

superabundant humble servant Sir Joseph Wittoll, Knight. Hem! Hem!

SHARPER: Sir Joseph Wittoll!

SIR JOSEPH: The same, sir, of Wittoll-hall in Comitatu Bucks.¹

SHARPER: Is it possible! Then I am happy to have obliged the mirror of knighthood and pink of courtesy in the age. Let me embrace you.

SIR JOSEPH: O Lord, sir!

SHARPER: My loss I esteem as a trifle repaid with interest, since it has purchased me the friendship and acquaintance of the person in the world whose character I admire.

SIR JOSEPH: You are only pleased to say so, sir. – But pray, if I may be so bold, what is that loss you mention?

SHARPER: O term it no longer so, sir. In the scuffle last night I only dropped a bill of a hundred pound, which I confess I came, half despairing, to recover; but thanks to my better fortune –

SIR JOSEPH: You have found it, sir, then it seems? I profess I'm heartily glad.

SHARPER: Sir, your humble servant – I don't question but you are, that you have so cheap an opportunity of expressing your gratitude and generosity; since the refunding so trivial a sum will wholly acquit you and doubly engage me.

SIR JOSEPH [*aside*]: What a dickens does he mean by a trivial sum? But ha'n't you found it, sir?

SHARPER: No otherwise, I vow to Gad, but in my hopes in you, sir.

SIR JOSEPH: Humph!

SHARPER: But that's sufficient. – 'Twere injustice to doubt the honour of Sir Joseph Wittoll.

SIR JOSEPH: O Lord, sir.

SHARPER: You are above (I'm sure) a thought so low, to suffer me to lose what was ventured in your service; nay, 'twas in a manner paid down for your deliverance; 'twas so much lent you. And you scorn, I'll say that for you –

SIR JOSEPH: Nay, I'll say that for myself (with your leave, sir), I do scorn a dirty thing. But agad! I'm a little out of pocket at present.

1. *Comitatu Bucks*: Buckinghamshire.

SHARPER: Pshaw! you can't want a hundred pound. Your word is sufficient anywhere. 'Tis but borrowing so much dirt; you have large acres and can soon repay it. Money is but dirt, Sir Joseph – mere dirt.

SIR JOSEPH: But, I profess, 'tis a dirt I have washed my hands of at present; I have laid it all out upon my Back.

SHARPER: Are you so extravagant in clothes, Sir Joseph?

SIR JOSEPH: Ha, ha, ha, a very good jest, I profess, ha, ha, ha, a very good jest, and I did not know that I had said it and that's a better jest than t'other. 'Tis a sign you and I ha'n't been long acquainted; you have lost a good jest for want of knowing me. – I only mean a friend of mine whom I call my Back; he sticks as close to me, and follows me through all dangers. He is indeed back, breast and headpiece as it were to me – agad, he's a brave fellow. Pauh, I am quite another thing when I am with him; I don't fear the devil (God bless us) almost if he be by. Ah – had he been with me last night –

SHARPER [*angrily*]: If he had sir, what then? He could have done no more, nor perhaps have suffered so much. Had he a hundred pound to lose?

SIR JOSEPH: O Lord, sir, by no means (but I might have saved a hundred pound). I meant innocently, as I hope to be saved, sir (a damned hot fellow); only, as I was saying, I let him have all my ready money to redeem his great sword from limbo.² – But sir, I have a letter of credit to Alderman Fondlewife, as far as two hundred pound, and this afternoon you shall see I am a person, such a one as you would wish to have met with.

SHARPER [*aside*]: That you are I'll be sworn. [*Aloud.*] Why, that's great and like yourself.

[*Enter BLUFFE.*]

SIR JOSEPH: Oh, here 'a comes. – Ah, my Hector of Troy, welcome my bully, my Back; agad, my heart has gone a-pit-pat for thee.

BLUFFE: How how, my young knight? Not for fear I hope; he that knows me must be a stranger to fear.

2. *from limbo*: out of pawn.

