

Lacy's Acting Edition.

SON OF
THE SOIL.

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A SON OF THE SOIL.

A Romantic Play,

IN THREE ACTS.

(Founded on the "Lion Amoureux," of Ponsard).

BY

HERMAN C. MERIVALE

(Member of the Dramatic Authors' Society).

AUTHOR OF

"Six Months Ago;" "He's a Lunatic."

PART AUTHOR OF

"Time and the Hour."

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A SON OF THE SOIL.

First performed at the Royal Court Theatre (under the management of M. Litton), on Wednesday, September 4th, 1872.

Characters.

LOUIS MARTEL (<i>of the Committee of Public Safety</i>)	... Mr. HERMANN VEZIN.
THE DUKE DE LILLE	... Mr. CLIFFORD COOPER.
THE COUNT DE VALMONT	... Mr. W. H. FISHER.
GENERAL HOCHÉ	... Mr. A. BISHOP.
CITIZEN ARISTIDES	... Mr. W. J. HILL.
CITIZEN LEONIDAS	... Mr. J. H. DOYNE.
MICHAEL	... Mr. CHARLES STEYNE.
COMMITTEE MEMBER	... Mr. TRAVERS.
EST	... Mr. C. PARBY.
BEATRICE, DUCHESS D'ARMINE	Miss ADA DYAS.
MADAME TALLIEN	... Miss EMMA BARNETT.
MARGOT	... Miss EMMA RITTA.

Republicans, Aristocrats, Soldiers, &c.



PERIOD 1795.

SCENE:

PARIS—afterwards AURAY, in BRITTANY.

3

A SON OF THE SOIL.

ACT I.

SCENE FIRST.—*A Room in MARTEL'S house; doors at R. and L. 2 E.; table with papers, &c., L.; chairs; table with drinking cups, R.*

HOCHE, ARISTIDES, and OTHERS *discovered.*

ARISTIDES. (R.) You are ready, then, General? If the Aristocrats should get to their old work again in Brittany, as we expect, the Republic counts upon your sword.

HOCHE. (L.) Now as ever, citizen. It is almost rusting for want of use. But, till it is needed, we wear pleasant faces as before, and amuse ourselves in the fine ladies' drawing rooms.

COMMITTEE MEMBER. (L.) Agreed, by all means.

ARIS. Those may who like it. Your fine ladies are the devil, General.

HOCHE. Then the devil must be a very pleasant person. You stand alone in your opinion. I think, Citizen Aristide, that you are the only member of the Committee of Public Safety who declines to attend Madame Tallien's receptions.

ARIS. Oh, no, there's one amongst us who hates women worse than I do.

COM. You forget the Citizen Martel.

HOCHE. Our host; he is indeed incorrigible. These rooms of his certainly seem better fitted for a meeting of good Republicans than for an assembly of ladies.

ARIS. A woman in Martel's house! Don't talk sacrilege.

COM. Well, General, we leave you to fight the ladies' battle with our stern moralists here. Our business is over for the day, and we may look to the evening's pleasure. The Committee thank you for your attendance. We meet to-night at Madame Tallien's?

HOCHE. I hope so. *Au revoir!*

Exeunt all but HOCHE and ARISTIDES, door R.

ARIS. And this is the Committee of Public Safety! If the object of your meeting is to arrange visits to fine ladies, you had better call yourselves the Committee of Public Danger.

HOCHE. Come, my Diogenes! Your classical godfathers

chose wrongly, citizen, when they gave you any name but that. What makes you so savage to-day? Have the Committee been too merciful to the Aristocrats this morning?

ARIS. Far too merciful for my taste, and they will pay for their confidence some day. More nobles released this morning without trial, and without rhyme or reason. One Count de Valmont especially, a pestilent young intriguer, who should be under the guillotine now if I had my way.

HOCHE. Thank heaven you have not, and that the times are not what they were. I would pardon all the Aristocrats if I could.

ARIS. And I'd take all their heads off—that's the only difference.

HOCHE. You are in a minority.

ARIS. Worse luck. If it wasn't for Martel and me we should be having half the emigrants and absentees back in Paris, and taking their names off the black list. He knows better. He was a serf himself (we've done with that word now, thank heaven) on the estate of one of them.

HOCHE. I have heard him speak of that; kindly enough, too. The Duke de Lille, was it not?

ARIS. Ay, an absentee, whose name was before us the other day. There was a difference of opinion about him, and many were for letting the fellow come back to Paris. Even Martel had a weakness that way, and, if he says the word, it will be done.

HOCHE. Then I hope he will say it. Haven't I heard him speak of a daughter of that same Duke's as a friend of his? I have almost fancied he kept a soft corner in his heart for her.

ARIS. His heart has no corners. It is as round and as sound as mine. The girl you speak of was some twelve years old, as I happen to know, and a cursed little Aristocrat. No fear of anything in the shape of a petticoat from twelve years old upwards coming between Citizen Martel and the Republic. Would that others were like him, for the Republic is all but lost.

HOCHE. Bah! the Republic is well enough; you need not wear mourning for her yet awhile. Do you mean to tell me that, because a woman revives the reign of good manners, and teaches two men of different opinions to know each other for the good fellows they are in private, though they may go on hating in public as much as they please, that the Republic is lost? She wanted men to defend her in the time of danger, let women brighten her hour of peace. (*crosses, R.*)

ARIS. You are hopeless. (*crosses, R.*) Here comes one who may convert you better than I can. I wonder the sound of the word women did not bring him down upon us sooner!

Enter MARTEL, L. 2 E.

MART. I have sent off the despatches. Still at work
On the old argument? (*sits at table, L.*)

HOCHE. Yes, I was saying
A good word for the women.

MART. Our worst foes!
The women always hated the Republic.

HOCHE. Let our task be to teach them how to love her.

MART. Impossible! Our lives and theirs are two,
As fire and water are. Their shallow brain
Has room for nothing but for lace and jewels,
For red-heeled boots and for black-painted eyes,
Equality and liberty are sounds
Too rude and rugged for their squeamish ears;
A people's cries are too loud for good taste:
And in the tribune's shouts is hushed and drown'd
The gossip of the drawing-room.

HOCHE. Poor fellow!
How you hate women. I could never see
Why lace and jewels should not hide a heart
As honest as a soldier's uniform.
But we must make the best of them, poor things!
We can't abolish women, or prevent
Their keeping half creation to themselves.
And if the sex and our laws can't agree,
So much the worse—for our laws. (*crosses, C.*)

MART. Can such men
Speak in such fashion! While our thoughts and time
Were filled with high and holy purposes,
These women studied decency. But now
That we have given up steel for gold, they flaunt
Their classic mockeries in the theatres,
Half dressed, and unashamed. The Grecian girdle
Will be enough to clothe them soon, without
Even the Grecian tunic that it clasps.

ARIS. Hear—hear!

HOCHE. You are too young to talk like that.
Has never pair of bright eyes in your heart
Pleaded the cause of woman?

MART. No, indeed;
Bright eyes don't trouble me. My life is still
Tribune at home, and battle-field abroad,
And has no leisure time for sighs and loves.
My country is my mistress, and for her
I breathe my only vows; for her I feel
The lover's passions and the lover's fears.

I quarrel with her weaknesses, rejoice
 In all her triumphs, and adore her beauty !
 And wonder much that living man can find,
 In these our grand and spirit-stirring days,
 Room in his heart for a divided love.

ARIS. How well he talks ! My sentiments exactly.
(crosses to L.—sits)

HOCHE. I've heard all that before. Such men as you
 Are just the very stuff a woman moulds
 Into a helpless slave. Converted rebels
 Have ever been the most devoted subjects.
 Come, dare you stand the test ?

MART. What test you please.

HOCHE. I dine to-night at Madame Tallien's ;
 You shall come with me.

MART. I ?

HOCHE. That is my test.

MART. You are joking, General.

ARIS. (to MARTEL) Don't think of it.
 No compromise with the idolater.

HOCHE. First hear me for a moment—then refuse.
 Believe me, times are changed, and Athens reigns
 Instead of Sparta. Throw your lot with me,
 Among the softened spirits of the time ;
 Leave uncouth manner and untidy dress
 To the low spouters of the clubs and streets.
 To-night, at Madame Tallien's, you will find
 Science and war shake hands, and even see,
 Under the presidency of good taste,
 A marquis bowing to a peasant.

MART. Thank you,
 Your good taste *à la mode* is not for me ;
 I cannot put friendships and enmities,
 Like old gloves, on and off. Were I to meet
 A traitor in your model drawing-rooms,
 Why, I should call him traitor, to his face ;
 Among these women and these men who ape them,
 I should be rude or awkward, insolent,
 If not insulted. You may go alone ;
 And when you meet these nobles in Vendée,
 At the sword's point, may you fight none the worse
 For having met with them before—at dinner !

HOCHE. Incurable man ! Good night.

MART. Good-bye.

Exit HOCHE, R. 2 E.

ARIS. Bravo ! that's the way to talk ; you've come out of the
 fire without a singe. Let him hob and nob with his Aristocrats ;

we shall find women after our own heart at the Jacobins' club—none of your bare shoulders and gold hangings, but honest cotton gowns and wooden shoes; good women of the people, fit for nothing but to applaud our speeches and mend our stockings, with no female charms about them whatever, thank heaven!

MART. Well said! (*laughing*) I will start with you directly, but must sign some orders of release first, the most welcome work I have to do. Let me see. (*sitting at a table, L., and looking over papers*)

Enter LEONIDAS, L. 2 E.

LEON. Wanted.

MART. By whom?

LEON. Woman.

MARG. What kind of woman?

LEON. Lady.

MARG. An Aristocrat? (*LEONIDAS nods*) Young or old?

LEON. Young, and—(*waking up*) pretty—very!

ARIS. The devil!

Exit precipitately, L. 2 E.

MART. Is she so anxious to see me?

LEON. Insists!

MART. Show her in.

LEONIDAS goes to the door, R., and beckons—then enter BEATRICE and LEONIDAS retires, R., after a stare at her—MARTEL at his papers, L., does not look up—BEATRICE pauses at the door, R.

BEAT. (*aside*) In the lion's den. Courage.

MART. (*not looking up*) What do you want, citizen?

BEAT. (*quietly*) A chair, sir.

(*MARTEL turns his head, rises and gives her a chair, R. C.*)

Thank you. (*MARTEL remains standing*)

MART. Now, will you tell me—

BEAT. You may be seated yourself.

(*he pauses for a moment, then bows, and sits at his desk, L.*)

BEAT. (R. C.) So I may count upon your courtesy?

MART. (L. C.) Why not?

BEAT. They told me that Republicans
Despised such trifles, and I felt afraid—
But without cause, I think.

MART. You are good to say so.

BEAT. It is but justice. I am glad to feel
That an acknowledged patriot, like you,
And stainless democrat, can be polite,
And still receive a woman as a woman,
Not as a—citizen.

