

FOOTE SAMUEL

THE LAME
LOVER

Samuel Foote

The Lame Lover

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Содержание

PROLOGUE	5
Dramatis Personæ	7
ACT I	8
Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.	25

Samuel Foote

The Lame Lover / A Comedy in Three Acts

PROLOGUE

Written and Spoken by Mr. Gentleman

*Prologues, like cards of compliment, we find,
Most as unmeaning as politely kind;
To beg a favour, or to plead excuse,
Of both appears to be the gen'ral use.
Shall my words, tipt with flattery, prepare
A kind exertion of your tend'rest care?
Shall I present our Author to your sight,
All pale and trembling for his fate this night?
Shall I solicit the most pow'rful arms
To aid his cause – the force of beauty's charms?
Or tell each critic, his approving taste
Must give the sterling stamp, wherever plac'd?
This might be done – but so to seek applause
Argues a conscious weakness in the cause.
No – let the Muse in simple truth appear,
Reason and Nature are the judges here:
If by their strict and self-describing laws,
The sev'ral characters to-night she draws;
If from the whole a pleasing piece is made,
On the true principles of light and shade;
Struck with the harmony of just design,
Your eyes – your ears – your hearts, will all combine
To grant applause: – but if an erring hand
Gross disproportion marks in motley band,
If the group'd figures false connexions show,
And glaring colours without meaning glow,
Your wounded feelings, turn'd a diff'rent way,
Will justly damn – th' abortion of a play.
As Farquhar has observ'd, our English law,
Like a fair spreading oak, the Muse should draw,
By Providence design'd, and wisdom made
For honesty to thrive beneath its shade;
Yet from its boughs some insects shelter find,
Dead to each nobler feeling of the mind,
Who thrive, alas! too well, and never cease
To prey on justice, property, and peace.
At such to-night, with other legal game,
Our vent'rous author takes satiric aim;*

*And brings, he hopes, originals to view,
Nor pilfers from th' Old Magpie, nor the New ¹.
But will to Candour chearfully submit;
She reigns in boxes, galleries, and pit.*

¹ Alluding to Mr. Garrick's Prologue to the Jubilee.

Dramatis Personæ

MEN.	
Sir Luke Limp,	<i>Mr. Foote.</i>
Serjeant Circuit,	<i>Mr. Vandermere.</i>
Colonel Secret,	<i>Mr. Robson.</i>
Jack,	<i>Mr. Weston.</i>
Mr. Woodford,	<i>Mr. Knowles.</i>
Mr. Fairplay,	<i>Mr. Wheeler.</i>
First Servant,	<i>Mr. Dancer.</i>
Second Servant,	<i>Mr. Griffiths.</i>
WOMEN.	
Mrs. Circuit,	<i>Mrs. Gardner.</i>
Charlot,	<i>Mrs. Jewell.</i>
Mrs. Simper,	<i>Mrs. Saunders.</i>
Betty,	<i>Mrs. Read.</i>

ACT I

Enter Serjeant Circuit and Charlot

CHARLOT

I tell you, Sir, his love to me is all a pretence: it is amazing that you, who are so acute, so quick in discerning on other occasions, should be so blind upon this.

SERJEANT

But where are your proofs, Charlot? What signifies your opening matters which your evidence cannot support?

CHARLOT

Surely, Sir, strong circumstances in every court should have weight.

SERJEANT

So they have collaterally, child, that is by way as it were of corroboration, or where matters are doubtful; then indeed, as Plowden wisely observes "Les circonstances ajout beaucoup depoids aux faits." – You understand me?

CHARLOT

Not perfectly well.

SERJEANT

Then to explain by case in point; A, we will suppose, my dear, robs B of a watch upon Hounslow heath – dy'e mind, child?

CHARLOT

I do, Sir.

SERJEANT

A, is taken up and indicted; B swears positively to the identity of A. – Dy'e observe?

CHARLOT

Attentively.

SERJEANT

Then what does me A, but sets up the alibi C, to defeat the affidavit of B. – You take me.

CHARLOT

Clearly.

SERJEANT

So far you see then the ballance is even.

CHARLOT

True.

