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PHOTO. BY PACH

MANSFIELD AS CYRANO DE BERGERAC.

CYRANO DE BERGERAC

An Heroic Comedy in Five Acts

Translated from the French of
EDMOND ROSTAND
BY
CHARLES RENAULD

With an introduction by



NEW YORK
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INTRODUCTION.

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The phenomenal success of "Cyrano de Bergerac" is undoubtedly one of the most important literary events of the last quarter of a century. It at once placed Edmond Rostand, a young man of twenty-eight, at the head of the small band of French dramatic writers, all men of marked ability, Maurice Donnay, Georges de Porto-Riche, François de Curel, Paul Hervieu, Henri Lavedan, etc., who had been struggling for supremacy since the disappearance of the two great masters of modern French comedy, Émile Augier and Alexandre Dumas, fils. There was no hesitation on the part of the public. It was at once recognised that what had just been produced upon the stage was not simply better than what had been seen for a long time, but was also, to a certain extent, of a different nature. And the verdict rendered by the French public in December, 1897, has since then been approved by readers and theatre-goers in nearly every one of the countries belonging to Western civilisation.

Can it be said, however, that to an American, or an Englishman, "Cyrano" is all that it is to a Frenchman, that its production would have been possible outside of as well as in France, and its success as significant in London as in Paris? If "Cyrano" is really a great work these questions must be answered negatively, for it is in the nature of great literary works that they consist of a combination of what is purely human with what belongs to the time and place where they have had their birth. They must have enough of what is purely human to make it possible for them to be universally accepted, understood and admired. But they must be also strongly national, so that their universal acceptance may help in spreading all over the world part of the national ideal which prevails in their birthplace. And to these elements may be joined a third one, which is sure to add greatly to their success, and which "Cyrano" possesses in a very high degree, viz: timeliness.

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As soon as "Cyrano" appeared it seemed to the French that this was just what they had been waiting for. Two things especially appealed to them, one of a purely literary nature, the other one a part of the basis of moral feelings and ideas upon which the play is built.

First of all, it was a clear play, full of light and sunshine. Edmond Rostand hails from the South of France, and the atmosphere of his play is as translucent as the atmosphere of his native Provence. It is as far removed from symbolism and mysticism as the shores of the Mediterranean are from the fogs of Scandinavia. Every incident in the play rests upon some trait of character or combination of circumstances which has been explained at some previous moment. Every one of the leading characters, and "Cyrano" most of all, stands out in bold relief, and there is no mistaking what they stand for.

But this clearness is mainly for the countrymen of the author. It depends partly upon the previous possession by the audience of a number of notions which are part of the intellectual inheritance of the race. The play, although quite modern in its style and construction, is in some respects for the French a resurrection of a portion of their glorious past. For them the *Hôtel de Bourgogne*, *les Précieuses*, Cardinal de Richelieu, etc., are more than mere names. The earlier part of the Seventeenth Century was for France a period of wonderful national energy. It is then, and not later, that France acquired that supremacy over the European Continent which is usually associated with the name of Louis XIV, but which was already established when that monarch assumed the reins of government.

The timeliness of Rostand's great play was shown exactly in this, that it called the attention of the French back to a time when the nation was full of youthful and vigorous ambition, when a Frenchman would hardly believe that there was anything that he could not do if he set his mind to it, when it became the fashion to say that "Impossible was not a French word."

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Ever since the war of 1870 the pall of defeat had hung over the French. The stage showed this in a striking manner. The plays that were produced presented on the whole a stern or a pessimistic conception of life. The great periods of history, especially, in which French valour carried everything before it, remained neglected, for fear of the painful contrast which they would present with the humiliated condition of a vanquished country.

The men who wrote these plays belonged to a generation in which, using the words of a French academician, "the mainspring of joy had been broken."

But the young men who now come to the front, and who have no more brilliant representative than Edmond Rostand, belong to another generation. They have not known the pangs of defeat; the mutilation of the beloved Fatherland was an accomplished fact when they began to feel and to think. They viewed French history not as concentrated in its last and heart-rending episode, but as spreading through centuries of heroic deeds, oftener illuminated by the dazzling sunshine of victory than darkened by the gloom of defeat. They were growing tired of hearing it repeated on all tones that life was not worth living, and they longed for some one who would shout in a voice loud enough to be heard by the whole world, "Let the dead past bury its dead."

In the acclaim that greeted "Cyrano de Bergerac" on December 28th, 1897, therefore, there was something more than applause for a great dramatic work: there was gratitude for the poet who had dispelled at last the atmosphere of sadness which had come to be stifling for the young Frenchmen of our time. The period of deep mourning was proclaimed to be over. Glances towards the past were again declared to be indulged in only as inspirations for the future. The glory, the joyfulness of action again appeared as living realities, not as the deceptive dreams of unsuspecting ignorance. Thus "Cyrano" presented to the French a play such as they had not seen for a long time. There had been plenty of problem plays, or *pieces à thèse*, as the French say; "Cyrano" was a *pièce à panache*.

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Seldom has, indeed, the purpose of a dramatist been more clearly pointed out than in "Cyrano." When the hero of the play breathes his last, after an imaginary fight with all the unworthy traits of human nature and society which he had antagonized during his checkered life, the one thing which he informs his friends cannot be taken from him, which he will proudly carry to the very presence of God, is his *panache*, and this is the last word, and, as it were, the affabulation of the drama.

Now, what is this *panache* upon which "Cyrano" sets such a high value? To understand it is to appreciate, to miss it is to miss the meaning of the play. An explanation of it is, therefore, not out of place in this introduction.

The *panache* is an external quality which adds colour and brilliancy to internal things already

worth having for their own intrinsic value. Its main justification is personal bravery. To take an example, the generals of the French Revolution, the marshals of Napoleon's army, all possessed personal bravery to a high degree. They were not all distinguished by the *panache*. Some of them, indeed, Marshal Davout, for instance, were strikingly devoid of it. The representative of the *panache* among them was essentially Murat. The *panache* is literally a high plume, or bunch of plumes, that waves high above a commander's head-gear. Murat was bravery itself. But he had to be as conspicuous as possible. He dressed as gorgeously as he could. He rode a superb charger, and rode it superbly. His fur cap was always surmounted by a high and richly coloured plume, which was always discerned just where the battle most fiercely raged. Not his the deeply laid and skilfully carried out plans, but the brilliant and heroic cavalry charge. His eyes, his very voice, irrespective of what he said, were an inspiration to his men, and dispelled all fear of death. There is magnetism in the *panache*, and readers may remember that a few years ago an American statesman whom his friends proclaimed to be magnetic if nothing else, was known throughout the land as the Plumed Knight. "Rally round my white panache," Henry the Fourth said to his soldiers; "you will find it always on the path of honour and duty." The *panache*, too, is essentially joyful. "Cyrano" is joyful, in spite of a life that would breed discouragement and bitterness in almost any heart but his. If reality denies him his share of happiness, then he will find it in the domain the ideal. He will not have to go without it.

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And here we strike another cause of "Cyrano's" success. It is not simply a play, it is a poem, and poetry always leads us towards the ideal. This is undoubtedly one of the reasons underlying the love of the French for a verse play. The very swing of its verbal development lifts us above the trivialities of daily life.

One might almost say that the verse play is as characteristic of the French as the Wagnerian lyric drama is of the Germans.

Corneille, Racine, Hugo, Molière himself in such a play as *le Misanthrope*, are idealists, and their message to the world at large, to which must now be added that of the brilliant author of "Cyrano," tells of things better than those we see around us, of things of beauty which it lies in every one of us to bring somewhat nearer to our touch, if we will only have the courage to live up to them.

A few words now about the new rendering of the play which is here presented to the English-reading public. A number of translations of "Cyrano" have appeared before this one. If the facts were known, however, it would perhaps appear that Mr. Charles Renauld's is the earliest of all. It was undertaken by its author under the spell cast upon the French mind by the sudden revelation of Rostand's genius, the nature and causes of which it has been the purpose of this production to elucidate.

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The Shakespearian character of the play, displayed in the freedom with which the author brings in everything that seems to him likely to complete the portrait of his hero, has been recognised by the translator, as is shown by his use of a combination of prose and verse passages.

A real translator must be equally at home in the language of the work translated and in the language into which he translates it. He must be in thorough sympathy with the mental attitudes of the two nations whose speeches he is transmuting one into the other. He must be able to be a component atom of that collective being, the public, on one side as well as on the other of the national frontiers that divide them. Thus only will he be able to discover the means that will produce upon the reader of the translation the impression first received by contact with the original.

The readers of Mr. Renauld's translation will, it is thought, acknowledge that he possesses in a high degree the above-described qualifications, and that he has been peculiarly felicitous, when the text did not lend itself to translation proper, in devising what may be termed adequate equivalents.

Of the faithfulness of his rendering those acquainted with the French language will easily judge, as they can have under the same cover the English of the translator and the French of the dramatist, and they will thus, it is hoped, acquire a clear and adequate conception of the beautiful picture, which, thanks to Edmond Rostand, has restored life and brilliancy to the somewhat faded features of that eccentric philosopher, poet, hero and gentleman, Savinien Hercule de Cyrano Bergerac.

ADOLPHE COHN.

PREFACE.

[Pg ix]

The author of this translation trusts that he is not presuming too much if, despite his aversion for anything akin to offensive thought and mention of self, he claims the privilege of prefacing the result here presented of his labours with a few remarks, not as a plea *pro domo sua*, but as an explanation relating to the motives and to the methods by which he was guided in his work.

First of all, he desires to state that this, his version of Edmond Rostand's "Cyrano de Bergerac" was written in the early part of 1898, and copyrighted in Washington long before any other

rendering in English of the beautiful and now celebrated play was either published or performed. Why did he withhold it until now? Simply because Mr. Edmond Rostand, with whom he was not in touch, had innocently, or under insufficient advice, neglected to copyright in the United States, and had meanwhile made arrangements for the performance of the play in America. Was the writer, who has long been, and is still, battling for a better protection of literary property, to interfere with, or even seem in any way to invade these arrangements? He thought not, despite solicitations to the contrary. True that, armed with the valid copyright of his own work, and with many technicalities at his disposal, he could have brought about considerable litigation in his own behalf, that would possibly have resulted in an indirect defence of Mr. Rostand's moral rights still subsisting. But in the face of a very doubtful issue in the courts, with a possible charge of officiousness out of them, he thought it wiser to abstain, allowing time meanwhile to accomplish its work of adjustment.

