

BEAU BRUMMEL by BERTRAM P. MATTHEWS

FULL PLAYSRIPT

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FOREWORD by Robert Kay

The play *Beau Brummel* (note the spelling with one ‘l’) was written by Bertram P. Matthews in 1928 to a commission from the actor-manager Gerald Lawrence.

Beau Brummel (George Bryan Brummell 1778-1840) was a real person, prominent at the time of the Regency (1811-1820). Matthews’ play presents a fictional treatment of his love for a lady : Brummel’s sacrifices on her behalf result in his losing his position in Society and ultimately dying exiled and in penury.

Play and playwright would today be forgotten but for the fact that music for the play was written by Sir Edward Elgar, no less — this music was never published and the MS later vanished. The loss of a substantial work by England’s leading composer (the most likely explanation, based on all the evidence available, is that Elgar gave the MS away to a friend or music editor) has caused severe heartache to generations of musicologists, and this serves to keep the play, its author and Gerald Lawrence in the public eye long after their reputations would otherwise have faded entirely.

Due to musicologists in the past having failed to research *Beau Brummel* adequately, Elgarians over the years came to believe that Lawrence was to blame for the music’s disappearance. This is a totally unjust and unfounded accusation.

In the absence of the music, and given that the play was also never published and that Elgar’s personal copy of the script has disappeared, any discussion of *Beau Brummel* has hitherto been doomed to remain purely theoretical. Making the playscript accessible to the general public at least rectifies one of these problems.

Set out below is a complete transcript of the play, which survives in a single typewritten copy submitted to the Office of the Lord Chamberlain for censorship approval prior to production. This official copy currently resides in the British Library under the reference LCP 1928/34. No alterations have been made in this transcript other than minor improvements to punctuation and stage directions.

Further information about the play, its music and the probable fate of the latter

can be found online in the *Elgar Society Journal* issues for December 2011 and April 2016, via the www.elgar.org website.

LAWRENCE AND MATTHEWS

The actor Gerald Leslie Lawrence (1873-1957) was a protégé of Sir Henry Irving and initially specialised in Shakespeare. After the Great War (during which he volunteered for the R.N.V.R. and worked as a cryptologist¹) Lawrence developed a career as an actor-manager. In this capacity he was best known in the title rôle of *Monsieur Beaucaire* by Booth Tarkington. *Beau Brummel* seems to have been an attempt to cash in on this reputation, being set in a similar period and locale. Apart from wartime fundraising galas Lawrence retired from the stage in 1938.

Playwright Bertram Paget Matthews (1872-1930) enjoyed some success in the early 1900s. His obituary² stated that he wrote ‘many successful plays’ and some, such as ‘A Royal Betrothal’, ‘The Grand Seigneur’ and ‘The Fighting Chance’ — all co-written with the actor Edward Ferris — were performed in the West End. After the Great War his output seems to have declined.

Beau Brummel was Matthews’ final play, premièred just over a year before his death. Already he was in poor health : he was unable to attend the First Night in Birmingham on November 5th 1928, being described in the newspapers as ‘an invalid’. A few days later Matthews sent Elgar a typewritten letter, apologising that it could not be handwritten on the grounds that “writing is now difficult for me.” Some months later he was forced to move from his house into a care home, where he died on 28th January 1930 at the early age of 57. The causes of death given on his death certificate — chronic gout, myocarditis and asthma — coupled with the apparently inexorable decline in his capabilities during the last year or so of his life, suggest that Matthews may possibly have been suffering from some degenerative auto-immune-related disease, such as e.g. rheumatoid arthritis. On the other hand, the gentlemanly pastimes of smoking and drinking would have had similar effects.

THE PLAY — GENESIS

Beau Brummel was of the now vanished genre of ‘musical play’, i.e. a play with music played under the dialogue in the manner of a melodrama or film score. There was no singing — it was not a ‘musical’ as the term is understood today.

No information survives as to negotiations between Lawrence and Matthews, and no mention of him is made in Lawrence’s correspondence with Elgar.

There was initial uncertainty as to the period in which the play would be set, one suggestion, oddly, being that *Beau Brummel* should not be named as the principal character. Letters between Lawrence and Elgar indicate that in May 1928 (when the script was submitted to Elgar for his consideration) Lawrence was also toying with the idea of putting the whole drama back by about 50 years — from the Regency to

¹ David Kahn, *The Codebreakers*, p. 275.

² *Kent and Sussex Courier*, 7th February 1930.

the era of Louis XV — so as to be able to employ more attractive costumes and to avoid complications with historical accuracy. However, as the licence for the play is dated only two months later, this plan must have been dropped. The necessary rewrites would presumably have been impossible in the time available.

‘Beau Brummel’ was indeed a very late candidate for the play’s title. The title page of the playscript submitted to the Lord Chamberlain reads ‘A Gentleman — The Love Story Of Beau Brummel’ with ‘A Gentleman’ then crossed out and ‘Beau Brummel’ substituted. In the playscript itself, the first three Acts are titled ‘A Gentleman’, but on the script for Act 3 this name is crossed out and ‘When Men Wore Swords’ substituted. The script for Act 4 is also titled ‘When Men Wore Swords’. The first mention of ‘Beau Brummel’ as an overall title for the play occurs in a letter from Gerald Lawrence to Elgar on 24th July 1928.

Act 3, Scene 1, Episode 1 appears to have been written some time before the rest of the play. It bears Matthews’ address in Tunbridge Wells, from which, according to his obituary, he had moved as long ago as 1925 (the other sections bear Lawrence’s address only). On this evidence Act 3/1/1 could have been a fragment which had lain on Matthews’ shelf for some time, awaiting a context (not to mention an able-bodied amanuensis). In Act 3/1/1, important events happen to Lord Mayne — proposal of marriage; bankruptcy and subsequent release from debts; the ‘Jovian displeasure’ of The Regent — while Brummel’s rôle is almost incidental. This prompts the speculation that Matthews’ original concept may have been for Lord Mayne, rather than Beau Brummel, to be the central character in the drama — the ‘Gentleman’ of the original title — which might explain Lawrence’s indecision concerning this aspect of the play as late as mid-1928.

The performance licence was granted on 23rd July 1928, upon which Gerald Lawrence wrote to Elgar informing him that “*Brummel* has been much knit up since [May] but the structure is unaltered.” However, on June 12th, 1929, shortly before the play opened in Johannesburg, Lawrence wrote to Elgar mentioning ‘the new Scene in Act 1’. This appears to have been a card party in Lord Harding’s rooms, probably added to circumvent an obvious logical flaw in Act 1, and interpolated before the action moves to the Fête in Lord Mayne’s grounds.³

James Carrall, the actor playing Squire Groombridge, was sacked for drunken behaviour after the play’s week in Hull.⁴ The part of Squire Groombridge may then have been excised from the script as it does not feature in the programme for the run in Cheltenham. However, the part reappears in performances in South Africa.

The Lord Chamberlain’s copy should therefore perhaps be regarded as a final draft rather than a definitive, exact representation of the play as eventually staged. However, as regards the U.K. performances at least, all the main onstage events described by the reviews⁵ find their place in the official copy.

³ This card party Scene is mentioned in the *Rand Daily Mail* review (20th August 1929). It does not appear in the official playscript.

⁴ *Hull Daily Mail*, 19th February 1929, carries a report of Carrall’s claim (later withdrawn) for wrongful dismissal.

⁵ The most detailed U.K. account of the play’s action is that in the *Gloucestershire Echo* for 11th December 1928. This carries a synopsis exactly mirroring the events in the playscript as submitted to the Lord Chamberlain.

The preview in the *Johannesburg Star* (19th August 1929), alone among all the newspaper coverage in two countries, states that “the play was long banned in England on account of the line ‘who’s your fat friend?’, thought by the censor to be capable of offending Royalty.” This is surely apocryphal. The officially approved script contains the line in question (as “. . . . your stout friend”) and, as explained below, internal evidence indicates that the play was assembled at the last minute, possibly with Lawrence playing a part in the scriptwriting.

Some of the actors doubled-up on rôles. For example, in the Cheltenham run, one actor played the parts of Mr. Bagwig, Larkin and M. Chauvin. Lady Mary Mayne and her daughter Mary Woodland should be played by the same actress (as the physical resemblance of the latter to the former is a crucial aspect of Act 4). Even so, some of the cast have nothing to do after Act 2.

One curious error is the date of Act 1, which is given in the programmes as 1818. Given that in the play there is an explicitly stated three-year gap between Acts 1 and 2, this would put the date of the latter as 1821. By that time Prince George had ascended to the Throne as King George IV — so would no longer have been referred to as ‘The Regent’ and would have been forbidden by protocol from the sort of casual social interactions portrayed in Acts 2 and 3. Prefatory disclaimer notwithstanding, this seems to have been simple carelessness on the part of Matthews and Lawrence : ‘1815’ would have resolved the problem.

AUTHORSHIP AND COPYRIGHT

The playscript is typed on two different typewriters. The script for Act 3/1/1 is typed on a machine identifiably belonging to Matthews : this machine is also used in a letter from Matthews to Elgar dated 8th November 1928. This section of the script is marked ‘Property of B.P.Matthews’, this then being crossed out and ‘Property of Gerald Lawrence’ substituted in ink — the remaining parts of the playscript simply carry a typewritten ‘Property of Gerald Lawrence’ and are typed on a different machine presumably belonging to Lawrence himself. From this it can be inferred that Gerald Lawrence purchased the complete performing rights of the play from Matthews, and if Matthews was in deteriorating health, Lawrence may also have acted as co-writer — with all that implies regarding creative input.

Matthews died in 1930, Elgar in 1934. The 70-year copyright period is long expired and there should be no copyright encumbrances in performing the play. But if Lawrence played an active part in the play’s creation, it could be argued that a residual copyright may still exist in his favour, Lawrence not having died until 1957.

When Lawrence died he left the residue of his Estate to his third wife Madge Compton, and when she died in 1969 her Estate residue was divided between three nieces, one of whom lived in South Africa. These ‘residues’ would include all assets including copyrights. In theory, therefore, the descendants of these three ladies might be entitled to claim performance rights until the year 2028 in respect of future *Beau Brummel* stagings. In practice, in the absence of concrete proof that Lawrence had any creative input, the question is academic. But it would be ironic if some rights of

performance, even if unenforceable, were still held by a resident of South Africa, the country where *Beau Brummel* last saw the light of day.

PERFORMANCES — FULL LIST

The First Night was on 5th November 1928 in Birmingham. Elgar conducted the orchestra, but Matthews was unable to attend, although he did see a later performance at his local theatre in Tunbridge Wells. 1929 UK runs comprised *Monsieur Beaucaire* in the first half of the week, *Brummel* at the end (including matinée).

Subsequently *Beau Brummel* was taken to South Africa as the latter half of a seven-month tour. This began on 1st April, 1929 but the *Beau Brummel* run did not commence until August.

An asterisk * indicates that a theatre programme survives in local archives.

United Kingdom :

05-10.XI.1928 *Theatre Royal, Birmingham.

Birmingham Post, B. Weekly Post, B. Mail, Evening Despatch, B. Gazette, Evening Standard, Daily Telegraph, Stage, Yorkshire Post, Sunday Referee, Musical Times, The Era, Worcester Herald, Malvern News.

12-17.XI.1928 Grand Theatre, Hull.

Hull Daily Mail.

19-24.XI.1928 *Her Majesty's Theatre, Walsall.

Walsall Observer.

26.XI-01.XII.1928 Prince Of Wales Theatre, Grimsby.

Grimsby Telegraph.

03-08.XII.1928 Theatre Royal, Exeter.

Express and Echo, Exeter and Plymouth Gazette.

10-15.XII.1928 *Opera House, Cheltenham.

Gloucestershire Echo, Gloucestershire Citizen.

28.I-02.II.1929 Opera House, Tunbridge Wells.

Kent and Sussex Courier, Sevenoaks Chronicle.

04-09.II.1929 The Theatre, Richmond-on-Thames.

Richmond And Twickenham Times, Richmond Herald.

11-16.II.1929 The Theatre, Great Malvern.

Malvern News, Malvern Gazette.

18-23.II.1929 Royal County Theatre, Bedford.

Bedford Record, Bedfordshire Times.

South Africa :

19.VIII-07.IX.1929 His Majesty's Theatre, Johannesburg.

Rand Daily Mail, The Star, J. Sunday Times, S.A. Merry-Go-Round.

09-12.IX.1929 Opera House, Pretoria.

Pretoria News.

14,16,17.IX.1929 Grand Theatre, Bloemfontein.

The Friend (flyer only).

19-21.IX.1929 Opera House, Port Elizabeth.

Eastern Province Herald.

24.IX-03.X.1929 Opera House, Cape Town.

Cape Times (includes full cast list), Cape Argus.

Although Lawrence intended to mount *Beau Brummel* in London after his return from South Africa, this never took place. No performances have been traced following the Last Night in Cape Town on 3rd October 1929⁶ (the troupe embarked for London the following day).

The cast was a mixed bag of the respected and the obscure. With the exception of the temporarily omitted part of Squire Groombridge (see above), the theatre programme for Cheltenham, reproduced in the *Elgar Society Journal* for December 2011 (available for viewing online) lists the complete personnel. For the UK performances in early 1929, the important part of Lord Harding was played to considerable acclaim by Ralph Richardson — a fact not mentioned by his biographers. Richardson then went to South Africa but returned to England midway through the tour, before *Beau Brummel* opened. His appointments diary for 1929 survives in the BL and lists the various venues in South Africa (though little else).

The most detailed and informative reviews of the play are in the *Birmingham Post* for 6th November 1928 (Birmingham), *Gloucestershire Echo* for 11th December 1928 (Cheltenham), *Rand Daily Mail* for 19th August 1929 (Johannesburg) and the *Eastern Province Herald* for 20th September, 1929 (Port Elizabeth).

Audience reaction, judging by the Press notices, was generally positive. The English reviews were almost without exception highly flattering, only the Hull reviewer raising certain doubts about the credibility of the plot. Some South African newspapers struck a negative tone⁷, criticising the play's plot and structure as well as the quality of the acting. This may have been sour grapes on the part of the local intelligentsia writing the reviews, determined to downplay the products of the colonial power — the *Cape Argus* review is so relentlessly uncomplimentary that one suspects a reviewer with an inferiority complex — but the review in the *Rand Daily Mail* is a perceptive analysis of the play's strengths and weaknesses.

THE PLAY — AFTERMATH AND ASSESSMENT

It must be remembered that Gerald Lawrence had recently made a name for

⁶ Matthews' obituary in February 1930 states that *Beau Brummel* was 'still on the boards' but this was probably a bit of poetic licence supplied to the newspaper by Lawrence himself, who attended the funeral : at the time he still had hopes of mounting a performance in the West End.

⁷ *Johannesburg Star*, 20th August 1929 : "The play is not distinguished either in colour or dialogue, although the final scene is so impressive that one leaves the theatre forgetful of many of the deficiencies that have gone before." *Cape Argus*, 25th September 1929 : "A one-man play : the other characters never come to life. In no respects can it claim to be a good play— the audience's attention is held solely by the merit of the acting." The rest of this review is remarkably bilious in tone. On the other hand the previous week's production, in Port Elizabeth, had been given a favourable notice by the *Eastern Province Herald* reviewer.

himself in the title rôle of *Monsieur Beaucaire*, a romantic comedy set in the Regency era. By commissioning *Beau Brummel* and purchasing the entire performance rights Lawrence doubtless hoped to build on this reputation with a drama set in a similar period, specially tailored to capitalise on his specific strengths as an actor, and unlike *Beaucaire* not requiring performance royalty payments to the author. If *Brummel* had succeeded at the box-office it could have made Lawrence rich at a time when (he was then aged 55) his career was likely to be approaching its end.

Regarding the play's chances of success, Lawrence made an error in that immediately after the UK performances he took the cast to South Africa for seven months. Any momentum built up by *Beau Brummel* in the UK was thereby lost. Had the play been staged in London in early 1929, immediately after the provincial run, the story could have been very different. In the event, by the time Lawrence returned to the UK, public taste seems, according to a letter from Elgar (a keen theatre-goer), to have moved away from the *Beaucaire/Brummel* type of drama. Lawrence made attempts to arrange a West End run but by mid-1930 his efforts had ended in failure.

Shortly afterwards, personal tragedy intervened. One presumes that Lawrence then gave up on *Beau Brummel* altogether : it is odd, given that he almost certainly owned the performance rights, that he did not attempt to recoup some of his losses by having the play published.

As with *Monsieur Beaucaire*, *Beau Brummel* was advertised as a 'Romantic Regency Costume Drama'. But anyone who had seen *Beaucaire* and was expecting something similar would have got a rude shock. Although set in the same period and opening with a romantic scene between two of the supporting characters, *Beau Brummel* only takes a few minutes before the atmosphere changes to one of foreboding. Thereafter, unpleasant events and unhappy personalities dominate proceedings, interspersed with uneasily comic episodes. The audience may have found it difficult to identify with a principal character who is portrayed as a paragon of virtue and self-sacrifice, but as a result loses everything⁸. The cast reduces, *Farewell Symphony*-like, as the play proceeds : a large cast in Act 1, somewhat fewer in Act 2, smaller still in Act 3 and only four characters in Act 4, while the atmosphere becomes ever more claustrophobic as the action progresses. And while *Beaucaire* ends happily, the final Act of *Beau Brummel* is bleak in the extreme.

A tragic atmosphere is not a dramatic deficiency — far from it — but if deliberately intended to have been a lucrative successor to *Beaucaire*, *Beau Brummel* might with hindsight be viewed as a miscalculation. The play was a failure at the box-office, a fate presciently foreseen by Elgar before the music had even been written⁹. Yet Lawrence, an experienced and intelligent actor, must have been able to assess the play's merits. He may have assumed that his audience was sufficiently sophisticated to be able to accept a Regency drama that was far removed from romantic bewigged fluff.

⁸ *Birmingham Mail*, 6th November 1928 : "A more serious criticism is that our hero is shown so consistently in the light of a failure."

⁹ Elgar to Lawrence 20th May 1928 : "I note what you say about some alterations. The last scene is good, but I fear that such a very sad ending may prevent its achieving the popularity it seems to deserve."

A final question is how the play would fare if presented on the stage today. As a piece of escapism it has much going for it : it is eventful and occasionally witty, and the last Act was praised in the newspapers as a powerful piece of theatre. There is a strong idealistic message that money and position in Society are as nothing compared with love and adherence to the highest principles. On the debit side, however, the internal organisation of the play leaves something to be desired, diminishing the play's credibility. Beau Brummel's rôle overshadows the others, to the detriment of their coming alive. The dialogue is somewhat grandiloquent in places, although this could be minimised by the actors playing their parts in a reasonably 'straight' manner. Finally, there is no feelgood factor : the play is an out-and-out tragedy, albeit set in attractive, exotic surroundings. And reviewers agreed that Elgar's music, as well as being meritorious in its own right, served to unify and enhance the action on stage as well as accompany it.

Unless Elgar's lost manuscript reappears, the chances of *Beau Brummel* being revived would appear slim — but if the music were ever recovered, the play would be, to an audience willing to suspend some disbelief, an interesting period curiosity.

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CAST IN ORDER OF APPEARANCE (as in Cheltenham theatre programme)

Lord Mayne
 Mistress Prudence Free
 Mr. Bagwig
 Sir Christopher Woodland
 Widow [*sic*] Chase
 Captain Bannister
 [Squire Groombridge]
 Lord Harding
 Lady Mary Mayne
 Lila Dawn (of the Playhouse)
 BEAU BRUMMEL
 The Regent
 Mistress Strange
 Larkin (A Tradesman)
 Hatter
 Tailor
 Flower Girl
 Mortimer
 Butler to Lord Mayne
 Post Boy
 Monsieur Chauvin (French Landlord)
 Mary Woodland [*see note below*]

Additional Characters in Act 1 —

Columbine [*see note below*]
 Sugar
 Gipsy
 Punchinello
 Harlequin
 Knight Templar

Mary Woodland, whose arrival is crucial to the play's final *dénouement*, should be played by the same actress as plays Lady Mary Mayne in Acts 1 to 3. At the critical moment the dying Brummel mistakes Miss Woodland for her mother.

There are a few differences between the published cast lists and the playscript :

- ‘A Tradesman’ is named as ‘Larkin’ but calls himself ‘Parkin’.
- The Hatter, Tailor, and Flower Girl (characters in the opening scene of Act 2) do not have any speaking parts in the script.
- ‘Mistress Strange’ is presumably the disguised Mistress/Widow Chase at the beginning of Act 2.
- The ‘Additional Characters’ are presumably the ‘Revellers’ in Act 1.
- Beau Brummel’s entry on stage precedes that of Lila Dawn.
- A ‘Footman’ appears in the Cape Town cast listing : although not in the original cast list this is technically correct, as in Act 2 he is heard to say two words (offstage) and may also make a brief onstage appearance.
- ‘Columbine’ is first in some cast lists but is not assigned any actual words in the script. Possibly she appeared onstage before the rise of the curtain, to deliver the Prefatory Note at the beginning of Act 1.

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ACT 1

*The gardens of Mayne House illuminated for a masked revel in honour of the Regent.*¹¹

A picture of velvet shadows and softly glowing coloured light. From the pendant tracery of the enclosing foliage hang festoons of gaily coloured lanterns, throwing a soft orange-tinted radiance on the central path, while in the half-shadows formally clipped walls of Box (broken here and there to reveal winding footpaths) form nooks with marble seats making lovers' shrines. From the L. a stronger glow through the trees suggests that there is the centre of festivities — a suggestion heightened by the sensuous melody of stringed instruments playing softly in the distance.

The curtain rises on a Watteau-like scene. In a bowery of green, opening onto the central path, two figures are seated on the marble seat. The gentleman [HARRY, LORD MAYNE], unmasked and ardent, is leaning to the lady [MISTRESS PRUDENCE FREE], who masked and coquettish leans away, making play with eyes and fan.

HARRY [Vainly tries to capture hand.] Ah, cruel to deny me.
PRUDENCE [Gives a tantalising laugh.] If tales be true, Lord Mayne never denies himself — he would welcome change.
HARRY Unfair! Unfair! You know me and refuse me knowledge of yourself. Remove your mask, I beg — let me see the beauty that it hides.
PRUDENCE [Laughs.] Perhaps it hides its absence, Sir.
HARRY The sweetness of your voice denies the words — Ah! Please . . .
PRUDENCE A woman's greatest charm is mystery — would you rob me of my charm, Sir?
HARRY That were impossible — see, I am your supplicant. [*falls gallantly on one knee before her — she spreads her hands before her in defence — he captures them, cries.*] One glimpse I do implore.