SERJEANT

But then to turn the scale, child, against A, in favour of B, they produce the circumstance D, viz. B's watch found in the pocket of A; upon which, the testimony of C being contradicted by B, – no, by D, – why then A, that is to say C, – no D, – joining B, they convict C, – no, no, A, – against the affidavit of C. – So this being pretty clear, child, I leave the application to you.

CHARLOT

Very obliging, Sir. But suppose now, Sir, it should appear that the attention of Sir Luke Limp is directed to some other object, would not that induce you to —

SERJEANT

Other object! Where?

CHARLOT

In this very house.

SERJEANT

Here! why the girl is non compos; there's nobody here, child, but a parcel of Abigals.

CHARLOT

No, Sir?

SERJEANT

No.

CHARLOT

Yes, Sir, one person else.

SERJEANT

Who is that?

CHARLOT

But remember, Sir, my accusation is confined to Sir Luke.

SERJEANT

Well, well.

CHARLOT

Suppose then, Sir, those powerful charms which made a conquest of you, may have extended their empire over the heart of Sir Luke?

SERJEANT

Why, hussy, you don't hint at your mother-in-law?

CHARLOT

Indeed, Sir, but I do.

SERJEANT

Ay; why this is point blank treason against my sovereign authority: but can you, Charlot, bring proof of any overt acts?

CHARLOT

Overt acts!

SERJEANT

Ay; that is any declaration by writing, or even word of mouth is sufficient; then let 'em demur if they dare.

CHARLOT

I can't say that, Sir; but another organ has been pretty explicit.

SERJEANT

Which?

CHARLOT

In those cases a very infallible one – the eye.

SERJEANT

Pshaw! nonsense and stuff. – The eye! – The eye has no authority in a court of law.

CHARLOT

Perhaps not, Sir, but it is a decisive evidence in a court of love.

SERJEANT

Hark you, hussy, why you would not file an information against the virtue of madam your mother; you would not insinuate that she has been guilty of crim. con.?

CHARLOT

Sir, you mistake me; it is not the lady, but the gentleman I am about to impeach.

SERJEANT

Have a care, Charlot! I see on what ground your action is founded – jealousy.

CHARLOT

You were never more deceiv'd in your life; for it is impossible, my dear Sir, that jealousy can subsist without love.

SERJEANT

Well.

CHARLOT

And from that passion (thank heaven) I am pretty free at present.

SERJEANT

Indeed!

CHARLOT

A sweet object to excite tender desires!

SERJEANT

And why not, hussy?

CHARLOT

First as to his years.

SERJEANT

What then?

CHARLOT

I own, Sir, age procures honor, but I believe it is very rarely productive of love.

SERJEANT

Mighty well.

CHARLOT

And tho' the loss of a leg can't be imputed to Sir Luke Limp as a fault —

SERJEANT

How!

CHARLOT

I hope, Sir, at least you will allow it a misfortune.

SERJEANT

Indeed!

CHARLOT

A pretty thing truly, for a girl, at my time of life, to be ty'd to a man with one foot in the grave.

SERJEANT

One foot in the grave! the rest of his body is not a whit the nearer for that. – There has been only an execution issued against part of his personals, his real estate is unencumbered and free – besides, you see he does not mind it a whit, but is as alert, and as merry, as a defendant after non-suiting a plaintiff for omitting an S.

CHARLOT

O! Sir! I know how proud Sir Luke is of his leg, and have often heard him declare, that he would not change his bit of timber for the best flesh and bone in the kingdom.

SERJEANT

There's a hero for you!

CHARLOT

To be sure, sustaining unavoidable evils with constancy is a certain sign of greatness of mind.

SERJEANT

Doubtless.

CHARLOT

But then to derive a vanity from a misfortune, will not I'm afraid be admitted as a vast instance of wisdom, and indeed looks as if the man had nothing better to distinguish himself by.

SERJEANT

How does that follow?

CHARLOT

By inunendo.

SERJEANT

Negatur.

CHARLOT

Besides, Sir, I have other proofs of your hero's vanity, not inferior to that I have mention'd.

SERJEANT

Cite them.

CHARLOT

The paltry ambition of levying and following titles.

