

OBSERVATION



AND

FLIRTATION

A Comedy

IN ONE ACT

BY

HORACE WIGAN,

COMEDIAN

AUTHOR OF

*Conjugal Lesson—Fascinating Individual—Base Impostor—
Pyramus and Thisbe—The Absent One, &c. &c.*



THOMAS HAILES LACY,

89, STRAND,

Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market,

LONDON.

*First performed at the Strand Theatre,
(Under the management of Miss Swanborough,)
On Thursday, July 26, 1860.*

OBSERVATION AND FLIRTATION.

CHARACTERS.

DOCTOR SUAVITER SLOMAN—(*Eccentric or low
Comedy*).....Mr. PARSELLE.
MR. SANGUINE— (*1st Walking Gent*).....Mr. SWANBOROUGH.
MR. SEEDEEP—*1st Old Man on low comedy*.....Mr. TURNER.
MRS. SEEDEEP—(*Leading Lady*).....MISS BUFTON.
MRS. LAMBERT—(*Light Comedy Lady*).....MISS OLIVER.
SALLY—(*Chambermaid*).....MISS LAVINE.

SCENE.—A Fashionable Hotel at Harrowgate.

TIME.—Present.

COSTUMES.

SLOMAN.—Black Suit.
SANGUINE.—Modern Walking Suit, Moustache, Beard, &c.
SEEDEEP.—Nankeen Suit, Spectacles.
THE LADIES.—Handsome modern dresses.

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SCENE.—*An Elegantly Furnished Apartment in an Hotel.*
Doors, c.—doors, R. and L.—window, R. 2 E.—fireplace, L.—
a sofa under the window, R.

SANGUINE *discovered, seated with open book at round table,*
gazing fixedly at window, R. 2E.

SANG. The blind still down ! Fatigued at the ball last night, no doubt. Ah, I hear a window open ! (*rises*) Perhaps it's—No, it's that stupid prying old fellow in the next apartment. As if he couldn't shave himself just as well at the other end of the room! It's an extraordinary thing, but most ugly men have an insane pleasure in exhibiting themselves to their fellow creatures in white cotton nightcaps and soapsuds! Confound him! she'll never make her appearance whilst he's there! And as everybody in the hotel will be up directly, I must give it up for to-day ! (*sits*)

Enter SLOMAN, C.

SLOMAN. Ah, my dear Sanguine, how are you ? But you needn't tell me you are better, I can see you are—decidedly better.

SANG. Yes, I think I am a little—

SLOMAN. I am *sure* you are! I speak professionally. And a little more conformity to our Harrowgate habits will set you thoroughly right. Nothing like early rising! It's a fine thing, even apart from sanitary considerations. The early bird gets the worm.

SANG. Yes, that's true, only the worm was up first, (*looking out--aside*) I don't see her!

SLOMAN. Dear me! well, do you know, I never thought of

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it in that light before ! But what are you doing here, moping all alone ?

SANG. I wasn't moping, I was hoping. As Tom Campbell says : " Hope springs eternal in the human breast." And now, my worthy Esculapius, let me ask what brings *you* here so early ?

SLOMAN. Well, you see, we are all early folks at Harrow - gate. I've just come from visiting my gouty patients, who are all up at the spring, swallowing water with true hydraulic energy; and I've dropped into the hotel to call on some, not gouty ones, but they all danced so hard last night that they sleep like dormice; and as I understand they're going to do the same thing to-morrow, they require a little looking after.

SANG. Again to-morrow ?

SLOMAN. To be sure—ball at the assembly rooms—grand affair of the season.

SANG. Why, of course. By-the-bye, that puts me in mind.
(rings.

Enter SERVANT, C.

Did you send to Covent Garden, Charles ?

CHARLES. Yes, sir—the bouquet arrived this morning—come to five guineas, sir.

SANG. Very good—you may go. *Exit SERVANT, C.*

SLOMAN. Give five guineas for a bouquet, and send all the way to Covent Garden ?

SANG. Yes, and if necessary, I'd have sent for it to the antipodes.

SLOMAN. Dear me! then it's for a lady !

SANG. No, it's for you ! *(seats himself opposite to him)*

SLOMAN. NO, really—you're joking! You don't mean it?

SANG. NO, I don't!

SLOMAN. I thought so ! Then she's here ?

SANG. DO you think *I* should be here if *she* wasn't ?

SLOMAN. Ah, now I understand why you came to Harrow-gate!

SANG. Then you understand more than I do, for I came here without any intention on my part, and when I got here I didn't know where I was?

SLOMAN. YOU don't mean to say you were run away with?

SANG. NO. I ran away with somebody else!

SLOMAN. Dear me!

SANG. Fact—quite a romance!

SLOMAN. NO—is it! then do tell me—I'm fond of anything romantic—in fact, I'm rather romantic myself.

SANG. Yes, you look like it.

SLOMAN. Do you think so ? Well, yes, I do a little—rather poetical—I'm said to be like Pope!

SANG. More like a Guy, old fellow, especially about the head!

SLOMAN. Ah, now you're laughing at me. But never mind, let us hear the romance!

SANG. Well, you must know, in order to shake off a certain *liason* that was becoming excessively troublesome, I set out about a fortnight since on a fishing excursion to some friends of mine in Yorkshire, quite in the opposite part of the county ; and as luck would have it, arrived at the junction of the branch line that led to my destination too late for the train, and not wishing to wait till the next day, hired a post-chaise to proceed on my journey, and before I had travelled a quarter of an hour, we came up with another chaise a few yards in advance. As often happens in such cases, the postilions begun a sort of struggle, which grew into a race as to which should pass the other. Having nothing better to think of, I entered into the spirit of the thing. Well, after a rather exciting quarter of an hour, we passed the other chase full gallop, and looking out with all the pride of a victory, to see those whom I had vanquished, I saw lounging back in the chaise, in a duck of a straw bonnet, lined with pink, the loveliest woman I ever beheld. Such hair! such eyes! and a smile—oh, such a smile. I fell back in the chaise overwhelmed.

SLOMAN. And in love!

SANG. In love at first sight!

SLOMAN. Say love at full gallop.

SANG. YOU may laugh, old fellow, but your strong attachments always begins this way.

SLOMAN. Yes, and often end in the same manner.

SANG. NO, no, not passions such as mine. I told the postilion to slacken speed—made him get down, as though to arrange the harness—allowed the other chaise to pass us, abandoned the road I was going, followed her from stage to stage, entered this town, hired an apartment in the same hotel, and then for the first time learned I was at Harrowgate, where for the last ten days I have been living under the same roof with my beautiful fellow-traveller.

SLOMAN. Well, certainly, it is quite a romance.

SANG. Delightful, my dear fellow, delightful! and thanks to the charming license of this watering place mode of existence, evidently created for the happiness of lovers, I every day see her, converse with her, and dance with her. She dances like a zephyr—and then her voice—her voice is as musical as a bird's.

SLOMAN. Bless me, what enthusiasm!

SANG. Yes, I am, indeed, in love ; and were I obliged to part from her, I feel that—that I should not survive it.

SLOMAN. AS bad as that, eh ? dear me—my poor fellow, that's a very strong expression. Not survive it! quite touching. Now, that's what I call love—real love. However, of course, if the affair is as serious as all that, hesitation is out of the question, so leave it to me, and I'll arrange it for you.

SANG. YOU will ? then you're the same jolly good-natured fellow that you always were at school, and at Cambridge.

SLOMAN. Where, by the bye, you and the other fellows were rather hard on me with your practical jokes and nicknames.

SANG. Nicknames! oh, ah, I remember, we used to call you " the virtuous Sloman," and " the proper party."

SLOMAN. Yes, I know! and though it was true, it annoys me even now when I think of it, though it's ten years ago.

SANG. Ten years—is it so long ?

SLOMAN. Fact, my dear boy—I'm turned thirty.

SANG. Not more! why, I'm thirty myself. I should have thought you much older than I am.

SLOMAN. (*looking in glass*) Ah, you think I look more? can't look much more. Don't quite like the idea of looking old. I dare say it's the effect of my dress, whilst you, you see, are the pink of fashion.

SANG. Yes, one must attend to these things at the spas. Everywhere people worship the golden calf, and here they pay homage to his attendant idols—they are devotees of doeskin, vassals of the vest, and slaves of the surtout.

