

Russ's explanation from the wiki:

Act IV, scene iii of the play is often named as one of the all-time great discovery scenes in the history of comedy. You can read it [here](#) -- or lots of other places.

"*The School for Scandal* climaxes in a subsequent knockdown—the falling of the screen in Joseph’s library (4.3)—that by all accounts in performance nearly brought the house down, too. The audience response on opening night was such that one boy, passing the playhouse at the crucial moment, believed in terror that the edifice was actually collapsing, and discovered only “the next morning that the noise did not arise from the falling of the house, but from the falling of the screen in the fourth act; so violent and so tumultuous were the applause and laughter” (Frederic Reynolds, *The Life and Times of Frederic Reynolds* **London, 1826?**, 1.110).

"What accounted for all this tumult? Perhaps it was the quick ricochet of revelation, in one of the best-managed moments of recognition in all comedy: Charles’s and Peter’s twinned reactions, ending in opposite adjectives (“Lady Teazle, by all that’s wonderful/horrible”); Joseph’s protracted silence, followed by convulsive, ineffectual self-defense. (Silence, specified in the stage directions, matters hugely to the scene’s success, making room not only for the “applause and laughter” but for Charles’s acute and almost tender interrogation of the other three, who stand stock still.) The core of the scene’s power, though, lies not in any of these three characters but in the two parties at opposite ends of the revelatory spectrum: Lady Teazle and the audience, now freshly linked by Sheridan’s stagecraft. During her time behind the screen, Lady Teazle has become an audience too, in fact pure auditor (all ears, no eyes). She has heard things—about Peter’s warmth, and Joseph’s coldness—that the audience has long understood. At the fall of the screen, the audience can laugh at the stupefaction of the stage witnesses, but can savor what those onstage are too surprised to contemplate: Lady Teazle’s self-recognition, her sorting-through of the delusions she’s done with and her working-out of how to proceed from here. Sheridan stages things so that we suddenly see her at a moment when she is suddenly seeing herself. During the ensuing dialogue he deftly gives her reaction considerable time to develop." [Notes and commentary adapted and enlarged by Dr. Gary Gutchess from David Damrosch, et al., *Teaching British Literature* (New York: Longman, 2003).

Russ's "Setup" posting:

In order to get the impact of this scene, you need to know some things about the main characters. Joseph and Charles Surface are brothers -- Joseph is a sanctimonious hypocrite, who convinces people that he's honourable and decent when he's really a dishonest scumbag, and Charles is a perfectly decent and honest guy with a weakness for drink and women. Joseph is trying to get Charles disinherited by convincing their uncle that he's a hopeless reprobate. Lady Teazle is a country girl who's married into the rural aristocracy and has started to put on airs (it's fashionable to have contempt for your husband and flirt with other, younger men, and spend all your husband's money on clothes, carriages, etc.) Sir Peter, her husband, is an honest country squire who loves his wife to distraction and just doesn't understand how she's fallen for all this city pretension. This is the scene in which pretty much all of this comes out.

The scene:

SCENE III. -- A Library

SURFACE and SERVANT

SURFACE. No letter from Lady Teazle?

SERVANT. No Sir --

SURFACE. I am surprised she hasn't sent if she is prevented from coming -- ! Sir Peter certainly does not suspect me -- yet I wish I may not lose the Heiress, thro' the scrape I have drawn myself in with the wife -- However, Charles's imprudence and bad character are great Points in my Favour.

SERVANT. Sir -- I believe that must be Lady Teazle --

SURFACE. Hold[!] see -- whether it is or not before you go to the Door -- I have a particular Message for you if it should be my Brother.

SERVANT. 'Tis her ladyship Sir -- She always leaves her Chair at the milliner's in the next Street.

SURFACE. Stay -- stay -- draw that Screen before the Window -- that will do -- my opposite Neighbour is a maiden Lady of so curious a temper! --

[SERVANT draws the screen and exit.] I have a difficult Hand to play in this Affair -- Lady Teazle as lately suspected my Views on Maria -- but She must by no means be let into that secret, at least till I have her more in my Power.

