

The Contract

Margaret Cavendish

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*Thus in this Semy–Circle, wher they Sitt,
Telling of Tales of pleasure & of witt,
Heer you may read without a Sinn or Crime,
And how more innocently pass your tyme.*

The Dedication.

To Pastime I do dedicate this Book,
When idle, then my Readers in't may look,
And yet be idle still; yet wish they may
Never mispend their time, or wast the day
Worse or more idly; since it may concern
My Readers all, in every piece to learn
Something to lay up still in mem'ries Treasure;
Thus for your sakes mix Profit with your Pleasure.
I hope you'll like it, if not, I'm still the same,
Careless, since Truth will vindicate my Fame.

To the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, on her Book of Tales.

Gallants and Ladies, what do ye lack? pray buy
Tales *a la mode*, new Fashion'd here do lye:
So do Romancies, your grave studies too,
Academies of Love, teaching to woo
And to be woo'd, corrupts more Virgins then
Hot Satyrs turn'd to Amorous Courtly Men:
But these are innocent; then be not nice,
Will you not buy, because they teach not Vice?
Nature will teach you that; then do not look
To do't by Art and Learning by the Book;
A Vestal Nun may reade this, and avow it,
And a *Carthusian* Confessor allow it.
Yet they are pleasant, but on this side harm,
Witty expressions, yet no wanton charm,
But virtuous Love, bright shining as the Sun,

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As innocent as Turtles, Vice to shun.
What do you lack? for here's the Shop of Wit
With new spun finer Phancies, for to fit
Your curious Brains: do you lack Prose or Verse?
Which, when you want discourse, you may rehearse,
And gossip too with Pleasure and Delight,
So for to wast a tedious Winters night.
'Twixt every Tale's Act, for your Musick, think
Of melting Sweet-meats, dissolv'd Wine your drink;
Unbrasing your Drums ears a while to stay,
Whil'st on your Tongues-strings tast doth sweetly play:
Then to the pleasure of your Tales again,
Thus feast your Senses; when they're wearied, then
To your soft Beds, Sleep seize you with delight,
So Noble Friends, I bid you all good night.

W. Newcastle.

A Copy of Verses to the Lady Marchioness of Newcastle, of all her Works, which are now all printed, except her Tragedies and Comedies, which will shortly come out.

You various Readers various judgements give,
And think Books are condemn'd, or ought to live
According to your censures, bad or good,
Before you read them, or they're understood,
Laying aspersions with a jeering brand;
But read them first, that is, to understand
On forfeit of your selves, like this that's writ,
Or prejudice your judgements and your wit.
Now for your own sakes, these Books like them then,
Have mercy on your selves you censuring Men;
For when you're dead, and all your envious looks,
These Writings they will live as long as Books.
O but a Woman writes them, she doth strive
T'intrench too much on Man's Prerogative;
Then that's the crime her learned Fame pulls down;
If you be Scholars, she's too of the Gown:
Therefore be civil to her, think it fit
She should not be condemn'd, 'cause she's a Wit.
If you be Souldiers, Ladies you'll defend,
And your sheath'd Arguments, when drawn, will end
The small male Gossipings: but Gallants, pray
Be not you factious, though each Mistris say
The Books are naught, but dance, & with them play,
Sweet pretty Ladies, and discourse with those
Of Ribbins, *point de Jane*, and finer Cloaths,
Their better reading, and let Books alone;
But these I will compare to every one
That here doth follow. Nay, old *Homer* writ
Not clearer Phancies, nor with clearer Wit;
And that Philosophy she doth dispense,

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Beyond old *Aristotle's* hard non-sense;
Her observations of Diseases new,
More than *Hippocrates* the Grecian knew;
As eloquent as Roman *Cicero*,
And sweeter flowers of Rhet'rick there do grow;
More lofty high descriptions she hath still
Than swell'd lines of th'Imitator *Virgil*;
As good Odes too as *Horace*, nay, I can
Compare her Dialogues to rare *Lucian*.
Lucan, the Battail of thy Civil War
Is lost, this Lady doth exceed thee far;
More Fame by Morals than grave *Plutarch* gain'd,
Profitable Fables, as *Esop* feign'd;
And as good Language as ev'r *Terence* writ,
Thy Comedies, poor *Plautus*, far less wit.
Thy rare Epistles all Epistles sully,
Beyond the two Familiars of vain *Tully*;
And as wise Sentences thou still dost say
As the *Apocrypha*, or *Seneca*;
As smooth and gentle Verse as *Ovid* writ,
And may compare with sweet *Tibullus* wit.
What takes the Soul more than a gentle vain?
Thou charm'st the charming *Orpheus* with thy strain.
If all these Wits were prais'd for several wayes,
What deserv'st thou that hast them all? what praise?

W. Newcastle.

TO THE READER.

The design of these my feigned Stories is to present Virtue, the Muses leading her, and the Graces attending her.

Likewise, to defend Innocency, to help the distressed, and lament the unfortunate.

Also, to shew that Vice is seldome crown'd with good Fortune; and in these Designs or Pieces I have described many sorts of Passions, Humours, Behaviours, Actions, Accidents, Misfortunes, Governments, Laws, Customes, Peace, Wars, Climates, Situations, Arts and Sciences: but these Pieces are not limb'd alike, for some are done with Oil colours of Poetry, others in Watry colours of Prose, some upon dark grounds of Tragedy, and some upon light grounds of Comedy. But the work of either is rough, being not done by a skilfull hand, so not so smooth as I could wish; yet I hope the proportions exceed not their Symmetry, but that every part is made proportionable to the whole, and the whole to the distance of your view, and that the Colours are neither mis-matcht, nor the Shadows misplaced.

AN EPISTLE To my Readers.

Perchance my feigned Stories are not so lively described as they might have been, for that my descriptions are not so lively express by the pen, as Sir *Anthony Vandick* his Pictures by the pencill, by reason I have not copied them from true [*I meane true Originall from immediat action.*] Originalls, but just as phancy formes; for I have not read much History to inform me of the past Ages, indeed I dare not examin the former times, for fear I should meet with such of my Sex, that have out-done all the glory I can aime at, or hope to attaine; for I confess my Ambition is restless, and not ordinary; because it would have an extraordinary fame: And since all heroick Actions, publick

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Employments, powerfull Governments, and eloquent Pleadings are denyed our Sex in this age, or at least would be condemned for want of custome, is the cause I write so much, for my ambition being restless, though rather busie than industrious, yet it hath made that little wit I have to run upon every subject I can think of, or is fit for me to write on; for after I have put out one Book more that I am writing, I cannot tell what more to write, unless I should write of the like subjects again, which would be as tedious as endless.

M. Newcastle.

TO THE READER.

As for those Tales I name Romancicall, I would not have my Readers think I write them, either to please, or to make foolish whining Lovers, for it is a humor of all humors, I have an aversion to; but my endeavour is to express the sweetness of Vertue, and the Graces, and to dress and adorn them in the best expressions I can, as being one of their servants, that do unfeignedly, unweariedly, industriously, and faithfully wait upon them: Neither do I know the rule or method of Romancy Writing; for I never read a Romancy Book throughout in all my life, I mean such as I take to be Romances, wherein little is writ which ought to be practised, but rather shunned as foolish Amorosities, and desperate Follies, not noble Loves discreet Vertues, and true Valour. The most I ever read of Romances was but part of three Books, as the three parts of one, and the half of the two others, otherwise I never read any; unless as I might by chance, as when I see a Book, not knowing of what it treats, I may take and read some half a dozen lines, where perceiving it a Romance, straight throw it from me, as an unprofitable study, which neither instructs, directs, nor delights me: And if I thought those Tales I call my Romancicall Tales, should or could neither benefit the life, nor delight the minde of my Readers, no more than those pieces of Romances I read, did me, I would never suffer them to be printed; but self-partiality perswades me otherwise, but if they should not, I desire those that have my book to pull out those tales and burn them: Likewise if I could think that any of my writings should create Amorous thoughts in idle brains, I would make blotts instead of letters; but I hope this work of mine will rather quench Amorous passions, than inflame them, and beget chaste Thoughts, nourish love of Vertue, kindle humane Pitty, warme Charity, increase Civillity, strengthen fainting patience, encourage noble Industry, crown, Merit, instruct Life; and recreate Time, Also I hope, it will damn vices, kill follies, prevent Errors, forwarne youth, and arme the life against misfortunes: Likewise to admonish, instruct, direct, and perswade to that which is good and best, and in so doing, I the Authoress have my wishes and reward.

M. Newcastle.

TO THE READER.

I must intreat my Readers to understand, that though my Naturall Genius is to write fancy, yet in this Work, I have strove, as much as I can, to lay fancy by in some out-corner of my brain, for lively descriptions to take place; for descriptions are to imitate, and fancy to create; for fancy is not an imitation of nature, but a naturall Creation, which I take to be the true Poetry: so that there is as much difference between fancy, and imitation, as between a Creature, and a Creator: but some Poeticall tales or discourses, both in verse and prose; but most in prose, hath crowded in amongst the rest, I cannot say against my will, although my will was forced by my Naturall Inclinations and affections to fancy, but otherwise I have endeavoured to describe, and imitate the severall Actions of life, and changes of fortune, as well as my little Wit, weak observations, and lesse learning can compose into severall discourses; Also I am to let my Readers to understand, that though my work is of Comicall, Tragical, Poeticall, Philosophicall, Romancicall, Historicall and Morall discourses, yet I could not place them so exactly into severall Books, or parts as I would, but am forced to mix them one amongst another, but my Readers will find them in the volume, if they please to take notice of them, if not there is no harme done to my Book, nor me the Authoress.

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TO MY READERS.

Although I hope every piece or discourse in my Book will delight my Readers, or at least some one, and some another, according as they shall agree and simpatize with their humors, dispositions and fancies, yet I do recommend two as the most solid and edifying, which are named, The Anchoret, and the Experienced Traveller, but especially the she Anchoret, they are the last of my feigned stories in my Book.

TO MY READERS.

I must intreat my Readers to take notice, that in this first Book or part of this volume, I was forced to order my severall Chapters, as Musicians doe their tunes, when they play upon Musicall Instruments, who for the most part do mix light Aires, with solemn Sounds: and by reason I thought this first part of my Book would be too short, if I did divide them, I have mixed them altogether, and although in my opinion I have disadvantaged it very much with imitating Musicians, yet I could not conveniently avoid it, for the reason aforesaid, although the light Aires and solemn Tunes, which are the Comicall & Tragicall discourse mixt together, will so disunite the thoughts and disturb the passions, as my Readers will hardly fix their minds seriously on either, for my Readers will be like one that is intreated or rather pull'd by two Companions, one to accompanie him to a house of Mourning, the other to a house of Mirth, or rather to a shop of toyes, in which posture, he can neither condole with the unfortunate, nor mourn with the afflicted, nor rejoyce with the happy, nor chat with the idle, and so may grow angry with them both, and fling them by as troublesome: the like may my Readers with my discourse; also I must tell my Readers, I do not strive as many do, to put the choice pieces in the first place, to invite or rather to intice the Readers to read their following works, but endeavor to place my works properly and not subtilly.

