

ADD. MS. 52,959 I

Soho Theatre
2/5/56
Lc'd 3/5/56¹

Winning The Widow.

Interlude

In 1. act

¹ Handwritten marginal note on top right hand side of front matter identifying the place of intended performance, the date the Licensor received the m.s. and the date the Licence for performance was granted. See Introduction for more on date of first performance.

Being an alternative
of Mrs Charles Kemble's
Personation, with the two
additional characters of
Flora and Peter – by –
Lucy Newbery²

Winning The Widow
An interlude in one act

Characters
Captain Westall
Peter
Lady Emily Wilmot
Flora

Dresses

Captain Westall First dress as a French valet
Second. Handsome Regimentals

Peter Modern gardeners dress

Lady Wilmot First morning robe. – then as French housekeeper.
3rd Ball Dress looped up with Roses
4th as the Honble Edward Percival
5th Ball Dress 6th Housekeeper again
7th Ball Dress again

Flora Spotted Muslin fashionable dress smart
Apron and cap with gay ribbons
2nd Large white veil from head to foot.

² Marginal note encircled in copyist's hand top right. See Introduction for commentary on the provenance of the play and playwright.

One set scene. A Drawing Room. Center. & R H Doors.
Practicable window. Carpet. Screen &c.⁴

Peter looks cautiously in at center door and then comes down center & says
I don't like it! I don't like it at all!⁵ It looks very suspicious, Flora says its my lady's order, that all her servants, /and even the gardeners, are to assist at Lady Beaufort's fete, which she gives to all the county round, because her son comes of age today. I don't believe my Lady meant me to go; I can't help fearing that Flora has some reason of her own to wish me out of the House; perhaps another sweetheart, Flora says I - "I don't like it" - "Peter" says she "you are so suspicious" "Flora" says I "why, oh why, won't you have me; now my Lady has given her consent?" "No no Peter", says she "I'll never be your wife, till you've confidence in me, but now if a gentleman only speaks to me you're jealous in a moment. If I'm only taking a message or a note to my Lady!" Well how can I help being jealous, Flora's so pretty and so cheerful and sings like a nightingale I always feel as if the Sun was shining when I see her pleasant face, so I pretended to go to Lady Beauforts, and ran back across the fields to watch her, [f3r] Oh if she did but love me, - but where shall I hide, - that window - yes - amongst the Shrubs outside, no one can see me - and if they only leave the window open, I can hear and see everything *as he goes toward the window Lady Wilmot says within*

[Lady]⁶ So we are alone in the House Flora?

Flora Yes my Lady quite alone!

Peter don't make too sure of that! But now to my hiding place *Gets out of window then pops his head in and says* If they should find me out - O I don't like it!

*As Lady Wilmot enters Peter Goes from window
Enter Flora & Lady L.H.*

Lady my plot is laid my servants all out of the way, and I think I shall give my suspicious Cousin the reception he deserves.

³ Modern page numbers will appear at the bottom of each page. The original folio numbers will be retained and marked by square brackets indicating recto and verso as appropriate. I have retained the original spelling, punctuation and emphasis in underlined words as they appear in the m.s. To avoid confusion I have put all stage directions into italics as they are also underlined in the m.s. I have not retained line breaks unless they are crucial to the timing of dialogue and/or action of the play but have retained dashes as they indicate punctuation to the dialogue. Where lines have been struck through I have retained this.

⁴ This is a simple set which allows the action to take place without scene changes. The entrances and exits reflect the perspective of the actor on the stage and are clearly indicated in the m.s. - most probably by the playwright who demonstrates her experience of stage-craft by using these to maximum effect as the comic action unfolds. For a fuller description of stage directions, entrances and exits etc. see Michael Booth, Richard Southern et.al., *The Revels History of Drama in English, vol. VI, 1750-1880*, London, Methuen, 1975, 80.

⁵ Peter's character is introduced with this catch phrase and it becomes a running gag throughout the play.

⁶ There is no speech ascription here but it is evident that Lady Wilmot speaks from off stage.

Flora Oh Peter was so reluctant to go my Lady, he said he didn't like it at all!

Lady I must now inform you Flora that a stronger motive than permitting my servants to assist in waiting on her Ladyships company, has induced me to desire we should be alone! You are aware Flora that my Uncle General Westall⁷ has a son in the army in India who [f3v] has for some time been expected home.

Flora Oh, yes my Lady, I've often heard of your cousin Charles, your old nurse told me when we were staying at the General's_ that he loved the very ground you trod upon.

