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Pierrepont Edwards et al.**

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*** START OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROMANCE OF A POOR YOUNG MAN

THE STANDARD DRAMA.

The Acting Edition.

No. CCXXV.

THE ROMANCE OF

A POOR YOUNG MAN.

**A Drama, adapted from the French of
OCTAVE FEUILLET,
BY MESSRS. PIERREPONT EDWARDS AND LESTER WALLACK.**

**TO WHICH ARE ADDED
A Description of the Costume—Cast of the Characters—Entrances and Exits—
Relative Positions of the Performers on the Stage, and
the whole of the Stage Business**

**Entered according to Act of Congress, in the year 1859, by LESTER
WALLACK, in the
Clerk's Office of the District Court for the Southern District of New
York.**

**NEW YORK:
SAMUEL FRENCH, PUBLISHER,
122 NASSAU STREET, (UP STAIRS.)**

CHARACTERS REPRESENTED.

Manuel, Marquis de Champcey,

Doctor Desmarests,—formerly of the French Army,

M. de Bevannes—a man of the world,

Gaspar Laroque—an aged man, formerly Captain of a Privateer,

Mr. Lester
Wallack.

Mr. Brougham.

Mr. Walcot.

Mr. Dyott.

Alain—a confidential domestic,
M. Nouret—a Notary,
Yvonnet—a Breton Shepherd,
Henri,
Louis,
Madame Laroque—Daughter-in-Law to Gaspar,
Marguerite—her daughter,
Mlle Helouin—a Governess,
Madame Aubrey—a relative of the Laroque family,
Louise Vauberger—formerly nurse to Manuel, now keeper of a lodging
house,
Christine—a Breton peasant girl,

Mr. Young.
Mr. Levere.
Mr. Baker.
Mr. Oliver.
Mr. Coburn.
Mrs. Vernon.
Mrs. Hoey.

Miss Mary Gannon.
Mrs. Walcot.
Miss Fanny
Reeves.

Guests, Servants, Peasantry, &c., &c.

The events of the Drama take place (during the 1st Act) in Paris, afterward in the Province of Brittany.

Costumes of the present day.

The Overture, incidental Music, and Choruses composed and arranged by Mr. Robert Stoepel.

A POOR YOUNG MAN.

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TABLEAU I.

A Room, simply furnished—Table, Chairs, Arm Chair, Secretaire, Side Table—Door C.

MADAME VAUBERGER *peeps in* L.

Madame Vauberger. No; he has not yet returned. [*Enters.*] Things cannot go on in this manner much longer—I shall have to speak out, and plainly too. And why not? Surely he won't take it ill from me—ah, no. I, who loved his poor mother so, could never—What's this? A purse! empty! And this key, left carelessly lying about; that's a bad sign. [*Opens Secretaire.*] No, not one solitary sous—his last coin came yesterday to pay me the rent. In the drawer, perhaps—

DR. DESMARETS *looks in.*

Dr. Desmarets. Hallo! [*She starts.*] What are you at there?

Mad. V. Me, sir? I was just—I was just—

Des. Poking your nose into that drawer—that what you call just?

Mad. V. I was dusting and putting the things in order, sir.

Des. I'll tell you what, Madame V., you're an extraordinary woman. Yesterday, when I called, you were dusting—half-an-hour ago when I called, you were dusting—and now, when I call again, you're dusting. Where the devil you find so much dust to dust, I can't think.

Mad. V. Ah, sir, look into this drawer.

Des. What for?

Mad. V. Is it not the place where, if one had money, one would naturally keep it?

Des. I suppose so. What of that?

Mad. V. See, sir, it is empty.

Des. What's that to me?

Mad. V. And his purse, also.

Des. What's that to you?

[*Goes up and puts hat on table.*

Mad. V. [*Aside.*] I dare not tell him that Manuel is without a meal—starving—I should never be forgiven. His *pride* would be wounded, and nothing could excuse that. [Pg 4]

Des. Well, what are you cogitating about? Looking for something to dust?

Mad. V. I'm thinking of the Marquis, sir.

Des. Well, what of him?

Mad. V. Is it not dreadful? Brought up as he has been—surrounded by every luxury—and now reduced to want even. Oh! it is too hard—too hard!

Des. Well, it's his own fault, isn't it? There was enough left from the wreck of his father's property, to give him a sort of a living, and he must needs go and settle it all upon his little sister Helen.

Mad. V. And for what? To give her the education befitting her rank.

Des. Fudge!

Mad. V. Doctor Desmarets, your're very unfeeling.

Des. Oh, of course, of course. I give him good advice, he rejects it. I withdraw my sympathy, and then I'm unfeeling. If he can't manage better with the little that's left him, egad! he may think himself lucky that he can get his daily meals.

Mad. V. Sir, he can't even—[*Aside.*] Oh, if I dared—

Des. Can't even what? Send for his coupe, I suppose, or drink Chateau margaux—terrible hardships, truly. When there's nothing else in a man's pocket, he had better put his pride there, and button it up tight.

Mad. V. Some day, sir, we shall find that he has taken poison, or cut his throat.

Des. Ah! and then there'll be nothing to dust.

Mad. V. Monsieur, I repeat it—you're unfeeling. But I, who loved and served his dear mother, whom he so much resembles—

Des. Not a bit—hasn't a look of her. The father, the father all over.

Mad. V. Of course. So you always say, and everybody knows why. You loved the poor Marchioness, offered her your hand, and she preferred the Marquis.

Des. Madame!

Mad. V. I don't care. I *will* speak my mind. And because she refused you, you have no regard for her son.

Des. Madame!

Mad. V. But if he has his father's face, he has his mother's heart.

Des. Much you know about it.

Mad. V. And who *should* know if I don't? Haven't I attended him since he was an infant?

Des. Well, and haven't *I* attended him since he was an infant?

Mad. V. Wasn't I with him during every sickness?

Des. Wasn't I with him too?

Mad. V. Didn't I nurse him?

Des. Didn't I cure him?

Mad. V. Wouldn't I follow him through the world?

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Des. Didn't I bring him *into* it?

Mad. V. Yes, and if things go on at this rate, he won't have much to thank you for.

Des. How do *you* know? How do *you* know, you foolish old woman you.

MANUEL *appears.*

Man. Heyday! the only two friends I have in the world at high words? What can have caused this?

Mad. V. My lord, the Doctor says you—

Man. Me! my dear Doctor, you never were quarrelling about so unimportant a person, surely?

Des. No matter for that. But I have some business with the Marquis, if this very positive old lady will allow me the luxury of an interview with him—a *private* interview. Pray, ma'am, *may* I trespass on your indulgence?

Mad. V. Truly, Doctor, your campaign in the Crimea has improved neither your manners, or your beauty.

[*Exit L. H.*

Des. Confound her impudence! The attack on my manners I could forgive, but my beauty—that's a tender point.

Man. Ah, Doctor, you must pardon her brusque manner. If she's poor in courtesy, she's rich in a rarer gift—fidelity.

Des. Oh! hang her! let her go. And now to your affairs. Your father's death occurred while I was with the army, in the Crimea. Rumors reached me there, but I have never heard the full particulars. I would not willingly revive a painful theme, but as an old friend—

Man. Nay, I shall be more satisfied when you know the facts. When you left France you know what our position was, and what our style of living.

Des. All the luxuries that money could procure—a mansion in Paris, an ancestral chateau, and a stable that could boast the best blood in France.

Man. Two months after the death of my dear mother, I went to Italy, by my father's desire, and for several years I traveled through Europe, at my pleasure. During this time his letters to me were affectionate, but brief, and never expressed any desire for my return. Two months ago, on arriving at Marseilles, I found several letters from him awaiting me, each of them begging me to return home with all possible haste.

Des. I remember, it was some time previous to that, that I heard his name mentioned in connection with some unfortunate speculations in the stocks.

Man. I arrived at night. The ground was white with snow. As I passed up the avenue—made still darker by the old trees which overshadowed it—I could hear the frost shaken from the branches, seeming, as it fell around me, like a warning of bitter tears to come. Hardly had I crossed the threshold when my father's arms were around me. I could feel his heart beating against my own, with a force almost painful. He led me to a sofa, and placed himself directly in front of me, when, as if longing to reveal something which yet he dared not name, he fixed his eyes on mine with an expression of supplication, of agony, of shame, wondrous in a man so haughty and so proud. It was enough! The wrong he had committed, yet could not confess, I divined full well—God knows how fully, how freely I forgave it! Suddenly, that look, which never quitted me, became fixed, rigid. The pressure of his hand on mine became a grip of iron. He arose—the eyes wandered, the hand relaxed, and he fell dead at my feet!

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Des. [*After a pause.*] Well, well, it is a sad history, for he left utter ruin for your portion. But come, you must not look back. "Forward" must be the watchword now. Mr. Faveau, your family

lawyer, tells me that the little that remained to you, after paying your father's debts, you have appropriated to making a fine lady of your sister.

Man. To educate her, doctor.

Des. Well, well, same thing; so that you, yourself, have literally nothing to speak of—hardly enough to give you bread.

Man. Hardly.

Des. Under these circumstances you will perhaps be disposed to the favorable consideration of a proposal I have to make?

Man. Name it, sir, for at present, I confess I have formed no plans of my own. I was so little prepared to find myself quite a beggar. Were I alone in the world, I would become a soldier. But my sister, that would involve prolonged absence from her—perhaps an early death. My darling—I cannot endure the thought of knowing her compelled to suffer the privations, the labor, and the dangers of poverty. She is happy at her school, and young enough to remain there for some years to come. If I could but find some occupation by which, even were I obliged to impose the severest restraints upon myself, it would be possible to save enough for her marriage portion, I should be more than content.

Des. An employment to suit a man of your rank—

Man. Oh, my dear Doctor—rank—

Des. Well, well, of your *education*, then, is not easily found. Now, mark what I am going to say, and consider it well, before you come to a hasty conclusion. There is, among my patients, a retired merchant, one who has been able, by indefatigable industry in trade, to amass a very handsome fortune. His daughter, an only child, and of course, the father's darling, has, by chance, become acquainted with the state of your affairs. Now, I have reason to know, (being on very confidential terms with them.) I say I have reason to know that this girl, ambitious, handsome, rich, and accomplished, would be happy to share your title. I have the father's consent, and only await the word from you to—

Man. Dr. Desmarts, my name is neither for sale, or to let.

Des. Humph! Do you know, my lord, that you bear a remarkable resemblance to your poor mother?

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Man. You must be mistaken, sir. I have always been told that I was more like my father.

Des. Not a bit! The mother, the mother, sir, in every feature. But, bless me, it's near eleven o'clock and I have a most particular appointment. As you decline considering the proposal I have made, we must think of something else. Au revoir. [*Aside.*] The mother—eyes, nose, mouth. What the devil made that stupid old woman say he was like his father?

[*Exit C.*

Man. He's a kind man, though a little eccentric, and apart from his professional duty, seems actuated by a sincere desire to serve me, and yet—and yet I could not bring myself to ask his charity. Hunger—starvation—are not, then, mere empty words. Oh! if I do sin in my pride, I am punished, for I suffer much. This is the second day without food. Why, after all, I could go into any Restaurant and dine, for I am well enough known. I could say I had forgotten my purse—have done so without scruple in happier times, but *then* I had the means to pay, and now—no, no, my sister, not for life, not even for *thee*, will I descend to lie and cheat. How weak I am; this comes too soon upon my long sickness. If I could but sleep and so forget my agony. And there are human creatures who suffer every day as I do now. My sister, my little sister, I seem to see thy dear face looking down upon me, and bidding me be comforted. [*Music.*] Thou, at least, shall never suffer. But for those who hear their cries of hunger repeated from the mouths of starving little ones, well, well, God comfort them; I will not re—Oh—holy—charity—for—those—who—my sister—my—

MANUEL gradually falls asleep. MADAME VAUBERGER enters with a Tray containing a dish or two with eatables, a plate, &c. She watches MANUEL carefully while she deposits the Tray on the chimney-piece and lays a cloth on the table. MANUEL awakes as she goes back to the chimney-piece for tray.

Man. Eh—who's that? Ah, me! What are you doing, Madame?

Mad. V. Did you not order dinner, my lord?

Man. Certainly not.

Mad. V. Why they told me—

Man. Then they were mistaken. It's for some of the other lodgers.

Mad. V. But there's no other lodgers on this floor, and I really cannot think what—

Man. At any rate, it is not for me. Take it away.

Mad. V. [*After slowly taking off cloth.*] My lord has probably dined?

Man. Probably.

Mad. V. Dear me, dear me, what a pity. A good dinner spoiled, wasted. Really, if you had not dined, my lord, it would so oblige me if—

Man. Will you go or not? [*She is dejectedly going, when MANUEL calls.*] Louise, I understand, and I thank you, but I am not well to-day. I have no desire to eat.

[*He turns away. MADAME VAUBERGER quietly comes back and gently places the dinner on the table.*

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Mad. V. Ah, my Lord, if you knew how you wound my heart. Come now, you shall pay me for the dinner—there—you shall put the money into my hand the moment you have it. But indeed, indeed, if you were to give me a hundred thousand francs, it would not cause me half the pleasure that I should feel in seeing you eat my poor little dinner. Oh, surely, surely, you can comprehend that.

Man. I do, Louise, I do—and as I can't give you the hundred thousand francs, why, I'll eat your dinner.

Mad. V. No; *will* you?

Man. Louise, your hand. Don't be alarmed, I'm not going to put money into it.

[*She timidly gives her hand.*

Mad. V. Oh! thank you, thank you, my lord, a thousand times. Now, I'll leave you to your dinner. Ah! how good of you to accept my poor gift. You have a noble heart.

[*Exit C.*

Man. And a monstrous appetite. My kind, faithful Louise. Well, well, let us to dinner, since dinner there is. Come, come, here's life for another day or so, at least, and that's something.

DOCTOR *and* MADAME VAUBERGER *heard without.*

Des. Nonsense, nonsense; I don't believe a word of it.

Mad. V. I tell you sir, 'tis true; you might have seen it.

Des. [*Entering.*] But, confound it, woman—I *didn't* see it, and it was your business to tell me.

Mad. V. It wasn't.

Des. It was.

