The Flattering Milliner, Or A Modern Half-Hour

William Combe

Transcribed and Edited by Ben Wiebracht and Rathan Muruganantham

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Editors’ Note:

This document contains a transcript of the manuscript of William Combe’s one-act play The Flattering Milliner, which was performed at the Bristol Theatre on 11 September 1775.

The manuscript is held at the Department of Special Collections, Stanford University. Photographs of each page of the manuscript are available here: https://pixeliapublishing.org/the-flattering-milliner-rediscovered/. To facilitate cross-checking, each page in the transcript (as numbered in the header) corresponds to the identically numbered page in the manuscript.

We have attempted to make this transcript as exact as possible, accepting Combe’s spelling, punctuation, and capitalization in all cases. However, we have made the following minor interventions for simplicity and ease of reading:

- We spell out the names of speakers in bold type in the dialogue, rather than using initials or abbreviations. We also bold and expand names of characters in stage directions.
- We italicize stage directions, while retaining other aspects of their formatting (location, use of parentheses).
- We provide obviously dropped words or letters in braces, as in “I’ll just [ask] M’° Blond what News” and “she pulls of[f] her Night-cap.”
- We spell out the word “the.” Combe sometimes uses a symbol of his own for this word that we are unable to reproduce in type.
- When part of a word is underlined, we underline the whole word.
- We render all dashes, of whatever length, as standard em dashes: “—”.
- We highlight sections of the script that were cut in the performance in light red. In the manuscript, Combe indicates an omitted section with a vertical line in the margin.
- We use the notation “[sic]” twice, in both cases to indicate a word that ought to be deleted, as in “a pair of a [sic] Crutches.”
- We omit or complete unclosed parentheses and quotation marks.

When quoting from the photographs, scholars are advised to cite the manuscript in this or similar form:


When quoting from the transcript, please cite it in this or similar form:

The flattering Millener

Or

A modern Half-Hour

A Piece of one Act, as it was represented for the Benefit of Mr' Henderson (a judicious Actor and a sensible Man) at the Theatre in Bristol Monday September 11 1775.

– Si dixeris æstuo, – sudat – Juv:
– See how they beg an Alms of Flattery! –
They languish: – O! support them with a Lie! – Young

Dramatis Personae

M' Hobbleworth, M' Parsons.
Sir Flippery Flirtem, M' Booth.
Sailor, M' Quick.
Lady Dorothy Doubtful, M'" Davies.
M'" Toilette, Miss Wheeler.
Isabella, M'" Brett.
Sailor’s Wife, Miss Costello.
M'" Blond, M'" Wrighten.

N.B. – This little Performance was written in one Evening and part of the succeeding Morning; and given to M' Henderson, who being much engag’d in preparing himself to appear for the first time in the Character of Sir John Falstaff, left it to the Mercy of the Prompter and the Players who curtail’d it most injudiciously indeed and omitted the entire Character of M'" Toilette. However, such was the Candor of the Audience, that notwithstanding these disadvantages, – together with the ill-casting of the parts and it's immediately following a play so full of Mirth as the Merry Wives
of Windsor, – it was receiv’d with great Indulgence; – or to use the Language of the Theatre, – it went off very well! –

– The Parts, which are scor’d in the margin, were omitted in the Representation.

*Scene 1st – a Millener’s Shop in a Street.*

**Mrs Blond:** Isabella! Isabella! What ails the Girl? – Why Isabella! –

– *Enter Isabella in her Hat, Cloak &c.*

**Isabella:** Did you call Ma’am

**Mrs Blond:** Did I call Ma’am? – Yes, I beleive, I did call Ma’am, and loud enough for you to have heard me, if you had been where you ought to be! – And your Hat and Cloak on too; – pray where have you been jaunting?

**Isabella:** – Where have I been Ma’am? – Why to my Lady Dorothy Doubtful, – where you sent me within this half Hour.

**Mrs Blond:** What did I send – I had forgot it I declare, Ay I really did to be sure; well, Isabella, and {what} did her Ladyship say? – Did the Caps please her?

**Isabella:** Why she said that one had not enough Gauze; and that the other had not enough Ribbon, and that the large Morning Cap had not enough of either. – and then she threw them on one side, and said the Ribbons were not of a pretty Colour and that the Gauze was yellow, – and that they were not made in the Fashion. I am sure, Ma’am I was frighten’d almost out of my wits, for fear she should send ‘em back again, –
Mrs. Blond: but she hasn’t I hope! –

Isabella: – Not indeed Ma’am; – but I verily believe she would have done it, had not a tall, handsome Gentleman in a fine lac’d Coat come to pay her a visit this Moment, as the Caps lay upon the Table, and so after he had said a great many pretty things to her Ladyship,– he took up the Caps, God bless Him for it, and began to admire them, and she seem’d so pleas’d, that she paid me the Money for them immediately, & would not take ‘Change – and here it is.

Mrs Blond: That’s well! Here give it me! – I don’t know anything so conducive to good Spirits, in our way of Traffic, as a little ready Money.