MART. If our rough ways
Stand in some need of mending, I for one
Would gladly take my lesson from your lips.

BEAT. A compliment! Then I feel quite at home,
And proffer my petition fearlessly.
I have a right of audience. The bond
That links us both is of no common kind:
In the same canton you and I were born.

MART. You come from——

BEAT. Villeneuve. Have you quite forgotten
The old grey manor-house upon the hill?

MART. (*his manner changing*)
I have forgotten nothing; no, nor shall.
Such memories are dangerous, Madame.
A thousand years of outrage and of wrong,
Humiliation's bitterest record,
Were written on that manor's wicked walls,
To be torn out for ever, in a day,
By an awakened people's lifted hand.
Bonds between us! Would you have said so once?
We miserable serfs are not as you,
But of a different form, and flesh, and life!
Your nobles have no country but your caste,
And the blue-blooded alien Englishman
Is more your countryman than such as we.
The thought of marrying with us and ours
Would be a shame and horror in your eyes!
Forgotten! Have you taught us to forget?

BEAT. Were our bad deeds, then, written upon rock,
And the good traced in sand, to fade so soon?
Have you no kinder memories of those
Your revolution beggared? In their ranks
Was there no woman numbered, by whose hand
Your sorrows were relieved, your wants supplied—
Who watched the bedside of your dying? None?

MART. True. I did know one such. She was a child.

BEAT. Some children grow to women, for you know
They cannot help it. Do you not remember
Your childhood's little playmate, in whose lap
You used to pour your wealth of fruits and flowers?

MART. You—was that you?

BEAT. Yes, it was I, indeed.
Then how you used to take me in your arms,
And carry me across the running streams,
Great, strong boy that you were?

MART. Ah! and how proud
I was of my sweet burden! With what care

I set my foot upon the slippery stones,
Afraid to breathe, for fear of wetting you!

BEAT. And all the toys you used to make for me!

MART. And then our hunts after the butterflies!

BEAT. The bonfires that we lighted in the woods!

MART. The books you lent me, which I carried off,
Rich and forbidden treasures, to my house,
More mindful of the lender than the loan!
Can it be *you*?

BEAT. What years have passed since then!

MART. And yet it seems to me but yesterday.

Ah, nothing speaks to the man's heart so loud
As do the happy memories of the boy!

BEAT. When you had left the village, how I missed
My old companion! But I heard with pride
When Rumour whispered of your growing fame;
My father tore the papers where the news
Of all your great exploits was written. I
Would sew the bits together, and would go
And read them to your mother.

MART. You did that?

BEAT. Was it so wrong?

MART. Oh, no.

BEAT. But I did more.

Your father died, and all his property
Fell to the lord, as you had left your home.
My father waived his rights, at my entreaty,
And for your mother's sake.

MART. Heaven bless you for it!

I can say nothing more.

BEAT. Then peace is made!

And you allow that an Aristocrat
May have some little good in her?

MART. Madame!

BEAT. You should be generous now, for we have learnt
Lessons of poverty, of cold and hunger;
We know what suffering and exile mean,
And we have worked, like you, to earn a living.
These very hands of mine have done no less,
And washed out drinking-cups upon the Rhine.

MART. What do you mean?

BEAT. Precisely what I say.

I was a barmaid, and a very good one!

MART. This little hand——

BEAT. Has carried draughts of ale
Most humbly to my peasant customers,
And in exchange closed tight upon the coins
They gave me for my pains.

MART. What sacrilege !
What an abomination ! But the reasons
That brought you to such work ?

BEAT. Necessity.
My father with the army, house and home
Pillaged and burned, friendless and destitute,
What could I do ?

MART. Your husband, where was he—
The Duke D'Armine ?

BEAT. Dead ! and the guillotine
That widowed, hardly spared me. Penniless
I had no choice but to work, beg, or starve,
And I preferred the first. A barmaid's place
Was all that I was fit for, and I took it.

MART. But this is horrible ! That such as you
Should work for your own living, drudge, and slave,
And take the wages of a servant. You
Were only born to order, not be ordered.
Those little hands are far too soft and white,
For menial offices, but should be kept
To be admired, and looked at. Ruffians ! Brutes !

BEAT. What a consistent democrat you are !
Don't be excited, for I rather liked it.
The air was pure ; the food, not choice, but wholesome,
And the whole place was rest and peace itself.
You should have seen the honest German boors
Sit staring at me with their big round eyes,
Admiring my neat figure, and the ankle
That peeped from under my short petticoat.
It so distracted them, that more than once
They wavered in their duty to the beer.
All was so strange, that I could think myself
Acting a part upon some private stage.
And then, to earn my living !—it was grand
To be a useful member of mankind.
If you had seen me in my servant's dress,
Would you have pardoned my old fineries ?
You should respect me now, as you respect
The workers of the world, and let the inn
Atone for the offences of the manor,
'The barmaid for the duchess.

MART. It is you
Who must forgive. I knew not what I said.
What can I do to win my pardon—tell me ?
Command me, I obey.

BEAT. I will command you.
You are a member of the great Committee.

Remove my father's name, the Duke de Lille's,
From the proscribed list of the absentees.

MART. He is an absentee.

BEAT. He's at the frontier;
What matter on which side by a few yards—
That can't concern the safety of the State.
You told me to command, and so I do;
I ask you for my father.

MART. What a tyrant!

BEAT. 'Tis no great boon I ask, for you to give,
But everything to me. You know my father.
His faults are of his race, more than redeemed
By his own virtues. We, bad as we are,
Have not unlearned the old-fashioned lessons yet
Of filial duty, love, obedience;
And well has he deserved them at my hands.
I never loved but him; he is my world;
His lightest wish has ever been my law.
For him I gave my hand without my heart—
For him would sacrifice my heart's desire,
Unmurmuring, at a word. That is my creed,
And must be to the end. Give him me back.
And think what payment you will earn from me.

MAR. Well, I will do my best, if you, Madame,
Stand surety for his good behaviour.

BEAT. Most gladly. If he keep not faith with you,
You shall imprison me, and be my jailor.

MART. Such pledges might make traitors of us all.
What other orders have you, citizen—
Your grace, I should say?

BEAT. There is yet one more
For whom I play the suppliant. My cousin,
The Count de Valmont, lies in prison here,
In Paris, charged with treason to the State.
He is not worth the compliment, believe me,
And cannot harm you. He is young, light-headed,
But dangerous to no man but himself.

MART. And to no woman?

BEAT. Pshaw, he is my cousin.
The veriest trifle Paris ever tossed
Upon her pleasure sea in smoother times.

MART. (*aside*) She does not care for him. I am glad of that.
He were not worthy, and she said she loved
Her father only. What is that to me?
The Count de Valmont (*looking at his papers*) Ah, I fear,
madame,
That this I cannot do.

BEAT. Say that you will not.

MART. It is already done. This very day
We signed the order of release. The Count
Is free by this time. And I cannot hope
To do you service there.

BEAT. Service unsought
Is still the greater service, and from this
I draw a happy omen for my father;
And so I have your promise?

MART. I will look
Into the case.

BEAT. We *have* looked into it.

MART. I must consult my colleagues. I am not
The entire Committee!

BEAT. I expected that,
And know what you must do. Except yourself
All the Committee meet, this very night,
At Madame Tallien's, and you must come;
She is my friend, and so will welcome you.
A word from you, Puritan that you are,
Will be all-powerful with your wavering colleagues.
So come to-night to Madame Tallien's.

MART. No, nothing shall persuade me.

BEAT. Disobeying
Commands already? You must come to night.
Are you so fearful of a drawing-room,
Where *I* shall be?

MART. Not that, but I have sworn
I would not go.

BEAT. You had not seen *me* then.
And to be forsworn in a woman's cause
Was never counted for a perjury.
I was sent here as an ambassador,
And if my mission fails, my friends will say
The post was ill-appointed.

MART. Hear my reasons——

BEAT. (R.) I will, to-night, at Madame Tallien's—
But not before. I am now upon my road,
And if you still desire to win my pardon,
You follow instantly.

MART. (R. C.) Can we not meet
Elsewhere, some other time?

BEAT. No; there or nowhere!
You have my *ultimatum*; so, good-bye

For an hour—or for ever. (*going to the door, R., then*
looking at his face, with a curtsey) For an hour! (*closed in*)

SCENE SECOND.—*Ante-room in Madame Tallien's House.*

Enter HOCHÉ and MADAME TALLIEN, R. 1 E.

MAD. T. Your wonderful Martel will not come then, General?

HOCHÉ. Nothing will persuade him. He is the most intolerant, intolerable, excellent fellow whom this giddy wheel of ours has brought to the surface.

MAD. T. And yet a member of that bloodthirsty Committee, to which brave men like you lend their swords!

HOCHÉ. I lend mine to our common country, not to them. They are but the accidents of the hour-glass, but Time itself is not more steady than she.

MAD. T. Then why do men like you bend to these accidents of the moment? Such stories as we hear of them! They have their sittings in the richest saloons of the Tuileries, and to them the best men of your party come humbly to solicit missions and commands. The National Representatives are the mere shadow of their power, and the Convention exists only to register their decrees. And they are the mere dregs of the people! One of them—my guest to-night—worked for me as a joiner, and now we pay him eighteen francs a day to decimate us. Why do you submit to these men, General?

HOCHÉ. Why do you invite them to your house, madame?

MAD. T. Because I have no wish to go to theirs. I submit because I can't help myself.

HOCHÉ. Nor can I. We never know in France why we obey this leader or that. It is enough for me that the country is above all, and Martel at least is not like his fellows. I obey him as readily in the council-chamber as he obeys me in the field; a pure and noble heart, without a touch of bloodthirstiness, or selfish ambition. His influence has already done as much to humanise his colleagues as even yours.

MAD. T. Yet you cannot bring these influences together.

HOCHÉ. I have done my best, but he is an incurable woman-hater.

MAD. T. How many women does he know? A woman-hater generally means a man whom some woman wouldn't like! Let me once see him here, and I will soon convert him. Believe me, in my way I work for my country too.

HOCHÉ. I know it, or I should not be here. But the task you have undertaken is almost impossible. The clouds are gathering again in Brittany.

MAD. T. We shall disperse them yet; but I want the good men of all parties to help me. I am bent upon securing Martel.

HOCHÉ. He will never come.

MAD. T. Must I try another ambassador?

HOCHÉ. If I fail, no one will succeed.

Enter BEATRICE, R. 1 E.

MAD. T. (*to BEATRICE*) Have you seen him?

BEAT. (*to MADAME TALLIEN*) Yes.

MAD. T. Have you succeeded?

BEAT. In obtaining my father's pardon? Yes.

MAD. T. And in bringing this Martel here?

BEAT. I think so.

