

MONTCALM.

A Romantic Drama,

IN FIVE ACTS.

BY

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MONTCALM.

First performed at the Queen's Theatre (under the management of E. Clifton, Esq.), on Saturday, September 28th, 1872.

Characters.

BERTRAND (<i>Count de Montcalm</i>)	...	Mr. G. RIGNOLD.
HENRI } (<i>Brothers—Cousins to Bertrand</i>)	{	Mr. G. NEVILLE.
ALEXIS }	}	Mr. PUGH.
LE DOCTEUR ANDRÉ DUVERNAY	...	Mr. A. NELSON.
LE CHEVALIER MALICORNE	...	Mr. J. RYDER.
BARON VICTOR DE CHOISEUL	...	Mr. R. CATHCART.
GRANDIN	Mr. VOLLAIRE.
ANATOLE	Mr. VINCENT.
LOUISE LAVERGNE	Miss H. HODSON.
MARGUERITE DE MONTCALM (<i>Sister to Bertrand</i>)	Miss WALLIS.
MADAME GRANDIN	Mrs. M. WATKINS.

Servants. Guests. Gendarmes.

Scenery.

ACT I.

THE CHATEAU MONTCALM.

ACT II.

Magnificent Saloon in the Tuilleries.

ACT III.

GARDEN OF THE CHATEAU MONTCALM.

ACT IV.

Salon in the Chateau Montcalm.

ACT V.

Library, same as in Act I.

MONTCALM.



ACT I.

SCENE.—*The Chateau de Montcalm. Heavy old-fashioned oak chamber. Window, C., leading on to terrace; bureau, L. C.; doors, R. and L.; fireplace, R. 3 E.; arm chair, R. of table, L. C.; chairs by fireplace, R. Evening.*

MADAME GRANDIN and GRANDIN busy arranging furniture;
ANATOLE sitting on arm of chair, L. C.

MADAME GRANDIN. (*up stage, R.*) Come, come, Grandin, bustle, bustle.

GRANDIN. (L.) Ah, it is all very well to say bustle, but it is not quite so easy to do it. Who is to bustle with the rheumatism in his back, I should like to know? Besides, after twenty years of doing next to nothing, it is not so easy to work, is it, Anatole?

ANATOLE. I don't know, M. Grandin; I have never tried hard work, and I sincerely hope I never shall.

MAD. G. What does your master give you wages for, then?

ANAT. Because I should not remain in his company unless he did. Don't mistake me: I am willing to do all that I believe to be my duty; I do it with pleasure. I take a proper pride in the wardrobe of Monsieur le Comte; I guard the spotless purity of his linen with an angel's care; the perfection of his toilette is my ambition; his cravats are my delight.

MAD. G. (*who has come down, R.*) Ah, this is what the Empire has taught you in Paris.

ANAT. I fancy the Empire has taught me a good many things in Paris; but I have no objection to reciting a few of my lessons to the native barbarians of this desert land.

GRAND. Barbarians!

ANAT. Figuratively, only.

MAD. G. The Basses Pyrenees a desert land! Ah, Monsieur Anatole, you would have learned different lessons in the lifetime of the uncle of Monsieur le Comte.

ANAT. Ah, Madame Grandin, those were the dark ages. But I am not without curiosity. Here have we arrived—I, Monsieur Le Comte, and the rest of the household—at the Chateau de Montcalm, upon a Monday evening. Now, what do you do on Monday evenings in the country, Monsieur Grandin?

GRAND. Supper, and go to bed.

ANAT. And on Tuesdays?

GRAND. Repeat the process.

ANAT. And on Wednesdays?

GRAND. Just the same.

ANAT. Extraordinary! And you've never been to Paris?

GRAND. Never been out of the village.

ANAT. Wonderful! And you have been going on like this for twenty years?

GRAND. For fifty!

ANAT. Marvellous! Monsieur le Comte has never been here for twenty years.

Enter DR. DUVERNAY, from terrace, through window, c.

MAD. G. No, he has never been here since he was ten years old.

ANAT. Ah, I'm not surprised at that.

DUVERNAY. (*coming down, R. C.*) Good evening, Madame Grandin.

MAD. G. Good evening, doctor.

DUVER. Monsieur le Comte de Montcalm has arrived, has he not?

ANAT. As monsieur sees, we have arrived. Monsieur le Comte is at his toilette; if I can be of any service——

DUVER. A friend of Monsieur le Comte?

ANAT. Well, an intimate friend—his valet, in fact.

DUVER. Take my card. (*giving it*)

ANAT. Certainly. Le Docteur Duvernay! Ah, Monsieur le Comte is very well; not even a toothache.

DUVER. (*crossing to L.*) Well, Grandin, how is the rheumatism?

ANAT. Just the same as on Tuesdays, Wednesdays, and the rest.

DUVER. (*turning to ANATOLE sharply*) Ah, you're suffering from a Paris complaint.

ANAT. I?

DUVER. Yes—impertinence; and I know how to cure it. Take that card to your master, or I shall be obliged to give you a dose. (*shakes stick gently*)

ANAT. (*going towards door, R. 2 E.*) Monsieur le Comte will wait upon you at his leisure. (*aside*) I suppose one becomes a brute on Mondays in the country. *Exit, door R.*

DUVER. (*C.*) Well, Madame Grandin, it is pleasant to see the old house waking up again, after twenty years of slumber.

MAD. G. (*R.*) Well, well, perhaps it is. But I am not sure that it might not be better for us all if its slumbers were not disturbed. Ah, it seems like yesterday that the late Count and his two brothers were talking and laughing on the terrace yonder (*points, C.*)

DUVER. You remember them?

MAD. G. Perfectly. I never saw brothers so attached to

each other as these three were. The two younger brothers—George and Albert—married two sisters; and as the elder brother—the Count—did not marry, they all lived happily together here.

DUVER. You are astonishing me, Madame Grandin. I thought that Bertrand, the present owner, and Henri and Alexis were brothers.

MAD. G. Oh, no; though many people might have thought as you did. Bertrand, Count de Montcalm, and Mam'selle Marguerite are the children of Monsieur George de Montcalm. Henri and Alexis are the children of Albert. After the death of their parents, which happened in their youth, they lived here with their uncle, who was devoted to them, and treated them as his own children.

DUVER. I remember that well. You know that I was their playfellow; and it was not till long afterwards that I learned that the late Count was their uncle, and not their father. But the late Count married after all.

MAD. G. Aye, that he did, indeed; but we never speak of that. (*looks round room, shuddering*) This was the very room.

GRAND. (L.) Ahem! Madame Grandin, the dusting is finished, and we have duties elsewhere. (*beckons her away*)

DUVER. My dear Grandin, you have duties to me as your physician, and you must not conceal your wife's state of health. Madame Grandin, I observed that you shuddered just now as you looked round the room.

GRAND. Madame Grandin is old and cold, and frequently shudders.

DUVER. Does this room bring back to your recollection any painful circumstances connected with this marriage of the late Count?

GRAND. Madame Grandin's recollection is most untrustworthy. She has positively forgotten that she has not yet arranged a room for Monsieur Alexis.

DUVER. But I think she can remember?

GRAND. Doctor, when I am your patient I always take the dose you give me. Now, Madame Grandin is my patient, and I prescribe a dose of silence. Come, Madame Grandin, you will take the dose better by yourself.

GRANDIN and MADAME GRANDIN *go out, door L. 2 E.*

DUVER. Evidently some mystery. The late Count married a certain Madame St. Just, the widow of an old General St. Just, by whom she had one child, a daughter. Now, there seems nothing mysterious about that; some people prefer a ready-made family. True, she died some twelve or eighteen months after her second marriage. Well, well, it's no affair of mine.

Enter COMTE DE MONTCALM, door R. 2 E.

MONT. (*crossing to C.*) My dear Duvernay, this is most kind.

of you. I hardly hoped to find so soon on my return a friend of boyhood. You make me feel at home again.

DUVER. (L. C.) I hesitated at first about coming so soon; but I thought it quite possible you might feel somewhat lonely here after so long an absence. Besides, I was most anxious to see one who brings back so many childish recollections; and so I started for the Chateau as soon as our village gossips informed me of your arrival.

MONT. And I repeat, it is most kind of you to come. Yes, Duvernay, you are right. I feel it dull, lonely, miserable here. Hot as it is out of doors this summer evening, the house is chilly as winter. (*shudders*) This room is like a grave.

DUVER. You will soon warm it into life. You are quite alone, then?

MONT. No, my sister is with me.

DUVER. Mademoiselle Marguerite? I am delighted to hear it. The charming child! Ah, but that's twenty years ago; she must have grown since I knew her. And your brothers—cousins, I mean?

MONT. You may well say brothers, for we were always far more than cousins. They are expected hourly. In consequence of our uncle's strange desire that the Chateau de Montcalm should remain closed for twenty years, and that at the expiration of that period we should all come here together, but not before, our homes have been separate for some time past, and we have seen but little of each other. I have entered diplomacy, Henri is a soldier, and Alexis——

DUVER. You pause—what of him?

MONT. Well, he should have pursued the study of the law; but instead of that, I fear he has too much pursued the science of pleasure.

DUVER. Ah, that is a science whose problems are solved by experience, and then dissolved altogether. The late Count's will was a strange one.

MONT. Yes, but I shall understand it before long. His reasons are given in a paper which I shall find in that bureau; there is the key, with the accumulated rust of twenty years. (*shows small rusty key*)

DUVER. And you have been some hours in the Chateau, and have not quieted your anxiety?

MONT. André! I fear to do so. Enough of that, tell me of yourself.

DUVER. I? Oh, I have nothing to tell. No romance or mystery about me, I assure you. My father left me tolerably provided for, but I disliked being idle. When I was quite a boy, our Curé made a remark that struck me much. He said, poets and writers always talk about the heart as being the seat of man's passions. Rubbish, his stomach domineers

everything. If a man is in love, he loses his appetite—stomach; or he takes to drinking—stomach; he is ambitious and over sensitive—proud stomach; he is a thief—empty stomach; he is jovial and successful—good stomach; he is irritable, disagreeable, disappointed—bad stomach. Now, who can deal best with that organ? The philosopher, the poet, the historian, the soldier, the lawyer, the priest, the monarch? No; they are powerless. Nobody knows how to regulate it except the doctors. Therefore, the great doctors are the greatest men. Follow this chain of reasoning, and understand why I became a doctor.

MONT. (*laughing*) Then you doubtless consider yourself greater than the Emperor?

DUVER. Decidedly! He has been a useful servant to me; he has filled the hospitals with the wounded, and so provided me with subjects for experiments. Besides, I have the inestimable pleasure of curing those whom he had nearly killed.

Enter MARGUERITE, C., through window, from L. U. E.

MARGUERITE. (*speaking as she enters, down R.*) No signs of Henri and Alexis yet. Ah, a stranger! Bertrand, I did not know you were engaged.

DUVER. Not altogether a stranger, Mademoiselle Marguerite. Your brother will assure you that we are old acquaintances.

MONT. This is André Duvernay, Marguerite, who played with us when we were children.

MARG. I am glad to see you, Monsieur André. (DUVERNAY crosses to her) Many early recollections have come back to me since I have been wandering about this house, like half forgotten dreams. But I remember you, a stout, chubby boy, that used to tease me dreadfully at times.

DUVER. The chubby boy is completely at your mercy now. It's your turn to tease.

MARG. Ah, twenty years make great changes.

DUVER. Not to very many, since you are Mademoiselle de Montcalm still.

MONT. (*seated R. of L. table*) She will not marry, my dear André. Come, put your philosophy to the test; she says she will not marry unless she can give her heart.

MARG. Don't you believe in love, Monsieur André?

DUVER. I am no sceptic, Mademoiselle; I am always willing to be taught: will you be my preceptor?

MARG. How can I teach that of which I know nothing?

DUVER. Then pupil and preceptor must go back to first principles, and rely upon instinct.

MONT. Well, you two go and decide that question in the garden. I have business. (*glancing at bureau*)

DUVER. (*aside to MONTCALM*) Your fear has vanished then?

MONT. (*aside to DUVERNAY*) Yes; since my conversation

DUVER. (*aside*) You see I have done you good already—and without any reference to the pharmacopœia. (*aloud*) If Mademoiselle will permit me to shew her the tree beneath which we used to play at being king and queen——

MARG. I shall be delighted.

DUVER. Ah! if all kings and queens were only as innocent as we were then!

DUVERNAY and MARGUERITE *go out C., and off* L. U. E.—
Music through the speech.

