

CAPTAIN CHARLOTTE

A FARCE

IN

T W O A C T S

BY

E D W A R D S T I R L I N G

AUTHOR OF

*Martin Chuzzlewit—The Rubber of Life—Woman's the Devil
—Bachelor's Buttons—The Queen of Cyprus—The
Rose of Corbeil—Blue Jackets—Yankee Notes
for English Circulation—Margaret Catch-
pole—The Pickwick Club—Aline
&c. &c. &c.*

THOMAS HAILES LACY,
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(Opposite Southampton Street, Covent Garden Marke
LONDON.

973508

CAPTAIN CHARLOTTE.

Produced at the Adelphi Theatre,
March, 1843.

CHARACTERS.

ST. LEON	Mr. MAYNARD.
PRINCE BAMBINELLI	Mr. WRIGHT.
COUNT BELLAFLOR	Mr. WILKINSON.
SEBASTIAN }	{ Mr. STERLING.
GIANNI }	{ Mr. FREEBORN.
SYLVIO	{ Mr. HENRY.
JUAN, Servant to St. Leon	Mr. SANDERS.
Courtiers, Servants, &c.	
DUCHESS MARIA	Miss FAUCIT.
COUNTESS BELLAFLOR	Mrs. BEVERLY.
CHARLOTTE CLOPIER	Miss KATE HOWARD

TIME IN REPRESENTATION.—1 hour 20 minutes.

COSTUMES.

ST. LEON.—Rich blue and gold uniform, red trousers, yellow sash, and orders at breast.

PRINCE BAMBINELLI.—Ornamental slate-coloured coat, long satin waistcoat richly ornamented, white satin breeches, salmon coloured stockings, high fronted powdered hair, black hat, and ostrich feather. 2nd dress.—Much torn, and covered with mud. 3rd dress.—Large green uniform, long sash, large red breeches, large boots, long white neck-cloth.

COUNT.—Dark flowered court coat, white satin waistcoat richly ornamented, black breeches and stockings, powdered wig, white ruffles.

SEBASTIAN & GIANNI.—Uniforms similar to St. Leon.

SYLVIO.—White uniform, red pantaloons, and high boots.

JUAN.—Blue jacket and trousers, and red belt.

DUCHESS.—Full dress pink gown and train richly ornamented, with long sleeves, hanging cuffs, and a coronet of white pearls.

COUNTESS.—Full pink dress, richly ornamented.

CHARLOTTE.—Deep coloured yellow gown tucked round, blue silk petticoat, black hat, drooping blue ostrich feathers. 2nd dress.—Light blue uniform faced with red and gold, gold aigulettes, light blue breeches, white stockings, black shoes, white sash, small cocked hat and sword.

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CAPTAIN CHARLOTTE.

A C T F I R S T .

SCENE.—*An Elegant Saloon in the House of St. Leon, richly furnished. A door L. 2 E., and L.U.E.—door C.—window at the extreme back with curtains—R. 2 E., a door. Table, pen and ink, chairs, couch, vases with flowers, and articles of vertu. N.B.—The R. and L. doors are painted to represent full length portraits of Noblemen.*

The Countess discovered writing, L. c.

COUNTESS. (*writes*) “ My dear Leon, pray be prudent—”

Enter LEON followed by JUAN, c. from L.

ST. LEON. The Countess here!

COUNTESS. (*starts up*) Ha! I was just writing to you.

ST. LEON. Were you?

Gives his cloak to JUAN, who exits, C. D.

Is there anything new? The Duchess—

COUNTESS. Is not aware of my visit to you. The fact is, I came thus secretly to give you some advice.

ST. LEON. Advice!

COUNTESS. Yes. Maria is uneasy—jealous. Beware how you offend her.

ST. LEON. Offend! what do you mean?

COUNTESS. Remember last night—the occurrence at the theatre. A strange female was continually gazing on you. She saw it—she also observed your embarrassment. Her suspicions are aroused. Beware!

ST. LEON. Confusion!

COUNTESS. I guessed a storm was raging, and as your friend (*holds forth her hand*) I have come here to warn you.

ST. LEON. Thanks—a thousand thanks, dear Countess.

(*she kisses her hand.*)

COUNTESS. You are French, and flighty—she is Italian and jealous—you are a simple officer in the Guards—she is—

LEON. A sovereign!

COUNTESS. Just so! therefore have a care. Tell me, do you know the person I spoke of, at the Opera? She appeared gay and bold!

ST. LEON. No—that is—yes, I knew her once. (*confused.*)

COUNTESS. Don't fear me, I shall never betray your secret.

ST. LEON. But your husband may—he is my bitterest enemy.

COUNTESS. That is the very reason I am your best friend. I love opposition. Seriously, will you be quite alone in an hour?

ST. LEON. I will!

COUNTESS. Then you may expect me. Addio! *Exit C. to L.*

ST. LEON. (*bows*) Curse Paris! that she-devil has found me out, and followed me. What's to be done? I know Maria to be capricious. Elevated as I am by a freak of fortune, the least imprudence would cause my downfall.

(*sits on couch absorbed in reflection.*)

The concealed door, R., slowly opens, and the DUCHESS appears.

She approaches LEON, quietly places her hand on his shoulder, and sits by him—he starts.

Maria! (*bows*)

DUCHESS. Why so much respect? There are no courtiers here who seek to read my thoughts and secrets in my eyes. They have deprived me of three hours of love—kept me three hours from you.

ST. LEON. Those hours seemed ages.

DUCHESS. Did they? It is true we can scarcely ever be together, and all my happiness rests on you. Until I saw you, I knew it not. Married to a man old enough to be my father, for state policy, my existence was rendered miserable, until—

ST. LEON. I was fortunate enough to quit the service of my native country, and enlist in your service.

DUCHESS. Yes, Leon, yes—you speak truly. I love you most devotedly—far above all earthly diadems. You are sole monarch of my heart.

ST. LEON. What a charm has our secret affection.

DUCHESS. It has, indeed! But to be always separated from you thus, fills me with anxiety. I become sad—jealous.

ST. LEON. (*aside*) Does she suspect? (*aloud*) Jealous!

DUCHESS. Yes, jealous, that you might prove ungrateful,

unfaithful. (*passionately*) Then I feel that I should be unmerciful in my revenge.

ST. LEON. (*aside*) All's safe!

DUCHESS. Even yesterday, silly as the incident appears, I was annoyed by the bold glances of a strange woman, directed towards you in the public theatre. It seemed to trouble you. Is she known to you?

ST. LEON. It was your looks, Maria, my beloved, that troubled me. (*aside*) I shall be lost.

DUCHESS. If you deceive me—(*checking herself*) No, no, I will—I must believe you. (*taking his hand*)

ST. LEON. And the proof—

DUCHESS. Is that I invite the Colonel. (*gaily*)

LEON. Colonel! is it possible? another promotion! beloved Maria, how can my life repay such kindness? (*he is about to kiss her hand, when*

COUNT BELLAFLOR enters suddenly, c.

DUCHESS. Heavens! (*hurriedly covers her face with her mask*.)

ST. LEON. My lord, what means this sudden intrusion?

