

MS Eng. Misc. f.897.

A Play in Fragments

by

Maria Edgeworth



Image: Alfred Crowquill, *Beauties of Brighton* (1825). Watercolour, 8.8x12.9in.
London: Victorian and Albert Museum, P.6-1932.

Act
Scene

West Wall - Housekeeper's room

Miss Lupell
Solo

Brighton! Ah Brighton! I must ^{will} go to Bright
~~ton & I must~~ for I've bought the sweetest second
~~hand pelisse, a purpose - and have laid myself out for~~
~~myself to go for it that nobody could~~
~~know from me - So let me consider -~~
 Yes, Lady that's the way it shall be - This
 shows for Lady Herbert is going there with
 her grand daughter little Lady Flora next
 week - And I'll go with them as sure as
 my name is Lupell! - Shuffleton too, ^{knows} would
 give her ^{two} eyes to go - And I'm ^{afraid} of her
 outplotting me, for she is as cunning as
 twenty foxes in one - But cunning as she
 becs, I hope & trust she's on the wrong account
 now - What she goes upon is, that being
 Miss Millicent's maid she must ^{betoken} go as part
 of ~~her~~ ^{her} baggage ~~of her bag & baggage~~
~~of Miss Millicent's~~ & Shuffleton I know ^{for certain} reckon
 that Miss Milly will ^{for certain} be the ~~par~~ cousin axed
 to go on account of my Lady Flora's taking
 such a fancy to her - May be so - But now
 my plan's on severer ground - My scheme is
 to get to be my Lady Flora's own maid & there
 no matter which cousin is axed I must go
 with my Lady - And luckily my Lady Flora's
 maids just ~~closed~~ ^{gone} & her is the place open &
 a word from Mr Wright the housekeeper
 who rules the world below & indeed ~~above~~
 who rules the roast with young & old above
 stairs as well as below will get me the situa-
 tion - to all I have to do is to ~~flatter~~ ^{flatter} her upon
~~that~~ - And I can easily win Mr Wright by a gentle
~~touch~~ ^{touch} of a bonnet of my making at some time that
~~will~~ ^{will} instead of the dowdy she wears - or may be I
 without ^{any} that expense - a few fair words - ~~from~~ Oh leave
 that

[IMG 5079]

Herbert Hall – Housekeeper's room

Miss Lapell

Sola

Brighton! Ah Brighton! I must & I will go to Brighton for I've bought the sweetest second hand pelisse o'purpose – and have laid myself out for the season at Brighton. So let me consider – yes, that's the way it shall be – This old ~~dowager~~ Lady Herbert is going there with her grand daughter little Lady Flora next week – and I'll go with them as sure as my name's Lapell! – Shuffleton too [xxx] would give her two eyes to go – and I'm a little afraid of her outplotting me, for she is as cunning as twenty foxes in one – But cunning as she bees I hope & trust she's on the wrong scent now—what she goes upon is, that being Miss Millicent's maid she must be taken as part of her baggage & Shuffleton I know reckons that Miss Milly will be the cousin axed to go on account of my Lady Flora's taking such a fancy to her – may be so – But now my plan's are on surer ground – My scheme is to get to be my Lady Flora's own maid & then no matter which cousin is axed I must go with my Lady – and Luckily my Lady Flora's maid's just gone & here's the place open & a word from Mrs. Wright the housekeeper who rules the roost with young & old above stairs as well as below will get me the situation – and I can easy win M^m Wright by a genteel Douceur of a paper or a bond of my making instead of the dowdy she wears – or maybe I without going to that expense – a few fair words – oh leave that

That to me - If I dont flatter her up well
and here she comes -

Enter Mr Wright

Mr W. My dear Mr Wright, if I enter-vede I
do pardon but I have been waiting for
you here to make my apologies - My dear
Ma'am I'm afraid that Rob who has no more
manners than a calf when he's suit on a
message annoyed you sadly about that
there evening primrose ribbon & I'm so ^{displeas'd}
Ma'am it is all over now - You'll excuse
~~Ma'am my going on with my desert being~~
out -

Capell Indubitably Ma'am - But my dear Mr Wright
as I was looking at this here fine picture
that graces your room this full length of an
officer that graces your apartment I often I've
intended to ask if it int an indiscreet question
whos picture it may be

Mr W. The picture is my property Ma'am - a present
from my kind lady - It's a portrait of the young
Lord my lady Plot's father who was an officer

Capell - Of the guards? dear yes, I sh^d have known the
regimentals any where, It's a prodigious likeness
- Neap I dare say Ma'am

Mr W. Yes Ma'am it's such a likeness that it strikes
every one who ever saw my young lord

Capell. And a very striking figure it is, an elegant fine
presence of a gentleman & a military presence too
which I doat upon ~~something~~ My stars
what a mistake my Lord will be for some body

Mr W. Dear Mad^m Ma'am he's dead - My young Lord did
soon after he came home to us after that wound
and fever he had abroad -

Capell What a throw and pities Ma'am - But Ma'am
your lady, I mean the old the dowager lady above
stairs is looking quite charming for her age - And
I'm quite in love do you know ^{Mr Wright} with her and
your style of dress, as my young lady says, 'tis so
viable - com

Mr W. So what Ma'am? I have no French

Capell No Ma'am it wasn't the fashion in your time - But
the Foreign tongues is of late greatly come up -

Mr W. Greatly come down I think

Capell But now if you'll please me Mr Wright I see a
vast likeness Ma'am not only in dress & features
but in your voice & speech & total manner I'm
sorry

Copy ending - 14. 10. 17

that to me – If I don't flatter her up well—
and here she comes –

Enter M^{rs}. Wright

My dear Mrs. Wright, if I enter'd rude
I ax pardon but I have been waiting for
you here to make my apologies – my dear
Ma'am Im afeard that Rob who has no more
manners than a calf when he's sent on a
message annoyed you sadly about that
There Evening primrose ribbon & I'm so dismayd
Mrs W – Ma'am it is all over now. ~~You'll excuse Ma'am~~
~~my going on with my desert laying out~~
Lapell – ~~Indubitably, Ma'am.~~ But my dear Mrs Wright
I was looking at this here fine picture
~~that graces your room~~ this full length of an
officer that graces your apartment & often I've
intended to axe if it in't an indiscreet question
who's picture it may be.