At this moment comedy intervenes disastrously. Mr. Simon BAGWIG, an elderly idiot — half ladykiller, half busybody and all fool — has entered just previously, bent nearly and peering on the ground short-sightedly, seeking his dropped glasses. At the critical moment he espies the heel of HARRY's shoe projecting beyond the corner of the alcove, and with a delighted exclamation seizes it Tableau HARRY is projected head-foremost into his astonished charmer's lap, who gives a startled squeal. BAGWIG stands gaping in stupid amazement at the

¹¹ This is the wording in the playscript : but the Regent's visit is, according to Harry, incognito. So 'in honour of the Regent' seems inappropriate as a description.

leg he is clutching.

HARRY [Frees his leg so forcibly that **BAGWIG** is deposited in a sitting position before them.] Damnation! What the devil, Sir

BAGWIG Lord Mayne! [*stammers.*] A thousand pardons my dear host — I am in great distress — I have dropped my quizzing glass — I am so blind without it.

HARRY Obviously.

BAGWIG I can scarce see a yard beyond my nose.

HARRY Then you should be in Parliament.

BAGWIG [*Sniggering with conceited delight.*] You think so? Ecod that's funny — I've sometimes thought myself I ought to be there.

HARRY [*With humour.*] I'm sure of it. [*pats his shoulder.*] Lose no time. [*pushes him along the path.*]

BAGWIG [*Hanging back.*] You haven't seen my glass?

HARRY No, no. [*urges him on.*]

BAGWIG Or a . . . [*giggles self-consciously.*] . . . a lady carrying a red rose?

PRUDENCE *in recess suddenly stiffens — her hand touches the rose she is wearing.*

HARRY [*Impatiently.*] No, no — nothing.

BAGWIG 'Tis most unfortunate [*smirks.*] She's probably breaking her heart.

HARRY [*Pushes him on.*] Then hasten to her, my dear sir.

BAGWIG [*Bleats desperately.*] But I can't hasten I can't see without my glass.

HARRY Then walk about till she sees you love is not always blind.

BAGWIG But she doesn't know me — 'Twas an assignation — I sent her a note begging her to wear a red rose at your fête tonight [*giggles.*] I signed myself Strephon.

PRUDENCE *with lively disgust tears the rose from her dress, flings it down and slipping from alcove makes off R.*

HARRY "Strephon." Ah! The gentleman who looked after lost sheep — I mustn't keep you . . . [*waves him away hopefully.*]

BAGWIG [*Not moving.*] "Lost sheep." [*sniggers.*] Oh, fie, Milord.

HARRY [*Looks round, sees alcove empty.*] The devil : I've lost my sheep. [*starts after his lady.*]

BAGWIG [*Drivelling on.*] He-He-He! Let's call them innocent lambs; 'tis vastly more polite . . . Did I tell you what I said to Lord Harding yesterday? He-He-He! Someone mentioned the ladies — not me of course — He-He-He! So Lord John says — you know his way?

— [*no answer – he speaks louder.*] You know his . . . Bless me, he's gone : and 'twas the best thing I've ever said — [*briskly.*] He oughtn't to miss it. [*calls.*] Lord Harry stop

Exit HARRY. BAGWIG hurries off after him.

From R., LORD HARDING, a distinguished, hawk-faced, evil-looking man, strolls on — his mask is in his hand, LADY MARY MAYNE leans on his arm indolently.

MARY [*Stops.*] Let us rest. [*drops languidly onto seat, removes mask, swings it carelessly.*] One is glad to get away from the glare for a little while.

HARDING [*Looks about.*] Your brother has given us Fairyland tonight.

MARY [*Laughs.*] Does Fairyland appeal to Lord Harding greatly?

HARDING [*Leans to her, gazes in her face.*] And you, Milady?

MARY I hate pretence.

HARDING I knew you would say so : 'tis your honesty — so rare in women — that I love the most.

MARY [*Instantly the great lady, speaks with dignified rebuke.*] It is unwise to squander one's affections my Lord.

HARDING And unwise still to place them wrongly.

MARY [*Ripostes swiftly.*] I'm glad we are agreed on that.

HARDING [*Gravely.*] And I also. You had an adventure while in Town. [*she turns a quick questioning gaze but he is gazing away.*]

MARY Some footpads stopped my coach, returning from the Playhouse.

HARDING And some gentleman came to your rescue.

MARY [*With feeling.*] A very gallant gentleman.

HARDING [*For a moment his face is that of a devil, then he is once again the grave courteous friend.*] You know him well?

MARY [*Warmly.*] One need not know Mr. Brummel well to know that. If you doubt it

HARDING God forbid. If the tales I've heard be half true it was a very gallant act. [*at the radiance in her face the devil in his shows again but is choked back. Slowly.*] Only [*pauses.*]

MARY You would qualify?

HARDING [*Looks her squarely in the face.*] Has your brother met this Mr. Brummel?

MARY [*Hesitates momentarily.*] There has been no opportunity yet.

HARDING Few people do seem to know much of this Mr. Brummel.

MARY [*Scornfully.*] You and your friends I think are the poorer for that.

HARDING [*Gravely.*] I trust so.

MARY [*Flashes out.*] I [*emphasised.*] do not doubt it.

HARDING [*With swift change to air of great sincerity.*] Then I will have no

doubt too. My great regard has made me too ready to listen to idle chatter about a gentleman I know so little of. That is clear.

MARY [*With spirit.*] They speak against

HARDING [*Quickly, shrugging.*] Gossip, just gossip . . . and with no foundation, I am sure of that now. It is the way of people. [*looks round.*] How beautiful it is. You love this place, Lady Mary?

MARY Who would not? But to me — we have lived here these three hundred years — it is part of our very selves. You can understand what I feel.

HARDING Aye, fully. [*relapses into silence, looks about, murmurs.*] 'T would be a heartbreak

MARY [*Surprised.*] A heartbreak?

HARDING [*Pretending surprise.*] Did I say that? I was thinking . . . how sad it would be to part from it.

MARY I think I should die. Thank God it can never happen.

HARDING [*After a long pause.*] No-o [*she glances at him quickly, puzzled at his tone.*] Just now, Lady Mary, I offended in my great desire for your safety and happiness.

MARY [*With quick generosity.*] Let us forget.

HARDING That is like you. But I want your promise [*pretends to find difficulty in framing the words.*] If . . . if you are ever in trouble . . . I mean, should this home you love be threatened

MARY “Threatened.” This? How can it be?

HARDING [*Putting on air of great embarrassment.*] No, no, of course not. 'Twas but supposition — foolish of me. Forget it, pray.

MARY Lord Harding, you are hiding something.

HARDING [*Most unconvincingly.*] Why — No! What should I?

MARY [*Has flash of intuition, insists.*] Something that concerns my brother. Oh, please be frank. Is Harry in trouble? Please tell me. He means so much to me. If he is in difficulty, don't keep it from me, please. It is no kindness.

HARDING [*With air of great reluctance.*] There was talk of high play

MARY [*Cries.*] “Play.” [*in tragic whisper.*] Oh, Harry, Harry

HARDING It may be nothing. [*pauses, then subtly conveys impression that he is trying to break bad news tactfully.*] He is not fortunate at play, I fear.

MARY [*Desperately.*] You have heard more? [*he avoids her eyes.*] You have. Oh, please be frank. [*suddenly a great fear seizes her.*] It isn't . . . ? He has gambled [*indicates the estate with a gesture.*] this away?

HARDING I trust not. [*bends to her, takes her hand.*] But if the trouble be real, I want you to remember I am rich Will you promise to come to me?

MARY [Catches her breath, gazes at him with troubled eyes, stammers.]
'Tis kind, Milord, but [frees her hand.]

HARDING [Laughs softly.] You think I would bargain? Am I sunk so low?

MARY [Conscience-stricken.] Forgive me.

HARDING [Swiftly.] If you will promise to take my help should need arise?
[smiles.] Believe me, I make no terms.

MARY [Impulsively.] Oh Milord, 'tis generous of you. [holds out hand.]

HARDING [Raises it to his lips.] I only ask to serve you.

Light laughter and voices sound offstage : approaching.

HARDING Our friends come. [they slip on masks, he offers arm, they move composedly to meet the revellers.]

A merry party of REVELLERS, masked, enters noisily. Among them, HARRY and PRUDENCE, CAPT. BANNISTER. SQUIRE GROOMBRIDGE, a fattish jolly middle-aged man, is leading.

GROOMB'GE Whoop, whoop! Deserters from the revels — they must pay forfeit — what say, ladies and gentlemen?

REVELLERS [Joining hands and imprisoning HARDING and MARY.] Yes! Yes! Forfeit.

GROOMB'GE [Laughs loudly.] A song from the gentleman and [smacks thigh] a kiss from the lady.

REVELLERS [Whoop joyfully] Bravo! Bravo! Pay! Pay! [they close on MARY. HARDING steps before her.]

HARDING [Blandly.] May I suggest a better forfeit. A song from the lady and [fixes his eyes on PRUDENCE, bows deeply.] a kiss from the gentleman. [A shout of delight goes up.]

MISS'S CHASE [An elderly withered spinster calling attention to her fading charms by her overdressed, over-jewelled state, gives an affected squeal of dismay.] Oh! La! La! No [stands perfectly still in a ridiculous pose hoping for the best.]

GROOMB'GE Proposed and carried, eh, gentlemen?

Delighted assent. PRUDENCE trying to slip away is ringed round by the laughing REVELLERS and stopped.

BANNISTER [Evidently unsteady and merry.] And the kissing first, To it, Romeo! [REVELLERS, laughing, echo cry.]

HARDING I bow to your decision. [steps to Mistress Chase.]

MISS'S CHASE [Squeaks.] Oh, la! I protest. [very obviously tilts her face for the expected kiss.]

BANNISTER [*With drunken gravity and a hiccup.*] Fly, madam.
MISS'S CHASE My limbs fail me — [as **HARDING** takes her hand.] Oh! [*turns head modestly away.*]
HARDING [*Very gravely.*] Forgive my daring, madam. [*kisses her hand and turns, leaving the spinster gasping with mixed indignation and disappointment. The REVELLERS are hugely delighted.*]

BAGWIG *rushes on, highly excited.*

BAGWIG [*Pantingly.*] Is the Lord Mayne among you, gentlemen? I must speak to him at once. 'Tis important.
HARRY [*Steps forward, removing mask.*] What is it Mr. Bagwig?
BAGWIG Ah, Milord, there's a robber in your grounds : a desperate fellow.
HARRY [*With surprising earnestness.*] What do you mean? Out with it, man, quick.
BAGWIG [*Delighted with the excitement he has caused.*] Why, you must know I dropped my quizzing glass
HARRY Yes, Yes! Never mind that.
BAGWIG [*Plaintively.*] But I do — I can't see without it — So you must understand I was searching for it — a fine glass set in tortoiseshell and my crest on the gold band of the handle —
HARRY [*Desperately trying to hold his irritation in hand.*] Yes? Yes?
BAGWIG And I was looking here, and looking there — just so [*gives demonstration, pokes with his stick, catching GROOMBRIDGE on toe, who gives a loud howl.*]
GROOMB'GE Damme! The gouty one — the fool's picked my gouty toe.
BAGWIG My dear Sir, a thousand pardons — but I assure you I didn't know which toe you had it in — quite accidental — So, as I was saying, just as I reached the boundary hedge Crash! [*dramatically.*] And what did I see?
BANNISTER You'd found your glasses. My congratulations Sir. [*seizes his hand and hangs on to it, shaking it violently.*]
HARRY [*Nearly tearing his hair.*] You saw?
BAGWIG A desperate-looking fellow burst through the fence.
GROOMB'GE Did you challenge him?
BAGWIG [*Dramatically.*] He was a monstrous big ruffian with a most villainous face
BANNISTER Then you didn't.
BAGWIG [*Ignores the interruption with dignity.*] I clapped my hand to my sword so . . . [*confronts HARRY truculently.*] “Hey! Fellow” says I. “What are you doing here?” And what do you think this rogue did? Sweeps off his hat to me . . . “Sir,” says he, “Am I right for London?” Ah! but I was equal to him. “You're right for the Old

Bailey my man,” says I. And damme! The scoundrel flings the cloak he was carrying over my head. Zounds! I almost felt his steel in my ribs.

BANNISTER [*Solemnly.*] But was it?

BAGWIG [*Declaims nobly.*] I was too quick for him. I sprang back till a bush stopped me. [*winces, tenderly fingers his least noble parts.*] ’Twas a holly bush. I tore the cloak from his hand

ALL Yes? Yes?

BAGWIG He had disappeared.

HARRY Where, man?

BAGWIG [*Plaintively.*] How could I tell without my glass?

BANNISTER [*Steps forward, admonishes him solemnly with wagging finger.*] Bagwig, Bagwig! So early in the evening. Fie.

BAGWIG [*Excitedly.*] I vow

HARDING *interrupts with short contemptuous laugh, turns on his heel. Amused laughter comes from the others and the circle breaks.*

GROOMB’GE [*Snorts.*] Dreamt it.

HARRY [*Swiftly.*] Gentlemen! Wait, I beg. [*they halt, surprised.*] This matter is serious.

HARDING What, Mayne, you believe the tale?

HARRY [*Quietly.*] I do. You all know there’s unrest in the Country : even tales of plots against the Regent’s life.

GROOMB’GE Damn the scoundrels. [*murmurs of pious assent.*]

HARRY Tonight His Royal Highness proposed to join our revels.

[*Excitement. Men murmur “The Regent”, “here”, “tonight”, and crowd round HARRY.*] That is why I am anxious at Mr. Bagwig’s story of his encounter.

As he speaks, a masked figure steps quietly from behind a clump of bushes and mingles unnoticed with the others. This is BRUMMEL. He remains masked and unrecognised for the present.

GROOMB’GE By Gad, yes that puts a nasty look on it.

HARDING This is devilish awkward — [*to BAGWIG angrily.*] Have you no idea of where the fellow got to?

BRUMMEL [*Very calmly.*] May I suggest? [*all turn to him swiftly.*] We waste time.

WOODLAND You’re right Sir. Harry, we must search for the fellow at once.

HARDING That’s it. Spread out, gentlemen, and beat the ground to the boundary. [*whips out sword, others follow suit.*]

GROOMB’GE We’ll get him.

They move in body to go off L.

WOODLAND But the ladies?

MEN *halt.*

BAGWIG [*Who has hung back, rises nobly to the occasion.*] I will escort them to the house.

HARRY Do, Bagwig. Come, gentlemen

MISS'S CHASE [*Grabs BAGWIG'S arm.*] Oh, Mr. Bagwig, what if we should encounter the man? I should swoon.

BAGWIG [*Offering the other arm to PRUDENCE, gives a brave laugh.*] The fellow won't risk meeting me again, madam — though I never saw a bigger or more ferocious ruffian.

BAGWIG *leads them off proudly R. as men go off.*

MARY *is about to follow when the masked BRUMMEL, who has cleverly been the last of the men, calmly turns and walks back to her in a perfectly unhurried manner. He halts, bows.*

BRUMMEL "A big and ferocious ruffian." Do you recognise the description, Madam?

MARY [*With startled cry.*] Mr. Brummel! [**BRUMMEL** *laughs gently, removes his mask and bows.*] It was you Mr. Bagwig saw.

BRUMMEL [*Shrugs.*] It is the tragedy of life that fools so often upset our plans.

MARY [*Glances about nervously.*] 'Twas madness. Why did you do it?

BRUMMEL [*Coolly.*] I had no invitation — and I wished to see you. [*drawls.*] One must assist Providence sometimes.

MARY But all these gentlemen are searching

BRUMMEL The exercise will do them good : especially Captain Bannister.

MARY But if it should be discovered 'twas you . . .

BRUMMEL [*Gives a step to her, seeming to dominate her : her words falter. Speaks quietly but with a sudden intensity.*] By then I trust it will not matter.

MARY [*Stammers.*] I do not understand

BRUMMEL [*Takes her hand, leads her to the seat : in some way he seems to master her will. He stands silent looking down at her then —*] I think you do.

MARY [*Nervously.*] What is it you propose?

BRUMMEL To prevent others doing so madam. [*for a second she doesn't*

realise, then she drops back with a gasp : he resumes coolly.] That is why I am here tonight . . . an intruder in your brother's grounds — and a stranger to him

MARY

That can be remedied — an introduction

BRUMMEL

[Swiftly.] As the man you love? *[she gives a gasp. He adds quickly]* And as the man who loves you.

MARY

[Breathlessly.] You have no right to speak so.

BRUMMEL

I ask you for it. I do not woo like other men? But you would have it so. Would you have me sing the beauty of your eyes — the glory of your hair — in the very words a thousand lips have worn to threadbare sweetness? *[his voice drops to tenderness.]* Ah, Milady, you are too fine for such a wooing — and Love, my dear, is something finer still — shall I tell you what Love may be?

MARY

[Her face has softened, carried away she murmurs.] Perchance I know. *[he catches his breath sharply and straightens in triumph. Alarmed at her yielding she cries swiftly.]* But there are other things in life.

BRUMMEL

None worth the counting.

MARY

[desperately.] Things we must count family — duty to our estates — *[Throws up head proudly.]* Yes, and Pride of Race too.

BRUMMEL

[Softly.] Do they satisfy?

MARY

I was taught from birth they must.

BRUMMEL

Yet your heart says different?

MARY

No, no — you must not say that. *[tries to pass him.]*

BRUMMEL

[Does not move aside : she halts.] Is happiness so easy to find?

MARY

[Tries to laugh.] That is not modest Mr. Brummel.

BRUMMEL

[Quietly.] I can give you happiness.

Man and woman they face each other in the ever-recurring battle. A moment of tense silence — then with the fine honesty of her, MARY throws aside pretence, speaking with simple sincerity.

MARY

I think you could give that to any woman. *[smiles with adorable frankness.]* A shameless speech, Sir and unrepented of. *[her laugh ripples out.]* More shameless still you see.

BRUMMEL

[With deep feeling.] So deeply generous all gratitude seems poor. So fine I know but one in all the world would say it. *[swiftly lifts her hand to his lips, quietly hands her to seat again.]*

MARY

[Tenderly.] I think some men must see in others the qualities they own themselves. Women are not generous by nature, Sir.

BRUMMEL

God makes exceptions. I thank Him for it.

MARY

I would there were. But I think a woman's life must kill all fineness. *[with passionate intensity.]* Watched : criticised :

commented on at every moment of the day — and so seldom kindly. We grow to be the things they think us. Always and ever on guard. Oh, the weariness of it. I would rather be the poorest worker on the land than the greatest lady in it. He has at least his freedom.

BRUMMEL [*Swiftly.*] A woman can find freedom too. [*bends to her.*] In a man's love. Ah, my Lady, a man can guard and shield very surely, from all hurt, the woman of his heart. Just one small word, and you shall never fear the malice of the world again. One little word, Mary. [*very pleadingly.*] Is it so hard to say?

MARY Oh, my friend, you make me throw down all defence. Tonight I would be utterly honest. Love means so much to women —

BRUMMEL And to men, Mary.

MARY It cannot mean so much, and so I would be very sure

BRUMMEL Each day you shall be surer.

MARY Sure of myself, I mean. Sure that I can give happiness, not only take it. What must it mean to see indifference grow in eyes where once was love — and know the fault is yours?

BRUMMELL There is another picture : the knowing each day you have made life a finer, lovelier thing for some poor fellow just because you are your own dear self and his. [*takes both her hands.*] Mary? Mary?

MARY [*In whisper.*] Be generous. I need so much a little time for thinking. See! I admit : you can compel surrender. But . . . oh, deal very gently with me tonight I do implore you.

BRUMMEL [*With swift generosity.*] “Implore” — nay, command. [*rises and stands away from her with fine courtesy. Plucks a rose.*] I leave this with you to plead for me. Wear it very close to your heart so with every beat you'll hear it whisper : “Oh Rose of all the world, far lovelier than I, be kind be kind BE KIND”

He holds rose to her — she stretches out her hand and takes it. He catches both her hands, presses them to his lips, and leaves her. Exit BRUMMEL.

MARY [*Whispers to herself.*] “Kind.”

Presses the rose to her lips, sits a moment dreaming happily, then rising places rose very tenderly against her heart, and moves to exit.

At the moment, enter R. LILA DAWN of the Playhouse. She is young and pretty, but her face has cunningly been made to seem drawn and haggard. A masque cloak covers the costume of a serving maid. She wears a mask.

- LILA** [*Breathlessly.*] My lady please [**MARY** *stops and turns.*] May I speak to you?
- MARY** [*Surprised.*] To me?
- LILA** [*With air of resolve, tears off mask.*] You won't know me, my Lady: I'm only a servant. I borrowed this to reach you [*indicates cloak, which falls open. She hurriedly snatches it around her as if to conceal her figure.*] You'll listen, won't you? They say you're kind.
- MARY** [*Speaks half to herself, smiling tenderly.*] 'Tis easy to be kind tonight. [*as the girl stands twisting her hands, very kindly.*] Yes?
- LILA** [*Stammers.*] It's . . . it's difficult . . . I . . . [*sways.*] I [*seems about to faint.*]
- MARY** Why, you can scarce stand. You're ill, child. [*with quick sympathy takes her arm.*] Sit down there. [**LILA** *suddenly bursts into tears, covers her face and sobs violently.* **MARY** *puts arm about her shoulders.*] What is it, child?
- LILA** [*With violent movement shakes it off.*] Don't touch me. [**MARY** *draws back offended. With quick contrition.*] Oh, my Lady, forgive me [*hysterically.*] It's your being kind when — when [*sobs with renewed violence.*]
- MARY** [*Very gently.*] Won't you tell me your trouble?
- LILA** [*Checks sobs, sits twisting her hands.*] I want to, but . . . [*wildly.*] Oh, I wish I were dead.
- MARY** [*Very tenderly draws the girl's hand onto her shoulder and lets the sobs die down then,*] Perhaps I can guess.
- LILA** [*Wails.*] He made me love him. What chance has a girl like me with a gentleman
- MARY** [*For a moment her aristocratic prejudice flashes out. Sharply.*] A gentleman?
- LILA** He used to come to her Ladyship's house. And then he noticed me — and — and — he seemed so wonderful and I trusted him. He'd promised, and . . . and [*sobs.*] I loved him so.
- MARY** [*To herself.*] Poor soul. [*takes her hand.*] What is your name?
- LILA** Helen, my Lady.
- MARY** You must let me help you, Helen.
- LILA** Oh, my Lady [*seizes her hand and kisses it.*]
- MARY** There, there. We must think. Have you parents?
- LILA** [*In a horrified whisper.*] I daren't go home. Father would drive me from the door. He's full of religion : it makes him hard, cruel hard.
- MARY** Poor little Helen. We must find a way
- LILA** [*With swift eagerness.*] There is a way my Lady.
- MARY** [*Eagerly.*] Yes?
- LILA** He'd come back to me : he'd keep his promise : he's not bad at

heart.