Isabella: La Ma’am! – you can’t conceive what a fine, handsome Gentleman he was; – and what delightful Ruffles he had on, – and what fine, handsome Things he said to Lady Dorothy. – Well to be sure, she look’d so charm’d and pleas’d & delighted with it, – but I don’t wonder at her; I’m sure I wish I was a fine Lady to have so many handsome, charming Things –

Mrs Blond: How the Girl chatters

Isabella: La, Ma’am – it was enough to –

Mrs Blond: Don’t be a Fool; – but mind what I say to you! – Here take these Hankerchiefs to Lady Junkit & wait for an Answer. – Then go to Miss Airy’s Lord Spendly’s kept Mistress with these Ruffles, -- but don’t leave them till you’ve got the Money. – At the same time, you may as well take this suit of Linnen to M^2 Thomlinson the great Merchant’s Lady in the City, – you need not stay for any Answer there; – she’s as good as the Bank itself.
Isabella: Have you anything more Ma’am? –

Mrs Blond: More, – yes to be sure I have, – what could it be, – I’m certain I had, – Let me see, – Why then I say, Isabella, – I declare I have forgot, – why then you must come back again. –

Scene 2d – A Street

Enter Sir Flippery Flirtem, – as he crosses the Stage, Isabella comes out of the House. – they meet.

Sir Flippery: So, my pretty Maid, who do you belong to? –

Isabella: To my Mistress Sir!

Sir Flippery: A pretty little Rogue, i’faith! & pray who is your Mistress?

Isabella: Mrs Blond the Millener Sir Flippery.

Sir Flippery: What do you know me child?

Isabella: Yes Sir, – you are Sir Flippery Flirtem!

Sir Flippery: Upon my word, my dear, you seem to be a very knowing young Baggage. – And where may you be going with this Cargo of Band Boxes? –

Isabella: To some of my Mistresses Customers Sir Flippery.

Sir Flippery: And if I was to become one of your Mistress’s Customers would you bring a Band-Box to me? –

Isabella: Yes surely, Sir Flippery, – I must go wherever my Mistress sends me.

Sir Flippery: pretty, complying Creature & so you shall. – Well, I’ll step in to your Mistress and order a little parcel for the purpose; – and do you bring it to my House tomorrow morning about eleven!

Isabella: Yes Sir Flippery, –

Sir Flippery: Be sure you don’t forget!

Isabella: No Sir Flippery, I never forget my Mistress’s Business.
Sir Flippery: Nor your own neither or I’m confoundedly mistaken! – Well, my pretty dear, – fare thee well! – we shall be acquainted I hope tomorrow. –

Isabella: Your Serv.1 Sir Flippery! – (As she goes off) I’ll have a little Flummery too, – as well as the best of them! (Exit)

Sir Flippery Flirtem
– As pretty a piece of Goods, faith, as a Millener’s Shop can be stock’d with. __ That the little Rogue sho.4 know me too! – Indeed a Man of my Figure, & Fashion & Appearance cannot avoid being known. – To say the Truth, – it is to very little purpose that we have Appearance and Fashion if we are not known; – Nay, do we not study Appearance & Fashion in order to be known! – And with people of a certain Rank, Fortune & Ton to be known & to be admired are Synonimous Terms. – It is without a doubt, no inconsiderable Preeminence to be the admiration of the Women, – the Envy of the Men, – & the Wonder of the Rabble. – Nay, I do not absolutely dislike to see the vulgar Creatures, eye me with the same Astonishment, as a Dutch-Boor does a King Prussia in a Puppet-Show. – Whenever, this is the case, which is as often as I walk the streets, – I smile upon the saucy Rogues, – take a Pinch of Snuff, – give my Cane a genteel Wave, and walk on. –  Exit

Scene 3.4 Mrs Blond’s Shop. – Mrs Blond at work. – Enter Mr Flippery Flirtem.

Sir Flippery: Mrs Blond your most obedient, – and all alone too, by Jupiter, – my dear Ma’am, – I could almost find, in my Heart to make a little Love to you! –

Mrs Blond: You are pleas’d to be merry Sir Flippery! – Nay I am sure, you have too much charity to make a Bankrupt
of me, which would, most assuredly, be the case, if you were to degrade yourself so far as to bestow those Attentions upon me, which all the fine Women are sighing for; – Every Customer that is worth having would desert me immediately; – you may laugh, Sir, – but they really would.

Sir Flippery: Egad, Mrs Blond, you are a most delightful Creature, How, the devil, has it happened that I never visited you before? –

Mrs Blond: I can only say Sir that it has been my great Misfortune! – Indeed, Sir Flippery, to tell you the Truth, it has been a Matter of great Mortification to me, to see a Gentleman of so much Taste, Elegance & Fashion, as you are, pass by, as you often do, without favouring me so far with your Patronage, as to purchase a pair of Ruffles of me. –

Sir Flippery: For this very purpose, believe me, I have done myself the Pleasure of paying you this visit. – Come, my dear Millener, – down with your Boxes, – and display your Bagatelles.

Mrs Blond: I shall be very happy Sir, to have the Honour of serving you with anything you may want.

