Kate and Marlow

MISS HARDCASTLE. (after a pause). But you have not been wholly an
observer, I presume, sir: the ladies, I should hope, have employed some
part of your addresses.

MARLOW. (Relapsing into timidity.) Pardon me, madam, I--I--I--as yet
have studied--only--to--deserve them.

MISS HARDCASTLE. And that, some say, is the very worst way to obtain
them.

MARLOW. Perhaps so, madam. But I love to converse only with the more
grave and sensible part of the sex. But I'm afraid I grow tiresome.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Not at all, sir; there is nothing I like so much as
grave conversation myself; I could hear it for ever. Indeed, I have
often been surprised how a man of sentiment could ever admire those
light airy pleasures, where nothing reaches the heart.

MARLOW. It's----a disease----of the mind, madam. In the variety of
tastes there must be some who, wanting a relish----for----um--a--um.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I understand you, sir. There must be some, who,
wanting a relish for refined pleasures, pretend to despise what they
are incapable of tasting.

MARLOW. My meaning, madam, but infinitely better expressed. And I
can't help observing----a----

MISS HARDCASTLE. (Aside.) Who could ever suppose this fellow
impudent upon some occasions? (To him.) You were going to observe,
sir----

MARLOW. I was observing, madam--I protest, madam, I forget what I was
going to observe.

MISS HARDCASTLE. (Aside.) I vow and so do I. (To him.) You were
observing, sir, that in this age of hypocrisy--something about
hypocrisy, sir.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. In this age of hypocrisy there are few who upon
strict inquiry do not--a--a--a--

MISS HARDCASTLE. I understand you perfectly, sir.

MARLOW. (Aside.) Egad! and that's more than I do myself.

MISS HARDCASTLE. You mean that in this hypocritical age there are few
that do not condemn in public what they practise in private, and think
they pay every debt to virtue when they praise it.

MARLOW. True, madam; those who have most virtue in their mouths, have
least of it in their bosoms. But I'm sure I tire you, madam.

MISS HARDCASTLE. Not in the least, sir; there's something so
agreeable and spirited in your manner, such life and force--pray, sir,
go on.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. I was saying----that there are some occasions,
when a total want of courage, madam, destroys all the----and puts
us----upon a--a--a--

MISS HARDCASTLE. I agree with you entirely; a want of courage upon
some occasions assumes the appearance of ignorance, and betrays us when
we most want to excel. I beg you'll proceed.

MARLOW. Yes, madam. Morally speaking, madam--But I see Miss Neville
expecting us in the next room. I would not intrude for the world.

MISS HARDCASTLE. I protest, sir, I never was more agreeably
entertained in all my life. Pray go on.

MARLOW. Yes, madam, I was----But she beckons us to join her. Madam,
shall I do myself the honour to attend you?

MISS HARDCASTLE. Well, then, I'll follow.

MARLOW. (Aside.) This pretty smooth dialogue has done for me.
[Exit.]

MISS HARDCASTLE. (Alone.) Ha! ha! ha! Was there ever such a sober,
sentimental interview? I'm certain he scarce looked in my face the
whole time. Yet the fellow, but for his unaccountable bashfulness, is
pretty well too. He has good sense, but then so buried in his fears,
that it fatigues one more than ignorance. If I could teach him a
little confidence, it would be doing somebody that I know of a piece of
service. But who is that somebody?--That, faith, is a question I can
scarce answer.