MONT. (*rises*) Now to understand the reason why I—the heir of Montcalm—my sister, and my cousins—all of whom our uncle loved as his own children, should be exiled from our home so long. (*opens bureau and takes out packet*) Here is the packet, addressed. "To my nephew—Bertrand." It is my duty to read then. (*opens packet*) "Bertrand,—I speak to you, in the faith that you will still be living when the corruption of twenty years has crumbled me to nothing. To you, whom I have loved as my own son, I, Julian de Montcalm, must confess a crime!"—Oh, heaven! a crime!—"The morality of society may call that crime justice. Be that as it may, I feel the guilt of blood is on my head!"—The guilt of blood—what am I about to learn!—"When you and Marguerite, Henri and Alexis, were left orphans, I resolved to devote my life to you, and I resisted all thoughts of marriage; but once, when you were all away at your schools and convents, I went to Paris. There the demon of passion awaked in me, at sight of a woman fairer, it seemed to me, than any one I had yet beheld or dreamed of; and so it was that I married Faustine St. Just. I believe I was happy at first; but by degrees the conviction forced itself upon me, that I had not won her heart. Then her perpetual craving for luxury and excitement, and her ill-concealed coldness to me, made me ask myself whether she had any heart at all. Bertrand, I discovered that what heart she had was given to another. All my jealousy was aroused, and I laid snares for her: I laid them well. I feigned a prolonged absence from home: I returned secretly. I learned that the paramour visited her frequently; and they were hidden together for hours in the darkness of the Montcalm woods. I watched, and learned that I was dishonoured. One hot summer night I was in the library of the Chateau—" This room!—"I paced up and down meditating schemes of vengeance against the man—betrayed as I was, I had then no thought against her—a hot night I have said; the thunder rolled in the heavens, and as I stood by the window, I saw in the dim gloom the figure of Faustine upon the terrace. Her face so treacherous in its beauty, seemed calm and peaceful; every passion rose to a burning flame within my heart. She lifted her face—a broad red glare of lightning flashed upon the scene—her eyes met mine—a look of dread and horror

overspread her countenance. I burst open the doors, and we stood face to face upon the threshold; the traitorous white throat was open to my hand, I seized it with a grasp of iron—she fell, and my vengeance was accomplished.” And it is Julian de Montcalm that tells me this! “Her body was found where I left it, across the threshold of the home she had dishonoured; and the law did not enquire too curiously. (*wind*) I choose that the Chateau shall be tenantless for twenty years. Rumour and gossip will have been hushed by that time, and no shadow can rest upon the escutcheon of Montcalm. Bertrand, read my confession; and through all your future life, honour love, but beware of passion!—Signed, Julian de Montcalm.” The stain of blood upon him I ever loved as father—(*distant thunder—dark outside window*)

Re-enter DUVERNAY and MARGUERITE, through window, C.

DUVER. (R.) And you don't remember playing at being my wife?

MARG. (C.) No; but I quite well remember pretending to be the tyrant queen.

DUVER. Ah! it's much the same thing.

MARG. You were my captive; and I recollect ordering them to take you away and cut your head off. (*goes to window*)

DUVER. And now I'm likely to be captive again, and in real earnest too. Ah! and she'll have my heart this time. (*goes to MONTCALM, who is seated L. C.*) I see you have read your uncle's explanation. (*wind and rain*)

MONT. Every word.

DUVER. Satisfactory?

MONT. (*evasively*) Yes—yes. You and Marguerite have returned very soon!

DUVER. There is a thunderstorm coming up. It has begun to rain already.

MARG. Hush! I hear the sound of a horse galloping up the drive.

MONT. (*rising*) It is Henri, or Alexis. (*a loud ring is heard*)

DUVER. (*to MONTCALM*) You seem agitated!

MONT. Yes, Duvernay; my uncle's last words, they are agitating. (*flash of lightning and thunder*)

DUVER. (*aside*) There was some cause for fear, then.

Enter HENRI, door L. 2 E.

HENRI. Here I am, better late than never, Bertrand and Marguerite. (*shakes hands with BERTRAND, and kisses MARGUERITE—looks at DUVERNAY*) And this gentleman?

MONT. A playmate of our childhood, André Duvernay.

HENRI. I remember him, and hail his presence here to-day as a good omen. Let us be children again. Upon my word, I feel as jolly as a boy just come back from school.

DUVER. And you have had a good deal of fighting in your school.

HENRI. Well, I wear a scar or two, no doubt; but I bring back some prizes, amongst others, the cross of the Legion of Honour, given me by the Emperor's own hand upon the field of battle. That's something to be proud of—(*distant thunder—rain and wind*) Hark! I have only just arrived in time to escape a wetting. Poor Alexis, he will catch it, unless he has forgotten the appointment altogether: has any one seen him lately?

MONT. No; I have been unable to discover him in Paris.

MARG. Will he come, I wonder. (*up at window, c.*)

DUVER. No doubt he will; but I have no business in this family reunion.

MONT. (*agitated*) No—no, André, stay, I beg of you.

DUVER. If I can be of any use—

HENRI. (*down, l. c.*) The reasons of our long exile, Bertrand, have you learned them?

MONT. I have; they are here—read. (*gives paper*) You read too, André. You have lived in the neighbourhood so long—may be able to give us some advice. (*to MARGUERITE*) How dull you are, sweet sister; and how cold your hands are, though the night is hot.

MARG. I feel faint and ill. Oh! Bertrand, I have a terrible presentiment of evil hanging over us. There is something oppressive—suffocating, about this room.

MONT. It is the sultry atmosphere—nothing else, believe me.

HENRI. Oh, this is terrible!

MONT. (*turns to him hastily, and aside*) Hush! (*points to MARGUERITE*) She need not know the tale.

(*thunder, and a vivid flash of lightning—MARGUERITE starts up with a cry*)

DUVER. (*R. c., going to her*) You are alarmed at the lightning, Mademoiselle. Come away from the window.

MARG. It was not the lightning that alarmed me. As I live I thought I saw the white figure of a woman on the terrace.

DUVER. Be assured there is no one there.

HENRI. (*giving paper to MONTCALM*) Which of us dreamed of this! An awful tale! (*crosses to R.*)

MARGUERITE is again at window; crash of thunder; three successive flashes of lightning, which reveal outside the window the phantom figure of a woman—the face is visible for a moment or two.

MARG. (*screams, comes down, c.*) There, again! Close to me! I saw her—a pale woman—a look of dread and horror on her countenance.

MONT. (*R., looking at paper, aside*) Strange! the very words of the confession.

DUVER. (*goes to window, looks out, returns*) It must have been your fancy, Mademoiselle Marguerite, there is no one there.

HENRI. Imagination, nothing else! You are weary from travelling, and are excited by this meeting.

MONT. (*reading, aside*) "We stood face to face upon the threshold!"

MARG. Hush, I hear wheels. (*a long ring heard*)

HENRI. It must be Alexis. Strange, we never met upon the road.

MARG. Oh, I am faint; what is this presentiment of something terrible that comes over me! (*thunder and lightning till ALEXIS on*)

ALEXIS, *fearfully pale staggers into room from door, L.*

MONT. Alexis—ill! what is the matter?

ALEXIS. (*L. C., his whole manner wild*) I have kept the tryst—enough of life is left to me for that. (*sinks into arm chair, which DUVERNAY assists him to*)

HENRI. His hands are icy cold; look at the strange colour of his face.

ALEX. (*starts up*) My face—do you see hers? Mark it well, note the too fascinating beauty of the serpent, the dark eyes that won me, the lips that burned me! See too, the ineradicable sign she bears, the one white lock amid her raven tresses—Know her by that! (*sinks back into chair*)

MONT. Is he mad?

HENRI. No, no, he has been cruelly wronged! Alexis, what can I do for you?

ALEX. Brother, avenge me!

HENRI. (*L.*) I will! I swear it! (*ALEXIS falls back in chair, dead—DUVERNAY looks at him closely*)

MONT. Wounded!

DUVER. (*C. of arm chair, after pause*) No, poisoned! (*thunder and lightning kept up till end—picture—slow drop*)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

Magnificent Saloon in the Tuilleries, open, C.; picture gallery runs along stage, behind C.; chandeliers hung; candelabra placed on stage, brilliantly lighted; doors R. and L.

Richly dressed LADIES and GENTLEMEN discovered, some seated and some standing in groups in conversation, who quietly exit during the scene, and pass along at back—HENRI and VICTOR come on among GUESTS.

HENRI. (*L. C.*) Yes, I have but one toast—the Empire.

VICTOR. (*R. C.*) Not the Emperor?

HENRI. The Empire means the Emperor.

VICTOR. Then the Kingdom means the King. I prefer drinking to the Kingdom.

HENRI. Bold words! Be careful, Victor.

VICTOR. So I am when I am not in the company of gentlemen.

HENRI. I am a soldier of the Empire.

VICTOR. But a gentleman for all that; and to be a gentleman is something in these days of mushroom nobility. (*crosses to R. corner*)

Enter MALICORNE, door R. U. E.

MALI. (*comes down, C.*) Bravo, bravo! An honourable and worthy sentiment, such as might be expected from the lips of Baron Victor de Choiseul! Don't frown, Baron, I will not betray your aristocratic proclivities. There are plenty of them about. You have no idea what an impetus to monarchy and aristocratic institutions the revolution has given. We were bad enough before, but the revolution has made us ten times worse. Revolutions generally do.

HENRI. (L.) Monsieur le Chevalier Malicorne, I believe?

MALI. Quite right, a representative, unworthy I admit, of the old school!

VICTOR. (R.) Very unworthy, I fancy.

MALI. And I hope to be forgiven, if I say that I am astonished at hearing a young soldier declare that the Empire is his only toast.

HENRI. What would you have me add?

MALI. There was a time when a gallant soldier's first toast was woman! Can the Empire boast of no lovely women that demand our homage?

HENRI. A soldier's Queen is his country.

MALI. A capricious mistress, I assure you, especially, if that country be France; why, sir, she changes her lovers, as the year its seasons.

VICTOR. Ah, that is the France of journalism!

MALI. Which is the France of to-day. And it is to-day's smiles and sunshine we must catch without speculating whether the sky will be more brilliant or less unclouded to-morrow. Let man's first toast be woman! He can take to politics when he gets angry in his cups. (*crosses R., and goes up stage*)

Enter DUVERNAY, L. U. E.

DUVER. (C.) Henri, my smartest of captains, I have been looking for you. Madame Lavergne charged me to remind you that you are her partner for the next dance.

HENRI. (*eagerly*) So soon?

DUVER. So soon! Most of the Lavergne's partners think that centuries must elapse before their paradisaical moment.

HENRI. And therefore I say, so soon—I fly.

DUVER. No—no, don't fly; one Icarus took to flying on

waxen wings, when he got too near the sun, his wings melted and he fell.

MALI. (*aside, up stage*) Moth and candle!

DUVER. Walk, my friend, walk. Too violent exercise, especially in a ball room, produces sleepless nights: and those who walk through life, feel no fever in their age.

MALI. (*to DUVERNAY*) Monsieur is a philosopher. (*coming down, R. C.*)

DUVER. No; a doctor.

HENRI. Where have you left Madame Lavergne?

DUVER. On the threshold of the card room.

VICTOR. Then catch her at once, or your chance of dancing with her is lost for to-night at all events.

Exit HENRI, C., and off, L.

DUVER. (*to VICTOR*) She is fond of cards, then?

MALI. To be sure she is; all women love games of chance. Why, a woman's life is one long play at hazard. Her love is fortune; not unfrequently misfortune; her beauty borrows its colour from the *rouge et noir*; she smiles upon the king of diamonds, and frowns upon the knave of hearts. I go to drink the health of woman. *Goes out, L. 3 E.*

DUVER. One hears a good deal about Madame Lavergne.

VICTOR. From our friend Henri? Yes; you will hear more about her from his cousin—the Comte de Montcalm—before long, I suspect.

DUVER. The cold and phlegmatic Bertrand in love! Impossible!

VICTOR. Nothing is impossible in Paris.

DUVER. You astonish me!

VICTOR. Your country people are easily astonished.

DUVER. Monsieur Victor de Choiseul, you have many friends.

VICTOR. Pardon me, I have a large acquaintance.

DUVER. Did you know Alexis de Montcalm?

VICTOR. Intimately!

DUVER. What became of him?

VICTOR. Well, it is difficult to say. I had the honour of converting him from his barbarous Imperialist ideas, and succeeded in persuading him that though Buonaparte is an excellent Corsican, and an admirable military cut-throat—Do you object to my phraseology?

DUVER. Not at all; go on.

VICTOR. My convert, Alexis, was overpoweringly enthusiastic—talked loudly—consequently, the Minister of Police began to pay him his uncomfortable compliments; and so, two years ago, Alexis found it necessary to disappear. (*GUESTS cross at back—some meet and converse*)

DUVER. And so for two years you have seen nothing of him?

VICTOR. Nothing whatever.

DUVER. I can tell you this much—he is dead!

VICTOR. Very likely; I always told him he lived too fast.

DUVER. He died in a mysterious manner.