Lady Ah Flora, would that he had loved me but I should have been too happy! Well last night I received this letter from the General, to inform me that he has arrived and will be here today.

Flora to day my lady! How shall we receive him without a servant in the house

Lady I've arranged his reception but I want your assistance Flora – so you shall hear my uncles letter. – My dear niece. I hope soon to write – ~~beloved~~ Beloved daughter, my Charles arrived here yesterday and will be with you soon after this reaches you, but as he still thinks you are a coquette; and never had any affection for him; he has confided to me a project of his; before offering you his hand, he will arrive disguised as his own valet, he intends by mixing with your servants as one of themselves, to find out, he says, your real character. So I thought it a pity to let him take you by surprise, but I have kept your secret faithfully and left him to discover as he best may, your affection for him. So you see, I am to be taken by surprise, to be detected, - [f4r] found out, - he'll find out my real character will he, - but if I am not mistaken the Biter will be Bit.

As she walks up and down Peter looks continuously in at the window

Peter I can hardly hear a word out here – and if I look in, Flora's sure to spy me out; there's my Lady angry about a letter, - some love letter to Flora no doubt, I don't like it!

Flora I thought I heard someone – hark – *as she turns up to listen Peter says*

Peter Oh I don't like it *and pops down outside suddenly*

Flora *at C.D.*⁸ Some one is coming across the Park, - shall I leave you, my Lady ?

Lady no, Flora stay, and when I leave you with him, should he question you about me, - tell him, I'm vain, affected, and ill tempered, -

Flora Ill tempered, la, my lady would you have me tell him such a story?

⁷ General Westall is abbreviated to Gen^{al} throughout but for ease of reading I have used the full title.

⁸ Centre Door.

Lady and tell him I am going to a reading at Lady Beauforts, a scene, I once saw acted by Miss Kelly⁹ that he'll never forgive.

Flora why not, my Lady? I've heard you say it was your cousin Charles who took you to see Miss Kelly

Lady Yes Flora, when I was quite a girl, he took me to a delightful little Theatre which belonged to Miss Kelly and her admirable acting made such an impression on my mind that to this day I can recollect nearly every word she said, now Flora I want you [f4v] to place my cousin where he can overhear me going thro' that scene, because I think it will bring to his memory a time when he did love me a little!

Flora leave me alone to manage that my lady, and am I to tell him that tho' you have had so many offers, you have rejected all?

Lady No Flora, should he ask if I've lovers tell him dozens, but that I seem to prefer the Honourable Edward Percival, he used to call that contemptible fop, my favourite before I was married to Sir John, but I think I hear footsteps – hush – here he comes –

*Captain Westall enters running disguised as French Valet C.L.
Lady R. Captain C. Flora L.¹⁰*

Captn O ma foi! Mille pardons milade, pardonez moi¹¹

Lady Who are you? Whom do you seek?

Captn I seek Von Lady de Villemotte! excusez moi miladi, I am domestique de Monsieur le Capitain; je suis arrivé dis moment

Lady Just arrived? With the Captain?

Captn *helas non miladi he vas fly on de ving of de Cupide to trow him at you feet, but diable de Chariot, him turns ovare*

Lady dear me! Overturned – did you say?

[f5r]

Captn *yees overturned, all broke to pieces and he vound dis arm touching his left arm all in leetle bits, so leetel, comme ca? shows tips of fingers*

⁹ See Introduction for more on Frances Maria Kelly and her relationship to the theatre in which this piece was first performed.

¹⁰ Captain runs in from Centre Left wing entrance and the three characters end up in the positions as indicated. By placing the Captain in the middle the possibility of comic exchanges between the two women and with their audience is set up.

¹¹ The comic foreigner with his mangled English is a stock ingredient of plays of the period. Newbery retains almost all of the lines for the 'french valet' (the leading man in disguise) as they first appeared in De Camp's *Personation* but cleverly alters the scene to include Flora, the lady's maid who brings additional comedy to the proceedings in her responses to 'Franglais'. Newbery makes the most of each comic opportunity here suggesting that she knows exactly where she wants, or expects, the laughs to be.

Flora *nudging him whispers*
Mounseer you mus'nt say come sir to my lady

Lady All to pieces? Did you say?

Captn Yees, en thousand pieces; he urry to kiss de vite hand of miladi but he come no funder den de Village vare the accident vas, till de arm is bettare

Lady he must have received quite a shock!

Captn *aside*¹² how coolly she takes it! Vare bad shock Milady but he vil soon be cured of de vound

Lady Oh he is wounded is he? How very distressing, Oh! Flora what shall I do?

Flora What must my Lady do, Mounseer?

