



***JOHN FLETCHER,
FRANCIS
BEAUMONT***

***THE LITTLE
FRENCH
LAWYER***

John Fletcher, Francis Beaumont

The Little French Lawyer

A Comedy

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COMEDY.

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Persons Represented in the Play.

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Dinant, a Gentleman that formerly loved, and still pretended to love Lamira.

Cleremont, a merry Gentleman, his Friend.

Champernell, a lame old Gentleman, Husband to Lamira.

Vertaign, a Noble-man, and a Judge.

Beaupre, Son to Vertaign.

Verdone, Nephew to Champernell.

Monsieur La Writt, a wrangling Advocate, or the Little Lawyer.

Sampson, a foolish Advocate, Kinsman to Vertaign.

Provost.

Gentlemen.

Clients.

Servants.

WOMEN.

Lamira, Wife to Champernell, and Daughter to Vertaign.

Anabell, Niece to Champernell.

Old Lady, Nurse to Lamira.

Charlotte, Waiting Gentlewoman to Lamira.

The Scene France.

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The principal Actors were,

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Joseph Taylor.
John Lowin.
John Underwood.
Robert Benfield.
Nicholas Toolie.
William Egleston.
Richard Sharpe.
Thomas Holcomb.

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Actus Primus. Scena Prima.

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Enter Dinant, *a[n]d* Cleremont.

Din. Disswade me not.

Cler. It will breed a brawl.

Din. I care not, I wear a Sword.

Cler. And wear discretion with it,
Or cast it off, let that direct your arm,
'Tis madness else, not valour, and more base
Than to receive a wrong.

Din. Why would you have me
Sit down with a disgrace, and thank the doer?
We are not Stoicks, and that passive courage
Is only now commendable in Lackies,
Peasants, and Tradesmen, not in men of rank
And qualitie, as I am.

Cler. Do not cherish
That daring vice, for which the whole age suffers.
The blood of our bold youth, that heretofore
Was spent in honourable action,
Or to defend, or to enlarge the Kingdom,
For the honour of our Country, and our Prince,
Pours it self out with prodigal expence
Upon our Mothers lap, the Earth that bred us
For every trifle; and these private Duells,
Which had their first original from the *Fr[enc]h*
(And for which, to this day, we are justly censured)
Are banisht from all civil Governments:

Scarce three in *Venice*, in as many years;
In *Florence*, they are rarer, and in all
The fair Dominions of the *Spanish* King,
They are never heard of: Nay, those neighbour Countries,
Which gladly imitate our other follies,
And come at a dear rate to buy them of us,
Begin now to detest them.

Din. Will you end yet—

Cler. And I have heard that some of our late Kings,
For the lie, wearing of a Mistris favour,
A cheat at Cards or Dice, and such like causes,
Have lost as many gallant Gentlemen,
As might have met the great *Turk* in the field
With confidence of a glorious Victorie,
And shall we then—

Din. No more, for shame no more,
Are you become a Patron too? 'tis a new one,
No more on't, burn't, give it to some Orator,
To help him to enlarge his exercise,
With such a one it might do well, and profit
The Curat of the Parish, but for *Cleremont*,
The bold, and undertaking *Cleremont*,
To talk thus to his friend, his friend that knows him,
Dinant that knows his *Cleremont*, is absurd,
And meer Apocrypha.

Cler. Why, what know you of me?

Din. Why if thou hast forgot thy self, I'll tell thee,
And not look back, to speak of what thou wert
At fifteen, for at those years I have heard
Thou wast flesh'd, and enter'd bravely.

Cler. Well Sir, well.

Din. But yesterday, thou wast the common second,
Of all that only knew thee, thou hadst bills
Set up on every post, to give thee notice
Where any difference was, and who were parties;
And as to save the charges of the Law
Poor men seek arbitrators, thou wert chosen
By such as knew thee not, to compound quarrels:
But thou wert so delighted with the sport,
That if there were no just cause, thou wouldst make one,
Or be engag'd thy self: This goodly calling
Thou hast followed five and twenty years, and studied
The Criticisms of contentions, and art thou
In so few hours transform'd? certain this night
Thou hast had strange dreams, or rather visions.

Cler. Yes, Sir,
I have seen fools, and fighters, chain'd together,
And the Fighters had the upper hand, and whipt first,
The poor Sots laughing at 'em. What I have been
It skills not, what I will be is resolv'd on.

Din. Why then you'll fight no more?

Cler. Such is my purpose.

Din. On no occasion?

Cler. There you stagger me.
Some kind of wrongs there are which flesh and blood
Cannot endure.

Din. Thou wouldst not willingly
Live a protested coward, or be call'd one?

Cler. Words are but words.

Din. Nor wouldst thou take a blow?

Cler. Not from my friend, though drunk, and from an enemy
I think much less.

Din. There's some hope of thee left then,
Wouldst thou hear me behind my back disgrac'd?

Cler. Do you think I am a rogue? they that should do it
Had better been born dumb.

Din. Or in thy presence
See me o'recharg'd with odds?

Cler. I'd fall my self first.

Din. Would'st thou endure thy Mistris be taken from thee,
And thou sit quiet?

Cler. There you touch my honour,
No French-man can endure that.

Di[n]. Pl—— upon thee,
Why dost thou talk of Peace then? that dar'st suffer
Nothing, or in thy self, or in thy friend
That is unmanly?