VICTOR. Ah! that's a common complaint with Buonaparte's enemies!

DUVER. (*aside*) Can it have been a political assassination?

VICTOR. But Alexis always was a mysterious man. But, see, here comes the Chevalier Malicorne!

Enter MALICORNE, L. 3 E.

He knows all about everything and everybody. Question him. I must go back to the ball room. (*goes out c., and off L.*)

DUVER. (*crossing R., aside*) No, his dying words forbid the belief that he was a state victim! (*to MALICORNE*) I hope Monsieur le Chevalier, that woman will be all the better for the libations you have offered at her shrine.

MALI. Without doubt, Monsieur le Docteur. The votary certainly feels the better for his homage, and so I would fain presume, does the object of his veneration.

DUVER. The Baron de Choiseul says that you know everything and everybody!

MALI. The Baron is a true Parisian, and his compliments must be taken for what they are worth.

DUVER. (*abruptly*) When did you last see Alexis?

MALI. I last saw Alexis—(*checking himself*) Which Alexis? I have known several.

DUVER. Alexis de Montcalm!

MALI. De Montcalm! Surely I know the name; but my treacherous memory declines to join the two together.

DUVER. Think again!

MALI. Sir, I am always thinking. The brains of the Malicornes are perpetually busy.

DUVER. The Alexis I refer to was a fine handsome, enthusiastic young man, passionately fond of play—pleasure.

MALI. And paradise, the fools' paradise, I mean.

DUVER. Do you recognise my Alexis?

MALI. My dear Doctor, I recognise twenty Alexises!

DUVER. His opinions, boldly expressed, got him into trouble.

MALI. Ah, they all get into trouble.

DUVER. He disappeared two years ago.

MALI. They all disappear, sooner or later.

DUVER. He was murdered—poisoned!

MALI. Eh, ah, just like an Alexis!

MARGUERITE appears, C.

DUVER. Here comes his cousin, Mademoiselle Marguerite de Montcalm: you may trace a likeness. (*he goes to MARGUERITE*)

MALI. (*vindictively, aside*) Let them all come! I have waited for them long enough.

MARG. Monsieur André, you are forgetful, sir. You were to have danced the last quadrille with me.

DUVER. A thousand pardons. You can guess the business that has detained me.

MALI. (*a i. e*) Bertrand, Henri, Alexis, Marguerite—one is gone, and three remain. Family of Montcalm, smile while you may, for you are doomed! (*goes out, c.*)

MARG. (*coming down, c.*) Still searching for traces of Alexis?

DUVER. Have I not promised you that I will do all I can to learn the secret of his fate.

MARG. (*sadly*) Shall we be the happier if we know it?

DUVER. *We!* Ah, Marguerite, will you give me the right to make your happiness and sorrow all my own?

Enter MONTCALM, door R. U. E.

MARG. Hush! My brother.

DUVER. (*aside*) Why do brothers invariably come in at the wrong time? (*to MONTCALM*) My dear Bertrand, I have scarcely seen you all this evening. Why, my friend, how pale you are!

MONT. (R.) Indeed. Nothing but the heat of the rooms.

MARG. (*crossing, c.*) No—no; I am sure there is something the matter: you are ill. Bertrand, for some time past, I have noticed how silent and *distract* you have been: you are ill, or else something has happened which has caused you great anxiety—what is it?

DUVER. (*who has got round to L. c.—aside*) The old complaint. I have got a touch of it myself.

MONT. Nothing, my sweet sister, nothing, I assure you.

DUVER. (*aside*) Yes; we always call it nothing, even when we know it to be fatal.

MARG. Let André prescribe for you.

DUVER. By all means. The doctor being called in, felt the patient's pulse. Intermittent, feverish. He unhesitatingly ordered bed, and calm consideration in the morning.

MARG. Consideration of what?

DUVER. The whole case: He further ordered that the patient's sister and medical adviser should dance together without delay. (*Music from ball room*)

MARG. It is not serious then?

DUVER. The music—quite the reverse. Permit me, Mademoiselle Marguerite.

MARGUERITE and DUVERNAY *go out, c.*

MONT. *Beware of passion!* the latest warning of my uncle's dark confession. But at the same time he bade me honour love: which is it—love or passion that enthralms me now? How can I tell—I, who never yet have had experience of either. Ah, Louise Lavergne, are you an angel guiding me to heaven, or a syren leading me to my doom? Only time can tell!

(*Music louder*) The sounds of triumph— for better or for worse ; the enchantress comes : I know it. (*Music forte—retires up R.*)

Enter LOUISE, L. U. E., *leaning on the arm of a* MARSHAL OF FRANCE—GUESTS *behind, and* MALICORNE *following.*

LOUISE. (C.) Ah, Monsieur le Marechal, you overwhelm me with your compliments.

MARSHAL. (R.) Pardon, madame, a Marshal of France would cover his enemies with confusion, but he would not bury beauty.

LOUISE. (*laughing*) Not if he were a lady-killer ?

MARSHAL. Ah, then he makes her grave within his heart.

LOUISE. (*disengaging her arm*) If there is room ! Ah, monsieur, I fear man's love is never constant till death.

MALI. (R. C., *behind*) Though woman's hate is !

LOUISE. (*turning and seeing* MALICORNE—*aside*) That man ! (*to* HENRI) Hate ! A shocking sentiment, is it not, Monsieur le Capitaine ?

HENRI. (L.) A libel on the sex ! A woman may pity or despise, she cannot hate.

MALI. Don't you know that the sublime often touches the ridiculous ? So love is very near akin to hate.

LOUISE. (*half aside to* HENRI) I do not know this gentleman.

MALI. (*overhearing*) The Chevalier de Malicorne, who has long thirsted for an opportunity of doing homage at the feet of Madame Lavergne.

LOUISE. (*coldly*) Without ceremony.

MALI. Save that which chivalry and knighthood owe to beauty.

LOUISE. (*scornfully*) Chivalry ! Knighthood ! Relics of barbarism.

MALI. Yes, madame ; like virtue, and a few of the vices.

MONT. (*coming down, C.*) Insolence, for example.

MALI. Monsieur !

LOUISE. Why, Monsieur de Montcalm, we are but jesting.

MALI. Madame is right ; I am sorry that the jest should seem ill-timed. (*aside*) Patience, good sword, patience ! (*MALICORNE goes up, R.*)

Enter VICTOR, L. C.

VICTOR. Messieurs and Mesdames who wish to make their obeisances to Napoleon can do so now. The Emperor receives in the Grand Salle. (*MARSHAL and GUESTS go off, L. U. E.*) Come, Henri, the Emperor is graciously recognising all his favourites.

HENRI. (L., *crossing to* LOUISE) May I not have the pleasure of escorting Madame Lavergne to the Emperor's presence ?

LOUISE. Oh, Napoleon does not care about women ; I am tired, and shall remain here.

VICTOR. (to HENRI) Come!

HENRI. (*irresolute, to LOUISE*) May I remain?

LOUISE. Disloyal! Your Emperor summons you.

HENRI. (*in a low tone*) But if my Empress bids me stay.

LOUISE. Hush, hush, and go.

HENRI. Forgive me, it is so hard to be silent.

(HENRI goes out, C. to L., with VICTOR—MONTCALM still standing back, R. —MALICORNE up, L., watching all that passes)

MALI. (*aside, first looking at LOUISE, then at MONTCALM*)
Humph! Fate and its victim! I am not needed yet. (MALICORNE goes out, C. to L.)

LOUISE. (*seated, L. C., aloud, thinking she is alone*) Oh, what a weary life this is!

MONT. (*coming forward, C.*) What makes it so?

LOUISE. (*starting*) The Comte de Montcalm!

MONT. Yes, I have dared to remain. I am glad that I have done so, for I have learned that the idol of Paris—the beauty of the Capital of Europe—belies the gossip of the world that trumpets her the queen of pleasure, and owns that her life is a weary one.

LOUISE. Where have you lived that you have never heard of people feeling bored?

MONT. It was not *ennui* that provoked that cry. Had you sighed out those words among a crowd, I might have disbelieved them, and thought they were only uttered for effect. You imagined yourself alone, and your lips gave utterance to the true language of your heart.

LOUISE. Men judge women by themselves. Men in society are eloquent with noble sentiments and elevated thoughts. But their practice seldom comes up to their precepts. When they are alone they become what they call philosophers, and sneer at their own conceits, and say what nonsense it all is. As we are your opposite in sex, so are we in everything else. We speak out our natural thoughts in public without fear for the consequences; no hidden meaning in our words. But when we are alone, sentiments, ideas, passions overcome us. (*crossing, C.*)

MONT. (*aside*) Passion! (*aloud*) Then you are not really weary of this life?

LOUISE. How could I be? Can the idol be weary of the worship that is paid to it?

MONT. (L.) That must depend upon the faith of the worshipper.

LOUISE. True! and there is not much faith now-a-days.

MONT. But amid the noisy crowd of sceptics, who repudiate all faith that is not centred in themselves, there may be some whose strong belief has not yet foundered beneath the hurricane of universal infidelity. The morals of the age in which we live are tainted with the boundless desire of conquest,

the greed of gold, the thirst for power, the temptations of unlicensed love! Yet some there are, may be, amid the faithless, faithful still; shall their voice not be heard? Does it find no echo in your heart, Louise?

LOUISE. Yes, an echo; nothing more. (*crossing to L.*)

MONT. Oh! think again.

LOUISE. (*aside*) A word from me, and he will make me the Countess de Montcalm. Shall I say it. What would life be chained to such a man as this? For all his words, I know him—cold, proud, overbearing, solitary. No, I must and will have love. Shall I bear with him any longer?

MONT. You are reflecting on my words, and all they mean?

LOUISE. I am; they are deep, Monsieur le Comte. I cannot get to the bottom of them so soon.

HENRI *appears, C.—he starts, and listens.*

MONT. Take them home, Louise, study them, find in them the hope of my life. May I take your hand?

LOUISE. It is not fettered yet. (*a look of despair comes over HENRI'S face*)

MONT. To all that I have said, add but this kiss. (*kisses her hand, and goes up stage*)

LOUISE. (*aside, with a half shudder*) His lips are cold as ice. No, I want warmth and passion. (*crossing, R.*)

(MONTCALM bows respectfully—meets HENRI, who conquers himself by an effort—seizes BERTRAND'S hand, and shakes it warmly—MONTCALM goes out C. to L.)

HENRI. (*aside*) He has won her; henceforth I am her brother. (*comes down, L. C.*)

LOUISE. (*aside*) No; it would be intolerable. (*sees HENRI—her manner changes*) Ah, le Capitaine Henri, I hope the Emperor has favourably received his gallant soldier?

HENRI. (*with constraint*) The Emperor never forgets those who have served him well.

LOUISE. What freezing tones! Did you expect his majesty to make you a colonel at a ball in the Tuilleries? There is something of disappointment in your voice.

HENRI. I assure you—you are mistaken, Madame Lavergne.

LOUISE. We are distant in our salutations to-night, Monsieur.

HENRI. What would you have me say?

LOUISE. That you have not forgotten that you are going to dance with me again.

HENRI. Would you not rather that I excused you from your promise?

LOUISE. Yes; if you do not wish to keep me to it.

HENRI. Who would willingly forego such a pleasure with Madame Lavergne?

LOUISE. Again so distant.

HENRI. Louise!

LOUISE. Ah, now we are overcoming the pride imperial favour has cast upon us. Why should you call me Madame Lavergne, when you can say Louise so prettily!

HENRI. (*aside*) Does she use this language for Bertrand's sake? (*aloud*) Am I always to call you Louise?

LOUISE. Yes, if I may call you Henri!

HENRI. Be it so. Brother and sister have the right to use such familiarities.

LOUISE. Brother and sister. (*aside*) Has Montcalm spoken to him? Has he accepted this poor relationship. (*aloud*) Am I then to think you love me with a brother's love?

HENRI. (*in a low tone*) Yes.

LOUISE. Indeed!

Enter DUVERNAY and MARGUERITE, C.

See, here comes one whom you have always loved as sister, can you love me as you love her?

HENRI. (*after a pause*) No! (*crossing, L., and up stage*)

LOUISE. (*aside, with smile of triumph*) He speaks the truth. (*goes up stage, R.*)

DUVER. (*to MARGUERITE, as they come down, C.*) There you have imperial glory, Mademoiselle Marguerite, what can one wish for more? We had a king—a bad one. The Revolution came and told us kings were all nonsense, and gave us a Republic, then the Republic gave us an emperor. It's all the same to us Doctors. Long live the empire! Ah, hem! I fear we have interrupted a tête-à-tête.

HENRI. (*R. C., confusedly*) No, no; you know Madame Lavergne?

MARG. Madame Lavergne! I have heard so much of her.