Enter LADY TEAZLE

LADY TEAZLE. What[!] Sentiment in soliloquy -- have you been very impatient now? -- O Lud! don't pretend to look grave -- I vow I couldn't come before -- --

SURFACE. O Madam[,] Punctuality is a species of Constancy, a very unfashionable quality in a Lady.

LADY TEAZLE. Upon my word you ought to pity me, do you now Sir Peter is grown so ill-tempered to me of Late! and so jealous! of Charles too that's the best of the story isn't it?

SURFACE. I am glad my scandalous Friends keep that up. [Aside.]

LADY TEAZLE. I am sure I wish He would let Maria marry him -- and then perhaps He would be convinced -- don't you -- Mr. Surface?

SURFACE. Indeed I do not. -- [Aside.] O certainly I do -- for then my dear Lady Teazle would also be convinced how wrong her suspicions were of my having any design on the silly Girl -- --

LADY TEAZLE. Well -- well I'm inclined to believe you -- besides I really never could perceive why she should have so any admirers.

SURFACE. O for her Fortune -- nothing else --

LADY TEAZLE. I believe so for tho' she is certainly very pretty -- yet she has no conversation in the

world -- and is so grave and reserved -- that I declare I think she'd have made an excellent wife for Sir Peter. --

SURFACE. So she would.

LADY TEAZLE. Then -- one never hears her speak ill of anybody -- which you know is mighty dull --

SURFACE. Yet she doesn't want understanding --

LADY TEAZLE. No more she does -- yet one is always disappointed when one hears [her] speak -- For though her Eyes have no kind of meaning in them -- she very seldom talks Nonsense.

SURFACE. Nay -- nay surely -- she has very fine eyes --

LADY TEAZLE. Why so she has -- tho' sometimes one fancies there's a little sort of a squint --

SURFACE. A squint -- O fie -- Lady Teazle.

LADY TEAZLE. Yes yes -- I vow now -- come there is a left-handed Cupid in one eye -- that's the Truth on't.

SURFACE. Well -- his aim is very direct however -- but Lady Sneerwell has quite corrupted you.

LADY TEAZLE. No indeed -- I have not opinion enough of her to be taught by her, and I know that she has lately rais'd many scandalous hints of me -- which you know one always hears from one common Friend, or other.

SURFACE. Why to say truth I believe you are not more obliged to her than others of her acquaintance.

LADY TEAZLE. But isn't [it] provoking to hear the most ill-natured Things said to one and there's my friend Lady Sneerwell has circulated I don't know how many scandalous tales of me, and all without any foundation, too; that's what vexes me.

SURFACE. Aye Madam to be sure that is the Provoking circumstance -- without Foundation -- yes yes -- there's the mortification indeed -- for when a slanderous story is believed against one -- there certainly is no comfort like the consciousness of having deserved it -- --

LADY TEAZLE. No to be sure -- then I'd forgive their malice -- but to attack me, who am really so innocent -- and who never say an ill-natured thing of anybody -- that is, of any Friend -- ! and then Sir Peter too -- to have him so peevish -- and so suspicious -- when I know the integrity of my own Heart -- indeed 'tis monstrous.

SURFACE. But my dear Lady Teazle 'tis your own fault if you suffer it -- when a Husband entertains a groundless suspicion of his Wife and withdraws his confidence from her -- the original compact is broke and she owes it to the Honour of her sex to endeavour to outwit him --

LADY TEAZLE. Indeed -- So that if He suspects me without cause it follows that the best way of curing his jealousy is to give him reason for't --

SURFACE. Undoubtedly -- for your Husband [should] never be deceived in you -- and in that case it becomes you to be frail in compliment to his discernment --

LADY TEAZLE. To be sure what you say is very reasonable -- and when the consciousness of my own Innocence -- --

SURFACE. Ah: my dear -- Madam there is the great mistake -- 'tis this very conscious Innocence that is of the greatest Prejudice to you -- what is it makes you negligent of Forms and careless of the world's opinion -- why the consciousness of your Innocence -- what makes you thoughtless in your Conduct and apt to run into a thousand little imprudences -- why the consciousness of your Innocence -- what makes you impatient of Sir Peter's temper, and outrageous at his suspicions -- why the consciousness of your own Innocence --

LADY TEAZLE. 'Tis very true.

