

CHAMPAGNE.

A Petite Comédie.


(Adapted from the French.)

BY

FREDERICK EDWARD WEATHERLY, B.A.

AND

ALFRED W. MOORE WEATHERLY.

 All applications respecting the performance of this Play to be made to
F. E. WEATHERLY, Esq., *Brasenose College, Oxford.*

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CHAMPAGNE.

Characters.

COLONEL DU MAURIER ...

FRANÇOIS DU MAURIER (*his Nephew,*
in love with Marie)

DUCLOS (*betrothed to Marie*) ...

LE BŒUF (*Friend of François Du*
Maurier)

CHAMPAGNE (*Servant of François Du*
Maurier)

JASMIN (*Servant of Colonel Du Maurier*)

MADAME DU MAURIER (*Wife of*
Colonel Du Maurier)

MARIE (*Daughter of Colonel Du Maurier,*
in love with François)

MADAME MIRVILLE (*Niece of Colonel*
Du Maurier, a young Widow) ...

Notary, two Police Officers, Postillion, three Servants.

SCENE—Paris—in the Mansion of Colonel Du Maurier.

TIME—1793.

CHAMPAGNE.

SCENE.—*Apartments in the Mansion of Colonel Du Maurier. Doors, R. and L.; window, C, opening to ground; garden at back. Moonlight.*

LE BŒUF enters hastily through window, C.; steps to writing table, and reads by one of the wax lights burning thereon.

LE BŒUF. (*reading note*) "M. Le Bœuf is requested to be in the garden room of Colonel Du Maurier at eight o'clock this evening. The little gate from the park is open all day." No signature! H'm! h'n! Most extraordinary thing; some pretty girl, perhaps. Glorious!—Footsteps! There are others coming in here. *Retires behind screen.*

Enter FRANÇOIS and CHAMPAGNE, both in cloaks, through window, C; FRANÇOIS gives cloak to CHAMPAGNE, who takes it and crosses behind screen, to place it on chair, R.; knocks up against LE BŒUF, who comes hastily forward.

CHAMPAGNE. Beg pardon, sir; didn't see you.

FRANÇOIS. Ah, good evening, my dear Le Bœuf.

LE BŒUF. You, Du Maurier? (*both shake hands heartily*) How did you come here? What is the meaning of this extraordinary get-up? This wig and uniform? Not your own, I know.

FRAN. Only a matter of safety. I've just shot my first lieutenant in a duel; so I've come to hide in Paris. I should be known so easily in my own uniform; and as my uncle and I are almost exactly the same in age, height, and figure, I thought I'd put on his wig and uniform; and, 'pon my word, I scarcely know myself. So glad to find you punctual at the rendezvous.

LE BŒUF. *Rendezvous!* How? What? Has she promised to meet you, too?

FRAN. She! What she?

LE BŒUF. She! Why the pretty girl, to be sure. Here's the note.

CHAM. Pretty girl, sir? (*comes, C., between them—is rebuffed, and retires*)

LE BŒUF. I don't mind showing it you; you are my friend, Du Maurier.

FRAN. Sweet pretty creature.

LE BŒUF. Eh? What are you laughing at?

FRAN. I am the pretty girl!

LE BŒUF. You?

CHAM. Yes, sir, he's the pretty girl, sir.

FRAN. Silence, you rascal.

CHAM. Yes, sir, dumb as an oyster.

LE BŒUF. You the pretty girl; the devil you are!

FRAN. Yes, I wrote the note.

LE BŒUF. Didn't know you wrote so well.

CHAM. (*aside*) Oh, the ignorance of some people!

LE BŒUF. Why didn't you sign your name; (*very loud and angry*) You've made a perfect fool of me.

FRAN. Come, come, it doesn't make any difference.

LE BŒUF. Eh? What?

CHAM. That's master's opinion, sir. It don't make any difference.

LE BŒUF. Oh, hang your difference and indifference, too, I say. But, there, we won't quarrel. (*shaking hands heartily with FRANÇOIS, turns, and finds his hand seized by CHAMPAGNE, who repeats the business—LE BŒUF trying to disengage himself in vain*)

CHAM. Quite right, sir; I hate quarrels. (*goes up, c.*)

LE BŒUF. (*going*) Good-bye, Du Maurier.

FRAN. Stay! Why are you in such a hurry? I want your help before any one else has seen me here.

LE BŒUF. All right, all right; depend on me. But I must be off now. Important business, really.

FRAN. Oh, yes, of course, just when I want you. It strikes me a petticoat's your important business.

LE BŒUF. No, no, my dear Du Maurier, I assure you; no, but I must go, really. They expect me.

FRAN. Where?

LE BŒUF. At the Hotel d'Angleterre.

CHAM. Oh!

FRAN. Important business, very!

CHAM. Very!

LE BŒUF. No, but, really, joking apart; I am going to see Mademoiselle Clarice, the sister of—why the very fellow you shot! I'll speak to her for you. Between you and me, I think she fancies me rather.

FRAN. Important business, very!

CHAM. Very!

FRAN. Well, if you see my sister, Madame Mirville, tell her somebody is waiting for her here. Don't mention my name, though. That's all I want.

LE BŒUF. Really haven't time—your sister, eh? Well, I think I can manage it. *Au revoir!* *Exit, c.*

FRAN. I don't want his help so much, after all. Perhaps no one will think of pursuing me. It's to see my sweet little Marie, that's what I want. *(throws himself in a chair, L. of L. table)*

CHAM. *(coming forward)* Ah, sir, what a lucky dev—fellow you are, sir, to be sure! You'll see your young lady, and I! *(sighs)* my wife! We live like angels—my wife and I, when—a dozen double deal doors and fifty milestones lie between us. *(goes behind screen, R.)*

FRAN. Hush! *(sits in chair, face in hands)*

Enter MADAME MIRVILLE, through door, R.

MAD. M. Where can I have left that book? *(looks about—then goes towards table—leans on back of FRANÇOIS' chair—in order to reach across table, places her hand accidentally on his head—screams)* Oh, a man! *(runs towards door, R.—CHAMPAGNE puts head out from screen)* Another! *(screams)*

FRAN. It's only me—I! *(rising)*

CHAM. It's only I—me! *(from other side of screen)*

MAD. M. Oh, I am so glad to see you. *(embracing FRANÇOIS)* And back again so soon!

CHAM. Oh, this is too much—too much. *(runs behind screen)*

MAD. M. It's so nice of you to surprise us. But you wrote you had a long journey before you, and couldn't be back at the very earliest for a month.

FRAN. I wrote? To whom?

MAD. M. Why, to my aunt. But where is Monsieur Duclos?

FRAN. Monsieur Duclos! Who's he?

MAD. M. Your future son-in-law.

FRAN. *(slowly)* Who—on—earth—do you think I am?

MAD. M. Think you are? Why, my uncle, to be sure.

FRAN. Good heavens! Even my sister doesn't know me.

CHAM. *(from behind screen)* No; well, I never! *(pops back again)*

MAD. M. You my brother?

FRAN. Yes, to be sure; look at me.

MAD. M. Oh, nonsense; my brother is with his regiment at Strasbourg; my brother wears his own hair; besides, this isn't his uniform. And yet, the likeness is very great.

FRAN. It ought to be. If I'm not most like myself, I don't know whom I ought to be like. Eh, Champagne?

CHAM. *(popping out suddenly from screen)* No, sir; yes, sir!

MAD. M. *(screams)* Oh!

CHAM. Oh! (*imitating*) It's only Champagne, madame!

FRAN. I had a duel with my first lieutenant, and was obliged to disguise myself. (*taking off his wig*)

MAD. M. Ah, yes, I see it now. But the likeness is marvellous, certainly.

FRAN. My uncle is away, then?

MAD. M. Yes; he is gone to arrange about the marriage.

FRAN. What marriage?

MAD. M. Marie's.