MAD. T. That means that you know you have. Well done. (*to HOCHÉ*) General, go and join the company. Before the evening is over you will see Martel there. (*HOCHÉ laughs*) Are you open for a wager?

HOCHÉ. I have nothing to wager but my sword, and a pair of white horses with which the Republic presented me this morning.

MAD. T. All she ever presented you with? Grateful Republic.

HOCHÉ. I will venture them on such a stake as this—Martel will not come.

MAD. T. He will.

HOCHÉ. And if he does, let your fine gentlemen guests be more careful of their tongues. You will be sorry he came before the evening is over.

MAD. T. Now, must I yield the palm to you, indeed;

My fascinations are but weak to yours;

My magic arts, so boasted and so feared,

Ne'er tamed so fierce a lion in his den,

Or civilised so tough a democrat.

You are like Cæsar, with a difference—

You come, *are* seen, and conquer! Tell me, now—

What is the thing like, dear? Is it an ogre?

BEAT. N—no!

MAD. T. No! But awkward? heavy? badly dressed?

Like some of my menagerie within—

A happy family of bears and peacocks.

He'll be a bear, of course?

BEAT.

Yes. I suppose so.

And yet his words are strangely passionate,

Fired with a soul that checks the rising smile

Upon a softer lip. You know I hate

The paltry talk and sickly gallantries

That make up all the fashion of our world.

His rough and rude sincerity was new,

And moved me more than polished compliment.

For the first time, I found myself alone

With one of these, our deadly enemies,

Frightened and curious both, at first. But scone,

Spite of myself I think that I was stirred
By a strange feeling—sympathy—I know not.
Oh! after all, these men are great and strong
To do the work that they have done in France;
To break the mighty statue of the past
In atoms from its storied pedestal,
To wipe out rank and manners, form and laws.
As they had never been—to change a dream
To a reality that rules the world.
There is more manhood in their nameless blood
Than in the pride of all our coats of arms.

MAD. T. Why, Beatrice!

BEAT. I grant you all their crimes,
Nor would excuse them,—I myself their victim,
Their victim's child and widow. But I feel
That we had driven them to extremity;
And on my life, had I been peasant born,
My very soul had risen in arms with them,
Against the tyranny and wrongs of years.

MAD. T. Ah!—tell me—Is he young, this citizen?

BEAT. Four or five years my elder,

MAD. T. So exact?

BEAT. His father was a serf on our estate,
Did not I tell you so? The young Martel
Was a close student, taught himself to read,
But left the village when the wars began,
Enlisted in the Army of the Rhine,
There won high name and honour, and is now
All powerful in the Convention.

MAD. T. We live in curious times, when ranks change places.
Shall I tell you what fancy crossed my mind?

BEAT. What was it?

MAD. T. Too absurd, even for days
When most absurdities are probable;
So never mind it. But just tell me, dear,
Have you obtained the Count de Valmont's freedom?

BEAT. He was released to-day.

MAD. T. By this Martel?

Your hand, I think, is promised to the Count?

BEAT. Half-promised—yes. It is my father's wish
That I some day should be my cousin's wife,
But this is not the time to think of it.

MAD. T. You love him?

BEAT. I suppose so. Change the subject.

MAD. T. Most willingly. I am rather sorry for him;
His head was never fit for graver work
Than theatres and horses. Poor De Valmont!

Enter VALMONT, L. 1 E.

VALM. (L.) A woman pitying me! Who was the fool who said that listeners never hear any good of themselves?

MAD. T. (C.) M. de Valmont!

BEAT. (R.) Ah! you are free already.

VALM. What a chilling reception! more free than welcome, I fear! I see you are afraid of giving way to your feelings in public. But our hostess will excuse us, I know. My beautiful cousin and betrothed, come to my arms! You won't! Then I must come to yours! (*crosses R.*)

BEAT. The hand is far enough. There! (*gives him her hand to kiss*)

VALM. As cold as ever!

BEAT. As foolish as ever!

VALM. If devotion be folly, yes! I declare, cousin mine, that you don't seem half rejoiced at my escape from captivity.

BEAT. I am not sure, cousin, that captivity is not better for you than freedom! I fear that a fortnight's imprisonment is scarcely enough to teach you common sense.

VALM. That quality is perfectly thrown away in these days. And what does it mean, at the best? To lay plans which an accident may upset in a moment—to be always looking forward, and always on your guard. Life isn't worth having at the price. My philosophy is to laugh at what makes the rest of the world cry, and throw myself blindly into the arms of the great god, Chance, who carries me wherever he pleases, which is sure to please me.

BEAT. Extravagant as ever!

VALM. Not I. It's the world that's extravagant, and has been for the last four years, not to say mad. Peasants turn into kings, bootmakers into generals, and dukes into dancing-masters. It would be horrible, if it wasn't so deliciously absurd. I met a fellow as I came in, all gold and feathers, who condescended to bow to me. He was one of my own farmers, and has millions, while I haven't a half-penny. Isn't it funny?

MAD. T. And you propose to devote your newly acquired freedom to enjoying this kind of fun?

VALM. Not entirely. I shall combine business with pleasure. I have begun conspiring already, I have.

MAD. T. Oh, hush! Take care!

VALM. I have, I assure you; but that's nothing. Everybody does it, and everybody knows that everybody does. Seriously, this game of plunder and death is nearly played out, and the accursed Republic will soon commit suicide, if we only wait and encourage her. It will be a good joke to see her cut her own throat in her own den.

BEAT. (*aside*) The Republic is not quite so easy to deal with, I suspect.

MAD. T. Stop. You are becoming dangerous, and as a hostess I must not encourage you. Come, both of you, and join my animals. Count, give me your hand.

VALM. Too much honoured. It is worth going to prison, for the new relish it gives to an evening party!

MAD. T. (*to BEATRICE*) Beatrice!

BEAT. I follow you.

Exeunt MADAME TALLIEN and VALMONT, R. 1 E.

So, we have met again.

The mistress and the serf, the helpless woman,
And the all-powerful ruler—in whose hand
Are names and fortunes, lands, and laws, and lives!
The foremost of the dread decemvirate,
Whose seat of justice is the guillotine.
Is this the man I thought to find so changed?
It is the very boy I knew of old.
A silver echo from our native hills
Rings in his voice, tender and true as then.
His presence brought my girlhood back again;
We moved again in the green woods, and dreamed
Under the open sky. Is this man cruel?
Is it of him that half France is afraid?
If so, all France should be afraid of me.
Why, I could melt this iron with mine eye,
And in these little finger-tips there lurks
A spirit of power to draw him where I would.
Oh, thou down-trodden country of my love,
Dear France, what might I do through him, for thee!

Exit, R. 1 E.

SCENE THIRD.—*A Suite of Rooms in Madame Tallien's house, richly furnished in the classical style.*

GUESTS *grouped about the stage in the different dresses of the day*; REPRESENTATIVES, NOBLES, LADIES *in the Greek dress, &c.*; amongst the others, MARTEL, L., *conversing with the MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE, L.*; in another part of the room, HOCHÉ.

MART. (*to MEMBER OF COMMITTEE*) It is arranged, then, about the Duke de Lille?

1ST COMMITTEEMAN. His name shall be removed from the proscription list at once. Your reasons are all-sufficient. (*he retires*—HOCHÉ *comes forward, C., seeing MARTEL*)

Enter at back MADAME TALLIEN, BEATRICE and VALMONT, who mix with the guests.

HOCHE. Can I believe my eyes?

MART. That depends on what they tell you.

HOCHE. You here? Here, you?

MART. Obviously.

HOCHE. I had no idea that I was so eloquent. You reflected on all I said, and changed your mind?

MART. Precisely. I changed my mind.

HOCHE. Bravo! Come and be introduced to our hostess.

MART. (C., *drawing back*) Later!

HOCHE. (C.) No, at once. Courage! Let us face the enemy together. (*leads MARTEL to MADAME TALLIEN*) Madame, I bring you one of my oldest and best friends, as you desired me, Citizen Martel, representative and member of the Committee, but better known on the bivouac by the Rhine than in the drawing-rooms of Paris, and more afraid of one woman than of twenty regiments.

MAD. T. My dear General, we owe you all thanks (*with a look at BEATRICE*) for your conquest. I trust that your friend, in whose praise I have heard so much, has only to know us, to fear us a little less than his enemies fear him. You see I did not overrate that winning tongue of yours, after all.

HOCHE. My horses are gone!

MAD. T. I would not rob you for the world. I only wanted to teach you not to mistrust yourself or me.

MART. (*after bowing to MADAME TALLIEN, crosses to BEATRICE, R.*) I have done as you wished, madame. Your father may return to Paris.

BEAT. (R.) Thank you from the bottom of my heart. You have acted generously, and have a lasting claim on my friendship. I can never thank you enough.

MAD. T. (*to one of the GUESTS*) Well, Barras, what news?

GUEST. Nothing particular. The democrats are agitating, and the absentees are conspiring. Bah! nothing but last dying struggles. My best news is, that the wines are good, and the women pretty; and that we have a delightful concert to-night.

MAD. T. A concert is well enough in its way; but when are we to have the Opera again? where the spiders are spinning their webs over the dear old decorations. Ah, Mr. Martel, give us back our Opera!

BEAT. Give us back something better, first. The very air is sighing for a different music, now long dumb—the music of the church bells. How long must God's house be turned into a barrack room? Oh, M. Martel, give us back our churches!

MART. But, madame—

BEAT. Hush ! You shall not blaspheme before me. I mean to convert you in spite of yourself. Come to my house, to-morrow, and hear the rest of my sermon.

A YOUNG GIRL. (*to MADAME TALLIEN*) Ah, madame, when are we to get something better than the Opera ! Shall we never have another ball ?

MAD. T. That is a real want, is it not ?

GIRL. It is, indeed. We are tired of wearing eternal mourning—two years of scaffolds, and murders, and all sorts of dreadful things. We want to see if our feet have forgotten how to keep time in their horrid Republican shoes. A ball—gives us a ball !

GUESTS. Yes, Madame Tallien, give us a ball.

VALM. (*coming forward*) Young ladies, you shall have one. Indeed, we have just been arranging the victims' ball.

MAD. T. What does that mean ?

VALM. All the guests are to be people who have suffered from Mother Guillotine.

GIRL. How horrid !

VALM. I don't mean personally, of course ; but by the loss of some relation—a father, mother or wife. We have settled the preliminaries, and everything is to be typical of the occasion. Instead of bowing we are to nod our heads, as if they were just cut off, like this. (*making a sign with his hand*) The ladies are to wear cypress in their hair. Pretty idea, is it not ?

MAD. T. Cheerful, very ! When is the entertainment to come off ?

VALM. In a fortnight.

MAD. T. The authorities will scarcely permit it.

VALM. Ah, bah ! We'll carry loaded canes with us, and our Jacobin friends will run like hares when they see them.