Likewise, I have not endeavoured so much for the eloquence, and elegancy of speech, as the naturall and most usuall way of speaking, in severall Discourses, and ordinary Phrases; but perchance my Readers will say, or at least think I have dressed the severall subjects of my Discourses too vulgar, or that the Garments, which is the language, is thread-bare: 'tis true, they are not drest up in constraint fashions, which are set phrases, nor tied up with hard words, nor bumbast sentences, but though they are carelesly, yet they are not loosely drest: but for fear my Readers should not take notice, I must repeat once again to put them in remembrance that most of my discourses or Tales, are naturall Descriptions & not Fancies; also I must tell my Readers, if they meet any words in my discourse, that belongs to any other Language, pray let them not perswade you I understand their native Originall, but pray remember, or if you do not know, inquire of Linguists, and they will inform you, that English is a compounded Language, as mithredated of many ingredients, or it is like a Cordiall water, whose spirits are extracted from many severall simples; so, if I speak the English that is spoken in this age, I must use such words as belongs to other Nations, being mixed therein, unless I should speak the English that was spoken in former Ages, as that they call old English, of which I am almost as ignorant as of other Languages: I would not have written this, but that I am condemned as a dissembler, for saying I do not understand any Language but English, which is my native Language, and the only reason is I use such words, as are mixed therein; but in this as in all things else, I am a Speaker of Truth, that is, I never say any thing for a Truth, that is false, and I am so great a lover of Truth, as I am one of her order, and have taken the habit of sincerity, in which I will live and dye.

M. Newcastle.

An Epistle to my Readers.

I desire my Readers to judge this Book of mine according to the harmless Recreations of my idle time, and not as a laborious, learned, studious, or a methodical Work. I did not pencil them so much for sale, as pleasure; not but that I should be well pleased to receive Fame for my several Pieces and Copies of nature, or natural Copies. But I shall not exact high Praises, nor expect great Renown for this Work: but if I can get an indifferent Commendation, I shall think I have enough for these Pieces, if not, yet the pleasure of writing them is a sufficient reward to me the Authoress,

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A noble Gentleman that had been married many years, but his Wife being barren, did bear him no Children; at last she dyed, and his Friends did advise him to marry again, because his Brothers Children were dead, and his Wife was likely to have no more: so he took to Wife a virtuous young Lady, and after one year she conceived with Childe, and great Joy there was of all sides: but in her Childe bed she dyed, leaving onely one Daughter to her sorrowfull Husband, who in a short time, oppressed with Melancholy, dyed, and left his young Daughter, who was not a year old, to the care and breeding of his Brother, and withall left her a great Estate, for he was very Rich. After the Ceremonies of the Funeral, his Brother carried the Childe home, which was nursed up very carefully by his Wife; and being all that was likely to succeed in their Family, the Uncle grew extream fond and tender of his Neece, insomuch that she grew all the comfort and delight of his life.

A great Duke which commanded that Province, would often come and eat a Breakfast with this Gentleman as he rid a Hunting; and so often they met after this manner, that there grew a great Friendship; for this Gentleman was well bred, knowing the World by his Travels in his younger dayes; and though he had served in the Wars, and had fought in many Battles, yet was not ignorant of Courtly Entertainment. Besides, he was very conversible, for he had a voluble Tongue, and a ready Understanding, and in his retired life was a great Student, whereby he became an excellent Scholar; so that the Duke took great delight in his Company. Besides, the Duke had a desire to match the Neece of this Gentleman, his Friend, to his younger Son, having onely two Sons, and knowing this Childe had a great Estate left by her Father, and was likely to have her Uncles Estate joyned thereto, was earnest upon it: but her Uncle was unwilling to marry her to a younger Brother, although he was of a great Family; but with much perswasion, he agreed, and gave his consent, when she was old enough to marry, for she was then not seven years old. But the Duke fell very sick; and when the Physicians told him, he could not live, he sent for the Gentleman and his Neece, to take his last farewell; and when they came, the Duke desired his Friend that he would agree to joyn his Neece and his Son in Marriage; he answered, that he was very willing, if she were of years to consent.

Said the Duke, I desire we may do our parts, which is, to joyn them as fast as we can; for Youth is wilde, various, and unconstant; and when I am dead, I know not how my Son may dispose of himself when he is left to his own choyce; for he privately found his Son very unwilling thereto, he being a Man grown, and she a Childe. The Gentleman seeing him so desirous, agreed thereto.

Then the Duke called his Son privately to him, and told him his intentions were to see him bestowed in Marriage before he dyed.

His Son desired him, not to marry him against his Affections, in marrying him to a Childe.

His Father told him, she had a great Estate, and it was like to be greater, by reason all the Revenue was laid up to increase it; and besides, she was likely to be Heir to her Uncle, who loved her as his own Childe; and her Riches may draw so many Suiters when she is a Woman, said he, that you may be refused.

He told his Father, her Riches could not make him happy, if he could not affect her. Whereupon the Duke grew so angry, that he said, that his Disobedience would disturb his Death, leaving the VVorld with an unsatisfied Minde.

VVhereupon he seemed to consent, to please his Father. Then were they as firmly contracted as the Priest could make them, and two or three VVitneses to avow it.

But after his Father was dead, he being discontented, went to the VVars; but in short time he was called from thence, by reason his elder Brother dyed, and so the Dukedome and all the Estate came to him, being then the

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only Heir: But he never came near the young Lady, nor so much as sent to her, for he was at that time extremely in love with a great Lady, who was young and handsome, being Wife to a Grandy which was very rich, but was very old, whose Age made her more facile to young Lovers, especially to this young Duke, who returned him equal Affections; he being a Man that was favoured by Nature, Fortune, and Breeding, for he was very handsome, and of a ready Wit, Active, Valiant, full of Generosity, Affable, well-fashion'd; and had he not been sullied with some Debaucheries, he had been the compleatest Man in that Age.

But the old Gentleman, perceiving his neglect towards his Neece, and hearing of his Affections to that Lady, strove by all the Care and Industry he could to give her such Breeding as might win his Love; not that he was negligent before she was contracted to him; for from the time of four years old, she was taught all that her Age was capable of, as to sing, and to dance; for he would have this Artificial Motion become as natural, and to grow in perfection, as she grew in years. When she was seven years of Age, he chose her such Books to read in as might make her wife, not amorous, for he never suffered her to read in Romancies, nor such light Books; but Moral Philosophy was the first of her Studies, to lay a Ground and Foundation of Virtue, and to teach her to moderate her Passions, and to rule her Affections. The next, her study was in Historie, to learn her Experience by the second hand, reading the good Fortunes and Misfortunes of former Times, the Errours that were committed, the Advantages that were lost, the Humour and Dispositions of Men, the Laws and Customes of Nations, their rise, and their fallings, of their Wars and Agreements, and the like.

The next study was in the best of Poets, to delight in their Phancies, and to recreate in their Wit; and this she did not only read, but repeat what she had read every Evening before she went to Bed. Besides, he taught her to understand what she read, by explaining that which was hard and obscure. Thus she was always busily employed, for she had little time allowed her for Childish Recreations.

Thus did he make her Breeding his only business and imployment; for he lived obscurely and privately, keeping but a little Family, and having little or no Acquaintance, but lived a kinde of a Monastical Life.

But when the Neece was about thirteen years of age, he heard the Duke was married to the Lady with which he was enamoured; for her Husband dying, leaving her a Widow, and rich, claimed a Promise from him that he made her whil'st her Husband was living, that when he dyed, being an old Man, and not likely to live long, to marry her, although he was loth; for Men that love the Pleasures of the World, care not to be incumbered and obstructed with a Wife, but did not at all reflect upon his Contract; for after his Father dyed, he resolved not to take her to Wife; for she being so young, he thought the Contract of no Validity: but she seeming more coy when she was a Widow, than in her Husbands time, seeking thereby to draw him to marry her, and being overcome by several wayes of Subtilty, married her. Whereupon the Uncle was mightily troubled, and was very melancholy; which his Neece perceived, and desired him to know the cause.

Whereupon he told her. Is this the only reason, said she? Yes, said he; and doth it not trouble you, said he? No, said she, unless I had been forsaken for some sinfull Crime I had committed against Heaven, or had infringed the Laws of Honour, or had broken the Rules of Modesty, or some Misdemeanour against him, or some defect in Nature, then I should have lamented, but not for the loss of the Man, but for the cause of the loss, for then all the World might have justly defamed me with a dishonourable Reproach: but now I can look the World in the Face with a confident Brow, as Innocence can arm it. Besides, it was likely I might have been unhappy in a Man that could not affect me; wherefore, good Uncle, be not melancholy, but think that Fortune hath befriended me, or that Destiny had decreed it so to be; if so, we are to thank the one, and it was impossible to avoyd the other; and if the Fates spin a long Thread of your Life, I shall never murmur for that loss, but give thanks to the Gods for that Blessing.

O, but Childe, said he, the Duke was the greatest and richest Match, since his Brother dyed, in the Kingdome; and I would not have thy Virtue, Beauty, Youth, Wealth, and Breeding, stoop to a low Fortune, when thou mayst be a Match fit for the Emperour of the whole World in a few years, if you grow up, and go on as you have begun.

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O, Uncle, said she, let not your Natural Affection make you an impartial Judge, to give the Sentence of more Desert than I can own; if I have Virtue, it is a reward sufficient in it self; if I have Beauty, it is but one of Natures fading Favourers; and those that loved me for it, may hate me when it is gone; and if I be rich, as you say I am like to be, who are happier than those that are Mistrisses of their own Fortunes? And if you have bred me well, I shall be happy in what Condition soever I am in, being Content, for that is the end and felicity of the Minde.

But if thou hadst been in Love with him, said her Uncle, where had been your Content then? for no Education can keep out that Passion.

I hope, said she, the Gods will be more mercifull than to suffer such Passions I cannot rule. What manner of Man is he, said she? for I was too young to remember him.

His Person, said he, is handsome enough.

That is his outside, said she; but what is his inside? what is his Nature and Disposition?

Debauch'd, said he, and loves his Luxuries.

Said she, Heavens have bless'd me from him.

Well, said her Uncle, since I am cross'd in thy Marriage, I will strive to make thee a Meteor of the Time, wherefore I will carry thee to the Metropolitan City for thy better Education; for here thou art bred obscurely, and canst learn little, because thou hearest nor seest little; but you shall not appear to the World this two or three years: but go alwayes veiled, for the sight of thy Face will divulge thee; neither will we have acquaintance or commerce with any, but observe, hear, and see so much as we can, not to be known.