FRAN. Marie going to be married? (*very much astonished*)

MAD. M. Yes, I thought you knew all about it.

FRAN. Not I, indeed.

CHAM. No; oh, no, not a single word; we don't know a single word.

MAD. M. Monsieur Duclos, an old brother officer of uncle's, has asked for Marie for his son. He lives at Toulon. Young Monsieur Duclos is said to be a very nice fellow; but we haven't seen him yet. Uncle has gone to Toulon to meet him; thence they go somewhere or other to take possession of some estate or other. We expect them in about a month; and if you are here then you can dance at the wedding.

FRAN. My dearest girl! Champagne, my good fellow, help me! Tell me what to do, for heaven's sake. (*falls in chair*)

MAD. M. What's the matter, Frank? (*kneeling to him*)

CHAM. (*coming to back of chair*) My master's in love with his cousin; that's all, madame.

MAD. M. In love with Marie? Why didn't you tell me before?

CHAM. (*taking the question for himself*) I, madame?

MAD. M. No.

CHAM. Oh!

FRAN. This marriage must not, shall not take place! Never, I swear it.

MAD. M. I don't see how it is to be stopped. Everything is settled: Both the fathers agree; the settlements are drawn up; the bridegroom is only wanted to sign them, and finish the matter.

CHAM. Patience, my dear young lady and gentleman, patience! Listen to me. (*steps between them*) You mightn't imagine it, but it's a fact notwithstanding, I've a sublime idea.

FRAN. Out with it, then.

CHAM. (*to FRANÇOIS*) You have already begun to personate your uncle; stick to it. Play the part through.

MAD. M. A glorious plan, and marry your niece.

CHAM. (*to BOTH*) Excuse paternal abruptness—don't be in a hurry; listen to me. (*to FRANÇOIS*) You are now master of the house and situation. Your first thing to do is to break off

this engagement of your cousin's. You haven't brought back the bridegroom from Toulon because—because—because he's dead! Meanwhile, Madame Du Maurier receives a letter from you (nephew, of course) asking to marry your cousin. That's my part. I'm the courier who brings the letter from Strasbourg. Madame Du Maurier likes the idea immensely; tells the whole thing to you (husband, you know). Of course she ought to tell her husband everything; all wives should. You are immensely delighted, and agree with her. Of course, all husbands should—shouldn't. So far, so good. Next, get off as soon as you can; business, anything you like. Off you go, leaving your aunt—I mean your wife—to arrange the marriage. On the appointed day you turn up in your own uniform. The marriage proceeds—your fair cousin is your wife. Enter the uncle with the bridegroom! That interesting young traveller is, however, too late; and the only thing for him to do is to turn round again and go back to the place of his birth, and seek a wife there, or in Kamschatka; (*very rapidly*) which place, I might remark by the way, would be highly conducive to allaying the passionate disappointment which in all probability will burst from the bosom of the aforesaid interesting young traveller.

FRAN. But what about my uncle? Do you think—

CHAM. Oh, he'll flare up, of course. But that's nothing; he's very fond of you, and still fonder of his daughter. You can easily talk him over. Promise him a roomful of little grandchildren as like him as you are. He'll laugh, get mollified, and the whole thing is square.

MAD. M. I declare, I'm quite excited. I never knew such a mad idea.

CHAM. Mad! The idea's perfectly heavenly—perfectly heavenly!

FRAN. It's jovial enough, but I fear hardly practicable. I suppose my aunt will take me for my uncle?

MAD. M. I did, didn't I?

FRAN. Yes, at first.

MAD. M. Oh, we mustn't give her time to find out. Say you must be off to-night. Don't wait for daylight. Then come back to-morrow in your own uniform. Quick—there's not a moment to be lost. Write the letter to aunt, asking for Marie. (*goes with FRANÇOIS to the writing table*)

CHAM. (*coming forward, rubbing his hands*) Glorious! Splendid! Magnificent! I only wish I hadn't a wife; I could play first-fiddle in this little piece, instead of double-bass.

MAD. M. (*leaving FRANÇOIS, and approaching CHAMPAGNE*) How do you mean, Champagne?

CHAM. How do I mean, my dear young lady? It don't

take much to see how. My master represents his uncle; I might take Monsieur Duclos' place; and then—(*eyeing MADAME MIRVILLE, and admiring himself*) and then—something might turn up for me, if only my—hem—hem!—

MAD. M. (*turning away*) Poor Marie! What a pity it is you are married.

FRAN. (*who has written the letter, seals it, and, coming forward, gives it to CHAMPAGNE*) There—there's the letter. Manage it all as you like. I leave myself in your hands.

CHAM. Yes, yes! leave it to me, sir. You'll be satisfied, I know. I shall be here in a few minutes from Strasbourg (courier, you know, courier), booted and spurred, and in what elegant writers call a bath of perspiration. Bear up, my dear master! Courage, boldness, and brass—that's all you want. Act the uncle; cheat the aunt; marry the niece; kiss the wife! Oh! (*smacking his lips*) And then, open your purse, and leave your devoted Champagne to take care of the pounds, for the pence may take care of themselves.

Exit, window, c.

MAD. M. Here comes aunt. (*crosses to L.*) Remember who you are—*uncle*. Just appear as though you had something important to say to her, and send me away.

FRAN. But—but, what the devil, am I to say to her?

MAD. M. Why, everything a gallant husband ought to say to his wife.

Enter MADAME DU MAURIER, door, R.

Come, aunt, make haste. Here's uncle come back.

MAD. D. What, my husband back already? I am so glad; I didn't expect you so soon. Well, I hope everything is all right. Why are you alone? Where are your servants? I never heard the carriage. But, there, I won't tease you. I don't remember anything; I am all in a flutter with joy and surprise. (*embracing him—FRANÇOIS, C., shy and awkward*)

MAD. M. (L. C.—*aside to FRANÇOIS*) Now, do speak. Answer her.

FRAN. (C.) Well, I am only on a short visit; so I came alone in a hired carriage. But the journey, my dear wife, was not a very happy one.

MAD. D. (R. C.) You frighten me. Has anything dreadful happened to you?

FRAN. No, not to me. But, the marriage— (*breaking off and addressing MADAME MIRVILLE*) I wish to speak to your aunt, my dear.

MAD. M. (*crossing*) Don't let me disturb you. I will go. (*aside*) Now the comedy begins. *Exit, door, L.*

MADAME DU MAURIER and FRANÇOIS take chairs—*business*—MADAME places hers very near to FRANÇOIS, he moves a little, at every available opportunity MADAME following, &c., &c.

MAD. D. Well, Du Maurier, well. The marriage.

FRAN. The marriage has come to the ground.

MAD D. How? I thought Monsieur Duclos, the father, had promised.

FRAN. So he did. But the son is another matter. He cannot marry Marie.

MAD. D. Not marry Marie? Why not?

FRAN. (*in a loud voice*) Because—because—he's dead! (*taking out handkerchief and going up stage*)

MAD. D. Dead? How sad!

FRAN. It is, indeed! He was a sad dog, I fear, like most young men are. One evening, at a ball, he took a fancy to a very pretty girl. So did somebody else; one of the two got insolent; there was a flare up, a challenge sent, and poor Monsieur Duclos was left with three fatal wounds in his body.

MAD. D. Merciful heaven! His poor father! What a blow to him!

FRAN. Yes, and his poor mother, fancy her anguish! (*handkerchief business*)

MADAME D. His mother? I thought she died last winter.

FRAN. (*perceiving his mistake—hastily*) Yes, last winter. Poor Monsieur Duclos! His wife died in the winter, and now his son in the summer killed in a wretched duel. It was very hard to leave him in his trouble; but regimental orders are so dreadfully strict now. I must be at the garrison on the 20th, and this is the 19th, so I shall have to start to-night.

MAD. D. Not till to-morrow morning, dearest. (*embracing him*)

FRAN. No help for it, I must go to-night.