Mrs W. – The picture is my property Ma'am – a present
from my kind lady – 'Tis a portrait of the young
Lord my Lady Flora's father who was an officer
Miss Lapell – of the guards? Dear yes, I shd. Have known the
Regimentals any where, 'Tis a prodigious like
=ness I dare say Ma'am

Mrs W – yes Ma'am it's such a likeness that it strikes
every one who ever saw my young lord.

Miss L – and a very striking figure it is, an elegant fine
presence of a gentleman & a military presence too
which I doat upon ~~something so~~ – My stars
what a match my Lord will be for somebody

Mrs W – Dear Heart Ma am he's dead – my young Lord died
soon after he came home to us after that wound
and fever he had abroad—

Miss L What a thousand pities Ma'am But in a [^{house}]
your Lady, I mean the old, the Dowager lady above
stairs is looking quite charming for her age – and
I'm quite in love do you know , Mrs Wright , with her's and
you'r stile of dress –as my lady says, 'tis so
vielle: com

Mrs. W – So what ma'am? I have no French

Miss L – so ma'am it wasn't the fashion in your time – But
the foreign tongue is of late greatly come up—

Mrs. W aside – greatly come down I think

Miss L – But now if you'll b'lieve me Mrs. Wright I see a
vast likeness Ma'am not only in dress & externities
but in your [air?] & speech & total manner. In every

every thing upon the very moral of your own
 second lady
 Mr Wright turning suddenly with a pleased manner
 Dear heart! Ma'am but do you really think so
 Miss L. - You know I do - for I was saying so in my
 bed no later than this morning to Miss Knapp
 - says I - Mr Wright is the very moral of her
 lady
 Mr Wright - sits a chair for Lapell while you are in my
 room - wont you make yourself comfortable Ma'am
 Wright - Pray Ma'am - I do
 Miss Lapell seats herself
 and Mr Wright seats herself crossing her hands
 Knapp - So Mr Wright the young people is all going this evening
 to Huntingdon to their dancing masters ball and will
 engage Ma'am in that ball room there wont be
 the unequal of you own lovely Lady Flora
 Mr W. - What Ma'am when your own young lady is
 there Ma'am?
 Miss L. - yes indeed Ma'am I speak with my eyes open
 for to be candid with your Mr Wright, tho' my
 young lady has had the advantage of grow young
 in hint of polish and fashion and masters
 and all that, yet I cant be blind Ma'am I
 must bow under in regard of natural
 beauty & grace & the janetua quae for tho' my
 Lady Flora maynt have as the connoisseurs say
 a conspicuously regular broad feature in her
 face if you accept her eyes yet Ma'am she's
 what the gentlemen call fascinating
 Mr W. - my lady Flora was but twelve years old last birthday
 Ma'am
 Miss L. - Indeed Ma'am then she's very tall of her age
 Mr W. - We think her Ma'am very little of her age
 Miss L. - Dear Ma'am do you? - But I like little ladies best
 they are so compact, & Lady Flora's quite "a pocket Venus"
 how she will be admired at Brighton where you're
 all going next week & under stand Ma'am
 Mr W. - So I understand Ma'am
 Miss L. - Take her all in all, there's not a young lady in my
 land I'd so wish to be attached to as my lady Flora
 Mr W. - But you be attached already betwixt you Ma'am to your
 own young lady
 Miss L. - Indeed Ma'am - if possible, but confidentially speaking
 I must to your discretion my dear Mr Wright I've made
 up my mind, directly to quit Mr. Thornboul's for I'd sooner
 give up the month's salary - salary nor nothing of the kind
 my mother with you sooner than stay another month
 Thornboul's Ma'am is so difficult
 Why I shall never see you again

[IMG 5080]

every thing you're the very moral of your own
reverend lady—

Mrs Wright turning suddenly with a pleased manner

Dear heart! Ma'am but do you really think so?

Miss L – Pon honour so I do – for I was saying so in my
bed no later than this morning to Miss Shuffle=

ton says I – Mrs. Wright is the very [moral] of her lady

Mrs Wright sets a chair for Miss Lapell – While you are in
my room wont you make yourself comfortable Ma'am?

Miss L – pray Ma'am – I beg---

Miss Lapell seats her self

and Mrs Wright seats herself crossing her hands
formally

Miss L - so Mrs. Wright the young people is all going this night
to Huntingdon's [brothers?] dancing master's ball and I'll
engage ma'am in that ball room there wont be
the nonpareil of your own lovely Lady Flora

Mrs W – What ma'am when your own young lady is
there Ma'am?

Miss L – yes indeed ma'am I speak with my eyes open

For to be candid with you Mrs. Wright tho' my

own lady has had the advantage I grant you

in hint of polish and fashion masters

and all that, yet I can't be blind Ma'am, & I

must knock under in regard of natural

beauty & grace & the janesee=quoi for tho' my

lady Flora may'nt have all the connections I say

a conspicuously regular [bread?] feature in her

face, if you accept her eyes yet Ma'am she's

what the gentlemen call fascinating

Mrs W. My lady Flora was but twelve years old last birthday

Ma'am

Miss L Indeed Ma'am then she's very tall of her age

Mrs W We think Ma'am very little of her age

Miss L - Dear Ma'am do you! – But I like little ladies best

They are so compact & Lady Flora's quite “a pocket Venus”

