

THE
MAN WITH THE IRON MASK,

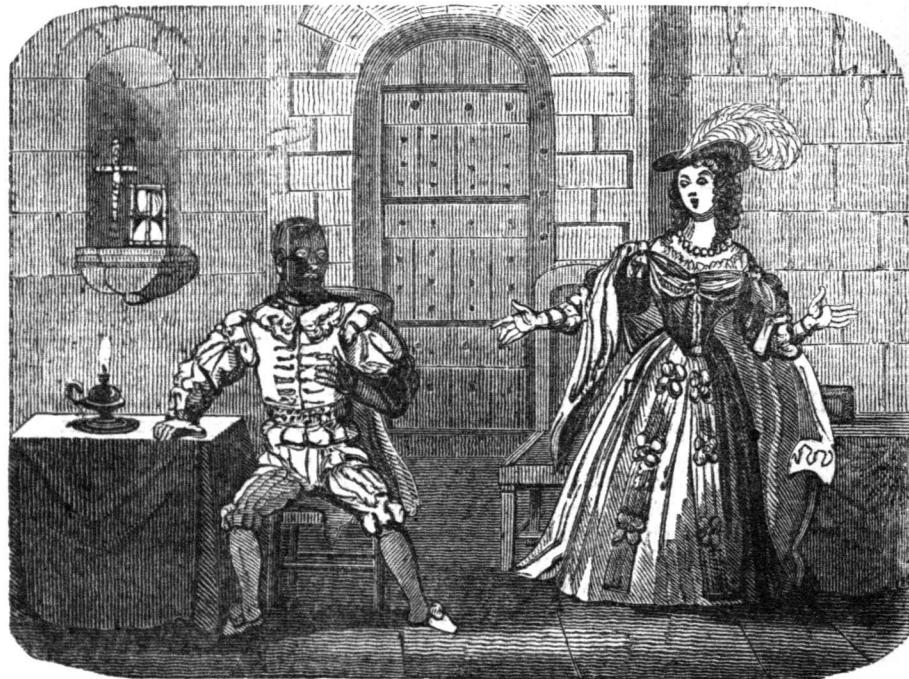
ADAPTED FROM THE FRENCH

BY W. J. LUCAS, Esq.

AUTHOR OF

The Death Plank—Traitors' Gate—White Farm—Widow Bewitched, &c., &c.

IN FOUR EPOCHS.



Each Epoch containing a distinct and thrilling phase in this most extraordinary man's life, until his murder in the Bastile, sternly corroborated by facts and documents seized during its demolition by the infuriated people.

LONDON.
THOMAS HAILES LACY,
WELLINGTON STREET,
STRAND.

909676

THE MAN WITH THE IRON MASK.

First performed at the Royal Pavilion Theatre.

CHARACTERS.

Original Cast.

GASTON, OR IRON MASK	-	-	MR. CHARLES FREER.
D'AUBIGNE	-	-	MR. JOHN FARRELL.
ST. MARS	-	-	MR. FRANK RAYMOND.
TONY	-	-	MR. W. WEST.
BARON D'OSTANGES	-	-	MR. CARROLL.
FATHER AUDOINE	-	-	MR. SAKER.
POMPIGNAN	-	-	MR. MAYNARD.
LAUNAY	-	-	MR. BECKETT.
SERGEANT EVRARD	-	-	MR. W. H. PAYNE.
BARON LOUVOIS	-	-	MR. W. RIGNOLD.
ZINGCON	-	-	M. B. CHAPMAN.
CHAPLAIN OF THE BASTILE	-	-	MR. J. WILSON.
SERVANT	-	-	MR. CHAPINO.
OFFICER	-	-	MR. R. SMITH.
MARIE D'OSTANGES	-	-	MISS MACARTHY.
MADEMOISELLE AUBRY	-	-	MISS FANNY CLIFTON.
MADAME LANDRY	-	-	MRS. HERRING.

COSTUMES.—PERIOD, 1657—1680.

GASTON.—*First dress*, neat dark brown doublet, trunks, stockings and shoes, plain collars, round hat, sword, long hair in heavy curls. *Second dress*, handsome velvet shape and cloak, hat and white feather, boots. *Third dress*, Black velvet shape, mask of black glazed calico.

D'AUBIGNE.—*First dress*, buff riding suit. *Second dress*, Handsome shape. *Third dress*, Red shirt, blue frock, petticoat trousers, high boots, fur cap. *Fourth dress*, plain helmet, breast-plate, doublet and trunks, boots, grey hair.

ST. MARS.—*First dress*, Handsome shape, cloak, boots, &c. *Second dress*, blue shape, steel gorget and gauntlets, helmet. *Third dress*, dark shape, grey hair.

TONY.—Fisherman's dress (same as D'Aubigne's third).

AUDOINE.—Black cloth shape and long cloak, shovel hat and grey hair.

POMPIGNAN, LAUNAY, LOUVOIS.—Handsome shapes.

CHAPLAIN.—Black robe, white hair and black skull-cap.

MARIE.—*First dress*, White muslin dress trimmed with blue ribbons, short full sleeves, short body, open skirt, hair dressed in full short ringlets. *Second dress*, Handsome satin dress, same style. *Third dress*, Plain grey silk. *Fourth dress*, Sister of Charity's costume, plain black gown with hood, white cap.

AUBRY.—Silk dress.

MADAME LANDRY.—Stuff dress, white cap and apron.

THE CHARACTERS CHANGE AFTER EACH ACT.

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This Drama is the property of Thomas Hailes Lacy.

THE
MAN WITH THE IRON MASK.



FIRST EPOCH, 1657.—SÉMUR.

SCENE.—*An open country about Sémur, in the distance. Platform and garden terrace across the stage, with steps to descend in centre; on the L. H. U. E., the neat house of Audoine, nearly surrounded by set trees; on the R. H., entrance to the park gates leading to the Baron's mansion, with armorial emblems, &c., wings to match; flowers and garden pieces arranged about the stage.*

The curtain rises to slow but marked music. Enter D'AUBIGNE in a plain shape, black horseman's cloak, high-crowned hat, drooping feathers. He examines everything around, referring occasionally to his tablets.

D'AUBIG. In the neighbourhood of Sémur, near the banks of the Yonne; this is the house I have watched and marked, and there—(*points to cottage.*)—he resides, in ignorance of his rank. Will my enterprise succeed, or shall I have vainly braved the dangers with which my return from exile is menaced? Shall I prevail on this young man to accompanyme? Oh! how long and ardently have I watched for this opportunity. With the aid of threats and gold I wrung from a discontented courier these despatches. These are my credentials! (*shows papers with seals attached.*) Ah, some one comes. I must be cautious.

(retires U. E. R.)

Enter FATHER AUDOINE, from house, L. H.

FATHER. Up before daylight! Guardianship has become very fatiguing. Where can he be gone to? I would fain give him a lesson in botany this morning. (*going up stage sees D'AUBIGNE, R.*) Ah! a stranger?

D'AUBIG. (*bowing.*) Doubtless, I address myself to Father Audoine of the holy order of Jesuits?

FATHER. (*bowing in return.*) At your service.

D'AUBIG. I am a courtier, in the service of Cardinal Mazarin; as you were, eighteen years ago, with Cardinal Richelieu.

FATHER. (*slowly.*) I have some recollection of your features.

D'AUBIG. I am now travelling under the name of the Marquis de St. Luce, to make some inquiries respecting the young man entrusted to your care.

FATHER. (*starting.*) To mine!

D'AUBIG. Do not be alarmed; I repeat to you, I am in the confidence of the cardinal.

FATHER. How am I to be sure of that?

D'AUBIG. (*approaching AUDOINE closer, says.*) By this—"Gaston and Providence!" (*AUDOINE starts.*) We all remember the rejoicings that took place at the birth of Louis the Fourteenth—and the consternation of the king, when, in six hours after, the queen consort, Anne of Austria, gave birth to another prince, who by the laws of France became the rightful future monarch. But the first had been already proclaimed as Louis the Fourteenth—so the council were sworn to secrecy, and the infant was confided to your care, to be brought up in obscurity, in perfect ignorance of laws, history, or politics, at last, to be adopted into the order of Jesuits—his only knowledge of his family, was to be, that he was the son of a certain Baron D'Orville, a poor and proscribed nobleman.

FATHER. Ah, all very well—but have you no other proof of the confidence of the cardinal?

D'AUBIG. These despatches. (*shewing them.*)

FATHER. The royal seal. (*taking them from D'AUBIGNE.*) Yes, 'tis the answer I was in expectation of. Excuse me, sir, but I cannot be too cautious as to this letter. I will read it when alone; my young pupil has never seen the precious papers that concern his royal rights, nor the golden casket that contains them. You are from Paris—has the queen dowager forgotten me, and the magnificent pension which the cardinal promised me?

D'AUBIG. All depends upon the manner in which you have fulfilled the intentions of the court.

FATHER. Oh, I dare say they will be satisfied. I have brought up the young man in perfect ignorance, as I told you before—believing himself to be the son of a pretended Baron d'Orville, who keeps at a distance from his person and affection. He lives without the least idea of the great world; knows nothing of the history of France, of laws, arts, or

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science ; thus have I carried out my instructions. All I am afraid of is that my pupil has met with another preceptor here, whose lessons are rather more agreeable to him than mine. .

D'AUBIG. How ! (*surprised.*)

FATHER. We were living in perfect seclusion here, when about two years ago the Baron D'Ostanges settled near this spot, Sémur.

D'AUBIG. But he is in disgrace, banished from the court.

FATHER. Ah, I know all that well ; but his daughter, Marie, is a charming young creature, and Gaston—

D'AUBIG. Well—well ! (*eagerly.*)

FATHER. Wishes to marry her.

D'AUBIG. Marry her ? Bethink yourself, Father ; this marriage must not, cannot take place.

FATHER I have written to the court upon the subject, and doubtless here is my answer. (*points to letter.*)

D'AUBIG. But if he continues to see, to love her—

FATHER. (*smiling.*) Bah ! what's the use of his loving her if he don't marry her ; (*chuckles to himself.*) besides it will keep his mind employed. I have my maxims on that subject. (*is going into his house, when he points off, U. E. R.*) But see, here comes Gaston ; he appears agitated.

D'AUBIG. (c.) The resemblance is indeed striking—

*Enter GASTON, U. E. R., looking off till on centre of platform.
Music, short hurry.*

GASTON. Base and cowardly !

FATHER. (*aside to D'AUBIGNE.*) He has had some quarrel with the royal forest keepers ; he is always at war with them.

GASTON. (*who has been watching on the terrace, suddenly turns and sees AUDOINE.*) Sir, I have just witnessed—and I shudder at it still—an act of the most savage barbarity, committed by order of the governor of this provincee, Monsieur de St. Mars. A poor peasant of the neighbouring village, was arrested, torn from wife and family, and they intended to send him by force to the colonies ; yes, sir, by force !

FATHER. Well, well, 'tis the custom of the country. Why did you interfere ?

GASTON. I rushed upon them, I threatened them, the two guards took to instant flight, and I released their prisoner ; and Heaven send the poor fellow home in safety.

FATHER. Did I not tell you he was ignorant of the customs of civilised society. But I must leave you now to look over my despatches ; retain the young man here till my return ; be careful ; you know the consequences of the least indiscretion.

D'AUBIG. (*aside to him.*) Father I value my life ; my task here is not finished, but, by Heaven's help, it will be soon, and then I can die in peace.

(AUDOINE goes into his house, GASTON comes down stage, c., whilst D'AUBIGNE is speaking.

D'AUBIG. (L.) Brave and generous—such as I wished to find him. (*to GASTON.*) This action is an honour to you, young man.

GASTON. (C.) What do I see ; are you not the gentleman I have met so often of late ? you appeared to examine me closely and attentively, as if you wished to accost me. Well, sir, tell me, what is your purpose with me ?

D'AUBIG. I am a gentleman, persecuted and exiled. Before I left France, I was wandering about this beautiful country where I received my birth, and intended demanding an asylum, for a few days, of the Baron D'Ostanges.

GASTON. Indeed ! then you will readily obtain it, for his daughter, Marie, who is so good, so mild, and beautiful, will eagerly offer to you the rights of hospitality.

D'AUBIG. Looking on you I felt myself inspired with a lively interest, as though I found in you an enemy to injustice.