BELLA. (c.) I come from the Duchess, Monsieur St. Leon. At that name every door flies open. (*seeing DUCHESS*) A woman! I beg pardon—I see, sly dog—ha, ha!

ST. LEON. May I ask what business brings you here?

BELLA. I came to see about the new dresses for the pages who are henceforth to form her body guard. One thing, monsieur, I wish to impress upon you, not to admit your protégé, Parella, among the new corps. He turns all the girls' heads, and wins all their hearts, though that's not very difficult. Now, about this new-fangled uniform that you have imported from France. Where is it? Everything must come from Paris now, of course, to be acceptable at court. Another act of folly of our sovereign duchess. Her head must be turned the wrong way, poor thing.

ST. LEON. (*aside*) Now—

(*motions MARIA to escape—the COUNT's back being towards her, she nods her head, laughs loudly, and exits by concealed door, R.—COUNT stands before the other.*)

BELLA. (*turns quickly round*) Where is she gone?

ST. LEON. Who? (*laughs*)

BELLA. Who? why, your white lady. Has she vanished through the keyhole? I'll find her out by her dress—throw myself at her feet—she can't resist me. I was made for love. When I was young the ladies called me Cupid, I resembled the little urchin so much. Have you ever seen my portrait with the bow and arrow? (*stands in attitude*)

ST. LEON. I cannot doubt your power with the fair sex, my lord, but allow me to say, in reference to the lady's dress, that your wife, the Countess, wore a white one this morning.

BELLA. My wife! what can he mean? I know he's a devil among the woman! If I thought—no, it won't bear thinking of. I'll drive home, and see if her ladyship has been out. Good morning, monsieur—I must take my leave. (*aside*) How he smiles! coxcomb! If it should be—no, it can't be—impossible! What woman can be false to such a handsome man as myself?

Exit c. to L.

ST. LEON. (*laughing*) Twaddler! I have succeeded in rousing his jealousy for the day. His mal apropos visit nearly discovered all.

Enter JUAN, hastily, c. from L.

JUAN. I've seen the lady you wished me to discover.

ST. LEON. And she said—

JUAN. She'd tear my eyes out if I didn't conduct her to you instantly.

ST. LEON. What did you do, or say?

JUAN. I did all, and said nothing. Ran away as fast as I could—she ran after me, dodged me up one street and down another. At last, thanks to my stars, I jumped up behind a carriage, and lost her in the crowd.

ST. LEON. I breathe again! nothing but resolution and courage can save me. If she seeks me here, mind, I'm not at home—you don't know me—nobody knows me—I don't live here! Be careful, and your reward shall be great. (*gives gold*) Be always on the watch—eat, drink, and sleep at the door.

Exit JUAN, c. to L.

(LEON paces the stage) What can have induced her to follow me? my hopes will be destroyed if the Duchess learns of our former intimacy. (VOICES heard without) Some new annoyance.

(listens.)

JUAN. (*without, L.*) I assure you, madame, my master is not at home.

CHARLOTTE. (*without, L.*) Very well—I'll step in and wait till he is.

JUAN. This is not his house.

CHARLOTTE. That's a fib, and you know it! Stand aside, or I'll box your ears.

ST. LEON. It's the dragon—my vampire!

JUAN. Pray don't, madame; go away!

CHARLOTTE. When I please. (*laughs*) Ha, ha, ha!

CHARLOTTE enters laughing, c. from L.—she runs up to LEON, slapping him on the back.

Well, here I am—found you out at last. How d'ye do? Your fellow denied you—wouldn't do, though.

ST. LEON. Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE. Yes, Charlotte. How the man stares! Your old friend and companion, whom you left without a good-bye on the banks on the Seine, and who landed yesterday on the shores of Italy, and who is rejoiced once more to embrace her gay, merry-hearted Lieutenant of the Tenth Light Infantry.

(embraces him—he makes wry faces.)

ST. LEON. What are you doing?

CHARLOTTE. Doing, mon ami? practising the Light Infantry movements. You see I am not proud, and haven't forgot the exercise you taught me. Perhaps you have, eh? Cut one, two, three. (*she does two and three cuts*) Ha, ha, ha! capital fun, wasn't it, when you used to climb up eight pair of stairs to my garret. You called me your angel then, because I was so near the sky. (*sits*)

ST. LEON. Did I?

CHARLOTTE. (*imitates*) Did I? don't be bashful—you know you did. Really I am delighted to meet you once more. I recognised you yesterday at opera—did you see me?

ST. LEON. Yes—(*aside*) unfortunately.

CHARLOTTE. Queer place, that said opera—never saw so many frights of women in my life. I wonder who made their gowns. Such colours! such taste! I'll soon set all to rights. I nodded to you—but times are altered since you gave me kisses and sugar plums up the eight pair back. Eh? why don't you smile and say, "I'm glad to see you?" Ain't you pleased?

ST. LEON. Very!

CHARLOTTE. Glad to hear it, because if you ain't, I am. By-the-bye, the only passable woman I saw at the theatre was the Duchess, and her nose is a decided pug. Then the dress—shocking! shabby! If she was under my hands a week, I'd made a woman of her.

ST. LEON. She will drive me mad! Charlotte, I conjure you to be guarded in your expressions.

CHARLOTTE. Oh, I see. You don't like to talk about the court. Depend upon me—mum!

ST. LEON. May I ask what brings you here?

CHARLOTTE. (*aside, with feeling*) Can he ask this? I that have loved him so. You want to know what brings me here. Pleasure, profit, and love of oranges. I grew tired of France—

quarrelled with my customers—sold my millinery business, and, directed by my tremendous love of oranges, started for Italy.

ST. LEON. Is that all the inducement?

CHARLOTTE. Hum! perhaps not. I had heard that your duchess was fond of French fashions. Judge of my astonishment when I recognised near to her person, attached to the court, my old friend of the Tenth—I was delighted. We'll have rare fun now, says I—and so we will, eh? (*takes his hand*) What can you do for me? anything good will suit. (*paces the stage*) Maid of honour, or prime minister. How black you look! You should be gay, sing—no, you can't sing—it's all out of tune. Ha, ha! but your dancing! (*walks up and down, dragging him by the arm*) How you used to dance on the Boulevards, drink Champagne, and crack nuts and jokes at the same time—both were generally bad, though—ha, ha! But we were happy, gay, and light hearted. I adore waltzing—do you? The last we tried was—

(*seizes him by the waist, waltzes a few steps, and sings—just at that moment*)

COUNT BELLAFLOR re-enters—he stands in the doorway amazed
—CHARLOTTE hurriedly covers her face with her mask—ST. LEON appears agitated—COUNT uses his glass.

BELLA. (L.) Very pretty, upon my word—ha, ha, ha!

ST. LEON. (C.) The Count!

BELLA. Sorry to interrupt. Oh, you Blue Beard. Ha, ha! Don't be jealous—my day is past for mischief—I'm a broken twig. What a pity she doesn't show her face.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) It's a pity you don't hide yours.

BELLA. (*points to CHARLOTTE*) Two, white and blue, in one hour! Sad dog! (*chuckles*) Just such a terrible Turk as I was. Good bye, monsieur—servant, Signora. Why the devil don't she show her face?
Exit, c., bowing.

