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A

STRANGE HISTORY.

A DRAMATIC TALE,

IN EIGHT CHAPTERS.

BY MESSRS.

SLINGSBY LAWRENCE
AND
CHARLES MATHEWS,

Authors of "A Chain of Events," &c. &c.

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET, STRAND,
LONDON.

*First Performed at the Royal Lyceum Theatre,
on Easter Monday, March 29th, 1853.*

CHARACTERS.

JEROME LEVERD	.	.	.	Mr. CHARLES MATHEWS.
LEGROS	.	.	.	Mr. FRANK MATTHEWS.
NICOLAS	.	.	.	Mr. ROBERT ROXBURY.
MAURICE BELLISLE	.	.	.	Mr. COOPER.
DOMINIQUE	.	.	.	Mr. JAMES BLAND.
ALFRED DE MIRECOUR	.	.	.	Mr. BELTON.
JEAN BRIGARD	.	.	.	Mr. BASIL BAKER.
AMEDEE	.	.	.	Mr. ROSIERE.
HECTOR DE BEAUSIRE	.	.	.	Mr. H. BUTLER.
CAPTAIN OF GENDARMES	.	.	.	Mr. ABBOTT.
PIERRE	.	.	.	Mr. HENRY.
CHRISTINE	.	.	.	Madame VESTRIS.
MADAME LEGROS	.	.	.	Mrs. FRANK MATTHEWS.
NICOTTE	.	.	.	Miss JULIA ST. GEORGE.
ESTELLE	.	.	.	Miss M. OLIVER.
COUNTESS DE MIRECOUR	.	.	.	Mrs. HORN.
MANETTE	.	.	.	Miss MASON.
MARGUERITE	.	.	.	Miss WADHAM.

Time in Representation, Three Hours.

If performed in Five Acts, Two Hours and Twenty Minutes.

COSTUMES.

In the first three chapters Tyrolean ; and French soldiers.

In the rest, Breton peasants and French gentlemen of 1810-15.

JEROME.—1st Dress—Peasant's brown jacket, black sleeves, red vest; full brown trunks; grey leggings; shoes; felt Swiss hat and feather; over-coat for the mountains, brown camels hair, trimmed with fur.

2nd Dress—Brown open jacket, without sleeves; holland shirt.

3rd Dress—Light blue open jacket, slashed sleeves of brown; red embroidered vest; light drab full trunks, all trimmed with white and coloured gimp; white buttons; striped silk sash.

4th Dress—Long blue dress coat (Paris cut), gilt buttons; white vest, trimmed with white fringe; white silk stockings; short blue breeches; Hessian boots, &c.; sugar-loaf hat; long hair.

LEGROS, NICOLAS, and PEASANTS same as Jerome's, but of different colours.

MAURICE.—Blue military tail coat, white facings; long white vest; long black gaiters; leather straps for garters; high pointed hair cap; cross belts, sword, knapsack, &c.

2nd Dress—Long military blue frock; long white vest; jack boots; velvet hanging cap.

3rd Dress—Frock coat; white vest; black trousers; patent boots; velvet cap, &c.

DOMINIQUE.—1st Dress—White military coat, red facings; long gaiters leather garters; hair cap; cross belts.

2nd Dress—Long grey Napoleon coat, black velvét facings; white breeches; high boots; hanging cap.

ALFRED DE MIRECOUR.—1st Dress—Military frock; black trousers, red stripe.

2nd Dress—Blue dress coat, gilt buttons; white vest; trousers; patent boots.

AMEDEE.—1st Dress—Plain frock; white trousers; vest, &c.

2nd Dress—Fashionable ball dress.

HECTOR.—Black trousers; flowered vest; blue dress coat, velvet collar.

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JEAN BRIGARD.-- 1st Dress--Long grey coat; long buff vest; high boots low crown'd hat.

2nd Dress--Black dress coat, vest, and breeches; black silk stockings; shoes and buckles; white neckcloth.

3rd Dress--Same as first.

SOLDIERS and DRUMMER.--Same as Dominique's.

VISITORS.--Fashionable ball suits.

CHRISTINE.--1st Dress--Cerise plaited petticoat; hat and feather; blue Cashmere jacket, white facings; shirt and cuffs.

2nd Dress--Brown merino petticoat and jacket; muslin handkerchief; Holland cap, apron, and cuffs.

3rd Dress--Lilac striped muslin dress; lace handkerchief and cap; black silk apron.

4th Dress--Lavender silk dress; lace cuffs and shirt.

MADAME LEGROS.--1st Dress--Dark blue petticoat; black velvet boddice; linen apron; shirt and cuffs; velvet and lace cap.

2nd Dress--Brown petticoat; blue ribbon; black velvet boddice, and light blue under dress; muslin sleeves with ribbon; muslin cap, trimmed with lace and ribbon; blue muslin apron.

3rd Dress--Velvet and green striped petticoat; brown satin ribbon; dark plain velvet boddice and ribbon; green under dress; muslin plaited apron and sleeves with ribbon, gold cap and lace.

NICOTTE.--1st Dress--Velvet woollen petticoat; black velvet boddice; Holland shirt, apron, and cap.

2nd Dress--Blue and black striped petticoat; red brown velvet boddice; orange coloured under dress; striped apron; muslin cap, and shoes, with ribbon.

3rd Dress--Lavender merino petticoat, pink ribbon; black velvet boddice; pink under dress; muslin plaited apron, and sleeves, trimmed with ribbon; gold cap, and lace.

MANETTE.--Brown merino petticoat; green velvet boddice; cerise under dress; muslin apron, cap, and sleeves, trimmed with ribbon.

ESTELLE.--1st Dress--White muslin dress, short sleeves; velvet silk apron, with shoulder bands

2nd Dress--Light blue silk morning dress.

3rd Dress--Tulle over white satin.

4th Dress--Pink glacee evening dress, trimmed with tarlatin.

COUNTESS DE MIRECOUR.--Green striped silk morning dress; white chip hat and ribbons.

PRINCIPAL DANCER.--Moire silk petticoat, trimmed with ribbon; violet velvet boddice: light blue under ditto; white tarlatin apron; high silver cap, and lace.

MARGUERITE.--Light blue silk dress, trimmed with tulle and ribbons.

LADIES OF THE BALLET.--1st Dress--Black velvet bodies, red under ditto; light blue petticoats, trimmed with ribbon; plaited muslin aprons; muslin sleeves, trimmed with ribbon; light gold caps, and lace.

2nd Dress--Ball dresses.

GIRL.--Blue jacket and petticoat; black merino apron; muslin handkerchief, and cap.

BOY.--Brown open jacket; red vest; white sleeves; brown trunks; blue stockings; Swiss hat and feather; shoes.

* * * Managers desirous of performing "A STRANGE HISTORY" in Five Acts instead of Eight, can do so by dividing it thus :—

ACT I. . . . CHAPTER I.

ACT II. . . . CHAPTERS II. and III.

ACT III. . . . CHAPTER IV.

ACT IV. . . . CHAPTER V.

ACT V. . . . CHAPTERS VI., VII., and VIII.

PROGRAMME
OF
The Scenery by Mr. William Beverly.

CHAPTER I.—PERIOD, 1797.

AN ALPINE INN.

CHAPTER II.

THE TRAVELLER'S ROOM.

CHAPTER III.

The Hut in the Mountain.

CHAPTER IV.—PERIOD, 1810.

THE FARM.

CHAPTER V.—PERIOD, 1815.

The Grounds of the Chateau.

Birth-Day Fête.

BALLET,

BY

Mesdames Wadham, Hunt, Mars, Webber, Barnes, F. Barnes, Ford, Sickle, Von Hollen, Flood, Julie, Henderson, Shew, J. Shew, Hyams, Fisher, &c.

Pas Breton, by Miss ROSINA WRIGHT.

CHAPTER VI.

THE BALL ROOM.

CHAPTER VII.

CHATEAU BY MOONLIGHT.

CHAPTER VIII.

WATERFALL IN THE GLEN.

The Overture and Music composed and arranged by Mr. J. H. TULLY.
The Dances and Action by Monsr. PETIT.—The Gentlemen's Costumes by Mr. BROWN.—The Ladies' Costumes by Miss BURT.
The Appointments by Mr. E. BRADWELL.—The Machinery by Mr. H. SLOMAN.—The Scenery by Mr. W. BEVERLY and Mr. MEADOWS.

A STRANGE HISTORY.

CHAPTER I.

A View of the Alps, with Glaciers in the distance—The Village of Storbach situated about half way up—Ascending and descending paths—A picturesque Inn L.—SOLDIERS discovered drinking—Shortly after the Curtain rises a noise of dispute heard within.

Enter MADAME LEGROS pushing DOMINIQUE on, followed by NICOTTE, who holds JEROME by the hand, LEGROS and two or three SOLDIERS follow.

MDE. L. Ta, ta, ta ! I won't allow it, there now ! Will you hear one word ? Can't I be allowed to speak *one* little word on this matter—must every one talk but me ? I will have my say !

NIC. And I will have mine.

MDE. L. Silence, Nicotte ! allow your elders to speak. Preserve the modesty of youth, and speak when you're spoken to.

NIC. But I am spoken to. It concerns me.

DOM. Of course it does. Nicotte is the prettiest girl in the village, and belongs by right to me.

NIC. I belong to you, indeed ! By what right ?

DOM. By right of conquest.

JER. If that is the way you make conquests, Monsieur Dominique, you'll never gain your epaulettes. Nicotte doesn't care a snap for you, not for the whole regiment. If you, or any one else, trouble her, child as she is, she will smack your impudent faces, and then turn you over to me, her protector.

DOM. Ha, ha, ha ! You're the cock of the village then, I suppose ?

JER. That honourable position in the poultry yard *is* mine. I am that desirable fowl. All the girls are under my protection, and woe to him who ventures near my hencoop.

DOM. A challenge ?

JER. A challenge !

MDE. L. No, no ! I won't have any quarrelling—I *won't*, d'ye hear ?

LEG. We won't have any quarrelling, we won't.

MDE. L. Be quiet, Legros ! Am I not to be allowed to say *one* little word ? Mill clacks that you are.

LEG. Don't quarrel—drink !

MDE. L. Exactly ! You needn't trouble yourself, Sir. It was what I was about to say, only I never can be allowed to say a word, never ! Others may talk, talk, talk till their tongues drop off, but I am not listened to ! I'm a chatterbox, forsooth ! There, now, let's hear no more about it. Give your orders, and don't stint them, my wine is of the best ; I guarantee it.

LEG. And I'll answer for it. Look here—(*drinks*) Is that a proof ?

MDE. L. Will you hold your tongue and attend to the orders ? Now, gentlemen, no more disputing. Nicotte is a good girl, a pretty girl, I don't say she isn't ; but what's the use of quarrelling about her ? Yet the men do nothing else. They never quarrel about *me*.

LEG. They often do *with you*.

MDE. L. Do *you* want to quarrel ?

LEG. Not I, my love. I never quarrel with anybody ; if I did, I certainly should give you the preference.

NIC. It isn't my fault. I'm sure I don't want the men to notice me—quite the reverse.

DOM. Nicotte, your beauty is not a fault.

MDE. L. No, it's a misfortune.

LEG. (*aside*) It's one you needn't be afraid of experiencing.

DOM. Only, we soldiers, you know—

JER. Yes, yes, we know ! But it won't do here. Do you suppose because you wear a bit of worsted on your shoulder, and have the privilege of being shot for a sou a day, that all the girls are to run after you ? A mistake, my friend. I'll shew you that not only are *our* girls safe from your incendiary attentions, but that *your* girls are not safe from mine. Why your very Vivandières belong to me. No sooner do they set foot within my territories, than I take possession of them, as a matter of course. You have got a new Vivandière, they tell me ; I haven't seen her. Come, where is she ? Produce her ! And if she's worth the trouble, I'll carry her off from under your very nose, Corporal as you are.

DOM. You ?

JER. I !

DOM. You must first fight for her.

JER. With all my heart ! Fighting's your trade, it's my recreation. Come on !

MDE. L. Ta, ta, ta !

LEG. Don't fight, drink.

DOM. So, so, young cock of the village, you want your comb cut, do you ?

JER. Try it ! Comrades, take your last view of the personal attractions of Corporal Dominique, they will be spoiled in a few minutes.

NIC. (*imploringly*) Jerome !

JER. Don't be alarmed. I will only just disturb the majestic proportions of that nose of his.

NIC. (*holding him back*) But I won't have you fight on my account. You shan't ! (*clings to him*)

MDE. L. Come away, Nicotte, I insist upon it! Legros, bring her into the house, out of harm's way. I don't mind a storm of words, but I can't bear blows. Talk as much as you like, I say, but don't fight.

LEG. Come, Nicotte, let's go out of harm's way. As my Jeanne says, and I quite agree with her, drink as much as you like, but don't fight.

NIC. No, I won't go! Fight, I say, but fairly. Jerome and I are a match for better men than they, but they are too many for us, that's all. It's not fair!

They force her towards the inn, and remain at the door, spectators.

DOM. Now, then!

They prepare to fight, when MAURICE enters, musket in hand, knapsack on back, from L.U.E.—he advances between them, grounds arms, and says—

MAU. Halt!—there'll be fighting enough presently, and serious enough, too. The Austrians are close at hand.

DOM. Eh, Sergeant Maurice! What brings you here?

MAU. The Republic sent me, with my regiment and two others, to reinforce the General. You see before you the brave Thirty-second.

DOM. And your comrades?

MAU. Cut to pieces. But we'll talk of that by and bye. What's the cause of dispute?

JER. The old subject since the beginning of the world?

MAU. A woman—eh? Is she handsome?

DOM. We haven't seen her yet.

JER. That makes no difference.

DOM. Not at all. This young bantam lays claim to our Vivandière. You can tell us whether she is worth the contest, for it's Christine of the Thirty-second we're expecting—your own regiment.

JER. Christine will be mine, then.

DOM. No—mine. She belongs by right to me.

JER. She belongs by custom to me.

MAU. And she belongs by choice to me.

JER. To you! No matter—I shall rob you of your sweetheart.

DOM. I shall carry off your mistress.

MAU. She is neither.

DOM. What then?

MAU. My wife.

JER. Your wife! Oh, that's a different thing.

MAU. And the mother of my children.

DOM. Say no more—respect where respect is due. Those whom the priest has joined—

MDE. L. Exactly so. Do you hear that, Legros? Those whom the— There's a moral sentiment! I hope it wil sink deep into your breast, and stimulate you to exertion for her who m—

LEG. That'll do—I'm quite stimulated enough. (*lights his pipe*) So long as the priest has joined them, why, then—

MAU. The priest has not joined us. We were married by roll of drum.

DOM. That's the same thing.

NIC. By roll of drum! What's that? It sounds as if it would suit me.

MAU. No, no—it's a military ceremony only; but with us it is as sacred as the best. Christine and I are as firmly married as if the Pope himself had joined us; and when we reach France once more, the Church will confirm our union. Christine was an orphan, brought up in the same village with myself, and we were to have been married years ago by the good old priest who had protected her childhood. Unfortunately, when the Revolution broke out, his opinions, too honestly and too loudly uttered, committed him, and he shared the fate of so many others.

JER. What, they— (*makes the sign of the guillotine taking off a head*)

MAU. He was led to the scaffold. There he made me swear to protect Christine; but enjoined me, by my love for his memory, not to marry her until the persecution of religion had ceased, and the altars now profaned were restored. I swore. I knew not what it was I undertook, but I would have undertaken anything for him. A few days after the army claimed me. Obliged to depart, what was to become of Christine? The brave girl soon ended my difficulty by resolving to follow me everywhere—to fight with me—to die with me. From that hour she has shared fatigue, privation, and peril by my side.

DOM. That's something like a woman.

MAU. We were at once married by roll of drum: but the priest's blessing and consecration we have still to wait for. However, the campaign will soon be over now, and not a day shall be lost before our union will be hallowed. And now, comrades, when you see her, I expect of you the respect, friendship, and protection due to my wife.

JER. Aye—respect, protection, admiration.

DOM. There is no comrade that will withhold it.

ALL. None! none!

MAU. Ah, boys! Christine is the darling of the soldiers. During the march she has always a place in her carriole for the sick and feeble, and a glass of brandy in her canteen for the thirsty comrade, without a sou. During the fight you should see her move amid the whistling hail of bullets, succouring the wounded—cheering on the brave.

MDE. L. Well, that is an occupation for which I have no fancy.

NIC. I have. I should doat upon it.

MDE. L. Not that I don't love the Army—every man in it—but I can't abide bullets.

LEG. Nor I—I don't mind a little smoke. (*puffs away*)

NIC. My life is passed in dangers. Here, amid the storms and avalanches of our Alps, I sleep in peace and security. I skip among the rocks and precipices as gaily as the goats I tend, and I quite warm towards Christine from what you say. I'm sure I shall love her dearly.

JER. So shall I.

MAU. (*listening*) I hear the wheels of her carriole. Here she is!

DOM. Comrades, I propose we give her a military reception.

ALL. By all means.

DOM. To your drums, then.

SOLDIERS raise themselves and present arms, R.; others roll the drums—CHRISTINE appears L.U.E., driving her picturesque carriole laden with kegs and baskets, and covered with a striped tarpaulin—The SOLDIERS shout “Long live Christine the Vivandière!”

CHRIS. (with military salute) Health to the brave Thirty-fifth!
(she descends)

DOM. (aside to JEROME) She was worth fighting for?

JER. She looks like a jolly wench.

CHRIS. And now, comrades, one civility calls for another. You have honoured me by a salute, and I must pay my welcome. Here's a spice of my quality to begin with. (taking little cups from her pocket)

ALL. Viva!

She fills from a keg slung from her shoulder, and gives them successively a drop of brandy.

DOM. (aside, having drunk) What a woman! And what brandy!

MAU. And what am I to have, Christine? Haven't you got a drop of comfort for me, too?

