

## *Beau Lovely*

As Mr. Ripple had prophesied, the indiscretions of his past in course of time acquired a romantick mystery of their own. He was credited in turn with a faithless wife immured in a Gothick dungeon in the North-West of the Island of Sicily, with a prodigiously passionate affair with a German princess in which he was said to have pinked four Royal Dukes, and with innumerable other entanglements quite impossible to recount. All these tales only added to his prestige, while his wealth and amiability gave him a reputation second to none of the Beaux of the past. He wrote a number of verses, but never published another volume, and was probably the original whom Sir Benjamin Backbite copied, though his reasons for not printing were quite different from those of the later fop.

He would sometimes return early from assembly, rout, or ridotto to pay a visit to Mr. Ripple. He would usually find the latter engaged in a game of picket with Sir George Repington and, after entertaining the two old gentlemen with a witty and satirical account of the evening's entertainment, he would walk slowly back to Dragon Lodge, stare meditatively at the new motto he had adopted, *Fui decorus*, step into a small ivory room that opened out of the massive library and take from a cedar-wood drawer a white swansdown muff.

EXPLICIT