CHARLOTTE. (*uncovers her face and laughs heartily*) Ha, ha, ha! What an old idiot! Why don't you laugh, Leon?

ST. LEON. My dear Charlotte, you must quit this place instantly, or I shall be ruined. I love you more than ever, but go you must.

CHARLOTTE. That's a nice way of showing your love.

ST. LEON. Go, now, and anything I can do to assist you, depend on it, shall be done.

CHARLOTTE. Shall it, though?

ST. LEON. Yes! go home, and write to the Duchess at once, stating your skill, and I will see that it reaches her.

CHARLOTTE. Now that's kind. I'll sit down and write it at once. (*sits at table*)

Sc. 1. CAPTAIN CHARLOTTE. 9

ST. LEON. No, no, not here!

CHARLOTTE. Why not? do you begrudge me a bit of paper?
I'm ashamed of you. (*rises*)

ST. LEON. There's none here.

CHARLOTTE. Perhaps there is here. (*at L. door*) I'll look
for a bit. I make myself at home, you see, old fellow.

Exit into apartment, L.

ST. LEON. I'd give a thousand ducats to be released from
her. Ruin and disgrace await me.

Enter JUAN, c. from L.

JUAN. (*bows*) Prince Bambinelli wishes to see your excellency.

ST. LEON. Show him in.

Enter PRINCE BAMBINELLI, c. from L.

Ha! is it you, my dear Bambinelli? what brings you here?

BAMBI. (r. c.) A spirit of vagabondising. Caro mio! You
know I am poor. The world's mine oyster, but I can't find a
knife sharp enough to open it. JUAN bows and exits, C. to L.

ST. LEON. You're always on the move.

BAMBI. Because I can't remain still. I grew tired of tra-
velling over my principality, which I could always walk round
before breakfast. I started for Paris—made a delicious con-
quest there. Such an arm—such a figure! I took her to supper—
she ate—she drank—my stars, how she drank.

ST. LEON. (*smiling*) Like a bird!

BAMBI. No, like a fish. When I attempted to kiss her, she
knocked me into a bowl of hot punch, and jumped out of the
window.

ST. LEON. (*laughs*) What an extraordinary woman!

BAMBI. Woman! my dear fellow, it was a man in disguise.
My she was a he! Disgusted with this adventure, I quitted
Paris—

Re-enter CHARLOTTE, with a sheet of paper, L. D.

CHARLOTTE. I have hunted a piece out, you see.

BAMBI. (*starts*) That voice!

ST. LEON. Allow me to introduce Mademoiselle—

BAMBI. (*stopping him*) Stay, are you sure she's a miss? she's
very like my master.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) How the fellow eyes me.

Re-enter JUAN, c. from L.

JUAN. The Countess—

CHARLOTTE. A countess! (*to JUAN—aside*) I see all now.
Fie, fie—naughty boy.

ST. LEON. My dear Bambinelli, will you excuse me? I have an appointment with a friend. You know how much I shall be delighted to see you some other time.

BAMBI. Sure of it—don't apologise—I'll return shortly. Addio! lovely creature that, but amazingly like my friend of the punch bowl. (*bowing*)

As he is going, meets the COUNTESS, who enters c. from L., and bows very low.

Prodigious fine woman—very.

Exit c. to L.

ST. LEON. How can I ever be grateful for your attention?
(points to CHARLOTTE.)

COUNTESS. The unknown at the theatre!

ST. LEON. (*c.—introducing her*) Mademoiselle Charlotte Clopier—

CHARLOTTE. (*aside, L., pulling his sleeve*) Milliner and dress maker. Shall I give her a card?

LEON. (*aside*) Hush! the Countess Bellaflor! (*aside to CHARLOTTE*) A lady that protects me.

CHARLOTTE. I understand, she belongs to the light infantry, too. (*curtsies to COUNTESS*)

COUNTESS. Ma'amselle—(*curtsies*)

CHARLOTTE. Madame—(*aside*) How bad her dress sits.

ST. LEON. This lady is from Paris—one of the most celebrated modistes in millinery, where I knew her.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) Tell her in what regiment.

COUNTESS. (*to LEON*) And whom you must get rid of as soon as possible.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) What are they whispering about?

ST. LEON. (*to COUNTESS*) Just so! you must aid me. My young friend proposes settling among us, to cause a revolution in the fashion.

COUNTESS. I shall be happy in offering my assistance (*CHARLOTTE curtsies—to LEON, aside*) Leave all to me. (*to him*) As I should like to be the first evidence of your skill in costume and taste, I will take you to my chateau, a few leagues from the city. (*aside to LEON*) This very night she shall embark for France.

CHARLOTTE. (*overhearing—aside*) Will I, my lady? I have a great mind to stick a pin in her sleeve.

ST. LEON. (*aloud*) I thank you, Countess.

CHARLOTTE. And I don't.

LEON. Mademoiselle Clopier will accept your kind offer with gratitude.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) Will she?

COUNTESS. In half an hour I will call for you.

BELLAFLOR. (*without*) I'm sure he is within, fellow—don't tell me.

COUNTESS. (*agitated*) My husband! (*hastily putting on her mask*)

ST. LEON. (*quickly*) Pray be calm!

CHARLOTTE. (*aside—laughing*) Her husband! there'll be some fun now. (*resumes her mask*)

Enter BELLAFLOR, C. from L.

BELLA. Excuse me, I came again to—(*sees LADIES*) Two at a time! horrible depravity! Miserable dog! two women would make any man miserable. One's enough sometimes.

COUNTESS. (*aside*) I shall sink!

CHARLOTTE. I'll assist you. Act as I act—we'll both be countesses.

BELLA. Her highness, wishing to reward your loyal services, has ordered me to inform you that she has just created you Marquis de Santa Cruce.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) Another jump for the Tenth.

ST. LEON. Is it possible?

BELLA. This it is to be favoured by the petticoats—eh, ladies?

COUNTESS. Ha, ha, ha!

CHARLOTTE. Ha, ha, ha!

BELLA. Why, they both laugh alike. Her highness is waiting your presence, Marquis.

ST. LEON. I'll instantly attend you.

COUNTESS. (*to CHARLOTTE*) A coach will be under the window in a few minutes, in which I will wait for you. (*to LEON*) All is arranged—

ST. LEON. Thanks. Now, Count—

BELLA. (*aside*) I'd give my life to see one of their faces!

(LEON and COUNT go up the stage, saluting LADIES—the COUNTRESS reaches concealed door, R., and removes her mask—CHARLOTTE takes off hers, when BELLAFLOR suddenly returns with eyeglass—they resume their masks, laughing together.

COUNTESS. Ha, ha, ha!

CHARLOTTE. Ha, ha, ha!

BELLA. (*forcing a laugh*) Ha, ha, ha! Why won't they show their faces?

Exit c. to L.—LEON exits with him, making signs to the COUNTESS—she slips through concealed door, R., when CHAR-

LOTTE's back is towards her, at noise of which she turns round.

CHARLOTTE. Gone—without saying good bye! (*tries R. D.*) Locked! Master Leon means some mischief. I won't put up with it. Where does this door lead to, I wonder!