SURFACE. Now my dear Lady Teazle if you but once make a trifling Faux Pas you can't conceive how cautious you would grow, and how ready to humour and agree with your Husband.

LADY TEAZLE. Do you think so --

SURFACE. O I'm sure on't; and then you'd find all scandal would cease at once -- for in short your Character at Present is like a Person in a Plethora, absolutely dying of too much Health --

LADY TEAZLE. So -- so -- then I perceive your Prescription is that I must sin in my own Defence -- and part with my virtue to preserve my Reputation. --

SURFACE. Exactly so upon my credit Ma'am[.]

LADY TEAZLE. Well certainly this is the oddest Doctrine -- and the newest Receipt for avoiding calumny.

SURFACE. An infallible one believe me -- Prudence like experience must be paid for --

LADY TEAZLE. Why if my understanding were once convinced -- --

SURFACE. Oh, certainly Madam, your understanding SHOULD be convinced -- yes -- yes -- Heaven forbid I should persuade you to do anything you THOUGHT wrong -- no -- no -- I have too much honor to desire it --

LADY TEAZLE. Don't -- you think we may as well leave Honor out of the Argument? [Rises.]

SURFACE. Ah -- the ill effects of your country education I see still remain with you.

LADY TEAZLE. I doubt they do indeed -- and I will fairly own to you, that If I could be persuaded to do wrong it would be by Sir Peter's ill-usage -- sooner than your honourable Logic, after all.

SURFACE. Then by this Hand, which He is unworthy of -- --

Enter SERVANT

Sdeath, you Blockhead -- what do you want?

SERVANT. I beg your Pardon Sir, but I thought you wouldn't chuse Sir Peter to come up without announcing him?

SURFACE. Sir Peter -- Oons -- the Devil!

LADY TEAZLE. Sir Peter! O Lud! I'm ruined! I'm ruin'd!

SERVANT. Sir, 'twasn't I let him in.

LADY TEAZLE. O I'm undone -- what will become of me now Mr. Logick. -- Oh! mercy, He's on the Stairs -- I'll get behind here -- and if ever I'm so imprudent again -- --
[Goes behind the screen --]

SURFACE. Give me that -- Book! -- --

[Sits down -- SERVANT pretends to adjust his Hair --]

Enter SIR PETER

SIR PETER. Aye -- ever improving himself! -- Mr. Surface --

SURFACE. Oh! my dear Sir Peter -- I beg your Pardon -- [Gaping and throws away the Book.] I have been dosing [dozing] over a stupid Book! well -- I am much obliged to you for this Call -- You haven't been here I believe since I fitted up this Room -- Books you know are the only Things I am a Coxcomb in --

SIR PETER. 'Tis very neat indeed -- well well that's proper -- and you make even your Screen a source of knowledge -- hung I perceive with Maps --

SURFACE. O yes -- I find great use in that Screen.

SIR PETER. I dare say you must -- certainly -- when you want to find out anything in a Hurry.

SURFACE. Aye or to hide anything in a Hurry either --

SIR PETER. Well I have a little private Business -- if we were alone --

SURFACE. You needn't stay.

SERVANT. No -- Sir -- --
[Exit SERVANT.]

SURFACE. Here's a Chair -- Sir Peter -- I beg -- --

SIR PETER. Well -- now we are alone -- there IS a subject -- my dear Friend -- on which I wish to unburthen my Mind to you -- a Point of the greatest moment to my Peace -- in short, my good Friend -- Lady Teazle's conduct of late has made me very unhappy.

SURFACE. Indeed I'm very sorry to hear it --

SIR PETER. Yes 'tis but too plain she has not the least regard for me -- but what's worse, I have pretty good Authority to suspect that she must have formed an attachment to another.

SURFACE. Indeed! you astonish me.

SIR PETER. Yes -- and between ourselves -- I think I have discover'd the Person.

SURFACE. How -- you alarm me exceedingly!