MARY “Not bad.” [*with the intensity of her scorn her voice sinks to a whisper: she speaks more to herself than to the girl.*] ’Tis vile.

LILA [*Wearily.*] Men are like that, my Lady.

MARY [*Her face light as she thinks of Brummel.*] Not all.

LILA [*Defensively.*] He was very kind before. [*stops as if afraid to say it, fidgeting helplessly.*]

MARY Before?

LILA [*In a very low voice.*] Before he saw someone else.

MARY [*Looks at her very pityingly.*] If that is so, child, I fear

LILA [*Desperately breaks in.*] Oh no, NO! You’ve but to speak.

MARY I? But what can I do?

LILA [*Flings herself on knees, cries passionately.*] Give him back to me, my Lady. What chance have I against you? Give him back to me.

MARY What are you saying?

LILA [*Rushes on passionately.*] He meant to be true. I know he did. Would he have given this ring? Look at it [*thrusts it into MARY’s hand.*] Oh, give him back to me. [*collapses — buries face in MARY’s gown and sobs desperately.*]

MARY sits upright. Pride, annoyance and anger show as she looks down at the pitiful figure — makes a movement as if to push her away : then generosity of heart conquers. She puts her hand gently on the bowed head — in doing so she becomes aware of the ring in her hand — glances at it.

An instantaneous change takes place. For a moment she remains absolutely rigid gazing at the ring. Then slowly as if mesmerised she raises the ring to her eyes. At last she reads from the inner side.

MARY [*In a whisper.*] “George Bryan Brummel.”

Slowly her arm sinks to her side, the ring falls from her hand. She sits staring before her as if turned to stone. For a long moment there is a silent Tableau. Then,

MARY [*In an utterly changed harsh voice.*] Get up. [**LILA** raises her head and gazes at her fearfully. **MARY** frees herself almost roughly, and rising, stands over her, cold, haughty and pitiless.] You are making a mistake. Mr. Brummel is nothing to me. [*for a moment she has difficulty with her voice, then very clearly.*] Less than nothing. You had better go. Pick up your [*her lip curls.*] treasure. Here it is.

MARY pushes ring with the toe of her shoe contemptuously towards **LILA**, then with cold dignity moves to leave her. For one second **MARY** sways unsteadily,

her hand seeking her heart, touches the flower Brummel had given her, pulls it out, looks at it with vague unseeing eyes : suddenly seems to realise — her head goes up haughtily, with an indifferent gesture she tosses it aside and moves on.

LILA [Staggers to her feet.] My Lady, [is ignored.] MY LADY, [still ignored. She flings up her hands and falls back onto seat.] Dear God! There's only the river. [her head falls back over seat as if exhausted utterly by her emotions.]

MARY halts, the struggle shows in her face, she turns to looks at the broken figure, slowly her face softens to pity, she returns, puts hand on **LILA**'s shoulder.

MARY You will need help. Come to me tomorrow. Tonight [her voice falters.] I cannot think well : but tomorrow

LILA [Cries gratefully.] My Lady, 'tis generous of you.

MARY [Tries to smile, her voice breaks queerly.] Life isn't very kind to women. They should be kind to each other. [stoops swiftly, kisses **LILA**.] I'm sorry you're so hurt.

MARY exits, face and bearing showing no sign of her distress.
HARDING steps from the shadows.

HARDING [A soft sneering laugh. **LILA** looks up.] Bravo, bravo. [pretends to clap his hands.] A most excellent performance, my dear Lila.

LILA [Springs to her feet, blazes out passionately.] I hate myself, Dear God, how I hate myself. [stamps foot at him furiously as he sneers.] She was kind to me — kind — when any other woman would have used insult. I've a mind

HARDING Then use it. [steps up to her, taps her shoulder.] You've a mind to confess, eh? Very pretty, but costly, Lila : very costly sometimes.

LILA [Faces him fiercely.] Don't threaten me.

HARDING [Very softly.] I never threaten, but sometimes I point out the risks. [with startling suddenness changes to savagery.] You little fool, do you think that after these years you could go back to the drudgery I took you from?

LILA [Who has slowly wilted, whispers.] Don't.

HARDING Or perhaps you fancy yourself so established in the public favour that you can do without me. Try it. A word from me and you never enter the Playhouse again. Barnstorming and travelling booths — a hard rough life It ages women quickly. [**LILA** shudders. **HARDING** laughs sneeringly.] A pretty finish to a career so full

of promise. We buy our greatness, Lila. Take your pay and come to heel.

LILA [*Gazes at him fascinated.*] You must hate Brummel.

HARDING [*Snaps fingers lightly.*] Indifferent. I clear him from my path, that's all. A way I have with trying people, my dear. [*taps her arm significantly — she shrinks away.*]

LILA But if . . . if she should find out?

HARDING [*Impatiently.*] Is she going to recognise Lila Dawn — the Playhouse favourite — as the frightened servant wench seen in this light?

LILA But she may speak to Brummel of it?

HARDING [*With a sneer.*] You know little of great ladies, though you play them. Brummel will not exist for her [*takes pinch of snuff.*] A better man will take his place.

LILA I was to call on her. She'll suspect.

HARDING [*Shakes head.*] You scrawl a note. [*quotes.*] "My Lady, forgive me, but I cannot face this shame, and am making an end." I'll see she gets it. [*chuckles.*] Now 'twill make her hate the very thought of Brummel.

LILA [*Bursts out.*] I can't do it. It's vile. I won't go on with it.

HARDING [*Swiftly commanding.*] Give me the ring. [*Involuntarily LILA puts it in his hand. His manner changes instantly — he laughs in her face.*] I'm not leaving such evidence with you, my dear. [*twiddles it about.*] "Evidence" may be used in various ways. Had you thought of that?

LILA What do you mean?

HARDING 'Tis known you set your cap at Brummel, who'd have none of you. Suppose the Justices received this back with a scrawled confession of some rascal that he stole it at your bidding?

LILA [*Terrified, gasps.*] They wouldn't believe . . .

HARDING [*His laugh stops her.*] I wonder? If the tale should get abroad of how you've used this . . . and tales do . . . we are such gossips — [*pauses, eyes her, shakes head sadly.*] I fear you'd have to fly the country.

LILA [*Gives a horrified gasp.*] Oh.

HARDING [*Meditatively.*] You might prefer to face a trial. [*takes snuff.*] Gad! What a sensation it would make.

LILA [*Utterly beaten.*] It's vile, vile. But I'm a coward. I couldn't face the old life. I'll do your dirty work — but I wish that God would kill us both this night. [*she stands panting with the stress of her feelings.*]

HARDING [*Quite unmoved, consults watch.*] The Playhouse calls. Keep faith with your public, Lila. Goodnight. [*turns and strolls off, humming,*

“I could not love thee dear so much, loved I not honour more.”]

LILA watches in rigid silence, then with a little choking catch of her breath her figure droops, her hands fall helplessly to her sides. Broken and beaten she creeps from the stage.

A faint ‘View Halloo’ sounds, answered by distant shouts : “This way!” “To me,” “Gone right,” “Here,” “Quick,” etc. A pause, then they sound nearer. **BRUMMEL**, emerging from path, halts to listen, smiling. **THE REGENT**, masked and with drawn sword — a portly figure made more portly by a long disguising cloak — almost runs on from R., his head turned to watch the path behind him, fearfully. He bumps slap into Brummel and jumps back with a startled cry.

REGENT Trapped! [*makes a furious lunge which BRUMMEL with consummate quickness and coolness parries with his hand. THE REGENT, utterly panicked, thrusts again.*]

BRUMMEL [*Turning the thrust.*] Stay, Sir, stay. I’m not a relative.

Recovering his balance, **THE REGENT** has shortened for another thrust when the words seem to penetrate his excited brain : his thrust checks — wavers — the point drops — he bursts into a roar of laughter.

REGENT “Not a relative,” Egad, that’s neat. Devilish neat.

BRUMMEL [*Takes snuff. With air of modesty.*] I liked it myself.

REGENT [*Eagerly.*] Will you stand by me, Sir?

BRUMMEL [*Coolly.*] With pleasure.

REGENT We shall have fighting. Draw, Sir.

BRUMMEL With more pleasure. [*flashes out sword, takes a step which puts him between THE REGENT and his pursuers.*]

REGENT There’s some dastardly plot against my life.

BRUMMEL [*Coolly.*] Then it’s failed.

REGENT Failed?

BRUMMEL [*Bows.*] You and I, Sir, should be worth a dozen.

REGENT [*Delighted.*] By Gad, that’s true. [*sticks out chest.*] We’ll deal with them. [*looks very martial, then bursts out.*] But the damned scoundrels to attempt this . . . they must have got wind of my intention to visit this Fête tonight secretly.

BRUMMEL [*Sweeps off hat.*] Is it possible that I am speaking to His Royal Highness Prince George?

REGENT Egad you are, Sir, and you are Mr. . . . ?

BRUMMEL Brummel, Sir.

REGENT Brummel, Brummel . . . I don’t know the name.

BRUMMEL [*Calmly.*] You will, Sir.

REGENT [*Claps him on the shoulder.*] I’ll see to that — you must come to

Court, Mr. Brummel . . . you play?

BRUMMEL I do all the things I ought not to do, Sir : and enjoy them.
REGENT [*Laughs boisterously, chuckles.*] “And enjoy them,” — I must tell Harding that.

Suddenly off L. a loud “View Halloo” is heard followed by shouting. THE REGENT fairly jumps.

BANNISTER [*(Off) Bawls.*] This way. This way. Here he is.
GROOMB’GE [*(Off)*] Yoicks Tally Ho!
HARDING [*(Off) More distant, in a perfect roar.*] Where are you? Which way?
REGENT [*Startled.*] That’s Jack Harding’s voice.
BRUMMEL I thought it was a bull.
HARDING [*Bellows.*] Where are you, Bannister?
BRUMMEL [*Taking snuff, murmurs.*] Very like a bull.
REGENT [*Laughs highly tickled, then shouts.*] This way, Harding. This way.

Just as he does so a comic group of GROOMBRIDGE, impeded by (drunk) BANNISTER hanging on his arm and tripping over his own drawn sword, followed by others, appears from the path L. BRUMMEL steps forward and flicks his handkerchief gracefully at them with air of dispersing chickens.

BRUMMEL Shoo!
BAGWIG [*Who has come on last with sword held out in front of him — jumps back in alarm.*] Why, there are two of them.
BANNISTER Four. Foursh, or I’m a sinner — wheresh my sword, Groombridge? [*steps forward, stands swaying.*] Four to one, and I can’t run. Thank God I’m a hero.
HARDING [*Almost rushing on — snaps.*] A damned fool. Do you know who?
REGENT [*Sharply.*] Harding! [*lays finger on lips.*]

HARRY *appears — others are crowding behind.*

HARDING [*Swings round.*] Mayne, ‘twas all a mistake. [*whispers to him.*]
HARRY [*Sotto voce.*] I understand. He wants to keep incog. [*turns to others.*] Gentlemen, I will explain — a false alarm. Mr. Bagwig was mistaken.

Exeunt all other than THE REGENT, BAGWIG, HARDING, Capt. BANNISTER, GROOMBRIDGE, BRUMMEL.

BAGWIG God bless my soul. They question my story. Gentlemen,

Gentlemen! [*hurries after them and exits.*]

BRUMMEL [*Quietly to GROOMBRIDGE.*] Take your friend, Sir.

GROOMBRIDGE *nods and steps to BANNISTER, who has been meditating : with a drunken man's startling change to energy, BANNISTER suddenly steps up to HARDING, hand on sword with great dignity.*

BANNISTER Sir, you called me a damned fool.

HARDING Think of that.

BANNISTER [*With truculent dignity.*] I allow no-one to call me a fool.

BRUMMEL [*Blandly.*] Tut-tut, my dear Sir, why trouble? We have the authority of Scripture that all men are liars. [**HARDING** *jumps.*]

BANNISTER [*Beams.*] Of course. [*goes to HARDING, shakes his hand gravely.*] I forgive you : you couldn't help yourself. [**THE REGENT** *gives a crow of delight. BANNISTER takes GROOMBRIDGE's arm, sways. Reprovingly.*] Groombridge, Groombridge. Carry your liquor like a gentleman, Sir. [*exits with GROOMBRIDGE with great dignity L.*]

HARDING [*Anxiously.*] What happened, Sir?

REGENT Curse me if I know : When I was but in the grounds I saw a fellow coming at me with a drawn sword — you know me, Jack — I turned to meet him but damme, there were two others — that was too much. I made for the house — curse me from the noise and shouting there were scores of them. It looked serious even for a swordsman like me.

HARDING Very serious, Sir.

REGENT But just then I fall in with Mr. Brummel : “Ah,” says I, “with a man to guard my back I'm equal to a dozen of them,” and I took my stand as you found. And now I'm waiting for an explanation.

HARDING Why, Sir, that man Bagwig has been a bigger fool than usual — he sees you in the grounds, no doubt, and runs hot-foot with a tale of intruders. Mayne fearing for your safety asks us to search the grounds.

REGENT [*Bursts into roar of laughter.*] Egad, Jack, a pretty comedy — but lucky I recognised your voice or I might have skewered half a dozen of them.

HARDING [*Gravely.*] They've had a narrow escape, Sir.

REGENT [*In high good humour.*] By Gad, they have. [*turns to Brummel.*] And you, Mr. Brummel — I'm vastly obliged to you : we must see more of each other. [*to HARDING.*] Mr. Brummel must join us tomorrow night, Jack. [*to BRUMMEL.*] I hope you're a two-bottle man, Mr. Brummel?

BRUMMEL I don't know, Sir : I never count them.

REGENT [*Laughs delightedly.*] Till tomorrow, then.

BRUMMEL *bows deeply to REGENT and then to HARDING, and exits.*

REGENT [*Turns on HARDING testily.*] Pest, Jack. Between you all you've spoilt the night for me — everybody will know me now. The fun's gone.

HARDING No, Sir. They've only seen you in your cloak. Let me wear it.

REGENT Gad, Jack, you have brains . . . here [*takes off cloak, HARDING puts it on.*] Hey, man, you're looking grim.

HARDING I'm feeling grim, Sir.

REGENT [*With a sudden kindness that is very winning slips arm through his.*] Can I help you, Jack?

HARDING That's good of you, Sir, . . . but I fear not.

REGENT Well, tell me the trouble — We're friends, man.

HARDING Why, Sir, I think you know I'm set on marrying Lady Mary

REGENT . . . and the lady loves someone else?

HARDING [*Sourly.*] She loves no-one but her cub brother. I meant to make his gambling losses serve me.

REGENT Jack, Jack! You're a callous devil.

HARDING [*Shrugs.*] I believe in getting my own way, Sir. [*bursts out with extraordinary venom.*] The young fool came edging up to me as we were searching the grounds for Bagwig's desperate ruffian . . . he was all smiles . . . "He hoped to pay his debts to me."

REGENT If he'd owed me the money I should have smiled too.

HARDING [*Makes an impatient gesture.*] He'd been confiding in Woodland.

REGENT [*Snorts.*] That strait-laced Puritan!

HARDING [*Savagely.*] That 'strait-laced Puritan', being in love with the lady himself, has artfully promised to help the boy.

REGENT He's dished you, Jack. [*wonderingly.*] Did Mayne tell you this?

HARDING [*Snarlingly.*] He asked my advice, Sir. [*mimics.*] "As a man of honour, could he accept this help?"

REGENT [*Laughs.*] You told him No, I'll warrant.

HARDING [*More savagely.*] I did. [*furiously.*] And then the fool cries, "Ah, but if my sister were marrying him, I could." [**THE REGENT bursts out laughing.**] Oh! Confusion, Sir! Don't laugh at me.

REGENT [*Soothingly takes his arm again.*] There, there, man! 'Tis hard lines . . . but Woodland wins.

HARDING [*Blazes out.*] By God, he shan't.

From one of the paths behind, WOODLAND's voice is heard calling loudly to BRUMMEL (both offstage).

WOODLAND Brummel! Brummel! Ha — I knew 'twas you just now.
BRUMMEL [*Laughingly.*] Did you, Chris, Why, what has happened to you?
WOODLAND [*Surprised.*] To me?
BRUMMEL Your face is radiant.

Their voices, very near, sound as if they were passing along a parallel path only separated by the hedge.

WOODLAND [*Speaking just off L. — gives the impression that they have turned a corner and are just about to enter.*] Ah! I have news for you.
BRUMMEL Good, I can see.

Enter L. WOODLAND and BRUMMEL, arm in arm. HARDING with a gesture of fury tears off his mask.

WOODLAND The finest tonight I think I am the happiest man alive.

HARDING *steps so abruptly from the recess that they recoil.*

HARDING [*With deadly politeness.*] Ah, Sir Christopher, I am rejoiced to see you recovered.

WOODLAND Recovered?

HARDING [*Smiling like a devil.*] From your lameness.

WOODLAND [*Very surprised.*] My lameness?

HARDING [*Very blandly raising brows.*] Is it possible, my dear Woodland, that it wasn't lameness that made you hang back so when we were searching?

WOODLAND [*In angry amazement.*] Hang back?

HARDING [*More blandly.*] Why, you certainly seemed to walk with difficulty.

WOODLAND [*Breathless with indignation.*] Milord, I deny

HARDING [*With air of pleasure — quickly.*] Ah! Excellent, the limp was only imaginary.

WOODLAND [*Checks himself with great effort — quietly.*] I understand . . . Brummel, may I?

BRUMMEL [*Who has quickly seen Harding's game, has for some time been moving round him studying him through his glass : he waves WOODLAND to silence.*] A moment, my dear Chris. [*continues his inspection : murmurs.*] Sad! Sad!

THE REGENT *by now is the picture of amused and excited curiosity.*

HARDING [*Vile temper instantly aroused as he discovers this performance.*]

- Well, Sir? [*claps hand instinctively to sword.*]
- BRUMMEL** [*Shakes head sadly, murmurs.*] Far from “well”. [*continues inspection, sighs.*] A pity, a sad pity
- HARDING** [*Barks.*] I ask, Sir — what is it you find a pity?
- BRUMMEL** [*With brisk pleased air.*] Why, as you ask I never offer advice — ‘tis the last complacency of foolish old age — but as you ask you snuff? [*offers box.*]
- HARDING** [*Snaps.*] No.
- BRUMMEL** No? A pity. It clears the brain but to answer you I am fastidious in some things. [*calmly pauses to snuff.*] Conduct for instance A gentlemen is the noblest work of God
- HARDING** [*Fuming.*] Get to the point, Sir.
- BRUMMEL** [*Runs eye over him and drawls.*] and very scarce. [*offers box again to the infuriated man.*] You should snuff : it soothes the nerves. To resume: A gentleman I think should dress harmoniously. Now, your cloak : excellent! The shoes : passable! The clocks on your stockings : suitable, distinctly suitable But your sword? [*throws up eyes.*] My dear Sir : your sword!
- HARDING** [*With savage snap.*] Ha! My sword. What fault do you find with my sword, Sir?
- BRUMMEL** With the sword, nothing. But the way you carry it!
- HARDING** [*Jumps delightedly to the chance.*] It does not please you?
- BRUMMEL** A gentleman’s sword should be worn quietly at the side, pressed well down into the scabbard not half drawn and rattling like a Prussian Princelet’s!
- HARDING** By Heaven
- REGENT** [*Commandingly.*] Harding, a moment Mr. Brummel —
- BRUMMEL** [*With bow to Harding.*] You permit? [*moves to REGENT, bows.*]
- REGENT** [*takes his arm, leads him away, speaks with real kindness.*] Be careful, man. He’s killed three and spoiled a dozen men — the deadliest blade in England.
- BRUMMEL** [*Very quietly.*] And Woodland is England’s poorest swordsman, I think : and my best friend. I am very grateful, Sir, but
- REGENT** [*Sighs, shrugs.*] Ah, well! I’m sorry.
- BRUMMEL** [*Bows, moves back leisurely taking snuff.*] You were saying, Milord?
- HARDING** [*Has frozen into the cold deadly polite manner of the killer.*] Perhaps, Mr. Brummel, you would like to teach me how to handle my sword?
- BRUMMEL** I am not a fencing master, but if you need a lesson, why [*makes gesture implying “I am at your service.”*]
- HARDING** [*Gives a short laugh.*] You will give me one?
- BRUMMEL** The cause is so excellent I can’t refuse.

HARDING [Barks.] Tomorrow?
BRUMMEL In the morning — as I dine with you at night.
HARDING [Laughs cruelly.] I trust nothing will prevent you.
BRUMMEL I'm a little careless, but my dear Sir, I'll see that nothing does.
WOODLAND [Steps forward.] Lord Harding, I protest
HARDING Your friend has first claim.
WOODLAND [Turns to Regent.] Sir, I appeal
REGENT [Stops him decidedly.] 'Tis all in order, Woodland . . . [turns away.] Why, what's this?

Loud cries of "Woodland!", "Woodland!" are heard off R. PRUDENCE runs on — stops — looks back, waves handkerchief, cries.

PRUDENCE Found! Found! Sir Christopher is here.

All the guests come surging on noisily. LADY MARY, leaning on HARRY's arm, follows.

HARRY [Sees REGENT, calls sharply.] Gentlemen. His Royal Highness is present.

There is instant silence, then every man sweeps off his hat and unmask. The ladies follow suit.

REGENT [Laughs genially.] Do not let me spoil your pleasure¹². What is afoot?
GROOMB'GE [Steps forward.] Why, Sir, we wanted to toast Sir Christopher Woodland.
REGENT [Laughingly.] Heaven forbid my presence should stop so pious a deed I'll join you. [HARRY presents a glass with bow.] But what's the occasion?
WOODLAND [Stepping to MARY's side.] My betrothal, Sir, to the fairest lady in the County.

WOODLAND lifts MARY's hand to his lips amid applause. HARDING is black with passion. BRUMMEL becomes rigid. MARY's eyes fall on him — he makes an involuntary movement of appeal — they pass over him coldly and haughtily.

¹² The only part of the *Beau Brummel* incidental music to have survived is a fragment of the orchestral score containing the *Minuet*, which was later published and has achieved wide popularity. According to a speech cue at the beginning of this fragment, this line by the Regent is the point at which the orchestra starts to play the *Minuet*. And thus, far from representing courtly Romanticism as has been generally supposed, the *Minuet* could in fact be intended to portray the sadness of lost love.

ACT 2

*Three years later.*¹³

Brummel's Chambers in London. Afternoon.

The room is large and graceful. The door C. gives onto a landing. R. is a bay window through which the setting sun streams. Evidence of a fine and luxurious taste are everywhere. L. is a door leading to bedroom and dressing room : the curtain before this is pulled back. A row of chairs is set against the wall each side of door C.: on them are seated, a fat pompous TRADESMAN, next to him is MISTRESS CHASE disguised in heavy veil and large cloak : on each side of them sit types of tradesman messengers, or the tradesmen themselves — all waiting for the great man's custom. There is a young apprentice with a large parcel, his legs dangling in the air and his eyes round with awe : a pretty girl, ringletted and solemn, carries a huge florist's box : other rather comic specimens sit in grave silence.