(*tries door, l. 2 E.*

PRINCE BAMBINELLI *throws it open.*

BAMBI. To my arms, most lovely—

CHARLOTTE. Ha!

BAMBI. Be not alarmed, fair divinity, I returned purposely to meet you, and to declare my passion. I loved you at first sight. I am a gentleman of little landless money, but great wit. (*kneels*)

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) What a poor goose it looks! Yet even geese are useful at times. (*reflects*) If I could—he seems simple enough

BAMBI. May I hope? I'm all sweetness like a ripe orange.

CHARLOTTE. (*L. C.*) I'm monstrously fond of oranges.

BAMBI. Are you? Allow me to send you a chest or two. (*takes her hand—drops it suddenly*) Phew! it's just like the hand that tumbled me into the punch. But it can't be—Leon knows her. Pray don't think me too bold. I have already asked your friend, Leon, if he cared about you—

CHARLOTTE. And he answered—

BAMBI. Take her away as soon as you can.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) The ingrate, to serve me so. I'll live to punish him. (*to BAMBINELLI*) You say you love me, signor?

BAMBI. Tremendously!

CHARLOTTE. Then run away with me at once. Under the window you will find a carriage—in it a lady, myself—jump in, and order the coachman to drive as fast as he can.

BAMBI. I will, most exquisite.

ST. LEON. (*without*) Bring it up instantly—

CHARLOTTE. 'Tis he—not a moment is to be lost. Take that veil and follow me. (*points to veil she placed on chair on her first entrance*)

BAMBI. I fly!

(*takes up veil and kisses it, sighing—while his back is turned, she retires, and hides.*

Enter LEON, quickly, door c. from L.

ST. LEON. Still here, signor?

BAMBI. Hush! I am the happiest of men. She—you know who—consents to run away with me. My blandishments and

a chest of oranges did it. She is now waiting for me. True, on my honour—by this tender pledge—(*kisses it*) this veil of beauty. *Throws it over his head, exits by L. a., sighing.*

ST. LEON. I wish you joy!

CHARLOTTE. (*peeping*) So do I!

ST. LEON. Anything to be released from her presence. If he fail, she cannot escape the Countess—either way I am secure.

JUAN and another DOMESTIC bring on a table elegantly laid out for supper, from C. D.

Exit SERVANTS, C. to L.

LEON. (*fastens doors L. and c. then approaches concealed door, R. and listens*) Now Maria may safely keep her appointment.

CHARLOTTE. (*advances to table—sits. and fills a glass*) Here's to the health of the gallant Tenth—hip, hip, hurrah!

ST. LEON. (*starting*) Heavens! still here?

CHARLOTTE. To be sure I am. You wouldn't have turned me out before supper, would you? (*cuts fowl*) And such a supper, too. Now, upon my word, Leon, this is really kind. I did not expect so much attention—and done so delicately. Ices, jellies, oranges, fowls, and tongue. (*eats*) Why don't you sit down?

ST. LEON. (*at door—aside*) If she comes—

CHARLOTTE. (*throws napkin to him*) Here, tuck that under your chin. This reminds me of Paris—rather better than our eighth story, though? Eh? what are you fidgetting about there? do you expect anybody else?

SL. LEON. (*aside*) I must tell her. Yes.

CHARLOTTE. A lady?

ST. LEON. (*hesitates*) Y-e-s!

CHARLOTTE. So much the better—there will be two of us. We'll have a rare night of it. I'll tell her all the Light Infantry tricks, eh? Ha, ha, ha!

ST. LEON. A word—a breath of the past, and all my hopes are blasted—all my fair prospects gone for ever. Charlotte, if ever you loved me, retire before it is too late.

CHARLOTTE. (*rises*) And what do you merit at my hands, ungrateful man? you that have closed your heart against me and have treated me as an enemy. Did you not persuade a simpleton to carry me off? Did you not plot with the Countess to rid yourself of me? Wretch! I'll remain to punish you. Do what I please—say what I please—

LEON. My life and liberty are at stake. If you are discovered here a prison will be your doom for life.

CHARLOTTE. A prison, eh? (*noise as of light footsteps*)

ST. LEON. Hush, for heaven's sake—I hear footsteps. Where can I hide you? (*opens L. D.*) Quick—run in here. Remain silent—your life depends on secrecy.

CHARLOTTE. (*alarmed*) Why didn't you tell me so before? this is no joke. Stay! (*returns to table, and takes fowl on fork*) I may as well have something to amuse myself. *Exit L. D.*

The R. door opens, and the DUCHESS enters just as LEON is locking the other—he appears confused.

DUCHESS. (*aside*) Can the Count be right? Why are you at that door, Leon?

ST. LEON. I—I was merely securing it against intrusion.

DUCHESS. Then why so agitated? Leon, I cannot conceal my feelings. You are accused of intriguing, by the Count of Bellaflor. Ah, you are pale—you tremble—beware! Marquis of Santa Cruce, I command you to answer truly—for my sake, for yours, is it so?

ST. LEON. Can you doubt me on the testimony of such a man?

DUCHESS. Justify yourself, then—prove his falsehood. He positively asserts that he saw two masked females in your apartment—nay, that one is concealed here now.

ST. LEON. (*aside*) Escape is impossible.

DUCHESS. (*who has watched his looks*) St. Leon, open that door! (*points*)

ST. LEON. I will—I will. One word—can you believe, madame, for a moment, that an officer, a soldier, who owes his elevation to your bounty, and whom my gracious mistress has been pleased to name her husband, would thus betray his faith and honour as a gentleman?

DUCHESS. Once more, sir, I say—open the door, or I summon assistance to force it.

ST. LEON. (*kneeling*) Maria, by the love you bear me, I implore—

DUCHESS. Traitor, dare you oppose my will? Stand aside, or your head shall answer—(*she is rushing towards L. D., when*

COUNT BELLAFLOR enters hastily, c.—she covers her face.

BELLA. Where's my wife? Give me back my wife, villain! (*to LEON*) You've run away with her—

DUCHESS. (*aside*) What do I hear?

BELLA. (*seeing DUCHESS*) Ha! she's here! That white dress! Remove the mask, unblushing minx—(*he runs to remove her mask—she uncovers*)

DUCHESS. My lord!

BELLA. (*kneeling*) The Duchess! oh, dear!

DUCHESS. What is the meaning of this? what of the Countess? Speak, signor—

BELLA. I will, signor, as soon as I can. A lady has been seen in a private carriage at this door. Not finding the Countess at home, and knowing the gentleman there, (*points to LEON*) I thought she was here.

DUCHESS. (*aside, quickly*) It is the Countess concealed, then. Count, I command you to enter that apartment.

ST. LEON. (*aside to her*) Pray reflect—

DUCHESS. I have done so; and as I intended to publicly honour you, as publicly will I disgrace you. Summon your attendants, and force open that door, Count.

COUNT. (*bows*) I will madame. I have brought half the court with me to bear witness of his perfidy. (*goes to c. d.*)

Enter MALE and FEMALE COURTIERS, c. from L.—they all bow to the DUCHESS.

