

THE
SEVEN CLERKS
OR
THE THREE THIEVES AND THE DENOUNCER
A ROMANTIC DRAMA
IN
TWO ACTS
BY
THOMAS EGERTON WILKS

AUTHOR OF

The King's Wager—The Dream Spectre—The Red Crow—Wenlock of Wenlock—Death Token—Michael Erle—The Black Domino—The Wren Boys—Rinaldo Rinaldini—Lord Darnley—The Crown Prince—Roll of the Drum—Eily O'Connor—Ben the Boatswain—Lady of Lambythe—Ruby Ring—Sixteen String Jack—Woman's Love—Scarlet Mantle—Gaspard Hauser—Raffaelle the Reprobate—Crichton of Clunie—Captain's not a-miss—State Secrets—Jacket of Blue—The Brothers—Sudden Thoughts—'Tis She—Bamboozling—Railroad Station—Serjeant's Wedding—My Wife's Dentist—My Valet and I—Ambassador's Lady—A Mistaken Story—The Devil's in it—How's your Uncle—The Miller of Whetstone—Raven's Nest, &c. &c. &c.

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(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Market,)
LONDON.

913529

THE SEVEN CLERKS.

First produced at the Royal Surrey Theatre.

CHARACTERS.

CLAUDE DARNAUD, <i>the Denouncer</i>	.	Mr. DAVIDGE.
SIMON SIGGEL, <i>his Servant</i>	.	Mr. W. SMITH.
ADOLPHE DE BRIANCOURT, <i>a Young Nobleman</i>	.	Mr. C. HILL.
GUSTAVUS, <i>his Friend</i>	.	Mr. MAITLAND.
LAROSE, <i>a Merchant</i>	.	Mr. BANNISTER.
PIERRE } Officers of Police	{	Mr. BROADFOOT.
ANTOINE }		Mr. TAYLOR.

THE THREE THIEVES:

MYNHEER HANS HOOGFIDT, <i>a Dutchman</i>	Mr. DILLON.
SIGNOR MATTEO MAGLEO, <i>an Italian</i>	Mr. ASBURY.
MASTER JOHN BROWN, <i>an Englishman</i>	Mr. MORTIMER.
VICTORINE, <i>Darnaud's Daughter</i>	Miss WATSON.

Soldiers, Townspeople, Peasantry, &c. &c.

COSTUMES.

CLAUDE DARNAUD.—	Crimson velvet shirt, trimmed with black fur, long brown robe. <i>2nd dress.</i> —Old embroidered tight morning gown, brown hose, russet shoes, small black velvet cap.
ADOLPHE DE BRIANCOURT.—	Green and gold laced doublet and trunks, crimson scarf, point lace collar, cuffs, &c., russet boots, black hat and feathers.
GUSTAVUS.—	Brown velvet doublet and trunks, trimmed with yellow, blue scarf, hat and feather, boots.
SIMON.—	Coarse black jerkin, trunks, blue hose, brown boots.
LAROSE.—	Tunic, blue, trimmed with black.
HANS.—	Brown doublet, and full trunk breeches, hair cap.
MATTEO.—	Italian brigand's dress, close, foppish, and shabby.
JOHN BROWN.—	Long skirted blue coat, short waist, dirty long buckskin small-clothes, striped hose, shoes and buckles, black high crowned hat.
VICTORINE.—	Orange silk open dress, trimmed with black velvet, white petticoat and veil.

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This Drama, and the whole of those written by Mr. Wilks, are the
Property of Thomas Hailes Lacy.

THE
SEVEN CLERKS.

A C T F I R S T.

SCENE FIRST.—*Picturesque Landscape, with View of the City of Marseilles.*

As the curtain rises a number of PEASANTS with baskets of flowers, fruit, &c. cross from r. and exeunt, l. Then enter GUSTAVUS, followed by LAROSE, l.

GUSTA. The sum you offer for my silks is not enough.

LAROSE. In good truth, sir, I can give no more—the trade is bad, and fluctuates strangely.

GUSTA. Well, if you can give no more I suppose I must accept the offer, although the proffered gold will but poorly recompense my toil.

LAROSE. The agreement, then, is struck ?

GUSTA. It is.

LAROSE. Your hand to the bargain. (*they shake hands*) But see, Master Gustavus, who is this? A stranger, surely, in Marseilles?

GUSTA. May I believe my eyes? it is—yes, it is my friend, Count Adolphe.

LAROSE. I know him not. For the present, sir, farewell. I will send for the silks this evening. *Exit, l.*

GUSTA. Why, Adolphe—is it indeed you whom I behold?

Enter ADOLPHE, r.

ADOLPHE. Indeed, my friend, it is—you seem surprised to see me?

GUSTA. I am so—but at least equally pleased. (*they shake hands*) How long is it since you arrived in Marseilles?

ADOLPHE. 'Tis scarce an hour when, for the first time, I gazed upon your far-famed city.

GUSTA. And what power, may I ask, could suffice to draw thee from the dazzling pleasures of the capital?

ADOLPHE. That power, Gustavus, which, as thou knowest, is so omnipotent, that whatsoe'er it biddeth, must be done—love.

GUSTA. Why, Adolphe, can this be possible? You, who used to laugh at Cupid, and scorn his boasted power—

ADOLPHE. (*interrupts*) Am now his veriest slave! Yes, my friend, I love; and that with such mad intensity, that you, who are so cold by nature, cannot even *imagine*, my devotion.

GUSTA. And prithee tell me—who is the object of this passion?

ADOLPHE. A young and lovely girl.

GUSTA. Upon my word, I could have guessed that much. I did not expect it was an old and ugly grandam. What is her name?

ADOLPHE. I never heard it.

GUSTA. Where does she reside?

ADOLPHE. I don't know.

GUSTA. This is strange.

ADOLPHE. I never saw her but once—that was at a masquerade in Paris. She told me that she was then visiting some friend there, but should leave for Marseilles on the following day—and though her lips spoke not the words, her eyes told me to follow her.

GUSTA. And here you are!

ADOLPHE. Yes, here I am; in search of a—

GUSTA. In search of a masquerade beauty—ha, ha, ha!

ADOLPHE. Nay, nay, Gustavus, no jeers, I entreat. My eyes could not, indeed, look into her soul; yet I dare to swear the heart I saw not, was as unsullied as the brow which glowed beneath my ardent gaze.

GUSTA. Well, Adolphe, I wish you success in your pursuit after this unnamed fair one. Ha, ha!

ADOLPHE. Jest as you like, I'll find her, or spend my life in the search. (*bell tolls solemnly without*) Ha! What means this?

Music.—Bell tolling—TOWNSPEOPLE, PEASANTRY, &c., cross stage from R. to L., expressing by signs impatience and horror—exeunt.

Why, Gustavus, what means this? Is there to be some sight exhibited?

GUSTA. Yes, and one of a very melancholy nature, a young man is now about to be hanged for robbing his master.

ADOLPHE. Is the crime so rare, then, that it excites such curiosity?

GUSTA. It is rather the curious circumstances of the case, than the rarity of the crime, that causes the commotion you see. Listen:—In this town resides one Claude Darnaud, a wealthy usurer—this man is either the guiltiest or the most unfortunate of human beings, for he has accused no less than seven of his clerks of robbing him, all of whom have been hanged upon his testimony, although believed by most people to be innocent.

ADOLPHE. Gracious heaven! seven did you say?

