



She Stoops To Conquer

Oliver Goldsmith

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Goldsmith's comedy has retained its freshness of wit, cleverness of plot manipulation, and sheer humanity for almost two hundred years. Few readers can resist the engaging rascality of Tony Lumpkin, the studied archness of Kate Hardcastle, the bumbling geniality of her parents, or the confused gallantry of her sometimes tongue-tied lover. The story rushes along with breathless hilarity as cases of mistaken identity trip over each other on-stage.

This is an Enriched Edition of *She Stoops to Conquer*. A special Reader's Supplement, appearing in the center insert, provides the following sections which have been designed to enhance understanding and deepen appreciation:

Biographical Background • Historical Background • Pictorial Background (illustrations depicting dress, interiors, and manners of the period) • ***Critical Excerpts*** (samples of critical reaction to the play and the dramatist)

The editor for this edition was Harry Shefte, Professor of English, New York University. The contributing editor was Oscar H. Fidell.

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TO SAMUEL JOHNSON, L.L.D.

DEAR SIR,

By inscribing this slight performance to you, I do not mean so much to compliment you as myself. It may do me some honor to inform the public, that I have lived many years in intimacy with you. It may serve the interests of mankind also to inform them, that the greatest wit may be found in a character, without impairing the most unaffected piety.

I have, particularly, reason to thank you for your partiality to this performance. The undertaking a comedy, not merely sentimental, was very dangerous; and Mr. Colman, who saw this piece in its various stages, always thought it so. However, I ventured to trust it to the public; and though it was necessarily delayed till late in the season, I have every reason to be grateful.

I am, Dear Sir,
Your most sincere friend,
And admirer,
OLIVER GOLDSMITH.

George Colman (1732–1794): English dramatist, manager of Covent Garden Theater, and producer of Goldsmith's play

She Stoops to Conquer
or, The Mistakes of a Night

Characters

SIR CHARLES MARLOW

YOUNG MARLOW, HIS SON

HARDCASTLE

HASTINGS

TONY LUMPKIN

DIGGORY

MRS. HARDCASTLE

MISS HARDCASTLE

MISS NEVILLE

MAID

LANDLORD, SERVANTS, *etc.*

Please note that, in the text of the play, words for which there is a footnote have been printed in **boldface roman** type and words worthy of vocabulary study have been printed in ***boldface italics***.

The Editors

**SHE STOOPS
TO
CONQUER**



ACT I

Prologue

By David Garrick, Esq.

Enter Mr. Woodward, dressed in black, and holding a handkerchief to his eyes.

Excuse me, sirs, I pray—I can't yet speak—
I'm crying now—and have been all the week!
"Tis not alone this mourning suit," good masters;
"I've that within"—for which there are no plasters!
Pray would you know the reason why I'm crying?
The Comic Muse, long sick, is now a-dying!
And if she goes, my tears will never stop;
For as a player, I can't squeeze out one drop:
I am undone, that's all—shall lose my bread—
I'd rather, but that's nothing—lose my head.
When the sweet maid is laid upon the bier,
Shuter and I shall be chief mourners here.

David Garrick (1717–1779): considered the greatest English actor of his time; playwright, co-owner, and co-manager of the Drury Lane Theater

Mr. Woodward: a popular comedy actor of the day
within: the expression is a paraphrase of lines from *Hamlet*, Act I, Scene ii, ll. 77 *et seq.*

Comic Muse: in mythology, Thalia, the inspiration for comedy

Shuter: Edward ("Ned") Shuter, the low-comedy actor who took the part of Mr. Hardcastle

To her a *mawkish drab* of spurious breed,
 Who deal in sentimentals will succeed!
 Poor Ned and I are dead to all intents;

We can as soon speak Greek as sentiments.
 Both nervous grown, to keep our spirits up,
 We now and then take down a hearty cup.
 What shall we do?—If Comedy forsake us!

They'll turn us out, and no one else will take us.
 But, why can't I be moral?—Let me try—

My heart thus pressing—fixed my face and eye—
 With a *sententious* look, that nothing means
 (Faces are blocks, in sentimental scenes),

Thus I begin—"All is not gold that glitters,
 Pleasure seems sweet, but proves a glass of bitters.
 When ign'rance enters, folly is at hand;

Learning is better far than house and land.
 Let not your virtue trip, who trips may stumble,
 And virtue is not virtue, if she tumble."

I give it up—morals won't do for me;

To make you laugh, I must play tragedy.
 One hope remains—hearing the maid was ill,
 A doctor comes this night to show his skill.
 To cheer her heart, and give your muscles motion,
 He in five draughts prepared, presents a potion:

sentiments: the artificial feelings of the earlier style
 of playwriting against which Goldsmith rebelled

sententious: filled with pithy, moralized sayings

maid: that is, the muse of comedy

doctor: referring to Goldsmith both as a physician
 and a dramatist

draughts: acts of the play

A kind of magic charm—for be assured,
If you will swallow it, the maid is cured.
But desp'rate the doctor, and her case is,
If you reject the dose, and make wry faces!
This truth he boasts, will boast it while he lives,
No pois'nous drugs are mixed in what he gives.
Should he succeed, you'll give him his degree;
If not, **within** he will receive no fee!
The college, you, must his pretensions back,
Pronounce him regular, or dub him quack.

within: If the doctor doesn't succeed, he gets no fee or reward.