GASTON. I oppose it wherever I meet with it.

D'AUBIG. And it pervades the whole kingdom, under the despotic sway of a detested minister.

GASTON. How ! is the cardinal, then, ignorant of these abuses ?

D'AUBIG. He commands them.

GASTON. And the king ?

D'AUBIG. Suffers them.

GASTON. Ah, sir, if I were king, I would listen to every complaint—I would redress every wrong—to dry up tears, to bring down blessings on his name, to uphold the glory of his people, is the right of a good king, as it is equally his happiness, his duty.

D'AUBIG. These were the sentiments of the great Henrie.

GASTON. Alas, sir, I am ignorant, unlettered—I have never been instructed in the history even of my own country, and it is by mere chance I know the name of the late king.

D'AUBIG. Louis the Thirteenth ?

GASTON. I will tell you—listen. When I was about ten years of age, a superb carriage drove up one day to this door ; a lady descended, still young and beautiful—she came to me, embraced me tenderly, and overwhelmed me with tears and caresses.

D'AUBIG. (*aside.*) It was his mother, Anne of Austria.

GASTON. She mentioned the name of Louis the Thirteenth, and I know not how it was, it has been deeply engraved on my memory ever since.

D'AUBIG. Beautiful did you say she was?

GASTON. Very beautiful!

D'AUBIG. A mild air!

GASTON. And majestic too! I saw her only that once, and the recollection is still delightful.

D'AUBIG. (*shewing a small portrait medal.*) Was she like this portrait?

GASTON. (*gazing on it.*) Oh, Heavens! 'tis she! I remember those noble features, those dear mild eyes that gazed so sweetly on me. Ah, sir! give me this portrait that I may wear it ever next my heart.

D'AUBIG. It were well placed there, young sir; she was the benefactress of this country—perhaps, too, a friend of your mother's.

GASTON. I never knew my mother. I have neither friends nor family that seem to care for me, and Heaven knows how ardently I have sighed for a friend of my own age—a brother. I have never had a brother; for some reason which I cannot understand, even my father has me brought up at a distance from him; under his care, I might, perhaps, have acquired some renown.

D'AUBIG. What! have dreams of ambition sprung up, then, even in this solitude?

GASTON. Ah! sir, I have a thousand times felt emotions of pride and ambition, and have dreamed of battles and victories. I have fancied the mighty rush of armies, I have led on the glorious charge upon the enemy, I have heard the joyous shout of victory; but, alas! sir, I am nineteen years of age, and my name is unknown in the world's fame. I have suppressed my tears at the thought, and laughed, sir, ay, laughed in the bitterness of my heart's despair, for I felt myself as if mad—ay, mad!

D'AUBIG. Ah! but you are not so. (*aside.*) Thank Heaven, his blood is not contaminated by the lessons of this monk.

GASTON. But, sir, all these chimeras vanish before the charming image of Marie d'Ostanges.

D'AUBIG. Ay, ay, you love her, as those of your age love; a mere transient passion, because she is the only beautiful woman you have as yet seen; you may see others, who will, perchance, make you forsake her.

GASTON. (*indignantly.*) Forsake her! forsake Marie! Never, never.

D'AUBIG. This woman, then, is the only stumbling-block between my design and its fulfilment.

GASTON. (*who has retired up.*) Ah! she comes.

D'AUBIG. (*looking off, r.*) Curses! How beautiful she is.

Enter MARIE, from park gates, R. U. E., attended by Two SERVANTS.

MARIE. Gaston! dear Gaston! (sees D'AUBIGNE—stops short.) Pardon me, sir. (To D'AUBIGNE) This is a gentleman in misfortune, Marie, who seeks an interview with your father.

MARIE. In misfortune, did you say? Will you please to follow me, sir?

D'AUBIGNE. A thousand thanks, dear young lady, but one of your servants can do that office. Your father knows me, and a private interview may be needful to my purpose. (he crosses to R. H.—aside.) Enjoy this moment of happiness, young hearts, it may be your last. Farewell, Monsieur Gaston, till we meet again. (exchange of courtesies takes place, and D'AUBIGNE exits through park gates, at a signal from MARIE, attended by a SERVANT, R. U. E.)

GASTON. (l. h.) My own Marie, I wrote to your father this morning demanding your hand in marriage. Ah, what does the gloom on your countenance denote; how has he answered?

MARIE. He has been silent; but should he refuse—

GASTON. How Marie, refuse! are you not mine? no power on earth can dissolve a tie formed in the face of Heaven. I will at once disclose to him the secret of our union, would you but permit me.

MARIE. Anything, dear Gaston to remain yours. But it is time you should know all; nay, do not alarm yourself, but hear me. A courtier who saw me some two years ago in Paris thought I possessed beauty, and fancied himself encouraged in his addresses—believe me, dear Gaston, I knew not then what those addresses meant—his name is the Marquis de Sennécy. He is now soliciting the recall of my father to court, and to all his former honours, and, should he succeed, my hand is to be the price.

GASTON. What a marquis, a nobleman, make a traffic of his services. Oh shame fall on his name; and your father?

MARIE. My father, you know, is proud of his family and ancestors—my brother is about to marry some noble lady—and I, as they often boast, was born at St. Germain's in the midst of the rejoicings on the birth of Louis, besides which, I am god-daughter to the Queen Dowager Anne of Austria.

GASTON. (bitterly.) Go on, Marie, enumerate all the proud titles which remove *you* from me, and place *me* at such an immeasurable distance. But let this lord, this courtier marquis come, let him dare attempt to snatch you from my arms, and he

will find he must first try his 'scutcheon & n l his honour against my sword and honesty.

MARIE. Dear Gaston, there remains one chance. If your father were to demand my hand in person—

GASTON. Right, it must be so, I will go in search of him this very day. Father Audoine has kept the secret too long from me, he must now explain, and shall too.

Enter AUDOINE from house, L. U. E.

FATHER. My instructions are very embarrassing to me; at any hazard, this marriage must not take place.

GASTON. (*seeing him at door beckons him down.*) Sir, you have brought me up from infancy, you have watched over me with paternal care, and I thank you from my heart for it; but one proof of your attachment to me still remains to be given, an important confidence, on which the whole happiness of my life depends. So away, then, with mystery, I implore you, and tell me—where is my father?

FATHER. (*aside.*) His father—what can he mean?

GASTON. I wish to obtain his consent to my marriage. Behold her whom I have chosen as the partner of my existence; should he resist my entreaties, I shall have a right to say to him, " You have not fulfilled your duty to me; but now is the time when you can make amends for all;" so tell me, Father, where can I find the Baron D'Orville.

FATHER. (*aside L.*) He'll have some difficulty in finding out a man that never existed. What answer can I make him?

MARIE. (*R.*) You see, he hesitates.

GASTON, (*C.*) Why do you not answer me?

FATHER. I am puzzled what part to take. Ah, here comes one to my assistance.

(*Observing D'AUBIGNE, who enters through the gates R. U. E., with the BARON D'OSTANGES.*

BARON. Go in, Marie. (*passes her across towards gates.*)

MARIE. How unkindly he speaks. Gentlemen, your servant. (*she curtseys, they bow to her.*) How my heart beats.

Exit through gates, BARON and GASTON retire up C.

D'AUBIG. (*L.—to AUDOINE.*) What are your instructions?

FATHER. To prevent the marriage at all hazards.

D'AUBIG. So I thought.

FATHER. What is to be done?

D'AUBIG. Hush! let the baron speak first.

BARON. Monsieur Gaston, I esteem, and have always received you with favour; doubtless this has emboldened you to raise your eyes to my daughter.

GASTON. It is true, my lord, I love her—

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BARON. Do you know who Mademoiselle D'Ostanges is?

GASTON. I know that she is beautiful and accomplished.

BARON. She reckons twelve generations of illustrious ancestors ; and never has the lustre of its honour been dimmed with taint or blot. Let us deal frankly with each other ; young man, you aspire to the hand of my daughter, and you appear worthy of it—

FATHER. Eh ! what—what—

D'AUBIG. (*aside.*) Silence ; have patience a moment.

BARON. I have this moment received a letter from court—my pardon is granted at the instance of the Marquis de Sennécy, who in return, solicits my alliance.

GASTON. Oh, Heavens—

BARON. Do not, however, mistake me ; the happiness of my daughter, and the honour of my house are my two most cherished ideas. I can again renounce the favour of the court, the friendship of the great, and make you my son-in-law.

GASTON. What, such happiness, Marie mine ! Oh, sir, such conduct is truly generous, truly noble, and in return you shall find in me all the love, duty, and tenderness of a son.

BARON. You are the son, you say, of the Baron D'Orville ?

GASTON. Yes, my lord.

BARON. I do not recollect the name ; pray pardon me, but is the baron at court ?

GASTON. Alas ! my lord, I have never seen my father. Father Audoine, here, can best answer you. Speak, sir, speak !

FATHER. The baron is not at court.

BARON. Where is he, then ?

FATHER. I do not know. (*aside to D'AUBIGNE.*) That's no lie.

BARON. His ancestors ?

FATHER. Are unknown. (*aside.*) That's no lie.

GASTON (c.) What do you say ?

BARON. The baron has never seen his son, you say ! But the mother of the young man ?—

GASTON. Well, well, my mother ? Go on—do not torture me thus ! My mother—

FATHER. (*aside to D'AUBIGNE.*) I'll tell the truth : his mother was not the wife of the baron. (*aside.*) That's no lie either.

GASTON. What do I hear ?

BARON. A natural son. Enough ! from this moment there is an end to all intercourse between us.

GASTON. I — illegitimate — nameless — without birthright ? Oh ! it cannot be : retract your words—say they are false. (*to AUDOINE, who shakes his head.*) What, is such indeed my lot ?

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and do I now hear it for the *first* time? Oh, if it be true, how guilty are you who perceived the growth of my passionate love for Marie, and strove not to suppress it; but do you know that it is now become part of my existence, that I cannot now eradicate it from my heart. (*turning to BARON.*) Oh, sir, it is now too late to renounce Marie.

BARON. You must—nay, do more, forget her very name. This is our last interview.

GASTON. My lord, do not leave me thus—yet a few words: let me speak a few words with you alone. In the name of honour, my lord, I demand it.

FATHER. Moderate these transports, young man.

GASTON. Silence, Audoine! you will have to answer before Heaven, the consequences of the misery you have entailed on me.

D'AUBIG. Now he's mine—and our cause is won.

BARON. Gentlemen, be pleased to retire.

Exeunt D'AUBIGNE and AUDOINE, after bowing to BARON,

L. H. 1 E.

Now, young sir, what more do you demand from me? you have had your decisive answer.

GASTON. I dare hope for another, a gentler one. It seems I am illegitimate; I have neither name nor title, but I may earn both with my good sword. I will withdraw myself from you,—and, oh, torture! from Marie—and return not till I have become worthy of your alliance.

BARON. Can you ever become so?

GASTON. The stain on my birth is not my fault, my lord.

BARON. Never shall that stain sully the honour of my house.

GASTON. Repeat those words, my lord, that hope may be dead within me; then I may answer you as I ought—shall I never marry your daughter?

BARON. Never! The question is an insult.

GASTON. Because she is of noble's blood, and I am illegitimate—

BARON. As you have said.

GASTON. And you are jealous of the honour of your house?

BARON. Spotless I received, and spotless I will render it up to my posterity.

GASTON. We will now see in what sense nobles understand the honour of their house. Do you know that your daughter loves me, will fly with me, and that it only remains for you to choose whether you will give her to me, or take vengeance on her seducer?

BARON. What! dare you utter?—

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GASTON. She is mine, death only can part us. This child of chance, whom the world calls bastard, has exited love in the bosom of your daughter; with him only will your daughter remain pure and virtuous, with him only will the honour—the honour of your house remain untarnished and spotless.

BARON. Villain! thou liest!

GASTON. My lord, insult me not, for although no noble, I will not brook indignity. You seem to doubt me? I have told you truth!

BARON. I say again—'tis false!

GASTON. If it be true, shall Marie be mine?

BARON. Thine? Never—never! Who waits there?

Enter a SERVANT, R. U. E.

Call here my daughter!

Exit SERVANT, R. U. E.

She shall confront this infamous slanderer.

