

LOVE FOR LOVE

by

William Congreve

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Introduction

Nudus agris, nudus nummis paternis,
Insanire parat certa ratione modoque.

- HOR.

TO THE RIGHT HONOURABLE
CHARLES, EARL OF DORSET AND MIDDLESEX,
LORD CHAMBERLAIN OF HIS MAJESTY'S HOUSEHOLD,
AND KNIGHT OF THE MOST NOBLE ORDER OF THE GARTER, ETC.

My Lord,--A young poet is liable to the same vanity and indiscretion with a young lover; and the great man who smiles upon one, and the fine woman who looks kindly upon t'other, are both of 'em in danger of having the favour published with the first opportunity.

But there may be a different motive, which will a little distinguish the offenders. For though one should have a vanity in ruining another's reputation, yet the other may only have an ambition to advance his own. And I beg leave, my lord, that I may plead the latter, both as the cause and excuse of this dedication.

Whoever is king is also the father of his country; and as nobody can dispute your lordship's monarchy in poetry, so all that are concerned ought to acknowledge your universal patronage. And it is only presuming on the privilege of a loyal subject that I have ventured to make this, my address of thanks, to your lordship, which at the same time includes a prayer for your protection.

I am not ignorant of the common form of poetical dedications, which are generally made up of panegyrics, where the authors endeavour to distinguish their patrons, by the shining characters they give them, above other men. But that, my lord, is not my business at this time, nor is your lordship NOW to be distinguished. I am contented with the honour I do myself in this epistle without the vanity of attempting to add to or explain your Lordships character.

I confess it is not without some struggling that I behave myself in this case as I ought: for it is very hard to be pleased with a subject, and yet forbear it. But I choose rather to follow Pliny's precept, than his example, when, in his panegyric to the Emperor Trajan, he says:-

Nec minus considerabo quid aures ejus pati possint, quam quid virtutibus debeatur.

I hope I may be excused the pedantry of a quotation when it is so justly applied. Here are some lines in the print (and which your lordship read before this play was acted) that were omitted on the stage; and particularly one whole scene in the third act, which not only helps the design forward with less precipitation, but also heightens the ridiculous character of Foresight, which indeed seems to be maimed without it. But I found myself in great danger of a long play, and was glad to help it where I could. Though notwithstanding my care and the kind reception it had from the town, I could heartily wish it yet shorter: but the number of different characters represented in it would have been too much crowded in less room.

This reflection on prolixity (a fault for which scarce any one beauty will atone) warns me not to be tedious now, and detain your lordship any longer with the trifles of, my lord, your lordship's most obedient and most humble servant,

WILLIAM CONGREVE.

Prologue

(Spoken, at the opening of the new house, by Mr Betterton).

The husbandman in vain renews his toil
To cultivate each year a hungry soil;
And fondly hopes for rich and generous fruit,
When what should feed the tree devours the root;
Th' unladen boughs, he sees, bode certain dearth,
Unless transplanted to more kindly earth.
So the poor husbands of the stage, who found
Their labours lost upon ungrateful ground,
This last and only remedy have proved,
And hope new fruit from ancient stocks removed.
Well may they hope, when you so kindly aid,
Well plant a soil which you so rich have made.
As Nature gave the world to man's first age,
So from your bounty, we receive this stage;
The freedom man was born to, you've restored,
And to our world such plenty you afford,
It seems like Eden, fruitful of its own accord.
But since in Paradise frail flesh gave way,
And when but two were made, both went astray;
Forbear your wonder, and the fault forgive,
If in our larger family we grieve
One falling Adam and one tempted Eve.
We who remain would gratefully repay
What our endeavours can, and bring this day
The first-fruit offering of a virgin play.
We hope there's something that may please each taste,
And though of homely fare we make the feast,
Yet you will find variety at least.
There's humour, which for cheerful friends we got,
And for the thinking party there's a plot.
We've something, too, to gratify ill-nature,
(If there be any here), and that is satire.
Though satire scarce dares grin, 'tis grown so mild
Or only shows its teeth, as if it smiled.
As asses thistles, poets mumble wit,
And dare not bite for fear of being bit:

They hold their pens, as swords are held by fools,
And are afraid to use their own edge-tools.

Since the Plain-Dealer's scenes of manly rage,
Not one has dared to lash this crying age.
This time, the poet owns the bold essay,
Yet hopes there's no ill-manners in his play;
And he declares, by me, he has designed
Affront to none, but frankly speaks his mind.
And should th' ensuing scenes not chance to hit,
He offers but this one excuse, 'twas writ
Before your late encouragement of wit.

Epilogue

(Spoken, at the opening of the new house, by Mrs Bracegirdle).