SERJEANT

Titles! I don't understand you?

CHARLOT

I mean the poverty of fastening in public upon men of distinction, for no other reason but because of their rank; adhering to Sir John till the Baronet is superceded by my Lord; quitting the puny Peer for an Earl; and sacrificing all three to a Duke.

SERJEANT

Keeping good company! a laudable ambition!

CHARLOT

True, Sir, if the virtues that procur'd the father a peerage, could with that be entail'd on the son.

SERJEANT

Have a care, hussy – there are severe laws against speaking evil of dignities. —

CHARLOT

Sir!

SERJEANT

Scandalum magnatum is a statute must not be trifled with: why you are not one of those vulgar sluts that think a man the worse for being a Lord?

CHARLOT

No, Sir; I am contented with only, not thinking him the better.

SERJEANT

For all this, I believe, hussy, a right honourable proposal would soon make you alter your mind.

CHARLOT

Not unless the proposer had other qualities than what he possesses by patent. Besides, Sir, you know Sir Luke is a devotee to the bottle.

SERJEANT

Not a whit the less honest for that.

CHARLOT

It occasions one evil at least; that when under its influence, he generally reveals all, sometimes more than he knows.

SERJEANT

Proofs of an open temper, you baggage: but, come, come, all these are but trifling objections.

CHARLOT

You mean, Sir, they prove the object a trifle.

SERJEANT

Why you pert jade; do you play on my words? I say Sir Luke is —

CHARLOT

Nobody.

SERJEANT

Nobody! how the deuce do you make that out? – He is neither person attained or outlaw'd, may in any of his majesty's courts sue or be sued, appear by attorney, or in propria persona, can acquire, buy, procure, purchase, possess, and inherit, not only personalities, such as goods, and chattels, but even realities, as all lands, tenements, and hereditaments, whatsoever, and wheresoever.

CHARLOT

But, Sir —

SERJEANT

Nay, further child, he may sell, give, bestow, bequeath, devise, demise, lease, or to farm lett, ditto lands, to any person whomsoever – and —

CHARLOT

Without doubt, Sir; but there are notwithstanding in this town a great number of nobodies, not described by lord Coke.

SERJEANT

Hey!

CHARLOT

There is your next-door neighbour, Sir Harry Hen, an absolute blank.

SERJEANT

How so, Mrs. Pert?

CHARLOT

What, Sir! a man who is not suffer'd to hear, see, smell, or in short to enjoy the free use of any one of his senses; who, instead of having a positive will of his own, is deny'd even a paltry negative; who can neither resolve or reply, consent or deny, without first obtaining the leave of his lady: an absolute monarch to sink into the sneaking state of being a slave to one of his subjects – Oh fye!

SERJEANT

Why, to be sure, Sir Harry Hen, is as I may say —

CHARLOT

Nobody Sir, in the fullest sense of the word – Then your client Lord Solo.

SERJEANT

Heyday! – Why you would not annihilate a peer of the realm, with a prodigious estate and an allow'd judge too of the elegant arts.

CHARLOT

O yes, Sir, I am no stranger to that nobleman's attributes; but then, Sir, please to consider, his power as a peer he gives up to a proxy; the direction of his estate, to a rapacious, artful attorney: and as to his skill in the elegant arts, I presume you confine them to painting and music, he is directed in the first by Mynheer Van Eisel, a Dutch dauber; and in the last is but the echo of Signora Florenza, his lordship's mistress and an opera singer.

SERJEANT

Mercy upon us! at what a rate the jade runs!

CHARLOT

In short, Sir, I define every individual who, ceasing to act for himself, becomes the tool, the mere engine of another man's will, to be nothing more than a cypher.

SERJEANT

At this rate the jade will half unpeople the world: but what is all this to Sir Luke? to him, not one of your cases apply.

CHARLOT

Every one – Sir Luke has not a first principle in his whole composition; not only his pleasures, but even his passions are prompted by others; and he is as much directed to the objects of his love and his hatred, as in his eating, drinking, and dressing. Nay, though he is active, and eternally busy, yet his own private affairs are neglected; and he would not scruple to break an appointment that was to determine a considerable part of his property, in order to exchange a couple of hounds for a lord, or to buy a pad-nag for a lady. In a word – but he's at hand, and will explain himself best; I hear his stump on the stairs.