Sir, said she, I shall be ruled by your Direction, for I know my small Bark will swim the better and safer for your sterge; wherefore I shall not fear to launch it into the deepest or dangerous places of the World, which I suppose are the great and populous Cities. So making but small Preparations, onely what was for meer necessity, they took their Journey speedily, carrying no other Servants but those that knew and used to obey their Masters will; and when they came to the City, they tooke private Lodging; where after they had rested some few dayes, he carried her every day, once or twice a day, after her exercise of Dancing and Musick was done; for he was carefull she should not onely keep what she had learn'd, but to learn what she knew not: but after those hours, he carried her to Lectures, according as he heard where any were read, as Lectures of Natural Philosophy, for this she had studyed least: but taking much Delight therein, she had various Speculations thereof; also Lectures of Physick, and Lectures of Chymistry, and Lectures of Musick, and so divers others, on such dayes as they were read. Also, he carried her to places of Judicature to hear great Causes decided; and to the several Courts, to hear the several Pleadings, or rather Wranglings of several Lawyers: but never to Courts, Masques, Plays, nor Balls; and she alwayes went to these places masqu'd, muffl'd, and scarf'd; and her Uncle would make such means to get a private Corner to sit in, where they might hear well; and when he came home, he would instruct her of all that was read, and tell her where they differed from the old Authors; and then would give his opinion, and take her opinion of their several Doctrines; and thus they continued for two years.

In the mean time, her Beauty increased according to her Breeding, but was not made known to any as yet: but now being come to the age of sixteen years, her Uncle did resolve to present her to the World, for he knew, Youth was admired in it self: but when Beauty and Virtue were joyned to it, it was the greater Miracle. So he began to examine her; for he was jealous she might be catch'd with vain Gallants, although he had observed her humour to be serious, and not apt to be catch'd with every toy; yet he knew Youth to be so various, that there was no trusting it to it self.

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So he ask'd her, how she was taken with the Riches and Gallantry of the City, for she could not choose but see Lords and Ladies riding in their brave gilt Coaches, and themselves dress'd in rich Apparel, and the young Gallants riding on praunsing Horses upon imbroydered foot-cloaths as she pass'd along the Streets.

She answered, they pleased her Eyes for a time, and that their Dressings were like Bridal Houses, garnished and hung by some Ingenious Wit, and their Beauties were like fine Flowers drawn by the Pencil of Nature; but being not gathered by Acquaintance, said she, I know not whether they are vertuously sweet, or no; but as I pass by, I please my Eye, yet no other wayes than as senseless Objects; they entice me not to stay, and a short view satisfies the Appetite of the Senses, unless the rational and understanding part should be absent; but to me they seem but moving Statues.

Well, said he, I hear there is a Masque to be at Court, and I am resolved you shall go, if we can get in, to see it; for though I am old, and not fit to go, since my dancing dayes are done, yet I must get into some Corner to see how you behave your self.

Pray, said she, what is a Masque?

Said he, it is painted Scenes to represent the Poets Heavens and Hells, their Gods and Devils, and Clouds, Sun, Moon, and Stars; besides, they represent Cities, Castles, Seas, Fishes, Rocks, Mountains, Beasts, Birds, and what pleaseth the Poet, Painter, and Surveyour. Then there are Actors, and Speeches spoke, and Musick; and then Lords or Ladies come down in a Scene, as from the Clouds; and after that, they begin to dance, and every one takes out according as they phancy. If a Man takes out a Woman, if she cannot dance, or will not dance, then she makes a Curchy to the King, or Queen, or chief Grandee, if there be any one, if not, to the upper end of the Room, then turn to the Man, and make another to him; then he leaves, or leads her to them she will take out; and she doth the like to him, and then goeth to her place again. And so the Men do the same, if they will not dance; and if they do dance, they do just so, when the Dance is ended, and all the chief of the Youth of the City come to see it, or to shew themselves, or all those that have youthfull Minds, and love Sights, and fine Cloaths; then the Room is made as Light with Candles, as if the Sun shined; and their glittering Bravery makes as glorious a Shew as his gilded Beams.

Sir, said she, if there be such an Assembly of Nobles, Beauty, and Bravery, I shall appear so dull, that I shall be onely fit to sit in the Corner with you; besides, I shall be so out of Countenance, that I shall not know how to behave my self; for private Breeding looks mean and ridiculous, I suppose, in publick Assemblyes of that nature, where none but the Glories of the Kingdome meet.

Ashamed, said he, for what? you have stollen no Bodies Goods, nor Good Names, nor have you committed Adultery, for on my Conscience you guess not what Adultery is; nor have you murdered any, nor have you betrayed any Trust, or concealed a Treason; and then why should you be ashamed?

Sir, said she, although I have committed none of those horrid Sins, yet I may commit Errours through my Ignorance, and so I may be taken notice of onely for my Follyes.

Come, come, said he, all the Errours you may commit, although I hope you will commit none, will be laid upon your Youth; but arm your self with Confidence, for go you shall, and I will have you have some fine Cloaths, and send for Dressers to put you in the best fashion.

Sir, said she, I have observed how Ladies are dress'd when I pass the Streets; and if you please to give me leave, I will dress my self according to my judgement; and if you intend I shall go more than once, let me not be extraordinary brave, lest liking me at first, and seeing me again, they should condemn their former judgement, and I shall lose what was gained, so I shall be like those that made a good Assault, and a bad Retreat.

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But Sir, said she, if you are pleased I shall shew my self to the most view, let me be ordered so, that I may gain more and more upon their good opinions.

Well, said her Uncle, order your self as you please, for I am unskilled in that matter; besides, thou needst no Adornments, for Nature hath adorned thee with a splendrous Beauty. Another thing is, said he, we must remove our Lodgings, for these are too mean to be known in; wherefore my Steward shall go take a large House, and furnish it Nobly, and I will make you a fine Coach, and take more Servants, and Women to wait upon you; for since you have a good Estate, you shall live and take pleasure; but I will have no Men—visitors but what are brought by my self: wherefore entertain no Masculine Acquaintance, nor give them the least encouragement.

Sir, said she, my Duty shall observe all your Commands.

When her Uncle was gone, Lord, said she, what doth my Uncle mean to set me out to shew? sure he means to traffick for a Husband; but Heaven forbid those intentions, for I have no minde to marry: but my Uncle is wife, and kinde, and studies for my good, wherefore I submit, and could now chide my self for these questioning Thoughts. Now, said she, I am to consider how I shall be dress'd; my Uncle saith, I am handsome, I will now try whether others think so as well as he, for I fear my Uncle is partial on my side; wherefore I will dress me all in Black, and have no Colours about me; for if I be gay, I may be taken notice of for my Cloaths, and so be deceived, thinking it was for my Person; and I would gladly know the truth, whether I am handsome or no, for I have no skill in Physiognomy; so that I must judge of my self by the approbation of others Eyes, and not by my own. But if I be, said she, thought handsome, what then? why then, answered she her self, I shall be cryed up to be a Beauty; and what then? then I shall have all Eyes stare upon me; and what am I the better, unless their Eyes could infuse in my Brain Wit and Understanding? their Eyes cannot enrich me with Knowledge, nor give me the light of Truth; for I cannot see with their Eyes, nor hear with their Ears, no more than their Meat can nourish me which they do eat, or rest when they do sleep. Besides, I neither desire to make nor catch Lovers, for I have an Enmity against Mankind, and hold them as my Enemies; which if it be a sin, Heaven forgive, that I should for one Man's neglect and perjury, condemn all that Sex.

But I finde I have a little Emulation, which breeds a desire to appear more Beautifull than the Duke's Wife, who is reported to be very handsome; for I would not have the World say, he had an advantage by the Change: thus I do not envy her, nor covet what she enjoys, for I wish her all Happiness, yet I would not have her Happiness raised by my Misfortunes, for Charity should begin at home; for those that are unjust, or cruel to themselves, will never be mercifull and just to others. But, O my Contemplations, whither do you run? I fear, not in an even path; for though Emulation is not Envy, yet the Byas leans to that side.

But, said she, to this Masque I must go, my Uncle hath press'd me to the Wars of Vanity, where *Cupid* is General, and leads up the Train: but I doubt I shall hang down my Head, through shamefastness, like a young Souldier, when he hears the Bullets fly about his Ears: but, O Confidence, thou God of good Behaviour, assist me. Well, said she, I will practice against the day, and be in a ready posture. So after two or three dayes, was the Masque; and when she was ready to go, her Uncle comes to her, and sees her dress'd all in Black.

Said he, why have you put your self all in Black?

Sir, said she, I mourn like a young Widow, for I have lost my Husband.

Now by my troth, said he, and it becomes thee, for you appear like the Sun when he breaks through a dark Cloud. Sayes he, I would have you go veiled, for I would have you appear to sight onely when you come into the Masquing Room; and after the Masque is done, all the Company will rise as it were together, and joyn into a Croud: then throw your Hood over your Face, and pass through them as soon as you can, and as obscure, for I will not have you known untill we are in a more Courtly Equipage. So away they went, onely he and she, without any attendance; and when they came to enter through the Door to the Masquing Room, there was such a Croud, and

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such a Noyse, the Officers beating the People back, the Women squeaking, and the Men cursing, the Officers threatening, and the Enterers praying; which Confusion made her afraid.

Lord, Uncle, said she, what a horrid Noyse is here? pray let us go back, and let us not put our selves unto this unnecessary trouble.

O Childe, said he, Camps and Courts are never silent; besides, where great Persons are, there should be a thundring Noyse to strike their Inferiours with a kinde of Terrour and Amazement; for Poets say, Fear and Wonder makes Gods.

Certainly, said she, there must be great Felicity in the sight of this Masque, or else they would never take so much pains, and endure so great affronts to obtain it: but, pray Uncle, said she, stay while they are all pass'd in.

Why then, said he, we must stay untill the Masque is done, for there will be striving to get in untill such time as those within are coming out.

But when they came near the Door, her Uncle spoke to the Officer thereof; Pray Sir, said he, let this young Lady in to see the Masque:

There is no room, said he, there are more young Ladies allready than the Viceroy and all his Courtiers can tell what to do with.

This is a dogged Fellow, said her Uncle; whereupon he told her, she must put up her Scarf, and speak your self; for every one domineers in their Office, though it doth not last two hours; and are proud of their Authority, though it be but to crack a Louse; wherefore you must speak.

Pray Sir, said she to the Door-keeper, if it be no injury to your Authority, you will be so civil as to let us pass by.

Now by my troth, said he, thou hast such a pleasing Face, none can deny thee: but now I look upon you better, you shall not go in.

Why Sir? said she.

Why, said he, you will make the Painter and the Poet lose their design, for one expects to enter in at the Ears of the Assembly, the other at their Eyes, and your Beauty will blinde the one, and stop the other; besides, said he, all the Ladies will curse me.

Heaven forbid, said he, I should be the cause of Curses; and to prevent that, I will return back again.

Nay Lady, said he, I have not the power to let you go back, wherefore pray pass.

Sir, said she, I must have this Gentleman along with me.

Even who you please, said she, I can deny you nothing, Angels must be obeyed.