MAD. D. Not to-night. (*coaxingly*)

FRAN. Yes, to-night.

MAD. D. No, you shan't go; I won't have you run away in this manner. (*in slight temper, stamping*) You shall stay till to-morrow.

FRAN. (*aside*) What the deuce shall I do? Here's a fix. Well, we'll talk about it presently. (*aside*) Now, having killed Monsieur Duclos, I must look to number one. Now, about Marie?

MAD. D. (*seated again as before*) Dear child! she has been very much cast down and low-spirited since you left.

FRAN. It strikes me this marriage was not to her liking.

MAD. D. Really, do you know, then——

FRAN. I know nothing; but she is old enough to choose for herself. I should not wish to shackle her affections.

MAD. D. No, certainly not.

FRAN. No, certainly not. (*aside*) I expect I have, though, pretty firmly, too.

Enter MARIE, door, R.

MARIE. (*starting at sight of FRANÇOIS*) Ah, papa!

MAD. D. Well, my dear, well, you are not afraid of your father, are you? Kiss him at once. (*passing MARIE over to him*)

FRAN. (*embracing her with a little needless warmth considering he is only her father—aside*) Who wouldn't be a father?

MAD. D. Marie, my dear, an accident has happened which will prevent your marriage.

MARIE. (*starting, but with an air of relief*) An accident?

MAD. D. Monsieur Duclos is dead.

MARIE. Good heavens! Dead!

FRAN. (*looking fixedly at her*) Yes, dead! What do you say to that, Marie?

MARIE. I—I pity the poor young man from my heart; but—but I cannot look upon his death in any other light than that it defers the day of my leaving you both.

FRAN. Then you hated this Monsieur Duclos from the first?

MARIE. Oh, no, no; not that. I had never seen him. I didn't hate him; but I didn't love him.

FRAN. And you wouldn't wish to marry any one you did not love?

MARIE. Is not that natural?

FRAN. Then you love some one else?

MARIE. I—I didn't say so, papa.

FRAN. Well, well, something very like it. Tell me, dear, who it is?

MAD. D. There, don't be frightened, child; don't be foolish. Forget who you are speaking to; don't think it's your father.

FRAN. (*aside*) That's one to the old girl. (*aloud*) Yes, dear, think you are speaking to your dearest, fondest friend. (*aside*) Hem! (*aloud*) And he you love, does he know you love him?

MARIE. Oh, no, no.

FRAN. Is he young?

MARIE. Love asks no questions as to age. He is very nice, and doubly so, dear papa, because he is so like you. Every one thinks so. He is a relation, same name! Oh, you must guess now whom I mean.

FRAN. No, no, I can't guess.

MADAME D. I can ; it's your cousin, Du Maurier !

FRAN. Well, Marie, you don't answer ?

MARIE. Do you approve of my choice ?

FRAN. (*aside, subduing his joy*) I must not betray myself. (*aloud*) Well, my dear, we must think over it.

MARIE. But why think over it ? My cousin is the best, nicest, cleverest, fondest, dearest—

FRAN. Scamp in the world ! (*aside*) Modest, isn't that ? (*aloud*) Why he has never written to his uncle these two years since he has been away.

MARIE. But he has to me, papa, all the time.

FRAN. Oh, he has, has he ? And you have answered his letters, I suppose, eh ?

MARIE. No, indeed, much as I wished to. But you promised me just this minute to marry whom I loved. Dear mamma, do speak for me.

MAD. D. Well, well, give in to her, Du Maurier. There's nothing else to be done.

FRAN. Well, well, if she loves him—

MARIE. Oh, I do—indeed I do, dear papa. Why, the very moment my marriage was arranged with poor Monsieur Duclos, I knew I loved my cousin ; and if—if he only cared for me—

FRAN. (*passionately, forgetting himself*) He does, my darling. (*checking himself*) He must, my dear Marie ; he could not help loving you. Yes, there, I give my consent.

MARIE. And may I write to him ?

FRAN. As much as you please. (*noise without*)

*Enter CHAMPAGNE, door, R., as postillion, cracking whip—and
MADAME MIRVILLE, door, L., at same moment.*

CHAM. Hey ! Olà ! olà !

MAD. D. }
MAD. M. } Why, it's Champagne.

MARIE. My cousin's servant !

CHAM. (C.) Ladies and gentlemen—I mean gentleman, sir ! Relieve the anxiety of your trustworthy Champagne. The young lady is not Madame Duclos yet ?

MAD. D. (R. C.) No, my good fellow, not yet.

CHAM. Then, I'm in time to save my poor master's life.

MARIE. (L. C.) How ? What ? Has anything happened to him ?

MAD. D. My nephew is not ill, is he ?

MAD. M. What is the matter with my brother ?

CHAM. Don't be alarmed, madame ; don't be alarmed, madame ! My master is quite well, but we are in a dreadful

plight. If you only knew—but here is his letter; he has opened his heart to you. Read it, and pity him.

FRAN. (L.) What is the matter?

(*while MADAME DU MAURIER reads letter, MARIE and MADAME MIRVILLE press eagerly towards her—CHAMPAGNE retiring a little back, still c., makes grimaces at FRANÇOIS over MARIE'S head*)

MAD. D. (*reads*) "My dear aunt,—I have just heard that Marie is to be married to a Monsieur Duclos. I cannot resist any longer; I must tell you I love her. I implore you do not let her marry Monsieur Duclos. I love her so well. I am certain I can win her love. Champagne brings this to you. I shall be with you soon. He will tell you all I have gone through since hearing the dreadful news.—Your affectionate nephew, François Du Maurier."

MARIE. Darling old fellow! (CHAMPAGNE nudges FRANÇOIS *aside*)

MAD. D. Poor boy!

CHAM. No, indeed, I can never tell you what my poor master has gone through, (*aside*) because, barring the Bankruptcy Court, I don't know. I tried to console him; I told him all was not lost. "Be off and see if she is married," he shouted, or words to that effect, madame, "and if you get there too late, I'll cut you into mincemeat." He can rave, this nephew of yours, madame, and swear too, like the very dev—hem.

FRAN. You impudent rascal.

CHAM. Well, sir, well, what's the matter now? Why, you're as angry as if I was speaking about you, sir! I'm only speaking for his good, sir, because you'll give him a sound lecturing for bad language, the rascal!

MAD. D. Go and rest yourself, my good fellow; I'm sure you must be tired and hungry.

CHAM. Thank you, madame; and when you want me, I rather suspect you may find me in that place of light and blissful beatitude—the kitchen! *Exit, door R.*

FRAN. Well, Marie, what do you say to it all?

MARIE. What do *you* say to it, papa? I will do what you wish.

MAD. D. Say to it? Why, let them be married at once.

MAD. M. But, Frank's not here.

MAD. D. Oh, he will be here soon, from his letter.

FRAN. (*to MADAME DU MAURIER*) Well, well, if you think it best, my love, so let it be. I am quite content—hem!—and let it all be arranged as quickly as possible, and have all the fuss over before I come back. Here! (*calls off, door, R.*)

Enter JASMIN and three SERVANTS, who stand at back.

MAD. D. One moment ; a tenant has just paid this money.
(*handing bag*) I gave him a receipt. Was that right ?

FRAN. Quite right. What you do is always right, my love.

(MADAME DU MAURIER *goes to table for receipt*)

(*aside to MADAME MIRVILLE*) Shall I take it ?

MAD. M. (*aside to him*) Yes, of course, or she'll suspect.

FRAN. (*aside to MADAME MIRVILLE*) Very well. I'll pay all my debts with it. (MADAME DU MAURIER *comes with receipt and purse, and gives it to FRANÇOIS*) The money reminds me that a rascally Jew has been pestering me for some money he lent my nephew. Shall I clear it off for him.

MAD. D. Yes, to be sure.

