

**JOHN ARBUTHNOT, JOHN GAY,
ALEXANDER POPE**

**THREE HOURS
AFTER
MARRIAGE**

John Gay

Three Hours after Marriage

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Gay J.

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Three Hours after Marriage

INTRODUCTION

It is a privilege to have a part in this reprint of what is certainly one of the wittiest plays in the language, and one of the most neglected.[A] Its tripartite authorship and raffish character have encouraged editors to bypass it. The 1717 London edition and Dublin reprint the same year bore no author's name on the title-page, but as Gay signed the Advertisement one would think his editors would have felt it somewhat incumbent on them to keep the play alive. However, so far as I have been able to discover, only the 1795 collected edition of Gay does its duty in this respect, and the editor of Gay's plays in the *Abbey Classics* (2 vols., 1923) refused to admit it there, claiming that though "this justly abused piece" had been ascribed to Gay, "the authors of the greater part were Pope and Arbuthnot." *Three Hours* has fared somewhat better as a work of Pope, but interest in reprinting it under his aegis seems to have died out early in the nineteenth century, where the Twickenham Edition (VI, 180) locates two collections of writings attached to Pope that include it – very far to the back of the volume in each case. Since then, nothing, except for a few scraps in G. C. Faber's *Poetical Works of Gay*, 1926.

[A] Since this introduction was written the *Johnsonian News Letter* for June 1961 has announced that an edition of *Three Hours* is being prepared and may be expected to appear at an early date. It is gratifying to learn that the play is receiving this attention and I hope that this reprint may be of use to the editors in their task.

Not much can be done with the play in the space here available, but neither is a complete treatment attempted. Our purpose is to dispel the impression that *Three Hours* is "dull"[1] (or so risqué that in the public interest it should be kept from general circulation) and to bring it to the attention of more scholars. Certainly the present discussion does not aim to pre-empt the possibilities for study; much will remain to conquer still—for example, the knotty problem of which author wrote precisely which parts of the play, if anyone wants to try an untangling here – I prefer to think it a collaboration through and through, though some tracks of individuals may be made out.

[1] Thus the editor of the Cambridge *Pope* in his headnote to the prologue; one wonders whether he had read the play or was merely going on hearsay.

In the selection of the text to be reproduced for this series the first edition (somewhat unexpectedly) had competition, not from the London 1757 *Supplement* to Pope's works, but from the version of the play given in the three Dublin printings of the collection of this title: 1757, 1758, 1761. The Dublin play is not merely a debased version of 1717: it is in five acts, 1717 in three, and it contains a sentence of dialogue that 1717 does not: these differences, when taken in conjunction with the prefatory remarks that Gay wrote for the 1717 printing, made it possible to determine (readers will find the argument set forth further on, in a note to the Advertisement) that Dublin, though printed so long after the event (and somewhat butchered by the type-setter, we admit, but corrections of his worst misreadings and typos will be found in the notes) dates from the year 1717 just as the other does, was the script used in the production of the play, and actually was the one that Gay thought Lintot would use in the edition he published. The other consideration inclining us toward the Dublin version of the play was that only in its printings can one get the Key and Letter which, a number of years ago, George Sherburn had in a copy of 1761 and used with such striking effect in his article on the "Fortunes and Misfortunes" of the play;[2] he quoted liberally from both documents but they seemed to us so interesting as to be worth putting into the reader's hands entire.

[2] *MP*, XXIV (1926), 91-109.

Thus it boiled down to a choice between the two earlier Dublin printings; 1761, it seemed, would not need to be checked. The kindness of the Harvard College Library made it possible to compare its copy of 1757 with the Clark Library's copy of 1758, and in the light of the data furnished by the Clark's Supervising Bibliographer, Mr. William E. Conway, the Clark copy could be settled upon; the differences, though slight – there was little resetting from 1757 to 1758, and none in the play proper – were in its favor.