(MARTEL, *who has heard VALMONT, starts up, BEATRICE stops him*)

BEAT. (*to MARTEL*) He is speaking of the assassins who disgrace your cause ; and not of you.

(MARTEL *sits down, looking at VALMONT, who has not observed him*)

VALM. We know these heroes pretty well by this time ; a pack of bloodhounds, who only bark round the guillotine, and attack those who can't show fight. We have thrashed them at the Club, in the Palais Royal, at the Tuileries ; and given many a Jacobin a cold bath in the fountain—not before he wanted it.

GUESTS. (*laughing*) Bravo !

MART. (*rising*) Damnation !

BEAT. (*aside to him*) Be still.

VALM. We will lay siege to their Club some day with stones, or smoke the fellows out of their lair.

MART. The puppy! Am I to bear—

BEAT. Why should you mind what he says? Restrain yourself, I command—I entreat you. (MARTEL *remains quiet; to VALMONT*) Count, in this company your remarks are not in the best taste. Let me beg you to say no more, if I have any influence with you.

VALM. My sweet cousin!

MART. (*aside*) The Count de Valmont!

VALM. Your influence is unbounded already. When will you give yourself the right to use it openly?

MART. (*aside*) What does he mean?

VALM. Madame Tallien, help me to subdue this charming rebel. Tell her it is high time we were married, after being engaged six months.

MART. Great Heaven!

BEAT. Don't talk of that now. You are just out of prison; still suspected; you would only compromise me.

VALM. Then secure the protection of the government for love's young dream. Your eyes could do that any day, for I hear that the Committee are highly susceptible, and never say "No" to a pretty woman.

BEAT. Count!

VALM. Don't frown, it's unbecoming. You can't have any scruple in fascinating these awkward tyrants of ours, and giving them a lesson, surely. Make use of them first, madame, and laugh at them afterwards.

MART. (*springing up*) Right! that is the way to treat those fellows on whom all honourable scruples are thrown away. You do them too much honour, madame, in condescending to play with them.

VAL. I don't know who you are, sir, but you are a very sensible man.

BEAT. Be silent! (*to VALMONT*) and you! (*to MARTEL—VALMONT turns away laughing—GUESTS approach and form in groups about the rooms*)

MART. Poor devils! Monsters, we all know they are!

But they are children, too, in ignorance!

Under their rough and scarred outsides there lie
Fresh feelings easily stirred, soft hearts that need
Small skill to trifle with, and to deceive.

We never learnt the polished treacheries
And the fine treasons of nobility.

This gentleman and his good friends, I hope,
Will bring the old times back again, and then
You need not stand on ceremony with us.

Instead of sending women to betray,
You will hire slaves to *beat* us.

BEAT. (*to MARTEL, aside*) Are you mad?
What are you doing? Oh, for your own sake
Be silent, or for mine! Do you not see
You draw all eyes upon us? It is cruel
To shame me thus.

MAD. T. (*coming forward*) M. Martel, I beg you,
In common courtesy, to spare her this.
Or, as you are a man, to leave my house.
Beatrice—gentlemen——

MART. (*throwing aside all restraint, as all gather round to listen*)
Yes, I will go!

Would that my foot had withered on the threshold,
Before I ever crossed it. I *will* go,
But not till I have thrown back in your teeth
Your scorn of the Republic I adore.
You think, you miserable Royalists,
That with your petty plots and trickeries
You can undo the Revolution's work,
Upset the giant brood her womb has borne
In place of dolls like you! We have beaten back
Europe in arms, with ten kings at her head,
With rags upon our backs, and pike in hand!
Our heroes struck Prussians and Englishmen,
Not their own womankind and helpless babes!
Our nobles fought barefooted—but for fame,
And not for gold! Our patriots died for France,
Which you had harried with your foreign friends.
Will you face such as *we* are? We shall toss you
Even to the winds, like straw! Sneer as you please,
Insult us, and awake the memories
Of your own evil story, whose black roll
We would forget and bury but for you!
Worry with your small stings the lazy lion,
Whose roar would drive you to your caves and holes!
Stand back, you hounds, and let a Frenchman pass!

*He rushes out, L., all standing back to let him pass—the
doors are thrown wide open—group.*

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE FIRST.—*Boudoir of Beatrice D'Armine, richly furnished; a window at the back opening on a balcony, L.C.*

BEATRICE and MADAME TALLIEN discovered, the former in a Greek dress, which MADAME TALLIEN is arranging, L. C.

BEAT. Have you finished?

MAD. T. Very nearly. The folds of the dress must hang a little more loosely—there; and a little more of the arm shown. How well it becomes the bracelet! Now, come and admire yourself in the glass, my pearl of Athenian beauties!

BEAT. Oh, take it away! I'm ashamed to look at myself.

MAD. T. Nonsense! It's a privilege that all the world might envy. I declare you are as red as fire. What a child it is?

BEAT. I can't help it. I never wore this sort of dress before, and I feel quite unsuited to it, and ashamed. Now I've obliged you by putting it on, I suppose I may please myself by taking it off again.

MAD. T. (*laughing*) Certainly not; my carriage is waiting for us, and the Count de Valmont with it. Come.

BEAT. I can't. I'm afraid to go out.

MAD. T. Why? you promised me that you would.

BEAT. I can scarcely answer; I am becoming fanciful and irritable, and don't know my own mind for two minutes together. I never was capricious before, but I am now. I have vague longings that I cannot define, and have lost all pleasure in what I most enjoyed. I want something new, and that is why I let you deck me out in this heathen fashion. But now I've changed my mind again. You've seen me in my masquerade, but nobody else shall. I'm out of spirits and temper, and am fit for nothing but to stay at home.

MAD. T. (*sitting by her side*) Ah! What are you so troubled about?

BEAT. About my father, I think. I don't know why he doesn't come to Paris. He must have heard that he is proscribed no longer.

MAD. T. Dutiful daughter! (*suddenly*) Have you seen the Hurricane again?

BEAT. The—what?

MAD. T. Your friend—you know, who made himself so agreeable at my house the other night—the lion, as he must not be called a bear—Monsieur——

BEAT. Martel? No, I have not seen him.

MAD. T. Has he made no sign?

BEAT. He has written, more than once, to ask my pardon.

MAD. T. Which you gave?

BEAT. No; he must work out his sentence. Oh, here's somebody coming.

MAD. T. It is only the Count.

BEAT. Provoking interruption!

Enter VALMONT, L. 2 E.

VALM. (L.) Your carriage is waiting, madame. Ah, Duchess, this is a revolution as it should be. Delightful revival of the old classic days! Am I permitted to worship at the shrine of the high-priestess of Venus? I adore everything Greek.

BEAT. (C.) Then go to my window for a few minutes, cousin, and look at the blue sky. It's perfectly Greek.

VALM. (*shrugging his shoulders, after walking to the window with a puzzled look*) Excuse me, but the sky is a dirty brown.

BEAT. Then see if there's anybody in the street, or read the newspaper; it is very interesting.

VALM. Haven't you got a doll to amuse me with?

BEAT. No, baby; stay at the window, or leave the house.

VALM. Ah, I see. I'm interrupting a confidence.

BEAT. Intelligent man! Well, which is it to be?

VALM. The window, by all means. (*goes on to the balcony*)

BEAT. (*to MADAME TALLIEN*) I have seen him under my window fifty times.

MAD. T. (R.) The Count?

BEAT. No; M. Martel.

MAD. T. Ah!

BEAT. I couldn't help pitying him, he looked so disconsolate. I wrote to tell him he might call and see me to-day, as he tells me he has something to say to me.

MAD. T. What a self-sacrifice! Shall you really be able to meet him with a decent show of civility?

BEAT. It is a distraction, at all events, and I own that the man has interested me. It may be the triumph of seeing a stubborn Democrat's respect for one of the proscribed race; or perhaps a woman's pride in conquest, the greater when she knows that no other woman has ever made that conquest before.

MAD. T. How do you know that?

BEAT. He is a notorious woman-hater. I should like to see him again. It would be a pleasure to read his heart in his tell-tale face, for want of a better occupation. I should like to study him, that's all.

MAD. T. Yes, I like studying people too. I'm practising on you at this moment. But don't be so absorbed in your

studies as to forget everybody else. That weathercock doesn't hear us, does he?

BEAT. Not he. Set a child to look out at the window, and its mind has no room for any other occupation.

MAD. T. Well, then, the child is in danger of being arrested again. You know how good my sources of information on these matters are. He has been compromising himself in fresh plots, it is said, and is what they call "suspected." He is in the power of your patriotic friend, my dear. If M. Martel were to use that power——

BEAT. He would not do it.

MAD. T. Indeed! Yet it would be an effective way of preventing the Count from becoming your husband.

BEAT. You wrong him cruelly by saying that. He may be a little violent at times, perhaps——

MAD. T. A little, yes.

BEAT. But he is incapable of any meanness.

MAD. T. Who told you so?

BEAT. My own heart—I mean I feel sure of it.

MAD. T. A good woman's reason. I won't quarrel with it.

VALM. (*at the window, L. C.*) I beg your pardon for one moment, but I have a most interesting fact to communicate. Marcus Brutus Horatius Cocles is coming this way.

BEAT. Who?

VALM. Isn't that his name, or something like it? I mean that tremendously virtuous and excitable person who paid us all so many compliments the other night. (*BEATRICE rises, VALMONT looking from the window*) He is positively coming to this house; he advances; he stops; he takes two steps forwards; he takes three backwards; he's going away; he's coming back. If he goes on like this much longer, it will take him some time to ring the bell. He *has* rung! Bravo! I wonder what pretty speeches he has prepared for the occasion, and what on earth he wants here? Confound his impudence!

MAD. T. (*to BEATRICE*) For the present, good-bye. Count, give me your arm.

VALM. Don't be alarmed, Duchess. I'll be back directly.

MAD. T. Not at all. You're going to take care of me.

BEAT. I give you my full permission, Count, and a dispensation for the day.

VALM. Do you mean to be left alone with the wild beast? Why, he'll eat you.

BEAT. I hope not. At any rate I'll run the risk.

VALM. Ah! Duchess, you distress me, upon my honour. You are contracting low tastes, and the matter is becoming serious. Save yourself by a desperate remedy, and take me at once.

Enter SERVANT, L. 2 E.

SERVANT. M. Martel.

MAD. T. (*to BEATRICE*) Good-bye.

BEAT. I can't receive him like this. Come to my room with me for a moment.

MAD. T. But you didn't mind the Count?

BEAT. That's different. I don't think M. Martel is—a classical scholar. Come. *Exit, R. 2 E.*

MAD. T. (*to VALMONT*) Stay here and do the honours, and don't be afraid. The wild beast won't be tempted to eat *you*.

Exit after BEATRICE, R. 2 E.

VALM. But, Madame! What an absurd position! (*sits down at his ease, R.*)

Enter MARTEL, L. 2 E., who looks at VALMONT curiously.