GASTON. Let her come, my lord.

Enter MARIE, R. U. E.; she advances, R.

BARON. She is here. Marie, my beloved daughter, my hope, my glory! confront this lying braggart; he dares assert that you love him—more, my child—forgive thy father the unworthy question—he says that thou hast forgotten thou hadst a mother!

MARIE. (*tremblingly.*) Mercy, pity, my father!—Gaston is master of my heart, my love, my life!

BARON. Degenerate girl, pronounce that name no more—
(draws his sword.) or a father's indignation—

GASTON. Oh spare her, turn all your rage on me—I am prepared to die at once—

BARON. Not by my hand.

Enter SERVANT, R. U. E.

SERVANT. My lord, the carriage of the Marquis de Sennécy has just driven into the court-yard.

MARIE. Oh, father—kind, dear father, have pity. (*kneels.*)

BARON. Prepare for your instant departure for Paris; should that man dare present himself at my gates, deny him entrance, and spurn him from my door! (*to SERVANT.*)

Exeunt BARON dragging MARIE, through gates, R. U. E.

GASTON. (*to SERVANT as he is following off.*) You mentioned but now the name of the Marquis de Sennécy, is he a young man?

SERVANT, No.

Exit SERVANT R. U. E.

GASTON. An old man! oh can I not find some one in whose blood I can wash away this accursed name of bastard.

Enter D'AUBIGNE. L. I. H.

D'AUBIG. Ah! (*observing GASTON.*) The moment is propitious. Well, my young friend, you have spoken to the baron, and found him inflexible. I can understand your just indignation, your grief; like you I detest these nobles, so fastidious upon *false* honours, so insensible to true.

GASTON. He has taken away his daughter to bestow her on another. What if I challenge them?—no, no! they both are old, and it would be assassination.

D'AUBIG. Listen to me.

GASTON. Ah, I remember now; Marie has a brother; he doubtless, wears a sword, and shall supply the place of these dotards.

D'AUBIG. He will not meet you.

GASTON. I will call him coward.

D'AUBIG. *He will call you—bastard, and refuse to fight with you.*

GASTON. Ah, misery.

D'AUBIG. Yet if you wish to depart—

GASTON. This instant.

D'AUBIG. But how—you have neither money nor horses?

GASTON. Oh, I shall find surely some one who will take pity on me—and he shall be my first, my dearest friend.

D'AUBIG. Horses are ready—there is money.

(*shewing a large purse.*)

GASTON. Ah, *you* are that friend—I devote myself to *you*.

D'AUBIG. (*aside.*) Thank Heaven, the great cause of liberty and religious freedom is now secure! But stay, some caution must be observed to effect your departure.

Enter FATHER AUDOINE, L.

I am about to take this young man round the neighbourhood—his present agitation must be calmed—on our return he will be more tranquil. He pardons *you*.

GASTON. Yes, willingly. (*aside.*) For, thank Heaven, I shall never see him more.

FATHER. Watch him closely. (*aside to D'AUBIGNE.*)

D'AUBIG. As I would my own life, for I will never leave *him*.

GASTON. (*looking off r.*) Oh, farewell, Marie—dear, beloved Marie. (*hurried music.*)

(Tableau—GASTON pointing with right arm in direction of the chateau, his left is in the grasp of D'AUBIGNE, who is in centre of stage extended towards the terrace—AUDOINE, L. H., examining his letter.)

END OF THE FIRST EPOCH.

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A lapse of two years between the First and Second Epochs.

SECOND EPOCH.—1659.

SCENE.—*A saloon in an inn. Door in flat, side door, R. H. Table, four chairs, bottles and glasses.*

Enter D'AUBIGNY, L.

D'AUBIG. The moment is at length arrived. Never was conspiracy in better train. I hold in my hands the fate of the monarchy, that of Europe, that of religion. Oh, that I had been able to obtain that casket in which Father Audoine inclosed the despatches from Anne of Austria, relative to the birth of Gaston; but I came too late—Audoine was gone to render up his account to heaven, and the sacred deposit had disappeared—returned, no doubt, to Louis. However, the prince's extraction is written on his brow. (*goes to window.*) Ah, here my dear nephew (as I call him) comes. My nephew! Heaven and the king forgive me!

Lively music.—Enter GASTON, door in flat.

GASTON. (R.) You are first, dear uncle; but, you see, the scholar always follows the master, whenever a jovial party is in agitation.

D'AUBIG. For a reformer, my dear nephew, you led a life not very remarkable in its austerity.

GASTON. Not very—But none of your sermons. What are we come here for? Are you going to preach again, as you did the other evening, about the cardinal, the protestants, the jesuites, and liberty of conscience? All that may be very amusing to *you*—but what is it to *me*?

D'AUBIG. What do you desire to do?

GASTON. To laugh, and empty glasses in honour of the ladies.

D'AUBIG. Yes, I am told you have already made a conquest.

GASTON. He who would speak ill of her, I would requite with a blow of my sword; he who would tell me her name should have my thanks; for I have hitherto received only notes without signature. Oh, it's quite a romantic adventure, I assure you.

D'AUBIG. Madman, as you are!

GASTON. Do you know that in her letters the lady attempts to shake my confidence in you?

D'AUBIG. In me?

GASTON. And in your friends.

D'AUBIG. (*aside.*) Are our projects suspected then?

GASTON. I followed her page, and saw him enter the Louvre; now your kind, good-natured friends must assist me in finding her out.

D'AUBIG. An honourable employment for gentlemen, truly.

GASTON. Gentlemen! speak for them and yourself; but what else have I to do than take the world gaily? Formerly I swore boldly that I was the son of Baron d'Orville; now, I am become your *nephew*, without being a whit improved in my descent. You promised I should travel, and for two years you have kept your word; but I wish now to see the world in a different view than such as the high roads afford. Paris proffers its pleasures, and you refuse them to me—you forbid my approaching the court.

D'AUBIG. And what would you see there? fools who dissipate in amusements the fruit of the sweat of the people. Are these the pleasures you seek? Perhaps you think it right that the king himself—

GASTON. The king? yes, indeed. In the devil's name, who in the kingdom should amuse himself if *he* cannot? You smile with pity, but 'tis you who are the cause of my trouble. Instead of keeping yourself quiet, you lead a life of intrigue, and make me a sort of second-hand conspirator—a pillar of the inn in which you hold your mysterious conferences—a genuine night-bird, that flies about only in the dark: and, after all, what shall I get by it? a state prison, perhaps. Ah, beware of that, my dear uncle, I entreat you—I feel that I should die of the spleen before the end of eight days. Ventre-Saint-Gris, as your Henry the Fourth, used to say—"an open, active, roaring, dissipated life for me." That's what I must have. Fêtes, pleasures, music, women, wine, and then a conspiracy or two if you like, uncle, just to fill up the time.

D'AUBIG. You will soon be occupied with more serious ideas.

GASTON. I am serious enough sometimes, *when alone*; the image of Marie d'Ostanges, and the insult I received awaken themselves within me. You prevented my playing at cut-throat with her brother. Marie! I loved her fondly—I love her still; but she is become the wife of another—she has, perhaps, forgotten me. Is she at court?

D'AUBIG. What signifies? 'Tis madness to think of her *now*. But here are our friends. This way, gentlemen.

Enter LAUNAY, POMPIGNAN, and Two CONSPIRATORS, door in F.

Welcome, gentlemen! Now to table, and then—glass in hand.

GASTON. Ah, that is speaking to some purpose.

(they all bow to each other. D'AUBIGNE takes head of table; on his right, LAUNAY and POMPIGNAN; on left, Two CONSPIRATORS. GASTON also l. h. of table in front.)

D'AUBIG. To-morrow the court departs on a journey for some days; it is time to give the signal for our just enterprise.

GASTON. Gently, my dear uncle, gently—I came to pass a pleasant hour or two in good company, and not to hear you repeat your tiresome complaints against the court and the cardinal. Your health! and let those who agree with me do honour to the toast. (pause.) Nobody? Oh, very well, I'll drink it myself. Your health, uncle!

POMPIG. (r.) D'Aubigne, you answered to us for your nephew.

D'AUBIG. (c.) And I answer for him still.

LAUNAY. Yet this language—would he desert our cause?

GASTON. I, gentlemen? You do me injustice—the trade of a conspirator is not to my taste. (chord—all start.) Come, come, gentlemen, let your swords remain quiet in their scabbards. Doubtless, your meeting here is noble, and its success uncertain. But if you are all determined, no one shall say that I abandoned my friends in the moment of peril. Launay, take this poniard, and if I hesitate in the hour of action, strike it to my heart. Now, uncle, proceed to business.

(they reseat themselves.)

D'AUBIG. Our projects are well understood. We would recover the rights of the great vassals of the crown—full freedom of conscience and liberty for the people. Now to the means. To seize on several strongholds—to strengthen ourselves with certain great names, and with an army from our Flemish neighbours—to place at our head a prince of the blood royal, whose concurrence I have already promised you—and then dictate the terms of a treaty. On how many men, Pompignan, can you reckon?

POMPIG. About one thousand.

D'AUBIG. All in arms?

POMPIG. All in arms.

D'AUBIG. (to LAUNAY.) And you, Launay?

LAUNAY. I promise you the town of Nevers.

D'AUBIG. Your regiment is devoted to you. (to POMPIGNAN.) Have you received the despatches from the Prince of Orange?

POMPIG. He will join us at the first signal. But who is the prince that is to command us—is he of France?

D'AUBIG. You shall know in good time, when triumph crowns our glorious cause.

POMPIG. Till then, where is our leader?

D'AUBIG. Here! (rises and points to GASTON.)

ALL. Gaston !

GASTON. I ? (*chord—all surprised.*)

Enter MADAME LANDRY, door in flat.

MADAME. Gentlemen, Monsieur de St. Mars is about entering this room.

Exit, door R. H.

POMPIG. St. Mars ! An agent of the cardinal.

LAUNAY. Are we discovered ?

D'AUBIG. Resume your places !

Enter ST. MARS, door in flat.

(*raising his glass.*) To the glorious and happy marriage of Louis the Fourteenth !

ST. MARS. (L., *taking off his hat.*) And so I say, gentlemen. Excuse the liberty I have taken in entering, unknown as I am to any of you. Is there not in your company a young gentleman named Gaston ?

GASTON. I am he, sir.

ST. MARS. Will you grant me brief converse ?

GASTON. Willingly, sir.

D'AUBIG. (*aside.*) What can he want with him ? (*loud.*) We will leave you now, my young friend, and return in the evening—(*aside to GASTON.*) at midnight—(*loud.*) glass in hand—(*low.*) and sword unsheathed.

Exeunt ALL, R. H. door, but GASTON and ST. MARS.

ST. MARS. (*aside.*) This young man must be a suspected person—the cardinal has charged me to interrogate him.

GASTON. Now, sir, what is your pleasure with me ?

ST. MARS. I came—(*starts.*)—can I believe my eyes ? What an astonishing likeness !

GASTON. O, I see ! you are a portrait painter, sir, and are so enchanted with my countenance that you must needs have a copy of it. Well, sir, pray commence ; will you have a front view, or a profile ? Well—either begin your work or speak, man.

ST. MARS. (*aside.*) 'Tis the face of the king—his figure—the very tone of his voice. (*aloud.*) A person of rank, struck with your appearance, takes the most lively interest in your welfare, and could promote your fortune at court, would you attach yourself to his service.

GASTON. Who is this courtier ?

ST. MARS. You put that question rather hastily, and if the cardinal had wished to conceal—

GASTON. The cardinal—I refuse to go !

ST. MARS. Doubtless you have never beheld the court—you were brought up in some distant province.

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GASTON. That's no business of yours, sir, I imagine.

ST. MARS. I was endeavouring to account for the strange reception you give my offers. If you knew what you refuse—

GASTON. Is the court, then, really so magnificent a place? and what is said of the gallantry and beauty of its ladies?—

ST. MARS. Is true to the letter—we courtiers find but few of them cruel.

GASTON. And is there not *one* among them, *more* noted for her *beauty* than the rest?

ST. MARS. One above all, a lady of honour to the queen—the charming widow of the Marquis de Sennécy.

GASTON. Widow! did you say?—Say that again—is she a widow?

ST. MARS. (R. H.) Do you know her?