CHRIS. Comfort? Here are two comforts. (goes to the carriole, and lifting up the covering, shows two children asleep)

MAU. Don't disturb them, the darlings! Comrades, look at that boy, he'll make a famous Grenadier, won't he?

DOM. (aside) That woman will be too much for me. What eyes—what brandy—and what children! (aloud) Sergeant Maurice, before any harm comes, you must have your marriage confirmed. For our common safety, put us beyond temptation.

MAU. How's that? I have announced our marriage already.

DOM. That's true, by roll of drum—that ceremony binding as to the Thirty-second is nothing to the Thirty-fifth, till it has been solemnized again. Every fresh regiment must witness your marriage before it recognises it. Our comrades respect the conjugal tie, but they must see the knot tied, and I am here to officiate. Come, we are ready and willing. Attention, drums! The bride and bridegroom are before you. (points to a drummer, he rolls) There's the Beadle of the Parish, and here are Jerome, Nicotte, Legros and his wife, for our civil witnesses. So make ready—present—fire! (drum rolls)

MAU. (advances to her) Christine Gautier, I have the honour to ask your hand in marriage for Maurice Bellisle, Sergeant; sound in heart and limb; who promises to be a good husband, and a glorious father.

CHRIS. (giving her hand) Maurice, I have nothing more to promise, my heart is yours already.

DOM. You accept?

CHRIS. I do!

DOM. Is it agreed?

CHRIS. }
 and } Perfectly !
 MAUR. }

DOM. (on a chair) Advance, then, interesting couple. Ready, lads !

SOLDIERS *all make ready—Cannons heard.*

JER. Do you hear that ? It's the cannon.

DOM. That ! It is the church bell of my parish. I'm the priest for the nonce. You swear fidelity, constancy, and all other conjugal virtues ?

CHRIS. }
 and } For ever !
 MAUR. }

DOMINIQUE gives the signal, and the drums are beaten.

DOM. You have all seen and heard ? Maurice and Christine are man and wife ! (*drums again beaten*) Enough ! I proclaim you married, as far as this regiment is concerned. Another salute, boys !

Prolonged roll—DOMINIQUE descends and shakes hands with them—The cannonading has gradually increased—Musketry is now heard.

MAUR. The Austrians must have entered the wood. We shall have some hot work, boys.

JER. The wedding is over, and now the ball's beginning.

MAUR. Christine, get the children out of the way. Take them up to yonder village, the Austrians have slipped into the little wood below, and are close upon us. So farewell for the present.

They embrace, and the SOLDIERS rush off L.—The PEASANTS are flying in all directions—LEGROS and his wife have run into the inn—Cannonading.

CHRIS. Maurice is right ; the whistling of the bullets is distinctly audible amongst the trees. This road is open to the village above, so while there is time we must—

The top of the carriole is shot off, as if by a cannon ball, and shews the children within, who cry in terror.

CHRIS. My children ! Thank heaven, they are safe ! (*rushes to them, and lifts them out of the carriole, assisted by JEROME and NICOTTE*) They are untouched. All hope of reaching the village with the carriole is at an end. What's to be done ? Friends, shew me the way, and help me to—

A discharge of musketry is heard—She is struck, staggers, and falls into the arms of JEROME—NICOTTE goes to her.

—Save, save the children, good friends. I will follow. I am not much hurt. But my children—

NIC. They are safe—I will take care of them; I will go at once with them to Storbach, the village you see there. (*points to it*) Do you understand me? Storbach.

CHRIS. (*feeble pronounces the name of the village, and faints*)

JER. Poor thing—poor thing! she has swooned! Away, Nicotte—keep the children out of danger,—I will see to her.

NIC. Come, darlings, come with me—mamma will follow.

JER. Stay, Nicotte. You had better not take them to Storbach. The Austrians may get possession, and there will then be safety for neither man, woman, nor child.

NIC. That's true.

JER. Carry them to your hut among the mountains, till the danger is over. (*calls*) Here, Madame Legros!—Legros! Help—help—help!

Enter MADAME LEGROS.

MDE. L. What's the matter? Oh! poor woman—wounded!

JER. I fear—dead!

They bend over her—PEASANTS stop to look on—NICOTTE stands on the path above, as if conducting the Children to the hut—PEASANTS throng the back of the Scene, and look towards the supposed skirmish.—TABLEAU.

END OF CHAPTER THE FIRST.

CHAPTER II.

SCENE.—*Interior of MADAME LEGROS'S Inn—Large windows at back, through which is seen a view of the Alps—Snow falling—In front of window a staircase, ascending and descending, with panelled sides; one of which has a carved niche in it, where a small lamp is burning—A bed, with the curtains drawn, L.H.—A huge Swiss fireplace, R.H., with a table before it—Logs blazing.*

JEROME, BRIGARD, and LEGROS are seated near the fire, drinking and talking, “sotto voce.”—MADAME LEGROS is holding a lamp and looking through the curtains of the bed, on which CHRISTINE sleeps.

JER. And so you are determined to go?

BRIG. I want to get into France as soon as possible. (*aside*) To keep out of it as long as possible, I mean.

LEG. Well, now, how tastes differ! If I were to find myself in a comfortable inn like this, with plenty of wine, good and cheap, I should never leave it till the casks or my purse were empty. But you have no talent for drinking.

BRIG. I have pressing business in France. (*aside*) Business that pressed me to leave it.

LEG. So have I. I'm a Frenchman born, myself, and if I choose to go for it, I believe I've a small piece of land in Brittany belonging to me; but I hate moving and I hate business. What business is so good as drinking?

BRIG. Money-making.

LEG. Then you are rich?

BRIG. I should be if I had money.

LEG. Ah!

BRIG. If I had but a few thousand francs just for five minutes, I should be a millionaire in a month. Such a speculation, I've got in my head. Unhappily I haven't the money to carry it out. (*aside*) No, unfortunately, it was *found* out before I'd time to carry it out. (*aloud*) But, once in France, I shall doubtless be able to find it.

JER. Growing on the hedges like blackberries, I suppose?

BRIG. Perhaps.

MDE. L. (*quitting the bedside*) Now then, now then, Legres,—drinking instead of attending to business, as usual! What would become of you, if it were not for me? For that matter, what would become of all the men, if they hadn't wives to look after them? Come, come,—go and do up your horses for the night.

LEG. That's enough, that's enough,—I'm going! That clacking tongue of yours would drive Bacchus himself out of a vineyard! What a pity it is you have no appreciation of quiet and repose!

MDE. L. You're sorry that I'm not a sot like yourself, eh?

LEG. There, there—say no more,—I'm gone!

Exit down steps, R.C.

BRIG. And you think the roads are safe now—I may venture? (*aside*) There's no danger I care about on *this* side of the frontier.

MDE. L. I'll send one of the boys to ascertain. If the poor woman should awake meanwhile, Jerome and you will attend to her for me, won't you?

Exit down stairs.

BRIG. Is her wound healed?

JER. Quite. It was a mere nothing. The danger has been in the fever which followed it. Poor creature! the idea of being separated from her husband and children torments her so, that she cannot get well. Her head is light, and in her wanderings she talks of them incessantly.

CHRIS. (*behind the curtains*) Maurice, Maurice!

JER. She's awake. (*draws aside the curtains*) Are you better to-day?

CHRIS. (*raising herself, and looking round*) Where am I? And you—who are you?

JER. You're safe in Madame Legros' house; don't you remember me?

CHRIS. (*wandering*) Maurice—my children—where are they?

BRIG. Still unconscious.

JER. No, the fever has left her, she is trying to collect her scattered thoughts.

CHRIS. (*rising, and coming forward*) I'm very weak—and I feel here—(*touching her forehead*) a sort of cloud, that will not let me see clearly. Memory comes in glimpses, and then vanishes again, leaving all dark. (*in a whisper*) Am I mad?

JER. (*who has supported her to the chair by the fireplace*) No, no,—you have been ill, and are recovering—that is all.

CHRIS. But I can't remember; and yet, I feel there is something I ought to remember—something strange and terrible! I see before me the form of a woman, and now she vanishes!

JER. A woman! Oh! it is Madame Legros, who tended you during the fever.

CHRIS. Yes, I see her though obscurely: she is at my bedside, and holds a lamp in her hand. But why does she step so softly away? She goes noiselessly up the staircase, and the panel is open—is it gold she is hiding there? Yes—gold.

JER. (*aside*) She is still light-headed, poor thing!

BRIG. (*aside*) Gold! This may be dreaming, but it may be true. I should like to examine those panels.

CHRIS. Oh, my poor head!—how it throbs!

JER. I'll run and fetch Madame Legros.

Exit down stairs.

BRIG. It seems as if the snow fell less abundantly.

He goes up the staircase and pretends to look out of the window, but really examines the panel.

CHRIS. (*rising and walking about*) Now memory grows clearer. I was wounded—I remember that; men and women were rushing past me in terror—the noise of artillery was near—and a kind woman took my children to save them. Let me see—where was it she said she would take them to?

BRIG. (*coming down*) (*aside*) She must have been dreaming—none of the panels are moveable.

CHRIS. It was a village—Oh, memory! memory!

BRIG. What village?

CHRIS. Nicotte.

BRIG. The village of Nicotte?

CHRIS. No, no, it was Nicotte who took them from me to the village for safety.

BRIG. Oh! then you will soon find them again. What was the name of the village?

CHRIS. Its name?

BRIG. Yes. She told you that, I suppose?

CHRIS. Yes.

BRIG. And do you remember what it was?

CHRIS. No. (*sobs and falls into her chair*)

Enter MADAME LEGROS.

M.D.E. L. Now, M. Brigard, the road is tolerably safe, they say.

BRIG. Then I may be off at once. (*aside*) Not till I've examined those panels a little more closely, though.

MDE. L. Oh, how I envy you! Shall I ever see France again—my own dear France? But you mustn't pass by Storbach—the Austrians are there.

CHRIS. (*catching the name*) Storbach—that's it.

MDE. L. That's what?

CHRIS. The village Nicotte mentioned. And you say the Austrians are there? I must go, then—there's not a moment to be lost.

MDE. L. Go! why 'tis half-way up the mountain!—you mustn't dream of such a thing. Ha! what is this?

She rushes up the staircase—the flames are seen reddening the landscape.

—Mercy on me! The village is on fire!

CHRIS. On fire! Storbach on fire, do you say?

MDE. L. Aye, that it is, indeed!

CHRIS. And my poor children are there! Let me fly to them! Who will shew me the way?

MDE. L. The way where?

CHRIS. To Storbach.

MDE. L. To Storbach. Impossible!

CHRIS. (*to BRIGARD*) Oh, Sir, you must take me to that village.

BRIG. I? My dear creature, it's on fire, and the Austrians are there.

Enter JEROME, who overhears this.

CHRIS. (*passionately*) My children are there!

BRIG. Oh, it wouldn't suit me at all.

JER. They are not there, happily for them and you. I told Nicotte to take them to her hut high up in the mountain, and she has done so.

CHRIS. She has? Oh, joyous news? You will take me to the hut, will you not?

JER. Yes, by and bye.

CHRIS. Now.

JER. Impossible! You will never be able to get through the snow, on foot, too, and night set in. It would be madness.

CHRIS. It would be madness to me to remain here.

JER. Why, I wouldn't undertake it till the morning, no, not for a thousand francs. That is, yes, give me a thousand francs and I will conduct you. (*aside*) She can't do that, I'm sure. (*aloud*) No, no! wait patiently till to-morrow. Nicotte has sent me word they are safe, and as soon as day breaks, I say—

CHRIS. (*in thought*) A thousand francs! And I have nothing, nothing!

JER. Madame Legros, talk to her. Why, in her weak state, it would be the death of her. No, no! To-morrow, to-morrow!

Exit.

BRIG. Aye, aye! to-morrow will be more prudent, and so, good bye, my poor woman. Good bye, Madame Legros. If ever I come this way again, be assured I shall call and see you.

MDE. L. That's hearty. We shall meet again some day, I dare say. Good bye!

BRIGARD pretends to go out, but quickly returns and hides himself behind the bed curtains.

CHRIS. (*still in thought*) A thousand francs. Oh! what a mockery! And yet—(*suddenly*) Madame Legros, you heard him say, for a thousand francs he would conduct me to my children. You are rich, will you lend it to me?

MDE. L. I rich, my dear? I haven't a thousand francs to call my own, in the world.

CHRIS. Not so. You who have saved my life, will you refuse to save what is more to me than life? Lend it me, you shall be repaid. Indeed, indeed, you shall!

MDE. L. I would with all my heart; but I haven't it. Bless my soul! not half of it.

CHRIS. I swear to you by my husband's honour—the honour of a soldier—by the welfare of my children—that it shall be faithfully repaid. In pity give it me. (*kneels to her*)

MDE. L. My dear, I swear to you in return, that I haven't got the money. I am poor myself. Where should I find such a sum?

CHRIS. (*suddenly recollecting*) Ah! (*rushes up the stairs*) Here, behind this lamp, you have gold. I saw it. (*seizes the carving of the niche where the lamp is, and it turns round discovering a cupboard*)

MDE. L. (*in great agitation*) Hush, hush! Not a word of it for your life!

CHRIS. Ah! it is so, then?

BRIG. (*aside*) She was not dreaming, after all.

MDE. L. You have surprised my secret, I confess; but you must keep it locked in your own bosom. That gold is not mine. I have concealed it even from my husband, for I dare not trust him. It was confided to my keeping by a poor emigrant flying from proscription, and the deposit is sacred. He will one day come to claim it. To touch it, would be to commit a robbery. You will not betray me?

CHRIS. (*sobbing*) No hope, no hope!

Enter JEROME.

JER. Madame Legros, there is a traveller just alighted, who says he must speak with you—with you alone.

MDE. L. (*aside to CHRISTINE*) There, perhaps the very person come to claim it now. Had I yielded to your prayers, you see what might have been the consequence. Not a word of what you have seen, as you value my esteem.

Exit.

JER. (*is following*)

CHRIS. One moment, friend, for you have been one to me, indeed.

JER. Have been, and am. Try me.

CHRIS. If you have a spark of generosity, you will take me to my children at once. The gold you ask I cannot give.

JER. Gold, pooh! I didn't mean that, I only meant to express that it was impossible.

CHRIS. Not so, go I must.

JER. But it is high up in the mountain, and the snow must be impassable by this time.

CHRIS. We will pass it.

JER. And you are weak and ill.

CHRIS. My heart is ill, pining for those I love.

JER. Indeed you are not strong enough.

CHRIS. I am a mother. Oh, do not make objections, call it madness if you like, but if you do not wish me to brave this journey alone, go with me, for go I will.

JER. This sudden determination is very strange. However, since you are resolved—

CHRIS. The thousand francs shall one day be yours.

JER. Pshaw! do you think I want *money* to decide me? Come, I will be your guide.

CHRIS. Heaven bless you for it.

MUSIC—*They exeunt down stairs at back.*

BRIG. (*appearing*) Now, if the emigrant really has returned to claim his money, it strikes me that young woman's anxiety to get away from the inn will look suspicious. *I* shall stop, and pretend the roads are too dangerous. Legros asked me if money grew on the hedges. I never knew it sprout out of a stone wall before. However, its just as good in one place as the other. All depends upon the skill in finding it.

He goes up the staircase—The snow is falling rapidly—The flames are at their height—He opens the panel as the Curtain descends.

END OF CHAPTER THE SECOND.

CHAPTER III.

SCENE—*The Summit of the Alps—Moonlight—Snow falling—The gleams from the burning Village below, grow fainter and fainter—R.H. a small rough hut partly seen high up in the scene—In the middle distance two peaked rocks, with an abyss between them, over which a fragile bridge of trees is thrown, and from which a path ascends to the hut—From the other side the path, here and there hidden from view by rocks, descends towards the Village below—As the Curtain rises NICOTTE is discovered in the hut, with the two CHILDREN—A lamp burning.*

CHILD. Mamma, where is mamma?

NIC. She will soon come to you, darling. I have sent a messenger; but the snow is so thick, I daresay she will have to wait. You don't mind being up here with me, do you?

CHILD. No, I love you, but I want mamma.

NIC. Come out, and hear the echo.

CHILDREN. Oh, yes!

Nicotte takes them outside the door—She sings, echo answering the last notes.

ECHO SONG.

Echoes sound far away,
Where the chamois are leaping,
And the wild wind is sweeping
Through the valleys all day.

Hark! how the old rocks repeat all I say to the streams!
And they sing to my singing,
Back the melody flinging,
In wild echoes around me.

Like a voice in my dreams
In their magic they've bound me.

NIC. The wind gets fiercer, and how the snow falls. You must go in, dears. (*leads them in*) I hear the moaning of a wind that will loosen the avalanche, ere long. What is that?

A rustic horn heard—Echoes reverberate it.

—Surely that is Jerome! He is coming to see me, and will bring us news of mamma. Dear, dear Jerome! Why, what is this? She is with him.

Jerome appears R. 1 E., supporting Christine, who nearly drops with fatigue—they approach the bridge.

JER. Nicotte!

NIC. (*going to meet him*) Here I am.

JER. See, Christine! we have arrived! There is Nicotte's hut! A few yards more, and we shall be there.

CHRIS. Are they there? My children—are they safe?

NIC. Oh yes; and dying to see you!

CHRIS. Then I have strength for anything.

NIC. Make haste, make haste—there's not a moment to lose!

JER. We do make haste. But Christine is weak, and the walking here is not exactly that of a greensward.

NIC. I hear the threatening signals of an avalanche! I know too well that it is coming. Pray heaven you may have crossed the bridge before it falls!

CHRIS. Quick—quick!

JER. Not too fast, or you will fall. Lean on me, and we shall find succour by this path.

NIC. I hear it loosening—the avalanche! Save yourself behind that ledge of rock!