MISS'S CHASE [*nervously to TRADESMAN.*] Do you think, Sir, He'll be much longer? I've waited an hour

TRADESMAN [*With air of shocked reproof.*] Mr. Brummel is at his toilet, madam. [*all the row of faces turn to stare at them with characteristic and rather stupid expressions. TRADESMAN seeing this is tempted to boast to show off his own importance.*] A great gentleman!

MISS'S CHASE [*Clasps her hands.*] Oh, yes indeed.

TRADESMAN At the Court they say he is absolutely supreme — The Regent can go nowhere without him — a wonderful gentleman [**MISTRESS CHASE** *clasps hands again with convulsive rapture and sighs like a furnace.*] but then his taste is so exquisite : I make all his cravats for him : and we never differ. [*looks round to see the impression he has created.*] He relies on me greatly — if his man Mortimer knew I was here this afternoon I should be shown in at once [*is obviously pleased with the effect he is producing, rises to further efforts.*] I shall never forget the excitement his duel with Lord Harding created — you remember it, Madam?

MISS'S CHASE [*With absolute worship.*] Oh, indeed I do.

TRADESMAN Lord Harding, the first duellist in England — and Mr. Brummel plays with him — absolutely plays — and then runs him through the right shoulder so that he couldn't hold a sword for three months. [*swells with importance as he hears the listening gasps of*

¹³ The script title for Act 2 states 'several years later' but later in Act 2 the precise three-year gap is mentioned.

astonished interest.] 'Tis said 'twas that made The Regent first think so much of him [*rising to further heights, chuckles.*] A rare take-down for Milord : "Mr. Brummel," I says one day when we were having a chat — as we do [*takes in, out of the corner of his eye, the open-mouthed admiration.*] "why did you let him off?" "Why, my dear Parkin," says he, "'twas sheer pity : the other lost souls have enough to bear without Milord." Ha-ha-ha-ha! He-He [*breaks off with ridiculous suddenness as Brummel's door opens — scrambles to his feet. All the others rise and stand respectfully.*]

MORTIMER, *an elderly servant, enters room, carefully closing door behind him.*

TRADESMAN [*his importance at stake, advances boldly, hand held out, tries to speak genially.*] Ah, Mortimer, and how is Mr. Brummel?
MORTIMER [*Sourly.*] Engaged. [*plumps a parcel into his proffered hand.*]
TRADESMAN [*Taken aback.*] Wh - what - what's - what's this, Mr. Mortimer?
MORTIMER Your cravats.
TRADESMAN [*More disconcerted.*] My cravats?
MORTIMER Mr. Brummel thinks them most excellent — [**TRADESMAN beams and swells his chest.**] — for ploughboys. [**TRADESMAN's jaw drops, he gapes helplessly : Mortimer glances at others.**] Mr. Brummel will see no tradespeople today.

They obediently move to door with grins at discomfited TRADESMAN,]

TRADESMAN [*Tremulously.*] Mr. Mortimer
MORTIMER [*Moving to bedroom, turns with a snap.*] Mr. Brummel will see no tradesmen today.

Exit TRADESMAN with tail between his legs.

MISS'S CHASE [*Very softly.*] Mr. Mortimer!
MORTIMER Well?
MISS'S CHASE [*Stammers.*] I wanted is is there any chance?
MORTIMER You heard, Madam.
MISS'S CHASE But mine isn't business. [*fumbles with reticule.*] I — I wrote Mr. Brummel last night. [*slips handsome tip into his hand.*]
MORTIMER Thank you, Madam, I will respect your confidence. [*walks to door, opens it for her to go.*]
MISS'S CHASE [*Bewildered.*] But I . . . I hoped . . . I wanted to see Mr. Brummel.
MORTIMER [*Gravely.*] You are quite safe with me, Madam — no-one shall know that. [*with bow indicates open door.*]

Exit MISTRESS CHASE in a bewildered dream. MORTIMER, with a disgusted toss of his head, arranges chair in middle of room, places small table near it, on which he puts a silver salver piled with letters : moves to Brummel's door, opens it.

MORTIMER The room is ready now, Sir.

Enter BRUMMEL, yawning. He is dressed in black silk breeches, black silk stockings with gold clocks, a fine lawn shirt and a brilliant dressing gown. He moves to the table, touches pile of letters with one finger distastefully, pushes heap over, drops into chair.

BRUMMEL Heavens! Why will people write letters? The use of a pen, Mortimer, either blackens your own fingers or somebody else's character — frequently both. [*mutters to himself.*] H'm! Rather neat. [*glances at wooden-faced Mortimer.*] Quite wasted. A pity.

MORTIMER [*Deferentially.*] It won't be wasted, Sir.

BRUMMEL Oh?

MORTIMER [*Bows.*] I shall use it tonight, Sir, in the Crown parlour.

BRUMMEL [*Turns, stares at him in surprise.*] You'll remember it all that time?

MORTIMER I always remember — and use them, Sir.

BRUMMEL Wonderful. [*sighs.*] I can never remember my own good things — and nobody else says any. [*waves to letters.*] Open them. [*elaborate ritual of MORTIMER cutting open a letter and presenting it on a salver. BRUMMEL reads languidly.*] “Lord Caley is sending his son to Court and begs Mr. Brummel's good offices.” [*laughs softly.*] “Mr. Brummel would be delighted to receive Lord Caley's son but unfortunately he has no cage.”

MORTIMER Very good, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Murmurs.*] I think so. [*sighs with satisfaction.*] I shan't have to remember that good thing then. [*holds out hand, receives another letter, tries to read it.*] It's very dark — what is the time?

MORTIMER A quarter to five, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Surprised.*] Eh? What time did I rise?

MORTIMER You woke at three, Sir.

BRUMMEL Three. That's late, Mortimer.

MORTIMER You were very tired, Sir — His Royal Highness didn't leave until after six this morning.

BRUMMEL I remember. [*smiles.*] His Royal Highness was “tired” too. He admired the rising sun and quoted those lovely lines in Shakespeare about the moon — you remember them, Mortimer?

MORTIMER [*Uncomfortably.*] I'm afraid, Sir, I

BRUMMEL [*Yawns.*] It doesn't matter : I don't either. Light the candles.
 [**MORTIMER** *lights two and is about to pull the curtains.*] Stay!
 [*stares out of window, waves hand at it — murmurs.*] That sunset — the beauty of it. [*watches, speaks to himself unconsciously.*] That is how a man's life should end — in glory without the shadows. [*watches : suddenly shudders, sharply.*] Pull the curtains, there are clouds coming up. [**MORTIMER** *does so.*] Light, Mortimer, light. [**MORTIMER** *lights candles until the room is brilliant.*] What is the news?

MORTIMER [*Reads from newsletter.*] Lord Harding has come to Town, Sir — also Sir Christopher Woodland and Lady Woodland.

BRUMMEL [*Starts.*] They had better [*checks himself as MORTIMER turns, speaks quietly.*] Sir Christopher is happier in the country, Mortimer — the Court is only for fools — or those who use them. [*takes snuff.*] I'm not a fool, Mortimer. [*picks up another letter, pulls out paper, drops it on floor with expression of disgust.*] A bill [*looks at fingers distastefully. MORTIMER hurries to get ewer and towel, he dips his fingers and wipes them. Sighs.*] I need cheering. [*brightly.*] I'll dress : put on my cravat. [**MORTIMER** *presents one, he touches it, looks at him with reproach.*] Limp. [**MORTIMER** *hastens to bring him another, he repeats business.*] Stiff. [*business repeated with immense reproach.*] Mortimer, Mortimer! crumpled.

MORTIMER *claps hands to head in despair, brings another cravat, presents it with trembling hands. BRUMMEL inspects it very carefully, then raises his arms to him, smiles gently. Instantly there is a deep sigh of relief from MORTIMER, who proceeds to tie it carefully, beaming with satisfaction. He fetches white waistcoat, holds it silently before his master.*

BRUMMEL [*Looks at himself in glass, shakes head.*] No, it's a little pale tonight something brighter. [**MORTIMER** *presents a crimson vest.*] Heavens, Mortimer! Don't you remember the Regent's supping with me tonight? That is the very colour of his cheeks after the third course. The silver one. [*is helped into a silver vest and black coat — contemplates himself in glass.*] Excellent! What will the world do when I die? [*drops into chair, sighs.*] I don't like to think of it [*sees bill on floor, waves hand towards it.*] The crumpled rose leaf [**MORTIMER** *removes basin etc. into other room.*] Why do tradesmen worry so about their money?

MORTIMER I think, Sir, they are very anxious to live.

- BRUMMEL** Then how foolish to worry : it's so bad for the health. I never worry. By the bye, have I any money?
- MORTIMER** There are the five hundred guineas Lord Cantor paid to settle his wager the other night, Sir.
- BRUMMEL** [*Kicks bill,*] What is the amount?
- MORTIMER** [*Picks up bill.*] Two hundred guineas, Sir.
- BRUMMEL** Pay him.
- MORTIMER** [*Nervously.*] But Sir —
- BRUMMEL** [*As an afterthought.*] By the bye, who's the bill from?
- MORTIMER** The horsedealer, Sir.
- BRUMMEL** [*With great energy.*] Mortimer! You were going to let me pay that scoundrel? . . . write to him — write at once. [**MORTIMER seizes a pen.**] Mr. Brummel is deeply surprised and annoyed that — well, what is it?
- MORTIMER** “Surprised,” Sir.
- BRUMMEL** S-I-R-P-R-I-S-E-D [*smiles complacently.*] His Grace of Chandos can't go beyond two syllables . . . I don't blame you, Mortimer.
- MORTIMER** Thank you, Sir — and “annoyed”?
- BRUMMEL** Ano — no, Annoi — am - n - er - n- — Oh, pay the fellow.
- MORTIMER** [*Much relieved.*] Very well, Sir. [*cuts another letter, hands it deferentially.*]
- BRUMMEL** [*Reads.*] “Lady Carstanley looks forward with the keenest anticipation to the Royal Cotillon tonight . . . Humph! Mr. Brummel does not . . . [*picks up another letter, reads.*] “Does Mr. Brummel wish an opportunity to renew the conversation with the black mask who gave him a rose last night?” [*wearily rubs his head.*] “Black mask . . . last night . . . a rose.”
- MORTIMER** [*Appearing silently at his elbow with a salver on which is a score of withered roses.*] These are last night's, Sir.
- BRUMMEL** [*Turns them about, considers, shakes head.*] No . . . they recall nothing . . . you're not married, Mortimer? No — I think you've said not. Sometimes I almost think it worthwhile marrying one woman to keep the rest off.
- MORTIMER** [*With wooden face.*] If it did, Sir.
- BRUMMEL** Mortimer, Mortimer! You have a poor opinion of human nature.
- MORTIMER** [*Gravely, with bow,*] I've been in service twenty years, Sir.
- BRUMMEL** [*Very gravely,*] I blush for my predecessors, Mortimer — but you should always think well of people till you find them out. That makes you an optimist — until you're thirty.
- MORTIMER** [*Respectfully.*] Yes, Sir. [*a loud tap sounds on door, he goes to it, holds a whispered colloquy — pushes door nearly closed, comes back. With perfectly respectful wooden face.*] A lady, Sir. I'm forty-one next birthday, Sir.

BRUMMEL "A lady." [*reproachfully.*] Mortimer, Mortimer. You know my rule.

MORTIMER She is very urgent to see you, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Sighs.*] History repeats itself.

MORTIMER I think she is in distress, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Instantly concerned.*] "In distress," — show her in, Mortimer — at once. [*rises.*]

MORTIMER *ushers in a woman [LILA DAWN, incognito]. Very shabbily dressed, a veil and cloak conceal her personality. She seems ill and walks uncertainly. A shocking fit of coughing shakes her.*

BRUMMEL A chair, Mortimer. [*takes her arm, gently helps her to the chair, gestures — MORTIMER brings LILA a glass of wine. She leans back, exhausted, pressing handkerchief to her lips.*] Take this, madam. [*she waves it away.*] Nay, I beg you.

LILA [*In stifled voice.*] I cannot take your kindness, Mr. Brummel.

BRUMMEL [*Smiles.*] It would be unkind not to. [*offers it.*] Pray

LILA [*Sighs faintly.*] You make it harder. [*sips wine : it seems to revive her.*]

BRUMMEL You are feeling better?

LILA Yes, thank you I wanted [*glances at Mortimer.*]

BRUMMEL *hands glass to MORTIMER, dismisses him with gesture.*

MORTIMER *going to door sees roses, picks up antimacassar, throws it over them and exits discreetly.*

BRUMMEL [*Prompts.*] You wished, Madam?

LILA [*With a swift gesture throws back veil, challenging his scrutiny. He is puzzled — she gives a bitter laugh.*] You do not recognise me. I am not surprised. [*with the pathetic bitterness of a once pretty woman.*] I have changed. [*tries to laugh, it changes to a tearing cough. Very bitterly.*] Your friend Lord Harding told me so six months ago.

BRUMMEL I cannot claim His Lordship's friendship, [*shrugs.*] but I live. [*she has another fit of coughing, he speaks very kindly.*] Forgive me, but if I could be of assistance to you [*stops in astonishment as she goes into hysterically wild laughter horribly punctuated by spasms of coughing.*]

LILA [*Stops suddenly, answers the look on his face.*] I'm not mad it was the thought that I could have injured a man like you for such a brute as Harding.

BRUMMEL "Injured"?

LILA [rises, throws arms wide dramatically.] Look at me! And three years ago they said I had a great future.

BRUMMEL [Starts.] Mistress Dawn.

LILA [Wildly.] Yes. “Beautiful Lila Dawn of the Playhouse.” I’ve paid, haven’t I? [there is a discreet cough and the door opens.]

BRUMMEL turns with gesture of irritation. Quickly.] Mr. Brummel. That is Lady Woodland.

BRUMMEL [Astounded.] Lady Woodland?

LILA She comes at my request.

MORTIMER enters. **BRUMMEL** turns sharply to him.

MORTIMER It is Lady Woodland, Sir.

BRUMMEL Ask Her Ladyship to join us at once. [exit **MORTIMER**. Sternly.] I do not understand.

LILA I sent a letter to her house [quickly, to avert his anger.] Dying people have licence. [he is about to speak — she laughs pitifully.] The doctors give me three months. [shakes head.] It will be less.

BRUMMEL [Kindly.] No, no. Have courage —

LILA [The cough comes, she presses handkerchief to lips.] One knows.

MORTIMER enters, holds door. **LADY MARY** enters, stands very erect on threshold. **BRUMMEL** moves forward, places a chair.

MARY [Without moving, very coldly.] I received a strange letter an hour ago —

BRUMMEL Of this lady’s sending.

MARY [Looks at **LILA**.] I do not think I know

LILA The Fête. Three years ago.

MARY gives a violent start — doubt and dawning trouble show in her face. She bends forward to see the girl’s face better — recognition comes.]

MARY [Cries.] The servant girl !!!

LILA [Tries to laugh : fails. Shakes her head.] An actress from the Playhouse. [watching her nervously.] Do you understand?

MARY stares at her in silence, half guessing, yet hardly able to believe the truth. Then into her face comes full realisation. Her eyes blaze, her figure seems to grow. Like a tigress about to spring, with clenched hands, she steps forward so swiftly that the girl shrinks back, throwing out her hands in an involuntary gesture of defence.

- MARY** [*A fierce hiss.*] That tale you told? It wasn't true? You lied to me? Answer! You lied?
- LILA** [*Wails.*] Don't look at me like that.
- MARY** [*Bending over her, whispers in the intensity of her passion.*] Answer.
- LILA** I didn't want to do it. He made me. [*coughs chokingly.*]
- MARY** [*Slowly draws back. Her eyes seek Brummel's in silent agony. Slowly in lifeless voice.*] Three years. And all that time it was never true. [**BRUMMEL** *makes a little hopeless gesture.*]
- LILA** [*Feebly.*] I'm not bad. I wanted to tell you but he made me keep silent. He frightens me. [*wails in self-pity.*] And I couldn't go back to the old life just when I was going to be famous [*with desperate vanity.*] And I should have been . . . they said I was a great actress . . . [*a fit of coughing stops her. Speaks very weakly.*] Then this came. I had to give up at last — and when my looks went he left me to starve. [**BRUMMEL** *and MARY* *have stood like statues listening.*]
- MARY** [*Coldly.*] Lord Harding?
- LILA** [*With flash of hate.*] He's a devil.
- MARY** [*Blazes out.*] And you did his work. You didn't care what it meant to anyone else — just self, self, all the time. Oh, you vile thing.
- LILA** [*Crouches back, cries.*] Don't. I'm ill. Be kind.
- MARY** [*Echoes in a passion of scorn.*] "Be kind." [*she steps forward.* **BRUMMEL** *takes a step too, as if to interpose.*] "Be kind."

MARY's arm makes a fierce gesture which sweeps from the table a small silver vase holding one rose. It falls with a clang — and between Brummel and her lies the rose. In one flash the memory of a night three years ago comes to both. There is a sudden stillness — then slowly her eyes lift from the rose to his. Tableau . . .

- LILA** [*Who has covered her face in fear, whimpers.*] Have some pity. I'm dying.
- MARY** [*Slowly, almost as if unseeing, her eyes come to the crouching figure. In a lifeless voice, pathetic in its hopeless misery.*] You are fortunate. I must go on living.
- LILA** [*Falls on knees, clings to her gown.*] I couldn't die until you knew. Won't you forgive?
- MARY** [*Steps back, speaks quietly.*] I can't forgive you yet. [*moves to BRUMMEL. In low voice.*] She should be at home. My coach can take her.

BRUMMEL *touches bell. MORTIMER* *appears instantly.*

BRUMMEL Take this lady home in Her Ladyship's coach. Get some warm wraps. [*stoops, raises LILA, offers arm. With her leaning heavily on it they exit.*]

MARY [*To MORTIMER, about to follow.*] Mortimer [*goes to him.*] She will need comforts. Take this. [*hands MORTIMER her silk bag purse. MORTIMER takes it and exits with a bow.*]

MARY, alone, shows the real extent of her suffering. She seems to wilt, moving wearily with effort. She lifts the rose, very gently smooths the ruffled leaves, and fastens it against her heart. Sinking into a chair she stares unseeing before her. BRUMMEL enters very quietly and stands looking silently at the woman he loves a tragic figure.

BRUMMEL [*At last, softly.*] Mary —

MARY [*Turns to him with a look of hopeless pathos.*] What can I say to you? [*her lips quiver piteously, then control breaks, she drops forward over the table, her head sunk in her arms, and sobs.*]

BRUMMEL [*Moves to her.*] Mary, [*his hand rests on her shoulder.*] Dear heart : [*pleadingly.*] Don't.

MARY [*Raises piteous face.*] That I could ever have believed You can't forgive.

BRUMMEL There was never need for it.

MARY Don't — don't. It only hurts to hear you say it. I deserve to suffer.

BRUMMEL [*Bends over her.*] That. Mary, is the only pain I cannot bear.

MARY [*Her hand steals up and holds his resting on her shoulder. She gives a sigh of gratitude. Then, womanlike, she breaks into speech, finding some comfort in confessing to the man she loves.*] But I have suffered. Dear God I have. When I think of my life these three years past — welcoming each night for its forgetfulness — waking each morning to a barren day — Nothing but duty, duty, DUTY — and an empty heart.

BRUMMEL Hush, Mary.

MARY I am past silence now. All through these miserable years it was only the belief that that lying tale was true gave me pride to go on facing life. I would not let you know how much . . . [*with sudden cry of anguish.*] Oh, Bryan, what are we to do?

BRUMMEL Pick up the pieces, Mary. [*sadly.*] Life is like that for some of us.

MARY [*Desperately.*] I can't.

BRUMMEL I had hoped Christopher is so true a gentleman

MARY I know, I know. That but makes it worse. He is kind, patient, generous beyond all reason that night he made his offer to Harry without condition — he would not have spoken — it was I I was mad — I wanted to hurt [*stops : a silence, then*

in changed lifeless voice.] And now I know the truth I can't go on. [*sways, supports herself by table.*] I can't . . . how I envy that woman dying.

BRUMMEL

[*At the horror of it his self-control breaks.*] Don't. DON'T.

MARY

[*Lifts her head : sees the agony of love in his face : gives a queer little gasp, then her face is alive with her great resolve. She is before him appealing desperately.*] Bryan, I injured you so . . . I didn't realise — it was my own suffering I always thought of — it shut out all else. Oh, my dearest [*her hands reach out and cling to him.*] Let me atone. I care for nothing — ask for nothing — only the right to make up a little for my cruelty. Do you understand? Oh my dear one, let all my heart's love repay a little for the past. [*clings to him.*]

BRUMMEL

[*Tempted to breaking-point — tries to free the clinging hands.*] Mary, for pity's sake : I'm only human.

MARY's strength fails, she seems about to fall — his arm is thrown around her, her head falls back, her eyes close.

Suddenly a loud discordant jangling of a bell is heard. For a moment BRUMMEL stands listening — again the bell clangs more violently. Very gently his lips brush her hair and he gently places her in chair.

A FOOTMAN's voice is heard protesting "But Sir", then the raucous drunken voice of BANNISTER.

BANNISTER

[*(Off.)*] I tell you, Mr. Brummelsh will shee meesh.

BRUMMEL

Bannister.

BANNISTER

[*Very loudly.*] I tell yoush, he will. Great friendsh.

BRUMMEL

He must not find you here. The man's an ape for malice. I must see him, or he'll suspect and watch the house. If you'll consent — [*moves to door (L.) of bedroom, holds aside curtain.*] I'll get rid of him. [*MARY passes through quickly into bedroom.*]

BANNISTER

[*With great dignity.*] Shallsh complain. He'll dish - dishmish you. Mark my wordsh.

BRUMMEL

[*Walks leisurely across, opens door C.*] My dear Bannister, with such a bad — ahem — cold, you ought not to stand about on the landing.

BANNISTER

shee

[*(Off), triumphantly.*] There, didn't I shay Mr. Brummel would meesh?

BRUMMEL

[*Blandly.*] See and hear — I recognised your voice — so distinctive — pray leave the other banisters and come in. [*to*

FOOTMAN.¹⁴] You needn't wait.

BANNISTER [*Lurching through.*] I'm greatly obliged to you, Mr. Brummel — greatly.

BRUMMEL [*Moves chair forward.*] Won't you sit?

BANNISTER Thankee, thankee. [*lurches in the other direction and bumps heavily against another piece of furniture.*]

BRUMMEL [*Adds with dry suavity.*] Or do you prefer to lean against something?

