

**A WOMAN
KILLED WITH
KINDNESS**

**BY THOMAS
HEYWOOD**

***Free*editorial** 

[DRAMATIS PERSONAE

SIR FRANCIS ACTON, Brother to Mistress Frankford.	NICHOLAS, ROGERBRICKBAT, JENKIN, JACK SLIME, SPIGOT, Butler,	}	Household Servants to Frankford.
SIR CHARLES MOUNTFORD.			
MASTER JOHN FRANKFORD.			
MASTER MALBY, friend to Sir Francis.	Sheriff . Keeper of Prison .		
MASTER WENDOLL, friend to Frankford.	Sheriff's Officers, Serjeant, Huntsmen, Falconers,		
MASTER CRANWELL. Sheriff's Officers,	Coachmen, Carters, Servants, Musicians.		
MASTER SHAFTON, false friend to Sir Charles.			
OLD MOUNTFORD, Uncle to Sir Charles.			
MASTER SANDY.	MISTRESS ANNE FRANKFORD.		
MASTER RODER.	SUSAN, Sister to Sir Charles Mountford.		
MASTER TIDY, Cousin to Sir Charles.	CICELY, Maid to Mistress Frankford. Women Servants in Master Frankford's household.]		

PROLOGUE

I COME but like a harbinger, being sent
To tell you what these preparations mean.
Look for no glorious state; our Muse is bent
Upon a barren subject, a bare scene.

We could afford this twig a timber-tree,

5

Whose strength might boldly on your favours build;
Our russet, tissue; drone, a honey-bee;

Our barren plot, a large and spacious field;
Our coarse fare, banquets; our thin water, wine;

Our brook, a sea; our bat's eyes, eagle's sight; 10

Our poet's dull and earthy Muse, divine;
Our ravens, doves; our crow's black feathers, white.
But gentle thoughts, when they may give the foil, ¹
Save them that yield, and spare where they may spoil.

[ACT I]

[SCENE I.] ²

Enter MASTER JOHN FRANKFORD, MISTRESS
FRANKFORD], ³ SIR FRANCIS ACTON, SIR
CHARLES MOUNTFORD, MASTER MALBY,
MASTER WENDOLL, AND MASTER CRAN-
WELL.

Sir F. Some music, there! None lead the
bride a dance?

Sir C. Yes, would she dance *The Shaking of
the Sheets*;
But that's the dance her husband means to lead
her.

Wen. That, 's not the dance that every man
must dance,
According to the ballad. ⁴

Sir F. Music, ho! 5

By your leave, sister, — by your husband's
leave
I should have said, — the hand that but this
day
Was given you in the church I'll borrow. —
Sound !
This marriage music hoists me from the ground.

Frank. Ay, you may caper; you are light and

free !

10

Marriage hath yok'd my heels; pray, then, pardon me.

Sir F. I'll have you dance too, brother !

Sir C. Master Frankford,
You are a happy man, Sir, and much joy
Succeed your marriage mirth: you have a wife

So qualified, and wit such ornaments

15

Both of the mind and body. First, her birth
Is noble, and her education such
As might become the daughter of a prince;
Her own tongue speaks all tongues, and her
own hand

¹ Defeat.

² Room in Frankford's house.

³ Q₂. *Acton*.

⁴ *The Shaking of the Sheets, or The Dance of Death*,
was a well-known ballad and dance tune.

Can teach all strings to speak in their best

grace,

20

From the shrill'st treble to the hoarsest base.
To end her many praises in one word,
She's Beauty and Perfection's eldest daughter,
Only found by yours, though many a heart hath
sought her.

Frank. But that I know your virtues and

chaste thoughts,

25

I should be jealous of your praise, Sir Charles.

Cran. He speaks no more than you approve.

Mal. Nor flatters he that gives to her her due.

Mrs. F. I would your praise could find a fitter
theme

Than my imperfect beauties to speak on! 30

Such as they be, if they my husband please,
They suffice me now I am married.
His sweet content is like a flattering glass,
To make my face seem fairer to mine eye;

But the least wrinkle from his stormy brow 35

Will blast the roses in my cheeks that grow.

Sir F. A perfect wife already, meek and
patient !
How strangely the word husband fits your
mouth,
Not married three hours since ! Sister, 't is

good; 39

You that begin betimes thus must needs prove
Pliant and duteous in your husband's love. —
Gramercies, brother! Wrought her to 't al-
ready, —
'Sweet husband,' and a curtesy, the first day?
Mark this, mark this, you that are bachelors,

And never took the grace ¹ of honest man; 45

Mark this, against you marry, ² this one phrase :
In a good time that man both wins and woos
That takes his wife down ³ in her wedding shoes.

Frank. Your sister takes not after you, Sir
Francis,

All his wild blood your father spent on you; 50

He got her in his age, when he grew civil.
All his mad tricks were to his land entail'd,
And you are heir to all; your sister, she
Hath to her dower her mother's modesty.

Sir C. Lord, sir, in what a happy state live

you ! 55

This morning, which to many seems a burden,
Too heavy to bear, is unto you a pleasure.
This lady is no clog, as many are ;
She doth become you like a well-made suit,

In which the tailor hath us'd all his art ; 60

Not like a thick coat of unseason'd frieze,
Forc'd on your back in Summer. She 's no chain
To tie your neck, and curb you to the yoke ;
But she's a chain of gold to adorn your neck.

You both adorn each other, and your hands, 65

Methinks, are matches. There's equality
In this fair combination; you are both
Scholars, both young, both being descended
nobly.
There's music in this sympathy ; it carries

Consort and expectation of much joy, 70

Which God bestow on you from this first day
Until your dissolution, — that's for aye !

Sir F. We keep you here too long, good
brother Frankford.
Into the hall ; away! Go cheer your guests.
What ! Bride and bridegroom both withdrawn

at once ? 75

If you be mist, the guests will doubt their wel-
come,

And charge you with unkindness.

Frank. To prevent it,
I'll leave you here, to see the dance within.

Mrs. F. And so will I.

Exeunt [MASTER AND MISTRESS
FRANKFORD].

Sir. F. To part you it were sin. —

Now, gallants, while the town musicians 80

Finger their frets ⁴ within, and the mad lads
And country lasses, every mother's child,
With nosegays and bride-laces ⁵ in their hats,
Dance all their country measures, rounds, and
jigs,
What shall we do ? Hark! They're all on the

hoigh ; ⁶ 85

They toil like mill-horses, and turn as round, —
Marry, not on the toe! Ay, and they caper,
Not] ⁷ without cutting; you shall see, to-
morrow,
The hall-floor peckt and dinted like a mill-
stone,
Made with their high shoes. Though their skill

be small, 90

Yet they tread heavy where their hobnails fall.

Sir F. Well, leave them to their sports ! —
Sir Francis Acton,
I'll make a match with you! Meet me to-
morrow
At Chevy Chase; I'll fly my hawk with yours.

Sir F. For what? For what?

Sir C. Why, for a hundred pound. 95

Sir F. Pawn me some gold of that!

Sir C. Here are ten angels; ⁸
I'll make them good a hundred pound to-mor-
row
Upon my hawk's wing.

Sir F. 'T is a match; 't is done.
Another hundred pound upon your dogs; —
Dare ye, Sir Charles?

Sir C. I dare; were I sure to lose,

I durst do more than that; here is my hand,

101

The first course for a hundred pound !

Sir F. A match.

Wen. Ten angels on Sir Francis Acton's
hawk ;
As much upon his dogs!

Cran. I'm for Sir Charles Mountford: I have

seen

105

His hawk and dog both tried. What ! Clap ye
hands, ⁹
Or is't no bargain?

Wen. Yes, and stake them down.
Were they five hundred, they were all my own.

Sir F. Be stirring early with the lark tomorrow ;

¹ Gained the dignity.

² In preparation for marrying.

³ Reduces her to submission.

⁴ The points where the strings of a musical instru-
ment are stopped.

⁵ Streamers.

⁶ Boisterous.

⁷ Q¹ *But.*

⁸ Gold coins worth about \$2.50. [AJ Note: diff. amt. today]

⁹ Shake hands on it.

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I'll rise into my saddle ere the sun 110

Rise from his bed.

Sir C. If there you miss me, say
I am no gentleman! I'll hold my day.

Sir F. It holds on all sides. — Come, to-night
let's dance ;

Early to-morrow let 's prepare to ride : 114

We'd need be three hours up before the bride.
Exeunt.

[SCENE II.] ¹

Enter NICHOLAS and JENKIN, JACK SLIME,
ROGER BRICKBAT, *with* Country Wenches,
and two or three Musicians.

Jen. Come, Nick, take you Joan Miniver, to
trace withal ; Jack Slime, traverse you with
Cicely Milkpail ; I will take Jane Trubkin, and
Roger Brickbat shall have Isabel Motley. And

now that they are busy in the parlour, come, 5

strike up ; we'll have a crash ² here in the
yard.

Nich. My humour is not compendious : danc-
ing I possess not, though I can foot it; yet,

since I am fallen into the hands of Cicely 10

Milkpail, I consent.

Slime. Truly, Nick, though we were never brought up like serving courtiers, yet we have been brought up with serving creatures, — ay,

and God's creatures, too ; for we have been 15

brought up to serve sheep, oxen, horses, hogs, and such like; and, though we be but country fellows, it may be in the way of dancing we can do the horse-trick as well as the serving-men.

Brick. Ay, and the cross-point too. 20

Jen. O Slime! O Brickbat! Do not you know that comparisons are odious? Now we are odious ourselves, too; therefore there are no comparisons to be made betwixt us.

Nich. I am sudden, and not superfluous; 25

I am quarrelsome, and not seditious;
I am peaceable, and not contentious;
I am brief, and not compendious.

Slime. Foot it quickly ! If the music over come

not my melancholy, I shall quarrel; and if 30

they suddenly do not strike up, I shall presently strike thee down.

Jen. No quarrelling, for God's sake ! Truly, if you do, I shall set a knave between ye.

Slime. I come to dance, not to quarrel. 35

Come, what shall it be? *Rogero* ? ³

Jen. *Rogero* ? No ; we will dance *The Beginning of the World*.

Cicely. I love no dance so well as *John come*

kiss me now. 40

Nich. I that have ere now deserv'd a cush-

ion, call for the *Cushion-dance*.

Brick. For my part, I like nothing so well as
Tom Tyler.

Jen. No ; we 'll have *The Hunting of the* 45
Fox.

Slime. *The Hay, The Hay !* There's nothing like *The Hay*.

Nich. I have said, I do say, and I will say
again — 50

Jen. Every man agree to have it as Nick says !

All. Content.

Nich. It hath been, it now is, and it shall
be —

Cicely. What, Master Nicholas ? What ? 55

Nich. *Put on your Smock a' Monday*.

Jen. So the dance will come cleanly off ! Come,
for God's sake, agree of something : if you like
not that, put it to the musicians ; or let me

speak for all, and we 'll have *Sellenger's* 60
Round.

All. That, that, that !

Nich. No, I am resolv'd thus it shall be ;
First take hands, then take ye to your heels.

Jen. Why, would you have us run away ? 65

Nich. No; but I would have you shake your
heels. — Music, strike up !

They dance ; NICK dancing, speaks

*stately and scurvily, the rest after
the country fashion.*

Jen. Hey ! Lively, my lasses ! Here's a turn
for thee ! *Exeunt.*

[SCENE III.] ⁴

Wind horns. Enter SIR CHARLES MOUNTFORD,
SIR FRANCIS ACTON, MALBY, CRANWELL,
WENDOLL, Falconer, *and* Huntsmen.

Sir F. So ; well cast off ! Aloft, aloft ! Well
flown !
Oh, now she takes her at the souse, ⁵ and strikes
her
Down to the earth, like a swift thunder-clap.

Wen. She hath struck ten angels out of my
way.

Sir F. A hundred pound from me. 5

Sir C. What, falconer !

Falc. At hand, sir !

Sir F. Now she hath seiz'd the fowl and 'gins
to plume ⁶ her,
Rebeck ⁷ her not; rather stand still and check
her !
So, seize her gets, ⁸ her jesses, ⁹ and her bells ! ¹⁰
Away !

Sir F. My hawk kill'd, too.

Sir C. Ay, but 't was at the querre, 10

Not at the mount like mine.

Sir F. Judgment, my masters !

Cran. Yours mist her at the ferre. ¹¹

Wen. Ay, but our merlin first had plum'd

the fowl, 15

And twice renew'd ¹² her from the river too.
Her bells, Sir Francis, had not both one weight,
Nor was one semi-tune above the other.
Methinks, these Milan bells do sound too full,
And spoil the mounting of your hawk.

Sir C. 'T is lost. 20

Sir F. I grant it not. Mine likewise seiz'd a
fowl
Within her talons, and you saw her paws

¹ Yard of the same.

² Frolic, bout.

³ The names of the dance-tunes here were all familiar.

⁴ Chevy Chase.

⁵ On the descent.

⁶ Pluck.

⁷ Call back.

⁸ Verity explains as "booty," but apparently it is the same as *jesses*.

⁹ Leg-straps.