Cler. That I grant, I cannot:
But I'll not quarrel with this Gentleman
For wearing stammel Breeches, or this Gamester
For playing a thousand pounds, that owes me nothing;
For this mans taking up a common Wench
In raggs, and lowsie, then maintaining her
Caroach'd in cloth of Tissue, nor five hundred
Of such like toyes, that at no part concern me;
Marry, where my honour, or my friend is questioned,
I have a Sword, and I think I may use it
To the cutting of a Rascals throat, or so,
Like a good Christian.

Din. Thou art of a fine Religion,
And rather than we'll make a Schism in friendship
I will be of it: But to be serious,
Thou art acquainted with my tedious love-suit
To fair *Lamira*?

Cler. Too well Sir, and remember
Your presents, courtship, that's too good a name,
Your slave-like services, your morning musique;
Your walking three hours in the rain at midnight,
To see her at her window, sometimes laugh'd at,
Sometimes admitted, and vouchsaf'd to kiss
Her glove, her skirt, nay, I have heard, her slippers,
How then you triumph'd?
Here was love forsooth.

Din. These follies I deny not,
Such a contemptible thing my dotage made me,
But my reward for this—

Cler. As you deserv'd,
For he that makes a goddess of a Puppet,
Merits no other recompence.

Din. This day friend,
For thou art so—

Cler. I am no flatterer.

Din. This proud, ingratefull she, is married to
Lame *Champernel*.

Cler. I know him, he has been
As tall a Sea-man, and has thriv'd as well by't,
The loss of a legg and an arm deducted, as any
That ever put from *Marseilles*: you are tame,

Pl—— on't, it mads me; if it were my case,
I should kill all the family.

Din. Yet but now
You did preach patience.

Cler. I then came from confession,
And 'twas enjoyn'd me three hours for a penance,
To be a peaceable man, and to talk like one,
But now, all else being pardon'd, I begin
On a new Tally, Foot do any thing,
I'll be second you.

Din. I would not willingly
Make red, my yet white conscience, yet I purpose
In the open street, as they come from the Temple,
(For this way they must pass,) to speak my wrongs,
And do it boldly. [*Musick playes.*]

Cler. Were thy tongue a Cannon,
I would stand by thee, boy, they come, upon 'em.

Din. Observe a little first.

Cler. This is fine fidling.

Enter Vertaign, Champernel, Lamira, *Nurse,*
Beaupre, Verdone. *An Epithalamium.*

SONG at the Wedding.

Come away, bring on the Bride
And place her by her Lovers side:
You fair troop of Maids attend her,
Pure and holy thoughts befriend her.
Blush, and wish, you Virgins all,
Many such fair nights may fall.

Chorus.

Hymen, fill the house with joy,
All thy sacred fires employ:
Bless the Bed with holy love,
Now fair orb of Beauty move.

Din. Stand by, for I'll be heard.

Verta. This is strange rudeness.

Din. 'Tis courtship, ballanced with injuries,
You all look pale with guilt, but I will dy
Your cheeks with blushes, if in your sear'd veins
There yet remain so much of honest blood
To make the colour; first to ye my Lord,
The Father of this Bride, whom you have sent
Alive into her grave.

Champ. How? to her grave?

Dina. Be patient Sir, I'll speak of you anon
You that allow'd me liberal access,
To make my way with service, and approv'd of

My birth, my person, years, and no base fortune:
You that are rich, and but in this held wise too,
That as a Father should have look'd upon
Your Daughter in a husband, and aim'd more
At what her youth, and heat of blood requir'd
In lawfull pleasures, than the parting from
Your Crowns to pay her dowr: you that already
Have one foot in the grave, yet study profit,
As if you were assur'd to live here ever;
What poor end had you, in this choice? in what
Deserve I your contempt? my house, and honours
At all parts equal yours, my fame as fair,
And not to praise my self, the City ranks me
In the first file of her most hopefull Gentry:
But *Champernel* is rich, and needs a nurse,
And not your gold: and add to that, he's old too,
His whole estate in likelihood to descend
Upon your Family; Here was providence,
I grant, but in a Nobleman base thrift:
No Merchants, nay, no Pirats, sell for Bondmen
Their Country-men, but you, a Gentleman,
To save a little gold, have sold your Daughter
To worse than slaverie.

Cler. This was spoke home indeed.

Beau. Sir, I shall take some other time to tell you,
That this harsh language was delivered to
An old man, but my Father.

Din. At your pleasure.

Cler. Proceed in your design, let me alone,
To answer him, or any man.

Verd. You presume
Too much upon your name, but may be couzen'd.

Din. But for you, most unmindfull of my service,
For now I may upbraid you, and with honour,
Since all is lost, and yet I am a gainer,
In being deliver'd from a torment in you,
For such you must have been, you to whom nature
Gave with a liberal hand most excellent form,
Your education, language, and discourse,
And judgement to distinguish, when you shall
With feeling sorrow understand how wretched
And miserable you have made your self,
And but your self have nothing to accuse,
Can you with hope from any beg compassion?
But you will say, you serv'd your Fathers pleasure,
Forgetting that unjust commands of Parents
Are not to be obey'd, or that you are rich,
And that to wealth all pleasure else are servants,
Yet but consider, how this wealth was purchas'd,
'Twill trouble the possession.

Champ. You Sir know
I got it, and with honour.