SLOMAN. Indeed! think so much of dress as all that? then I'm afraid my influence must be very small, for I never could tie a cravat fit to be seen, though I've devoted ten minutes of my life to the study every morning for the last ten years. However, no matter, I'll make the necessary inquiries, and if the lady likes you, as no doubt she does, for you certainly are a very good-looking fellow—

SANG. My dear Sloman—

SLOMAN. Oh, you are—you know you are, so if it's all right in that quarter, and the family is respectable—

SANG. Respectable?

SLOMAN. Yes, in that case I'll ask the father's consent at once.

SANG. Consent—consent to what?

SLOMAN. Why, of course, to allow you to propose to the girl.

SANG. Girl! why, what are you talking about, she's a married woman!

SLOMAN. A married woman!

SANG. Of course ! I thought you understood that all along.

SLOMAN. Ah, my good fellow, I can feel for you. I know what that is, by my own case.

SANG. What, you too! why, you don't mean to say that you're in love with a married woman.

SLOMAN. Yes, and have been so madly, devotedly any time these six years.

SANG. The virtuous Sloman! who'd have thought it ?

SLOMAN. Oh, I was in love with her before her marriage, but, but of course I never told her so.

SANG. In the name of common sense, why not ?

SLOMAN. Well, you see, I'd nothing to offer her but a full heart and an empty pocket.

SANG. What then ? some people think *that* better than the converse.

SLOMAN. Yes, I know—I do for one, but I didn't think it right, with her inexperience, to convert her to the same opinion.

SANG. And who was she ?

SLOMAN. Oh, a charming young creature of seventeen, daughter of a naval surgeon. I used to meet her in a family where I spent my evenings. I used to sit beside her and go partners with her at cards, and cheat to make her win.

SANG. Oh, you rascal!

SLOMAN. Well, you know, we never played for anything but almonds and raisins. I loved the very ground she walked on, and then she—she married.

SANG. I see—sly dog! and then—then you declared your passion. Oh, you Lovelace.

SLOMAN. What! no, no! I'm not such a d----- d— Dear me, I am getting quite excited—I mean that I did nothing of the kind. I disturb her peace of mind, poor dear! No, I loved her too much and too well for that. No, I avoided her for six years, and tried to forget her, and hard work—*very* hard work it was, when about a twelvemonth ago I learned she was a widow, and once more her own mistress. Then for the first time I saw her again, and if in pursuance of my professional advice, she comes here, as I hope she will, and the air of Harrowgate should re-establish her health, I think—I *think* I shall risk a declaration.

SANG. DO you, indeed ! psha, you care nothing about her! *You* in love! fiddle-de-dee !

SLOMAN. Fiddle-de-dee ! I shan't fiddle-de-dee! what can you be thinking of, to talk in that way ?

SANG. What could you be thinking of for six years not to talk at all?

SLOMAN. Bnt don't I tell you she was married?

SANG. Psha! your true lover never heeds if his mistress be maid, wife, or widow! he loves—loves through all, and in spite of all. However, I wish you every success in your suit, though in all probability your paragon will not have waited quite so long for you, as you have for her.

SLOMAN. Dear me! do you think so?

SANG. I do, indeed! However, I'm off, so good-bye for the present.

SLOMAN. Why, where *are* you going?

SANG. TO the esplanade, most learned of doctors and virtuous of lovers—to the esplanade, where every morning from seven to eight I enjoy a charming *tete-a-tete* with the object of my affection, while her husband is taking a cold shower bath for the good of his nerves. What do you think of that, you antediluvian Amoroso—isn't that a hint for you? Pon my soul, I can't help laughing. In love with a woman for six years and never have the pluck to tell her so—ha, ha, ha! *Exit c.*

SLOMAN. Well, but I say, Sanguine—(*coming down*) He's off! good gracious me! what a dreadful thing! It really is a shocking thing—and the poor husband, too, no doubt, come here for his health—perhaps one of my own patients! now who can it be?

Enter SEEDEEP, C.

SEE. It's only me, doctor!

SLOMAN. The deuce it is!

SEE. Can I come in?

SLOMAN. Oh, certainly. I was just thinking of you, Mr. Seedeep—I am quite alone.

SEE. (*mysteriously*) I know it—Mr. Sanguine has just left you.

SLOMAN. Well, yes, he *has* left me.

SEE. He is a friend of yours?

SLOMAN. Oh yes, a very old friend.

SEE. Charming young man!

SLOMAN. I'm glad you think so!

SEE. *Think So!* I see it—I *know* it! Is he a bachelor?

SLOMAN. Yes, he certainly has that misfortune.

SEE. Exactly—I *saw* it—I *knew* it! And he's about eight-and-twenty, or thirty?

SLOMAN. Well, yes, that's about his age.

SEE. Of course it is—I *saw* it—I *knew* it! The age of passion and romance, class number two—period number three. (*turning over memorandum book, which he takes from pocket*) It's perfectly correct.

SLOMAN. Is it, indeed! you don't say so ?

SEE. Does he drink the water ?

SLOMAN. Well, he isn't a patient of mine, and 'pon my word I can't say!

SEE. I con—I *know* he doesn't.

SLOMAN. Then, my dear sir, as you appear to know more about him than I do, why ask ?

SEE. I know what you are going to say I see it. " Why ask so many questions ? " But make yourself easy on that score, my dear doctor, my inquiries portend no harm to your friend, I assure you, for he's a great favourite of mine. But the fact is, he is the only person here that puzzles me. I have only been here a fortnight, and yet such is the power of my physiological observation and my peculiar natural tact, that I see—I may say, I *know* everything that goes on in Harrowgate.

SLOMAN. Everything?

SEE. Fact, doctor, I assure you. I pride myself on my eagle glance. Only let a man and woman bid each other good morning in my presence, and in a second, sir, I see and foresee, vulgarly speaking, how the cat jumps.

SLOMAN. Dear me, don't you think this feline foresight a very terrible gift ?

SEE. Terrible? on the contrary—it's very consoling. In matters of danger—you know, forewarned is forearmed. I make minutes of my observations, with a view to publication, and I flatter myself, a very curious and useful little work it will be. I shall call it " The Perfect Married Man's Manual." No, I mean "The Married Man's Perfect Manual, or Vade Mecum." A neat 12mo., printed in large type, as married men are not so remarkably clear sighted, and I mean to say that, with my little book in his pocket, there's not a husband in the world but will immediately see his way, let him be as blind as a bat.

SLOMAN. YOU don't say so!

SEE. Oh, infallibly. I've already struck a few proofs. But I am bound to confess, my dear doctor, that your friend has hitherto baffled all my penetration. I can *not* see, and I do *not* know why he has come to Harrowgate. He may drink as much water as he likes, but he doesn't deceive me! It's perfectly evident that he doesn't come here for his health—and it's quite as manifest that he has no love affair on his hands.

SLOMAN. Oh, you think he has no—

SEE. Think ! I never think—I see it—I *know* it. He knows nobody but ourselves—goes nowhere—never leaves us—never *has* done since his arrival, and we came together.

SLOMAN. Together! really!

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SEE. Fact—our post chaises actually ran a race which should get here first.

SLOMAN. Is it possible ?

SEE. Yes, singularly enough. First of all, he passed us full gallop—

SLOMAN. Bless me!

SEE. Yes, and then we made a start and passed him, and, as I may say, won by a length—or perhaps, as it was a post chaise contest, it would be more correct to say by a pole.

SLOMAN. I beg your pardon for interrupting you for a moment, but what time do you take your shower bath ?

SEE. Between seven and eight.

SLOMAN. (*looking at his watch*) Between seven and eight.

SEE. Yes, I know, it wants twenty minutes to eight. But I was informed that just at this time I should see something very curious and interesting on the esplanade.

SLOMAN. Then you are now going there ?

SEE. (*going up*) Exactly, doctor—so good bye, for I foresee, and I may say, I know that I shall find something very remarkable.

SLOMAN. That he certainly will—and how the deuce shall I prevent him ?

Enter MRS. SEEDEEP, C.

MRS. S. Ah, my love! Why, I thought you were taking your bath!

SLOMAN. His wife! Heaven be praised ! He gave me a rare fright!

MRS. S. (*speaking off*) Come in, my love—there's nobody here!

MRS. LAMBERT *entering, c. and seeing* GENTLEMEN.

MRS. L. Nobody?

MRS. S. Only my husband.

MRS. L. Your husband ! oh, pray introduce me ! There's my dear doctor, too;

SLOMAN. (*bowing timidly*) You here, madam? This is, indeed, a most delightful—I should say, a most unexpected surprise!

MRS. L. Unexpected, doctor ? Why, did not you write, and prescribe the waters of Harrowgate as an infallible panacea for my complaint?

