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1

A Dialogue on Men, Women and Clarissa Harlowe

A Husband and Wife; to whom enter a Bachelor Friend with an  
armful of books.

The Lady. At last - you have finished it.

The Friend. I have searched the air once more thru' the world, with the aid of a paper cutter and a pocket handkerchief, & have finished Clarissa Harlowe.

The Lady. Calumniator! Do you mean to say it was uncut?

The Friend. "I was the first that ever burst" and yet <sup>now</sup> the copy has been going about the world, with bell and clapper soliciting readers, since 1811! Alas! how times change! ~~The public of Clarissa was surely more intellectual than that of Pickwick - or even perhaps Daniel De Foote.~~ Ah, better, 'tis a kind of intellect that I prefer but console yourself: your omissions were happily inspired.

The Lady. It is not a book of course to read through.

The Friend. And get your grandmother -

The Lady. No, I will not hear it, I will not hear of her. I have lost <sup>some</sup> part of my self respect by reading the book <sup>at all</sup> myself; ~~part~~ more, by reading it more than I intended; more still, by confessing I had read it; but if you wish to leave me destitute, remind me of my grandmother! and I remember her in a cap! She kept the place in her bible with her spectacles! No - no; she never could, she shall not have read it.

The Husband. They all read it, my dear; the firm and the free; read it and re-read it; and tilled it, and were nevera penny the worse.

The Friend. The worse? I intend it was their ruin.

The Lady. What! are you too on virtue's side? You make me ashamed for my husband. You have been reading Clarissa, and you know we women love to think we have reformed the creatures.

The Friend. We are at cross purposes. You do not take my meaning.

The Lady. How? There can be only one. The book is shocking, and you think it not a book for women. Whether it's discreet to say so much to me

Enter the bachelor friend, with an ampil of works  
wife. You have finished it?

Bach. <sup>Reached the end of the eighth volume,</sup> With <sup>the aid of</sup> paper cutter and a pocket handkerchief.

wife. A paper cutter Calumnator! Do you mean it was uncut?

Bach. "I was the first that ever burst." But console yourself, my omissions were all I should have expected from a lady.

wife. <sup>Indeed</sup> ~~Of course~~ these were some passages are, how shall I say.

Husband. Strong.

Lady. Well.

Bach. And get our venerated grandmother -

Lady. No, I will bear it. I've lost but some of my self-respect by <sup>reading</sup> ~~conducting~~ it myself; more by lending it to you; if you wish to leave me destitute, remind me of my grandmother! And I remember her in a cap and spectacles; She kept the place in her bible with her spectacles. No - no - she never could, she shall not, have read it!

Husband. They all read it; my dear, the priest and the parson; read it and re-read it, and liked it; and were never a penny the worse.

Bach. The worse! it was I contend it was their ruin.

Lady. What? are you too on virtue's side? You make me ashamed of my husband. You know we love to think we have reformed these creatures?

Bach. I fear you do not take any meaning.

Lady. How? there can be only one. The fault is shocking; and you think it <sup>but</sup> bad for women. You do not spare me, but I forgive you, for the love of truth.

Bach. Alas! you are far wiser, dear lady. I shot at a mark - which I am half ashamed to own. I thought it bad reading for my sex, indeed, <sup>as</sup> there we agree. But how and why? - that's a different question.

Lady. how? and why? let me hear them; I am all <sup>2</sup> impatience.

Bro Husband. So and, for the matter of that, I'd like to hear myself.

Bro. Madam, I know my position too well. You have lent me the book; which puts me on my good behavior, to the end of time; for its an act of freedom and confidence. but if I were to go on, and speak out my mind - But no you would never forgive me.

Lady. I? I've forgiven my husband.

Bro. Hear that.

Bro. The good is ticklish; the subject is delicate; I don't; I hold my peace.

Lady. Come, I am not strait laced, am I? I've read (Lauressa - Suppose I was my grandmother!

Bro. May I? dates, you know - and ladies -

Lady. I waive the any presumption. I am just fine if you will have it; as I've been married twenty years; if you will forget these two confessions since the question is set, please; they are - your lamps have a mind.

Bro Husband.

Lady. Precisely. And <sup>not</sup> for this answer I am no head and butter miss; but a stout-hearted, middle-aged woman. So speak.

Bro. Well, finally, ~~is banished by~~ the the morals of the characters are not to my taste - shall I say the word, rather me.

Lady. Take care they did? Ladies -

Bach. O I give you Lovelace, then we shall agree &  
 He's a cad, ~~some say~~ he had a bad heart; ~~was~~ a  
 cold and rancid heart; though what a style he wrote, the  
 rogue! and how he knew you women! But I give him up;  
 true or not true, I give him up and heartily disown him;  
 not true, he was a fine, glaring, fastidious boy, with a  
 candle in his inside, to fright the public: true, and  
 well, if we're to take him for true, he was a sad, unhealthy  
 dry fox; he had no guess of what he wished, to my mind, willed  
 for mind, willed for disgust. Come, I'll offer you a bet,  
 and Richardson shall decide it, in a better world, where  
 he walks, escorted by elect females; Had not Colonel  
 Marden stamped him out near Trent, ten to one, he had  
 died of Pthisis.

Richard - Size? Consumptive tendency. My tell me (chuckling)  
 that when they go for health —

Lady (with in). State materialism. No a strange thing but  
 materialism, even the best.

Bach. Madam, it is the basis.

Lady. Well, no, but where's your aptery? where's your delicate  
 talk? Had I pinned myself an <sup>anything</sup> among — but it seems we quite  
 agree.

Bach. Let's say, she's not begun; my first parallel is not of hand.

Look for a siege Madam, but for a hot siege. No (laissa —  
 No Miss Mure, who shall we.

Lady laughs. O my fine grandmother! My air kinder than air

B. But the period; and then a man was writing & I  
 I fear you are a Louisa after all: - you are so fond of modesty  
 in a woman."

B. I give you my word, my conception could go farther. The  
 indelicacy that I complain of <sup>the property</sup> ends me in Miss Lane and  
 the admirable Miss Harlowe, ~~as to~~ so far from being a piece  
 of the period, has increased upon an hour. ~~My dear~~ <sup>My dear</sup> what  
 my am I a bachelor? Because of the indelicacy of women.  
 There's the answer: take it how you will.

Lady. The girl of the period? A jealous, vulgar woman -

B. The girl of the period? Who is she? The sky, damn looking  
 creature, who is finer as one chaste than ice, and gives  
 herself to the first man with a good temper and a carriage and  
 pair. Girl of the period! This a man to marry? I'm of with  
 Louisa in one. "I - name" (I quite madam, give my  
 grandmother, remember) "Damn, if I could any the first princess  
 on earth, if I had that thought she balanced a minute in her  
 choice of me and of an inferior?"

Lady. I have given you a license; but not from common reason  
<sup>any</sup> the English language. Indelicacy, do you call this?  
 You abuse words sadly. The defect is delicacy.

B. It may be delicacy, no am, to you; believe me, it's  
 death to us.