DUCHESS. Gentlemen, your sovereign has been insulted—betrayed. (*they touch their swords*) The culprit stands there. (*points to LEON*) Enter that chamber, and bring forth his accomplice. Stand aside, sir! (*they all advance to L. D.*)

The door is suddenly thrown open, and CHARLOTTE enters, richly habited as a Page of Honour, in military costume. Picture of surprise.

ST. LEON. (*aside*) Charlotte! I am saved!

CHARLOTTE. Marquis de la Santa Cruce, I wait your orders. (*salutes*.)

BELLA. (*aside*) What riddle is this?

DUCHESS. (*with emotion*) Who and what are you, signor?

CHARLOTTE. (l. c.) A milliner—ahem! Lord, I'd forgot—I am a young officer, madame, whom the Marquis wishes to serve by admitting to—to—

LEON. (c., *quickly*) To the new company of Pages—allow me to present Signor Parella to your Highness.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) Her highness! what a horrid dowdy.

(*she is curtseying, when LEON looks at her, she hastily bows.*)

DUCHESS. (r. c.) The General's nephew! (LEON bows)

BELLA. (*aside*) The devil after the girls!

ST. LEON. I had hoped to have afforded you a little surprise when all the pages were attired in their new uniforms. (*to the DUCHESS*) This is why I refused to open the door—but confidence was denied me!

DUCHESS. (*aside*) Mercy, dear Leon—I confess my fault—Mercy! (*takes his hand*)

CHARLOTTE. (*shaking the other*) All right! I have saved the Light Infantry—march on!

DUCHESS. Signor Parella, henceforth you will remain in the household, attached to my secret service.

CHARLOTTE. I! lord bless you, I never could keep a secret in my life, and for service I know nothing about it.

ST. LEON. Hush!

DUCHESS. (*to LEON.*) What does he say?

ST. LEON. That the honour delights him.

CHARLOTTE. Does it? fiddlestick ends about honour. I want to return to my own country, madame.

DUCHESS. You must remain—I have promised your uncle.

CHARLOTTE. And I promised my aunt to go back as soon as I could.

DUCHESS. I insist! (*turns aside to COUNT*) My lord—

(COUNT bows.)

ST. LEON. (*to CHARLOTTE*) Now you are a man, you can never be anything else.

CHARLOTTE. It's impossible! I'll tell her all about it.

ST. LEON. Then we are both lost—a prison!

CHARLOTTE. Oh dear! and you know how I hate these disagreeable things. (*points to dress*) I won't bear it! I'm determined I'll run for it.

(she attempts to run out at D. F., when the COURTIERS interpose.)

DUCHESS. Detain him! he shall never quit me!

CHARLOTTE. Don't say so, your highness! I want to go home. (*half crying, she appeals to the DUCHESS, who smiles, then to the COUNT, who laughs*) I won't put up with it! I will go home.

(burst into tears—ALL laugh. Music—Drop descends rapidly.)

END OF ACT FIRST.

A C T S E C O N D .

SCENE FIRST.—*The Royal Palace. Three doors, at back—a gallery, R., leading to the private apartments of the Duchess. On the same side a window and balcony. An Officer parading the gallery with drawn sword.*

The Count and Countess Bellaflor discovered—the Count in R. C., Countess L.—their backs are towards each other. A flourish. Enter the Duchess, preceded by Pages, and followed by Leon, Officers, Ladies and Courtiers, from centre arch. Charlotte enters last of the Pages.

DUCHESS. (*bending to All*) The Count! (*seeing him and advancing*) You appear displeased, my lord! Still chagrined about the Countess? pray speak to her. (*half aside*)

BELLA. It is too much, your highness!

DUCHESS. I command it. (*turns to LEON*)

BELLA. (*advances to Countess—attempts to smile*) My love—no, I can't do it. Crocodile!

CHARLOTTE. (*observing*) The poor fat man can't forget his runaway wife.

DUCHESS. Signor Parella! (*CHARLOTTE doesn't attend*) Signor Parella!

ST. LEON. (*aside to CHARLOTTE*) It is you.

CHARLOTTE. La, is it? I'd forgot. (*bows*)

DUCHESS. I am displeased at your frequent attempts to leave the palace! I forbid it. You remain in my household until your uncle returns, which I expect shortly. In his letters he complains much of your conduct to the young girl.

CHARLOTTE. I deceive a young girl? stuff and nonsense!

DUCHESS. Repair the injury, and I will pardon you; and, as I have promised your uncle, will watch over you, captain.

CHARLOTTE. Captain! Captain Charlotte! another Light Infantry movement, eh? (*aside to LEON, laughing*) Eh, my boy?

(DUCHESS, LEON, and COUNTESS retire up the stage, followed by the COUNT.)

SEBAS. (*slapping her on the shoulders*) Allow me to congratulate you, captain, on your rapid promotion.

CHARLOTTE. Well, you needn't hit so hard, if you do. (*rubs shoulder—aside*) He's made me all pins and needles.

GIANNI. (*shaking her hand heartily*) Glad to call you captain! bravo!

CHARLOTTE. Oh my! (*snatching her hand away*)

ST. LEON. (*advances to her, laughing*) Courage, Captain! Courage!

CHARLOTTE. Yes, I dare say—it's all very fine! I'm black and blue!

BELLA. (*having left DUCHESS's side—to LEON*) Her Highness expects your attendance in an hour at the pavilion. She will be attended by a single officer.

(SYLVIO has by this time reached CHARLOTTE, L., and touched her waist with his hand playfully.)

CHARLOTTE. (screaming) If you do that again, I'll slap your face.

DUCHESS. (turning quickly round) What is it, captain?

(LEON laughs at her.)

CHARLOTTE. Nothing—only a stitch in my side, madam. (to LEON) If they tickle me, I can't stand it!

DUCHESS. (COUNTESS addresses her) Let them be brought here. (COUNT bows) Some new fashions from Paris.

CHARLOTTE. Fashions! let me—

(running to DUCHESS, LEON stops her.)

DUCHESS. (not hearing her) You will accompany us in our ride, Captain, on horseback!

CHARLOTTE. I! bless you, I can't ride! (LEON laughs)

DUCHESS. To horse! Addio, my Lord Marquis.

(offers his hand to LEON—he bows and kisses it. Music—

Exeunt All but LEON and CHARLOTTE, C. to R.—he throws himself in a chair. She stands on the opposite side of the stage.

CHARLOTTE. If this fun is to last much longer, I can't bear it.

ST. LEON. (smiling) You have nothing to complain about.

CHARLOTTE. Haven't I? How would you like to wear things you know nothing about?

ST. LEON. Remember, you are a captain, and may become a colonel!

CHARLOTTE. I'll be a petticoat colonel, then, for I won't wear these. You may laugh, as you're safe—I'll give it up!

ST. LEON. What will you do, then?

CHARLOTTE. Go with my own—a petticoat or death.

ST. LEON. If the cheat is discovered, I shall lose my liberty, and you will lose your head.

CHARLOTTE. Shall I? I'll have a run for it.

ST. LEON. It is useless—you would be pursued and retaken. Be contented, you're in high favour, surrounded by good companions.

CHARLOTTE. Very good companions, truly—pretty conversation at dinner. Then the Champagne I shall be obliged to swallow, and toasts I shall be obliged to drink. Oh, oh! (shakes her head) Fie, fie!