She rushes back to her hut—The avalanche descends R. and sweeps away the bridge, half covering the hut—JEROME and CHRISTINE are unhurt—NICOTTE and the CHILDREN are safe in the hut.

NIC. At least you are saved. Thank heaven, my children, for your deliverance! (*kneels with them in prayer*)

JER. Saved!

CHRIS. But they?

JER. They are safe too. See, the hut is still erect.

CHRIS. But can we not go to them?

JER. Alas! no—not yet; the bridge is swept away.

CHRIS. Lost—lost!

GENDARMES enter B. I E.

SERGEANT. Lost? Found, you mean! Escape is now impossible!

JER. What do you mean?

SER. We have come to arrest that woman.

JER. Arrest?—for what?

SER. For theft.

CHRIS. (*screams*) Theft?

JER. Impossible!

CHRIS. Oh, good friend, speak for me—I am indeed innocent!

SER. Innocent indeed!

CHRIS. Mercy—mercy!

TABLEAU.

END OF CHAPTER THE THIRD.

CHAPTER IV.

SCENE.—*Farm of MADAME LEGROS—Open country and distant high-road at the back seen through a large arch, with picturesque farming implements hanging about, &c.*

JEROME and NICOLAS discovered at a small table, counting money—LEGROS seated at another, MANETTE, a rough little country girl, waiting on him; she lights his pipe with a match, and holds a wine jug in her other hand.

LEG. Take care, Manette! What are you grinning at now?

MAN. I don't know.

LEG. No, of course not. You're always grinning, and you never know what at.

MAN. Well, I can't help it.

NIC. Let the girl alone. I like to see her grin—it does her good.

LEG. Yes; but she'll spill the wine.

MAN. No, I sha'n't.

LEG. You'll put out the light.

MAN. (*grins*)

LEG. There she goes again.

MAN. Well, I shall be sure to do one or the other, if you're not quiet.

LEG. Quiet? I'm always quiet.

JER. (*counting*) Twenty-seven.

NICOL. No—twenty-eight.

JER. I tell you it's twenty-seven.

NICOL. And I say twenty-eight.

JER. Nicolas, take care—you know I hate to be contradicted.

LEG. So do I.

NICOL. I can't help that,—I'm an honest man.

JER. Yes, an honest man who can't count.

NICOL. Do you mean to say I'm a cheat?

JER. I mean to say you're an ass.

NICOL. (*rising in a dignified manner*) Jerome, I'm hurt.

JER. (*with his long whip gives him a cut, which makes him caper*) Now you're hurt again.

MAN. (*grins and spills the wine*)

LEG. There—I knew you would.

MAN. Well, I must laugh at Nicolas, and so it's of no use talking. Besides, he likes to see me grin—don't you, Nicolas?

NIC. Manette, how dare you?

MAN. Why, you said so.

NIC. Yes, yes; so I do,—I like to see you grin, but not at me. I'm disgusted. It's a most remarkable thing, but no one seems to have any respect for me at all—no one understands me.

JER. And you understand nothing.

NIC. Jerome, it's all your fault—you're always humiliating me before company. I wouldn't mind a knock or two in private; but you lower me in the eyes of the world—you undervalue your friend.

JER. Go to the devil.

NICOL. (*aside*) Not before Manette. (*aloud*) Go yourself.

JER. What's that? (*knocks his hat off*)

Enter NICOTTE, R.C., who sees the blow given and bursts out with a loud laugh.

NICOL. Who's that? Nicotte, I'm ashamed of you! A pretty example you set in the house! Look there! (*he points to MANETTE, who is grinning from ear to ear*)

NIC. Come along, Manette—I want you to help me.

Exit, L.D.

LEG. No, I want her here to fill my pipe for me.

Enter MADAME LEGROS, c.

MDE. L. To do what? Well, upon my word! (*to MANETTE*) Get along with you, you idle baggage!—we shall have the Countess here in a moment, and her room not ready for her.

MAN. (*aside to LEGROS*) I will be back in a minute.

LEG. Bring another jug of wine.
MAN. I will.

Exit, L.
MDE. L. Come, Jerome, Nicolas—stir about and make yourselves tidy.

NICOL. Oh! don't bother me, aunt: I'm busy—I'd just begun again. Thirteen—fourteen—there! you've put me out with your chattering!

JER. Put you out! Why, you can't count at all.

NICOL. No more can you.

MDE. L. Chattering, indeed! I think I'd need chatter, with all the work thrown upon my shoulders, and yet scarcely allowed to call my own my own: and if I attempt to say a word I'm always stopped. (*to NICOLAS*) Will you get about your business? (*turns sharply round upon LEGROS*) You shall, at any rate. Put down that pipe directly, and disappear. There never was such a man! When I kept my inn he would do nothing but sit and drink the day through, and now, when—thanks to the generosity of the Countess—we have got this farm on our native soil he is worse than ever. I believe he thinks he's a nobleman born and bred.

LEG. I'm a king when I'm let alone.

MDE. L. That you shall never be, while I live.

LEG. I believe you, my love.

MDE. L. You shall hear the sound of my voice as long as I have a tongue left in my head. I will *not* be stopped! I'm resolved to bear it no longer—I *will* have my say!

LEG. As if you didn't!

NICOL. Will you be quiet? Thirty-five—thirty-six—

MDE. L. Haven't you done yet?

NICOL. There—you've put me out again! Oh, it's of no use—

JER. None whatever. I tell you you can't do it—you're too stupid.

NICOL. Well, I'm no worse than you, at any rate. A cattle-dealer who can't read! I'll tell you what it is, Jerome, we always squabble over accounts. Why don't you go to school, and learn to write and do sums?

JER. Why don't you?

NICOL. Oh, me, that's a different thing altogether. Besides, I did try, but I couldn't. I hadn't a genius for it. But you, so good a judge of cattle, and not able to write. *That* is why we squabble. I never squabble with other cattle dealers. But you're so quick with your fist.

JER. Well, Nicolas, if I *have* been hasty, I accept your apologies, and withdraw the blow. There! (*offers his hand*)

NICOL. There! Jerome, I like you; but you have a fatal facility in striking. You're like Nicotte. There is a girl, now. (*to the audience*) You must know I've a very distant cousin called Nicotte; that was her, you saw her just now; well, I actually persuaded my aunt Legros to take her into our house, instead of letting her keep goats on the mountain, and you'd think therefore she'd adore the very ground I walk on. (*in a rage*) But no, not at all. She doesn't adore it a bit. On the contrary, she always sides with Jerome, and drives me about as if I were a shuttlecock,

MDE. L. Nicotte, is a good girl, and knows how to keep you in order. It's the only way to treat the men, to snub them, and make them know their place. But come, will you go and get yourself ready to receive the Countess, or will you not?

NICOL. We must settle our accounts first; yet I don't know how its to be done, for Jerome is such a—(*to the audience*) You must know that Jerome is my partner, and I lend him the money to buy his cattle, so you'd naturally suppose that he at least, would pour blessings upon my head, and that I should lead him by the nose in everything. Not a bit, neither. Mine's the nose that's led, and instead of blessings on my head, he pours nothing but—It can't go on so, it must end. If we are to continue partners, some plan must be hit on to settle our accounts without dispute. Jerome, I don't want to rob you, and you don't want to rob me. Suppose we keep a clerk.

JER. To rob us both.

NICOL. Ah, I never thought of that. I have it. Marry a wife who knows—(*MADAME LEGROS begins to move table*) reading and writing.

JER. No, you.

NICOL. I'm too young. You're just old enough.

JER. To know better. I haven't lived thirty years in the world my own master to begin such a life as Legros there, leads. Look at him.

MADAME LEGROS has just taken away his glass and pipe, and removed the table, leaving him on his stool in the middle of the stage.

MDE. L. There, never say I don't let you alone again. (*carries them away*)

LEG. I might be worse off. (*puts his hands in his pockets and whistles*)

NICOL. What do you say, Jerome, shall we take a wife ?

JER. Between us ?

NICOL. No, no ! You or I. I don't care which.

JER. I do, so we'll say you. Besides, I don't know a soul here.

NICOL. Stop ! I do, a girl who has every virtue in the world, arithmetic included.

JER. Who's that ?

NIC. The Countess's protégée, Estelle.

JER. A child !

NICOL. Not at all, she's grown a woman now.

JER. True. She's sixteen, sure enough. How the time flies. Who'd think it was thirteen years ago since I and Nicotte saved her and her brother Amedee. Poor children ! the avalanche which separated them from their mother, separated them also from the knowledge of her arrest for the robbery.

MDE. L. (*who has re-entered*) I never can believe she committed it.

JER. Nor I ; though appearances certainly were suspicious enough to condemn her.

MDE. L. Poor thing, poor thing ! No means of finding out the

place of her imprisonment either. Legros and I went to the prison at Storbach in hopes of being allowed to see her; but there was no such person there, nor could they tell us where she had been removed. Do you know, Jerome, I often lie awake o' nights thinking of her, and blaming myself for my share in her accusation. It is true I took care of her children until the Countess, interested in their story, adopted them, and rewarded me with this farm, in my native village. Still I feel that I was the cause of her arrest, and if she *should* be innocent—

JER. I have always had a misgiving about that fidgetty traveller.

MDE. L. What, Jean Brigard? Well, so have I, yet you know he was with us all the time, and it was she who so suddenly left the inn, on such a night too?

JER. But wasn't I with her all the time? How could she have got rid of the money?

MDE. L. As I think over all the circumstances, the image of Brigard always appears to me as that of the robber.

LEG. He said he preferred money to drinking, I've never forgotten that. It looked ill.

MDE. L. If ever I set eyes on him I'll know the truth of it, or my name's not Jeanne Legros. In the meantime (*to LEGROS*) troop! If you don't go, we must carry you. Here, Nicotte, Manette! come and help me to move this monster of mine.

LEG. Do! I should like it. 'Twould save me the trouble of moving.

JER. Nicolas, you're right, the more I think of it, the more I like it. Estelle is a good girl, and well educated, and her brother Amedee is at College. The Countess is too fond of her not to give a comfortable dowry with her. She'd make a charming little clerk. Nicolas, consider yourself married.

NICOL. Thank you, I'm in no hurry to put myself in a woman's power; but, as you say she'd make a charming little clerk, marry her yourself.

JER. I'll tell you what we'll do, we'll draw lots for her. What do you say?

NICOL. Agreed! Here are two straws, and whoever draws the shortest wins.

JER. Here goes, then. Fortune, do thy best—I'm generally lucky, I warn you, so beware. Ha, Nicolas!

NICOL. What's the matter?

JER. You're cheating.

NICOL. I?

JER. Yes—you pushed one towards me.

NICOL. I didn't.

JER. You did.

NICOL. It's false!

JER. False! (*offers to strike him—NICOLAS retreats*)

NICOL. There—you're beginning again.

NICOTTE enters and pushes NICOLAS violently on one side.

NIC. What are you about, Sir?—worrying Jerome as usual. I won't have him worried. How d'ye do, Mons. Jerome?—glad to

see you Mons. Jerome. (*comes close to him and holds up her face*)

JER. (*kissing her*) Thank you, my little wench, heartily.

NICOL. Look at that now—I worry Jerome, do I? That's good. He does nothing but humiliate me all day long, actually beats me, and then you tell me *I* worry *him*, and go and kiss him into the bargain.

NIC. What's that you say?—I go and kiss *him*? Attack my morals! You'd better take care—I won't have my morality attacked. Did I come and kiss you, Monsieur Jerome?

JER. Certainly not—it was I who kissed you. Look here, Nicolas, this was the way. (*kisses her*)

NICOL. I know the way, I know the way—you needn't shew me again.

NIC. Then why did you attack my morality?

NICOL. (*stopping his ears*) There, there, that'll do—I haven't hurt your morality. And, now, what does your morality want here?

NIC. I've come to have my writing-lesson: Estelle will be here directly to give it me on this table. I'm learning to write, Jerome. Look, I'm already in pot-hooks—ain't they beauties? (*shews him her paper*) (*aside*) He's always talking about clever women—my pot-hooks may put an idea into his head.

JER. They do look bold and handsome, that's certain. Nicolas, suppose we make Nicotte choose the straws for us, then it must be all fair. What do you say?

NICOL. With all my heart. Come, Nicotte, choose for Jerome.

NIC. With pleasure. But what's it for?

NICOL. Never you mind—choose.

NIC. Oh, I hope I shall win for you.

NICOL. No favouritism.

NIC. I think this will win. (*puts forth her hand and suddenly draws it back*) Oh no! I don't like the looks of that one. Oh! do tell me—what are you playing for?

NICOL. Something of great importance.

NIC. I tremble! Oh, if I should make him lose! Let me see—that—no, the other. Dear me! how tantalizing! I wonder which is the shortest.

NICOL. Come, come—no favouritism—which do you draw?

NIC. This for Jerome! (*draws the long one*)

JER. Ha! I have lost! Go and be hanged! you have made me lose.

NIC. (*crying*) It wasn't my fault, indeed—indeed, I tried to win for you—it was his ugly face flurried me. What was it you were playing for?

JER. What!—why, I'll tell you what—

MDE. L. (*entering*) Hush! here is the Countess—and, as I expected, none of you ready to receive her.

LEG. I shall do very well as I am.

MDE. L. Indeed you won't—I'll tie you up in a clean neckcloth if I die for it!

LEG. Oh dear! the vanity of these women! I'm sure I look very well as I am.

MDE. L. Go along to the pump. (*pushes him off, R.C.*)

JER. Well, I sha'n't be long, for I've nothing to change. Never

mind, Nicotte, you couldn't help it. You're a good girl, and shall be one of my bridesmaids.

He has been petting her as they go off—At the word "Bridesmaid" she suddenly stops.

NIC. Your bridesmaid! Oh! you don't mean to say you have any thoughts of *that*! Oh! Oh! Oh! I wouldn't have cared if it had been Nicolas.

NICOL. Thank you—don't mind me.

She goes out sobbing, JEROME comforting her—NICOLAS follows.

MDE. L. That Nicotte is in love with Jerome. I can see it. Nothing escapes *my* eyes. No, not even the young Count Alfred's secret courting of Estelle, his mother's protégée. He may throw dust in the eyes of his parent, but he can't deceive Jeanne Legros. I should like to catch the man who could.

Enter COUNTESS DE MIRECOUR, L.C.

COUNT. Now, my good Madame Legros, I am come to hear what this terrible secret is which requires my presence.

MDE. L. The Countess de Mirecour needs not be assured of my gratitude, nor of the anxiety with which all that can affect her fills me.

COUNT. (L.) I do not doubt your grateful affection.

MDE. L. Thank you for saying so. You must also know enough of me to know that I am no mischief maker. So, to go right to the heart of the business, what do you propose to do with your protégée, Estelle?

COUNT. Estelle! I have given her and her brother the education to fit them for any station; but beyond that, I have not as yet determined.

MDE. L. Would you desire her to be your daughter-in-law?

COUNT. (*horrified*) What do you say?

MDE. L. Oh, I am frankness itself. I go straight to the point. It is because I believe you do *not* intend her to marry your son, that I, who have watched the Count Alfred's attentions to her, have begged your presence here, before it is too late.

COUNT. Can I believe you?

MDE. L. This much, at any rate, is clear—M. Alfred loves your protégée. Now, of two things, one—he intends to marry her.

COUNT. Impossible!

MDE. L. Or he intends to make her his mistress. Will you allow him to disgrace himself?

COUNT. No, no, no!

MDE. L. Will you allow him to degrade *her*?

COUNT. No, no, no! Oh, you have done well to warn me.

MDE. L. At all events, he will be here in a few minutes, to pay his daily visit. Step in awhile, and wait for him, and then you will be able to judge for yourself. Your room is quite prepared, and I will give you due notice of his approach.

Exit L.

Enter NICOTTE, in great grief, R.D.

NIC. Oh, oh ! why was I born ? Why was I a girl ? I should have been so much happier as a boy, and shouldn't then have cared for this ungrateful, cruel, horrid, darling Jerome ? To think of his going to be married ! What business has he to marry ? What does he want with a wife ? I'm sure she isn't good enough for him, whoever she is, forward minx ! And I to go and draw the longest straw, too. Would that my hand had been chopped off, before I did it.

Enter MANETTE in a great hurry, L.

MAN. (L.) Nicotte—Nicotte !

NIC. Well, what's the matter ?

MAN. (grinning) Nothing.

NIC. Nothing ? Then what do you rush in for in that stupid manner ?

MAN. Stupid ? I'm not stupid ! Only, Lolotte says that the cream will all turn if you don't come.

NIC. Let it turn !

MAN. And the cakes will all burn.

NIC. Let 'em burn !

MAN. Yes, but Madame le Comtesse's lunch will all be spoiled.

NIC. Let it all be spoiled—let everything be spoiled,—I don't care ! Throw it all into the fire—and yourself after it, if you like—only let me alone !

MAN. Oh, my gracious, what a humour she's in ! I don't care—I'll go and tell Lolotte, and see how she likes it.

DUO—NICOTTE and MANETTE.

NIC. Oh, cruel fate ! thus to sever
Hopes long cherish'd in this heart
And bid them all so soon depart !
Alas ! my chance is gone for ever ;
Ne'er will Jerome, so good, so clever,
Think of me—no, never !

MAN. Come along, I say, now ;
Lolotte won't wait, and so that's flat. } Repeated
NIC. Get along, I say, now ; } as
For I won't budge, so tell her that. } Duett.

MANETTE goes off R.C., but returns and says "That's flat!"
and then exit, running, C.

NICOLAS heard without, calling NICOTTE.

NIC. There's the other now ! Oh yes, I daresay indeed ! As if I was going to attend on him, when my feelings are in this state !

Enter NICOLAS, in shirt sleeves, R.

NICOL. (speaking as he enters) Nicotte, where have you put my best jacket—the beauty ?

NIC. (l.) I gave it to Jerome. It wasn't a beauty,—it's not half good enough for him.