SLOMAN. Yes, I certainly did say that I was of opinion that a little change might be advisable.

MRS. L. Of course you did—and as London was as empty

as a desert, like an obedient patient, I followed your professional advice, though I think it would puzzle even your skill to say what is the matter with me.

SLOMAN. Oh, madam, nothing very serious—nothing grave, unfortunately—I mean fortunately.

MRS. L. Oh, very well. But you had better find some learned hard word for my vulgar ailment—the dumps, or else find me a substitute, for I can't consent to come all this way for nothing!

SEE. Depend upon it, madam, he'll find you two for one. Ah, they manage these things much better in China. There the patient, as long as he is in good health, pays the doctor, but the moment the patient falls sick, he cuts off the medical supplies.

MRS. L. Ha, ha! So that by this means, the Chinamen's health is in every sense Celestial.

SEE. NO, madam—but the doctors are sure to take a lively interest in their welfare.

MRS. L. An admirable expedient certainly.

SEE. 'Tis indeed madam, and works well I assure you. And now, pray, may I ask whom I have the honour of—

MRS. S. La, haven't you discovered that? You, who see and know everything! This is Julia Lambert, the schoolfellow I so often talk about.

MRS. L. SO often, Mary?

SEE. Oh yes, indeed, very often. Allow me to welcome you to Harrowgate. I have heard so much of you that I ought to have recognised the original from the description.

MRS. L. Indeed! you alarm me! One so seldom realises the impression created by the partiality of friendship, that I have a dread of being talked about.

SLOMAN. Ah, madam, that's the ordinary diagnosis of diffidence.

MRS. L. NOW, my dear doctor, that's a very learned, and at the same time a very pretty speech—and as you are so gallant, I will honour you with a commission. Pray go and see if my luggage is arrived, and secure me apartments as near to Mary's as possible.

MRS. S. I fear, Julia, that will be impossible—they are quite full here—not a room to be had.

MRS. L. La, my love, what merit would there be in the doctor's finding them, if there were any to be had?

SLOMAN. Very true, madam—I'll execute your commission with the greatest pleasure, and I'll find you apartments, whether they're to be had or not.

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MRS. L. Thanks, dear doctor. *Au revoir*, and remember by and bye I shall expect a consultation.

SLOMAN. Certainly, madam, you may. (*aside*) And a declaration! *Exit, c.*

SEE. Delightful, obliging creature, Doctor Slowman—I saw it—I *knew* it the very first time we met. And now, my dear, if you and your friend will excuse me, I'll go and extend my walk and my observations at the same time.

MRS. L. Pray make no stranger of me! But may I ask the subject of your observation ?

SEE. The human heart, madam—the human heart! Nothing escapes me, so beware !

MRS. L.. Oh, you terrible man !

SEE. Yes, madam—observation is my forte—my existence—in short, I'm a perepatetic eyeball—a devout follower of the precepts of the immortal Johnson.

" Let observation with extended view,
Survey mankind from China to Peru."

MRS. L. Or as a modern critic suggests, " Let observation with extended observation observe mankind extensively."

SEE. Madam, I do not hesitate to affirm that that critic was an impertinent fellow—I see it, and I know it. But I am losing your time and my own walk—so good bye for the present, we shall meet at dinner. Good bye, my love. *Exit, c.*

MRS. L. Your husband seems a good-tempered creature.

MRS. S. Yes.

MRS. L. And really seems to adore you.

MRS. S. Oh, yes.

MRS. L. That's a very cool acknowledgment!

MRS. S. Yes, my dear, as cool as his adoration.

MRS. L. Ah, my dear, husbands are all alike in that particular. You must make up your mind to it, and provided they love us a little bit, it's as much as we can expect.

MRS. S. A little bit! You are easily satisfied !

MRS. L. My love, I never was much spoiled in that particular !

MRS. S. Then your husband is—

MRS. L. *Was* child. I have lost him, poor man—so let us change the subject, for I shouldn't like to say any harm of him.

MRS. S. Then you are a widow ?

MRS. L. Alas, yes, my love, and have been so for eighteen months.

MRS. S. And now that you are free, you intend to remain so.

MRS. L. La, child, are women ever free ?

MRS. S. Then you think of remarrying ?

MRS. L. Why, what else would you have a widow think about?

MRS. S YOU are in love with some one ?

MRS. L. YOU are very curious!

MRS. S. And he loves you in return?

MRS. L. I'm not quite sure of that.

MRS. S. How can you be in doubt ?

MRS. L. People sometimes mistake the signs.

MRS. S. If his voice falters when he speaks to you—if his glance pursues you—if he is only happy in your presence—if—

MRS. L. Enough, my love—I see you are well acquainted with the *ordinary* symptoms—but if he ran away some fine morning, and never left word where he was going to, would not that be what the doctor calls a remarkable diagnosis ?

MRS. S. Then you have repulsed him?

MRS. L. I did, fortunately.

MRS. S. He fears to displease you, and hopes you may regret him !

MRS. L. But it's customary for people to write.

MRS. S. He waits, perhaps, for you to recall him, and you can do so. Ah, Julia, 'tis a happy thing to love, and be beloved!

MRS. L. Yes, Mary ; but more especially by one's husband! Don't you think so ?

MRS. S. Oh, yes, of course, (*with indifference*)

Enter SARAH MUMMERY, C.

SALLY. There's a chap out yonder askin' for t' lady.

MRS. L. What lady ?

SALLY. Thysen I rackon.

MRS. L. Mysen! (*to* MRS. SEEDEEP) What a singular looking girl! Are they all like this in Yorkshire ?

SALLY. Oh, no, they been't all so pratty behaved like as I—I've just come from .Sunday school, and they've meade I chamber maid.

MRS. L. Indeed! And who is the gentleman? The doctor, perhaps ?

SALLY. Maybe, he's got a killin look wi' un.

MRS. L. Where is he? (*pointing, c.*) That way?

SALLY, (*pointing, L.*) NO. thic way.

MRS. L. What a strange girl!

SALLY. Noa, I been't strange, I be quite at home. But, mayhap, thee doesn't mean I?

MRS. L. Oh, yes! " Thysen, I rackon!" Ha, ha, ha! Excuse, me, Mary, I must hear what the doctor has to say, and I'm sure you won't mind, when I leave you with one—(*mimicking*) " so pratty behaved like." *Exit, laughing, c.*

SALLY, (*looking round, mysteriously*) Be you Mrs. Seedeep ?

MRS. S. Yes—certainly.

SALLY. And be you quite alone?

MRS. S. Don't you see that I am ?

SALLY. Oh, yes, I see, but I want somebody else to see.
(*beckons and calls at window.*)

MRS. S. What are you doing ?

SALLY. I be telling on 'un that you be quite alone.

MRS. S. Telling! Telling who?

SALLY. Your owd man.

MRS. S. What do you mean ?

SALLY. Why, thy husband, for sure!

MRS. S. My husband!

SALLY. Ay, and a smart looking chap he be, all as one as he'd come out of bandbox.

MRS. S. NO, no, it's not my husband—you are mistaken.

SALLY. NO, no, not I. Here a be !

Enter SANGUINE, C.

MRS. S. Mr. Sanguine !

SALLY, (*mysteriously to him*) She be quite alone.

SANG. I see that, simpleton—leave us!

SALLY. Thou see'st that simpleton ? May be thou was't looking in glass! He, he, he! but you'll excuse my joking, Muster Seedeep—I'm going (*going*)

SANG. Mr. Seedeep! What do you mean ?

MRS. S. She takes you for my husband—undeceive her.

SANG. YOU are mistaken, Sally. My name is not Seedeep, I'm not this lady's husband.

SALLY. Oh, go along—do you think I can't see ?

SANG. See! What do you see ?

SALLY. Why, you be always a casting sheep's eyes at she—and when she sets eyes on you, she simmers up as red as a rose.

MRS. S. I tell you, you foolish girl, this is not Mr. Seedeep, and I beg you will have done with your impertinent ridiculous suppositions.

SALLY, (*to SANGUINE*) Then you bean't t' owd man arter all? Well, I never! (*to MRS. SEEDEEP*) And he as fond o' you as a hog is o' beans! Well, I never! (*aside*) I'll go and tell John Ostler. Well, I never! *Exit c.*

MRS. S. (*after a pause*) You see, sir, to what your importunate assiduity exposes me?

SANG. Alas, madam, am I to blame if my looks do not sufficiently dissemble my passion ?

MRS. S. Passion ?