When they came into the Masquing Room, the House was full; now, said her Uncle, I leave you to shift for your self: then he went and crouded himself into a Corner at the lower end.

When the Company was called to sit down, that the Masque might be represented, every one was placed by their Friends, or else they placed themselves. But she, being unaccustomed to those Meetings, knew not how to dispose of her self, observing there was much justling and thrusting one another to get places, when she consider'd she had

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not strength to scramble amongst them, she stood still. When they were all set, it was as if a Curtain was drawn from before her, and she appeared like a glorious Light; whereat all were struck with such amaze, that they forgot a great while the civility in offering her a place. At last, all the Men, which at such times sit opposite to the Women to view them the better, rose up, striving every one to serve her: But the Viceroy bid them all sit down again, and called for a Chair for her. But few looked on the Masque for looking on her, especially the Viceroy and the Duke, whose Eyes were rivetted to her Face.

When the Masquers were come down to dance, who were all Women, the chief of them being the Daughter of the Viceroy, who was a Widower, and she was his onely Childe, they took out the Men such as their Phancy pleased, and then they sate down; and then one of the chief of the Men chose out a Lady, and so began to dance in single Couples, the Duke being the chief that did dance, chose out this Beauty, not knowing who she was, nor she him: But when she danced, it was so becoming; for she having naturally a Majestical Presence, although her Behaviour was easy and free, and a severe Countenance, yet modest and pleasing, and great skill in the Art, keeping her Measures just to the Notes of Musick, moving smoothly, evenly, easily, made her astonish all the Company.

The Viceroy sent to enquire who she was, and what she was, and from whence she came, and where she lived, but the Enquirer could learn nothing. But as soon as the Masque was done, she was sought about for, and enquired after, but she was gone not to be heard of: whereupon many did think she was a Vision, or some Angel which appear'd, and then vanished away; for she had done as her Uncle had commanded her, which was, to convey her self as soon away as she could, covering her self close. So home they went, and her Uncle was very much pleased to see the Sparks of her Beauty had set their Tinder Hearts on Fire. But as they went home, she enquired of her Uncle of the Company; Pray Sir, said she, was the Duke or Dutchess there?

I cannot tell, said he, for my Eyes were wholly taken up in observing your Behaviour, that I never considered nor took notice who was there.

Who was he that first took me out to dance? said she.

I cannot tell that neither, said he, for I onely took the length of your measure; and what through a fear you should be out, and dance wrong, and with joy to see you dance well, I never considered whether the Man you danced with moved or no, nor what he was: but now I am so confident of you, that the next Assembly I will look about, and inform you as much as I can: so home they went. But her Beauty had left such Stings behinde it, especially in the Breast of the Viceroy and the Duke, that they could not rest. Neither was she free, for she had received a Wound, but knew not of it; her Sleeps were unsound, for they indeed were Slumbers rather than Sleeps; her Dreams were many, and various: but her Lovers, that could neither slumber nor sleep, began to search, and to make an enquiry; but none could bring Tidings where she dwelt, nor who she was. But the Viceroy cast about to attain the sight of her once again; so he made a great Ball, and provided a great Banquet, to draw an Assembly of all young Ladies to his Court. Whereupon her Uncle understanding, told his Neece she must prepare to shew her self once again; for I will, said he, the next day after this Ball, remove to our new House.

Sir, said she, I must have another new Gown.

As many as thou wilt, said he, and as rich; besides, I will buy you Jewels.

No Sir, said she, pray spare that cost, for they are onely to be worn at such times of Assemblies which I shall not visit often for fear I tire the Courtly Spectators, which delight in new Faces, as they do new Scenes. So her Uncle left her to order her self; who dress'd her self this time all in white Sattin, all imbroydered with Silver.

When her Uncle saw her so dress'd, now by my troth thou lookest like a Heaven stuck with Stars, but thy Beauty takes off the gloss of thy Bravery; now, said he, you shall not go veiled, for thy Beauty shall make thy way; besides, we will not go too soon, nor while they are in disorder, but when they are all placed, you will be the more

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prospectious.

But the Cavaliers, especially the Duke and the Viceroy, began to be melancholy for fear she should not come; their Eyes were always placed at the Doors like Centinels, to watch her entrance; and when they came to the Court, all the Crouds of People, as in a fright, started back, as if they were surprized with some Divine Object, making a Lane, in which she pass'd through; and the Keepers of the Doors were struck mute, there was no resistance, all was open and free to enter. But when she came in into the presence of the Lords and Ladies, all the Men rose up, and bowed themselves to her, as if they had given her Divine Worship; onely the Duke, who trembled so much, occasioned by the passion of Love, that he could not stir: but the Viceroy went to her.

Lady, said he, will you give me leave to place you?

Your Highness, said she, will do me too much Honour.

So he called for a Chair, and placed her next himself; and when she was set, she produced the same effects as a Burning-glass; for the Beams of all Eyes were drawn together, as one Point placed in her Face, and by reflection she sent a burning heat, and fired every Heart. But he could not keep her; for as soon as they began to dance, she was taken out, but not by the Duke, for he had not recovered as yet Loves shaking Fit. But the young Gallants chose her soo often to dance, for every one took it for a Disgrace, as not to have the Honour to dance with her, insomuch that few of the other Ladies danced at all, as being Creatures not worthy to be regarded whil'st she was there.

But the Viceroy, for fear they should tire her, and she not daring to deny them, by reason it would be thought an affront, and rude, or want of Breeding, made the Viceroy call sooner for the Banquet than otherwise he would have done. Besides, he perceived the rest of the Ladies begin to be angry, expressing it by their Frowns; and knowing nothing will so soon pacifie that Bitter humour in Ladies as Sweet-Meats, he had them brought in. But when the Banquet came in, he presented her the first with some of those Sweet-Meats, and still filling her Ears with Complements, or rather chosen Words, for no Complement could pass on her Beauty, it was beyond all expressions.

At last, he asked her where her Lodging was, and whether she would give him leave to wait upon her.

She answered him, it would be a great grace and favour to receive a Visit from him; but, said she, I am not at my own disposing, wherefore I can neither give nor receive without leave.

Pray, said he, may I know who is this happy Person you so humbly obey.

Said she, it is my Uncle, with whom I live.

Where doth he live? said he.

Truly, said she, I cannot tell the name of the Street.

He is not here, Lady? said he.

Yes, said she, and pointed to him. And though he was loth, yet he was forced to leave her so long, as to speak with her Uncle: but the whil'st he was from her, all the young Gallants, which were gathered round about her, presented her with Sweet Meats, as Offerings to a Goddess; and she making them Curtesies, as returning them thanks for that she was not able to receive, as being too great a Burthen; for she was offered more Sweet-Meats than one of the Viceroy's Guard could carry.

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But all the while the Duke stood as a Statue, onely his Eyes were fix'd upon her, nor had he power to speak; and she perceiving where he was, for her Eye had secretly hunted him out, would as often look upon him as her Modesty would give her leave, and desired much to know who he was, but was ashamed to ask.

At last, the Duke being a little encouraged by her Eye, came to her.

Lady, said he, I am afraid to speak, lest I should seem rude by my harsh Discourse; for there is not in the Alphabet, words gentle nor smooth enough for your soft Ears, but what your Tongue doth polish: yet I hope you will do as the rest of the Gods and Goddesses, descend to Mortals, since they cannot reach to you.

Sir, said she, but that I know it is the Courtly Custome for Men to express their Civilities to our Sex in the highest Words, otherwise I should take it as an affront and scorn; to be called by those names I understand not, and to be likened to that which cannot be comprehended.

Said the Duke, you cannot be comprehended; nor do your Lovers know what Destiny you have decreed them.

But the Viceroy came back with her Uncle, who desired to have his Neece home, the Banquet being ended.

But when the Duke saw her Uncle, he then apprehending who she was, was so struck, that what with guilt of Conscience, and with repenting Sorrow, he was ready to fall down dead.

Her Uncle, seeing him talking to her, thus spoke to the Duke.

Sir, said he, you may spare your Words, for you cannot justifie your unworthy Deeds.

Whereat she turned as pale as Death, her Spirits being gathered to guard the Heart, being in distress, as overwhelmed with Passion. But the busle of the Croud helped to obscure her Change, as well as it did smother her Uncles words, which pierced none but the Dukes ears, and hers.

The Viceroy taking her by the Hand, led her to the Coach, and all the Gallants attended; whereat the Ladies, that were left behinde in the Room, were so angry, shooting forth Words like Bullets with the Fire of Anger, wounding every Man with Reproach: but at the Viceroy they sent out whole Vollyes, which battered his Reputation: but as for the young Lady, they did appoint a place of purpose to dissect her, reading Satyrical Lectures upon every part with the hard terms of Dispraises. So all being dispersed, the Viceroy long'd for that seasonable hour to visit her.

But the Duke wish'd there were neither Time nor Life; I cannot hope, said he, for Mercy, my Fault is too great, nor can I live or dye in quiet without it; but the Miseries and Torments of despairing Lovers will be my punishment.

But the old Gentleman was so pleased to see his Neece admired, that as he went home, he did nothing but sing after a humming way; and was so frolick, as if he were returned to twenty years of age; and after he came home, he began to examine his Neece.

Said he, how do you like the Duke? for that was he that was speaking to you when I came.

She answered, that she saw nothing to be disliked in his Person.

And how, said he, do you like the Viceroy?

As well, said she, as I can like a Thing that Time hath worn out of fashion.

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So, said he, I perceive you despise Age: but let me tell you, that what Beauty and Favour Time takes from the Body, he gives double proportions of Knowledge and Understanding to the Minde; and you use to preach to me, the outside is not to be regarded; and I hope you will not preach that Doctrine to others you will not follow your self.

Sir, said she, I shall be ruled by your Doctrine, and not by my own.

Then, said he, I take my Text out of Virtue, which is divided into four parts, Prudence, Fortitude, Temperance, and Justice. Prudence is to foresee the worst, and provide the best we can for our selves, by shunning the dangerous wayes, and choosing the best; and my Application is, that you must shun the dangerous wayes of Beauty, and choose Riches and Honour, as the best for your self.

Fortitude is to arm our selves against Misfortunes, and to strengthen our Forts with Patience, and to fight with Industry. My Application of this part is, you must barricade your Ears, and not suffer, by listning after the enticing perswasions of Rhetorick to enter; for if it once get into the Brain, it will easily make a passage to the Heart, or blow up the Tower of Reason with the Fire of foolish Love.

Temperance is to moderate the Appetites, and qualifie the unruly Passions. My third Application is, you must marry a discreet and sober Man, a wise and understanding Man, a rich and honourable Man, a grave and aged Man, and not, led by your Appetites, to marry a vain phantastical Man, a proud conceited Man, a wilde debauched Man, a foolish Prodigal, a poor Shark, or a young unconstant Man.

And fourthly and lastly, is Justice, which is to be divided according to Right and Truth, to reward and punish according to desert, to deal with others as we would be dealt unto.