NICOL. (r.) No—nothing is, of course. That's pleasant! And my worked cravat?

NIC. (*crying*) I tied it round—his neck.

NICOL. (*getting angry*) The devil you did! And my shoes with the silver buckles?

NIC. (*crying*) They were better than his, so I gave them to him.

NICOL. Well, I never! You would give everything to that Jerome!

NIC. (*still crying*) Everything—and a great deal more, if he asked!

NICOL. And I, ma'amselle,—what am I to wear?

NIC. Your slippers, if you like. What do I care?

NICOL. Let me tell you—

NIC. (*stampin*g with impatience) Don't bother me! Don't you see I'm not in the humour?

NICOL. Nicotte, you forget you're an orphan, and that I stand in the position of father and mother to you. You owe everything to me.

NIC. You're a very bad substitute for either father or mother. You ought to make me happy, and I am mi-mi-miserable! (*bursts into loud crying*)

NICOL. But how can I help it? You have it all your own way with me.

NIC. (*stampin*g) But I don't want to have it all my own way! That doesn't make me happy.

NICOL. If that is the case, I'll soon settle it. (*aside*) The girl's in love with me all the time, and I haven't suspected it. (*aloud*) There, now you're happy. (*attempts to kiss her*)

NIC. (*smacks his face*) How dare you!

Enter JEROME, C.

JER. Ah, there's one of the right sort.

NICOL. My eyes strike fire! She has blinded me completely! Whoever you are, I take you to witness—Oh, it's you, Jerome! You saw what she did. Now, I ask you how you would behave if you were me?

JER. (l.) I'll tell you what I'd do. When a woman attacks your cheek, attack hers, so. (*kisses her*) It's very simple, and not at all unpleasant.

NIC. Not at all. Oh, what a duck of a man he is!

NICOL. (r. astonished) There, she doesn't smack your face. (*aside*) I see how it is, she's like a cat, and shews her affection by—(*imitates the spitting and striking of a cat*)

JER. But where have you been, Nicolas? For the last ten minutes I have been scampering over the village in search of you.

NICOL. In my new shoes and silver buckles, thank you.

JER. Oh, they are your shoes, are they? I thought they were rather clumsy.

NIC. His foot's so clumsy.

NICOL. You needn't split them, if they are. They are mine. Nicotte took the liberty—

JER. (*chucking her under the chin*) It was you, was it? Good girl.

NIC. What an amiable disposition.

NICOL. Well, so is mine an amiable disposition, when everything's done to please me.

JER. You shall dance at the ball.

NIC. No, I won't.

JER. Yes, you will. (*takes her by the hand and begins dancing—She at first unwilling, but finally yielding, and dancing gaily—*

NICOL. Mind my shoes! Jerome, be tender with my shoes. Stop, stop! Not so much enthusiasm, you'll split them. (*JEROME and NICOTTE dance off*).

Enter MADAME LEGROS, L.

MDE. L. Hoity, toity! here's a pretty piece of work, for shame.

NICOL. Stop him, he's wearing out my new shoes with the silver buckles.

MDE. L. You go and put on your coat, if the Countess should see you in that state.

NICOL. That's true.

He runs off R.D.

MDE. L. This love, this love! what a fuss it does make in the world! Somebody is always loving somebody who loves somebody else—a perfect game of catch-me-who-catch-me-can. Ha! here comes Estelle, and the young Count following her, of course. Now to acquaint the Countess.

Exit L. 3 E

Enter ESTELLE C. from L., followed by ALFRED.

EST. (R., *with her handkerchief to her eyes*) You are angry with me, and yet wonder at my tears. You were never angry before you went to Paris.

ALF. (L.) And since my return why have I been so? Because you have avoided me—have been cold and distant to me—in short, have been unlike the Estelle you once were.

EST. You had not then told me of your love.

ALF. And is it that which offends you?

EST. The Count de Mirecour cannot really love the poor Estelle. His rank and birth forbid it.

ALF. No, Estelle, they do nothing of the kind. No one shall dare to interfere between my love and me.

EST. Yes, there is one whom both you and I must bend to—your mother.

ALF. (*starts*)

EST. She, whose kind heart sheltered the poor orphan, must not have that heart wounded by her whom she has honoured by her protection.

ALF. But, dearest Estelle, you mistake my mother. She is so indulgent that she would do anything my happiness desired.

EST. I know how indulgent she is; but I also know how firmly she holds by those distinctions of birth, which the Revolution has made even dearer than before. Oh, Alfred, if you really love me,

you will cease this clandestine pursuit—you will go at once to your mother, and tell her all.

ALF. I will, and feel assured of her consent.

EST. No, you do *not* feel assured, or you would not have concealed your love from her.

ALF. At any rate I feel assured of myself. The love which has grown up with my youth, nothing can root from my heart. Even were my mother herself to oppose it, I would say—

The Countess enters during the latter part of this dialogue and advances c.

COUNT. What? What would Alfred Count de Mirecour say to his mother?

ALF. (*is confused*)

EST. (R., *kneels at her feet*) Oh, Madam, forgive me!

COUNT. (C. *raising her*) It is not you my child who needs forgiveness. Alfred, I have heard all.

ALF. (L.) Since you know my secret, know my passion—know that my life is bound up in it—will you withhold your consent?

COUNT. Before I consent, I must know that your passion is a passion; not the caprice of a boy.

ALF. You doubt me?

COUNT. You are young and inexperienced. To secure your happiness I demand of you implicit obedience.

ALF. Command! in all things I will obey you.

COUNT. I do not say that I consent to your marriage with Estelle, I only say come back a twelvemonth hence and ask me.

ALF. (*kissing her hand*) My dearest mother!

COUNT. But for this you must depart at once. Go back to Paris, see the world, and, after that, come to your mother for her consent.

ALF. (*overjoyed, crossing to c.*) Did I not tell you so, Estelle? Oh, Madam! you have made me mad with joy.

COUNT. You accept the conditions?

ALF. Joyfully.

COUNT. Then say farewell, this instant.

ALF. To-day?

COUNT. At once.

ALF. (*taking ESTELLE by the hand*) The year will be a long one, dearest—long, but not weary; for I shall count each day, and count it as each mile is counted by the eager traveller riding to his home. Farewell! we part to-day, and when we meet again 'twill be to part no more!

Exit, c. and L.

EST. (*turning to Countess*) Oh! how can I ever be grateful enough to you! All seems so strange, it is as if fever had made me light-headed—I cannot believe that what I hear is true.

COUNT. (*sternly*) It is not true.

EST. (R., *starting*) Not true?

COUNT. (L.) Estelle, I believe I know your heart. I heard you say that you would endure anything rather than wound me—I will now put you to the proof. Alfred can never be your husband.

EST. (*sobbing*) Alas! I knew it.

COUNT. Not because you are of humble birth—for my son's happiness I place higher than my pride—but there is something I place higher than his happiness—his honour.

EST. You are right! you are right!

COUNT. Let me tell you why he cannot marry you. Alfred has been betrothed, ever since his childhood, to the daughter of the Comte de Ranville; he is in exile and in poverty: to break the engagement now, would therefore be doubly dishonourable.

EST. (*sobbing*) My heart told me I did wrong to listen to him.

COUNT. I have formed my plan. While Alfred is away we must find some worthy husband for you.

EST. For me. Oh, no, I can never marry.

COUNT. Yes, Estelle, you must. As long as you are unmarried, I shall have to fear his headstrong vehemence; if once you are lost to him for ever, he will return to his duty. Therefore, I ask this sacrifice of you; will you refuse it me?

EST. (*after a struggle, throws herself into the arms of the Countess*) Do with me as you will.

COUNT. Good girl! let me press you to my heart. In this one moment, you more than repay all I have done for you.

EST. (*agitated*) Let it be at once. Now, while I am strong, and duty masters impulse, in pity decide for me, and I will obey blindly.

Enter MANETTE, c. from R., and curtseys to the Countess.

COUNT. Well, my good girl.

MAN. Madame la Comtesse!

COUNT. Well, what have you to tell me?

MAN. Please, Madame la Comtesse, it isn't me—

COUNT. It isn't you?

MAN. No, its Monsieur Jerome, the cattle dealer, and Nicolas, who want to speak to Madame le Comtesse, saving her presence.

COUN. (*aside*) Jerome—at such a moment—and yet, perhaps—(*struck by a sudden idea*) Let him come in.

MAN. Yes, Madame la Comtesse.

Exit c. and r.

COUN. Estelle, go into the next room, dear, and wait for me. I may perhaps, wish to speak with you again.

ESTELLE *kisses her hand, and exit l.d.*

—Jerome! The man of all others. Though rough in manner, he is an honest, upright, trustworthy fellow, with a good heart, and steady principles. I could not make a better choice.

Enter JEROME and NICOLAS c. from R.—JEROME carries his whip.

JER. Now then, you speak first, and I'll chime in.

NICOL. (L.) Trust to me. You shall see how I'll do it. You don't know how eloquent I can be upon occasion.

JER. (C.) At it, then.

NICOL. (*with exaggerated bows*) Um, um ! Madame la Comtesse—we, that is, I—or indeed, both of us, for that matter—

JER. (*giving him a cut with the whip*) Is that the way you do it ? Stand out of the way. I beg your ladyship's pardon, but the matter which brings us here is very simple. You have educated Ma'amselle Estelle, who is known all over these parts for her virtues and her arithmetic ; so it seemed natural to us that you should desire to get her comfortably established. Now, as I've had the misfortune to draw the longest straw—I mean, as I'm well to do in the world, sound in limb, and don't owe a sou—if no one has anticipated me, I should be delighted if you would give her to me—for—for a wife—and I've come to ask her hand.

NICOL. (*quickly*) Yes, her hand ; we are particular about having that—(*aside*) with a pen stuck in it.

JER. (*without turning round, flips NICOLAS with his whip*)

COUNT. (R., *delighted*) You love Estelle, then ?

JER. Well, I can't say that exactly.

NICOL. No, we can't say that.

JER. (*cuts him as before*) But, as it were, she has been dear to me for years. I saved her life when a child, and I don't think she has forgotten me.

COUNT. I know she has not. But can you afford to keep her in comfort ? Estelle has had the education of a lady, and—

NICOL. Oh yes ! we're tolerably off in the world—that is, I am ; and he makes use of—

JER. (*flips him as before*)

COUNT. Estelle has nothing.

NICOL. Nothing ?

JER. Nothing ? Well, no matter—I have plenty.

NICOL. He has plenty—that is to say, I have plenty, and—

JER. (*threatens him*)

COUNT. And you will marry her without a sou ?

JER. I will. Let her make me a good wife—I ask no more.

COUNT. No, Jerome ; your disinterested conduct merits reward. I will give Estelle a portion. Tell me frankly, what did you expect with her ?

JER. Oh, Madame la Comtesse, it is not for me to say how much.

NICOL. (*nudging him*) No, Madame la Comtesse, it is not for us to say. (*aside to him*) Say how much. Never mind—say how much.

COUNT. Nay, I insist.

JER. Oh ! well, if you insist—

NICOL. You hear, Madame la Comtesse insists.

JER. Well, I certainly thought, then—that is, I hoped that—(*aside*) I say, Nicolas, how much shall I say I hoped for?—four or five ?—eh ?

NICOL. (*aside*) Not enough—not half enough.

JER. (*aside*) Oh ! five's plenty.

NICOL. (*aside*) It's too little, I tell you.

JER. (*aside*) It's quite enough—be quiet ! (*cuts him with whip*)

COUNT. Well, Jerome ?

JER. Well, Madame la Comtesse, since you insist—I thought that

if we had about five or six hundred francs, just to buy cattle to begin with—what with that and a little credit, we might manage to—

NICOL. Yes, we might manage to rough it—just to rough it.

COUNT. I understand ; and since your views are so disinterested with regard to my darling Estelle, if she gives her consent, you may count upon mine.

NICOL. (*rubs his hands and nudges JEROME, who flips him again*)

COUNT. Make her happy, and rely on my protection. I will fetch her at once ; and remember, the portion I give with her will be fifteen hundred francs.

Exit L. 3 E.

JER. Fifteen hundred francs. Oh, its too much, far too much. (*following her*)

NICOL. Not a bit, not a bit ; its just what I had reckoned on. Don't be a fool. She'd have given you twenty if you'd stuck out for it.

JER. Fifteen hundred francs ! I begin to think marriage isn't such a bad thing after all.

Enter NICOTTE, c. from R.

NIC. Marriage, marriage ! You seem to talk of nothing else, Monsieur Jerome.

JER. Well, Nicotte, that's generally the way, when one takes a wife for the first time, I believe. And to think that I owe all this good fortune to you.

NIC. To me ?

JER. Yes, when you lost for me this morning.

NIC. What, the long straw that I chose for you ?

JER. Presented me with a wife, and a handsome portion.

NIC. (*aside*) Oh, dear, oh, dear ! To think I should have given him away with my own hand without knowing it.

NICOL. Yes, yes ! that's all very well to say ; but don't forget in your hurry, that it was I who put the idea into your head.

NIC. You did ? (*aside*) Just like him. I shall hate him worse than ever. (*aloud*) And who is to be your wife after all ? For nobody seems to think it necessary to tell me that.

JER. What, haven't I told you ? Why, Estelle, of course.

NIC. Estelle ! (*aside*) Not if I can help it ; and I think I can help it, too, or I am much mistaken. (*aloud*) Hush, here she comes with the Countess. (*aside*) There's not a minute to be lost.

Exit c. and L

Enter COUNTESS, with ESTELLE, L. 3 E.

COUNT. (*aside to her*) And since you own your gratitude is due to him, and that you have long loved and respected him as a brother, rely on it your own happiness, as well as that of others, will be ultimately secured by the alliance.

JER. Estelle, I have no fine speeches to offer you. I'm an honest man, and will make you a good husband. Will you have me ?

EST. Jerome, I am honoured by the proposal you have made me.

I know your good heart. I know your honourable principles. When a child, you saved my life. That life cannot be better devoted, than to secure your happiness; and since it is your wish, and that of my dear benefactress, that I should become your wife, there is my hand.

COUNT. (L.) You accept him?

EST. I do. (*aside*) The sacrifice is accomplished, my happiness is gone for ever.

COUNT. Then, the contract shall be signed this very evening, and to-morrow the wedding. (*aside*) Estelle, my child, your devotion will some day be requited.

Enter NICOTTE, c. from L., bringing in ALFRED—At the sight of him ESTELLE and the COUNTESS start.

NIC. (*announces*) The Count Alfred de Mirecour! (*aside*) He was just mounting his horse when I stopped him. If he doesn't prevent Jerome's marriage, now, I'm no judge at all.

Exit.

COUNT. (*indignant*) Alfred! I thought you had departed.

ALF. I was on the point of setting out, when I heard that Estelle was about to be married.

JER. And Monsieur le Comte will honour us by signing the wedding contract?

ALF. (*vehemently*) That contract I will tear in shreds! You are surprised! Are you, then, ignorant of my love for Estelle—of her love for me?

COUNT. Alfred, my son!

ALF. You have deceived me. Estelle loves me, and shall be mine.

COUNT. Alfred, have you forgotten all that is due to me—to your mother? Estelle is about to marry the man of her choice,—do you hear me?—her choice.

ALF. I'll not believe it! (*crossing to her*) Tell me, Estelle, that they are forcing you to this. Trust in me. I will protect you against them. Speak!

EST. (L., *struggling*) They—do—not—force me!

ALF. What! Can you say that this marriage is your act? Silent? You cannot say it!

EST. I have said—this marriage—is with my free consent.

ALF. (*stupified*) She avows it! Oh, my poor brain! (*takes her aside, and places a ring on her finger*) There is some mystery you dare not now confess; but remember, in the hour of trial, Alfred will be ready to fly to you. Send me this ring, and, wherever I may be, it shall bring me to your side.

COUNT. (*to JEROME*) Jerome, be not surprised at this. I will explain everything to you.

JER. Countess de Mirecour, I want no one to explain to me my course. The only explanation I consent to receive is from my wife. Leave us together.

COUNT. Be it so. Come, Alfred. (*aside to ESTELLE*) Be firm one moment, and all is saved.

Exeunt all but JEROME and ESTELLE.

JER. (*brusquely*) Now we are alone. So, the Countess with her soft speeches, and you, with your quiet modest looks—you wanted to make a fool of me!

EST. (*hurt*) Oh, Jerome!

JER. Don't look hurt! I'm blunt, but I speak plainly what others are not ashamed to do hypocritically. What made you consent to be my wife? Speak! To betray me? Yes! you know it! To make *me* your tool,—the man who saved your life!

EST. Jerome, Jerome, I cannot bear this accusation—from you, least of all. I never, never wronged you, even in thought!

JER. Do you not love the Count?

EST. I do—I did; but I should not have deceived you. It was not my love you asked. You did not yourself profess to love me. I was dear to you for the sake of the past. Before signing the contract, I should have said to you what I say now—Jerome, my heart is given to the son of my benefactress,—'twas given even in childhood; but I cannot be his. (*sobbing*) You asked me to be your wife; and you would have found in me one who, in place of love, had respect, confidence, and old affection,—one who would never have made you blush for her, nor have brought dishonour upon your name. Do you believe me, Jerome?

JER. (*whose rage has gradually disappeared*) I do, you are incapable of wrong. Forgive my impetuous temper if for a moment I suspected you. But why did you consent to be my wife at all?—there was no necessity.

EST. There was—the Countess, my benefactress, exacted it;—it was the only way to make Alfred cease to—to—love me.

JER. Poor girl! (*walks up and down meditating, then suddenly stops and looks fixedly at her*) Estelle, you know me well. I have told you I believed you. Have you confidence in me?

EST. Perfect.

JER. Thank you for that. Now listen. No one here knows to what part of the country I belong. As a cattle-dealer I frequent all the fairs and villages; but in Normandy lives my dear old mother, who loves me as only a mother can love. For her sake I have refused hitherto to marry at all. Come with me to her—she will welcome you as a daughter—there the Count will never hear of you, and there you may learn to forget him. Will you come?