SANG. Oh, pardon me—what have I said ?

MRS. S. More, sir—much more than my conduct towards you has ever warranted. And you must be aware that the folly of that foolish menial is but the echo of the scandal of the place.

SANG. Alas, madam! who can control the tongue of slander? I have struggled in vain with my attachment.

MRS. S. Again, sir! once for all, there must be an end to this! Because I have accepted from you the ordinary civilities which it is customary for a woman of my age to receive from a man of yours, you have thought proper to misconstrue a harmless Flirtation, and indulge in hopes that can never be fulfilled, and if my husband should observe your attentions—

SANG. Oh, do not believe it! I would die rather than cause you a moment's uneasiness.

MRS. S. Then, at least, give some proof of your sincerity, and no longer persecute me with your ill-timed and offensive attentions. Only last night at the ball, you openly had the audacity to take a flower from my bouquet.

SANG, (*taking flower from his buttonhole*) Oh, forgive my temerity, allow me to restore it.

MRS. S. (*rejecting it*) Psha!

SANG. Then you give it me? (*kisses it, and places it in his bosom*) It shall wither on my heart!

MRS. S. Again, sir, you misinterpret me, and force me to put a termination to a feeling—a—I mean an acquaintance, which I shall ever regret.

SANG. Oh, thanks for that word!

MRS. S. Hear me, sir. An old schoolfellow, whom I have expected from London has just arrived, she will reside here under this roof, and I must request that your visits may be less frequent here. Now I do not know to what unworthy imputations your stay here, in my husband's absence, may expose me, and I must therefore, command—I must beg of you to leave me.

SANG. Leave you! when I have not seen you for hours, and when I have so much to talk of?

MRS. S. What can you have to speak of? (*turns away*)

SANG. Oh, of thousands of things—of our plans for to-morrow for the ball—of the ball last night, where you were the Cynosure of all eyes.

MRS. S. Did I indeed, look so very nice? (*turning to him*)

SANG. Bewitching—adorably beautiful!

MRS. S. I spoke of my toilette, sir.

SANG. I saw only you.

MRS. S. Adieu, sir. (*going*).

SANG. What, can you leave me thus abruptly?

MRS. S. I have no other resource, since you refuse to obey me!

SANG. I refuse you anything! Oh, never!

MRS. S. YOU say so!

SANG. And will give the hardest proof in my power, by leaving you at once—leaving you, I fear, in anger.

MRS. S. Not so, Mr. Sanguine. On that condition I pardon what has passed, (*gives her hand*)

SANG, (*kissing her hand*) But may I not hope—shall I not see you again—but for a moment?

MRS. S. (*looking off, c.—suddenly withdrawing her hand*) No, sir—and if you do not immediately depart—

SANG. I am gone! But let me speak with you again. Here, in an hour, I will return—but for a few moments, to say a last farewell. I implore you! (*gestures of impatient refusal by MRS. SEEDEEP*) Enough, I will obey you—your cruelty will drive me to distraction!

As he says these latter words, he buries his face in his hands, and goes up towards centre, then with an effort, uncovers his eyes, exclaiming "Farewell, for ever!" finds himself face to face confronted with SEEDEEP, who has entered c.—Tableau.

MRS. S. (*aside*) My husband!

SEE. Ah! so I have caught you at last?

SANG. Sir—I—

SEE. Why, I have been looking for you the last hour!

SANG. Been looking for me, sir?

MRS. S. And what are you seeking Mr. Sanguine for, *my* love?

SEE. Oh! (*mysteriously*) I have my reasons!

MRS. S. Can he suspect?

SEE. (*to MRS. SEEDEEP*) I see it all—I *know* it!

MRS. S. (*aside*) I am lost!

SEE. (*to SANGUINE*) And pray where were you off to in such a hurry?

SANG, (*aside*) Hang me if I know myself! Oh, no where in particular, (*hesitating*) The fact is, I was going to—to—

MRS. S. To meet Mrs. Lambert, (*quickly*)

SANG, (*astonished*) Mrs. Lambert?

MRS. S. My old schoolfellow that we were talking about just now.

SEE. Oh, I see. Then it's very fortunate I stopped you, for here she comes!

Re-enter MRS. LAMBERT, C.—she stops, c.

MRS L. Mr. Sanguine!

SANG. Mrs. Lambert !

MRS. S. (*aside*) Why, he actually does know her!

SEE. Mutual embarrassment—I see it, I *know* it. (*aloud*) Come in, my dear madam—pray come in ! You're just in time, for here is a gentleman who was rushing to meet you, in a whirlwind of eagerness!

MRS. L. Mr. Sanguine then, knew of my arrival at Harrowgate ?

SEE. I presume so, for he was speaking of you with a warmth which I can find no parallel for, but the heat of the weather. (*wiping forehead*) Pray be seated, (*they all sit*—SANGUINE, R.—SEEDEEP, R. C.—MRS. SEEDEEP, L. C. and MRS. LAMBERT, L.

MRS. L. Indeed! you surprise me!

SEE. (*aside to MRS. SEEDEEP*) I've found it out! (*aloud*) It's a fact, my dear madam, I assure you! he's hardly recovered from his excitement yet. You haven't, have you, Sanguine ?

SANG. (*to MRS. LAMBERT*) I certainly must admit, madam, that just now, I did—

MRS. L. Not expect to see me, sir, I dare say.

SANG. NO, madam, I certainly did not expect the pleasure ! (*aside*) I'm dumbfounded!

MRS. L. It was equally unlooked for on my part si r, I assure you!

SEE. (*aside*) Now that's clever on both sides—but it doesn't deceive me! I see it—I know it—they met by appointment.

MRS. S. (*starting*) Impossible! (*aloud to MRS. LAMBERT*) Why, Julia, my love, I was not aware that you knew Mr. Sanguine before!

MRS. L. Oh, dear, yes, my love—Mr. Sanguine *was* a friend of my husband's.

SEE. (*aside to MRS. SEEDEEP*) *Was* a friend! did you mark, he *was* ?

MRS. S. Why, he's dead.

SEE. That's another affair ! (*aloud*) And so you were an old friend of Lambert's ?

SANG. Oh, yes—a most intimate friend.

SEE. Ah, a very good sort of man, Lambert! you must have deeply regretted him!

SANG. Yes, most sincerely, (*aside*) What the deuce shall I say ? (*aloud*) I trust you have been quite well since we met ?

MRS. L. Oh, yes, thank you. I hope you, also, have enjoyed good health

SANG. Oh, excellent, madam—never was better in my life—that is, no, I have been ill, and in point of fact, I am still indisposed. I came here for the benefit of the springs. In short,

I have visited all the principal watering places during the last twelvemonths. Nothing but the pursuit of health could have kept me so long from town.

MRS. L. Dear me! have you been so long absent? Really, one has so many acquaintances in town, that one scarcely remarks when they come or go!

SEE. Clever on both sides! but it doesn't deceive me! (*aloud*) Well, my dear Mrs. Lambert, if you have lost sight of each other, that won't be the case here! Nothing like the spas for meeting the folks we least expect to see!

SANG, (*aside*) He may say that!

SEE. Here people love and hate persons they don't know, quite as much as those they do. People walk together, talk together, dine together, dance together, and, I may say, live together, quite in an agreeable, domestic way—and I suppose you'll join the family circle, and take up your quarters here?

SANG. What, in this hotel?

MRS. L. I hope so—if the doctor keeps his word.

SEE. Oh, no doubt he will. Ah, it's a delightful thing to live under the same roof with those we love!

SANG. It is, *indeed*. Don't you think so, Mrs. Seedeep?

SEE. (*to* MRS. LAMBERT) Indeed? do you observe that?

MRS. L. (*aside to* SEEDEEP) I don't understand you!

SANG, (*rising and bowing to* MRS. LAMBERT) But I must apologise for staying so long. You must be fatigued after your journey.

MRS. L. Oh, not at all, sir!

SANG. Pardon me, I'm sure you must have many arrangements to make. Allow me to take my leave.

MRS. S. Are you going to leave us?

SANG, (*looking steadfastly at* MRS. SEEDEEP) Only for a short time. I have an appointment here, with some one whom I confidently expect to meet on my return.

SEE. (*to* MRS. LAMBERT) *Here*, you understand!

MRS. L. (*to* SEEDEEP) I beg your pardon!

SEE. (*aside to* SANGUINE) I understand, my boy—it's quite right—two's company and three's none—want to get rid of us, and have it all to yourself—I see it—I know it.

SANG. What does he mean?