Sir Flippery: That I most cordially beleive! –

Mrs Blond: These, Sir Flippery, are the best Point & of a very beautiful Pattern. – Here are some of Brussels Lace, and those are very handsome, & of the Bath Manufacture, – they are English, Sir Flippery, –

Sir Flippery: Why as to the matter of Ruffles that is no great Recommendation; – For in Lace, Snuff Boxes, – Toothpicks, – Hairdressers, Dancing-Masters, – Cooks and soup-maigre they rather excell us; – but in sound Hearts, & warm Hands Seamen & Soldiers, – Roast Beef, Plum-pudding & Liberty – we beat them all to nothing! – here, to be sure, we have a very considerable Advantage.
**Mrs Blond:** Then here are some which, perhaps, Sir will suit your taste better; – they are work’d by the Nuns in Flanders! –

**Sir Flippery:** Ha, Ha, Ha, – by the Nuns say you? –

**Mrs Blond:** Indeed, Sir, it is very true; – they are work’d in a Convent by the Nuns, – who have nothing to do, poor Souls, but to work Aprons, Ruffles & Hankerchiefs & say their prayers.

**Sir Flippery:** A pretty Employment truly, *Mra Blond!* – but I don’t see, this morning, any of your ruffle-making Nuns about you! – Where are they all? –

**Mrs Blond:** They are among my Customers *Sir Flippery*!

**Sir Flippery:** And pray, my good Lady Millener, are not your Customers sometimes permitted to return the Compliment and be among them? –

**Mrs Blond:** Indeed, Sir, I don’t understand you, – I don’t know what you mean, – I –

**Sir Flippery:** No, to be sure! I am absolutely unintelligible! I’m not to be understood, *Mra Blond*, – I don’t speak English; – I’m all Jargon, – to be sure! – Well then, my dear good Sempstress, to speak a little plainer, – you will be so good as to consider me as the Purchaser of the best pair of Ruffles in your shop, & at your own price, provided you will send to my House tomorrow morning, by –

**Mrs Blond:** I am exceedingly obliged to you Sir Flippery you may depend upon –

**Sir Flippery:** Not quite so fast, my dear, good *Mra Blond*, – I have not quite done, – and that you let the little Girl of yours, that I met just now at the corner of the Street, be the bearer of them! –

**Mrs Blond:** Sir you may depend upon my sending them! –

**Sir Flippery:** You have heard me *Mra Blond*, – such are my Conditions. I shall be at Home tomorrow ‘till one so I desire you will be punctual – *Mra Blond* your servant. – Nothing can resist
me, egad; – from a Dutchess down to a Barrow-wench! Exit Sir Flippery.

M's Blond alone.

Mrs Blond: No Sir! – Tho’ you were to bribe me with the purchase of every piece of Gauze, Lace, Silk and Thread in my Shop, I would not, – if I could help it, – suffer any one that belongs to me to be the dupe of such inhuman Designs! – If a little simple Flattery would satisfy a Customer, – with all my Heart, if by hinting that he was handsome when he was most hideously Ugly; – if the flattering him that he was a favourite of the Ladies, when I knew that they hated & despised him; if by a few such trifling, harmless, inoffensive, pretty little Deceptions I could induce either Male or Female to empty their purses upon my Counter, – I should not have any very great Scruple of Conscience, in throwing a few Temptations of this Nature in their way; – but I go no farther! – If I am oblig’d to have a pretty face or two, in my Shop, to decoy Customers; If I must have what is generally thought to be the Sign of my Profession, – I’ll take care it shall not hang in anyone’s reach. – For rather than give the least Countenance to the horrid Scheme of seducing Innocence, – I would suffer my Shop to fall about my Ears and be buried (in the Ruin of) beneath the Heap of, – my own Band-Boxes.

– But here comes another of my delightful Customers!

Enter M' Hobbleworth

Mr Hobbleworth: Confound this Gout! – Here have I been confin’d, these three weeks, to a cursed Arm-Chair & a Stool; – and am as [sic] scarce able to walk across the Street! – Is it not a shocking thing that a Man of my Spirits & Time of Life should be thus crippled by a Scoundrel Disorder, that prevents me, six Months out of the twelve, from enjoying the best Pleasures of my Nature. Of all Equipages I know of the least desirable is a pair of a [sic] Crutches, – and as for Flannel, I had rather
be tarr’d and feather’d than be wrap’t up in it. – Oh! – what a confounded twitch! – Well! – I’ll just {ask} Mrs Blond what News, – and go home again! – So Mrs Blond, how do you do, – Mrs Blond, – how do you do? –

Mrs Blond: Very well, M’ Hobbleworth, I thank you; & the better for seeing you abroad again. – Why Sir, – I have not had that pleasure, this Month, I beleive. – Indeed, I was very uneasy, for people said you were like to die.

Mr Hobbleworth: Like to die? – like to die? – Mrs Blond! – What, the Devil, had they a mind to send me out of the world already! – like to die indeed! – No, No, No, No! – I mean to live these forty years. – I intend to have another couple of Wives, – and half a dozen Children, at least, before I die! – Why do I look, Mrs Blond, as if I was going to die.