GUSTA. Even so. In his business as usurer, this strange being employs one clerk—the first who filled this office, one Roland Aubigne, had been but a day in his service ere he was accused by his master of purloining gold—hurried before the judicial authorities, who pronounced him guilty—and, eventually, in spite of his asseverations of innocence, was hung. Strange and dreadful as it may appear, others have shared the same fate; and the man whom these people are now hurrying to see executed, is the seventh.

ADOLPHE. By my halidame, I marvel much that any were found to fill the vacant place. Methinks, were I starving, I would not accept employment at such a fearful risk.

GUSTA. Nor will any more attempt to do so. He is alike hated and dreaded by the people here, who have bestowed on him the appellation of the Manslayer, or the Denouncer. Yet it was not always thus. I can remember him a very different being, ere age had dulled his intellect, and avarice seared his heart. But come to my house, Adolphe, (*crosses to R.*) believe me, under its roof you will receive a hearty welcome.

ADOLPHE. I thank you, and at once accept your offer; yet first will, with your permission, wander through the town.

GUSTA. In search of your unknown beauty, hey? Ha, ha, ha! Well, well, at the dinner hour I shall expect you, adieu!

Exit, R.

ADOLPHE. Now to commence my search—but without knowing even her name, I fear my fair one will give me some trouble. No matter—the prize I seek is too bright to be easily surrendered. (*yelling and hooting without*) Ha! what noise is that? (*VICTORINE screams piercingly without, L. U. E.—yelling, hooting, &c.*) Ha, what do I see? a woman pursued and threatened by a crowd of ruffians? this must not be!

Music—he draws his sword—VICTORINE rushes on frantically, L. U. E., stones and other missiles are thrown, as though after her, and fall on stage. She looks round eagerly, sees ADOLPHE, and throws herself at his feet.

VICTOR. Save me, in mercy's name, save me!

ADOLPHE. Lady, I will.

VICTOR. I am innocent—indeed, indeed, I am!

ADOLPHE. I will protect you with my life.

Music—a number of MEN rush on L. U. E., and menace her with sticks, stones, &c. ADOLPHE throws himself before her, and presents sword at them—Tableau.

MEN. (*variously*) Stand out of the way—Out of the way, I say!

ADOLPHE. And I say, out of the way! The first man who rudely approaches this girl, dies by my hand! What would you with her?

1st MAN. What would we? Why, pelt her with stones, to be sure—so stand out of the way, or else you may chance to catch some too.

ALL THE MEN. Ay, ay, ay!

ADOLPHE. What has she done?

1st MAN. Done? Why, nothing that I know of, but her father is the greatest villain upon earth—another poor fellow has he slain this morning. (*MEN groan*)

ADOLPHE. Of this I know nothing—I only know that I see an unprotected girl on one side, and a crowd of angry men on the other, and this is quite sufficient for me—so look ye, every one, unless ye forthwith depart from this spot, my cold steel shall shortly serve as a lancet to reduce your feverish blood. Go to—go to—learn better manners.

Exeunt all the MEN, slowly and grumbling variously, L.—he raises her.

Be composed, lady, you are safe. Gracious heavens! that form, that face!

VICTOR. Adolphe de Briancourt!

ADOLPHE. Can it be possible?—my unknown beauty! Yes, lady, the same Adolphe whom you met in Paris, and who there swore never to love another but thee.

VICTOR. What brings you to Marseilles?

ADOLPHE. To seek and woo, and if possible, win thee.

VICTOR. Alack, I fear such hopes are vain.

ADOLPHE. Tell me not that, lady! Surely you do not love another?

VICTOR. Oh, no.

ADOLPHE. Surely I am not hateful to thee?

VICTOR. Oh, no, no, no!

ADOLPHE. Tell me, then, why did you say my best, most dearly-cherished hope was vain?

VICTOR. You do not know the many obstacles that oppose such wishes.

ADOLPHE. Indeed I do not, I cannot even guess them; but this I do know, that I am young, noble, wealthy, possessing a heart by no means framed for despair, and which heart, moreover, dear one, is devoted to thee. How am I to remove the obstacles you speak of?

VICTOR. First tell me, are you courageous?

ADOLPHE. Courageous? Now, by my father's sword, if a man were to ask me that question, he would get more blows than words for an answer. Put me to the proof, lady.

VICTOR. Dare you to win me, hazard everything—life itself!

ADOLPHE. Ay, that would I, without a moment's pause.

VICTOR. Then—and yet, why should I endanger thee, and for so vague a hope? No, I am resolved—go, sir, go hence, far from this fatal spot; banish my image from your memory, and in the arms of some deserving fair one, lose the remembrance of Victorine.

ADOLPHE. (*aside*) So, so, her name is Victorine, is it? Never. I have sworn to wed thee or none, and the oath shall be remembered, and performed. Tell me, what is it I am to do?

VICTOR. First swear to do what I shall require.

ADOLPHE. If it be not dishonorable.

VICTOR. If it were, sir, I would not ask you.

ADOLPHE. I believe it! Then here I swear to do your wish.

VICTOR. Then now listen, and mark well my words, for in this adventure, a bold heart and a keen wit, alike are necessary. In this town there resides a wealthy miser, one called Claude Darnaud.

ADOLPHE. I have heard of him; the people call him the Man-slayer or Denouncer.

VICTOR. Ha—you have heard the frightful tale then? Well, sir, this man is now in want of a clerk.

ADOLPHE. I suppose so, and likely to be, I should think. I understand he has hanged seven.

VICTOR. Let that pass. Observe me, sir; you must enter his service.

ADOLPHE. I ?

VICTOR. You. Go to him instantly, proffer your services, they are sure to be accepted, for the old man has just now lost his clerk.

ADOLPHE. Lost him? Hanged him, you mean. Why, pretty Victorine, you are jesting with me!

VICTOR. In good truth, I am serious ; and, remember, you have sworn to obey my commands.

ADOLPHE. What, I, Adolphe de Briancourt, turn merchant's clerk ? Impossible ! Besides, the fellow will accuse me of robbery to-morrow, and hang me the next day.

VICTOR. (*crosses to L.*) The danger is not so great as you imagine ; but do, sir, as you please—I give you back your oath, but if ever you wish again to behold *me*, do as I have said. Go to the miser's house—he lives at the Rue Veldt ; watch over his gold as you would over your own, and remember, the innocent need not fear. Farewell ! *Exit, L.*

ADOLPHE. Stay—pause but for an instant—only tell me—She's gone ! Well, really, this is the strangest affair I ever met with, or even heard of ! What, I, Count Adolphe de Briancourt, turn clerk to a Manslayer ? Impossible ! And yet to resign Victorine—why, that is as impossible as the other ! What the deuce shall I do ?

Enter SIMON, R.

SIMON. Oh, dear, dear ! how hungry I am ! I don't get half victuals enough, my stomach's like a balloon—it's full of wind ! I feel just as though master had been blowing me up !

ADOLPHE. Egad, I'll see the old fellow, at all events ; and if he does not seem very repulsive, why—in the Rue Veldt, she said—I wonder where that is ! Perhaps this fellow can tell me. Pray, sirrah, where is the Rue Veldt ?

SIMON. Next to the Rue du Pontin.

ADOLPHE. And where is the Rue du Pontin ?

SIMON. Next to the Rue Veldt.

ADOLPHE. You are a wag, I perceive—but I am in no humour for your jokes, so answer me quickly, or, (*points to his sword*) can you draw inferences ?

SIMON. No ; I can draw wine or beer, but I can't draw inferences.