Any study of the play must begin with Professor Sherburn's article – it is still indispensable, factually – but in its findings scholars have perhaps let it influence them more than they should have. John Wilson Bowyer was exceptional in challenging one of its identifications[3] (successfully, I thought); perhaps the time has now come for re-examining some of its other theses – for example, the doctrine (which has become so firmly embedded in the scholarship on the play) that the authors intended the role of Plotwell as a satire on Cibber. This was suggested at the time in the *Key* to the play by E. Parker, but any charge brought by this person might well have been looked at askance; for, whoever he was, he was avowedly a champion of "that elaborate Gentleman," "the learned Dr. W – d – d" (Woodward, one of the real people attacked in the play) and might be suspected of hoping to cause an embroilment. It seems clear that prior to the play's première there was no rift between the management at Drury Lane and the authors. Parker says that they were constantly in attendance at rehearsals, and our Letter (p. 216) avers that they were more than satisfied with what Cibber was doing with their work. It rings true; the line attributed to Gay, "We dug the ore, but he [Cibber] refined the gold" exaggerates greatly no doubt, but seems beyond the powers of our female informant to have contrived in support of a thesis. An atmosphere of happy optimism prevailed; Lintot (Parker says) predicted that the play "would surprize the whole Town," and it was reported that he had given 50 guineas for the publishing rights (this item from John Durant Breval – signing himself "Joseph Gay" – p. 30 of *The Confederates*, 1717).[4]

[3] In *The Celebrated Mrs. Centlivre* (1952). Sherburn had contended that Phoebe Clinket in the play was aimed at Mrs. Centlivre rather than at Lady Winchilsea as the tradition had it. Bowyer pins the satire to Lady Winchilsea once more and it seems this must be generally correct; the reference in the epilogue to "our well-bred poetess" seems intended for Lady Winchilsea rather than for Mrs. Centlivre.

[4] The report was not far wrong – the amount that Lintot paid Gay, on January 8, was £43, 2s, 6d (Nichols, *Literary Anecdotes*, VIII (1814), 296).

That in all this sweetness and light there should have been a plan to make Cibber ridiculous, and he too stupid to realize this until he had trod the stage as Plotwell and felt the impact of the lines directed at him personally, is unbelievable on the face of it. How could the alleged plotters have been sure that when Colley came to cast the play he would not frustrate their deep-laid plan by assigning Plotwell to some other actor, if only by mere chance?

The theory has fed on some misreadings of the play that must have an end put to them if this ghost is to be laid. If the reader, then, will pardon the obviousness of the following, it is true that Cibber wrote plays, but the name Plotwell should not be taken in this sense, but merely as suggesting the gallant skilled in the stratagems which, in the older comedies, males of this class had been accustomed to use in their cuckolding operations. Plotwell in the play has never set pen to paper except for notes sent to wives, and he is not an "actor-manager" or the like. He and Underplot are simply gentlemen who spend so much of their time in intrigues in real life that they would have no time for play-writing.[5] In the part of *Three Hours* that has led scholars down this false path – the scene in which the manuscript is judged by Sir Tremendous and the players – it must be kept in mind that the actual author of the work being dismembered is Phoebe Clinket, not Plotwell, who, since he

is merely fronting for her, is enabled to meet such strictures as "Between you and I, this gentleman knows nothing of poetry" with perfect sang-froid; it is Phoebe whose withers are comically wrung. Thus there was nothing in the part to offend Cibber, much less can resentment on his part be deduced from the intermission of the play after the seventh night.[6]

[5] See the excellent comment on the pair in our Key, p. 212.

[6] To charge him, as one authority has done, with "an arbitrary withdrawal of *Three Hours* after a far from unsuccessful week ... an invidious, if not unwarrantable, decision on his part" betrays an imperfect understanding of how a theater had to be managed in the early 18th century when the number of patrons upon which it could rely was limited. A play would run as long as it continued to draw; when the house began to fall off a new bill would have to be announced. The intermitting of *Three Hours* should be most naturally read as suggesting that at least in the judgment of the managers its initial vogue had passed. It would have been brought back when they thought patrons were ready to see it again – say, in a couple of months.

