

EXTRACTS FROM
KNOWLES' COMEDY OF "OLD MAIDS"

DANDYISM—INDEPENDENCE.

Sir Philip.

Men call me fop,
And so I am, so will be, and why not ?
It is my humour ! Better fop than fool ;
And he's a fool that does not please himself.
And so the more they smile, the more they may ;
The more I'll give them cause, and smile myself,
Sitting at ease in mine own snug content,
Wearing a cheery, frank, and saucy cheek !
Now tell me, Robert, what men say of me ;
What comeliness they give me credit for,
Besides my person which I know will pass ?

Robert.

They say, though rather vain, you are very brave.

Sir Philip.

What is it to be brave ? I give Heaven thanks
I was not born a spaniel !—What had I
To do with that ? Find something of mine own
For which they praise me, I will thank them then !
What say they to my gait ? I made my gait
Myself ! There's matter in men's gait, good

Robert !

Therein you have the impress of their callings ;
There is the clerk's gait, which implies obedience ;
The shop-keeper's, half service, half command ;
The merchant's, o'er revolving speculations ;
The lawyer's, quick and keen at quirks and flaws ;
The student's, ponderous as piles of folios ;
The courtier's, supple, prompt for courtesies ;
The soldier's, keeping time with drums and trum-
pets ;

And twenty others—all most common-place !
But there's one gait that's paramount of all—
The gentleman's, that speaks not any calling ;
Shows him at liberty to please himself ;
And while it meditates offence to none,
Observes a proper negligence towards all,
And imperturbable complacency.

THE BEAU.

What shall I call thee now ?
Ware from the milliner's, the tailor's, or
The cordwainer's, or jeweller's or what ?
Thyself is the least part of thee ! The man
Is trimmings to the dress.—Thou art a ruff
Of plaits elaborate and infinite ;
Thy vest for curiosity of style.
Armour of diamonds upon velvet plaited,
Were better given a cabinet to keep,
As theme for wonderment to after time,
Than left provision for the hungry air
That's sure to eat it up ! Thy jerkin runs
Enormous risk from thy ambition ! trying
With satin slashes, ribbon-knots, and lace,
How close to woman's gear a man's may come,
And still appear a man's—thy trunks partake

Its divers sins ; and for thy hose, who says,
In town or out of town, thou walk'st not in
A shrubbery, why let him own he is blind
To save his credit for veracity !
Thy very rapier would abjure the man !
Its handle vouches for the laceman more
Than the cutler—nay, nor him alone,
'Twas plann'd in concert with a milliner !
Which of the precious metals has the honour
To help it to a blade ? It cannot be
A thing so exquisitely delicate
Could pair with homely steel ?

WOMAN AND MAN.

Leave an old maid

Alone to make a man, reforming him
After the fashion likes her. Women prate
Who talk of conquest, while they stoop to love !
What's sway for sway, but mere equality
Wherein the party least deserves to rule—
And that, past all dispute, is man, the lord !—
Ne'er rests till he disturbs the perfect poise,
Into his own scale throws his might—that good
Wherein the brute hath mastery o'er him—
And to the beam heaves up the counter one,
To hang there at his will ! Had women but
The thews of men ! My very girlhood solved
The riddle of their sovereignty ! brought up
With two male cubs of cousins, was not I
A likely one the relative deserts
Of women and of men to put to proof ?
And didn't I ? I beat them to a stand !
We started all together ! Where were they
When I could read ? Why in the spelling-book !
When I was in subtraction, where were they ?
A cudgelling their brains to cast a sum
Of ten lines in addition ! I could rhyme
My tables backwards, while they fought with
pounds,
Shillings and pence, that kept the upper hand
And laughed at them for masters ! I could parse,
While they on footing of most shy acquaintance
Kept with their parts of speech ! In one thing only
I found I met my betters—and e'en there
I tried them, though I came off second best—
I could not beat them when they quarrelled with
me,

Because they held my hands ! They were afraid
To fight me ! But Sir Philip thrives apace,
And all of my performing ? And what pains
He takes to please me, with his air, his gait,
His dress, and most of all his books ! How fond
He is of study ? I'll do all I can
To encourage him ! At last, he'll make a man !

BEAUTY.

I lay light value upon beauty only.
Then it is hard to say what beauty is.
You like the Roman outline, I the Grecian—
Where's beauty ? Beauty, may I trust report,