SEE. Make no stranger of us, my boy—keep your appointment. I have no doubt you'll find the party *here* when you retain.

SANG. Inquisitive old bore! what is he driving at? Ladies, your most obedient. *Exit, c.*

SEE. NOW, that's an excellent young man—I *see* it and I *know* it. (*aloud*) Mary, my love, come with me—I've something particular to tell you.

MRS. S. And leave Julia? how rude you are!

SEE. I am sorry to leave Mrs. Lambert, but I must tell you (*whispers*) I have found out what brings Sanguine to Harrowgate.

MRS. S. Heaven forbid! (*to* MRS. LAMBERT) Will you excuse us for a short time?

MRS. L. Oh, certainly—I'll follow you presently.

SEE. Don't you think you'd better wait for poor Sanguine—he's waited a long time for you.

MRS. L. Wait for Mr. Sanguine!

SEE. Adores you—worships you, poor fellow!

MRS. L. Why, what, sir, can lead you to suppose—

SEE. (*going up, c. with* MRS. SEEDEEP) Observation! Insight! knowledge of the human heart. Come along, Mary! Mark me, Mrs. Lambert, I *see* it and I *know* it!

Exit with MRS. SEEDEEP, C.

MRS. L. Waiting for me! oh, it must be a joke! Sanguine, whom I have not seen for a year. How could he know that I was coming here, unless he guessed it? To be sure, there was a time when he might have been curious of my whereabouts. I have treated him too harshly. Mary was right! Could she have been advocating his cause? Now I think of it, a light breaks in upon me—the doctor's incomprehensible letter, advising me to come to Harrowgate—Mr. Seedeep's mysterious smiles and observations, and Mary's eagerness to introduce me. I see it all—it's a preconcerted plan to bring us together. Poor Sanguine! Good heavens! what a figure I am! (*arranges hair in glass*) I declare I'm a positive fright! And to think, too, that the doctor should be at the bottom of all this! I declare, the men are all alike, though I never should have suspected him of such hypocrisy. Ah, here he comes! Ah, doctor—doctor, I'll be even with you.

Re-enter SLOMAN, C.

SLOMAN. Well, my dear madam, it's all arranged. It was a difficult case, but thanks to the infallible specific of golden ointment, I have worked a perfect cure. Forgive these professional expressions—I have secured you apartments next your friend.

MRS. L. Many thanks, doctor!

SLOMAN (*aside*) Now for it—the crisis has arrived, (*with sepulchral tone and sudden effort*) Madam!

MRS. L. (*imitating his tone*) Doctor!

SLOMAN. (in on *easy, colloquial manner*) I trust you had a pleasant journey!

MRS. L. Oh, very!

SLOMAN. Ah, so much the better! (*pause*) It's very important that—that is, I should say, it's very warm!

MRS. L. (*after a pause*) Have you nothing more than that to say to me?

SLOMAN. Oh, yes, a great deal, madam. The fact is—(*aside*) It's of no use—I *can't* do it! (*aloud*) The fact is, I will defer it till you are more at leisure.

MRS. L. Oh, I am quite disengaged, (*sits L.*) And now that we are quite alone, I am anxious to know why you so strenuously advised my coming to Harrowgate.

SLOMAN. Ah, exactly—you wish to know *why* I—

MRS. L. Naturally enough—sit down.

SLOMAN. Thank you, madam, I'm not tired.

MRS. L. NOW, my dear doctor, *pray* sit down!

SLOMAN. (*sitting on couch at window, on further side of round table—business of sitting in chairs, gradually approaching*) Certainly, madam, if you insist upon it.

MRS. L. NO, not all that way off. (*pointing to chair beside her*) Here!

SLOMAN. (*sits beside her*) It certainly is very warm—quite sultry!

MRS. L. And now, doctor, look me full in the face—that is, if my face doesn't frighten you—there. Well?

SLOMAN. I beg your pardon!

MRS. L. Well, what do you think of me?

SLOMAN. (*with sudden admiration*) Think of you, madam! I think you more beautiful than ever.

MRS. L. Dear me, doctor!

SLOMAN. (*disconcerted*) I—I beg your pardon—I really—I beg your pardon.

MRS. L. Oh, dear, there's no offence if you think so; but I am astonished, doctor, that a sage like you should think about such things. I meant how do you think I look as a patient? Come, try my pulse.

SLOMAN. (*rising*) I—madam! no, not for the world. I didn't mean that—that was not the object of my visit.

MRS. L. What, do you refuse, then? (*holding out her wrist*)

SLOMAN. NO, no, madam, not to take your hand—on the contrary, I came to ask for it.

MRS. L. TO ask for my hand? What does this mean?

SLOMAN. It means, madam, that—it is excessively embarrassing, but in fact—in short—however—that is, I say, what would you say, if a young person—by which you will under-

stand an individual of the male sex—I might have said *party*, as being a more popular expression—I say, madam, what would you say if a young man—that is, a man of about my age—

MRS. L. SO, SO, now for it. Pray go on, doctor !

SLOMAN. I say, if a man of about my figure.

MRS. L. He certainly doesn't flatter him! (*aside*)

SLOMAN. I say, madam, what would you reply, if such a man were to say to you I am not handsome ?

MRS. L. (*aside*) That's false modesty—everyone must allow he's good-looking.

SLOMAN. (*continuing*) If he were to repeat, I am not handsome, but I am master of a good constitution, a good temper, a good social position, and I have long secretly loved you passionately—loved you in secret.

MRS. L. In secret?

SLOMAN. In fact, I have never loved anyone but you.

MRS. L. (*aside*) I did not know that before.

SLOMAN. And I feel that—that I feel that were you to become my—my *wife* that that passion would end but with my *life*.

MRS. L. Why, if that were so, indeed—

SLOMAN. Madam, that *is* so, indeed!

MRS. L. YOU really render me quite curious; and where, may I ask, am I to look for a husband of this rare and almost extinct species?

SLOMAN. Oh, madam, he is to be found at no great distance.

MRS. L. DO I understand you to mean in Harrowgate ?

SLOMAN. Yes, madam, in this room!

MRS. L. (*looking round*) La, my dear doctor, where ?

SLOMAN. (*seated*) He is before you ?

MRS. S. YOU, doctor, you ?

SLOMAN. Even so, madam—myself!

MRS. L. (*laughing*) Ha, ha, ha!—you are joking, doctor.

SLOMAN. Joke ! joking, madam !

MRS. L. YOU can't be serious—you're laughing at me ?

SLOMAN. Laughing! nay madam, it may be an unmanly avowal, but I never felt more disposed to cry in my life.

MRS. L. NO, no, pardon my levity. I see now it is serious—*too* serious. You love me—you ?

SLOMAN. Yes, and have done, wildly, madly for six long weary years, (*throwing himself on his knees*)

MRS. L. Good heavens! I never should have suspected it.

SLOMAN. NO, no, I've concealed it well, haven't I ? (*rising*)

MRS. L. YOU have, indeed!

SLOMAN. And was it not my duty ? you were married—my

sense of honour, my respect for you—my very love all commanded me to be silent, but now that circumstances permit—now that you are free—now that my reputation is established, and my means, if not ample, sufficient, I thought—dared to hope—

MRS. L. (*aside*) And that hope I must destroy—poor doctor. (*aloud*) Mr. Sloman, your proposition, and the avowal of a passion so long—so disinterested and respectful, and from one whom I must ever esteem, is indeed, as unexpected as it is flattering, and, if I cannot respond—

SLOMAN. (*supporting himself on back of chair*) Ah, cannot respond!

MRS. L. It is not from any undue sense of your merits and the honour you intended me, but I should be wanting in candour, were I not to avow that another here entertains towards me the sentiments which you profess—that, unlike you, he has been at no pains to conceal them; and though they were repulsed with coldness—when duty urged their rejection, yet the impression they created would, were they renewed now, prompt their acceptance, and—

SLOMAN. And you will marry him?

MRS. L. I did not positively say that!

SLOMAN. NO, but you're going to say it—I know you are.

MRS. L. YOU are not angry, doctor? (*giving her hand*) We are old friends, and I trust shall remain so.

SLOMAN. (*with great emotion*) Angry with you! Alas, madam, even that wretched consolation is for me impossible, and if this—this *other* is to make you happy—if you—if you love him—(*with concentrated fury*) Oh, if I only knew who he was!

MRS. L. Alas, doctor, what good purpose can such knowledge serve?

SLOMAN. Don't be alarmed, madam, I shall pick no quarrel with him—I shan't challenge and shoot him—I shan't even poison him, although I am a medical man, for I would not willingly give you a moment's pain.