The squabble involving Pope, Gay, and Cibber must have begun with the latter's allusion to our play in the revival of *The Rehearsal* on February 7, a couple of weeks after *Three Hours* had closed. Cibber's version of how it happened may be read in the Letter (pp. 217-218 below); our female correspondent sympathized with him and deleted a few expressions indicative of animus on his part, but on the whole the quote as she gives it is a reasonable facsimile of what he had said in the *Letter to Pope* (1742). His disclaimer of an intent to offend is believable in the light of what we have just seen as to how Plotwell should be read in the play; on the other side, Pope's anger at the gag – though not any visit by him to Cibber, that is true – is attested both by Breval and by "Timothy Drub" (*A Letter to Mr. John Gay*, 1717) who agree that Pope was the one principally offended and that it was he who sent Gay with instructions to trounce "that impudent Dog C – r" (this line from Drub's pamphlet). Why may not Pope have been angry enough to seek out Cibber himself on the impulse of the moment? It seems feeble to doubt Cibber's testimony on the grounds that he had not told the story prior to 1742; he had not previously told the tale of the youthful Pope in a bagnio, either, yet the authorities think there might be something to this – if to the one tale, why not to the other? As to the account the lady gives of the scuffle between Gay and Cibber, it was widely known at the time that there had been some sort of angry meeting between them; her story is highly colored but nonetheless may be substantially true.[7]

[7] She says that the fracas occurred on the fourth evening of *The Rehearsal*, and at least this revival did have a fourth performance, five in fact: Emmett L. Avery in *The London Stage* (1960) gives the dates as February 7, 8, 20, March 21, 28. There is a slight difficulty in assigning Gay's visit to the fourth of these, i.e., March 21: this is that the dates on which the two pamphlets that refer to it were advertised ("just before March 1" for Drub's, and March 30 for Breval's – Sherburn, p. 91) seem to rule out a March 21 fracas in the one case and to fall uncomfortably close in the other. But publication (of course) though announced, may have been delayed, and it is perhaps worth noticing that in each pamphlet Gay's visit is mentioned in an inorganic part of the work that could have been added late: the Dedication in Drub's, and, in Breval's, an ironical "congratulatory poem" printed after the epilogue, on the last two pages of the book.

This quarrel, whether with both poets involved with Cibber or only one, doubtless cost the play a revival or two that it would otherwise have had; with such evidence of anger in the authors Cibber could well have wished to have done with them and their work. The use of the crocodile costume on April 2 in a dance at Drury Lane entitled *The Shipwreck* suggests that so far as the management was

concerned the play for which it had been devised would not be acted again. Thereafter, *Three Hours* had only two revivals (Handlist of Plays in Nicoll, *Early Eighteenth-Century Drama*) – one in 1737 (two performances) the other in 1746 (three).

A pity! But in any case the play could not have had much of a life on the stage, considering the climate into which the authors chose to introduce it. The type of wit that had flourished in the former age did still hold a place in the theatre in 1717, but only in such comedies as had already won a place in the repertory.[8] The older plays could be "corrected" (that is, the racier lines could be taken out) or the tender-minded could tolerate them as classics or in a pinch stay at home when a play known to be of this sort had been announced. A new play was in a more vulnerable position; it had to conform to what the reformers had for a couple of decades been telling audiences a play should be, or squalls could be expected. Sir Richard Blackmore was continuing the crusade against scapegrace wit – in the Preface to his *Essays*, 1717, he is explicitly severe upon *Three Hours* and its authors – and the battle was going his way. Jeremy Collier had published nothing on the theatre for nearly a decade but it is interesting to see his methods applied to the play by Timothy Drub in his *Letter to Gay* and Drub then clinching his remarks with a quote of two pages from "a very elegant author" whom he does not name but who – not too surprisingly – can be recognized as Collier himself.[9] (Could "Drub" have been, in fact, Collier, thus tempted by *Three Hours* to return to the fray under this alias?)

[8] During the year prior to the première of *Three Hours* the following had been seen on the London stage twice each or more (selection only: based on Avery, op. cit.): *The Comical Revenge*, *Man of Mode*, *Country Wife*, *Plain-Dealer*, *London Cuckolds*, *Old Bachelor*, *Relapse*. *City Politicks*, a play from which our authors took some hints, was revived in the July after the closure of *Three Hours*; it ran three performances (i.e., successfully). But it should be recalled that the most recent of the eight plays here mentioned – Vanbrugh's – had been in the repertory twenty years.