ADOLPHE. And I can draw steel, but no matter, perhaps another plan may answer better. Friend, I will give thee a franc to conduct me to the Rue Veldt.

SIMON. A franc ? I'm your man. Oh, my, what a dinner I'll have ! First of all, I'll have some herb soup—

ADOLPHE. Lead the way.

SIMON. Yes, yes, I'll lead the way. After the herb soup, I'll have some beef alamode—

ADOLPHE. Show me the road.

SIMON. After the alamode beef, I'll have some veal stewed with rice. Oh, dear, how hungry I am getting.

ADOLPHE. Will you proceed?

SIMON. Oh, yes, sir, directly. But pray, who do you want in the Rue Veldt?

ADOLPHE. I want one Master Claude Darnaud.

SIMON. My master! The devil! I hope he didn't hear what I said about eating—if he tells my master that I've treated myself to a dinner, he'll treat me to bread and water for a month to come! Oh, dear, dear! how hungry I am! Herb soup!

ADOLPHE. Get on, fellow.

SIMON. Alamode beef!

ADOLPHE. (*pushes him*) Lead the way, sirrah!

SIMON. Veal stewed with rice—oh, how nice!

ADOLPHE. Proceed, I say! *Pushes him off, and follows, L*

SCENE SECOND.—*Antique Apartment in Darnaud's House.*

At back, table covered with books, parchments, &c,—chair near it.

Enter VICTORINE, R.

VICTOR. Will he obey my wishes? I would hazard everything to have this terrible secret unravelled. Day after day I behold my father wade yet more deeply in a sea of blood—hated and denounced by all. Adolphe I know to be the soul of honour; under his care the gold would be safe—my father exonerated, and the guilt of the men who have suffered, be proved. Then will Claude Darnaud once more triumph over the scandal-tipped tongue of his enemies, and brightening hope be again my prized companion. Yes, Adolphe prove that my father is wronged, not the wronger; and thou wilt, indeed, merit all I can bestow. My father comes!

Enter CLAUDE, L., with parchments in his hand, which he is examining.

CLAUDE. Twelve hundred francs at an interest of twenty per cent., for three months, certain. Good, very good, such a rate of profit is welcome, indeed, but is the security right?

(looks at papers.)

VICTOR. Good Morrow, my father.

CLAUDE. Good day, child—good day; but don't interrupt me now, for I am busy. Twelve hundred francs, at an interest of—

VICTOR. They have hung poor François.

CLAUDE. Pish! bah! He was a thief and deserving it—he stole gold from me. At an interest of twenty—(*crosses, R.*)

VICTOR. Father, the people say he was innocent.

CLAUDE. Bah! What do they know about it? I know, and so does the judge, that the gold was gone, and that none but he could have taken it. But respecting the security—

(*crosses, L.*)

VICTOR. Father, father, they say that you are a murderer, and this very morning a mob assailed me fiercely in the streets, and would have killed me, merely because I was your daughter.

CLAUDE. Why go out then? Stay at home as I do—let them say what they will. And the security to be—(*crosses, R.*)

VICTOR. 'Tis plain, my father thinks these men were guilty, at least he did not make the charge, knowing its falsehood.

CLAUDE. What are you chattering about? Be quiet, or leave me—here is a matter of twelve hundred francs I am considering about.

SIMON. (*without, L.*) Please may I come in?

CLAUDE. What would you?

Enter SIMON, L.

SIMON. Please, your worship, here's a stranger wants to see you.

VICTOR (c.) 'Tis he! My conscious heart tells me it is he.

CLAUDE. What's the wench muttering about? He wants to borrow money, I suppose. Well, well, at twenty per cent., if the security be good. Bid him enter.

SIMON *beckons on ADOLPHE, L.—VICTORINE goes up.*

What would you? (*crosses, C.*)

ADOLPHE. This then is the man, and that, surely—'tis Victorine! (*VICTORINE puts her finger to her lips*)

CLAUDE. What would you? If you come not here to speak, go hence, for I am busy now.

ADOLPHE. Pardon me, sir, I will not detain you long. You are in want of a—a—a clerk?

CLAUDE. Well, what if I be?

ADOLPHE. (L. c.) I would willingly serve you.

SIMON. (L.) Poor devil!

CLAUDE. You? What, are you another of the crew who seek by robbery to bring me to ruin, hey? But mark me, sir, I must have one who is honest—honest, sir.

ADOLPHE. My name is one which never yet was linked with villainy.

CLAUDE. Fine words mean little, but you may be honest. I know not whether you are or not; but this I know, that several have basely robbed me of my gold—yes, several.

SIMON. Mind what you're about, sir, the old fellow's doing you. Several, indeed! There's a precious lot more than several. I know of seven!

CLAUDE. But think not I tamely bore it! No, no—he, he, he! I made them dance for it.

SIMON. Indeed he did; they all danced upon nothing.

CLAUDE. I am not one to overlook injuries. I lost my gold—

SIMON. And they lost their lives.

CLAUDE. And I played them a tune for it. He, he, he!

SIMON. Indeed he did; he played them the dead march.

ADOLPHE. Nevertheless, I am willing to enter your employ.

SIMON. Oh, you unhappy sinner!

CLAUDE. Well, well, then, so be it; as long as you touch not my gold, I am content. But stay, are you a great eater?

SIMON. That's the toucher!

ADOLPHE. Truly not, master.

CLAUDE. I rejoice to hear it, for the household expenses are great, and vex me much. Look at that fellow by you yonder—there's a glutton for you—he does nothing but eat, eat, eat, all day long; he eats the very bones.

SIMON. That's because I can get nothing else.

CLAUDE. Nothing else, sirrah? Why, don't I allow you three-quarters of a pound of meat per week, besides two large potatoes per diem?

SIMON. But what's that to a growing boy?

CLAUDE. Pish! You're a glutton, a glutton! Do as I do—mortify the flesh—nourish not the appetite, gratify not the belly!

SIMON. I starve my belly! I haven't got three ounces of flesh upon my bones! Only look at me—I'm a walking specimen of anatomy.

CLAUDE. Silence, sirrah! And you, sir, tell me, have you dined?

ADOLPHE. No, sir.

CLAUDE. There's another expense. Why couldn't you have come as well after you had dined as before? But no matter, we ought to punish the appetites. No dinner will you get from me to-day.

SIMON. No, I'll be hanged if he will, or to-morrow either, or the next day. Dinners are like strangers here, and like strangers I should like to take them in!

(CLAUDE goes to chair, and sits, examining papers—VICTORINE comes down hastily)

VICTOR. Adolphe, you thought my proposal strange, possibly cruel; but it was sense of duty that urged me to make it. On you I know I can depend. Discover who steals, or has stolen my father's gold, and—

ADOLPHE. And what, Victorine?

VICTOR. I will be thine!

ADOLPHE. Dearest girl, for such a prize I will leave no project untried, no danger undared. (*kisses her hand*)

VICTOR. Farewell, dear Adolphe, ere nightfall we shall meet again!

Exit, R.—Meantime SIMON has stolen round to R., so that when ADOLPHE turns to look after VICTORINE, they face.

SIMON. Please to give me my franc!

ADOLPHE. Did I not so? Then there it is. (*gives the coin*)

SIMON. So this is a franc! And I am actually worth ten-pence. What a pretty thing it is—and what a pretty dinner it will buy! I'll steal out presently, and go to the cook shop. Oh, how hungry I am! Where shall I put this franc, to keep it safe, and be sure nobody sees it? I know—I'll put it in my boot. (*does so*) And now I'll go and get something to eat. Herb soup, alamode beef, veal stewed with rice. Oh, how hungry I am!