FRAN. And what's left can go towards the wedding expenses.

Enter SERVANT.

SERVANT. Madame Mirville's milliner. *Exit, door R.*

MAD. M. Just at the right time. I'll order the trousseau. *Exit, door R.*

FRAN. (*to 1ST SERVANT*) Here.

1ST SERVANT. (*advancing*) Sir.

FRAN. (*to MADAME DU MAURIER*) We must send for Monsieur Gaspar, the notary.

MAD. D. Yes ; ask him to supper, and then we can arrange everything in comfort.

FRAN. (*to 1ST SERVANT*) Go to Monsieur Gaspar, the notary, and request him to sup with us to-night.

(1ST SERVANT *takes four steps to the R. and waits*)

FRAN. (*to 2ND SERVANT*) Here.

2ND SERVANT. (*advancing*) Sir.

FRAN. Go to the jeweller's, next to the Hotel de la Concord, and tell him to bring round some of his newest things.

(2ND SERVANT *takes three steps to the R. and waits*)

(*to 3RD SERVANT*) Here.

3RD SERVANT. (*advancing*) Sir.

FRAN. Order a post-chaise and four horses to be at the door at eleven sharp.

2ND SERVANT *takes two steps to the R., and then all three go off, Indian file.*

(*to JASMIN*) Jasmin ; here.

JASMIN. (*advancing*) Sir.

FRAN. Are those men fools ?

JASMIN. Yes sir.

FRAN. I have a ticklish business for you, Jasmin ; but I think I can trust you.

JASMIN. Yes sir.

FRAN. You know where Monsieur Simon, the money-lender, lives? Pay him this money. My nephew owes it to him. Bring a receipt; and look sharp after the old usurer. But I can trust you, I know. You've got a head.

JASMIN. Yes sir. (*putting hand to head and rubbing it*) So I have.

MAD. D. Dear fellow! How astonished he will be when comes here, and finds his debts paid. *Exit, door R.*

MARIE. And the wedding presents bought.

FRAN. (*doubtfully*) Ye-es; oh, yes.

Enter MADAME MIRVILLE, hastily, R.

MAD. M. (*aside to FRANÇOIS*) Quick—be off! Uncle has returned, and a gentleman with him. Monsieur Duclos, I expect.

FRAN. (*rushing through door, L.*) The devil!

MAD. D. (*after him*) Where are you going, Du Maurier?

FRAN. (*as he vanishes*) Back in a minute.

MAD. M. (*pointing to writing table, L., to MADAME DU MAURIER and MARIE*) Why, what's this?

As they turn away COLONEL DU MAURIER and DUCLOS enter, R.

COLONEL. I am back sooner than I expected; but all the better. Let me introduce this gentleman. (*to the LADIES, who turn without evincing much surprise*)

MAD. D. (*icily, imagining DU MAURIER has rushed out to bring in some stranger*) Excuse us, gentlemen, the milliner is waiting for us. *Exit, door R.*

COLONEL. I should have thought the milliner might wait.

MARIE. Oh, no, papa, milliners never can. Excuse me, sir. (*bowing to DUCLOS, who is utterly in a fog*) *Exit, door R.*

COLONEL. I should have thought—

MAD. M. Oh, of course, gentlemen don't want anything of milliners; but to us they are of the utmost importance.

Same business as MARIE's, then exit, door R.

COLONEL. A nice reception, I must say.

DUCLOS. Is this the custom of the ladies of Paris, to run after the milliner directly the husbands appear?

COLONEL. I can't make it out. I told them I should not be at home for six weeks, and I come back unexpectedly, and they are as little surprised as if I had never left the house.

DUCLOS. Who are the two young ladies? They are both very pretty.

COLONEL. Damn it, sir, the ladies in my family are all pretty; but I like politeness as well as—

Enter JASMIN and the three SERVANTS.

1ST SERVANT. The notary, sir, is very sorry, but he cannot sup with you to-night. He will call later in the evening.

Exit, door R.

COLONEL. What's the fellow talking about?

2ND SERVANT. The jeweller, sir, is bankrupt, and has decamped this very evening.

Exit, door R.

COLONEL. What's that to me? He owes me nothing.

3RD SERVANT. The postchaise will be at the door, sir, at eleven sharp.

Exit, door R.

COLONEL. Postchaise! Why, I have only just arrived.

JASMIN. I went to Monsieur Simon, sir. He was ill in bed, but he sends the receipt.

Hands receipt and exit, door R.

COLONEL. What receipt? (*reads*) "Received from Colonel Du Maurier the sum of one hundred pistoles, being a full and complete discharge of the debt of Lieutenant François Du Maurier, nephew of the aforesaid, due to me.—Jules Simon." What on earth does it all mean? The most rascally sharper in Paris is ill and sends me a receipt for money my nephew owes him!

DUCLOS. Perhaps his conscience smites him.

COLONEL. Come, Monsieur Duclos, let us see if we can find out the meaning of this agreeable welcome; and let the notaries, milliners, post-horses, money-lenders, and jewellers go to the devil!

Exeunt COLONEL and DUCLOS, door R.

FRANÇOIS *puts his head through door, L., looks round stage, enters, and looks about at different entrances.*

MAD. M. (*entering suddenly, R.*) How foolish you are. Uncle will be here in a minute.

FRAN. What am I to do? Is it all discovered? Where's Champagne? Where's Marie? Where's my aunt? Where's my uncle? Where's—where's—where's everybody?

MAD. M. There, don't excite yourself. Aunt is still with the milliner, uncle is cursing in the stables, Monsieur Duclos perfectly stupefied in the hall. However, an explanation must come sooner or later, and if the worst comes to the worst, sooner than that Marie should be forced to marry Monsieur Duclos, why—I'll marry him myself.

Enter LE BŒUF, window, C.

LE BŒUF. Ah, capital, capital; so glad to catch you. I've a thousand things to talk to you about.

FRAN. (*aside*) Oh, hang your thousand things. Why have you come here? I don't want you.

LE BŒUF. (*looking towards MADAME MIRVILLE*) Excuse me—

FRAN. I have no secrets from my sister.

LE BŒUF. Your sister. Delighted to make your acquaintance, madame—

FRAN. Hark! what's that? His voice. (*flies back through door, L.*) I'll retire.

LE BŒUF. (*not noticing FRANÇOIS' departure, continues*) And if at any time I could be of any service to you, consider me your most devoted servant.

Enter COLONEL and DUCLOS, door R.

COLONEL. (*to DUCLOS, both standing R. of LE BŒUF*) Yes, the women are indeed a trial to their husbands.

LE BŒUF. (*turns and imagines he is talking with FRANÇOIS*) The fact is, my dear boy, what I came here for, was to tell you the first lieutenant is not dead after all.

COLONEL. First lieutenant? What—the—

LE BŒUF. (*interrupting*) Why, you haven't forgotten your duel? He has written to a friend of mine. He acknowledges he was in the wrong. But the family mean to prosecute.

COLONEL. Prosecute? What—the—

LE BŒUF. But I'll see what I can do for you. I thought you'd like to hear the news. I got leave on purpose. They mean to prosecute, you know.

COLONEL. Very kind of them, I'm sure—and you too, but what—the—

LE BŒUF. (*interrupting*) There, there, no thanks. Don't say a word about it.

COLONEL. But what—the—

LE BŒUF. Good-bye, good-bye! You can sleep in peace. I'll be on the look-out. *Exit, window, C.*

COLONEL. (*to MADAME MIRVILLE*) What does it all mean?

MAD. M. Oh, he's mad, that's very plain; mad, quite mad.

COLONEL. An epidemic which seems to have seized the whole lot of you since I left. He's not the first fool I've seen during the last half-hour.

MAD. M. Ah, now, uncle, don't be angry with poor aunt. When there's a dress in the question, it's perfectly useless to try anything else.