[9] The quote is from the *Short View*, pp. 7-8 in the 1698 edition, from "Obscenity in any Company is a rustick and incredible Talent" to "But here a Man can't be a Sinner without being a Clown."

In any event the authors must have known that they were offering to swim against the tide but counted on their combined brilliance to win anyway. What they wrote happens to conform to the current rules in one respect – to paraphrase the epilogue to *Love's Last Shift*, no cuckold is made within the limits of its three hours' time span – but this compliance must have been accidental, for in every other respect the play deliberately flouts the regulations as established by Collier and his school. Obviously the authors were out to create a sensation: shock the stodgy and respectable element, jam the play down the throats of the audience, and win the admiration of the minority with whom libertine wit was still in favor.

These aims, which even a friend and well-wisher has to view as a bit on the juvenile side, were far from fully achieved. The description that Breval gives of the behavior of the crowd on the first night (Sherburn quotes it, if the reader can not readily get hold of *The Confederates*) is suggestive, not of a house packed with enemies of the authors, friends of Dr. Woodward and John Dennis out to damn the play, but of a crowd that had come predisposed to approve – "Silent a while th'attentive Many sate" – but found themselves simply unable to endure the dramatic fare set before them. The murmur that began and then grew to a hiss must have surprised and alarmed the authors: Breval's version of how they reacted must have a grain or two of truth in it. In the account of the second and third nights furnished by our Key one can see matters improving, but it is clear that to quiet the audience took heroic efforts by the cast and there was probably some deletion of offending lines,[10] perhaps some resort to "packing" the house.[11] This last was a measure not infrequently taken in those days – Dr. Johnson's story of Steele's efforts in behalf of *Cato* will be recalled – but this was not what the authors had anticipated. In the upshot they had dared the unpastured dragon of reform

in his den and had got away with it – but barely. They were all right financially – the run should have brought them two "benefits" – and there was the fee from Lintot and an added present of guineas from those three court ladies who wanted the world to know that they were sophisticated enough to take the play in stride. (Pope paid them with "A Court Ballad.") Still, the pride of the authors must have received some damage; perhaps some sensitiveness on Pope's part is understandable.

[10] Drub says that the actors left out "a considerable load of Obscenity and Prophaness." Presumably the authors would have to acquiesce in such bowdlerizing.

[11] Breval, p. 11, and his note.

But what the collaboration produced is truly remarkable; if there is something of a show-off air about it the authors can be forgiven, in view of what they had to exhibit. Though its fast pace (which flags only toward the last) and its emphasis on intrigue may slant it toward farce, *Three Hours* has the vitality and verve that one finds only in the very best English comic writing. Phoebe Clinket and Sir Tremendous are, to me, endlessly enjoyable, and Dr. Fossile more than merely a caricature of a now forgotten virtuoso or a lifeless counter in an intrigue plot (though in both these respects he meets the requirements of the part beautifully); even he has moments when the humanity shows through – as in his plaintive line to his friends when the mummy and the crocodile spring into movement and speech, "Gentlemen, wonder at nothing within these walls; for ever since I was married, nothing has happened to me in the common course of human life." Of the trio composed of Mrs. Townley and her followers I like them all, for various reasons, but the lady best. Once she shrieks (p. 186) but considering the circumstances anyone would consider this justifiable; otherwise she moves through the incredible crises of her role with a self-possession and an easy charm and good humor that one can only admire: as if she knew it was all nonsense but condescended to cooperate for the sake of the joke.

Among the minor characters one deserves especial mention. It was probably heartless of the authors to make fun of an aging and unfortunate (if rather eccentric) lady in "poor Lady Hyppokekoana" (as her compassionate, but, perforce, ever neglectful physician calls her) but at least the result was esthetically satisfactory, and I beg leave to nominate her for listing with that class of comic characters who, though kept behind the scenes throughout, still come through unforgettably in the reports we have of them: Mrs. Grundy in *Speed the Plough*; Mrs. Harris in *Martin Chuzzlewit*; Dashenka in *The Cherry Orchard*.