Captn You no derange yourself Miladi; ne vous derangez pas!

Lady I shall go deranged I'm sure to think of his being wounded oh Flora *weeps*

Captn *aside* well come she has some feeling

Lady at such a time as this just as I wished to give the whole of my time to practising the Spanish Waltz

Captn *aside* the spanish waltz – what the deuce

Lady the ball this evening is to be opened, with the Spanish Waltz, by Lord Beaufort, & lady Augusta Hope, the Honourable Edward Percival, and myself; but I have not danced it so long, I fear I shall [f5v] forget the figure and now I am so agitated; I shall not be able to practise. –

Flora to think my Lady the Captain should go and smash his arm to pieces, at such a time as this! The men are all alike!

Lady and no doubt he expects me to go to him, or send, or, - really I am so distressed – return to your master and tell him I'm really dreadfully grieved to hear of his – his – I mean his -

Flora I beg pardon my Lady, but you have not yet decided which dress you will go to Lady Beauforts in – Your Ladyship must dress soon.

Lady bless me, no, what is to be done, my poor cousins arriving at such a moment has put every thing out of my head; well as I was saying, return to your master and tell him, I know not how to express my anxiety about – the white silk with green tulle over, I think most becoming Flora - & say I am much shocked but I trust his wounded

¹² From this point in the m.s. the stage direction 'aside' is often placed at the end of the line. I have regularised all such directions by moving them to the beginning of the line, or part of line they apply to.

arm will soon be – looped up with Roses Flora – tell him I cannot describe my sorrow and distress on his account but I hope he will soon be able to – arrange a few Flowers for my Hair Flora !

Captn Je suis enchanté to obey miladi but Monsieur le Capitain ordere me to wait till he com, pardonnez moi miladi

Lady that's unfortunate for every room, and bed, in the house, is promised to friends who come to Lady Beauforts from a distance and all my servants are there, except the old French Housekeeper [f6r] perhaps she'll find some corner or other to poke you into

Flora or give him a bolster on the kitchen dresser my Lady *Flora turns upstage L*

Captn Vat, vat, you poke, me on von bolster! *aside* This is pleasant upon my soul

Lady I declare Flora I am so upset by this accident, that I shall have no spirits to go thro my scene, or to dance, or anything as for the waltz I shall never remember it, let me see, la la la! la la la! la la be sure you tell him how much grieved I am *exit L*

Captn well but for this disguise, I should have made a nice fool of myself and the General has set his heart upon my marrying this frivolous unfeeling woman, but I'll watch her – and when he hears – ah, there her little waiting maid, perhaps I can discover more Ah! How you do mam-sell Floor, venez ici come here *she approaches* - ah que vous êtes agréable

Flora what do you say mounseer? I'm disagreeable

Captn Ah! Non, non, vous êtes très charmante vous êtes très jolie

Flora *aside* I must be civil to him, for he'll soon be my master – jolly, what do you mean by jolly?

Captn non, non, not jolly, jolie, pretty, you are vare pretty – I love you, *as Captain puts his arms round Flora's waist, Peter looks in* - com you shall tel to me of you Lady –

Peter just as I suspected, theres a fellow making love to my Flora, I don't like it!

Captn Com mams-elle Floor vil you tel to me? [f6v]

Peter what does he mean by floor to my Flora I don't like it! – a Frenchman too, he's not a going to floor my Flora in that manner; I won't stand it.
Says recklessly, and pops down inside window instantly! I say you frog

Captn *looking all round* some one call! you know who say, “you frog”?

Flora *looking round* I don't see any one Sir; it was Peter's voice, Oh! Now I know he's watching, he shall suffer for it.

Captn is you lady take von grand Role dis night

Flora take a roll sir where? La no sir what do you mean by a roll?

Captn I mean act von role?

Flora my Lady is going to act a Scene which she once saw acted in London

Captn but she have learn in de Booke?

Flora no this piece of paper is all she had to tell her what she has to do

Captn reads paper call Miss Rattle outside then enter L and go to D

Flora no, no, enter L, means enter left and go to the D means Door, go to the Door,

Captn I cannot tel – you tel me, vat scene you Lady vil act?

Flora O it's a beautiful speech, so grand, all about a clock striking, and murdering somebody and hands that wont come clean, and singing and dancing, and putting on somebodys nightcap,¹³ but I must help my lady to dress, and here comes the Old French Housekeeper *Exit L*

[f7r]

Captn now, I'll question her and the French valet may discover what the Captain might learn too late.