Others, however, apparently satisfied with safety for a justification, have not treated with the same respect Mr. Rostand's moral rights and the arrangements made by him for the American production of his "Cyrano de Bergerac." The play has been mutilated, adapted, or "improved" to suit. There are just now, it is said, some twenty so-called stock companies presenting it in different cities throughout the United States. The original in French has been openly reprinted here, likewise its British translation, and other translations (so-called) have been offered to the public. Mr. Rostand did not copyright. Hence the result of his labours, of his genius, belongs, it would seem, to whoever chooses to pick it up!

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In these circumstances and now, there certainly can be no impropriety in the publication of this work, the more so as Mr. Rostand is to receive in this instance the royalties to which he is morally entitled.

Further even. Who knows but that this royalty-paying version in book form, or produced on the stage (the right to perform it having been expressly reserved by the writer), may not assist in setting aside the different versions that now interfere with Mr. Rostand's moral rights, as well as with the arrangements he chose to make for stage production in America? Diffidence would prevent the translator, were it not for the valuable encouragement he has received, from adding that the present version of "Cyrano de Bergerac" may, perchance, better than any of the renderings in English now extant, lead to an adequate conception of the beauties of the work in French.

At all events, those who were consulted, including the eminent publishers, and the distinguished writer of the Introduction to this book, freely agreed with the author in his opinion that publication under the foregoing conditions could do no harm, while it might effect considerable good, were it only as an example in many respects, proving, among other things, that there are those, even in America, for whom impunity does not constitute right.

But enough "talk of shop," perhaps too much, for the *genus irritabile vatum*.

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At this point, the author feels that, if he expatiated on his methods of translation, he might with some justice be accused of tiresome insistence, or, to put it more gently, of obduracy in esoterism. He will, therefore, confine himself to a few statements, and make them as short as possible.

This version of "Cyrano de Bergerac" was written originally for the stage, where, according to opinion behind as well as before the curtain, in America at least, verse may be acceptable for the expression of occasional flights of thought, but not through the whole of a play, and especially not for such portions of a play as are necessarily colloquial. To explain this alleged distaste for verse on the stage would lead us far beyond the limits of a preface. Suffice it, then, to say, reserving developments for some future occasion, that, for poetic emotion, English verse is more than the French dependent on form, on expression. In other words, English verse is less than the French free to consider only thought, or substance, irrespective of words, or construction. As a rule, then, it would seem in English that dress comes first and figure next; while in French the order appears to be reversed. In consequence (and setting aside the fact that there exists a "magic of words," that has been an all-time and frequent deceiver of men), the average reader or listener instinctively expects from English verse a somewhat conventional language, diversified with unusual words and exceptional contractions, inversions, etc. It follows that, when this special phraseology and peculiar construction are applied to everyday thoughts, facts, occurrences and sentiments, the effect produced is not an agreeable one, by reason of a sort of clash, the appearance of a thing of prose, straight-laced and overdressed in verse, in a word, unnaturalness. Further, the majority of English-speaking actors, unavoidably imbued with the same spirit, so soon as they deal with verse, unconsciously resort to a stilted diction that is distressingly far-removed from the art that consists, through tedious and patient work, in being natural.

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Natural, unconstrained verse can, with proper care, it is thought, be written in English, and can certainly, with appropriate training, be delivered with naturalness. This done, our audiences would no doubt take kindly to the rhythm of plays in verse. But, as this does not yet seem to have been fully accomplished, the undersigned translator of "Cyrano de Bergerac" reluctantly decided to use both verse and prose. For this liberty, though justified as above, he feels that he owes the French poet an apology, adding, however, that the deed brought its own punishment, since, strange as it may appear to some, it would have been much easier to render the play all in verse.

As to verse and metrics, on which, in this instance, a book could (and later, may) be written, the

author of this translation must now rest satisfied with the following brief remarks.

Enlightened by considerable experience, the result of many experiments and after much thought, he adopted blank pentameter as the true equivalent in English of French riming Alexandrine verse. First, because in English, frequent elisions making many syllables heavy, and "run on" lines practically adding to the number of syllables, the ten-syllable line of English verse is in reality the counterpart of the twelve-syllable verse in French. And second, because the object of rime being, not to repeat a given sound, but to *beat time*, the strongly accentuated syllables of English, as compared with the very much more even enunciation of French, are quite sufficient, without rime or assonance, to *mark rhythm*. Thus he avoided at least one criticism, to wit: rime is monotonous!

Touching metrics, the writer will here go only one step in the ways of heresy, by stating that, in his opinion, such words as "our," "hour," "fire," etc., should be, as in French, "duel," "hier," etc., counted for one syllable, or for two syllables, according to rhythm as influenced by the stronger or weaker emphasis called for by the *sense* of the word. This could be elucidated by examples, the place of which, however, is not here.

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More generally as to methods, the writer makes free to state that, exerting himself to avoid *literal* translation (too often productive of laughable nonsense), and *free* translation (frequently a substitution of the translator's for the author's thoughts), he endeavoured, as in previous works of the same nature, to give what he has termed an *equivalent* translation. In other words, he strove to remain really true to the original by creating in detail, as well as in a general way, in English words on English minds the *impression* caused by French words on French minds. Some examples of the *equivalence* at least sought for will be found in the foot-notes on several pages of this book.

As to "le panache" that surmounts this masterpiece, "Cyrano de Bergerac," of which it is the main feature, sending through it a breath of joyful daring "quand même," the writer sought, as will be seen, to describe it in triolets. These, too, might need to be explained, were it not for the able commentary to be found in the Introduction so kindly written for this book by one of the most learned and esteemed professors of our Columbia University.

The writer trusts that he may be pardoned for going at such length into some of the minutiae of his task, and he certainly should be acquitted if he thereby succeeded in showing how much labour must be expended to produce even a tolerable translation, and consequently, how little justice is very often done to translators in general. He commends these details to his friends as an inducement to think a while before they leap, or rather jump at conclusions. Were he less charitably disposed, or more eager for a practical demonstration, he could say to them simply: "Try the task!"

CHARLES RENAULD.

NEW YORK, February, 1899.

"LE PANACHE."

[Pg xv]

TRIOLETS.

(After the fashion of Rostand's in [ACT II](#): "Ce sont les Cadets de Gascogne.")

O'er truth and daring floats a
plume
That is no flaunting feather
vain!
In knightly grace and flower's
bloom,
O'er truth and daring floats a
plume!
In festive hall, by silent tomb,
It waves aloft without a stain.
O'er truth and daring floats a
plume
That is no flaunting feather
vain!

We'll call it, if you will, a
broom;
But how it sweeps with proud
disdain!
It sweeps the skies, and not a
room!
We'll call it, if you will, a
broom.
It is a symbol, not of gloom,

But of a dash that scorns to
gain.
We'll call it, if you will, a
broom;
But how it sweeps with proud
disdain!

O'er truth and daring floats a
plume
That is no flaunting feather
vain!
It marks for ay the hero's
doom!
O'er truth and daring floats a
plume.
It nods o'er chisel, brush and
loom,
And consecrates the poet's
strain.
O'er truth and daring floats a
plume
That is no flaunting feather
vain!

CHARLES RENAULD.

NEW YORK, 12th July, 1898.

CAST OF CHARACTERS.

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THÉÂTRE DE LA PORTE ST. MARTIN, PARIS, 28th Dec., 1897 (*First night*).

CYRANO DE BERGERAC	MR. COQUELIN.
CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE	MR. VOLNY.
COUNT DE GUICHE	MR. DESJARDINS.
RAGUENEAU	MR. JEAN COQUELIN.
LE BRET	MR. CASTILLAN.
CAPTAIN CARBON OF HAUGHTY-HALL ^[1]	MR. GRAVIER.
	MR. PERICAUD.
	MR. DEMEY.
	MR. NOIZEUX.
	MR. TERVAL.
	MR. KIRTAL.
	MR. ARMAND.
	MR. HOSSARD.
	MR. REBEL.
	MR. NICOLINI.
	MR. WALTER.
	MR. LAUMONIER.
	MR. HEMERY.
	MR. PERICAUD.
	MR. DAVRIL.
	MR. CARTEREAU.
	MR. GODEAU.
	MR. BORGES.
	MR. PERSON.
	MR. CARLIT.
	MR. DURAND.
	MR. ALBERT.
	MR. DOUBLEAU.
	MR. JOURDAN.
	MR. LOISEAU.
	MR. BOURGEOIS.
	MR. SAMSON.
	MR. DANNEQUIN.
	MR. G. MONPEURT.
	MR. RAVART.
	MR. GASTON HENRY.
	MR. DAMON.
CADETS OF GASCONY	
LIGNIÈRE	
DE VALVERT	
A MARQUIS	
SECOND MARQUIS	
THIRD MARQUIS	
MONTFLEURY	
BELLEROSE	
JODELET	
CUIGY	
BRISSAILLE	
AN INTRUDER	
A MUSKETEER	
SECOND MUSKETEER	
A SPANISH OFFICER	
A CAVALRYMAN	
THE JANITOR	
A TRADESMAN	
TRADESMAN'S SON	
A SPECTATOR	
A GUARD	
BERTRANDOU, THE FIFE-PLAYER	
A CAPUCHIN MONK	
TWO MUSICIANS	

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THE POETS

THE PASTRY-COOKS

ROXANE
SISTER MARTHA
LISE
WAITING-GIRL
MOTHER MARGARET OF JESUS
THE DUENNA
SISTER CLAIRE
A COMEDIENNE
A LADY'S MAID

THE PAGES

THE FLOWER-GIRL

{ MR. WILLIAMS.
MR. LEROY.
ETC.

{ MR. MALLET.
MR. BERCHA.
ETC.

MME. MARIE LEGAULT.
MME. ESQUILAR.
MME. BLANCHE MIROIR.
MME. KERWICH.
MME. BOUCHETAL.
MME. BOURGEOIS.
MME. PANNETIER.
MME. LUCINNE.
MME. VARENNES.

{ MME. MARTHE MARTY.
MME. LOISIER.
MME. BERTHA.
ETC.

The people, tradesmen, musketeers, thieves and pickpockets, pastry-cooks, poets, Gascon cadets, comedians, violin-players, pages, children, Spanish soldiers, spectators of both sexes, euphuistic ladies ("précieuses,") comediennes, tradeswomen, nuns, etc.

(The first four acts in 1640; the fifth in 1655.)



**COQUELIN AS CYRANO DE
BERGERAC.**

CYRANO DE BERGERAC.

[Pg 1]

ACT I.

A PERFORMANCE AT THE HOTEL DE BOURGOGNE THEATRE.