How she'll be admired at Brighton! where you're

going next week I understand Ma'am

Mrs W. so I understand Ma'am

Miss L Take her all in all, there's not a young lady in Eng

=land I'd so wish to be attached to as ~~my~~ Lady Flora

Mrs W But you be attached already be'nt you Ma'am to your

own ~~young~~ Lady—

Miss L – Indeed Ma'm – if possible but confidentially speaking

and trust to your discretion my dear Mrs. Wright I've made

up my mind, directly to quit Mrs Chamberlayne for I'd sooner

give up the month's salary – salary was nothing of the kind

being no object with me, sooner than stay another month as Mrs

Chamberlayne Ma'am is so difficult

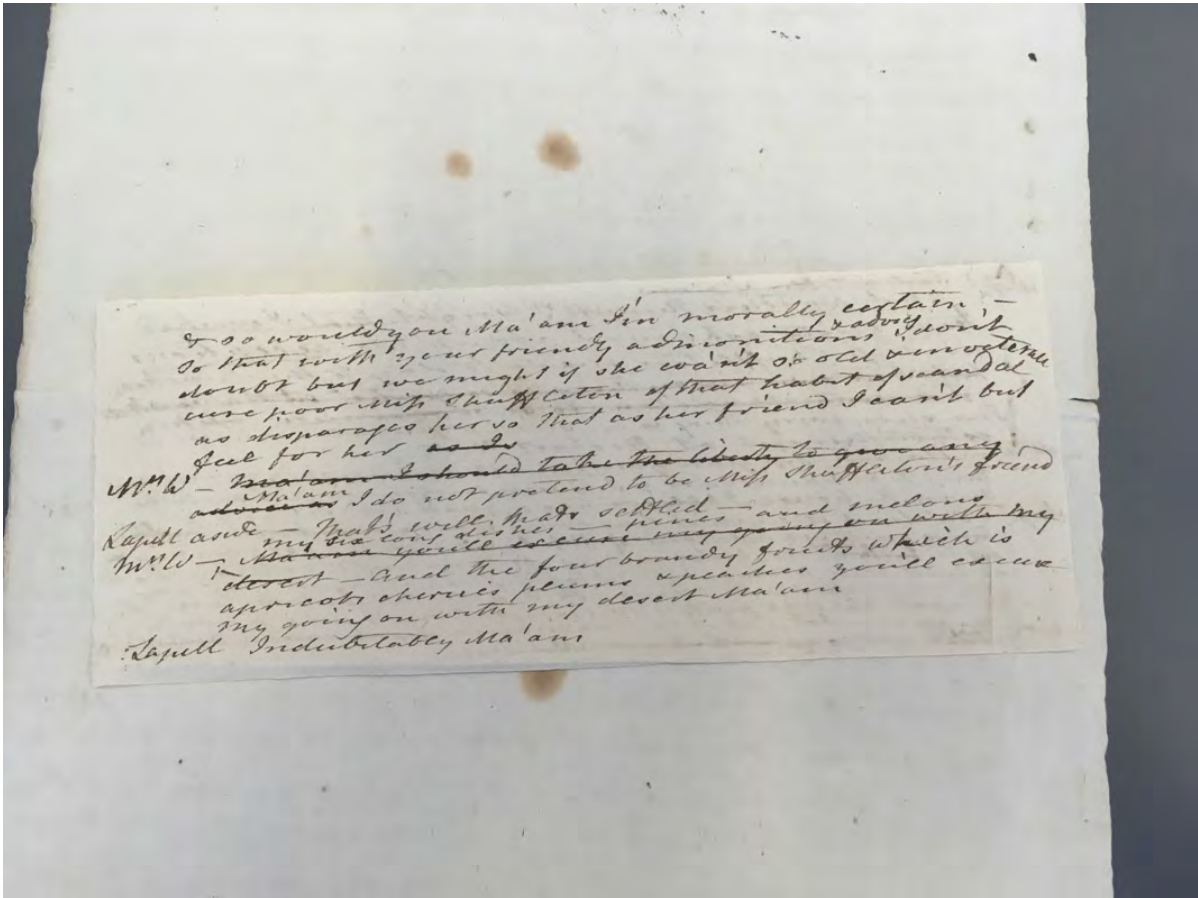
since she's grown
 such a temper & such a tongue & is so hard to
 fit in her dress & please in her humors that I
 can't live longer with them two, even if I could
 live longer with Miss Shuffleton Ma'm whom
 you yourself must see there's no human
 probability of putting up with me not for a year
 of gold another season. Now Ma'am I would
 not mention these things to any creature one but
 you whom I took a journey to from the first minute
 ever I came into set eyes upon you Mr Wright
 I am obliged to you Ma'am (aside) I wish I could
 return the compliment (aloud) I am obliged to you Ma'am
 And Mr Wright I have a secret to tell you too
 Mr W - riving) Oh dear Ma'am don't tell me any of
 your secrets I am the worst person for secrets in the world
 Oh dear Ma'am don't disparage yourself so I'm
 sure I'd trust you as soon as my own mother with my secrets
 Mr W - moving away -) But indeed Miss Lapell I have no time for -
 But my dear Mr Wright (holding her) this won't keep you a
 minute & it's a family secret which your domestic nature
 can't but be interested to hear of a near relation that to my know-
 ledge of your lady's
 My lady will inform me I'm sure Ma'am in proper course
 Of course Ma'am if she knewed't But Ma'am it might be of
 service that you ought to inform her for the sake of the family
 I ought to Ma'am then pray what is it
 But you'll please not to mention me Ma'am -
 the thing is I smell a rat
 Do you Ma'am - then I hate a rat.
 Oh Ma'am it's only in my fancy, but in ideas
 Ma'am the resemblance only of a rat as the saying
 is - but indeed it was Miss Shuffleton smelt it first
 to do her justice & she put me upon the scent which in plain
 English is this Ma'am that the Chamberlaine's is received
 & fast
 so too I hear there's
 a nature hanging
 a secret occasion
 living on
 down