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NOTES

Advertisement, printed exactly as it is acted.

In 1717 Gay continued, "for, tho' the Players in Compliance with the Taste of the Town, broke it into five Parts in the Representation; yet, as the Action pauses, and the Stage is left vacant but three times, so it properly consists but of three Acts, like the *Spanish Comedies*." There are several puzzles here. In the first place for a three-act play the stage should be left vacant twice rather than three times. But setting this aside there is a contradiction which must have puzzled any reader who has used the 1717 edition, namely that if the players broke it into five parts and the play is printed exactly as it is acted, the play that follows should be in five acts but actually is in three. The London 1757 *Supplement to Pope* merely reprints Advertisement and play as they are in 1717 and it is not until the Dublin printings that the play appears in the five acts in which Gay says it was acted.

I suggest that Lintot in 1717 had two scripts of the play, one in three acts, one in five, and that Gay wrote the Advertisement under the impression that Lintot would discard the former.

I judge that when W. Whitestone undertook his Dublin Supplement of 1757 he took the Advertisement from the London book that had just been published (see the title-page of the volume) but that when he re-issued his book in 1758 he deleted the lines quoted above, perceiving that they were not to the point so far as his text of the play was concerned.

Unless we imagine Whitestone revising the play into five acts himself we must suppose that he had got his hands on an authentic acting MS of the play, and it seems not one from a late revival. I suspect that Whitestone in fact had got the very MS of the play that Gay thought Lintot was going to print; one cannot guess from where, but presumably from the same source that supplied the Key and Letter. Besides the act divisions the most interesting variant is a speech of a dozen words added to Dublin; see the note to p. 183. Cibber may have put this in, or Gay, at Cibber's request. But in either case it seems that the text that has it is the one that Gay authorized for printing.

By the same token, the cast as given in the present reprint (no actors' names are given in Dublin 1757 but they must have been in the script and in the reprint of 1758 Whitestone decided to put them in) is more probably correct than that printed in 1717. The only differences between the two are in five very minor roles, where, as rehearsals went on, substitutions would be easy. All the principals are the same.

Prologue.

Nothing to add to the Twickenham *Pope*, VI, 179-180.

Dramatis Personae.

Five minor roles differ from 1717, as stated above. *Mrs. Bicknet*. A misreading by the typesetter – he had never heard of Mrs. Bicknell.

Play.

140 *Almost three and twenty*. Mrs. Oldfield was only 34 in 1717 but no doubt popular enough to draw a laugh by simpering at this line.

The office of the church ... brute beasts. The *Book of Common Prayer* (1709) says of matrimony that it is not to be taken in hand "wantonly ... like brute beasts." The fashion of alluding to the Prayer Book in a jocose context, if it did not begin in the reign of Charles II, was at least in vogue then; a couple of instances in Dryden's *Wild Gallant* will be pointed out in the Clark *Dryden*, VIII (scheduled to appear in 1962). Another touch of "profaneness" that Collieresque critics objected to in *Three Hours* was the paraphrase of Holy Writ in Sir Tremendous's line about "ten righteous criticks," p. 153; cf. Key, p. 215.

141 *pistachoe-porridge*. An aphrodisiac concoction? (I apologize for my neglect of the pharmaceutical, medical, and alchemical jargon – J.H.S.)

144 *spoils of quarries*. Cf. the anecdote of Dr. Woodward in the Key, p. 211; Parker's Key has it also, but in a less complete form.

145 *Shock*. Mrs. Townley's lapdog – perhaps named after Belinda's in *Rape of the Lock*. Of course it may have been a common name for such dogs before Pope wrote the poem; see Twickenham *Pope*, II, 153.

147 *my pace and my honour*. 1717, "Peace."

148 *forgive thee, if thou hadst ... kill'd my lapdog*. Parker, with a citation to *Rape of the Lock*, assigned this speech to Pope, and indeed it smacks of several places in the poem, e.g., III, 157-8, IV, 119-120.

150 *some ... that nauseate the smell of a rose*. Cf. *Essay on Man*, I, 200.