The interior of the Hotel de Bourgogne Theatre, in 1640. A sort of Racket-Court arranged and decorated in view of performances. The auditorium is a long square. It runs diagonally, and forms the background, one of its sides beginning at first entrance, right, and ending at last entrance, left, where it forms a right angle with the stage, that is thus seen canted. On each side of this stage, benches along the wings. The curtain is in two pieces of tapestry, that can be drawn apart. Above the proscenium, the royal arms. Wide steps lead from the stage to the auditorium. On either side of these steps, seats for the violin-players. Foot-lights composed of candles.

Two galleries, one above the other, running along the side of the auditorium (that forms the diagonal background). The upper gallery is divided into boxes. No seats in the pit. In the rear of

this pit, really front first entrance right, a few benches in tiers. Under a staircase leading to the galleries, and only the lower part of which can be seen, a refreshment side-board bearing lights, flowers, glasses, plates of cakes, decanters, etc.

In the rear, centre, under the galleries, the entrance to the house. A wide door, half opened now and then to admit the audience. Near this door, as well as near the side-board and in other places, red posters giving the name of the play about to be performed: "La Clorise."

As the curtain rises, the house is empty and rather dark.

The chandeliers have been lowered into the pit, but are not yet lighted.

[Pg 2]

SCENE I.

The audience enters gradually. Gentlemen, tradesmen, lackeys, pages, pickpockets, the janitor, etc. THE MARQUISES, CUIGY, BRISSAILLE, the waiting girl, the violins, etc.

Noise outside the door, then a gentleman bursts in.

THE JANITOR (*pursuing him*).

Here! Your fifteen sols!

THE GENTLEMAN.

I pay nothing for admission.

THE JANITOR.

Why so?

THE GENTLEMAN.

King's guard!

THE JANITOR (*to another gentleman just come in*).

You, Sir?

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

Free admission.

THE JANITOR.

But

SECOND GENTLEMAN.

Musketeer!

FIRST GENTLEMAN (*to second gentleman*).

It's not two o'clock yet, and the pit is empty. Suppose we fence a bit?

(They begin fencing with foils they have brought along.)

A LACKEY (*entering*).

Pst—Flanquin!

ANOTHER LACKEY (*just in*).

Hallo, Champagne!

FIRST LACKEY (*taking cards and dice from out his doublet*).

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Cards? Dice? Let's play.

(Seats himself on the floor.)

SECOND LACKEY.

Certainly, you rascal.

(Takes a candle out of his pocket, lights it, and after seating himself near first lackey, plants it on the floor.)

GUARD (*taking flower-girl by the waist*).

How sweet in you to come before the lights do!

ONE OF THE FENCERS.

Touched!

ONE OF THE CARD-PLAYERS.

Clubs!

GUARD (*to flower-girl trying to escape*).

A kiss!

A MAN (*sitting on the floor, with a basket of provisions*).

I come early, so as to eat in peace. A knowing fellow, when he is at the Hôtel de Bourgogne, should drink his Burgundy. (*Drinks.*)

TRADESMAN (*to his son*).

It's as bad as a low tavern.—(*Showing the man drinking*):

Drunkards!—(*One of the fencers backs up against him*):

Cut throats!—(*He is pushed on to the card-players*):

Gamblers!

GUARD (*still pursuing the flower-girl*).

A kiss!

TRADESMAN (*hearing him*).

And worse!—For shame! To think that walls like these, my son, have seen the plays of Rotrou!

THE SON.

And Corneille's!

A TROOP OF PAGES (*coming in, dancing and singing, holding each other by the hand, so as to form a string*).

[Pg 4]

Tra la la la la la la la la la lère!....

JANITOR (*to Pages severely*).

No practical jokes, mind!

FIRST PAGE (*with great dignity*).

Sir, your suspicion is an offense!....

SECOND PAGE (*to first Page*).

I have some string. Haven't you a fish-hook?

FIRST PAGE.

Of course I have! We can do some fine angling from up stairs.

(*To the other Pages who are already in the gallery*).

We're coming!

THIRD PAGE (*in gallery*).

We're ready! (*Blows dried peas at him through hollow stick*.)

A PICKPOCKET (*drawing around him some suspicious-looking characters*).

Now, youngsters, try to learn something. You see, the first time you steal....

(*Driven away by dried peas blown in showers by the Pages above*.)

TRADESMAN (*to his son*).

The play we are going to see: "La Clorise"

SON.

The author, please?

TRADESMAN.

Balthazar Baro.

PICKPOCKET (*continuing his instructions*).

[Pg 5]

Mind the lace around the knees!^[2] How you cut it!

TRADESMAN (*to his son*).

I was at the first performance of "Le Cid,"—(*pointing up*)—There!

PICKPOCKET.

As to watches.... and kerchiefs....

TRADESMAN.

You are going, my son, to see illustrious actors. (*Enumerating*) Montfleury!

THE PAGES.

Light the chandeliers!

WAITING-GIRL (*offering her refreshments*).

Oranges! Milk! Raspberry water! Cedar water!

A MARQUIS (*entering*).

Make way there, fellows!

A LACKEY.

What! a Marquis in the pit!

MARQUIS (*to other Marquises who have followed him in*).

The house is empty! Why, we enter like tradesmen, disturbing nobody, treading on nobody's toes! Disgraceful!

(*Meeting other noblemen just come in*).

Cuigy! Brissaille!

(*They salute and embrace each other with great affectation*.)

CUIGY.

Patrons of art so faithful, yes, that we get here even before the candles are lighted!

MARQUIS.

Do not mention it! I'm terribly out of humour!

CUIGY (*seeing lamplighter enter*).

[Pg 6]

Be consoled! Here is the lamplighter.

ALL THE HOUSE (*satisfied*).

Ah....

(*Groups around the chandeliers while they are being lighted. Lignière enters the pit, leaning on the arm of Christian de Neuville. Lignière, somewhat untidy, has the appearance of a gentlemanly drunkard. Christian, dressed with care, but somewhat out of fashion, seems thoughtful, and examines the boxes.*)

SCENE II.

The same, CHRISTIAN, LIGNIÈRE, *then* RAGUENEAU *and* LE BRET.

CUIGY.

Why, here's Lignière!

BRISSAILLE (*laughing*).

And not yet drunk?....

LIGNIÈRE (*aside to Christian*).

Shall I present you?

(*Christian nods assent. Lignière presents.*)

Baron de Neuville.

(*General salutations.*)

THE AUDIENCE (*as the first chandelier goes up*).

Ah!....

CUIGY (*to Brissaille, looking at Christian*).

A beautiful head!

FIRST MARQUIS (*who has overheard*).

Oh! so, so!....

LIGNIÈRE (*presenting to Christian*).

Mr. de Cuigy, Mr. de Brissaille.

Delighted!

FIRST MARQUIS (*to second*).

He is good looking, but not dressed according to the latest fashion.

LIGNIÈRE (*to Cuigy*).

Baron de Neuville has just arrived from Touraine.

CHRISTIAN.

Yes, I've been in Paris only a few days. To-morrow I join the guards, the Cadets.

FIRST MARQUIS (*looking up to the boxes*).

There is the wife of President Aubry.

THE WAITING-GIRL.

Oranges, milk

THE VIOLINS (*tuning*).

La, la, la, la, la.

CUIGY (*to Christian, looking around*).

Quite an assemblage!

CHRISTIAN.

Yes, indeed!

FIRST MARQUIS.

The cream of fashion.

(He seems to give the names of the different ladies who occupy the boxes, in full dress. Bows, nods, answers, smiles.)

SECOND MARQUIS.

Mesdames de Guéménée....

CUIGY.

De Bois-Dauphin....

FIRST MARQUIS.

Whom we loved

BRISSAILLE.

[Pg 8]

De Chavigny

SECOND MARQUIS.

For whom our hearts are toys!

LIGNIÈRE.

There is Monsieur de Corneille, just from Rouen.

TRADESMAN'S SON (*to his father*).

The Academy is here?....

TRADESMAN.

I see several of its members. Here are Boudu, Boissat, Cureau de la Chambre, Porchères, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaud So many names that can never die! How grand!

FIRST MARQUIS.

Attention! here are our lovely "précieuses,"^[3] they of wondrous names: Barthénoïde, Urimédonte, Cassandace, Félixérie

SECOND MARQUIS.

Delightful names! Marquis, you know them all?

FIRST MARQUIS.

I know them all, Marquis.

LIGNIÈRE (*aside to Christian*).

I came in to do you service. The lady comes not. So I return to my tavern.

CHRISTIAN (*imploringly*).

Do not. You, who in your songs depict both town and court, can tell me the name of one for whom I am dying of love. Remain!

(*The violins begin to play.*)

[Pg 9]

I fear she may be something of a coquette and too subtle in her refinement. I dare not speak to her, for my wit is dull and the language of to-day confuses me. I am but a good soldier. She generally occupies that box to the right—that empty one.

LIGNIÈRE (*as if to leave*).

I must go.

CHRISTIAN (*holding him*).

Remain, please.

LIGNIÈRE.

I cannot. D'Assoucy expects me at the tavern. One might die of thirst here.

WAITING-GIRL (*passing*).

Lemonade!

LIGNIÈRE.

Fie!

WAITING-GIRL.

Milk!

LIGNIÈRE.

Ugh!

WAITING-GIRL.

Wine!

LIGNIÈRE.

(*to Christian*).
I'll stay a while.

(*to waiting-girl*).
Let me taste your wine.

(*Takes a seat near the buffet. Waiting-girl serves wine to him.*)

SHOUTS IN THE AUDIENCE (*on the entrance of a short, plump and jovial looking man*).

Here's Ragueneau!

LIGNIÈRE (*to Christian*).

[Pg 10]

The celebrated poulterer and pastry-cook!

RAGUENEAU (*in his best pastry-cook clothes, going up to Lignière*).

Sir, have you seen Monsieur de Cyrano?

LIGNIÈRE (*presenting Ragueneau to Christian*).

The caterer of comedians and poets!

RAGUENEAU (*bowing low*).

Flattered, indeed!....

LIGNIÈRE.

Come, come, you Mæcenás!

RAGUENEAU.

They honour me with their custom

LIGNIÈRE.

But seldom pay. A good poet himself

RAGUENEAU.

They say so.

LIGNIÈRE.

Enthusiastic for verse!

RAGUENEAU.

The fact is that for a short poem

LIGNIÈRE.

You willingly give a pie.

RAGUENEAU.

A small tart only!

LIGNIÈRE.

Good fellow, he excuses himself!.... And for a triolet did you not give

[Pg 11]

RAGUENEAU.

Only a few rolls!

LIGNIÈRE (*sternly*).

Milk-rolls!.... And the stage? You like it?

RAGUENEAU.

I love it.

LIGNIÈRE.

And you buy your way in with your cakes.

RAGUENEAU.