SIR PETER. Ah: my dear Friend I knew you would sympathize with me. --

SURFACE. Yes -- believe me Sir Peter -- such a discovery would hurt me just as much as it would you --

SIR PETER. I am convinced of it -- ah -- it is a happiness to have a Friend whom one can trust even with one's Family secrets -- but have you no guess who I mean?

SURFACE. I haven't the most distant Idea -- it can't be Sir Benjamin Backbite.

SIR PETER. O -- No. What say you to Charles?

SURFACE. My Brother -- impossible! -- O no Sir Peter you mustn't credit the scandalous insinuations you hear -- no no -- Charles to be sure has been charged with many things but go I can never think He would meditate so gross an injury --

SIR PETER. Ah! my dear Friend -- the goodness of your own Heart misleads you -- you judge of others by yourself.

SURFACE. Certainly Sir Peter -- the Heart that is conscious of its own integrity is ever slowest to credit another's Treachery. --

SIR PETER. True -- but your Brother has no sentiment[--]you never hear him talk so. --

SURFACE. Well there certainly is no knowing what men are capable of -- no -- there is no knowing -- yet I can't but think Lady Teazle herself has too much Principle -- --

SIR PETER. Aye but what's Principle against the Flattery of a handsome -- lively young Fellow --

SURFACE. That's very true --

SIR PETER. And then you know the difference of our ages makes it very improbable that she should have any great affection for me -- and if she were to be frail and I were to make it Public -- why the

Town would only laugh at the foolish old Batchelor, who had married a girl -- --

SURFACE. That's true -- to be sure People would laugh.

SIR PETER. Laugh -- aye and make Ballads -- and Paragraphs and the Devil knows what of me --

SURFACE. No -- you must never make it public --

SIR PETER. But then again that the Nephew of my old Friend, Sir Oliver[,] should be the Person to attempt such an injury -- hurts me more nearly --

SURFACE. Undoubtedly -- when Ingratitude bars the Dart of Injury -- the wound has double danger in it --

SIR PETER. Aye -- I that was in a manner left his Guardian -- in his House he had been so often entertain'd -- who never in my Life denied him my advice --

SURFACE. O 'tis not to be credited -- There may be a man capable of such Baseness, to be sure -- but for my Part till you can give me positive Proofs you must excuse me withholding my Belief. However, if this should be proved on him He is no longer a brother of mine I disclaim kindred with him -- for the man who can break thro' the Laws of Hospitality -- and attempt the wife of his Friend deserves to be branded as the Pest of Society.

SIR PETER. What a difference there is between you -- what noble sentiments! --

SURFACE. But I cannot suspect Lady Teazle's honor.

SIR PETER. I'm sure I wish to think well of her -- and to remove all ground of Quarrel between us -- She has lately reproach'd me more than once with having made no settlement on her -- and, in our last Quarrel, she almost hinted that she should not break her Heart if I was dead. -- now as we seem to differ in our Ideas of Expense I have resolved she shall be her own Mistress in that Respect for the future -- and if I were to die -- she shall find that I have not been inattentive to her Interests while living -- Here my Friend are the Draughts of two Deeds which I wish to have your opinion on -- by one she will enjoy eight hundred a year independent while I live -- and by the other the bulk of my Fortune after my Death.

SURFACE. This conduct Sir Peter is indeed truly Generous! I wish it may not corrupt my pupil. -- [Aside.]

SIR PETER. Yes I am determined she shall have no cause to complain -- tho' I would not have her acquainted with the latter instance of my affection yet awhile.

SURFACE. Nor I -- if I could help it.

SIR PETER. And now my dear Friend if you please we will talk over the situation of your Hopes with Maria.

SURFACE. No -- no -- Sir Peter -- another Time if you Please -- [softly].

SIR PETER. I am sensibly chagrined at the little Progress you seem to make in her affection.

SURFACE. I beg you will not mention it -- What are my Disappointments when your Happiness is in Debate [softly]. 'Sdeath I shall be ruined every way.

SIR PETER. And tho' you are so averse to my acquainting Lady Teazle with YOUR passion, I am sure she's not your Enemy in the Affair.