My last Application is, that you should take such counsel, and follow such advice from your Friends, as you would honestly give to a faithfull Friend as the best for him, without any ends to your self; and so good night, for you cannot choose but be very sleepy.

When he was gone, Lord, said she, this Doctrine, although it was full of Morality, yet in this melancholy Humour I am in, it sounds like a Funeral Sermon to me; I am sure it is a Preamble to some Design he hath, pray God it is not to marry me to the Viceroy; of all the Men I ever saw, I could not affect him, I should more willingly wed Death than him, he is an Antipathy to my Nature; good *Jupiter*, said she, deliver me from him. So she went to Bed, not to sleep, for she could take little rest, for her Thoughts worked as fast as a Feaverish Pulse.

But the Viceroy came the next day, and treated with her Uncle, desiring her for his Wife.

Her Uncle told him, it would be a great Fortune for his Neece, but he could not force her Affection; but, said he, you shall have all the assistance, as the power and authority of an Uncle, and the perswasions as a Friend can give, to get her consent to marry you.

Pray, said the Viceroy, let me see her, and discourse with her.

He desired to excuse him, if he suffered him not to visit her; for, said he, young Women that are disposed by their Friends, must wed without wooing. But he was very loth to go without a sight of her: yet pacifying himself with the hopes of having her to his Wife, presented his Service to her, and took his leave.

Then her Uncle sate in Councel with his Thoughts how he should work her Affection, and draw her consent to marry this Viceroy, for he found she had no Stomack towards him; at last, he thought it best to let her alone for a week, or such a time, that the smooth Faces of the young Gallants, that she saw at the Masque and Ball, might be worn out of her Minde. In the mean time, she grew melancholy, her Countenance was sad, her Spirits seemed

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dejected, her Colour faded, for she could eat no Meat, nor take no rest; neither could she study nor practice her Exercises, as Dancing, &c. her Musick was laid by: Neither could she raise her Voyce to any Note, but walk'd from one end of the Room to the other, with her Eyes fix'd upon the Ground, would sigh and weep, and knew not for what; at last, spoke thus to her self; Surely an evil Fate hangs over me, for I am so dull, as if I were a peice of Earth, without sense; yet I am not sick, I do not finde my Body distempered, then surely it is in my Minde; and what should disturb that? my Uncle loves me, and is as fond of me as ever he was; I live in Plenty, I have as much Pleasure and Delight as my Minde can desire. O but the Viceroy affrights it, there is the Cause; and yet methinks that cannot be, because I do verily believe my Uncle will not force me to marry against my Affections; besides, the remembrance of him seldome comes into my Minde; for my Minde is so full of thoughts of the Duke, that there is no other room left for any other; my Phancy orders places, and dresses him a thousand several wayes: thus have I a thousand several Figures of him in my Head; Heaven grant I be not in Love; I dare not ask any one that hath been in Love, what Humours that Passion hath: But why should I be in Love with him? I have seen as handsome Men as he, that I would not take the pains to look on twice: But now I call him better to minde, he is the handsomest I ever saw: But what is a handsome Body, unless he hath a noble Soul? he is perjured and inconstant; alas, it was the fault of his Father to force him to swear against his Affections. But whil'st she was thus reasoning to her self, in came her Uncle; he told her, he had provided her a good Husband.

Sir, said she, are you weary of me? or am I become a Burthen, you so desire to part with me, in giving me to a Husband?

Nay, said he, I will never part, for I will end the few remainder of my dayes with thee.

Said she, you give your Power, Authority, and Commands, with my Obedience, away; for if my Husband and your Commands are contrary, I can obey but one, which must be my Husband.

Good reason, said he, and for thy sake I will be commanded to; but in the mean time, I hope you will be ruled by me; and here is a great Match propounded to me for you, the like I could not have hoped for, which is the Viceroy, he is rich.

Yet, said she, he may be a Fool.

O, he is wise and discreet, said he.

Said she, I have heard he is ill natured, and froward.

Answered her Uncle, he is in great Power and Authority.

He may be, said she, never the honester for that.

He is, said he, in great Favour with the King.

Sir, said she, Princes and Monarchs do not alwayes favour the most deserving, nor do they alwayes advance Men for Merit, but most commonly otherwise, the Unworthiest are advanced highest; besides, Bribery, Partiality, and Flattery, rule Princes and States.

Said her Uncle, let me advise you not to use Rhetorick against your self, and overthrow a good Fortune, in refusing such a Husband as shall advance your place above that false Dukes Dutchess; and his Estate, with yours joyned to it, it will be a greater than his, with which you shall be served nobly, attended numerously, live plentifully, adorned richly, have all the Delights and Pleasures your Soul can desire; and he being in years, will dote on you; besides, he having had experience of vain debaucheries, is become staid and sage.

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Sir, said she, his Age will be the means to bar me of all these Braveries, Pleasures and Delights you propound; for he being old, and I young, he will become so Jealous, that I shall be in restraint like a Prisoner; nay, he will be Jealous of the Light, and my own Thoughts, and will enclose me in Darkness, and disturb the peace of my Minde with his Discontents; for Jealousie, I have heard, is never at quiet with it self, nor to those that live near it.

Come, come, said he, you talk I know not what; I perceive you would marry some young, phantastical, prodigal Fellow, who will give you onely Diseases, and spend your Estate, and his own to, amongst his Whores, Bauds, and Sycophants; whilst you sit mourning at home, he will be revelling abroad, and then disturb your rest, coming home at unseasonable times; and if you must suffer, you had better suffer by those that love, than those that care not for you, for Jealousie is onely an overflow of Love; wherefore be ruled, and let not all my pains, care, and cost, and the comfort of my labour, be lost through your disobedience.

Sir, said she, I am bound in Gratitude and Duty to obey your Will, were it to sacrifice my Life, or the Tranquillity of my Minde, on the Altar of your Commands.

In the mean time, the Duke was so discontented and melancholy, that he excluded himself from all Company, suffering neither his Dutchess, nor any Friend to visit him, nor come near him, onely one old Servant to wait upon him; all former Delights, Pleasures and Recreations were hatefull to him, even in the remembrance, as if his Soul and Body had taken a Surfet thereof. At last, he resolved she should know what Torment he suffered for her sake; and since he could not see nor speak to her, he would send her a Letter: then he called for Pen, Ink, and Paper, and wrote after this manner.

Madam,

The Wrath of the Gods is not onely pacified, and pardons the greatest sins that can be committed against them, taking to mercy the Contrite Heart, but gives Blessings for Repentant Tears; and I hope you will not be more severe than they: let not your Justice be too rigid, lest you become cruel. I confess, the sins committed against you were great, and deserve great punishment: but if all your mercies did fly from me, yet if you did but know the torments I suffer, you could not choose but pity me; and my sorrows are of that weight, that they will press out my life, unless your favours take off the heavy Burthen: but howsoever, pray let your Charity give me a line or two of your own writing, though they strangle me with Death: then will my Soul lye quiet in the Grave, because I dyed by your hand; and when I am dead, let not the worst of my Actions live in your Memory, but cast them into Oblivion, where I wish they may for ever remain. The Gods protect you.

Sealing the Letter, he gave it to his Man to carry with all the secrecy he could, bidding him to enquire which of her Women was most in her favour, praying her to deliver it to her Mistris when she was all alone, and to tell the Maid he would be in the Street to wait her Command. The Man found such access as he could wish, the Letter being delivered to the Lady; which, when she had read, and found from whom it came, her Passions were so mix'd, that she knew not whether to joy or grieve; she joy'd to live in his Thoughts, yet griev'd to live without him, having no hopes to make him lawfully hers, nor so much as to see or speak to him, her Uncle was so averse against him; and the greatest grief was, to think she must be forced to become anothers, when she had rather be his, though forsaken, than by another to be beloved with Constancy. Then musing with her self for some time, considering whether it was fit to answer his Letter, or no; If my Uncle should come to know, said she, I write to him without his leave (which leave I am sure he will never give) I shall utterly lose his Affection, and I had rather lose Life than lose his Love; and if I do not write, I shall seem as if I were of a malicious nature, which will beget an evil construction of my disposition, in that Minde I desire to live with a good opinion. And if I believe, as Charity and Love perswades me, that he speaks truth, I shall endanger his Life; and I would be loth to murder him with nice scruples, when I am neither forbid by Honour nor Modesty, Religion nor Laws: Well, I will adventure, and ask my Uncle pardon when I have done; my Uncle is not of a Tyger's nature, he is gentle, and will forgive, and a Pardon may be gotten: but Life, when once it is gone, will return no more. Then taking Pen, Ink, and Paper, writ to him after this manner.

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Sir,

I am obedient, as being once tyed to you, untill you did cut me off, and throw me away as a worthless piece, onely fit to be trodden under the feet of disgrace, and certainly had perished with shame; had not my Uncle owned me, I had been left destitute. And though you are pleased to cast some thoughts back upon me, yet it is difficult for me to believe, you, that did once scorn me, should humbly come to sue to me: but I rather fear you do this for sport, angling with the Bait of Deceit to catch my Innocent Youth. But I am not the first of my Sex, nor I fear shall not be the last, that has been, and will be deceived by Men, who glory in their treacherous spoils; and if you beset me with Stratagems kill me outright, and not leade me Prisoner, to set out your Triumph: but if you have Wars with your Conscience, or Phancy, or both, interrupting the peace of your Minde, as your Letter expresses, I should willingly return to your side, and be an Arbitrator; yet the Fates have destin'd it otherwise. But what unhappy fortune soever befalls me, I wish yours may be good. Heavens keep you.

Here, said she, give the Man, that brought me the Letter, this. The Man returning to his Lord so soon, made him believe he had not delivered her that Letter.

Well, said the Duke, you have not delivered my Letter.

Yes, but I have, said he, and brought you an Answer.

Why, said the Duke, it is impossible, you staid so short a time.

Then, said he, I have wrought a Miracle; but, said he, you did lengthen my Journey in your Conceits, with the fowl wayes of Difficulties.

I hope, said the Duke, thou art so blessed as to make as prosperous a Journey, as a quick Dispatch; leave me awhile, said he, while I call you. But when he went to open the Letter, Time brings not more weakness, said he, than Fear doth to me, for my Hands shake as if I had the Palsey; and my Eyes are so dim, that Spectacles will hardly inlarge my sight. But when he had read the Letter, Joy gave him a new Life: Here, said he, she plainly tels me, she would be mine; she saith, she would return to my side, if the Fates had not destin'd against it, by which she means, her Uncle is against me: well, if I can but once get access, I shall be happy for ever. So after he had blessed himself in reading the Letter many times over, I will, said he, strengthen my self to enable my self to go abroad, for as yet I am but weak; and calling to his Man, he bid him get him something to eat.

Did your Grace, said the Man, talk of eating?

Yes, answered the Duke, for I am hungry.