Exit, L.

ADOLPHE. (L. C.) Now for my first essay as a clerk.

CLAUDE. (*comes down, R. C.*) Are we alone?

ADOLPHE. We are, sir.

CLAUDE. Young man, you doubtless think me usurious, selfish, unforgiving, and perhaps you are right; but what I am, the world, not nature has made me. I have been the prey of designing men. In early life, they plundered me of all, of everything, and threw me upon the world to buffet as I might its pittiless billows. This froze my heart to all mankind, and I became a usurer. Why? First, that by the wealth I should acquire, I might take precedence of those who have wronged me: and secondly, that I might gloat over the misery of those upon whose sorrows my fortunes would be built. But this was not all; when I discovered the dupe I had been made, I knelt at once on the spot, and swore, solemnly swore, to be a tiger in defending the wealth I should obtain. The oath has hitherto been kept, and shall be still. Seven victims have I sacrificed at the shrine of honesty, but I like you—your appearance interests me, and I pray to heaven you are not doomed to be the eighth.

ADOLPH. Amen!

CLAUDE. Perform your duties well and earnestly, and I will prove a friend worth winning. Behold, in this paper are a hundred louis—take them—they are thine—do with them as

thou wilt. (*gives*) Squander them in worthless dissipation—barter them in lawful commerce—or at the gaming table, be the dupe of a keener wit than thine—I care not. When they are gone, come to me again, say “My purse is empty,” and I will replenish your store—but do not, do not rob me—do not rob me, for if you do, my oath must be kept—and as sure as the sun shines in the heavens above us, the scaffold will be your portion. Now follow me, and I will show you the deeds I would have copied. Twelve hundred francs at an interest of twenty per cent., and the security to be— *Exit, R.*

ADOLPHE. Can this be possible? The old man has a heart I little dreamt of! His generosity, however, shall not be lost on me! No, love and gratitude alike call on me to act with discretion here—and I will either prove the guilt of the men who have suffered, or detect this unknown robber. *Exit, R.*

SCENE THIRD.—*The Miser's Treasure Room, a dark antique looking chamber—folding doors in flat—a peculiar looking cabinet in flat, L.—casement, with shutters and bar, closed, in flat, R.—table and chair at back.—Stage rather dark.*

Enter SIMON, R.

SIMON. I can't manage to get either dinner or supper—it's a very hard case; I'm so hungry. I wish I could slip out of the house for five minutes, and slip a good meal in! it would be the first I've had these six months. I'm a complete skeleton—my bones all rattle as I walk along for want of flesh to cover them! It's cruel—it's dreadfully cruel to keep anything to starve it! Here comes our new clerk—I wonder how he likes it!

Enter ADOLPHE, L.

Well, sir, how do you get on?

ADOLPHE. At present, very well—the old man seems quite satisfied with my efforts.

SIMON. Oh, I don't mean that—what I mean is, don't you get very hungry?

ADOLPHE. Not particularly so!

SIMON. Really! Well, never mind, I'm hungry enough for both of us.

ADOLPHE. But I suppose we shall have some supper presently?

SIMON. You suppose so, do you? Ah, that was just the

way with me when I first entered master's service—I went on supposing, and supposing, and supposing I should have some supper ! But what do you suppose, now, I found out at last ?

ADOLPHE. I cannot guess.

SIMON. Then I'll tell you. I found out master expected me to live on suppositions—there's a cruel man for you ! But don't talk of supper any more, because it makes me feel so hungry. How do you like your sleeping room ?

ADOLPHE. I have not seen it as yet.

SIMON. Oh, yes you have—this is it.

ADOLPHE. This ? Why, I do not see any bed.

SIMON. No, nor any one else. I didn't say bed room, I said sleeping room. You'll have to sit all night in that chair !

ADOLPHE. Oh, zounds ! this will not do ! To be starved, and have no bed into the bargain, is too much.

SIMON. Too little, you mean. Do you see that closet ? Well, that's where Master Claude keeps his gold—and you'll have to watch it all night—and to-morrow morning, if there's none gone, you'll be the first that ever saved it.

ADOLPHE. Indeed !

SIMON. Yes, that was the case with all the other seven—though they watched ever so much, some of the gold was sure to go. So as master couldn't find out the unknown robber, he hanged them instead.

ADOLPHE. Egad, I almost wish I had not embarked in this adventure !

SIMON. I wish I could embark a good dinner into my stomach ! Hallo ! there's master's voice—I shall be off ! I know what I'll do, I'll go and look in the cupboard—I do it fifty times a day, but it's all no use, I always find it like my belly—full of emptiness. There *was* a bone there this morning, but I'll lay a wager the cat's stolen it ! Oh, dear, how hungry I am !

Exit, r.

ADOLPHE. So pretty Victorine is the miser's daughter, and her object in engaging me in this adventure, was to clear her father's name, and prove the guilt of the seven clerks. Well, the object, no doubt, was a very filial one, but really, I wish she had selected any one but me ! However, as I am thus deeply involved in the affair, I will now see its termination.

Enter CLAUDE, L.

CLAUDE. The security is better than I expected ! but I shall pretend not to be satisfied, and then the young scapegrace will

offer larger interest Ha, Master Adolphe, I would speak with you.

ADOLPHE. I attend you, sir.

CLAUDE. You see yonder cabinet? Well, then, within it there are seven bags of gold—it will be your duty to-night to watch over them—to-morrow I will do so myself.

ADOLPHE. But, sir, will you not fasten the closet door?

CLAUDE. Fasten the door, sir? Why of course I shall, and sleep with the key under my pillow; all you have to do is to see that no one enters here—there, (*takes bunch of keys from his girdle and selects one*) there is the key, (*gives it to him*) unlock the door, and count the gold.

(*Music—ADOLPHE unlocks the cabinet, takes from within seven bags, and places them on table.*)

ADOLPHE. There are seven.

CLAUDE. Exactly. Now replace them, lock the door, and give the key to me. (*Music—ADOLPHE does so*)

Enter VICTORINE, with antique lamp, lighted, l.

VICTOR. (*crosses to c.*) Dear father, will you not to bed?
'Tis near midnight.

CLAUDE. Ay, child, directly; I have but been showing our clerk what gold he has to watch over.

VICTOR. Believe me, sir, under his care it will be safe.

CLAUDE. I hope so, I hope so, both for my sake and his own.
Now to bed. (*going, r.*)

VICTOR. (*hurriedly*) Adolphe, be firm and slumber not—see that the gold be safely treasured—prove that my father *has* been robbed before, and I am thine.

ADOLPHE. Dearest girl! (*kisses her hand*)

VICTOR. Hush—hush!

CLAUDE. Come, girl, why do you linger? Give me your arm, and lead me to my chamber.

VICTOR. Yes, father.

(*goes to r., holds lamp in her right hand, CLAUDE leans on her left arm.*)

CLAUDE. Remember, young man, there are seven bags of gold—seven—seven.

VICTOR. Come, dear father, to bed.

(*she leads him gently to r.—stage dark—he fixes his eyes on ADOLPHE and points to cabinet.*)

CLAUDE. Remember, let it be so found in the morning—seven bags of gold—seven—seven—seven!

Music.—Picture—clock strikes twelve. Exeunt CLAUDE and VICTORINE, r.—ADOLPHE expresses determination, and and then throws himself into chair near cabinet. Scene closes.