VALM. (*bowing*) Take a chair, sir.

MART. I don't understand.

VALM. It's very simple. I mean, sit down.

MART. I thought that this was Madame d'Armine's house. (*sits, L.*)

VALM. Quite right. I am Madame d'Armine; that is, I represent her for the moment, as gracefully as I can. Anything that you may have to say to her, I will repeat faithfully, if you will tell it to me.

MART. Thank you. I speak the same language as the lady, and require no interpreter.

VALM. Not exactly the same language, I think. But, however, the Duchess is arranging her dress. It may bore you to wait.

MART. Not at all. I will sit here till she can see me.

VALM. It may be some time, especially as it is probably her wedding dress that she is trying on.

MART. Her wedding dress?

VALM. Didn't you know she was going to be married? Widows of twenty will do it, though it's a weakness. You don't seem comfortable. You *are* bored I can see.

MART. No.

VALM. I am afraid you are.

MART. No; I tell you, no.

VALM. Very well, you ought to know best. A charming woman, the Duchess, is she not? Ah, I ought to consider myself a very lucky man.

MART. The Count de Valmont, I think?

VALM. The same. Your penetration does you credit.

MART. I may have something to say to you.

VALM. Delighted to hear it. So far, you have not said

much. But you have lost your opportunity for the present—here comes the Duchess.

Re-enter BEATRICE, R. 2 E., with a cloak thrown over her dress, and MADAME TALLIEN; MARTEL rises, and he and BEATRICE bow.

MAD. T. Come, M. de Valmont.

VALM. At your service. (*aside*) I flatter myself I've made Brutus extremely uncomfortable. Good-bye, Duchess! (*warmly kissing her hand, then going to the door, returning and kissing it again*) Cousin, good-bye!

BEAT. (*impatiently*) That's enough; good-bye!

MART. (*watching VALMONT, aside, as he turns at the door, and kisses his hand to BEATRICE*) How well a box on the ear would suit that puppy.

Exeunt MADAME TALLIEN and VALMONT, L. 2 E.—a pause.

BEAT. (R. C.) Well? Are you penitent?

MART. (L. C.)

Yes.

BEAT.

Overwhelmed?

And from the very bottom of your heart?

MART. I am—whatever you would have me be.

BEAT. Then you confess your sins and ask my pardon?

MART. I only know this, that I cannot live

In your displeasure.

BEAT. Why did you make that scene the other night?

MART. Because I thought, and you had let me think—

BEAT. What?

MART. That we two were friends.

BEAT.

Well, and what then?

MART. The sudden news of your intended marriage
Dispelled my dream.

BEAT. Had I said anything

That gave you the right to think me free?

MART. No.

BEAT. Had you asked me if I was or not?

MART. No.

BEAT. Then why were you angry? Tell me, why?

MART. Because I love you, and am jealous! Lady,

Forgive me, but it is a bitter pain

That wrings this truth unwillingly from me.

I cannot talk the language of your world,

Or play dissembler after your world's fashion.

Our peasant passions are as rude as we—

Our hate is to the death, our love to madness!

And I—I never loved before! The foe

That I had laughed at took my heart by storm,
 All in a moment, irresistibly !
 If you but knew the insensate thoughts and dreams,
 Fearful and rash by turns, that have been mine.
 If you but knew, since first I met with you,
 How often I have passed before your doors,
 How often I have followed in your path,
 And never dared to cross it ! How my life,
 My heart, my soul, are yours, and yours alone !
 Why am I here, to court a helpless pain
 Of my own seeking ? I have no hope—none !
 I look for nothing—wish for nothing—ask
 For nothing ! But I love you—that is all.
 What right have I to speak these words to you ?
 None, and I know it. This, my doom of torture,
 Is of my own pronouncing. You and I
 Are sundered as the poles—as heaven and earth !
 My birth is not as your birth, and my speech
 Is of another tongue. The power that we,
 Men of the people, have won over you,
 But makes the gulf between us wider yet.
 You have the right to choose your husband. Well,
 I know it, but my jealousy is mad,
 And every nerve in all my body thrills
 And tingles at the thought that you can give
 Your beauty to another ! That a man,
 Other than I, should live to be your lord,
 Makes my blood boil within me ! I am jealous
 Of who comes near you—could have struck down dead,
 Here where he stood, that fool who kissed your hand !
 Why do you wear that dress—why fall so low ?
 Leave such things to the shameless, you whose crown
 Of glory is your spotless purity !
 That you should let a man see you like that.

(BEATRICE moves)

Oh, pardon me, I knew not what I said !
 But I no longer know myself, my brain
 Is turning. Hardened soldier as I am,
 I tell you I could find it in my heart
 To throw myself down at your feet and cry !

BEAT. Don't speak like that. Louis, you frighten me !
 It is no fault of mine, indeed, *indeed*,
 If I was pledged before I met with you.
 Cannot you like a woman as a friend,
 Without this passionate and violent love ?
 Listen, my friend, my dear friend. You will let me
 Give you that name ? Some one is coming. Hush !

Enter SERVANT, with letter, L. 2 E.

SERVANT. From Madame Tallien.

BEAT. You permit me, sir?

Exit SERVANT, L. 2 E.

(*opens and reads aside*) What's this? "I have just learned
"beyond all doubt that the Count de Valmont is in immediate
"danger. He will be arrested to-night, by the order of
"Martel. If you can do anything, do."

I don't believe it. Say this is not true.

(*gives MARTEL letter*)

MART. I had forgotten. I came here to day
To warn you of your cousin's danger.

BEAT. What!

Then it is true?

MART. Yes.

BEAT. And you tell me so?

MART. I hold the proofs, undoubted, of new treasons
Of this De Valmont. He engaged in plots
Against the State as soon as he was free.
Of the Committee I alone know this;
And may be bound by duty to arrest him.

BEAT. Is this revenge under the guise of duty?
You fight a duel with your rival, choosing
The guillotine for weapon?

MART. If it please you,
Kill me; but spare me such a stab as that.
Do you deliberately ask of me
To violate a sacred trust, that I
May bring your lover back into your arms?

BEAT. I ask you that, that I would ask of no man
Whom I believed less noble. If this man
Is, as you say my lover, your own heart
Should show you where the path of duty lies.
A stranger, you might send him to his death.
Your rival, for your very jealousy,
You feel and know that you should leave him free.
He shall quit Paris. I will answer for it.
I ask of you to spare him—for his safety,
And for your honour.

MART. Do you love him?

BEAT. What,
And if I do? For your own sake spare him.

MART. And you will marry him?

BEAT. Yes.

MART. Be it so.

It shall be as you wish. The Count de Valmont

Is guilty ; and a servant of the State
I cannot do this thing. But if my post
On the Committee is resigned, my colleagues
Need never know of this ; and, if you will,
To-morrow—he can take you—for his wife.

BEAT. (*aside*) I think I never saw a man before !
You will do this ?

MART. I have said so. Now good-bye,
For you and I must never meet again.
The blow that you have given me is heavy,
And I must wrestle with the pain alone.
Heaven bless you.

BEAT. Do not leave me yet.

MART. I must.
I have stayed too long. For God's sake let me go.

BEAT. One moment. For perhaps—I am not sure—
I may find means to break this marriage off.

MART. Madame !

BEAT. It never was my father's wish
To force it on me. I have never loved
My cousin, but I felt indifferent
Till now. All that is changed. The Count de Valmont
May free me from my promise.

MART. Do not mock me :
It were too cruel.

BEAT. Do you think I would,
Even for a moment ? If so eagerly
I pressed you for an answer to my prayer,
It was for your sake, more than for the Count's ;
At least, I think so. That which you have done
More than saves him, for it ennoble you.
It was no common victory you won,
And from my soul I thank, and I admire you.
I must be frank and fearless with you now ;
If I refuse the Count this hand of mine,
I pay the forfeit, for I give him life ;
And if I find—perhaps—I cannot say,
Some other man to woo me for his wife,
Who begged me hard enough—some day, not yet,
He might not find me quite invincible.

MART. Am I awake or dreaming ? No ; your eyes
Confirm the half avowal of your tongue.
I am not good at words. I—is it true
That you will be my wife ?

BEAT. Oh, not so fast !
For there are some conditions to be made
Before the garrison surrenders quite.

Of this I am resolved, never to wed
 Unless before the altar of my faith;
 For, frankly, I am no philosopher,
 And I believe in my old-fashioned prayers.
 So now you know what work you have to do;
 And if you love me, set our churches open.

MART. All that man's heart can in its strength conceive,
 All that man's hand can dare and execute,
 By honour not forbidden, shall be done,
Is done, to serve your will or please your fancy.
 The criminal who on the scaffold hears
 The sudden news of pardon, does not breathe
 Heaven's air as greedily as I do now.
My Beatrice! how beautiful you are,
 And oh, how gloriously that dress becomes you!

(throws himself at her feet)

BEAT. Here, take this picture; it is like, they say—
 And use it for a safeguard when you feel
 One of those fits of passion coming on;
 For in those moods you are rather dangerous.

(MARTEL kisses her hand as he takes the picture)

Enter LILLE, L. 2 E.

My father!

LILLE. Beatrice! *(they embrace)*

BEAT. *(turning to MARTEL)* For a time, good-bye.

MARTEL *bows to BEATRICE and LILLE, and exit, L. 2 E.,*
with a passionate look at BEATRICE.

LILLE. Who is that gentleman?

BEAT. He is a member
 Of the Committee.

LILLE. In this house? The villain!

BEAT. Have you forgotten him, Louis Martel,
 The son of your old tenant, whom you favoured
 In the old days? He was my friend, you know,
 And you approved it.

LILLE. He has well repaid
 Such favour at our hands; his gratitude
 Is strangely shown. But it is stranger still
 That you, my daughter, should receive him here.
 Such men as that are not for you to know.

BEAT. And yet we owe your safety, sir, to him.

LILLE. How so?

BEAT. My letter told you, did it not,
 He struck your name from the proscription list?

LILLE. I will take no such favour from such hands;
 I thought myself in danger, still proscribed,

And will remain so. But the day will come,
When I shall owe my safety to my sword;
If not, I will be dead, or live in exile.

BEAT. Oh, what new deed of madness does this bode?
How can a band of scattered fugitives
Prevail with men who have subdued the world?

LILLE. This time, on all sides, fortune favours us;
We never played upon so grand a scale
The game of righteous war. England lends vessels;
The Bretons are in arms along the coast;
And every gentleman, both young and old,
A few days hence, will meet in Brittany.
I shall be there, and have but time to snatch
A hasty glimpse of you, ere yet once more
We meet in arms this rebel peasantry.
But tell me, was I dreaming, Beatrice,
Or did I see that fellow, that Martel,
Kissing my daughter's hand?