Mrs Blond: No indeed Sir! – I never remember to have seen you look (better) since I have had the Honour of knowing you. – I know if I was a young Lady, – I very beleive I should make Love to you.

Mr Hobbleworth: Ay, you saucy Jade, you flatter, – you flatter: tho’, to be sure, I’m not an old Man; and my family have all been remarkable since the Days of William the Conqueror, for long Lives & stout Constitutions. – Besides, Mrs Blond, – I have the Gout, – the Gout; – a Disorder, if it can be call’d one, which prevents all others. – I declare that I would not be without it for half my Estate! – (Aside) Tho’ if it did not visit me quite so often I should like it the better. –

Mrs Blond: Why, to be sure, Sir, – what you say, I beleive, is very true, And, if the Gout did not sometimes leave a little Tenderness in the feet, and make an active, young Gentleman hobble, now & then, for a Month or six Weeks, – it would be truly desirable.

Mr Hobbleworth: What do you mean, Mrs Blond, by Hobbling? who hobbles? Not I – Why I walk, Child, with all the Firmness of a
Grenadier! –

Mrs Blond: I really think so too, Sir,! – but as a Grenadier should never be without a Cap, what think you of giving me five and twenty Shillings for this? – It is very elegant, is it not? –

Mr Hobbleworth: A Cap? – What the Devil, should I do with a Cap? – You would not, M™ Blond, make an Old Woman of me, would you? – (What a cunning Jezebel it is!) aside.

Mrs Blond: Fye, M™ Hobbleworth! – I had no such meaning! An old Woman truly? – Why you are not an old Man yet!

Mr Hobbleworth: No, No, – M™ Blond, – I hope to be useful in my Generation, some years longer. – Tho’, when I’m grown old, of the two, I think, verily, I should prefer being an old Woman.

Mrs Blond: An old Woman? – Beleive me, Sir, I never was so astonish’d in all my Life! – Of all the Birds in the Air, that you should fix upon an old Woman. – If you had been dispos’d to make an Exchange with some young Lady of great Beauty & Accomplishments, it would not have surpriz’d me. The continual Attention which follows them; – the constant praise which they hear; – the universal Homage which they receive, is, I must own, very enviable: – And If I was rich, handsome & sixteen, I would not change my Petticoats for e’er a pair of Breeches in Christendom.

Mr Hobbleworth: Ha, Ha, Ha, – very well, M™ Blond! – Ha, Ha, Ha, you are very droll, very comical indeed! – but you may believe me, when I tell you, – that when I was a young Man I never wish’d to change Sexes with the most admired Beauty of the Time; – Now I’m of a middle-Age, I hold the same Opinion. but when I’m grown old, I do not doubt, – nay I am very sure, that I shall be glad to do it with the ugliest – bleereye’d Cat of an Old Woman that ever saddled her Nose with a Pair of Spectacles.

Mrs Blond: Why, Sir, I am all Amazement! –
Mr Hobbleworth: I have very weighty & sufficient Reason, Mrs Blond, Ay and a –

Mrs Blond: I make no Doubt, Sir, but a Gentleman of your Years Sir –

Mr Hobbleworth: Years, Hussey?

Mrs Blond: I say, Sir, I make no Doubt but a Gentleman of your Wisdom, Sagacity & acknowledg’d Understanding —

Mr Hobbleworth: Ay, that’s another Thing! –

Mrs Blond: Has, – I say, Sir, has the best Reasons for everything He thinks, says or does, – but I am sure if I was to scratch my Noddle for this Twelvemonth, – I could not even Guess at the Motive which sho.4 induce you to wear a Cap & Petticoat in your Old Age, – I mean, Sir, when you grow old –

Mr Hobbleworth: Ay, Ay, —

Mrs Blond: And to become an Old Woman instead of an Old Man

Mr Hobbleworth: Why then I’ll tell you. – I say to ease you of your Curiosity, I will tell you, – M”th Blond; – I have but one Motive to wish for such an Exchange as this; – but considering the many Pains & Penalties, – the numerous Cares & Troubles of Old Age, – It is a great Matter gain’d even if it were possible to get rid of but one of them.

Mrs Blond: I am afraid I shall be grown old before He has done with his Story, – or come to a Conclusion. (aside)

Mr Hobbleworth: To keep you then no longer, in suspense; the Reason why when I am no longer able to enjoy my present Range of Pleasure —

Mrs Blond: And that seems to be only between his own House over the Way, – and my Shop! (aside)

Mr Hobbleworth: The Reason why, when I am grown old, & have none of my present pleasures to solace me in that Comfortless & de-
serted Situation, – I sho. d be dispos’d to change my Sex & to become a Woman is –

Mrs Blond: Now for it! –

Mr Hobbleworth: To save the Trouble of Shaving, – and a very good reason too; – for a Man with such a Bristly Beard as a Hale Constitution has given me! –

Mrs Blond: Lord Sir, – is that all? – Why if the Change took place you might {be} disappointed Notwithstanding. – My Grandmother, Sir, has a Beard as Grey as your Wig; –

Mr Hobbleworth: Ay, Ay! – Mrs Blond, – but then she does not shave, – she does not shave, – No, No, – she does not shave, —

Mrs Blond: Well, Sir, – you are the merriest, pleasantest Gentleman that comes to my Shop! – (tho I sho. d not Care if He & his Beard were never to make their Appearance here again) – You are so lively, – so entertaining, – I don’t wonder the Ladies, M’H – are so fond of you!