SCENE FOURTH.—*The Market Place of Marseilles—night*
—Stage dark.

Enter HANS, R.

HANS. Donner! dey are not here, den I am first. Donner! unless dey have better luck den I, ve sall go vidout supper to-night. Ha, here is von.

Enter MATTEO, L.

MATTEO. Well—ha—friend Hans, how have you fared this day?

HANS. Donner! bad enough, I have been on de look out all day, and I have got noting.

MATTEO. That is unlucky, for I have been unsuccessful—ha—too.

HANS. Donner! you don't men dat you have got noting too?

MATTEO. Indeed I do, though—cospetto! the people seem to think of nothing but the hanging of these seven clerks; not a single pouch have I robbed, not a single commission—ha—in the killing line.

HANS. Vy, donner, ve sall have noting to eat.

MATTEO. Then—ha—we must keep a fast.

HANS. Donner! dat does not agree with mine bowels.

MATTEO. But stay—ha—where's that lubberly Englishman? He may have had better luck.

HANS. Ha, I had forgotten him, but I hope he won't forget us.

MATTEO. No, no, the fellow is honest enough, after a thief's fashion; if he's got anything he will share it with us. He's got his good points, although he's a coward.

HANS. He told me yesterday dat he had never killed a man.

MATTEO. Cospetto! it's not possible—ha!

HANS. Donner! do you doubt my vord?

MATTEO. No, no, but I doubt his, though. Now, Hans, do you think it possible that John Brown could have been a thief all his life without killing a man?

HANS. No.

MATTEO. Nor I; but here he comes.

Enter BROWN, R.

HANS. Vell, Jone Brown, vot luck? vot you got?

BROWN. Nothing wotsomdever.

MATTEO. } Nothing?
HANS. }

BROWN. Nothing. If I have I'll be shot.

HANS. Donner and blitzen! you are of no use!

MATTEO. No use—ha—at all! cospetto, Hans, we must part company with him.

BROWN. But I say, Master Hans, what have you got, hey?

HANS. Oh, vy—I, donner, have got noting too.

BROWN. Nothing? why, you Dutch pipe, you're of no use yourself. But I say, Signor Matteo, what have you got?

MATTEO. Me? oh, I've got nothing too—ha.

BROWN. Oh, you're of no use at all—I shall part company with you both. Oh, dear, dear, we shall have no supper.

MATTEO. No wine!

HANS. Nor no Schiedam!

BROWN. Now you two chaps just listen to me. I had a thought come into my head this morning, and if we mind what we're about, it will bring us a lot of money.

HANS. Money? donner!

BROWN. Now listen. When I lived in St. Giles', that's in England, you know—

HANS. Yaw!

BROWN. I used to do a little in the housebreaking line, for being a little chap then—

MATTEO. Little then? why, Brown, you're not very big now.

BROWN. Come, don't you be imperent, signor. Vell, as I was going to say, I shall set about making some false keys directly, or as we calls them in St. Giles', some skeletons; and to-morrow night, if you'll agree, we'll pay a visit to old Claude Darnaud, the miser's house, and borrow some of his gold—he says he's robbed when he isn't, so now we'll see what he will say when he is. (*all laugh*)

HANS. Yaw, as ve say in Holland, ve vill borrow his cash.

MATTEO. Or as we say in Florence—ha—we will take advantage of our friend's prudence.

BROWN. Or as ve say in St. Giles', ve'll crack a crib. (*all laugh*) But, hallo—there's somebody coming—stand back, friends—let us see whether he's worth robbing. (*they go back*)

Enter SIMON, R.

SIMON. I've stolen out at last—it's quite dark, but never mind, that has no effect upon my appetite—I'm as hungry as ever. I know a cook shop close by here where they keep open all night. I'll go and spend my franc, and get some soup, and

some alamode beef, and some veal stewed with rice. Oh, how hungry I am ! (*they come down*)

HANS. (*with pistol*) Goot even to you !

SIMON. Oh lord !

MATTEO. (*with dagger*) Fine night, friend !

SIMON. Oh dear !

BROWN. Or as we say in St. Giles'—how ain't you ?

SIMON. Why, where did you all spring from ?

BROWN. Never mind that ; but hand over your browns.

SIMON. My what ?

BROWN. Your browns—your brads.

SIMON. I haven't got any brads.

BROWN. Your money, stupid !

SIMON. My money ! oh, my franc ! I haven't got any.

BROWN. Nonsense ! hand it over, or—

SIMON. Here—help !

HANS. Silence, or—do you see dis plaything ?

SIMON. Oh, what an ugly plaything.

BROWN. If you won't deliver your cash, I shall hand you over to the secular power. Search him, friends. (*they search him*.)

SIMON. Oh, my franc—oh, my dinner ! my franc's going—my dinner's not coming.

BROWN. Well, what has he got ?

HANS. Vy, donner and blitzen ! he has got noting too.

BROWN. Nonsense ! I know he has—I can see it in his face.

SIMON. Then what's the use of looking in my pockets ?

BROWN. Silence ! I know he's got something—as ve say in St. Giles', look in his boots.

SIMON. My boots ? oh; my franc !

BROWN. What have you got in your boots, stupid ?

SIMON. My feet, stupid !

BROWN. Search his boots !

(*they throw him down and pull off his boots*.)

HANS. Donner ! here is one franc !

BROWN. (*takes it*) Only one franc ! why, I suppose if the fellow had had two, he'd have killed us all.

HANS. Well, now, I sall kill him out of the vay.

BROWN. (*restrains him*) No, no, I won't have you kill him, by no manner of means.

SIMON. You needn't trouble yourselves, gentlemen, I am dying now.

BROWN. Dying now ?

SIMON. Yes, dying of starvation.

HANS. You sall die of someting else.

BROWN. No, no, I'll have no killing, ve never kills in St.

Giles's, ve ònly prigs. (SIMON, *meantime*, has got up, suddenly knocks HANS down, and runs off, R.)

HANS. Oh, de deyvil ! he has boxed me.

BROWN. 'Never mind, we've got his boots and his franc. Now gentlemen conveyancers, we'll divide the spoil. Hans, here's a boot for you, and Matteo, here's a boot for you, and John Brown, here's a franc for you.

HANS. No, no, I sall hab de franc.

MATTEO. No, no, I sall have de franc.

BROWN. As we say in St. Giles', the court's dissolved. (*shews the franc*) Good night, I'm satisfied! Exit L.

HANS. Donner and blitzen ! he has run avay vid de franc !

MATTEO. After him Hans !

Music—He hurries HANS off, L., then picks up boots, and runs off, R.—HANS re-enter, L. and finding the boots gone, expresses rage and dissatisfaction by gestures, then exits, L.

Enter SIMON followed by several MEN, with cudgels, R.

SIMON. This way, this way—here they are—here are the thieves who robbed me of my boots and my franc—seize them !

1st MAN. (with lighted lantern—Stage lighter) But where are they ?

SIMON. Where ? (*looks round*) Holloa ! they are gone !

1st MAN. I say, Master Simon, it's my belief you've been having a joke with us.

SIMON. Quite a mistake ! It's them that's been having a joke with me.

1st MAN. And you shall pay for it.

SIMON. Hav'n't a sous.

1st MAN. Then your bones shall.

SIMON. You may well say bones, for I'm sure there's no flesh on them.

1st MAN. At him lad !

SIMON. Here, help ! Murder !

Music—they beat him round stage. HANS, MATTEO, and BROWN rush on with cudgels—HANS breaks lantern, and puts out light—Stage dark—they all commence thrashing each other, and the drop falls on a general fight.