EST. Anywhere—to fly from him.

JER. I'll go at once, then, and prepare the carriole; and, as soon as you hear the evening bell, slip away and join me at the bottom of the road. Be careful not to drop a word to any one.

EST. (*absorbed in thought*) At the evening bell—so soon!

JER. Well, Estelle, what do you say?

EST. I will be there.

Exit JEROME, c. and L.

—Yes, he is right. I will fly at once—I will not risk another meeting with Alfred. (*sees ALFRED enter*) Ha!

Enter ALFRED, followed by the COUNTESS, d.l. 3 e.

ALF. Alone!

EST. (*starts*)

ALF. Nay, Estelle, be not alarmed; I ask but one thing more—delay your marriage, yet a little while.

COUNT. Not a day!

ALF. I implore you, by the love that—

The BELL is heard—ESTELLE starts.

COUNT. Leave us, Estelle—you see he will not listen to reason.

ESTELLE goes up to the COUNTESS, kisses her hand, holds out her hand to ALFRED, who kisses it passionately, and exclaiming “ Farewell!” rushes out c.

COUNT. Nay, Alfred, let me conjure you to return to Paris.

ALF. Madam, I will not leave this spot till Estelle has promised to delay her marriage.

Enter NICOLAS in great glee, MANETTE following, c.

NICOL. Here, Madame la Comtesse, Estelle, Jerome, Nicotte—all of you—here’s such an arrival!—we’ll make you open your eyes! This way, Sir—this way, Colonel. Where’s Nicotte? Manette, run and fetch her directly.

MAN. (*stands grinning*) Yes, that I will. Oh, my gracious!

NICOL. Well, then, don’t stand grinning there, but go.

MAN. Ah, that I will. Oh, good gracious!

NICOL. Get out! (*pushes her off, c.*) This way, Sir—this way, Colonel. Madame Legros! Where are you?

Enter MADAME LEGROS and LEGROS, l.c.—MAURICE, now a COLONEL, c.—DOMINIQUE, following.

NICOL. There, Madame la Comtesse, who do you think that is? Why, Colonel Maurice, the father of Amedée and Estelle.

ALL. Maurice!

MAU. Even so, Madame. Sergeant Maurice that was, now Colonel Maurice, and Count de Valrire, who comes to thank you in person, and with all his heart, for the inestimable service you have rendered him. (*takes her hand and kisses it*) After a vain search of thirteen years, chance at last directed me hither, and I come to claim my children, and pour out my gratitude to you for their preservation.

ALF. Oh, Sir, how shall I testify my joy?

MAU. Ah! I cannot be mistaken. Amedée, my boy, come to your father’s heart.

COUNT. No, Colonel, this is my son. Allow me to introduce Count Alfred de Mirecour.

MAU. Bless me, pray excuse me, the voice of nature seemed to—

DOM. (*aside*) I say, Colonel, the voice of nature was out for once.

COUNT. Your son is at College, where his progress is enough to make any parent proud.

MAU. At College! Ah, we’ll soon have him out of that. How I long to hug the dear fellow. And Estelle, my little Estelle, where is she?

NIC. (*calling outside*) Nicolas, Nicolas ! Come, quick ! Run !

NICOL. What's the matter now ? (*to MANETTE, who enters, C.*
Has anything happened ?

MAN. (*grinning*) Yes, something's happened.

NICOL. Come along.

Exit, C.

COUNT. Colonel, it is there your gratitude is really due. To that good creature do you owe the recovery of your children. That kind soul brought them up with a mother's care, and I have merely assisted in the good work.

MAU. Indeed ! (*rushes to LEGROS, and shakes him vehemently by the hand*) You're a noble fellow, and—

MDE. L. (*pushes LEGROS away*) Nonsense ! Ha, ha, ha ! I can't help laughing, but whether its with joy at your return, or the idea of my stupid husband's being a noble fellow, I don't know ; but laugh I must. Yes, Colonel, I do feel proud of what I've done, and so it's no use mincing the matter. It wasn't my husband who reared them with a mother's care, it was I, Jeanne Legros ;—and I don't mind saying I'm ready to be congratulated.

MAU. You're a jolly old soul. Come to my arms ! (*embraces her*)

DOM. And to mine. (*embraces her*)

MAU. But where is my girl—why doesn't she come ?

Enter NICOTTE, c. from R., blubbering.

NIC. Oh, oh, oh ! I shall cry my eyes out. Oh, Madame la Comtesse—

MAU. Ah, 'tis she ! This time I cannot be deceived. Come to my arms—(*embracing her*) my own Estelle !

NIC. I, your Estelle, indeed ! No such luck.

MDE. L. Ha, ha, ha ! Why, that's my Nicotte.

MAU. Confound it, wrong again !

DOM. (*aside*) I say, Colonel, if you go on following the voice of nature in this way, we shall have you kissing all the pretty girls in the village.

MAU. Hold your tongue, you rascal ! But where is my child, then ?

NIC. (*crying*) Gone !

ALL. (*except the Countess*) Gone !

MDE. L. Where ?

NIC. Gone away with Jerome, to be married. To think of his marrying her after all the trouble I've taken to prevent him.

ALF. With Jerome !

NIC. I saw them get into the carriage, and drive away, and she was crying, tears of joy. The happy, artful, deceitful little minx !

Enter NICOLAS, C.

NICOL. (R.) Yes, did you ever hear of such a thing ? He has carried her off, and my new shoes into the bargain. Its abominable, its a breach of trust. I ran after them ever so far, but the carriage went so fast, I couldn't overtake it.

ALF. (L.) Estelle ! Impossible ! I'll not believe it.

NIC. Oh, yes, you will. See, here's a letter—(*crossing to L.C.*) she left for Madame la Comtesse. (*aside*) What a fool a girl is who gets fond of a man!

MAU. Estelle, my little Estelle, married, do you say? Married already! Do you hear that, Dominique?

DOM. Yes, that's the voice of nature, if you like.

MAU. (*opens letter—reads*) Madam, I have yielded to your wishes, and your son is restored to you. Since my marriage to another is the sacrifice you exact in return for your bounty, you shall not find Estelle ungrateful. She exchanges her happiness for yours, and bids you farewell for ever!" Gone! and for ever?

ALF. And no word—no regret for me. What perfidy! How have I been deceived! But she is not lost yet. Oh, Sir! come with me; in a few minutes our horses will be saddled, and we will overtake them.

NIC. Oh, do, Sir, if you please; don't let her marry Jerome?

MAU. Come then, at once.

NICOL. Its too late. Look, look! yonder they go.

The carriage is seen on a hill in the distance.

ALF. Lost, lost!

COUNT. My son.

ALF. Madame, you have no son. Your cruelty has robbed me of her I love alone on earth. You have broken my heart.

COUNT. Alfred!

ALF. All is over. Your triumph is complete. You have driven Estelle from her home, and that act has lost to you your son. Farewell!

COUNT. Alfred, hear me!

ALF. Farewell! you will never see me more?

Exit c. and l.

The Countess faints—The rest group round her.

END OF CHAPTER THE FOURTH.

CHAPTER V.

SCENE.—*A picturesque rural site on the borders of the sea, which lies spread out below—It is a spot in the grounds of a Chateau, one wing of which, with steps and an awning, is seen L.H.—A small trellised arbour, with table and seats, R.H.*

PEASANTS in their holiday clothes are grouped, lying on the ground, with grapes, &c., feasting, NICOTTE, LEGROS and MADAME LEGROS among them—In the arbour JEROME and NICOLAS are in deep talk—MUSIC.

JER. (*continuing his conversation as the MUSIC ceases*) And so it is; strange as it may seem, it is as I have said. Now, having told

you all, I needn't caution you against revealing this secret to any one—mind, not to *any one*.

NICOL. Not a whisper. I suppose you don't include Nicotte!

JER. Tell your wife! What are you thinking of? It's my belief secrets never ooze out but through the lips of wives.

NICOL. I'm dumb!

MDE. L. Now then, Nicolas, have you done your talking? Oh, when men get together how they *do* talk!

JER. (*coming out of the arbour with NICOLAS*) We have nearly finished our business now.

MDE. L. Ah, and perhaps you will tell us why, after five years, you have sent for your old friends at last, who find you now rich as a prince and owner of this fine chateau. Not that I blame you for *that*—the chateau is charming—but I suppose you had something else in your head, besides letting us see it.

NIC. I am all curiosity to hear. I do so rejoice in your fortune, Jerome.

JER. Thank ye, Nicotte! You were always a dear little thing.

MDE. L. And terrible fond of you, Jerome.

JER. Aye, so she was, I do believe.

NICOL. Wasn't she! Ah, Jerome, if you had seen how she cried her eyes out when you went away to be married! The life she led me for a month afterwards, is scarcely worth alluding to. However, by dint of perpetual teasing, she began at last to think of me.

NIC. Yes, and completed your misery by marrying you, Nicholas, eh? I couldn't bear the idea of anybody teasing him but myself, you know.

JER. Well, ever since we parted, Estelle and I have lived with my dear old mother. The dowry I received with my wife, I made a fortune with, by lucky speculations, and having so made it, I thought it right she should enjoy it; so, hearing that my old patroness, the Countess de Mirecour, was dead, and her chateau confiscated, I determined to purchase it for Estelle; and here we came. We had some difficulty in finding her brother Amedée, who had left his college, and was running over France, after us, with his father. But after a long game of hide-and-seek, we all met at last, and made up a charming family-picture, to adorn our chateau with.

MDE. L. Is the Colonel here, then?

JER. With his son, and his old comrade, Dominique. You remember Dominique, Nicotte, who wanted to carry you off from under my nose, hundreds of years ago? He's considerably battered since then; but the old soldier has a faithful heart, and the Colonel makes him still his comrade. You will see them both presently. In the mean time I must have five minutes more with Nicolas, and then we've done.

MDE. L. There, there, finish your whispering. Come along, Nicotte, and lets see what's become of my lively companion.

Exeunt L. 2 E.

JER. And now, Nicholas, there is something more I have to tell you. The other day as we were driving on the sands, a gentleman on horseback cantered past us; and, as he passed, looked into the

carriage. It was Alfred de Mirecour! Estelle saw him. I know she did, by her sudden illness, but I do not think he saw her, for he neither turned his head, nor gave any sign of recognition.

NIC. What then?

JER. Don't you guess? Alfred de Mirecour is poor, very poor, and it was with his mother's money that I made my fortune.

NIC. Oh, oh? I think I see now—of course, (*aside*) I don't see anything.

JER. I must return him the dowry I received with Estelle—return it, and with interest;—but as he would not accept it from me, I am anxious to get it to him through some other channel.

NIC. (*aside*) What an idea! Now, that would never have entered my head. (*aloud*) And that channel is your humble servant!

JER. Precisely—you were one of his mother's tenants. We must invent some excuse. Come with me into the house, and we'll settle how its to be done.

As they go towards the steps of the Chateau, JEROME sees a glove on the ground, picks it up, and gives it to NICOLAS.

—Your glove.

NIC. Mine—that's good—as if I wore them. I've got a pair of bearskins for the winter, but in the summer I hate 'em.

JER. Whose is it then? Amedee's, I suppose. Come, I follow you!

Exeunt into Chateau, L. 2 E.

Enter AMEDEE and DOMINIQUE, L.U.E.

DOM. There, it was from that terrace he jumped; and you see how he has trodden down the flower beds—which, considering he is a gardener, must have been the most painful part of his fall. Poor fellow! he didn't know that Madame Leverd's maid was gone, and so, I suppose, he paid his usual moonlight visit.

AME. Dominique, are you sure it was the man you say?

DOM. There's no one else who comes courting her, that I know of.

AME. (R.) But are you sure it was my sister's maid he came to see?

DOM. (L.) Well, to be frank with you, I had my doubts at first; for, to let you into a secret, I don't think your sister lives on the best terms with her husband.

AME. Dominique!

DOM. Oh! I don't mean any harm;—but, you see, he is almost old enough to be her father.

AME. What then? It was a match of inclination on both sides, and they seem very fond of each other.

DOM. So, at first, when I saw a man jump from that terrace, close y Madame Leverd's window, thinks I to myself, now there is some handsome young dog who——

AME. Dominique, remember, you are speaking of my sister.

DOM. Don't fly out. I said, at first; but on reconsideration I saw

my doubt was absurd. Madeleine's room was next to hers; and I know the gardener has more than once been to pay her a visit there.

AME. Oh, yes; the adventure is simple enough, and no doubt remains about it. And now to execute my father's commission. The Colonel has learned that one of the long-lost registries of his regiment has just been found, and he thinks it may contain information respecting a poor Vivandière, about whose fate he appears painfully anxious.

DOM. Christine?

AME. Exactly. You remember her?

DOM. Remember her! (*aside*) My poor Colonel still hoping!

Enter JEROME, L. 2 E.

JER. Ha, ha, ha! capital! Ah, Amedée, your glove. (*offers it*)

AME. It's not mine.

JER. No? (*affecting indifference*) It's Nicolas's, I suppose. But have you heard of the adventure? Pray, Monsieur Dominique, why wasn't I to be told of this midnight Lovelace, who, finding his Clarissa gone, leaped headlong from the terrace in a fit of despair—this romantic gardener? (*aside, savagely*) A gardener in white kid gloves.

DOM. I was just telling Monsieur Amedée of it. Do look at the state of the flower-beds! But here's a visitor. Oh, it's Monsieur de Beausire. (*goes up and talks with NICOTTE*)

Enter HECTOR DE BEAUSIRE, L.U.E.

AME. My dear Hector! Well, what news?

HEC. (c.) About my sister? Don't be in a hurry—I'm coming to that presently. But first, I must tell you such a delicious bit of scandal: it's just hot out of the oven, and it won't be good cold. Only imagine! I have just been visiting an old college chum, found him languishing on a sofa with a sprained wrist—the most delightful thing in the world!

JER. (R.) What—a sprained wrist?

HEC. No—the story—how he came by it, you know. He had met with an old flame of his—finds her married to a man twice as old as herself. Well, my friend is a devilish good-looking fellow—something in my style, d'ye see?—so he sends her a letter, of course, just as you might do, begging for an interview, and—sly dog!—proposes it shall be by moonlight. By way of answer what does she send him but a ring he had given her in former times—a magic ring which was to bring him to her side be he where he might. Well, no sooner does he get to the place of rendezvous than he is discovered by one of the household, and forced to jump for his life—saved his neck, but sprained his wrist.

JER. Ha, ha, ha! capital—capital! very droll indeed! (*aside*) This babbling fool has made suspicion certainty. Alfred *has* seen her.

AME. (*aside*) Jerome's blindness is incomprehensible. Oh! if I can but discover—

JER. And the old fool of a husband knows nothing, then—eh?

HEC. Nothing. That's the joke. Husbands never do, you know. They are bats, owls, blind as beetles. And this one was no exception to the general rule, it appears.

JER. Ha, ha ! Serve him right, it is his own fault if he is old and a husband. No man in his senses would be either.

HEC. And now, Amedée, about my sister. I have good news for you my boy. I hope shortly for the honour of calling you brother-in-law. Come, let that suffice you for the present. When I have had my little diplomatic chat with the Colonel, your father, perhaps I may disclose more.

AME. I am now on his business, which must not be longer delayed. On my return I hope to hear from you that all is settled. Till then, farewell !

Exit, L.

HEC. But where is the Colonel ? I must speak to him at once.

DOM. No, no ! he is coming this way, but you can't see him. Now, pray defer it for a short time. (*to the PEASANTS, off L. 3 E.*) Now then, attention, make ready !

All the PEASANTS enter, L.U.E. and R.

HEC. What, is there a fête going on here, then ?

DOM. Hush, he is coming !

Enter COLONEL MAURICE, R. 3 E., the PEASANTS, L. 3 E., with MADAM^E LEGROS, NICOLAS, NICOTTE, and range themselves to meet him with their bouquets.

MAU. Heyday, heyday, friends ! What does this mean ?

DOM. A fête in honour of my Colonel's birthday.

MAU. Friends, the old soldier was never eloquent, but his heart thanks you.

DOM. Now then, lasses, to your places.

MUSIC.—Ballet and Pas Breton.

MAU. Thanks, thanks again, my pretty wenches ! Egad ! I should like to be among you.

HEC. And now, most noble Colonel, may I ask for five minutes ?

MAU. The brother of so pretty a sister as Marguerite, Hector, must always be welcome to the father of so devoted a young gentleman as my boy Amedée appears to be.

HEC. You know, then ?

MAU. That my boy's in for it in that quarter. Do you think we old soldiers don't know the symptoms ?

HEC. I'll warrant you do, Colonel. You have been a devil among the women, confess it. You have been a victim to the soft passion.

MAU. (*mournfully*) Young man, pray do not touch that trembling chord in the old man's heart. I cannot speak lightly of it. Nay, nay, I'm not offended with you, you did not know that the mother of my children, my first and only love, was torn from these arms.

DOM. (*sends off PEASANTS*)

HEC. Is she then dead ?

MAU. I know not. She has long been lost to me.

HEC. Colonel, since we have ventured on this delicate topic, let me confess that I was about to broach the subject myself. You must

know that Amedée has commissioned me to ask for him the hand of my sister. Now, the Baron de Farroll, my step-father, you must also know, is, I may say, ridiculously punctilious on the matter of family; but though he has his prejudices, he is ever indulgent and kind to Marguerite. I am the bearer of a letter to you from him, which may almost be called his consent; but you will see there one condition, that he be made acquainted with the name of Amedée's mother

MAU. Does he expect that the wife of ex-Sergeant Maurice was a grand duchess.

HEC. Not at all. He is too well aware that, in our day, Marshals of the Empire have risen from the ranks. But as there is a mystery hanging over her—forgive me if I am indiscreet—he desires that at least her reputation should prove unequivocal. Excuse me, she *was* your wife?