Man. What's the matter now?

Des. Matter enough! That stupid woman—

Man. Doctor, will you do me the pleasure to dine with me?

Des. My lord, you have done wrong.

Man. Indeed!

Des. For you have wounded a friend. You have been cruel.

Man. Cruel!

Des. For you have made an old man blush.

Man. I!

Des. Yes, you! why was I left in ignorance? How could you, Manuel? why didn't you. Damn it, sir? how dare you starve without letting me know?

Man. Sir, I could not—

Des. My poor boy; there, there, eat your dinner; I've news for you.

Man. News!

Des. Yes; eat your dinner.

Man. But I want to listen.

Des. Well, you don't listen with your mouth, I suppose. Eat your dinner.

Man. But—

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Des. Devil a word you'll get out of me, if you don't eat your dinner.

Man. Well, well.

[Eats.

Des. Good! You remember I told you I had an appointment?

Man. Yes.

Des. Don't talk—eat! [MANUEL *eats.*] That appointment concerned you. [MANUEL *nods.*] I think I've found employment for you.

Man. Eh?

[Pauses with a bit on his fork.

Des. In with it. [MANUEL *puts it in his mouth.*] Good! You are aware, of course, that my practice and my residence is in the country. I merely came to Paris on your account. [MANUEL *lets go his fork to shake hands with the DOCTOR, who puts the fork into his hand again.*] Well, among the families with whom I am most intimate, there is one, in particular, of great wealth and importance. The name is Laroque. The family have had for some years past, a managing man, a steward, who never was worth much. Indeed, the only real service he has ever rendered them, he has just performed.

Man. Ran away?

Des. No, died. The moment I heard of this, I wrote to Madame Laroque, asking his situation for a friend of mine. On leaving you, I went to the post office, and found a letter awaiting me, with the full consent of the family to my request. To be sure the position for a man of your rank—

Man. My rank, under present circumstances, is a mockery. I shall, in future, take simply my Christian name of Manuel.

Des. I have only mentioned you in my letters as Monsieur Manuel, anticipating that such would be your wish. You will have your own apartments in a pavilion near the Chateau. Your salary will be so regulated that you will be enabled to lay by a portion for your sister. Now, the only question remaining is, will this suit you?

Man. Admirably! My dear, kind friend, how shall I sufficiently thank you?

Des. Eat your dinner.

Man. But am I fitted for the position?

Des. Pretty well. You've learned one great requisite.

Man. What's that?

Des. Economy. As to the rest, the duties are simple enough. And now I'll give you some notion of the people you are going to meet. There are, in the Chateau, without counting visitors, five persons. First, Monsieur Laroque, celebrated at the beginning of the present century as a famous privateer Captain. Hence his large fortune. He is now a feeble old man, mind and memory a good deal the worse for wear. Then there is Madame Laroque, his daughter-in-law, a Creole—

Man. A Creole?

Des. Yes, young gentleman, an *elderly* Creole, with some eccentricities to be sure, but a good heart. Thirdly, there is Mademoiselle Marguerite, her daughter, much younger—

Man. That's singular.

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Des. Eat your dinner. She is proud, somewhat romantic, a little thoughtless,—

Man. And her disposition?

Des. Sweet. Fourthly, Madame Aubrey, a widow, a sort of second cousin, old maidish, talky—

Man. Disposition?

Des. Sour. Fifthly, Mademoiselle Helouin—Governess. Young, good looking.

Man. Disposition?

Des. Doubtful. And that completes the catalogue.

Man. Delightful! Two good dispositions out of five. The proportion is enormous!

Des. I'm glad you look at things so hopefully. When will you be ready to accompany me to the Chateau?

Man. To-morrow—to-day.

Des. To-morrow will do. I shall be here for you early.

[*Going.*

Man. I shall be ready.

Des. [*Runs against* MADAME V. *who is coming in.*] Confound it, woman, take care!

Mad. V. Why, Doctor, you ran against me.

Des. I didn't!

Mad. V. You did!

Man. What's the matter now?

Des. Eat your dinner!

END OF TABLEAU I.

TABLEAU II.

A Saloon with bay windows opening on a Terrace, from which steps descend to lawn and grounds at back—Piano, R. U. E.—Books, Papers, Vases, &c., &c.

DE BEVANNES, DR. DESMARETS, MAD. LAROQUE, MARGUERITE, MADEMOISELLE HELOUIN, MAD. AUBREY *discovered.* As *Curtain rises*, M. DE BEVANNES *is conversing with several young ladies on the terrace at back.* DESMARETS *reading paper*, L. C. MADAME LAROQUE *wrapped in furs*, L. *reading a book.* MARGUERITE *near her mother, at tapestry work.* MADAME AUBREY, R. C. *knitting.* MAD'LE HELOUIN *arranging flowers in vase*, R. *Great talking and laughing from the party on the terrace as the curtain rises.*

Bevannes. Very well, very well, young ladies, if you insist upon it. The ladies are determined on a waltz on the terrace.

Madame Laroque. What! in the broiling sun?

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Bev. The roses do not fear the sun. Why should the lilies?

Ladies [*all courtesey.*] Oh, how pretty.

Bev. Yes, rather neat, I think. [*To MARGUERITE*] Mademoiselle, may I hope for the honor?

Mar. Thank you. Despite your pretty speech, I confess to a fear of waltzing in the sun. But I'll play for you with pleasure.

[*Goes towards Piano, R.*

Bev. [*Aside to her.*] Always cruel. [*To M^{LLE} HELOUIN,*] Mademoiselle, may I request the pleasure?

Mlle Helouin. Oh! certainly.

Bev. [*Aside to her.*] Ever kind.

[*MARGUERITE plays—they waltz and gradually disappear.*

Mad. L. Have you seen my new conservatory, Doctor?

Des. No, Madame.

Mad. L. Well, I must show it to you, if I can drag myself so far.

Des. Drag? Why, good gracious! You're the picture of health this morning—fresh as a rose.

Mad. L. Fresh? Frozen. It's a curious fact, Doctor, that since I left the Antilles, twenty years ago, I have never yet known what it was to feel comfortably warm.

Des. That accounts for your continued good looks. Consult your Cookery Book, page 18. If you want to preserve things fresh, you must keep them cold. And you, Madame, [*To MADAME AUBREY*] how do *you* find yourself?

Madame Aubrey. Very weak, Doctor. I ate a tolerable breakfast this morning.

Des. [*Aside.*] You may say that. Three eggs and a broiled chicken.

Mad. A. And I feel a fullness—

Des. [*Aside.*] I should think so.

Mad. A. In the head.

Des. Ah!

Mad. A. The fact is, Doctor, I am subject to such continual chagrin, such cruel mortifications here. Dependent upon others for certain luxuries which I can't get for myself.

Des. Why not?

Mad. A. Things are so dear. Ah, Doctor, nothing will soothe me but death.

Des. Well, *that's* cheap!

Mad. A. Brute!

[*Aside.*

Mar. [*at Piano.*] Here they come again.

She plays. The waltzers appear on terrace. In the midst of this dancing, MANUEL comes up steps, as if from lawn below. They separate R. and L. and regard him with some astonishment. He has a portfolio under his arm.

Mar. Well, why don't you go on?

Des. [*Aside.*] At last, [*aloud.*] Madame Laroque, permit me to present to you, M. Manuel, the new Steward.

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MAD. LAROQUE rises and salutes MANUEL, at the same time ringing a bell. A servant enters and goes to MANUEL, taking from him a small portmanteau, which he carries off. MARGUERITE goes over to L. of MAD. LAROQUE.

Bev. Rather a stylish looking steward!

Mad. L. Why, Doctor, what does this mean? You promised a quiet, simple, steady young man, and you bring me a fine gentleman like this.

As MANUEL comes down R. C., MAD'LE HELOUIN sees him.

Mlle. H. [*Aside.*] It is the Marquis de Champcey!

[*Goes up to ladies.*

MAD. AUBREY—MANUEL—DESMARETS—BEVANNES—MAD. LAROQUE—MADEMOISELLE HELOUIN—MARGUERITE.

Mad. L. Pardon, sir, you are Monsieur—

Man. Manuel, Madame.

Mad. L. The new Steward?

Man. Yes, Madame.

Mad. L. You are quite sure?

Des. [*Aside.*] That's not bad.

Man. Madame!

Bev. The lady wishes to know whether you are yourself.

Man. I have always been under that impression, sir.

[*BEVANNES goes up.*

Des. [*Aside.*] The conversation is becoming brilliant—I'll leave them to enjoy it.

[*Exit at back—BEVANNES comes down to MARQUIS.*

Mad. L. Sir, we are indebted to you for devoting your talents to our service; we really require them, for we have the misfortune to be immensely rich.

Mad. A. Misfortune, dear?

Mad. L. Yes, love; wealth is a heavy burthen.

Mad. A. But a very pleasant one.

Mad. L. You'd find it hard to bear, dear.

Mad. A. I should like to *try*, darling.

Mad. L. I feel that I was born for the devotion and self-sacrifice entailed by poverty. Ah! my dear Bevannes, should I not have made an excellent Sister of Charity?

Bev. You are already the next thing to it, Madame?

Mad. L. How so?

Bev. [*Indicating MARGUERITE.*] The mother of goodness.

Mar. Oh, sir.

Mad. L. But do you not agree with me?

Bev. In what?

Mad. L. That wealth is a heavy responsibility.

Bev. Doubtless. But then you have the comfort of knowing that there are always some devoted friends willing to relieve you.

Mad. L. [*Rings.*] But *my* fortune is not mine to dispose of—for my duty obliges me to preserve it for my child.

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Enter ALAIN.

Alain, show this gentleman to his apartments—but first, you must be introduced to my father-in-law. Ask if Monsieur Laroque can see the gentleman. [*Exit ALAIN—MANUEL up stage.*] And now, we will take a stroll to the conservatory. What has become of that horrid doctor? [*As she rises, her shawl falls off—MANUEL comes forward and assists her.*] Oh! thank you, sir.

Re-enter ALAIN.

Alain. Monsieur Laroque is coming down, Madame.

[*Exit at back.*]

Mad. L. [*To MARGUERITE.*] My dear, will you stay and introduce Monsieur Manuel to your grandpapa?

Mar. Certainly, if you wish it.

Mad. L. Now, my dear Bevannes, your arm.

Bev. [*Who has been talking to MARGUERITE.*] Eh?

Mad. L. You shall accompany us—

Bev. [*To MARGUERITE.*] This is too bad.

[*Gives arm to MADAME LAROQUE.*]

Mar. Oh! Monsieur de Bevannes, how happy you ought to feel—arm in arm with "the mother of goodness."

Bev. I do feel happy—blessed. [*MADAME AUBREY takes his other arm.*] Doubly blessed.

[*Exeunt BEVANNES, MADAME LAROQUE and MADAME AUBREY.*]

Mlle. H. [*Aside.*] So, so, my lord Marquis. Well, I will keep your secret, *perhaps.*

[*Exit—MARGUERITE seats herself as they go off.*]

Mar. [*After a pause.*] Is this your first visit to Brittany, sir?

Man. It is, Mademoiselle.

Mar. It is an interesting country, I believe, to strangers.

Man. Deeply interesting; though I travelled through it so rapidly, that I had hardly time to appreciate its beauties. What I *did* see, however, charmed me.

Mar. Ah! an admirer of the picturesque, I perceive, like our governess. You two will get on very well together—you'll be excellent companions.

Man. Mademoiselle—

Mar. Oh, yes; she adores trees, rocks, rivers, etcetera—things that, for my own part, I don't think very interesting.

Man. [*Smiling, and throwing himself carelessly into a chair.*] Pray, then, may I ask what you *do* think interesting?

Mar. [*Rising.*] Excuse me, sir.

Man. A timely reproof—for I was already forgetting my position. [*ALAIN is crossing the stage.*] My friend, a word with you.

Alain. Certainly, sir.

Man. Monsieur Laroque is very old, is he not?

Alain. Oh, yes sir, *very* old.

[Pg 14]

Man. He was a seaman formerly, I believe?

Alain. Yes sir, and a bold one too. Up in the picture gallery, there are paintings of some of his most famous battles with the English. Ah! he was a terrible man. Why, sir, if you'll believe me, when the fit is on him, he will walk for hours alone in that gallery, in a sort of dream, muttering to himself, and fancying that he is again on board his ship in the midst of fire and slaughter, and between you and I, sir, they *do* say—but hush! he's coming with his granddaughter.

[*Music.*

Enter M. LAROQUE, leaning on MARGUERITE.

Mar. This way, dear grandfather. So, so. How well and strong you are to-day.

[*ALAIN places chairs and exits.*

Laroque. Always better and stronger when you are near me, my darling, [*sits down.*] Thank ye, thank ye.

Mar. Let me present to you Mons. Manuel, our new steward.

LAROQUE, on seeing MANUEL, is transfixed and gazes with a sort of terror at him.

Lar. No—no—no—it cannot be!

Mar. What is this?

Lar. But I tell you he is dead—dead—

Mar. Dearest grandfather! [*To MANUEL.*] For heaven's sake, sir, speak to him.

Man. Really, Mademoiselle—I—I—

Mar. Speak, sir! Say something—anything—

Man. I am happy, sir, that I can devote my humble talents to your service.

Lar. But he is dead—

Man. Who?

Mar. The last steward—

[*Signs to MANUEL to speak on.*

Man. All the more happy, sir, as I have heard of your many brilliant exploits, and had relatives who, like yourself, have often fought against the English—

Lar. The English! Aye—aye—aye—they did it—they were the cause, but they paid it all—paid dearly—dearly.

Man. [*Approaching.*] Permit me, sir, to—

Lar. Ah! No—no—no. He has blood upon him! See—see—see—

Mar. Grandfather, dear grandfather! Do not regard him, [*To MANUEL.*] he is often thus—his great age—and—and—oh, sir, pray retire; join my mother, I beg of you.

Man. Certainly, Mademoiselle. [*Aside.*] A good beginning, truly.

Mar. Grandfather, dearest, what terrible thoughts are troubling you? See, it is I, Marguerite, your child.

Lar. Eh! my child! Ah, yes, true, my child, my own dear child; but where is—are we alone? Who stood *there* just now?