A C T S E C O N D .

SCENE I.—*Apartment in Darnaud's House—same as Scene 2.
Door in flat, r. c.—table and chair at back.*

Enter SIMON, R.

SIMON. Oh dear, dear, how hungry I am! I want my breakfast, and likely enough I am to want it; my master will see me starved before he gives me any—he's no bowels whatever, and if he does not feed me better, I don't think I shall have any much longer. I wonder how that poor devil of a clerk gets on? If there should be any gold missing, I wouldn't be in his shoes—for—Shoes? talking of shoes reminds me of my boots. That was a bad affair last night—they took my franc and my boots, and gave me in return a good beating, which was the very thing I didn't want. There's master's voice! he's coming this way. I'll ask him boldly for some breakfast. I'll tell him if he doesn't feed me better, I shall leave his service—and so I shall; I shall take a place under Mister Death—there's a grave idea! (*clock strikes two quarters*)

Enter CLAUDE, L.

CLAUDE. So, so—half-past six, and no one stirring yet. My household is surely the laziest in the city. How now, sirrah? Why stand you there? Why not go to work?

SIMON. I feel as bold as a lion—I'll up and tell him—'cause I haven't had any breakfast.

CLAUDE. Breakfast? Breakfast indeed! Why sirrah, you think of nothing but eating and drinking—you're a glutton—a glutton, sirrah!

SIMON. Do I look like a glutton? I'm an ill used individual; I'm a starved skeleton. No breakfast, no dinner, no nothing!

CLAUDE. Heyday, master! if I hear any more of this you must tramp.

SIMON. Tramp? I can't tramp unless you give me something more to eat; I havn't got strength enough to tramp.

CLAUDE. Hold thy impertinent tongue, and see if my new clerk be stirring yet.

SIMON. Hold my tongue, indeed ! I need hold something. Oh, dear, how hungry I am ! I wish my stomach would hold a good dinner. (*goes to door in flat*) Young man, are you risen ?

Enter ADOLPHE from flat, R. C.

ADOLPHE. Good morrow, sir !

CLAUDE. Good morrow, good morrow, Adolphe. Have you watched well ?

ADOLPHE. In good truth, sir, I have had but one half hour's slumber since you left me at midnight.

CLAUDE. That is well. Diligence is a commendable quality. Here, take you this key, and bring to me the seven bags of gold which I left in your care last night. (*takes key from his girdle, and gives it to ADOLPHE, who goes through door R. C.*)

SIMON. Happy man ! He hasn't got such an appetite as I have.

CLAUDE. What said you, Simon ?

SIMON. Nothing particular, sir ; I was only talking to myself.

CLAUDE. Talking to yourself, eh ?

SIMON. Yes—I was only saying to myself, oh, you unhappy Simon, how hungry you are !

CLAUDE. Pshaw ! Your ideas are all of meat.

SIMON. Exactly so—I'm obliged to feed upon ideas—and very poor windy diet they make—a dinner of meat is a sort of miracle to me, and like all other miracles, it comes very seldom.

CLAUDE. You're a glutton, sir ; but do your morning's work well, and they shall give you a basin of water gruel.

SIMON. Water gruel ? Talk of water gruel to a chap of my size ?

CLAUDE. Now, sir, why come ye not ?

Music—ADOLPHE enters from D. in F., with six bags, which he places on the table.

Put them on this table—that is right. (*he regards them attentively, then places them in a line, and counts them*) Heyday, master Adolphe, there are but six here.

ADOLPHE. (*confusedly*) Only six—six ?

CLAUDE. No, sir, only six. Can't you count, hey ? One, two, three, four, five, six. I left seven in your care.

ADOLPHE. True, sir—I must have left one in the closet.

CLAUDE. Go then, fetch it—you are careless !

Music—ADOLPHE goes through D. in F., then re-enters wildly.

ADOLPHE. Fool that I am ! I have played with life as though it were a toy ! Master Claude, there is no more gold in the closet !

CLAUDE. No more gold ? Why, did I not leave seven bags in your care last night ?

ADOLPHE. You did. I myself counted them—and watched with such persevering care the closet in which they were deposited, that scarce for one poor quarter of an hour did I slumber.

CLAUDE. Where then is the other bag ?

ADOLPHE. Surely among these.

CLAUDE. Count them. (*ADOLPHE goes to table, and counts them eagerly*)

SIMON. There's going to be another hanging match. I knew there would be, because I dreamt last night of legs of mutton.

ADOLPHE. By heavens, there are but six ! This is unaccountable !

CLAUDE. Not at all—I can account for it. (*takes hold of his arm, and brings him down to front*) You have stolen the other bag.

ADOLPHE. What mean you ? Would you accuse me of theft ?

CLAUDE. Stay, master—do not speak so loudly, nor frown with such a grace—in matters like these, proof—proof is better than a thou sand words—ay, or looks either. If this bag of gold passed not from the house by your contrivance, how went it ?

ADOLPHE. I know not—cannot even guess ; but this I swear, I neither touched, nor even saw it, from the time you took the closet key, till now.

CLAUDE. Tell that tale in a court of justice. Simon ! fetch hither instantly the officers of police. We'll let this gallant know that theft is punished in Marseilles.

SIMON. (*crosses to L.*) Just as I thought—he was a fool to come, and I'm a fool to stay. Yes, master, I'll go. No more francs from that chap.

CLAUDE. Go, sirrah, this instant !

SIMON. Yes, sir. That fellow is going to be hung, and this fellow (*points to himself*) is going without his breakfast. Ah, these are dreadful things, they do make me so hungry !

Exit L.

ADOLPHE. This, then, is to be the termination of my career ! Ensnared by a plotting woman to this house of villainy, my life must pay the forfeit of a moment's folly !

CLAUDE. (*abstractedly*) Eight—eight does this one make—who hath with shameless audacity robbed me of my gold—but not—no, no—not with impunity!

Enter VICTORINE, L.

VICTOR. Good morning, my father—and you, sir, how passed you the night?

CLAUDE. In deeds of villainy, daughter!

VICTOR. How? What means this? Despair on one countenance, and anger on the other! Speak, speak, the meaning of this?

CLAUDE. He has robb'd me of a bag of gold.

VICTOR. No! on my life, no! I'd not believe it though fifty witnesses appeared to prove the charge! (*crosses to centre*) Speak, Adolphe, deny this falsehood!

ADOLPHE. And where would be the use? No, lady, like the other seven, I must go to the scaffold, the victim not of my own crimes, but of a woman's lures.

VICTOR. Oh, say not so, say not so! For months has your image been stamped upon my heart; and sooner than see you suffer—innocent as I know you are, I myself would perish! Father, revoke this unjust charge, this gentleman is guiltless.

CLAUDE. Let him prove it then, and produce the gold.

VICTOR. Give him time at least to do so; a day—an hour!

CLAUDE. Not an instant. I have sent for the police; they are even now without—it is too late—he must either prove his innocence in open court, or hang.

VICTOR. (*hurriedly*) Ah! Is it so? Oh, Adolphe, I have sacrificed your life to a vague hope of clearing my father's fame. Oh, forgive me, forgive me, or I shall go mad with anguish!

ADOLPHE. Lady, you have indeed ruined me; but if the deed be *unintended*, I freely forgive you.