Mr Hobbleworth: Ha, Ha, Ha! – Who told you that M’ B – Hey? – who told you that? –

Mrs Blond: Who told it me, Sir? – I have heard it from – so many People, that I – can’t tell who! –

Mr Hobbleworth: Very likely, – very likely! – It’s no Secret; – I really beleive I must be oblig’d to marry one of the little Rogues!

Mrs Blond: Why to be sure I have heard as much; – There was a Young Lady, no longer Ago than this Morning, – who was enquiring a great deal about you. – And I could tell you who, –

Mr Hobbleworth: Pretty Lambkin! – Well, M’ Blond, – prove your Words true, and, by Jove, I’ll purchase, – I’ll purchase, – Ay, I’ll buy a Pair of Garters of you that I will, – tho’ my own are not half worn out! –

Mrs Blond: No Sir, – I don’t want to be brib’d neither, with such a Generous Customer as you are, M’ Hobbleworth, – I would not make a Bargain about the Matter.

Mr Hobbleworth: I verily beleive you, – I do indeed! But tell me, – come tell me!
Mrs Blond: Why, Sir, the three Miss Woudbees, –

Mr Hobbleworth: Pretty Rogues! –

Mrs Blond: These Ladies were here this Morning, – & I know from their conversation that you could make them all three compleatly happy.

Mr Hobbleworth: Oh you unconscionable Creature! what all three of them! Why you have no Mercy, upon me, – M’a Blond, you hav’nt indeed, – Why you make a Grand Turk of me!

Mrs Blond: Yes, Sir, but I say you can! – & I’ll tell you how. –

Mr Hobbleworth: I’m afraid you are a Saucy Baggage!

Mrs Blond: The eldest, Sir, quite languish’d for this Suit of Linnen; – The other Declar’d she had a Passion for these Feathers; – & Miss Sukey, your Old Favourite said she sho’d go quite distracted, if she {had} not this Cap & Lappets; –

Mr Hobbleworth: Well & what’s that to me M’a Blond, – what Have I to do {with} Feathers & Lappets? –

Mrs Blond: If therefore, like a Man of true Gallantry, you wou’d ease the Languishings of the first, – satisfy the Longings of the second, and save Miss Sukey from absolute Distraction, you will order me to send these Trifles to the Young Ladies, – and make them completely happy, – It won’t cost you above forty or fifty Pound, –

Mr Hobbleworth: Why the woman’s out of her Senses! – She’s stark, staring Mad by Jupiter! – What do you think I’ve got to this time {of} Life to lay out my Money in Caps, Lappets & Hankerchiefs! I’ll hobble off as fast as I can. –


Mr Hobbleworth: You are an impertinent Woman! –

Mrs Blond: Why Sir, – M’ Hobbleworth! – you march with all the Strength and Firmness of a Grenadier! – Ha – Ha, Ha! –

Mr Hobbleworth: It won’t cost you above forty or fifty pounds, – an Extravagant Jezebel! – Exit.
Mrs Blond: Your most obedient Servant Sir! – I shall not see your sweet face again these three Months! – I was resolv’d either to get some of his money or be rid of his Company, – an old Miserly Hunks! – I wish I had let him have had the Garters! – In some fit of Chagrin or the Gout, they might (have been) of use to him! and a worthy young Man of a Son whom He starves, – and two Daughters whom He will not suffer to marry, which, you know, is worse than Starving. Would, perhaps, have thank’d me for it! – The Follies of Youth may be reform’d; – and when reform’d, – pardon’d, & forgotten. – But when we see Old Age so forgetful of itself as to sink in the Errors of Youth without it’s Temptations; When it blends the vice of early passion with the Avarice of advanc’d Age; – when we see the Eye sunk in the Head, the Locks grey, – & the Face wrinkled, – yet hear the feeble voice express wishes which ought to have been, for Years, forgotten, – Pity cannot exert itself alone, – Contempt will mingle with it.

Enter Mrs Toilette

Mrs Blond: Your Obedient {servant} Mrs Toilette, – how did you like your Lady’s Caps Mrs Toilette, – I hope Lady Dorothy lik’d ‘em too. Did they please you? – If I might be permitted to commend—

Mrs Toilette: The[y] pleas’d somebody! – as for my poor Lady Heaven bless Her, – she has no will or pleasure of her own! –

Mrs Blond: By fackins. – If I had her Rank & Fortune, – I {would} have a good deal of will & pleasure too! –

Mrs Toilette: Well, – this is really the Case with Lady Dorothy! –

Mrs Blond: Then I don’t envy her Ladyship I admire her; – for tho I’m but a poor Handicraftswoman of a Millener, I would not, in some Cases, but have a will of my own, – for the best Coach
and six long-tail’d Horses I ever saw. – But my dear M’* Toilette, if your Lady has no will of her own, who has the Honour of determining for her Ladyship

Mrs Toilette: – Anyone who happens to be present: – & sometimes, for want of a better, your humble Servant.