GASTON. (L. H.) Know her! what, Marie D'Ostanges, the companion of my youth.

ST. MARS. Ah! You were brought up, then, at Sémur?

GASTON. Yes!

ST. MARS. You lived on the shores of the Yonne?

GASTON. Yes!

ST. MARS. With Father Audoine?

GASTON. Right!

ST. MARS. Near the Baron D'Ostanges?

GASTON. You're right again.

ST. MARS. You were called Gaston D'Orville.

GASTON. And you, sir, were called St. Mars—you were the governor. The whole province detested—everybody hated you—your acts of tyranny I have often in person opposed. You see, sir, that we are old acquaintances.

ST. MARS. (*aside.*) So, so! I have learned enough for the cardinal. (*to him.*) You would again turn your thoughts towards the marchioness?

GASTON. I would—who is to hinder me?

ST. MARS. The nobles who pay their court to her, and who scarcely brook the rivalry of the king.

GASTON. Of the king?

ST. MARS. He who has Louis for a rival need fear but little from Monsieur Gaston D'Orville.

GASTON. And *he* in his turn fears no man.

ST. MARS. Enough, young man; learn to be moderate, and do not, by your imprudence, draw towards you the attention of a court which is, perhaps, already but too watchful of your actions. I know not the motives of this vigilance, but if you take my advice, beware of showing yourself at the Louvre. Good day to you—again, I say, beware! *Exit* D. L. C.

GASTON. Marie will be restored to me—I shall behold her

once more at liberty. Ah! how was it I did not guess that those private communications proceeded only from her—I feel convinced she still loves me—then let St. Mars be my rival, it matters little—but the king—the king! there's the danger. Oh! I wish I were a king. I must see her, speak to her—I shall soon find her out, for I have money, D'Aubigne does not let me want for that. As to his conspiracy! Oh, well, I shall meet him again here at midnight. How the devil came it into his head to name me chief? Well, I like to command; but first, to the Louvre. Yes, yes, to the Louvre! Ah! the hidden beauty that palace contains is more precious to me than all the power its potentates ever wielded.

Exit L. H.

SCENE II.—*Apartment of the Marchioness at the Louvre.*

Back and side doors; R. H. a window; L. H. a toilette with a looking glass; R. H. a table, with pens, ink, &c.; doors, c.—another, R., leading to her chamber; chairs, &c.

Slow music.—Enter MARIE, c. with a miniature.

MARIE. This portrait of the king might be taken for his own—in the image of Louis I retrace that of Gaston—how like are their features, but their language how different! as wide apart as gallantry is below true love. Poor Gaston! I tremble for him; the cardinal suspects a conspiracy, and has already his emissaries on the watch. Ah! let him fly! let him fly! my last letter was not urgent enough, I must dictate another.

Enter MADEMOISELLE AUBRY, R. H.

Are you there, Aubry?

AUBRY. (R.) Yes, madame! You look melancholy—now that does surprise me; a widow, young and beautiful, surrounded with the homage of the whole court, and even that of its master, the royal Louis.

MARIE. (*seated L.*) I have sought none of it.

AUBRY. That is the reason it comes to you. The king, they say, loves difficult enterprises; besides, a lover who is deeply smitten is not discouraged by a little difficulty.

MARIE. You read too many romances, mademoiselle.

AUBRY. Now I fancy the king a veritable hero of romance. I have seen him but once since I have had the honour of serving you; I thought him very handsome, and then he is so noble.

MARIE. Very handsome, is he not, Aubry?

AUBRY. A noble countenance.

MARIE. Very noble.

AUBRY. He is fit to govern the whole world.

MARIE. So I always thought of him.

AUBRY. I said to myself to-day that if I were a great lady and he honoured me by wearing my colours, I should be ready to expire with joy. Only think, now, a king!

MARIE. (*aside.*) Always the king! (*to her.*) No more of this; you will find in my room a casket impressed with the royal arms—bring it to me, I must send it to his majesty this very day.

MARIE. (*aside.*) Always the king! (*to her.*) No more of this; you will find in my room a casket impressed with the royal arms—bring it to me, I must send it to his majesty this very day.

Exit AUBRY, R. H.

I had forgotten this deposit which Father Audoine entrusted to me; I know not what it contains; he said the king only must ever know its contents.

Enter a SERVANT, c.

SERVANT. Will the marchioness be pleased to receive company?

MARIE. Who wishes to see me?

SERVANT. A gentleman whom I do not know.

MARIE. Admit him! (*crosses to L.*)

GASTON enters, c. and stops.

(*aside.*) Gaston! (*to SERVANT.*) Wait without till I call you.

Exit SERVANT, C.

GASTON. (*R.*) Marie!

MARIE. (*L.*) Is it you?

GASTON. You are surprised! perhaps the Marchioness de Sennécy expected a visit from the king of France?

MARIE. What a reproach in such a moment. Ah! I did not hope to see you again. How did you discover me?

GASTON. I suspected, Marie, that those letters came from you, for who else would take an interest in the fate of the despised Gaston—and your name, your rank at court were made known to me—Monsieur. de St. Mars.

MARIE. Have you seen him?

GASTON. I have! he says he loves you—that he aspires to the honour of your hand. Ah, Marie, let us forget that two years have passed away, and tell me, as formerly that you still love the poor, the titleless Gaston.

MARIE. Ah! judge of it by my anxiety at this moment in which you expose your life.

GASTON. Is it threatened, then?

MARIE. I know not that, but your secret meetings—

GASTON. Ah! what is suspected of them?

MARIE. A conspiracy—an enterprise against the power of the minister. Admitted into the intimacy of the great, I know

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that the cardinal is restless, he watches the discontented—the place of their meeting is known.

GASTON. Heavens ! you make me tremble, not for [myself, but for my friends, for D'Aubigne.

MARIE. You must separate from them.

GASTON. I must warn them.

MARIE. Without seeing them, then, or it may be too late—Oh, fly, I conjure you.

GASTON. Fly ! and leave an open field to the designs of a courtier or a monarch against you, Marie !

MARIE. Gaston !

GASTON. Hear me, Marie ! to warn my friends and then take flight *alone*, would be the act of a coward who clings to life. If I renounce my share in the peril of my friends—if I consent, that for a moment suspicion darkens my name, you must give up the splendour that surrounds you ; 'tis a painful sacrifice for a woman to grant, but it will be the price of a man's honour. Ah ! you hesitate.

MARIE. Fly with you ! but how ?

GASTON. Fear nothing ! I have friends in all quarters who will cover my retreat—D'Aubigne will be informed by a private message—to-morrow, or this evening if you will—

MARIE. To-morrow—this evening—abandon the court—my rank—my father ?—

GASTON. Is that all you regret ? oh, I see—I see—the king !

MARIE. Some one comes—silence !

Enter AUBRY, r. GASTON retires, and comes down L. corner.

AUBRY. Madame, here is the casket you sent me for. There cannot be much of a treasure in it, for it is very light. (*puts it on table, L.*) I have just seen the gentleman-usher, he says the queen dowager is waiting to consult you about her dress for the approaching ball.

MARIE. I must obey. (*to AUBRY.*) You will shew this gentleman down the private staircase. (*to GASTON.*) Excuse me, sir. (*low.*) Return this evening, and your heart's hope shall be gratified.

She exits, r. AUBRY retires up, r.

GASTON. (*aside, L.*) I was wrong to doubt her, yet there remains a point to be cleared up—ah, this young girl ! Mademoiselle—

AUBRY. (*r.*) The king ! is it possible ! in this disguise. Oh dear, I declare I have got the twitters.

GASTON. What ails you ?

AUBRY. Yes, it is the king. Pardon me, sire, surprise—respect—(*curseys very low.*)

GASTON. I do not understand you.

AUBRY. Ah, sire, I so little expected to see your majesty—

GASTON. (*aside.*) Sire ! my majesty ! The girl's mad ! what does she mean ?

AUBRY. Whoever has *once* seen you, cannot fail to recognise you again.

GASTON. (*aside.*) She's stark, staring mad. She takes me for the king.

AUBRY. This disguise is so romantic, so conformable to the rules of gallantry.

GASTON. (*aside.*) The girl's a fool ! I'll turn her mistake to my own account. (*loud.*) Be very prudent and speak very low.

AUBRY. Yes, sire, as low as ever you please.

GASTON. You have already seen the king—that is, you have seen me ?

AUBRY. Once—*only* once.

GASTON. In this apartment ?

AUBRY. No, sire.

GASTON. (*aside.*) I breathe again.

AUBRY. But in the glorious entertainment, when you wore the colours of my mistress, the marchioness.

GASTON. (*aside.*) An open declaration of love to Marie by the king. (*loud.*) And tell me, is the marchioness proud of the power of her charms ? does she receive the open attentions of her king ?

AUBRY. Ah, sire, who can be insensible to your attentions ? it is of no use for the marchioness to affect indifference—be sure she loves you.

GASTON. (*aside.*) The devil she does.

AUBRY. Oh, lord, his majesty swears. And when she was presented at court, everybody noticed the impression which the sight of Louis made upon her.

GASTON. Indeed !

AUBRY. So violent was her emotion that she was obliged to be supported ! then she became sad and thoughtful, and I've often seen her draw from her bosom a portrait of the king and bedew it with tears.

GASTON. Ah !

AUBRY. (*aside.*) He seems moved—with joy, I suppose. What a clever girl I am !

GASTON. But her father—the Baron d'Ostanges ?

AUBRY. Ah, your majesty had your reasons for sending him away to England.

GASTON. (*aside.*) No doubt my majesty *had*. Enough, I thank you—I will see the marchioness again. You may go.

AUBRY. (*aside, going.*) "You may go !" They call him a gallant monarch. Well, it's a curious specimen of gallantry to get all this intelligence out of a lady's maid, a *pretty* one too—at least I fancy so—and then say "you may go !" without even

giving her a royal kiss in return. Oh, how I should like a royal kiss!

Exit, R. H.

GASTON. (*sits at table, L. H.*) What have I heard? The remarks of this girl and the words of St. Mars agree; they account for Marie's hesitation. Yet she is ready, for my sake, to quit this seat of luxury and dissipation—nothing compels her, however. I must write to D'Aubigne. (*takes a seat to write, L.*) "All is discovered—fly!" (*seeing the casket.*) A casket with the royal arms! Yes, these are the arms of France. What does it contain? some proof, perhaps. I should like to know. Ho! who waits there?

Enter AUBRY, R. H.

Send this note—yet, stay! This is a very handsome casket; what is in it, do you know?

AUBRY. Your majesty ought to know better than anybody else, for my mistress meant to send it to you this very day.

GASTON. To the king?

AUBRY. Yes, to your princely majesty.

GASTON. And for what purpose?

AUBRY. I do not know, sire. Has your majesty any further commands?

GASTON. None! leave me—leave me!

AUBRY. Your majesty wants nothing else then?

GASTON. Nothing—Go, girl!

AUBRY. (*aside, going.*) Well, I'm sure—what a temper he is in! There's no chance, I see, of a royal kiss. Lord! what a delicate treat it must be to get one. Well, I do long for a royal kiss!

Exit, C.

GASTON. What, is she about to send back her kingly lover's presents and letters? The *proof* is *here*, and have it I will. What am I going to do? open this casket—violate her secrets! The truth were a thousand times preferable to this suspense. I'm strangely tormented. (*seeking to open it.*) My fingers ache to—well, then, the royal seal shall not stand in the way of my knife. (*takes a small knife off table and breaks it open.*) A letter in ciphers, and this—"To Father Audoine!" What do I see?—"To Father Audoine!"—"Anne of Austria!" Is this an illusion? what does she say? "Gaston, twin-brother of Louis the Fourteenth!" Am I delirious? "The prince has a small spot on his left hand"—'tis here—"and one on the right side of his face." (*looking in the glass.*) Ah, that *too* is here! (*sinks into a chair.*) "Do not forget that he is of the blood royal of France, and that the death of the Dauphin may call to the throne Gaston, twin-brother of Louis the Fourteenth." Signed—"Anne of Austria." *My mother! Brother to the king! Son of Louis the Thirteenth!* (*falls on his knees.*) Peace to your memory, my royal father!