BANNISTER I'll sit, thankee. [*subsides into chair heavily. Comedy of startled look : his eyes goggling, his mouth falling open — he recovers, with drunken impressiveness.*] Mr. Brummel, I respect you, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Bows very gravely.*] It's mutual.

BANNISTER [*Very impressively.*] I reshpectsh you azh a man . . . a gentlemansh and a friendsh.

BRUMMEL My dear Captain, I hope I'm the first — sometimes I like to think I'm the second — but the third — you overwhelm me.

BANNISTER [*Waves aside the protest nobly.*] I appealsh to you azh a friend . . . Don't take her away from me.

BRUMMEL [*Utterly at a loss.*] "Her"? "Take away"?

BANNISTER [*Suddenly becomes tearful. Very pathetically.*] You have all the women after you . . . don't, don't I shay rob me of my one ewe lambsh — she's infatuated with yoush, but if you'll not encourage her, she'll come back to meesh — promish me, Mr. Brummel.

BRUMMEL [*Solemnly.*] I do not like lamb.

BANNISTER [*Insistently.*] A crown it cost me . . . the harpy . . .

BRUMMEL But who is the lady?

BANNISTER Mistress Chase.

BRUMMEL [*for one moment he is utterly taken aback, then very gravely he lays hand on BANNISTER's shoulder.*] Bannister, set your mind at rest.

BANNISTER [*Jumps up, clutches his hand.*] Mr. Brummel — Mr. Brummelsh — heaven blessh you.

BRUMMEL [*Solemnly.*] And your love affair.

BANNISTER "Love"? It'sh not lovesh — itsh ne . . . nesheshity.

BRUMMEL [*In terrible voice.*] Captain!

BANNISTER [*In alarm.*] Don't mishunderstandsh me, Mr. Brummel. [*clings to his buttonhole.*] I'm a man of honoursh, I ashure you I am — it's my future I'm thinking of . . . [*becomes maudlin.*] Look at me, Sir — a soldier worn out in hish country's servish — [*taps chest.*] A man who hash fought fifty battlesh.

BRUMMEL Fifty — and they never killed you. [*sighs.*]

14 No indication in the script as to whether the Footman actually enters on stage. He is mentioned in some cast lists so presumably makes an appearance, however brief.

BANNISTER And what am I? A captain on half-pay — compelled to deny my self even the necessities of life [*with a burst of enthusiasm.*] And she has such a lovely cellar and rich . . . [*smacks lips at the thought.*] Why, I shan't be able to spend it all if I live to a hundred. [*seizes BRUMMEL's hand, tearfully.*] Don't take her from me, Mr. Brummel.

BRUMMEL [*With noble air.*] May I be hanged for sheep-stealing if I do.

BANNISTER [*Fervently.*] God bless you I'll never

BRUMMEL Not a word — not a word of thanks, my dear Captain, I won't listen to one — rely on me absolutely. [*is steadily pushing*

BANNISTER *to the door, stifling his efforts to burst into thanks.*]

Fly to your lamb and guard her woolly innocence from designing wolves — fly to her, my dear shepherd — but be careful of the stairs. [*pushes BANNISTER through door.*] Goodbye, goodbye.

. . . . stands leaning in doorway watching the noisy stumbling descent of the Captain, who is still heard invoking blessings on him. There comes a heavy clatter and bump.

BRUMMEL Happy lamb!

. . . . closes door and moves towards bedroom door L. . . . halts . . . listens frowning. The bumping sounds are unmistakably coming up stairs again. **BRUMMEL** strides across room, just as **BANNISTER** taps loudly and throws door C. open.

BANNISTER [*All breathless.*] Mr. Brummel, that fellow of yours is a fool . . . a perfect fool . . . he was just turning Woodland away — said you were engaged — I stopped him for you.

BRUMMEL Captain, I have no words.

BANNISTER [*Proudly.*] Knew you'd be pleased . . . Don't thanksh me. [*stumbles down stairs again.*]

BRUMMEL [*Quietly.*] Come in, Chris. [*moves into room. WOODLAND enters behind him — he has a wild distracted air. BRUMMEL speaks before turning.*] What fortunate wind — ?

WOODLAND Fortunate! Fortunate? [*drops heavily into chair.*]

BRUMMEL [*Turns sharply.*] What ails you, man?

WOODLAND [*Laughs wildly.*] "Ails" . . . the word's right — ailing past all hope of cure this side of death, I think — forgive me, I forget my manners.

BRUMMEL You are in trouble?

WOODLAND "Trouble." God help me, I am very hard hit.

BRUMMEL Can you tell me?

WOODLAND Dear God : I must speak or go mad I need advice, Brummel — I need it sorely and so I come to you . . . the one man who has never failed me, the one friend I can trust utterly. [*pauses, then, more quietly.*] It concerns my wife.

BRUMMEL [*With effort.*] Your wife ?

WOODLAND [*Painfully.*] I find it hard to say that night three years ago when I found my dearest hopes fulfilled, I thought life could not hold but happiness and now — [*passionately.*] Oh, the fault is mine — mine alone — I cannot give her all she has the right to ask I'm dull and heavy and she — all life and fire and wit and so — [*breaks off, stares before him in hopeless misery.*]

BRUMMEL And so?

WOODLAND [*Heavily.*] A woman cannot always starve her heart : [*painfully.*] I — I — think there — is — another [*starts up painfully.*] Do not misunderstand me : I charge her with no harm but it is the future of which I think — the future that I see so blackly a woman can have only one friend that she can trust always.

BRUMMEL [*Softly.*] Tell her that.

WOODLAND [*Miserably.*] I cannot — I try and stumble and fall silent — [*flings out hands in gesture of despair.*] How can it end for both of us? How can it end?

BRUMMEL Believe me, Chris, it will end well. Your wife is a very beautiful woman with many men eager for her favour, but I am very sure she will not forget the claim of honour. Trust to your wife's honour, Chris. She will not fail you.

WOODLAND 'Tis I who have failed. I should have known I couldn't keep the love of such a woman I only want her happiness, I would not keep her tied. A man may quit life without suspicion —

BRUMMEL [*Flashes look at curtain concealing door L.*] Be sure no woman will throw away such love. Men have called me the finest gentleman at Court but the finest gentleman in England is Sir Christopher Woodland, for what he has said today. I would to God that I or any other man at Court were worth the half of him —

Suddenly there is noise and laughter on the stairs. The door flies open and THE REGENT, followed by HARDING, HARRY, SQUIRE GROOMBRIDGE and others, bursts noisily into the room.

REGENT [*Shouts.*] Yoicks! Gone away! Tally ho! [*bursts out with a laugh.*] Ha! Ha! Ha! 'Tis a man and not a petticoat — you've lost, Jack.

BRUMMEL [*Bows deeply.*] I am glad, Sir, to see you in such — robust health today.

REGENT [*Genially.*] Ah, Brummel, don't be vexed with me. [*laughs.*] Why

BRUMMEL Faith! You should be grateful I've defended your character. [*Drily.*] 'Tis your generous nature, Sir, to do for others what they are so well able to do for themselves. [*turns with cool menace to HARDING.*] Does Lord Harding honour my character by his criticism?

REGENT [*Slips arm through BRUMMEL's soothingly.*] No, no, no — 'twas only a wager. As we entered, Harding found a handkerchief. [*chuckles.*] A lady's, Brummel.

A moment's silence, then BRUMMEL touches bell. Enter MORTIMER.

BRUMMEL Were there any women from the tradespeople here today?

MORTIMER The girl from the florists's comes every day for your instructions, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Drawls.*] Ah! The girl from the florist's — Lord Harding has found her handkerchief and is treasuring it. [**REGENT chuckles, a smile goes round.**] I'm sure, Milord, this is not the first time you have been kind in such cases. Mortimer will return it.

HARDING [*Shakes head.*] It has the look of belonging to a lady of quality.

BRUMMEL It is so difficult to judge. [*runs eye over him.*] So many objectionable people nowadays pass as persons of quality.

HARDING Gad! Funny you should say that. Bagwig has a tale of his aunt once having seen your grandfather at Lord Mopson's. [*smiles maliciously, drawls.*] He opened the door to her.

At this insult there falls a strained silence, all watch Brummel with different emotions.

BRUMMEL [*Takes snuff leisurely. With unruffled calm.*] Interesting. My grandfather was a private servant — my father a public servant — and I am no-one's servant, but very much at your service [*flicks sword hilt lightly.*] at any time. [*his eyes fixed unmovingly on HARDING's, he takes a pinch daintily in his fingers.*] You think I come from a very old family [*takes snuff, drawls.*] A gardener's, to be exact : Adam, the name

HARDING jumps with fury. **THE REGENT**, who has been watching pop-eyed, bursts into a roar of laughter, to the confusion of **HARDING**.

. . . . but only through the younger son. My man claims the elder branch.

REGENT [*Delighted.*] He had you there, Jack. [*catches HARDING by the arm and pokes his ribs to his great annoyance.*] Eh! But we're

forgetting. We never looked to see if there was a name.

HARDING [*Grins evilly.*] That's soon remedied, Sir. [*studies handkerchief.*] Only an initial.

REGENT That's not much help. What is it?

HARDING It seems — a monogram : V or perhaps V N.

BRUMMEL [*Coolly*] May I see? [*takes handkerchief.*] To me it looks like an M, but as you say, Sir, that tells us nothing. [*pauses.*] Would you like to see my new picture?

REGENT But you haven't heard my tale yet, Brummel.

BRUMMEL Which one, Sir?

REGENT [*Taken aback.*] Eh? Why — about the handkerchief Harding picked up on your stairs . . . “Ha,” says he, “’Tis always said Brummel cares nothing for the women, but I wager we’ve caught him this time. A hundred guineas we find a fair lady with him.” . . . “Done,” says I, “Brummel would never be so unkind to all the others.” Ha-ha-ha [*laughs heartily at his own wit.*] Then I forbade your fellow to announce us, and up we came. He seemed so anxious, that I grew anxious for my guineas, but I’ve won . . . ’tis only Woodland.

HARDING [*Quickly.*] Woodland. [**BRUMMEL** *turns sharply at the tone :* **HARDING** *waves the handkerchief carelessly — drawls.*] Yes. Only Sir Christopher.

BRUMMEL [*Very suavely.*] You must accept my sympathy, Milord.

HARDING [*Laughs.*] For my lost guineas?

BRUMMEL For having so little business of your own that needs attention.

[**HARDING** *straightens angrily.* **BRUMMEL** *takes snuff, smiles at him with deliberate provocation.*]

REGENT [*Anxious to prevent trouble.*] Come, Brummel, now we’re here you must show us your new picture.

HARRY [*Backing him up.*] What is the subject, Mr. Brummel?

BRUMMEL A sunset.

GROOMBRIDGE *suddenly indulges in an extraordinary performance. He chuckles, coughs, laughs, coughs, wheezes, chokes and grows purple in the face while all gaze at him in amazement.* **BRUMMEL** *quietly rings the bell. Enter MORTIMER.*]

BRUMMEL [*Calmly.*] Pat his back.

MORTIMER *quite sedately advances and pats GROOMBRIDGE’s back.*

GROOMB’GE [*Recovering.*] Your pardon, Sir, but it’s so funny . . . Ha ha ha He he he . . . A clever man like Mr. Brummel paying seventy

guineas for a sunset — Why, at my place in Kent we see 'em every day for nothing.

BRUMMEL [*Blandly.*] Yes, but do you see them?

GROOMB'GE [*Puzzled.*] Why, I suppose so.

BRUMMEL [*More blandly.*] I thought perhaps you knew of them from your farm hands.

GROOMB'GE Farm hands! They don't think of anything but beer — but with me it's different — I notice. [*triumphantly.*] This'll prove it to ye — last fall I was riding with the bailiff back from a ratting when he points out a fine sun setting behind my trees — [*proudly.*] I saw in a minute they were too close and had 'em thinned . . . I'm a hundred guineas richer for that today.

BRUMMEL [*Solemnly.*] My dear Squire, how I have misjudged you.

GROOMB'GE [*Beaming with pleasure — nobly.*] Say no more, Sir.

REGENT Come Squire, come Mayne, you too Woodland, you're a judge : [*slips arm through Brummel's, looks over shoulder.*] But Jack has no soul for Art, so we'll leave him here while we inspect the picture. [*draws BRUMMEL to door.*] Is it really good, Brummel?

BRUMMEL [*Unable to refuse, cloaks his disquiet.*] I fancy it is, Sir.

REGENT Then I'll swear it is.

Exeunt ALL except HARDING, who remains in room alone.

HARDING [*Looking at handkerchief, smiles devilishly. Softly to himself.*] M.W. and Woodland here! [*goes into fit of silent laughter. Then turns, walks swiftly to curtain (concealing Door L.), jerks them aside.*] The way is clear now, Madam. [*steps back, waiting.*]
LADY MARY, perfectly calm, enters. **HARDING** pretends great astonishment.] Lady Woodland ! You!

MARY Your concern for me, Sir, is touching.

HARDING [*Bows.*] I trust I should always show concern for any woman . . . so placed.

MARY [*Swiftly.*] Then let me suggest a more fitting subject for your kindness. [*looks at him very directly. Very clearly.*] Mistress Dawn.

HARDING [*Hit hard and unexpectedly, catches his breath sharply, then pulls himself quickly together.*] Lady Mary has been listening to gossip.

MARY [*In a flash.*] From the woman herself.

HARDING [*Again shows the hit has gone home. Brazening it out.*] You have heard one side.

MARY And I wish to hear no more . . . my one desire is to leave this room — and Lord Harding.

HARDING [*Bows deeply, moves to door (L.), halts.*] If I may suggest . . . the

small staircase ensures a private exit. [*opens door L.*]

MARY

[*Inclines head in acknowledgement — pauses at door, looks at*

HARDING *with cold contempt very calmly.*] Three years ago, Sir, Mr. Brummel ran you through the shoulder. This time I think he will not be so merciful.

MARY *sweeps past HARDING and exits Door L.*

HARDING

[*Is absolutely shaken with fury, then slowly begins to laugh softly.*]

I think not, Milady. [*pulls out handkerchief, dangles it and eyes it smiling evilly.*] No! I think not. [*breaks into chuckle.*] Heaven is very kind to me at times if it is Heaven.

THE REGENT's *jolly laugh is heard. He enters leaning on MAYNE's arm. All except BRUMMEL follow.*

REGENT

A magnificent picture. Harding, you've lost a pleasure.

HARDING

I've lost a hundred guineas too, Sir — [**THE REGENT** *chuckles.*] — unless

REGENT

Eh?

HARDING

Unless you'll give me a chance of winning it back.

REGENT

[*Grandly.*] Name your wager, Jack — George of Wales is a sportsman first and prince afterwards.

HARDING

Then, Sir, double or quits that I prove Brummel was visited by a lady tonight. Prove it to your entire satisfaction.

REGENT

Oh, come, come! That's no wager. Why, a nun or a grandmother :

HARDING

A pretty woman, Sir — in the most compromising circumstances.

REGENT

Done, then.

WOODLAND

[*Sharply.*] And with me. [**HARDING** *books the bets.*]

HARRY

And me.

HARDING

[*Surprised.*] You, Mayne?

HARRY

[*Quietly.*] I do not think Brummel that kind of man.

HARDING

[*Shrugs.*] As you will.

REGENT

[*Chuckles.*] What's the lady's name, Jack?

HARDING

Ah! That's not in the wager, Sir.

REGENT

We must know the name. Why — if not, you might find a score of 'frail fairs' ready to help you win your wager with their testimony.

HARDING

Still, Sir —

REGENT

[*Authoritatively.*] I claim the name, Harding.

HARDING

[*With show of reluctance.*] Why, then Sir — I fancy Mlle. Cerito the dancer

REGENT

[*With a roar.*] What! Adele? Here with by God, I don't believe it. She only cares for . . . [*breaks off, stamps about fuming.*]

HARDING [*Behind hand, to WOODLAND.*] Pest! His latest fancy: I forgot.

WOODLAND *looks him straight in the face and deliberately turns his back on him.*

REGENT [*Bursts out.*] I don't believe it

HARDING Let us cancel the wager, Sir.

REGENT No — by Heaven you must prove it. If Brummel's dared I'll have it proved and if it's true, he never enters the Court again — I'm not Regent for nothing. I don't believe it of Brummel — prove it, I say.

HARDING Five minutes will serve, Sir, if you support me.

REGENT I'll do that.

WOODLAND Sir, I protest —

REGENT [*Stamps.*] Woodland, this is my business.

HARDING [*Quietly.*] He is here.

BRUMMEL *enters in a queer silence all round.*

BRUMMEL You must excuse me, Sir. I thought you might care for wine. My fellow is bringing it.

HARDING [*Searching his pockets.*] Plague take it.

REGENT [*Following his cue.*] What is it?

HARDING I've lost my snuff-box, Sir — No! Here it is — a recent purchase. A fine piece of work, I think. [*holds it out.*]

REGENT [*Puzzled.*] The pattern's fine.

HARDING And the catch is rather curious one presses so — [*spills half of the contents of the snuff-box all over THE REGENT's hands.*]

REGENT [*Calls out.*] Ah! Devil take it.

HARDING A plague on my clumsiness. A thousand pardons, Sir. Let me get you water and a towel. Mr. Brummel will permit — [*moves to door of bedroom (door L.)*] — this is your bedroom, I think?

BRUMMEL [*Stops him.*] My fellow will get them.

HARDING But 'twill keep the Prince waiting. Pray permit me. Shoots glance at **REGENT.**]

BRUMMEL [*Bars the way coolly.*] I will fetch them myself.

REGENT [*Realising the game.*] Nay, Brummel, there's no need for that. I can walk to the room myself so long as I get rid of this quickly. [*shakes fingers which he is holding before him with a gesture of distaste.*]

BRUMMEL [*Bars way.*] A host only exists for his guests, Sir. You must permit me.

HARDING [*With meaningful laugh.*] Mr. Brummel is so anxious, one almost

wonders if the room contains some secret of the toilet.

REGENT [*Who has scowled savagely at the thought suggested, cunningly assumes his boisterous genial manner.*] Brummel and I are too good friends for secrets — Ha ha ha! [*laughs, moves to door L.*]

BRUMMEL I take advantage of that friendship, Sir, to offer a chair. [*moves one before THE REGENT.*]

REGENT No, no! My curiosity's aroused — by the Lord, I must see. [*makes a dart at door L.*]

BRUMMEL [*In a flash catches THE REGENT's arm and swings him heavily into the chair.*] Again I offer a chair.

WOODLAND [*With startled cry.*] Brummel! The Regent!

Tableau. . . . **THE REGENT** rises. *He is very calm, with savage quietness.*

REGENT [*Speaks with dignity.*] Mr. Brummel, you have laid hands upon me — the Regent of England. For a man who so deeply forgets what is due to my rank, there can be no place at Court — or, I think, in this country. I advise you to try the air of France.

HARDING And for the journey my coach is entirely at your disposal.

BRUMMEL A thousand thanks, Milord. But you will need it for your own use. [*strikes bell. MORTIMER appears.*] Lord Harding's coach.

Tableau : **HARDING** savage and humiliated, **BRUMMEL** calmly eyeing him as he takes snuff.

BLACK OUT.

Some time later the same evening. Lights come up slowly again. All others (including it is assumed, Lady Mary) have left. By the light of a candle, MORTIMER silently packs his master's bags. BRUMMEL, head sunk on chest, sits watching. Suddenly he starts to his feet.

BRUMMEL No! Unpack those bags. I'll not be driven so to exile.

MORTIMER [*In awestruck whisper.*] They say you struck him, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Laughs wildly.*] I was always original, Mortimer — but I'm not beaten yet. I have led the Court these three years past — men will follow me still. Brains against Rank we shall see, Mortimer. We shall see.

CURTAIN.

END OF ACT 2.

ACT 3

Six months later.

Scene 1 (First Episode) : A room in Lord Mayne's house in Bath. Evening.

A heavily furnished sombre room. A curtained french¹⁵ window C. Door up R. L. in the wide fireplace a log fire glows. A big high-backed armchair stands partly before and partly beside the fire. In centre, a table covered and littered with papers, deed box, dice and cards. On it a branched candelabra. The light from one candle forms a small circle of light enhancing the surrounding gloom, and bringing out vividly the haggard face of HARRY sprawled back in a chair, head sunk on chest, hands deep in pockets, heels spread out . . . a perfect picture of the hard-hit gambler.

HARRY *[Stirs, slowly sighs and wearily resumes his inspection of papers, mutters.]* First mortgage . . . second . . . third mortgage . . .
 Nothing to be raised there *[looks over other papers, throws them back on table with impatient disgust . . . consults pocket-book.]*
 Harding five hundred . . . Talbot a thousand . . . Norfolk three thousand . . . Brummel five . . . Well, I'm glad Brummel gets some of it, he's different from the rest . . . *[studies figures silently.]* H'm! As I make it, five thousand and this house are all I have left between me and a bullet. *[laughs grimly.]* Well! Tonight will settle it. *[falls into gloomy thought, mutters.]* A mad fool :
 Woodland gave me my chance. *[shrugs.]* Too late for regrets now. *[picks up dice box and plays with it.]* A last fling with you tonight, my friend, and if the luck goes wrong . . . *[laughs wildly.]* FINIS.

The door has quietly opened and MISS PRUDENCE FREE enters.

PRUDENCE *[Quietly.]* Don't blame your servant — I insisted.
HARRY *[Starts out of chair.]* Prudence!
PRUDENCE *[Advancing, laughs softly.]* I fear this visit belies my name.
HARRY *[Goes to raise her hand to his lips.]* There could be no more welcome visitor . . . But . . .
PRUDENCE *[Coolly.]* But it is not prudent. May I sit?
HARRY Forgive me. *[places chair, then seeing telltale papers hastily crams them into box.]*
PRUDENCE *[Very quietly.]* It is true then.
HARRY I . . . I fail to understand.

¹⁵ Archaic spelling as in the playscript. Use of the conventional spelling in Scene 2 reinforces the supposition (see Foreword) that other parts of the play were typed, or even created, by Lawrence rather than Matthews.