Mrs Blond: I’m sure she cannot have a better – that’s impossible.

Mrs Toilette: You’re very obliging, indeed, M’* Blond! – but to proceed. Her Morning visitors direct her dress for the Afternoon! but if it should so happen, – that we should not have a single Rap at the Door before three o’Clock, – why then she will Yawn, & stretch herself upon the Sofa, as {she} did yesterday, & say, — Toilette, what shall I wear to day? – When I reply’d whatever your Ladyship pleases! – Go, says she, – you odious Creature, go think upon it for a Quarter of an Hour, – & then bring me a better Answer. – Upon which I went, & knowing that she was engag’d to go to twenty Diff. Places & being very dirty weather, I got ready her last new white Tissue, – & she put it on without looking at it.

Mrs Blond: Well, – I shall always know for the future when I see Lady Dorothy uncommonly well-dress’d, who she has consulted. –

Mrs Toilette: La! M’* Blond! –

Mrs Blond: Nay, it’s very true, – *(Mrs Blond and Mrs Toilette – continue talking)*

Enter Lady Dorothy Doubtful speaking to a Servant.

Lady Dorothy: Let the Coach wait, – I shall return immediately. –

Mrs Toilette: To be sure my Lady has some Charms —

Lady Dorothy: Who is this Toilette, that is so charming? – Your Servant M’* Blond

Mrs Toilette: Who, My Lady? – Why, My Lady, I was telling M’* Blond, Yes I was telling, – I was. —
Mrs Blond: M’th Toilette, My Lady, to tell your Ladyship the truth, was speaking of your Ladyship, — & everybody knows that the word charming can never be more justly applied than to Lady Dorothy. —

Lady Dorothy: Lady Dorothy, M’th Blond is extremely oblig’d, — but you certainly overrate her small pretensions to —

Mrs Blond: By no Means, My Lady, — your Ladyship’s Looking-Glass & myself are equally faithful; — the one shews you your Charms & the other tells of them. —

Lady Dorothy: Delightful, M’th Blond. — You are a most amusing Creature, I wish you would give that stupid Wretch a Lecture now & then that she might learn to say a few of your agreeable Things, while she’s dressing me: — but the Girl has not a single Idea, beyond the whole Duty of Man! —

Mrs Toilette: Well, my Lady, the whole Duty of Man is —

Lady Dorothy: Go about your Business, — I don’t want you here! —

Mrs Toilette: That’s the whole Duty of Man, — I suppose she thinks — Well with all my Heart, — & No such bad Business Neither (aside) exit.

Lady Dorothy: Well, M’th Blond, any New Fashion stirring —

Mrs Blond: Your Ladyship is, at this Moment, the most perfect Model of Fashionable Undress; — & I make no Doubt but by four o Clock, you will be the most fashionable dress’d Figure, in all his Majesty’s Dominions.

Lady Dorothy: Do you think so? —

Mrs Blond: I am very certain of it! —

Lady Dorothy: Why, for my own part, — I cannot tell how I shall be dress’d. — Lord Fanciful & S’ William Modely were both with me this Morning, — & I consulted them upon this important Article, and his Lordship was pleas’d to say I look’d best in Pink, but Sir William was outrageous for white, — and after they had disputed this important Matter for full half an Hour, — they left me without my being able to come to any determination.

Mrs Blond: Then pray don’t let your Ladyship be, any longer, at a loss. —

Enter Sir Flippery Flirtem.

For here comes the very Prince of Taste to decide the Matter for you in a Moment.
**Sir Flippery**: Lady Dorothy here! – I hope your La’yship’s perfectly well. – This *Rencontre* is an Happiness I did not expect, – and I am here most à propos to throw myself at your Layship’s Feet! –

**Mrs Blond**: I am afraid, Sir Flippery, that as my Shop has not the Convenience of a Carpet, it would be better to defer that Act of Gallantry to some other opportunity. – Besides, my Lady, wishes to employ you in an Affair of a most serious Nature.

**Sir Flippery**: The Devil she does! – how sensibly this Millener, with all her little Pruderies about her own Slaves; – open’s an Intrigue between her Customers of Quality. *(aside)* Her La’yship *(knows)* that she may command Sir Flippery Flirtem’s best powers at all times, places & seasons.