152 *That injudicious Canaille*. In view of her bias Phoebe's strictures on the players are of course to be taken in the directly opposite sense.

155 Parker finds some double-entendres in the dialogue in which Phoebe and Sir Tremendous compliment each other; if such there be, the speakers are unaware of them.

156 *if stones were dissolved, as a late philosopher hath proved*. In summarizing his thesis in the preface to his *Essay Toward a Natural History of the Earth* (1695) Dr. Woodward does say that "the whole Terrestrial Globe was taken all to pieces and dissolved at the Deluge, the particles of Stone ..." According to the DNB, Arbuthnot published a criticism of this book in 1697.

163 The "old woman" who brings the letter from Madam Wyburn (a name beyond all praise!): Drub, p. 18, calls her "an Old Woman without a Nose," and objects strenuously. One dislikes siding with Drub on anything, but this was indeed an unsavory touch, perhaps one of the embellishments suggested by Cibber while refining the ore of the play into gold during the rehearsal period. Our authors should have ruled against it but they were in no mood to pull punches at this time, though, as stated above, they had to consent to some bowdlerizing after the first night of the play.

168 *a rouge in disguise*. 1717, "Rogue."

171 *my Mercury*. 1717, "by Mercury."

173 *s. d. in a chair like a sick man*. Idea from Crowne, *City Politicks*, first acted 1682.

178 *fitigue*. 1717, "Fatigue."

s. d. powers some drops in. 1717, "pours."

180 *have the any power*. 1717, "they."

182 Townley's concealing Plotwell under the petticoat owes to Mrs. Behn's *The Younger Brother* (acted 1696, not revived), Mirtilla's hiding "Endimion" under the train of her gown in IV.ii.

invisible i th is very. Typo for "in this very"; 1717 has "on this very." Gay (or Cibber) might have changed "on" to "in" when adding the sentence at the end of Act IV; see next note.

183 *But pritheee ... rarities*. This sentence is not in 1717, but seems an improvement, as it hints at developments to come and raises the expectations of the audience.

186 *desarts*. 1717, "Disserts."

Macedonian queen. Olympias: Underplot in his verses alludes, mock-heroically, to the fabled begetting of Alexander the Great.

mantyggers. This spelling may have come from the London 1757 *Supplement*. 1717, "Mantegers" (OED, mantegar, a kind of baboon).

191 *s. d. leap from their places*. Idea from Ravenscroft's *The Anatomist*: cf. n. to 215.

199 *Come we may* (5th line on page). 1717, "Come we now" – perhaps

"may" is a misreading.

Epilogue.

sound in living. Perhaps another misreading: 1717, "and" for "in."

viol. 1717, "vial." Perhaps another misreading.

Key.

212 *knights of the shires, who represent them all.* Paraphrase of a line in Dryden's epilogue to *The Man of Mode*: a mark of literacy in the anonymous writer of our Key.

Heautontimerumenos. Self-tormentor – title of a play by Terence.

213 *another eminent physician's wife ... shall be nameless.* Contemporary gossip said that the wife of Dr. Richard Mead was meant: Parker, less considerate than the gentlemanly author of our Key, uses her name, and in Breval (p. 15) Mrs. Oldfield is made to wish that she had not "mimick'd Mrs. M – d" in her role as Mrs. Townley. But it seems likely that any mimicry would be in the mind of the audience rather than in Mrs. Oldfield's performance, or for that matter, the intention of the authors.

214 *Marriage not to be undertaken wantonly.* The Key is incorrect in citing the Jonson play; see note to p. 140, above.

215 *letters ... Cocu imaginaire.* None of our Key-writer's adducings of Molière is really in point. The hint for the letters came from Act V of anon., *The Apparition*, acted twice in 1713. The same play has an intriguing valet named Plotwell; here our authors found the name for one of their gallants – Underplot was a happy invention of their own.

Lubomirski ... in Lopez de Vega. Parker (p. 9) is correct in tracing this impersonation of Plotwell's to Ravenscroft's *The Anatomist, or the Sham Doctor*; the same farce suggested the anxiety of the disguised gallants at the proposals to dissect them in Act V. Ravenscroft's play, first acted in 1696, was popular well into the 18th century and would be well known to the audience. No doubt our authors expected their play to be found infinitely funnier than Ravenscroft's in the comparable parts. It is.