HENRI. From Bertrand, doubtless. (*crossing, R.*) Madame Lavergne, permit me to present to you my cousin, Marguerite de Montcalm! (*MARGUERITE bows, LOUISE haughtily inclines her head, her eyes on MARGUERITE, who slowly lifts her gaze to LOUISE's face*)

MARG. (*starting violently*) Ah, that face! (*shrinks back to DUVERNAY*)

LOUISE. (*astonished*) I trust, Mademoiselle de Montcalm, there is nothing in it to alarm you?

MARG. Oh, forgive me; but I fancied I had seen your face before.

LOUISE. Scarcely, I think; for my part I never forget a face I have once seen, and I do not think that we have met before. (*aside*) What can she mean?

MARG. Doubtless some dream. (*sinks on seat, L. C.*)

LOUISE. (*crossing to MARGUERITE*) The heat of the rooms has overcome you. We cannot do better than leave you to the care of Doctor Duvernay. (*sweetly to HENRI*) Will you take me to the ball room? LOUISE and HENRI go out, C. to L.

MARG. (*who has risen and crosses, watching LOUISE off*) André!

DUVER. (L. C.) Marguerite!

MARG. Who is this Madame Lavergne? What is she, and whence does she come?

DUVER. I'll tell you all I know, but mind I don't vouch for the accuracy of my information. She is said to be the widow of a wealthy old gentleman, who became enamoured of her some few years ago at Marseilles: what she was doing there, I, from discretion, never enquired. She had no father or mother—no ostensible encumbrances, not even money. He married her, and died. She came to Paris and lived. That's all.

MARG. Have you observed Montcalm lately?

DUVER. Well, I have seen him, certainly.

MARG. Have you noticed anything strange in his demeanour?

DUVER. It is always strange.

MARG. But more strange now than ever. How do you account for that?

DUVER. I have no doubt I could easily account for it, if he would call me in professionally, allow me to feel his pulse, look at his tongue, ascertain his recent diet, general habits, and usual hour of going to bed.

MARG. Oh, you are jesting. (*crosses to L.*)

DUVER. Doctors never jest, except when they professionally compare their fashionable patients.

MARG. Doctors imagine they have sharp eyes, yet you have not seen what I have.

DUVER. (*aside*) I know what she's going to say.

MARG. (*advances, c.*) Montcalm loves this woman!

DUVER. (*aside*) I knew it was coming. (*aloud*) So do many others; what then?

MARG. What if he should wish to marry her?

DUVER. Marry her!

MARG. Ay! In my turn—what then?

DUVER. Why, no one can prevent him.

MARG. Regard my words as you will, that woman is the fate of our family.

DUVER. Oh, Marguerite, it is you who are jesting now!

MARG. Do you remember that evening when we all met at the Chateau last summer—the storm?

DUVER. Of course!

MARG. The face I saw at the window?

DUVER. The face you thought you saw!

MARG. Her face! I tell you, André, her face!

DUVER. Oh, impossible!

MARG. Call me mad, if you will; but on that night, outside the window, I saw the face of Madame Lavergne! (*crosses, R.*)

Enter MALICORNE, door L. U. E.

MALI. Madame Lavergne! Wherever I go, nothing but that name—Madame Lavergne! Can any one tell me why?

DUVER. (L.) The Chevalier Malicorne has eyes which are

not indifferent to beauty, I presume. There is a reply to your question.

MALI. Ah, the gentleman I mistook for a philosopher; and, if I am not mistaken again, I find in his company Mademoiselle de Montcalm. Doctor, you ought to know that beauty is only skin deep.

DUVER. Sir, we all know it, but none of us believe it. Belief in beauty is the one faith that neither argument nor experience can dull or dissipate.

MALI. You are a philosopher, after all. Mademoiselle de Montcalm, too, appears lost in thought.

MARG. Sir!

MALI. And Madame de Lavergne is the subject of her contemplation.

MARG. Monsieur Malicorne, I am not of your acquaintance.

MALI. The misfortune is mine.

MARG. Monsieur Duvernay, will you conduct me to the ball-room? (*going up, R.*)

MALI. (*aside to DUVERNAY*) One moment! You are not favourably inclined towards me.

DUVER. I could not think of contradicting you.

MALI. You admire, but at the same time you dislike, this Madame Lavergne?

DUVER. You interpret my sentiments perfectly.

MALI. You are so candid that I will ask a favour of you. Will you grant it?

DUVER. Anything short of friendship.

MALI. You are too good! Oblige me by telling Madame Lavergne that the Chevalier Malicorne awaits her here.

DUVER, (*aside*) I could not wish her in worse company. (*aloud*) Chevalier, for this once I will convey your message.

MALI. I shall be eternally grateful. (MALICORNE *bows to DUVERNAY, who returns it, both excessively polite*—DUVERNAY *crosses up stage, C., going off with MARGUERITE, who bows her acknowledgements coldly—business of bowing with MALICORNE and DUVERNAY repeated*) *Exit DUVERNAY and MARGUERITE, L. U. E.* One of the secrets of life is never to be secret. Seem to tell everybody everything, and you may be sure they will never find out the one little corner which you keep concealed; for the man who has the reputation of being the most candid is generally found to be the greatest liar. The doctor will give my message, but will she come? Yes. Poor Louise! she has seen my face frequently, here, there, and everywhere, but she has never spoken to me before to-night. She wonders who and what I am. She will come—a woman's curiosity will give her good name a long start and beat it easily.

Enter LOUISE, C.—she pauses—MALICORNE does not turn.
I hear the rustling of her dress. I thought she would come.

LOUISE. (*down, R. C.*) By what right does the Chevalier Malicorne send such a message to me?

MALI. By the right that made you obey it.

LOUISE. I come to put an end to your persecutions of me. By some strange fate you and I have often met; for years past you have now and again come across my path. I have seen your eyes fixed on me at Saint Petersburg, at Vienna, at Marseilles, at Paris. Never till to-night have you dared address me. Now, sir, what is the meaning of this?

MALI. It is easily explained. I have taken an interest in you—I have chosen to watch your career. There is not a chain of events in your life that I cannot tell link by link.

LOUISE. You!

MALI. I. A man who had not the one terrible desire upon him that I have, might have made himself known to you long ago. Had there been no shadow over both which neither can dissolve, a happier life had been in store for both. Years ago, I knew of your existence. I sought you. I found you. You are necessary to me. I have a wrong to avenge, and I see in you the surest means to accomplish my vengeance!

LOUISE. You hardly know, sir, what you are saying, or to whom you speak. (*crosses, L.*)

MALI. Shall I justify my language by reference to past events? Do I not see before me the child that was brought up in a home where she was never happy, the child whose mother's name or fate were never told her, whose father was never spoken of? The harsh female relative with whom the child passed her early years died suddenly. The child was cast upon the world, she was clever and accomplished, and assisted at a convent school. Impatient of restraint, this girl, at the age of sixteen threw up her employment, and went into the world to seek her fortune there. Shall I trace her onward career step by step, her engagement and success at the theatre, her visits to the gaming tables. Shall I tell the history of the false oath she swore in a court of justice—her subsequent trial for perjury?

LOUISE. Enough of your romance. The mysterious Chevalier Malicorne is merely an agent of police, and not a very scrupulous one. Leave me, sir, nor presume to speak to me again.

MALI. Ah, if you knew how the proud beauty of your face, the anger flashing from your eyes, the very accents of your voice, rouse the dark demon in my heart that I have kept hushed so long! Leave you! Never more, till the purpose of my life be consummated.

LOUISE. What! Do you dream that I in any way would link myself with such as you? Beware, sir, I have friends! (*going up stage, L. C.*)

MALI. And so have I! Your friends are powerful enough

to incarcerate me in Vincennes, but my friends are your secrets, one of which revealed would condemn you to the guillotine!

LOUISE. (*turning savagely*) You threaten me! I say again, beware! The man that threatens me carries his life in his hand.

MALI. Do I not know it? I have not yet forgotten—(*he whispers in her ear—she recoils*) And now, Louise Lavergne, shall I ask in vain?

LOUISE. What do you require of me?

MALI. The Count de Montcalm loves you; he is ready to place his name and fortune at your feet! Marry him!

LOUISE. Marry him! Wed that marble statue! Be chained to that frozen piece of pride! There is something hateful to me in his very touch; I loathe him. (*crosses, R.*)

MALI. Yet, you must marry him!

LOUISE. Do your worst, I will not.

MALI. (*with tenderness in his voice*) Louise, there are times when gazing on your face, I feel again the tremble of an early tenderness, that half persuades me to forego my vengeance if I could but see you a bright and happy woman. The hearts of the worst of us are not all bad, and there are moments when the agonising cry of nature will be heard. Marry Montcalm! It may be that he will win your love and make you happy. If fate will have it so, I will bury my deep wrongs in the grave beside which I swore to wreak my vengeance on the race, pass from your sight, and trouble you no more. But marry him you must!

LOUISE. (*crossing up stage, R. C.*) I will suffer this insolence no longer. Suspect me of what you please, I will be dictated to by no man.

MALI. You defy me, then? Take care! I am no agent of police, but I can give them a clue to a crime which baffled them! (*Music*) Hark! the ball is drawing to a close, the guests approach! The highest in France have poured their homage at the shrine of Madame Lavergne! What, if a few days hence, the salons of Paris—

GUESTS *re-enter from back*, HENRI, DUVERNAY, MONTCALM, and MARGUERITE.

echo with the tale that the beautiful Louise is the convicted poisoner of her lover! Montcalm is coming for your decision. Criminal, obey my orders!

MONTCALM *down, R., takes the hand of LOUISE, who, from a sign of MALICORNE, slowly presents it to MONTCALM, who respectfully kisses it as—drop descends.*

ACT III.

SCENE.—*Garden of the Chateau Montcalm. Window with steps and terrace, R. 3 E.; door, R. 2 E.; bench, L. C.*

MARGUERITE *standing on steps, R.*—MADAME GRANDIN *seated at wheel, spinning—Music—sun dial set, C.*

MARG. And so you and Grandin have lived in the village fifty years?

MAD. G. Yes, Mademoiselle, and neither of us have ever wanted to go any further.

MARG. And the best part of that time you were in my father's service?

MAD. G. Both of us. Heaven rest his soul.

MARG. And my mother: was she a kind mistress?

MAD. G. A better and a kinder lady never breathed.

MARG. I can just remember her. It is a sad thing to lose a mother when one is still a child.

MAD. G. But you have grown up just as she would have wished. You are very much like your mother, Mademoiselle Marguerite.

MARG. It was after her death that you came into my uncle's service?

MAD. G. Even so.

MARG. And then my uncle married. (*coming down steps*) Tell me something about my aunt, Madame Grandin.

MAD. G. Dear, dear, there's a thread broken—two threads. Ah, I must go and get another skein. (*rises hurriedly and is going towards door, R. 2 E.*)

MARG. Not yet; you can be idle for a few minutes.

MAD. G. No, indeed. It is sunset too; I must go and see the cows milked.

MARG. But I want you to talk to me. How is it that whenever I begin to talk about my uncle's wife, you always try to change the conversation, Madame Grandin?

MAD. G. Oh, mademoiselle, it is only because you always begin to talk of her just as I am obliged to attend to something else.

MARG. I will come with you to the farm, and we can talk as we go.

MAD. G. Oh, no, mademoiselle, I cannot talk and do my duties. (*aside*) The very milk would turn sour if we talked of her aunt.

MARG. Tell me, was she very beautiful?

MAD. G. I didn't think so, mademoiselle; but tastes differ.

MARG. She died soon after marriage?

MAD. G. Yes, fortunately—unfortunately, I mean.

MARG. What did she die of?

MAD. G. A fit, mademoiselle, a fit. Now I must go and see the cows milked.

MARG. Stay one moment. Was my uncle very sorry?

Enter DUVERNAY, L. U. E.

MAD. G. The cows, mademoiselle, the cows; and I know somebody will steal the milk if I am not there. (*sees DUVERNAY*) Ah, Monsieur le Docteur, must I not go and see the cows milked?

DUVER. Of course you must, Madame Grandin. I am sure I don't know why, but you speak in a tone that defies contradiction.

MAD. G. There; you hear, mademoiselle. (*goes out door, R.*)

MARG. I was talking to Madame Grandin when you came in.

DUVER. So I observed.

MARG. I was asking her about the Countess de Montcalm, my aunt.

DUVER. And Madame Grandin had to go and look after the cows. How many cows do you keep?

MARG. You have lived in the neighbourhood all your life, André, what do you remember of her?

DUVER. Really, I don't think Madame Grandin has much changed.

MARG. André, I am speaking of my aunt!

DUVER. Oh, ah, to be sure; yes, your aunt. Splendid weather, isn't it?

MARG. What do you remember of her?

DUVER. Nothing—absolutely nothing.

MARG. But you must have heard something about her. Was she not young and beautiful?