COLONEL. A sensible word at last. So you will be the first to be introduced to Monsieur Duclos. (*introduces them*)

DUCLÓS. I am delighted, mademoiselle, to have obtained your father's consent. I cannot say how happy it has made me; but my happiness is not complete till you—

COLONEL. What the— Now he's beginning! (*to DUCLOS*)

Has this universal madness seized you too, my good sir? Your speeches are pretty enough, but they shall be made to my daughter and not to my niece.

DUCLOS. Forgive me, madame. I—I—you are so exactly like the description which Colonel Du Maurier gave me of my bride that I—I——

MAD. M. Here comes my cousin, monsieur; you will see that she is well worthy all the pretty speeches you made me.

Enter MARIE, door R.

MARIE. (*to COLONEL*) I am so sorry, dearest papa, I ran away from you just now. How can I thank you enough that you consent to our marriage!

COLONEL. (*mollified*) It does make you happy, then, dear?

MARIE. Oh, yes, yes.

COLONEL. (*aside to DUCLOS*) See how she loves you before having seen you. You've got to thank me for that. (*to MADAME MIRVILLE*) Well, niece, we will leave them together. (*to MARIE*) Stay with Monsieur Duclos. Marie, he is very dear to me, and I want him to be so to you. (*crosses to DUCLOS*) Win her to-day and she's your wife to-morrow.

Exit with MADAME MIRVILLE.

MARIE. So you are going to be at the wedding?

DUCLOS. Yes, mademoiselle. The wedding does not displease you, I hope?

MARIE. My father wishes it.

DUCLOS. Yes, but young ladies' wishes are not always their father's.

MARIE. Well, as far as that goes, I had *something* to do with it?

DUCLOS. How—how do you mean?

MARIE. My father consulted me on the matter.

DUCLOS. And you love the one you have chosen?

MARIE. Ye—yes.

DUCLOS. Without even knowing him?

MARIE. I was brought up with him; I ought to know him!

DUCLOS. Brought up with young Duclos.

MARIE. With Monsieur Duclos? No.

DUCLOS. Monsieur Duclos—your betrothed?

MARIE. Yes, he was, once.

DUCLOS. How do you mean "once?"

MARIE. Ah, you don't know about him yet.

DUCLOS. No! Oh, no!

MARIE. He is dead.

DUCLOS. Who is dead?

MARIE. Young Monsieur Duclos.

DUCLOS. (*aside*) Pleasant, upon my word! (*to MARIE*) Quite sure?

MARIE. Perfectly certain.

DUCLOS. Who told you so, may I ask?

MARIE. My father.

DUCLOS. Impossible, mademoiselle, impossible; pardon me, impossible. He could not have told you so.

MARIE. I beg your pardon, he did. He has just come from Toulon, and he surely ought to know better than you. Monsieur Duclos had a quarrel at a ball, fought a duel, and received three wounds. Wasn't it dreadful?

DUCLOS. Three wounds! Very!

MARIE. Yes, isn't it? And he died from them.

DUCLOS. You are joking, mademoiselle. No one can give you better news of Monsieur Duclos than I.

MARIE. You! That would be strange.

DUCLOS. But true, mademoiselle. I am Monsieur Duclos, and am not dead yet, at least, as far as I know.

MARIE. You—you Monsieur Duclos?

DUCLOS. Who else?

MARIE. I thought you were a friend of my father's, asked to the wedding.

DUCLOS. So you were going to be married in spite of my death?

MARIE. Ye—yes.

DUCLOS. May I ask, to whom?

MARIE. To my cousin, Lieutenant Du Maurier.

DUCLOS. What does your father say to it?

MARIE. He has given his consent, of course.

DUCLOS. When?

MARIE. A few minutes before you came.

DUCLOS. But I came with him.

MARIE. Impossible; my father came some time before you did.

DUCLOS. (*with hand to his head*) Am I mad or dreaming? I—I don't know what to—is there—there must be some secret! I really—

MARIE. But have you been speaking in earnest?

DUCLOS. Very much so.

MARIE. You really are Monsieur Duclos? And how I have been talking of you! Will you ever forgive me?

DUCLOS. Do not ask me to forgive you, mademoiselle. I am only too glad that I have learnt before it was too late that you love your cousin and not me. It would have been too late to have learnt it after marriage.

MARIE. But I cannot conceive how—

DUCLOS. I will go and find Monsieur Du Maurier. Perhaps

he will be able to solve the riddle. But depend upon it, mademoiselle, you shall have no reason to repent having inadvertently made me your confidant. *Exit, door R.*

MARIE. He really seems a very nice fellow, and as long as long as they don't make me marry him, I am very glad he isn't dead.

Enter COLONEL and MADAME DU MAURIER.

COLONEL. Leave us, Marie.

Exit MARIE.

MAD. D. How can you persist in saying you were not talking to me just now, Du Maurier? Who else could have made the arrangements you did?

COLONEL. Arrangements! What did I arrange?

MAD. D. Marie's marriage; the presents from the jeweller's; Monsieur Gaspar, the notary, to sup with us; the postchaise at eleven; paying the usurer——

COLONEL. I don't know, madame, whether you have been dreaming or no, or whether some one really has been personating me in my absence. If so, it's high time, indeed, I came home. This some one kills my son-in-law, arranges my daughter's wedding, plays the husband to my wife, and, damn it, they are all delighted!

MAD. D. Really, Monsieur Du Maurier, I am quite at a loss to understand your behaviour. *(walking up and down)*

COLONEL. And I'm sure I can't fathom yours. *(walking up and down)*

Enter MADAME MIRVILLE, door R.

MAD. M. Ah, I thought I should find you together. I wish all married people were like you; always billing and cooing; no anger and quarrelling; one heart and one soul. What an example! Aunt as agreeable as an angel, and uncle as patient as Job.

COLONEL. Quite right, my dear; one wants the patience of Job, or the nonsense I have heard would drive one mad. *(up and down)*

MAD. D. Quite right, my love; one ought to be agreeable as an angel to bear such folly. *(up and down)*

COLONEL. *(to MADAME DU MAURIER)* Now, madame, shall we take Blanche as our judge? She has scarcely been out of my sight since I came.

MAD. D. As you please.

MAD. M. What is it about?

MAD. D. Why, just fancy, my dear, your uncle persists, to my face, he was not here just now. *(very angry)*

MAD. M. Nonsense! Impossible!

COLONEL. And, just fancy, my dear, your aunt wants me to believe that I was talking to her, in this very room, at the very time when I was miles away.

MAD. M. Quite inconceivable, my dear uncle. There must be some mistake. Let me speak to aunt a minute. (*whispers to MADAME DU MAURIER*) It is only his joke.

MAD. D. (*aside to MADAME MIRVILLE*) Of course! It must be!

MAD. M. (*aside to MADAME DU MAURIER*) Pay him back in his own coin. Show him you haven't got the worst of it.

MAD. D. (*as before*) Quite right, my dear; so I will.

COLONEL. When you have quite done—

MAD. D. (*mockingly*) Oh, quite. And, as it is the wife's duty to see with her husband's eyes, I acknowledge my mistake, and will see and believe everything you wish me.

COLONEL. If you're going to talk in that strain, we shall not get on with this mystery very much.

MAD. D. Oh, yes. You have laughed at me; now I laugh at you. I go up, you go down. Up, up, up! down, down, down! I have some things to see to; when I come back, if this joking mood has left you, we can talk seriously.

Exit, door R.

COLONEL. (*to MADAME MIRVILLE*) Can you understand a word she says?

MAD. M. Not a word. I will go and try to find it all out.

Exit, door R.

COLONEL. I believe the devil's been here, and turned the house topsy-turvy. (*goes to writing-table—sits with his back to audience*)

Enter CHAMPAGNE, rather drunk.

CHAM. (*singing*) Three blue-bottles, three blue-bottles,
three blue-bottles,
Sat on a milestone.