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Love to you, oh! my mother—who have not banished me irretrievably! Love to you, my brother! He is king—and I also am king of France. I resemble him, they say, in feature—I would resemble him in more than that. Do not reject me, brother Louis: I must have my *share* in our father's inheritance. Keep to yourself the pomps and the joys of court—I must have armies, soldiers, glory. Oh! what a life will mine be. I am young and possess strength, with a pure heart. Some one comes! Down, kingly ideas! thoughts which disturb the peace of the world—return into my bosom, there to smoulder till you burst forth, a devouring flame.. (*sits.*)

Enter St. MARS from centre, down R.

ST. MARS. (*aside.*) I will await the marchioness here. He is there—a quarrel and the point of my sword.—I have my instructions. (*loud.*) So you are here, young man?

GASTON. Yes; and who sent for you to keep me company? Your surprise is impertinent.

ST. MARS. I forbade you to enter the Louvre.

GASTON. For that very reason I came.

ST. MARS. Does the marchioness allow your visits?

GASTON. Does she countenance yours?

ST. MARS. Your replies are less respectful than are usual among gentlemen.

GASTON. Perhaps they agree with yours to me.

ST. MARS. I should resent this behaviour were you of more elevated rank: but you are not my equal.

GASTON. No, nor do I wish to be.

ST. MARS. Your birth assures you of impunity.

GASTON. Thank your own, rather.

ST. MARS. I aspire to the hand of the marchioness. I suffer no rival of your grade—retire!

GASTON. You command me? Dare you do it?

ST. MARS. (R. H.) Are you a gentleman?

GASTON. (L. H.) By Heaven! I swear it.

ST. MARS. Prove it then on the point of your sword.

GASTON. With all my heart. (*aside.*) What am I about to do—measure my destiny with this man's?

ST. MARS. You hesitate?

GASTON. I spare you—but retire.

ST. MARS. If you are of noble family, show it. But, no! you are afraid.

GASTON. Madman! do you know to whom you speak? Respect me, sir,

ST. MARS. Respect *you!* (*with contempt.*)

GASTON. Ask pardon.

ST. MARS. Ask pardon, too! Poor fellow! I pity you.

GASTON. Pity ! Off with your hat, sir ! Off with your hat.
How dare you stand covered in my presence ?

(strikes off his hat.)

ST. MARS. Villain ! who are you then ?

GASTON. I am—no matter, defend your life. (they draw.)

ST. MARS. And you yours.

GASTON. Hold ! The marchioness.

ST. MARS. As the clock strikes six, behind the Louvre.

GASTON. You will find me there. (put up their swords.)

Enter MARIE, R. H. 2 E.

MARIE. (R.) Monsieur de St. Mars !

ST. MARS. (C.) I am concerned, madame, that I have missed the opportunity of speaking to you, but duty calls me to the cardinal's. (to GASTON.) It will soon be six.

GASTON. (L. H., to ST. MARS.) You may depend upon me.

Exit ST. MARS, C.

MARIE. What is this ? You were at high words when I entered ; have you had a quarrel ?

GASTON. He boasted he was about to wed you. Ah, tell me that you still love Gaston, a poor, friendless fugitive ; without even a name to his inheritance.

MARIE. You—you only.

GASTON. Do you see that casket ?

MARIE. Heavens ! I was to have sent it to the king.

GASTON. And a king has opened it. Read—I thought you faithless—I sought for evidence of your truth or falsehood—pardon me—and read.

MARIE. (R. H., having read.) Gracious Heavens.

GASTON. I am son of Louis the Thirteenth. (she kneels.)

GASTON. (raising her.) No, no—into my arms, upon my heart, Marie ; my life, my love !

MARIE. Gaston, let me once more say that I love you ; to-morrow I should have fled with you—to-morrow I should have been your wife ; now I can be but the mistress of a prince.

GASTON. My wife ever.

D'AUBIGNE. (without.) I say, I must speak to him.

(confused noise without.)

GASTON. What noise is that ?

D'AUBIGNE. (without, c.) I will speak to him.

GASTON. 'Tis the voice of D'Aubigne, a friend who is devoted to me.

Enter D'AUBIGNE, C., and comes down L. H.

D'AUBIGNE. Well, my dear nephew ; pardon me marchioness ; so I am obliged to come here then in search of you ?

GASTON. (c.) You come in good time.

D'AUBIG. (L.H.) Excuse my disturbing you, but we have serious business to attend to. (*aside.*) Imprudent man ! why came you hither ?

GASTON. Do not scold, dear uncle ; but stay—you are this night to name the chief of the conspiracy ?

D'AUBIG. Yes.

GASTON. He is of the blood royal ?

D'AUBIG. Yes.

GASTON. And the proofs of his birth ?

D'AUBIG. I shall have them.

GASTON. Take them then.

D'AUBIG. Heavens ! these letters !—

GASTON. Well, dear uncle, do you know that your nephew—

D'AUBIG. These twenty years, my prince, I have known all. (*kneels—Bell strikes six.*)

GASTON. (*aside.*) Ah ! the hour—I must begone. (*loud.*) Farewell, Marie.

MARIE. Monsieur D'Aubigne, I have only wishes to bestow. Watch over him, defend him from the dangers that threaten him ; above all prevent his meeting again with St. Mars.

Enter AUBRY, c.

AUBRY. A messenger from his eminence the cardinal—

MARIE. (R.) What is his business ?

AUBRY. Shall I show his majesty out ?

D'AUBIG. Gracious Heavens ! do you know then—

AUBRY. Oh ! I knew him immediately.

GASTON. (C.) Let him come in.

Enter OFFICER and FOUR GUARDS, C.—GUARDS remain behind.

MARIE. (R.) What is your business, sir ?

OFFICER. (L, corner.) We are come in search of a young man named Gaston, whom we are to conduct into the cardinal's presence.

D'AUBIG. (R. C.) Silence, for if discovered here, he is lost—doomed. (*aside to MARIE.*)

OFFICER. Is this the gentleman ?

AUBRY. What are you about, why you fool that is the king.

OFFICER. The king ? (*all kneel.*)

D'AUBIG. He is saved !

GASTON. (*aside.*) I may now escape and keep my appointment with St. Mars. (*crosses to D'AUBIGNE.*) Farewell friend, we meet again in the evening as usual ; (*aside.*) then I lose my head or gain a crown. (*turns to MARIE.*) Rise, my dear marchioness. (*aside.*) All will be happy yet. (*to the OFFICER.*) I forbid your following me ; Guards remain here till further

orders. (*going up stage, stands in centre of door.—takes off his hat, and the drop falls on the picture as he exclaims—*) Adieu, dear Marchioness! (*the GUARDS presenting arms.*)

END OF THE SECOND EPOCH.

A lapse of ten years between the Second and Third Epochs.

THIRD EPOCH.

THE ISLE OF ST. MARGUERITE.—1669.

SCENE I.—*The walls of a Fortress, l. u. e., surrounded by water; a set piece from l. 2 e. to r. 2 e. After a few bars of music, an arm is seen through a grating of the Fort to throw a silver plate into the lake.*

Enter TONY, singing, in boat, r. h.

TONY. It's settled, by fate or the old gent in black, that I am to catch no fish before sunset; and after all my trouble and risk in going to the point of the island, and close to the castle, I can see nothing yet. (*looks out, r. h.*) Who comes here? Ah, it's Father Maurice, the old fisherman just settled on the coast. Well, Father Maurice. (*lands from boat.*)

Enter D'AUBIGNE, as a fisherman, under the name of Maurice, from u. e. r.

D'AUBIG. (l. h.) What are you looking at—some prisoner breathing the air from that window?

TONY. (r. h.) No, bad luck to it! it's too high. Have you ever seen him then?

D'AUBIG. Whom?

TONY. The prisoner who has his face always concealed under an iron mask.

D'AUBIG. Never!

TONY. My father saw him once as he took provisions into the fort. He says that in other respects he is a good-looking fellow. I'm told he has a beautiful voice. Sometimes on a calm night the sailors hear delightful songs, which seem to come from yon window. But why that mask? that's what I should like to know. I remember when Mr. St. Mars brought

him into the island — *it is ten years ago*—we were talking about him in our cabin one winter's night in the chimney corner. Some said he was a great personage—the Duke of Monmouth I think, or one of Buckingham's bastards ; others, that he had a horrible face—a real death's-head-and-cross-bones' physog ; others, that he is a sorcerer, and turns your luck by only looking at you. Who knows but he put a spell upon my fishing.

D'AUBIG. Likely enough.

TONY. I shall be sure of a scolding when I get home, if not a good drubbing from father, if I go without fish or a silver crown—to day I have neither.

D'AUBIG. Never mind, my lad. I am poor, like you, but I have only myself to look after—here's some money. I'll buy your first cast.

TONY. Thank you, Father Maurice. They say you are a spy of the governor's; but I think you are a good fellow. I'll throw my net into the castle moat, and return directly.

Exit in boat, and rows off under the tower, l.

D'AUBIG. I a spy of the governor's? Would to Heaven I had such confidence! Unfortunate prince! what protracted agony. These ten years I have sought the opportunity of releasing him. I alone guessed who was "The man with the iron mask."—Marie herself knows not yet. When I met her on this island, I thought she had found out the existence of Gaston ; but all her concern is for the captivity of her father, who is also confined in yonder fortress.

Re-enter TONY, in boat, u. e. l. h.

TONY. (*as he lands.*) Oh, Father Maurice—oh, Father Maurice!—this is a strange adventure, Father Maurice. Nobody but ourselves would believe it—you are in luck.

D'AUBIG. (R.) What have you taken?

TONY. I threw my net into the castle moat ; in pulling it up, it went plaguy heavy. Oho! thinks I, it's high tide then. I gave another tug, and out came this silver plate.

D'AUBIG. Give it me. (*snatches it.*)

TONY. (L. H.) It's solid silver.

D'AUBIG. This plate must have been thrown out of one of the prison windows ; the governor must have it back. I'll take charge of it.

TONY. As you like about that ; you bought my first cast. But no matter—you are in luck. Here comes the governor—I'm off in a jiffey. I say, just look at the back of that plate, how its scratched and scrawled all over. One would swear it was writing. Good bye, Father Maurice. (*goes off in boat, r.*

Act 3. THE MAN WITH THE IRON MASK. 29

D'AUBIG. Good bye, my lad. This plate is mine by a double title. (*reads.*) "Endeavour to penetrate into Fort St. Marguerite; the garrison is weak; you will find me faithful in my adherence to the rights of my royal birth—The Man with the Iron Mask." He must have seen me. (*March, continued till all are on.*) The governor! Coolness and audacity! this is the wished for moment.

Enter ST. MARS, OFFICER and GUARD, L. H. 2 E.

ST. MARS. (*to OFFICER.*) Halt! March round the island; suspicious persons are said to have landed last night—ascertain the truth.

OFFICER. We shall, my lord. March!

Exeunt OFFICER and GUARD, L. H.

D'AUBIG. Has the old Baron d'Ostanges made a second attempt to escape, governor?

ST. MARS. No, Maurice, thanks to you who gave me information of his projects, I have nothing to fear for him. You did me a service—I am not ungrateful. Can I do *you* one in return?

D'AUBIG. I have already told you—bed and board in the fort, governor.

ST. MARS. Impossible! Do you want money?

D'AUBIG. I am not asking alms, but only a place of rest. Well, as I can't have it, why good bye—I'm off to my cabin, governor. But, before I go, I'll leave with you what I fished out of the castle moat just now—a silver plate, governor.

ST. MARS. Silver?

D'AUBIG. I suppose one of your prisoners let it fall, governor.

ST. MARS. (*aside.*) One only can have done so. (*having read.*) What do I see? Stir not hence. (*to D'AUBIGNE, who is going, R.*) One word decides your fate—have you read this writing?

D'AUBIG. How the devil could I? I *can't* read, governor.

ST. MARS. (*L.*) What is to assure me of that?

D'AUBIG. (*R.*) The word of an honest man.

ST. MARS. You are right to say so—your life depends upon it.

D'AUBIG. Take it if you do not believe me, governor.

ST. MARS. (*aside.*) Should he be deceiving me—but, at least, he shall not divulge it. (*loud.*) Hark you, Maurice, I grant your request. The servant of a prisoner confided to my care died the day before yesterday; I offer you his place, will you take it?

D'AUBIG. Willingly, governor.