[IMG 5081]

~~and now she's~~ since she's grown so nervous and miss Millicent
 has such a temper & such a tongue & is so hard to
 fit in her dress & please in her humors that I'd
 not live longer with them two, even if I could
 live with Miss Shuffleton Ma'am whom
 you yourself must see there's no human
 possibility of putting up with no not for a [globe]
 of gold and this season. Now Ma'am I would
 not mention this ~~thing~~ to any ~~creature~~ one but
 you whom I took a fancy to from the first minute
 ever I ~~came into~~ set eyes upon you Mrs Wright
 Mrs W – ~~I am oblig'd to you, Ma'am~~ (aside) I wish I could
 return the compliment (aloud) I am oblig'd to you Ma'am
 Miss L – And Mrs. Wright I have a secret to tell you too
 Mrs W (--rising) Oh dear Ma'am don't tell me any of
 your secrets I am the worst person in the world for secrets
 Miss L Oh dear Ma'am don't disparage yourself so – I'm
 sure I'd trust you as soon as my own mother with my secrets
 Miss W (moving away--) But indeed Miss Lapell I have no time for secrets
 Miss L But my dear Mrs. Wright (holding her) this won't keep you a
 minute it's a family secret which your domestic nature
 can't but be interested to hear of a near ~~relation that's to say~~ connec
 =tion of your Lady's
 Mrs W - My Lady will inform me I'm sure Ma'am in proper course
 Miss L - Of course, Ma'am if she knowed it – But Ma'am ~~it might be of~~
~~service that you ought to inform her for the sake of the family~~
 Mrs W – Ought I Ma'am, then pray what is it
 Miss L – But you'll please not to mention me all a'on
 the thing is – I smell a rat
 Mrs W starting) Do you Ma'am – then I hate a rat.
 Miss L – Oh Ma'am tis only in the nose of my fancy, ~~not in ideas~~
 Ma'am. The verisimilitude only of a rat as the saying
~~is~~ but indeed if was Miss Shuffleton smelt it first
 to do her justice & she put me upon the scent which in plain
 English is this Ma'm that the Chamberlaynes is believed
 [XXXX] and foot

Smell

so too I hear there's
 nature ~~busying~~
 so [overt] occasion
 enjoys in
 down

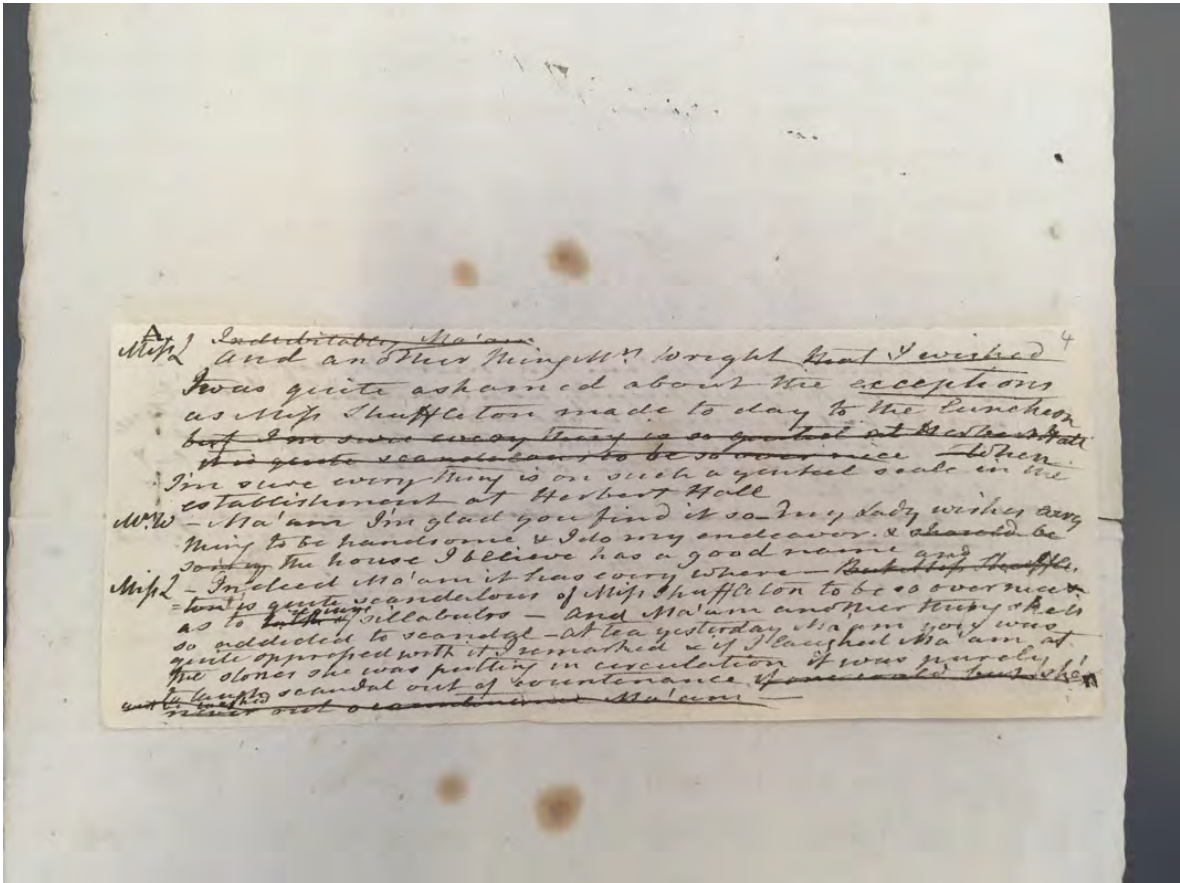


[IMG 5078]

and so would you Ma'am I'm morally certain, --
so that with your friendly admonition & advice I don't
doubt but we might if she wa'n't so old and inveterate
cure poor Miss Shuffleton of that habit of scandal
as disparages her so that as her friend I can't but
feel for her as I