MAU. (R.) In the face of heaven she was.

HEC. (L.) I understand.

MAU. No, you do not understand. We were married by roll of drum. I need not tell you that we only waited the time when the priest could bless our union; but alas! before that time arrived, the tumult of war separated us, and I was forced to follow my regiment, ignorant of her fate. Since then, I have sought in vain for her everywhere, and know not even whether she be alive or dead.

HEC. I fear indeed this will raise a new and very serious obstacle. The idea of introducing into the family a woman who, perhaps, may be unworthy to—

MAU. Unworthy? Not so.

HEC. At all events, Amedée has been much to blame in concealing this fact from me

MAU. No, Hector—I am alone to blame. Amedée is himself ignorant of it. I could not—I dared not—entrust him with a secret which might have led him to disrespect his mother's memory. He must never know it.

HEC. Bless my soul! What with one punctilio and another, I don't see how we are ever to meet. I think you and my respected step-father had better fight it out together. There is his letter,—read it at your leisure; and if I can be of any service, command me. (*aside*) I might as well try to reconcile fire and water. I give it up!

Exit.

DOM. (*at back*) Now, my good friends, away with you, and joy go with you.

The Peasants disperse and shake hands with Nicotte and Madame Legros, who enter the house—The sun is setting—Maurice has seated himself with the letter in his hand, which he glances over, and then falls into a reverie.

MAU. Oh, Christine, Christine!—had we not been so cruelly separated, this humiliation had been spared me, and Amedée's happiness would have been without alloy!

During this speech, Christine has appeared at a distance, L.—She is pale and wayworn, and can scarcely support herself.

DOM. The Colonel seems occupied,—I won't disturb him. (*as he is going out, he perceives CHRISTINE*) Eh! who is this? My good woman, you have missed the path. The road to the left will lead you to the high-road.

CHRIS. Nay, forgive my intrusion; but I wanted to know if Colonel Maurice, who lives here—

DOM. Eh! that voice! I cannot be deceived.

CHRIS. Is the same who once was Sergeant in the Thirty-second Regiment?

DOM. It is, it must be! Colonel, Colonel! Yes, there he is to speak for himself.

CHRIS. (*seeing him*) Maurice!

MAU. Who is that? Christine! Is it a dream? (*she rushes into his arms*)

CHRIS. (*sobbing with joy*) Oh, press me, press me closer to your heart. It is no dream. Maurice, have I found you at last—at last! It is you, is it not? This, at least is true. (*sobs hysterically on his shoulder*)

MAU. My dear, dear, Christine! At the very moment I was thinking of you. See, Dominique, see, old comrade, here is Christine found at last.

CHRIS. Maurice—but you forgive me—you are no longer Maurice, you are now the Count de Valrire.

MAU. (R.) Pshaw! Maurice, plain Maurice. Unchanged, Christine, unchanged!

CHRIS. (L.) And the children?

MAU. Well! Oh, you will be so proud of them!

CHRIS. If you knew the yearning of this poor heart. Severed from them for so many years, I have pined and pined for the sound of their glad voices, and the light of their dear eyes, to soothe me amidst my sorrows and my sufferings. For, oh, Maurice I have suffered!

MAU. But where, where have you lain concealed? I have sought for you in every corner of France, in vain; not a sign, not a word. Eighteen years, and not even a word.

CHRIS. I could not. I have been—No, no, no! I cannot tell you yet; by-and-bye, when I have more strength. At present, I am too weak, long suffering, followed by this great joy, is too much for me.

MAU. My poor Christine. (*places her on a chair, R.C.*) And see, here comes our boy.

CHRIS. (*brightening up at the word*) Amedée! Oh, shall I then clasp him once more to my heart!

MAU. Yes, Christine, and to show you that you have been ever present in my thoughts, he has been this very day, at my request, occupied in a fresh inquiry respecting you.

CHRIS. Indeed!

MAU. (*agitated*) Hector with him! Christine, you must leave me, now; and yet, no, that perhaps will be too much to expect of you; but promise me to remain silent in your son's presence; do not speak to him, do not let him know you are his mother while his friend is there.

CHRIS. (*reproachfully*) Oh, Maurice, what is this?

MAU. You shall know afterwards. Here they are. Remember, Amedée's happiness depends on your silence.

Enter AMEDEE and HECTOR, L.U.E.

AME. I have executed your commission, Sir. But I see you are engaged—(*about to withdraw*)

CHRIS. (*aside*) Maurice, tell him to stay, I will be firm, but let me feast my eyes upon him.

MAU. Nay, Amedee, you may speak on—this is no stranger.

CHRIS. Why not tell him at once?

MAU. (*aside to her*) No, you shall tell him yourself, by-and-bye—not yet.

HEC. Shall I retire?

MAU. No, no—remain where you are young man; you may, perhaps, be interested in the result of my son's enquiry. Well, Amedee, the commission I gave you.

AME. I have executed, and bring you the result. The registry is in existence. I have seen it, and read the report you were so anxious for, touching the Vivandiere Christine.

At this CHRISTINE, who has been looking at AMEDEE with ecstasy, trembles violently, staggers back overcome, and leans against the table.

CHRIS. Heavens, what do I hear?

MAU. You see I did not deceive you—you were our last thought.
(*to AMEDEE*) Well?

AME. Here is the extract I have made. It forms part of the registry of the year seventeen hundred and ninety seven. "Christine Gautier, Vivandière of the Thirty-second, convicted of theft, and condemned at Storbach to imprisonment for life."

MAU. It is false! It cannot be! You have read some other name.

AME. No. I am quite correct.

MAU. (*covers his face with his hands*)

CHRIS. (*aside to MAURICE*) Maurice, I must speak to you at once—alone. (*aside*) My son himself proclaims my shame.

HEC. (*aside to AMEDEE*) Who was this Christine?

AME. (*drawing him aside, and walking up with him*) Hush—don't say a word. An old acquaintance, perhaps, of days gone by! Come along!

HEC. Mum!—that's enough. I never intrude if I can help it. I hate sentiment, and I can't keep secrets.

They retire.

MAU. (*approaching CHRISTINE*) Christine—oh, tell me you are innocent!

CHRIS. I am!

MAU. And you can prove it?

CHRIS. No.

MAU. Was that sentence pronounced?

CHRIS. In open Court.

MAU. But you are not still within its power ?

CHRIS. (*sobbing*) I am.

MAU. Miserable woman ! How can you avow yourself then to your children ?

CHRIS. I cannot till my innocence is proved.

MAU. And you have hopes ?

CHRIS. The hand which favoured my escape must have been that of one who either committed the crime himself, or at least was witness of my innocence. One day, my gaoler, who had been gained over, placed in my hand a scrap of paper, containing these words : " You are free—fly ; but be careful to conceal your name, or justice will overtake you." This paper was unsigned. After so many years, buried in a dungeon, in a strange country, far away from family and friends, who could have known even of my existence, but one who could attest my innocence.

MAU. But have you no other clue ?

CHRIS. Yes, this postscript :—" Seek Monsieur Delacour, the notary, near the Quai St. Malo."

MAU. Delacour ? I know him well,—he is my agent,—an honest man. And have you seen him ?

CHRIS. No, not yet. My first thought, on regaining my liberty, was to hasten to Storbach. There I learnt that my children had been taken away by the innkeeper and his wife, years before, no one knew where. Heart-broken, I then directed my steps hither in search of M. Delacour, when by chance, at the little tavern where I took up my abode this morning, the name of Colonel Maurice met my ear. " Maurice," I cried, " formerly Sergeant in the Thirty-second ?" " The same," they answered, " now Count de Valrire." Concealing my emotion, and forgetting all else, I sought you here without delay.

MAU. But you must see Delacour, at once—at once. Hush ! (*aside*) Christine, you must leave us—you must indeed.

CHRIS. Leave you ?

MAU. Let me know through Dominique where I may find you, but leave us now.

AMEDEE and HECTOR have gone to meet JEROME, who enters from the house with ESTELLE.

JER. Colonel, a carriage has just driven into the court-yard, and the servant enquires for the Count de Valrire.

MAU. Indeed ? Ah ha ! It doubtless brings the visitor I expect, —one to whose family I am under the deepest obligation.

EST. Then, my dear father, we cannot fail to love him.

CHRIS. (*aside*) Father ? (*springs up, and keeps her eyes fixed on ESTELLE through the following scene*)

MAU. It is an old friend of yours, Estelle.

CHRIS. (*aside*) Estelle ?

EST. Of mine ?

MAU. Aye, and one you little dream of seeing—one who, burying the past in oblivion, seeks only the friendship of his mother's former protégée.

SERVANT announces "The Count Alfred de Mirecour."

ALFRED enters L.; his arm is in a sling—ESTELLE is greatly troubled—JEROME bites his lip.

ALF. My dear Colonel, I am delighted to see you! (*bows to the others, familiarly to HECTOR, and gravely to JEROME & ESTELLE shakes hands with AMEDEE*) It is indeed an age since we met, and since I last had the honour of seeing Monsieur and Madame Leverd.

HECTOR laughs, nudges AMEDEE and JEROME, and points to ALFRED'S arm in the sling; they are both astounded.

HEC. My dear Alfred, what is the matter with your arm?

ALF. Oh, a mere sprain. I tripped over my carpet this morning—a mere nothing.

HEC. (*aside*) Oh! that's all. (*winks at JEROME and AMEDEE*)

ALF. (*frowns at him*)

HEC. (*aside to AMEDEE*) How well he does it!

JER. (*with affected cordiality*) I'm glad it has not deprived us of the pleasure of your company to-day. You come from Paris, I presume. I'm an odd man and ask strange questions. We have not met for five years, and the first enquiry I make is—who's your glover?

ALF. My glover! Wennzel—the glover to the Court. Why?

JER. You shall know some day. (*looks at the glove he had picked up*) Wennzel is the name of mine, also. Meantime, may we hope for the pleasure of your company at the ball I give?—we shall do our best to brighten it with beauty.

AME. (*aside to ALFRED, with suppressed rage*) If you are a man of honour you will refuse.

EST. (*aside to him*) Accept—I have so much to say to you.

ALF. (*bewildered between the two*) A ball?

AME. Perhaps the Count is engaged.

ALF. I had, indeed, an engagement; but it will not prevent my availing myself of your kindness. I accept.

AME. (*aside to him*) Then, Sir, I know my course.

ALF. (*aside, haughtily*) I do not understand you.

AME. You soon will.

JER. But come, the sun is setting and the air is getting chill. Shall we go in?

EST. Yes, let us go at once.

ALFRED offers her his arm—She curtseys and takes that of JEROME—They all move towards the house.

MAU. Remember, Christine, Amedée's happiness depends on your silence.

CHRISTINE watches them in agony as they go up the steps.

CHRIS. I will—I will be silent, though it stifle me; but I have not promised to be blind. I must see my children, and watch over them. Oh, Maurice! to have been withheld from their caresses all these years, and now to see them near me, yet not one little kiss, one single word of love! My heart will break!

MUSIC heard in the distance, and illuminated boats appear upon the water—A CHORUS is heard faintly in the distance.
—See yonder, all those happy beings returning to their peaceful homes, while the poor outcast, once as blythe as they, now weeps alone, disowned, spurned from her husband's door.

MUSIC grows fainter in the distance—The boats pass across and the Curtain drops.

END OF CHAPTER THE FIFTH.

CHAPTER VI.

SCENE.—*An Ante-room elegantly furnished, adjoining a Ball Room, which is concealed by columns and velvet curtains.*

Enter DOMINIQUE, showing MADAME LEGROS, NICOTTE, and LEGROS, the rooms.

DOM. There! Behind that curtain is the ball room; but that I shall keep to the last. What do you say to the saloons you have come through?

LEG. I say—

MDE. L. Nothing! As if you could have anything to say, that any one would care to hear.

NIC. (*clapping her hands*) It's quite a fairy palace!

LEG. I don't say it isn't; but, for my part, I think the kitchen fire, and a glass of good brandy, worth all these kickshaws put together.

MDE. L. I thought as much, just like you! I don't know what made me bring you with me, except to keep you out of harm's way.

LEG. I'm sure I'm never out of harm's way when I'm with you.

NIC. (*looking round*) Oh, how lovely! I feel like Cinderella, and I shouldn't be surprised a bit if my Nicolas were to turn out to be a grand prince, after all. By-the-bye, where is he?

DOM. He has been away all day, on business for the Colonel.

NIC. And to think of this belonging to Jerome.

MDE. L. Yes, Nicotte; and to think if you had married him, you would have been mistress of it all.

NIC. Lor, should I? But of course I should; and instead of it, I've only got Nicolas. What a difference.

DOM. But you should see the rooms when filled with the fine folks. To-day's the fête of Saint Louis, and there's to be no end of grand people.

NIC. And we are to be among the number, that is, we are to be allowed to peep through the curtains.

DOM. Yes, that's a promise.

NIC. Oh, what a treat it will be!

LEG. Will there be any drinking?

DOM. Plenty!

LEG. Then I say with Nicotte—what a treat it will be!

MDE. L. Sot, you have no soul!

LEG. Yes I have, for drinking.

NIC. Well, I hope Nicolas will be back in time for the fun. He's to have a peep too, you know.

Enter NICOLAS, L. fashionably dressed.

NICOL. No, he isn't. Nicolas scorns to peep! Nicolas is going to be one of the fine folks himself, and dance at the ball.

NIC. Stop! Let me look. Is it really Nicolas, and dizzened out in that way?

MDE. L. Bless the lad! Why, he has taken leave of his senses.

NICOL. Has he? Wait till you see me dance, that's all. You may peep through the curtains at me, good folks, and take a lesson.

NIC. This is what has kept you so long, then?

NICOL. Exactly. I should have been here sooner, only I couldn't get any gloves big enough—and when I did, I couldn't get my hands into them—they wanted a deal of coaxing.

NIC. Coaxing? I should think so! What a figure of fun! You one of the fine folks? You dance at the ball? Oh, I shall die with laughing!

NICOL. Nicotte, you are forgetting the respect you owe your husband.

NIC. Respect, indeed! No, there's an end of that. I never saw such a nondescript!

LEG. Why, I think it will be my turn next. I must get a fashionable suit, and then I shall look like—

MDE. L. An idiot, as you are. Don't let me catch you at it, that's all!

LEG. My dear, I won't let you catch me at all, if I can help it.

Enter MAURICE L.D.

MAU. Well, friends, come to pass in review all the gay preparations, eh? I am only a looker-on, like yourselves. I've done with dancing long ago, and I'm no longer a fit ornament for a ball-room

DOM. Come, let us finish our round, or we shall have the company here before we've done.

Shows them off R.D., but, on a signal from MAURICE, remains himself behind.

—Do you want me, Colonel?

MAU. Yes, Dominique. Now, listen;—when the company is all assembled, you and I will slip away to see Christine. You must show me where to find her lodging. We were to have gone to her yesterday, and the day before. There seems to be some spell at work to prevent me. As for you, one would fancy you were keeping

me away on purpose—you have always some pretext or other for deferring the visit.

DOM. (*aside*) That's exactly what I am endeavouring to do.

MAU. I cannot remain longer without communicating with her. She has submitted in silence to my commands, contented with the news you have daily taken of the health of her children; but I must see her herself—

DOM. (*aside*) How shall I tell him?

MAU. We will surprise her to night.

DOM. That's bad, Colonel. She mayn't be at home, you know. Indeed, it's very likely she won't—I may say, certain.

MAU. Then I'll wait there till she is.

DOM. (*aside*) The deuce he will! What shall I do? I must find some excuse.

Enter ESTELLE, R.

EST. My dear father, is it true you are not going to be present at the ball?

MAU. Me, my child? you cannot want an old fellow like me among you. You wouldn't have me dance, surely?

EST. No, not dance, but I would have you present. I have a particular reason for wishing it, and you know, my dear father, you can refuse me nothing. His Majesty has accorded the Cross of St. Louis.

MAU. The Cross to me—with my known attachment for the Emperor?

EST. (*caressingly*) And your known services to your country. I am so proud!—and I must have you wear it to-night, that all the guests may share my delight. You will gratify my wish—won't you? Come, come, Louise shall bring it you at once.

MAU. Louise?

EST. My maid. You haven't seen her yet. You'll have a pleasing surprise there, I hope, for she is the widow of one of your old comrades. I took her on Dominique's recommendation, and because I thought it would please you.

DOM. (*makes signs to her which she does not perceive*)

MAU. Indeed! Louise—Louise who? But I shall see, I suppose, all in good time. Well, well, as you please, my dear child, send her to me—and if you will have me among you, why, stay I must.

DOM. Oh lord, oh lord! what shall I do now?

Exit R.

SERVANT announces "The Baron de Favrolle."

Enter HECTOR, BRIGARD as the BARON, and MARGUERITE, L.D.

HEC. May we come in?

EST. Ha, Monsieur Hector! come in—come in, I beg. My dear Marguerite!

MAU. Come in, my good friends.

HEC. We must apologize for coming so early, but we thought we might catch the Colonel and have five minutes' chat before the commencement of the ball. Allow me to introduce to you my step-father, the Baron de Favrolle—Marguerite you know already.

MAU. (*bows to him*) Delighted to see you, Baron; Marguerite, dear. (*kisses her forehead*) Baron, here is my daughter—(*presenting ESTELLE*) soon, I trust, to be yours also.

MAR. Dear Estelle! shall I then call you my sister at last?

BRIG. (*stiffly*) Mademoiselle!

EST. I shall, indeed, be proud, Sir, of the honour. But do not let us interrupt you. We shall meet again in the ball room. Till then, farewell! Come, Marguerite, you and I will go together. (*crossing R.*)

HEC. Nay, take me with you—I won't be left behind. I've nothing to do with family matters, and I hate everything in the shape of business.