ST. LEON. Never mind—everybody knows your reputation as a rake is notorious.

CHARLOTTE. Which makes it the more pleasant for me. My other self fights, drinks, plays, and runs off with the women, and I get the credit of it. It's monstrous! I wish I was back

in my garret again. By the bye, what has become of my adorer—the sweet gentlemen with a large wig, Signor Bambinelli—did he discover the cheat that was played upon him?

ST. LEON. Yes, and the jest ended rather awkwardly for him!

CHARLOTTE. (*smiles*) How so, poor devil?

ST. LEON. He has been detained a prisoner at the Countess's chateau ever since the night of the elopement.

CHARLOTTE. Why?

ST. LEON. For fear he should recognise the Countess or yourself, and relate the adventure. He must be quickly sent about his business.

CHARLOTTE. You forget you are depriving me of a husband, Monsieur!

ST. LEON. A husband?

CHARLOTTE. Yes! Is he not a prince, moderately rich, and a fool? All necessary qualifications for a husband now-a-days!

SEBASTIAN. (*without, R. U. E.*) Her Highness waits, Captain!

CHARLOTTE. Let her wait till her hurry is over.

ST. LEON. Hush! you must to horse.

CHARLOTTE. What is the use? you know I can't ride—here's another pleasant situation! I will not endure it. She shall know everything—I won't—I never learnt cavalry movements.

(she is going up the stage during this speech, urged by LEON.
She appears very sulky. Just as she reaches the entrance C.,

PRINCE BAMBINELLI enters covered with mud, and dripping with water. CHARLOTTE starts—BAMBINELLI and LEON start—picture.

BAMBI. (*recognising her*) That face!

CHARLOTTE. (*laughing*) That voice! oh, what a precious guy!

Runs off screaming with laughter, C. to R.

ST. LEON. My dear friend, where do you come from?

BAMBI. A horse pond. Here's a condition for a sweet gentleman—I mean sweet tempered.

ST. LEON. Tell me!

BAMBI. First tell me, was that she?

(points to where CHARLOTTE ran out.)

ST. LEON. What she?

BAMBI. Why he—I mean that lady!

ST. LEON. That lady, my dear fellow, is a gentleman—an officer in the Body Guards.

BAMBI. Then I'm bewitched—amazingly like my charming unknown though. (*sighs*)

ST. LEON. (*aside*) I must endeavour to puzzle him, or he may suspect Charlotte's disguise. Your unknown is far away.

BAMBI. (*starting wildly*) No, no! say not so. (*snatches his hand*) This is too much—after all I have endured. Gone! lost! let me pour my sorrows in your bosom! (*wringing the wet from his clothes, he leans on LEON*) Excuse my weakness if I faint.

ST. LEON. Rouse yourself, man!

BAMBI. I cant. Don't disturb me. Never mind the mud. It will rub off when dry.

ST. LEON. Take heart!

BAMBI. Heart, signor! I have no heart—it has evaporated—oosod out gently at my shoes. You know not the misery of true love that never meets return. I'm a victim—a pining victim to the boy without trousers.

ST. LEON. You'll be more successful next time.

BAMBI. Never, signor—never! My first love ended in a bowl of punch, my second in a horse pond.

ST. LEON. Follow your charmer. (*aside*) Anything to rid myself of him.

BAMBI. Follow, signor! 'Tis useless, I'm doomed to be deceived. When I followed my supposed bride into the carriage, I was talkative, she was silent. I became warm, attempted to kiss her—she slapped my face, and ordered the coachman to drive on. When we arrived at the end of our journey, I was poked into a gloomy apartment, locked in, and abandoned to my solitary reflections. After having been shut up for eight days, I contrived to remove one of the iron bars that guarded the windows, squeezed myself through, and dropped into the horse pond. Scrambled out and ran for my life—reached the palace—used your name. The doors flew open, and here I am, mud and all. (*sighs*)

The COUNT and COUNTESS enter c. from R., followed by SERVANTS with boxes.

BELLA. Place them on this table for her highness' inspection.

(SERVANTS place boxes on table and exit c. to R.)

ST. LEON. The devil!

BAMBI. (*turning, sees COUNTESS*) Ah! my lady in the dark. If you have a heart, madame, won't this make it bleed? Look at my condition! This—this is all your work, cruel feminine.

(*points to his dress.*)

COUNTESS. Heavens!

BELLA. Who is this person? I don't know him!

(eyeing him through glass.)

BAMBI. But I know your wife. Ask her if she remembers kidnapping me, slapping my face, and locking me up.

ST. LEON. (aside to COUNT) Heed him not, my lord, he is mad.

BELLA. Mad or not, there's a mystery that demands explanation—what is it you mean? (crosses to him)

BAMBI. Ask my mutilated clothes—they were once perfect. I've been sacrificed at the altar of Love.

BELLA. What does the fellow mean?

COUNTESS. Poor fellow! he is mad—he has no meaning.

BAMBI. Fire and fury, madame, have these no meaning? (shows rags) Or these? Have you no eyes, or have they no tongue? (holds rags)

BELLA. (aside) I begin to fancy my lady's been out in a white dress again. My head—

Enter SEBASTIAN, c. from R.

SEBAS. My Lord Marquis, the Duchess has been exposed to imminent danger. (retires up)

ALL. Danger!

BAMBI. Hallo! has she been in a horse pond?

Re-enter CHARLOTTE, hastily, c. from R.

CHARLOTTE. Yes, but it's all over.

BAMBI. (looking at CHARLOTTE) Again!

ST. LEON. My dear fellow, pray be gone. If you are seen in this condition, it will ruin you—go! (hurrying him out)

BAMBI. Can't you lend me a coat?

ST. LEON. No, no. Yes, my valet shall supply you. (pushing him out.)

BAMBI. And a pair of—

He is hurried off at L. side door by LEON, the COUNTESS, and CHARLOTTE.

DUCHESS, followed by the COUNT and all the COURT, re-enter, c. from R.—LEON runs to her.

ST. LEON. (half aside) Dear Maria, what has happened?

DUCHESS. Nothing, nothing! I've been more alarmed than hurt! (sits)

BELLA. May I ask what has happened?

DUCHESS. Enquire of my brave deliverer there!

(points to CHARLOTTE.)

ST. LEON. Charlotte!

DUCHESS. Speak, you have reason to be proud of your devotion.

CHARLOTTE. Rather say, madame, confused at my audacity. But, when I saw your horse stumble, and your highness fainting, I could not restrain myself. I rushed forward, caught you in my arms, and ran away with you as fast as I could.

BELLA. Why wasn't I there to catch her?

CHARLOTTE. I bore my precious burden to the pavilion in the park, and there, I confess, you looked so lovely I stole a kiss. (ALL start)

BELLA. Kiss a duchess! the world's at an end.

CHARLOTTE. When your highness recovered, you found me on my knees entreating pardon for my presumption.

ST. LEON. Is it possible!

CHARLOTTE. Possible! there is nothing in one woman's kissing another, is there? (*he checks her*)

DUCHESS. (*smiling*) Your extreme youth must excuse the freedom. I am happy in being enabled to reward your courage, and express my gratitude. (*gives her her hand*)

BELLA. Another affair! Up goes the captain—down goes the marquis.