Mar. That was our new steward, Monsieur Manuel.

Lar. Manuel—Manuel—'tis very strange! I thought—

[Pg 15]

Mar. What, dear grandfather?

Lar. Thought that—that—

Mar. Oh, you thought you recognized him? He is like some one you have seen before?

Lar. Yes—yes—yes—like some one I have seen before. But I am very old, darling, and have seen so many faces in my time. Well, well, I think I shall like him. Does he play picquet?

Mar. Indeed I do not know—

Lar. I hope so, I hope so—

Enter MAD. AUBREY.

Mad. H. Ah, my dear cousin, how do you find yourself now? They told me you were ill, and almost frightened me to death.

Lar. Thank ye, cousin, thank ye. It was only a passing weakness.

Mad. A. Indeed, I rejoice to hear it, for I was fearful of some sudden—Oh, why did you not send for me? 'Tis very unkind of you to forget those who love you so.

[Weeps.]

Mar. Grandpapa, there's one for you.

[Aside to him.]

Lar. [To MAD. AUBREY.] Well, well it's very kind of you to be so fearful of *something sudden*, but you needn't—I've made my *will*. [Aside to MARGUERITE.] There's one for *her*!

Mad. A. Come now, take my arm, a walk upon the terrace will do you so much good. There, don't be afraid to lean on me.

Lar. You're very kind, cousin. Thank ye, thank ye. [Going.] Marguerite, my darling, ask him if he plays picquet.

Mar. I will.

Lar. Umph! do you think he does?

Mar. I have no doubt of it.

Lar. [As he goes out with MAD. AUBREY.] I hope so—I hope so—I hope so!

[Exeunt LAROQUE and MAD. AUBREY.]

Mar. My poor grandfather; spite of his failing memory, he sees through the disinterestedness of our good cousin Aubrey. But those wild words, his terror at the appearance of this young man, what could that mean? Or had it any meaning? [Sees MAD. LAROQUE and MANUEL coming in at back.] My mother—and leaning on the arm of that person!

Mad. L. Precisely my own opinion, sir, my impression exactly; this is really charming; we agree upon every point.

Man. I am flattered, Madame, to think such should be the case.

Bev. [Without.] 'Pon my honor, young ladies, I can't, I really can't!

Enter BEVANNES, surrounded by ladies, exclaiming, "You must, Indeed!"

Bev. Would you believe it, Madame? Those unconscionable ladies insist on another waltz.

Mar. Oh, indeed I cannot play any more—I must finish this to-day—It is a promise—

[Pg 16]

Man. Pray do not let that inconvenience the ladies—I will play a waltz with much pleasure.

[Touches Piano.

Bev. Sir!

Mar. [*Haughtily.*] Thank you, sir—it is not requisite.

Man. [*Aside.*] Forgetting again.

[Goes up Terrace.

Bev. [*Aside.*] Pretty cool!

Mar. Very presuming of that steward.

Mad L. Very polite of that *gentleman*.

Bev. Highly disgusting to *this* gentleman.

Mad. L. Well, de Bevannes, you must find some other amusement for the ladies.

Bev. 'Gad, I'll soon do that. It's positively fatiguing to be in such general request with them. They can't do without me for one moment—they absolutely—

Turns and perceives MANUEL, who, during the preceding dialogue, has entered into conversation with the ladies, and has, by this time, offered his arm to two of them—They all accompany him off.

Bev. [*Aside.*] Well, if I were given to strong sentiments, I should wish that fellow at the deuce. As it is, I'll content myself with simply damning his impudence.

Mad. L. Do you know, my dear, that I don't feel quite easy in my mind about that young man.

Bev. [*Aside.*] Nor I, either.

Mar. Why not, mamma?

Mad. L. He is much too charming to make a good steward.

Mar. Really; I do not perceive it. A person may be honest and well-behaved, although he does happen to play on the piano.

Bev. I don't know that; I flatter myself I have seen something of the world, and experience has specially taught me to beware of the man who plays the piano.

Mar. Mamma, dear, will you hand me those scissors?

Mad. L. Yes, my child. [*Perceives MANUEL'S portfolio.*] Whose drawing-book is this?

Mar. That? oh! that is the steward's—I saw it in his hand when he came in.

Mad. L. I positively must take a peep. Oh! De Bevannes, look! beautiful! What a charming accomplishment it is to draw well.

Mar. Yes, for an engineer, or a builder—

Bev. Or an actor—

Mar. Why gracious! Monsieur de Bevannes, you have said a good thing.

Bev. Have I? Allow me to apologize.

Mar. Not at all; it's your *first* offence.

Mad. L. How beautifully finished these groups are.

Bev. Positively, they're not so bad.

Mad. L. Bad! my dear sir; they're exquisite. Look, for instance at that horse—is it not perfection? [Pg 17]

Bev. It would be, doubtless—only it happens to be a cow.

Mad.L. A cow?

Bev. I think so; horses don't go about with two horns.

Enter MANUEL.

Man. Your pardon, ladies; but I believe I left my drawing-book—

Mad. L. Allow me to return it, sir—and to thank you for an accident which has afforded us much pleasure.

Man. Madame, you are too kind—so kind, indeed, that you have too long refrained from permitting me to commence my duties. With your consent, I will at once set about them. Your farm at Langeot, of which you spoke to me, is not more, I think, than a mile or two from this. I will walk over there this afternoon, and—

Mad. L. Walk! over such a miserable bad road as it is. Indeed, sir, I could not allow it.

Enter MADAME AUBREY.

Mad. A. Hush! Pray, *pray*, not so much noise. My dear cousin has composed himself to sleep.

Bev. Noise! it appears to me we were pretty quiet.

Mad. A. Ah, sir, you might think so; but the least sound jars upon his poor nerves.

[*Weeps.*]

Bev. [*Aside.*] I never saw such a devil of a woman as this is, to cry.

Man. But I assure you, Madame, that I would rather walk. If I pretend to be your steward—why steward I must be, and not fine gentleman.

Mad. L. [*To* MARGUERITE.] My dear, would it be proper to allow M. Manuel to walk?

Mar. I believe it is usual for the steward to do so. However, I see no reason why he should not ride, if he chooses. There are plenty of horses in the stable.

Mad. A. Ah!

[*Weeps.*]

Bev. What's the matter, Madame?

Mad. A. Talking of riding always overcomes me.

Bev. Excuse my peculiar mode of expression—but you appear to me to pass your life in being perpetually overcome.

Mad. A. Women are but fragile flowers.

[*Weeps.*]

Bev. They seem to require a deal of water.

Mad. A. But horses, sir—talking of horses, puts me in mind of a pet I had.

Mad. L. A pet horse, dear?

Mad. A. No, love, a donkey. Oh!

Bev. [*Aside.*] Now she's watering the donkey.

Mad. A. I had the dear little creature for two years. Just long enough to—pray listen, sir.
[*To MANUEL.*]

Man. I beg your pardon, Madame—I'm all attention—I heard. The creature had two ears just long enough—
[*All laugh.*]

Mad. A. No, no; I said I had him for two years—just a sufficient time to love him like a child— [Pg 18]
when he died—died, sir, of one of those diseases peculiar to that class of quadruped.

Man. Children?

Mad. A. No, sir, Donkies! Dear me, it was, Umph! let me see, you must know, sir, what I mean?
[*To BEVANNES.*]

Bev. Measles?

Mad. A. No, no, but no matter; He died—

Bev. Peace to his ashes. But as you were saying, Madame Laroque, there are plenty of horses in the stable, and, really, all but ruined for want of exercise.

Enter DR. DESMARETS.

Des. Yes, that's what you'll *all* be, if you continue to lounge away the days as you do.

Mad. L. Ah, Doctor, we've missed you dreadfully.

Des. What's the matter? anybody sick?

Bev. You ought to have been here just now, Doctor; Madame Aubrey has told the most touching tale—

Des. Of a donkey? I know, I've heard it often.

Bev. But with regard to a horse for M. Manuel. There's Black Harry—

Des. Black Harry! Nobody can ride the brute! He's perfectly untameable! Why, de Bevannes, you tried it yourself and couldn't.

Bev. Ahem! Oh—ah—yes, but I had no spurs.

Des. Spurs! Why, you couldn't even get upon his back!

Bev. Eh—why—no—not exactly—[*Aside*] Confound him!

Man. [*To BEVANNES*] And is Black Harry so very unmanageable?

Bev. 'Pon my word I don't see it. He has an insuperable objection to being mounted, but if you can get upon his back, and *being* on his back, can *keep* there, why, of course, it's a great point in your favor.

Man. [*Smiling.*] Certainly an important one.

Des. If you except a partiality for biting, and ditto for kicking, occasionally shying, and always prone to running away, he's a pleasant beast.

Mar. But such a beauty! I never saw a horse I should like so much to ride, if he were but properly broken.

Man. [*To MAD. LAROQUE*] Madame, have I your permission?

Mad. L. Certainly.

Bev. [*Aside.*] What's he at now?

Enter ALAIN.

Man. Tell one of the grooms to saddle Black Harry.

Alain. Sir!

Des. What?

Mad. L. No—no—

Man. [*To* ALAIN.] Did you hear my order?

Alain. Yes, sir. [*Aside.*] There'll be work for the Doctor to-day.

[*Exit.*

Bev. [*Aside.*] Good.

[Pg 19]

Man. Pray do not fear, Madame, I have been used to restive horses. I'll just make his acquaintance now, and if I can succeed in gaining a small portion of his esteem, I will do myself the honor of riding him daily until he is fit for your daughter's use.

Des. [*To* BEVANNES.] What the devil made you mention that confounded animal? You don't like the new steward, eh?

Bev. Not particularly.

Des. He's good looking.

Bev. Inconveniently.

Des. And you want his neck broken?

Bev. No. But I should like his nose put out of joint.

Mad. L. I do not think I ought to permit this.

[*Noise below the terrace.*

Enter ALAIN.

Alain. The horse is ready, sir.

Bev. I will lend you a pair of my spurs. Alain, get my spurs as you go down.

Alain. Very well, sir.

[*Exit.*

Mad. L. Let me entreat you, sir.

Man. I do assure you, there is nothing to fear. With your good wishes I am certain of success.

[*Exit down steps.*

Des. [*On a terrace.*] Why, here are all the servants and grooms. Quite an assemblage.

Noise—Cries of "Hold him," "Quiet, sir," "Out of the way," "Stand clear," &c.—Enter LADIES and Mlle HELOUIN.

Des. A nice, quiet animal. [*Leans over.*] Manuel, my dear boy. Sir! if you break your leg, you may mend it yourself—I won't.

Bev. [*On a sofa.*] Doctor, report progress. [*Aside.*] I'll bet a thousand francs he doesn't even mount him.

Mar. [*Who has overheard him.*] I'll take that bet, sir.

Bev. Eh? oh! as you please Mademoiselle.

Des. By the Lord, he's up!

[*Noise as before—then shout.*]

Bev. In the air?

Des. No, in the saddle. [*Noise again.*] Ah, he's off!

Bev. Off the horse?

Des. No; off on a gallop. [*Noise gets more distant.*] Egad! they're all scampering after him. What's he doing now? The ditch! take care!

Mad. L. He'll be killed.

Mad. A. Oh! oh!

[*Weeps.*]

Mar. The horse can never do it.

[*Shouts distant.*]

Des. Ah! he's—

Bev. In it?

Des. No, *over* it! Back again! [*Shouts distant.*] Here he comes. Egad! Black Harry's had enough of it.

[*Shouts approach nearer.*]

Mar. [*Aside.*] There's some mystery about this man. He has hardly arrived, when all eyes seem turned to him. There certainly *is* a mystery. [Pg 20]

Mlle H. It will be cleared up, Mademoiselle.

Enter ALAIN.

Mar. What do you mean?

Mlle H. Hush!

Alain. [*To BEVANNES.*] Your spurs, sir.

Bev. Oh! I hope they assisted him.

Alain. Didn't want 'em sir.

Great shouting below—The ladies, who have been witnessing the ride, crowd upon the terrace, waving their handkerchiefs, and appear surrounding and congratulating MANUEL as he comes on up steps.

Des. [*To BEVANNES.*] Somebody's nose is out of joint.

END TABLEAU II.

Lapse of Three Months.

TABLEAU III.

The Park of the Chateau Laroque. ALAIN discovered arranging Portfolio and Drawing materials.

Alain. Now really I do thank Madame for deputing me to wait more especially on Monsieur Manuel. Steward or no steward, he's a perfect gentleman; of that there can't be a doubt. What a pity it is that Mademoiselle Marguerite and he don't like one another. When he says white, she

says black. When she goes one way, he goes another, yet everybody else likes him. M'lle Helonin, our Governess, is absolutely in love with him, and the wonderful influence he has obtained over old Mons. Laroque, in this short time, is unaccountable. He has hardly been here three months, and they say that all the money will be left according to his advice—but that's going rather far, even for gossip. Well, now, his drawing materials are all ready for him, and—here he is to employ them.

Enter MANUEL.

Man. Alain, did you, by chance, pick up a half finished letter anywhere in my room?

Alain. No, sir.

Man. Strange! I commenced it yesterday, and left it on my table, intending to finish it this morning. I have searched the room thoroughly, and it is nowhere to be found. [Pg 21]

Alain. Was it of much importance?

Man. Merely inasmuch as it related to family and business matters. It was for the Doctor, in case he should call when I was from home. However, let it go. I'll write another when I return. [*Sits down and prepares drawing materials.*] Did not Mademoiselle Marguerite go out on horseback yesterday alone?

Alain. Yes, sir.

Man. How was it you did not follow her, as usual?

Alain. Oh, sir, she often goes without me. She's a capital rider, and she says, to be alone sometimes, makes her feel more self-dependent, and you know, sir, it won't do to contradict her, for though a charitable, kind-hearted, young lady, she's rather wilful, and terribly proud.

Man. Somewhat, perhaps, but her general manner appears to me more the result of a sad and gloomy thoughtfulness, than mere pride.

Alain. Ah, well, I suppose, sir, that, like most young ladies of her age, she's a little bit in love.

Man. In love?