By my troth, said the Man, I had thought your Hands, Mouth, Appetite and Stomack had made a Bargain; the one, that it never would desire Meat nor Drink; the other, that it would digest none; the third, that it would receive none; and the fourth, that it would offer none; for on my conscience you have not eat the quantity of a pestle of a Lark this week; and you are become so weak, that if a Boy should wrestle with you, he would have the better.

You are deceived, said the Duke, I am so strong, and my Spirits so active, that I would beat two or three such old Fellows as thou art; and to prove it, I will beat thee with one hand.

No pray, said he, I will believe your Graces report, and leave your active Grace for a time, to fetch you some Food.

When his Man came in with the Meat, he found the Duke a dancing.

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I believe, said he, you carry your Body very light, having no heavy Burthens of Meat in your Stomack.

I am so Aëry, said the Duke, as I will caper over thy Head.

By my troth, said he, then I shall let fall your Meat out of my hands, for fear of your heels.

Whilst the Duke was at his meat, he talkt to his man; Why hast thou lived an old Batchelour, and never married?

O Sir, said he, wives are too chargeable.

Why, said the Duke, are you so poor?

No Sir, answered he, Women are so vain, besides they do not only spend their husbands estates, but makes his estate a bawd to procure Love servants, so as his wealth serves onely to buy him a pair of horns.

Pray thee, let me perswade thee to marry, and I will direct thee to whom thou shalt go a wooing.

Troth Sir, I would venture, if there had been any example to encourage me.

Why, what do you think of my Marriage, do not I live happily?

Yes, said he, when your Dutches and you are asunder, but when you meet, it is like *Jupiter* and *Juno*, you make such a thundring noise, as it frights your mortall servants, thinking you will dissolve our world, your Family, consuming our hospitallity by the fire of your Worth; Rowling up the clouds of smoaky vapour from boyld Beef, as a sheet of Parchment; VWhen you were a Batcheler we lived in the Golden Age, but now it is the Iron Age, and Doomesday draws neer.

I hope, saith the Duke, thou art a Prophet, but when Doomesday is past, you shall live in Paradise.

In my conscience, Sir, said he, fortune hath mismatcht you; for surely nature did never intend to joyne you as Man and Wife; you are of such different humors.

Well, said the Duke, for all your rayling against women, you shall go a wooing, if not for your self, yet for me.

Sir, said he, I shall refuse no office, that your Grace imployes me in.

Go your ways, said the Duke, to that Ladyes maid you gave the letter to, and present her with a hundred pounds, and tell her, if she can help me to the speech of her Lady; you will bring her a hundred pounds more, and if you finde her nice, and that she sayes she dare not, offer her five hundred pounds or more, or so much, untill you have out-bribed her cautious fears.

Sir, said the man, if you send her many of these presents, I will wooe for my self, as well as for your Grace, wherefore by your Graces leave, I will spruce up my self before I go, and trim my beard, and wash my face, and who knows but I may speed, for I perceive it is a fortunate year for old men to winne young mayds affections, for they say, the Vice-Roy is to be married to the sweetest young beautifullest Lady in the world, and he is very old, and in my opinion, not so handsome as I am: with that the Duke turned pale.

Nay, said the man, your Grace hath no cause to be troubled, for tis a Lady you have refused, wherefore he hath but your leavings.

With that the Duke up with his hand, and gave him a box on the eare: Thou lyeest said he, he must not marry her.

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Nay, said the man, that is as your Grace can order the business; but your Grace is a just performer of your Word, for you have tryed your strength, and hath beaten me with one hand.

The Duke walked about the roome, and after he had pacified himself, at last spoke to his man; Well, said he, if you be prosperous, and can winn the maid to direct me the way to speak to her Lady, I will cure the blow with Crowns.

Sir, said he, I will turn you my other cheek to box that, if you please.

Go away, said the Duke, and return as soon as you can.

Sir, said he, I will return as soon as my business is done, or els I shall loose both paines and gaines, good fortune be my guide, said he, and then I am sure of the Worlds favour, for they that are prosperous shall never want friends, although he were a Coward, a Knave, or a Fool, the World shall say, nay, think him valliant, honest and wise.

Sir, said he to the Duke, pray flatter fortune, and offer some prayers and praises to her Deity in my behalf, though it be but for your own sake; for he, that hath not a feeling interest in the business, can never pray with a strong devotion for a good success, but their prayers will be so sickly and weak, as they can never travell up far, but fall back as it were in a swoun, without sense; in the meantime the Vice-Roy and the Uncle had drawn up articles, and had concluded of the match without the young Ladyes consent; but the Uncle told her afterwards, she must prepare herself to be the Vice-Roys bride: And said he, if you consent not, never come neer me more, for I will disclaime all the interest of an Uncle, and become your enemy: his words were like so many daggers, that were struck to her heart: for her grief was too great for tears: but her maid, who had ventured her Ladies Anger, for gold had conveyed the Duke into such a place, as to go into her Chamber, when he pleased, and seeing her stand as it were, without life or sence, but as a statue carved in stone, went to her, which object brought her out of a muse, but struck her with such Amaze, as she fixt her eyes upon him, as on some wonder, and standing both silent for a time, at last she spake.

Sir, said she, this is not civilly done, to come without my leave, or my Uncles knowledge: nor honorably done, to come like a thief in the night to surprise me.

Madame, said he, Love, that is in danger to loose what he most adores, will never consider persons, time, place, nor difficulty, but runns to strengthen and secure his side, fights and assaults all that doth oppose him, and I hear you are to be married to the Vice-Roy: but if you do marry him, I will strive to make you a Widow the first houre, cutting your Vowes asunder: and your husband, instead of his bride, shall imbrace death, and his Grave shall become his Wedding bed, or I will lye there my self shrowded in my winding sheet from the hated sight of seeing, or knowing you to be anothers: but if knowledge lives in the grave, think not your self secure when I am dead; for if Ghosts as some imagines, they can rise from the Earth, mine shall visit you and fright you from delights, and never leave you untill you become a subject in deaths Kingdom; but if you are cruell and take delight to have your bridall health drunk in blood, marry him, where perchance we may be both dead drunk with that warme red liquor.

Sir, answered she, it is an unheard of malice to me, or an Impudent and vaine-glorious pride in you, neither to own me your self, nor let another, but would have me wander out of my single life, that the World may take notice and say, this is your forsaken maid; and I live to be scorned and become friendless, for my Uncle will never own me, which will prove as a proclamation to proclaime me a traitor to gratitude, and naturall affection, by committing the treason of disobedience.

Said the Duke, you cannot want an owner whilst I live, for I had, nor have no more power to resigne the interest I have in you, than Kings to resign their Crowns that comes by succession, for the right lyes in the Crown, not in

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the man, and though I have played the tyrant, and deserved to be uncrowned, yet none ought to take it off my head, but death, nor have I power to throw it from my self, death onely must make way for a successor.

Then said she, I must dye, that your Dutches may have right, and a free possession.

Nay, said he, you must claime your own just interest and place your self.

What is that, said she, go to Law for you.

Yes, said he.

VWhere if I be cast, said she, it will be a double shame.

You cannot plead, and be condemned, said he, if Justice hears your Cause: and though most of the Actions of my life have been irregular, yet they were not so much corrupted or misruled by nature, as for want of good education, and through the ignorance of my youth, which time since hath made me see my errors; and though your beautie is very excellent, and is able to enamour the most dullest sense, yet it is not that alone that disturbs the peace of my mind, but the conscientiousness of my fault, which unless you pardon and restore me to your favour, I shall never be at rest.

I wish there were no greater obstacle, said she, than my pardon to your rest: For I should absolve you soon, and sleep should not be more gentle, and soft on your eyes, than the peace to your minde, if I could give it, but my Uncles dislike may prove as fearfull dreams to disturbe it: but indeed if his anger were like dreams, it would vanish away, but I doubt it is of too thick a body for a Vision.

Sayes the Duke, we will both kneel to your Uncle, and plead at the bar of either eare, I will confess my fault at one eare, whilst you aske pardon for me at the other; And though his heart were steele, your words will dissolve it into compassion, whilst my tears mixe the ingredients.

My Uncle said she, hath agreed with the Vice-Roy: and his word hath sealed the bond, which he will never break.

Sayes the Duke, I will make the Vice-Roy to break the bargain himself, and then your Uncle is set free: Besides, you are mine and not your Uncles; Unless you prove my enemy to deny me, and I will plead for my right: Heaven direct you for the best, said she, it is late, good night.

You will give me leave, said he, to kiss your hands.

I cannot deny my hand, said she, to him that hath my heart.

The next day the Duke went to the Vice-Roys, and desired to have a private hearing, about a business that concerned him; And when he had him alone, he shut the door, and drew his sword; which when the Vice-Roy saw, he began to call for help.

Call not, nor make a noise, if you doe, hell take me, said the Duke, I'le run you thorough.

What mean you, said the Vice-Roy, to give me such a dreadfull visit?

I come, said the Duke, to aske you a question, to forbid you an Act, and to have you grant me my demand.

Said the Vice-Roy, the question must be resolvable, the Act just, the demands possible.

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They are so, said the Duke, My question is, whether you resolve to be married to the Lady *Delitia*.

Yes, answered he.

The Act forbidden, is, you must not marry her.

Why, said the Vice-Roy?

Because, said he, she is my VVife, and I have been married to her almost nine years.

VVhy, said he, you cannot have two wives?

No, said he, I will have but one, and that shall be she.

And what is your demand? My demand is, that you will never marry her.

How, sayes the Vice-Roy? put the case you should die, you will then give me leave to marrie her?

No, said the Duke, I love her too well, to leave a possibility of her marrying you: I will sooner die, than set my hand to this, said the Vice Roy.

If you do not, you shall die a violent death, by heaven, answered he, and more than that, you shall set your hand never to complain against me to the King; will you do it, or will you not? for I am desperate, said the Duke.

Said the Vice Roy, you strike the King in striking me.

No disputing, says he, set your hand presently, or I will kill you.

Do you say, you are desperate?

Yes, answered he.

Then I must do a desperate Act to set my hand to a bond I mean to break.

Use your own discretion, to that;

Come, said he, I will set my hand before I read it; for whatsoever it is, it must be done; after he set his hand he read.

Here I do vow to Heaven, never to Wooe the Lady *Delitia*, nor to take her to wife, whereunto I set my hand. To this paper too, said the Duke.

Here I do vow to Heaven, never to take revenge, nor to complain of the Duke to my King and master, whereunto I set my hand.

Saith the Duke, I take my leave, rest you in peace, Sir.