ACT I

Scene I: A chamber in an old-fashioned house.

Enter Mrs. Hardcastle and Mr. Hardcastle.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I vow, Mr. Hardcastle, you're very particular. Is there a creature in the whole country, but ourselves, that does not take a trip to town now and then, to rub off the rust a little? There's the two Miss Hoggs, and our neighbor, Mrs. Grigsby, go to take a month's polishing every winter.

HARDCASTLE. Aye, and bring back vanity and affectation to last them the whole year. I wonder why London cannot keep its own fools at home. In my time, the follies of the town crept slowly among us, but now they travel faster than a stagecoach. Its *fopperies* come down, not only as inside passengers, but in the very basket.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Aye, *your* times were fine times, indeed; you have been telling us of *them* for many a long year. Here we live in an old rumbling mansion, that looks for all the world like an inn, but that we never see company. Our best visitors are old Mrs. Oddfish, the curate's wife, and little

basket: the large baggage compartment behind the coach which was sometimes used for extra passengers

Cripplegate, the lame dancing master: and all our entertainment your old stories of Prince Eugene and the Duke of Marlborough. I hate such old-fashioned trumpery.

HARDCASTLE. And I love it. I love everything that's old: old friends, old times, old manners, old books, old wine; and, I believe, Dorothy (*taking her hand*), you'll own I have been pretty fond of an old wife.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Lord, Mr. Hardcastle, you're forever at your Dorothy's and your old wife's. You may be a Darby, but I'll be no Joan, I promise you. I'm not so old as you'd make me, by more than one good year. Add twenty to twenty, and make money of that.

HARDCASTLE. Let me see; twenty added to twenty makes just fifty and seven.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. It's false, Mr. Hardcastle: I was but twenty when I was brought to bed of Tony, that I had by Mr. Lumpkin, my first husband; and he's not come to years of discretion yet.

HARDCASTLE. Nor ever will, I dare answer for him. Aye, you have taught *him* finely!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. No matter. Tony Lumpkin has a good fortune. My son is not to live by his learning. I don't think a boy wants much learning to spend fifteen hundred a year.

Prince Eugene (1663–1736): Prince of Savoy and Austrian general, and the **Duke of Marlborough** (1650–1722), who was John Churchill, commanded the Austrian and English forces against the French in the War of the Spanish Succession

Darby and Joan: a proverbial, loving old couple who appear in a poem *The Happy Old Couple*

HARDCASTLE. Learning, quotha! A mere composition of tricks and mischief!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Humor, my dear; nothing but humor. Come, Mr. Hardcastle, you must allow the boy a little humor.

HARDCASTLE. I'd sooner allow him a horsepond! If burning the footmen's shoes, frightening the maids, and worrying the kittens be humor, he has it. It was but yesterday he fastened my wig to the back of my chair, and when I went to make a bow, I popped my bald head in Mrs. Frizzle's face!

MRS. HARDCASTLE. And am I to blame? The poor boy was always too sickly to do any good. A school would be his death. When he comes to be a little stronger, who knows what a year or two's Latin may do for him?

HARDCASTLE. Latin for him! A cat and fiddle! No, no, the alehouse and the stable are the only schools he'll ever go to.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Well, we must not snub the poor boy now, for I believe we shan't have him long among us. Anybody that looks in his face may see he's consumptive.

HARDCASTLE. Aye, if growing too fat be one of the symptoms.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. He coughs sometimes.

HARDCASTLE. Yes, when his liquor goes the wrong way.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I'm actually afraid of his lungs.

HARDCASTLE. And truly, so am I; for he sometimes

quotha: an old-fashioned expression for "she says"

whoops like a speaking trumpet—(Tony *hallooing behind the scenes*) O, there he goes—a very consumptive figure, truly!

Enter Tony, crossing the stage.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Tony, where are you going, my charmer? Won't you give papa and I a little of your company, lovee?

TONY. I'm in haste, mother; I cannot stay.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. You shan't venture out this raw evening, my dear; you look most shockingly.

TONY. I can't stay, I tell you. The Three Pigeons expects me down every moment. There's some fun going forward.

HARDCASTLE. Aye; the alehouse, the old place: I thought so.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. A low, paltry set of fellows.

TONY. Not so low, neither. There's Dick Muggins, the exciseman; Jack Slang the horse doctor; Little Aminadab, that grinds the music box; and Tom Twist, that spins the pewter platter.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. Pray, my dear, disappoint them for one night at least.

TONY. As for disappointing *them*, I should not so much mind; but I can't abide to disappoint *myself*.

MRS. HARDCASTLE (*detaining him*). You shan't go.

TONY. I will, I tell you.

MRS. HARDCASTLE. I say you shan't.

TONY. We'll see which is strongest, you or I.

Exit, hauling her out.

exciseman: tax collector