¹⁰ Quarry : "the swoop upon the bird." (N. E. D.)

¹¹ Not satisfactorily explained.

¹² Attacked afresh.

Full of the feathers; both her petty singles ¹
And her long singles grip'd her more than
other ;
The terrials ² of her ³ legs were stain'd with

blood, 25

Not of the fowl only; she did discomfit

MOUNTFORD, CRANWELL, Falconer, *and* Huntsman, *fight against* SIR FRANCIS ACTON, WENDOLL, *his* Falconer and Huntsman ; *and* SIR CHARLES *hath the better, and beats them away, killing both of* SIR FRANCIS'S *men. Exeunt all but* SIR CHARLES MOUNTFORD.]

Sir C. My God, what have I done ! What
have I done !
My rage hath plung'd into a sea of blood,
In which my soul lies drown'd. Poor inno-

cents,

45

For whom we are to answer ! Well, 't is done,
And I remain the victor. A great conquest,
When I would give this right hand, nay, this
head,
To breathe in them new life whom I have
slain ! —
Forgive me, God ! 'T was in the heat of

blood,

50

And anger quite removes me from myself.
It was not I, but rage, did this vile murder ;
Yet I, and not my rage, must answer it.
Sir Francis Acton, he is fled the field ;
With him all those that did partake his quarrel ;

And I am left alone with sorrow dumb,

56

And in my height of conquest overcome.

Enter SUSAN.

Susan. O God ! My brother wounded 'mong
the dead !
Unhappy jest, that in such earnest ends !

The rumour of this fear stretcht to my ears,

60

And I am come to know if you be wounded.

Sir F. Oh, sister, sister ! Wounded at the
heart.

Susan. My God forbid !

Sir. C. In doing that thing which he for-
bad,
I am wounded, sister.

Susan. I hope, not at the heart. 65

Sir C. Yes, at the heart.

Susan. O God! A surgeon, there.

Sir C. Call me a surgeon, sister, for my
soul !
The sin of murder, it hath pierc'd my heart
And made a wide wound there ; but for these
scratches,
They are nothing, nothing.

Susan. Charles, what have you done ? 70

Sir Francis hath great friends, and will pursue
you
Unto the utmost danger ⁶ of the law.

Sir C. My conscience is become mine enemy,
And will pursue me more than Acton can.

Susan. Oh ! Fly, sweet brother !

Sir C. Shall I fly from thee ? 75

Why, Sue, art weary of my company?

Susan. Fly from your foe!

Sir C. You, sister, are my friend,
And flying you, I shall pursue my end.

Susan. Your company is as my eyeball
dear ;

Being far from you, no comfort can be near. 80

Yet fly to save your life! What would I care
To Spend my future age in black despair,
So you were safe ? And yet to live one week
Without my brother Charles, through every
cheek
My streaming tears would downwards run so

rank, ⁷ 85

Till they could set on either side a bank,
And in the midst a channel; so my face
For two salt-water brooks shall still find place.

Sir C. Thou shalt not weep so much; for I
will stay,

In spite of danger's teeth. I'll live with thee, 90

Or I'll not live at all. I will not sell
My country and my father's patrimony,
Nor thy sweet sight, for a vain hope of life.

Enter Sheriff, with Officers.

Sher. Sir Charles, I am made the unwilling
instrument

Of your attach ⁸ and apprehension. 95

I 'm sorry that the blood of innocent men
Should be of you exacted. It was told me
That you were guarded with a troop of friends,
And therefore I come thus arm'd.

Sir C. Oh, Master Sheriff !

I came into the field with many friends, 100

¹ Toes.

² Unexplained.

[*AJ Note: Terrial - the part of the foot touching the earth - *i.e.*, bottoms of the feet ?*]

- ³ The rest of the speech seems to refer to Mountford's hawk.
- ⁴ Bungler.
- ⁵ Curly-tailed.
- ⁶ Limit of liability.
- ⁷ Abundantly.
- ⁸ Arrest.

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But see, they all have left me ; only one
Clings to my sad misfortune, my dear sister.
I know you for an honest gentleman ;
I yield my weapons, and submit to you.
Convey me where you please!

Sher. To prison, then, 105

To answer for the lives of these dead men.

Susan. O God ! O God !

Sir C. Sweet sister, every strain
Of sorrow from your heart augments my pain ;
Your grief abounds, ¹ and hits against my
breast.

Sher. Sir, will you go ?

Sir C. Even where it likes you best. 110

[*Exeunt.*]

[ACT II]

[SCENE I.]

Enter MASTER FRANKFORD in a study.

Frank. How happy am I amongst other men,
That in my mean estate embrace content !
I am a gentleman, and by my birth
Companion with a king; a king's no more.

I am posses'd of many fair revenues,

5

Sufficient to maintain a gentleman ;
Touching my mind, I am studied in all arts ;
The riches of my thoughts and of my time
Have been a good proficient; ² but, the chief

Of all the sweet felicities on earth,

10

I have a fair, a chaste, and loving wife, —
Perfection all, all truth, all ornament.
If man on earth may truly happy be,
Of these at once possess, sure, I am he.

Enter NICHOLAS.

Nich. Sir, there's a gentleman attends with-

out

15

To speak with you.

Frank. On horseback?

Nich. Yes, on horseback.

Frank. Entreat him to alight, I will attend
him.

Know'st thou him, Nick?

Nich. Know him? Yes ; his name's Wendoll.
It seems, he comes in haste: his horse is booted ³

Up to the flank in mire, himself all spotted

20

And stain'd with plashing. Sure, he rid in
fear,

Or for a wager. Horse and man both sweat ;
I ne'er saw two in such a smoking heat.

Frank. Entreat him in: about it instantly!
[*Exit* NICHOLAS.]

This Wendoll I have noted, and his carriage 25

Hath pleas'd me much; by observation
I have noted many good deserts in him.
He's affable, and seen ⁴ in many things ;
Discourses well; a good companion ;

And though of small means, yet a gentleman 30

Of a good house, though somewhat prest by
want.

I have preferr'd him to a second place
In my opinion and my best regard.

Enter WENDOLL, MISTRESS FRANKFORD, and
NICHOLAS.

Mrs. F. Oh, Master Frankford! Master Wen-
doll here
Brings you the strangest news that e'er you
heard. 35

Frank. What news, sweet wife? What news,
good Master Wendoll?

Wen. You knew the match made 'twixt Sir
Francis Acton
And Sir Charles Mountford ?

Frank. True; with their hounds and hawks.

Wen. The matches were both play'd.

Frank. Ha ? And which won ?

Wen. Sir Francis, your wife's brother, had
the worst, 40

And lost the wager.

Frank. Why, the worse his chance ;
Perhaps the fortune of some other day
Will change his luck.

Mrs. F. Oh, but you hear not all.

Sir Francis lost, and yet was loth to yield. 44

At length the two knights grew to difference,
From words to blows, and so to banding sides ; ⁵
Where valorous Sir Charles slew, in his spleen,
Two of your brother's men, — his falconer,
And his good huntsman, whom he lov'd so
well.

More men were wounded, no more slain out-
right. 50

Frank, Now, trust me, I am sorry for the knight.
But is my brother safe ?

Wen. All whole and sound,
His body not being blemish'd with one wound.
But poor Sir Charles is to the prison led,
To answer at th' assize for them that's dead.

Frank. I thank your pains, sir. Had the news
been better, 56

Your will was to have brought it, Master Wen-
doll.
Sir Charles will find hard friends; his case is
heinous
And will be most severely censur'd ⁶ on.

I 'm sorry for him. Sir, a word with you ! 60

I know you, sir, to be a gentleman
In all things ; your possibilities ⁷ but mean :
Please you to use my table and my purse ;
They 're yours.

Wen. O Lord, sir ! I shall ne'er deserve it.

Frank. O sir, disparage not your worth too

much :

65

You are full of quality ⁸ and fair desert.
Choose of my men which shall attend on you,
And he is yours. I will allow you, sir,
Your man, your gelding, and your table, all

At my own charge; be my companion !

70

Wen. Master Frankford, I have oft been
bound to you
By many favours ; this exceeds them all,
That I shall never merit your least favour ;
But when your last remembrance I forget,

Heaven at my soul exact that weighty debt !

75

-
- ¹ Overflows.
² Have made good progress.
³ Splashed.
⁴ Versed.
⁵ Forming factions.
⁶ Judged.
⁷ Resources.
⁸ Accomplishments.

Frank. There needs no protestation; for I
know you
Virtuous, and therefore grateful. — Prithee,
Nan,
Use him with all thy loving'st courtesy !

Mrs. F. As far as modesty may well extend,

It is my duty to receive your friend.

50

Frank. To dinner! Come, sir, from this pre-
sent day,
Welcome to me for ever! Come, away !

Exeunt [FRANKFORD, MISTRESS
FRANKFORD, and WENDOLL].

Nich. I do not like this fellow by no means :
I never see him but my heart still yearns. ¹
Zounds ! I could fight with him, yet know not

why ;

85

The devil and he are all one in mine eye.

Enter JENKIN.

Jen. O Nick ! What gentleman is that comes
to lie at our house ? My master allows him one
to wait on him, and I believe it will fall to thy

lot.

90

Nich. I love my master ; by these hilts, I do ;
But rather than I'll ever come to serve him,
I'll turn away my master.

Enter CICELY.

Cic. Nich'las ! where are you, Nich'las ? You
must come in, Nich'las, and help the young

gentleman off with his boots.

96

Nich. If I pluck off his boots, I'll eat the
spurs
And they shall stick fast in my throat like burrs.

Cic. Then, Jenkin, come you !

Jen. Nay, 't is no boot ² for me to deny it.

100

My master hath given me a coat here, but he
takes pains himself to brush it once or twice a
day with a holly wand.

Cic. Come, come, make haste, that you may

wash your hands again, and help to serve

105

in dinner !

Jen. You may see, my masters, though it be
afternoon with you, 't is yet but early days with
us, for we have not din'd yet. Stay but a little ;

I'll but go in and help to bear up the first 110
course, and come to you again presently.
Exeunt.

[SCENE II.] ³

Enter MALBY and CRANWELL.

Mal. This is the sessions-day ; pray can you tell me
How young Sir Charles hath sped ? Is he acquit,
Or must he try the laws' strict penalty ?

Cran. He's clear'd of all, spite of his ene-
mies

Whose earnest labour was to take his life. 5

But in this suit of pardon he hath spent
All the revenues that his father left him ;
And he is now turn'd a plain countryman,
Reform'd ⁴ in all things. See, sir, here he
comes.

Enter SIR CHARLES and his Keeper.

Keep. Discharge your fees, and you are then
at freedom. 10

Sir C. Here, Master Keeper, take the poor remainder
Of all the wealth I have ! My heavy foes
Have made my purse light; but, alas I to me
'T is wealth enough that you have set me free.

Mal. God give you joy of your delivery ! 15

I am glad to see you abroad, Sir Charles.

Sir C. The poorest knight in England, Master Malby.

My life has cost me all my patrimony
My father left his son. Well, God forgive them

That are the authors of my penury !

20

Enter SHAFTON.

Shaft. Sir Charles ! A hand, a hand ! At liberty ?

Now, by the faith I owe, I am glad to see it.
what want you ? Wherein may I pleasure you ?

Sir C. Oh me! Oh, most unhappy gentleman !

I am not worthy to have friends stirr'd up,

25

Whose hands may help me in this plunge of
want.

I would I were in Heaven, to inherit there
Th' immortal birthright which my Saviour
keeps,

And by no unthrift can be bought and sold ;
For here on earth what pleasures should we

trust !

30

Shaft. To rid you from these contemplations,
Three hundred pounds you shall receive of
me ;

Nay, five for fail. ⁵ Come, sir, the sight of gold
Is the most sweet receipt for melancholy,
And will revive your spirits. You shall hold

law

35

With your proud adversaries. Tush I let Frank
Acton

Wage, with his knighthood, like expense with
me,

And he will sink, he will. — Nay, good Sir
Charles,
Applaud your fortune and your fair escape
From all these perils.

Sir C. Oh, sir ! they have undone me. 40

Two thousand and five hundred pound a year
My father at his death possest me of ;
All which the envious Acton made me spend ;
And, notwithstanding all this large expense,

I had much ado to gain my liberty ; 45

And I have only now a house of pleasure,
With some five hundred pounds reserv'd,
Both to maintain me and my loving sister.

Shaft. [*Aside.*] That must I have, it lies convenient for me.

If I can fasten but one finger on him, 50

With my full hand I'll gripe him to the heart.
'T is not for love I proffer'd him this coin,
But for my gain and pleasure. — Come, Sir
Charles,
I know you have need of money; take my offer.

¹ Grieves.

² Use.

³ The Gaol.

⁴ Changed.

⁵ To prevent failure.

Sir C. Sir, I accept it, and remain indebted

Even to the best of my unable ¹ power. 56

Come, gentlemen, and see it tend'red down ! ²
[*Exeunt.*]

[SCENE III.] ³

Enter WENDOLL, melancholy.

