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THE
LADY'S LAST STAKE;
OR, THE
WIFE'S RESENTMENT.

A
COMEDY,
By COLLEY CIBBER, Esq.



ADAPTED FOR
THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,
AS PERFORMED AT THE
THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK,

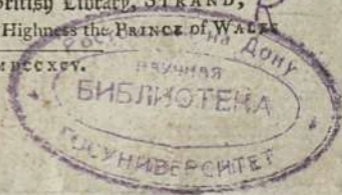
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МДССХСУ.



TO THE MOST NOBLE THE
MARQUIS OF KENT.

LORD CHAMBERLAIN

OF HER MAJESTY'S HOUSEHOLD, &c.

THE utmost success I ever proposed from this play, was, that it might reach the taste of a few good judges, and from thence plead a sort of a title to your Lordship's protection; and if the most just and candid critics are not the greatest flatterers, I have not failed in my proposal. As for those gentlemen that thrust themselves forward upon the stage before a crowded audience, as if they resolved to play themselves, and save the actor the trouble of presenting them; they indeed, as they are above instruction, so they scorn to be diverted by it, and will as soon allow me a good voice as a genius. I did not intend it should entertain any, that never come with a design to sit out a play; and therefore, without being much mortified, am content such persons should dislike it. If I would have been less instructive, I might easily have had a louder, though not a more valuable applause. But I shall always prefer a fixed and general attention, before the noisy roars of the gallery. A play without a just moral, is a poor and trivial undertaking; and it is from the success of such pieces,

that Mr. Collier was furnished with an advantageous pretence of laying his unmerciful axe to the root of the stage. Gaming is a vice that has undone more innocent principles than any one folly that is in fashion, therefore I chose to expose it to the fair sex in its most hideous form, by reducing a woman of honour to stand the presumptuous addresses of a man, whom neither her virtue or inclination would let her have the least taste to. Now 'tis not impossible but some man of fortune, who has a handsome lady, and a great deal of money to throw away, may, from this startling hint, think it worth his while to find his wife some less hazardous diversion. If that should ever happen, my end of writing this play is answered; and if it may boast of any favours from the town, I now must own they are entirely owing to your Lordship's protection of the theatre: for, without a union of the best actors, it must have been impossible for it to have received a tolerable justice in the performance.

The stage has for many years, till late, groaned under the greatest discouragements, which have been very much, if not wholly, owing to the mismanagement or avarice of those who have awkwardly governed it. Great sums have been ventured upon empty projects, and hopes of immoderate gains; and when those hopes have failed, the loss has been tyrannically deducted out of the actor's salary. And if your Lordship had not redeemed them, they were very near

being wholly laid aside, or, at least, the use of their labour was to be swallowed up, in the pretended merit of singing and dancing. I don't offer this as a reflection upon music, (for I allow and feel its charms) but it has been the misfortune of that, as well as poetry, to have been too long in the hands of those whose taste and fancy are utterly insensible of their use and power. And though your Lordship foresaw, and experience tells us, that both diversions would be better encouraged under their separate endeavours, yet this was a scheme, that could never be beat into the impenetrable heads of those that might have honestly paid the labourers their hire, and put the profits of both into their own pockets. Nay, even the opera, though the town has neither grudged it pay nor equipage, from either the wilfulness or ignorance of the same general, we see, was not able to take the field till December.

My Lord, there is nothing difficult to a body of English people, when they are unanimous, and well commanded. And though your Lordship's tenderness of oppressing is so very just, that you have rather stay'd to convince a man of your good intentions to him, than to do him even a service against his will: yet since your Lordship has so happily begun the establishment of the separate diversions, we live in hope, that the same justice and resolution will still persuade you to go as successfully through with it.

But while any man is suffered to confound the industry and use of them, by acting publicly, in op-

position to your Lordship's equal intentions, under a false and intricate pretence of not being able to comply with them; the town is likely to be more entertained with the private dissentions, than the public performance of either, and the actors in a perpetual fear and necessity of petitioning your Lordship every season for new relief.

To succour the distressed is the first mark of greatness, and your Lordship is eminently distinguished for a virtue that certainly claims the next place to it. The disinterested choice and manner of your Lordship's disposing places in your gift, are proofs that you always have the claims of merit under your first and tenderest consideration. And from the assurance of this thought, my Lord, the stage, the poets, and the players, lay their cause, their hopes, and utmost expectations at your Lordship's feet for support and protection.

I am,

My Lord,

Your Lordship's most humble,

And most obedient servant,

COLLEY CIBBER.

PROLOGUE.

SINCE plays are but the mirrors of our lives,
And soon or late mankind are chain'd to wives;
Since those dissolueless fetters too, must be
Our greatest happiness or misery;
What subject ought, in reason, more to please ye,
Than an attempt to make those chains sit easy?
Though in the noose so many souls seem curst,
Pray who's in fault?—For when you've said your worst,
You all did feel it happiness—at first.
Therefore our author drew you once the life
Of careless husband; and enduring wife,
Who by her patience (though much out of fashion)
Retriev'd, at last, her wanderer's inclination.
Yet some there are, who still arraign the play,
At her tame temper shock'd, as who should say—
The price, for a dull husband, was too much to pay.
Had he been strangled sleeping, who should hurt ye?
When so provok'd—revenge had been a virtue.
—Well then—to do his former moral right,
Or set such measures in a fairer light,
He gives you now a wife, he's sure, in fashion,
Whose wrongs use modern means for reparation.
No fool, that will her life in sufferings waste,
But furious, proud, and insolently chaste;
Who more in honour jealous, than in love,
Resolves resentment shall her wrongs remove:

Dramatis Personae.

COVENT GARDEN.

Men.

Lord WRONGLOVE,	..	Mr. Wroughton.
Lord GEORGE BRILLIANT,		Mr. Lewis.
Sir FRIENDLY MORAL,	-	Mr. Aickin.
BRUSH,	- -	Mr. Kennedy.

Women.

Lady WRONGLOVE,	-	Mrs. Bates.
Lady GENTLE,	- -	Mrs. Warren.
Mrs. CONQUEST,	-	Mrs. Wells.
Miss NOTABLE,	-	Mrs. Brown.
Mrs. HARTSHORN,	-	Mrs. Pitt.



THE
LADY'S LAST STAKE.

ACT I. SCENE I.

*Lord Wronglove's Apartment. Lord WRONGLOVE
alone, musing.*

Lord Wronglove.

MY wife—as abundance of other men of quality's wives are—is a miserable woman—ask her the reason, she'll tell you—husband: ask me, I say, wife—all's entirely owing to her own temper.

Enter Mrs. HARTSHORN.

Mrs. Harts. My Lady desires to know if your Lordship pleases to spare her the chariot this morning?

Lord W. Hah! That's as much as to say, I have a mind to guess when, and how you go out this morning. [*Aside.*] Well, the chariot is at her service. [*Exit Hart.*] This continual jealousy is insupportable.—What's to be done with her? What's her complaint? Who's the aggressor? I'll e'en refer the