DUVER. I believe Count Julian Montcalm was considered a man of taste.

MARG. Tell me, what did she die of so suddenly?

DUVER. An accident.

MARG. I was sure there was some mystery about it. Madame Grandin says she died in a fit.

DUVER. No mystery at all; a fit brought on by an accident. (*aside*) Now, I wonder what she is driving at!

MARG. Now, André, tell me have you any faith in ghosts?

DUVER. None at all. I wouldn't lend a ghost a centime!

MARG. Oh, André, be serious! If I were to tell you that here upon this terrace, I—looking out of my window yonder in the dead of night—had seen the figure of a woman suddenly appear, and stand close beside those windows, then fall, then vanish, what would you say?

DUVER. I should say—nightmare.

MARG. Oh, you are laughing at me.

She goes out angrily up steps, R., and through window.

DUVER. (*looking after her*) No, I am not, though I am glad

you think I am, Marguerite. She believes she has seen on that spot where the miserable Faustine was murdered, the apparition of a woman, but she knows nothing of the story. On the night of Alexis' death, she saw a face outside that window, which she afterwards thought she recognised in the person of Louise Lavergne; in fact, she was positive she recognized it—at least, that the resemblance was most striking. Now, doctor and philosopher, how do you explain all this? If she really saw anything at all on that occasion, it was Louise's face, or one uncommonly like it. If in some unaccountable way she saw the restless spirit of the murdered Faustine St. Just, there must be a great likeness—St. Just, Alexis—can it be possible—no, I will not believe it!

Enter HENRI, L. U. E.

Ah, Henri, low-spirited and gloomy still. Haven't I cured you yet? You will injure my professional reputation if you don't become the gay captain once again soon.

HENRI. My malady is beyond your skill.

DUVER. Then you evidently know what it is, and you don't deal fairly by your doctor. Tell me all.

HENRI. If I possessed my ancestral faith, I could tell my secret in the confessional; it is my soul that needs healing, not my body.

DUVER. And you have committed no crime. I have been wanting an opportunity to talk to you since my return, but you have shunned me, Henri—yes, you have feared lest I should learn your secret. I guess nothing but what may easily be guessed. You love some one.

HENRI. (*wildly*) No! I do not love—I worship, I adore, I passionately long to hold her in my arms; I hunger for her kiss! Oh, I am mad! (*goes up to sun dial, c.*)

DUVER. (*aside*) A very severe attack. (*aloud*) I gather from all this, that the object of your worship, adoration, &c., belongs to somebody else.

HENRI. André, seek to know no more. (*coming down*) There, I am calmer now; let us speak of something else.

DUVER. We will. Henri, what about your oath?

HENRI. What oath?

DUVER. To avenge Alexis.

HENRI. I have not forgotten it.

DUVER. But you have let justice slumber. What have you done towards tracing home the guilt?

HENRI. I have learned nothing of importance, though I have made enquiries in every direction.

DUVER. Because you have not perseveringly followed up your enquiries. Something else has absorbed your energies, Master Henri. Now, for the sake of the family to which I hope soon to belong, I have been more keen in tracing the

footsteps of crime. Henri, it is my firm belief that Alexis fell a victim to a woman's hate.

HENRI. Poor brother! I care not—man or woman—I will keep my oath. (*crosses, L.*)

• DUVER. Listen to the story as I frame it from the materials I have gathered. Two years before his death, Alexis was obliged to quit Paris on account of the political creed he had adopted. He changed his name; but I have succeeded in identifying him at Genoa and Marseilles. In Italy he became passionately enamoured of a beautiful adventuress, who had made some sensation on the stage at Milan and elsewhere. Her coldness was the universal theme among young men, and though it is more than probable that she at first encouraged the advances of Alexis, she soon grew weary of him. But he was not so easily got rid of. He devoted his energies to hunting up this woman's story. It is most likely that he was successful, for she insulted him publicly one day, and then he told her that his shadow should for ever follow her—that wherever she went, he would trumpet her story. And as she had insulted him and renounced his love, no other man should ever call her wife while he lived. Henri, *he died—poisoned!* Do you not see a woman's hand in this?

HENRI. The woman's name?

DUVER. She was known in the theatrical world as Gabrielle St. Just?

HENRI. St. Just, the name of the late Countess de Montcalm!

DUVER. Even so; and when your uncle married her, she had an infant daughter, who was sent away to be educated by some member of the family of St. Just.

HENRI. But you do not think it possible that that daughter was this Gabrielle St. Just?

DUVER. You have read the dying words of Julian de Montcalm. You know what sort of a woman Faustine St. Just was—as the mother, so the daughter!

HENRI. And what has become of this Gabrielle?

DUVER. Ah, what indeed. For the present I am at the end of my story. Doubtless she had good reason to fear Alexis' threats, and she has succeeded in obscuring her identity.

HENRI. But we will find her out!

DUVER. We will!

Enter GRANDIN, door, R. 2 E.

GRAND. Monsieur Henri, Monsieur Henri! I am sure the Count is returning!

HENRI. (*agitated*) Bertrand! Impossible! In his last letter he said we were not to expect him and madame for a week at least.

DUVER. Yes, but time always goes so oddly in the honeymoon.

GRAND. But I saw a fourgon enter the gates. Depend upon it the Count and Countess are not far behind.

HENRI. (*aside*, DUVERNAY *watching him*) Oh, how I have dreaded this!

DUVER. (*aside*) Humph! the case is worse than I expected.

Enter ANATOLE, from door, R. 2 E.

ANAT. Messieurs, I have the honour to salute you. Dear Grandin, you look younger than ever. How is the amiable Madame Grandin?

DUVER. (*sharply*) Where is your master?

ANAT. He will be here almost immediately, with Madame la Comtesse. I am in advance with the luggage.

DUVER. In that case we will prepare to meet them. (*to HENRY, pointedly*) I say, we will prepare to meet them.

HENRI. (*abstractedly*) Yes, yes, we must prepare.

DUVER. A few sharp turns round the garden with your medical adviser will be as good as a tonic. Come.

DUVERNAY and HENRI *go out*.

ANAT. Beloved Grandin, should it please Providence to make an angel of Madame Grandin, don't you marry again.

GRAND. Well, I'll try not to.

ANAT. I thought of marrying once.

GRAND. Did you indeed.

ANAT. But I have changed my mind.

GRAND. She won't have you, I suppose?

ANAT. Grandin, your supposition is absurd upon the face of it. She won't have me because I don't intend to give her the chance.

GRAND. Poor thing, she has had a very narrow escape.

ANAT. She has indeed, and she may thank Madame la Comtesse for it.

GRAND. I hope she will be eternally grateful for it.

ANAT. I shall be. How long have you been married?

GRAND. Thirty years.

ANAT. And you still survive! What a dreadful existence you must have dragged out.

GRAND. Well, no, not so bad on the whole. Now look here, young man, what do you mean?

ANAT. You have not seen Madame la Comtesse?

GRAND. Never!

ANAT. You have heard she is beautiful?

GRAND. Very, I am told.

ANAT. Looks amiable?

GRAND. So they say.

ANAT. All, in fact that a man can desire in a wife?

GRAND. I have heard so.

ANAT. You think all women are very much alike?

GRAND. I should think so.

ANAT. Then on the whole, I should prefer Madame Lucifer to the Countess. As it is, I remain a bachelor.

GRAND. Posterity will be grateful to you. (*gate bell*)

ANAT. Hark, they arrive! Come, the rooms are not yet prepared.

GRAND. Madame Grandin will see to that.

ANAT. An excellent person. I kiss her hands, but does she understand Parisian luxury? The chamber of Madame la Comtesse should be wainscoted with gold, the toilet table made of ivory, the bed should be stuffed with the down from angels' wings, the curtains made of richest silk, the carpets velvet pile, the air redolent with perfumes!

GRAND. And her sleep?

ANAT. Eternal, if I could have my way. Come along.

Exit GRANDIN and ANATOLE, R. 2 E.

Enter MONTCALM and LOUISE by window R., and down steps.

MONT. You are at home, Louise. Welcome to the Chateau Montcalm.

LOUISE. (*coldly*) I should have expected other welcomes than yours.

MONT. We have returned so suddenly: it was your wish.

LOUISE. I was sick of travelling. (*crossing to L.*)

MONT. Here you can have the rest that you have longed for.

LOUISE. Rather dull here, is it not? (*looking round*)

MONT. I will invite our neighbours.

LOUISE. Farmers, peasants, and curés, I suppose.

MONT. Pardon me, here in the Basses Pyrenees reside some of the oldest families in France.

LOUISE. My dear Montcalm, as if one family was not just as old as another. But everything is old in the country. It is only in Paris that everybody is young.

MONT. (*aside*) Can nothing satisfy her?

Enter MARGUERITE, DUVERNAY and HENRI, R. 3 E.

MARG. (*embracing MONTCALM*) My dear brother, this is indeed an unexpected pleasure, and therefore all the sweeter. I am so glad to see you again!

MONT. Dear Marguerite, here is your new sister.

MARG. (*curtseying*) Madame!

LOUISE. (*crossing and kissing her*) Nay, a warmer salutation; we are sisters, are we not? Monsieur Henri, come, will you not claim a brother's privilege?

HENRI. (*kissing her cheek*) A brother's kiss, Louise.

LOUISE. (*aside*) Too sweet for that. (*aloud*) The Doctor Duvernay, I think.

DUVER. (R.) Himself, madame. Soon to be a brother too. (*aside*) But I don't desire any privileges.

LOUISE. (C.) The sooner the better.

DUVER. (*aside*) And so get rid of us. (*aloud*) Quite my idea, madame; there is nothing to wait for now, except the consent of Monsieur de Montcalm.

LOUISE. Oh, he will give it; your marriage shall be celebrated at once. I shall think it a good omen for my own married life, if one of my first acts is to make you two happy. Come, Marguerite, will you not name the day? (*she takes her hand, MARGUERITE trembles*) Why how you tremble, child! the excitement is too much for you. (*turns away, sits L. C.*)

DUVER. Marguerite, what is the matter.

MARG. (R. C.) It is the face of the phantom, André, and her touch is as the touch of death!

DUVER. You cling to your fancy then?

MARG. I abide by my woman's instinct.

DUVER. Ah, there's no arguing with that! (*goes up, R.*)

Enter ANATOLE, R. 2 E.

ANAT. The apartments of Monsieur le Comte and Madame la Comtesse are now prepared.

MONT. Then we will get rid of the dust of travelling; we shall dine, Marguerite?

MARG. In half an hour, Bertrand.

MONT. Good—will you come, Louise.

LOUISE. I will follow you directly.

MONTCALM *goes out, followed by ANATOLE—MARGUERITE regarding LOUISE with a terrified look.*

DUVER. (*aside to MARGUERITE*) You must control yourself, or you will be my patient instead of my wife—come!

MARG. The mystery must be solved.

MARGUERITE and DUVERNAY *go out at door, R. 2 E.*

LOUISE. (*who is sitting on stone seat, L. C., her back to HENRI, who is up stage*) Henri, I know you are there, though you have not spoken so long. (*he turns and advances irresolutely*) You are coming to me now. I am so pleased with your silence, Henri.

HENRI. You understand my feelings then?

LOUISE. I think I do.

HENRI. You have chosen to become the wife of one who is to me a brother—and so you have silenced me for evermore.

LOUISE. Why so—may not brother speak to sister?

HENRI. Not when their relationship is such as yours and mine.

LOUISE. Ah then, you do not love me as you love Marguerite?

HENRI. You have had my answer to that question.

LOUISE. How do you love me then?

HENRI. That question is answered—you are Bertrand's wife.

LOUISE. I scarcely understand you. (*rises*) Perhaps I shall comprehend you better in a day or two.

HENRI. You will not have the chance; I go to join the army to-morrow.

LOUISE. To-morrow? Oh, Henry, do you hate me so very much?

HENRI. Hate you, Louise?

LOUISE. Why do you fly from me thus?

HENRI. Because I fear you!

LOUISE. Fear me?

HENRI. Aye, and myself.

LOUISE. And is Henri de Montcalm a coward?

HENRI. (*passionately*) Yes, an abject coward! I shrink at the touch of your hand; I dare not meet your eyes; I tremble at the sound of your voice. There is a fascination about you which will destroy me if I do not escape from it. Why, you draw these words from me though I should have died rather than have spoken them, for that which is far dearer to me than life is in peril while I remain beside you—my honour!

LOUISE. How can that be?

HENRI. Will you drag from me the passionate avowal once again? Silence, my tongue!

LOUISE. Henri, you love me still?

HENRI. Yes, and it is my curse; I must carry it with me to my grave. (*rushes out, door R.*)

LOUISE. Fool, to have yielded to a braggart's threat! Weak idiot, to have sacrificed an hour of love for a life of fettered hate! He—a coward! Not half the dastard that I was to yield myself a tool to Malicorne's revenge. And from the dread of the exposure of a deed which he might vaunt as truth, and I proclaim a lie! Where were my woman's wits—my woman's heart!