And the Devill torment you, said the Vice-Roy! O fortune, I could curse thee with thy Companions, the fates, not only in cutting off my happiness, in the injoying of so rare a beauty, but in stopping the passage to a sweet revenge: And though I were sure, there were both Gods, and Devils, yet I would break my Vow, for the one is pacified by Prayers, and praises, and the other terrified with threats; but, O the disgrace from our

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fellow-creatures, mankind, sets closer to the life, than the skin to the flesh. For if the skin be flead off, a new one will grow again, making the body appear younger than before; but if a man be flead once of his reputation, he shall never regain it, and his life will be alwaies bare and raw, and malice and envy will torment it, with the stings of ill tongues; which to avoid, I must close with this Duke in a seeming friendship, and not defy him as an open enemy, least he should divulge my base acts done by my Cowardly fear; but they are fools that would not venture their Reputations, to save their life, rather than to dye an honourable death, as they call it; which is to dye, to gain a good Opinion, and what shall they gain by it? a few praises, as to say, he was a valiant man; And what doth the valiant get, is he ever the better? No, he is tumbled into the grave, and his bodie rottes, and burnes to dust; All the clear distinguishing senses, the bright flaming appetites are quenched out; but if they were not, there is no fuell in the grave to feed their fire; for, death is cold, and the grave barren; besides, there is no Remembrance in the grave, all is forgotten, they cannot rejoyce at their past gallant actions, or remember their glorious Triumphs, but the onely happiness is, that though there is no pleasure in the grave, so there is no paines; but to give up life before nature requires it, is to pay a Subsidy before we are taxt, or to yield up our liberties before we are prisoners. And who are wise) that shall do so, No, Let fools run head-long to death; I will live as long as I can, and not only live, but live easily, freely, and as pleasant as I can; wherefore to avoid this mans mischiefs, which lies to intrap my life, I will agree with him; and I had rather loose the pleasures of one Woman, than all other pleasures with my life; but to do him a secret mischief he shall not escape, if I can prevaile; but I perceive this Duke, since he can have but one Wife, intends to set up a Saraglia of young wenches, and by my troth, he begins with a fair one, and whil'st he courts his mistris, I mean to woe his wife, for he hath not sworn me from that. So that my revenge shall be to make him a Cuckold, so the Viceroy went to the Dutchess; and after he had made his Complemental Addresses, they began to talk more serious.

Madam, said he, how do you like the rare Beauty which your Husband doth admire so much, that he is jealous of all that look on her, and would extinguish the sight of all Mens Eyes but his own, and challenges all that make Love to her, threatens ruine and murder to those that pretend to marry her.

Answered she, if he be so enamoured, I shall not wonder now that my Beauty is thought dead, my Embraces cold, my Discourse dull, my Company troublesome to him, since his Delight is abroad: but, said she, I am well served, I was weary of my old Husband, and wished him dead, that I might marry a young one; I abhorred his old age, that was wise and experienced; despised his gray hairs, that should be reverenced with respect; O the happiness I rejected that I might have enjoyed! for he admired my Beauty, praised my Wit, gave me my Will, observed my Humour, sought me Pleasures, took care of my Health, desired my Love, proud of my Favours, my Mirth was his Musick, my Smiles were his Heaven, my Frowns were his Hell; when this Man thinks me a Chain that enslaves him, a Shipwrack wherein all his Happiness is drown'd, a Famine to his Hopes, a Plague to his Desires, a Hell to his Designs, a Devil to damn his Fruitions.

Nay certainly, said he, that Woman is the happiest that marries an antient Man; for he adores her Virtue more than her Beauty, and his Love continues; though her Beauty is gone; he sets a price of Worth upon the Honour and Reputation of his Wife, uses her civilly, and gives her Respect, as Gallant Men ought to do to a tender Sex, which makes others to do the like; when a Young Man thinks it a Gallantry, and a Manly Action, to use his Wife rudely, and worse than his Lacquay, to command imperiously, to neglect despisingly, making her the Drudge in his Family, flinging words of disgrace upon her, making her with scorn the mirth and pastime in his idle and foolish discourse amongst his vain and base Companions; when an Antient Man makes his Wife the Queen of his Family, his Mistris in his Courtship, his Goddess in his Discourse, giving her Praise, applauding her Actions, magnifying her Nature; her Safety is the God of his Courage, her Honour the World to his Ambition, her Pleasure his onely Industry, her Maintenance the mark for his Prudence, her Delights are the Compass by which he sails, her Love is his Voyage, her Advice his Oracle; and doing this, he doth Honour to himself, by setting a considerable value upon what is his own; when Youth regards not the temper of her Disposition, slights her Noble Nature, grows weary of her Person, condemns her Counsels, and is afraid his Neighbours should think his Wife wiser than himself, which is the mark of a Fool, and a Disease most Men have (being married young.) But a Man in years is solid in his Counsels, sober in his Actions, gracefull in his Behaviour, wise in his Discourse, temperate in his Life,

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and seems as Nature hath made him, Masculine. When a young Man is rash in his Counsels, desperate in his Actions, wilde in his Behaviour, vain in his Discourses, debauch'd in his Life, and appears not like his Sex, but Effeminate.

A fair Forehead, and a smooth Skin, a rosie Cheek, and a ruby Lip, wanton Eyes, a flattering Tongue are unmanly, appearing like Women or Boyes, let them be never so Valiant; and that appears, as if they would sooner suffer the Whip, than handle the Sword.

Where an antient Man, every Wrinkle is a Trench made by Time, wherein lyes Experience to secure the Life from Errours; and their Eyes are like active Souldiers, who bow and sink down by the over-heavy Burthens of their Spoils, which are several Objects that the Sight carries into the Brain, and delivers to the Understanding, as Trophies, to hang up in the Magazine of the Memory. His white Hairs are the Flags of Peace, that Time hangs out on the Walls of Wisdome, that Advice and Counsel may come from and to safely. Nay, the very Infirmities of Age seem manly; his feeble Legs look as if they had been overtired with long Marches, in seeking out his Foes; and his Palsey-Hands, or Head, the one seems as if they had been so often used in beating of their Enemies, and the other in watching them, as they knew not what Rest meant.

Sir, said the Dutchess, you commend aged Husbands, and dispraise young ones, with such Rhetorick, as I wish the one, and hate the other; and in pursuit of my Hate, I will cross my Husband's Amours as much as I can.

In the mean time, the Duke was gone to the old Gentleman, the young Ladies Uncle.

Which when the old Man saw him enter, he started, as if he had seen an Evil he desired to shun.

Sir, said he, what unlucky occasion brought you into my House?

First, Repentance, answered the Duke, and then Love; and lastly, my Respect which I owe as a Duty. My Repentance begs a Forgiveness, my Love offers you my Advice and good Counsel, my Respect forewarns you of Dangers and Troubles that may come by the marriage of your Neece to the Vice-roy.

Why? what danger, said he, can come in marrying my Neece to a wise, honourable, rich, and powerfull Man, and a Man that loves and admires her, that honours and respects me?

But, said the Duke, put the case he be a covetous, jealous, froward, ill-natured, and base cowardly Man, shall she be happy with him?

But he is not so, said he.

But, answered the Duke, if I can prove him so, will you marry her to him?

Pray, said he, spare your proofs of him, since you cannot prove your self an honest Man.

Sir, said the Duke, Love makes me endure a Reproach patiently, when it concerns the Beloved: but though it endures a Reproach, it cannot endure a Rival.

Why, said the old Gentleman, I hope you do not challenge an interest in my Neece.

Yes, said the Duke, but I do, and will maintain that interest with the power of my Life, and never will quit it till Death; and if Ghost could fight for her, it should.

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Heaven bless my Neece, said the old Gentleman: What is your Design against her? Is it not enough to fling a Disgrace of Neglect on her, but you must ruine all her good Fortunes? Is your Malice so inveterate against my Family, that you strive to pull it up by the Roots, to cast it into the Ditch of Oblivion, or to fling it on the Dunghill of Scorn?

Said the Duke, my Design is to make her happy, if I can, to oppose all those that hinder her Felicity, disturbing the content and peace of her Minde, for she cannot love this Man; besides, he disclaims her, and vows never to marry her.

Sir, said the Gentleman, I desire you to depart from my House, for you are a Plague to me, and bring an evil Infection.

Sir, said the Duke, I will not go out of your House, nor depart from you, untill you have granted my Request.

Why, said the Gentleman, you will not threaten me?

No, said the Duke, I do petition you.

Said the Gentleman, if you have any Quarrel to me, I shall answer it with my Sword in my Hand; for though I have lost some Strength with my years, yet I have not lost my Courage; and when my Limbs can fight no longer, the heat of my Spirits shall consume you; besides, an Honourable Death I far prefer before a baffled Life.

Sir, said he, I come not to move your Anger, but your Pity, for the Sorrows I am in, for the Injuries I have done you; and if you will be pleased to take me into your Favour, and assist me, by giving my Wife, your Neece, leave to claim the Laws of Marriage and Right to me, all my Life shall be studious to return Gratitude, Duty, and Service.

Yes, answered he, to divulge her Disgrace, declaring your neglect in an open Court, and to make my self a Knave to break my Promise.

Sir, said the Duke, your Disgrace by me is not so much as you apprehend; but it will be a great Disgrace when it is known the Vice-roy refuses her, as I can shew you his Hand to it; and if he deserts your Neece, you are absolved of your Promise made to him; and to let you know this is a Truth, I say here is his Hand.

The whil'st the old Gentleman was reading the Papers, the Vice-roy comes in.

O Sir, said he, you are timely come; is this your Hand, sayes he?

Yes, answered the Vice-roy.

And do you think it is honourably done, said the Gentleman?

Why, said the Vice-roy, would you have me marry another Man's Wife.

Well, said the old Gentleman, when your Viceroy-ship is out, as it is almost, I will give you my answer; till then, fare you well.

But the Duke went to the young Lady, and told her the progress he had had with her Uncle, and his anger to the Viceroy.

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But after the old Gentleman's passion was abated towards the Duke, by his humble submission, and the passion inflamed towards the Viceroy, he hearkned to the Law—suit, being most perswaded by his Neece's affection, which he perceived was unalterably placed upon the Duke. And at last, advising all three together, they thought it fit, since the Parties must plead their own Cause, to conceal their Agreements, and to cover it by the Duke's seeming dissent, lest he should be convicted as a Breaker of the known Laws, and so be liable to punishment, either by the hazard of his Life, or the price of a great Fine.

But after Friends were made of all sides, the Law—suit was declared, which was a business of discourse to all the Kingdome, and the place of Judicature a meeting for all curious, inquisitive, and busiless People.

When the day of hearing was come, there was a Bar set out, where the Duke and the two Ladies stood; and after all the Judges were set, the young Lady thus spake.

Grave Fathers, and most equal Judges,

I come here to plead for Right, undeck'd with Eloquence, but Truth needs no Rhetorick, so that my Cause will justify it self: but if my Cause were foul, it were not pencill'd words could make it seem so fair, as to delude your Understanding Eye.

Besides, your Justice is so wise, as to fortifie her Forts with Fortitude, to fill her Magazine with Temperance, to victual it with Patience, to set Centinels of Prudence, that Falshood might not surprize it, nor Bribery corrupt it, nor Fear starve it, nor Pity undermine it, nor Partiality blow it up; so that all Right Causes here are safe and secured from the Enemies of Injury and Wrong. Wherefore, most Reverend Fathers, if you will but hear my Cause, you cannot but grant my Suit.