DUCHESS. (*to LEON*) My Lord Marquis, write a cheque for three thousand piastres for my deliverer.

(LEON bows and goes to table and writes.)

CHARLOTTE. (*to LEON*) Three thousand what do you call them—how much is that?

ST. LEON. Sixteen thousand francs!

CHARLOTTE. Sixteen! stop! you'll take away my breath. I can't carry them!

DUCHESS. (*sees boxes on table*) Ah! the packages have arrived. (*opens one*) How vastly pretty!

CHARLOTTE. (*running to boxes*) Do let me have a peep.

(*pushes all aside—LEON coughs and appears uneasy.*)

DUCHESS. (*looking at a cap*) How charming!

CHARLOTTE. Charming! never saw such a thing in my life. No shape or make in it—only see how it sits!

(*puts on cap—ALL laugh—she recollects herself.*)

ST. LEON. (*pulls her sleeve*) Charlotte! (*she laughs*)

DUCHESS. What exquisite taste is displayed in these feathers!

CHARLOTTE. Taste! pooh—pooh! they're all as stiff as pokers, (*takes feathers*) instead of gracefully bending. Then look at the body of this dress. However, it'll do for Italy, where they are a hundred years behind in their bodies.

DUCHESS. Our bodies?

COUNTESS. Are well made.

CHARLOTTE. No, they're not. You were never brought up to the business. Look at the countess, for instance. There's a

guy—one side too high—the other a mile too low—then the waist—horrible! I should be ashamed to own such a dress.

DUCHESS. This is most amusing!

(laughs—*All laugh but LEON, who is enraged.*)

BELLA. Very—especially for the Countess. An officer, or captain, study caps and waists.

CHARLOTTE. Why not? Young officers generally do study waists.

DUCHESS. Fortunately, captain, if there be moments you talk like a woman—there are others when you act like a man. I shall never forget my obligations to you.

Exit followed by COUNT and LEON, who shakes his head at CHARLOTTE. All the COURT follow, c. to L.

CHARLOTTE. Every step I take I become more and more of a man. Her highness is absolutely smitten with me. How funny it would be if I was to make love to her.

BAMBINELLI appears in Leon's attire, L. D.

At all events, I've got some money by the frolic. If I could only get back to France! (*sees BAMBINELLI*) That goose again—bother the fellow! (*endeavouring to pass him*) Recovered, eh? glad to see you—how d'ye do? I hope to see you again soon. (*waves her hand*)

BAMBI. Signor, I insist—(*stopping her*)

CHARLOTTE. So do I, that you get out of my way!

(*pushes him aside.*)

BAMBI. (*rubbing his arm*) It's the same hand that tumbled me into the punch bowl. I know the feel! Do you know Paris?

CHARLOTTE. Don't I?

BAMBI. Do you like punch?

CHARLOTTE. Amazingly.

BAMBI. And have you ever worn a gown?

CHARLOTTE. A gown? Lord bless your stupid head—hundreds. (*forgetting herself*)

BAMBI. I knew it—I knew it! Then how dare you ever wear the breeches? You once insulted me—I now demand satisfaction.

CHARLOTTE. What am I to do?

BAMBI. Fight, signor, fight. (*aside*) He's not very big.

CHARLOTTE. I can't f-i-g-h-t. (*recedes from him*)

BAMBI. A soldier, and can't fight! my courage rises—it'll soon boil over. Poltroon! can't you handle a sword?

CHARLOTTE. I can handle a sword better. I never hear a popgun without fainting.

BAMBI. Come on—come on—draw!

CHARLOTTE. Oh! (*dreadfully alarmed, suddenly perceives he wears no sword*) I'm saved, he has no sword. (*loudly*) Come on! willingly. I'll soon polish your bones, old boy. (*draws*) Shall I hit you (*fences at him*) on the head? I always pick out a soft place.

BAMBI. (*feeling for his sword*) Not here! I forgot—I left it with my rags.

CHARLOTTE. Signor—signor! I'm anxious to punish you—draw—draw!

BAMBI. I have nothing to draw.

(*she advances, driving him before her—he snatches up a chair to parry the thrusts.*)

CHARLOTTE. You have dared insult me—a soldier—a man of mettle, signor, and I will be revenged. Nothing but blood, and plenty of it, can appease my rage—hem—hem! (*fences at him*) I'm a fire eater.

BAMBI. Murder—murder! (*he runs from her—she follows him up.*)

LEON enters, c. from L.—BAMBINELLI runs to him for protection.

Save me!

ST. LEON. What do I see?

CHARLOTTE. A roaring lion. Stand out of the way, or I'll skewer you both.

ST. LEON. (to CHARLOTTE) Your uncle, the general, is arrived.

CHARLOTTE. My uncles are all aunts. Stand aside, he has dared to insult me. I will have satisfaction.

BAMBI. I can't satisfy him without a sword.

ST. LEON. A sword? take mine. (*gives a sword*)

CHARLOTTE. (*running away*) You wretch, do you want him to kill me?

BAMBI. Now, my fire eater, I'm ready. (*following him*)

CHARLOTTE. So am I—to drop! my honour's satisfied.

BAMBI. He's afraid now! (*flourishes sword*)

ST. LEON. Stop—stop! remember you are in the palace. It is death to fight duels here.

Enter DUCHESS and COURT, c. from L.

CHARLOTTE. Is it? then I am safe—come on.

(*she crosses swords with him, as DUCHESS, COUNTESS, &c. enter suddenly, followed by COUNT.*)

DUCHESS. What is this tumult? (CHARLOTTE tries to put up her sword awkwardly)

ST. LEON. Captain Parelli drew his sword on Signor Bambinelli.

BAMBI. No, not against me, your magnificeente—it was only in fun.

DUCHESS. A duel in the palace—what is the penalty?

BELLA. For an officer? shooting at least.

CHARLOTTE. Shooting! oh dear!

BAMBI. I'm glad I'm not an officer.

BELLA. Stay, signor—you with the boots—I arrest you.

(stops him.)

CHARLOTTE. Ye-e-s!

DUCHESS. (*motions all to retire—the COURT retire up*) Read that letter, signor. (*to CHARLOTTE*) I know all—how dare you address it to me? It has been seized by the police—do you recognise it? (*shews letter*)

CHARLOTTE. Me? no!

DUCHESS. Look at the signature!

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) My other self again.

DUCHESS. You know it. It is a crime punished by death! my ministers have seen it, but I spare your life. Respecting Signor Bambinelli—

BAMBI. Don't bestow a thought on me, most illustrious, I'm not worth shooting—I shouldn't pay funeral expenses. I wish I'd never been taken out of the horse pond.

DUCHESS. (*to LEON*) My Lord Marquis, secure his person.

BAMBI. Pity your highness—pity my youth and beauty—

DUCHESS. Remove him!

BAMBI. Do it tenderly, or I shall fall to pieces.

LEON conducts him off, c.

DUCHESS. Place those dresses in my closet. (*to COUNTESS, who exits with dresses, r. c., and re-enters*) I would be alone. Captain, remember you are under arrest, do not attempt to leave the palace.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) I don't intend just now.