MALICORNE *appears through window, R., and down steps to C. at back.*

How to undo what I have done—come what will—passion shall find a way! (*turns and sees MALICORNE*) You here! You are come in time.

MALI. I thought you would make me welcome; may I offer you my congratulations?

LOUISE. Do you know what you have done?

MALI. Married you to one man, while you love another. I know it, perfectly.

LOUISE. You did it of set purpose.

MALI. I am not disposed to deny it. But you are not in a fit state to listen to reason.

LOUISE. I will listen to nothing but the voice of love. Hear me, dark plotter! Proclaim what you believe to be my secret to the world, hand me over to the justice which you yourself have baulked so long; so rid me of the husband you

have tied me to, and I will thank you from the scaffold of the guillotine! (*crosses, R.*)

MALI. And Henri, he will thank me too. He will mourn the loss of such a love, will he not? Or will he not rather tell you to your face how much he loathes you? Ah, you are silent at the contemplation of the picture I have painted, you may trust second thoughts; they generally have their wisdom.

LOUISE. Chevalier Malicorne, I decline all intercourse with you. I go my way, go you yours! (*going towards R. 3 E., up steps*)

MALI. But what if you must bear me company?

LOUISE. (*turns sharply*) Must!

MALI. Ay, must! *Gabrielle St. Just!*

LOUISE. (*coming down steps*) Silence!

MALI. No, you do not know that the name of St. Just was once well known at the Chateau Montcalm. I have vowed vengeance upon the family, and you must take my vow; for there, on yonder threshold, the uncle of Bertrand de Montcalm slew your mother!

LOUISE. My mother?

MALI. Yes, the Count Julian de Montcalm wedded Faustine St. Just, and strangled her! Hush, not a word! No matter why I am her avenger! Nature bids you help me. Now listen, I am come here, a chosen courier from Paris, with despatches for your husband to carry on a secret mission to Madrid.

LOUISE. What then?

MALI. He will be absent for a month at least.

LOUISE. Well?

MALI. Henri remains behind.

LOUISE. You are mistaken, he returns at once to rejoin his regiment.

MALI. But I have an extended leave of absence for him in my pocket.

LOUISE. He will not accept it.

MALI. Not if you urge him to?

LOUISE. What is your scheme?

MALI. That will unfold itself.

LOUISE. Be it what it will, I am no accomplice. (*goes up stage*)

MALI. We shall see.

Enter MONTCALM, door R. 2 E., followed by MARGUERITE, DUVERNAY; and HENRI—MONTCALM carrying papers.

MONT. Chevalier, your arrival is most unexpected, as are the papers you bring me. To whom am I indebted for this mark of favour from the Emperor?

MALI. The Emperor never gives his reasons for his conduct.

DUVER. Wise man!

MONT. Louise, these despatches order me to depart instantly for Madrid; I am not to lose a moment. Will you forgive me for leaving you at such a time as this?

LOUISE. The Emperor's orders are imperative. How long must you be absent?

MONT. A month or six weeks; but I leave you in safe keeping. Marguerite, my sister, you will be here.

DUVER. That reminds me. Mademoiselle Marguerite and I have been waiting some time for your formal consent to our marriage, will you grant it?

MONT. You have it freely. Then, to you, Henri, I commit the guardianship of my wife.

HENRI. To me? My leave of absence expires in a few days; I have to rejoin my regiment.

MALI. How forgetful I am! I have a document for you, Monsieur le Capitaine, entrusted to me by the Minister of War. Here it is—a further leave of absence for two months.

MONT. (*crossing, L. C.*) Then, there is no further difficulty. Henri, my cousin—no, no, my brother, I commit Louise to you. (*picture—drop quick*)

MALICORNE.

LOUISE.

DUVERNAY.

MONTCALM.

E. MARGUERITE.

HENRI. L.

END OF THE THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

SCENE.—*Salon in the Chateau de Montcalm. (enclosed Scene)*

LOUISE *discovered writing at table, R. C.*

LOUISE. He shuns me, for he loves me with a passion he cannot control when he is with me. But his cousin, my statue husband, whom I was forced to wed—his cousin, whom he calls his brother, has committed me to his keeping, and what he calls his honour is at stake. Bah, I have seen enough of man's honour to know that it is but another name for selfishness;—how much does he think of woman's honour when it is at his mercy? But I love you, Henri—you love me, nothing shall stand between us. Come, I must invite you. (*sits at table, R. C., and writes and folds letter and places it in folds of portfolio*) There, Monsieur le Capitaine, can you resist that appeal?

Enter HENRI, door L. 2 E.; LOUISE sees him, and with a cry of joy shuts up blotting book, leaving letter inside.

Ah, I thought you could not be long away.

HENRI. Louise, I come to say adieu.

LOUISE. What do you mean? Are you not left to guard me?

HENRI. You need my guardianship, such as it is, no longer. André and Marguerite have returned to the village. They will protect you.

LOUISE. (*aside*) Returned so soon? (*aloud*) But Marguerite does not care for me, Henri. Besides, she lives at some little distance, and has her home and husband to attend to. Oh, do not leave me!

HENRI. Louise, you do not know the fires that burn within my veins. The agonies of heart that leave me neither rest nor sleep. The strife between the tormenting fiend that drags me to you, and the good angel that still guards my honour!

LOUISE. (*aside*) But yet he comes to say, "adieu!"

HENRI. So we must part, Louise, and never meet again?

LOUISE. Part! meet no more! Oh Henri, do you know what you are saying? You have come to me, the one bright gleam of happiness that has ever shone upon my weary life. The sorrows and the sufferings I have endured, vanish, when I gaze into your eyes, and hear you speak to me. The clouds that hang around me melt at your presence, and the heart that I thought dead, warms into a new existence when you are with me. Oh, Henri, I am a wretched, miserable woman; do not make my burden too hard for me to bear!

HENRI. Louise, Louise, you must not speak to me like this.

LOUISE. Ah, have I not stifled all my thoughts too long? Have I not seen your misery? Have I not measured it by my own? No, no, you must not leave me.

HENRI. Yes, and for ever! (*turns to go*)

LOUISE. For ever! Does he know what he is doing? Are his eyes blinded? Does he know that he carries my life with him, that if he leaves me there is nothing left for me, but to die, because of the great love that he has kindled here? (*HENRI going towards door, L.*) What, leaving me without one kind word, one tender wish? (*HENRI turns back*) Oh, no, Henri, my love! (*she advances, he turns*) Not yet, not yet, Henri, stay with me a little longer, that I may grow used to the thought of parting. Only a few hours longer, Henri, promise me this!

HENRI. I promise.

LOUISE. (*aside*) Won!

Enter DUVERNAY, door R.

LOUISE. Ah! Monsieur André Duvernay, we were speaking of you but now. I am so charmed that you and Marguerite are returned. Really Henri and I are becoming like two old gossips in the village, and I believe we should turn into vegetables soon, if some one didn't come to enliven us.

DUVER. Turn into vegetables, my dear Countess. We may

be animals physically, but we are all vegetables morally : at first starting we appear above ground, and look so innocent and helpless that we must be taken great care of, and gently tended. But all the while our roots are taking firm hold upon the earth by which we have to live. In the spring-tide of youth and adventure, our existence is tolerably precarious ; in the glow of summer prosperity we exhibit with some ostentation our blooming charms without caring to hide our thorns ; in the autumn, when we feel that we are fading, we borrow graces from the other hues of nature, and trade upon the remembrance of what we were. And in the winter——

HENRI. We die !

DUVER. Precisely so, my dear Henri, only I intended to clothe that prosy fact with poetic fancy.

LOUISE. Well, we are in our summer now, so we had better enjoy ourselves while it lasts.

DUVER. By all means. (*aside, looking at HENRI*) Summer, eh ! Rather a warm one, and thunder-storms about, I fear. (*aloud*) News from Bertrand lately ?

LOUISE. Yes, he has written.

DUVER. Still in Madrid ?

LOUISE. I believe so.

DUVER. (*aside*) That means she hasn't read his letters ! (*aloud to HENRI*) Leave of absence soon up, Henri ? Europe is getting agitated.

HENRI. Indeed !

DUVER. (*aside*) And he hasn't read the journals. Bad symptoms these. (*aloud*) Yes, the Emperor's ideas don't harmonise with those entertained at London, Vienna, and St. Petersburg. Doubtless, by this time war has been declared in Paris.

HENRI. War ?

DUVER. Even so. Glorious war ! International murder upon an extended scale. Crime is only crime when it is small and mean. Look at it through a glass of extra power, and it assumes the proportions of patriotic and heroic virtue.

HENRI. War declared—I must anticipate a recall to the army and return at once.

DUVER. You are right, you will confirm the General's good opinion of you. (*goes up and sits, L. C.*)

HENRI. I will not lose a moment. (*going, door, R.*)

LOUISE. (*aside to him*) Your promise——

HENRI. Do you bid me stay ?

LOUISE. I do.

DUVER. I have left Marguerite gossiping with Madame Grandin. She is longing to see you, Henri. She is in the garden.

HENRI. (*aside to LOUISE*) May I go to her.

LOUISE. Yes, and bring her here. HENRI *goes out, door R.* I cannot doubt, Monsieur Duvernay, that you have had a charming honeymoon. (*sitting at table, R.*)

DUVER. Judge it by your own, could it be anything but overwhelming bliss?

LOUISE. As you say, overwhelming. (*aside*) He is more tedious than ever, this André. (*aloud*) You must have been interested, then, during your month of travel.

DUVER. Naturally; woman is always an interesting study, especially where the particular subject happens to be one's wife.

LOUISE. How long does that interest last?

DUVER. As long as a wife chooses.

LOUISE. Indeed. Have you seen nothing else remarkable since your marriage?

DUVER. Yes. I have seen in the course of our travelling one picture that struck me much.

LOUISE. What was the subject?

DUVER. A bird fascinated by a serpent. The skill of the painter was so remarkable that you can imagine the poor bird in the act to launch into the air and soar towards heaven when the glistening eye attracted it and paralysed its pinions.

LOUISE. The painter must have been a clever man.

DUVER. It was not painted by a man. Who could pourtray the fascinations of a serpent better than a daughter of Eve?

LOUISE. Oh, a woman. What was her name?

DUVER. Gabrielle St. Just!

LOUISE. I fancy I have heard the name. (*aside*) Serpents may fascinate, Monsieur André, but women have instinct. I see your trap.

DUVER. (*aside*) Not the slightest sign of emotion. (*aloud*) Have you heard the name? No doubt it is well known among the disciples of art.

LOUISE. I suppose I have heard critics mention it.

DUVER. Severely, of course?

LOUISE. Oh, of course.

DUVER. (*aside*) Am I wrong? (*aloud*) Do you expect your husband to return soon?

LOUISE. Diplomacy should be slow in its actions.

DUVER. (*aside*) Yes, and I have been too quick. (*aloud*) I fear you must have found it somewhat dull here after Paris.

LOUISE. Not at all. There is nothing so refreshing as the calm after the tempest.

DUVER. And so the country profits by the comparison. Delightful place, the country, so green!

LOUISE. Yes, and the air so clear; one sees through things, and people, perhaps so much better in the country. Will you excuse me if I go to seek your wife. (*going, door R.*)

DUVER. Certainly! (*calls*) Gabrielle!

LOUISE. (*turning off her guard for a moment*) Yes!

DUVER. (*aside*) Caught! (*aloud*) I have another word or two to say.

LOUISE. (*recovering herself*) Oh, about the lady who painted the picture. Really, it doesn't interest me in the least. (*turns away*)

DUVER. (*aside*) What am I to believe?

Enter HENRI and MARGUERITE, door R.

LOUISE. Ah, my sister, need I say how glad I am you have returned? I must congratulate you on having such an amusing husband—so fond of art too; he has been telling me all about that picture of a serpent which you saw, painted by a Gabrielle St. Just.

MARG. Picture of a serpent?

HENRI. (*aside*) Gabrielle St. Just! What can this mean?

MARG. I do not remember the picture, Henri!

DUVER. Oh, probably not, it was not an uncommon sort of picture.

HENRI. (*aside to DUVERNAY*) Is this picture another link in the chain of evidence?

DUVER. (*aside to HENRI*) I think it is.

MARG. (*aside to DUVERNAY*) Let us go home. I cannot bear her face.

DUVER. (*aside to her*) Still harping on that fancy. (*aloud*) Well, now that we are satisfied that Madame de Montcalm is all that our brother, her husband, could desire her to be, we will return to our cottage.

MARG. Come with us, Henri. I have so much to talk to you about.

HENRI. (*gaily*) I shall be charmed to come and see you in your new house, Marguerite.