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ST. MARS. But once within the castle gate, you will never leave it more.

D'AUBIG. Never, governor?

ST. MARS. Never!

D'AUBIG. Well, no matter—I consent, governor. The castle is large—there is a court to walk about in, and prisoners to say good morning and good night to, governor.

ST. MARS. (L. H.) You will be allowed to speak to no one.

D'AUBIG. (R. H.) Nature has not made me a babbler, governor. I can take the air at the windows and look out upon the open sea, governor.

ST. MARS. The prisoner whom you will serve is about to change his apartment; that which is allotted him is lighted only by a window twenty feet from the ground.

D'AUBIG. I understand—a dungeon, governor. Let us finish our bargain at once, and say no more about it.

ST. MARS. Follow me.

Re-enter OFFICER and GUARDS from R., and form across stage at back.

(L. H., to OFFICER.) Well?

OFFICER. (C.) We have discovered nothing.

D'AUBIG. (R. H.) No, you have been on the wrong scent.

ST. MARS. What did you say? (*to him quickly.*)

D'AUBIG. Why, this, governor—it is not the south-east, but the north of the island you should have gone to; twelve or fifteen men have landed there, and are concealed in a cavern formed by the rock, governor.

ST. MARS. (C.) How do you know that?

D'AUBIG. I saw them last night, governor, and heard them talk in a low animated tone. Their design is to penetrate into the fort by surprise, and release the prisoner whom they call—

ST. MARS. What?

D'AUBIG. The Duke of Monmouth.

ST. MARS. (C.) Conduct my soldiers to the spot.

D'AUBIG. (R.) Readily, governor.

ST. MARS. They must be seized.

D'AUBIG. They'll find their way into the fort, but in a different manner from what they intended—eh, governor?

ST. MARS. Follow that man—stay! I will go with you. (*aside.*) Ever in dread—new conspiracies! Fatal ambition! thou hast linked me to the other end of my prisoner's chain. The garrison is weak—he is but too right. But Monsieur de Louvois is visting the coast of Provence; from him I will obtain a reinforcement. March!

(*Music.—All march off, R. H.* ST. MARS goes into fortress.

SCENE II—*Room in the prison. Door in flat, R.C.—grated L. 2 E. One table and a chair, &c. Stage half dark.*

Slow music.—Enter BARON and MARIE, L. H. door.

BARON. (R.) My dear Marie, I am in momentary dread of a visit from the governor. You must now retire.

MARIE. I cannot without danger. Julien, the guard who privately admitted me during the absence of St. Mars, will come to me on the first threat of danger.

BARON. I scarcely hoped to see you—we are so strictly guarded. There must be some important personage immured here. Cursed be the day on which I fought with that proud noble for the honour of my house.

MARIE. I expect to obtain your pardon; I have been led to hope so.

BARON. Louvois will refuse.

MARIE. Not on an order from the king. A courtier, who is about to rejoin the army, promised to solicit it for me.

BARON. (R.) Do you expect it soon?

MARIE. (L.) From day to day.

BARON. Hark! Do you not hear steps in the corridor?

MARIE. Yes, 'tis Julien—no doubt he comes for me.

BARON. No, 'tis the steps of my jailor—'tis St. Mars.

MARIE. Heavens! should he find me here. Where can I conceal myself?

BARON. Here in this room. Silence!

(*slow music—MARIE enters room L. D. 2 E.*

Enter ST. MARS, and an OFFICER, R. C. D. F.

ST. MARS. Baron d'Ostanges!

BARON. My lord!

ST. MARS. You are about to resign this chamber.

BARON. Is my pardon arrived?

ST. MARS. Your pardon! No! Remove the Baron.

(*OFFICER points off, R.C.*

BARON. (L.) Where am I to go?

ST. MARS. (R.) To another room in the prison.

BARON, (*aside.*) Heavens! And Marie? (*aloud.*) I request that I may remain here.

ST. MARS. My duty, sir, refuses your request.

BARON. As jailor, you refuse—but as an old friend—

ST. MARS. From the windows of your new apartment you will have a cheering view of the country.

BARON. Am I to give place to some other unfortunate?

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ST. MARS. No. These two chambers will remain vacant.

BARON. (*aside.*) Julien can let her out, then. (*to JAILORS.*) I follow you.

(BARON exits R. C.)

ST. MARS. (*after a moment's silence.*) Is all silent in the corridor?

OFFICER. Yes, my lord.

ST. MARS. Call in the prisoner.

OFFICER. Marchiali! Marchiali!

ST. MARS. Marchiali, advance. (*to OFFICER.*) Retire.

Exit OFFICER, R. C., closing the door after GASTON enters.

Enter GASTON, his face covered with a black mask, D. in F., R. C., he sits at table, centre—ST. MARS stands with his hat off, R. H.—music very plaintive and slow.

ST. MARS. Prince, it has been judged advisable to remove you to this chamber. I shall take care that you are provided with everything necessary, and even what is denied to other prisoners. In all else, my instructions are the same as usual—death to whoever shall discover the secret! Have you any orders? (*GASTON signs, not—aside.*) The courage of this man astonishes even me—not a murmur, no complaints escape him.

Exit, door R. C.

(music again—GASTON rises, examines the rooms.

GASTON. For ten years! the tormentors! I would have dashed my forehead against the iron mask that incases it, but one ray of hope restrained me. My blood dries up, and burns in my compressed brain! Oh, Heaven! for pity's sake, grant me an hour of sleep, a dream that would transport me, for only one hour, to open air and liberty!

(walks to R. H.—MARIE looks in, L. H.

MARIE. All is silent. They are gone. (*approaches GASTON—he turns.*) Ah! (*starts back in alarm*)

GASTON. A woman here! how did she gain entrance? Heaven! Marie! no, no! I deceive myself! let me look again! calmly—calmly! yes—'tis she! such as I formerly beheld her! It is not a vision!

MARIE. (*L. H.*) In Heaven's name, who are you?

GASTON. (*aside.*) She knows not, then. (*to her.*) Who am I? Ah! were I to tell you, your death! death—do you hear? would be the consequence. I must be known to you only as the man with the iron mask.

MARIE. Unhappy sufferer!

GASTON. How did you gain admission? did you not come in the hope of seeing some one?

MARIE. Yes!

GASTON. Whom, then?

MARIE. My father.

GASTON. Your father—ah! (*shudders.*)

MARIE. You, perhaps, have also a father, friends, a wife who knows not your fate?

GASTON. No!

MARIE. (L.) Nor ever will know it.

GASTON. (R.) Never!

MARIE. Oh! how I pity you—but do not despair, attachment often survives absence—I know it—those whom you love, perhaps lament you from afar—their hearts are faithful to you still.

GASTON. Heavens! she loves me still.

MARIE. Poor prisoner! I hear that you weep, but I cannot see your tears.

GASTON. (*aside.*) Oh, misery! in her presence, and dare not discover myself. I know not by what means you came here, but we must part—go, go, quickly—go.

MARIE. I must wait.

GASTON. Oh, fly, Marie, fly!

MARIE. You know my name?

GASTON. What have I said?

MARIE. What suspicion!—no! it is not possible—yet, that voice—those stifled sighs! ah! surely I recognise—tell me—is it you? Oh! no, no, it is not, so unhappy—so suffering, I would not have it so. Ah! you are not—my voice chokes in anguish—tell me you are not.

GASTON. Marie!

MARIE. (*rushing to him.*) Ah! 'tis he—'tis Gaston!

(*embrace.*)

GASTON. Dear Marie, your tears bedew only a visage of iron; but feel how my heart beats, it is still unchanged. Ah! you are the first to whom I dare say it, but for ten years I have suffered horribly.

MARIE. And is it thus, is it here that I find you at last? Alas! I knew not your fate—when they spoke to me of the Iron Mask, I listened without emotion. No, Gaston, my indignation was not roused, I wept not, I fancied a criminal; yet it was you whom they inclosed in this dreadful mask. Oh! why can I not tear it off, that I might gaze on those features, that I might contemplate them once more. How they must be sunken by ceaseless suffering! No rest! no peace! sorrow preys upon your heart, despair wearies your brain, you cannot weep. Oh! that I could behold your tears—that I could rest your burning brow on my hands and refresh it with my sighs. Oh! my whole life would I give for one hour of happiness to you.

GASTON. In vain you wish, Marie, in vain. On your life divulge not this fatal secret; your death would be the result.

You and your father will soon depart, and I, unhappy wretch that I am, I shall never see you more. Ah! of all my recollections, yours was the most fondly cherished ; the heart of Marie was more estimable to me than the crown of France.

MARIE. Hark! some one comes. (*chains heard to fall.*)

Enter D'AUBIGNE, door in flat, R. C.

D'AUBIG. (R.) Is she here yet ?

MARIE. (L.) Ah ! Monsieur d'Aubigne.

GASTON. (C.) D'Aubigne, is it you ?

D'AUBIG. Your room has been changed ; she has recognised you ; this is what I wished to prevent. (*to MARIE.*) Julien awaits you—you must go ; you have but two minutes left.

GASTON. Farewell, Marie, farewell !

D'AUBIG. A moment longer and you are lost.

Slow music—Exit MARIE, door R. C.

(at the door, c.) She descends the staircase—the wicket opens—it closes—she is safe ; now to business. (*down, R.*)

GASTON. It is you then, D'Aubigne ?

D'AUBIG. Even so—I have been in the island two months.

GASTON. A silver plate—

D'AUBIG. Was returned by me to the governor.

GASTON. (L. H.) By you ?

D'AUBIG. To insure my secrecy, he brought me within the fortress, under the name of Maurice a fisherman.

GASTON. For pity's sake, D'Aubigne, remove this dreadful mask, if but for a moment—it suffocates me.

D'AUBIG. Two men only are in the secret of its springs, St. Mars, and Louvois.. Listen to me ; before the close of the day you may be—

GASTON. Free ?

D'AUBIG. Ay, and king. Since our separation I have resumed my rank and re-appeared at court.

GASTON. Is the man with the iron mask spoken of there ?

D'AUBIG. In vague report and falsehood ; the truth would be a thunderbolt. France is weary of the yoke of Louis.

GASTON. Does he oppress his people ?

D'AUBIG. Judge by your own fate. The moment is at hand—this night, in a few hours I bear you hence.

GASTON. This night ! Is liberty so near ?

D'AUBIG. I have landed in the island a dozen soldiers devoted to me ; I have denounced them to the governor—they are all within the prison ; the garrison is weak, and by this stratagem may easily be disarmed. A fisherman's bark will transport you to the coast, and in a few days your rights will be proclaimed in the face of the world.

GASTON. My rights! would they be credited? the only proofs I had—

D'AUBIG. (R., taking out letters.) Are here.

GASTON. (L.) The letters of my mother!

D'AUBIG. I have preserved them—they will be of use to you.

GASTON. But shall I have strength enough?

D'AUBIG. You will soon regain it in the open air and liberty. Why not? Heaven is in our cause—Louis is in the field, and he is not invulnerable.

GASTON. The die is cast! I risk but my life—and oh, Heaven's, what a life!

D'AUBIG. I can depend upon you?

GASTON. You may.

D'AUBIG. The governor!

GASTON. Ever that man!

Exit, door L. H.

Enter ST. MARS, C. D.

D'AUBIG. (L.) Well, governor, you see I am entered upon office.

ST. MARS. (R.) Have you spoken to your new master?

D'AUBIG. Labour in vain; he wont so much as open his mouth. For one so high born, your Duke of Monmouth is rather low bred.

ST. MARS. Announce to him a visit from Monsieur de Louvois.

D'AUBIG. (*aside.*) Louvois! (*loud.*) Have they placed *him* under your care too?

ST. MARS. Louvois has this moment landed at the castle with thirty soldiers, whom I begged him to spare from his guard. He is coming up the staircase.

D'AUBIG. (*aside, and overwhelmed.*) *Thirty soldiers!* the contest is too unequal! no matter—All for all—my life or victory!

ST. MARS. Enter, my lord.

Enter LOUVOIS, door R. C.

LOUVOIS. Is this the chamber of the prisoner?

ST. MARS. (L. of centre.) It is.

LOUVOIS. (R.) Who is this man?

ST. MARS. The servant whom I have appointed to wait on him—he is devoted to me.