MRS. L. But you do cause me pain.

SLOMAN. I, madam!

MRS. S. Yes, indeed, great pain.

SLOMAN. I, madam!

MRS. S. YOU, sir, you! (*puts her handkerchief to her face, and going off slowly, c.*) His generosity moves me to tears!

SLOMAN. Sir—sir! not even *dear* doctor now. I'm nothing to her now—nothing! Strange! and she's still everything to me, for I do love her. Who wouldn't love her—so amiable—to kind-hearted—so good—so beautiful. Ah, that's it—too

beautiful for me—much too beautiful. And yet how happy I could have made her. Angry ! what right have I to be angry—is it her fault that I am too old ?—Sanguine told me I *was looking* old, and now I *feel* old. Is it her fault that I don't know how to make love ? for I don't know. Sanguine told me I didn't, this morning. In love for six years and never open my mouth! of course she must have thought me ridiculous—she couldn't help it; but when I think that I had brought her here to place her in the arms of another, I feel as if my heart would burst!

Re-enter SANGUINE in a rage, c.

SANG. Stupid old pestering pump!

SLOMAN. Ah, Sanguine!

SANG. Tormenting, senile idiot !

SLOMAN. Why, who has put you so out of temper ?

SANG. Who! why, that concentrated, double-action, high-pressure bore, Seedeep, who follows me about everywhere, telling me he's found out what keeps me at Harrowgate—as if it was any business of his.

SLOMAN. But it's rather serious if he has found out.

SANG. He find out? not he! I only wish he *was* jealous—it would be all in my favour with his wife; but instead of that he says I've come down here by appointment to meet a lady from London.

SLOMAN. A lady! what lady?

SANG. Don't I tell you, a lady that's just arrived here from town.

SLOMAN. What, alone?

SANG. Yes!

SLOMAN. A widow ?

SANG. Yes!

SLOMAN. And who is she ?

SANG. A Mrs. Lambert !

SLOMAN. What an idea!

SANG. Perfectly absurd!

SLOMAN. A woman you don't even know.

SANG. Oh, yes, I do—I *do know* her!

SLOMAN. Oh, you do know her ?

SANG. To be sure—that's what makes it so embarrassing.

SLOMAN. Embarrassing ! what for—why ?

SANG. What for? why? why, of course, because she happens to be the friend of the young lady I told you about.

SLOMAN. Oh! what, you mean of Mrs. Seedeep?

SANG. Why, how did you discover that?

SLOMAN. Oh, I've just seen them together.

SANG. Ah! beautiful, isn't she?

SLOMAN. Mrs. Lambert?

SANG. NO, no—Mrs. Seedeep. Ah, my dear boy, it's all over with me—I love that woman to distraction. Do you think she'll stop long?

SLOMAN. What, Mrs. Seedeep?

SANG. NO, Mrs. Lambert!

SLOMAN. Why, how on earth can that signify to you!

SANG. Well, I'll tell you if you'll give me time.

SLOMAN. Go on.

SANG. Well, you must know that some time ago—(*looking round*) Are we quite alone?

SLOMAN. Yes, that some time ago—

SANG. Why, some time ago I paid my addresses to her.

SLOMAN. (*with explosion*) To Mrs. Lambert!

SANG. Make a little more noise, do!

SLOMAN. (*softly*) Did you say to Mrs. Lambert?

SANG. Yes, of course I did, and very much in love I was with her at the time.

SLOMAN. Dear me! (*aside*) can he then, be—

SANG. And I believe I was not altogether displeasing to her.

SLOMAN. He *is* the man!

SANG. I beg your pardon.

SLOMAN. (*looking fixedly at him*) Yes, he's decidedly better-looking than I am!

SANG. What are you staring and muttering about, old fellow?

SLOMAN. Oh, nothing in particular! Yes, he *is* better-looking—and *taller*—decidedly taller. What I was about to say was merely that of course you are going to marry her?

SANG. What, when I'm up to my eyes in love with another woman? How can you suppose anything so absurd?

SLOMAN. Ah, to be sure! My dear friend, I'd forgotten that. Of course—you're in love with another woman, and a most charming person she is—quite the queen of Harrowgate. But who told you about Mrs. Lambert?

SANG. Why, Seedeep—he insists upon it she is dying for me!

SLOMAN. Insists upon it, does he?

SANG. Yes; and that she is come here on purpose to meet me!

SLOMAN. Ah, he's mistaken there, to my certain knowledge. In fact, so little did she come here to meet you, that she didn't even know you were here, and she starts for Malvern immediately.

SANG. For Malvern?

SLOMAN. Oh, yes, this place wouldn't suit her, so I ordered her off at once, (*aside*) It isn't strictly true, but never mind!

SANG. My dear boy, I am *so much* obliged to you!

SEOMAN. Oh, don't name it. I shouldn't wonder if she's already on the road!

SANG. So soon?

SLOMAN. Oh, yes, it was a case of urgency, and I ordered her off at once, so if that was the only obstacle to your happiness, go on and prosper.

SANG. My dear Sloman, I am so much obliged. May I, then, reckon on your countenance and support?

SLOMAN. Of course you may. What a question!

SANG. Why, this morning, you know, you didn't seem to quite approve—

SLOMAN. NO, but this morning I didn't know—that is, I was not exactly aware—but of course, where people are so very ill-assorted, that makes a great difference.

SANG. Very true, it does!

SLOMAN. Besides, where the husband is a mere conventional fiction, you know—a mere social hypothesis—

SANG. Exactly!

SLOMAN. And old enough to be her father, to say nothing of his having one foot in the grave—

SANG. YOU surprise me—why, he looks hearty enough.

SLOMAN. Hearty! monstrous delusion! he hasn't six months to live.

SANG. Is it possible? What, then, do you imagine is the matter with him?

SLOMAN. Imagine! (*aside*) He may well say imagine. (*aloud*) Oh, my dear sir, it's a dreadful thing! he's troubled with a chronic irritation of the gastric nerves, which, if not allayed at regular intervals, is accompanied with great sensational disturbance and junctional disturbance, causing a gradual waste and dissipation of the cellular tissues, terminating in syncope and ultimate death!

SANG. Dear me! I see—a sort of consumption.

SLOMAN. Exactly so, (*aside*) of rumpsteaks.

SANG. What a shocking thing! And the poor little woman, how I sympathize with her.

SLOMAN. (*assuming a Lovelace manner*) And so do I—I always pity a woman that doesn't love her husband—it makes them so interesting.

SANG. It does—it does! (*looking off, R.*) And by all my hopes, here she comes.

SLOMAN. The deuce she does! Comes here—what for?

SANG. Why, to keep an appointment that I was afraid she wouldn't keep—but love, mighty love! has stood my friend.

SLOMAN. (*utterly confounded*) You don't mean to an assignation with yon !

SANG. Yes, you dog, and thanks to your advice and information, my scruples are removed, and I shall make the most of it.

SLOMAN. My *advice*—goodness gracious me!

SANG. Why, of course, after what you've just said. But quick, quick, leave us—she's here!

SLOMAN. Oh lord ! what have I done ? (*aloud*) Well, but I hope Sanguine, nothing I have said will induce you—

SANG. NOW, my good fellow, don't talk—she'll be here in a minute.

SLOMAN. Well, but now, I say, Sanguine—

SANG. (*pushing him*) Get out!

SLOMAN. Oh what an Iago I have been, (*is pushed into room, L. by SANGUINE, who shuts the door*)

Enter MRS. SEEDEEP, C.

SANG. Only just in time! Here she comes! Ah! madam, how can I thank you for this kindness ?

MRS. S. (*coldly*) Oh, are you here ?

SANG. Yes, madam, glowing with gratitude and hope.

MRS. S. Are you alone ?

SANG. Yes, madam, quite—quite alone.

MRS. S. SO much the worse!

SANG. I don't understand!

MRS. S. I thought you were with Julia!

SANG. With whom ?

MRS. S. Julia ! you seem a little deaf—and as I leave Harrowgate to-day—

SANG. Is it possible?

MRS. S. Is there anything so extraordinary in that ? one can't live for ever in these tiresome watering places—one so soon exhausts all their amusements, and as I don't take the waters, and am not ill—

SANG. But Mr. Seedeep—

MRS. S. Oh, he's quite well!

SANG. There, my dear madam, you must excuse me. You are in error—his medical attendant has just assured me to the contrary.