*Enter Lady as Fr Housekeeper L*¹⁴

Lady ah, ure Miladi has given ordare, and direction, for you, and I com to execute you; - I com vid prepare degré of promptitude and alacrité to tell to you how sincerement I feel beaucoup de plésire, and satisfaction in de office, and functions of ma post, ma avocations –

Captn what a whirlwind - dis heart is full vid your goodness, Madame!

Lady ah sare, you bestowe on me, une appellation vich my pride, my modesty, -

Captn Oh Mademoiselle, pardonez moi; mess

Lady yeess sare I am mess, but it only depend on myself to be madame, but de modestie vich belong to min sex, to ma country particulare – ha ha ha – he he M.¹⁵ le

¹³ While this has clear references to dramatic action we recognise in Shakespeare's 'Lady Macbeth', the comic ingredients suggest the possibility of a well-known burlesque. (see n17 below for more on this).

¹⁴ Again, the dialogue for this scene is essentially the same as in its progenitor but this is not to detract from Newbery's re-fashioning of the scene which is smart in its reconstruction of dialogue and cleverly retains the original comic action, building on it still further with Flora and Peter.

¹⁵ M or M^f is used throughout the French Housekeeper's speech, I have regularised to M.

Capitain I am single, and vare moch at your service, - but I chater, chater, chater and forget dat monsieur, hav no refreshment after des journey

Captn oh merci, mam-selle it is sufficient refraishment to see your beauté face

*Bows low
She Curtseys*

Lady I thank ou vare moch M. Assayez vous - vil you sit down – ah Monsiur do you sink between ourself dat dis marriage vid your master and mildai vil evare take place?

Captn Oui mam – selle certainment!

[f7v]

Lady I tink so once – ah! mais

Captn pourquoi why, for no?

Lady ah M. Domestique see so many tings dat one is sorry to see, Ah! dissimulation

Captn Ah en vérité?

Lady oui en vérité; ah M. I nevare trouble himself vid the business dat no concern myself? but you M. ah, you have inspire me vid a friendship

Captn ah mademoiselle you très bonne –

Lady vid a consideration –

Captn allez donc, depechez vous

Lady and I vil tel to you – miladi is sorry her cousin Charles arrivé dis day for she expects dis vare night –

Captn *hastily* a lovare?

Lady ah Monsieur, you know vare vel vat a gay young widow expect.

Captn *aside* the Devil ! *He rises and walks up and down*

Lady he is to com in disguise! *She hobbles after him*

Captn In disguise!

Lady when it is dark!

Captn perfidious woman – Oh I must arrive as the Captn immediately *goes toward C.D.*

Lady but vat is the matter my dear, vare you go?

Captn I must see if Monsieur le Capitain is bettare

Lady You not go, I have not tel you -

[f8r]

Captn *pushes her away saying* go to the Devil

Lady *Certainment as Lady returns to front of Stage Peter looks in*

Peter oh good gracious! That French man that was making love to my Flora, has turned himself into an old woman, but he shant escape my vengeance *gets in at window and comes down L takes hold of Lady* I wont stand this, I wont, now then old fellow, you think to escape by dressing up in petticoats do you, but you've been watched, watched I tell you, so come on I say.

Lady *aside* why its Peter! If I trust him he'll spoil all. me not know vat you say je suis Française!

Peter don't think to bamboozle me, did'nt I see you kissing Flora, my Flora I tell you come on, lets fight it out, come on, I say.

Flora *runs in L* Oh Peter Peter what are you doing Peter? What are you doing

Peter oh you're come miss Boldface, are you just in time to see me pay off this French jackanapes of yours – stand out of the way *as often as Lady trys to run out, Peter holds her by the dress, Flora trys to pull him away by the tails of his coat. Saying*

Flora Peter, Peter, for goodness sake listen to me, - Peter, I say! See theres my Lady, - *points to C.D. while Peter looks Lady runs out L Peter trys to follow Flora prevents him.*

Flora oh Peter, Peter, you'll be sorry for this soon

[f8v]

Peter don't speak to me, I don't like it O you snake, you deadly nightshade, you, you, O you atrocious little woman

Flora you're deceived Peter, and you'll be ready to knock that stupid little head off, when you know the truth.

Peter Shall I mandrake, I know too much, and I don't like it at all! Do you think I did'nt see that french fribble with his arm round your waist?

Flora la, Peter, did you see him now! and I thought you went to Lady Beauforts the first thing this morning, but what do you think my lady will say, when she hears of your disobeying her orders

Peter I don't care what she says, I know shes in the plot, and only sent me out of the way, to give that french fellow an opportunity of making love to you, but I'll tell her a piece of my mind! I tell her that – that I – I don't like it!