Sure Providence at first designed this place
To be the player's refuge in distress;
For still in every storm they all run hither,
As to a shed that shields 'em from the weather.
But thinking of this change which last befel us,
It's like what I have heard our poets tell us:
For when behind our scenes their suits are pleading,
To help their love, sometimes they show their reading;
And, wanting ready cash to pay for hearts,
They top their learning on us, and their parts.
Once of philosophers they told us stories,
Whom, as I think, they called--Py--Pythagories,
I'm sure 'tis some such Latin name they give 'em,
And we, who know no better, must believe 'em.
Now to these men, say they, such souls were given,
That after death ne'er went to hell nor heaven,
But lived, I know not how, in beasts; and then
When many years were past, in men again.
Methinks, we players resemble such a soul,
That does from bodies, we from houses stroll.
Thus Aristotle's soul, of old that was,
May now be damned to animate an ass,
Or in this very house, for ought we know,
Is doing painful penance in some beau;
And thus our audience, which did once resort
To shining theatres to see our sport,
Now find us tossed into a tennis-court.
These walls but t'other day were filled with noise
Of roaring gamesters and your dam'me boys;
Then bounding balls and rackets they encompass,
And now they're filled with jests, and flights, and bombast!
I vow, I don't much like this transmigration,
Strolling from place to place by circulation;
Grant heaven, we don't return to our first station!
I know not what these think, but for my part
I can't reflect without an aching heart,
How we should end in our original, a cart.
But we can't fear, since you're so good to save us,
That you have only set us up, to leave us.
Thus from the past we hope for future grace,
I beg it -
And some here know I have a begging face.

Then pray continue this your kind behaviour,
For a clear stage won't do, without your favour.

Dramatis Personae

MEN.

SIR SAMPSON LEGEND, father to Valentine and Ben,--Mr Underhill.

VALENTINE, fallen under his father's displeasure by his expensive way of living, in love with Angelica,--Mr Betterton.

SCANDAL, his friend, a free speaker,--Mr Smith.

TATTLE, a half-witted beau, vain of his amours, yet valuing himself for secrecy,--Mr Bowman.

BEN, Sir Sampson's younger son, half home-bred and half sea-bred, designed to marry Miss Prue,--Mr Dogget.

FORESIGHT, an illiterate old fellow, peevish and positive, superstitious, and pretending to understand astrology, palmistry, physiognomy, omens, dreams, etc; uncle to Angelica,--Mr Sanford.

JEREMY, servant to Valentine,--Mr Bowen.

TRAPLAND, a scrivener,--Mr Triffusis.

BUCKRAM, a lawyer,--Mr Freeman.

WOMEN.

ANGELICA, niece to Foresight, of a considerable fortune in her own hands,--Mrs Bracegirdle.

MRS FORESIGHT, second wife to Foresight,--Mrs Bowman.

MRS FRAIL, sister to Mrs Foresight, a woman of the town,--Mrs Barry.

MISS PRUE, daughter to Foresight by a former wife, a silly, awkward country girl,--Mrs Ayliff.

NURSE to MISS,--Mrs Leigh.

JENNY,--Mrs Lawson.

A STEWARD, OFFICERS, SAILORS, AND SEVERAL SERVANTS.

The Scene in London.

ACT I

SCENE I.

VALENTINE in his chamber reading. JEREMY waiting.

Several books upon the table.

VAL. Jeremy.

JERE. Sir?

VAL. Here, take away. I'll walk a turn and digest what I have read.

JERE. You'll grow devilish fat upon this paper diet. [Aside, and taking away the books.]

VAL. And d'ye hear, go you to breakfast. There's a page doubled down in Epictetus, that is a feast for an emperor.

JERE. Was Epictetus a real cook, or did he only write receipts?

VAL. Read, read, sirrah, and refine your appetite; learn to live upon instruction; feast your mind and mortify your flesh; read, and take your nourishment in at your eyes; shut up your mouth, and chew the cud of understanding. So Epictetus advises.

JERE. O Lord! I have heard much of him, when I waited upon a gentleman at Cambridge. Pray what was that Epictetus?

VAL. A very rich man.--Not worth a groat.

JERE. Humph, and so he has made a very fine feast, where there is nothing to be eaten?

VAL. Yes.

JERE. Sir, you're a gentleman, and probably understand this fine feeding: but if you please, I had rather be at board wages. Does your Epictetus, or your Seneca here, or any of these poor rich rogues, teach you how to pay your debts without money? Will they shut up the mouths of your creditors? Will Plato be bail for you? Or Diogenes, because he understands confinement, and lived in a tub, go to prison for you? 'Slife, sir, what do you mean, to mew yourself up here with three or four musty books, in commendation of starving and poverty?

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