Mrs W - Ma'am I should take the liberty to give any
Advice - Ma'am I do not pretend to be Miss Shuffleton's friend
Lapell aside - That's well that's settled -

Mrs W - Ma'm you'll excuse my going on with my desert
^my six long dishes - prunes and melons
-and the four brandy forests which is
apricots cherries plums & peaches you'll excuse
my going on with my desert Ma'am
Lapell Induitably Ma'am



[IMG 5077]

Indubitably Ma'am
 and another thing M^{rs} Wright ~~that I wished~~^{wrote that I wished}
 I was quite ashamed about the exceptions
 as Miss Shuffleton made to day to the luncheon
 but I am sure every thing is so genteel at Herbert hall
 it is quite scandalous to be so over nice. When
 I'm sure everything is on such a genteel scale in the
 establishment at Herbert Hall.
 Mrs. W. I'm glad you find it so my Lady wishes every
 thing to be handsome & I do my endeavour. &
 the house I believe has a good name
 Miss L Indeed ma'am it has every where - and
 it is quite scandalous of Miss Shuffleton to be so over nice &
 as to request syllabubs --- and Ma'am another thing she is
 so addicted to scandal - at tea yesterday Ma'am you was
 quite oppressed with it I remarked & if I laughed Ma'am at
 the stories she was putting in circulation it was purely
 to laugh scandal out of countenance. If one could but she
 ^just be laughed^ never out of [XXXXXXXX] Ma'am--

~~[XXX] — from them. I've something to say to you. Exit still talking of Lady [K]~~

Oh I wish Flora would take Millicent
to Brighton
that I might live with her
& then we shd. both be happy
Scene

Miss Millicent Chamberlayne and Miss Sophy Seymour

Mill. Do Sophy ring the bell – I must know why
the boy is not come back with the letter from
the port – I'm dying to hear what is
decided about Brighton – Are not you?
Sophy. – No indeed – (ringing the bell) I'd rather be
here than at Brighton—I am so happy here
~~walking and talking with Millicent walking~~
~~Mill—Well and couldn't~~
with Millicent walking
and talking & such beautiful walks! And
such entertaining books we have to read together
I only hope Millicent will not be taken
away from me to Brighton.
Mill. But you'd give a great deal

Mill - That you shall go
 Sophy - Oh more than that
 Mrs - More! - Then I am to go Millicent Flora?
 Lady R - That's as ^{as} hercraft may be Millicent
 - But it is more still Sophy - you'll think -
 Sophy - Well if you mean if I am to go with you
 too - I am very glad I dare say what'll be
 very happy with you - any where.
 Lady R - ~~But more so~~ That's as hercraft may be
 but I must tell you at once for I cannot
 keep the pleasure any longer - Aunt Gibbs
 Grandmamma intends to ask one of you
 very dear cousins, to live with us always
 Sophy - To live with you always - Oh how I should
 love that
 Mrs - But I am afraid it won't be me
 with ~~me~~ Aunt Ann afraid it will be me & that
 Mill - ^{before} ~~before~~ ^{justice} ~~justice~~ ^{was} ~~was~~ ^{for} ~~for~~ ^a ~~a~~ ^{long} ~~long ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{Brighton}
~~about~~ ^{and} ~~which~~ ^{is} ~~it~~ ^{to} ~~be~~ [?] ~~My~~ ^{dearest} ~~Flora~~
 Lady R - That's as hercraft may be - But I must
 tell you - I am to have the choice -
 Mill - You - The entire choice! - Then
 Sophy - Then I hope - I hope I shall keep myself
 from ~~being~~ ^{being} ~~jealous~~ ^{jealous} ~~not~~ ^{not} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~be~~ ^{be} ~~envious~~ ^{envious} ~~or~~ ^{or} ~~jealous~~ ^{jealous} ~~of~~ ^{of} ~~you~~ ^{you} ~~Millicent~~ ^{Millicent} - I'll do my best -
 Lady R - They tell you have reason my dear
 Sophy - That is true - But I know you'll always esteem
 me & love me too - tho I'm not so entertaining
 as Millicent
 Lady R - Well that is just the very truth & just
 what I was saying to Grandmamma & now
 I have said it to your face dear Sophy I am
 better pleased with myself
 Mill - Oh how happy Flora my dearest & dearest
 Flora we two should be laughing together
 at Brighton - do you remember the night
 we went to the play together ^{(put her arm within}
 Lady R - Oh yes I do & I never laughed so much in
 my life - You certainly ^{are} ~~are~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{most} ~~most ^{entertaining} ~~entertaining~~ ^{person} ~~person~~
 Mill - ^{being} ~~being~~ ^{jealous} ~~jealous~~ ^{not} ~~not~~ ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{be} ~~be ^{envious} ~~envious~~ ^{or} ^{or} ^{jealous} ~~jealous~~ ^{of} ^{of} ^{you} ~~you~~ ^{Millicent} ~~Millicent~~
~~so~~ ^{so} ~~entertaining~~ ^{entertaining} ~~person~~ ^{person} ~~as~~ ^{as} ~~Millicent~~ ^{Millicent}
 Grandmamma & now I've told you both the truth
 as to the rest which ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{choice} ~~choice~~ ^{you} ~~you~~ ^{should} ~~should~~ ^{choose} ~~choose~~ ^{of} ^{of}
 I am to ~~choose~~ ^{choose} ~~between~~ ^{between} ~~you~~ ^{you} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~Flora~~ ^{Flora} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~live~~ ^{live} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~us~~ ^{us} ~~always~~ ^{always}
 Mill - ^{It} ~~It~~ ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{the} ~~the ^{same} ~~same ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{me} ~~me~~ ^{as} ~~as ^{it} ~~it~~ ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{you} ~~you~~ ^{and} ^{and} ^{Flora} ~~Flora~~
 Sophy - I am to ~~choose~~ ^{choose} ~~between~~ ^{between} ~~you~~ ^{you} ~~and~~ ^{and} ~~Flora~~ ^{Flora} ~~to~~ ^{to} ~~live~~ ^{live} ~~with~~ ^{with} ~~us~~ ^{us} ~~always~~ ^{always}
 Mill - ^{It} ~~It~~ ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{the} ~~the~~ ^{same} ~~same ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{me} ~~me~~ ^{as} ~~as ^{it} ~~it~~ ^{is} ~~is~~ ^{to} ~~to~~ ^{you} ~~you~~ ^{and} ^{and} ^{Flora} ~~Flora~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~~