Flora you'd better not Peter! You had better be careful, you know you always make a noodle of yourself

Peter a noodle! Very well madam I'm a noodle am I, now I've found you out, she calls me a noodle, I don't like it!

Flora well sir didn't you make a nice Tom fool of yourself the last evening we spent at Lady Beauforts in the housekeepers Room, when they were talking polite you must join [f9r] in, tho' you understood no more what they were talking about than a pumpkin would;

Peter well my speech was as good as any ones, and caused as much amusement, I'm sure; did'nt they laugh

Flora yes they laughed; not at your speech but at your stupidity my Lord's valet was speaking of the election, "my friends" said you "I rise on my legs to address you" "well" whispered the Butler, "you would'nt rise on your head would you", every one laughed of course, "the gentleman who spoke last is in favour of universal suffering" said you "but my opinion is theres suffering enough already!" And then they laughed still more, he was speaking of universal suffrage stupid, not suffering.

Peter and pray what does universal suffrage mean? Since you're so clever?

Flora what don't you know you tommy noodle you, it means *aside* hang me if I know what it means, what shall I say –

Peter Well it means what?

Flora it means to suffer everyone to do as they like! Simpleton!

Peter then I must say that you support it, - that accounts for your suffering that French fellow's palavering and parla-woeing you flirting – false hearted –

Flora *looks out C.D._oh!* Peter, Peter! Run, run, heres such a handsome young officer crossing the [f9v] lawn! And my lady will see you if you don't make haste *exit Peter at window*

Flora well I've got rid of him at last; and if he continues watching me he shall not watch for nothing, I promise him! Ah theres my lady in the balcony *looks out L.U.E.*¹⁶ he's not far off. Here he comes!

Enter Captain C. his left arm in a sling

¹⁶ Left Upper Entrance

Captn Do you belong to the house pretty one

Flora I belong to Lady Willmot sir, I'm her maid sir, and a better mistress never –
aside bless me I forgot, I'm to find fault with her

Captn is her ladyship at home?

Flora yes, - that is no sir!

Captn yes, no, does that mean yes, or no,

Flora well she is dressing to go to a grand ball, and I don't think she can see any one!

Captn tell her Captain Westall her cousin has just arrived! But first – come here

Flora where sir!

Captn Here! And take her this kiss from me *as Captn draws Flora near to him. Peter looks in. when he hears the kiss he says*

Peter I don't like it! Why now theres that officer making love to Flora O I shall go mad! *Peter remains watching*

[f10r]

Lady without Miss Rattle where are you! Miss Betsy Rattle!

Flora my lady comes this way practising her scene I had better not interrupt her,
behind this screen you can hear all

Captn O with all my heart, if you come with me you little rogue

Goes behind with Flora Peter still watching

Peter I don't like it, I don't like it at all. She's gone behind the screen with him – shes
– oh – *Peter pops down again as soon as he hears Lady voice*

Lady who enters in ball dress “Miss Rattle I say” when scene is over¹⁷, Captn & Flora enter Captn R. Flora L

¹⁷ A vertical line here and the ‘when scene is over’ reinforces the notion that the scene is well known to the audience and that as it has already received a licence for performance, it does not need to be written out in full here. The earlier references to this being a scene that Miss (Fanny) Kelly performed and the opening lines given here identify it as being one of many ‘character sketches’ included in Kelly’s *Dramatic Recollections* (1832), a mono drama that she performed well into the 1840s. It is a short sketch, caricaturing a French Governess seeking her unruly young pupil, Miss Betsy Rattle (*Dramatic Recollections* includes a sketch in which this boisterous young woman appears at her grandmother’s house and causes chaos by breaking everything in sight). It is surprising to find that Newbery creates yet another opportunity to impersonate a French woman but here, the governess gives her opinion on Shakespeare and her intended alterations to his tragedy “Mad-Bess” (*Macbeth*). A full transcript of the scene is provided as an appendix and can be found below following the end of the play.

Flora my Lady your cousin the Captn has arrived exit L

Lady *very affectedly all this scene* my Cousin Charles, O where?

Captn my dear Emily

she pretends to faint on his wounded arm he forgets himself and supports her, the audience see she is laughing. he removes sling to right arm¹⁸

Lady *recovering* O Charles your poor wounded arm I am so grieved

Captn *confusedly* no it was not that it was a - a – not - exactly – a

Lady O Charles this shocking accident of yours, no doubt your valet informed you, how much I was affected?