VICTOR. Is there no hope? Yes, flight may save you yet. Fly, fly, Adolphe, instantly! I would not have your blood upon my head for a thousand worlds. See! (*points to R. 2 E.*) yonder passage will conduct you to the garden, thence you may escape—

CLAUDE. Escape? No, no, the thief shall not evade me. Help, help! Police! Simon!

ADOLPHE. I am innocent, and will not move.

VICTOR. Oh, say not so! this obstinacy will destroy you! Fly, if not for your own sake, at least for mine. Fly, I conjure, command you!

CLAUDE. No, no, he shall not fly! he has robb'd me of my gold.

VICTOR. He has not robbed you, old man, and shall not be sacrificed ! Fly ! (*they all struggle together—VICTORINE attempting to force ADOLPHE off, and CLAUDE to detain him*)

CLAUDE. Help ! help ! the thief will escape !

Enter PIERRE, ANTOINE, and SOLDIERS, l. 2 e.—they seize ADOLPHE.

CLAUDE. Seize him, the villain has robbed me !

VICTOR. (*screams*) He is lost ! He is lost ! Adolphe, I have murdered you ! Forgive, forgive me ! Yet oh, how can you forgive me ? (*she clings to him*)

ADOLPHE. I do, I do, Victorine !

CLAUDE. Part them, and convey him to prison—he has robbed me of a bag of gold.

VICTOR. (*hysterically*) No—no—no !

(*Music—CLAUDE tears her away from ADOLPHE—they prepare to lead ADOLPHE off—she bursts from CLAUDE, and in the attempt to reach ADOLPHE, falls centre—Scene closes upon tableau.*)

SCENE SECOND.—*Street in Marseilles. (1st grooves.)*

Enter BROWN and MATTEO, R.

BROWN. (*shows keys*) See here, Matteo, here's three capital skeletons—this one is for the street door, this for the gold-room, and this for the cabinet.

MATTEO. You—ha—appear to have arranged it well—ha !

BROWN. I believe I have indeed ; as we say in St. Giles', I'm a keen covey. But where's Hans ?

MATTEO. Moping about as discontented as possible, because you did him out of the franc.

BROWN. Well, and you did him out of the boots ; so no reflections if you please, because they're like Hans, they're bootless.

MATTEO. Oh, I didn't mean to offend you—ha—and so there's my hand.

BROWN. (*they shake hands*) Oh, well, there's mine then—I ain't above shaking hands with anybody, not I.

Enter HANS, R.

HANS. Oh, you are two bad men—two dam thieves—you no give me my share last night of anything except the beating.

BROWN. Well, never mind, Hans, we'll get something handsome to night—that war'nt worth diwidng. Do you see that house yonder ?

HANS. Yaw.

BROWN. Well, that's where Master Claude lives—or as we say in St. Giles', that's the crib wot's to be cracked.

HANS. Well?

BROWN. Well, to-night at twelve, we'll steal in at the window, if the door's barred, and nail the gold.

MAGLEO. Good! and if anybody dares to meddle with us—this—ha—(*shews dagger*) This shall make our game certain.

BROWN. Don't now—put it away—the very sight of that ugly thing makes me quite poorly. Now once for all, I won't have any killing.

HANS. Dere's somebody coming!

BROWN. Is there? Then as we say in St. Giles', let's wanish.
(*they hide at R.*)

Enter VICTORINE, L.

VICTOR. My course is plain. I have involved him whom I prize better than all the world, in ruin inevitable, unless the real culprit be diecovered, and that must now be my fearful task. I have procured pistols, and to-night will watch myself! The stake at hazard is too great to allow slumber to approach my pillow, and danger must be scorned, when justice is the object sought. Simon!

Enter SIMON, L.

Simon, have they taken poor Adolphe to prison?

SIMON. No, Mademoiselle, according to your wish they have confined him in a room at the top of the house, and all the soldiers remain to keep watch over him—and to-morrow morning, unless you can prove his innocence, he is to go to jail. Oh, dear, these things do make me so hungry.

VICTOR. Simon, when you take dinner to him—

SIMON. Dinner? Don't mention it—the very thought makes me so hungry.

VICTOR. Bid him be of good cheer—

SIMON. Good cheer? Oh, how fond I am of good cheer.

VICTOR. Tell him there is one near him who knows his innocence, and will risk life itself to prove it to the world. Pray you remember this, Simon.

SIMON. I will, Mademoiselle.

VICTOR. And here is a louis for you. Now to prepare for my midnight watch—now to unmask the unknown robber!

Exit R.

SIMON. I've got a louis! Oh, dear, who'd ever have thought of such a thing! What a dinner I will have! Six basins of soup, six plates of alamode-beef, and as to the veal—but I'll

take very good care not to get near those three thieves again, no, no—I'll—(turns and sees HANS watching him from R.—he runs out hastily, L.—HANS, BROWN, and MAGLEO cross stage hastily after him, from R. to L.)

SCENE THIRD.—*The Miser's Treasure Room—same as Last Scene of First Act—shutters barred before window—table, with lighted lamp on it at back.*

Enter VICTORINE and CLAUDE, R.

CLAUDE. Girl, girl, this plan of thine is akin to madness—the lad is guilty—let him perish.

VICTOR. No, father, it shall not be. The time is now arrived when the secret motives which actuated me must be explained. Listen! From earliest youth you have been my constant companion—friend; though others have found you harsh, usurious, and unforgiving—to me, you have ever been kind and affectionate—and in good truth, father, in spite of all the rude world doth say of you, I love you dearly. (*hangs upon his shoulder*)

CLAUDE. Well, well, child—I believe you do.

VICTOR. You have caused the death of Seven Clerks—the fate of an eighth rests on the event of to-night!

CLAUDE. No, no—I have not slain them! they robbed me!

VICTOR. Hear me! The world says not—the world says you have not been robbed—and that these men were sacrificed to gratify—oh, horror!—your taste for blood!

CLAUDE. They lie! They lie then foully! On my soul they lie! Why each of these men stole my gold—nay, scarce a night passes but my treasure suffers from the midnight robber.

VICTOR. I know it—and it was to prove to the world that you at least *thought* them guilty, that I induced Adolphe to become your clerk.

CLAUDE. You induced him?

VICTOR. Ay, father, Adolphe de Briancourt is no low-born servitor—but a rich and noble gentleman—one who would sooner perish than commit a theft. Knowing this, I persuaded him for a time to play your clerk, that so the world might see you did not complain unjustly.

CLAUDE. The scheme has failed. He resisted not temptation, but stole my gold.

VICTOR. Alas! the scheme *has* failed—but not Adolphe. Another plan must now be tried—I will myself watch over thy treasure—nor for an instant close my wearied eyelids until the

secret plunderer be discovered. But go now to bed, my father—leave the rest to me.

CLAUDE. Well, well, you are a good girl, Victorine, and love your father, I believe. Bless you—bless you, my child! Good night! *Music—She leads him to wing—Exit CLAUDE, R.*

VICTOR. The philosopher of old, who said that none could know until they tried what they could do, was right; under some powerful influence—the coward becomes brave, the thief honest, the drivelling idiot wise, the timid girl a heroine! But who would not be a heroine with such incentives as I have? A father's fame to clear, a lover's life to save! If these be not enough to nerve my soul to action, then every human feeling must have perished under the baleful influence of a demon's spell. (*looks round*) I must extinguish the light, else perhaps the robber may not come. (*does so*) This is very solemn—and my heart would quake did I not hold it tightly. (*clock chimes two quarters*) 'Tis past midnight! Oh, ye who guard the innocent in hours of thick darkness, think now of me. Ha, was not that a noise? No, no—it was nothing—nothing but my anxious fancy—or perchance, the quick and heavy beatings of my heart—yet again! (*a slight noise without*) What's that? (*noise at window—the shutters shake*) Ha, the window! (*watches it eagerly—shutters shake again, and the bar falls*) They come—they come—my pistols!