Wen. I am a villain, if I apprehend ⁴
But such a thought ! Then, to attempt the
deed,
Slave, thou art damn'd without redemption. —

I 'll drive away this passion with a song. 4

A song ! Ha, ha ! A song ! As if, fond ⁵ man,
Thy eyes could swim in laughter, when thy
soul
Lies drench'd and drowned in red tears of
blood !
I'll pray, and see if God within my heart
Plant better thoughts. Why, prayers are medi-
tations,

And when I meditate (oh, God forgive me !) 10

It is on her divine perfections.
I will forget her; I will arm myself
Not t' entertain a thought of love to her ;
And, when I come by chance into her presence,
I'll hale these balls until my eye-strings

crack. 15

From being pull'd and drawn to look that way.

*Enter, over the Stage, FRANKFORD, his Wife,
and NICHOLAS [and exit].*

O God, O God! With what a violence
I'm hurried to mine own destruction !
There goest thou, the most perfectest man

That ever England bred a gentleman, 20

And shall I wrong his bed ? —Thou God of
thunder !
Stay, in Thy thoughts of vengeance and of
wrath,

Thy great, almighty, and all-judging hand
From speedy execution on a villain, —

A villain and a traitor to his friend.

25

Enter JENKIN.

Jen. Did your worship call ?

Wen. He doth maintain me; he allows me
largely
Money to spend.

Jen. By my faith, so do not you me: I cannot
get a cross of you.

30

Wen. My gelding, and my man.

Jen. That's Sorrel and I.

Wen. This kindness grows of no alliance ⁶
'twixt us.

Jen. Nor is my service of any great acquaint-
tance.

Wen. I never bound him to me by desert.

35

Of a mere stranger, a poor gentleman,
A man by whom in no kind he could gain,
He hath plac'd me in the height of all his
thoughts,
Made me companion with the best and chiefest

In Yorkshire. He cannot eat without me,

40

Nor laugh without me; I am to his body
As necessary as his digestion,
And equally do make him whole or sick.
And shall I wrong this man? Base man! In-
grate !
Hast thou the power, straight with thy gory

hands,

45

To rip thy image from his bleeding heart,
To scratch thy name from out the holy book
Of his remembrance, and to wound his name
That holds thy name so dear ? Or rend his
heart
To whom thy heart was knit and join'd to-

gether ? —

50

And yet I must. Then Wendoll, be content!
Thus villains, when they would, cannot repent.

Jen. What a strange humour is my new master in ! Pray God he be not mad; if he should

be so, I should never have any mind to serve

55

him in Bedlam. It may be he's mad for missing of me.

Wen. What, Jenkin! Where's your mistress ?

Jen. Is your worship married ?

60

Wen. Why dost thou ask?

Jen. Because you are my master; and if I have a mistress, I would be glad, like a good servant, to do my duty to her.

Wen. I mean Mistress Frankford.

65

Jen. Marry, sir, her husband is riding out of town, and she went very lovingly to bring him on his way to horse. Do you see, sir ? Here she comes, and here I go.

Wen. Vanish !

[*Exit JENKINS.*]

70

Enter MISTRESS FRANKFORD.

Mrs. F. You are well met, sir ; now, in troth,
my husband
Before he took horse, had a great desire

To speak with you; we sought about the
house,
Halloo'd into the fields, sent every way,
But could not meet you. Therefore, he enjoin'd

me

75

To do unto you his most kind commends, —
Nay, more: he wills you, as you prize his love,
Or hold in estimation his kind friendship,
To make bold in his absence, and command

Even as himself were present in the house ;

80

For you must keep his table, use his servants,
And be a present Frankford in his absence.

Wen. I thank him for his love. —

[*Aside.*] Give me a name, you, whose infec-
tious tongues

Are tipt with gall and poison: as you would

Think on a man that had your father slain,

85

Murd'red your children, made your wives base
strumpets,

So call me, call me so; print in my face

The most stigmatic ⁷ title of a villain,

For hatching treason to so true a friend !

90

Mrs. F. Sir, you are much beholding to my
husband ;

You are a man most dear in his regard.

Wen. I am bound unto your husband, and
you too.

¹ Feeble.

² Paid over.

³ Frankford's house.

⁴ Conceive.

⁵ Foolish.

⁶ Relationship.

[*Aside.*] I will not speak to wrong a gentleman

Of that good estimation, my kind friend. 95

I will not; zounds! I will not. I may choose,
And I will choose. Shall I be so misled,
Or shall I purchase ¹ to my father's crest
The motto of a villain ? If I say

I will not do it, what thing can enforce me ? 100

What can compel me ? What sad destiny
Hath such command upon my yielding
thoughts?
I will not ; — ha ! Some fury pricks me on ;
The swift fates drag me at their chariot
wheel,

And hurry me to mischief. Speak I must : 105

Injure myself, wrong her, deceive his trust!

Mrs. F. Are you not well, sir, that you seem
thus troubled ?
There is sedition in your countenance.

Wen. And in my heart, fair angel, chaste
and wise. 109

I love you! Start not, speak not, answer not;
I love you, — nay, let me speak the rest ;
Bid me to swear, and I will call to record
The host of Heaven.

Mrs. F. The host of Heaven forbid
Wendoll should hatch such a disloyal thought ?

Wen. Such is my fate ; to this suit was I

born,

115

To wear rich pleasure's crown, or fortune's
scorn.

Mrs. F. My husband loves you.

Wen. I know it.
Mrs., F. He esteems you,
Even as his brain, his eye-ball, or his heart.

Wen. I have tried it.

Mrs. F. His purse is your exchequer, and his

table

120

Doth freely serve you.

Wen. So I have found it.

Mrs. F. Oh ! With what face of brass, what
brow of steel,
Can you, unblushing, speak this to the face

Of the espous'd wife of so dear a friend ?

124

It is my husband that maintains your state. —
Will you dishonour him that in your power
Hath left his whole affairs ? I am his wife,
It is to me you speak.

Wen. O speak no more ;
For more than this I know, and have recorded

Within the red-leav'd table of my heart.

130

Fair, and of all belov'd, I was not fearful
Bluntly to give my life into your hand,
And at, one hazard all my earthly means.
Go, tell your husband ; he will turn me off,

And I am then undone. I care not, I ;

135

'T was for your sake. Perchance, in rage he'll

kill me ;
I care not, 't was for you, Say I incur
The general name of villain through the world,
Of traitor to my friend; I care not, I.
Beggary, shame, death, scandal, and re-

proach, —

140

For you I'll hazard all. Why, what care I ?
For you I'll live, and in your love I'll die.

Mrs. F. You move me, sir, to passion and to
pity.
The love I bear my husband is as precious
As my soul's health.

Wen. I love your husband too,

145

And for his love I will engage my life.
Mistake me not; the augmentation
Of my sincere affection borne to you
Doth no whit lessen my regard to him.

I will be secret, lady, close as night ;

150

And not the light of one small glorious star
Shall shine here in my forehead, to bewray
That act of night.

Mrs. F. What shall I say ?
My soul is wandering, hath lost her way.
Oh, Master Wendoll ! Oh !

Wen. Sigh not, sweet saint ;

155

For every sigh you breathe draws from my
heart
A drop of blood.

Mrs. F. I ne'er offended yet :
My fault, I fear, will in my brow be writ.
Women that fall, not quite bereft of grace,

Have their offences noted in their face.

160

I blush, and am asham'd. Oh, Master Wendoll,
Pray God I be not born to curse your tongue,
That hath enchanted me! This maze I am
in
I fear will prove the labyrinth of sin.

Enter NICHOLAS [*behind*].

Wen. The path of pleasure and the gate to
bliss,

165

Which on your lips I knock at with a kiss !

Nich. I 'll kill the rogue.

Wen. Your husband is from home, your bed's
no blab.

Nay, look not down and blush !

[*Exeunt* WENDOLL and MISTRESS
FRANKFORD.]

Nich. Zounds ! I'll stab.
Ay, Nick, was it thy chance to come just in the

nick ?

170

I love my master, and I hate that slave ;
I love my mistress, but these tricks I like
not.

My master shall not pocket up this wrong ;
I 'll eat my fingers first. What say'st thou,
metal ?

Does not that rascal Wendoll go on legs

175

That thou must cut off ? Hath he not ham-
strings

That thou must hough ? Nay, metal, thou shalt
stand

To all I say. I'll henceforth turn a spy,
And watch them in their close conveyances.²

I never look'd for better of that rascal, 180

Since he came miching ³ first into our house.
It is that Satan hath corrupted her ;
For she was fair and chaste. I'll have an
eye
In all their gestures. Thus I think of them :

If they proceed as they have done before, 185

Wendoll's a knave, my mistress is a —

Exit.

¹ Acquire, add.

² Secret proceedings,

³ Sneaking.

[ACT III]

[SCENE I.] ¹

Enter SIR CHARLES MOUNTFORD and *Susan*.

Sir C. Sister, you see we are driven to hard shift
To keep this poor house we have left unsold.
I 'm now enforc'd to follow husbandry,
And you to milk ; and do we not live well ?
Well, I thank God.

Susan. Oh, brother ! here's a change, 5

Since old Sir Charles died in our father's house.

Sir C. All things on earth thus change,
some up, some down ;
Content's a kingdom, and I wear that crown.

Enter SHAFTON, with a Sergeant.

Shaft. Good morrow, morrow, Sir Charles !

What ! With your sister,
Plying your husbandry ? — Sergeant, stand off !—
You have a pretty house here, and a garden,
And goodly ground about it. Since it lies
So near a lordship that I lately bought,
I would fain buy it of you. I will give you —

Sir C. Oh, pardon me; this house succes-
sively

15

Hath long'd to me and my progenitors
Three hundred years. My great-great-grand-
father,
He in whom first our gentle style began,
Dwelt here, and in this ground increast this
mole-hill
Unto that mountain which my father left me.

Where he the first of all our house began,

21

I now the last will end, and keep this house, —
This virgin title, never yet deflower'd
By any unthrift of the Mountfords' line.

In brief, I will not sell it for more gold

25

Than you could hide or pave the ground withal.

Shaft. Ha, ha ! a proud mind and a beggar's
purse !
Where's my three hundred pounds, besides the
use ? ²

I have brought it to an execution

29

By course of law. What! Is my money ready ?

Sir C. An execution, sir, and never tell me
You put my bond in suit? You deal extremely. ³

Shaft. Sell me the land, and I 'll acquit you straight.

Sir C. Alas, alas ! 'T is all trouble hath left

me

To cherish me and my poor sister's life. 35

If this were sold, our names should then be
quite
Raz'd from' the bead-roll ⁴ of gentility.
You see what hard shift we have made to keep
it
Allied still to our name. This palm you see,

Labour hath glow'd within; her silver brow, 40

That never tasted a rough winter's blast
Without a mask or fan, doth with a grace
Defy cold winter, and his storms outface.

Susan. Sir, we feed sparing, and we labour
hard,

We lie uneasy, to reserve to us 45

And our succession this small spot of ground.

Sir C. I have so bent my thoughts to hus-
bandry,
That I protest I scarcely can remember
What a new fashion is; how silk or satin

Feels in my hand. Why, pride is grown to us 50

A mere, mere stranger. I have quite forgot
The names of all that ever waited on me.
I cannot name ye any of my hounds,
Once from whose echoing mouths I heard all
music
That e'er my heart desir'd. What should I

say ? 55

To keep this place, I have chang'd myself
away.

Shaft. Arrest him at my suit ! — Actions and
actions

Shall keep thee in perpetual bondage fast ;
Nay, more, I'll sue thee by a late appeal,

And call thy former life in question. 60

The keeper is my friend; thou shalt have irons,
And usage such as I'll deny to dogs. —
Away with him !

Sir C. You are too timorous.⁵
But trouble is my master,
And I will serve him truly. — My kind sister,

Thy tears are of no use to mollify 66

The flinty man. Go to my father's brother,
My kinsmen, and allies; entreat them for me,
To transom me from this injurious man
That seeks my ruin.

Shaft. Come, irons ! Come away ; 70

I'll see thee lodg'd far from the sight of day.
Exeunt [except SUSAN].

Susan. My heart's so hard'ned with the frost
of grief,
Death cannot pierce it through. — Tyrant too
fell !
So lead the fiends condemned souls to hell.

Enter SIR FRANCIS ACTON and MALBY.

Sir F. Again to prison! Malby, hast thou

seen 75

A poor slave better tortur'd ? Shall we hear
The music of his voice cry from the grate,⁶
Meat, for the Lord's sake ? No, no ; yet I am
not
Thoroughly reveng'd. They say, he hath a pretty
wench

Unto his sister ; shall I, in mercy-sake 80

To him and to his kindred, bribe the fool
To shame herself by lewd, dishonest lust?
I'll proffer largely; but, the deed being done,
I'll smile to see her base confusion.

Mal. Methinks, Sir Francis, you are full re-

veng'd

85

For greater wrongs than he can proffer you.
See where the poor sad gentlewoman stands!

Sir F. Ha, ha ! Now will I flout her poverty,
Deride her fortunes, scoff her base estate ;

My very soul the name of Mountford hates.