Living here's glorious! Splendid, 'pon my life! But where the devil are they all? Hullo! there's my master.

COLONEL. (*who has turned round, now comes forward*) What the devil? Why, it's that rascal Champagne! (*CHAMPAGNE makes signs of recognition, and laughs complacently at the COLONEL*) What on earth does the ass mean by his idiotic grimaces?

CHAM. Well, sir—well!

COLONEL. Well, rascal.

CHAM. Well, sir, what's news? Played my part well, eh?

COLONEL. (*aside*) His part? Oho!—I begin to smell a rat! (*aloud*) Yes, my friend, not badly.

CHAM. Well, how far 've you got—eh?

COLONEL. How far? Oh, you can easily imagine how far.

CHAM. Marriage all right, 'spose? Given consent—eh? Father, I mean; you know, father?

COLONEL. Yes.

CHAM. Come back to-morrow—eh? Lover—eh—nephew?

COLONEL. It's a trick of my nephew's. (*aside*)

CHAM. And marry Duclos' widow? Widow! widow!—whose widow? Not Duclos! Duclos' dead—dead as a door-nail. Eh? Dead, sir—eh? (*poking COLONEL in the ribs*) Whose widow? Widow of my imagination, 'flatter myself. Ha! ha! (*laughs*) Laughing at—laughing at? Why, at—(*laughs idiotically*) Why, to think of your uncle! (*laughs*) What a face the old boy will pull when he comes back in a month, and finds you married to his daughter. That's what I'm laughing at.

COLONEL. (*aside*) Oh-h-h! I shall kick him in a minute.

CHAM. And Monsieur Duclos, when he comes and finds somebody in his— (*laughs*) in his nest. (*laughs*) It's heavenly—perfectly heavenly!

COLONEL. Delightful.

CHAM. And who's to be thanked for it all? Your faithful Champagne.

COLONEL. You! How?

CHAM. Why, who else advised you to personate your uncle?

COLONEL. (*aside*) Oh, the rascal!

CHAM. It's really astonishing, perfectly astonishing the resemblance you bear to your old dev—ehem—of an uncle! I could swear you were he, if I didn't know he was a hundred miles away. It's perfectly astonishing to be sure!

COLONEL. (*aside*) That scoundrel nephew of mine! A pretty use he makes of our resemblance!

CHAM. You only look a little too old. There was no necessity to make yourself look so old.

COLONEL. What do you mean?

CHAM. But there, it don't matter. (*sings*)

“Two blue-bottles, two blue-bottles, two blue-bottles,
Sat on a milestone.”

Your uncle's not here for comparisons. It's lucky he's not. 'Twould be awful if that wretched old colonel—excuse me, sir—were to turn up.

COLONEL. He has turned up! He is here.

CHAM. How? What!—turned up, eh? Here?

COLONEL. Come back. Yes.

CHAM. What! and you staying here still? Look to yourself, sir. By Jove, I shall be off! (*moves towards door*)

COLONEL. (*detaining him*) Stop, you scoundrel—you double-faced hound!

CHAM. Well, 'ponmy word, you're grateful, sir, that you are.

COLONEL. Stop here, you rascal! By Jove, my wife (CHAMPAGNE *makes a movement of fright*) is not the fool I took her for! But shall I let this villain go unpunished? No, no; it is not too late now. I'll go to the notary, and bring him back with me. Duclos shall marry Marie this very evening. I'll just surprise this nephew of mine. He shall sign the marriage contract himself: and as for you—you vagabond——

CHAM. I—I—your honour. I—oh—I'll sign too—sign, yes; and dance at the wedding.

COLONEL. I'll make you dance! Oh, you scoundrel, you!

Exit, door R.

CHAM. Well, I *am* bottled! (*sings*)

“One blue-bottle, one blue-bottle, one blue-bottle,
Sat on a milestone.”

This cursed uncle comes back just at the wrong time, and of course gets in my way, and makes me gossip. It's not possible I've had a glass too much, is it? Eh? glass—too—much—yes; no; glass—too—much—think I'll be off, then there'll be—(*sings*)

“No blue-bottle, no blue-bottle, no blue-bottle,
To sit on the milestone.” (*diminuendo*)

Enter MADAME MIRVILLE, R., looks round, and crosses to door, L., and speaks through to FRANÇOIS.

MAD M. All right; the coast is clear. (CHAMPAGNE *idiotically amusing himself at back*)

Enter FRANÇOIS cautiously.

CHAM. (*suddenly seeing him*) Oh, oh! back again. Now I'm in for it. (*falls at FRANÇOIS' feet*) Mercy, mercy, sir!

FRAN. What on earth do you mean? Get up! I'm not going to hurt you.

CHAM. You really won't sir?—really?

FRAN. Why should I? I'm very well pleased with you. You've played your part uncommonly well!

CHAM. (*recognizing him*) How? Eh? Sir, it's you, is it?

FRAN. Yes, to be sure.

CHAM. Your uncle's here.

FRAN. I know.

CHAM. I've seen him; spoken to him: I thought it was you, sir. I told him everything; yes, (*plaintively*) I'll be hanged if I didn't.

FRAN. Lunatic!

MAD M. Idiot!

CHAM. How could I help it?

FRAN. What's to be done now?

MAD M. You must be off at once.

FRAN. Yes; but what about Marie?

MAD M. There, there, go along, while the way is clear.
*adds him to door, and is pushing him through, when DUCLOS
ters at the same and leads him back)*

DUCLOS. (to FRANÇOIS) Just the person I want to see.

MAD. M. (*aside to FRANÇOIS*) It's Monsieur Duclos. He
inks you are uncle. (*moves to go*)

DUCLOS. Are you going, madame?

MAD. M. Excuse me, sir, I shall be back in a minute.

Exit, R., CHAMPAGNE following.

DUCLOS. You remember leaving me just now with your
daughter?

FRAN. I remember.

DUCLOS. She is a sweet little thing!

FRAN. She is.

DUCLOS. And could make me the happiest man alive!

FRAN. She could.

DUCLOS. But I must ask you not to force her into this
marriage.

FRAN. Eh? What? How much?

DUCLOS. She is in love with her cousin, Lieutenant François
du Maurier, and he with her.

FRAN. Really!

DUCLOS. Yes, I know it.

FRAN. How do you know it?

DUCLOS. She told me so.

FRAN. Well, Monsieur Duclos, what is to be done? What
do you advise?

DUCLOS. Be a good father to her.

FRAN. How?

DUCLOS. Why, you have often told me you love your
nephew as a son; give him your daughter; make them both
happy.

FRAN. What about you?

DUCLOS. Ah, well, she doesn't love me; how could she?
Your nephew has won the prize, and he ought to wear it.

FRAN. Do you mean to say you can give her up?

DUCLOS. I can, because it is my duty.

FRAN. (*excitedly*) My dear Monsieur Duclos, you are the
best fellow in the world. How can I thank you enough?

DUCLOS. (*mystified*) I don't understand you.

FRAN. No, no, of course you don't. Darling little Marie,
we shall be so——

DUCLOS. What! you are not Colonel Du Maurier?

FRAN. I have betrayed myself.

DUCLOS. Well, well, I suppose I must not be angry with you for giving me those "three fatal wounds," eh? "A great rake," was I? "Dead," eh?

FRAN. My dear Monsieur Duclos—

DUCLOS. Happily they were *not* fatal; so it's all right on that score. You are a capital fellow, Monsieur Du Maurier; your uncle has often told me so. And as for quarrelling with you, I shall only be too glad to be your friend if you—

FRAN. My dear Monsieur Duclos, you are too good.

DUCLOS. Well, now, to business. You love your cousin, and a very natural thing too; and I promise to do all in my power to influence your uncle in your favour. But I have something to ask in return.