Alain. Yes, sir, Monsieur de Bevannes has been paying her great attention for some time past, and it would be a grand match, for, after Monsieur Laroque, he is the richest gentleman in the neighborhood, and of excellent family. Ah, sir, what a pity it is *you* are not rich.

Man. Why so, Alain?

Alain. Because—no matter. Have you any orders for me, sir?

Man. Merely to have a good look for that letter when you go to my room.

Alain. I certainly will, sir.

[*Exit.*]

Man. Married—married—and to *him*. Well, and why not? Fool that I am! Despite of all that should preserve and fence my heart as with a wall of steel, from every impulse which could induce forgetfulness of my bitter lot, and the one sacred object of my life, still will that coward heart indulge in dreams—wild dreams of one day laying its most precious offerings at the feet which would but spurn them.

Enter M'LE HELOUIN, with basket.

But I will conquer yet, and if the struggle be hard, the victory will be the more worthy.

Mlle H. [*Aside.*] He is alone. Hitherto, I have kept his secret well; whether I will continue silent, depends upon himself. Courage, and the poor hireling may yet be a Marchioness. [*Comes down to him.*] Oh! Monsieur Manuel, how beautiful that is! You see, while you have been painting the woods, I have been gathering flowers. You know we have a ball to-night.

Man. Indeed? I was not aware of it.

Mlle H. You positively don't seem to know or care about anything that goes on. You are worse

Man. Pardon me, not unsociable. But I know my station, and think it better not to risk being reminded of it.

Mlle H. [*After a pause.*] Monsieur Manuel—

Man. Mademoiselle—

Mlle H. Have I ever offended you?

Man. No, indeed.

Mlle H. I have been vain enough to think, at times, that you had some friendly feeling for me.

Man. And so I have. It is but natural. Our fortunes and positions are the same, or nearly so. Both dependent on the caprices of those who employ us, both alone, friendless. This should create sympathy at least, if not friendship.

Mlle H. You would not fear, then, to tell me of my faults?

Man. Not if you desired it.

Mlle H. Indeed I do desire it.

Mlle H. But I only know of one.

Mlle H. Pray name it. Nay, I shall receive it as a kindness.

Mlle H. Well, then I think you admit and encourage somewhat too great a familiarity with the family in whose employment we are. Your motives may be, indeed, I'm sure they *are*, perfectly innocent; still they will not be so considered, for in this world, the unfortunate are always suspected.

Mlle H. True, true. Spoken with a delicacy and candor all you own—I thank you sincerely—and you will always continue as now—my true friend?

Man. I shall feel honored in the title.

Mlle H. A true—a *dear* friend?

Man. [*Aside.*] What is she driving at?

Mlle H. A friend that loves me?

Man. [*Aside.*] Hallo! we're getting tender!

Mlle H. A friend that loves me, ardently—do you hear?

Man. Distinctly.

Mlle H. And do you comprehend?

Man. [*Half aside.*] I'm afraid I do.

Mlle H. Do you remember the old nursery rhyme—

"Pluck from the flower its leafy store—
Love me little, love me more;
Hearts change owners, yet combine,
If mine is yours, and yours is mine."

Come, now, let us see if you know which line should be yours. Shall I commence?

Man. If you please.

Mlle H.

"Pluck from the flower it's leafy store—[*A pause.*]
Love me little, love me more; [*A pause.*]
Hearts change owners, yet combine,
If—

Man. I respectfully decline."

[Pg 23]

Mlle H. [*Throwing away the flower, which she has been picking to pieces*] Then, sir—

Sees BEVANNES, who enters.

Indeed, I could look at it all day, it is so beautiful—but I positively must go. Monsieur, an revoir. [*Aside to MANUEL, as she goes.*] You have misunderstood me.

[*Exit.*

Man. Have I? Then I must be a greater fool than I thought.

Bev. [*Aside.*] Pretty close quarters. What the deuce is that governess after? And now for a little scientific pumping. [*Comes down.*] Ah, Monsieur Manuel, at your drawing, eh? Beautiful, beautiful, indeed.

Man. You flatter.

Bev. Not at all—but to change the subject—by the by, do, I interrupt your work?

Man. Not in the least.

Bev. Well, I was going to compliment you on the vast affection and confidence you have inspired in poor old Laroque.

Man. I believe he really has a kindly regard for me.

Bev. Regard! my dear sir—you are absolutely wound around his heart. His affection for his granddaughter is very great, but no one has the influence over him that you have. Now, in the strictest confidence, I'm going to be very frank with you—and mark me well, you will not find it to your disadvantage hereafter, if you are equally frank with *me*.

Man. Really, I don't quite—

Bev. No; but you will presently. Without flattery, I think you—

Man. [*Referring to his picture.*] Too green.

Bev. Eh? Oh, exactly. I was about to say I think you, in every way, a gentleman, therefore I don't hesitate to confide in you the fact that yesterday, after dinner, I was just—

Man. [*To picture.*] A little blue.

Bev. Eh? Oh precisely. I was just on the point of proposing to Madame Laroque for her daughter's hand, when it suddenly struck me that I should possess a double claim, if I could, in the first place, influence you enough in the young lady's favor to make it certain that the bulk of Monsieur Laroque's property would be left to her.

Man. Monsieur de Bevannes, you really very much over-rate—

Bev. Pray forgive me, but you hardly know yourself, the importance of your good offices in this matter. I was going on to say that my marriage with Marguerite is all but a settled affair, and, of course, it is my duty to promote her interests in every possible way. I think you must concede that?

Man. Surely, but—

Bev. Permit me. Now I wish to call to your mind that Madame Laroque, though a worthy excellent woman, is one of very simple tastes and habits, and, should too large a portion of the property be left to her, it would tax and embarrass her to an extent that would be painful to my feelings. I hope you appreciate my disinterestedness in the matter.

[Pg 24]

Man. Oh, thoroughly! But I am still at a loss to imagine where my interference would be either necessary or effectual.

Bev. My dear friend—

Man. [*Aside.*] Now *he's* getting tender!

Bev. One word from you as to the proper disposition of the money would—

Man. Monsieur de Bevannes, let me end this at once, by telling you that, in my opinion, any interference from me in the family affairs of M. Laroque, would be a gross and unseemly abuse of his confidence.

Bev. And this is the return you make for mine?

Man. I did not solicit it, sir.

Bev. Sir, permit me to take your hand.

Man. Really—

Bev. You have stood the test, you are a noble fellow. You are—

Enter MADAME AUBREY.

[*Aside.*] There's Mrs. Waterspout, by jove! [*Aloud.*] You seem puzzled at my manner—I will take another opportunity of explaining. Suffice it now to say you have *misunderstood* me.

[*Exit.*

Man. My understanding seems to be terribly at fault to-day.

Mad. A. [*Aside.*] De Bevannes has left him. A good opportunity for me. [*Comes down.*] Beautiful! Exquisite indeed!

Man. Madame—

Mad. A. Truly, each new picture you finish, is more lovely than the last. Oh!

[*Weeps.*

Man. What is the matter?

Mad. A. The painting of that sheep's head—

Man. Yes, Madame—

Mad. A. Reminds me of my own portrait, taken in happier years, long passed away.

Man. But there are as happy ones in store for you, I hope.

Mad. A. That will depend greatly upon you, Monsieur Manuel.

Man. On *me*?

Mad. A. Yes. Do you know, Monsieur Manuel, that I find my poor cousin Laroque very much changed,—

Man. Indeed he is.

Mad. A. And for the worse. In fact, he appears to me to be sinking fast.

Man. I'm afraid such is the case.

Mad. A. How fond he is of you—you, it is well known, possess his entire confidence.

Man. I have been fortunate enough to make my poor services acceptable to him.

Mad. A. Now, just between ourselves, in the strictest confidence; do you happen to be aware how the property will be left?

Mad. A. I am in a state of painful apprehension, lest the dear old gentleman should over-estimate the desires and requirements of Madame Laroque, and should, therefore, curtail any little legacy coming to *me*, to make *her* portion larger, which would be absolutely throwing money away. I hope you understand my entire want of selfishness in this matter?

Man. I think I do.

Mad. A. I was sure you would. Now, if you will use your power and settle this affair to my advantage, all I can say is, so noble an action would not go unrewarded.

Man. I should hope not.

Mad. A. You will find me *substantially* grateful; you understand me?

Man. Entirely.

Mad. A. And I you?

Man. Not quite; but in order that you may—I must tell you, Madame—that when you offer me money to rob your benefactor, and mine, you entirely and totally mistake the person you are addressing.

Mad. A. Oh! oh!

[Weeps.]

Man. It grieves me to be so abrupt, but—

Mad. A. It is not that, it is not that—but, to be thought capable of such—to be accused—oh, sir! you have cruelly *misunderstood* me.

[Exit, weeping.]

Man. Another misunderstanding! That makes three friends I have secured this morning. One or two more of the same sort, and my business here will be soon finished.

Enter M^{lle} HELOUIN.

Man. Here comes the first misunderstanding again.

Mlle H. M. Manuel, I thought you might like to know that the Doctor has just arrived—

Man. Thank you—I'll go to him at once.

[Exit.]

Mlle H. So eager to avoid me. Have a care, my lord Marquis—spite of my insignificance, you may learn to rue the day you made me conscious of it.

Enter BEVANNES.

And here is one on whom, if I don't very much mistake, I may rely for aid.

Bev. Upon my honor, Mademoiselle, you make quite a pretty picture—a wood nymph's reverie; sweet subject, now, for the pencil of our friend, the steward.

Mlle H. Our friend, the steward, as you term him, has loftier subjects for his pictures, either aerial or substantial.

Bev. Really!

Mlle H. And in the former quality his aspirations are sublime.

Bev. Mademoiselle, you are an entertaining person, but I never guessed a conundrum in my life.

[Pg 26]

Mlle H. In plain terms, then, this romantic gentleman aspires to create an interest in the heart of Marguerite.

Bev. O come! I can stand a great deal, but that's rather *too* good.

Mlle H. But if I can prove it?

Bev. The thing is too absurd.

Mlle H. I have just parted from Madame Aubrey.

Bev. I congratulate you.

Mlle H. You jest, M. de Bevannes, but you may one day wake to find the steward rather a dangerous person. Madame Aubrey has picked up a letter of his, which was blown out of the window of his room, into the park. Would you like to see it?

Bev. Mademoiselle, I don't pretend to more virtue than my neighbors, but if I can only get at facts by reading another man's letters, I'm afraid I shall remain in ignorance.

Mlle H. Marguerite is coming. Would you like to hear the communication I have to make?

Bev. The contents of the letter?

Mlle H. No, but still a somewhat startling discovery.

Bev. On the whole, I think I'll take my departure; for when there's mischief to be concocted, and two women to brew it, it would be the grossest vanity in any man to think he could improve the cookery.

[*Exit.*

Mlle H. Now if I can instill but one small drop of the poison called suspicion, her proud, impetuous spirit, will complete the work itself.

Enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. Really, a very touching scene. The affection existing between the good doctor and our steward is remarkable. If he had been M. Manuel's father, he could hardly have been more cordially received.

Mlle H. And I assure you that M. Manuel's father could not serve him at this moment as the doctor can.

Mar. My dear governess, you seem to know more of this young man than you choose to reveal. I remember well your mysterious words to me the day he first rode and conquered that horse.

Mlle H. Perhaps I have been to blame for having remained silent so long. But right or wrong, I have, until now, looked upon it as a duty to keep this person's secret inviolate.

Mar. His secret!

Mlle H. Nor would I reveal it now, but that his base intentions are no longer doubtful, and silence would be criminal. However, I must exact your promise that the knowledge of it shall remain, for the present, between ourselves.

Mar. You have my word. Proceed.

Mlle H. Four years ago, when you were in Paris—you are aware that I was in the habit of visiting some of my old friends at my former school?

Mar. I remember.

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Mlle H. Well, I often saw there this very M. Manuel. He visited the school to see his little sister. His father was the well known Marquis de Champcey.

Mar. Ah!

Mlle H. It was the talk of the school that the family were even then much reduced. Now, they are totally ruined. The father is dead, and the son has, through the good offices of a friend, been placed in a position to regain the fortune he has lost. By what means I leave to your penetration to discover.

Mar. And is it so! [*A pause.*] But, after all, the conduct of this young man in no way justifies

suspicion. I see him but seldom. In truth, he actually avoids me.

Mlle H. Of course he does. Reserve creates inquiry, inquiry, interest. Oh, he has been well tutored.

Mar. Enough. I thank you sincerely for the warning. But relieve your mind of all anxiety; I shall know how to deal with this conscientious gentleman, be assured.

Mlle H. Indeed I feel the happier that I have at last confided this fact to you. Ah, my child, to what snares, what treachery, what deceit, does the possession of wealth expose the innocent. The thought of them makes the poor governess almost contented with her humble lot. Come, shall we walk towards the house? As we go, I shall be able to bring to your recollection many circumstances, trifling in themselves, but which, when considered in connection with what I have now told you, will serve to bring full conviction to your mind.

[*Exeunt* MARGUERITE, leaving her basket of flowers on the bank.

Enter MANUEL.

Man. And now, having enjoyed the honor of a tete-a-tete with each of those most interested in inquiring into matters upon which I'm strictly determined to be silent, I presume I shall be permitted to continue my work undisturbed.

[*He has reseated himself at his drawing.*

MARGUERITE *re-enters to find her basket. He rises. She merely looks haughtily at him and, in carrying off the basket, lets a rose fall on the ground.*

Man. Really, her manner is more than haughty. 'Tis almost rude. [*He picks up the flower.*] I suppose now, she'd grudge me this poor flower, yet who, though loving wildly and hopelessly as I do, would not think it a fair prize? No, I will return it. I will not be guilty of one action which shall give my heart the power to whisper "Thus should'st thou not have done."

Re-enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. [*Aside.*] As I supposed. Have the kindness, sir, to return me that flower. I am not in the habit of presenting bouquets to—gentlemen.

Man. Under which conviction, Mademoiselle, I was on the point of bringing it to you.

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Mar. [*Aside.*] Oh! for some way to make him feel how I despise him. Do you know, M. Manuel, seeing so little of you, lately, I was under the impression that death had deprived us of another steward—

Man. Highly flattered that you should condescend to be under any impressions concerning so insignificant a person.