MARG. Oh, now you are speaking like your old self. Do you know you seem much altered, Henri?

HENRI. Oh, impossible!

MARG. You are indeed, my once light-hearted cousin. Come, you shall tell everything to me as in the old days.

HENRI. (*aside*) If I could!

MARG. Good-bye, Madame la Comtesse—Louise, we shall see you to-morrow.

LOUISE. Without fail. Good-bye, Henri.

HENRI. (*to LOUISE*) You do not forbid me then?

LOUISE. (*to HENRI*) Oh no, I trust in you.

HENRI and MARGUERITE go out, door R.

DUVER. Will you excuse me, too?

LOUISE. Willingly!—one moment! I feel interested in that picture. Can you not procure a copy?

DUVER. I would rather show you the original.

Bows and goes out, door R.

LOUISE. This man suspects me; nay, he knows me; but he

can prove nothing. Will he dare to breath his suspicions? Will he make his insinuations to Henri? Why did not that wife of his include me in her invitation? They are hatching some plot against me.

MONTCALM *appears, door R.*

It shall be defeated. I will invite myself to their sweet cottage. (*she is going to door, R.*)

MONT. Stay!

LOUISE. (*turning*) The Count!

MONT. Your husband! Yes—pardon my abrupt arrival! But you should be scarcely so much surprised. Did not my last letter prepare you for it?

LOUISE. (*confusedly*) Your last letter!

MONT. Did you not read it?

LOUISE. Could I have failed to do so? Still, I did not expect you so soon!

MONT. Your welcome is a cold one.

LOUISE. You know I am not given to enthusiasm.

MONT. Still, a husband expects some warm words of welcome from his wife.

LOUISE. You have a quicker fancy than I have. Imagine that I have said all that you can desire.

MONT. It is true, then?

LOUISE. What?

MONT. That you have no love for me. That you became my wife to indulge a caprice; to rescue yourself from the doubtful position that the unknown Louise Lavergne occupied in the Parisian world; that you hope soon to return thither, with a better right to a position in society, with additional claims upon the homage of your admirers—wealth and a wedding-ring.

LOUISE. Are these the manners you have learnt at Madrid? I thought that Spanish gentlemen were at least respectful to their wives.

MONT. Ask your own conscience what claim you have to my respect. I loved you, Louise—loved you fondly, passionately. I was blind to your coldness—your want of affection. I thought that you returned my love, and that your manner was but modesty. I saw only your beauty, and was blind to all else.

LOUISE. Blame your own blindness, then; and spare me further self-accusations.

MONT. But I am not blind to your nature; I know that such a woman as you are can love if she will—ay, she will love some one. If you do not love me, you love some one else.

LOUISE. I shall not condescend to argue with you.

MONT. Because you cannot deny the truth of my assertion. Now mark my words, Louise.

LOUISE. I am the Countess de Montcalm, but were I fifty

times a wife I would be revenged upon the husband that played the spy upon me. You were a different man when I parted from you; who has changed you?

MONT. This is beside the purpose.

LOUISE. Who has poisoned your mind against me? Tell me; I will know!

Enter MALICORNE, door L.

Ah, I understand.

MALI. Forgive me if I am interrupting a charming *tête-à-tête*; how charming only those who have been separated from their brides for four long weeks can tell! Madame de Montcalm, I see you have not forgiven me for having been the reluctant bearer of those abominable despatches that took your husband to Madrid. I live in hopes that you will forgive me by-and-bye. My dear Count, the excellent Madame Grandin has prepared a savoury repast, and I am sure you need refreshment.

MONT. Go; I will join you directly.

MALICORNE goes up, L. C.

LOUISE. I will not detain you from your dinner, or your friend. Perhaps when you have satisfied your appetite and the duties of hospitality, you will be able to satisfy me that you have been the victim of a passing madness. *Exit, door L.*

MONT. You are right, Malicorne. She never loved me.

MALI. (*coming down, L.*) Pardon me. I never said so.

MONT. But you hinted it in a thousand ways. You showed me the mysteries of Madrid, and taught me that they were plain and innocent in comparison with the iniquities of Paris.

MALI. Well; that's true. But you could have judged of that for yourself.

MONT. What did I know of Paris? I, the book-worm—I, the diplomatist, who thought of nothing beyond hard politics and history. I had neither time nor inclination to study the sensual side of life; my four weeks' companionship with you has made me regard my species with horror, and question whether it is not entirely useless to endeavour now to benefit mankind.

MALI. You are scarcely complimentary to me.

MONT. I believed in the purity of love—the sacredness of honour—you came like the dark cloud with which the sceptic overshadows the faith of the believer: you pictured woman as the vilest of creation, as the slave of lust and vanity, false in her face and in her sentiments; you held up all that I had hitherto held as good, noble, and true, to scorn and ridicule. You shattered the idol of my worship, you made me doubt my wife!

MALI. Indeed, and yet I don't think that I have advanced a statement that is not justified by actual facts.

MONT. Ay, by facts drawn from a narrow experience among the slums of society—

MALI. My dear Montcalm—

MONT. The dark alleys of the empire—the hardly human things that feed like parasites upon the glory of a nation. The creatures that fatten upon the prosperity of others, that betray by their beauty, and kill with a kiss!

MALI. I did not think a diplomatist could have been so eloquent. It won't do to talk like this at court, my dear Count.

MONT. I am sick of your irony and satire, they have wounded me to the quick; but gangrene has not yet set in. Chevalier Malicorne, our mission has ended. I can give you no welcome to the Chateau Montcalm.

MALI. Certainly. I am not desirous of partaking of an ungenial hospitality. I am sorry to have offended you by my plain speaking. Possibly the time may come when you will admit that I was right after all. The Comtesse de Montcalm is a charming wife, beautiful as an angel, pure as the driven snow, amiable as the most exacting husband could desire! I had not the good fortune to be present, but doubtless, she welcomed your return with all a true wife's devotion.

MONT. If she did not, that was my fault.

MALI. It is generous of you to say so. I presume that I am not trespassing too much in occupying the bed which has been prepared for me.

MONT. I have no desire to turn you out of doors!

MALI. I am obliged to you. I will only press your hospitality so far, as my horse and myself are tired. But I will take my leave as early as possible to-morrow morning. (*aside*) Much may happen between this and then. (*aloud*) By-the-bye, there is a trifle of accounts standing between us.

MONT. What I have lost to you at cards. I will discharge the debt at once. (*goes to table, R.*)

MALI. Don't think any more of my joking and satirical remarks upon women generally. Regard them as the cynical sentiments of a man who, perhaps, himself has suffered, but is the exception to the rule, and above all things continue to believe that the lady who bears your name is the purest of the pure. Can I offer you a better wish?

MONT. (*turning over leaves of blotting book*) No, the Comtesse de Montcalm is beyond the taint of your suspicions.

MALI. I am glad to hear it. I own I am suspicious. (*MONTCALM finds the note addressed to HENRI, he gazes at it*) But I regret that you should have thought that my remarks were aimed at your wife! (*aside*) What has he got hold of there? (*aloud*) Possibly you do not remember the exact sum.

MONT. (*aside—reading the address*) "Le Capitaine Henri de Montcalm"—addressed in Louise's handwriting! Why should she write to him?

MALI. My note-book may assist you.

MONT. (*aside*) Shall I read?

MALI. Five thousand four hundred and thirty francs is the exact sum. (*aside*) Now, what has he found?

MONT. (*aside*) The note is unsealed. Write to Henri, when he is in the same house!

MALI. (*approaching and showing tablets*) See, I have jotted it down here.

MONT. Malicorne, may a husband read his wife's letter?

MALI. (*aside*) Oh, that's it! (*aloud*) Certainly not. A husband look into his wife's correspondence! why there would be an end to domestic peace at once, and society would come to a full stop. If you have found a letter addressed by your wife to a gentleman, leave it where you found it, undisturbed. You have had a long journey, and want a good night's rest; you had better not read it.

MONT. I will prove your insinuations to be as false as anything about you. I will read, and tell you you are an infamous slanderer.

MALI. As you please. (*shrugs his shoulders*) I have advised for the best. (MONTCALM opens letter)

MONT. (*reads*) "Why have you been absent from me so long? I cannot bear this silence. Oh, my Henri, far more than brother, my own darling love!"

MALI. I told you, you had better not read.

MONT. (*reading*) "Come to me; I have no life, but in your presence! Henri, I love you passionately!—LOUISE."

MALI. I am waiting to be told that I am an infamous slanderer!

MONT. Silence! Am I in the humour to bear your sarcasms?

MALI. No, the truth is quite sufficient. See, they come! (*goes up*)

Enter MARGUERITE, DUVERNAY, and HENRI; door R.

MARG. My dear brother, I am so glad you are come home.

MONT. Yes, home is sweet after absence, is it not, André?

DUVER. I find it so, I assure you. (*goes up, R., with MARGUERITE*)

HENRI. Brother, no word for me?

MONT. For you, Henri? Yes; give me your hand; it is cold, it trembles, your eyes are fixed upon the ground. How is this?

HENRI. Take my farewell. France is on the eve of war, and to-night I go to join my regiment.

MONT. I fear that I cannot let you go so suddenly. Can you not first give me some account of the trust I committed to your charge?

Enter LOUISE, door L.

HENRI. I restore her to you, as I received her from you.

MONT. I can quite believe you; and in gratitude for the way in which you have discharged your duty, I give you this. (*holds out LOUISE's letter*)

HENRI. A letter in Louise's handwriting!

MONT. Yes; addressed to you. Madame de Montcalm, you are evidently grateful to your protector.

MARG. What can he mean?

DUVER. Hush! my worst fears are realized.

MONT. You have read the letter; the Comtesse de Montcalm awaits your answer: give it. Silent—ah! you would prefer the solitude of the Montcalm woods, where the innocence of the trees and flowers cannot raise the blush of shame upon your brow. Silent still! False brother! betrayer of a sacred trust, you shall make your answer to me, and seal it with your life!

LOUISE. What! you would make him fight?

MONT. Aye, madame; and the survivor of us two shall claim as his reward the murderess of the other! (*picture—drop quick*)

HENRI. MONTCALM.

MARGUERITE.

LOUISE.

R. DUVERNAY.

MALICORNE. L.

END OF THE FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

SCENE.—*Library as in Act I.*

MONTCALM *at table, L., writing—bell on table*—MALICORNE
seated by fireplace, R.

MAL. Nothing then can alter your resolution. This duel between brothers must take place.

MONT. It must. If I had entertained a moment's doubt about the matter your subtle reasonings would have resolved my hesitation. Henri de Montcalm may be my father's nephew, but I forswear him; he is the betrayer of my honour, and and the duel between us must be the death of one.

MAL. He may be innocent.

MONT. Innocent—you suggest the thought—you, who can destroy a woman's reputation with a sneer, and shatter belief in purity with a smile. (*strikes bell*) Come, now, what should you do if you had an outrage to avenge?

MAL. Avenge it most completely.

MONT. (*rising*) So will I!

MAL. (*aside*) By taking one life at the risk of his own. Bah!

Enter ANATOLE, door L.

MONT. Bring some wine to my room. (*ANATOLE bows and goes out, door L.*) There, I have settled everything now; and nothing remains but to meet my wife's lover sword to sword. (*crosses, R.*) You have arranged with Duvernay, who acts for him, to meet at daybreak in the woods. I know that you have ample skill in fence, will you come and practise with me in the gallery by-and-bye.

MAL. I have had the misfortune to measure swords with the best men in France and Italy, and know something of the

art, certainly, since I am still alive, and my opponents are now represented by their children or other relations. I shall be delighted to practise with you.

MONT. In half-an-hour I shall expect you. *Exit, door R.*

MALI. I must see that there are good buttons on the foils, or the temptation may be too great for me. Ah, Bertrand de Montcalm, if Julian had but lived a little longer! As it is, my vengeance shall be the more complete! Faustine—the one love of my youth, whose memory is the passion of my age—your murder shall be amply atoned for! Here, where, if Marguerite's imagination lies not, your restless spirit still walks, I will offer up a holocaust of victims to appease your ghost! Justice may halt upon its way, but it reaches its inexorable doom at last!

Enter LOUISE, door L.

LOUISE. Stay, I have a word to say to you.

MALI. I am at your service.

LOUISE. Why has my husband returned so unexpectedly?

MALI. Is there anything to be surprised at in the impatience of love?

LOUISE. Don't try to lie to me. I have not forgotten one syllable of all that you have ever said to me. You have brought him back here suddenly with deliberate intention; you have insinuated into his mind doubts of my fidelity; you have prepared him to suspect Henri; you are plotting to destroy the life of one, and the happiness of another; you would make this place desolate, but you take no account of me. I have only time for a few words with you, explain at once.

MALI. In one word—revenge!

LOUISE. For what?