FRAN. Out with it; I'll do anything! I'll—I'll—

DUCLOS. You have a sister, and I—though I have only seen her so short a time—I—I—

FRAN. You love her? She's yours, my dear fellow, yours, and my grandmother, too, if I had one.

DUCLOS. Here is your sister. Plead for me, and I will go to your uncle and do the same for you.

Exit, bowing to MADAME MIRVILLE, who enters, R.

FRAN. Capital fellow he is, to be sure.

MAD. M. Well, what news?

FRAN. You have made a conquest, dear; Duclos is over head and ears in love with you. He told me so this minute; I told him the thing was not to be thought of, that you had long ago given up the idea of marrying again. I was right, I suppose?

MAD. M. Ye—ves, c—certainly, I sup—suppose so. But you need not have sent him away so rudely. Poor fellow, it is bad enough to have lost Marie, without—

Enter CHAMPAGNE, R., sobered.

CHAM. Look sharp, sir, you must be off at once. Your aunt must not see you here when she comes back.

FRAN. All right; come along, Blanche. Duclos won't get Marie, and that's all I care about. *Exeunt, door R.*

CHAM. (*alone*) Alone at last! My good friend Champagne—that's a good joke, capital joke, talking to myself—my good friend Champagne, you're a scoundrel! Complimentary to oneself, to say the least of it. To go and betray the whole plot to that infernal old Colonel. But what's to be done? (*thinking*) My master and Monsieur Duclos have parted good friends; but a quarrel might be got up between them—might

be. I'll go to the police. Well, and if they mistake nephew for uncle or uncle for nephew, or take nephew for nephew and uncle for uncle, why it's no fault of mine. Oh, no! not in the slightest degree. A risk, I know; dreadful risk, and if it fails—oh, but it shan't fail. At all events, I shall be all right. And as for the uncle, he may rage and swear-r-r and storm-m, oh-h-h! as much as he likes. I shall get behind my master; I shall help him to win his wife, and then he can't forget his honest Champagne. And if I could only despatch my beloved partner mounted on a white donkey on some charitably misguided mission to Jerusalem or Timbuctoo, I might do a stroke of matrimonial business, or something to that effect.

Exit, window C.

Enter COLONEL, crosses to table and sits.

COLONEL. Here's the notary turned up. I suppose it's that nephew of mine who has saved me the trouble of sending for him.

Enter DUCLOS.

DUCLOS. This time I believe it is the uncle and not the nephew to whom I am speaking?

COLONEL. Quite right.

DUCLOS. I have a good deal to talk to you about.

COLONEL. Oh, yes, I daresay, you are going to get in a fury; but no violence, my dear boy, no violence. It is my nephew who has injured you; but leave him to me, leave him to me. I'll—

DUCLOS. But allow me—

COLONEL. No, no, not a bit of it; it will be all right. You young people think the only way to square matters is to run each other through.

DUCLOS. No, no, no! Listen to me, do!

COLONEL. My dear sir, listen to you! I know all about it. I've been young myself. Never mind, you shall have Marie. I'll see to that.

DUCLOS. You are very good, I'm sure; but—but really, as matters at present stand, I—I—

COLONEL. There, don't say another word! You shall have Marie. Not another word, my dear fellow. (*louder*). Not another word!

Enter CHAMPAGNE and Two POLICE-OFFICERS through window C.

CHAM. (*to OFFICERS*) You see, gentlemen, just as I told you, they were just going to quarrel.

CHAM. (to COLONEL) 'Twasn't I, sir; no, sir. I didn't tell him. He heard it with his own ears. It really was very imprudent of you, sir, to talk so openly of the young lady. Very imprudent indeed.

1ST OFFICER (to COLONEL) Well, sir, come.

COLONEL. Well, Mr. Escort, well. I suppose I must go with you. But, I can assure you, it's very much against my will.

1ST OFFICER. That's what all our customers say, sir.

COLONEL (to CHAMPAGNE) You are my servant, then?

CHAM. Yes, sir, I'm your servant.

COLONEL. Then come with to Strasbourg.

CHAM. Oh, the devil!

POSTILION. To be sure! Quick—march!

CHAM. (to COLONEL) Sorry to disappoint you, sir; but there's my wife. You know how devotedly I adore her. I have just seen her to-day, after a long separation. She was so delighted to see me, that I determined to give you warning and leave service, and be restored to the bosom of my family—I mean wife, because I haven't got a family; and without wishing to inconvenience you, sir, I would just remind you, sir, that you owe me three months' wages—

COLONEL. Three months' licking and kicking, you scoundrel. (*begins to beat CHAMPAGNE—OFFICERS interfere*)

DUCCLOS. (to COLONEL) I beg you, Colonel Du Maurier, go with them. Luckily I am so far free. I will go to my friends and set the matter straight before this time to-morrow.

COLONEL. All right, and I'll pay the postilion to drive slowly. You'll soon overtake me. Here (to POSTILION) my lad. Drink my health, and you'll drive me—

POSTILION. Drive you, sir, into the middle of next week.

COLONEL. No—no, not that.

POSTILION. Then I'll drive you as though the fiend himself were after us.

COLONEL. The fiend find you, you drunken dog! I told you to—

POSTILION. You told me you were in a hurry: so am I. (*hic*) Calm yourself, sir, we'll drive till the sparks—(*hic*) fly.

Exit, window c.

COLONEL. I believe hell's thousand devils are let loose to-day. I shall go out of my mind.

Exit with 1ST OFFICER, window c.

DUCCLOS. (to 2ND OFFICER) Now, sir, follow me, as you are so ordered. I warn you, I shall not spare your marrow-bones.

2ND OFFICER. All right, sir, I'm used to it. (to CHAMPAGNE) Good night, sir. (*CHAMPAGNE waves the pair off with dignity*)

CHAM. Gone at last. Good luck, Champagne! the victory's ours. Now for the wedding. Here's Madame Mirville.

Enter MADAME MIRVILLE.

MAD. M. Where's my uncle?

CHAM. Gone to Strasbourg.

MAD. M. What do you mean? Explain yourself.

CHAM. Certainly, madame, certainly. Perhaps you are not aware that my master and Monsieur Duclos have had a tremendous quarrel, tremendous—perfectly awful!

MAD. M. Quite the contrary. They parted the best friends. That I'm certain of.

CHAM. Well, madame, I was not quite so certain. No; in fact in the ardour of my zeal and affection for my beloved master, I went for the police. Strange to say, I found two officers: one had orders to *attend* Monsieur Duclos, the other to escort my master to Strasbourg. The devil must have been in league with those infern—ehem—officers; for they have actually walked off your uncle, bundled him into the chaise, and have driven off to Strasbourg; and as for following them and rectifying the mistake, that's perfectly out of the question, perfectly.

MAD. M. Nonsense; you are joking. My uncle gone to Strasbourg instead of my brother.

CHAM. Joking, madame, joking? Not I! True as I stand here. Alsace is a charming country: your uncle has never been there; so I arranged the little trip for him. He was perfectly delighted I can assure you; perfectly.

MAD. M. Where is Monsieur Duclos?

CHAM. Promenading the public thoroughfare with his attendant police officer.

MAD. M. (*aside*) I wish I was a police officer!

CHAM. Now, madame, there's no time to be lost, let us settle the wedding, and then we can send after your uncle. I'll fetch my master. *Exit, L.*

Enter MADAME DU MAURIER and MARIE.

MAD. M. Here comes aunt. She must not know the truth.

MAD. D. Have you seen your uncle, my dear?

MAD. M. Why, didn't he say good-bye to you?

MAD. D. Good-bye? How? What?

MAD. M. Well, he's gone!

MAD. D. Gone? When?

MAD. M. Just this moment.

MAD. D. Where?

MAD. M. Haven't the least idea. But, who is this?

Enter FRANÇOIS in his own uniform, without wig, with

CHAMPAGNE.

CHAM. There he is, ladies! There he is!

MAD. D. Who? My husband.