90

But stay, my heart ! Oh, what a look did fly

¹ Sir Charles Mountford's house.

² Interest.

³ Extremely rigorously.

⁴ List. Properly a list of names to be prayed for.

⁵ Ed. conj. *tyrannous* .

⁶ Of the debtor's prison.

To strike my soul through with thy piercing
eye !
I am enchanted ; all my spirits are fled.
And with one glance my envious spleen struck
dead.

Susan. Acton ! That seeks our blood !

Runs away.

Sir F. O chaste and fair !

95

Mal. Sir Francis ! Why, Sir Francis! Zounds,
in a trance?

Sir Francis ! What cheer, man? Come, come,

how is 't ?

Sir F. Was she not fair? Or else this judging eye
Cannot distinguish beauty.

Mal. She was fair. 99

Sir F. She was an angel in a mortal's shape,
And ne'er descended from old Mountford's line.
But soft, soft, let me call my wits together!
A poor, poor wench, to my great adversary
Sister, whose very souls denounce stern war
One against other! How now, Frank, turn'd

fool 105

Or madman, whether ? But no! Master of
My perfect senses and directest wits.
Then why should I be in this violent humour
Of passion and of love ? And with a person

So different every way, and so oppos'd 110

In all contractions ¹ and still-warring actions ?
Fie, fie ! How I dispute against my soul!
Come, come; I'll gain her, or in her fair quest
Purchase my soul free and immortal rest.

[*Exeunt.*]

[SCENE II.] ²

*Enter three or four Serving-men, one with a voider ³ and a wooden knife, to take away all ;
another the salt and bread; another with the
table-cloth and napkins; another the carpet; ⁴
JENKIN with two lights after them.*

Jen. So ; march in order, and retire in
battle array ! My master and the guests have
supp'd already ; all's taken away. Here, now
spread for the serving-men in the hall ! — But-

ler, it belongs to your office. 5

But. I know it, Jenkin. What d' ye call the gentleman that supp'd there to-night ?

Jen. Who? My master?

But. No, no ; Master Wendoll, he's a daily

guest. I mean the gentleman that came

10

but this afternoon.

Jen. His name's Master Cranwell. God's light! Hark, within there; my master calls to lay more billets ⁵ upon the fire. Come, come!

Lord, how we that are in office here in the

15

house are troubled! One spread the carpet in the parlour, and stand ready to snuff the lights; the rest be ready to prepare their stomachs ! More lights in the hall, there ! Come, Nicholas.

Exeunt [all but NICHOLAS].

Nich. I cannot eat; but had I Wendoll's

heart,

20

I would eat that. The rogue grows impudent, Oh ! I have seen such vile, notorious tricks, Ready to make my eyes dart from my head. I'll tell my master; by this air, I will ; Fall what may fall, I'll tell him. Here he

comes.

25

Enter MASTER FRANKFORD, as it were brushing the crumbs from his clothes with a napkin, as newly risen from supper.

Frank. Nicholas, what make you here? Why are not you At supper in the hall, among your fellows ?

Nich. Master, I stay'd your rising from the

board,
To speak with you.

Frank. Be brief then, gentle Nicholas

My wife and guests attend ⁶ me in the parlour. 30

Why dost thou pause ? Now, Nicholas, you
want money,
And, unthrift-like, would eat into your wages
Ere you had earn'd it. Here, sir, 's half-a-crown ;
Play the good husband, ⁷ — and away to supper !

Nich. By this hand, an honourable gentle-

man! I will not see him wrong'd. 35

Sir, I have serv'd you long ; you entertain'd me
Seven years before your beard; you knew me,
sir,
Before you knew my mistress.

Frank. What of this, good Nicholas ?

Nich. I never was a make-bate ⁸ or a knave ; 40

I have no fault but one — I'm given to quarrel,
But not with women. I will tell you, master,
That which will make your heart leap from
your breast,
Your hair to startle from your head, your ears
to tingle.

Frank. What preparation 's this to dismal

news ? 45

Nich. 'Sblood ! sir, I love you better than
your wife.
I'll make it good.

Frank. You are a knave, and I have much
ado
With wonted patience to contain my rage,

And not to break thy pate. Thou art a knave. 50

I'll turn you, with your base comparisons,
Out of my doors.

Nich. Do, do.
There is not room for Wendoll and me too,
Both in one house. O master, master,
That Wendoll is a villain !

Frank. Ay, saucy ? 55

Nich. Strike, strike, do strike; yet hear me !
I am no fool ;
I know a villain, when I see him act
Deeds of a villain. Master, master, the base slave
Enjoys my mistress, and dishonours you.

Frank. Thou hast kill'd me with a weapon,

whose sharp point 60

Hath prick'd quite through and through my
shiv'ring heart.
Drops of cold sweat sit dangling on my hairs,
Like morning's dew upon the golden flowers,

-
- ¹ Legal transactions.
² Frankford's house.
³ Tray for removing dishes.
⁴ Table-cover.
⁵ Small logs.
⁶ Await.
⁷ Economist.
⁸ Maker of quarrels.

And I am plung'd into strange agonies.
What did'st thou say ? If any word that

tought 65

His credit, or her reputation,
It is as hard to enter my belief,
As Dives into heaven.

Nich. I can gain nothing :
They are two that never wrong'd me. I knew
before

'T was but a thankless office, and perhaps

70

As much as is my service, or my life
Is worth. All this I know; but this, and
more,
More by a thousand dangers, could not hire
me
To smother such a heinous wrong from you.

I saw, and I have said.

75

Frank. 'T is probable. Though blunt, yet he
is honest.
Though I durst pawn my life, and on their
faith
Hazard the dear salvation of my soul,
Yet in my trust I may be too secure.

May this be true? Oh, may it ? Can it be ?

80

Is it by any wonder possible ?
Man, woman, what thing mortal can we trust,
When friends and bosom wives prove so un-
just ? —
What instance ¹ hast thou of this strange re-
port ?

Nich. Eyes, [master,] eyes.

85

Frank. Thy eyes may be deceiv'd, I tell
thee ;
For should an angel from the heavens drop
down,
And preach this to me that thyself hast told,
He should have much ado to win belief ;

In both their loves I am so confident. 90

Nich. Shall I discourse the same by circumstance ?

Frank. No more ! To supper, and command
your fellows
To attend us and the strangers ! Not a word,
I charge thee, on thy life ! Be secret then ;

For I know nothing. 95

Nich. I am dumb ; and, now that I have
eas'd my stomach, ²
I will go fill my stomach. [Exit.]

Frank. Away ! Begone ! —
She is well born, descended nobly ;
Virtuous her education; her repute

Is in the general voice of all the country 100

Honest and fair; her carriage, her demeanour,
In all her actions that concern the love
To me her husband, modest, chaste, and godly.
Is all this seeming gold plain copper ?
But he, that Judas that hath borne my purse,

Hath sold me for a sin. O God ! O God ! 106

Shall I put up these wrongs ? No ! Shall I
trust
The bare report of this suspicious groom,
Before the double-gilt, the well-hatch'd ³ ore
Of their two hearts? No, I will lose these

thoughts ; 110

Distraction I will banish from my brow,
And from my looks exile sad discontent.
Their wonted favours in my tongue shall
flow ;
Till I know all, I'll nothing seem to know. —
Lights and a table there ! Wife, Master

And gentle Master Cranwell !

Enter MISTRESS FRANKFORD, MASTER WENDOLL, MASTER CRANWELL, NICHOLAS, and JENKIN with cards, carpets, stools, and other necessities.

Frank. O ! Master Cranwell, you are a
stranger here,
And often balk ⁴ my house; faith, y'are
churl ! —
Now we have supp'd, a table, and to cards!

Jen. A pair ⁵ of cards, Nicholas, and a carpet

to cover the table! Where's Cicely, with her 121

counters and her box ? Candles and candlesticks,
there ! Fie ! We have such a household of ser-
ring-creatures! Unless it be Nick and I, there's
not one amongst them all that can say bo to a

goose. — Well said, ⁶ Nick ! 126

*They spread a carpet : set down
lights and cards.*

Mrs. F. Come, Mr. Frankford, who shall take
my part ? ⁷

Frank. Marry, that will I, sweet wife. 129

Wen. No, by my faith, when you are to-
gether, I sit out. It must be Mistress Frank-
ford and I, or else it is no match.

Frank. I do not like that match.
Nigh. [Aside.] You have no reason, marry,

knowing all. 135

Frank. 'T is no great matter, neither. —
Come, Master Cranwell, shall you and I take

them up ? ⁸

Cran. At your pleasure, sir.

139

Frank. I must look to you, Master Wendoll,
for you'll be playing false. Nay, so will my wife, too.

Nich. [*Aside.*] Ay, I will be sworn she will.

Mrs F. Let them that are taken playing false,

forfeit the set !

145

Frank. Content; it shall go hard but I'll take
you.

Cran. Gentlemen, what shall our game be ?

Wen. Master Frankford, you play best at
noddie. ⁹

Frank. You shall not find it so; indeed, you
shall not.

Mrs. F. I can play at nothing so well as

double-ruff. ¹⁰

150

Frank. If Master Wendoll and my wife be
together, there's no playing against them at
double-hand.

Nich. I can tell you, sir, the game that Mas-

ter Wendoll is best at.

155

Wen. What game is that, Nick?

Nich. Marry, sir, knave out of doors.

Wen. She and I will take you at lodam.

Mrs. F. Husband, shall we play at saint ?

¹ Evidence.
² Resentment,
³ Of noble origin.
⁴ Avoid.
⁵ Pack.
⁶ Well done.
⁷ Be my partner.
⁸ Be their opponents.
⁹ A game like cribbage.
¹⁰ An earlier kind of whist

495

Frank. [*Aside.*] My saint's turn'd devil. —

No, we'll none of saint: 160

You are best at new-cut, wife, you'll play at
that.

Wen. If you play at new-cut, I'm soonest hit-
ter of any here, for a wager.

Frank. [*Aside.*] 'T is me they play on. —

Well, you may draw out; 164

For all your cunning, 't will be to your shame;
I'll teach you, at your new-cut, a new game.
Come, come!

Cran. If you cannot agree upon the game,
To post and pair!

Wen. We shall be soonest pairs; and my good
host, 170

When he comes late home, he must kiss the
post.¹

Frank. Whoever wins, it shall be to thy
cost.

Cran. Faith, let it be vide-ruff, and let 's
make honours!

Frank. If you make honours, one thing let
me crave:
Honour the king and queen, except the
knave.

175

Wen. Well, as you please for that. — Lift, ²
who shall deal?

Mrs. F. The least in sight. What are you,
Master Wendoll?

Wen. I am a knave.

Nich. [*Aside.*] I'll swear it.

Mrs. F. I a queen.

Frank. [*Aside.*] A quean, thou should'st say.
— Well, the cards are mine:

They are the grossest pair that e'er I felt.

180

Mrs. F. Shuffle, I'll cut: would I had never
dealt!

Frank. I have lost my dealing.

Wen. Sir, the fault's in me;
This queen I have more than mine own, you see.
Give me the stock! ³

Frank. My mind's not on my game.
Many a deal I've lost; the more's your shame.
You have serv'd me a bad trick, Master Wen-

doll.

186

Wen. Sir, you must take your lot. To end
this strife,
I know I have dealt better with your wife.

Frank. Thou hast dealt falsely, then.

Mrs. F. What's trumps? 190

Wen. Hearts. Partner, I rub.

Frank. [*Aside.*] Thou robb'st me of my soul,
of her chaste love;
In thy false dealing thou hast robb'd my
heart. —

Booty you play; I like a loser stand,

Having no heart, or here or in my hand. 195

I will give o'er the set, I am not well.
Come, who will hold my cards?

Mrs. F. Not well, sweet Master Frankford?
Alas, what ails you? 'T is some sudden qualm.

Wen. How long have you been so, Master

Frankford? 200

Frank. Sir, I was lusty, and I had my
health,
But I grew ill when you began to deal. —
Take hence this table! — Gentle Master Cran-
well,
Y' are welcome; see your chamber at your
pleasure!

I am sorry that this megrim takes me so, 205

I cannot sit and bear you company. —
Jenkin, some lights, and show him to his
chamber! ⁴

Mrs. F. A nightgown for my husband;
quickly, there!
It is some rheum or cold.

Wen. Now, in good faith,

This illness you have got by sitting late 210

Without your gown.

Frank. I know it, Master Wendoll.
Go, go to bed, lest you complain like me! —
Wife, prithee, wife, into my bed-chamber!
The night is raw and cold, and rheumatic.
Leave me my gown and light; I'll walk away

my fit.

215

Wen. Sweet sir, good night!

Frank. Myself, good night! [*Exit Wendoll.*]

Mrs. F. Shall I attend you, husband?

Frank. No, gentle wife, thou 'lt catch cold
in thy head.
Prithee, begone, sweet; I'll make haste to
bed.

Mrs. F. No sleep will fasten on mine eyes,

you know,

220

Until you come. [*Exit.*]

Frank. Sweet Nan, I prithee, go! —
I have bethought me; get me by degrees
The keys of all my doors, which I will mould
In wax, and take their fair impression,
To have by them new keys. This being com-

past,

225

At a set hour a letter shall be brought me,
And when they think they may securely
play,
They nearest are to danger. — Nick, I must
rely
Upon thy trust and faithful secrecy.