MALI. Have I not told you? Upon the threshold of this room your mother died?

LOUISE. Well?

MALI. Is this nothing to you?

LOUISE. Nothing; what is it to you?

MALI. I loved her! Daughter of Faustine St. Just—your mother was once betrothed to me. Her father hated me, for I was poor and nameless, and wealthy suitors desired to buy her beauty. A *lettre de cachet* imprisoned me; they told her I was dead—killed in a street brawl—and they married her to your father within a month! Five months later on, while I still languished in my dungeon, Monsieur de St. Just died, and a few years afterwards, Faustine, who had sought in a life of excitement oblivion of the past, married the rich Count Julian de Montcalm. How, or why, I know not, my prison was unbarred. I sought her, found her here, found her as beautiful as I had left her. Our love revived in all its old intensity. Montcalm's suspicions were aroused. He went away and returned suddenly, as your husband has done,

watched our parting in the Montcalm woods; for I was called away suddenly to Germany, waited for her in this room, and strangled her as she stepped across the threshold of that door. (*window, L. C.*) The tragedy never reached my ears till six weeks afterwards, and his death by disease baulked my vengeance upon him. I stood beside her grave, and vowed vengeance on all his race. I waited patiently till my time should come. I tracked you out, as I have said, my instinct telling me that I should find my surest accomplice in you. Gabrielle St. Just, one has fallen by your hand!

LOUISE. (*astonished*) By mine?

MALI. Aye, and I thank you. The final hour has arrived. Henri or Bertrand must die by the other's hand, and the survivor shall account to me!

LOUISE. And what of me? I never knew a mother's love, and your story stirs me not. What is your wretched vengeance to my great passion! My life is bound up with Henri's, and I love both too well. And you shall find your vengeance baulked again.

MALI. Too late! you cannot save him.

LOUISE. I tell you that I will. What, you think you have made me your instrument? You think my love is nothing, if you choose to set your foot upon it. I say these two shall not fight.

MALI. No!

LOUISE. No, my love is stronger than your threats! Chevalier Malicorne, I defy you!

Exit hastily through window, C., and off, L.

MALI. Then you yourself shall fall amidst the ruins. I would have spared her for her mother's sake. Her shame will only make the story more complete. (*sits and writes at table, L.*) The Comtesse de Montcalm shall go to the guillotine as the murderess of her husband's brother Alexis. I hold sufficient proofs. This letter will refresh the Procureur's memory! (*rings bell*) The tale is not yet forgotten in the village.

Enter SERVANT, door L.

Take this at once to the Procureur Imperial, not a moment's delay.

SERVANT *takes note and exits, door L.* She will be arrested and her doom is certain. What is this faintness that comes over me? Is it possible that my vengeance can be too complete. Faustine's daughter—no matter. She is the Comtesse de Montcalm, and she has defied me. Bah! Malicorne, be a man. What else to fill the measure of the cup? Montcalm has hinted that his father left a paper revealing some dark secret. What question but it is the confession of Faustine's murder! I want that too. Is it possible that it is in this bureau, and see the door is open? (*goes up and opens one or two drawers*) Nothing like it here! Possibly some secret drawer! (*feeling about*) These fantastic

ornaments. They must mean something. Ha, a spring, so it opens! Yes, a paper, a woman's handwriting—and Faustine's! Addressed to myself, a half-finished letter, doubtless thrust in there once when she was suddenly disturbed. Oh, Faustine, it was your hand that touched this paper last, your eyes the last to gaze upon it! As I gaze, time seems annihilated, and the miserable space of years bridged over! I hear your voice, I feel the warm touch of your hand! Ah, Faustine! lost love! What have you to say to me? (*opens letter*) "My darling love, I feel as if these would be my last words to you! By the memory of all that has passed between us, I beseech you guard my child Gabrielle through her orphan life. Remember that she is my daughter, and cherish her as though she were your own. By the memory of our love, I bid you shield her with your life!—FAUSTINE." Oh, why have I not seen this before? There wakes in me the memory of the time when first I saw your face, Faustine; and in Gabrielle's face I trace the beauty that was once the sunshine of my life! What have I done? Led her on from crime to crime, when with one word I might have prevented all; and at last have betrayed her to the guillotine. Oh, vengeance, fallen on my own head! I seem to see Faustine, and hear her curse me! That note! The Procureur! Gabrielle, you must be saved! (*rushes out, door L.—lights down at back gradually*)

Enter MARGUERITE, door L.

MARG. It is too terrible—Henri and Bertrand to meet in deadly strife. What is to be done? What can I do? Oh, what curse is there upon the family that the face of this woman should bring such mischief here? They laughed at me—or called me the weak victim of some hallucination or a dream. Ah, there are some dreams which are the soul of truth. Let me recall the scene. It was on this very night last year. (*thunder*) Hark! the thunder rolled as I hear it now. The bell rang—I seem to hear it again. Henri arrived, we greeted him. (*thunder*) Again the thunder. I turned to the window, (*lightning*) the lightning flashed as now. I saw outside the window the figure of a woman—and then—(*lightning*)—LOUISE is seen standing without, window, c.) she stands there still—but now I do not faint. (*going up to window*) Enter, and prove the truth of what I say.

Enter LOUISE, c.

LOUISE. You are agitated, Mademoiselle Marguerite. I beg your pardon, Madame Duvernay.

MARG. Acknowledge it to be the truth.

LOUISE. Acknowledge what?

MARG. That you were outside that window the night Alexis died.

LOUISE (*aside*) Alexis! (*aloud*) I do not understand.

MARG. You *will* not! Listen again, and deny it if you can? Upon this night last year Alexis de Montcalm arrived, fearfully ill, and died, within this room, from the effects of poison—you stood without!

LOUISE. (*aside*) *Alexis de Montcalm!* I understand all now.

MARG. Your silence is no denial. I need no further proof, Comtesse de Montcalm. I go to explain your identity to my brother. *Exit, door R.—lights gradually go out.*

LOUISE. So it was he, then? I might have perceived a resemblance in Bertrand's face. *And my mother's ghost beheld my victim's fate!* Oh, I shall go mad! What if Malicorne should tell Henri this? He must take me away at once. If I could but see him, I know my power over him.

Enter ANATOLE, door L., with wine.

Where are you going?

ANAT. Pardon, Madame la Comtesse, I am taking this wine to—to the Chevalier Malicorne. (*aside*) She makes me lie to her.

LOUISE. Set it down. Do you know where Monsieur Henri is?

ANAT. He is in his room, madame.

LOUISE. Beg him to come to me instantly. Instantly, mind.

ANAT. Instantly, madame.

Exit, door L.

LOUISE. Wine for the Chevalier Malicorne. What tempting devil made the man pass this way! Malicorne! the one man that I have now to fear; and he has sworn to be revenged upon the race of Montcalm; and I have vowed to baulk his schemes. Idiot! long ago I bade you beware, and warned you that the man that threatened me carried his life within his hand. (*takes small phial from bosom*) At my bidding that hand drops palsied—that life is done! (*pours poison into wine which ANATOLE has placed on table, L. C.*)

Re-enter ANATOLE, door L.

ANAT. Monsieur le Capitaine bade me say that he would wait on Madame la Comtesse without delay.

LOUISE. Good, take the wine to the Chevalier Malicorne. (*ANATOLE takes up tray, crosses, and goes out, R.*) Oh, Henri, come, do not give me time for thought, or for remorse. I feel a pressure on my heart and brain, which nerves of iron could not long withstand.

Enter HENRI, door L.

HENRI. You have sent for me, madame. Against my will, I come.

LOUISE. Oh, do not speak so bitterly to me. Do I deserve no softer tones than these?

HENRI. Your conscience and mine can make answer to that question. Neither may listen to soft words any more. See what they have brought us to. (*sits in chair, L. C.*)

LOUISE. Oh, Henri, who can resist love?

HENRI. No man nor woman, and they have never need to do so. Love honours, elevates, ennobles all it touches, sheds

a hallowed radiance upon life, purifies the heart, and makes earth more like heaven.

LOUISE. Then how are we to blame?

HENRI. It was not *love* that drew us two together! Ah, we are not the first who have allowed themselves to be deceived by a fiend in angel's form. Foul *passion* chained me to you, dulled my sense of duty, tarnished my honour, and gives me now a miserable victim to the justice of Bertrand's sword.

LOUISE. Oh, no, Henri, you will not let him kill you! (*kneeling by him, c.*)

HENRI. Could I lift my hand against the man whose generous confidence I have so betrayed. No—I will cross swords with him, and then welcome his blade within my heart.

LOUISE. You are resolved on this?

HENRI. I am.

LOUISE. Then make reparation to the full and kill me first.

HENRI. Louise!

LOUISE. Ay, if there must be a victim to our unhappy love—for love it is, Henri—despite your reasoning, let that victim be myself. Why do you hesitate? I am the wretched cause of all this woe: one blow, and the disgrace is wiped away; and you and Bertrand can be brothers. Come! what is the miserable life of a creature like myself.

HENRI. No—no, you need not die, Louise.

LOUISE. Ah! I told you it was love. Yes, Henri, my life is precious to me now, though not so precious as your own. I love you, Henri, with all the strong tenderness of a woman—who, till she saw you, never dreamed what a mighty power love could be. Live, my own darling, live; let us leave this place, and for long years to come I will show you how deep and vast a woman's devotion to the man she loves can be.

HENRY. Temptress, I must not listen.

LOUISE. Is my life, my happiness, nothing to you? Must my sacrifice be all in vain? Ah, it is me whom you have deceived, Henri—only me! You never loved me!

HENRI. I did love you, with all the agony of soul and body! Shame upon my accursed weakness, Louise, I love you still!

LOUISE. Ah, my own!

HENRI. I yield to fate! Louise, there is a fascination about you I cannot resist; *your eyes have won me, your kisses have burned my lips! (he is stroking her hair—starts suddenly)* What do I see among the dark tresses? Where did I learn those words? Ah, I remember all! *Mark well that face: the too fascinating beauty of the serpent, the dark eyes that won me, the lips that burned me! See, too, the ineradicable sign she bears, the one white lock amid her raven tresses—know her by that! (casting her off)* The spell is broken; all love and passion vanish! Nothing remains but my neglected oath; on man or woman I have sworn to avenge

the death of Alexis de Montcalm! Murderess! I know you now. Gabrielle St. Just, prepare to die! (*rises*)

LOUISE. (*shrinking*) You are mad!

HENRI. The pale ghost of Alexis stands beside you now, and calls for vengeance! Ask mercy from heaven—none from me!

LOUISE. (*terrified*) You would not kill me?

HENRI. Fair serpent! You offered me your life in mockery just now. You meant to deceive me, and you succeeded, the nature that you cannot change has betrayed you to me. You have made me forget my brotherhood—my duty to Bertrand and Alexis—you have dishonoured me, and unknighthed me. Your sex pleads for you in vain!

LOUISE. Oh, spare me, spare me! Give me over to the law, but do not let me die by your hand, Henri, I loved you so!

HENRI. You supplicate in vain, you may escape the law, my hand is certain doom! (*seizes her, and raises dagger*)

LOUISE. Oh, Henri!

HENRI. My oath! (*he is about to strike when MALICORNE rushes from C. window, seizes uplifted dagger, and wrests it from HENRI.*)

MALI. Stand back, I claim the daughter of Faustine St. Just! Fly, Gabrielle, fly, my horse stands ready for you, fly—fly, not a moment is to be lost. I will reckon with your pursuers. Fly!

LOUISE *is hurrying off, C.—Enter DUVERNAY, C., and stays her.*

DUVER. (*sternly*) Too late. I was at the office of the Procureur Imperial when your note arrived, it confirmed the suspicions I had already breathed. The Gendarmes are here!

Enter GENDARMES and range at back—MONTCALM, with goblet of wine, enters from door, R., follows by MARGUERITE.

MONT. Madame la Comtesse de Montcalm! Some wine has been brought to my room which has been for a few moments in your keeping. Before I drink it, will you do me the honour to taste it? (*offers it*)

LOUISE. (*taking goblet*) To the dregs. (*drinks*)

MALI. Poison! (*dashing goblet from her hand*)

LOUISE. Ay, and by me, for you! (*LOUISE's manner changes—looks vacantly round—then presses her hand upon her heart*) Something seems to have broken *here*! (*wildly*) Poisoned! Who is poisoned? Hush! did you not hear a bell ring? Some one is coming. See—the door opens! Oh, pale and awful face. He advances to me—his fiery eyes are fixed on mine! He lays his icy hand upon my heart—my blood stops—Alexis! Alexis! (*she falls dead, C.*)

MALI. (*to MONTCALM, who advances*) Back! I claim my own! Henri is innocent! There rests no stain upon the honour of Montcalm, and the dark plot of my revenge lies shattered here! (*picture*)

Slow Curtain.