SURFACE. Pray Sir Peter, now oblige me. -- I am really too much affected by the subject we have been speaking of to bestow a thought on my own concerns -- The Man who is entrusted with his Friend's Distresses can never -- --

Enter SERVANT

Well, Sir?

SERVANT. Your Brother Sir, is -- speaking to a Gentleman in the Street, and says He knows you're within.

SURFACE. 'Sdeath, Blockhead -- I'm NOT within -- I'm out for the Day.

SIR PETER. Stay -- hold -- a thought has struck me -- you shall be at home.

SURFACE. Well -- well -- let him up. --

[Exit SERVANT.] He'll interrupt Sir Peter, however. [Aside.]

SIR PETER. Now, my good Friend -- oblige me I Intreat you -- before Charles comes -- let me conceal myself somewhere -- Then do you tax him on the Point we have been talking on -- and his answers may satisfy me at once. --

SURFACE. O Fie -- Sir Peter -- would you have ME join in so mean a Trick? to trepan my Brother too?

SIR PETER. Nay you tell me you are SURE He is innocent -- if so you do him the greatest service in giving him an opportunity to clear himself -- and -- you will set my Heart at rest -- come you shall not refuse me -- here behind this Screen will be -- hey! what the Devil -- there seems to be one listener here already -- I'll swear I saw a Petticoat. --

SURFACE. Ha! ha! ha! Well this is ridiculous enough -- I'll tell you, Sir Peter -- tho' I hold a man of Intrigue to be a most despicable Character -- yet you know it doesn't follow that a man is to be an absolute Joseph either -- hark'ee -- 'tis a little French Milliner -- a silly Rogue that plagues me -- and having some character, on your coming she ran behind the Screen. --

SIR PETER. Ah a Rogue -- but 'egad she has overheard all I have been saying of my Wife.

SURFACE. O 'twill never go any farther, you may depend on't.

SIR PETER. No! -- then efaith let her hear it out. -- Here's a Closet will do as well. --

SURFACE. Well, go in there. --

SIR PETER. Sly rogue -- sly Rogue. --

SURFACE. Gad's my Life what an Escape -- ! and a curious situation I'm in! -- to part man and wife in this manner. --

LADY TEAZLE. [peeps out.] Couldn't I steal off --

SURFACE. Keep close, my Angel!

SIR PETER. [Peeping out.] Joseph -- tax him home.

SURFACE. Back -- my dear Friend

LADY TEAZLE. [Peeping out.] Couldn't you lock Sir Peter in? --

SURFACE. Be still -- my Life!

SIR PETER. [Peeping.] You're sure the little Milliner won't blab?

SURFACE. In! in! my good Sir Peter -- 'Fore Gad, I wish I had a key to the Door.

Enter CHARLES

CHARLES. Hollo! Brother -- what has been the matter? your Fellow wouldn't let me up at first -- What[?] have you had a Jew or a wench with you. --

SURFACE. Neither Brother I assure you.

CHARLES. But -- what has made Sir Peter steal off -- I thought He had been with you --

SURFACE. He WAS Brother -- but hearing you were coming He didn't chuse to stay --

CHARLES. What[!] was the old Gentleman afraid I wanted to borrow money of him?

SURFACE. No Sir -- but I am sorry to find[,] Charles -- you have lately given that worthy man grounds for great Uneasiness.

CHARLES. Yes they tell me I do that to a great many worthy men -- but how so Pray?

SURFACE. To be plain with you Brother He thinks you are endeavouring to gain Lady Teazle's Affections from him.

CHARLES. Who I -- O Lud! not I upon my word. -- Ha! ha! ha! so the old Fellow has found out that He has got a young wife has He? or what's worse she has discover'd that she has an old Husband?

SURFACE. This is no subject to jest on Brother -- He who can laugh -- --

CHARLES. True true as you were going to say -- then seriously I never had the least idea of what you charge me with, upon my honour.

SURFACE. Well it will give Sir Peter great satisfaction to hear this.