Nich. Build on my faith!

Frank. To bed, then, not to rest!

Care lodges in my brain, grief in my breast. 231

[*Exeunt.*]

[SCENE III.] ⁵

Enter SIR CHARLES'S Sister, OLD MOUNTFORD,
SANDY, RODER, and TIDY.

Old Mount. You say my nephew is in great
distress;
Who brought it to him but his own lewd life?
I cannot spare a cross. I must confess,
He was my brother's son; why, niece, what
then?

This is no world in which to pity men. 5

Susan. I was not born a beggar, though his
extremes
Enforce this language from me. I protest
No fortune of mine own could lead my tongue
To this base key. I do beseech you, uncle,

¹ Be shut out.

² Cut.

³ Pack.

⁴ This line should probably be given to *Mrs. F.* If
not, Cranwell exit here with Jenkin.

⁵ Old Mountford's house.

For the name's sake, for Christianity, — 10

Nay, for God's sake, to pity his distress.
He is deni'd the freedom of the prison,
And in the hole is laid with men condemn'd;
Plenty he hath of nothing but of irons,

And it remains in you to free him thence. 15

Old Mount. Money I cannot spare; men
should take heed.
He lost my kindred when he fell to need. *Exit.*

Susan. Gold is but earth; thou earth enough
shalt have,
When thou hast once took measure of thy grave,

You know me, Master Sandy, and my suit.

20

Sandy. I knew you, lady, when the old man
liv'd;
I knew you ere your brother sold his land.
Then you were Mistress Sue, trick'd up in
jewels;
Then you sung well, play'd sweetly on the lute;

But now I neither know you nor your suit.
[Exit.]

25

Susan. You, Master Roder, was my brother's
tenant;
Rent-free he plac'd you in that wealthy farm,
Of which you are possest.

Roder. True, he did;
And have I not there dwelt still for his sake?
I have some business now; but, without doubt,
They that have hurl'd him in, will help him

out. *Exit.*

31

Susan. Cold comfort still. What say you,
cousin Tidy?

Tidy. I say this comes of roysting, ¹ swag-
g'ring.
Call me not cousin; each man for himself!
Some men are born to mirth, and some to sor-

row:

35

I am no cousin unto them that borrow. *Exit.*

Susan. O Charity, why art thou fled to
heaven,
And left all things [up]on this earth uneven?
Their scoffing answers I will ne'er return,

But to myself his grief in silence mourn.

40

Enter SIR FRANCIS and MALBY.

Sir F. She is poor, I'll therefore tempt her
with this gold.
Go, Malby, in my name deliver it,
And I will stay thy answer.

Mal. Fair mistress, as I understand your grief
Doth grow from want, so I have here in store

A means to furnish you, a bag of gold,

46

Which to your hands I freely tender you.

Susan. I thank you, Heavens! I thank you,
gentle sir:
God make me able to requite this favour!

Mal. This gold Sir Francis Acton sends by

me,

50

And prays you ——

Susan. Acton? O God! That name I'm born
to curse.
Hence, bawd; hence, broker! See, I spurn his
gold.
My honour never shall for gain be sold.

Sir F. Stay, lady, stay!

Susan. From you I'll posting hie,

55

Even as the doves from feather'd eagles fly.

Exit.

Sir F. She hates my name, my face; how
should I woo?
I am disgrac'd in every thing I do.
The more she hates me, and disdains my love,

The more I am rapt in admiration 60

Of her divine and chaste perfections.
Woo her with gifts I cannot, for all gifts
Sent in my name she spurns; with looks I cannot,
For she abhors my sight; nor yet with letters,
For none she will receive. How then? how then?

Well, I will fasten such a kindness on her, 66

As shall o'ercome her hate and conquer it.
Sir Charles, her brother, lies in execution
For a great sum of money; and, besides,
The appeal is sued still for my huntsmen's

death, 70

Which only I have power to reverse.
In her I'll bury all my hate of him. —
Go seek the Keeper, Malby, bring him to me!

To save his body, I his debts will pay; 74

To save his life, I his appeal will stay.
[*Exeunt.*]

[ACT IV]

[SCENE I.] ²

*Enter SIR CHARLES [MOUNTFORD], in prison,
with irons, his feet bare, his garments all ragged
and torn.*

Sir F. Of all on the earth's face most miserable,
Breathe in this hellish dungeon thy laments!

Thus like a slave ragg'd, like a felon gyv'd, —
That hurls thee headlong to this base estate.

Oh, unkind uncle! Oh, my friends ingrate! 5

Unthankful kinsmen! Mountford 's all too base,
To let thy name be fetter'd in disgrace.
A thousand deaths here in this grave I die;
Fear, hunger, sorrow, cold, all threat my death,

And join together to deprive my breath. 10

But that which most torments me, my dear
sister
Hath left ³ to visit me, and from my friends
Hath brought no hopeful answer; therefore, I
Divine they will not help my misery.

If it be so, shame, scandal, and contempt 15

Attend their covetous thoughts; need make
their graves!
Usurers they live, and may they die like slaves!

Enter Keeper.

Keep. Knight, be of comfort, for I bring thee
freedom
From all thy troubles.

Sir C. Then, I am doom'd to die:

Death is the end of all calamity. 20

Keep. Live! Your appeal is stay'd; the execution
Of all your debts discharg'd; your creditors
Even to the utmost penny satisfied.

¹ Rioting.

² York Castle.

³ Ceased.

In sign whereof your shackles I knock off.

You are not left so much indebted to us 25

As for your fees; all is discharg'd; all paid.
Go freely to your house, or where you please;
After long miseries, embrace your ease.

Sir C. Thou grumblest out the sweetest
music to me

That ever organ play'd. — Is this a dream? 30

Or do my waking senses apprehend
The pleasing taste of these applausive ¹ news?
Slave that I was, to wrong such honest friends,

My loving kinsman, and my near allies! 34

Tongue, I will bite thee for the scandal breath'd
Against such faithful kinsmen; they are all
Compos'd of pity and compassion,
Of melting charity and of moving ruth.
That which I spoke before was in my rage;

They are my friends, the mirrors of this age; 40

Bounteous and free. The noble Mountford's
race
Ne'er bred a covetous thought, or humour base.

Enter SUSAN.

Susan. I cannot longer stay from visiting
My woful brother. While I could, I kept

My hapless tidings from his hopeful ear. 45

Sir C. Sister, how much am I indebted to
thee
And to thy travail!

Susan. What, at liberty?

Sir C. Thou seest I am, thanks to thy industry.

Oh! Unto which of all my friends

Am I thus bound? My uncle Mountford, he 50

Even of an infant lov'd me; was it he?

So did my cousin Tidy; was it he?

So Master Roder, Master Sandy, too.

Which of all these did this high kindness do?

Susan. Charles, can you mock me in your

poverty, 55

Knowing your friends deride your misery?

Now, I protest I stand so much amaz'd,

To see your bonds free, and your irons knock'd
off

That I am rapt into a maze of wonder;

The rather for I know not by what means 60

This happiness hath chanc'd.

Sir C. Why, by my uncle,
My cousins, and my friends; who else, I pray,
Would take upon them all my debts to pay?

Susan. Oh, brother! they are men [made] all
of flint,

Pictures of marble, and as void of pity 65

As chased bears. I begg'd, I sued, I kneel'd,

Laid open all your griefs and miseries,

Which they derided; more than that, deni'd us

A part in their alliance; but, in pride,

Said that our kindred with our plenty died. 70

Sir C. Drudges too much,² — what did they?

Oh, known evil!

Rich fly the poor, as good men shun the devil.

Whence should my freedom come? Of whom

alive,
Saving of those, have I deserv'd so well?

Guess, sister, call to mind, remember me! 75

These have I rais'd, they follow the world's
guise,
Whom rich [they] ³ honour, they in woe despise.

Susan. My wits have lost themselves; let's
ask the keeper!

Sir C. Gaoler!

Keep. At hand, sir. 80

Sir C. Of courtesy resolve me one demand!
What was he took the burden of my debts
From off my back, staid my appeal to death,
Discharg'd my fees, and brought me liberty?

Keep. A courteous knight, one call'd Sir

Francis Acton. 85

Sir C. Ha! Acton!! Oh me! More distress'd
in this
Than all my troubles! Hale me back,
Double my irons, and my sparing meals
Put into halves, and lodge me in a dungeon
More deep, more dark, more cold, more com-

fortless! 90

By Acton freed! Not all thy manacles
Could fetter so my heels, as this one word
Hath thrall'd my heart; and it must now lie
bound
In more strict prison than thy stony gaol.

I am not free, I go but under bail. 95

Keep. My charge is done, sir, now I have my
fees.

As we get little, we will nothing leese. ⁴

Sir C. By Acton freed, my dangerous opposite!

Why, to what end? On what occasion? Ha!

Let me forget the name of enemy, 100

And with indifference balance ⁵ this high favour!

Ha!

Susan. [*Aside.*] His love to me, upon my soul,
't is so!

That is the root from whence these strange
things grow.

Sir C. Had this proceeded from my father, he

That by the law of Nature is most bound 106

In offices of love, it had deserv'd
My best employment to requite that grace.

Had it proceeded from my friends, or him, 109

From them this action had deserv'd my life, —
And from a stranger more, because from such
There is less execution ⁶ of good deeds.
But he, nor father, nor ally, nor friend,
More than a stranger, both remote in blood,

And in his heart oppos'd my enemy, 115

That this high bounty should proceed from
him, —

Oh! there I lose myself. What should I say,
What think, what do, his bounty to repay?

Susan. You wonder, I am sure, whence this
strange kindness

Proceeds in Acton; I will tell you, brother. 120

He dotes on me, and oft hath sent me gifts,

Letters, and tokens; I refus'd them all.

Sir C. I have enough, though poor: my heart
is set,

In one rich gift to pay back all my debt.

Exeunt.

¹ Joyful.

² Too base in their conduct. (Ward.)

³ Ed. conj. Qq. *in.*

⁴ Lose.

⁵ Weigh impartially.

⁶ Verity emends to *expectation*.

[SCENE II. ¹]

*Enter FRANKFORD and NICHOLAS, with keys
and a letter in his hand.*

Frank. This is the night that I must play my part,
To try two seeming angels. — Where 's my keys?

Nich. They are made according to your
mould in wax.

I bade the smith be secret, gave him money,

And here they are. The letter, sir!

5

Frank. True, take it, there it is;
And when thou seest me in my pleasant'st vein,
Ready to sit to supper, bring it me!

Nich. I'll do 't; make no more question, but
I'll do it. *Exit.*

*Enter MISTRESS FRANKFORD, CRANWELL,
WENDOLL, and JENKIN.*

Mrs. F. Sirrah, 't is six o'clock already
struck;
Go bid them spread the cloth, and serve in

supper!

Jen. It shall be done, forsooth, mistress.
Where's Spigot, the butler, to give us out salt

and trenchers?

14

Wen. We that have been a hunting all the day,
Come with prepared stomachs. — Master Frank-
ford,
We wish'd you at our sport.

Frank. My heart was with you, and my mind
was on you. —
Fie, Master Cranwell! You are still thus sad. —
A stool, a stool! Where's Jenkin, and where's

Nick?

20

'T is supper time at least an hour ago.
What's the best news abroad?

Wen. I know none good.

Frank. [*Aside.*] But I know too much bad.

*Enter Butler and JENKIN, with a table-cloth,
bread, trenchers, and salt ; [then exeunt.]*

Cran. Methinks, Sir, you might have that
interest ²

In your wife's brother, to be more remiss ³

25

In his hard dealing against poor Sir Charles,
Who, as I hear, lies in York Castle, needy
And in great want.

Frank. Did not more weighty business of
mine own

Hold me away, I would have labour'd peace

30

Betwixt them with all care; indeed I would,

sir.

Mrs. F. I'll write unto my brother earnestly
In that behalf.

Wen. A charitable deed,
And will beget the good opinion
Of all your friends that love you, Mistress

Frankford.

35

Frank. That's you, for one; I know you
love Sir Charles,
[*Aside.*] And my wife too, well.

Wen. He deserves the love
Of all true gentlemen; be yourselves judge!

Frank. But supper, ho! — Now, as thou

lov'st me, Wendoll,

39

Which I am sure thou dost, be merry, pleasant,
And frolic it to-night! — Sweet Mr. Cranwell,
Do you the like! — Wife, I protest, my heart
Was ne'er more bent on sweet alacrity.
Where be those lazy knaves to serve in supper?

Enter NICHOLAS.

Nich. Here's a letter, Sir.

Frank. Whence comes it, and who brought it?

Nich. A stripling that below attends your

answer,

45

And, as he tells me, it is sent from York.

Frank. Have him into the cellar, let him taste
A cup of our March beer; go, make him drink!