Whereupon the Judges bid her declare her Cause. *Then thus it is .*

I was married to this Prince; 'tis true, I was but young in years when I did knit that Wedlock knot; and though a Child, yet since my Vows were holy, which I made by Virtue and Religion, I am bound to seal that sacred Bond with Constancy, now I am come to years of knowing of Good from Evil.

I am not onely bound, most Pious Judges, to keep my Vow, in being chastly his, as long as he shall live, but to require him by the Law, as a Right of Inheritance belonging to me, and onely me, so long as I shall live, without a Sharer or Co—partner: so that this Lady, which layes a claim, and challenges him as being hers, can have no right to him, and therefore no Law can plead for her; for should you cast aside your Canon Law, most Pious Judges, and judge it by the Common Law, my Suit must needs be granted, if Justice deals out right, and gives to Truth her own; for should an Heir, young, before he comes to years, run on the Lenders score, though the Lender had no Law to plead against nonage, yet if his nature be so just to seal the Bonds he made in nonage, when he comes to full years, he makes his former Act good, and fixes the Law to a just Grant, giving no room for Cosenage to play a part, nor Falshood to appear. The like is my Cause, most Grave Fathers, for my Friends chose me a Husband, made a Bond of Matrimony, sealed it with the Ceremony of the Church, onely they wanted my years of consent, which I, by an Approvement, now set as my Hand—writing.

Sayes the Judges, what sayes the Duke? Then the Duke thus spake.

I confess, I was contracted to this Lady by all the sacred and most binding Ceremonies of the Church, but not with a free consent of Minde; but being forced by the duty to my Father, who did not onely command, but threatned me with his Curse, he being then upon his Death—bed, and I being afraid of a dying Fathers Curses, yielded to those Actions which my Affections and Free—will renounced; and after my Father was dead, placing my Affections upon another Lady, married her, thinking my self not liable to the former Contract, by reason the former Contract was but of six years of age, whose nonage I thought was a warrantable Cancel from the Engagement.

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Most Upright Judges,

My nonage of years is not a sufficient Bail to set him free, he being then of full Age; nor can his fear of offending his Parents, or his loving Duty towards them, be a casting Plea against me; his Duty will not discharge his Perjury, nor his Fear could be no Warrant to do a Wrong; and if a Fool by promise binds his Life to Inconveniencies, the Laws that Wise Men made, must force him to keep it. And if a Knave, by private and self-ends, doth make a Promise, Just Laws must make him keep it.

And if a Coward make a Promise through distracted Fear, Laws, that carry more Terrours, than the broken Promise, Profit, will make him keep it.

But a wise, just, generous Spirit will make no Promise, but what he can, and durst, and will perform.

But say a Promise should pass through an ignorant Zeal, and seeming Good, yet a Right Honourable and Noble Minde will stick so fast to its Engagements, that nothing shall hew them asunder; for a Promise must neither be broken upon Suspicion, nor false Construction, nor enticing Perswasions, nor threatening Ruins, but it must be maintained with Life, and kept by Death, unless the Promise carry more malignity in the keeping them, than the breaking of them.

I say not this to condemn the Duke, though I cannot applaud his secondary Action concerning Marriage; I know he is too Noble to cancel that Bond his Conscience sealed before high Heaven, where Angels stood as Witnesses; nor can he make another Contract untill he is free from me; so that his Vows to this Lady were rather Complemental, and Loves Feignings, than really true, or so Authentical to last; he built Affections on a wrong Foundation, or rather Castles in the Air, as Lovers use to do, which vanish soon away; for where Right is not, Truth cannot be; wherefore she can claim no lawfull Marriage, unless he were a Free-man, not bound before; and he cannot be free, unless he hath my consent, which I will never give.

Then the other Lady spake.

Noble Judges,

This crafty, flattering, dissembling Child layes a claim to my Husband, who no way deserves him, she being of a low Birth, and of too mean a Breeding to be his Wife; neither hath she any right to him in the Law, she being too young to make a free Choyce, and to give a free consent. Besides, he doth disavow the Act, by confessing the disagreeing thereto in his Minde; and if she was to give a Lawfull Consent, and his Consent was seeming, not real, as being forced thereunto, it could not be a firm Contract; wherefore, I beseech you, cast her Suit from the Bar, since it is of no validity.

Just Judges, answered she.

What though he secretly disliked of that Act he made? yet Humane Justice sentences not the Thoughts, but Acts; wherefore those Words that plead his Thoughts, ought to be waved as useless, and from the Bar of Justice cast aside.

And now, most Upright Judges, I must intreat your favour and your leave to answer this Lady, whose Passions have flung Disgraces on me, which I, without the breach of Incivility, may throw off them off with scorn, if you allow me so to do.

Said the Judges, we shall not countenance any Disgrace, unless we knew it were a punishment for Crimes; wherefore speak freely.

The Contract

Why then, to answer to this Lady, that I am meanly born. 'Tis true, I came not from Nobility, but I can draw a Line of Pedegree five hundred years in length from the root of Merit, from whence Gentility doth spring. This Honour cannot be degraded by the Displeasure of Princes, it holds not the Fee—simple from the Crown, for Time is the Patron of Gentility, and the older it groweth, the more beautifull it appears; and having such a Father and Mother as Merit and Time, Gentry is a fit and equal Match for any, were they the Rulers of the whole World.

And whereas she sayes, most Patient Judges, I am a false dissembling Child.

I answer, as to my Childhood, it is true, I am young, and unexperienced, a Child in Understanding, as in Years; but to be Young, I hope it is no Crime: but if it be, 'twas made by Nature, not by me. And for dissembling, I have not had time enough to practice much Deceit; my Youth will witness for me, it is an Art, not an inbred Nature, and must be studied with Pains, and watch'd with Observation, before any can be Masters thereof. And I hope this Assembly is so just, as not to impute my Innocent Simplicity to a subtil, crafty, or a deceiving Glass, to shew the Minds false Face, making that fair, which in it self is foul. And whereas she sayes, I have been meanly bred, 'tis true, Honoured Judges, I have been humbly bred, taught to obey Superiours, and to reverence old Age; to receive Reproofs with thanks, to listen to wise Instructions, to learn honest Principles, to huswife Time, making use of every minute; to be thrifty of my Words, to be carefull of my Actions, to be modest in my Behaviour, to be chaste in my Thoughts, to be pious in my Devotions, to be charitable to the Distressed, to be courteous to Inferiours, to be civil to Strangers; for the truth is, I was not bred with Splendrous Vanities, nor learnt the Pomp and Pride of Courts; I am ignorant of their Factions, Envies, and Back—bitings, I know not the sound of their flattering Tongues, I am unacquainted with their smiling Faces, I have not Wit to perceive their false Hearts, my Judgement is too young and too weak to fathom their deep and dangerous Designs.

Neither have I lived so long in populous Cities, as to share of the Luxuriousness therein; I never have frequented their private nor publick Meetings, nor turned the Day into Night by Disorders; I can play at none of their Games, nor can I tread their Measures: but I was bred a private Country Life, where the crowing of the Cocks served as Waights of the Town; and the bleating of the Sheep, and lowing of the Cows, are the Minstrels we dance after; And the singing of the Birds are the Harmonious Notes by which we set our Innocent Thoughts, playing upon the Heart—strings of Content, where Nature there presents us a Masque with various Scenes, of several Seasons of the Year.

But neither low Birth, nor mean Breeding, nor bad Qualities, nay, were I as Wicked as I am Young, yet it will not take away the truth of my Cause, nor the justness of my Plea; wherefore I desire you to give my Suit a patient Trial, and not to cast me from the Bar, as she desires; for I hope you will not cast out my Suit by an unjust Partiality, nor mistake the right measure, and so cut the truth of my Cause too short: but I beseech you to give it length by your serious Considerations, and make it fit by your just Favour; for though Truth it self goeth naked, yet her Servants must be cloathed with Right, and dress'd by Propriety, or they will dye with the cold of Usurpation, and then be flung into the Ditch of Sorrow, there eaten up with the Ravens of Scorn, having no burial of Respect, nor Tombe of Tranquility, nor Pyramids of Felicity, which by your Justice may raise them as high as Heaven, when your Injustice may cast them as low as Hell. Thus you become to Truth, Gods or Devils.

Madam, said the Judges to the young Lady, the justice of your Cause judges it self; for the severest Judge, or strictest rules in Law, would admit of no debate.

And truly, Madam, it is happy for us that sit upon the Bench, that your Cause is so clear and good, otherwise your Beauty and your Wit might have proved Bribes to our Vote: but yet there will be a Fine on the Duke for the breach of the Laws.

With that the Duke spake.

Most Carefull, Learned, and Just Judges, and Fathers of the Common—wealth.

The Contract

I confess my Fault, and yield my self a Prisoner to Justice, to whom she may either use Punishment or Mercy: but had I known the Laws of Custome, Religion or Honour then, as well as I do now, I had not run so fast, nor plunged my self so deep in the foul erroneous wayes: but wilde Youth, surrounded with Ease, and fed with Plenty, born up with Freedome, and led by Self-will, sought Pleasure more than Virtue: but Experience hath learn'd me stricter Rules, and nobler Principles, insomuch as the reflection of my former Actions, clouds all my future Happiness, wounds my Conscience, and torments my Life: but I shall submit to what your wise Judgements shall think fit.

My Lord, answered the Judges, your Grace being a great Peer of the Realm, we are not to condemn you to any Fine, it must be the King, onely we judge the Lady to be your lawfull Wife, and forbid you the Company of the other.

Said the Duke, *I shall willingly submit.*

With that, the young Lady spake. *Heaven, said she, send you just Rewards for your upright Actions: But I desire this Assembly to excuse the Faults of the Duke in this, since he was forced by Tyrant Love to run in uncouth wayes, and do not wound him with sharp Censures .*

*For where is he, or she, though ne'r so cold,
But sometimes Love doth take, and fast in Fetters hold.*

The Vice-roy being by, said to the other Lady; Madam, said he, since the Law hath given away your Husband, I will supply his place, if you think me so worthy, with whom perchance you may be more happy than you were with him.

I accept of your Love, said she, and make no question but Fortune hath favoured me in the change.

With that, the Court rose, and much Rejoycings there were of all sides.

The Contract is a 2006 German-American action thriller film directed by Bruce Beresford and written by television writer Stephen Katz and John Darrouzet. The Contract stars Morgan Freeman as assassin Frank Carden and John Cusack as teacher Ray Keene. Released direct to video in the United States and most of Europe, The Contract received little critical notice despite its high-profile cast. Definition: The term contract is defined as an agreement between two or more parties which has a binding nature, in essence, the agreement with legal enforceability is said to be a contract. It creates and defines the duties and obligations of the parties involved. Process of Contract. First and foremost, an offer is made by one party to another, which when accepted by the party to whom it is made, leads to the agreement. If that agreement is enforceable in the court of law, it is known as a contract.