Oh, so few! (*Looking around.*) But I am surprised not to see Monsieur de Cyrano!

LIGNIÈRE.

Why so?

RAGUENEAU.

Because Montfleury plays!

LIGNIÈRE.

That talking hogshead? True. To-night he plays Phédon. But what cares Cyrano?

RAGUENEAU.

Don't you know? Monsieur de Cyrano has taken an aversion for him, and, gentlemen, has forbidden him to appear on the stage for a whole month.

LIGNIÈRE (*emptying his fourth glass*).

Well, then?

RAGUENEAU.

Oh! I only came to see what is going to happen.

FIRST MARQUIS (*who has come up meanwhile with Cuigy*).

Who is this Cyrano?

CUIGY.

A capital swordsman.

SECOND MARQUIS.

[Pg 12]

Of noble birth?

CUIGY.

Sufficiently so. He is a cadet in the guards.

(*Indicating a gentleman who appears to be seeking somebody.*)

But here's his friend Le Bret....

(*Calling*) Le Bret! (*Le Bret comes down.*)

You are looking for Bergerac?

LE BRET.

Yes, and with some anxiety....

CUIGY.

Am I not right in stating that he is no ordinary man?

LE BRET (*moved*).

He is the most exquisite of creatures sublunary.

RAGUENEAU.

A rimester!

CUIGY.

A swordsman!

BRISSAILLE.

A scientist!

LE BRET.

A musician!

LIGNIÈRE.

But how strange is his appearance!

RAGUENEAU.

No solemn painter, like Philip de Champaigne, probably, will ever give us a portrait of him. But he is so odd, extravagant, wild and strange, that he could well have served Jacques Callot as a model for the most erratic of his fighting heroes. Three-plumed hat, astounding doublet, cloak whose folds a sword draws up behind, in stateliness, like the saucy tail of a cock.^[4] Prouder than the proudest of Gascony's numberless haughty sons, he wears, above his Pulcinella ruff, a nose!.... Ah! mylords, what a nose is that nose! It is impossible, in presence of such a nose-bearer^[5] not to think: "This, really, is exaggeration!" Then you will smile, and think: "Of course, he'll take it off." But Monsieur de Bergerac never takes it off.

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LE BRET.

Never—but whoever notices that nose he wears is sure to get a swordthrust for the attention.

RAGUENEAU.

His sword is one of the two blades of the fatal sisters' scissors!

FIRST MARQUIS (*shrugging his shoulders*).

He will not come.

RAGUENEAU.

Oh! yes, he will. I'll bet.... a chicken....à la Ragueneau.

(Murmurs of admiration as Roxane appears in her box, where she takes a seat in front, while her duenna sits behind her. Christian, busy paying the waiter-girl, does not notice her entrance.)

SECOND MARQUIS (*affectedly*).

Oh! gentlemen, she is frightfully lovely!

FIRST MARQUIS.

A peach divine, smiling in a nest of strawberries.^[6]

SECOND MARQUIS.

So refreshing that she might give one a cold in the heart!

CHRISTIAN (*perceiving Roxane, and clutching Lignière's arm*).

[Pg 14]

It's she!

LIGNIÈRE (*looking up*).

So this is your deity!

CHRISTIAN.

Yes, speak quickly. I tremble.

LIGNIÈRE (*slowly sipping his wine*).

Magdeleine Robin, otherwise Roxane. Refined and quick. A "précieuse."

CHRISTIAN.

Alas!

LIGNIÈRE.

Independent. An orphan. Cousin of Cyrano, whom you heard mentioned just now.

(A gentleman, very finely dressed, wearing a blue ribbon crosswise from shoulder to waist, enters the box, and remains engaged in conversation with Roxane.)

CHRISTIAN *(starting)*.

That man?....

LIGNIÈRE *(slightly intoxicated, winking)*.

Ha, ha! The Count de Guiche. Very much in love with her. But he is the husband of Richelieu's niece. And he is urging Roxane to marry rather a sorry fellow, Monsieur de Valvert, who is both of noble birth and.... accommodating. She resists, but Guiche has influence. I wrote a song on the subject. No doubt he bears me a grudge for it. The end is cutting. Just listen:

(He rises, holding up his glass, ready to sing.)

CHRISTIAN.

No, stop.—I must leave.

LIGNIÈRE.

And you are going?....

CHRISTIAN.

To seek this Valvert.

LIGNIÈRE.

Take care. Perhaps it's he that might kill you. *(Indicating Roxane.)* See! she is looking at you.

CHRISTIAN.

True. *(He remains, looking up as if transfixed. The pickpockets get close around him.)*

LIGNIÈRE.

'Tis I who leave. I'm thirsty and I must be expected—in some tavern!

(Exit unsteadily.)

LE BRET *(who has been walking, to Ragueneau)*.

I feel relieved. Cyrano has not come.

RAGUENEAU *(incredulous)*.

I'd be astonished....

THE AUDIENCE.

The play! The play! The play!

SCENE III.

The same, except LIGNIÈRE; GUICHE, VALVERT, then MONTFLEURY.

SECOND MARQUIS *(seeing Guiche, as he comes from Roxane's box, crossing the pit, surrounded with fawning friends, among whom Valvert)*.

Guiche! Ff! Another Gascon!

FIRST MARQUIS.

Yes, of the cool and supple breed, the one that thrives. We had better greet him, believe me.

(Both go up to meet Guiche. General salutations.)

SECOND MARQUIS.

Beautiful ribbons! What colour, Count? "Kiss-me-darling," or "roe's-breast?"

GUICHE.

Colour? "Sickly-Spaniard."

FIRST MARQUIS.

The colour is fast and true; for soon, thanks to your valor, the Spaniard will be worse than uneasy

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in Flanders!

GUICHE.

I am going to my seat on the stage. Are you coming?

(He and his followers walk up on to the stage. Guiche turns and calls.)

Come along, Valvert!

CHRISTIAN *(who has heard, starting)*.

That viscount! Now I'll fling at him!....

(Puts his hand to his pocket and finds there the hand of a thief.)

(holding on to the pickpocket).

I was looking for a glove!

PICKPOCKET *(smiling)*.

And you find a hand. *(Aside and rapidly.)* Let me go and I'll tell you a secret.

CHRISTIAN *(still holding him)*.

What secret?

PICKPOCKET.

Lignière, who has just left you, is going to his death. A song of his gave offence to.... some great man, and one hundred men, I know it, will lie in wait for him to-night....

CHRISTIAN *(still holding on)*.

One hundred! Paid by whom?

PICKPOCKET.

Discretion....

CHRISTIAN *(shrugging his shoulders)*.

[Pg 17]

Oh!

PICKPOCKET *(with great dignity)*.

Professional discretion....

CHRISTIAN.

Where?

PICKPOCKET.

At the Porte de Nesle, his way home. Warn him in time.

CHRISTIAN *(freeing the pickpocket)*.

Where can I find Lignière?

PICKPOCKET.

In one of the taverns near here: "The Golden Wine-Press," "The Fir-Cone," "The Bursting-Belt," "The Two Torches," "The Three Funnels." Go the rounds and leave a note in each.

CHRISTIAN.

I'll do it! The wretches! A hundred men against one! *(Looking up toward Roxane.)* But to leave her! *(With a look of fury toward Valvert.)* And him! But I must save Lignière!

(He rushes out. Guiche and his followers have gone on to the stage behind the curtain, to take their seats. The pit is full; so are the galleries and boxes.)

THE AUDIENCE.

The play! The play! Curtain!

TRADESMAN *(whose wig flies up hooked by one of the pages above)*.

My wig! *(Shaking his fist at the pages.)* Scoundrels!

(All the audience laughs. Sudden silence.)

LE BRET *(astonished)*.

What is it?

TRADESMAN *(near Le Bret)*.

[Pg 18]

The Cardinal.... there.... in a screened box.

A PAGE.

Good-bye, fun! (*Raps on the stage. Order in the audience. Wait.*)

A MARQUIS (*behind the curtain, during silence*).

Snuff that candle!

OTHER MARQUIS (*passing through the split in the curtain*).

A chair, please!

(A chair is passed, from hand to hand, over the heads of the audience. The marquis takes it and disappears behind the curtain, after sending a few kisses up into the boxes.)

(Three raps on the stage. Curtain is drawn aside. Tableau. Marquises seated on either side of the stage, in impertinent attitudes. Drop represents a bluish pastoral scene. Low music by the violins.)

LE BRET (*aside to Ragueneau*).

Montfleury comes in at once, does he not?

RAGUENEAU (*aside to Le Bret*).

Yes. Monsieur de Cyrano is not here, and I have lost my bet.

LE BRET.

I am glad of it.

(A bag-pipe air, and Montfleury appears, a very powerful man in a poetic shepherd's dress: his hat ornamented with roses and his bag-pipe with ribbons.)

THE PIT (*applauding*).

Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

MONTFLEURY (*after bowing, begins his part of Phédon*).

"Oh! happy he who far from courts, in solitude,^[7]
Self-banished, has cast off the chains of servitude,
And who, when zephyr sighs and rustles through the leaves...."

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A VOICE IN THE PIT.

You rascal, did I not suspend you for a month?

(Astonishment. Everybody eager to see who spoke. Murmurs.)

SEVERAL OF THE AUDIENCE.

What? What is it? Who? Why?

(People in the boxes rise, to see better.)

CUIGY.

It's he!

LE BRET (*frightened*).

Cyrano!

THE VOICE IN THE PIT.

King of clowns, get off the stage!

THE HOUSE.

Oh!

MONTFLEURY.

But....

THE VOICE IN THE PIT.

You recalcitrate?^[8]

VOICES IN THE PIT (*and in the boxes*).

Silence! Enough! Go on, Montfleury! Montfleury, have no fear!....

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MONTFLEURY (*in shaking tone*).

"Oh! happy he who far from courts, in sol...."

THE VOICE IN THE PIT (*more threatening*).

Well, you king of knaves, shall I be forced to plant a grove of these upon your shoulders?

(*A stick is seen to rise in the pit.*)

MONTFLEURY (*in still weaker tones*).

"Oh! happy he...."

(*The stick is shaken threateningly.*)

THE VOICE IN THE PIT.

Get off, I say!

THE PIT.

Oh!

MONTFLEURY (*almost breathless*).

"Oh! happy he who far"

CYRANO (*in the pit, standing on his chair, arms folded, hat cocked on the side of his head, his mustache bristling and his nose terrible*).

I am going to let my temper loose!

(*Excitement in the audience.*)

SCENE IV.

The same, CYRANO, then BELLEROSE, JODELET.

MONTFLEURY (*to the Marquises*).

Protect me, gentlemen!