**Mrs Blond**: I do admire your *(chivalry)* Sir Flippery, Lady Dorothy has a very important piece of Business for you.

**Sir Flippery**: I am sure there’s no Lady’s Business I sho.⁴ be better pleas’d to do, than Lady Dorothy’s. – But does your La’yship do me the Honour to confirm the flattering Assertions of our prattling Millener? –

**Lady Dorothy**: Why, Sir Flippery, as it is a matter which depends entirely upon taste & Preference, – & from my own Opinion of you as well as M‘t Blond’s –

**Sir Flippery**: I’ll save her the Trouble of her Explanation! *(aside)* Your La’yship’s Coach waits, – shall I have the Honour? –

**Lady Dorothy**: Why you have not executed your Commission! –

**Sir Flippery**: That I presume, can be done better at your La’yships own House!

**Lady Dorothy**: No! Sir Flippery, – I positively wont stir from hence ‘till it is determin’d.

**Sir Flippery**: The Devil you wont?

**Lady Dorothy**: Do you tell him, M‘t Blond, for I cannot!

**Mrs Blond**: If your La’yship insists upon it, – why, to be sure, I must! – but I sho.⁴ think it would come in a more *Interesting Manner* from you. – I’m sure Sir Flippery will receive the Declaration of your difficulty, & be more alert in directing your Ladyship’s wishes, – than if the proposals came from me.

**Sir Flippery**: *(aside)* Declarations, Difficulties, – wishes, – proposals; – a Woman surely is the most unaccountable, unintelligible Animal in —

**Lady Dorothy**: Well then, Sir, — I really have not Courage! –

**Sir Flippery**: My dear Lady Dorothy, dont deny me the Happiness of –

**Lady Dorothy**: Why then, Sir Flippery, – you must know I purpose this Evening to go to the Masquerade!

**Sir Flippery**: Charming! – *(aside)*

**Lady Dorothy**: And I have two Dresses both very elegant & almost new, –
**Sir Flippery:** Delightful! *(aside)*

**Lady Dorothy:** One of them is white & the other Rose-colour. –

**Sir Flippery:** She gives me the Rose Colour for a Thousand! – *(aside)*

**Lady Dorothy:** And both of them are now hanging in my dressing Room, & will hang there the whole Evening,

**Sir Flippery:** Unless I wear one of them! –

**Lady Dorothy:** Now Sir, as it is impossible I can wear both of them, –

**Sir Flippery:** I am to be sure, a most Lucky Dog! –

**Lady Dorothy:** I cannot go any further, I protest. —

**Mrs Blond:** Why then, I must help your Lay’ship out. –

**Sir Flippery:** Ay, that’s a kind, convenient Creature! –

**Lady Dorothy:** Pray do, My dear M[r] Blond!  

**Mrs Blond:** Why then, Sir, – Lady Dorothy wishes to know your Opinion as a Man of Taste, which Colour you think becomes her Lay’ship best, – white or red.

**Sir Flippery:** And this is all the mighty Business is it, – finely taken in to be sure!

**Lady Dorothy:** Because, Sir, if you wont determine for me, –

**Sir Flippery:** It is really impossible, Ma’am, unless I saw the particular red, & the particular white which are now claiming pre-eminence in your La’yship’s Wardrobe, for me to determine. – Your Coach is waiting, – if you’ll permit me {to} attend you home, – I make no doubt but I shall be able to fix your Choice in five Minutes.

**Lady Dorothy:** Well, Sir, I see you wont determine for me, – So I must e’en go home and determine for myself! – M[r] Blond. – Good Morning!

**Mrs Blond:** I’m your La’yships most obed.¹ Servant!

**Lady Dorothy:** **Sir Flippery,** – I shall not ask another favour of you in haste. –

**Sir Flippery:** Give me Leave to see if your Servants are ready!

**Lady Dorothy:** Sir Flippery M[r] Blond, means to whisper it to me on the Stair-Case, I suppose. –

**Sir Flippery:** I wish they were both at the Bottom of the Serpentine River! –

*M[r] Blond alone*

— Well, little as it may be practis’d, a Woman sho.² be nothing but caution. From the time she pulls off(f) her Night-cap in the Morning, – till the Day is past & she puts it on again; – A Woman, especially if she is young & handsome, sho.³ never act or speak without previous reflection. – Here now is a young Lady, who, from a mere Carelessness of Expression & fashionable Inattention, has not only subjected herself to the Impertinence of a Libertine, but, run the risk of giving a Subject for such a Tale of Scandal, as Envy would not have forgotten, – ‘till the wrinkles of Old Age had destroy’d every Trace of her Beauty.
Scene the Street, – Enter Sir Flippery & Lady Dor. Doubtful who cross the Stage. –

Lady Dorothy: Ha, Ha Ha — I think S’ Flippery, this is not one of your bright Days.

Sir Flippery: I do assure your La’yship I think it is one of the dullest, most infernal Days I ever knew in my Life. – Exeunt.

Enter Sailor {Thomas} & his Wife {Sally}. –

Thomas: Ha, Ha Ha, – Do look there Sal! – The Devil take me if this is not as pretty a frigate as I have seen a good while. – But what a Hulking Dog that was a long side her, – He looks for all the world like the Mast of a West-Country Barge turn’d into a May-pole & hung with Ribbons on a May-Day. – She’s some Court-Lady I suppose. –

Sally: I suppose she is.

Thomas: Tho’ she’s in such fine Trim, she’s not to my mind half so comely, Sal, as thou art!