Mar. I thought that so gifted a gentleman could hardly do anything without a motive, and now I am informed that your absence is attributable to the fact that you spend all your evenings with our noble relative, Mademoiselle Delonnais.

Man. I certainly do, and I deny myself that pleasure the less because the lady happens to be old enough to be my grandmother. Her ancestors reigned here formerly, and she—the last of a noble race—poor and infirm, bears so well the dignity of her name, her age, and her misfortunes, that I feel almost a filial affection for her. Besides, it was your mother who first introduced me to her.

Mar. Oh! no one means to reproach you; on the contrary, I dare say Madame Laroque is obliged to you for your attention to the good old lady.

Man. You may remember, too, it was your wish—

Mar. Oh, if you want praise or admiration from me, you must be content to wait. Though young, I have some experience of life. I know that there are two motives to most human actions. I know that M'lle Delonnais has a small independence. I know she has no heir, therefore a little extra attention and—

Man. Mademoiselle, permit me to express for you my sincere pity.

Mar. Sir!

Man. Permit me to express for you my sincere pity.

Mar. Your pity?

Man. Yes, madame—if unjust suspicion be the bitter fruit of experience in one so young. Nothing can merit more compassion than a heart withered by misbelief, almost before it has begun to exist.

Mar. Are you aware of what you say, sir? Are you aware to whom you speak?

Man. Entirely conscious, Mademoiselle, of both.

Mar. [*Bitterly.*] Perhaps you expect me to ask your pardon?

Man. Assuredly I do. Wealth can afford to humble itself—poverty cannot.

Mar. [*As she is going, turns with a haughty humility.*] Then, sir, I ask your pardon.

[*Exit.*]

Man. Oh! my sister, my darling Rose! It needs all my love for thee to make endurance of these insults less than cowardice! Coldness and antipathy have increased to absolute hate and persecution. She is determined to drive me hence. She will succeed at last, and then—

Enter DOCTOR DESMARETS.

Ah! my dear Doctor!

Des. I've eaten some lunch, had the dust brushed off, and now I'm going to brush some more on. [Pg 29]

Man. How so?

Des. Just got a letter—patient very sick—twenty miles ride there and back. Pleasant life, a doctor's.

Man. Where is it?

Des. About four miles beyond the ruins of Elfin.

Man. The ruins of Elfen.

Des. Yes; but what's the matter with you? you look feverish and queer. Anything wrong between you and the family?

Man. Why, no. But—

Des. But—what? They tell me you're quite a great man here—old Laroque can't live without you—angry because you don't spend all your evenings at the Chateau—and the ladies, without exception, are crazy about you.

Man. Pardon me—there's one *important* exception—Mlle Marguerite.

Des. What the devil! You don't mean to tell me you can't agree with *her*.

Man. I do assure you—she loses no opportunity to humiliate, and even openly insult me. Indeed, it has lately become insufferable—so that I am going to tax your friendship once more, to seek for me some other employment.

Des. Now don't be hasty, my dear boy. By Jove! here she comes—no she don't—she perceives you—and there she goes. She don't escape *me* though.

Man. Nay, my dear doctor, I beg of you—

Des. Stuff! nonsense! I'll just give her a piece of my mind.

[*Exit.*]

Man. I very much fear the Doctor's zeal in my cause will lead him into trouble with this proud girl—but I am resolved. Here, I will not, *can* not remain. Rose, my darling, thy marriage dowry must be sought and won elsewhere. I will at once visit my poor old friend, and say farewell. Marguerite I will see no more—no faltering now—a good resolve once taken, action should be speedy. To-night the horse I have almost learned to love, because she would one day ride him, shall bear me

for the last time.

[Exit.]

The DOCTOR and MARGUERITE are heard outside—then enter.

Des. Can't help it, if I *do* offend you. The young man is my friend—

Mar. Doctor—

Des. My friend, Mademoiselle—and I never desert a friend, even though he has incurred the displeasure of your proud ladyship.

Mar. Do you not regard *me* as a friend?

Des. I should rather think so; known you since you were a baby; disposition altered since then—

Mar. For the better?

Des. Don't know that. When you are angry now it's a storm—*then* it was only a squall.

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Mar. This is no jesting matter. Doctor Desmarests, I have always considered you a man of honor.

Des. Much obliged to you. I've been under the same impression myself.

Mar. What then is the meaning of this plot!

Des. Plot!

Mar. This young man, this steward you have so kindly supplied us with, he has been recognized. He is known!

Des. Well, suppose he is; what of it?

Mar. Why does he bear a false name?

Des. He don't.

Mar. Doctor—

Des. Manuel is his Christian name. I suppose he may make what use of it he pleases. Whether he puts it first or last, is nobody's business but his own.

Mar. His motive?

Des. His motive, Mademoiselle, is worthy of himself, and proceeds from a sense of honest pride, which many would do well to imitate. He is a gentleman, and a man of honor, reduced to sudden poverty, and compelled to labor for a livelihood. Now, I'm not acute enough to perceive any *plot* in all this. But I *do* perceive that you are doing your best to drive him from this place.

Mar. Doctor, your word is enough. I believe you, and I thank you. Oh, it is so sad to look only on the gloomy side of things. I thank you *so* much, and never liked you half so well as I do to-day.

[While speaking this speech, she searches for the rose she has taken from MANUEL, and, on finding it, places it in her bosom.]

Des. No?

Mar. No!

Des. What a pity—

Mar. Eh?

Des. That I can't stay to luxuriate in your friendship. I have only time to say good-bye to your mother, then I must be off.

Mar. Well, now, I'll tell you what I'll do. To prove I'm in earnest, I'm going to take my horse, and

bear you company part of the way.

Des. My child, it will be dark before I get there.

Mar. But there'll be a lovely moon, and I want to see the ruined tower of Elfen by moonlight. So say no more, for I'm resolved.

Des. Well, my experience, professional and personal, has taught me that when a woman is determined—

Enter MADAME LAROQUE—DE BEVANNES.

Mad. L. You are right, my dear Bevannes, I confess it.

Bev. Oh, there's no doubt he is, absolute perfection, the *rara avis*, so long sought for, found at last.

Mad. L. Laugh as you please, I positively adore him.

Bev. You'll ask me to the wedding, I hope?

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Mad. L. Go along with you. Well, my child, have you persuaded that obstinate man to stay till morning?

Des. That obstinate man regrets he must go within the hour.

Alain. [*without.*] Go away, you troublesome little thing!

Enter CHRISTINE *and* ALAIN.

Mad. L. What's the matter?

Alain. This little girl will insist on searching the park for some gentleman she wishes to see, belonging to the Chateau.

Mad. L. That will do—leave her here.

[*Exit* ALAIN.]

Bev. Now small specimen of rustic humanity, what do you want?

Mad. L. What is your name, little one?

Christine. Christine, Madame. My grandfather—

Bev. Never mind your pedigree—which of us do you want?

Mad. L. Be quiet. Well my dear?

Chris. My grandfather is very old and blind, if you please, and—and—oh! I want to see the *nice, good* gentleman.

Des. Bevannes, she don't want *you*.

Chris. The *handsome* gentleman.

Bev. Doctor, she don't want *you*.

Chris. Please, Madame, may I tell you what happened yesterday?

Mad. L. Yes, child, go on.

Chris. My grandfather has a dog that leads him about—poor old Spot—such a pet—

Enter MADAME AUBREY.

Mad. A. A pet! are you talking of a pet?

Bev. Yes; but don't weep, Madame—it isn't a donkey. Go on, little girl.

Chris. Well, yesterday, we three—grandfather, Spot and I, were sitting near the stream, in the village, by the mill-dam, when some wicked boys—oh! such dreadful wicked boys, came by. They seized poor Spot and threw him into the water. He was nearly being crushed by the mill-wheel, when a dear, kind gentleman, who was riding by on a beautiful black horse—

Enter MANUEL.

Oh! there he is. Oh, sir! I'm so glad I've found you.

Man. [*Aside.*] Oh, confound it! what brings you here, you little pest?

Chris. Don't be angry, sir—you rode away so fast, yesterday, I had no time to thank you, and I wish to do so now.

Bev. Beautiful subject for a nautical drama: "The Desperate Diver; or, The Drowning Dog of the Dam."

Man. Ridiculous enough, I admit. However, I did jump into the water after poor Spot.

Chris. You did, you did, indeed! Ah! sir, [*to BEVANNES,*] you laugh—but perhaps if you were old and blind, you wouldn't think it such a joke.

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Bev. I assure you, my dear, it would have given me infinite pleasure to have saved your dog.

Des. You save a dog? Why you can't swim.

[*All laugh.*

Bev. Here are ten francs, child, go away.

Chris. And now, sir, [*To* MANUEL.] I'll go directly, if you'll give me just one kiss.

Man. [*Angrily.*] Upon my word—

Mad. L. Now I insist upon it you do. Poor little thing, I'm sure she deserves it.

Man. [*Laughing.*] Well, then, [*Kisses her.*] now, go home, there's a dear.

Chris. Oh! I will, I will, good-bye.

Mad. L. Well, haven't you got one for me?

Chris. Oh, dear, yes, Madame.

[*Kisses* MAD. L.

Bev. You're forgetting your money.

Chris. Oh, dear, no, sir.

[*Takes it and curtsies.*

Bev. Now a kiss for me?

Chris. Oh, dear, no, sir!

[*Curtsies and exits. All laugh except* MADAME AUBREY.

Mad. A. Oh!

[*Weeps.*

Bev. Weeping for my disappointment, Madame?

Mad. A. No—sir—no.

Mad. L. A most interesting little girl.

Mad. A. That's it, that's it. She reminds me of a circumstance that occurred in my youth, before my marriage. You must know I had a little—

Des. Hallo!

[Takes MARGUERITE *hastily up stage.*

Bev. Ahem!

[Takes MADAME LAROQUE.

Mad. A. Eh! What! [*Calling after them as they go off.*] You don't understand me! A little *niece*—
Oh! this is too dreadful!

[*Sinks into chair.*

END OF TABLEAU III.

TABLEAU IV.

Interior of a room in the Tower of Elfen. A large breach in the wall at back, through which the distant country is dimly seen. Night coming on.

YVONNET *discovered upon the balcony, listening. Singing in the distance. When the singing is done, Enter MANUEL.*

Man. What are you at there, my good fellow?

Yvonnet. [*Startled.*] I was listening to the singing, sir.

Man. Who are the singers?

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Yvon. The reapers, sir, returning home.

Man. You, I suppose, are the keeper of these ruins?

Yvon. Yes, sir. I am the shepherd that minds the sheep, and shows the tower to strangers.

[*Shows key.*

Man. [*Giving money.*] There.

Yvon. Thank you, sir.

Man. Are you never afraid here all alone?

Yvon. Afraid! No, indeed. That is, not in the day-time, but at night—

Man. Ah, ah, then you have fairies, or spirits, or ghosts here, eh!

Yvon. [*Disdainfully.*] Sir, do you take me for a superstitious fool! It's all very well for people who don't know any better, but I—

Man. Then you do not believe in anything of the kind?

Yvon. I should think not, indeed. But if you come to talk about the white lady, that's quite another matter.

Man. Oh! so there's a white lady, is there?

Yvon. Yes, sir, there is indeed, and she walks about on the top of that tower over there, and where there are no stairs either. But she is never seen in the day, only in the night, when it is quite dark.

Man. [*Laughing.*] Yes, she is seen when it is too dark to see.

Yvon. [*Looking out.*] Ah! Confound those sheep, at their old tricks again. [*Shouts.*] Hi! Hi! I don't believe there's such a troublesome set of brutes in the whole country, always climbing where they have no business. Hi! Hi!

[*Throws a stone.*

Man. Why don't you jump down there?

Yvon. Try it yourself, if you want to break your neck, my fine gentleman. Are you going to stay long? It is getting late.

Man. Don't be uneasy, I shall go presently.

Yvon. The sooner the better. I ain't a coward, but I feel more comfortable away from here.

[*Exit.*]

Man. This is a fine old ruin. How is it that I have never found it out before? I must bring my sketch-book here some day. Alas! I forgot that for me there is no future here, to-morrow—'Tis but a sad farewell that I must bid the scenes I had begun to love so well. Wretched heart! Is it, then, because reason, honor, everything, forbids my loving her that—Ah! were I not the guardian of an existence more precious than my own, I should long ago have fled this torture!

[*Goes up.*]

Enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. This is most fortunate, when the moon rises the view will be charming. [*Suddenly sees* MANUEL.] Sir, I beg your pardon. I was not aware, indeed—

[*Going.*]

Man. Excuse me, Mademoiselle, I am not at home here—permit *me* to retire.

[*Going.*]

Mar. [*Crossing.*] Stay, sir. As we happen to be alone, will you answer me fully and frankly, one question. They tell me my manner towards you is abrupt, unkind, even at times, offensive.

Man. I have never complained.

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Mar. But you would leave us?

Man. Mademoiselle.

Mar. And they say that I am the cause. Your departure, sir, would occasion my mother sincere sorrow, which I am anxious to spare her, if it be in my power; but I am at a loss to know what explanation to make you—what am I to say? that the language which has offended you, is not always sincere—that perhaps, after all, I myself can appreciate joys and pleasures more exalted than those which the mere possession of wealth can give. Well, it is possible—but am I so much to blame, that I use my powers to stifle thoughts which are forbidden me.

Man. Forbidden?

Mar. Yes, forbidden. It may, perhaps, appear like affectation, to complain of a destiny which so many envy—but, like my mother, I believe that were I less rich, I should be the more happy. You have reproached me with my continual distrust. But in whom *can* I trust? I, who from my infancy have been surrounded—do I not know it too well—but by false friends, grasping relatives, and suspicious suitors! Do you suppose that I am weak and foolish enough to attribute to my own attractions, the care, the solicitude, with which so many of these parasites surround me; and even if a pure and noble heart, (should such a thing exist in this world,) were capable of seeking and loving me for what I *am*—not for what I *have*—I should never know it—[*with meaning*]—for I should never dare the risk! And this is why I shun, repulse, almost hate, all that is beautiful and good—all that speaks to me of that heaven, which is, alas! forbidden me. [*The reapers are again heard singing in the distance—with emotion and in an undertone.*] What is that?