PRUDENCE Cards . . . dice . . . deed boxes . . . they tell their own story, I think.
HARRY [*Becoming dignified.*] And still I fail
PRUDENCE [*With disarming appeal.*] Please, Harry ?
HARRY [*Smiles suddenly.*] Say whatever you please.
PRUDENCE They are saying you have been playing heavily — and losing.
HARRY The luck has not been good.
PRUDENCE They go further than that.
HARRY 'Tis kind of them.
PRUDENCE [*Steadily.*] They say you are well-nigh ruined.
HARRY I'm sure it gives them great pleasure to do so my friends especially.
PRUDENCE [*Persists.*] But is it true?
HARRY [*Hesitates — is about to evade — then takes the honest way with her.*] I can answer that better tomorrow.
PRUDENCE That means tonight you play?
HARRY [*Shrugs.*] Needs must.
PRUDENCE And if fortune still prove perverse?
HARRY [*Laughs recklessly.*] Why, then I shall not play again.
PRUDENCE [*Her hand flies to her heart : with little catch of breath.*] Oh, no!
HARRY [*Laughs lightly to turn aside the sinister suggestion.*] They say poverty is healthy.
PRUDENCE [*Gravely.*] You did not mean that. [**HARRY** *is at a loss.*
PRUDENCE *rises quickly, lays a hand on HARRY's arm.*]
Harry, I think you care for me?
HARRY [*With swift feeling.*] "Care," My dear, had I known how much, it would not have been like this with me tonight.
PRUDENCE [*Softly.*] I care too.
HARRY [*Catches her hand to his lips, then gravely.*] Because of that . . . if fortune changes tonight I'll never touch card or dice again.
PRUDENCE [*With trembling lips.*] But if it does not?
HARRY [*Gravely.*] Why then . . . I shall have this moment to remember till my life ends.
PRUDENCE [*Gives a little choking gasp, then with desperate appeal.*] Oh Harry, be frank with me . . . Haven't I earned that much? What are you hiding from me in your mind?
HARRY [*Quietly.*] A fool must pay the price of his folly.
PRUDENCE [*Very softly.*] He seldom pays alone. [*speaks with difficulty.*] If — if the worst — [*breaks off.*] They say that men who have have found trouble here can start again a new life in America
[**HARRY** *gives short, hard laugh. Her composure breaks.*] Oh, I know what is in your mind . . . the gentleman's code to make an end when the game goes against you to go out with a well-bred laugh — [*passionately.*] But it's a vile code — a cruel selfish

code — thinking only of self — never of others who care.

HARRY [*Gently.*] What other way is there, Prue, for a gentleman?

PRUDENCE [*Flashes out.*] The man's way : to face things anew in a new land.

HARRY As a beggar? [*smiles, shakes head.*] 'Tis not alluring.

PRUDENCE [*In a little breathless voice.*] Harry! I have a private fortune : it is not large, but

HARRY [*Stops her.*] My dear, my dear

PRUDENCE [*With desperate courage.*] Then if you will not take it so . . . take it with me. Oh, I am shameless and past all caring I will not lose the man I love for a few poor scruples — There, there, Harry, I have said it — the man I love — you cannot repulse me now — promise me that whatever happens tonight you will not [*chokes at the thought.*] You will do nothing desperate [*sees he is about to avoid the promise.*] No, No, NO, it is not sacrifice I should be happy anywhere with Oh, Harry, don't you understand? You have no right to take all my happiness to satisfy your pride. Promise me . . . or must I kneel?

HARRY Dear God, I didn't think such fineness lived. [*lifts her hand reverently to his lips.*]

PRUDENCE [*Breathlessly.*] You promise?

HARRY [*Slowly.*] I promise that however fortune runs tonight I'll do nothing that will hurt you.

PRUDENCE And you'll . . . ?

HARRY [*Checks her, smiles.*] Nay, I must win my way back alone : but I will do so if you will wait.

PRUDENCE "Wait." [*gives a little sob of happiness.*] Oh my dear, 'till death [*Laughs tremulously.*] I could not help myself, I think.

HARRY [*Smiling, slips arm about her, kisses her.*] Then we're both in the same plight, for I can't help myself either.

PRUDENCE [*Whispers.*] Must you play tonight?

HARRY [*Quietly.*] Yes, I think so. I asked last night for my revenge. It would be hard with honour

PRUDENCE [*Finely.*] Then I will not urge you. [*moves away quietly.*]

HARRY Ah, my dear, you make a man ashamed. I will not fail you again. Trust me.

PRUDENCE [*Holds out hand.*] I do. [*with adorable change to gaiety.*] And now, if I would save the few poor shreds of my reputation . . . [*moves to door.*]

HARRY [*Boyishly.*] Ah, no! A few moments [*she shakes head smilingly.*] But I have scarce seen you this month past.

PRUDENCE [*Quickly.*] Was that my fault, Sir?

HARRY [*Humbly.*] Mine utterly — I could not trust myself to see you and keep silent and with beggary so near I might not speak . . .

PRUDENCE And so made me . . . Indeed, I'm grateful. [*makes great pretence of moving to door.*]
HARRY [*Catches her hand.*] Ah, Prue! Be a little kind.
PRUDENCE [*With twinkling eyes, makes a show of considering.*] Well! Having already so much gone against my inclinations . . .
HARRY [*Rapturously.*] Ah, sweetheart. [*catches her in his arms, kisses.*]
PRUDENCE [*Sighs resignedly, completes sentence.*] I must go further, I suppose. [*gives a delicious little laugh and kisses him frankly.*]
HARRY [*Softly.*] Dear God, how sweet you are [*kisses her again.*]

There comes a discreet knock at the door.

. the Devil!
PRUDENCE Oh Harry, what company you keep.

Enter BUTLER.

BUTLER Mr. Brummel wishes to see your Lordship.
HARRY [*Angrily.*] I cannot see
PRUDENCE [*Swiftly.*] Harry. [**HARRY** turns, she speaks in low tones.] You must see him. To refuse Mr. Brummel would be so hurtful now that he is fighting so splendidly to hold his own.
HARRY I had forgotten : [*to BUTLER.*] Show Mr. Brummel in.

Exit BUTLER.

PRUDENCE I think it was so fine that Mr. Brummel shielded a woman like that. I wonder who she was.
HARRY No-one knows to this day. It was fine.
PRUDENCE I love him for it.

Enter BUTLER.

BUTLER Mr. Brummel, my Lord.

Exit BUTLER, enter BRUMMEL.

BRUMMEL My dear Mayne . . . [*sees PRUDENCE.*] Ah, pardon, my business can wait. [*moves to go.*]
PRUDENCE Mr. Brummel — [**BRUMMEL** halts. **PRUDENCE** goes swiftly to him.] I am so glad that you should be the first of all our friends to have the news.
BRUMMEL [*Bows.*] Good news, I trust?

PRUDENCE [*Shoots humorous glance at HARRY : shrugs.*] One hopes for the best. [**HARRY jumps.**] Lord Mayne and I are shortly to be married. [**BRUMMEL stiffens and looks very directly at HARRY, who shifts uneasily at the unspoken rebuke.**] He was so urgent. [**HARRY's jaw drops open.**] Won't you congratulate us?

BRUMMEL I congratulate Lord Mayne with all my heart . . . and to you [*lifts her hand.*] . . . to you I wish all the happiness that should come to kind hearts, now and always.

PRUDENCE [*Looks at him very kindly.*] No wonder you keep your friends.

BRUMMEL [*Smiles.*] I need them now.

PRUDENCE They will not fail you.

BRUMMEL And once again happiness.

Exeunt PRUDENCE and HARRY.

BRUMMEL [*Stands, frowning.*] Mayne should not have spoken with his affairs so tangled. [*a sudden smile.*] Yet one forgives him . . . she's worth a little madness

Enter HARRY.

. I came to make an apology. When I promised you your revenge tonight, I had forgotten I was supping with Rutland . . . you forgive me?

HARRY [*Obviously upset.*] Why, yes of course.

BRUMMEL [*Moving to door.*] Shall you be at the Assembly Rooms tomorrow?

HARRY [*Absently.*] Yes, I think so. [*with sudden resolve.*] Mr. Brummel! [**BRUMMEL halts.**] My indebtedness to you is rather large . . .

BRUMMEL It can wait your convenience.

HARRY [*Nervously.*] I should like the chance of reducing it. [*blurts out.*] Rutland does not sup yet — [**BRUMMEL lifts his eyebrows, HARRY blunders on.**] We could have a few throws

BRUMMEL My dear Mayne, you put me in an awkward position.

HARRY [*Uncomfortable but determined.*] I do not go beyond my right in asking.

BRUMMEL I admit that, but may I speak frankly?

HARRY Please do.

BRUMMEL It would give me no pleasure to win from the man Mistress Prue is marrying.

HARRY [*Laughs recklessly.*] You may not win.

BRUMMEL Still

HARRY You did not demur last night when my luck was poor.

BRUMMEL [*Stiffens : draws himself up seeming to dominate young HARRY,*

BRUMMEL *looks at HARRY silently, then walks to table, seats himself — picks up dice — very coldly.*] What stakes do you wish?

HARRY [*Stammers.*] I . . . I didn't intend . . .

BRUMMEL Please name your stakes.

HARRY [*Changes to recklessness : swings forward, takes chair.*] I owe you five thousand : five throws for a thousand each.

BRUMMEL [*Indifferently.*] As you wish. [*passes dice.*]

HARRY [*Throws . . . smiles.*] Seventeen.¹⁶ [**BRUMMEL** *throws carelessly without looking. HARRY bends forward . . . triumphantly.*] Nine. That's four thousand only. [**BRUMMEL** *throws, looks at his watch at the same time. HARRY announces.*] Seven. [**HARRY** *throws, gives an ejaculation of pleasure.*] Ah! That makes it three thousand. I knew my luck would turn tonight. [*throws, can't keep the joy out of his voice.*] Sixteen.

BRUMMEL [*Throws, drawls.*] I'm afraid it has.

HARRY [*disappointedly.*] Seventeen.

BRUMMEL [*Throws,*] Nine : you should beat that.

HARRY [*Throws.*] Damnation. That makes us level . . . let me double.

BRUMMEL [*Indifferent.*] With pleasure.

HARRY [*Throws, stares at dice, mutters.*] Six. [**BRUMMEL** *throws, HARRY looks, speaks with difficulty.*] I'm in your debt by seven thousand now. [*feverishly.*] Let's go on.

BRUMMEL I can spare another ten minutes.

HARRY [*Huskily.*] Two thousand again — [*desperately.*] No. Will you double or quits?

BRUMMEL [*Yawns.*] Fourteen thousand or nothing. That makes it interesting. [*gathers up dice — throws, doesn't trouble to look.*]

HARRY [*Checks a cry.*] Eighteen. [*staggers to feet.*]

BRUMMEL [*Coldly.*] Won't you throw?

HARRY What's the good? [*clutches dice, throws, glares wildly, then drops into chair, sits staring . . . at last he whispers.*] One more throw [*gathers up dice fumblingly.*]

BRUMMEL [*Drawls.*] Double or quits again?

HARRY [*Through his teeth.*] Yes. [*about to throw, suddenly flings down the box, staggers to his feet.*] No, by God . . . 'tis not honest . . . I couldn't pay if I lost. [**BRUMMEL** *lolling back in chair eyes him keenly. HARRY feverishly searches deed box, pulls out papers, writes at table.*] Here is a draft on my bankers for nine thousand: 'twill be met. The house with its furnishings is worth another five: here are the deeds for it. That clears my debt.

¹⁶ Evidently using three dice, highest total wins (not specified in script). Which makes Brummel's 18 (see later) an invincible total unless Harry then throws 18 to tie the round. Harry is a sufficiently experienced gambler to know that the odds in favour of this are remote (in fact 1 in 216).

BRUMMEL [*Taking papers.*] So bad as that?
HARRY [*Laughs bitterly.*] To the bone.
BRUMMEL But the estates?
HARRY Woodland paid the debts : the estates are settled on my sister.
BRUMMEL [*Consults watch, rises.*] I'm sorry it should have happened so.
HARRY I would rather you had it than some. [*with boyish candour.*] You meant me kindly, Mr. Brummel, and I fear I was unseemly, but . . . [*laughs bitterly.*] I had need . . . and great hopes of winning back: but that is done with now. . . .

Enter BUTLER.

. . . . Well?
BUTLER What wines shall I use for dinner, Milord?
HARRY [*Starts.*] I had forgotten. [*turns to BRUMMEL.*] Mr. Brummel, I had forgotten : The Regent and a party were dining with me tonight. This house is now yours, but if
BRUMMEL Pray entertain your guests as if nothing had changed. [*a loud tap sounds on the door. BUTLER opens it, puts head outside to speak to some servant, pops back hastily.*]
BUTLER His Royal Highness's coach is at the door. Milord.
HARRY [*Confusedly.*] I must receive him
BRUMMEL [*Coolly.*] Pray hasten. [*HARRY hurries from room. To BUTLER.*] Serve what wine you think best
BUTLER [*His eyes fairly goggling.*] Yes, Sir.
BRUMMEL And give me that book. [*BUTLER hands BRUMMEL large book of illustrations and is dismissed with a gesture.*] You can go. [*BRUMMEL drops into chair at fireside and commences to study book. BUTLER exits full of excited curiosity.*]

THE REGENT's hearty laugh is heard. He enters leaning on **HARRY's** shoulder. **HARDING, BAGWIG** and two dandified **BUCKS**¹⁷ follow.

REGENT I think I scored, Eh? [*sees BRUMMEL, stops dead, frowns, lifts eyeglass, stares at BRUMMEL very nastily. Stiffly.*] I did not know you had other guests.

Comedy of BAGWIG, whose eyes nearly fall out as he peeps round HARDING at the blandly unconscious form of BRUMMEL, then watches THE REGENT with popping eyes. THE OTHERS have halted and are halted and are staring with chilly silent regard.

¹⁷ See Editorial note below.

- HARRY** [*Stammers.*] I I did not expect you so soon, Sir. You are early, I think.
- REGENT** [*Still staring, with bitter disfavour.*] I do not think I know the gentleman, and you need not introduce him. [**BRUMMEL** gives a very audible sigh of relief and settles more comfortably in his chair. **THE REGENT**, furious, walks with great dignity to a spot as far as possible from **BRUMMEL**.] I will sit here. A chair, please.
- BAGWIG** [*Hurries forward with one, bumping into the indignant* **HARDING**.] Permit me, Sir.
- REGENT** Thank you, Mr. Bagwig. Be seated, gentlemen. [*looks at watch, speaks graciously.*] Yes, I see I am before my time. How is your sister, Mayne? She is staying with you, I think will she join us tonight?
- HARRY** She begged me to make her apologies, Sir . . . she is terribly indisposed . . . one of her bad headaches.
- REGENT** Dear, dear! I'm sorry. [*shivers.*] It's very cold tonight. [*glares at BRUMMEL enjoying the fire : BRUMMEL pokes the fire, spreads his hands to the blaze and settles again luxuriously to his book. A battery of scowling eyes are fixed on him.*] What were we talking about when we came in, Harding?
- HARDING** [*With pointed sneer.*] Manners, Sir . . . and Breeding.
- REGENT** Ha! So we were. I think I'm entitled to speak on such matters. What is it they call me?
- BAGWIG** [*With eager sycophancy.*] The First Gentleman In Europe, Sir.
- REGENT** [*Beaming.*] Ah, Yes! The First Gentleman In Europe.
- BRUMMEL** [*Very clearly and distinctly.*] That accounts for it. [*all turn and stare. BRUMMEL is holding up book, examining picture and talking to himself.*] "First Work." and the first is always such a poor specimen. [*resumes reading, to an accompaniment of frozen silence.*]
- HARDING** [*Very distinctly.*] I must say, Sir, that I agreed with the remark that you made [*looks at BRUMMEL with a sneer.*] that it takes three generations to make a gentleman.
- BRUMMEL** rises, furtively watched by all — rings bell — and stands warming his back.
- REGENT** [*Rising, to be more impressive — glances with insulting meaning at Brummel.*] Yes. Blood tells. [*takes snuff, waves hand.*] Manner : . . . any fellow may put on that — but his origin will always show — we are what our ancestors have made us.
- BRUMMEL** [*Very distinctly.*] My dear Mayne, I haven't the pleasure of

knowing your stout friend — [**THE REGENT** gives a startled snort.] — but I am sure he is right. ~~Take for instance our present Regent. His father's a lunatic~~ [*drawls.*]¹⁸ “Blood tells.” — [*eyes THE REGENT's congested face.*] — and some persons have such a lot of it. [*takes snuff in a silence of amazement.* **THE REGENT** tugs at his collar as if choking.]

Enter BUTLER.

BUTLER You rang, Sir?

BRUMMEL Yes. I'm going out. I shall not return till late. [*lets glance rest on group : adds meditatively.*] Very late, I think. My compliments to Lord Mayne, and I would like to see him, if convenient, on his return — and tell my man Mortimer to wait here for me.

BUTLER Very good, Sir.

BRUMMEL And Johnson : be particularly careful to look after the comfort of my guests and see that they have everything they want. [*the group starts violently.*] Make my apologies to them when I am gone, and say “I beg they will not hasten their departure.”

BRUMMEL moves in leisurely fashion to the door and exits. Exit **BUTLER**.
Tableau . . . **THE REGENT** subsides into chair, snorting audibly.

HARDING [*Turns on HARRY.*] “His guests.” His guests??

HARRY [*Miserably.*] He won the house from me tonight.

REGENT [*In awful voice.*] Mayne — you allowed me to enter knowing that?

HARRY [*Desperately.*] It only happened a few moments before your arrival, Sir . . . I was at a loss . . .

REGENT [*With Jovian air of rebuke.*] That man obtained the opportunity to humiliate me . . . ME . . . by your act.

HARRY I did not expect, Sir — [*stops dead.*]

REGENT [*With portentous calm.*] You did not expect what, Milord?

HARRY [*Draws himself up : the manhood in him shows : he looks THE REGENT straight in the face.*] That you would act as you did, Sir.

REGENT [*With air of a man who has listened to blasphemy — rises.*] My cloak

BAGWIG [*Almost running.*] Permit me, Sir.

Unfortunately as BAGWIG tries to help THE REGENT into his coat and

¹⁸ The deleted words and stage direction are crossed-out in the playscript. Advisedly : the remark is not only insulting (which Brummel intends) but crassly insensitive (not Brummel's style. King George III seems to have commanded much contemporary public sympathy). The next sentence was added in ink on the script, in substitution.

with **HARRY** at the same time with a glare of disapproval, he consistently holds the coat too high or too low. **THE REGENT** makes desperate efforts to get his arms in and look dignified at the same time.

Enter **BUTLER**.

BUTLER From Mr. Brummel, Milord.

Hands HARRY note which HARRY does not open. Intense curiosity : THE REGENT so devoured with it that he stands with one arm in air. BAGWIG peeps round him in an ecstasy of inquisitiveness. THE REGENT makes a sudden move for sleeve, catches BAGWIG fairly in the wind.

HARRY Does Mr. Brummel require an answer?

BUTLER He did not say so, Milord. [**HARRY** makes move to put note in pocket.]

REGENT [*Unable to restrain curiosity, tries to speak with dignified condescension.*] Perhaps he desires to apologise.

HARRY You wish me to open it, Sir?

REGENT [*With more dignity.*] I wish to be fair — even to Mr. Brummel.

HARRY [*Opens note. All watch intently. Two papers fall from it. HARRY smiles.*] It's not . . .

REGENT [*Hastily puts on his most benignant air.*] Read it, Mayne. Read it.

HARRY Very well, Sir. [*reads.*] "My dear Mayne : I was the first to congratulate you — let me be the first also to offer my wedding gift. Accept the enclosed with my sincerest wish that they may add to the happiness of you both."

REGENT [*Who has picked up the papers : in awestruck tone.*] Your draft for £9000 and the deeds of the house.

There is dead silence. All are impressed.

HARDING [*Laughs sneeringly.*] The fellow was always a poser.

HARRY [*Turns on him in a flash.*] He had a very pretty pose with the small sword, I remember.

A smile goes round at HARDING's discomfoting.

REGENT Is that all?

HARRY No, Sir. [*reads.*] "I do not presume to offer advice, but . . . a man is known by the company he keeps. I commend to your notice the following portions of Holy Scripture : Psalm 73, verses 3 and 7."

REGENT What are they?

HARRY [Blankly.] I . . . I don't know, Sir. [*others look equally blank.*]
REGENT [Testily.] You have a Bible?
HARRY [Hopelessly lost.] I . . . I suppose . . . Yes, I must have
BUTLER Mr. Brummel in looking through the library, Milord, came across a volume presented to you by your maternal aunt on the occasion of your twenty-first birthday. He is sure you must have valued it as it is so perfectly preserved — the pages still being uncut — and he instructed me to restore it to your lordship. [*presents book.*]
HARDING [Chuckles.] A Bible.
REGENT Find the place, Jack. [**HARDING** *fumbles helplessly.*]
BUTLER [Deferentially.] I think the Psalms are in the Old Testament, Sir.
REGENT [Virtuously.] Of course . . . find and read them out, man . . . give him the book, Jack : Verses 3 and 7.
BUTLER [*Reads in perfectly expressionless voice and manner.*] “And why? I was grieved at the wicked. I do also see the ungodly in such prosperity. Their eyes swell with fatness”

*A dismayed silence has settled on the assembled company. At the last line **THE REGENT** bursts out.*

REGENT [*Volcanically.*] By God, the damned scoundrel insults me to my face — to my very face — and my friends stand helpless. Is there no-one capable of driving the insolent dog out of the country? By Heaven, I'll never rest until I see him driven out of England a ruined and broken man [*stops abruptly.*]

*The door opens and in deep silence **BRUMMEL** enters and walks across to his chair with perfectly composed face subtly enjoying the obvious discomfort. He finds his gloves — and with hat under his arm, cane swinging from his wrist, he saunters from the room putting them on. All eyes follow him.*

BLACK OUT.

End of Act 3 Scene 1 Episode 1.
Episode 2 follows after a ten-second pause.

Author's note to episode 2

In this episode, in real life a woman of Mary's birth and character would behave without any display of emotion. This is hopeless from a dramatic point of view; on the other hand it would be utterly wrong to write the scene too much on the type of

tearing a passion to tatters. I think the only wise way is for her to play it thus — she is half mad with anxiety when she hears Harding's first cryptic remark, but gallantly tries to mask her fears. But when the fact of Brummel's dying is told she throws every consideration to the winds. The one thought holds her : the man she loves and always has loved is dying, and has asked for her. She cares nothing of what Harding, Mortimer, the whole world thinks. She is burnt up with grief and the mad determination to get to him. She is oblivious to all reason or habit — simply the primitive woman again. This gives scope for some real power and passion, which adds to the acting value of the part.

Scene 1 (Second Episode) : The same room, five hours later.

Just before the black-out/fade out the clock strikes 'seven'. There is a pause of ten seconds before the light comes up again. LADY MARY is seen reading. She sighs, closes book. The clock strikes 'twelve' musically. Mary wearily throws book aside and rests head on hand. MORTIMER enters with a cup of coffee, places it on table at her side and stifles a tremendous yawn.