A MARQUIS (*languidly*).

Play on! Play on!

CYRANO.

Now mind me, corpulence! If you play, I'll have to spank your cheeks.

THE MARQUIS.

[Pg 21]

Enough! Enough!

CYRANO.

Let the gentlemen remain silent on their benches. Otherwise their ribbons will have a taste of my stick.

ALL THE MARQUISES (*rising*).

This is too much, indeed! Montfleury!

CYRANO.

Montfleury must go, or I shall crop his ears and disembowel him!

A VOICE.

But

CYRANO.

He must go!

ANOTHER VOICE.

We cannot

CYRANO.

What! Not gone yet!

(*As if he were going to turn up his sleeves*).

Then must I go upon the stage to cut up this overgrown sausage into slices?

MONTFLEURY (*with an attempt at dignity*).

By insulting me, Sir, you insult the Muse Thalia!

CYRANO (*with great courtesy*).

If the Muse Thalia, with whom you are not related, Sir, had the honour of your acquaintance and saw you so fat and so silly, she would certainly give you a lift with her buskin.

THE PIT.

Montfleury! Montfleury! The play.

CYRANO (*to the noisy ones around him*).

[Pg 22]

Have pity on my scabbard! If you continue thus, it will lose control of its blade.

(*The circle around him widens.*)

(*to Montfleury*).

Get off the stage!

(*The crowd closes in on him, muttering.*)

(*Turning suddenly*).

Any objection made?

(*Crowd falls back again.*)

A VOICE (*in the rear*).

Monsieur de Cyrano is a tyrant. "La Clorise" shall be played.

THE AUDIENCE.

"La Clorise!" "La Clorise!"

CYRANO.

If I hear that again, I'll slaughter you all.

TRADESMAN.

You are not Samson!

CYRANO.

I will be, my dear Sir, if you'll lend me your jaw.

A LADY (*in one of the boxes*).

Disgraceful disturbance!

A GENTLEMAN.

Scandalous!

A PAGE.

Oh! What fun!

THE PIT.

Kss! Kss! Montfleury! Cyrano!

CYRANO.

[Pg 23]

Silence! Such is my order. I challenge the whole pit! Now for the names! Come up here, young heroes. Take the line, please; I'll distribute numbers. Well, who'll be number one? You, Sir? No! You, then? No! I'll favour number one by prompt attendance. Let any one who desires to die hold up a hand.

(*Silence around him.*)

Oh! I see. You are prudish and would not like to see a blade naked. Not a name? Not a hand?—Very well, then, I continue.

(*Turning again to the stage, on which Montfleury is waiting in agony.*)

I desire to see the stage cured of a monstrous tumor. And, if necessary, I'll use ... (*putting his hand to his sword*) a lancet!

MONTFLEURY.

But I

CYRANO (*gets off his chair and sits down on it, comfortably, with a wide circle around him*).

Attention, full moon! I'll clap my hands thrice. The third time, there must be an eclipse.

THE PIT (*amused*).

Ah! Good!

CYRANO (*striking his hands together*).

One!

MONTFLEURY.

But I

A VOICE (*from the boxes*).

Stay, Montfleury!

THE PIT.

Will stay, will not! Will stay, will not!

MONTFLEURY.

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I believe, gentlemen

CYRANO.

Two!

MONTFLEURY.

It would be far better

CYRANO.

Three!

(*Montfleury disappears as if by magic. General laughter, whistling, etc.*)

CYRANO (*leaning back in his chair, and crossing his legs*).

Let him return if he dares!

THE AUDIENCE.

The company's orator!

(*Bellerose advances and bows.*)

THE BOXES.

Ah! here is Bellerose!

BELLEROSE (*with great elegance*).

Noble lords

THE PIT.

No! No! Jodelet!

JODELET (*with a nasal twang*).

Disturbers of the peace! The heavy tragedian whose bulk suits your fancy, felt....

THE PIT.

He is a coward!

JODELET.

Suddenly unwell ... and was compelled to retire.

THE PIT.

Let him return!—No!—Yes!—

A YOUNG MAN (*to Cyrano*).

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But, after all, Sir, what reason is there for your hating Montfleury?

CYRANO (*very courteous, still seated*).

Young gosling, there are two, either one of which is sufficient in itself. First: he is a bad actor; he rants, and seems to lift with a derrick lines that have wings of their own. Second: but that is *my* secret.

TRADESMAN (*behind Cyrano*).

But, Sir, you deprive us of the pleasure of hearing "La Clorise." I insist....

CYRANO (*turning in his chair toward the tradesman respectfully*).

Venerable mule, Baro's verse is worthless. I interrupt without the slightest remorse.

THE "PRÉCIEUSES" (*in the boxes*).

Baro! Our Baro! Heavens! Is it possible?

CYRANO (*turning his chair to the boxes, with great courtesy*).

Fair beings ...
Irradiate and bloom, be Hebes, all,
Dispensing dream; with smile make death a feast
To us—inspire verse.... but judge it not!

BELLEROSE.

How about the money we'll have to return?

CYRANO (*turning his chair toward the stage*).

Bellerose, you have said the only intelligent thing yet heard to-day. I would not for the world make holes in the cloak of Thespis.

(*He rises and throws a small bag upon the stage*).

Catch this purse and hold your tongue!

THE AUDIENCE (*bewildered*).

Ah!.... Oh!....

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JODELET (*picking up the purse and weighing it*).

For the same price, Sir, you may daily prevent the performance of "La Clorise"!....

THE AUDIENCE.

Hu!.... Hu!....

JODELET.

Even if we are to be hooted Clear the house!

(*The audience begins to leave. Cyrano looks on with great satisfaction. The crowd, however, soon stops as the following discussion begins. The ladies in the boxes, who had already risen to go, and put on their wraps, resume their seats*).

LE BRET (*to Cyrano*).

You are insane!

AN INTRUDER (*who has come up to Cyrano*).

A comedian like Montfleury! Scandalous! Why! He is a favourite of the Duke de Candale's! What powerful patron have you?

CYRANO.

None!

THE INTRUDER.

No patron?

CYRANO.

No!

THE INTRUDER.

What! no high-born gentleman whose name can shield you?

CYRANO (*impatient*).

I've said No twice already. A third time: No! I've no protector.... (*his hand on his sword*) but this!

THE INTRUDER.

You are going to leave town, then?

CYRANO.

[Pg 27]

Hardly probable.

THE INTRUDER.

But the Duke has a long reach!

CYRANO.

Not so long as mine (*showing his sword*) with this extension! Now, go about your business.

THE INTRUDER.

But allow me....

CYRANO.

Go! Or, rather, tell me why you look so sharply at my nose.

THE INTRUDER (*abashed*).

What! I....

CYRANO.

Is there anything extraordinary about it?

THE INTRUDER.

Your lordship mistakes....

CYRANO.

Is it soft and swinging like an elephant's trunk?

THE INTRUDER.

I did not say....

CYRANO.

Or crooked like the beak of an owl?

THE INTRUDER.

No; I....

CYRANO.

Is there a wart on the end of it? Or a fly? What's amiss with it? Or is it a phenomenon?

THE INTRUDER.

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Why, I didn't even look at it!

CYRANO.

Why shouldn't you look at it? Is it repulsive?

THE INTRUDER.

My dear Sir....

CYRANO.

In colour unhealthy? In shape indecent?

THE INTRUDER.

Not at all!

CYRANO.

Why, then, seem to revile it? Perhaps the gentleman finds it rather large?

THE INTRUDER (*stammering*).

I find it small, very, very small.

CYRANO.

How small? Ridiculously then? My nose small! Why, my nose is enormous! Remember, vile flat-nose and flat-head, that I am proud of such an appendix! For a large nose properly indicates a man that is affable, kind, courteous, witty, liberal and brave, such as I am, and such as you, miserable knave! can never be; for the inglorious face that my hand is about to seek above your collar is as destitute (*he slaps intruder's face*).

THE INTRUDER.

Oh!

CYRANO.

Of pride, of flight, of poesy, of picturesqueness, of fire, of magnificence, of Nose, in fact, as the one.... (*Cyrano seizes the Intruder by the shoulders and kicks him in the seat*) that my boot now reaches at the base of your back.

THE INTRUDER (*escaping*).

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Help! Guards!

CYRANO.

Fair warning, then, to idle lookers on
Who criticise the centre of my face!
The critic, if a gentleman, will get,—
Before he flies,—in front and higher too,
My custom's such, some steel instead of leather!

GUICHE (*who with the marquises, has come down from the stage*).

The gentleman is getting very tiresome!

VICOMTE de VALVERT (*shrugging his shoulders*).

He is a braggart!

GUICHE.

And no one answers him?....

THE VICOMTE.

No one? Just wait. Such a retort as I'm going to send him!

(*He advances toward Cyrano, who has been looking at him, and draws himself up with an air of foppish vanity.*)

You.... you have a nose.... hum! a nose, Sir, that is.... very large.

CYRANO (*very quietly and seriously*).

Very large, indeed!

VICOMTE (*laughing*).

Ha! Ha!

CYRANO (*with great self-possession*).

Is that all?

VICOMTE.

Well, I....

CYRANO.

[Pg 30]

No, no, that's a little too short, young man! You might have said.... Well.... many things.... in different keys. For instance, listen: *Aggressive*: "I, Sir, had I such a nose, would at once have it amputated."—*Friendly*: "It must dip into your glass. To drink with comfort, you should have a hanap constructed!"—*Descriptive*: "It is a rock!... a peak!... a headland!!! More than a headland, a whole peninsula!"—*Inquisitive*: "What may this oblong thing be used for? A writing-desk or a tool-chest?"—*Pleasant*: "Do you love birds so much that you feel bound to offer them so comfortable a resting place?"—*Fierce*: "When you use tobacco, Sir, can you emit smoke from that nose without your neighbours' crying that there is a chimney on fire?"—*Thoughtful*: "Be careful; so much top-hamper might cause you to fall!"—*Affectionate*: "Have a parasol made for it; the sun might fade its colour!"—*Pedantic*: "For so much flesh on so much bone beneath the forehead, we must go back, Sir, to the animal Aristophanes calls Hippocampelephantocamelos!"—*Flippant*: "Why! man, is that the fashion for hooks? Certainly convenient for hanging up a hat!"—*Emphatic*: "Masterly nose, no wind can make you catch aught but a fractional cold! None but a northern hurricane!"—*Dramatic*: "When it bleeds, we have the Red Sea!"—*Admiringly*: "For a perfumer, what a sign!"—*Lyric*: "Is it a shell trumpet, and are you a triton?"—*Innocent*: "When is this monument open to visitors?"—*Respectful*: "This is really owning a mansion with a gable on it!"—*Countrylike*: "That be not a nose, but a big turnip, or a young melon!"—*Military*: "Point against cavalry!"—*Practical*: "Will you put it up in a lottery? It will surely be the largest prize!"—Finally, to parody the grief of Pyramus:

So here we have the nose that on its master came
To ruin harmony! The traitor's red for shame!