LOUVOIS. Does he know the prisoner?

D'AUBIG. Yes, my lord!

LOUVOIS. How? (*alarmed—mysteriously.*)

D'AUBIG. (*aside to him.*) He is the duke of Monmouth.

LOUVOIS. 'Tis well! I expect some despatches of importance; when the courier arrives let them be brought to me *instantly*.

ST. MARS. (c.) Maurice, *you* will look to this commission.

D'AUBIG. Yes, governor. (*aside.*) Ah! a lucky thought—it shall be so.

Exit, door R. C.

LOUVOIS. (r.) Call the prisoner forth.

ST. MARS. (l. h.) Marchiali!

LOUVOIS. Leave us.

Exit ST. MARS, door R. C.

Enter GASTON, door L. H.

GASTON. (*seated, l.*) Who are you?

LOUVOIS. (*taking off his hat.*) The Marquis de Louvois, minister to his majesty.

GASTON. To my brother, Louis! do you come from him?

LOUVOIS. Yes, prince, to alter your doom.

(*approaches to take off the mask.*

GASTON. Vain effort in which my hands have been uselessly employed for ten years; an infernal art has placed it there. (*LOUVOIS detaches and puts it on the table—chord.*) Ah! I breathe! (*remains awhile as one dazzled, puts his hands before his face, then looking at the mask.*) Look, sir—look! it is rusted with my tears. (*rises.*) Ah! air, air! (*paces the room.*) Not a window! not a window! (*falls in chair.*)

LOUVOIS. Prince, the king your brother—

GASTON. Talk not to me of *him*—speak not to me yet—I cannot listen to you—I see nothing—I hear nothing—ah! how many emotions at once! (*sinks back in his chair.*)

LOUVOIS. (*aside.*) After ten years of captivity he will consent.

GASTON. My brother, Louis, did you say? has he invented new tortures for me? what is your business?

LOUVOIS. (r.) On his departure for the army, his majesty committed to me the most extensive powers; prince, you are free, if—

GASTON. Free! Is my brother; then, touched with remorse? Is he prepared to render to Heaven an account of his reign?

LOUVOIS. Let us hope that his majesty, victorious over his enemies, will yet live long to the happiness of his subjects. But he is touched with compassion—

GASTON. Free, did you say?

LOUVOIS. You will leave France under an assumed name, after having signed, in my presence, a formal renunciation of all your rights; this is necessary to prevent future troubles, for attempts appear already to have been formed.

(*places deed on table.*

GASTON. Oh, you are in fear, then. This is the secret of

your generous compassion. What, sir, renounce my birth-right? Fly the kingdom an obscure, unknown fugitive.

LOUVOIS. The public treasury will be open to you.

GASTON. You offer me gold in exchange for a crown.

LOUVOIS. Sign, prince!

GASTON. It is but my name—and liberty the price. (*sits.*)

LOUVOIS. Sign, prince!

GASTON. I give my name—they give me freedom.

LOUVOIS. Sign, prince!

GASTON. (*rising.*) Never—never—never!

LOUVOIS. It is the will of the king.

GASTON. His will, is it, sir? It is his will that I suffer thus—that I should be his victim; but it is the will of Heaven that I should die king of France. I will not sign!

LOUVOIS. Prince! (*alarmed.*)

GASTON. Return and tell my brother Louis that I will not sign.

LOUVOIS. What hopes have you, prince?

GASTON. None, but I will not sign.

LOUVOIS. Your captivity will be endless.

GASTON. I defy my butchers! What, coward-like, renounce my birthrights—fly my kingdom? No, no! it will require ten years more before they can subdue my courage. I have strength enough for longer suffering yet. Though my brother Louis may die upon a throne, and I perish in a dungeon, still will I die king of France. That, sir, is my will. (*retires up.*)

Enter St. MARS, door R. C.

LOUVOIS. Why is this haste, my lord?

ST. MARS. My lord, pardon my alarm; but this news if be true—the king—

LOUVOIS. (R. H.) Well, the king—speak low!

ST. MARS. (C., seeing GASTON, L.) Ah! (*to LOUVOIS.*) The king has been killed on the field of battle.

LOUVOIS. Killed! How did you hear that?

ST. MARS. Or mortally wounded—the news is spread throughout the prison.

LOUVOIS. Is the courier arrived then?

Enter D'AUBIGNE, door R. C., with despatches.

D'AUBIG. (L.) What news?—gracious heavens! what news?

(*he comes down, L.*)

LOUVOIS. (R.) Give me the despatches. Lead Marchiali to his chamber.

D'AUBIG. Come, go in ! (*aside to GASTON.*) Pardon me—it is the last time you will be called upon to obey.

Exit GASTON, door L. H.

LOUVOIS. (*reading.*) "My lord, the army is in consternation. This day, at four o'clock, the king, in leading his guard to the attack of an entrenchment, was killed by a cannon ball. Consider the means of securing the tranquillity of the kingdom.—Camp of Turnheim, August 17, 1669. For the Marshall,—Signed, D'Aubigne." D'Aubigne ! one of the lords of the court—it is true, then.

ST. MARS. Read on, my lord.

LOUVOIS. "Killed by a cannon ball—17th of August."

ST. MARS. Consider the means of securing the tranquillity of the kingdom.

LOUVOIS. St. Mars, what is to be done—what part shall we take?

D'AUBIG. What part shall you take, gentlemen ?—The king is dead. Long live Gaston, King of France !

GASTON. (*entering suddenly, l. door.*) What do I hear ? The king dead !

D'AUBIG. Killed on the field of battle—on the 17th of August.

GASTON. (*to LOUVOIS.*) I have not signed—I am king of France !

LOUVOIS. 'Tis false—you are not !

GASTON. My birth—

LOUVOIS. There is no proof.

GASTON. These letters of my mother —

LOUVOIS. But the Dauphin—

GASTON. He is but a minor, and his rights are void when I resume mine.

LOUVOIS. Impossible ! St. Mars, call in the soldiers.

Enter OFFICER, suddenly, followed by SOLDIERS, who remain and fill back of scene.

OFFICER. My lords, the soldiers refuse to obey the name of the king ; the prisoners are all in arms, and ours the weaker party.

GASTON. St. Mars, I pardon all that's past—Louvois, you shall be my minister ; your homage, sirs, your homage !

ST. MARS. Let us be the first to proclaim him king. (*are about to kneel.*)

Enter MARIE, SOLDIERS, and PRISONERS, door R. C.

MARIE. My lord, behold my father's pardon, signed by the king.

LOUVOIS. The king ! what date ?

MARIE. My lord, the 19th of August.

ST. MARS. The 19th!—Treason!—the dispatch is a forgery!

LOUVOIS. Soldiers, your king yet lives—seize that traitor!

(pointing to D'AUBIGNE)—GUARDS surround D'AUBIGNE.

GASTON. Stand back! If they dare attempt it, I will declare myself.

LOUVOIS. (alarmed.) What say you?

GASTON. Monsieur Louvois, a word with you. It seems I am not to be king—fate, not right, conspires against me. Yet I possess at this moment the means of disturbing the tranquillity of the whole kingdom, by simply declaring who I am. Forty persons are now within hearing; would you rather destroy forty lives to secure your secret, or let that man escape whose only crime has been fidelity to my person. Open then the ranks of your soldiers; let him forth in freedom, and I will refrain from publishing to the world the cruelty of one royal brother, and the sufferings and torture endured by the other.

LOUVOIS. A serious peril on one hand, an obscure individual on the other. Release him!

GASTON. Life for life. (to D'AUBIGNE.) Farewell, perhaps for ever. There, gentlemen, take the only proofs of my royal birthright—the letters of my mother. And, now, adieu to hope and liberty. Gentlemen, you may replace the mask. (as they take the mask from table.)

MARIE. (forgetting herself.) Oh, mercy—mercy for Gas—

GASTON. (starts up and aloud.) Silence, woman! (aside.) have I not already told you that to mention my name were certain death. (aloud.) Hence, woman! I know you not!

(Tableau.—She faints in the arms of D'AUBIGNE, L. H.; GASTON seats himself at table, c., LOUVOIS behind table holding up the mask over his head; ST. MARS, R. H.—OFFICER and SOLDIERS at back.

END OF THE THIRD EPOCH.

F O U R T H E P O C H .

THE BASTILE.—1680.

SCENE.—A large stone chamber, dark and sombre. Stone arch, R. U. E.—in centre, a window with drawn curtains; behind flats, a raised platform from R. to L., on which a SENTRY is seen pacing backwards and forwards; at back, dark horizon, with turret piece and cheveaux de frise—wings

40 THE MAN WITH THE IRON MASK. Act 4.

to match. In centre of stage, a couch or sofa—on R. H., table covered, and arm chair, with writing materials; a smaller table L. H., with papers, &c.

ST. MARS, CHAPLAIN, and SURGEON discovered.

ST. MARS. (*at table R., writing.*) Have you, sir, administered the rites of religion to the prisoner?

CHAPLAIN. He did not require them. There is not the danger in his appearance that you led me to expect.

SURGEON. (*also in attendance.*) My lord, notwithstanding the deep swoon that came over him the day before yesterday, the prisoner is more ill in mind than in body.

ST. MARS. Will this man never die?

CHAPLAIN. My lord! do not in your wishes anticipate the moment in which he may depart from this world: it is most sinful. His existence has been a miserable one. Ah, sir, who would not be moved to see him slowly waste away, the victim to a cruel destiny he appears not to have merited. This morning he refused my attentions, and requested those of a Sister of Mercy. May I not send one of those holy women of the Bastile?

ST. MARS. You may—as the man is dying. Leave me, sirs.

(*they go through arch, R. U. E.*
but I have waited ten years—shall I wait longer? Oh, no
I was wrong to let them see my impatience, and wish it had
not escaped my lips. I am linked to this man, like a living
being to a corpse. When I first brought my prisoner here, the
king said to me—"Count St. Mars, I promise you a dukedom,
and the government of Normandy, when your services are no
longer required at the Bastile." He was then weak and ailing
as now, and I thought but a few days of life remained to him;
—no! not a day longer. Sergeant Evrard!

EVWARD enters through arch, R. U. E.

EVWARD. My lord!

ST. MARS. You have circulated the report of his illness?

EVWARD. His death will surprise no one.

ST. MARS. That's as it should be. An existence like his
must be a dreadful burthen—

EVWARD. Death would be preferable.

ST. MARS. Evrard, when I leave the Bastile I shall have
great influence at court, and will fulfil my promises to you.
When shall we leave?

EVWARD. Perhaps to-morrow.

ST. MARS. To-morrow, then, you will be a lieutenant.

EVWARD. To-morrow, my lord, you shall be a duke.

Exit EVWARD, R. U. E.

Plaintive music.—GASTON enters, L. U. E., feeble, prematurely old, and worn down with sickness and care. He is supported to the arm chair by D'AUBIGNE, disguised as one of the Bastile Guard, under the assumed name of Urbain, and OFFICER.)

ST. MARS. Place a guard on the terrace.

(*the OFFICER takes off D'AUBIGNE who relieves the Sentry on the platform; the GUARDS follow through arch, R. U. E.*

ST. MARS then takes off the mask, placing it on the table.

My prince !

GASTON. *I am not your prince ; your prince is at the Louvre ! Heard you not the shout of the soldiery, and how they cried, " Long live Louis the Fourteenth !" That man is always before me. Why do you always receive me standing and uncovered ? what mockery !—Sit down, sir. How long have you been in prison ? I have been twenty years, and you—*

ST. MARS. Twenty years also.

GASTON. Ah, it's a long time to reckon by the single hour. Well, we must be patient—We came here together, we have grown old here together, and we shall die here together.

ST. MARS. I hope to go out shortly.

GASTON. You do go out sometimes. Tell me, are the heavens still beautiful—is the air still pure ? I am sure that a poor invalid like myself, would recover in the open country.

ST. MARS. You desired, sir, the attentions of a Sister of Mercy—I am about to send one to you.