CHARLES. [Aloud.] To be sure, I once thought the lady seemed to have taken a fancy -- but upon my soul I never gave her the least encouragement. -- Beside you know my Attachment to Maria --

SURFACE. But sure Brother even if Lady Teazle had betray'd the fondest Partiality for you -- --

CHARLES. Why -- look'ee Joseph -- I hope I shall never deliberately do a dishonourable Action -- but if a pretty woman was purposely to throw herself in my way -- and that pretty woman married to a man old enough to be her Father -- --

SURFACE. Well?

CHARLES. Why I believe I should be obliged to borrow a little of your Morality, that's all. -- but, Brother do you know now that you surprize me exceedingly by naming me with Lady Teazle -- for faith I always understood YOU were her Favourite --

SURFACE. O for shame -- Charles -- This retort is Foolish.

CHARLES. Nay I swear I have seen you exchange such significant Glances -- --

SURFACE. Nay -- nay -- Sir -- this is no jest --

CHARLES. Egad -- I'm serious -- Don't you remember -- one Day, when I called here -- --

SURFACE. Nay -- prithee -- Charles

CHARLES. And found you together -- --

SURFACE. Zounds, Sir -- I insist -- --

CHARLES. And another time when your Servant -- --

SURFACE. Brother -- brother a word with you -- Gad I must stop him -- [Aside.]

CHARLES. Informed -- me that -- --

SURFACE. Hush! -- I beg your Pardon but Sir Peter has overheard all we have been saying -- I knew you would clear yourself, or I shouldn't have consented --

CHARLES. How Sir Peter -- Where is He --

SURFACE. Softly, there! [Points to the closet.]

CHARLES. [In the Closet!] O 'fore Heaven I'll have him out -- Sir Peter come forth!

SURFACE. No -- no -- --

CHARLES. I say Sir Peter -- come into court. --

[Pulls in SIR PETER.] What -- my old Guardian -- what[!] turn inquisitor and take evidence incog. --

SIR PETER. Give me your hand -- Charles -- I believe I have suspected you wrongfully; but you mustn't be angry with Joseph -- 'twas my Plan --

CHARLES. Indeed! --

SIR PETER. But I acquit you -- I promise you I don't think near so ill of you as I did -- what I have heard has given me great satisfaction.

CHARLES. Egad then 'twas lucky you didn't hear any more. Wasn't it Joseph?

SIR PETER. Ah! you would have retorted on him.

CHARLES. Aye -- aye -- that was a Joke.

SIR PETER. Yes, yes, I know his honor too well.

CHARLES. Yet you might as well have suspected him as me in this matter, for all that -- mightn't He, Joseph?

SIR PETER. Well well I believe you --

SURFACE. Would they were both out of the Room!

Enter SERVANT, whispers SURFACE

SIR PETER. And in future perhaps we may not be such Strangers.

SURFACE. Gentlemen -- I beg Pardon -- I must wait on you downstairs -- Here is a Person come on particular Business -- --

CHARLES. Well you can see him in another Room -- Sir Peter and I haven't met a long time and I have something to say [to] him.

SURFACE. They must not be left together. -- I'll send this man away and return directly --
[SURFACE goes out.]

SIR PETER. Ah -- Charles if you associated more with your Brother, one might indeed hope for your reformation -- He is a man of Sentiment -- Well! there is nothing in the world so noble as a man of Sentiment!

CHARLES. Pshaw! He is too moral by half -- and so apprehensive of his good Name, as he calls it, that I suppose He would as soon let a Priest in his House as a Girl --

SIR PETER. No -- no -- come come, -- you wrong him. No, no, Joseph is no Rake but he is no such Saint in that respect either. I have a great mind to tell him -- we should have such a Laugh!

CHARLES. Oh, hang him? He's a very Anchorite -- a young Hermit!

SIR PETER. Harkee -- you must not abuse him, he may chance to hear of it again I promise you.

CHARLES. Why you won't tell him?

SIR PETER. No -- but -- this way. Egad, I'll tell him -- Harkee, have you a mind to have a good laugh against Joseph?

CHARLES. I should like it of all things --

SIR PETER. Then, E'faith, we will -- I'll be quit with him for discovering me. -- He had a girl with him when I called. [Whispers.]

CHARLES. What[!] Joseph[!] you jest --

SIR PETER. Hush! -- a little French Milliner -- and the best of the jest is -- she's in the room now.