[IMAGE 5083]

Mill – That you shall go

Lady F – Oh more than that

Sophy More!—then you are to go Flora!—(sighing

Mill More! – Then I am to go ~~Millicent~~ Flora?—

Lady F – ~~But more [XXX]~~ That's as hereafter may be Millicent

- But it is more still Sophy – you'll think==

Sophy. --- Well if you mean – if I am to go with you

too --- I am very glad I dare say I shall be

very happy with you—anywhere

Lady F That's as hereafter may be

but I must tell you all at once for I can not

keep the pleasure any longer in. ~~Aunt Herbert~~ Grandmamma intends to ask one of you

my dear cousins, to live with us always

Sophy. To live with you always – Oh how I should

---but I'm afraid it won't be me

Mill – ~~And I'm afraid it will be me & that's~~

~~a hard price even for a trip to Brighton~~

^{^affecting eagerness^} ~~aloud~~ and which is it to be my dearest Flora

Lady F That's as hereafter may be – but I must ~~tell you~~

~~I am to have the choice~~

Mill – ~~The [XXX] choice~~ Then...

Sophy – ~~Then I hope – I hope I shall~~

~~Not be envious or~~

~~Jealous of you Millicent – I'll do my best~~

Lady F --- ~~stay tell you [have] reason my dear~~

Sophy ~~That is true – But I know you'll always esteem~~

~~me & love me too – tho I'm not so entertaining~~

~~as Millicent~~

Lady F – Well that is just the very truth & just

~~what I was saying to Grandmamma & now~~

~~have said it to your face dear Sophy I am~~

~~better pleased with myself~~

Mill. – Oh how happy Flora my dearest ~~dearest~~

Flora we two should be laughing together

at Brighton – do you remember the night

we went to the play together /puts her arm within

Lady Floras

Lady F Oh yes I do & I never laughed so much in

my life – you certainly Millicent are the

most entertaining person. Exeunt Lady F and Mill arm

In arm

Mill – taking Lady F – come then, I've something ~~I cannot~~ to tell you

~~too satirical. That's what I was saying to grand~~

~~mama & now I've told you both the truth~~

~~& as to the rest which I shall should share if~~

~~I [XXX] will the truth is I do not know myself~~

~~[& I am to thank take forever home to consider of it~~

Mill Come in the meantime let us walk. Exit Lady F.

Sophy sighing – As do I – But I hope I shall never be jealous.

Brighton Ambitious: Some Fragments

by Maria Edgeworth,
edited by Ellen B. Brewster

The following scenes are from an unpublished play by Maria Edgeworth c.1811, found in MS Eng misc. f.897. The fragments have been joined by a title and staging devices which, it is hoped, continue to draw attention to the incomplete and fragmentary nature of the surviving source material.

The editor has added and modernised some punctuation, whilst attempting to retain Edgeworth's characteristic use of dashes. Non-standard and archaic spellings (such as 'ax' for 'ask') are generally retained where they may be taken as indications of pronunciation and accent. Abbreviations have been written out in full and ampersands have been silently replaced with 'and'. The modern conventions for stage directions and displaying dialogue have been used, with further directions added where it might be useful to a reader or performer of the text.

This text was drawn up from the manuscript material and transcription contained in this booklet, and used for a performance on Tuesday 3rd December 2019, at the Centre for Digital Humanities at the Bodleian Library. The parts were read and performed by Jemima Hubberstey, Olivia Krauze and Eugenie Nevin.

Dramatis Personae (Staged)

Miss Lapell {Maid to Mrs Chamberlayne}
Mrs Wright {Housekeeper of Herbert Hall}
Miss Sophie Seymour {Cousin to Lady Flora}
Miss Millicent Chamberlayne {Cousin to Lady Flora}
Lady Flora {Granddaughter to Lady Herbert}

Dramatis Personae (Unstaged)

Lady Herbert {Grandmother to Lady Flora}
Mrs Chamberlayne {Mother of Millicent, Mistress of Miss Lapell}
Miss Shuffleton {Maid to Miss Millicent}
Rob {Manservant of Herbert Hall}

SCENE 1

[Herbert Hall - Housekeeper's Room. Projected on the wall is a full-length portrait of a man in military dress - think Sharpe, or Poldark - alongside images from MS Eng misc. f.897. In the middle of the room is a table with two chairs.]

[Enter Miss Lapell, sola.]

Miss Lapell: Brighton! Ah Brighton! I must and I will go to Brighton for I've bought the sweetest second hand pelisse¹ o'purpose - and have laid myself out for the season at Brighton. So let me consider - yes, that's the way it shall be - this old Lady Herbert is going there with her grand-daughter little Lady Flora next week - and I'll go with them as sure as my name's Lapell! -- Shuffleton too, would give her two eyes to go - and I'm a little afraid of her outplotting me, for she is as cunning as twenty foxes in one - But cunning as she bees I hope and trust she's on the wrong scent now - what she goes upon is, that being Miss Millicent's maid she must be taken as part of her baggage and Shuffleton I know reckons that Miss Milly will be the cousin axed to go on account of my Lady Flora's taking such a fancy to her - may be so - But now my plans are on surer ground - My scheme is to get to be my Lady Flora's own maid and then no matter which cousin is axed I must go with my Lady - and luckily my Lady Flora's maid's just gone and here's the place open and a word from Mrs Wright the housekeeper (who rules the roost with young and old above stairs as well as below) will get me the situation - and I can easy win Mrs Wright by a genteel Douceur² of a paper or a bond of my making instead of the dowdy she wears -- [thinking] or maybe I without going to that expense - a few fair words - oh leave that to me - If I don't flatter her up well - and here she comes -

[Enter Mrs Wright, with a tray of desert spoons and bowls.]

