

***RICHARD
BRINSLEY
SHERIDAN***



***THE SCHOOL
FOR SCANDAL***

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FOR SCANDAL***

Richard Brinsley Sheridan

The School for Scandal

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THE TEXT OF THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

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The text of THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL in this edition is taken, by Mr. Fraser Rae's generous permission, from his SHERIDAN'S PLAYS NOW PRINTED AS HE WROTE THEM. In his Prefatory Notes (xxxvii), Mr. Rae writes: "The manuscript of it [THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL] in Sheridan's own handwriting is preserved at Frampton Court and is now printed in this volume. This version differs in many respects from that which is generally known, and I think it is even better than that which has hitherto been read and acted. As I have endeavoured to reproduce the works of Sheridan as he wrote them, I may be told that he was a bad hand at punctuating and very bad at spelling. . . . But Sheridan's shortcomings as a speller have been exaggerated." Lest "Sheridan's shortcomings" either in spelling or in punctuation should obscure the text, I have, in this edition, inserted in brackets some explanatory suggestions. It has seemed best, also, to adopt a uniform method for indicating stage-directions and abbreviations of the names of

characters. There can be no gain to the reader in reproducing, for example, Sheridan's different indications for the part of Lady Sneerwell—LADY SNEERWELL, LADY SNEER., LADY SN., and LADY S.—or his varying use of EXIT and EX., or his inconsistencies in the use of italics in the stage-directions. Since, however, Sheridan's biographers, from Moore to Fraser Rae, have shown that no authorised or correct edition of THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL was published in Sheridan's lifetime, there seems unusual justification for reproducing the text of the play itself with absolute fidelity to the original manuscript. Mr. Ridgway, who repeatedly sought to obtain a copy corrected by the author, according to Moore's account (LIFE OF SHERIDAN, I. p. 260), "was told by Mr. Sheridan, as an excuse for keeping it back, that he had been nineteen years endeavouring to satisfy himself with the style of The School for Scandal, but had not yet succeeded." Mr. Rae (SHERIDAN, I. p. 332) recorded his discovery of the manuscript of "two acts of The School for Scandal prepared by Sheridan for publication," and hoped, before his death, to publish this partial revision. Numberless unauthorized changes in the play have been made for histrionic purposes, from the first undated Dublin edition to that of Mr. Augustin Daly. Current texts may usually be traced, directly or indirectly, to the two-volume Murray edition of Sheridan's plays, in 1821. Some of the changes from the original manuscript, such as the blending of the parts of Miss Verjuice and Snake, are doubtless effective for reasons of dramatic economy, but many of the "cuts" are to be regretted from the reader's standpoint. The student of

English drama will prefer Sheridan's own text to editorial emendations, however clever or effective for dramatic ends.

THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

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ADDRESSED TO MRS. CREWE,

WITH THE COMEDY OF THE SCHOOL FOR SCANDAL

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Tell me, ye prim adepts in Scandal's school,
Who rail by precept, and detract by rule,
Lives there no character, so tried, so known,
So deck'd with grace, and so unlike your own,
That even you assist her fame to raise,
Approve by envy, and by silence praise!—
Attend!—a model shall attract your view—
Daughters of calumny, I summon you!
You shall decide if this a portrait prove,
Or fond creation of the Muse and Love.—
Attend, ye virgin critics, shrewd and sage,
Ye matron censors of this childish age,
Whose peering eye and wrinkled front declare

A fixt antipathy to young and fair;
By cunning, cautious; or by nature, cold,
In maiden madness, virulently bold!—
Attend! ye skilled to coin the precious tale,
Creating proof, where innuendos fail!
Whose practised memories, cruelly exact,
Omit no circumstance, except the fact!—
Attend, all ye who boast,—or old or young,—
The living libel of a slanderous tongue!
So shall my theme as far contrasted be,
As saints by fiends, or hymns by calumny.
Come, gentle Amoret (for 'neath that name,
In worthier verse is sung thy beauty's fame);
Come—for but thee who seeks the Muse? and while
Celestial blushes check thy conscious smile,
With timid grace, and hesitating eye,
The perfect model, which I boast, supply:—
Vain Muse! couldst thou the humblest sketch create
Of her, or slightest charm couldst imitate—
Could thy blest strain in kindred colours trace
The faintest wonder of her form and face—
Poets would study the immortal line,
And REYNOLDS own HIS art subdued by thine;
That art, which well might added lustre give
To Nature's best and Heaven's superlative:
On GRANBY'S cheek might bid new glories rise,
Or point a purer beam from DEVON'S eyes!
Hard is the task to shape that beauty's praise,
Whose judgment scorns the homage flattery pays!
But praising Amoret we cannot err,
No tongue o'ervalues Heaven, or flatters her!
Yet she, by Fate's perverseness—she alone
Would doubt our truth, nor deem such praise her own!
Adorning Fashion, unadorn'd by dress,
Simple from taste, and not from carelessness;
Discreet in gesture, in deportment mild,