Captn *pointedly* he told me all

Lady had he not prevented me I should have flown instantly to your assistance

Captn *aside* shameful dissimulation he did not tell me that! – *aside* I shall betray my indignation

[f10v]

Lady but you look thoughtful, Charles, your arrival should bring nothing but joy, ah how long I have watched for you a prey to solitude and melancholy! Hark! I hear the approach of a carriage! more company! Oh how delightful! How charming!

Captn you have company then?

Lady oh yes, a house full, not that I care for any of them, but I suspect half the world here, the delightful Lady Dashaway, Sir John Stylish, the Countess of Winnington and that charming fellow the Honourable Edward Percival

Captn *aside* That's the man! Charming why he's the greatest puppy in England – a contemptible – empty – headed – conceited –

Lady speak with more respect of a person I admire! But to prove to you I would owe my happiness to you alone Charles I will go and endeavour to get rid of these gay intruders, and in the meantime, dear Cousin do go and take a turn or two in the little wilderness! You remember Charles, how joyously we used to pick the Buttercups¹⁹ and daisies, the Violets and Blackberries when we were happy children and fancy ourselves the Babes in the Wood and try to lose ourselves! go, and its brambly walks, and sweet wild flowers! Will sooth your mind to pleasing thoughts [f11r] when it is

¹⁸ This stage direction is inserted in a box, right of the Captain's line above.

¹⁹ "The Buttercups" is overwritten in such a way to make the earlier word indecipherable

dark, I will come and fetch you; go to the little wilderness! Charles, to the little wilderness! *Exit L.H.*²⁰

Captn *mocking her* go to the little wilderness! go to the Devil! Stay amongst the thorns, and Brambles, till she fetches me, false heartless woman! go to the little wilderness! and yet there is something about her that! – but why should I put up with this; disappoint the General's wishes; and suffer that contemptible fop to rob me of my cousin! Evening is drawing on – I'll watch this cautious Rival and then, - *Enter Flora*
L *with candle* well what now? are you sent to watch me?

Flora to watch you, la sir! Watch you

Captn yes are you sent to see if I am wandering in that confounded little wilderness! I know Lady Wilmot's projects but come here, come here, I say, now you assist me, and I'll make it worth your while to tell me all you know

Flora Well sir you're so kind to me, that – but what do you wish to know?

Peter *peeps in and watches* they're at it again! I don't like it!

Captn who came in that carriage? tell me the truth -

Flora I will sir, only one single Gentleman has visited my lady this day

Captn and you think she loves him?

Flora I've heard her say, she has loved him ever since she was a child

Captn *aside* I allways [stet] said so! well but where is he now?

Flora he is to meet my lady here in this room as soon as it is dark!

Captn *gives her money* this will buy you a Ribbon

Peter why he's giving her money! Oh I don't like it! I won't [f1 l v] put up with it! I'll go in, and let him know I won't, stand it, it's shameful! – oh I – I don't like it, *goes away*

Captn to meet her in this room; did you say?

Flora if you doubt it sir, I'll soon convince you -

Captn I take you at your word – instantly – *in his eagerness he seizes her R Hand the candle is in her left and she sly'ly blows it out* Stage Dark²¹

²⁰ Left hand; indicating an exit via a wing entrance rather than a door. This has been indicated before in directions for entrance/exit L but this is the first time L.H. has been used.

²¹ The sexual inference here is reinforced by the emphatic double underlining of the direction to blackout but any further speculation is undercut by Flora's almost immediate exit. This is another stock piece of comic action and is also used in the earlier *Personation* but, once again, is exploited more fully by the farcical action arising from Peter's entrance.

Flora la sir, you're so hasty, you've put the light out; and now you are more in the dark than ever, hush they are to meet soon! Be still while I go for a light *exit Flora L*

Captn *feeling about* well may I be hasty in this house! Unlucky darkness I can see nothing, however it conceals me, ah here's a door; if I can't see, I can listen! Hush

Enter Peter C.D feeling his way. Captn R

Peter I can hardly hear anything outside, so I'll hide somewhere in her Room, ah behind this Screen I'll Screen myself, Ah, my Lady!

Enter Flora in large white veil L.H. She goes up to window and claps her hands three times – the claps are repeated outside, and Lady looks in at window as the Honourable Edward Percival

Lady Emily? Are you here? My dear creature

Flora Yes Edward here I am – but speak softly, you can come in soon

Lady the sooner the better, my dear creature I'm dev'lish glad of the opportunity, pon honor but where the Deuce is the Captn

Flora he's safe in the little wilderness – he's to stay there till I fetch him Edward! Ha, ha, ha

[f12r]

Lady you're a charming creature, pon honor, think of the poor Devil wandering about there, in the cold, its devilish good pon honor capital! Ha, ha, ha, ha, capital!

