

Q. 8. Sir Willfull offers a refreshing contrast to the rest of characters, noted for their urban wit and licence. Discuss.

Ans. Sir Willfull comes from the country— Shropshire, and claims little of the polish and elegance of town-bred people as his half-brother, Witwoud, and Petulant and Fainall. We do not bring Mirabell into comparison with him, for he is a solitary figure, having little in common with those with whom he is brought into contact. Witwoud wants to ignore him. Of course, when he comes in a riding dress, attended by a footman, he greets the gentleman (Witwoud and Petulant) and Mrs. Marwood after a while— “Save you, gentleman and lady.” He cannot spot out his half-brother, “so be-cravated and so be periwigged.” Witwoud holds back from him. And Sir Willfull may well-ridicule his affected humility— “a flap-dragon for your service, sir; and a hare’s foot, and a hare’s scut for your service, sir and you be so cold and so courtly.” Witwoud can, but plead that it is not modish to know relations in town. And this Sir Willfull finds in his ‘Inns o’ Court breeding,” which he can little appreciate when later he complains to his aunt, Lady Wishfort, of his half-brother’s behaviour, she defends Witwoud as a wit and believe that when Sir Willfull has been abroad, he will understand raillery better. As a matter of fact, Lady Wishfort thinks that her nephew is a little “unbred”.

According to the people whom Sir Willfull meets here, he is an “unbred” country gentleman. He contrasts with them because he is little infected by their vices. He has none of their insincerity, affection and artificial air and grace, and convinced little of their moral delinquencies. He may be blunt and unceremonial in his speech, but he knows none of trickery. He seems to bring a breath of fresh air into a foul atmosphere in which Fainall and Mrs. Marwood shamelessly thrash out their intimate personal relations and make no secret of the motive for which each is acting— Fainall to seize the fortune of Millamant, and Mrs. Marwood to prevent the union of Mirabell and Millamant, and to get Fainall to repudiate his wife. It is a world, ridden with vices, named and unnamed, gross sensuality and vile cupidity. Sir Willfull seems to be out of place here. As we find later, he is dragged into a complicated affairs the plot of Mirabell and the counter-plot of Fainall and Mrs. Marwood, but he does all that is fair and honourable. He finally helps in uniting Mirabell and Millamant. He seems to be the only man of honour in the play, and he has to bear an important part towards the end. It is better for him that he has none of urban wit and accomplished and elegance which cover licentiousness and even villainy.