MORTIMER I thought Milady might find a cup of coffee refreshing.
MARY [*Smiles her thanks.*] You are always very thoughtful, Mortimer.
MORTIMER [*Gives a little cough.*] There's an old saying, Milady, that a man grows like his master.
MARY [*Shoots glance at the impassive face busying itself over the coffee : then smiles.*] I think it must be true. [*sips coffee.*] This is very nice. Do you always wait up for Mr. Brummel?
MORTIMER He very kindly tells me not to, Milady.
MARY [*Looks at him very kindly.*] But you do.
MORTIMER [*In his best wooden manner.*] I have been given to understand, Milady, that sleep is not refreshing unless the mind is at rest.
MARY You are fond of your master, Mortimer?
MORTIMER [*Quietly.*] Once when I was very ill, Mr. Brummel sat up three nights with me, Milady. He saved my life.
MARY [*Her face lights up.*] Did he?
MORTIMER [*Hastily.*] But he would not like it spoken of.
MARY [*Very softly.*] I understand that. [*hesitates, then takes her resolve.*] You and I are both in his debt, Mortimer.
MORTIMER [*With feeling.*] I can never hope to pay mine, Milady.
MARY [*Under her breath, tenderly.*] Nor I. You are certain he will return tonight?
MORTIMER [*With sublime confidence.*] Oh yes, Milady. He said he would.
MARY I think you know he did my brother a great service this evening.
MORTIMER [*In his most wooden manner.*] We discussed it in the butler's room at supper, Milady.

- MARY** [*Is taken aback — then.*] I want to thank him and I leave early tomorrow. Will you let him know I have not retired when he returns?
- MORTIMER** Yes, Milady. [*moves to door.*]
- MARY** And, Mortimer
- MORTIMER** Milady?
- MARY** [*Impetuously rises, holds out hand.*] Thank you for thinking of the coffee and other things.
- MORTIMER** [*Very pleased. Deprecatingly.*] Milady. [*bows very deeply over MARY's hand, then moves to door.*]

There is a sudden tapping at the window.

- MARY** [*Startled.*] What is that?

Both stand listening. The tapping comes again, more loudly.

- MORTIMER** [*Evenly.*] With your permission, Milady?

MORTIMER *Walks to fireplace, picks up poker, moves calmly to window. Pulls back curtains, throws open window and steps back quickly, poker poised.*

LORD HARDING, *hatted, cloaked and booted, strides in.*

- HARDING** [*Snarls.*] Were you asleep?
- MORTIMER** [*Blandly.*] Quite wide awake, Milord. [*as if accidentally gives poker a little twirl.*]
- HARDING** [*Laughs harshly.*] Took me for a dangerous ruffian, eh?
- MORTIMER** [*Suspiciously bland.*] I'm sure your Lordship will see it was a natural mistake.
- HARDING** [*Stares at him dubiously — then.*] I didn't want to wake the house, and I saw a light in here
- MORTIMER** My master has not returned.
- HARDING** [*Brutally.*] He's not likely to.
- MARY** [*Gives a stifled cry.*] Oh!
- HARDING** [*Swings round, becomes conscious of her presence, sweeps off hat.*] Lady Woodland! I did not see you. Will you grant me a few moments?
- MARY** [*Shaken by fear for Brummel's welfare, but disliking Harding.*] Is the matter urgent?
- HARDING** I fear so. [*turns to MORTIMER who is standing like an image with folded hands from which dangles the poker, makes a curt gesture of dismissal — turns back to MARY.*] I have come post-haste from Grantley's.

- MARY** [*Faintly.*] Where they gamble so heavily?
- BARDING** Yes. [*realises MORTIMER is still there — scowls and waves him to door. MORTIMER gazes woodenly into space. HARDING turns angrily to MARY.*] My message is for you.
- MARY** ‘A message’? [*the quick fear for Brummel’s safety shows in the little catch of her breath.*]
- HARDING** For you alone. I undertook its bringing though I have no love for the sender. [*looks significantly at MORTIMER.*] Do you wish to hear it?
- MARY, in doubt, looks helplessly at MORTIMER, who walks promptly to fireplace, replaces poker, picks up bell, walks to table, places bell close to MARY’s hand.*
- MORTIMER** Should you need anything, Milady. [*bows and walks evenly from room, picking up salver and coffee cup on his way with maddening calmness.*]
- HARDING** [*Savagely.*] That fellow needs a thrashing.
- MARY** [*Flashes out.*] He will not receive it in this house, Milord.
- HARDING** [*Bows.*] I ask your pardon. I’m cursed with an evil temper, and this is no time for it.
- MARY** [*Her fears growing.*] Something has happened?
- HARDING** [*Speaks gently.*] Lady Mary, you have no liking for me but I want you to forget that tonight. In the face of some things, enmity dies.
- MARY** [*Desperately.*] Oh, my Lord, I have no enmity. What are you trying to tell me?
- HARDING** [*Pretends to great difficulty in speaking.*] There was high play at Grantley’s¹⁹ tonight. Brummel had ridden out there.
- MARY** [*Catches her breath.*] Yes?
- HARDING** [*Craftily breaking her nerve by delaying, speaks hesitantly.*] Some of them had been drinking heavily. A quarrel started . . . I don’t know quite the cause . . . I — I think
- MARY** [*Losing control. cries.*] But what happened?
- HARDING** [*After a long pause, very reluctantly.*] Swords were drawn
- MARY** [*As if unable to stand longer, sinks into chair. Her eyes, wide with fear, search his face. She almost whispers.*] And then?
- HARDING** [*Sadly.*] Poor Brummel was taken unawares.
- MARY** [*Cries.*] He wasn’t ? [*chokes, tries to speak calmly.*] You don’t mean ? [*is unable to finish.*]
- HARDING** [*Very gently.*] He wants to see you.

19 An inadvertent error here (though the audience need never know). Baron Grantley was a real person (unlike everyone else in *Beau Brummel* other than the man himself and The Regent) but his residence was in North Yorkshire. Not exactly accessible from Bath in the time available.

MARY [*Her face transfigured.*] Only wounded. I thought . . . [*she stops with a shudder.*]

HARDING [*Gravely.*] But seriously. [*then, as if unable to meet her questioning eyes, starts pacing the room.*]

MARY [*Fighting desperately against her fears.*] He is so strong — [*her eyes follow his with piteous appeal. She stammers on, trying to convince herself.*] Surgeons are so clever now . . . they . . . they're sure to be able

HARDING [*Turns abruptly, speaks very kindly.*] It's best to face the truth, Lady Mary.

MARY [*Falters.*] The truth?

HARDING [*With great gentleness.*] It's only a matter of hours.

MARY [*Cries out,*] No! NO! [*impulsively she flings her hands out as if to ward off some evil.*]

HARDING [*Shakes his head sadly.*] I fear

MARY [*Suddenly loses all attempt to repress her feelings and swings to a fever of energy. Springs to feet.*] Why do we wait? He asked for me. Your coach. Come.

HARDING You need a cloak.

MARY [*Turns on him passionately, laughs wildly in contempt of suggestion.*] A cloak! I would walk barefoot.

MORTIMER *enters with salver and bottle of wine. Obviously an excuse to enter room. MARY flies to him.*

MARY Mortimer! There's been a duel. Oh, Mortimer! He's dying

MORTIMER *drops the salver with a crash.*

. . . . He's asked for me. [*sways : her hand flies to her heart.*] If it should be too late! [*catches HARDING's arm.*] Tell them to drive fast . . . fast . . . Come! [*almost drags HARDING from room through window.*]

MORTIMER *stands frozen he puts out his hand unsteadily gropes in air until he clutches chair . . . crumples into it.*

MORTIMER [*Whispers.*] Dying!

He sits hunched in chair, staring sightlessly before him. A bell sounds faintly, he does not hear.

. . . . Dying!

His face quivers, he plucks nervelessly at his mouth. The bell sounds again, impatiently : he hears nothing. A cry breaks from him.

. Oh, my master [flings out arms, collapses over table, his body shaken with silent painful sobs.]

The door opens. BRUMMEL enters, cloaked and booted. Stops, looks at figure. Moves across, places hand on MORTIMER's shoulder.

BRUMMEL *[Very kindly.]* Mortimer?

MORTIMER *starts up into sitting position, stares at him, then gives a great cry.*

MORTIMER Oh, thank God — thank God. *[catches BRUMMEL's hand and lifts it to his lips.]*

BRUMMEL *[Pats his shoulder.]* Why, what's the matter, Mortimer?

MORTIMER *[Gazes at him, face working, then brushes away tears.]* They said you were dying.

BRUMMEL *[Smiles whimsically.]* Have you ever known me to do a thing like that? *[with humorous reproof.]* Why, it would be so commonplace, Mortimer. Oh, no.

MORTIMER *[Raises a watery smile, then suddenly remembers.]* But she went :

BRUMMEL *[In a flash changes to tensity — catches MORTIMER's arm. MORTIMER winces at the force of BRUMMEL's grip.]* Who? Who, man? WHO went?

MORTIMER Lady Mary. Lord Harding came with the tale

BRUMMEL *[Suddenly very quiet and dangerous.]* Harding! What tale?

MORTIMER *[Stammers.]* That you had gone to Lord Grantley's. There had been a duel. You were dying — and asked for her

BRUMMEL *[With a face of iron calmness.]* I see. At once. Saddle two horses.

MORTIMER Yes, Sir.

Exit MORTIMER as he is speaking, almost running from room. BRUMMEL, with dangerous calmness, walks to where a sword is resting in corner, comes down stage, draws sword, tests blade.

BRUMMEL *[Very softly.]* Once too often, Harding. *[gives his wrist a flick, the blade sings. A grim smile shows. He slips sword steadily back into sheath.]* God help you this time.

BRUMMEL *walks with unhurried step to door as CURTAIN falls.*

MORTIMER [Bows.] Yes, Sir.
BRUMMEL And when you clap your pistol to Milord's head, don't bow.
MORTIMER [Gravely.] Very good, Sir. I think I hear the coach, Sir.

They listen. Very faintly the coach sounds.

BRUMMEL You're right. Now remember, when I hold them up, tie up the Postboy while I deal with His Lordship.
MORTIMER Yes, Sir.
BRUMMEL And Mortimer, it has struck me that you are incurring some risk.
MORTIMER [Gravely, bowing.] Thank you, Sir, for thinking of it.
BRUMMEL But there is no reason why you should, Mortimer.
MORTIMER [Impassively.] You may require me, Sir.
BRUMMEL [Laughs vexedly.] Heavens! Highway robbery is not included in 'service' — [adds meditatively.] Though some servants I have known . . .
MORTIMER [Very deferentially.] I should be very distressed, Sir, not to be in attendance I think the coach is approaching If you will permit me to put on my mask? I had better get to my station.
BRUMMEL Very well. [as **MORTIMER** moves off.] Mortimer . . . speaks very kindly.] . . . sometimes I think you are the truest gentleman of us all. [**MORTIMER**, covered with confusion, makes little deprecating gestures. **BRUMMEL** smiles.] Run along, my bold footpad.

*Exit **MORTIMER** down path.*

BRUMMEL Now to become a highwayman. [puts on mask, tests pistol and exits down path, humming.]

*Louder and louder sounds the approaching coach. A soft warning whistle sounds from the unseen road, evidently the coach has entered the cutting. The racket of hoofs and wheels intensifies. A harsh voice calls "Walk up the hill, Boy." A luminous spot shows in the foliage R., travels very slowly across to L., growing steadily brighter. As it reaches C., **BRUMMEL**'s voice rings out.*

BRUMMEL [(Off) : Voice disguised with a French accent.] Halt!

There is a splutter of hoofs, a grinding of wheels and the glow stops, and streaming upwards from the coach lamps makes a soft halo of light on the trees. At the same time a cloud comes over the moon.

. Put up your hands.

POST BOY [(Off) : *in a frightened squeal.*] I am, Sir, I am. Don't shoot.
HARDING [(Off) : *savagely.*] What the Devil . . . ? [*gives a roar.*] Damn you, you scoundrel, take your pistol from my back.
BRUMMEL [*Very suavely.*] M'sieur vill kindly descend.
HARDING [*Savagely.*] If it wasn't for the lady, I'd see you in Hell.
BRUMMEL T'anks, M'sieur, but today ve go upwards . . . later, who knows?

The moon comes out. HARDING appears at head of path. Behind him walks MORTIMER, pressing a pistol firmly into his back. BRUMMEL, escorting MARY, follows.

HARDING I know you, you rascal, you're French Jacques. You shall hang for this.
BRUMMEL [*Shrugs.*] Oh, M'sieur, if ve all got vat ve deserve, so many would do zat — but of course — vat is et you say? Ha! "Present company included."

MORTIMER keeps behind HARDING with pistol pressed well into his back. Through the scene comes comedy of HARDING giving an uncomfortable wiggle and MORTIMER promptly pressing harder.

HARDING [*Growls.*] What do you want?
BRUMMEL M'sieur vill lend 'is coat. [**HARDING**, *about to bluster, gets poke in the ribs from BRUMMEL's pistol.*] For a lady . . . for a lady, M'sieur.
HARDING Take it, damn you. [*starts to strip it off, hands it over.*]
BRUMMEL [*Blandly.*] Bless you. [*spreads coat on fallen tree trunk, leads MARY to it.*] Madame will honour ze . . . ze . . . oh, yes, gentleman by sitting on 'im.
MARY Sir, I would appeal to you . . .
BRUMMEL Eef eet is for ze gentleman eet ees unnecessaire. Ee ees already a big chatterboxer.
HARDING It's money you want : here's my purse. A hundred guineas. [*hands purse to MORTIMER. BRUMMEL shakes his head.*] This ring's worth another hundred. [*hands it also to MORTIMER, who takes both very reluctantly.*] Now let us go.
BRUMMEL Vat a generous fellow. 'E give vot ve 'ave got already.
HARDING What more do you want?
BRUMMEL [*Bows.*] M'sieur's company ees so . . . so [*has inspiration.*] so gay.
HARDING Bah.
BRUMMEL Oh, 'ow clevaire. 'E ees a sheep. Perhaps soon 'e vill be a little lamb.

- MARY** [*Anxiously.*] If you would only allow us to continue our journey, my purse . . . this ring
- BRUMMEL** [*Bows.*] Are still Madame's.
- MARY** I beg you to be more generous still. Someone [*throws up head proudly.*] very dear to me is dying.
- BRUMMEL** [*Stops her with gesture.*] Madame, I cannot believe zat.
- MARY** [*Desperately.*] How can I make you understand?
- HARDING** [*Breaks in.*] Listen to me. My name is Harding, Lord Harding. Don't stop us now and I'll send five hundred . . . a thousand guineas to any place you name. I swear it.
- BRUMMEL** [*Throws up shocked hands.*] 'E swears.
- HARDING** On my honour I'll send the guineas and make no attempt to trap the man who receives them.
- MARY** And I will add anything you like to name. Oh, please! If Mr. Brummel should die
- BRUMMEL** [*Begins to laugh.*] Meester Brummel die! Oh, no!
- MARY** [*Catches his arm.*] He's wounded
- BRUMMEL** [*Shakes head.*] 'E ver' near wound me ten minutes ago.
- MARY** [*Cries.*] It couldn't have been . . .
- BRUMMEL** Madame, I know Mistaire Brummel as vell as I know myself. 'E vos riding to Bath and ve did 'old 'im up and 'e did knock me down.
- MARY** You say [*with piteous eagerness.*] Oh! Are you sure?
- BRUMMEL** [*Taps side of his head.*] Vould Madame like to feel ze bump 'e left behind 'im?
- MARY** [*Puts hand to her heart, speaks with difficulty.*] I I ask you to be very certain.
- BRUMMEL** Eef Madame doubts, zis will convince. [*holds out riding glove, points to gauntlet.*]
- MARY** [*Reads.*] Bryan Brummel.
- BRUMMEL** 'E drop eet as 'e rode away.
- MARY** [*Whirls round with blazing eyes to HARDING, who meets her gaze hardily. With deadly quietness.*] What have you to say?
- HARDING** [*Throws back head and laughs.*] That I nearly succeeded.
- MARY** You've sunk to crime, it seems.
- HARDING** To take the woman he wants is a man's way.
- MARY** [*Steps up to HARDING, looks him full in the face, speaks with biting scorn.*] And to lie — to make her suffer. . . . the gentleman's way in your creed, I suppose? [*turns to BRUMMEL.*] This this gentleman of title came to me with the tale that Mr. Brummel was dying and had asked for me.
- BRUMMEL** Madame did not refuse?
- MARY** [*With intense passion.*] I would not have failed him if it had meant

my eternal punishment. [*swings round, looks at HARDING with curling lip.*] You knew that your evil soul did not scruple to torture a woman to gain your end. [*turns to BRUMMEL.*] Have you a whip? [**HARDING starts.**]

BRUMMEL

At Madame's service.

MARY

[*Icily.*] Flog him. [*her passion blazes out.*] I do not care if you flog him to death.

HARDING

By God, no! [*tries to snatch out his sword.*]

BRUMMEL

[*Like a flash has HARDING's wrist and wrenches it from handle, shakes head smilingly.*] Oh, no. [*To MORTIMER.*] Put ze peestol in 'ees back again an' ze next time pull ze triggaire.

HARDING

Fire and be damned. I'll not be thrashed.

BRUMMEL

No? Vell perhaps you sall learn to behave yourself anuzzer vay. Vill Madame trust ze lesson to me?

MARY

I have no choice. [*her fury masters her.*] But if you are a man, you make him suffer.

BRUMMEL

'E sall nevaire trouble Madame again. And she must return home. [*to MORTIMER.*] Fetch ze Post Boy [*as MORTIMER hesitates.*] Oh! Zis iss vere 'e becomes ze lamb . . . [*pulls pistol from pocket : to HARDING genially.*] Ees eet not?

Exit MORTIMER. BRUMMEL walks to log, picks up HARDING's cloak, walks to MARY.

BRUMMEL

Madame vill need zis. [*waves hand at HARDING.*] 'E vill not need et. [*MORTIMER returns with POST BOY who is trembling visibly.*] Ah, my friend, you know me?

POST BOY

[*Quavers.*] Yes, Mister Highwayman Jacks.

BRUMMEL

Vell, you vill drive zis lady back to Bath — viz great care. [*Shakes finger at POST BOY.*] Remember zat : VIZ GREAT CARE. And eef anything should happen not so-so . . . you and I vill meet again.

POST BOY

[*Shivers.*] No, Sir. I won't, Sir. I promise.

BRUMMEL

[*Goes to MARY.*] Madame, because of tonight, I vill honaire all women. [*lifts MARY's hand to his lips. To MORTIMER.*] Allons, camarade, and give ze boy five guineas — from the gentleman's purse. [*smiles wickedly.*]

MARY

I shall think with gratitude of you, Sir, when people speak of 'gentlemen of the road'. [*makes BRUMMEL a deep curtsy and then, escorted by MORTIMER and POST BOY, moves to path.*]

Exeunt MARY, MORTIMER, and POST BOY.

HARDING [*Sneers.*] Very pretty. In the best style of Claude Duval.²⁰ And now, what's the price of my freedom?

BRUMMEL [*Waves hand to path,*] M'sieur is free to go [**HARDING wavers suspiciously, then makes a tentative step. Instantly BRUMMEL's sword is out, barring HARDING's way.**] . . . if he can. [**BRUMMEL flings his pistol aside.**]

HARDING [*His face lights up with joy.*] You'll fight me for it.

BRUMMEL [*Shrugs.*] I can clean my sword afterwards. [*lowers his blade.*]

HARDING *suddenly whips out his sword and attacks without warning foully, only to find his blade met and whirled from his hand.*

BRUMMEL [*Laughs lightly.*] Always ze dirty gentleman. [*stands negligently on guard. HARDING picks up blade and engages more cautiously.*]

Re-enter MORTIMER. He stands calmly watching with folded hands, conveying a humorous suggestion that he is waiting on the fighters. BRUMMEL presses HARDING back : then HARDING attacks — and is baffled with perfect ease — wavers— hesitates : then suddenly attacks furiously — his thrusts are turned aside : there is a swift parry and his sword drops from his hand. He springs back.

BRUMMEL [*Impassively.*] Continue.

MORTIMER *picks up sword, offers it with bow. HARDING takes it slowly — resumes reluctantly — is driven round and round — his play grows wilder and wilder — at last he drops his point.*

HARDING [*Panting.*] You're master. I admit it.

BRUMMEL [*Impassively.*] Continue.

HARDING Curse it — do you want to kill me? [**BRUMMEL laughs softly.**] God's death. [*he realises.*]

BRUMMEL [*Deadly quiet.*] Allons. [*puts point at HARDING's heart. HARDING desperately parries and fights.*]

HARDING [*On the retreat : pants.*] I've never injured you, man.

BRUMMEL [*Driving him back, speaks calmly through his swordplay.*] After tonight, M'sieur vill injure no-one.

HARDING [*Gasps.*] Five thousand guineas.

BRUMMEL [*With a strong sweep sends HARDING's sword from his hand. To MORTIMER.*] Give 'im 'is sword.

²⁰ A French highwayman who operated in England during the seventeenth century. He was reputedly averse to violence and treated his victims with politeness. He was executed in 1670.

A cloud covers the moon.

HARDING We can't fight in the dark.
BRUMMEL Ze lantern. [**MORTIMER** *silently takes a dark lantern from its hiding place and exposes the beam.*]²¹ On the blades. [*to* **HARDING.**] Milord vould 'ave hurt a woman, ve must be verry sure that 'e nevaire hurt anozzer.
HARDING I'll not continue.
BRUMMEL Give me ze whip.
HARDING Damn you. [*attacks savagely.*]

A grim scene follows. The shadowy figures : the blades gleaming as they twist and turn in the ray of light. Suddenly BRUMMEL makes a sweep, HARDING cries out involuntarily as the blade comes up for the fatal thrust. At the very moment of striking a loud shout of "Hold!" from offstage distracts him and his blade passes through HARDING's shoulder instead of his heart.²² Shadowy figures rush on — some make for BRUMMEL, some for MORTIMER.

BRUMMEL [*His voice rings out.*] Keep back.

The moon comes out showing the following picture: BANNISTER and another holding MORTIMER, pistols at his head. THE REGENT, GROOMBRIDGE and three other men, swords in hand, face BRUMMEL, who, with mask replaced, holds them in check with levelled weapon.

REGENT Drop your weapon, fellow, or we'll shoot your comrade.
MORTIMER Let them shoot, Sir — run.
REGENT I know that voice : pull off his mask. [**MORTIMER's** *captors remove his mask forcibly.*]
BANNISTER [*In amazement.*] Brummel's man.
REGENT Mortimer! [*swings round.*] By, Heaven, Brummel himself. I know you.

Tableau. All mutter in various tones of amazement, "Brummel . . ."

BRUMMEL [*Sweeping off mask and hat, bows.*] Congratulations, Sir. You've recovered your memory.
GROOMB'GE Brummel turned highwayman.
BAGWIG [*Who, cautiously following behind, has arrived and sees HARDING : squeaks.*] Sir, Sir, 'tis poor Lord Harding. They've killed him.