Flora ha, ha, ha, you had better come in now, it is quite dark –

Lady one embrace you dear creature

Kisses Flora very loud Peter on hearing the kiss comes excitedly from behind the screen. Lady goes from window, flora runs out L. Captain feels way toward window, and runs into Peter's arms, Peter grasps him, he seizes Peter and they struggle together in front of stage both speaking at once

Captn Villain! Puppy! Coward! Percival

Peter no, no, not Percival, I'm Peter its only Peter

Captn that's not the voice, and who the deuce is Peter?

Peter Floras Peter, Lady Wilmots Peter! I mean her gardener I don't know who I am, don't talk to me – I shall go mad I don't like it! *Peter walks from R to L in a state of excitement and the Captn from L to R both talking to themselves*

Peter yes I say I shall go mad to think of his kissing her in that aggravating manner –

Captn the abandoned woman – to induce me to return to England – to sell out of the army –

Peter hasn't she told me over and over that she loved no one but me, and then after watching me out of the house –

Captn Pretending to be every thing amiable and gently; to my Father, making him believe she has allways had a regard for me, and when I arrive sending me into that infernal little wilderness! I'll burn the little wilderness!!

[f12v]

Peter when she thinks I'm safe at Lady Beauforts there she is in the morning, in the arms of a stranger Frenchman –

Captn after inducing me to believe I might win her if I came – to find her encouraging this contemptible puppy - -

Peter in the afternoon kissing an officer –

Captn Death and furies – if I could but find my way out of this confounded place Peter! – Peter!

Peter and as soon as it is dark, kissing another fellow out of the window –

Captn Peter I say!

Peter *nearly blubbing* I say I don't like it! Don't say anything to me Sir, I can't answer you, I can't indeed –

Captn what's the matter with you Peter?

Peter oh Sir didn't you hear hi, hi, kissing, just now, that abominable woman, that shameful, flirting, - bold –

Captn Speak more respectfully of your Lady, Peter!

Peter lord love you sir, that wasn't my lady it was – *footsteps again*, - oh I don't like it! *Runs behind screen again, hearing Lady Wilmots footsteps who enters very softly L*

Lady Edward! Dear Edward is it you?

Captn I'll take advantage of her mistake *aside softly* yes Emily it is I

Lady dear Edward you have merited my fullest confidence, and before I accept your hand I think it right to inform you I have from my [f13r] childhood loved my cousin Charles!

Captn indeed! Then why did you marry Sir John Wilmot

Lady I am about to tell you, my uncle was my guardian we were brought up together, when children, we loved each other tenderly, tho' I was several years older than Charles, - well when lovers came around[stet] me – his manners to me changed, - yet I thought he loved me, and hoped by appearing to accept Sir John to bring him to confess his love, but he only entered the army, and went to India and when my uncle arranged my marriage with Sir John I cared not what became of me!

Captn *aside* what a blockhead I have been. Go on dear Emily –

Lady well, from Charles remaining unmarried and some hints, from the General I still believed he had not forgotten me, and when I became a widow, I wrote entreating him to return to England –

Captn *aside* that letter induced me to sell out, but go on -

Lady Well Edward he came! but now as a spy upon my conduct, he came disguised as his own valet!!!

Captn *aside* how the deuce did she find it out well Emily go on –

Lady Tho' I can never love anyone as I have loved him, I will be your wife if you still desire it. The Marriage License is lying on the Library table, you will find lights there sign it and [f13v] bring it here to me, and when I fetch my cousin out of the wilderness I shall, I shall present my husband to him! *Exit L*

Captn So I've got into a pretty scrape, and nearly lost her, at last, thro this cursed project of mine, yet could she see my heart, if she knew my feelings for her at this moment – my contempt for my own stupidity – she might still perhaps, - well I'll sign the License as she desired and return instantly. *He goes out R*

*Enter Flora with Candle L
Stage Light*

Flora So he thought he could outplot my Lady, did he? Plot indeed! As if we women were but allways better at that sport! And my Lady always thought her Cousin Charles so wise and sensible, well if these are your sensible men, if these are your lords of the Creation! Heaven help us poor women!²²

Captn enters with License R

Captn Wheres Lady Wilmot she told me I should find her here²³

²² In *Personation* this speech is given by Lady Julia. Here, the comic observation on the dominant male is offered by Flora, the lady's maid.