That is about what you might have said, dear boy, if you had a sprinkling of letters and a bit of humour. Of humour, though, lamentable being, you never had an atom; and, as to letters, you never had but the four that spell the word Fool!—Some invention is requisite for extravagant jests before such an audience, but, even if you had it, you could not have uttered a quarter of the half of the beginning of what I said; for I may be willing to serve such sport myself, but I allow nobody to serve it to *me*.

[Pg 31]

GUICHE (*endeavouring to lead away the Vicomte*).

Vicomte, pay no attention to him!

VICOMTE (*overwhelmed*).

Such arrogance! An insignificant little squire who who doesn't even wear gloves!....and who sallies forth without ribbons, bows or trimmings!

CYRANO.

'Tis morally I have my elegance,
I do not dress as does a fop, but I
Am better groomed than some more richly clad.
I'd not set forth with traces of neglect
About me, say: an insult left unwashed,
A conscience still confused and half asleep,
My honour soiled, or scruples out of shape.
When I proceed, I do so clean and bright,
With truthful independence for a plume.
'Tis not my form I lace to hold it up,
It is my soul I try to elevate!
The ribbons that I wear are only deeds;
I twist perhaps my wit like a mustache;
But then I cause, as I go through your groups,
Above the clash of spurs, the truth to ring!

VICOMTE.

But, Sir

CYRANO.

I have no gloves on?.... What matters it? I did have one left from a very old pair! One day I found [Pg 32]
it somewhat in the way and I left it on somebody's face.

VICOMTE.

Knave, puppy, flat-footed ridiculous bully!

CYRANO (*taking off his hat and bowing, as if the Vicomte had just presented himself*).

Ah! delighted!.... and I: Cyrano, Savinian, Hercules de Bergerac.

(*Laughter around.*)

VICOMTE (*exasperated*).

Buffoon!

CYRANO (*uttering a cry as if he had a cramp*).

Ay!....

VICOMTE (*who was leaving, returning*).

What is it now?

CYRANO (*grinning as if in pain*).

I must move it, for it is asleep.... What a mistake to let it remain inactive.... Ay!....

VICOMTE.

What ails you?

CYRANO.

It's my sword that's tingling!

VICOMTE (*drawing his sword*).

Be it so!

CYRANO.

I'll show you a neat little thrust.

VICOMTE (*disdainfully*).

Poet!

CYRANO.

Yes, Sir, a poet! So much so that, while we play swords here, I mean—hop!—on the spur of the moment, to improvise for you a ballade.

VICOMTE.

[Pg 33]

A ballade?

CYRANO.

Yes. I'll wager you do not know what is a ballade.

VICOMTE.

But....

CYRANO (*as if reciting a lesson*).

Well, then, a ballade is composed of three stanzas of eight lines each....

VICOMTE (*stamping impatiently*).

Oh!

CYRANO (*continuing*).

Plus an Envoy of four lines. Twenty-eight lines in all, with only three rimes....

VICOMTE.

You....

CYRANO.

I am going to compose one while fighting, and when I come to the last line, Sir, I'll touch you!

VICOMTE.

You'll not!

CYRANO.

Be sure, I shall!

(*Declaiming.*)

Ballade of the Duel Between Monsieur de Bergerac and a Coxcomb.

VICOMTE.

What is that, if you please?

CYRANO.

That is the title.

THE AUDIENCE (*greatly excited*).

[Pg 34]

Make room there!.... Capital!.... Stand back!.... Be silent!....

(Tableau.—Circle of lookers-on in the pit,—marquises and officers, with the tradesmen and common people. Pages on each others' shoulders for a better view. All the women standing in the boxes. To the right, Guiche and his followers. To the left, Le Bret, Ragueneau, Cuigy, etc.).

CYRANO (*closing his eyes for a moment*).

Wait....I'm selecting my rimes....There now, I'm ready!

(*He does as he says while speaking the verses.*)

My hat with grace I cast aside;
Next, watch me, please, I slowly free
The cloak in which I'm wont to stride;
And then I draw my sword, you see.
A Celadon^[9] you have in me,
A Scaramuccia very much;
But, pygmy, moderate your glee,
For, when I close th' Envoy, I'll touch!

'Twere better you had slept or died.
O goose, where shall I puncture thee?
Beneath the ribs? Above? Decide!
Or through the breast, where ribbons be?
The hilts are ringing. One, two, three!
My sword, beware! is not a crutch.
I'll strike according to decree,
For, when I close th' Envoy, I'll touch!

I seek in vain a rime in *ide*.
You back—and whiten—let's agree
Upon a word, say: trembling hide,
So, tac! I parry, just a wee,
Your vicious thrust. Now finish we!
I open—quart—or something such—

[Pg 35]

Hold well that spit, you dog, or flee,^[10]
For, when I close th' Envoy, I'll touch!

(He announces with solemnity).

ENVOY.^[11]

Now, Prince, may heaven hear your plea!
I follow, though you break and clutch.
I cut—I feint—Be ready—Hee! *(He lunges.)*

(Vicomte staggers; Cyrano bows.)

For now I close th' Envoy.... *(pointing to Vicomte)*
I touch!

(Applause in boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs are thrown. Officers surround and congratulate Cyrano. Ragueneau dances for joy. Le Bret seems both overjoyed and dejected. The Vicomte's friends support him and bear him off.)

A MUSKETEER *(most cordially shaking Cyrano's hand).*

Allow an expert to congratulate you, Sir, most heartily.

(He leaves.)

CYRANO *(to Cuigy).*

Who is this gentleman?

CUIGY.

D'Artagnan!

LE BRET *(passing his arm through Cyrano's).*

Now let us talk!....

[Pg 36]

CYRANO.

Wait till the crowd has left.

(to Bellerose).

May we stay a while?

BELLEROSE *(to Cyrano).*

Certainly, Sir.

(giving orders to Janitor).

Close the house, but do not put out the lights. We'll return after dinner for a rehearsal.

(Jodelet and Bellerose bow to Cyrano, then exeunt.)

JANITOR *(to Cyrano).*

You are not going to dinner, Sir?

CYRANO.

I?... No.

(Exit Janitor.)

LE BRET *(to Cyrano).*

Why not?

CYRANO *(proudly).*

Because....

(changing his tone, when he sees that the Janitor has gone).

Because I have no money!....

LE BRET *(as if throwing a purse).*

How about that bag of coin?

CYRANO.

Monthly allowance, thou wert short lived! One day!

LE BRET.

For a whole month, then....

CYRANO.

I have nothing left.

LE BRET.

To throw away thus your purse, what folly!

CYRANO.

[Pg 37]

Yes, but what a gesture!

THE WAITING-GIRL (*behind the counter*).

Hum!

(*Cyrano and Le Bret turn around. She advances timidly.*)

Sir I cannot bear.... to see you fast.... (*Showing the buffet*). I have here several things.... Take some!

CYRANO (*taking off his hat*).

My dear child, Gascon pride forbids my accepting from you the smallest of your delicacies. But, on the other hand, I would not for the whole world offend you, as my refusal might do. So I will with pleasure accept....

(*Goes up to the buffet and chooses.*)

Oh! the smallest thing!.... ah! one grape from this bunch.

(*She tries to make him take the bunch, but he picks out a single grape.*)

Only one.... a glass of water....

(*She tries to pour some wine, but he prevents her.*)

Pure water!.... and half a maccaroon.

(*He breaks a maccaroon in two, and returns one of the pieces.*)

LE BRET.

What nonsense!

WAITING-GIRL.

Do have something more!

CYRANO.

Yes, your hand to kiss.

(*He kisses her hand as if she were a princess.*)

WAITING-GIRL.

Thank you, Sir!

(*Curtsies.*)

A very good evening!

(*Exit waiting-girl.*)

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SCENE V.

CYRANO, LE BRET, *later* JANITOR.

CYRANO (*to Le Bret*).

Now, I'll listen to you.

(*He goes to the buffet, on which he places the half maccaroon.*)

Dinner!

(*Then the glass of water.*)

Drink!

(*And the one grape from the bunch.*)

Dessert!

(*Takes a seat by the buffet.*)

Now for the feast! My dear friend, I feel very hungry.... (*Eating*) Well? You were saying?....

LE BRET.

That all these bellicose doings and the admiration they elicit will warp your judgment. Go ask people of sense what they think of this last prank of yours, of its effect.

CYRANO (*finishing his half maccaroon*).

Enormous!....

LE BRET.

The Cardinal!....

CYRANO (*beaming with delight*).

He was there? The Cardinal?

LE BRET.

Yes, and he must have found you....

CYRANO.

Anything but commonplace.

LE BRET.

Nevertheless....

CYRANO.

He's an author. And he must have enjoyed seeing another's play crushed.

LE BRET.

[Pg 39]

You are, really, making too many enemies!

CYRANO (*munching his one grape*).

How many do you estimate I have made to-day?

LE BRET.

Forty-eight, without counting the women.

CYRANO.

Enumerate them.

LE BRET.

Montfleury, the tradesman, Guiche, the Vicomte, Baro, the Academy....

CYRANO.

You give me infinite joy!

LE BRET.

What will all this lead you to? What system is yours?

CYRANO.

I was really meandering, and I found so many conclusions to adopt, through so many complications, that I came to this decision....

LE BRET.

Which is?....

CYRANO.

Oh! the simplest of all, by far. I decided to show myself admirable in all, and for all!

LE BRET (*shrugging his shoulders*).

So be it!.... But come now, tell me, tell *me*, the true reason of your hatred for Montfleury.

CYRANO (*rising*).

This Silenus, with a stomach like a hogshead, still believes himself a danger to womankind. See him, while he stammers on the stage, ogling like a carp, with his frog's eyes! I hate him since he dared, once, to set those eyes of his upon her.... Oh! I felt as if I saw a long slug crawling over a flower!

LE BRET (*astounded*).

[Pg 40]

What, is it possible?....

CYRANO (*with a bitter laugh*).

That I love?

(changing to a solemn tone).

I do love.

LE BRET.

Whom? May I enquire? You never told me.

CYRANO.

Whom I love? Come now, reflect. The dream of being loved, even by a homely girl, is one forbidden me. Forbidden by this nose of mine that precedes me everywhere by fifteen minutes. So, then, I love Whom? Why! it is most natural! I love it could not be otherwise, the loveliest of the lovely!