EST. Then give me your arm, and we'll make a tour through the rooms, and see that everything is in order.

HEC. Delighted! That's an occupation quite in my way. Allow me! (*he offers his arm and takes them out R.D. 3 E.*)

MAU. Baron, I am indeed flattered by this visit.

BRIG. Not at all, Colonel. It has not been made without mature deliberation. Hector has of course acquainted you with my scruples, and my perhaps foolish pride of birth. I cannot help the weakness. Bred in the old school, I cannot shake off early prejudices in a moment. Still, any sacrifice compatible with honour, I am willing to make, to ensure the happiness of my beloved Marguerite. Indeed, I am anxious to hurry over all preliminaries, Colonel, while I am still alive, and equal to the task. My state of health is so precarious.

MAU. Nay, do not—

BRIG. I cannot conceal from myself the fact. There is no immediate danger; but all is not right here, Colonel (*touches his breast*) and one is never certain at what moment the blow may smite. I am told a sudden shock would do it. And as in this life we are all exposed to sudden shocks, I wish as far as possible to leave nothing undetermined, which my death might influence. But let us drop this melancholy topic. I have no right to intrude my sufferings upon others. Your son Amedée is an excellent young man, and will make Marguerite happy.

MAU. Aye, that he will, I will answer for him.

BRIG. Enough! We need say no more. At a more convenient moment we will go to figures.

MAU. Oh, that part of the business I leave to my agent, M. Delacour.

BRIG. M. Delacour, your agent?

MAU. Do you know him?

BRIG. Not I! I thought I heard the name before, that's all. Meantime, the alliance is concluded. Colonel, there is my hand. I will now seek Hector and Marguerite, and announce the happy termination of our interview.

MAU. Allow me—

BRIG. Nay, nay, I shall find them.

As he goes off, R. he encounters CHRISTINE, entering with the cross in her hand—She does not notice him in her anxiety to see how MAURICE will receive her—He recognises her with terror.

—(aside) Christine, here! That woman a servant in this house. Delacour, too, the Colonel's agent. I'm lost! But, pshaw! this terror is idle. Delacour has never seen me but in my disguise—(presses his hand upon his heart, as in pain) knows me only as Brigard. Nor could this woman recognise after so many years, and in the Baron de Favrolle, the traveller she met in former times. I need fear nothing after all.

Exit R. 3 E.

CHRIS. Colonel, by my mistress's orders I have brought you the Cross of Saint Louis.

MAU. (starting) Christine here? Is it possible?

CHRIS. Hush! not a word! (*looks round to see that no one is near*) Be careful, or you will betray me.

MAU. What imprudence!

CHRIS. Maurice, forgive me! I could not live away from you—from my children. My courage failed me. For four days I have been installed here near my Estelle. I will not betray myself,—indeed I will not! Are you angry, Maurice?

MAU. Angry, dearest, angry? No, but troubled to see you here, a servant, under the same roof with me—to be perpetually in my presence, and yet disowned.

CHRIS. Oh! let me remain so till the day arrives when I can boldly raise my head, and declare myself your wife—their mother!

MAU. Have you seen Monsieur Delacour, who so mysteriously furnished you with money?

CHRIS. I have—but he is a stranger, and from him I could gain nothing. All he said was, that he had followed his instructions—sent me money—and told me, if I would live far away in some foreign land, under another name, I should be secure from pursuit. Instead of the proof of my innocence, he offered me charity.

MAU. There is a clue there, at all events. This mystery hides villainy. I will unmask it. But hush! we must be prudent. Here is Amedée.

CHRIS. Fear nothing,—there is no one here now but Louise.

Enter AMEDEE and HECTOR, R. 3 E.

AME. Wish me joy, my dear father. Good news—good news!

CHRIS. (*who was going away, expresses her eager curious joy—aside*) Oh, I must hear it! (*occupies herself with the flowers, &c.*)

MAU. You have seen the Baron, then?

HEC. He has, and has brought about a miracle! I never saw the Baron so condescending before. The day is to be fixed without delay. There is but one trifling formality now to be complied with.

MAU. And that is—

Hec. Oh! stop though. Bless my soul! Now I come to think of it, it's not such a trifling formality, after all. It's a serious difficulty, now I remember what you told me, Colonel! The Baron requires the certificate of the death of Amedée's mother. Mercy on me!—to be sure! Why, you told me yourself—you don't know that she is dead.

CHRIS. (*on hearing this, leans against a chair for support*)

MAU. Poor Christine ! That she should hear this.

AME. (*appears full of thought*)

HEC. My dear Amedée, don't look so melancholy. I know I'm a thoughtless fellow, but I would not give you pain for worlds. It is no recent loss, and you do not even remember your mother.

AME. True, Hector; but I will not disguise the emotion you excited within me. Though I do not remember her, I have always indulged the hope of one day pressing her to my heart, and now the thought of her death comes over me like a fearful shadow.

CHRIS. (*aside*) Dear Amedée ! And I dare not throw myself into his arms, and claim him for my son. Amedée, at the sacrifice of my life, your happiness shall be secured.

MUSIC heard—*Exit CHRISTINE, L.*

Enter ESTELLE, R.D.

EST. (c.) The rooms are filling rapidly, almost all the guests are come ; but there is one I am surprised I do not yet see.

HECTOR is talking with MAURICE, and they do not overhear the following scene.

AME. Estelle, I think I can name that one—Alfred de Mirecour.

EST. You have guessed it.

AME. He will not be here.

EST. He has accepted.

AME. I begged him to decline.

EST. You, Amedée, and by what right ?

AME. His presence in this house is—But I need not express myself more distinctly. My sister knows too well what I mean.

EST. Amedée you are deceived.

AME. Estelle, I fear it is not *I* who am deceived ; there is another who—

EST. Hold ! You know not what you say ; nor can I at present explain further.

AME. (*reproachfully*) Estelle, Estelle, think of your husband's honour.

EST. It is as dear to me as my own. What would you insinuate ?

AME. Do not force me to give utterance to my thoughts.

EST. (*proudly*) I hope my brother will not add to the insult of suspicion, the further insult of accusation. I know what I do, and am amenable to no one.

AME. As you please. At all events, I will not meet him beneath this roof. Alfred will not be here to-night. I have erased his name from the list.

EST. And I have restored it. We shall see whose commands he will obey.

SERVANT announces “ The Count Alfred de Mirecour ! ”

AME. Confusion !

EST. Now we may join the dancers.

Enter ALFRED from the Ball-room, the curtains being raised, and discovering the room full—MUSIC, Forte—ALFRED shakes MAURICE by the hand, salutes ESTELLE, and bows haughtily to AMEDEE, who is enraged—The dancing commences—JEROME and BRIGARD are seen at the back—NICOLAS is among the dancers. JEROME and BRIGARD come forward, at the end of the dance—NICOLAS with a LADY does the same.

JER. (*aside*) Where have I seen that face?

BRIG. (*to MAURICE*) May I ask you to present me to Monsieur Leverd?

MAU. Jerome, this is the Baron de Favrolle, as I hope our families will shortly be united—

JER. The Baron's face is familiar to me; and yet, I cannot recollect where I have had the pleasure of seeing him.

BRIG. I have not the advantage of recollecting you. But, as the Colonel says, I trust our acquaintance will not be limited to this. (*they shake hands*)

EST. Look Jerome, do you see that my father has the Cross of St. Louis on his breast?

JER. Is it possible, Colonel! I congratulate you. This is indeed as it should be.

Speaks with NICOLAS, and then re-enters the ball room and disappears.

ALF. Colonel, may I be allowed to express my pleasure also, on the occasion—a pleasure doubled by the satisfaction I feel at having received the same honour, on the same day. Your's is the fit recompence of valuable service; would that mine were as well deserved.

MAU. (*delighted*) Indeed! Have you then obtained the same distinction?

ALF. At the same time. A distinction due to my family—more than myself.

AME. (*R., aside*) Alfred, I thank you for the pretext you have given me. (*aloud*) Oh, yes! the Count has been made a Chevalier, as well as you, Sir. You are sixty—he is twenty-five—Your hair has grown grey in active service—He has caracoled on parade. To some eyes there would seem a great difference between you, but a bit of ribbon equalizes all. Your conquests have been achieved in the battle-field—his, in the ball room.

MAU. (*L.*) Amedée!

ALF. (*c.*) This public insult.

AME. Who has the most reason to complain of insult? Is it the man who—

MAU. Hold, Amedée! This language—and to the son of your benefactress?

AME. Oh! I know too well to whom I speak,—to an unknown, obscure youth, who, confounding the reward of service with the price of intrigue, has the insolence to place himself by the side of a brave officer, and call himself his equal!

MAU. Amedée, you are mad! This wanton insult, and in my presence? Alfred, forgive him,—I will see that due reparation be

made. Friends, I regret that you should have been witnesses to this disgraceful scene. Leave us together for a few moments.

They all retire into the ball-room—The curtains are closed—
MAURICE, ALFRED and AMEDEE remain.

—Amedée, you have made an unjustifiable and wanton attack upon the Count de Mirecour. Apologise at once for that ignoble insult.

AME. (*crosses to c. and aside to ALFRED*) Monsieur de Mirecour, you have made an unjustifiable and wanton attack upon the honour of this house. Apologise at once for that ignoble insult.

ALF. (*L., aside*) Sir!

MAU. (*R.*) Come, Amedée—I await the acknowledgment of your repentance.

AME. (*aside to ALFRED*) On your knees apologise, or I unmask you!

ALF. (*aside*) Apologise? I? Never!

MAU. You hesitate! My son, remember, there is more courage and magnanimity in retracting a hasty word than in braving its consequences. I do not understand what sudden irritation got the mastery of your natural good feeling; but the insult, I repeat, was unjustifiable. Amedée, you must apologise.

At this moment CHRISTINE appears at the side and watches eagerly.

CHRIS. (*aside*) Heavens! What does this mean?

MAU. Once more I demand your retraction of the offensive words, and the expression of your regret for their utterance.

AME. (*seizing ALFRED'S hand*) Sir, the culprit stands before you, and bows his head in token of his shame. Holding the hand of one he has deeply insulted, he confesses that his conduct has been unworthy of a gentleman, and regretshis presence here this night. Need he say more?

MAU. (*R.*) Enough, Amedée,—I am proud of you once again. Alfred will understand and forgive your momentary insanity.

AME. Oh! I cannot doubt that he will understand me.

MAU. I am sure of it. (*goes up and throws open the curtains—The company advance from inner apartments*) Friends—this matter, I am proud to say, is amicably settled. The Count Alfred de Mirecour accepts the explanation of my son. Your hands.

AME. (*gives his hand—aloud*) Count de Mirecour, are you satisfied?

ALF. (*gives his hand—aside*) Not yet. To-morrow, one of us will expiate the offence with his life!

MAU. Friends, you may resume your dance.

MUSIC.—*Dance again commences.—TABLEAU.*

CHAPTER VII.

SCENE.—*Exterior of JEROME'S Chateau by Moonlight—Ball room, with illuminated windows, at back, L.C.—MUSIC faintly heard within.*

NICOTTE and **MADAME LEGROS** are peeping through the windows—**LEGROS** is seated on the steps, in the shade, smoking.

NIC. Ha, ha, ha! do look at my Nicolas! The man's mad, I think! I shall never get him home again, that's certain.

MDE. L. Who'd have thought that he'd have had the audacity to do it? The whole room must be laughing at him, I'm sure. I only wish Legros were amongst them—I think, if I were once to see him dance, it would be the death of me.

LEG. If anything would make me dance, my dear, that would be the temptation.

NIC. Hush! there's some one coming out.

They retire into the dark—LEGROS remains smoking where he is—The window opens, and AMEDEE and ALFRED enter. ESTELLE follows them, but remains behind with NICOTTE, whom she has beckoned to her side.

ALF. (L.C.) I attend your orders.

AME. (R.C.) You understand me, then?

ALF. Perfectly. Name your own weapons.

AME. Swords.

ALF. Be it so. The place and hour?

AME. Daybreak—at the waterfall.

ALF. Be it so.

AME. The cause of our quarrel, remember, is my insult respecting the Cross of St. Louis.

ALF. Sir, I am as anxious as you can be to keep the lady's name out of the question.

AME. Day is fast approaching. I will seek Dominique at once. (*bows to ALFRED, who returns the salute*)

Exit AMEDEE, L.U.E.

ALF. I should have been glad to have seen Estelle once alone, but perhaps it is better as it is. Now to find Hector. (*goes up towards window*)

NIC. (*stopping him*) Count, one word. You remember me—Nicotte?

ALF. Perfectly. But, my dear child, I have no time now—I am in haste.

NIC. Yes, men are always in haste to commit crime.

ALF. Crime, Nicotte ?

NIC. I know what you purpose : but oh, Count ! let me entreat you not to fight this duel—for her sake let me entreat you !

ALF. Nicotte, I see you know all ; but I cannot avoid it—nay, I would not if I could.

NIC. Amedée is her brother.

ALF. Oh, fear nothing—he is in no danger. I accept the challenge as a ready means of quitting a life that is odious to me. I ask but to die, and to die for her—to die. There is no other happiness left for me, Nicotte.

NIC. What, do you love her still, then ?

ALF. Love her still ? A passion such as mine outlives all change, all circumstance. During the weary years of separation, I have lived but in the hope of seeing her. At last that hope is crowned. I meet her ; before we have time to speak, we are interrupted, and now I shall die, without having told her that to the last, this heart beats only for her. Will you tell her that ?

NIC. I will, believe me.

ALF. And give her this ring in exchange for that she sent, which shall be buried with me. Farewell, Nicotte, farewell !

Exit into Ball-room, L.C.

NIC. (*r. much affected*) Poor fellow, how he loves her ! Estelle !

EST. (*l. coming forward*) Is he not noble ? Oh, Nicotte, it breaks my heart to think of him.

NIC. (*sobbing*) I don't wonder at it. But Estelle, dear Estelle, don't forget, Jerome. You won't, will you ? Oh, I'm not afraid ! Only, remember he is your husband. Don't cry, dear. I can feel for you. (*sobbing*) Didn't I lose the man I loved ? And what a man ! to marry Nicolas. There was a blow—Nicolas—who wears cotton night caps, and looks like a candle with its extinguisher on. (*suddenly*) Jerome doesn't wear cotton night caps, does he ? (*ESTELLE has buried her face in her hands, and does not hear her*) But, of course he doesn't. Still, for all that, I say, having married Nicolas, I wouldn't betray him. No, not even for Jerome, himself.

EST. This duel must be prevented, no matter by what means. We will ourselves seek them at the Waterfall. Go at once and find Louise, she shall accompany us. I must now return to the ball-room, or I shall be missed. But I will not lose sight of Alfred. Nay, I will seek an opportunity and implore him to hear me. There, go, Nicotte, there's no time to lose !

Exit into ball-room, L.C.

NIC. Poor Estelle, and poor Jerome ! Ah, he'd better have married me, after all. I loved him better than she does, I'm sure. However, I must do what I can for them, and at all events, try and prevent bloodshed. So, I'll go and look for Louise, at once.

Exit at back, L.

Enter BRIGARD, hastily, from the ball-room.

BRIG. I must not stay here a moment longer, this agitation will kill me. To think of my encountering in the corridor, Madame

Legros. She is in the very same house with Christine. They must have recognised me. It is the handicraft of fate, weaving this mesh around me. I must find my way out through the garden without observation. (*stumbles against LEGROS*) My friend, can you shew me the way to my carriage?

LEG. Your carriage?

BRIG. Yes, the carriage of the Baron de Favrolle. Quick, I am ill, and cannot again enter the heated rooms. (*aside*) After so many years of impunity to be detected at last! But it serves me right. I had no business with such absurd scruples of conscience. Why couldnt I let Christine remain in prison? Why must I effect her escape? Bitterly I have been repaid for my overstrained benevolence!—and yet I took such precautions. Even Delacour himself never suspected the Baron de Favrolle. The disguise in which I always went to him, kept him completely in the dark—he never knew me but as Brigard. However, there is but one course of safety now; and that is to have Christine arrested again, and at once. (*aloud*) Well, my friend, you do not move?

LEG. I never do, if I can help it. There's the path to the garden gate. You don't want me.

BRIG. No, no—I can find it. Thank you. (*aside*) It is now a question of self-preservation, and I must not hesitate. Some one comes. (*conceals himself R.*)

LEG. Hollo! Why, the old fellow's hiding himself. What does this mean?

Enter COLONEL MAURICE and MADAME LEGROS from back.

MDE. L. Well, Colonel, it is as I say—there is a person in the house now, who can testify to Christine's innocence, by confessing his own guilt; for, as sure as my name is Jeanne Legros, so sure am I he committed the robbery.

MAU. And who is he?

MDE. L. The Baron something, they call him now.

LEG. A Baron. Ho, ho!

MDE. L. But he was called Jean Brigard, then. I didn't quite catch the name, but I caught sight of his ugly face, and although its nearly twenty years since I last had the first unpleasant glimpse of him, I remembered him at once, and would swear to him among a thousand.

MAU. This is news indeed!

MDE. L. I have sent Christine into the room after him. I couldnt go myself, you know; besides, our joint evidence will the better convict him.

BRIG. (*aside R.*) So!—then my danger was nearer than I thought! Oh—(*pressing his heart in pain*)—I must be calm, or I shall be betrayed. Christine, your fate is now inevitable.

Exit at back by balcony, c. and l.

LEG. (*gets up quickly, aside*) I think, perhaps, a walk now may do me good; so, I'll just take a quiet stroll, and see where that amiable gentleman goes to.

Exit, following BRIGARD.

MAU. Oh, may the hope be realized !

Enter CHRISTINE, agitated, from ball-room.

CHRIS. (c.) I cannot find him—he is not in the ball-room.