Sally: I am glad, Thomas, you thinks so! – But Fine Feathers makes fine Birds. –

Thomas: Ay Sal, – but strip ’em of their Feathers and what are they then! –

Sally: Then, I suppose, they are no better than poor folks.

Thomas: Poor Folks? – What do you mean by that? – May the next Cannon Shot knock my Head off, – if I dont make thee as fine as the best of ‘em. – Come Sal, & we’ll go look for a Cap Shop, – & thee shall be as finely dizen’d out as Ribbons can make thee. – And I beleive Here is one. – Reads the Sign, – &c – Come Sal! –

Scene – Shop. – M’s Blond: –

Gracious, – Who have we here! –

Enter Thomas & Sally: –

Thomas: Mistress Gentlewoman, your Servant! – If a’nt too bold, Madam, Pray do you sell Top-Knots? –

Mrs Blond: Yes Sir, – if you’ll please to walk this way, – I’ll show you some of all Kinds & Colours.

Thomas: We want but one Colour! – An Honest Tar wants but one colour! – True Blue for ever; – that’s the Colour for an Englishman; – True Blue will never never stain! –

Mrs Blond: I am sure, Sir, you must be a Man {of} Taste for Blue now is all the Fashion.

Thomas: Damn the Fashion I say; – I know nothing, Ma’am, of Fashions; – but when True-Blue’s out of Fashion, I beleive it will be worse for Old England. – Here Ma’am, – stick one upon Sal’s Pate; & now stick another upon her Breast,
and hark'ee, – Let her have one on the other side her elbows, – and now I’ll have one in my Hat, – and who’ll be so fine as we?

**Mrs Blond:** Here Sir! –

**Thomas:** May I tumble over-board next voyage, – & be bit in two by a shark, – if she does not look handsomer than any Quality Woman in England! Does not she? –

**Mrs Blond:** Indeed, Sir, – I think she does! – The Favours become you, Ma’am very Much. –

**Sally:** La! – you flatters me to be sure.

**Thomas:** Not she by Jingo! – Pray, Ma’am, may I be so bold as to know whether you are the Mistress or the Maid; – because Maids go so fine now a Days, that one don’t know ‘em from their Mistresses.

**Mrs Blond:** I beleive, Sir, I am the Mistress of this Shop at your Service.

**Thomas:** I thank you Mistress kindly, – but I wont prove false to my little Cock-boat, – shall I Sal? –

**Sally:** I hopes not Thomas!

**Thomas:** Ho, Ho! – Well Ma’am there’s your Money! – is it enough? –

**Mrs Blond:** Yes Sir, – It is more than enough! –

**Thomas:** Is there! – why then since you are not the Maid, – give the rest to her with my Service.

**Mrs Blond:** Well, I do believe an English Sailor has’nt his Equal for Generosity on the face of the Globe! – *(aside)*

**Thomas:** Come, Sal, & now we’ll go see a Conjuring Man, – or a Puppet Shew or Something or other.

**Mrs Blond:** Your Lady, Sir, will be the prettiest woman there! –

**Sally:** La! Thomas, did you hear that? – The Gentlewoman call’d me Lady!

**Thomas:** Did she so, – why then turn around & make her one of your best Courtesies!

**Sally:** Thanky Ma’am, – I am sure you flatters me! – Exeunt, bowing

**Blond alone.** –

– You flatters me! – why ‘tis my Trade! – I live by it! – It is more necessary than an[y] Article I have in my Shop! – ‘Tis this gives an Air of Elegance to everything I sell! – When I first began the world, I was determin’d to tell the Truth, and I acted more through fear of offending than a desire to please; but my empty Shop soon convinc’d me, that I must change my Tone or become a Bankrupt. – I therefore took another Line of proceeding. I assur’d Mothers who had handsome Daughters that the young Ladies were Copies of themselves. – I told young Men that they were all admir’d by the young Women, – & the young women, that the young men were all dying for them; & so on. – Thus I sell more Caps, Ruffles, Hankerchiefs, Bags Tooth-picks & Powder puffs than most Milleners in Town. – But my Flattery only tickles the Ear; – & does not sink into the heart. – Mine is
nothing more than a little Essence upon a pocket Hankerchief with an agreeable Odour for an Hour, – and then totally evaporates. – But {when} Mother’s flatter their Daughters, & encourage others to join in the Adulation; When young women are delighted with the idle, unmeaning praise of idle Unmeaning young Men; – when, in short, – to be polite & to flatter, are one & the same thing, – It is not (to) be wonder’d that good sense is call’d Formality, & a wise cautious Behaviour, consider’d as Prudery.

Ye flatterying Swains, – if, free from Jarring Strife,
You seek the pleasures of a married Life, –
Oh do not charm the fair with flatt’ring Strain,
Nor make each future Hope of Virtue vain.
And you, ye flatter’d Maidens, Oh beware,
The soft enticing words, – the gilded Snare!
When Foplings prattle, – let your Anger rise!
For they who flatter most, – the most despise.
Court not the whisperings of deceitful Youth;
But owe your Charms to Nature & to Truth.