Goes off, cautiously, L., observing them.

BROWN *peeps cautiously through window—then enters—takes off his shoes, and puts them in his pocket—produces dark lantern, and looks round.*

BROWN. (*whispers*) It's all right—come along.

HANS and MATTEO *get through window—HANS falls down.*
Hush! hush!

HANS. (*gets up*) Donner, I have tumbled down! (*they examine the apartment carefully*)

BROWN. Now, lads, come along; I can see my way as well by a lantern as I can by the sunbeams. I warn't bred in St. Giles's for nothing.

HANS. Vich is de gold chest?

BROWN. We'll find it presently.

MATTEO. Here is a lamp—I'll light it.

BROWN. Leave it alone! Don't never touch nothing you don't want—as we say in St. Giles's—'tain't worth while. Oh, here's the closet—now to work.

(*Music—places lantern on table, and prepares to open cabinet*)

VICTORINE rushes on, L., with two pistols.

VICTOR. (*presents pistols*) Surrender! (*Tableau*)

BROWN. My eyes, here's a row!

VICTOR. At last, then, villains, you are discovered! you who have remorselessly sacrificed the lives of so many, must now prepare to pay the penalty of crimes so monstrous.

BROWN. Never killed a man in my life—ax the people in St. Giles's.

VICTOR. He who attempts to move—dies. Help! help!

MATTEO. This must not be.

HANS. Donner, no—she must be silenced.

(*Music—MATTEO and HANS rush upon her—she fires pistol without effect—BROWN jumps through window—HANS wrests pistol from her—MATTEO holds her—she screams—and just as HANS fires at her, ADOLPHE rushes in, R., strikes up his arm, and rescues her*)

Enter PIERRE, ANTOINE, and SOLDIERS, hurriedly, R.—they seize HANS and MATTEO.—Tableau.

PIERRE. Speak, lady, who are these men?

VICTOR. These are they who for so long a period have stolen my father's gold. These are they who have suffered seven innocent men to perish on the scaffold, to screen their own dark crimes.

HANS. False as de deyvil! We were never here before.

MATTEO. You are mistaken. 'Tis true we came here to-night with the intention of robbing your father—and why? Because he has gold which he does not require; whilst we are starving for the want of it. But never before was I within this house.

PIERRE. Tell that tale to the commandant. Soldiers, conduct these men to the prison.

Exeunt SOLDIERS with HANS and MATTEO, guarded, L. 2 E.

VICTOR. And I'll to my father. But first, observe all—that my father has been robbed—nor destroyed so many men from motives of revenge, as hath been rumoured. (*going*)

ANTOINE. Hold, lady—some one else approaches—possibly another accomplice.

VICTOR. I hear nothing.

ADOLPHE. Yes; I too, hear footsteps, and they seem to me as though ascending some staircase beyond yon folding doors.

VICTOR. Impossible! There are stairs there, 'tis true—but the doors have not been unlocked for years, and my father alone has the key.

ADOLPHE. Hark! the person, whoever he is, has stopped at these doors.

PIERRE. And, by heavens, is opening them!

VICTOR. Oh, what—what can this mean?

ADOLPHE. Hush, hush!

PIERRE. Silence, lady, I entreat; a few moments will unravel the mystery.

The folding doors, c., slowly unclose, and CLAUDE is seen in his dressing gown, asleep.

VICTOR. Gracious heaven! My father!

ADOLPHE. Hush! he sees us not—he is *asleep*.

CLAUDE. All is still—I am alone; the watcher—if one there be—is asleep. Now to my work—the gold, the gold!

VICTOR. Awake him! he knows not what he says!

PIERRE. Lady, I command you—be silent.

(ADOLPHE restrains her—CLAUDE goes slowly to cabinet, unlocks it, takes from it a bag of gold—then re-locks it, and comes down)

VICTOR. (*weeps convulsively*) Oh, father, father! (CLAUDE kneels with difficulty, and raises a small trap)

CLAUDE. There is my gold—go you among the rest! (*puts the bag in*)

ADOLPHE. This is dreadful!

PIERRE. Dreadful, indeed! (*seizes him, and stamps*) Awake! awake, wretch, and know thy hideous crimes!

(*Music—CLAUDE suddenly awakes, and starts up*)

Enter SOLDIERS, l. 2 e., with lights, they range at back—stage light.

CLAUDE. What ho! Thieves—thieves!

ADOLPHE. Thieves, indeed! Whilst wrapped in heavy slumber you have stolen from yourself—accused others of the crime, and caused their dismal doom. Repent—repent, whilst there is yet time!

CLAUDE. Unsay those fearful words! Tell me—oh, tell me not that I am a murderer! And yet—this chamber—these people round me—and that secret hoard of which I nothing knew! Oh, I am sleeping still! and some drear nightmare sits upon my breast, and chills the heart beneath! Awake me—I charge ye awake me—else these thoughts will drive me frantic!

PIERRE. (*meantime has taken from the trap the bags of gold*) 'Tis true—too true, old man—and here is the accursed gold for which seven innocent men have perished.

CLAUDE. Open thou too patient earth! Swallow me in thy

capacious bosom—for I am no longer worthy to bask in the sunbeams, or gaze on the face of my fellow man! I have slain seven—seven lives have I remorselessly sacrificed! That cursed thought burns at my heart like some vile searing iron—and will do so for ever!

VICTOR. Father—father, be more composed. Remember that He who sees and knows all, is well aware that though guilty, you were unconscious of the deed. He will be merciful, my father, to thee!

CLAUDE. No, no—that poor, paltry subterfuge cannot veil *my* crime! I have condemned others, and am now myself condemned. You, too, (*to ADOLPHE*) I would have sacrificed—can you—oh, can you forgive?

ADOLPHE. Ay, from my soul I do.

CLAUDE. What reparation I can make to thee I will—but there are seven to whom I can make none! You love my daughter—she is thine; take with her all my treasure—'tis freely given. But oh, when I am gone let prayers be said over me, for I shall need them much.

VICTOR. Oh, father—speak not thus!

CLAUDE. Who are these men? What do they here? Whom do they seek? Why do they gaze upon me so earnestly? Ha, there are *seven* of them! I know ye now—I know ye well!—Roland, Jaques, François—I know ye all! Well I remember your cries for mercy—your pity-seeking eyes—your hands raised in entreaty! Now—now your cry is for vengeance! Now your eyes look perdition on me—now those hands are raised to denounce! They point at me—and now—ha! they advance towards me! Keep them off—let them not approach me—the atmosphere around them is pernicious—it's scent is of the grave! Ha! they come nearer and yet nearer!—I cannot escape them! With lifeless eyes, they look into my very soul—with fleshless hands they grasp my throat! I suffocate—I suffocate! Help—help! Mercy!

(falls and dies, c.—VICTORINE kneels by his side.—Tableau.

CURTAIN SLOWLY.



The Seven Clerks.

ADOLPHE... Victorine, you must be silent; this dreadful secret must be explained.

VICTORINE (*Weeps convulsively*) Oh! father... father!

CLAUDE... (*Kneeling with difficulty & raising a small trap*) There is my Gold... go you among the rest (*drops bag in*)

Act 2 Scene 3