Nich. I'll make him drunk, if he be a Tro-

jan.⁴

50

Frank. [after reading, the letter.] My boots
and spurs! Where's Jenkin? God forgive
me,
How I neglect my business! — Wife, look here!
I have a matter to be tri'd to-morrow
By eight o'clock; and my attorney writes me,

I must be there betimes with evidence,

55

Or it will go against me. Where's my boots?

Enter JENKIN, with boots and spurs.

Mrs. F. I hope your business craves no such
despatch,
That you must ride to-night?

Wen. [Aside.] I hope it doth.

Frank. God's me! No such despatch?
Jenkin, my boots! Where's Nick? Saddle my

roan,

60

And the grey dapple for himself! — Content ye,
It much concerns me. — Gentle Master Cran-
well,
And Master Wendoll, in my absence use
The very ripest pleasure of my house!

Wen. Lord! Master Frankford, will you ride

to-night?

65

The ways are dangerous.

Frank. Therefore will I ride
Appointed ⁵ well; and so shall Nick, my man.

Mrs. F. I'll call you up by five o'clock to-
morrow.

Frank. No, by my faith, wife, I'll not trust

to that:

'T is not such easy rising in a morning

From one I love so dearly. No, by my faith,
I shall not leave so sweet a bedfellow,
But with much pain. You have made me a
 sluggard
Since I first knew you.

Mrs. F. Then, if you needs will go

This dangerous evening, Master Wendoll,

Let me entreat you bear him company.

Wen. With all my heart, sweet mistress. —
My boots, there!

Frank. Fie, fie, that for my private business
I should disease⁶ a friend, and be a trouble
To the whole house! — Nick!

¹ Frankford's house.

² Influence with.

³ Less severe.

⁴ Good fellow.

5 Armed.

⁶ Cause discomfort to.

Nich. Anon, Sir!

Frank. Bring forth my gelding! — As you
love me, Sir,
Use no more words: a hand, good Master Cran-
well!

Cran. Sir, God be your good speed!

Frank. Good night, sweet Nan; nay, nay, a
kiss, and part!

[*Aside.*] Dissembling lips, you suit not with my
heart.

85

Exeunt [FRANKFORD and NICHOLAS]

Wen. [*Aside.*] How business, time, and hours,
all gracious prove,
And are the furtherers to my new-born love!
I am husband now in Master Frankford's place,
And must command the house. — My pleasure
is

We will not sup abroad so publicly,

90

But in your private chamber, Mistress Frank-
ford.

Mrs. F. Oh, Sir! you are too public in your love,
And Master Frankford's wife —

Cran. Might I crave favour,
I would entreat you I might see my chamber.

I am on the sudden grown exceeding ill,

95

And would be spar'd from supper.

Wen. Light there, ho! —
See you want nothing, sir, for if you do,
You injure that good man, and wrong me too.

Cran. I will make bold; good night! [*Exit.*]

Wen. How all conspire

To make our bosom ¹ sweet, and full entire!

100

Come, Nan, I pr'ythee, let us sup within!

Mrs. F. O ! what a clog unto the soul is sin!
We pale offenders are still full of fear;
Every suspicious eye brings danger near;
When they, whose clear hearts from offence

are free,

105

Despise report, base scandals do outface,
And stand at mere defiance with disgrace.

Wen. Fie, fie! You talk too like a puritan.

Mrs. F. You have tempted me to mischief,
Master Wendoll:
I have done I know not what. Well, you plead

custom;

110

That which for want of wit I granted erst,
I now must yield through fear. Come, come,
let's in;
Once over shoes, we are straight o'er head in sin.

Wen. My jocund soul is joyful beyond meas-

ure;

114

I'll be profuse in Frankford's richest treasure.
Exeunt.

[SCENE III.] ²

Enter CICELY, JENKIN, Butler, *and other* Serving-men.

Jen. My mistress and Master Wendoll, my
master, sup in her chamber to-night. Cicely,
you are preferr'd, from being the cook, to be
chambermaid. Of all the loves betwixt thee and

me, tell me what thou think'st of this?

5

Cic. Mum; there's an old proverb, — when
the cat's away, the mouse may play.

Jen. Now you talk of a cat, Cicely, I smell a
rat.

Cic. Good words, Jenkin, lest you be call'd

10

to answer them!

Jen. Why, God make my mistress an honest woman! Are not these good words? Pray God my new master play not the knave with my old

master! Is there any hurt in this? God send 15

no villainy intended; and if they do sup together, pray God they do not lie together! God make my mistress chaste, and make us all His servants! What harm is there in all this? Nay,

more; here in my hand, thou shalt never have 20

my heart, unless thou say, Amen.

Cic. Amen; I pray God, I say.

Enter Serving-man.

Serving-man. My mistress sends that you should make less noise. So, lock up the doors,

and see the household all got to bed! You, 25

Jenkin, for this night are made the porter, to see the gates shut in.

Jen. Thus by little and little I creep into office. Come, to kennel, my masters, to kennel;

't is eleven o'clock already. 30

Serving-man. When you have lock'd the gates in, you must send up the keys to my mistress.

Cic. Quickly, for God's sake, Jenkin; for I must carry them. I am neither pillow nor bol-

ster, but I know more than both. 35

Jen. To bed, good Spigot; to bed, good hon-

est serving-creatures; and let us sleep as snug
as pigs in pease-straw! *Exeunt.*

[SCENE IV.] ³

Enter FRANKFORD and NICHOLAS.

Frank. Soft, soft! We've tied our geldings
to a tree,
Two flight-shot ⁴ off, lest by their thundering
hoofs
They blab our coming back. Hear'st thou no
noise?

Nich. Hear? I hear nothing but the owl and
you.

Frank. So; now my watch's hand points upon
twelve,

5

And it is dead midnight. Where are my keys?

Nich. Here, sir.

Frank. This is the key that opes my outward
gate;
This, the hall-door; this, the withdrawing-
chamber;
But this, that door that's bawd unto my shame,
Fountain and spring of all my bleeding thoughts,
Where the most hallowed order and true knot
Of nuptial sanctity hath been profan'd.
It leads to my polluted bed-chamber,
Once my terrestrial heaven, now my earth's

hell,

15

The place where sins in all their ripeness
dwell. —
But I forget myself; now to my gate!

Nich. It must ope with far less noise than
Cripplegate, or your plot's dash'd.

-
- ¹ Intimacy.
² Another part of the house.
³ Outside the house.
⁴ Bow-shots.

500

Frank. So; reach me my dark lantern to the

rest! 20

Tread softly, softly!

Nich. I will walk on eggs this pace.

Frank. A general silence hath surpris'd the
house,

And this is the last door. Astonishment,
Fear, and amazement, beat upon my heart,

Even as a madman beats upon a drum. 25

Oh, keep my eyes, you Heavens, before I enter,
From any sight that may transfix my soul;
Or, if there be so black a spectacle,
Oh, strike mine eyes stark blind; or if not so,

Lend me such patience to digest my grief, 30

That I may keep this white and virgin hand
From any violent outrage, or red murder! —
And with that prayer I enter.

[*Exeunt into the house.*]

[SCENE V.] ¹

[*Enter NICHOLAS.*]

Nich. Here's a circumstance! ²
A man may be made cuckold in the time
That he's about it. An the case were mine,
As't is my master's, 'sblood! (that he makes me

swear!),

4

I would have plac'd his action, ³ enter'd there;
I would, I would!

[Enter FRANKFORD.]

Frank. Oh! oh!

Nich. Master! 'Sblood! Master, master!

Frank. Oh me unhappy! I have found them
lying

Close in each other's arms, and fast asleep.

9

But that I would not damn two precious souls,
Bought with my Saviour's blood, and send them,
laden
With all their scarlet sins upon their backs,
Unto a fearful judgment, their two lives
Had met upon my rapier.

Nich. Master, what, have you left them sleep-
ing still?

15

Let me go wake 'em!

Frank. Stay, let me pause awhile! —
Oh, God! Oh, God! That it were possible
To undo things done; to call back yesterday;
That Time could turn up his swift sandy glass,
To untell ⁴ the days, and to redeem these hours!

Or that the sun

21

Could, rising from the west, draw his coach
backward;
Take from th' account of time so many minutes,
Till he had all these seasons call'd again,
Those minutes, and those actions done in them,
Even from her first offence; that I might take

her

26

As spotless as an angel in my arms!
But, oh! I talk of things impossible,
And cast beyond the moon. God give me
 patience;
For I will in, and wake them. *Exit.*

Nich. Here's patience perforce! 30

He needs must trot afoot that tires his horse.
 [Exit.]

Enter WENDOLL, running over the stage in a night-gown, ⁵ FRANKFORD after him with his sword drawn ; a maid in her smock stays his hand, and clasps hold on him. He pauses for a while.

Frank. I thank thee, maid; thou, like the
 angel's hand,
Hast stay'd me from a bloody sacrifice. —
Go, villain; and my wrongs sit on thy soul

As heavy as this grief doth upon mine! 35

When thou record'st my many courtesies,
And shalt compare them with thy treacherous
 heart,
Lay them together, weigh them equally, —
'T will be revenge enough. Go, to thy friend

A Judas; pray, pray, lest I live to see 40

Thee, Judas-like, hang'd on an elder-tree!

Enter MISTRESS FRANKFORD in her smock, night-gown, and night-attire.

Mrs. F. Oh, by what word, what title, or
 what name,
Shall I entreat your pardon? Pardon! Oh!
I am as far from hoping such sweet grace,
As Lucifer from Heaven. To call you hus-

band, — 45

(Oh me, most wretched!) I have lost that name;
I am no more your wife.

Nich. 'Sblood, Sir, she swoons.

Frank. Spare thou thy tears, for I will weep
for thee;
And keep thy count'nance, for I'll blush for
thee.

Now, I protest, I think 't is I am tainted, 50

For I am most asham'd; and 't is more hard
For me to look upon thy guilty face
Than on the sun's clear brow. What! Would'st
thou speak?

Mrs. F. I would I had no tongue, no ears, no
eyes,

No apprehension, no capacity. 55

When do you spurn me like a dog? When tread
me
Under feet? When drag me by the hair?
Though I deserve a thousand, thousand fold,
More than you can inflict — yet, once my hus-
band,

For womanhood, to which I am a shame, 60

Though once an ornament — even for His sake,
That hath redeem'd our souls, mark not my
face,
Nor hack me with your sword; but let me go
Perfect and undeformed to my tomb!

I am not worthy that I should prevail 65

In the least suit; no, not to speak to you,
Nor look on you, nor to be in your presence;
Yet, as an abject, ⁶ this one suit I crave; —
This granted, I am ready for my grave.

Frank. My God, with patience arm me! —

Rise, nay, rise,

70

And I'll debate with thee. Was it for want

¹ The hall of the house. Note that in the Qq. these scenes are continuous.

² Delay.

³ Established his case. (Ward.)

⁴ Count backwards.

⁵ Dressing-gown.

⁶ Outcast.

501

Thou play'dst the strumpet? Wast thou not suppli'd
With every pleasure, fashion, and new toy, —
Nay, even beyond my calling? ¹

Mrs. F. I was.

Frank. Was it, then, disability in me;

75

Or in thine eye seem'd he a properer man?

Mrs. F. Oh, no!

Frank. Did I not lodge thee in my bosom?
Wear thee here in my heart?

Mrs. F. You did.

Frank. I did, indeed; witness my tears, I
did —
Go, bring my infants hither! —

[*Two Children are brought in.*]

Oh, Nan! Oh, Nan!

If neither fear of shame, regard of honour,

81

The blemish of my house, nor my dear love,

Could have withheld thee from so lewd a fact;
Yet for these infants, these young, harmless

souls,

84

On whose white brows thy shame is character'd,
And grows in greatness as they wax in years, —
Look but on them, and melt away in tears! —
Away with them; lest, as her spotted body
Hath stain'd their names with stripe of bas-
tardy,
So her adulterous breath may blast their spirits
With her infectious thoughts! Away with

them!

[*Exeunt Children.*]

91

Mrs. F. In this one life, I die ten thousand
deaths.

Frank. Stand up, stand up! I will do nothing
rashly.
I will retire awhile into my study,
And thou shalt hear thy sentence presently.
Exit.

Mrs. F. 'T is welcome, be it death. Oh me,

base strumpet,

96

That, having such a husband, such sweet chil-
dren,
Must enjoy neither! Oh, to redeem mine hon-
our,
I'd have this hand cut off, these my breasts
sear'd;

Be rack'd, strappado'd, put to any torment:

100

Nay, to whip but this scandal out, I'd hazard
The rich and dear redemption of my soul!
He cannot be so base as to forgive me,
Nor I so shameless to accept his pardon.

Oh, women, women, you that yet have kept

105

Your holy matrimonial vow unstain'd,
Make me your instance; when you tread awry,
Your sins, like mine, will on your conscience
lie.

*Enter CICELY, SPIGOT, all the Serving-men, and
JENKIN, as newly come out of bed.*

All. Oh, mistress, mistress! What have you
done, mistress?

Nich. 'Sblood, what a caterwauling keep you
here!

110

Jen. O Lord, mistress, how comes this to
pass? My master is run away in his shirt, and
never so much as call'd me to bring his clothes
after him.