[*Listens—lets her head fall upon her hands, and weeps.*]

Man. Tears!

Mar. [*With transport.*] Well, yes, I can weep. Enough—I did not intend, sir, to burthen you with so much of my confidence; but now you know me better. You see I have a heart, and if ever I have wounded yours, I hope you will forgive me. [*Gives her hand, which he kisses, respectfully.*] See; the pledge of our friendship shall be this flower, which I rudely demanded from you this morning. [*Gives rose.*] Now let us go, [*returning,*] and never let this subject be revived between us.

Man. Never!

Mar. But before I go, I must see the view from yonder height.

Man. I beg you will not venture—do not run such a risk.

Mar. Oh! I am not afraid.

Man. At least take my hand, then.

[*She mounts the platform outside of the window. It begins to grow dark.*

Mar. The height is fearful, but the view is very beautiful. I could gaze on it forever.

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Enter YVONNET. He looks round without seeing them.

Yvon. Ah! he's gone at last. I shan't be long in following him; I don't like this place.

[*Exit, locking door after him.*

[*Night comes on, the moon lighting the scene beyond. MARGUERITE comes down from tower, aided by MANUEL.*

Mar. There comes the night, in good earnest; fortunately, the moon will help us to regain our horses. Come, sir, let us hasten.

[*Low music from orchestra. MANUEL tries to open door.*

Man. That stupid fellow has fastened it while we were upon the tower.

Mar. [*Anxiously.*] Call to him, he cannot be far off.

Man. [*Upon platform.*] Hallo! Come back, will you? Now he sees me, but he only runs the faster—takes me for the white lady, I suppose. Confound the fool!

Mar. [*Looking about.*] No other means of egress! What is to be done?—they will die with anxiety at home.

Man. Stay! I can descend by those trees, perhaps—

Mar. 'Tis useless—there is an inclosed court-yard below.

Man. It is in vain—this door resists all my efforts. I know not what to do.

[*While MARGUERITE has gone upon platform.*

Mar. Great Heaven! I see it all. [*To MANUEL, with restrained passion.*] Marquis de Champcey!

Man. [*Turns quickly.*] My name!

Mar. [*Slowly.*] You boast a long ancestral descent. Pray tell me, sir, are you the first *coward* of your name?

Man. Madame!

Mar. [*Violently.*] It is you—you who have bribed this boy to imprison us here!

Man. Merciful Heavens!

Mar. Ah, I comprehend your purpose. I understand it all. To-morrow this *accident* will be noised abroad; the ever-ready tongue of scandal will be busy with my name, a name which, if less ancient than your own, is full as stainless, and you trust to my despair to make me yours! But this vile trick, which crowns all your base maneuvering, I will thwart. I tell you, sir, that I would incur the world's contempt, the cloister, anything—even death itself—rather than the disgrace, the ignominy, the shame, of uniting my life to yours!

Man. [*Calmly.*] I entreat you to be calm. Call reason to your aid. I understand and respect your distress, but let not your anxiety prompt you to do me wrong. Consider! How could I have prepared such a snare, and even were it in my power, how have I ever given you the right to think me capable of such baseness?

Mar. [*Passing L.*] All that I know of you gives me that right. For what purpose do you enter our house, under a false name, in a false character? We were happy before you came. You have brought us sorrow, misery, which we dreamed not of. To attain your object, to repair the breach in your fortune, you have usurped our confidence, sported with our purest and most holy sentiments. Have I not seen all this? And when you now pledge to me your honor—that honor which was too poor and weak to save you from these unworthy actions—have I not reason to doubt? Have I not the right to scorn and disbelieve?

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Man. Marguerite, listen to me! I love you, it is true, and never did love more ardent, more

disinterested, more holy, live in the heart of man. But here, with the eyes of Heaven upon us, I swear that, if I outlive this night, all beloved as you are, were you upon your knees at my feet, never would I accept a fortune at your hand. Never! My heart is yours, yours to break, to crush, to trample in the dust, if it so please you, but my honor, Madame, is my own and that I will preserve. And now pray—pray for a miracle. It is time.

[Runs to the tower.

Mar. What would you do? God of mercy! You shall not—you shall not!

Man. Think, Marguerite, your name!

Mar. You shall not! Forgive me! *If you love me*, forget what I have said, for pity's sake, for mine!

Man. [Disengaging himself.] Loose your hold.

[He repulses her, and leaps upon tower. Singing heard afar off.

Mar. [Falling on her knees.] Manuel! Manuel! Madman! hear me. It is death!

Man. It is honor!

[Throws himself down.

[MARGUERITE with a shriek, falls insensible.

END OF TABLEAU IV.

TABLEAU V.

Handsomely furnished Room in Chateau Laroque—Doors R. and L., and U.—Candles lit.

DE BEVANNES, MAD. LAROQUE, MAD. AUBREY, ALAIN, Mlle HELOUIN *discovered*—MAD. LAROQUE *is walking about in much agitation.*

Mad. L. [To ALAIN.] You say she went out on horseback?

Alain. Yes, Madame.

Mad. L. Did she say at what hour she would be back.

Alain. No, Madame.

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Bev. Did she not tell you she would be early in the ball-room this evening?

Mad. L. She did; and that only makes me the more apprehensive. This anxiety is torture.

Bev. Be assured, Madame, she is safe. You know she is often out late on fine evenings.

Mad. L. But never after dark. Can nobody even tell which way she went?

Mlle H. There is one person, I think, might give us some information.

Mad. L. Oh! who? Why did you not say so before?

Mlle H. I have no doubt M. Manuel could enlighten us, if he chose.

Mad. L. Monsieur Manuel! what should *he* know about it?

Bev. Exactly. I do not clearly perceive why the steward must be better informed of the young lady's movements, than her mother.

Mlle H. Nor I. Yet I think it would be worth while to ask him.

Mad. L. Alain, ask Monsieur Manuel, if he will be so good as to come to me, at once.

Alain. Monsieur Manuel has also gone out on horseback, Madame, and has not yet returned.

Mlle H. Ahem!

Mad. A. Ah, ha!

Bev. And pray, at what time did he go out?

Alain. Just before Mademoiselle Marguerite, sir.

[*A pause.*]

Mad. L. You are all marvellously silent! What do you imagine? what do you infer? Speak, if you would not drive me mad! Still silent! [*To Mlle HELOUIN.*] Mademoiselle, your looks convey some hidden meaning. [*To MAD. AUBREY.*] Cousin.

Mad. A. Oh!

[*Weeps.*]

Mad. L. What's the use of that, Madame? speak out. I always knew you were a fool—don't make me think you are a complete idiot! Bevannes, *what* does all this mean?

Bev. Alain.

Alain. Sir?

Bev. Did Mademoiselle go out alone?

Alain. No, sir; with the Doctor.

Mad. L. Ah! then all is well.

Bev. Humph!

Mad. L. Bevannes, what *do* you mean? will you explain or not?

Mlle H. Madame, your generous nature and partiality for the steward, has somewhat blinded your judgment; those who love you have been more watchful. This Monsieur Manuel is—

Enter MANUEL—His dress disordered—His face pale, with slight marks of blood upon his forehead.

Man. Here, Madame, you did me the honor to send for me.

Mlle H. You have just returned, sir?

Man. This moment—I met Alain on the stair.

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Mad. L. But you are hurt, Monsieur—there's blood upon your forehead.

Man. Nothing of importance, I assure you; the horse fell with me, and got a few scratches—nothing more—a little cold water will set all to right.

Mad. L. This seems to be a night of misfortunes.

Mad. A. [*Sighs.*] Ah!

Mad. L. Do be quiet.

Man. What has happened, Madame?

Mad. L. Marguerite went out on horseback just after you, and has not yet returned.

Man. Oh, don't be alarmed—I met her.

Mad. L. Oh! when? where?

Man. About six o'clock, on the road to Elfen—she told me she was going on to look at the ruins.

Mad. L. Good heavens! the ruins are in the midst of the forest, and the roads dreadful! She must have lost her way! Alain!

Enter ALAIN.

Order the carriage. [*Exit ALAIN.*] I will send directly—I will go myself.

Man. You may rest certain, Madame, that you will find her. In the meantime, I will get rid of the evidences of my trifling fall. Be assured your daughter is quite safe.

[*Exit.*

Mad. L. Come, Bevannes, order your horse, and ride by the carriage.

Bev. Thank you, but, with your permission, I'll ride *in* the carriage. The road *is* a bad one, and if one horse stumbles, another may.

Mad. L. Well, well, any way you please, only come.

[*Exit.*

Mad. A. Ah, poor girl, poor girl—

[*Weeps.*

Bev. Don't be so distressed, Madame. It's not your little niece.

Mad. A. Monsieur de Bevannes, you are a brute!

Bev. So is a donkey, Madame, and yet one died rich in your affection. Ah, if I could only have inherited a portion of his wealth.

[*Exit.*

Mad. A. I wonder if he means that. He never said anything so civil before. I've a great mind to—

[*Going.*

Mlle H. Stay—that letter of the steward's which you found in the park—

Mad. A. Well?

Mlle H. Have you got it with you?

Mad. A. Of course.

Mlle H. Give it to me.

Mad. A. To *you!* Why?

Mlle H. No matter. Suffice it that my hopes, and yours—the very life of all our plans—depend on the use I shall make of that letter.

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Mad. A. Oh, well, take it. [*Gives letter.*] I'm sure you'll make much better use of it than I can. [*Aside.*] Upon my life I'll go and ask Bevannes what he meant by that.

[*Exit.*

Mlle H. Why, why did nature endow me with a heart to suffer, an intellect to comprehend? Had I been born a fool, like that woman, this dependent state would have brought with it calm endurance, if not happiness. But, as I *am*, it is misery. How easy is bounty to the rich. How natural is virtue to the happy. He heard my words as he came in—must have divined their purport. Well, well, if I have taught him to despise me, he shall learn to fear me, too. He dared to read me a lesson, and I hate him for it, even though I profit by it. If I must fall, he shall share the ruin he has caused.

Enter MARGUERITE.

Mar. Helouin!

Mlle H. Marguerite!

Mar. Hush! To prevent remark, I came by the small stairway, through the conservatory. My mother has been anxious?

Mlle H. Much alarmed. She has gone to seek you.

Mar. I know it. I have sent Alain to overtake and bring her back. Before she comes, I have a word to say to you. It is of Monsieur Manuel. I have strong reason to believe that you have most

strangely misjudged his character and his intentions.

Mlle H. I know him to be the Marquis de Champcey.

Mar. And *I* know that if his birth be noble, his heart is no less so.

Mlle H. It is very recently, then, that you have made the discovery.

Mar. True. Now mark. You have seen the ruins of Elfen?

Mlle H. I have. I was once there with a party, and was the only woman who dared ascend the tower.

Mar. You know the danger, then. Well, I care not now if all the world should hear it. We were alone. By accident, imprisoned in those ruins. I rashly, blindly, *falsely* accused him, and he, to save my honor and his own, plunged from that tower in to the gulf beneath!

Mlle H. But he escaped.

Mar. I know it and have thanked God for the miracle. I had not strength to implore.

Mlle H. Upon my word, this is an extraordinary man.

Mar. Mademoiselle—

Mlle H. And understands so well how to turn his talents to the best account. Why, poor child, and you don't see through all this? Yesterday it was a swimming match, producing an admirably planned and effectual scene. To-night, it is an exhibition of daring activity. The gentleman has been brilliantly educated.

Mar. You evidently hate him.

Mlle H. And why? On my own account? No! What is he to *me*? But when I see that he dares to bring his plots and machinations here, and intends you for their victim, I am free to confess, I *do* despise and hate him!

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Mar. These are grave accusations. What proof have you to support them?

Mlle H. Ah, you suspect me. For the sake of this stranger, you doubt the truth of one you have known for years? Well, be it so—I will give you proof, since you demand it. Do you know his handwriting?

Mar. I do. I have had to look over many papers he has copied for my mother.

Mlle H. Look at that letter. Now listen: [*Reads.*] "*My dear Desmarests: I follow your instructions exactly. But will they avail to win for me the bright reward for all I have to endure. I do not think the dowry will be as large as I had hoped.—*

Mar. Great Heavens!

Mlle H. "*But I have sworn to win it, and though there are many obstacles here to make the task a hard one, yet, to achieve it, I will serve, like Jacob, for forty years, if need be—*What a pity he did not finish it. This was found under the window of his room by Madame Aubrey and, by her, handed to me.

Mar. Enough. My resolution is taken.

Enter MADAME LAROQUE *and* BEVANNES.

Mad. L. Oh, my dear child! What a state I have been in about you. How did you get back? What happened?

Mar. The shepherd, who locks up the tower of Elfen, happened to fasten it before I left. Some reapers returning home, heard my cries and brought him back to release me, that is all.

Enter MANUEL.

Mad. L. Ah, Monsieur, you have recovered from the effects of your fall, I hope?

Man. Entirely, Madame.

Mad. L. [*To MARGUERITE.*] But you, my child, must be fatigued, nervous—

Mar. On the contrary, dearest mother, I never felt better or more cheerful than to-night, which I will prove to you whenever the ball commences.

Bev. The ball! why, surely, you'll never think of—

Mar. Dancing? Indeed but I shall though—and you, M. de Bevannes, will be my first partner, will you not?

Bev. With the greatest delight—but pray, let me advise—

Mar. Advise nothing—you shall be my chief cavalier for the evening.

Bev. But my dress—

Mar. Your residence is hardly two miles from this; you can go home, dress, and be here again—all within an hour.

[*Speaks to MADAME LAROQUE.*

Bev. [*Aside.*] This anxiety portends something. Bevannes, my boy, the chase is nearly over, for the quarry is in sight.

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Mar. Nonsense, my dear mother! I will have my own way for once.

Mad. L. For *once!*

Mar. My carriage shall take M. de Bevannes, and bring him back. Where are all the servants? Here, some one—oh! the steward! go and order my carriage.

Mad. L. [*Surprised at her tone of voice.*] My dear.

Man. [*Quietly rising and ringing a bell, which summons ALAIN, who enters.*] I believe Mlle Marguerite has some orders for you.

Alain. Mademoiselle—

Mar. I have none—you may leave the room.