²¹ No previous stage direction regarding Mortimer hiding the lantern.

²² Stage direction needed at this point : 'Harding falls to ground.'

REGENT [With genuine feeling.] Jack, my poor Jack. Thank God I decided suddenly to return to London. [**THE REGENT** drops on knee beside **HARDING**.]

BAGWIG [Squeaks.] Don't let the ruffians escape. They've killed him.

BRUMMEL As usual, Bagwig's wrong unfortunately.

REGENT You damned scoundrel.

BRUMMEL [Shrugs, looks round, company, drawls.] Strange how much I feel at home.

HARDING [To **THE REGENT**, who is supporting him — in whispers.] Sir . . . speak . . . to . . . you . . . alone.

*The others, in response to **THE REGENT**'s gesture, draw back, keeping an eye on **BRUMMEL**, who plays with his pistol quite at ease.*

HARDING [Faintly.] You . . . said . . . you . . . wanted . . . the . . . way . . . to . . . drive . . . him . . . out . . . of . . . England.

REGENT [Grimly.] This changes it.

HARDING No, Sir, listen.

***HARDING** props himself painfully on elbow and whispers. **THE REGENT**'s face gradually shows an evil satisfaction. He beckons **GROOMBRIDGE** who takes his place supporting **HARDING**.*

REGENT [Rises, walks, forward.] Gentlemen, I wish to speak to Mr. Brummel. But hold that fellow safely. [gestures to **MORTIMER**.]

***BRUMMEL** and **THE REGENT** face each other alone in centre.*

REGENT [Coldly.] I should be sorry to see the man I once called my friend charged with highway robbery.

BRUMMEL [Coolly.] I don't think you will, Sir.

REGENT [More coldly.] But I have no compunctions about that fellow : he shall hang.

BRUMMEL [Startled.] Mortimer! You must know, Sir . . .

REGENT I know he has Harding's purse and ring . . . and witnesses enough to hang a dozen.

BRUMMEL [Softly.] My God. [aloud.] You'll not do it, Sir.

REGENT It rests with you to save him.

BRUMMEL [Eagerly.] Name it.

REGENT [Slowly and meaningly.] I'll give you twenty-four hours to get the fellow safely to France and journey with him. [sneers.] Naturally you would not return, Mr. Brummel.

BRUMMEL [Softly.] "The First Gentleman In Europe."

REGENT [*Scowls savagely, then holds himself in.*] In that case, these gentlemen will keep silence. [*pulls out watch.*] You have five minutes. [*pause.* **BRUMMEL** *stands silent, his face showing the bitterness of his thoughts.*] Three minutes.

BRUMMEL [*Quietly.*] You win. Sir.

At sign from THE REGENT, MORTIMER is freed. He walks to HARDING, lays purse and ring by him and walks back again gravely. All stare.

BRUMMEL [*Laughs very softly.*] A treasure. [*throws up his head, cries, gaily.*] Come, Mortimer, we travel to France. You'll like it : a sunny land, ruled by brains [*his eye sweeps over THE REGENT.*] not brawn.

CURTAIN

END OF ACT 3.

Editorial Note to Act 3

As explained in the Foreword, Act 3 Scene 1 Episode 1 appears to be the only part of the play to have been created by Matthews himself, without assistance. It is highly likely that Lawrence played some part in drafting the rest of the drama including Episode 2 and Scene 2. This 'division of responsibilities' has the consequence that Act 3 has some loose ends :

— The Regent's arrival shortly after the beginning of Act 3 is accompanied by two 'dandified bucks'. This is a generic term not found elsewhere in the play and either indicates that Matthews' concept of the play differed somewhat from Lawrence's, or confirms the suspicion that this section of the play was written first, before the general scenario was finalised (see Foreword). Possibly the two 'bucks' could be Groombridge and Bannister, both of whom feature in the script for Scene 2.

— At one point the Butler hands Harry a Bible, apparently taken by Brummel from Harry's library. On the verso of the relevant page of playscript is a note from Lawrence querying how this has been done in the short time available. Matthews' handwriting is so poor that his reply is illegible : but in any case there seems to be just about enough time onstage for Brummel to have removed the book, written his short note to Mayne, and given them to the Butler, between Brummel's exit and the Butler's return. One has to assume that Brummel knew where the book was located on the shelves.

— During the 'Fade-out' between Episode 1 and Episode 2 a clock strikes

ACT 4

Twenty years later.

A garret in Paris. A winter evening.

The squalid room is almost bare of furniture. There is no fire in the grate. A little latticed window, set high, shows a tangle of roofs and chimneys covered with snow. The rays of the evening sun pour in and centre on a large worn armchair. MORTIMER, aged and bent, stands shivering in the cold bleakness and listening to the distant tolling of a funeral bell. He gives himself a shake and commences listlessly to arrange the armchair cushions. As bell tolls again he shudders.

MORTIMER [*Angrily.*] That bell! [*he stops dead to listen anxiously to distant calls in the street. Goes to window, looks out.*] He's coming. The children are mocking him — and once he was the finest gentleman in England.

MORTIMER *closes window, listens until he hears the slow leaden tread of his master, then throws open the door with a flourish and stands ready. Slowly, the pathetic figure of BRUMMEL — frail and shrunk and thin — dressed in worn thin attire still scrupulously clean — enters, There is Death in the shrunken white face. MORTIMER takes his hat and stick with all the old ceremony. Suddenly from the street come the voices of the children crying in shrill mockery, "Beau! Beau! Come out, old Beau!"*

BRUMMEL [*Listens, then vaguely.*] They call after me, Mortimer. [*shivers, draws cloak round him, sees mud splashes on it — touches them with wondering disgust.*] Mud, Mortimer. Mud. [*with pathetic air of puzzled wonder.*] The children throw mud at me, Mortimer.

MORTIMER Your coat, Sir. [*helps BRUMMEL out of coat, into a faded once glorious dressing gown, assists him to chair.*]

BRUMMEL [*Sinks into chair.*] A little tired today, Mortimer : a little tired. [*his head sinks forward, his eyes close.*] I think I'm not quite well Perhaps if I didn't accept so many invitations . . . for . . . a . . . little whi- . . . [*his head sinks forward and he sleeps gently.*]

MORTIMER *glances cautiously to see that BRUMMEL is really asleep, then very gently wraps an old shawl round him. Shivers . . . hesitates, then wraps himself in a very tattered bedspread. A loud tap sounds, MORTIMER walks to door.*

MORTIMER [*Holding door half open, speaks through it.*] Ah. Good evening, Monsieur Chauvin.

LANDLORD [*Enters, pushing in roughly.*] It is not good,. What of my rent?

MORTIMER Hush, please. My master sleeps.

LANDLORD Then wake him up. I want my money.

MORTIMER [*Nervously.*] In a day or so, remittances

LANDLORD Bah! So often that tale is told . . .

MORTIMER Lower, Monsieur, lower I beg. He is ill, so frail.

LANDLORD [*Roughly.*] Let the fine gentleman pay honest people, then. If I do not have some money soon, out you go. What is it to be, eh?

MORTIMER A moment, a moment. [*slips behind screen that partly hides bed : slips off coat and vest, replaces coat — buttons it, shivers, comes back into room.*] This vest, see — it is very good, the cloth is fine, and little . . . not much worn. It is worth forty francs.

LANDLORD Twenty-five. Not a sou more.

MORTIMER [*Eagerly.*] Take it. Take it : in a few days no doubt our letters

LANDLORD [*Laughs coarsely.*] No doubt . . . with millions. Well! It will do for the present.

Exit LANDLORD, tramping heavily. MORTIMER again wraps himself, shivering, in the bedspread : from pocket extracts some letters yellow with age — lays them on salver — stands looking at BRUMMEL.]

MORTIMER A few guineas less than he gave to a beggar . . . would buy him comfort now. [*sighs.*]

BRUMMEL stirs in his sleep. MORTIMER throws off the bedspread, smooths his coat and stands before BRUMMEL with folded hands : the well-trained servant.

BRUMMEL [*Stirs, opens his eyes.*] Ah, Mortimer, have I slept?

MORTIMER Yes, Sir.

BRUMMEL What is the hour?

MORTIMER Nine, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Sits up straight.*] Nine! They'll be waiting for me to open the dancing. I must go at once to the Assembly Rooms. Why did you let me rest so long?

MORTIMER I'm sorry. Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Shivers.*] Heavens, Mortimer. What's coming to you? You've let the fire out. Light it at once.

MORTIMER The doctor, Sir . . .

BRUMMEL [*Testily.*] What, has the doctor been again? Why does he never

come when I'm awake?

MORTIMER He said, Sir, on no account was there to be a fire in your room . . . fires were so apt to dry the oil in the muscles and spoil a gentleman's carriage.

BRUMMEL Well. Well — then by no means light it. [*dreamily.*] Sometimes, Mortimer, I think I'm not quite so well in health.

MORTIMER It will pass, Sir.

BRUMMEL Yes, Yes. It's nothing. Give me my supper.

MORTIMER *goes aside, returns with a small tray covered with a scrupulously clean napkin. With a great air of ceremony he places it on table and sweeps off the napkin. A very small roll and a small glass of milk are revealed.*

MORTIMER Your supper is served, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Looks at it with distaste, snaps fingers.*] The wine.

MORTIMER The doctor said, no more on any account, Sir.

BRUMMEL Tut, tut. He always seems to be restricting me, that doctor. [*breaks off corner of roll, then kindly.*] You may go to your own supper, Mortimer.

MORTIMER [*With famished glance at tray.*] Thank you, Sir, I have had my supper already.

BRUMMEL [*Pleasantly.*] A good one, I hope, Mortimer. [*smiles.*] The physician does not restrict you too, eh?

MORTIMER No, Sir. I have made an excellent supper.

BRUMMEL [*Pushes tray away.*] Take this. I cannot eat. [*head droops : he seems to doze.*]

MORTIMER *carries away tray, seizes the roll wolfishly. Then glances at the frail figure and puts the roll down, turning away before his resolution fails — his eyes keep seeking tray.*

BRUMMEL [*Suddenly raises head, breaks into a musical laugh.*] Excellent, Devonshire, excellent. Ah! Here comes Donaghue — now we can take our places. [*rises, shakes MORTIMER's hand.*] My dear Donaghue, not a word, I beg : 'tis we who are early — my fellow always has his clocks wrong. [*looks round.*] We may be seated . . . Devonshire here : you, Sir Charles, on the left [*claps MORTIMER on shoulder.*] You, my dear Woodland, will sit on my right : 'tis in your honour, this supper. [*seats himself.*] My dear Rutland, your glass is empty. Mortimer, fill His Grace's glass. [*business of MORTIMER gravely pretending to do so.*] How do you find the wine, Sir Charles? The colour is very fine, I think . . . Ah! you cannot see it truly — Mortimer, another candelabra.

[**MORTIMER** *gravely puts down a wretched candlestick and lights it.*] Pass the peaches to Sir Christopher, Mortimer — peaches are like a woman's reputation : the bloom is so easily destroyed. [*turns with laugh to his right.*] But I mustn't talk so with you to be married tomorrow, Woodland — try these grapes, Rutland. [*gesture of command.*] Mortimer . . . [*laughs.*] Our good friend The Regent knows my fondness for them and always sends them from Hampton Court. Fill the glasses, Mortimer. [*rises, looks round table to prepare them for speech.*] Gentlemen. Ah! What a wonderful word that is : what a symbol of all the finest truest things in life. The world is full of men of breeding : and if the breeding does not go deeper than the skin, the world seldom looks beneath the surface. But here and there . . . once perhaps in life's journey . . . we find a truer breeding : a breeding that is not of the surface only, but comes from the heart. Gentlemen, it is our good fortune that we know such a man — [*turns, bows to an imaginary Woodland.*] — our guest of honour this evening. [*waits for applause.* **MORTIMER** *gives it.* **BRUMMEL** *silences it with uplifted hand.*] But it is our deep ill-fortune that tonight, for the last time, Sir Christopher Woodland sits with us on these occasions. Our misfortune but his great happiness; for tomorrow he weds the most beautiful lady in Kent. It is that thought alone that consoles us for his loss — that in the company of Lady Mary Mayne he will find a far greater content than any our poor company could give . . . [*raises glass.*] Gentlemen, I ask you to drain your glasses to the great happiness and future joy of Sir Christopher Woodland and his charming bride. [*drains glass, flings it crashing into grate, then suddenly collapses into chair. He seems only half conscious.* **MORTIMER** *eyes him anxiously. He rouses.*] What was I saying, Mortimer? Ah! Who have called today?

MORTIMER [*With air of reciting well-known lesson.*] Lady Desart, Lady Browning, the Duchess of Gordon, the Duke of . . .

BRUMMEL Yes, Yes. Has The Regent called?

MORTIMER Yesterday, Sir, while you were sleeping.

BRUMMEL [*Fretfully.*] Everything seems to happen nowadays while I'm asleep. Give me my letters.

MORTIMER [*Gravely brings forward tray.*] I've cut them for you, Sir.

BRUMMEL [*Takes one of the faded letters.*] Tut, tut! How can people of quality use such soiled paper? When first I came to Court, no gentleman would have permitted himself such carelessness. [*reads.*] "Lord Caley is sending his son to Court and begs Mr.

Brummel's good offices on his behalf." Well, well! Remind me to return a courteous answer, Mortimer. [*frowns thoughtfully.*] But surely Lord Caley has written to me on this subject before . . . I seem to recall . . . * * [*sits puzzling.* **MORTIMER** *hastily hands him another letter.*] "Lady Carstanley looks forward with the keenest interest to the Royal Cotillon this evening." * * ²⁴ [*with sudden briskness.*] Ah! What money have I, Mortimer?

MORTIMER
BRUMMEL

[*Carelessly.*] Some hundred guineas, Sir, at the moment. Give * * Lady Carstanley's * * Lord Caley's footman five guineas: the fellow was vastly civil in finding my cane last night.

MORTIMER
BRUMMEL

Very well, Sir.

[*Puzzling.*] How is it I never see Sir Charles Wood- . . . [*stops dead. Life and memory flash into his face. With extraordinary energy he starts to his feet, gazes round the room taking in the sordid details. He gives a cry.*] I remember. I remember. [*his hand flies to his heart, he staggers.* **MORTIMER** *is just in time to catch him and lower him gently into chair.*] Yes. I did it for them both . . . and all the time she wasn't there . . . a useless act . . . all thrown away . . .

MORTIMER
BRUMMEL

[*Passionately.*] She wasn't worth . . .

Mortimer! [*then gently.*] They're both dead now, but they had ten years of happiness, Mortimer. Never speak like that again. Never.

* * [*his head falls forward. There is a silence, then he lifts it, speaks feebly.*] What was I saying, Mortimer? Ah! [*leans forward, peers at MORTIMER.*] Surely it is Buccleugh? [*rises feebly.*] A chair, Mortimer, for His Grace. [*holds out hand which*

MORTIMER *shakes gravely.*] This is kind of you, Buccleugh — Mortimer, a glass of wine. And how is the Court? Mortimer tells me my physician will not allow me to take part in any festivities for some days yet, so I must sit here. But I find it irksome, Buccleugh, very wearisome. What a life these poor devils must lead who've been broken : a living death. Oh, worse than any death, I think. I remember some lines I once read — I have kept them in my memory — they seemed so to fit a man I once heard of. What was his name? They called him Beau . . . Beau . . .

Well, well, it doesn't matter. * *

BRUMMEL's voice trails off into nothingness : his head sinks forward and he sleeps. With a stifled sob **MORTIMER** rises and places the old bedspread over **BRUMMEL's** knees, stands gazing at him, then turns away, dashing the tears aside.

There is a tap at the door. **MORTIMER** opens it and a young girl [**MARY**

24 See Editorial note regarding passages between asterisks.

WOODLAND] *enters. She is dressed in a fine travelling cloak, beneath which is glimpsed a rich and beautiful costume. The face is the face of Lady Mary, but almost childlike in its fairness and gentle youth. She stands a moment, hesitant — then,*

MARY W. [Her face grows pitiful at the shrunken starved figure. Very kindly.] You must be Mortimer.

MORTIMER [Dully.] Yes. [hesitates — decides.] Milady.

MARY W. [Smiles, shakes head.] Just Mary Woodland.

MORTIMER [Gives a great start.] Her daughter. [peers into her face, still not seeing the great likeness.] I'm sorry, Madam, I ought to have seen.

MARY W. They say I'm like my mother [sadly.] Both my parents died while I was a child, Mr. Mortimer.

MORTIMER So we heard, Madam. [looks sympathetic.]

MARY W. [Her eyes have travelled round the dingy room with distaste until they rest on the sleeping figure. She gives a cry of pity.] Oh! [moves to chair, gazes down at the thin white face — her lips quiver — she turns swiftly to **MORTIMER**.] Oh, why didn't you write to those who knew him?

MORTIMER He's very proud.

MARY W. [Nods her head in understanding : almost in tears.] And all those years I've never known. [very quietly.] It was only last week I found some old letters and a diary in my mother's desk. Oh, Mortimer, Mortimer, when I think of all he did for her . . . how fine he was . . . and it should be like this. [turns away to hide tears.]

MORTIMER [Quietly.] He never regretted it. [very simply.] He loved her.

MARY W. [Very softly.] They loved each other. [gazes at **BRUMMEL**.] How life can be so cruel. [gives a little sob.] And I can do nothing for him . . . [with a swift impulse stoops and gently kisses **BRUMMEL's** forehead.]

BRUMMEL [Opens his eyes quietly . . . over his face sweeps a great look of happiness.] Mary! [he gazes at her in rapt silence — then very tenderly.] Mary, you've come to me.

MARY W. *is about to speak and tell him the truth, when she sees*
MORTIMER, *his lips moving silently, put his finger on his lips.*

MARY W. Yes. [holds out her hands. **BRUMMEL** takes them and lifts them to his lips reverently.]

BRUMMEL How can I speak my thanks? [tries to rise.]

MARY W. [Quickly puts hand in his shoulder.] No, no. You must rest. You've been ill.

MORTIMER *has quietly placed a chair for* **MARY W.** *at the side of*

BRUMMEL's. *She sits.*

BRUMMEL [*Becomes again the Brummel of old days.*] How could I be ill, when you have come to cure me?

MARY W. [*Playing her part. Gaily.*] Then I command you to be very careful of yourself.

BRUMMEL [*Laughs his old musical laugh.*] A man should never be careful of himself — only of the lady [*lifts her hand to his lips.*] he loves. [*looks up at her face, smiles with whimsical tenderness.*] And there, Mary, very, very careful indeed.

MARY W. [*With deep feeling.*] A woman could be very sure of that with you.

BRUMMEL [*Gives a little sigh of happiness.*] Ah! How wonderfully life can change. A month ago, Mary, we had not met.

MARY W. It changed everything, I think, for both.

BRUMMEL [*His face is radiant.*] Ah, Mary! To hear you say that . . .

MARY W. [*Bends forward, looks into his face with shining eyes.*] You are the happier for it?

BRUMMEL “Happy.” How poor a word! I never dreamed [*breaks off, puts hand to forehead : dazedly.*] Dreamed!

MARY W. [*Trying to keep him in the past, puts hand on his and prompts gently.*] You dreamed?

BRUMMEL [*Coming back to present, starts, shudders — in his thin voice.*] Why did you let me sleep, Mortimer? I dream when I sleep, you know that. [*drops back — then, in command of himself, faintly.*] Only a dream, of course, Mortimer. [*shivers, and by an effort checks the shiver.*] But it was very real.

MARY W. [*Soothingly.*] Do not think of it.

BRUMMEL [*Turns to her, still struggling with the mists of his mind. Wonder shows, then slowly he leans forward, gives a happy laugh.*] Real! What is it they say at sea? “All’s well!” [*studies the loved face : very softly.*] All’s very well. You must forgive me, I’ve been . . . a little unwell . . . we get fancies at such times . . . I had a dream . . .

MARY W. [*Quickly.*] You must forget it.

BRUMMEL [*Smilingly shakes head.*] I must tell it to you. It makes the reality [*takes her hand.*] so much more beautiful. I was in a garden — all music and light. But the real music, Mary, was : you had told me you cared. Oh! I had dreams then — wonderful dreams. And they were all coming true. [*a little choked sob comes from the shadowy corner where MORTIMER has effaced himself through the scene.*] And then . . . [**BRUMMEL** *breaks off, struggling with the pain of a memory.*]

MARY W. [*In a whisper, pleadingly.*] Don’t.

BRUMMEL [*Very pathetically.*] They were all broken in a minute. There were

people all round me, smiling and raising their glasses to toast your betrothal, Mary to another man.

MARY W.
BRUMMEL

[*Gives a little cry.*] Oh! It was cruel.

[*Quietly.*] It made the world a very grey place for me. [*he is silent for a moment as if in memory.*] I seemed to live many years with the shadow always deepening. Just a little happiness, when I was able to guard yours, Mary. But one grew very tired and weary . . . [*sighs.*] . . . weary indeed [*there comes a sob from MARY W.*] Why, Mary, you mustn't cry. It was only a dream. I only told it to make our happiness greater at the wonder of our future, spent side . . . by . . . side. [*his voice grows faint, MORTIMER moves silently to BRUMMEL's side. MARY W. bends forward, watching BRUMMEL's face with anxious eyes.*] What . . . a wonderful . . . wonderful life.

BRUMMEL's head sinks forward. MORTIMER passes an arm round his shoulders and lets him sink back gently as the voice trails off. MARY W. raises frightened eyes to MORTIMER's, questioningly.

MORTIMER [*In low voice.*] It's like this now. He'll sleep for a little while.
[*very sadly.*] It's the kindest thing.

MARY W. rises.²⁵ *They stand looking down at the worn tired face.*

* * **MARY W.** [*Whispers.*] He needs a doctor. I will come back. [*from her bosom she takes a red rose, lays it on the table at BRUMMEL's side.*] In case he wakes. [*tries to smile, has to choke back tears instead.*] * *

MARY W. moves to door. MORTIMER, still the perfect servant, reaches it first and holds it open.

* * **MARY W.** [*With a quick impulse, catches both his hands.*] Oh, Mortimer, Mortimer, how much you've done for him.

MORTIMER [*Very simply.*] I love him too, Milady . . . Madam.

MARY W. [*Bends forward, kisses the old cheek.*] God bless you for it. * *

Suddenly BRUMMEL sits up, his eyes wild.

BRUMMEL The violins! They wait for me . . . they want me to lead the Minuet. [*stands erect. Strings in orchestra are softly played.*] Ah. Madam, I am your servant. [*bows deeply, then holding aloft the hand of an imaginary partner, he paces through the minuet, then*

²⁵ If the subsequent words are cut, then Mary should put the rose on the table now (as specified in the revised script).