SERJEANT

I hope you will preserve a little decency before your lover at least.

CHARLOT

Lover! ha, ha, ha!

Enter Sir Luke Limp

Sir LUKE

Mr. Serjeant, your slave – Ah! are you there my little – O Lord! Miss, let me tell you something for fear of forgetting – Do you know that you are new christen'd, and have had me for a gossip?

CHARLOT

Christen'd! I don't understand you.

Sir LUKE

Then lend me your ear – Why last night, as Colonel Kill'em, Sir William Weezy, Lord Frederick Foretop, and I were carelessly sliding the Ranelagh round, picking our teeth, after a damn'd muzzy dinner at Boodle's, who should trip by but an abbess, well known about town, with a smart little nun in her suite. Says Weezy (who, between ourselves, is as husky as hell) Who is that? odds flesh, she's a delicate wench! Zounds! cried Lord Frederick, where can Weezy have been, not to have seen the Harietta before? for you must know Frederick is a bit of Macaroni, and adores the soft Italian termination in *a*.

CHARLOT

He does?

Sir LUKE

Yes, a delitanti all over. – Before? replied Weezy; crush me if ever I saw any thing half so handsome before! – No! replied I in an instant; Colonel, what will Weezy say when he sees the Charlotta? – Hey! you little —

CHARLOT

Meaning me, I presume.

Sir LUKE

Without doubt; and you have been toasted by that name ever since.

SERJEANT

What a vast fund of spirits he has!

Sir LUKE

And why not, my old splitter of causes?

SERJEANT

I was just telling Charlot, that you was not a whit the worse for the loss.

Sir LUKE

The worse! much the better, my dear. Consider, I can have neither strain, splint, spavin, or gout; have no fear of corns, kibes, or that another man should kick my shins, or tread on my toes.

SERJEANT

Right.

Sir LUKE

What d'ye think I would change with Bill Spindle for one of his drumsticks, or chop with Lord Lumber for both of his logs?

SERJEANT

No!

Sir LUKE

No, damn it, I am much better. – Look there – Ha! – What is there I am not able to do? To be sure I am a little awkward at running; but then, to make me amends, I'll hop with any man in town for his sum.

SERJEANT

Ay, and I'll go his halves.

Sir LUKE

Then as to your dancing, I am cut out at Madam Cornelly's, I grant, because of the croud; but as far as a private set of six couple, or moving a chair-minuet, match me who can.

CHARLOT

A chair-minuet! I don't understand you.

Sir LUKE

Why, child, all grace is confined to the motion of the head, arms, and chest, which may sitting be as fully displayed, as if one had as many legs as a polypus. – As thus – tol de rol – don't you see?

SERJEANT

Very plain.

Sir LUKE

A leg! a redundancy! a mere nothing at all. Man is from nature an extravagant creature. In my opinion, we might all be full as well as we are, with but half the things that we have.

CHARLOT

Ay, Sir Luke; how do you prove that?

Sir LUKE

By constant experience. – You must have seen the man who makes and uses pens without hands.

SERJEANT

I have.

Sir LUKE

And not a twelvemonth ago, I lost my way in a fog, at Mile-End, and was conducted to my house in May-Fair by a man as blind as a beetle.

SERJEANT

Wonderful!

Sir LUKE

And as to hearing and speaking, those organs are of no manner of use in the world.

SERJEANT

How!

Sir LUKE

If you doubt it, I will introduce you to a whole family, dumb as oysters, and deaf as the dead, who chatter from morning till night by only the help of their fingers.

SERJEANT

Why, Charlot, these are cases in point.

Sir LUKE

Oh! clear as a trout-stream; and it is not only, my little Charlot, that this piece of timber answers every purpose, but it has procured me many a bit of fun in my time.

SERJEANT

Ay!

Sir LUKE

Why, it was but last summer, at Tunbridge, we were plagued the whole season by a bullet-headed Swiss from the canton of Bern, who was always boasting, what, and how much he dared do; and then, as to pain, no Stoic, not Diogenes, held it more in contempt. – By gods, he was no more minds it than notings at all – So, foregad, I gave my German a challenge.