Theatre Italien. Parker (p. 14) says more explicitly that the mummy-crocodile scene is "all stole from a farce" in this collection. Gherardi, vol. VI, does have a farce of the title cited but the only trace of it in *Three Hours* occurs in the brief joke on Antony and Cleopatra that Townley and Plotwell share on p. 185.

A
SUPPLEMENT
TO THE
WORKS
OF
ALEXANDER POPE, Esq;
CONTAINING,
Such POEMS, LETTERS, &c.
As are omitted in the Edition published
by the Reverend Doctor Warburton:
With the COMEDY of the
THREE HOURS after MARRIAGE;
And a KEY to the LETTERS:
To which is added, (not in the *London* Edition)
A KEY to the THREE HOURS after
MARRIAGE,
And a LETTER giving an Account of the
Origin of the Quarrel between CIBBER,

POPE, and GAY.

DUBLIN:

Printed for W. WHITESTONE, opposite *Dick's Coffee-House*, in *Skinner-Row*.

M.DCC.LVIII.

Three Hours after

MARRIAGE:

A

COMEDY.

Rumpatur, quisquis rumpitur invidia. MART.

ADVERTISEMENT

It may be necessary to acquaint the reader, that this play is printed exactly as it is acted.

I must farther own the assistance I have receiv'd in this piece from two of my friends; who, tho' they will not allow me the honour of having their names join'd with mine, cannot deprive me of the pleasure of making this acknowledgment.

JOHN GAY.

PROLOGUE

Spoke by MR. WILKS

*Authors are judg'd by strange capricious rules,
The great ones are thought mad, the small ones fools.
Yet sure the best are most severely fated,
For fools are only laugh'd at, wits are hated,
Blockheads with reason, men of sense abhor;
But fool 'gainst fool is barb'rous civil war.
Why on all authors then should critics fall?
Since some have writ, and shewn no wit at all.
Condemn a play of theirs, and they evade it,
Cry, damn not us, but damn the French that made it;
By running goods, these graceless owlers gain,
Theirs are the rules of France, the plots of Spain:
But wit, like wine, from happier climates brought,
Dash'd by these rogues, turns English common draught:
They pall Moliere's and Lopez sprightly strain,
And teach dull Harlequins to grin in vain.
How shall our author hope a gentle fate,
Who dares most impudently – not translate.
It had been civil in these ticklish times,
To fetch his fools and knaves from foreign climes;
Spaniards and French abuse to the worlds' end
But spare old England, lest you hurt a friend.
If any fool is by your satire bit,
Let him hiss loud, to show you all – he's hit.
Poets make characters as salesmen cloaths,
We take no measure of your fops and beaus.
But here all sizes and all shapes ye meet,
And fit yourselves – like chaps in Monmouth-street._*

*Gallants look here, this[B] fool's cap has an air –
Goodly and smart, – with ears of Issachar.
Let no one fool engross it, or confine:
A common blessing! now 'tis your's, now mine.
But poets in all ages, had the Care
To keep this cap, for such as will, to wear;
Our author has it now, for ev'ry wit
Of course resign'd it to the next that writ:
And thus upon the stage 'tis fairly[C] thrown,
Let him that takes it, wear it for his own.*

[B] Shews a cap with ears.

[C] Flings down the cap and

Exit.

Dramatis Personæ.

MEN.

FOSSILE, } Mr. *Johnson*.

POSSUM, } Doctors. Mr. *Corey*.

NAUTILUS, } Mr. *Cross*.

PTISAN, Apothecary. Mr. *Wright*.

PLOTWELL, Mr. *Cibber*.

UNDERPLOT, Mr. *Penkethman*.

Sir TREMENDOUS, Mr. *Bowman*.

First PLAYER, Mr. *Diggs*.

Second PLAYER, Mr. *Watson*.

SAILOR. Mr. *Bickerstaff*.

Footmen, Servants, &c.

WOMEN.

Mrs. TOWNLEY, Mrs. *Oldfield*.