[*Exit ALAIN.*

Bev. Come, come, this sort of thing won't do.

Mar. Monsieur de Bevannes.

Bev. As you please—but permit me to regret that I have not the right to interfere here.

Man. Your regret is unnecessary, sir—for if I did not see fit to obey the lady's orders, I hold myself at yours.

Bev. Enough, sir; I shall act accordingly.

Mad. L. Gentlemen, I beg, I entreat—

Mar. Monsieur de Bevannes.

Bev. Mademoiselle?

Mar. Have the goodness to follow me—I must speak with you in the presence of my mother only. Not a word, if you would ever speak with me again—follow me now, at once.

[*Exit with MADAME LAROQUE.*

Bev. [*To MANUEL.*] I believe, sir, we comprehend each other?

MANUEL *bows*—*Exit BEVANNES*—MANUEL *turns and encounters the look of Mlle HELOUIN, who curtsies and exits.*

Man. I see plainly now to whom I owe all this. Well, well, what matters it to whom? The one thin ray of light upon my desolate and gloomy path has vanished. Pshaw! This is no time for dreams or vain regrets.

[*Rings.*

Enter ALAIN.

Has Dr. Desmarets returned?

Alain. No, Monsieur.

Man. The moment he arrives I must see him.

Alain. I know—I know all about it. I overheard. Oh, sir, this is most unfortunate.

Man. It is, but unavoidable. I did not seek it—

Alain. And that devil of a Bevannes is a fine swordsman, and the best pistol-shot in Brittany.

Man. So much the better. The contest will be the more equal.

Alain. Indeed!

Man. I have had much practice with both weapons.

Alain. Oh then, pray do me one favor, sir. Don't kill him, but hit him in the leg. He's so deuced proud of his leg and foot.

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Man. There, that will do. Let me know the instant the Doctor arrives.

Alain. I will sir, I will, but don't forget. Pray don't forget the leg—the leg, sir, if you love me.

[*Exit.*

Man. For myself, it matters not, but my sister, my little darling, helpless sister—should I fall—Oh! Heaven, let my errors be so atoned, and look down in pity on the orphan child, bereaved of earthly succor, to be the more dependent upon thine.

[*As he raises his head, he perceives BEVANNES approaching, and his bearing becomes calm and resolute.*

Enter BEVANNES.

Bev. Monsieur Manuel, can I have a few words with you?

Man. I am at your service, sir.

Bev. What I am about to say, considering our position, may seem irregular, but I obey orders which cannot be disputed. Besides, I believe no man can doubt my courage—

Man. Not I, be assured, sir.

Bev. To be brief, I am commissioned by the ladies to express their regret for what has just occurred. M'lle Marguerite, in a moment of forgetfulness, gave you certain orders, which it was plainly not your province to fulfil. Your susceptibility was justly wounded. We admit it, and—

Man. Not one word more, sir, I entreat.

Bev. Your hand. [*MANUEL gives his hand.*] The ladies also desire me to express their hope that this momentary misunderstanding will not deprive them of your good offices, the value of which they fully appreciate, and I am extremely happy in having acquired within the last few minutes, the right to join my entreaty to theirs. My most ardent wish is about to be gratified.

Man. Indeed?

Bev. And I shall feel personally obliged if you will not refuse us your aid upon the eve of an event which family affairs and the failing health of old Monsieur Laroque compels us to hasten.

Enter ALAIN with a box containing deeds, &c.

Oh, thank you. Place it on the table. [ALAIN *does so and exits.*] These are the private papers and memoranda of Mons. Laroque, and the ladies beg, as a proof of their entire confidence, that you will examine them and take notes of such matters as will prove important to the marriage contract.

Man. I shall obey their orders to the best of my ability.

Bev. Thank you, my dear fellow. I feel assured you will, and now, I trust, we shall in future, understand one another better. I do not think that, hitherto, either of us has formed a correct estimate of the other. I protest to you that I'm disposed to like *you* immensely. For myself, I'm a very nice man, but I must be cultivated. Cultivate me, my dear sir, and I give you my word you'll find me one of the most agreeable fellows you ever knew; you will, indeed. Cultivate me, I beg.

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[*Exit.*]

Man. Well, well. He is her equal in fortune, and therefore, of course, above suspicion. Poor girl! She is unaware that, in this world the greatest beggars are not, always the poorest. She would see how I can support the torture she inflicts. She shall be gratified, for she shall see me even at the foot of the altar. But she will not triumph there, for her pride, lofty as it is, shall pale before my own. Now to my work. [*Sits and turns over papers.*] Nothing here that I have not seen before. "Title Deeds to"—Umph! "Legacies to my children." "Marriage portion for Marguerite" and—Ah! What's this? My name! "The Antilles"—yes, I remember, our family had large estates there, but that, was long ago. Let me see, let me see. [*He reads, and as he does so his face expresses, first, surprise, and then conviction and triumph.*] Great Heaven! And can this be so? Miserable old man. This, then, is the secret of your wanderings, your visions, and of my unsought influence. And now, *now* I have them in my power. They shall find that there is still some blood left in the heart that they would crush. This proud, unfeeling girl, has yet to learn the meaning of that bitter word, *humility*, and she *shall* learn it.

[MARGUERITE *speaks without.*]

Mar. He will soon return, dear mother. Meantime I will prepare for the ball.

[*She enters, crosses slowly, and exit, after a look at MANUEL.*]

Man. No—no—I can *not!* Never, never, by my act, shall the blush of shame crimson that noble face. Laroque cannot live long. Let his crime and his confession die before him! [*Music.*] To my deep love I consecrate the sacrifice.

Burns paper. While he contemplates it burning, MADAME AUBREY looks in unseen by him.

SCENE II.—*A hall in the Chateau.*

Enter BEVANNES and ALAIN, meeting.

Bev. Alain, who arrived just now?

Alain. The Doctor, sir. He's gone to Monsieur Laroque's room.

Bev. Is Mademoiselle Marguerite's carriage ready for me?

Alain. Quite ready, Monsieur.

Bev. Very well. Tell the ladies I shall be back in an hour, at most.

Alain. You'll have to drive fast, sir, to do it in the time.

Bev. I shall make my toilette less perfect than usual, and take an elaborate revenge another time.

Enter DESMARETS.

Des. Bevannes that you? where are you off to?

Bev. Home, for a short time.

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Des. Better stay where you are—the ladies may want your assistance.

Bev. I know—at the ball—

Des. Ball? stuff! If I don't mistake, you'll have something else to think of. Alain, let that prescription be sent to the village immediately.

Alain. Yes, Doctor.

[Exit.

Bev. Why, what's the matter?

Des. Old Laroque is very ill to-night. By the by, what's this he told me about a marriage in the family?

Bev. Quite true. The fair Marguerite has become alive to my merits—she knows me at last.

Des. And accepts you?

Bev. Of course.

Des. Little fool.

Bev. Sir!

Des. I don't mean *you*.

Bev. Ah!

Des. I tell you what, my friend, you hardly know what you've undertaken. I wish you joy—I wouldn't have the management of girl for a trifle. Ecod! if she takes a fancy to the *moon*, she'll expect you to give it her.

Bev. Oh, I'm not afraid. However, I'll go and dress, as it is her wish, and take the chance of the ball coming off.

Des. And you've determined to marry her?

Bev. Most certainly.

Des. Spite of all her caprices?

Bev. Decidedly—

Des. And if she wants the moon—

Bev. She must fetch it herself.

[Exit.

Des. Queer match—what does it mean? As to her loving that fellow, I don't believe a word of it. Now to the old man—it won't do to leave him alone—he's got one of his wandering fits on him, and he'll be all over the house if I don't look to him. What a nice quiet life a doctor's is.

[Exit.

SCENE III.—*Same as First—Music.*

MANUEL *discovered asleep*—MAD. AUBREY *opens door and looks in.*

Mad. A. Worn out with the day's excitement, he's asleep at last. [*Comes in.*] What could that paper have been, I saw him burn? Ah! there's the envelope he threw away, when he put it in the flame. [*Picks it up.*] So, so—what's that? a footstep.

[Exit.

MONSIEUR LAROQUE *opens door and looks in—He is very pale and appears much exhausted—He looks back and beckons, as if to followers—Music ceases.*

Lar. This way—this way—quickly—but silently. Silently, men or we shall spoil all. Remember, they are *English*, and spare not! no quarter! no quarter, mind—but softly—softly—and fire not until I give the word! Then—then—every drop of Saxon blood shall float a world of crime from off my soul! One moment—*now! now!*

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He raises his arm, as if to strike, when he sees MANUEL, upon whose face the lamp throws a powerful light—A pause.

Heaven have mercy! 'tis he. At such an hour as this I can *not* be mistaken! It is he—[MANUEL

awakes.]—My Lord Marquis!

MARGUERITE *appears*.

Man. What is this?

Lar. Pity—pity—and forgive me.

[MANUEL *all at once comprehending, advances to M. LAROQUE.*

Man. Miserable man, I pity, and I forgive.

Mar. What does this mean?

Man. Oh, nothing, Mademoiselle, but I thought it better to humor his delirium.

[LAROQUE *staggers. MANUEL places him in chair.*

Enter ALAIN, DESMARETS, MADAME LAROQUE and Mlle HELOUIN.

Mar. Grandfather, dearest, speak to me—it is Marguerite, your child, to whom you were always so good, who loves you so. You have some thought, some remembrance which torments you. Is it not so? Tell me, dearest, tell your own Marguerite.

[*Music.*

LAROQUE *looks up, makes one or two endeavors to speak, when his head again falls on his breast.*

Mar. Mother! mother! Oh Heavens! Can nothing be done?

DR. DESMARETS *places his hand on LAROQUE'S heart, and looks at MANUEL, who, in answer to an appeal from MARGUERITE and MADAME LAROQUE, points upwards.*

END TABLEAU V.

Lapse of Some Months.

TABLEAU VI.

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Saloon in the Chateau Laroque splendidly decorated and furnished. Arches R., L. and C. ALAIN and Servants discovered arranging furniture, lighting lamps, &c.

[*Music.*

Alain. There now. I think everything is pretty well arranged here, so run away all of you and see to the preparations outside. [*Exeunt servants.*] 'Pon my life I'm nearly done up. All of a sudden to change a house that has, for the last five months appeared like a mourning coach, into a dandified, bright-looking mansion prepared for a marriage fete, requires more inventive genius than ever I shall get credit for. If I could only extend my transforming powers to the faces of the family, I should be much gratified, for such a grim-looking household exists not in Brittany at this moment. There's M'lle Marguerite. The nearer the time approaches for the marriage, the paler she grows. Madame Laroque does nothing but freeze and shiver, Mons. Manuel is absent for days together, and Madame Aubrey weeps a good tea-cup full about every two hours. Cheerful work, very.

Enter MADEMOISELLE HELOUIN.

Mlle H. Alain go and tell Monsieur Manuel I wish for a few moments' conversation with him.

Alain. Monsieur Manuel, M'lle? Why, bless you, he's been at Largeot for the last three days.

Mlle H. He has returned. I saw him ride into the court-yard some fifteen minutes since.

Alain. Where shall I tell him to come to you, Mademoiselle?

Mlle H. Are all your preparations made here?

Alain. Yes, Mademoiselle. I have sent the servants to other work.

Mlle H. Request, Mons. Manuel, then, to see me here, and to come instantly, as it is important I

should speak to him at once.

Alain. Very well, Mademoiselle.

[*Exit.*

Mlle Helouin goes to Arches and ascertains that no one is near to listen.

Mlle H. And now, Manuel Marquis de Champcey, we will try the issue. How often and how vainly do I question my own heart. Were Manuel other than he is, should I pursue him thus? What motive sways my action? Is it love? Ambition? Both? I know not, and will not reflect. There lies the path. Some resistless impulse urges me along, nor will I, *can* I swerve, till all is won or lost.

Enter MANUEL.

Man. Mademoiselle, good evening. Alain informs me that you wish to speak with me.

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Mlle H. For a few moments. Your stay at Langeot has been shorter than usual.

Man. I returned a day earlier than I had intended. Respect for the family suggests that I should not be absent on an occasion like the present.

Mlle H. An occasion that gives you an opportunity of showing that you possess *moral*, as well as physical courage, of no common order.

Man. You are pleased to be enigmatical.

Mlle H. I shall indulge in no enigma that you cannot speedily solve. And now. Manuel, take good heed of what I say, but I warn you do not judge me by a common standard. My nature and my sad dependant lot, place me beyond the pale of those born for a happier fate. From the first hour we met, my heart was drawn insensibly towards you. Still that heart was safe. A mere spark existed, which reason and reflection might have killed; you yourself, in defining the bond of sympathy between us, raised from that spark a flame.

Man. Madame, in justice to myself, I must interrupt you. Never by word or deed have I—

Mlle H. Go on sir, pray do not spare me. Never have you *encouraged*, you would say. Well, I grant it. Be it so. Your reserve and coldness could not alter me. What fire but burns the fiercer in the frosty air? And yet if you have pride, so too have I, and I will confess that something more exists to keep the flame alive than love. Ambition, and the hope to triumph over one who is a rival. These, I am free to own, would be incentives enough for me, if love existed not.

Man. Mademoiselle, at the risk of appearing vain, I must tell you you are most fortunate.

Mlle H. Indeed sir, how so?

Man. In saying all this to a *gentleman*.

Mlle H. Oh, sir, of that I'm well aware, by birth—

Man. And *principle*. I do not affect to despise the one, but I take more pride in the other. The first, is for the present, buried. Therefore, if you have any appeal to make, let it be to the last.

Mlle H. I *have* an appeal to make, but, even though compelled to differ with so sage an adviser, I shall make it to an ally more powerful than either.

Man. And what is that?

Mlle H. Self interest.

Man. You think so?

Mlle H. I'm sure of it.

Man. Will you permit me to suggest that an important ceremony is to take place in this room to-night, and the hour approaches.