ALL bow and exit, c. to L.

DUCHESS. Can the letter really be true? The presumptuous boy loves me! Leon's jealousy will be roused. I must at once rid myself of his presence. His uncle shall take charge of him.

CHARLOTTE has re-entered at c.

CHARLOTTE. Shall he? say you don't know. (*advances*) Madame!

DUCHESS. (*starts*) Heavens! you here again!

CHARLOTTE. Pray be not alarmed, I come to entreat for pardon. (*kneels*)

DUCHESS. Don't come near me.

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) She thinks I'm going to kiss her again. If you withhold your forgiveness, let me die—lead me to the scaffold. (*aside*) If she was to take me at my word!

DUCHESS. I—I—do forgive you—but that audacious letter!

CHARLOTTE. I glory in it! (*aside*) I don't know what it is about though. (*reads*) "I am madly in love with you—they would drive me far away." I wish they would! "They deceive you."

DUCHESS. Who deceives me?

CHARLOTTE. Who, indeed? (*reads*) "But it is useless—I will seek her presence, throw myself at her feet, avow my love, dare everything." If she was to take me at my word. The secret must come out, then—anything to be released from these horrible things. (*looking at clothes*) I confess my crime—but it was love that prompted me—love for you, fairest of all earthly beings! (*kneels and catches her hand*) Pretty well for a milliner! (*aside*) Pity me—pity me. (*footsteps heard*)

DUCHESS. Rise—rise—some one approaches!

CHARLOTTE. (*aside, rising*) Devilish lucky for me! Who do you fear? are you not mistress here?

DUCHESS. Yes, yes, but the court—the palace—the time—begone, I beg—

ST. LEON. (*without, L. U. E.*) Let every avenue of the palace be guarded—he must be in the ducal apartments.

DUCHESS. Fly, fly, I entreat. (*hurrying her off, R.*)

CHARLOTTE. (*aside*) It's her turn now, and I will give her a treat.

Exit, R. door—DUCHESS throws herself into a chair agitated.

Enter ST. LEON, c. from L.

ST. LEON. Is it true, madame, that a person has dared to force his way unbidden to your presence? (*takes her hand*)

DUCHESS. No, no, who has—

ST. LEON. The Count!

DUCHESS. Babbler! fear not, Leon—I am safe. Summon my court—I will publicly avow our marriage, and acknowledge you my husband.

ST. LEON. (*kissing her hand*) How can my gratitude ever repay you? (*a slight noise, R. of furniture falling*)

ST. LEON. (*starts up*) A noise in your closet?

DUCHESS. (*agitated*) It—it's nothing!

ST. LEON. You tremble—there is some one concealed—the Count's report—your agitation—this balcony—the window open—all—all confirm it.

DUCHESS. Leon, you forget.

ST. LEON. No, madame, I remember too well the rank you have raised me to ; but what would you have said, if, instead of a page, you had found a woman in my apartments, who had come to implore my protection ?

DUCHESS. Fortunately that was not the case.

ST. LEON. It was !

DUCHESS. A female ?

ST. LEON. Yes—and she's now in the palace ? Beware !

Enter COUNT, running, out of breath, and LADIES OF THE COURT, c. from L.

BELLA. Excuse me, your highness, I can't help it—don't frown—I come to save you—the culprit's unkennelled—found—discovered—he is here !

ST. LEON. Where, where ?

BELLA. His life shall answer for it !

(draws sword and rushes towards door, r. c.—DUCHESS throws herself before it.)

DUCHESS. Hold, I command !

The door is opened, and CHARLOTTE appears, habited as a woman, in one of her French dresses. She curtseys, and ALL seem surprised.

ALL. (exclaim) A woman ?

CHARLOTTE. Did your highness please to call ?

DUCHESS. What do I see ?

ST. LEON. (aside) Charlotte !

BELLA. My man's a woman, after all !

ST. LEON. (feigning surprise) Who is this person ?

CHARLOTTE. The sister of Parelli, at your service. (curtseys to him) All right ! leave the Light Infantry to manoeuvre.

BELLA. (eyeing her with glass) Sister ! why, she died of the measles.

CHARLOTTE. I am here to solicit pardon for my poor wild brother.

DUCHESS. Thanks, thanks ! your stratagem has saved me, (to her) But to silence scandal, you must ever remain a woman.

CHARLOTTE. Bless you, I don't want to remain anything else—give—give me my petticoats, and take you know what—

Enter BAMBINELLI and COUNTESS, c.

BAMBI. I will see the Duchess. Oh, gracious lady, pity a small gentleman. (kneels) Don't let them imprison me.

DUCHESS. You are at liberty, signor—rise !

BAMBI. Huzza ! long life to your highness. (sees CHARLOTTE) Oh ! that sylph again ! am I dreaming ? Will anybody bite my finger and try ? Lovely, but slippery. (to her)

ST. LEON. You know this young lady?

DUCHESS. (*laughs*) Young lady!

BAMBI. Haven't I reason? Think of the horse (*LEON laughs*) bath! Oh, I adore her—only accept my hand, and you shall live upon oranges.

CHARLOTTE. I take you at your word. (*gives him her hand, he kisses it*)

DUCHESS. This cannot be—'tis impossible.

ST. LEON. Why?

BAMBI. Yes, why? let me put in my why!

DUCHESS. (*confused*) I dare not suffer it. Leon, the imprudent youth—

BAMBI. Another youth? oh lord! (*recoils*)

ST. LEON. Maria!

DUCHESS. I must avow all! he came secretly to implore my pardon and to save my reputation, disguised himself as a woman.

(*BAMBINELLI groans.*)

ALL. A woman!

ST. LEON. (*smiles*) Sir candour deserves the same at my hands—that impruden' person came secretly to implore my protection, and to save my reputation, disguised herself as a man!

ALL. A man!

CHARLOTTE. No longer, but a woman and a milliner, at your service. Allow me to give you a card. (*presents card*) "Charlotte Clopier, Rue Rivoli, eighth pair back. N.B.—For ready money only—no credit."

DUCHESS. (*taking LEON's hand*) We have both been punished sufficiently for our want of confidence. (*to CHARLOTTE*) You shall have my patronage, and to prevent further masquerading, your marriage must take place in the ducal palace, and I will give the bride a portion.

ST. LEON. And I will give the bride away.

CHARLOTTE. And glad enough you'll be to do it, old boy.

(*aside, laughing.*)

DUCHESS. You shall be married to-morrow. (*smiling*)

BAMBI. To-morrow, your highness? to-night!

BELLA. But the lady's friends should be invited!

CHARLOTTE. Oh, bless you, my friends are all here. (*points to AUDIENCE*) And by their smiling countenances and merry faces, I am sure they won't forbid the banns, and prevent a poor girl from being married—

BAMBI. To-night!

(*flourish.*)

LORDS.

LADIES.

BELLA. BAM. CHARLOTTE. ST. LEON. DUCHESS. COUNTESS.

CURTAIN.



Captain Charlotte.

CHARLOTTE. Look at the Countess for instance, there's a guy! one side too high — the other a mile too low — then the waist! Horrible.

Act 2. Scene last