MRS. S. I repeat, sir, that he is quite well, and our departure is settled. I have just sent a note to Mr. Seedeep, and I am confident that, after its perusal, he will leave Harrowgate immediately, so that you can then enjoy a *tete-a-tete* with your wife without interruption.

SANG. My wife?

MRS. S. Or your intended, if you prefer the term. Has she not just arrived from town to meet you?

SANG. My intended!

MRS. S. And a charming, fascinating person she is—quite throws us homely, plain folks, into the shade.

SANG. May I ask if Mr. Seedeep is the author of this wonderful fiction?

MRS. S. What matter if it is true, and you are in love with Mrs. Lambert?

SANG. Pardon me, madam, but it is not so. I certainly have met Mrs. Lambert in society, but our acquaintance was of brief duration, and that our indifference is mutual, is sufficiently proved by her immediate departure for Malvern.

MRS. S. HOW ? does she leave for Malvern ?

SANG. Immediately—and is, probably, now on the road.

MRS. S. Indeed !

SANG. Absolutely true, madam, I assure you—her medical man has just told me so.

MRS. S. Then this story of your marriage—

SANG. Never had any foundation, but in the brain of Mr. Seedeep.

MRS. S. I am sorry for it. Poor Julia! I came to congratulate her on her happiness, for I am sure you would have made her an excellent husband! and I am certain she loves you! (*sits at table*) Indeed, I can't think why you gave her up!

SANG. Can you ask why ?

MRS. S. Yes. Why, I'm sure she's very handsome!

SANG. Because I do not love her, and because—because I—I love another.

MRS. S. Ah!

SANG. One superior to her in charms—superior in accomplishments—one from whom, though she avoids me, I cannot tear myself away! One who repels me with scorn, yet out of whose sight I cannot live—the sound of whose voice caste a spell upon my heart—whose highest wish is my law—whose smile is happiness—whose frown is death.

MRS. S. Enough, sir—enough. Should you be overheard, it might be thought—

SANG. (*kneeling, and taking her hand*) That I spoke of you Oh, fear not—I will be dumb—I will be blind—but for pity's sake give up this journey—do not drive me to despair! Remain in scorn—in hatred if you will; but stay.

MRS. S. It is too late—the letter—

SANG. He has, perhaps, not yet received it.

MRS. S. Alas, I fear—

SANG. YOU fear! Enough, then I am blessed ! (*rising, and kissing her hand*)

MRS. S. For Heaven's sake sir, desist! What would you do—

SANG. Intercept that letter by force, if necessary—provoke him—challenge him—I know not what! We will fly together, and love shall be our guiding star. You have sealed my destiny—my fate is, henceforth, bound up in your own. I will have the letter, if I tear it from his very hand. *Exit c.*

MRS. S. What are these ? Tears! He loves me, and I have dared to listen to the avowal! How faint and ill I feel! What have I done? Oh, sin, sin! Heaven save me from thee—save me from myself! (*sinks in chair*)

Enter MRS. LAMBERT, C.

MRS. L. Why, my dear Mary, what's the matter?

MRS. S. Nothing—nothing! a sudden giddiness, that's all.

MRS. L. YOU look quite pale and ill!

MRS. S. NO, I'm better now.

MRS. L. That's right.

MRS. S. Yes, it's quite gone now—quite gone.

MRS. L. That's right. How did it happen ?

MRS. S. I don't know—I was sitting here.

MRS. L. Alone ?

MRS. S. Yes.

MRS. L. My poor child, I declare you quite frightened me! But come, think no more about it! I've got a budget of good news that will cheer you up.

MRS. S. I know—you are going.

MRS. L. I am, my love—on a long, and, perhaps, perilous journey. I'm going to be married.

MRS. S. Married!

MRS. L. Yes, my love—the recollection of his last shipwreck never keeps the sailor ashore, and as I'm a sailor's daughter, I shall imitate his example, and risk it.

MRS. S. And who is the happy man ?

MRS. L. Can't you guess ?

MRS. S. Of course—the gentleman you were speaking of.

MRS. L. Quite right—you're as good as a witch.

MRS. S. But you said he had forgotten you!

MRS. L. And I was mistaken.

Mrs. S. Didn't I tell you, that out of sight is not always out of mind ?

MRS. L. Yes, and you were right—there are still some faithful hearts!

MRS. S. Oh yes, and loving and devoted ones.

MRS. L. Yes, and disinterested and sincere—but poor Sanguine is an instance in point.

MRS. S. Mr. Sanguine?

MRS. L. NOW, my love, don't pretend to be astonished.

MRS. S. Is Mr. Sanguine the man ?

MRS. L. NOW, my dear Mary, how you can be such a little hypocrite, when you know all the time you are his confidante.

MRS. S. I his confidante ? Who told you so ?

MRS. L. Your husband. He declares that you and Sanguine have done nothing but talk about me for the last fortnight.

MRS. S. Talk about you?

MRS. L. Yes, but perhaps he was mistaken, and you were talking about something else ?

MRS. S. NO, no—it really was about you.

MRS. L. Oh, *do* tell me what he said, there's a dear.

MRS. S. (*embarrassed*) Really, I hardly know—he told me—

MRS. L. Exactly what he told *me*, I dare say.

MRS. S. What did he tell you?

MRS. L. Oh, a thousand things—that I was his first love—

MRS. S. Ah!

MRS. L. That it was happiness to live at my side—

MRS. S. Yes ?

MRS. L. To follow me everywhere!—to give his life for me—to marry me if I was free.

MRS. S. Yes, indeed—he told me all that.

MRS. L. And yet I didn't believe him! Oh, my dear Mary, how happy you have made me!

MRS. S. You love him, then ?

MRS. S. My dear, how can I help loving one who loves me so much ? (*goes up a little*)

MRS. S. He loves her! I am rightly punished! and yet, can he have deceived me ? He will be here directly, and, at all risks, I will know the truth. My dear Julia, ask no questions, and do me the favour to step into this room for five minutes.

MRS. L. What do you mean ?

MRS. S. I will tell you in five minutes. In the meantime, step in here.

As she drags her up to L. room; door suddenly opens—enter SLOMAN in great agitation.

MRS. L. } Doctor Sloman!

MRS. S. }

SLOMAN. Yes. Mrs. Seedeep, I am here—I am here to save you. if you only knew Sanguine—

MRS. L. } What?

MRS. S. }

30 OBSERVATION AND FLIRTATION.

SLOMAN. It's perfectly horrible! and when I reflect that I am the guilty, though innocent cause, it's really quite bewildering. He talks of nothing but duels and elopements—but, fortunately, I am here to protect you. I will throw before you the AEGIS of my professional reputation—dispose of me as you think proper. I will run any risk to repair the evil I have caused.

Enter SANGUINE, C.

MRS. S. }
 MRS. L. } Sanguine!
 SLOMAN. }

SANG. It is impossible to obtain the letter!

MRS. L. What letter?

SANG, (*seeing her*) Mrs. Lam—I really beg your pardon, I thought you were gone!

MRS. L. Gone?

SLOMAN. (*aside*) Oh, the devil!

SANG. Yes, to Malvern ; Sloman told me so.

SLOMAN. Me ! nothing of the sort.

SANG, (*seeing him*) Ah ! you are there too ?

SLOMAN. (*hesitating*) Yes, I am there too.

MRS. S. Yes, we were just hearing from Julia that instead of going away, she is going to be married.

MRS. L. (*aside to MRS. S.*) My dear, there's no occasion.

MRS. S. (*aside to MRS. L.*) Don't contradict me!

SLOMAN. Ah! Mrs. Lambert is going to married! that is indeed damnable—hem!—I should say delightful intelligence.

SANG. It is, indeed, and who is the favoured individual?

MRS. S. Oh a very old flame—one who loved her before she was married.

SANG. Eh? (*alarmed*)

MRS. S. And learning that she is free, is come here'to renew his addresses.

SANG, (*alarmed*) Come here?

SLOMAN. And—and may I presume to ask *who* is the—a—a party?

MRS. S. Why you, of course, Doctor.

SLOMAN. Me!

MRS. S. (*making signs*) Hush. Of course ; as if you didn't know it perfectly well!

SLOMAN. Yes—exactly—as if I didn't know it perfectly well!

MRS. L. (*aside to MRS. S.*) Are you mad?

MRS. S. (*aside to MRS. L.*) It's to prove if Sanguine really loves you.

SANG. So then, old boy, you are the happy man, after all ?

MRS. S. (*aside to SLOMAN*) Say " yes."

SLOMAN. Yes—I am the man.