Not stiff with prudence, nor uncouthly wild:
No state has AMORET! no studied mien;
She frowns no GODDESS, and she moves no QUEEN.
The softer charm that in her manner lies
Is framed to captivate, yet not surprise;
It justly suits th' expression of her face,—
'Tis less than dignity, and more than grace!
On her pure cheek the native hue is such,
That, form'd by Heav'n to be admired so much,
The hand divine, with a less partial care,
Might well have fix'd a fainter crimson there,
And bade the gentle inmate of her breast,—
Inshrined Modesty!—supply the rest.
But who the peril of her lips shall paint?
Strip them of smiles—still, still all words are faint!
But moving Love himself appears to teach
Their action, though denied to rule her speech;
And thou who seest her speak and dost not hear,
Mourn not her distant accents 'scape thine ear;
Viewing those lips, thou still may'st make pretence
To judge of what she says, and swear 'tis sense:
Cloth'd with such grace, with such expression fraught,
They move in meaning, and they pause in thought!
But dost thou farther watch, with charm'd surprise,
The mild irresolution of her eyes,
Curious to mark how frequent they repose,
In brief eclipse and momentary close—
Ah! seest thou not an ambush'd Cupid there,
Too tim'rous of his charge, with jealous care
Veils and unveils those beams of heav'nly light,
Too full, too fatal else, for mortal sight?
Nor yet, such pleasing vengeance fond to meet,
In pard'ning dimples hope a safe retreat.
What though her peaceful breast should ne'er allow
Subduing frowns to arm her altered brow,
By Love, I swear, and by his gentle wiles,

More fatal still the mercy of her smiles!
Thus lovely, thus adorn'd, possessing all
Of bright or fair that can to woman fall,
The height of vanity might well be thought
Prerogative in her, and Nature's fault.
Yet gentle AMORET, in mind supreme
As well as charms, rejects the vainer theme;
And, half mistrustful of her beauty's store,
She bars with wit those darts too keen before:—
Read in all knowledge that her sex should reach,
Though GREVILLE, or the MUSE, should deign to teach,
Fond to improve, nor tim'rous to discern
How far it is a woman's grace to learn;
In MILLAR'S dialect she would not prove
Apollo's priestess, but Apollo's love,
Graced by those signs which truth delights to own,
The timid blush, and mild submitted tone:
Whate'er she says, though sense appear throughout,
Displays the tender hue of female doubt;
Deck'd with that charm, how lovely wit appears,
How graceful SCIENCE, when that robe she wears!
Such too her talents, and her bent of mind,
As speak a sprightly heart by thought refined:
A taste for mirth, by contemplation school'd,
A turn for ridicule, by candour ruled,
A scorn of folly, which she tries to hide;
An awe of talent, which she owns with pride!
Peace, idle Muse! no more thy strain prolong,
But yield a theme thy warmest praises wrong;
Just to her merit, though thou canst not raise
Thy feeble verse, behold th' acknowledged praise
Has spread conviction through the envious train,
And cast a fatal gloom o'er Scandal's reign!
And lo! each pallid hag, with blister'd tongue,
Mutters assent to all thy zeal has sung—

Owens all the colours just—the outline true;
Thee my inspirer, and my MODEL—CREWE!

DRAMATIS PERSONAE²

SIR PETER TEAZLE Mr. King

SIR OLIVER SURFACE Mr. Yates

YOUNG SURFACE Mr. Palmer

CHARLES (his Brother) Mr. Smith

CRABTREE Mr. Parsons

SIR BENJAMIN BACKBITE Mr. Dodd

ROWLEY Mr. Aikin

SPUNGE

MOSES

SNAKE

CARELESS—and other companions to CHARLES

LADY TEAZLE

MARIA

LADY SNEERWELL

MRS. CANDOUR

MISS VERJUICE



PROLOGUE WRITTEN BY MR. GARRICK

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A school for Scandal! tell me, I beseech you,
Needs there a school this modish art to teach you?
No need of lessons now, the knowing think;
We might as well be taught to eat and drink.
Caused by a dearth of scandal, should the vapours
Distress our fair ones—let them read the papers;
Their powerful mixtures such disorders hit;
Crave what you will—there's quantum sufficit.
"Lord!" cries my Lady Wormwood (who loves tattle,
And puts much salt and pepper in her prattle),
Just risen at noon, all night at cards when threshing
Strong tea and scandal—"Bless me, how refreshing!
Give me the papers, Lisp—how bold and free! [Sips.]
LAST NIGHT LORD L. [Sips] WAS CAUGHT WITH LADY D.
For aching heads what charming sal volatile! [Sips.]
IF MRS. B. WILL STILL CONTINUE FLIRTING,
WE HOPE SHE'LL draw, OR WE'LL undraw THE CURTAIN.
Fine satire, poz—in public all abuse it,
But, by ourselves [Sips], our praise we can't refuse it.
Now, Lisp, read you—there, at that dash and star:"
"Yes, ma'am—A CERTAIN LORD HAD BEST BEWARE,
WHO LIVES NOT TWENTY MILES FROM GROSVENOR
SQUARE;
FOR, SHOULD HE LADY W. FIND WILLING,
WORMWOOD IS BITTER"——"Oh! that's me! the villain!
Throw it behind the fire, and never more
Let that vile paper come within my door."
Thus at our friends we laugh, who feel the dart;
To reach our feelings, we ourselves must smart.
Is our young bard so young, to think that he
Can stop the full spring-tide of calumny?

Knows he the world so little, and its trade?
Alas! the devil's sooner raised than laid.
So strong, so swift, the monster there's no gagging:
Cut Scandal's head off, still the tongue is wagging.
Proud of your smiles once lavishly bestow'd,
Again our young Don Quixote takes the road;
To show his gratitude he draws his pen,
And seeks his hydra, Scandal, in his den.
For your applause all perils he would through—
He'll fight—that's write—a cavalliero true,
Till every drop of blood—that's ink—is spilt for you.

ACT I

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SCENE I.—LADY SNEERWELL'S House

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