BEAT. I have no wish
To hide the truth; the witness of your eyes
Did not deceive you—he did kiss my hand—
That man, Martel, is worthy you and me,
And I have pledged myself to be his wife.

LILLE. His wife! a peasant's wife! Unsay that word.

BEAT. That peasant is the noblest man alive.
Merit alone is now nobility;
And I, who without shame could stoop to wear,
For ducal coronet, the servant's coif,
Am proud to throw the menial garb aside,
To be a statesman's and a hero's wife.
I love him and I glory in my love!

LILLE. Is it a child of mine who dares blaspheme
The name I gave her? Has democracy,
The accursed plague spot, tainted my race too,
And degradation crowned our house's fall?
What! All the pride of our great lineage
To end in gutter-blood—to die with you?
Madame Martel, the wife of her own serf?
Her thing, her chattel! Woman, are you mad?
Have you forgot the sea of gentle blood
That lies between this scum of the earth and you,—
Your brother's, and your husband's, and your king's?

BEAT. He had no hand in that; he knew it not;
Was with the army of the Rhine. If blood
Was ever shed by him, 'twas sword in hand.

LILLE. He is the accomplice of the murderers,
If not a murderer. Hear me, Beatrice!

I had rather see you lie dead at my feet,
Had rather with my own hand lay you there.
Than see you married to this man. But if
I may not take your life, you shall take mine.
Go then and do this thing, and before Heaven
I swear that I will never live to be
The witness of this crowning infamy.
Give up the match, or I denounce myself
To the assassins, to your chosen friends,
And to the church the daughter's path shall lie
Over the father's grave.

BEAT. Oh, silence, silence !

LILLE. Or shall I kneel to you, humble myself
Even to the dust, to pray that you will spare me
This bitter outrage ! Beatrice, on my knees——

BEAT. Father, not that ! Oh, you are cruel, cruel.
I had hoped that the unforgiving past
Might in my cause be buried, and my hand
Be the fair pledge of peace, my hand and—*his*.
But if it may not be, and if your pride
Is unrelenting and resentful still,
If you forbid this marriage, I—oh, Louis !
(*falls half fainting into LILLE'S arms as the scene changes*)

SCENE SECOND.—*Before Martel's House.*

Enter HOCHÉ, L. 1 E., and ARISTIDES, R. 1 E., meeting.

HOCHÉ. Good morning, citizen. Is Martel at home ? I am come to look for him.

ARIS. I have just left him ; he's changed, bewitched, done for, and it's a woman that has done it. To think of his being caught by a woman ! By-the-bye, I want to introduce my wife to you.

HOCHÉ. Eh ! has a woman caught you too ?

ARIS. Oh, no ; this isn't a woman, it's a female citizen !

HOCHÉ. Ah ! accept my congratulations.

ARIS. A real citizen ! Fought at the barricades, she did, and has made two speeches at the club about the rights of the sex. That knocked me over completely, and we were married the next day, citizen fashion, by shaking hands on our bargain. General, when do you start for the war in Brittany ?

HOCHÉ. To-morrow. Your wife won't let you join us, I suppose ?

ARIS. On the contrary. She wants to join too, and I want to ask you to take us both for the honeymoon. I'm sick of Paris ! Those accursed Aristocrats broke up our club yesterday, and the Committee have sold themselves to the devil—I

mean, to the Royalist party. I shake the Paris dust off my feet, and hey for a fair field in Brittany, in the teeth of the English and the Aristocrats. If you want a solid grenadier, warranted to stand fire, I'm your man.

HOCHE. And I am yours. But what am I to do with your wife?

ARIS. With Ceres—that's her name, that is. She wants to be a vivandière, and a beauty she'll make: pour out the brandy with a will, and serve in the ranks, if required. Is it a bargain?

HOCHE. Most willingly. You are just the sort of people I want. I start with Martel to-morrow.

ARIS. Have you asked him?

HOCHE. Not yet. I am come to make the proposal now.

ARIS. Then he won't come; take my word for it. I caught him mumbling over a scented letter just now. Bah! Good-bye, General. I wish you success with him, but I don't think you will have it. I must go and help Ceres to pack up her trousseau. (*crosses, L.*)

HOCHE. We don't allow much luggage.

ARIS. Don't be alarmed. It's only a musket and a keg of brandy. *Exeunt severally.*

SCENE THIRD.—*A Room in Martel's House.*

MARTEL *discovered seated, L., with a letter in his hand.*

MART. She is coming here to-night to this house. "Be at home this evening." How bare the room looks! I must send for some flowers to brighten it.

Enter HOCHE, R. 2 E.

You here?

HOCHE. Good news, Martel; my arrangements are made. I start to-morrow for Brittany, and have full power to choose my own officers. I want you to be my adjutant.

MART. Me?

HOCHE. The place is in great request, but none but you shall have it, old friend. Be ready to-morrow morning.

MART. To-morrow?

HOCHE. Don't answer like an echo! Are you holding back? I tell you, man, the war has begun.

MART. Give me a fortnight, a week only, and I will join you.

HOCHE. The English won't wait a week or a day for you. Do you mean to arrive when the battle is over? Is your spirit grown cold? For shame! Start with me to-morrow, or you shall never serve with me again. Take my offer, or let it alone.

Enter SERVANT, R. 2 E., announcing.

SERVANT. The Duchess d'Armine.

Exit, R. 2 E.

HOCHE. Ah! I understand.

MART. Leave me—at once.

HOCHE. This is what keeps you from the army.

MART. Leave me, I say. For pity's sake, go.

HOCHE. I will leave you for a few minutes, but for *pity's* sake I shall come back again. Think over it.

Exit, L. 2 E., as BEATRICE enters, R. 2 E.

MART. Welcome to my poor house, my queen, my love!

I have waited, with this letter at my lips,
For you and happiness.

BEAT. (R. C.)

I bring to you

Sorrow, not happiness. Call up your courage,
For you will need it.

MART. (L. C.)

Why, what does this mean?

Our marriage—

BEAT.

Is impossible!

MART.

Who dares

To come between us? Who——

BEAT.

My father! None

But he can alter me.

MART.

And you submit?

BEAT. I have done all I could—all woman can.

I have pleaded, prayed and struggled, hard and long;
But struggled, prayed and pleaded, all in vain.

MART. Oh!

BEAT.

If I marry you, I kill my father.

I cannot do it.

MART.

Oh!

BEAT.

Martel, my friend——

MART. One moment. And, to make your work complete,

You mean to be your cousin's wife?

BEAT.

Oh, no!

MART. You may be; there is no impediment.

I have resigned my post, and he is free.

You have played your game most skilfully, Madame.

BEAT. You don't believe that.

MART.

Have no fear of me.

I spare you both entreaty and complaint.

Your low-born lover will not hurt your pride

By words of passion or of insolence.

I loved you, it is true, and with a love

In which my friends, my country, and the world

Were buried and forgot. I thought in you

To find a heart and not a coat of arms.

Poor blinded fool! the lesson was deserved,
And I can laugh at the mistake I made—
Taking a high-born lady for a woman!
Bah! I can break my chain as easily
As you can. Go! (*she goes silently to the door, R., when
he breaks out suddenly, and she pauses, trembling*)

Great heaven! was it not *you*
Who gave me hope I dreamed not of? *You* placed
The cup of happiness between my lips
To dash it down when I was drunk with it!
I would have fled from you—you held me back!
If you had crushed and spurned me in your scorn
I should have had no right to hate you. But
To do *this* is a devil's cruelty!
I loved you, woman, as men seldom love!
I loved you to the peril of my honour—
Ay, and I knew it. I could see, for you,
Old friends look coldly on me. What were they
Or anything to me? I could forget
To hate, to work, to think—and all for you!
What can I do now? How shall I revive
The fire that you have trodden out, the soul
That you have parched within me? Give me back
The power of loving anything but you!
Give me my old life and old strength again.
And make me what I was before I knew you,
Or keep your word to me. Oh, God! Oh, God!

BEAT. If only for a moment, look at me.
Look at me, Louis! Are you then so blind,
Or is my face so subtle a dissembler?
Can you not read my bitter suffering there?
Can you not hear the echo in my voice
Of the same blow that kills my heart and yours?
Louis, I love you—and the wound you bear
Is not more mortal or more sharp than mine.
The thought of you has grown into my life,
And it will never leave me till I die.
I love you, and I neither wish nor care
To hide or to deny it. Reason bade me.
To write, but not to come. My heart rebelled,
And forced me here, to look on you once more;
And then I thought that—if I told you this—
You might be—less unhappy—I myself
Be stronger to endure. Think kindly of me;
Forget me—No! I know you can't do that!
Forgive me—pity me! and now good-bye!

MART. You love me?

BEAT.

Yes.

MART.

Then leave your world, as I will!

Give up your father—I give up my country.

Come with me—where you will, and let our lives

Be only for each other—all in all!

If you love me, what matters all the rest?

Will you do this?

BEAT.

I cannot. Let me go.

MART. You love me? It's a *lie*!

BEAT.

No! but I leave you!

Exit, R. 2 E.

(he stands overcome for a moment, then takes out BEATRICE'S picture, looks at it, throws it on the ground, and sets his foot on it)

MART. So be it with my dream!

Enter HOCHÉ, L. 2 E.

I'll go with you!

HOCHÉ. Good! But we start to-morrow.

MART.

No, to-night!

HOCHÉ. Why is your purpose changed so suddenly?

MART. What matters that! I long to meet these nobles—

I long to fight—to *murder* them—that's all!

HOCHÉ. Well said! You are yourself again.

MART.

I? *(aside)* Never!*(he falls into a chair—HOCHÉ watching him)*

END OF THE SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

SCENE.—*The Public Place, Auray, in Brittany. House, R.; table and seats, R.; drinking cups.*

MARGOT and other PEOPLE assembled on the Place in front of the house of Michael, R.

A WOMAN. What's all the fuss and the marching for, Mère Margot?

MARG. Don't rightly know. They do say there's been a power of hard fighting in the night. But, lord! they'd never go and fight such weather as last night, surely! I've sent Michael to find out all about it; and here a' comes, all agape with the news.

Enter MICHAEL, L. U. E., they all crowd round him, R.

ALL. Tell us all about it, Michael; tell us all about it.

MICH. Give us a drop to drink. (MARGOT gives him drink)
I'm better. Now then, there's been a fight on the coast, and no mistake about it

ALL. Yes. Go on.

MARG. When was it?

MICH. Last night, in the middle of the storm. The Republican army came down on the enemy in the dark; and, would you believe it, they waded through the water up to the waist, with the waves running mountains. Blest if I don't think those fellows have got wings like the petrels yonder, or skins like a shark's, made water-tight.

MARG. And what was the end of it?

MICH. The end of it was, that there isn't an enemy's ship left on the sea, or a rebel on the coast line. Never was such a thing done yet; twenty thousand killed or taken, that's the long and short of it.