Mrs. F. See what guilt is! Here stand I in
this place,

115

Asham'd to look my servants in the face.

*Enter FRANKFORD and CRANWELL; whom see-
ing, she falls on her knees.*

Frank. My words are regist'red in Heaven al-
ready.

With patience hear me! I'll not martyr thee,
Nor mark thee for a strumpet; but with usage

Of more humility torment thy soul,

120

And kill thee even with kindness.

Cran. Master Frankford ——

Frank. Good Master Cranwell! — Woman,
hear thy judgment!

Go make thee ready in thy best attire;

124

Take with thee all thy gowns, all thy apparel;
Leave nothing that did ever call thee mistress,
Or by whose sight, being left here in the house,
I may remember such a woman by.
Choose thee a bed and hangings for thy chamber;
Take with thee every thing which hath thy
mark,

130

And get thee to my manor seven mile off,
Where live; — 't is thine; I freely give it thee.
My tenants by ² shall furnish thee with wains
To carry all thy stuff within two hours;

No longer will I limit ³ thee my sight.

135

Choose which of all my servants thou lik'st
best,
And they are thine to attend thee.

Mrs. F. A mild sentence.

Frank. But, as thou hop'st for Heaven, as
thou believ'st
Thy name's recorded in the book of life,

I charge thee never after this sad day

140

To see me, or to meet me; or to send,
By word or writing, gift or otherwise,
To move me, by thyself, or by thy friends;
Nor challenge any part in my two children.

So farewell, Nan; for we will henceforth be

145

As we had never seen, ne'er more shall see.

Mrs. F. How full my heart is, in mine eyes
appears;
What wants in words, I will supply in tears.
Frank, Come, take your coach, your stuff;
all must along.

Servants and all make ready; all begone!

150

It was thy hand cut two hearts out of one.

[*Exeunt.*]

[ACT V]

[SCENE I.] ⁴

Enter Sir CHARLES MOUNTFORD, gentleman-like, and his Sister, gentlewoman-like.

Susan. Brother, why have you trick'd ⁵ me
like a bride,

Bought me this gay attire, these ornaments?

Forget you our estate, our poverty?

¹ Rank.

² Nearby.

³ Permit.

⁴ Before Sir Francis Acton's house.

⁵ Dressed.

502

Sir C. Call me not brother, but imagine me

Some barbarous outlaw, or uncivil kern; ¹

5

For if thou shutt'st thine eye, and only hear'st
The words that I shall utter, thou shalt judge me
Some staring ruffian, not thy brother Charles.
Oh, sister! ——

Susan. Oh, brother! what doth this strange

language mean?

10

Sir C. Dost love me, sister? Wouldst thou
see me live

A bankrupt beggar in the world's disgrace,
And die indebted to mine enemies?
Wouldst thou behold me stand like a huge beam

In the world's eye, a bye-word and a scorn? 15

It lies in thee of these to acquit me free,
And all my debt I may outstrip by thee.

Susan. By me? Why, I have, nothing, nothing
left;
I owe even for the clothes upon my back;
I am not worth ——

Sir C. O sister, say not so! 20

It lies in you my downcast state to raise;
To make me stand on even points with the
world.
Come, sister, you are rich; indeed you are,
And in your power you have, without delay

Acton's five hundred pounds back to repay. 25

Susan. Till now I had thought you lov'd me.
By my honour
(Which I have kept as spotless as the moon),
I ne'er was mistress of that single doit ²
Which I reserv'd not to supply your wants;
And do you think that I would hoard from
you?
Now, by my hopes in Heaven, know I the
means
To buy you from the slavery of your debts
(Especially from Acton, whom I hate),

I would redeem it with my life or blood! 34

Sir C. I challenge it, and, kindred set apart,
Thus, ruffian-like, I lay siege to thy heart.
What do I owe to Acton?

Susan. Why, some five hundred pounds; to-
wards which, I swear,

In all the world I have not one denier. ³

Sir C. It will not prove so. Sister, now re-

solve ⁴ me:

40

What do you think (and speak your conscience)
Would Acton give, might he enjoy your bed?

Susan. He would not shrink to spend a thou-
sand pound
To give the Mountfords' name so deep a wound.

Sir C. A thousand pound ! I but five hundred

owe:

45

Grant him your bed; he's paid with interest so.

Susan. Oh, brother!

Sir C. Oh, sister I only this one way,
With that rich jewel you my debts may pay.
In speaking this my cold heart shakes with
shame;

Nor do I woo you in a brother's name,

50

But in a stranger's. Shall I die in debt
To Acton, my grand foe, and you still wear
The precious jewel that he holds so dear?

Susan. My honour I esteem as dear and pre-
cious
As my redemption.

Sir C. I esteem you, sister,

55

As dear, for so dear prizing it.

Susan. Will Charles
Have me cut off my hands, and send them
Acton?
Rip up my breast, and with my bleeding heart

Present him as a token?

Sir C. Neither, sister;

But hear me in my strange assertion! 60

Thy honour and my soul are equal in my re-
gard;
Nor will thy brother Charles survive thy shame.
His kindness, like a burden, hath surcharg'd
me,
And under his good deeds I stooping go,

Not with an upright soul. Had I remain'd 65

In prison still, there doubtless I had died.
Then, unto him that freed me from that
prison
Still do I owe this life. What mov'd my foe
To enfranchise me? 'T was, sister, for your
love;
With full five hundred pounds he bought your

love; — 70

And shall he not enjoy it? Shall the weight
Of all this heavy burden lean on me,
And will not you bear part? You did partake
The joy of my release; will you not stand

In joint-bond bound to satisfy the debt? 75

Shall I be only charg'd?

Susan. But that I know
These arguments come from an honour'd mind,
As in your most extremity of need
Scorning to stand in debt to one you hate, —
Nay, rather would engage your unsustain'd

honour, 80

Than to be held ingrate, — I should condemn
you.

I see your resolution, and assent;

So Charles will have me, and I am content.

Sir C. For this I trick'd ⁵ you up.

Susan. But here's a knife,

To save mine honour, shall slice out my life. 85

Sir C. I know thou pleasest me a thousand
times

More in that resolution than thy grant. —
Observe her love; to soothe it to my suit,
Her honour she will hazard, though not lose;

To bring me out of debt, her rigorous hand 90

Will pierce her heart, — O wonder! — that will
choose,

Rather than stain her blood, her life to lose.
Come, you sad sister to a woful brother,
This is the gate. I'll bear him such a present,

Such an acquittance for the knight to seal, 95

As will amaze his senses, and surprise
With admiration all his fantasies.

Enter SIR FRANCIS ACTON and MALBY.

Susan. Before his unchaste thoughts shall
seize on me,
'T is here shall my imprison'd soul set free.

¹ A Celtic foot-soldier; often used in contempt.

² A small coin.

³ Penny.

⁴ Tell.

⁵ Dressed finely.

Sir F. How! Mountford with his sister, hand

in hand!

100

What miracle's afoot?

Mal. It is a sight
Begets in me much admiration.¹

Sir C. Stand not amaz'd to see me thus at-
tended!
Acton, I owe thee money, and, being unable

To bring thee the full sum in ready coin,

105

Lo! for thy more assurance, here's a pawn, —
My sister, my dear sister, whose chaste honour
I prize above a million. Here! Nay, take her;
She's worth your money, man; do not forsake
her.

Sir F. I would he were in earnest!

110

Susan. Impute it not to my immodesty.
My brother, being rich in nothing else
But in his interest that he hath in me,

According to his poverty hath brought you.

114

Me, all his store; whom, howsoe'er you prize,
As forfeit to your hand, he values highly,
And would not sell, but to acquit your debt,
For any emperor's ransom.

Sir F. Stern heart, relent,
Thy former cruelty at length repent!

Was ever known, in any former age,

120

Such honourable, wrested courtesy?
Lands, honours, life, and all the world forego,
Rather than stand engag'd to such a foe!

Sir C. Acton, she is too poor to be thy bride,

And I too much oppos'd to be thy brother.

125

There, take her to thee; if thou hast the heart
To seize her as a rape, or lustful prey;
To blur our house, that never yet was stain'd;
To murder her that never meant thee harm;
To kill me now, whom once thou sav'dst from

death: —

130

Do them at once; on her all these rely,
And perish with her spotless chastity.

Sir F. You overcome me in your love, Sir
Charles.
I cannot be so cruel to a lady

I love so dearly. Since you have not spar'd

135

To engage your reputation to the world,
Your sister's honour, which you prize so dear,
Nay, all the comforts which you hold on earth,
To grow out of my debt, being your foe, —
Your honour'd thoughts, lo! thus I recompense.

Your metamorphos'd foe receives your gift

141

In satisfaction of all former wrongs.
This jewel I will wear here in my heart;
And where before I thought her, for her wants,

Too base to be my bride, to end all strife,

145

I seal you my dear brother, her my wife.

Susan. You still exceed us. I will yield to fate,
And learn to love, where I till now did hate.

Sir C. With that enchantment you have
charm'd my soul

And made me rich even in those very words!

150

I pay no debt, but am indebted more;
Rich in your love, I never can be poor.

Sir F. All's mine is yours; we are alike in
state;
Let's knit in love what was oppos'd in hate!
Come, for our nuptials we will straight provide,

Blest only in our brother and fair bride.

156

[*Exeunt.*]

[SCENE II.] ²

Enter CRANWELL, FRANKFORD, *and* NICHOLAS.

Cran. Why do you search each room about
your house,
Now that you have despatch'd your wife away?

Frank. Oh, sir! To see that nothing may be
left
That ever was my wife's. I lov'd her dearly;

And when I do but think of her unkindness,

5

My thoughts are all in hell; to avoid which tor-
ment,
I would not have a bodkin or a cuff,
A bracelet, necklace, or rabato wire,³
Nor anything that ever was call'd hers,

Left me, by which I might remember her. —

10

Seek round about.

Nich. 'Sblood ! master, here's her lute flung
in a corner.

Frank. Her lute! Oh, God! Upon this in-
strument
Her fingers have rung quick division,⁴
Sweeter than that which now divides our

hearts.

15

These frets have made me pleasant,⁵ that have
now

Frets of my heart-strings made. Oh, Master
Cranwell,
Oft hath she made this melancholy wood
(Now mute and dumb for her disastrous chance)
Speak sweetly many a note, sound many a

strain

20

To her own ravishing voice; which being well
strung,
What pleasant strange airs have they jointly
sung! —
Post with it after her! — Now nothing's left;
Of her and hers I am at once bereft.

Nich. I'll ride and overtake her; do my

message,

25

And come back again. *[Exit.]*

Cran. Meantime, sir, if you please,
I'll to Sir Francis Acton, and inform him
Of what hath past betwixt you and his sister.

Frank. Do as you please. — How ill am I be-
sted,

To be a widower ere my wife be dead!

30

[Exeunt.]

[SCENE III.] ¹

Enter MISTRESS FRANKFORD; *with* JENKIN,
her maid CICELY, *her* Coachmen, *and three*
Carters.

Mrs. F. Bid my coach stay! Why should I
ride in state,
Being hurl'd so low down by the hand of fate?
A seat like to my fortunes let me have, —
Earth for my chair, and for my bed a grave!

Jen. Comfort, good mistress; you have

5

watered your coach with tears already. You
have but two miles now to go to your manor.

¹ Wonder.

² Frankford's house.

³ Wire used to support a ruff.

⁴ Variation.

⁵ Merry.

⁶ Road near Mistress Frankford's manor.

504

A man cannot say by my old master Frankford
as he may say by me, that he wants manors;
for he hath three or four, of which this is one

that we are going to now.

11

Cic. Good mistress, be of good cheer! Sorrow,
you see, hurts you, but helps you not; we all
mourn to see you so sad.

Carter. Mistress, I spy one of my landlord's

men

15

Come riding post : 't is like he brings some news.

Mrs. F. Comes he from Master Frankford, he
is welcome;
So is his news, because they come from him.

Enter NICHOLAS.

Nich. There!

Mrs. F. I know the lute. Oft have I sung to

thee;

20

We both are out of tune, both out of time.

Nich. Would that had been the worst instrument that e'er you played on! My master commends him to ye; there's all he can find was ever yours; he hath nothing left that ever you

could lay claim to but his own heart, — and

26

he could afford you that! All that I have to deliver you is this: he prays you to forget him;

and so he bids you farewell.

29

Mrs. F. I thank him; he is kind, and ever was.
All you that have true feeling of my grief,
That know my loss, and have relenting hearts,
Gird me about, and help me with your tears
To wash my spotted sins! My lute shall groan;

It cannot weep, but shall lament my moan.

35

[*She plays.*]

Enter WENDOLL [behind].

Wen. Pursu'd with horror of a guilty soul,
And with the sharp scourge of repentance
lash'd,
I fly from mine own shadow. O my stars!

What have my parents in their lives deserv'd,

39

That you should lay this penance on their son?
When I but think of Master Frankford's love,
And lay it to my treason, or compare
My murdering him for his relieving me,
It strikes a terror like a lightning's flash,

To scorch my blood up. Thus I, like the owl,

45

Asham'd of day, live in these shadowy woods,
Afraid of every leaf or murmuring blast,
Yet longing to receive some perfect knowledge
How he hath dealt with her. [*Seeing MISTRESS FRANKFORD.*] O my sad fate!