Mlle H. Well, then, if I appear abrupt, attribute it to your delicate reminder, and not to my own desire. You love Marguerite Laroque—

Man. Mademoiselle, this is beyond—

Mlle H. You love Marguerite Laroque. That love is hopeless. Everything is prepared for the ceremony you speak of, and if a shade of doubt as to her destiny existed, it can live no longer now. I possess a secret which, if given to the world, will compromise your honesty as a man, your honor as a gentleman, and sink the proud name you bear to a depth that even the despised governess could look down upon with pity. Manuel Marquis de Champcey, give *me* the title *she* can never bear, and I am silent. A wife none the less devoted because, at first, unsought—a friend none the less sincere, though newly found. [Pg 48]

Man. Mademoiselle, you are a singular instance of a well known fact.

Mlle H. And what may that be, sir?

Man. That the cleverest people sometimes do the silliest things. Had you been a simple, uneducated rustic, you would have reflected seriously before you lowered yourself in the opinion of the man you professed to love. But, as you are—accomplished, shrewd, and resolute, you have taken the worst road by which to gain the end you coveted. Nay more; you have allowed impulse to snatch the reins from principle, and those unbroken steeds, Passion and Ambition, have taken the bit in their mouths, galloped off with common sense, and I very much fear it will cost you some time and trouble to come up with them. I need hardly add, Mademoiselle, that I decline continuing this conversation.

[*Exit.*

Mlle H. [*After a pause.*] Be it so. The sooner ended the sooner to my work. I swear, the thought of the revenge I'll take on this proud fool, makes me all but rejoice in failure. [*Music heard without.*] The guests are arriving. I must not be found here.

[*Exit.*

Enter ALAIN, then two servants, who arrange tables, chairs, &c. Enter MADAME LAROQUE, M'LE MARGUERITE, M DE BEVANNES, DESMARET, MONS. NOURET, M'LE HELOUIN, MADAM AUBREY, MANUEL and Guests.

Mad. L. [*to servants.*] That will do, you may retire.

[*Exeunt ALAIN and servants.*

Des. Before you proceed to business, Monsieur Nouret, I will make a few preliminary remarks, if you will allow me.

Mons. Nouret. Certainly, Doctor. Pray speak.

Des. For the information of those friends of the family who are yet unacquainted with the facts, I wish to state that, before the death of M. Laroque, he wrote a letter to be given to me, his oldest friend, when he was no more. I shall read a short extract. [*Reads.*] "For these reasons it is my earnest desire, nay positive injunction, that my grand-daughters' marriage shall take place within six months of my death, with the same ceremonies and rejoicings as though I were still living, and the reading of the will shall immediately succeed the marriage." And now, Monsieur, before proceeding, it is necessary for you to state that all is ready for the reading of the will immediately on our return.

Mons. N. I trust all *will* be ready, Doctor; but, at present, I cannot say it is so, for although I find the will and codicils of the deceased to be in the most perfect order, and numbered in regular succession, I have, thus far, been unable to discover the first of the series, marked No. 1. All the rest are here—2, 3, 4, and 5—but 1 is wanting. Now the legacies are, with the exception of a few to the old servants, entirely to Mons. Laroque's blood relations. [Pg 49]

Mad. A. [*Weeps.*] Oh!

Mons. N. Be comforted Madame, he was indeed a kind man. His blood relations have all been thought of.

Mad. A. But I'm *not* a blood relation. Oh!

[*Weeps.*

Mlle H. Is it not possible that the missing paper may contain—

Mad. A. No doubt of it, no doubt of it. And that is burnt.

All. Burnt!

Mlle H. You saw Mons. Manuel, the steward, burn a paper. You found the envelope, and gave it to me?

Mad. A. I did, but I never—

Mlle H. Silence! [*Gives envelope to MONS. NOURET.*] Examine that, sir.

Mons. N. It is the hand-writing of the deceased, and the envelope of the peculiar size and make of all the others.

[*All look at MANUEL.*]

Mad. L. Monsieur Manuel, what have you to say to this?

Bev. Speak, sir.

Man. The lady is right, I *did* burn the paper.

Mad. L. Great Heavens!

[*All rise.*]

Man. But she is mistaken as to the purport of the document.

Bev. Upon my soul this is a little too strong.

Mad. L. Oh, Monsieur Manuel, do not tell me you have so far abused our confidence. Do not tell me that one whom I had begun to love almost as a son, has fallen low enough to commit so vile an act. I am an old woman, sir, and in the course of nature, you must outlive me. My child is provided for. You shall share with me while I live, and all I have shall be yours at last if you will but refute this, if you will but give me the joy of knowing you are innocent.

Mons. N. Come sir, this painful matter may be set at rest, perhaps, if you will tell us the content of that paper.

Des. Manuel, my son.

Mad. L. Oh! for my sake!

Man. [*Looks at MARGUERITE and says.*] I will not speak.

[*Exit DESMARETS.*]

Mad. L. [*After a short pause.*] Then sir, much as it pains me, you must, clearly understand that we can live no longer under the same roof.

Man. [*Going.*] I know it, madame.

Mar. And [*He turns at the sound of her voice,*] have you *nothing*, not *one* word to say in your defence?

Man. Not one word.

[*Exit.*]

Mad. L. Oh Marguerite, my joy on this occasion is lost in this most unhappy discovery.

Mar. [*Aside.*] And my misery doubled. Do not follow me, dear mother, I will rejoin you directly.

[*Exit.*]

Mad. A. Oh!—

[*Weeps.*]

[Pg 50]

Bev. My dear madame, I beg to remind you that this is my wedding day. Pray reserve your tears till after the ceremony. [*Re-enter DESMARETS.*] My friends, if you will adjourn to the reception room, the carriages will be ready immediately.

[*Exeunt guests and MADAME AUBREY.*]

Des. [*To M'LE H.*] Mademoiselle, you do not appear as much shocked as we are by this unfortunate discovery.

Mlle H. Simply, Doctor, because, knowing the gentleman, I am not surprised.

Des. You are not?

Mlle H. Not at all.

[*Exit.*

Des. Umph! Bevannes, my dear fellow, I'm loth to delay an event which, by a popular but pleasant fallacy, is supposed to be the happiest in a man's life, but I must request, before we go to the chapel, that you will give me a few moments of your attention.

Bev. Certainly Doctor; the evening's before us. Pray vary the entertainment according to your own taste.

Des. My dear madame, I must also request *your* presence, and, as what I am about to say is important, and guests are still arriving, this apartment will soon become too public for our purpose, therefore, with your permission, we'll retire to the library which, as the works it contains are purely instructive, is about the last place our fashionable friends are likely to visit.

Mad. L. Had we not better wait until we return from—

Des. By no means. What I have to say must be said at once, and so, madame, permit me.

[*Offers arm.*

Bev. Doctor, that's a remarkably nice young man you recommended for steward.

Des. Never mind him. We'll talk about him to-morrow.

[*Exeunt.*

Enter MANUEL, dressed for traveling.

Man. For her, for her, this bitter, bitter trial. Oh, let that thought sustain me. Falsely I had imagined that the change from the sweet dreamy days of my youth, to the stern realities of my manhood, had created for me that tower of strength to the unfortunate—endurance. But, no, no; too truly do I feel that, until this moment, I have not known what utter misery is—one last, last look at scenes made sacred by her presence; at objects hallowed by her touch, and then, and then

[*He sinks into a chair.*

[*Enter MARGUERITE. She comes down slowly.*]

Mar. Manuel!

Man. Marguerite!

Mar. Hush! move not, nor speak till you have heard me. I am here to ask forgiveness.

Man. Forgiveness?

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Mar. Now, now, I know your truth, too late, oh, Heavens! too late late I know your pure, unselfish heart. You bore suspicion, insult, scorn, but I believed you not. How nobly you risked life for honor; yet I believed you not.

Man. At last then—

Mar. At last, conviction came; that letter you mislaid—

Man. Relating to my sister—

Mar. Aye, and *not* to me. I know it now, Desmarests told me all.

Man. And could you think—

Mar. I did, I did. Oh, do not scorn me, but grant my prayer, the first, the *last* you'll ever hear from Marguerite. There is some mystery hidden beneath your refusal to speak of the paper you destroyed—some reason which refers to *me*. Do not deny it, for I know it. You cannot deceive the watchful eyes of love—for *I love you*, Manuel. We *must* part, and forever. My word is pledged already for my marriage with Bevannes. But by the love which you professed for me, for your dear sister's sake, for *mine*, [*she kneels*,] clear your good name of this foul stain. Oh, Manuel! Manuel! do it in pity for the rash, unhappy girl, who, with ruin staring at her from the fatal rock, suspicion, spite of reason, spite of warning, wildly, madly dashed herself upon the shore and

made her heart a wreck.

[Enter M^{lle} HELOUIN.]

Mlle H. Good. I could not have wished it otherwise. [To MAD. LAROQUE and DESMARETS who appear with MAD. AUBREY, guests and MONS. NOURET.] Look, Madame! Look, sir! Observe the faithful, loyal steward, who, not content with fraud and betrayal of his trust, still lingers on the scene of his disgrace. Behold the proud *gentleman*, who completes his list of honorable actions by ensnaring the affections of that unthinking girl—the betrothed wife of another, the daughter of his benefactress. [MADAME LAROQUE and DESMARETS raise MARGUERITE, who is almost fainting.] Well, you hear all this; you witness it—you are men and stir not—your friend is betrayed—an aged lady insulted in your presence, yet there stands the man, erect and fearless. Will you bear this, I say, or will you cast him forth like the dog he is?

[The gentlemen make a movement toward MANUEL.]

Des. Stop. Before Mons. Manuel departs, I have a piece of intelligence to communicate, which it is important for *him*, as well as you, to hear. You will the better comprehend it, if I request your patience while I read a portion of this paper, left in my care by Mons. Laroque, with discretionary power to destroy or reveal its contents as my judgment should dictate. Under present circumstances I choose the latter course. This is in the old man's own handwriting, and you will admit, is an important episode in his history. The events described occurred in the West Indies. [Reads.] "On the approach of hostilities between the French and English, my father, Pierre Laroque, who was steward to the then Marquis de Champcey, received orders to sell immediately, the magnificent estates on the island, and then to join the Marquis (who commanded a small French fleet) and to bring with him the money realized from the sale. The estates were sold for a very large sum. With this money my father and myself started to join the Marquis, but, on our way were interrupted by an English frigate and taken prisoners. My father died defending himself. I was promised my life, and permission to escape with whatever money we had with us when taken, if I would reveal the hiding place of the French fleet. How shall I write the words? *I yielded*. A large English force attacked them. The Marquis was killed, and I came to France a wealthy, but dishonored man." Such is the confession left in my hands. Such is the confession which makes the present Marquis de Champcey master of this and all the property the old man left, and such is the duplicate of the paper which that young man destroyed.

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[Great sensation among all the dramatis personæ. The Doctor leads MARGUERITE to MANUEL, then turns and embraces MAD. LAROQUE. Guests crowd round MANUEL, congratulating him.]

Mlle H. [To MADAME AUBREY.] Hark'ye Madame—

Mad. A. Oh! go away, you nasty thing. You've made a pretty mess of it. You've caused me to do mischief enough. I won't be corrupted by you any more.

[She goes to MANUEL and shakes hands with him violently.]

Mlle H. [Aside.] Baffled. Foiled at every turn. [Enter BEVANNES.] Ah! no. One hope *is* left. Mons. de Bevannes, you are well arrived. In good time to defend your honor, which is grievously in peril here. That man, the steward, by a strange reverse of fortune, has become master of this great estate.

Bev. So I have already been informed.

Mlle H. Well, look there. Have you eyes?

Bev. Madame, you wound my vanity.

Mlle H. Do you not see that the new master here is likely to become lord where you alone should reign? Will you tamely submit and give her up?

Bev. Madame, you just now reflected on my person, now you do worse; you attack my heart. Do you think I am the man to step between two devoted young creatures for my own selfish ends? No! The moment I found the dear girl was penniless, I destroyed the contract, and in the most generous manner, gave her back her word.

Mad. L. I won't go near her. I do believe she'd bite me. Doctor, will *you* have the goodness?

Des. [To M^{lle} HELOUIN.] Mademoiselle, you were very anxious just now for somebody to turn out—I don't wish to be ungallant—but what is going to take place here will coincide so little with your arrangements, that the ladies think—that perhaps—

Mlle H. Enough, sir. [To MANUEL.] If I am criminal, you shall not call me hypocrite. I go, and as a parting gift, take from me such wishes for your future, as bitter scorn and baffled hate may leave.

Bev. A very nice young person that.

Des. But come, come, what the deuce are you all standing here for?

[Enter ALAIN.]

Alain. Please Madame, the grounds are lit up, the carriages ready and all the country folks are waiting.

Des. Come. The bride and bridegroom. Come along.

Mar. Now—at once? Oh, Doctor.

Des. Now—at once? Of course; do you think all our pretty preparations are to go for nothing?

Bev. Mademoiselle, I've got myself up utterly regardless of expense, and if *somebody* ain't married, I shall withdraw my consent.

Mad. A. Oh, Mons. de Bevannes do not let that deter you, if you meant what you said the evening Mons. Laroque died.

Bev. I!

Mad. A. Why, be it so.

Bev. Be it so? Be it what, Madame?

Mad. A. I will dispense with further courtship.

Bev. You may, for an indefinite period.

[They go up.]

Des. So, as soon as Manuel has changed his dress—

Mar. Nay, dear Manuel, you shall not change it. For the last time, obey the headstrong girl. In that dress you often bore her taunts and insults; in that same dress you shall receive her vows of love and duty.

Man. Let it be so then. I will but ask one ornament—the bud you wear upon your breast. [*She detaches it from her dress.*] Look at it, dearest. It lacks the rich color and the gorgeous blush of one you gave me once before. But that was lost and trampled under foot. There let it fade, and typify the errors and misfortunes past, whilst this, just putting forth its beauty into life, shall be an emblem of dear hopes and happiness to come.

[ALAIN gives a signal—the same chorus as in fourth tableau is heard. The curtains are suddenly drawn back from the three arches, showing the park and grounds splendidly illuminated with colored lamps, and the peasantry assembled, in their picturesque Breton holiday costume; a troop of little girls headed by CHRISTINE, form, and strew flowers before MANUEL and MARGUERITE, and the Curtain falls on a Tableau.]

THE END.

*** END OF THE PROJECT GUTENBERG EBOOK THE ROMANCE OF A POOR YOUNG MAN ***

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