MARG. Holy Virgin! I knew there was something awful going to happen. I heard the death-spirit howling in the storm last night, and saw the Jack-o'-lanterns dancing out on the marshes.

MICH. Bah! give us something to drink. (*drinks*)

MARG. Did you see the troops anywhere?

MICH. Anywhere? everywhere. I saw some of the regiments coming towards the town, with the sea-water still dripping from their clothes. And there was the prisoners between a double row of muskets, jammed together like a flock of sheep.

MARG. Poor folk, poor folk!

MICH. Ay, and a lot of poor women were crying and dragging themselves on behind them—their wives and daughters, I take it; there's many that were with the Aristocrats, for they had no other homes to go to.

MARG. Ah, it's a cruel business, and I don't rightly see what we gain by it.

MICH. Gain! why liberty, equality, and fraternity.

MARG. Don't talk that nonsense to me. We were always very well off down here, and if I can do anything to help the poor Aristocrats in their trouble, why I will.

(*all except MICHAEL and MARGOT have left the stage*)

MICH. (*confidentially*) So long as you do it when my back's turned, I don't mind if you do.

MARG. Ah, you're a man, you are.

MICH. Just so, and women can do things that men can't.

MARG. That's not saying much for them. But about the prisoners, what's to be done with them?

Enter BEATRICE, behind, L. U. E.

MICH. They say that the Bretons are to have a free pardon, and to be sent home to their fields and farms; but it's a bad job for the Aristocrats. Taken in arms on French soil—that's the way the cant goes—shot!

(BEATRICE gives a faint cry and sinks on a bench, R.)

MARG. Eh! what's that? A woman, and a young and pretty one, for all she's so white and worn like. She's fainted away. *(BEATRICE shakes her head)* What is it, my dear, what is it?

BEAT. For pity's sake give me a cup of milk, I am so weak and ill.

MARG. *(supporting her)* Eh, but the poor thing's dying for hunger. Here, Michael, quick, bring some milk, and cheese and bread. Courage, Madame, you shall have food directly. *(MICHAEL brings bread, R.)* Here take and eat this, and pluck up heart o' grace, there's a dear.

BEAT. A thousand thanks for your kindness. You have a good heart, child. Heaven bless you for it! *(trying to rise, but unable)* The air is stifling; oh, how tired I am!

MARG. And no wonder, if you've walked all the way from the coast. Have you?

BEAT. I think so. I don't know—yes—it's a weary distance. I nearly fell down on the road from sheer fatigue.

MARG. Ay, ay—you want something better than bread. Michael, lay the white cloth indoors—with the venison and the Sunday wine. *Exit MICHAEL, R.*

Now, rest yourself a bit, you'll be right in a minute.

BEAT. If it were only that; but I am distracted with anxiety. *(aside)* I can learn no news of my father, whether he is dead or a prisoner. Merciful heaven!—what a night! and what a day!

MARG. Listen, now; any one can see that you're a lady born and bred, and if there's anything I can do to help you, I will, if you'll only trust me. I love ladies; and I hate your citizens, I do.

BEAT. I could trust you readily. But you can do nothing for me. My father was with the beaten army last night, and they say that every officer in it was killed or taken.

Enter LILLE, disguised in a peasant's dress, L. U. E.

He was all I had in this world, and I have lost him.

LILLE. Not yet, Beatrice.

BEAT. Ah! *(throws herself into his arms)*

MARG. (*aside*) Hurrah! the Republic's done this time. And it won't be my fault if they catch this one.

Exit, R., into house.

BEAT. (R. C.) Safe! Can I believe my senses?

LILLE. (C.) Safe only so far. And but for you, Beatrice, and for the hope that I may yet live to see these curs crushed in the end, I would have died on my own sword last night.

BEAT. Ah!—hush—don't think of that. How will you escape from this place? Are the Republicans on your track?

LILLE. I cannot tell. I escaped their hands almost by a miracle, and got shelter from a friendly peasant who provided me with these clothes. As far as I know, I am the only survivor of all our officers. It was a terrible carnage. May I live to avenge it!

BEAT. Don't speak of vengeance now, but think only of your safety.

LILLE. If we can find some quiet hiding-place here for a while, we may be able to take ship for England.

BEAT. You wish me to follow you there?

LILLE. What else would you do? Beatrice, you are not still thinking of that man?

BEAT. He has forgotten me. Do not speak of him.

LILLE. But if he has not? I have heard that he was with the army here.

BEAT. Here!—Louis Martel! Oh! father, through his means your life may be saved, if you will consent to—to——

LILLE. Beatrice!

BEAT. We need not talk of this now. Where can you hide? The soldiers surround the town, I know, and you cannot pass them. If I had a friend here!

Re-enter MARGOT from house, R.

MARG. And so you have, madame. If the gentleman don't mind a different sort of bed from what he's been used to——

LILLE. *Pardieu!* for some time I've been used to none at all.

MARG. Then I'll undertake to hide you for a bit until you can look round you.

BEAT. Oh, bless you for your kind heart!

LILLE. I will never consent to expose you to such a danger.

MARG. There's no danger to me; I've had my own way all my life, and I'm not going to let other people have theirs now, not if they were twenty times citizens. Supposing they ask me, how am I to know you're not a real peasant—begging your pardon for supposing that I could think such a thing?

Enter VALMONT at the back, also disguised, L. U. E.

Peasants, indeed! give me a nobleman.

(VALMONT suddenly kisses her)

VALM. (R. C.) Your wish is gratified.

MARG. (R.) Gracious! What's that?

VALM. Don't be alarmed—the tribute paid by Valour to Beauty and Generosity.

LILLE. Valmont? (*crosses, R.*)

VALM. I believe so, though I don't look like him.

MARG. (*aside*) Another nobleman, and certainly behaves as such.

LILLE. What are you doing here?

VALM. What you are—running away.

MARG. Ah, and that's why you called yourself Valour.

VALM. I am the better part of it—Discretion.

BEAT. Then you are indeed changed, cousin.

VALM. (*kissing her hand*) In all respects save one. I live for novelty, and it amuses me to be discreet. Then the excitement of running away is new to me; and in all my adventures I never wore a peasant's dress before, till I stripped this last night from the body of a citizen (of the other world) who tried hard to knock my brains out. He had so few, though, that I knocked his out first, and, as he died intestate, possessed myself of his personal property. Duchess, once more your slave till death, which is likely just now to be a very short term of service.

BEAT. Is this your discretion, and at such a moment?

(*a march heard*)

MARG. The soldiers are coming! make haste in, sir; there's no time to be lost. *Exeunt LILLE and BEATRICE into house, R.* But what am I to do with you?

VALM. Nothing; nobody ever succeeded in doing anything with me. I shall stay here and see how the land lies. My own mother wouldn't know me in this dress, and I am sure nobody else will.

MARG. Show me a citizen that would take things as cool as that!

Exit into house, R.

Enter ARISTIDES, LEONIDAS, and SOLDIERS, accompanied by some of the TOWNSPEOPLE, L. U. E.—VALMONT stays about in the background, and mixes with the CROWD.

ARIS. (R.) Now then, Citizen Landlord, your best cider and plenty of it. Come along, boys, and Ill give you a toast.

LEON. (R.) Long live Aristides!

ARIS. Amen, by all means; but I've a better toast than that. Here's to our General, who beats every enemy from the Rhine to the sea. To the good Republican, Hoche!

ALL. To the health of the General, Hoche!

ARIS. This cider's a real invention to comfort a man after such a piece of work as last night's. We'll have another toast on the strength of it; and it's pretty strong too. Comrades, here's the health of the Captain who stormed the fort last night, and never cranes at anything. Here's a health to Captain Martel!

ALL. Captain Martel!

VALM. (*aside*) The Hurricane It was he, was it, confound him? I thought I heard his voice shouting last night, but they told me it was a cannon.

LEON. Great man! Was my master—is your friend.

ARIS. I should think so. We are a pair of brothers, we are, and better than that. It's Orestes and the other fellow over again. He and I have got one more little bit of service to do before we have quite done with the Aristocrats.

LEON. What's that?

ARIS. One of their chiefs got away last night, and is somewhere hereabouts. We're after him.

VALM. (*coming forward, c.*) Ah, one did you say?

ARIS. Yes I did; who the devil are you?

VALM. (*aside*) By-the-bye, who the devil am I?—Citizen Valette, at your service—a hard-working man.

ARIS. (*aside*) With a very white pair of hands—very good; Citizen Valette, will you join us in our toast?

VALM. Citizen, with the utmost pleasure. You were drinking to Captain Martel, I think. Here's to his very good health, and may his lungs never be less. A fine fellow, Captain Martel!

ARIS. What do you know about him?

VALM. Come, I like that; you want me to drink his health, and then ask me if I know him! His reputation has reached me. A great creature, with an abnormal development of muscle.

ARIS. (*aside*) Speaks oddly for a hard-working man.—You're a queer fellow; do you belong to this town?

VALM. Not altogether.

ARIS. A Parisian?

VALM. Partly. (*aside*) The patriot is inquisitive.

ARIS. One of us?

VALM. Certainly; (*aside*) and as good as six of you. Did I hear you say that one of those infernal Aristocrats had escaped last night?

ARIS. You did. Does that interest you?

VALM. More or less, as a matter of curiosity. I think you said Captain Martel was charged with his capture?

ARIS. I did.

VALM. What is the runaway's name?

ARIS. Not known yet.

VALM. (*aside*) Ah, and they're only after one of us. I hope it's myself, and not the Duke—in the first place, because I've no womankind belonging to me, and in the second, because it would hurt my feelings to be overlooked.

ARIS. You are fond of talking to yourself.

VALM. I am; my conversation is so sure to be appreciated.

ARIS. (*aside*) I've seen this fellow before. Can he be the man we are after? Surely even an Aristocrat would never be such a fool as to run his head into the lion's mouth in this way.

VALM. You seem partial to your own conversation, too, which I confess surprises me.

ARIS. What do you mean by that?

VALM. Absolutely nothing. (*aside*) How clever I am when I'm put to it! He hasn't the smallest suspicion.

ARIS. (*aside*) I'd stake my life on his being the man we want. The shallow-brained lunatic. I must warn the Captain. Ah, here comes Captain Martel. (*going up stage and pointing out VALMONT to LEONIDAS*) Don't lose sight of this man.

VALM. (*looking off*) The Hurricane himself, no doubt. I must let the Duchess know that at once; it may be useful.

Looks round, then exit into house, R., LEONIDAS and ARIS-TIDES watching him.

ARIS. Hang about here, and keep your eye on that house. I mean to try what I can find out at the back there. If I'm not much mistaken, the chase won't be long.

Exit, R. U. E.—LEONIDAS and SOLDIERS, R. 1 E.

Enter MARTEL, L. 1 E.