LE BRET.

The loveliest?....

CYRANO.

Exactly in the world! The most brilliant, the most exquisite, (*crushed*) the blondest!

LE BRET.

This woman is?....

CYRANO.

A deadly danger, though
She knows it not; a snare that Nature made
Unconscious, like a sweetly budding rose
Whose leaves conceal,—in ambush lurking, love.
Who sees her smile knows what perfection is:
Her slightest touch engenders loveliness;
She moves as if all heaven's grace were hers,
And Venus ne'er embarked in any shell,
Nor did Diana tread the sylvan paths
As my adored can step into a chair!

LE BRET.

[Pg 41]

I understand! Quite clear.

CYRANO.

Transparent, say.

LE BRET.

It's Magdeleine, your cousin?

CYRANO.

Yes, Roxane.

LE BRET.

Well, where's the harm? You love her? Tell her so!
She witnessed here just now your valiant deed!

CYRANO.

Why! Look at me, good friend, and say what hope
There can be with such a protuberance!
I clearly see the truth. But, then, of course,
My heart will beat, perchance, at eventide,
If, with this nose, I scent the breath of spring.
Or else, I see, along some moonlit path,
A whisp'ring pair of lovers slowly move;
And then I think what rapture would be mine
If on my arm a gentle creature leaned.
I dream: but suddenly, I'm brought to sense.
By what? Alas! My profile on the wall!

LE BRET.

Dear friend!....

CYRANO.

Yes, friend, it's hard indeed to feel
So homely and forlorn at times....

LE BRET (*taking his hand*).

You weep!

CYRANO.

Weep? Never! Oh! a sorry sight, indeed,
If down this nose a tear should take its course!
I will not have, so long as I command,
The saintliness of tears polluted by
This homeliness of mine. Remember, friend,
That nothing's more sublime than flowing tears.
So would I not allow a single one
To cause a laugh, or seem ridiculous!

[Pg 42]

LE BRET.

Come, come, do not be sad. In love there is hazard, remember.

CYRANO (*shaking his hand*).

No! I love Cleopatra: do I resemble a Cæsar? I adore Berenice: do I look like a Titus?

LE BRET.

But, friend, your bravery, intelligence and wit!.... Take that girl there who just now offered you your dinner. Did her eyes seem to detest you?

CYRANO (*struck*).

It's a fact.

LE BRET.

Well, then, hope!.... Why! Roxane was pale and trembling, ghastly pale, while she followed your duel here!....

CYRANO.

Ghastly pale?

LE BRET.

Her heart and mind were certainly struck. Pick up courage and speak to her, so that....

CYRANO.

So that she bursts out laughing into my face under my very nose? No, no!.... That is the only thing in the world that I fear!

THE JANITOR (*bringing in the duenna, to Cyrano*).

[Pg 43]

Somebody for you, Sir.

CYRANO (*seeing the duenna*).

Great heavens! Her duenna!

SCENE VI.

CYRANO, LE BRET, THE DUENNA.

THE DUENNA (*with a long curtsy*).

A fair cousin would like to know where a valiant cousin can be seen, in private.

CYRANO (*greatly disturbed*).

I be seen, in private?

DUENNA (*with another curtsy*).

Yes, be seen. There are things to be said.

CYRANO.

There are things....

DUENNA (*another curtsy*).

To be said.

CYRANO (*staggering*).

Heavens!

DUENNA.

We'll hear to-morrow early mass, at the church of Saint-Roch.

CYRANO (*leaning on Le Bret*).

Heavens!

DUENNA.

As we go out, we can chat a bit, I fancy.

CYRANO (*bewildered*).

Where?.... I But Heavens!

DUENNA.

Decide.

CYRANO.

[Pg 44]

I'm thinking....

DUENNA.

Where?....

CYRANO.

At.... at.... Ragueneau's.... the pastry-cook's....

DUENNA.

Where's that?....

CYRANO.

Rue.... Rue.... Heavens! Rue St.-Honoré!

DUENNA (*leaving*).

We'll be there by seven sharp. Be punctual.

CYRANO.

I shall!

(*Exit Duenna.*)

SCENE VII.

CYRANO, LE BRET, THE COMEDIANS *and* COMEDIENNES, CUIGY, BRISSAILLE,
LIGNIÈRE, THE JANITOR, THE VIOLINS.

CYRANO (*falling into the arms of Le Bret*).

I!.... She.... An appointment!....

LE BRET.

So, now your sadness is no more?

CYRANO.

No! for, whatever the reason, she knows that I exist!

LE BRET.

And now you will be cool?

CYRANO (*beside himself*).

No, I'll be frantic and invincible! I would I had an army to defeat! I have ten hearts and twenty arms. What are dwarfs to me?.... (*He shouts.*) I must have giants to vanquish!

[Pg 45]

(*For the last few minutes, on the stage, in the rear, actors and actresses have been going and coming: a rehearsal is on. The violins have taken their seats.*)

A VOICE (*from the stage*).

Silence there, please! We're rehearsing.

CYRANO (*laughing*).

Very well. We're leaving.

(*As Cyrano is about going, enter, by the wide door in the rear, Cuigy, Brissaille, and several officers, supporting Lignière, who is completely intoxicated.*)

CUIGY.

Cyrano!

CYRANO.

What is it?

CUIGY.

A friend of yours.

CYRANO (*recognising Lignière*).

Lignière!.... Why! what is the matter?

CUIGY.

He was looking for you.

BRISSAILLE.

He cannot get home.

CYRANO.

Why not?

LIGNIÈRE (*thick-tongued, showing a note soiled and torn*).

This note warns me a hundred men are posted on account of a song I'll be murdered at the Porte de Nesle there I must pass to get home Offer me shelter under your roof! [Pg 46]

CYRANO.

One hundred men, you say? You'll sleep under your own roof.

LIGNIÈRE (*terrified*).

But how can I?....

CYRANO (*in fierce tones, showing him the lighted lantern held by the Janitor, who has been listening*).

Take that lantern!

(*Lignière seizes the lantern.*)

And walk on boldly. I swear to you that I to-night will make your bed for you. (*To the officers.*) You, gentlemen, be good enough to follow at a distance. You'll be witnesses.

CUIGY.

Yes, but one hundred men!....

CYRANO.

To-night I would not have them fewer by a single man!

(*The comedians and comediennes, who have, in their costumes, come down from the stage into the pit, crowd around Cyrano.*)

LE BRET.

But why protect this....

CYRANO.

There's Le Bret grumbling again!

LE BRET.

This commonplace drunkard?....

CYRANO (*playfully striking Lignière on the shoulder*).

Because this drunkard, this cask of Muscatel, this barrel of Rossoli, once did something exceedingly handsome: his lady-love, as she was leaving church, after mass, having properly dipped her dainty finger into the holy water near the door, he, though he has a horror for water, ran up to the stoup, leaned over it and drank it dry! [Pg 47]

COMEDIENNE (*in soubrette's dress*).

A pretty deed, I think.

CYRANO.

Was it not, soubrette?

COMEDIENNE (*to the others*).

But why a hundred men against a poor poet?

CYRANO.

Let us on!.... (*to the officers*) and you, gentlemen, when you see me charge, please do not follow; simply look on, whatever danger I may be in!

COMEDIENNE.

But we wish to see too!

CYRANO.

Come along, then!

COMEDIENNE (*to the troop*).

Let us all go?

CYRANO.

Come, all of you, the Doctor, Isabella, Leander, all! Come as a bevy pleasant and frolicsome! Come, and let the fantasy of Italian farce tinkle through the rumble of to-night's Spanish drama, surrounding it with jingles like a tambourine!

THE WOMEN (*jumping for joy*).

Bravo! Quick, a wrap! a hood!....

JODELET.

Let us proceed!

CYRANO (*to the violins*).

Will the violins supply the music?

(The violins join the formation. Candles are taken from the footlights and distributed; and thus a torch-light procession is prepared.)

[Pg 48]

CYRANO.

Bravo! Officers, gentlemen and women in fancy dress! Now, ten steps ahead (*he places himself as he speaks*) I, alone, beneath the plume that glory itself stuck into this hat proud as a Scipion thrice Nasica!.... Understood?.... All assistance to me is forbidden! Ready?.... Open the door!

(Janitor opens the door, through which can be seen a bit of old Paris, picturesque in the moonlight.)

Ah! Paris in the dimness of the night,
With moonlight trickling down the bluish roofs.
For coming deed how exquisite the frame!
'Neath mist as light as gauze, behold! the Seine,
As if it were a magic mirror there,
Is trembling and you'll see what you shall see!

ALL.

To the Porte de Nesle!

CYRANO (*on the threshold*).

To the Porte de Nesle!

(Turning, before going out, to the soubrette.)

Did you not ask, Mademoiselle, why against this one rimester a hundred men were sent?

(He draws his sword and continues very quietly.)

Because he is known to be a friend of mine!

(Exit Cyrano. The procession—Lignière with unsteady head—the comediennes hanging upon the arms of the officers, then the comedians dancing and capering—moves out into the night, with the violins for music, and with candles for light.)

CURTAIN.



FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

[Pg 49]

THE POET'S COOK-SHOP.

The shop of Ragueneau, poulterer and pastry-cook, a large establishment in Paris, on the corner of the Rue St.-Honoré and the Rue de l'Arbre-Sec. In the rear, through the wide glazed door, the streets are plainly seen, grey in the light of dawn.

To the left, first entrance, a counter, above which is an iron frame, from hooks on which are suspended geese, ducks and white peacocks. Large crockery vases containing ordinary plants, principally sunflowers. On the same side, second entrance, a wide fireplace, before which, between two monumental andirons, on each of which a pot is hung, several roasts, the fat of which is dripping into pans.

To the right, first entrance, a door. Second entrance, a staircase leading up to a small inside room, the interior of which is visible through its open blinds; a table is there, with cover set, lighted by a Flemish chandelier. A wooden gallery at the top of the staircase leads seemingly to other rooms of the same sort.

In the centre of the shop, an iron ring is hung: it can be lowered by means of a pulley, and on it are large pieces of game, meat, hams, etc. It forms a peculiar sort of chandelier.

Under the staircase, the glow of several ovens. Copper saucepans shine. Spits are turning. Morning activity. Cook-boys run in and out. Fat chefs are seen now and then. Loads of cakes and meat-pies are brought in on willow trays.

Tables are garnished with cakes and eatables. Other tables, with chairs around, are prepared for customers. A small table in a corner is covered with papers. Before it is seated Ragueneau, who is writing, as the curtain rises.

[Pg 50]

SCENE I.