²³ At this point in the m.s. this and the next line have been omitted, probably by the copyist, as the text continues with the Captain's speech: 'tell your lady I have signed this paper', followed by Lady Wilmot speaking as the old French housekeeper. Above the Captain's speech ascription is a mark and note reading 'see slip'. The slip in question has curiously been inserted on f15r and stuck over an unconnected piece of dialogue, probably an error created when the manuscripts were bound at the

Flora she talked about going to the little Wilderness!

Enter Lady as the Housekeeper L

Captn tell your lady I have signed this paper

Lady *takes paper* then ma felicite est complete *coughs* com to dese *coughs* loving arms

Captn why you infernal old hag, return that paper instantly –

Lady ah non, non, I am your wife *coughs* if you passion vil not let you see my beauties – *coughs* my values *coughs* dat is only von lettel *coughs* dat takes me in the vintare [winter] –

Captn I wish to the Deuce, it would take you off [f14r]

Lady ah my Lady Wilmotte so clevere, to get me, such good handsome husband, you sal have no odare wife, and you sal lov me vare much²⁴

Captn love you, you ugly old beldame I'll instantly leave the house

He goes toward C.D. they stop him

Lady no you must not leave, my lov I am lady, I have some gentile blood in my veins
~~I can sing de English song~~

Captn the devil take your gentility, let me go I say! –

Lady and when I take off these spectacles and dis cap and dese ruffles of my grandmosare –

Captn why the old hag is undressing herself

Lady when I remove this shawl which conceals a faithful heart, whose truth, my cousin never should have doubted, perhaps he will as willingly take for wife the old French housekeeper, - as Cousin Emily! ha! ha! ha!

Captn Emily! is it possible? Am I awake?

Lady you are indeed, and I hope you'll never dream of distrusting me again!

Captn but did I not hear Edward Percival at that window?

Lady it was myself I appeared as Edward Percival on a very short notice!

British Library. The slip is also marked with X 'see copy' and written in the same hand as the rest of the m.s. I have corrected the run of dialogue by incorporating the material as it was intended to be.

²⁴ There is a further addition to this speech inserted above the line but it is illegible.

Captn but I heard a womans voice

Flora by particular desire, I appeared as my Lady for this night only!

Captn but I heard a carriage surely?

Lady it is mine, and is now waiting to convey us to Lady Beauforts, where the General is anxiously awaiting us, and I am engaged to no one, unless [f14v] my Cousin Charles should ask my hand for the Spanish Waltz !

Captn the General here! Then I see the whole plot! – but there was a poor fellow here as miserable as myself – I should now like to make him as happy by telling him his Flora –

Flora hush, hush! *Flora points to screen* there! there!

Captn brings Peter down R he has put on the disguise which Lady Wilmot has thrown off

Peter Captn Lady Flora

Captn ha, ha, ha,

Lady ha, ha, ha,

Flora ha, ha, ha,

Peter *when the laughter is over* I don't like it!

Lady why Peter is that you?

Peter no, I'm not Peter I'm Lady Willmottes French housekeeper, but I don't like it!

Lady Well Peter as we have all, been masquerading, I forgive you and when I give my hand to my Cousin, you should be married to Flora

Flora thank you my Lady! Peter why don't you thank her ladyship

[f15r]

Peter thank you for nothing – Mrs Flirt

Flora la! Peter what have I done?

Peter do you think I didn't hear you kissing that fellow at the window!

Lady I was that fellow, Peter, Flora is not to blame I assure you!

Peter Your Ladyship that whisker'd puppy! But I saw that French fellow with his arms round your waist

Captn I was that fellow Peter, Flora is not to blame I assure you!

Flora tis quite true Peter, I only obeyed my ladys orders I am not to blame I assure you Peter

Peter did your lady order the Captain to kiss you mischief?

Lady did he kiss you Flora?

Flora *confused* no, that is yes, my lady, Peter was watching and so I, that is I, and –

Captn and the kiss was for you my dear

Peter *x in front to Flora* L well Flora – I – hang the petticoats! I don't like it! Let us forget and forgive!

[f15v]

Flora well since its my ladys orders, - but its more than you deserve, Peter!

Lady but Charles, no more kisses by proxy!

Captn Certainly not! How the General will laugh at my stupidity when he learns you would have been mine at first, yet he will rejoice to think, that if I lost the maiden, I have been more fortunate in winning the widow

Lady and you dear friends will make us happy too if this attempt should be approved by you if we but win your smiles in spite of flaws we hope to please and gain your kind applause

END

Captain

Lady

Peter

*Flora*²⁵

Gilli Bush-Bailey

RHUL Jan 08

²⁵ Final positions for the curtain call