MART. So, then, the war is over; and to me,
 Who in the warm embrace of fire had thought
 To find at last death or forgetfulness,
 Nothing is left to live for. Yet I live!
 It is so difficult to die. I live,
 Haunted for ever by one memory,
 And think of her alone. I longed to find
 Death in the battle, but I found her image;
 And in that thought forgot that death was near.
 And so he passes by, to deal with those
 Who fear to meet him. Something, it is true,
 Of the old patriot spirit and old pride
 Stirs feebly in me in the hour of victory—
 One smouldering ember that escaped her foot,
 When she trod out the fire that warmed my life;
 And even now, that last faint ember crumbles
 Into the cold, grey ashes of the past.

But to my task—a most unwelcome duty.
Heaven grant this fugitive a safe release,
Whoever he may be!

Re-enter ARISTIDES, R. U. E.

ARIS. Captain Martel!

MART. What is it, Citizen?

Enter BEATRICE *from the house, R., and listens apart.*

BEAT. (*aside*) It is true, then; he is here, and is the officer charged with the capture. There he is. How changed and sad!

ARIS. I have run the fox to earth, Captain. The Aristocrat we are after is there, (*pointing to the house*) or I am much mistaken.

BEAT. (*aside*) Discovered! I must warn my father.

ARIS. The house is surrounded, and nobody can escape.

BEAT. (*aside*) Too late! I have only one chance left.

MART. The Republic is indebted to you for your zeal, citizen. (*aside*) Curse his blundering, why couldn't he let the man go! In that house, you say? Let me first make sure that you are right. Come with me. (*takes a step towards the house, BEATRICE comes forward and meets him*) Beatrice—Madame D'Armine, you in Auray?

BEAT. I wish to speak with you alone.

(*MARTEL makes a gesture to ARISTIDES, who looks doubtful*)

MART. Leave us.

ARIS. (*aside*) A petticoat again? My Orestes is in danger. I shall give a hint to the General. *Exit, L. U. E.*

MART. What are you doing here?

BEAT. I wished to see you.

MART. Well, are you satisfied? and am I changed

Enough to please you?

BEAT. Not more changed than I:

Look in my face.

MART. I know your power to mould it
To any shape you please. And yet I think
That you should fear to meet me: I have power
Yet—for revenge.

BEAT. Have I deserved that threat?

For our love's sake—

MART. Hush! never speak of that:

It is well over now. You never knew
The meaning of the word; and as for me,
I care for you no longer.

BEAT. (*aside*) Oh, my heart!

All is lost now!

MART. Yet, wherefore should I feign,
Or grudge you half the spoils of victory?
I love you still, as much as I despise you.
You wished to break my heart, and now would learn
If you have done so. Be content; you have!

BEAT. How can you speak so cruelly? What of mine?

MART. Bah! we are wasting time. Perhaps you have
Some other reason for your presence here?
What do you want of me? Is it your cousin?
Can I do anything for him?

BEAT. My father——

MART. I thought as much. Your father is in England.

BEAT. No; he is here—here in this very house.

MART. Your father, in this house?

BEAT. I have heard all.
The fugitive for whom you search—is he.

MART. He—he! Impossible! He whom my oath
And duty bind me to give up to death!
No—no, it cannot be!

BEAT. It is too true.
If you desire revenge, you have it.

MART. No;
Not in that way. Go home at once, Madame,
Back to your friends.

BEAT. I have no friends or home.
My father is all that I have left to me;
And they will kill him too, unless you save him.

MART. What power have I?

BEAT. Say that he is not there.
His secret is but guessed; a word from you
Will banish all suspicion. Screen him now,
And he may fly in safety. None will ever
Know aught of what you do, but I alone.
Oh, when they ask you, say he is not there!

MART. It would be a base treason, and a lie;
The men I lead, the uniform I wear,
I should disgrace to say it, and I cannot.

BEAT. Louis, for mercy's sake!

MART. Don't kneel to me!
I cannot bear it. Why, what can I do?
How can I cast my honour under foot?
Break faith and oath, and *lie*? My comrades all
Would scorn and loathe me. What you ask, Madame,
Is my own lasting shame.

BEAT. I want my father!
What do I know of your nice points of honour?
I know this, that one little word from you

Will save my father's life, and that the bravest
Are the most merciful of conquerors.
Louis, by all our childhood's memories—
By all the care I gave your dying mother—
By all your love for me which I can read
Written in every line upon your face—
By all my love for you, and from my soul
I love you so, that I would die for you—
Say that one word, and save him !

MART. If I did,

Among the first you would despise me for it.

BEAT. No, before Heaven. Shall I give you proof?

Say it, and I will be your wife to-morrow.

I swear it by your mother's grave.

MART. You will?

Enter HOCHÉ, L. U. E.

HOCHÉ. Captain Martel, it has just been reported
That the Aristocrat whom you are charged
To capture, styled and known as Duke de Lille,
Is thought to be concealed here, in this house,
And that yourself have ascertained the truth
Of the suspicion. Captain, on your oath,
Tell me if this be so?

BEAT. (*to MARTEL, aside*) Yours when you will.

MART. (*aside*) I thought that misery could do no more,
But this is worse than all.

BEAT. (*to MARTEL*) Do you hear me, Louis?

MART. Do I *not* hear you? I have tried to doubt you;
But even when I tried, I trusted most.

I *know* you love me, and to win your hand
I would do anything in the world—but this !

If I must buy you at this price alone,
I have lost you. General, the Duke is there.

BEAT. My father!

MART. (*aside*) Is this death?

BEAT. My father! (*to MARTEL*) Oh!

You are revenged indeed, for you rob me
Of my last friend and last hope in the world,
While, with my father's blood upon your hands,
You leave with me no memory of you,
But as his murderer. You talk of *love*,
And never bate a jot of your false pride.
I leave you, and we shall not meet again.
What must become of me, orphaned, alone,
Heaven knows—not I. But never while I live,
Even in the last and worst extremity,

Will I abase me to one thought of you
That breathes of peace or pardon. That I swear!
But I shall not forget you. In the mourning
Which I must wear in beggary all my life,
My eyes will ever see your cruel work—
The bitter end of all your evil pride! (*going*)
HOCHÉ. Bring forth the Duke de Lille!

(*signing to a SOLDIER, who approaches the house*)

Enter VALMONT from house, R.

VALM. (*with dignity*) Well; he is here!
I am the Duke de Lille!

BEAT. (*to VALMONT*) Valmont! my cousin!
(*HOCHÉ retires to the back with MARTEL*)

VALM. (*to BEATRICE*) Hush! I am here to save your father's
life!

These fellows only know of one of us,
And I shall serve to gorge their appetites.

BEAT. I will not hear of it; it must not be.

VALM. Indeed it must; for me, the mischief's done;
And, if you speak, your father is lost too;
Don't let me make a useless sacrifice!

BEAT. My father is within?

VALM. No; with the help
Of that extremely tempting landlady,
He has escaped our polished enemies.
They had been kind enough to mark *me* down,
So paid him no attention; you will find him
Safe at the nearest sea-port. As for me,
I never thought to make so good an end.
(*to HOCHÉ, who comes forward*)

I am your prisoner, sir. (*gravely*) God save the King!

HOCHÉ. (*aside*) The spirit of a hero! I am glad
To tell the Duke de Lille his life is safe;
And 'tis our friend here who has saved it, lady.

BEAT. (*bewildered*) I do not understand you.

MART. (L.) Comrade—friend,
What does this mean?

HOCHÉ. It means that the Duke's name
Was by your orders some time since removed
From the proscribed list of the absentees.
Do you remember?

MART. Yes.

HOCHÉ. The stringent law,
Which to the rebel nobles here denies
All mercy and all quarter, strikes alone

At those whose names are still upon that list.
Such are my orders. And the Duke de Lille,
By act of you, Martel, is not among them ;
And you, Martel, have saved the Duke de Lille !
I have shown mercy to the Breton peasants,
And have the right to him to show as much.
It may be that I stretch a point in this ; (*to MARTEL*)
But I have done good service to the State,
And claim the privilege to serve a friend.

BEAT. (*to VALMONT*) He knows you, and he screens you.
From my soul

I thank you for the noble act which saves
Your own life where you thought to save another.

VAL. Virtue its own reward ! How very hard !

I may not even sacrifice myself.

Just my old luck ! Well, as your father, Duchess,
Of course I cannot hope to marry you.
Don't let the Hurricane tear you to bits,
And take my blessing.

BEAT. But where will you go ?

VALM. To follow my old leader, the god Chance—
Heaven knows how long or where ! One parting word,
Dear cousin, of advice. Wear the Greek dress
As often as you can. It's a sweet fashion,
And it becomes you to perfection. *Exit, R. 1 E.*

HOCHE. A Frenchman to the core ! A frivolous heart,
Until its depths are stirred, but steadfast then,
Even to the last ! (*aside*) I'm glad I let him go.
May the Republic never hear of it !
I have been very deaf and very blind !—
Forgive the trial, lady ; for your sake
I wished that you should see him as he is !
And so I leave you free to join the Duke.
You will want a man's help to take care of him.

MART. I lose her once again, then !

HOCHE. (*laughing*) What of that ?

You have no leisure time for sighs and loves !

Let her alone ; bright eyes don't trouble you. *Exit, L.*

MART. You leave France—with your father ?

BEAT. Where he goes.

So must, I too ; I have no other home.

(*timidly*) Have I ?

MART. I know : I am glad that he is spared.

BEAT. And yet, you would not spare him !

MART. What I did,

I could not choose but do, but know too well

It parts us more than does your father's will.

And that in this world you will surely keep
The vow you made just now.

BEAT. What vow was that?

That I should not forget you—was it not?

MART. Or dream of peace or pardon. Oh, the words
Are burnt into my brain. Where'er you go,
May happier love than mine, and not less true,
Follow, and guard, and crown you, evermore! (*going*)

BEAT. (*aside*) Oh, he will go! I cannot call him back;
Yet, what is pride that I should cling to it,
When he gives all, but honour, up for me!
Hear me before you go. It was well done,
That which you did; and while I hated you,
Oh how I *did* admire you! (*he turns to her—she stops him*)
Doubting still?

Spite of yourself you saved my father's life;
Will you not claim your guerdon?

MART. If I dared!

That oath forbids.

BEAT. (*throwing herself into his arms*) Then thus I break the
oaths!

If angry vows bound women where they love,
There's ne'er a wooer that would gain a bride!
Give me your life, and I will pay you for it
With coin as rich and golden as your own,
If in the world such mintage may be found!
Come, take me to my father. You will bend
His love to yours, as you have conquered mine.

MART. Heaven helping me, I will! Mine own at last!
Mine own! so madly loved, so hardly won!
May a new era be by us begun!
May pride's worn barrier that thy love breaks through,
No longer part the old race and the new;
And in our plighted troth may France forecast
The union of her future and her past!



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