Mrs. PHOEBE CLINKET, Mrs. *Bicknet*.

SARSNET, Mrs. *Garnet*.

PRUE. Miss *Willis*.

ACT I

Enter FOSSILE, leading TOWNLEY.

Fos. Welcome, my bride, into the habitation of thy husband. The scruples of the parson —

Town. And the fatigue of the ceremony —

Foss. Are at last well over.

Town. These blank licences are wonderful commodious. — The clergy have a noble command, in being rangers of the park of matrimony; produce but a warrant, and they deliver a lady into your possession: but I have no quarrel with them, since they have put me into so good hands.

Foss. I now proclaim a solemn suspension of arms between medicine and diseases. Let distempers suspend their malignant influence, and powders, pills, and potions their operations. Be this day sacred to my love. I had rather hold this hand of thine, than a dutchess by the pulse.

Town. And I this, than a hand of matadores.

Foss. Who knows but your relations may dispute my title to your person? come, my dear, the seal of the matrimonial bond is consummation.

Town. Alas! what will become of me!

Foss. Why are thy eyes fix'd on the ground? why so slow? and why this trembling?

Town. Ah! heedless creature that I was, to quit all my relations, and trust myself alone in the hands of a strange man.

Foss. Courage, thou best of my curiosities. Know that in husband, is comprehended all relations; in me thou seest a fond father.

Town. Old enough o' my conscience.

[*Aside.*

Foss. You may, you must trust yourself with me.

Town. Do with me as you please: Yet sure you cannot so soon forget the office of the church. Marriage is not to be undertaken wantonly, like brute beasts. If you will transgress, the sin be upon your own head.

Foss. Great indeed is thy virtue, and laudable is thy modesty. Thou art a virgin, and I a philosopher; but learn, that no animal action, *quatenus animal*, is unbecoming of either of us. But hold! where am I going? Prithee, my dear, of what age art thou?

Town. Almost three and twenty.

Foss. And I almost at my grand climacterick. What occasion have I for a double-night at these years? She may be an Alcmena, but alas! I am no thunderer.

[*Aside*

Town. You seem somewhat disturb'd; I hope you are well, Mr. Fossile.

Foss. What business have I in the bed-chamber, when the symptoms of age are upon me? Yet hold, this is the famous corroborative of Crollius; in this vial are included sons and daughters. Oh, for a draught of the *aqua magnanimitatis* for a vehicle! fifty drops of *liquid laudanum* for her dose would but just put us upon a *par*. *Laudanum* would settle the present ataxy of her animal spirits, and prevent her being too watchful.

[*aside*

Enter a Servant.

Serv. Sir, your pistachoe-porridge is ready.

[*Exit.*

Foss. Now I think of it, my dear; Venus, which is in the first degree of Capricorn, does not culminate till ten; an hour if astrology is not fallible, successful in generation.

Town. I am all obedience, Sir.

Foss. How shall I reward thee for so much Goodness? let our wedding as yet be a secret in the family. In the mean time I'll introduce my niece Phoebe Clinket to your acquaintance: but alas, the poor girl has a procidence of the pineal gland, which has occasioned a rupture in her understanding. I took her into my house to regulate my oeconomy; but instead of puddings, she makes pastorals; or when she should be raising paste, is raising some ghost in a new tragedy. In short, my house is haunted by all the underling players, broken booksellers, half-voic'd singing-masters, and disabled dancing-masters in town. In a former will I had left her my estate; but I now resolve that heirs of my own begetting shall inherit. Yonder she comes in her usual occupation. Let us mark her a while.

Enter Clinket and her maid bearing a writing-desk on her back. Clinket writing, her head dress stain'd with ink, and pens stuck in her hair.

Maid. I had as good carry a raree-show about the streets. Oh! how my back akes!

Clink. What are the labours of the back to those of the brain? thou scandal to the muses. I have now lost a thought worth a folio, by thy impertinance.

Maid. Have not I got a crick in my back already, that will make me good for nothing, with lifting your great books?

Clink. Folio's, call them, and not great books, thou monster of impropriety: But have patience, and I will remember the three gallery-tickets I promis'd thee at my new tragedy.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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