Here, and so far from home, and thus attended!

Oh, God! I have divorc'd the truest turtles 51

That ever liv'd together, and, being divided,
In several places make their several moan;
She in the fields laments, and he at home;

So poets write that Orpheus made the trees 55

And stories to dance to his melodious harp,
Meaning the rustic and the barbarous hinds,
That had no understanding part in them:
So she from these rude carters tears extracts,

Making their flinty hearts with grief to rise, 60

And draw down rivers from their rocky eyes.

Mrs. F. [*to* NICHOLAS] If you return unto
my master, say
(Though not from me, for I am all unworthy
To blast his name so with a strumpet's tongue)
That you have seen me weep, wish myself

dead! 65

Nay, you may say, too (for my vow is past),¹
Last night you saw me eat and drink my last.
This to your master you may say and swear;
For it is writ in heaven, and decreed here.

Nich. I'll say you wept; I'll swear you made

me sad. 70

Why, how now, eyes? What now? What's
here to do?

I'm gone, or I shall straight turn baby too.

Wen. [*Aside.*] I cannot weep, my heart is all
on fire.

Curs'd be the fruits of my unchaste desire!

Mrs. F. Go, break this lute upon my coach's
wheel,

75

As the last music that I e'er shall make, —
Not as my husband's gift, but my farewell
To all earth's joy; and so your master tell!

Nich. If I can for crying.

Wen. [*Aside.*] Grief, have done,

Or, like a madman, I shall frantic run.

80

Mrs. F. You have beheld the wofull'st wretch
on earth, —
A woman made of tears; would you had words
To express but what you see! My inward grief
No tongue can utter; yet unto your power

You may describe my sorrow, and disclose

85

To thy sad master my abundant woes.

Nich. I'll do your commendations.²

Mrs. F. Oh, no!
I dare not so presume; nor to my children!
I am disclaim'd in both; alas! I am.
Oh, never teach them, when they come to

peak,

90

To name the name of mother: chide their
tongue,
If they by chance light on that hated word;
Tell them 't is naught; for when that word
they name,
Poor, pretty souls! they harp on their own
shame.

Wen. [*Aside.*] To recompense their wrongs,

what canst thou do?

95

Thou hast made her husbandless, and childless
too.

Mrs. F. I have no more to say. — Speak not
for me;
Yet you may tell your master what you see.

Nich. I'll do't. *Exit.*

Wen. [*Aside.*] I'll speak to her, and comfort
her in grief.

100

Oh, but her wound cannot be cur'd with words!
No matter, though; I'll do my best good will
To work a cure on her whom I did kill.

Mrs. F. So, now unto my coach, then to my
home,

So to my death-bed; for from this sad hour,

105

I never will nor eat, nor drink, nor taste
Of any cates ³ that may preserve my life.
I never will nor smile, nor sleep, nor rest;
But when my tears have wash'd my black soul
white,
Sweet Saviour, to thy hands I yield my sprite.

¹ Sworn.

² Commands.

³ Food.

Wen. [*coming forward.*] Oh, Mistress Frank-
ford!

Mrs F. Oh, for God's sake, fly!

111

The devil doth come to tempt me, ere I die.
My coach! — This sin, that with an angel's

face
Conjur'd ¹ mine honour, till he sought my
wrack,

In my repentant eye seems ugly, black. 115

*Exeunt all [except WENDOLL and
JENKIN]; the Carters whistling.*

Jen. What, my young master, that fled
in his shirt! How come you by your clothes
again? You have made our house in a sweet
pickle, ha' ye not, think you? What, shall I

serve you still, or cleave to the old house? 120

Wen. Hence, slave! Away, with thy unsea-
son'd mirth!

Unless thou canst shed tears, and sigh, and
howl,

Curse thy sad fortunes, and exclaim on fate,
Thou art not for my turn.

Jen. Marry, an you will not, another will;

farewell, and be hang'd! Would you had 126

never come to have kept this coil ² within our
doors! We shall ha' you run away like a sprite
again. *[Exit.]*

Wen. She's gone to death; I live to want

and woe, 130

Her life, her sins, and all upon my head.
And I must now go wander, like a Cain,
In foreign countries and remotest climes,
Where the report of my ingratitude

Cannot be heard. I'll over first to France, 135

And so to Germany and Italy;
Where, when I have recovered, and by travel
Gotten those perfect tongues, ³ and that these
rumours

May in their height abate, I will return:

And I divine (however now dejected),

140

My worth and parts being by some great man
prais'd,

At my return I may in court be rais'd. *Exit.*

[SCENE IV.] ⁴

Enter SIR FRANCIS ACTON, SIR CHARLES
MOUNTFORD, CRANWELL, [MALBY,] *and*
SUSAN.

Sir F. Brother, and now my wife, I think
these troubles,
Fall on my head by justice of the heavens,
For being so strict to you in your extremi-
ties;
But we are now aton'd. I would my sister

Could with like happiness o'ercome her griefs

5

As we have ours.

Susan. You tell us, Master Cranwell, won-
drous things
Touching the patience of that gentleman,
With what strange virtue he demeans ⁵
his grief.

Cran. I told you what I was a witness of;

10

It was my fortune to lodge there that night.

Sir. F. Oh, that same villain, Wendoll!
'T was his tongue
That did corrupt her; she was of herself
Chaste and devoted well. ⁶ Is this the house?

Cran. Yes, sir; I take it, here your sister

lies. ⁷

15

Sir F. My brother Frankford show'd too

mild a spirit
In the revenge of such a loathed crime.
Less than he did, no man of spirit could do.
I am so far from blaming his revenge,

That I commend it. Had it been my case,

20

Their souls at once had from their breasts been
freed;
Death to such deeds of shame is the due meed.

Enter JENKIN and CICELY.

Jen. Oh, my mistress, mistress! my poor mis-
tress!

Cicely. Alas! that ever I was born; what

25

shall I do for my poor mistress?

Sir F. Why, what of her?

Jen. Oh, Lord, sir! she no sooner heard that
her brother and her friends had come to see

how she did, but she, for very shame of her

30

guilty conscience, fell into such a swoon, that
we had much ado to get life in her.

Susan. Alas, that she should bear so hard a
fate!

Pity it is repentance comes too late.

Sir F. Is she so weak in body?

35

Jen. Oh, sir! I can assure you there's no hope
of life in her; for she will take no sust'nance: she
hath plainly starv'd herself, and now she's as
lean as a lath. She ever looks for the good hour.

Many gentlemen and gentlewomen of the

40

country are come to comfort her.

[SCENE V.] ⁸

[SIR CHARLES MOUNTFORD, SIR FRANCIS AC-
TON, MALBY, CRANWELL, *and* SUSAN]

Enter MISTRESS FRANKFORD in her bed.

Mal. How fare you, Mistress Frankford?

Mrs. F. Sick, sick, oh, sick! Give me some
air, I pray you!
Tell me, oh, tell me, where is Master Frankford?
Will not he deign to see me ere I die?

Mal. Yes, Mistress Frankford; divers gentle-

men,

5

Your loving neighbours, with that just request
Have mov'd, and told him of your weak estate: ⁹
Who, though with much ado to get belief,
Examining of the general circumstance,

Seeing your sorrow and your penitence,

10

And hearing therewithal the great desire
You have to see him, ere you left the world,
He gave to us his faith to follow us,
And sure he will be here immediately.

¹ Enchanted, seduced.

² Made this trouble.

³ Acquired these languages perfectly.

⁴ Before the Manor House.

⁵ Conducts.

⁶ Dutiful.

⁷ Dwells.

⁸ The Manor House. The scene was really unchanged.

⁹ Condition.

[*Mrs. F.* You have half reviv'd me with the

pleasing news,

15

Raise me a little higher in my bed. —

Blush I not, brother Acton? Blush I not, Sir
Charles?

Can you not read my fault writ in my cheek?

Is not my crime there? Tell me, gentlemen.

Sir C. Alas, good mistress, sickness hath not

left you

20

Blood in yore face enough to make you blush.

Mrs. F. Then, sickness, like a friend, my
fault would hide. —

Is my husband come? My soul but tarries
His arrive; then I am fit for heaven.

Sir F. I came to chide you, but my words of

hate

25

Are turn'd to pity and compassionate grief.

I came to rate you, but my brawls, you see,

Melt into tears, and I must weep by thee. —

Here's Master Frankford now.

Enter FRANKFORD.

Frank. Good morrow, brother; morrow,

gentlemen!

30

God, that hath laid this cross upon our heads,
Might (had He pleas'd) have made our cause of
meeting

On a more fair and more contented ground;

But He that made us made us to this woe.

Mrs. F. And is he come? Methinks, that

voice I know.

35

Frank. How do you, woman?

Mrs. F. Well, Master Frankford, well; but
shall be better,
I hope within this hour. Will you vouchsafe,
Out of your grace and your humanity,

To take a spotted strumpet by the hand?

40

Frank. This hand once held my heart in
faster bonds,
Than now 't is gripp'd by me. God pardon
them
That made us first break hold!

Mrs. F. Amen, amen!
Out of my zeal to Heaven, whither I'm now
bound,

I was so impudent to wish you here;

45

And once more beg your pardon. O, good
man,
And father to my children, pardon me.
Pardon, oh, pardon me: my fault so heinous
is,
That if you in this world forgive it not,

Heaven will not clear it in the world to come.

50

Faintness hath so usurp'd upon my knees,
That kneel I cannot; but on my heart's knees
My prostrate soul lies thrown down at your
feet,
To beg your gracious pardon. Pardon, oh, par-
don me!

Frank. As freely, from the low depth of my
soul,

55

As my Redeemer hath forgiven His death,
I pardon thee. I will shed tears for thee;
pray with thee;

And, in mere pity of thy weak estate,
I'll wish to die with thee.

All. So do we all.

Nich. So will not I;
I'll sigh and sob, but, by my faith, not

die.

Sir F. Oh, Master Frankford, all the near
alliance
I lose by her, shall be suppli'd in thee.
You are my brother by the nearest way;
Her kindred hath fall'n off, but yours doth stay.

Frank. Even as I hope for pardon, at that
day

When the Great Judge of heaven in scarlet
sits,
So be thou pardon'd! Though thy rash of-
fence
Divorc'd our bodies, thy repentant tears
Unite our souls.

Sir C. Then comfort, Mistress Frankford!
You see your husband hath forgiven your

fall;

Then rouse your spirits, and cheer your fainting
soul!

Susan. How is it with you?

Sir F. How d'ye feel yourself?

Mrs. F. Not of this world.

Frank. I see you are not. and I weep to see
it.

My wife, the mother to my pretty babes!

Both those lost names I do restore thee back,
And with this kiss I wed thee once again.
Though thou art wounded in thy honour'd
name,
And with that grief upon thy death-bed liest,

Honest in heart, upon my soul, thou diest.

80

Mrs. F. Pardon'd on earth, soul, thou in
heaven art free;
Once more thy wife, dies thus embracing
thee.¹ [Dies.]

Frank. New-married, and new-widow'd. —
Oh! she's dead,
And a cold grave must be her nuptial bed.

Sir C. Sir, be of good comfort, and your

heavy sorrow

85

Part equally amongst us; storms divided
Abate their force, and with less rage are
guided.

Cran. Do, Master Frankford; he that hath
least part,
Will find enough to drown one troubled heart.

Sir. F. Peace with thee, Nan! — Brothers

and gentlemen,

90

All we that can plead interest in her grief,
Bestow upon her body funeral tears!
Brother, had you with threats and usage bad
Punish'd her sin, the grief of her offence
Had not with such true sorrow touch'd her

heart.

95

Frank. I see it had not; therefore, on her grave
Will I bestow this funeral epitaph,
Which on her marble tomb shall be engrav'd.

In golden letters shall these words be fill'd: ²
Here lies she whom her husband's kindness kill'd.

¹ Verity suggests, *Once more* (i. e. Kiss me once more); *thy wife dies, etc.*

² Cut and filled in with gold.

THE EPILOGUE

AN honest crew, disposed to be merry,
Came to a tavern by, and call'd for wine.
The drawer brought it, smiling like a cherry,
And told them it was pleasant, neat ¹ and
fine.
'Taste it,' quoth one. He did so. 'Fie!'

(quoth he)

5

'This wine was good; now 't runs too near the
lee.'

Another sipp'd, to give the wine his due,
And said unto the rest, it drunk too flat ;
The third said, it was old; the fourth, too new ;
Nay, quoth the fifth, the sharpness likes me

not.

10

Thus, gentlemen, you see how, in one hour,
The wine was new, old, flat, sharp, sweet, and
sour.

Unto this wine we do allude ² our play,
Which some will judge too trivial, some too
grave:

You as our guests we entertain this day,

15

And bid you welcome to the best we have.
Excuse us, then; good wine may be disgrac'd,

When every several mouth hath sundry taste.

¹ Pure.

² Compare.