Miss Lapell: My dear Mrs Wright, if I enter'd rude I ax pardon but I have been waiting for you here to make my apologies - my dear Ma'am I'm afeared that Rob (who has no more manners than a calf when he's sent on a message) annoyed you about that there evening primrose ribbon and I'm so dismayd -

Mrs Wright: Ma'am it is all over now. You'll excuse Ma'am my going on with my desert laying out.

Miss Lapell: Indubitably, Ma'am. But my dear Mrs Wright I was looking at this here fine picture, [gestures] this full length of an officer that graces your apartment and often I've intended to axe (if it in't an indiscreet question) whose picture it may be.

Mrs Wright: The picture is my property Ma'am - a present from my kind lady - 'Tis a portrait of the young Lord my Lady Flora's father who was an officer -

Miss Lapell: [Interrupting] of the guards? Dear yes, I should have known the regimentals anywhere - 'Tis a prodigious likeness I dare say Ma'am

Mrs Wright: Yes, Ma'am it's such a likeness that it strikes everyone who ever saw my young lord.

¹ A fashionable military-inspired coat.

² A bribe.

Miss Lapell: And a very striking figure it is, an elegant fine presence of a gentleman and a military presence too which I doat upon -- My stars what a match my Lord will be for somebody.

Mrs Wright: Dear heart Ma'am he's dead - my young Lord died soon after he came to us after that wound and fever he had abroad -

Miss Lapell: What a thousand pities Ma'am! [*Abruptly changing subject*] But your Lady, I mean the old, the Dowager Lady about stairs is looking quite charming for her age - and I'm quite in love do you know Mrs Wright with hers and your stile of dress - as my Lady says, 'tis so [*in a French accent*] *vieille comme*.³

Mrs Wright: So what, Ma'am? I have no French -

Miss Lapell: So Ma'am it wasn't the fashion in your time - But the foreign tongue is of late greatly come up -

Mrs Wright: [*aside*] Greatly come *down*, I think -

Miss Lapell: But now if you'll believe me Mrs Wright I see a vast likeness Ma'am not only in dress and externities but in your air and speech and total manner. In every thing you're the very model of your own reverend Lady -

Mrs Wright: [*turning suddenly with a pleased manner*] Dear heart! Ma'am but do you really think so?

Miss Lapell: 'Pon honour so I do - for I was saying so in my bed no later than this morning to Miss Shuffleton - says I, Mrs Wright is the very model of her lady -

Mrs Wright: [*sets a chair for Miss Lapell*] While you are in my room won't you make yourself comfortable Ma'am?

Miss Lapell: Pray, Ma'am - I beg -

[*Miss Lapell seats herself and Mrs Wright seats herself, crossing her hands formally*]

Miss Lapell: So Mrs Wright the young people is all going this night to Huntingdon's brother's dancing master's ball and I'll engage ma'am in that ballroom there won't be the *nonpareil* of your own lovely Lady Flora -

Mrs Wright: What Ma'am when your own young lady is there Ma'am?

Miss Lapell: Yes indeed Ma'am - I speak with my eyes open, for to be candid with you Mrs Wright, though my own Lady has had the advantage - I grant you - in hint of polish and fashion masters and all that, yet I can't be blind Ma'am, and O must knock under in regard of natural beauty and grace and the *je ne sais quoi* for though my Lady Flora may'nt have all the *connections* I say a conspicuously regular bread feature in her face, if you *accept* her eyes - yet she's what the gentlemen call *fascinating* -

³ 'Like an old woman', or 'Old-wommanly'.

Mrs Wright: My lady Flora was but twelve years old last birthday Ma'am -

Miss Lapell: Indeed Ma'am? then she's very tall of her age -

Mrs Wright: We think Ma'am very little, for her age -

Miss Lapell: Dear Ma'am do you! – But I like little ladies best. They are so compact and Lady Flora's quite "*a pocket Venus*". How she'll be admired at Brighton! [*Angling*] Where you're going next week I understand Ma'am?

Mrs Wright: So I understand Ma'am -

Miss Lapell: Take her all in all, there's not a young lady in England I'd so wish to be attached to as Lady Flora -

Mrs Wright: But you be attached already be'nt you Ma'am to your own Lady?

Miss Lapell: Indeed Ma'm – if possible but confidentially speaking and trust to your discretion my dear Mrs. Wright I've made up my mind, directly to quit Mrs Chamberlayne for I'd sooner give up the month's salary – salary was nothing of the kind being no object with me, sooner than stay another month as Mrs Chamberlayne Ma'am is so difficult and since she's grown so nervous and Miss Millicent has such a temper and such a tongue and is so hard to fit in her dress and please her humours that I'd not live longer with them two, even if I could live with Miss Shuffleton Ma'am, whom you yourself must see there's no human possibility of putting up with - no - not for a globe of gold and this season. Now Ma'am I would not mention this to anyone but you, whom I took a fancy to from the first minute ever I set eyes upon you Mrs Wright.