CHAM. Your nephew, madame.

MARIE. (*going to FRANÇOIS—aside to him*) Darling old boy, I thought I should never see you. (*they converse apart*)

CHAM. He said he should turn up with his letter, you see, ladies.

MAD. D. My husband starts and my nephew arrives at the same moment. How strangely things turn out, to be sure!

FRAN. (*to MADAME DU MAURIER*) At last, my dear aunt! I had been longing to see you. And now I am in a perfect fever of excitement!

MAD. D. (*coldly*) Good evening, my dear François.

FRAN. (*aside*) Ice is nothing to this.

MAD. D. I am delighted to see you—but my husband—

FRAN. What has happened to him?

MAD. M. My uncle came this morning, and has just vanished without saying a word to anybody.

FRAN. Very strange.

CHAM. Marvellous—perfectly marvellous!

MAD. D. Oh, there's Champagne. He can explain it all.

CHAM. Oh, the devil! I? Madame! I?

MAD. M. My uncle spoke to you just as he was starting.

CHAM. Oh, yes; so he did. So he did now, to be sure!

FRAN. Well, why did he go off so suddenly?

CHAM. Orders from Government, sir. Orders from Government, ladies. Secret despatches, madame. He could not help himself. Bound to go. No time to wait to say good-bye. "Champagne," he said to me, "I go to St. Petersburg, on important State business. I will write to my wife as soon as I can. And as for my daughter's marriage, I am quite willing and satisfied."

FRAN. What? My uncle consents?

CHAM. 'Course he does, sir. "Tell my wife," he said to me, "that I hope to find my nephew and daughter as happy as two turtle doves when I return." Or—or—words to that effect.

MAD. D. Did he go alone?

CHAM. Well, no, madame, not exactly. He had another gentleman in attendance on him.

MAD. D. I can't make it out.

MAD. M. At all events we know his wishes, and must carry them out.

MARIE. There's not the least doubt, mamma dear, that papa is willing; and I'm sure that Frank is; and I'm sure—I—am—quite.

MAD. D. But I am not; I shall wait.

Enter NOTARY, R.

NOTARY. (*to* MADAME DU MAURIER) At your service, madame. Your husband was good enough to call at my house. He left this note. (*handing note to* MADAME DU MAURIER)

CHAM. (*aside to* FRANÇOIS) It's the Notary commissioned for Duclos' marriage. We must use him for yours.

MAD. D. (*reads note*) "Sir, have the goodness to go this evening to my house, and take with you the marriage contract you have drawn out for my daughter. I have reasons for wishing that the marriage should be concluded at once.—Yours, &c.,—Du Maurier."

CHAM. There it is, madame, in black and white. You will not doubt now, madame, surely.

MARIE. And as papa has written to this gentleman, mamma dear, there's no need to wait till he writes to you.

MAD. D. (*to* NOTARY) What do you think, Monsieur Gaspar?

NOTARY. Well, madame, the letter seems plain enough.

MAD. D. (*taking* MARIE'S *hand, and placing it in that of* FRANÇOIS) There, children; Heaven bless you both; but I won't bear the responsibility.

FRAN. Sharp, Champagne—a table, pen and ink, and we'll sign at once.

Enter COLONEL and LE BŒUF, *window C.*

MAD. M. Good heavens, my uncle!

MARIE. Papa!

MAD. D. My husband?

CHAM. The devil's brought him back.

FRAN. It's that Le Bœuf. He's my evil genius.

LE BŒUF. (*presenting* COLONEL) I am delighted to be able to restore your dear nephew to you, Madame Du Maurier. (*when he sees* FRANÇOIS) How! You here? (*turning to* COLONEL) And who are *you* then, sir?

COLONEL. His uncle, sir; at your service.

FRAN. What's the meaning of all this, Le Bœuf? Explain.

LE BŒUF. I received information that orders had been sent to you, commanding your immediate return to the garrison. After an immense deal of trouble, I got the orders cancelled; jumped on my horse, overtook the postchaise, and expected to find you; but, instead, found——

COLONEL. Your obedient servant, raging and cursing at a damned postilion, whom I paid to drive slowly, and who was driving like a maniac.

LE BŒUF. (*to* FRANÇOIS) Your uncle did not think fit to

undecieve me; and here we are. You can't grumble at want of haste, I'm sure.

FRAN. I am exceedingly indebted to you, my friend, for the inestimable and invaluable services you have rendered me; unfortunately they were slightly ill-timed.

COLONEL. My dear Le Bœuf, my nephew is not properly grateful to you, as I am.

MAD. D. So you aren't gone to St. Petersburg after all?

COLONEL. St. Petersburg? What for, pray?

MAD. D. Why, the important secret despatches. The Government orders, you know; Champagne told us all about it.

COLONEL. I owe Champagne a thousand thanks, I'm sure, for the posts of honour, and dishonour, which he has given me. (*to the NOTARY*) Monsieur Gaspar, I dare say you duly received my letter. I should be glad for the marriage contract to be signed and sealed to-night.

NOTARY. Nothing is easier, Colonel Du Maurier. In fact, we were just on the point of so doing.

COLONEL. Really! I have heard of marriages settled without the father, but without the bridegroom, never!

MAD. D. (*pointing to FRANÇOIS*) But, here is the bridegroom.

COLONEL. My nephew is a very estimable young man, no doubt, but he don't get my daughter for all that.

MAD. D. Who else, pray?

COLONEL. Who else? Monsieur Duclos!

MAD. D. Then he's not dead?

COLONEL. No, not yet. At least, he was alive a few minutes ago. In fact, here he comes.

Enter DUCLOS with POLICE OFFICER, who sits at back.

DUCLÓS. (*to COLONEL*) So you sent your uncle to Strasbourg, did you?

COLONEL. Stay, stay, my dear Monsieur Duclos. If you want to fight, fight my nephew, not me.

DUCLÓS. (*recognising him*) How? What? How on earth did you get back so quickly?

COLONEL. Thanks to Monsieur Le Bœuf here. Out of friendship for my nephew he brought me back.

CHAM. (*aside*) Yes, he did. Devil take him!

FRAN. I don't understand, Monsieur Duclos. Have you not given up all claims to my cousin Marie?

COLONEL. (*interrupting*) Silence! It's no use talking to me. I'll have my own way. Wife, daughter, nephew, niece, all put together, shan't stop me. I'll have my own way!

DUCLÓS. But, my dear Colonel, we have been making all sorts of plans.

COLONEL. Plans—plans. Don't tell me. I'm not going to bring you all the way from Toulon to Paris, and send you back a bachelor. Don't tell me!

FRAN. As far as that goes, uncle, perhaps Monsieur Duclos need not go back a bachelor. Ask my sister, perhaps she can tell you something.

MAD. M. I—I—have nothing tell.

DUCLOS. Let me speak. Colonel Du Maurier, your daughter loves her cousin, and he loves her. I won't stand in their way. Make them both happy, will you?

COLONEL. Monsieur Duclos, you are a generous fellow. (to MARIE) Come, Marie. (*places her hand in that of FRANÇOIS*)

DUCLOS. (*continuing*) Your daughter does not love me. But there is your niece. She is free. Perhaps, if you would speak for me, she would consent to make me happy. She can if she will—if she only will. I love her!

COLONEL. Eh? what? Marry my niece. What do you say to that, Blanche? I thought you never meant to marry again.

MAD. M. Well, uncle, the cleverest people sometimes—change their minds—don't they? and so stupid little people like me may, I suppose—mayn't they?

COLONEL. Yes, yes, my dear. Depend upon it, woman's best rights are marriage rites.

MARIE. (*stepping forward with FRANÇOIS*)

This to our friends, ere parting here and there!—

Forgive our follies, and approve our fare;

Poor though it be, and though the cooking plain,

To crown the feast you'll always find——

CHAM.

CHAMPAGNE!

Curtain.