SERJEANT

As how! – Mind, Charlot.

Sir LUKE

Why to drive a corkin pin into the calves of our legs.

SERJEANT

Well, well.

Sir LUKE

Mine, you may imagine, was easily done – but when it came to the Baron —

SERJEANT

Ay, ay.

Sir LUKE

Our modern Cato soon lost his coolness and courage, screw'd his nose up to his foretop, rapp'd out a dozen oaths in high Dutch, limp'd away to his lodgings, and was there laid up for a month – Ha, ha, ha!

Enter a Servant, and delivers a Card to Sir Luke

Sir LUKE reads

"Sir Gregory Goose desires the honour of Sir Luke Limp's company to dine. An answer is desired." Gadso! a little unlucky; I have been engag'd for these three weeks.

SERJEANT

What, I find Sir Gregory is return'd for the corporation of *Fleesum*.

Sir LUKE

Is he so? Oh ho! – That alters the case. – George, give my compliments to Sir Gregory, and I'll certainly come and dine there. Order Joe to run to alderman Inkle's, in Threadneedle-street; sorry can't wait upon him, but confin'd to bed two days with *new influenza*.

CHARLOT

You make light, Sir Luke, of these sort of engagements.

Sir LUKE

What can a man do? These damn'd fellows (when one has the misfortune to meet them) take scandalous advantage; tease, When will you do me the honour, pray, Sir Luke, to take a bit of mutton with me? Do you name the day – They are as bad as a beggar, who attacks your coach at the mounting of a hill; there is no getting rid of them, without a penny to one, and a promise to t'other.

SERJEANT

True; and then for such a time too – three weeks! I wonder they expect folks to remember. It is like a retainer in Michaelmas term for the summer assizes.

Sir LUKE

Not but, upon these occasions, no man in England is more punctual than —

Enter a Servant, who gives Sir Luke a Letter

From whom?

SERVANT

Earl of Brentford. The servant waits for an answer.

Sir LUKE

Answer! – By your leave, Mr. Serjeant and Charlot. [*Reads.*] "Taste for music – Mons. Duport – fail – Dinner upon table at five" – Gadso! I hope Sir Gregory's servant an't gone.

SERVANT

Immediately upon receiving the answer.

Sir LUKE

Run after him as fast as you can – tell him, quite in despair – recollect an engagement that can't in nature be missed, – and return in an instant.

CHARLOT

You see, Sir, the Knight must give way for my Lord.

Sir LUKE

No, faith, it is not that, my dear Charlot; you saw that was quite an extempore business. – No, hang it, no, it is not for the title; but to tell you the truth, Brentford has more wit than any man in the world; it is that makes me fond of his house.

CHARLOT

By the choice of his company he gives an unanswerable instance of that.

Sir LUKE

You are right, my dear girl. But now to give you a proof of his wit: You know Brentford's finances are a little out of repair, which procures him some visits that he would very gladly excuse.

SERJEANT

What need he fear? His person is sacred; for by the tenth of William and Mary —

Sir LUKE

He knows that well enough; but for all that —

SERJEANT

Indeed, by a late act of his own house, (which does them infinite honour) his goods or chattels may be —

Sir LUKE

Seiz'd upon when they can find them, but he lives in ready-furnish'd lodgings, and hires his coach by the month.

SERJEANT

Nay, if the sheriff return "non inventus" —

Sir LUKE

A pox o' your law, you make me lose sight of my story. One morning, a Welch coach-maker came with his bill to my Lord, whose name was unluckily Loyd. My Lord had the man up. You are call'd, I think, Mr. Loyd? — At your Lordship's service, my Lord. — What, Loyd with an L? — It was with an L indeed, my Lord. — Because in your part of the world I have heard that Loyd and Floyd were synonymous, the very same names. — Very often indeed, my lord. — But you always spell your's with an L? — Always. — That, Mr. Loyd, is a little unlucky; for you must know I am now paying my debts alphabetically, and in four or five years you might have come in with an F; but I am afraid I can give you no hopes for your L. — Ha, ha, ha!

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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