Mrs Wright: [*aside*] I wish I could return the compliment - [*aloud*] I am oblig'd to you Ma'am -

Miss Lapell: And Mrs Wright I have a secret to tell you too -

Mrs Wright: [*rising*] Oh dear Ma'am don't tell me any of your secrets, I am the worst person in the world for secrets -

Miss Lapell: Oh dear Ma'am don't disparage yourself so – I'm sure I'd trust you as soon as my own mother with my secrets -

Mrs Wright: [*moving away*] But indeed Miss Lapell I have no time for secrets -

Miss Lapell: But my dear Mrs Wright [*holding her*] this won't keep you a minute - it's a family secret which your domestic nature can't but be interested to hear of a near connection of your Lady's -

Mrs Wright: [*resisting Miss Lapell's grip*] My Lady will inform me I'm sure Ma'am in proper course -

Miss Lapell: Of course, Ma'am, if she knowed it – But Ma'am the thing is - I smell a rat!

Mrs Wright: [*starting*] Do you Ma'am? - then I hate a rat.

Miss Lapell: Oh Ma'am 'tis only in the nose of my fancy, but indeed it was Miss Shuffleton smelt it first to do her justice, and she put me upon the scent which in plain English is this Ma'am, that the Chamberlaynes is believed --

SCRAP 1

[Offstage, a sound of a tearing manuscript page is heard. Mrs Wright retrieves six dishes piled with assorted fruit and jelly and places them on the table. Miss Lapell and Mrs Wright resume their seats.]

Miss Lapell: ... and so would you Ma'am I'm morally certain, - so that with your friendly admonition and advice I don't doubt but we might - is she wa'n't so old and inveterate - *cure* poor Miss Shuffleton of that habit of scandal as disparages her, so that as her friend I can't help but feel for her.

Mrs Wright: Ma'am I do not pretend to be Miss Shuffleton's friend -

Miss Lapell: *[aside]* That's well, that's settled -

Mrs Wright: *[gestures]* My six long dishes - prunes and melons and the four brandy forests which is apricots, cherries, plums and peaches - you'll excuse my going on with my desert Ma'am *[Reaching for one]*

Miss Lapell: Induitably Ma'am -

SCRAP 2

[Offstage, the sound of shearing scissor blades. Mrs Wright, pudding in hand, raises her spoon to her mouth. Before she can eat, Miss Lapell reaches for her arm to speak. Mrs Wright puts down the spoon, resigned.]

Miss Lapell: And another thing, Mrs Wright, I was quite ashamed about the *exceptions* as Miss Shuffleton made today to the luncheon when I'm sure everything is on such a genteel scale in the establishment at Herbert Hall.

Mrs Wright: I'm glad you find it so - my Lady wishes every thing to be handsome and I do my endeavour. And the house I believe has a good name.

Miss Lapell: Indeed ma'am it has every where - and it is quite scandalous of Miss Shuffleton to be so over nice and as to request syllabubs⁴!

[At the mention of pudding, Mrs Wright raises her spoon once again to her mouth. Again she is thwarted.]

Miss Lapell: And Ma'am another thing, she is so addicted to scandal - at tea yesterday Ma'am you was quite oppressed with it. I remarked and laughed Ma'am at the stories she was putting in circulation - circulation it was purely to laugh scandal out of countenance.

SCENE 2

⁴ A milky sweet drink or pudding, curdled with some kind of acid, such as alcohol or citrus juice.

[Exit Miss Lapell and Mrs Wright, with the uneaten pudding. A bell is placed on the table.]

[Enter Miss Millicent Chamberlayne and Miss Sophy Seymour.]

Miss Millicent: Do Sophy ring the bell - I must know why the boy is not come back with the letter from the port - I'm dying to hear what is decided about Brighton - are not you?

Miss Sophy: No, indeed *[ringing the bell]* - I'd rather be here than at Brighton - I'm so happy here with you walking and talking and such beautiful walks! And such entertaining books we have to read together. I only hope you will not be taken away from me to Brighton.

[Enter Lady Flora, with a letter.]

Miss Millicent: *[joking]* But you'd give a great deal that you shall go.

Lady Flora: *[hearing]* Oh more than that.

Miss Sophy: More! - then you are to go Flora! *[sighing]*

Miss Millicent: *[simultaneously]* More! - then I am to go Flora?

Lady Flora: That's as hereafter may be Millicent - but it is more still Sophy - you'll think -

Miss Sophy: - Well if you mean - if I am to go with you too - *[blandly]* I am very glad, I dare say I shall be very happy with you - anywhere.

Lady Flora: That's as hereafter may be, but I must tell you all at once for I cannot keep the pleasure any longer in. Grandmamma intends to ask one of you my dear cousins, to live with us always.

Miss Sophy: *[apparently joyfully]* To live with you always – Oh how I should - but I'm afraid it won't be me.

Miss Millicent: *[aside, to Miss Sophy]* And I'm afraid it will be me, and that's a hard price even for a trip to Brighton. *[affecting eagerness]* And which is it to be my dearest Flora?

Lady Flora: That's as hereafter may be - but I must tell you I am to have the choice.

Miss Millicent: The choice? Then -

Miss Sophy: Then I hope - *[stifling laughter]* I hope I shall not be envious or jealous of you Millicent - I'll do my best - *[moves to leave]*

Lady Flora: *[playfully]* Stay till you have the reason my dear.

Miss Sophy: That is true - but I know you'll always esteem me and love me too - though I'm not so *entertaining* as Millicent.

Lady Flora: Well that is just the very truth and just what I was saying to Grandmamma and now I have said it to your face. Dear Sophy I am better pleased with myself.

Miss Millicent: [*fawning*] Oh how happy Flora, my dearest Flora, we two should be laughing together at Brighton - do you remember the night we went to the play together?
[*puts her arm within Lady Flora's*]

Lady Flora: Oh yes I do and I never laughed so much in my life - you certainly Millicent are the most entertaining person.

Miss Millicent: [*Taking Lady Flora, or perhaps being taken*] Come then, I've something to tell you - it's too satirical to tell you here. Come, in the mean time let us walk.

[*Exeunt Lady Flora and Miss Millicent, arm in arm.*]

Miss Sophy: [*knowingly*] But I hope I shall never be jealous!

[*Exit Miss Sophy.*]