SANG, *(aside)* 'Gad. I was afraid she mean't me. *(aloud)* So then this was the lady you were talking about ?

MRS. L. Oh! then he did mention me ?

SANG. Oh yes—went into raptures about a charming woman whom he has secretly loved for half a century—the unique passion of his life—for the Doctor, you must know, is a passionate admirer, though it is after a fashion of his, for his love *is* more constant than conversational.

SLOMAN. I think he is laughing at me!

MRS. L. Mr. Sanguine then approves of our union?

SANG. Certainly, madam ; first, on his account, and secondly, on yours, for I am convinced he'll make you a most wise, calm, virtuous, excellent husband-warranted to go quiet in single or double harness.

SLOMAN. NOW I'm *sure* he's laughing at me.

SANG, *(looking with meaning at MRS. SEEDEEP)* Happy dog to be united to her you love—would it were my case !

MRS. L. HOW he looks at Mary ! *(aside)*

MRS. S. *(aside to her)* You see ?

MRS. L. *(aside to MRS. S.)* Yes, my love, you've opened my eyes, and now I'll return the compliment.

SANG. Marry, my dear Doctor, by all means, it's not every body that has the good fortune to be able.

MRS. S. Why, Mr. Sanguine, you're quite a matrimonial mentor.

SANG. Yes, madam, I always paraphrase Pope upon this subject, it is a favorite quotation with me—

" Know, then, this truth enough for man to know
Marriage alone is happiness below."

MRS. L. *(aloud)* You hear, Mary ?

MRS. S. Yes.

MRS. L. Then of course you can no longer be in doubt ?

MRS. S. Doubt about what?

MRS. L. The strength of Mr. Sanguine's attachment for you.

SANG. I beg your pardon, madam ?

MRS. L. Yes, Sir, she actually was in doubt about it.

MRS. S. Are you mad ? *(aside)*

MRS. L. It's to prove is Sanguine really loves you. *(aside)*

SANG. I really don't understand?

MRS. L. Psha, my dear Sir, why make a mystery of the matter, Mary has told me all about it.

SANG. Told you all?

MRS. L. Yes, and I heartily approve of it!

SLOMAN. YOU approve of it!

MRS. L. Certainly! what objection can there be when the gentleman's intentions are honourable?

SLOMAN. (*aside*) Honourable! It strikes me I'm in a dream.

MRS. L. And if I were in your place, my love, I should put him out of his pain at once.

SLOMAN. Good gracious!

MRS. L. And as you know, my dear, that the only obstacle to his happiness is your husband, whom he was going to kill. (*to SANGUINE*) YOU know we've heard all about the duel! (*to MRS. SEEDEEP*) SO, why not take a good resolution and kill him yourself.

SLOMAN. Merciful powers! Kill her own husband—that's a good resolution, with a vengeance!

MRS. L. Don't be uneasy, doctor; he wouldn't be a bit the worse for it, for the husband is only a myth, and the marriage a *ruse*.

SLOMAN. Then you mean to say that—that lady—

MRS. L. IS not married!

SLOMAN. Not married?

SANG. Not married?

SLOMAN. Not married! oh, what a load you have taken off my heart! (*to SANGUINE*) NOW, what did I tell you? wasn't I sure of it? of course I knew perfectly well she wasn't married!

MRS. L. YOU knew it then?

SLOMAN. Of course; that is I would have bet any odds that she wasn't, the first moment I saw Mr. Seedeep! (*to SANGUINE*) Oh, my dear friend, if you only knew all the happiness contained in those two words, "not married"—if you only knew their full meaning. It means a wife of your bosom, bone of your bone, and flesh of your flesh—it means a home and fireside—it means children, whom you can love and cherish legitimately, sir, legitimately! Yes, madam, (*to MRS. SEEDEEP*) he loves you fondly, passionately! there's no harm in my telling you of it now! Oh, my dear fellow, I am so happy, so overjoyed, that I declare I'm brim full up to the top, and it runs over at the eyelids, (*uses handkerchief*) in fact, to speak professionally, I've a morbid affection of the lachrymal glands.

MRS. L. (*aside*) Oh, that dear little man!

MRS. S. (*to SANGUINE*) Well, sir, you are silent.

SANG. Really, madam, the surprise, the astonishment I feel is so great that—

MRS. L. (*to MRS. SEEDEEP*) YOU hear?

SANG. I say, madam, that this happiness is so unexpected that I can hardly bring myself to believe that it is real—that it is not a joke.

MRS L. NO, no, my dear sir, marriage is no joke any way.

SLOMAN. Most assuredly not, my boy, so ask her hand at once, and put it to the proof.

SANG. Ask the hand of Mrs. Seedeep ?

MRS. L. *Miss Seedeep.*

SLOMAN. To be sure—*Miss Seedeep.* And here comes her father, just in the nick—

Enter SEEDEEP, C.

MRS. S. My husband! (in *alarm*)

SLOMAN. Come along, my dear sir—come along ; Sanguine was only waiting for you to pop the question.

SEE. So, then, he's declared his intentions at last. I thought I should force him to do it—I saw it, I knew it.

SLOMAN. Ah, you're a deep one.

SEE. Yes—observation, sir—insight is my forte.

SLOMAN. So it is mine. Bless you, I said all along, Seedeep is too old.

SEE. Too old!

SLOMAN. Or rather I should say, too cold.

SEE. (*wiping his forehead*) What do you mean by too cold, am I too old ?

SLOMAN. Why, of course, too old to be that lady's husband.

SEE. TOO old to be the husband of my own wife?

SANG, (*aside*) His wife!

SLOMAN. I beg your pardon—I thought you were the father.

SEE. Father, sir—what father? I hope to be the father of my own children, if I have any.

SANG. I'm bowled out at last, (*aside*)

SEE. (*to MRS. SEEDEEP*) What do they all mean? Am I too old ?

MRS. S. Oh no, you, indeed, love me!

SEE. Well, I hope so.

MRS. S. Yes, better than I deserved. (*with intention at SANGUINE*) For you proved it when you took me for your wife.

MRS. L. Yes, my love, and that's the best proof of all—and I have met with an ardent and durable attachment.

SEE. I know what you're going to say—I see it, I know it—you're going to marry, (*points to SANGUINE*)

MRS. L. Doctor Sloman!

SEE. Marry Sloman!

SLOMAN. Me?

MRS. L. Yes, doctor, if you'll have me—for I know you love me!

SLOMAN. Do I? don't I? don't I? I do, indeed! that I feel a sort of convulsive twitching about the legs, a sort of St. Vitus's dance, and I really am so overjoyed, that I really think I shall die of happiness!

MRS. L. NO, no, make a better use of your happiness, and live for my sake. And now, Mr. Seedeep, own for once, that you didn't forsee that.

SEE. NO, I certainly did not! (*to SANGUINE*) But, my dear, sir, will you allow me to ask you what you *did come* to Harrow-gate for?

MRS. L. To drink the waters!

SEE. But he looks quite well?

SLOMAN. Oh, yes, he's perfectly cured!

MRS. S. And leaves for town this evening.

SEE. Ah, I see it, I know it! (*taking SANGUINE forward mysteriously*) Rejected for a man like that—sorry for the lady's taste, (*aloud*) And so you're going this evening?

SANG. Yes, the doctor insists on it, though (*looking at MRS. SEEDEEP*) I'm not quite cured.

MRS. S. (*aside*) I am!

SEE. Then all I can say is, joy go with you, and better luck next time.

ALL. Ha, ha, ha!

SEE. They may laugh, my dear Sanguine, but I am quite sincere; but before you go, allow me to present you with a copy of my "Manual," (*takes it from pocket*) it's the result of deep observation of the human heart, and when you *do* marry, you may find it useful.

SLOMAN. Take it, my dear Sanguine, and allow me to suggest its epigraph—it's a favourite quotation of yours; but this time you'd better abandon the paraphrase, and stick to the text.

Know, then, this truth enough for man to know—
Virtue alone is happiness below.

SANG. MRS. L. SEEDEEP. SLOMAN. MRS. S.
R. CURTAIN. L.

STAGE DIRECTIONS.

R. means Right of the Stage, facing the Audience; L. Left; C. Centre; R. C. Right of Centre; L. C. Left of Centre; D. Y. Door in the Flat; or Scene running across the back of the Stage
C. D. F. Centre Door in Flat; D. R. C. Right Door in Flat;
L. C. F. Left Door in the Flat; B. D. Right Door; L. D. Left Door; 2 E. Second Entrance; U. E. Upper Entrance.