SIR JOSEPH: Nay, agad, I hate fear ever since I had like to have died of a fright. But –

BLUFFE: But? Look you here boy, here's your antidote, here's your Jesuit's powder³ for a shaking fit. – But who hast thou got with thee, is he of mettle?

[*Laying his hand upon his sword.*]

SIR JOSEPH: Ay bully, a devilish smart fellow, a' will fight like a cock.

BLUFFE: Say you so? then I honour him. But has he been abroad? for every cock will fight upon his own dunghill.

SIR JOSEPH: I don't know, but I'll present you –

BLUFFE: I'll recommend myself. – Sir, I honour you; I understand you love fighting, I reverence a man that loves fighting. Sir, I kiss your hilts.

SHARPER: Sir, your servant. But you are misinformed, for unless it be to serve my particular friend, as Sir Joseph here, my country, or my religion, or in some very justifiable cause, I'm not for it.

BLUFFE: O Lord, I beg your pardon, sir, I find you are not of my palate; you can't relish a dish of fighting without sweet sauce. Now I think fighting for fighting sake's sufficient cause; fighting to me's religion and the laws.

SIR JOSEPH: Ah, well said my hero; was not that great, sir? By the Lord Harry he says true; fighting is meat, drink and cloth to him. But Back, this gentleman is one of the best friends I have in the world, and saved my life last night. – You know I told you.

BLUFFE: Ay! Then I honour him again. – Sir, may I crave your name?

SHARPER: Ay sir, my name's Sharper.

SIR JOSEPH: Pray, Mr Sharper, embrace my Back. – Very well. – By the Lord Harry, Mr Sharper, he's as brave a fellow as Cannibal, are not you bully – Back?

SHARPER: Hannibal I believe you mean, Sir Joseph.

BLUFFE: Undoubtedly he did, sir; faith, Hannibal was a very pretty fellow. But, Sir Joseph, comparisons are odious – Hannibal was a very pretty fellow in those days, it must be granted. But alas, sir,

3. *Jesuit's powder*: quinine; first brought to Europe from Peru by Jesuit missionaries.

were he alive now, he would be nothing, nothing in the earth.

SHARPER: How sir? I make a doubt if there be at this day a greater General breathing.

BLUFFE: Oh, excuse me, sir; have you served abroad, sir?

SHARPER: Not I really, sir.

BLUFFE: Oh, I thought so. Why then you can know nothing, sir; I'm afraid you scarce know the history of the late war in Flanders,⁴ with all its particulars.

SHARPER: Not I, sir, no more than public letters or Gazettes tell us.

BLUFFE: Gazette! Why, there again now. – Why, sir, there are not three words of truth, the year round, put into the Gazette. I'll tell you a strange thing now as to that. – You must know, sir, I was resident in Flanders the last campaign, had a small post there; but no matter for that. Perhaps, sir, there was a scarce anything of moment done but an humble servant of yours, that shall be nameless, was an eye-witness of – I won't say had the greatest share in't. Though I might say that too, since I name nobody you know. – Well, Mr Sharper, would you think it? In all this time – as I hope for a truncheon⁵ – this rascally Gazette-writer never so much as once mentioned me – Not once, by the wars. – Took no more notice than as if Noll Bluffe had not been in the land of the living.

SHARPER: Strange!

SIR JOSEPH: Yet, by the Lord Harry 'tis true, Mr Sharper, for I went every day to coffee-houses to read the Gazette myself.

BLUFFE: Ay, ay, no matter. – You see, Mr Sharper, after all I am content to retire. – Live a private person. – Scipio⁶ and others have done it.

SHARPER [*aside*]: Impudent rogue.

SIR JOSEPH: Ay, this damned modesty of yours. – Agad, if he would put in for't he might be made General himself yet.

BLUFFE: Oh, fie, no Sir Joseph! You know I hate this.

SIR JOSEPH: Let me but tell Mr Sharper a little, how you ate fire

4. *late war in Flanders*: probably the indecisive campaign of 1691.

5. *truncheon*: a marshal's baton.

6. *Scipio*: Scipio Africanus, Roman general. He defeated Hannibal but later retired from public life because of personal and political rivalries.