MDE. L. Not find him ! Then I will, if he's still on earth ! I'll call Nicolas, and put him on the sent. My stupid husband is out of the way, of course ; and, if he were not, he would only be *in* the way, as usual. Never mind, we'll find the villain Brigard, I'll warrant ! We'll ferret out the old rat amongst us, trust me we will.

Exit R. 3 E.

CHRIS. Do you know who the Baron de Favrolle is ? Jean Brigard—the wretch for whose infamy I have so long suffered !

MAU. The Baron de Favrolle ! Heavens ! is *he* the Baron she was talking of?—he Jean Brigard ? Oh, Christine ! the moment, then, is at hand for your justification. But calm your agitation.

CHRIS. Oh, there is another, and still greater cause for it. Maurice, you have been deceived. The apology made by Amedée was but a feint—I saw through it at once—with words of friendship on his lips I saw death in his glance ; and, it is as I suspected, a duel is at hand—our son's life is at stake.

MAU. A duel !

Enter JEROME, L.U.E.

JER. (L.C.) A duel ?—wherefore ?

CHRIS. (c.) *passionately* Wherefore ! Because you are an easy, unobservant husband,—because you are blind and apathetic,—because others are obliged to watch the honour of your house, and detect that which you alone should be eager to prevent or to avenge.

JER. You are mistaken : I am not the blind fool you take me for—I have seen all.

MAU. (R.) What ! you have seen and tolerate ?

JER. No ; I have seen and *punish*.

CHRIS. (*alarmed*) Punish ! Whom ?—not Estelle ? (*checking herself*) Pardon me—your wife, I mean—she is innocent ; I pledge my soul for her ! The fault, if fault there be, is *his*—the Count de Mirecour. Oh, Sir ! believe me—I have no interest to deceive you—Estelle is *not* guilty. (*falling on her knees before him*) You will not punish her for the fault of another—you will not let Amedée risk his life for you !

JER. What does this mean, Louise ?

CHRIS. Nay, not Louise, I am—

MAURICE stops her as she is about to betray herself—She looks imploringly at him, but he says “Not yet—not yet,” and she submits.

JER. Estelle is innocent—I never doubted her—and as for the honour of my house, I can protect that myself ; I need not her brother's interference. Begone !

CHRIS. Oh, Maurice ! the struggle is too much for me. Follow me at once, if my life is dear to you—this duel must be prevented.

Exit L. 2 E.

MAU. Jerome, yonder is the Count himself. I leave you together; your own honour will guide you.

Exit L. 2 R.

ALFRED appears at the window looking at his watch—ESTELLE follows him, trying to speak with him; but, seeing JEROME stops—ALFRED is not aware of her presence.

EST. I must and will speak with him. Jerome here?

ALF. (*coming forward*) The time draws near—I must steal away unobserved.

JER. Not so. Count Alfred de Mirecour, a word with you.

ALF. Monsieur Leverd! I am glad of this accidental meeting. Jerome, I wished to speak with you alone, and to thank you as far as words can thank, for your generosity. Nicolas has at length confessed that the money he pretended to restore to me, came from you.

JER. There was no generosity in that. It was a simple act of justice; but I beg of you to observe that I would now address you on a very different subject. I know, Count, that you and your proud companions regard marriage as a social institution, meant to give piquancy to intrigue, and consider husbands as an easy indolent race, born without eyes, for the sole purpose of being duped and laughed at.

ALF. Jerome!

JER. There are exceptions, however. I am a husband; but my eyes are open. Do you understand me? You are about to meet Amedée. This cannot be. He has no authority from me to avenge my quarrels. Count, it is with me you must measure swords, and not with him!

ALF. Nay, Jerome, I will not raise my hand against you. You must not doubt my courage, if I refuse this duel; nor will you doubt my word, I trust, when I say that your wife—

JER. Is innocent! I know it. But you love her.

ALF. What then? Do you suppose she would forget the duty she owes you, Jerome? You wrong her.

JER. (*fiercely*) And if she owes me none?

ALF. What do you mean?

JER. (*folding his arms*) When, five years ago, I carried Estelle away from you, I suppose you imagine I said to her—"Girl, dry your eyes, and marry me. I am not young, I am not handsome, I am not well born, like the Count Alfred de Mirecour; but never mind that. Whether you will or no, you are my wife; so make the best of it!" No, Count, I said nothing of the kind. I am a man without education, without manners, violent; perhaps, worse. I can't help that, one can't help one's nature. But not even my enemy can say, "Jerome was born without a heart!"

ALF. (L.) What course would you adopt, then?

JER. (R.) That which every honest man would have adopted. I left her choice free. I took her home to my old mother. On the way, I said to her, "Estelle, they will think here, we were married in your village, and in your village they will think we were married here. Let it be so for a time. I have saved your honour. Consider me your friend—your brother!"

ALF. 'Twas nobly done.

JER. Had you returned a year, two years after that, you would have found Estelle your own ; but, since then—

ALF. She has ceased to love me ?

JER. No, but I have learned to love her. At first, I was content to be a brother ; but as I lived, day after day, in the light of her smile, in the sphere of her influence, how could I help adoring her, as you did ? I was her senior in years ; but my heart was young, and its young idolatry was given to her. And now I ask you, Count, would you tear from me my life's treasure ?

ALF. (L.) Jerome, you are worthy of her love. Once more will I see her—'twill be to take a last farewell ! Confide in my honour when I pledge it, that she shall never hear of me more.

JER. Stay here a moment, and I will bring her to you.

ALF. Your hand, Jerome, this candid avowal, commands respect and admiration.

JEROME goes into ball-room, L.C., but immediately returns, and watches them unobserved.

ALF. And now, Estelle, my early love, farewell for ever !

EST. (aside) Miserable Estelle, your doom is sealed ! (advancing (R.C.))

ALF. Estelle !

EST. Be patient,—I have heard all. Alfred, at your interview with Jerome I was present. I heard the history of his love—his sacrifice. That love I never before even suspected ; but hearing it, my course is clear. To one who has acted so nobly towards me, my gratitude is due, and I can give nothing less than my life. I at once resolved to stifle in my heart the old affection which had lingered there, and to dedicate my days to my *husband*. Is not my resolution right ?

ALF. (after a pause) Estelle, it is. Jerome is worthy of you. Be happy. (kissing her hand) Think of me as one who loved you too dearly, to wish you less noble than your own true heart ; as one who would rather lose you, than have you less generous than you are. I will seek in foreign climes and active life, to deaden the sense of pain here, (pressing his heart) and console myself with the belief that your sacrifice has not been made in vain. Farewell.

JEROME advances, followed by MAURICE, NICOTTE, and NICOLAS.

JER. Hold ! (stopping ALFRED) Where would you go ? What ! leave a young and lovely woman thus ? Is your old affection extinct within you ? See she is in tears.

ALF. Jerome !

JER. She is in tears !—and you would leave her ?

MAU. Jerome, I can bear this no longer, and my indignation will have vent. Idiot!—dolt!—besotted husband !—are you dead to all sense of honour and of shame ? Would you thrust your wife into another's arms before her father's face.

JER. My dear Colonel, a word will explain it all ;—I am not—I never was the husband of Estelle. (astonishment in the group) Estelle indeed, the wife of one like me ? No, no !—there is the object of

her idolatry;—there beats the heart which no time, no distance, could ever change. There stands the man she loves. To him I entrust the unsullied honour of his wife.

EST. Jerome, can I believe my senses? You will make this sacrifice!

JER. It is none. I did but make trial of you both; and nobly have you both passed through it. Estelle, if I had loved you as *he* loves you, and as you love him. Ah! then indeed, it would have been hard to give you up; that would have been too terrible. (*smiling faintly*) Mine is but the friendship of a—a—brother. (*aside*) The sacrifice is a cruel one, but I have done my duty.

ALF. Such generosity!

JER. Shall I tell you how you can repay it? Make her happy! Alfred, I restore to you at the same time, the mansion of your father's. It is your wife's dowry. (*going*)

NIC. (*crying*) Oh, oh, oh!

NICOL. What's the matter?

NIC. To think of his not being a married man after all.

NICOL. Nicotte, remember you're a married woman, at any rate. So, no nonsense!

JEROME stands at the back and waves a farewell to all—ESTELLE appears deeply affected—TABLEAU, and

END OF CHAPTER THE SEVENTH.

CHAPTER VIII.

The Waterfall in the Glen.—A rivulet descends from the back to front, c., and falls over the mouth of a cave—A path down L. of stream, and also by stepping stones across it, from L. to R.

HECTOR discovered seated on a stone, R.C.—He holds two swords in his hands.

HEC. Will they never come? I am getting abominably tired of this waiting. After dancing all night, too. I'm fairly knocked up; and instead of going quietly to bed to dream of my fair partner, I have to come down here in the chill of the morning, to be Alfred's second in a duel. How sleepy I am to be sure. Why, the very stars are winking as if they were tired, too. (*places the swords on a rock, and stretches himself on his back beside them*) Oh, dear! I wish they would come. Fighting's disagreeable enough at all times; but in the middle of the night its intolerable.

BRIGARD, disguised, enters from L.U.E., led by a COUNTRY LAD—They cross the stream.

BRIG. Yes ! This must be the place, and here I can wait unseen till the moment arrives. Do you run back secretly, by the path we came, and bring the Gendarmes with you. Show them where I am ; and, above all, try to avoid being seen.

Exit Boy, by same path they entered.

—Aye, aye ! I think I shall contrive it now. As Brigard, I have hitherto transacted all this business ; and in Brigard, she at least will not suspect the Baron de Favrolle.

Exit R. 3 E.

Enter LEGROS—NICOLAS and MADAME LEGROS follow from L.U.E.

LEG. So ! my walk turned out of some service, after all. The sly old fox ! I tracked him to his hole ; and having done so, I sat down to light my pipe by the side of it. Presently, out he came again, having changed his skin, so that I hardly knew him ; and away he trotted, and away I trotted after him, till we came to the Gendarmerie.

MDE. L. Well, but what brings him here, then ?

LEG. I'm coming to that, if you'll let me. Well, from the Gendarmerie off we went again to Jerome's, where he made enquiry for Louise.

MDE. L. For Louise ? What could he want her for ? Has she been betrayed, then ?

LEG. That I can't say. But who should come by, at the very moment, but Nicotte. "Louise ?" said she ; "you'll find her at the Waterfall in the Glen. Is it on Monsieur Amedée's business that you come ?" "Exactly," said the old Baron. "Oh, then, quick, quick to the Waterfall !" said she ; "there's not a moment to lose !" So, quick, quick he started again. I had only just time to tell Nicotte to send you after us, and then away I trotted again after him and the lad he picked up by the way ; and here we are.

NICOL. Here we are indeed ! Yes, here we are ; but where's the Baron ?

LEG. Oh, he's all safe ! You needn't hurry—we're in good time. I'll swear I saw the boy leading him in this direction ; but which path he dived down, I can't quite say,—so I'll sit down quietly for a minute, and wait for him.

NICOL. But there are so many paths, that he may escape us yet. I'll continue the search while I'm on the scent. What do you advise, Madame Legros ?

MDE. L. Oh, let us hunt him out, by all means !

They cross the stream and disappear, missing the path that leads to the cave.

LEG. (*sits down and lights his pipe*) I'll stay here and wait. I've found things generally come right, by keeping quiet.

BRIGARD appears in the cave underneath the waterfall.

BRIG. I thought I heard voices, but I see no one yet.

CHRISTINE, entering by a more forward path, stumbles upon
HECTOR.

HEC. Oh, there you are at last! Eh? No! A woman, I declare! Why, you're not the other second!

CHRIS. I am come to prevent the duel.

HEC. (*coxcombically*) Prevent a duel! My good creature, when we men manage little affairs of this kind, we never allow women to interfere.

CHRIS. But I will interfere. Amedée shall not fight!

HEC. Amedée! Is he Alfred's antagonist? Oh, then I throw it up. I'm not going to be second in a duel against my own brother-in-law, you may depend upon it. Not likely.

CHRIS. (*delighted*) Your brother-in-law?—Amedée your brother-in-law?

HEC. That is to be. All the obstacles are at length removed.

CHRIS. Amedée will be happy, then! Thank you, oh thank you Sir, for telling me so.

HEC. (*aside*) She's a good creature. What interest she takes in the family!

CHRIS. And you will not permit this duel?

HEC. Very distinctly the reverse. I shall home and go to bed. By Jupiter! it's lucky you met me. Come out in the middle of the night to assist in killing my own brother-in-law! A pretty thing, indeed! Good bye. Give Alfred my best regards and say I was too sleepy to wait

Exit yawning, l. 2 E.

BRIG. (*looking out of the cave*) She is there. Why don't the Gendarmes arrive? I'm all impatience. I must go and hurry their march. (*disappears*)

CHRIS. Amedée once married I may avow myself without disguise. Now I stand on the threshold of this happiness, it seems too great to be ever realized.

BRIGARD emerges from the cave on rising ground R., looks cautiously round, crosses the stream, and goes off L.U.E., beckoning SOLDIERS—LEGROS perceives him.

LEG. Ah ha! There he is, sure enough! They might have saved themselves the trouble. There's never anything lost by waiting, if you only wait long enough.

Enter AMEDEE l. 2 E.

AME. Louise—you here! How is this?

CHRIS. He whom you expect, will not come!

SOLDIERS enter, led by BRIGARD, L.U.E., cross to R. and disappear R. 3 E.

AME. Alfred de Mirecour?

CHRIS. Is in the hands of the offended husband. Jerome knows all—knows that you took up his quarrel, and insists on punishing

the Count himself. But I have joyful news for you. Your marriage is settled—all obstacles are removed—and Marguerite is yours. Oh, Amedée!—forgive me if I call you so—you know not how happy this has made me!

AME. Dear Louise! your friendship for my father is of long standing, I know, and it appears to extend now even to his children.

CHRIS. That is because I, too, have children. I have a son whose marriage I wish to see—a son, brave, good, like yourself; and whom, although separated from me now, I hope soon to clasp once again in these arms.

AME. You make me feel indeed that I have lost a mother. Oh! Louise, you knew my father years ago. Tell me, did you know my mother also?

CHRIS. Well, very well!

AME. Speak to me of her. Tell me she was worthy of all reverence—she was, was she not?

CHRIS. Your mother was worthy of her children's love;—but she was of humble birth; and you, who have been educated among the prejudices of the great world, might, perhaps, blush for her.

AME. Louise!

CHRIS. (*correcting herself*) No, no, no, no!—not blush! The very thought is an insult to your noble heart! You would not blush for your mother, Amedée, I know;—that mother, who, through many a long march, watched over your infancy, and who, in trying to protect your life, received the shot, that nearly destroyed her own!

AME. Nearly! She was not killed then?

CHRIS. No! Yet, from that time she has disappeared; but, if after years of privation, of peril, if walking day and night, poor and degraded, supported solely by the hope of seeing her children, she were to present herself at your gates, were to enter your house as a servant, to wait upon you daily—

AME. Good heavens!

CHRIS. A servant, loving the menial offices which brought her near her son—if, under the shadow of some terrible calamity, she could only approach you in that disguise; still, you would not blush, Amedée; still, by your true heart, the servant would be worshipped as mother.

AME. (*throws himself on his knees*) I can no longer doubt! Louise, you are—you are my mother!

CHRIS. Oh, this repays a life of suffering! Amedée, I have betrayed myself too soon; but I could not resist, nor does it matter, now that your marriage is beyond recall.

BRIGARD enters with GENDARMES, R. l E.—*On the other side NICOLAS and MADAME LEGROS are seen to approach, having been beckoned by LEGROS.*

BRIG. Soldiers, there is your prisoner!

CHRIS. Brigard! heavens!

AME. Prisoner! You are mistaken, Sir. I will be answerable for this person with my life. Do you know who she is?

BRIG. I do, and it is quite clear you do not. Learn, then——

CHRIS. Hold! Not before him!

BRIG. You hear!—she has deceived you all, and has obtained entrance to your house by fraud. She is an escaped convict.

CHRIS. Ah! (*screams*)

AME. Villain!—it is false! She is in every way worthy of respect! Know that she is—

BRIG. Who?

AME. My mother!

BRIG. (*aside*) His mother! What have I done! But it is too late now. (*aloud*) I repeat, she is an escaped convict, and her name is Christine Gautier.

AME. Christine Gautier—the Vivandiere, and my mother!—now the mystery is explained.

CHRIS. Amedée, I am innocent! Your mother swears that she is innocent! And he, the infamous Brigard, who accuses me, well knows—

BRIG. Gendarmes, I command you to do your duty.

Enter MAURICE, ESTELLE, ALFRED, and others, L. and L.U.E.—MADAME LEGROS, NICOLAS, and LEGROS advance.

MDE. L. But first learn what that duty is. Arrest that man, Jean Brigard. I am here to prove his guilt!

BRIG. (*aside*) That woman again!

MDE. L. The guilt for which poor Christine was unjustly condemned, and has so long suffered.

AME. Ah! Can I believe this—speak on!

MDE. L. Look well at him—in spite of his disguise do you not recognise in him—

NICOL. The Baron de Favrolle.

CHRIS. And Jean Brigard—for they are one and the same.

BRIG. 'Tis false!

MAU. But we have ample proofs—proofs that will ensure conviction. Christine is innocent! There stands the felon! Gendarmes, remove your prisoner!

BRIG. Prisoner! Discovered! Convicted! (*puts his hand to his heart and stands a moment immovable*) Denial is useless. I do confess the crime for which Christine has suffered, was mine, and mine alone! The expiation is at hand—suffer I must—I shall. Yet, when I think of Marguerite—my child—

AME. Marguerite your child?

BRIG. No, but I have ever loved her as my child; and when she hears of my disgrace— Oh! in pity keep her from the knowledge of it! She has never known me but as the Baron de Favrolle. Let her never learn that her adopted father was the convict Brigard. Oh! soldiers, you will not take your prisoner, but—his corpse!

He falls R.C.—TABLEAU.

Curtain.