CHARLES. The devil she is --

SIR PETER. Hush! I tell you. [Points.]

CHARLES. Behind the screen! Odds Life, let's unveil her!

SIR PETER. No -- no! He's coming -- you shan't indeed!

CHARLES. Oh, egad, we'll have a peep at the little milliner!

SIR PETER. Not for the world -- Joseph will never forgive me.

CHARLES. I'll stand by you -- --

SIR PETER. Odds Life! Here He's coming --

[SURFACE enters just as CHARLES throws down the Screen.]

Re-enter JOSEPH SURFACE

CHARLES. Lady Teazle! by all that's wonderful!

SIR PETER. Lady Teazle! by all that's Horrible!

CHARLES. Sir Peter -- This is one of the smartest French Milliners I ever saw! -- Egad, you seem all to have been diverting yourselves here at Hide and Seek -- and I don't see who is out of the Secret! -- Shall I beg your Ladyship to inform me! -- Not a word! -- Brother! -- will you please to explain this matter? What! is Honesty Dumb too? -- Sir Peter, though I found you in the Dark -- perhaps you are not so now -- all mute! Well tho' I can make nothing of the Affair, I make no doubt but you perfectly understand one another -- so I'll leave you to yourselves. -- [Going.] Brother I'm sorry to find you have given that worthy man grounds for so much uneasiness! -- Sir Peter -- there's nothing in the world so noble as a man of Sentiment! --

[Stand for some time looking at one another. Exit CHARLES.]

SURFACE. Sir Peter -- notwithstanding I confess that appearances are against me. If you will afford me your Patience I make no doubt but I shall explain everything to your satisfaction. --

SIR PETER. If you please -- Sir --

SURFACE. The Fact is Sir -- that Lady Teazle knowing my Pretensions to your ward Maria -- I say Sir Lady Teazle -- being apprehensive of the Jealousy of your Temper -- and knowing my Friendship to the Family. She Sir -- I say call'd here -- in order that I might explain those Pretensions -- but on your coming being apprehensive -- as I said of your Jealousy -- she withdrew -- and this, you may depend on't is the whole truth of the Matter.

SIR PETER. A very clear account upon the [my] word and I dare swear the Lady will vouch for every article of it.

LADY TEAZLE. For not one word of it Sir Peter --

SIR PETER. How[!] don't you think it worthwhile to agree in the lie.

LADY TEAZLE. There is not one Syllable of Truth in what that Gentleman has told you.

SIR PETER. I believe you upon my soul Ma'am --

SURFACE. 'Sdeath, madam, will you betray me! [Aside.]

LADY TEAZLE. Good Mr. Hypocrite by your leave I will speak for myself --

SIR PETER. Aye let her alone Sir -- you'll find she'll make out a better story than you without Prompting.

LADY TEAZLE. Hear me Sir Peter -- I came hither on no matter relating to your ward and even ignorant of this Gentleman's pretensions to her -- but I came -- seduced by his insidious arguments -- and pretended Passion[--]at least to listen to his dishonourable Love if not to sacrifice your Honour to his Baseness.

SIR PETER. Now, I believe, the Truth is coming indeed[.]

SURFACE. The Woman's mad --

LADY TEAZLE. No Sir -- she has recovered her Senses. Your own Arts have furnished her with the means. Sir Peter -- I do not expect you to credit me -- but the Tenderness you express'd for me, when I am sure you could not think I was a witness to it, has penetrated so to my Heart that had I left the Place without the Shame of this discovery -- my future life should have spoken the sincerity of my Gratitude -- as for that smooth-tongued Hypocrite -- who would have seduced the wife of his too credulous Friend while he pretended honourable addresses to his ward -- I behold him now in a light so truly despicable that I shall never again Respect myself for having Listened to him.

[Exit.]

SURFACE. Notwithstanding all this Sir Peter -- Heaven knows -- --

SIR PETER. That you are a Villain! -- and so I leave you to your conscience --

SURFACE. You are too Rash Sir Peter -- you SHALL hear me -- The man who shuts out conviction by refusing to -- --

[Exeunt, SURFACE following and speaking.]