GASTON. (*in anguish.*) What, that torture again ? (*to ST. MARS, who is about to put the mask on again.*)

ST. MARS. (*aside.*) His woeworn countenance bears the stamp of long suffering and speedy dissolution—the sister will bear witness of this. *Exit ST. MARS through arch, R. U. E.*

GASTON. (*alone.*) Can the brain of man contain all his ideas ? when free—yes ! for they are scattered abroad through a variety of objects ; but in the wretch whose days and nights are passed in silent contemplation of his misery, whose thoughts are amassed like an unemployed treasure, recurring unceasingly to the past—no relaxation in sufferance, oh, they create a burning fever in the brain, from whence madness springs. Madness ! oh, that is a consummation I may well dread.

D'AUBIGNE is seen leaving his post, he comes through arch, and kneels before GASTON.

D'AUBIG. I have but an instant to speak with him. (*takes GASTON's hand.*) Do you not recollect me ? (*GASTON signs not.*)

Ah, but you have not forgotten my name—D'Aubigne. Not remember even my name? Unhappy man! a soulless body is all I find him. Do you remember nothing beyond your captivity—Marie?

GASTON. (*a pause and a faint smile.*) Marie! Oh, yes, yes—I remember her; she was good—is she still living?

D'AUBIG. Yes.

GASTON. Where is she?

D'AUBIG. In a convent.

GASTON. Ah, she was true—she truly loved me, not like that man you speak of.

D'AUBIG. D'Aubigne.

GASTON. Ay! he loved only the son of Louis the Thirteenth.

D'AUBIG. What say you?

GASTON. I have often reflected on it since—I believe he sought to make a dupe of me; that man has been my ruin.

D'AUBIG. Your ruin! Behold him once more returned to save you.

GASTON. Where is he?

D'AUBIG. He stands before you.

GASTON. You—you, old man!

D'AUBIG. Yes, I; who from your birth have watched over you. I followed you to Pignerol—to the Isle of St. Marguerite—and, finally, even here in pursuit of my task. Old, indeed, in years, but not in devotedness to you, my prince—and even now prepared to dispute for you with your executioners.

GASTON. (*who has roused from his lethargy.*) Pignerol—Isle of St. Marguerite! Oh, yes, yes—I recollect you now. (*with a passionate burst of tears falls on his neck.*)

D'AUBIG. This month past I have waited an opportunity; it is time it was found. They seek to assassinate you.

GASTON. Oh, no, no!

D'AUBIG. Your approaching end is announced. I suspected the governor—I watched him and learned all. This is to be the place, the time this evening. Take this poniard; when the murderer is about to strike, we will turn the blow upon himself—you will escape in his uniform—this staircase leads to the north gate. I have friends waiting to receive us; I hold communication with those out of doors. Do you understand me?

GASTON. Yes, yes!

D'AUBIG. I must return to my post, and there watch over you. But conceal the poniard.

Exit, R. U. E., and resumes his office of Sentry—pause.

Enter SERGEANT EVRARD and MARIE, R. U. E.

EVRARD. Come in, sister.

MARIE. (*seeing GASTON in the chair.*) He is there.

EVRARD. (R. C.) What is your name?

MARIE. (C.) Sister Marie!

EVRARD. You will sign this paper?

MARIE. What is the purport of it?

EVRARD. You see how ill that man is; observe how he suffers.

MARIE. He does indeed.

EVRARD. You will certify that you found him in danger of death.

MARIE. I will, sir. (*goes to table L. H., and signs.*)

EVRARD. You have one-quarter of an hour to remain with him. *Exit EVRARD, R. U. E.*

MARIE. Poor prisoner! Oh, what a wreck. Look at me.

(she has knelt by his side and taken his hand.)

GASTON. (*after a pause.*) A woman! (*astonished.*) And she resembles Marie! Yes, I felt I should see her again. (*smiles.*) I thought of her—I expected her.

MARIE. Oh, how fearful, to contemplate his sufferings, so plainly marked upon his features.

GASTON. Dear Marie! pale as a departed spirit. I have had moments of delirium in which they treated me like a child; I fancied then I beheld you. Oh, give me your hand, let me press it to my withered heart, and say this is no anguished mockery of the brain.

MARIE. Yes, I am that Marie whom the world had separated from you, yet who has lived only for your sake. A convent became my shelter, my refuge; there I learnt the Sisters of Mercy administered religious consolation to poor prisoners. I entered into their order; they praised my zeal, my attention. I have often been chosen for the Bastile. I expected to go there, and to be called to the "Man with the Iron Mask." I have waited for this nine years.

GASTON. Devoted woman! soul of love and constancy! the few short hours of happiness in this world I ever knew, I owe entirely to you alone. Oh, thanks, Marie, thanks!

MARIE. On entering, from what they said, I feared I was too late.

GASTON. Yes Marie—they seek my life, for this night they will assassinate me.

MARIE. Great Heavens! what do you say?

GASTON. My life! The flame of life has been long extinguished within me. What you behold is not a living man, but a corpse mouldering away in an iron tomb. Formerly this mask compressed and bruised my features; but now my sunken, hollow countenance shrinks from its touch—beneath this cold

and motionless image my face has contracted by long suffering. I have tried to pray through the dark, silent nights of thought and anguish, but in vain ; the bitterness that amassed itself in my heart found vent only in curses. (*rising and half mad.*) Cursed be the authors of my being ! cursed be they who have imposed this agony on me ! cursed be this world in which the life of man is perverted from its end, for Heaven willed it not thus ! Curses !—curses !—curses !—cur— (*he staggers back to sofa and sinks on it exhausted.*)

MARIE. His transports have overcome him—his eyes are closed. Oh, Gaston ! Gaston !

GASTON. Marie, where are you ? Ah, I am free again—free as air ! The wind whistles through my hair—it plays round my brow. Oh, place not the crown upon my head, for, see Marie, the mask—the fatal mask is bound to it ! Come, Marie, conceal me from them—then let us fly from the tormentors ! Oh ! my name, glory, kingdom, take from me—but give me liberty, give me one single ray of the sun ! Marie ! Marie ! Mar—

(*falls stretched out on sofa.*)

MARIE. Ah, help—help !

Enter D'AUBIGNE and SURGEON, R. U. E.

Oh, sir, assist him !

SURGEON. Give him air.

MARIE. Tell me, in pity, sir, is there any hope ?

SURGEON. (*after feeling his pulse and placing his hand on his heart.*) He will not die of this shock.

MARIE. I thank Heaven !

SURGEON. Life is but suspended in consequence of the shock to the nervous system ; yet observe, he breathes not—the pulse is stilled. Any other than a medical man would believe the appearances to be those of death. However 'tis only a profound lethargy.

D'AUBIG. Ah, a lethargy ! How long will it continue ?

SURGEON. Two or three hours. A similar occurrence alarmed us the day before yesterday.

D'AUBIG. Two or three hours ! I shall have time then.

MARIE. What do you mean ?

D'AUBIG. Silence ! 'tis a desperate, but our only chance. (*bringing SURGEON down stage.*) You are certain that for the time mentioned this person will have all the appearance of a dead man ?

SURGEON. Quite certain !

D'AUBIG. And you are also assured that at the expiration of that time he will be a living being ?

SURGEON. Equally sure.

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D'AUBIG. Now mark me! this man, through your assistance, must be dead to all the world, that he may yet live amongst his friends, who now deplore his loss and sufferings.

SURGEON. My assistance?

D'AUBIG. Ay, sir, yours! you must sign a certificate of his death.

SURGEON. How? I consign him to his coffin?

D'AUBIG. Had you rather an assassin placed him there?

SURGEON. What do you tell me? an assassin?

D'AUBIG. Yes! the funeral is already prepared, this evening death and funeral would be reality. Let them be but mockeries—write the certificate of his death! behold! (*producing a small pistolet.*) I am armed and desperate, you are neither, so write, I say.

MARIE. Your project alarms me.

D'AUBIG. Weak woman! do you not see the danger that threatens him? (*the SURGEON, during this, has gone to the table L. H., and written the certificate.*) Give it to me, sir, 'tis according to form.

SURGEON. (*aside to D'AUBIGNE.*) I tremble for what I have done; it is, sir—

D'AUBIG. 'Tis a good action—Heaven will reward you—your ministry is now at an end, but how am I to be assured of your secrecy?

SURGEON. By the event, but the king—

D'AUBIG. Oh, I'll answer to you for the king.

SURGEON. I'll do my duty—there is treachery here, I'll hasten to the king and denounce them. *Exit R. U. E.*

(*bell begins to toll.*)

D'AUBIG. That bell announces the preparations for the funeral at the north gate of the Bastile, the distance to the Church of St. Pol will occupy but a few moments; Heaven smiles upon our enterprise. *(bell.)*

MARIE. I fear 'tis profanation thus to sport with death.

D'AUBIG. Woman, for Gaston's sake, whom you once so truly loved, be firm; haste, inform St. Mars of this event.

(bell.)

MARIE. Yes, dear Gaston, for thy dear sake I *will* be firm—I obey you, sir. *Exit through arch, R. U. E.—bell.*

D'AUBIG. (*reverently approaching the couch and taking off his hat.*) Cold and motionless figure, 'tis thus I salute you, king. (*kneels.*) And for a royal robe of state, I invest you—but for awhile—in the winding sheet of the grave. *(bell.)*

Enter ST. MARS, EVRARD, MARIE, OFFICER, and GUARDS,
R. U. E.

ST. MARS. (R.) Is this true, the prisoner—

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MARIE. (L. C.) Has ceased to suffer.

ST. MARS. Remove the body into the next chamber.
(GUARDS take off the couch and body through the arch, L. U. E.—bell and slow music.) Has the surgeon written the certificate of his death?

D'AUBIG. It is here. (*produces it to ST. MARS.*)

ST. MARS. (*reading.*) "On the 16th of September, 1680, on the anniversary of his majesty's birthday, died, at eight o'clock, in the Bastile, Marchiali, otherwise Iron Mask." At last I am free, the woman (MARIE.) and the soldier (D'AUBIGNE.) will also sign this document. (*bell tolls.*) 'Tis the passing bell, oh, welcome! (*they have signed at the table, L., EVRARD takes the certificate to ST. MARS.*) "Sister Marie"—"Urbain"—'tis well. Serjeant Evrard, you will communicate this event to his majesty, and say, his orders respecting the body of Marchiali shall be obeyed, to the very letter; and no other precautionary measure neglected; here, you have your instructions. After his death. (*giving a small dagger.*) You understand? (*these instructions to EVRARD are given by ST. MARS in a low tone of voice.*)

EVRARD. I do, my lord.

Exit L. U. E.

(bell tolls occasionally.)

ST. MARS. Sister, you may retire. (MARIE goes up stage.) You, (*to D'AUBIGNE.*) will form one of the escort of the funeral party—it is about to proceed. (*bell.*) Ah! that death bell sounds as enlivening to my soul as a song of triumph. Now will I to the king, and demand the price of that iron mask—liberty and a dukedom. (*is going L. H., when he is met by an OFFICER and FOUR GUARDS.*)

OFFICER. My lord, you are my prisoner; follow me to the presence of the king. You are accused, sir, by the Surgeon of the Bastile, of having forced him to certify the death of a living man.

EVRARD. (*rushes in, pale and agitated, from L. U. E.*) My lord, pursuant to your orders, I plunged your poinard into the breast of Marchiali, when, oh horrible sight, the seeming dead body started into convulsive and agonised life again.

D'AUBIG. Palsies wither, and for ever, thy murderous arm! Assassins, butchers! you have destroyed your true and rightful monarch! oh, Gaston, son of my heart, our last struggle for right and freedom destroyed in thy precious blood. Oh, would to Heaven, my prince, my king, I could have died for thee.

GASTON. (*staggers on, pale and dying, L. U. E., the bosom of his dress unbuttoned, and his shirt sprinkled with blood, the dagger yet in the breast, he gasps out his last words with difficulty.*)

Act 4. THE MAN WITH THE IRON MASK. 47

St. Mars, *I* pardon you, but dare you ask pardon *there*? my soul will be freed from thy power. (*to D'AUBIGNE.*) Good and true, take Gaston's dying love and thanks. Marie, soul of love, angel of constancy, let me pass away gazing on thee!

Slow music. He suddenly plucks out the dagger, and instantly falls dead at her feet.—Tableau of grief and interest.)

SOLDIERS.

D'AUBIG. (kneeling.) MARIE.

EVARD.

ST. MARS.

Body of Gaston.

L.

C.

OFFICER.

CHAPLAIN.

R.

CURTAIN.

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