RAGUENEAU, PASTRY-COOKS, *then* LISE. RAGUENEAU *is writing and counts on his fingers.*

FIRST PASTRY-COOK (*bearing a dish*).

Candied fruits!

SECOND PASTRY-COOK (*with another dish*).

Pie!

THIRD PASTRY-COOK (*with a roast*).

Peacock!

FOURTH PASTRY-COOK (*with a tray*).

Cakes!

FIFTH PASTRY-COOK (*with an earthen bowl*).

Stewed beef!

RAGUENEAU (*stops writing and looks up*).

The copper's yellow sheen is silvered by the dawn^[12]
Now smother, Ragueneau, the godly notes you love!
Sweet poesy must wait—just now is cooking time!

(*He rises. To one of the cooks.*)

Look here! Your sauce is thick, and you must lengthen it.

COOK.

How much?

RAGUENEAU.

Three feet.

(*Passes on.*)

O Muse, keep thou aloof, or else your pleading eyes
Will suffer from the glare of vulgar fires here!

(*to one of the pastry-cooks.*)

These loaves are badly set, the split should not be thus,
Cesuras should be placed between the hemstitches.

(*to another, pointing to an unfinished meat-pie.*)

[Pg 51]

This palace made of crust is fine, but needs a roof.

(*to an apprentice boy who, seated on the floor, is running a fowl on a spit.*)

The spit is long enough for chickens, turkeys, all,
But alternate, my boy, and imitate Malherbe:
His lines the longest were relieved by shorter ones.
Do you the same, prepare real stanzas on the spit!

ANOTHER APPRENTICE (*carrying a tray over which is a large napkin.*)

Dear Master, this for you was in the oven cooked.
We wish to please you, Sir!

RAGUENEAU.

A lyre!

THE APPRENTICE.

Made of paste!

RAGUENEAU (*moved.*)

Of candied fruits besides! And strings of sugar, too!

THE APPRENTICE.

To give a sweeter tone!

RAGUENEAU (*handing him some money.*)

It's fine; go drink my health

(*seeing Lise, as she enters.*)

My wife! Be silent—skip!

(*to Lise, showing her the lyre.*)

Fine work!

LISE.

Ridiculous!

(*She lays on the counter a bundle of paper bags.*)

RAGUENEAU.

Some bags; I thank you, dear.

(*Looks at the bags.*)

The manuscripts I love!
The verses of my friends! All mutilated! Torn!
To serve as wrappers for such prosy things as cakes!
It's Orpheus once again pursued by the Bacchantes!

LISE (*harshly.*)

I use the only thing your friends in payment give;
Your sorry scribblers bent on not completing lines!

RAGUENEAU.

[Pg 52]

The ant should not insult the magic cricket's song!

LISE.

Before these crickets thus possessed you wholly, dear,
You never said to me: bacchante, or even: ant!

RAGUENEAU.

Treat verses thus!

LISE.

Why not?

RAGUENEAU.

What would you do with prose?

SCENE II.

The same, TWO CHILDREN come in to buy cakes.

RAGUENEAU.

What is it, little ones?

FIRST CHILD.

We want three patties, please.

RAGUENEAU (*servicing them*).

Here they are, well-browned, just out of the oven.

SECOND CHILD.

Please wrap them up for us.

RAGUENEAU (*aside*).

[Pg 53]

Alas! my bags!

(*to the children*). Oh! wrap them up, hey?....

(*takes one of the bags to use it, but first reads from it*).

"As was Ulysses when he left Penelope...."
Not this one!....

(*puts the bag aside, and takes up another, from which also he reads*).

"Blond Phœbus...."

Not this one!
(*Sets the bag aside.*)

LISE (*out of patience*).

Well, what are you waiting for?

RAGUENEAU.

Coming! Coming!

(*takes up a third bag and then with resignation*).

The sonnet to Philis!.... pretty hard too!

LISE.

You were long enough about it!

(*shrugging her shoulders*).

Goose!

(*She climbs upon a chair to arrange dishes and plates on a shelf*).

RAGUENEAU (*taking advantage of the fact that her back is turned, calls back the children who were just passing out*).

Pst!.... Little ones!.... Return me the bag and instead of three patties I'll give you six.

(*The children give him the bag, take the cakes and leave. Ragueneau smoothes the paper and reads*).

"Philis!" On this sweet name, a grease spot!.... "Philis!"

(*Cyrano enters abruptly*).

RAGUENEAU, LISE, CYRANO, *then* A MUSKETEER.

CYRANO.

What time is it?

RAGUENEAU (*bowing low to him*).

Six o'clock.

CYRANO (*excited*).

In one hour!

(*Walks to and fro through the shop.*)

RAGUENEAU (*following him*).

Bravo! I witnessed....

CYRANO.

What?

RAGUENEAU.

Your fight.

CYRANO.

Which one?

RAGUENEAU.

The one at the Hôtel de Bourgogne.

CYRANO (*disdainfully*).

Oh!.... that duel!....

RAGUENEAU (*admiringly*).

Yes, your duel in verse.

LISE (*aside*).

In verse!.... His mouth seems to him too small for the words!

CYRANO (*to Ragueneau*).

Ah!.... So much the better!

RAGUENEAU (*lunging with the spit he has seized*).

[Pg 55]

"For, when I close th' Envoy, I'll touch!...."

"For, when I close th' Envoy, I'll touch!...."

How beautiful!.... (*with growing enthusiasm*).

"For, when I close th' Envoy,...."

CYRANO.

Ragueneau, what time is it?

RAGUENEAU (*remaining with arm and leg outstretched, simply turning his head to look at the clock*).

Five minutes after six!....

"I touch!"

(*He rises.*)

Oh! to write a ballade!

LISE (*to Cyrano, who, on passing near her, has absent-mindedly shaken hands with her*).

Why! what is the matter with your hand?

CYRANO.

Oh! nothing! A scratch.

RAGUENEAU.

Were you exposed to any peril?

CYRANO.

No peril!

LISE (*threatening him with her finger*).

I fear you are not telling the truth!

CYRANO.

What! Did my nose move? What an enormous lie that would indicate! (*becoming serious*). I expect somebody here. If that somebody comes—you never can tell,—please leave us here alone.

RAGUENEAU.

[Pg 56]

That is hardly possible; my rimesters^[13] are coming....

LISE (*ironical*).

For their first meal.

CYRANO.

You will have to take them away when I make a sign to you.... What time is it?

RAGUENEAU.

Ten minutes after six.

CYRANO (*sitting down nervously at Ragueneau's table, and taking some paper*).

A pen, please!....

RAGUENEAU (*offering him the one that he has behind his ear*).

A swan quill.

A MUSKETEER (*with an enormous mustache and stentorian voice*) enters.

Good morning!

(*Lise goes rapidly up to him.*)

CYRANO (*turning around*).

Who is this?

RAGUENEAU.

A friend of my wife's. A terrible warrior,—at least so he says!....

CYRANO (*taking up the pen and motioning away Ragueneau*).

Silence!.... write—fold,—(*to himself*) hand it to her,—and run away....

(*throwing away the pen*). Coward!....But may I die if I dare speak to her, even a single word....

(*to Ragueneau*). What time is it?

RAGUENEAU.

[Pg 57]

A quarter past six!....

CYRANO (*striking his breast*).

But I have plenty of words here, and by writing....

(*Takes up the pen.*)

So be it then! I'll write.—This letter fraught
With love, I've thought it out a hundred times;
It's ready, and, to close it, I have but
To read my soul, and copy what I read.

(*He writes. Behind the glazed door, a movement of lean and hesitating forms.*)

SCENE IV.

RAGUENEAU, LISE, THE MUSKETEER, CYRANO, *by the table, writing*, THE POETS,
clad in black, bedraggled.

LISE (*entering, to Ragueneau*).

Here are your bedraggled friends!

FIRST POET (*entering, to Ragueneau*).

Brother-poet!....

SECOND POET (*shaking Ragueneau by the hand*).

Dear brother-poet!

THIRD POET.

Eagle of pastry-cooks!

(*sniffing*) It smells good in your nest.

FOURTH POET.

O Phœbus-Caterer! Apollo master-cook!....

RAGUENEAU (*somewhat bewildered*).

How soon one feels at ease with them!

FIRST POET.

We were delayed a bit by something of a crowd,
Close by the Porte de Nesle!....

SECOND POET.

By sword both slashed and pierced,
Eight cut-throats bleeding fast illustrated the street.

CYRANO (*looking up*).

Eight?... I thought seven.

(*continues writing.*)

RAGUENEAU (*to Cyrano*).

Who fought so bravely? Do you know?

CYRANO (*treating the matter lightly*).

I?... No!

LISE (*to the Musketeer*).

Do you?

MUSKETEER (*curling his mustache*).

Perhaps.

CYRANO (*writing—mutters a word now and then, aside*).

I love you....

FIRST POET.

A single man, they say, put all the band to flight!....

CYRANO (*writing*).

Your eyes!....

SECOND POET.

Why! Spears and hats were found a hundred yards away!

CYRANO (*writing*).

Your lips!....

FIRST POET.

Quite fearless must be he who fought so many thus.

CYRANO (*writing*).

And I am like to faint, outdone, when you appear.

SECOND POET (*helping himself to a cake*).

What new rimes can you give us, Ragueneau?

CYRANO (*writing*).

Who loves you!....

(*He stops just as he was going to sign, rises, folds the letter and puts it into*

his doublet.)

Signature unnecessary. I'll hand her the letter myself.

RAGUENEAU (*to Second Poet*).

I have put a recipe into verse.

THIRD POET (*settling near a tray of tarts*).

Oh! let us hear the lines.

FOURTH POET.

This cake is crooked. Make it straight.

(*Eats it.*)

SECOND POET.

We are listening.

THIRD POET.

This tart will lose its cream. We'll save it.

(*Eats the tart.*)

SECOND POET (*breaking off and eating a piece of the candied lyre*).

The only time perhaps a lyre's fed its man.

RAGUENEAU (*who has been preparing to recite, coughing, settling his cap and striking an attitude*).

A recipe in verse....

SECOND POET (*to First Poet*).

Why! you are breakfasting!

FIRST POET (*to Second Poet*).

And you are dining, friend!

RAGUENEAU.

HOW TO MAKE ALMOND TARTS.

Beat up to foam, discarding dregs,
Your choice of eggs.
Add carefully into the foam
Some citron juice that's new and stout;
Then lengthen out
With milk of almonds made at home.

Next, coat with dough, both fresh and sound,
Below, around,
Such moulds as pastry-cooks prepare.
Add sweetening to suit your taste
Into the paste.
Then pour quite slowly and with care

Your foam into each well^[14], so well
That ev'ry well,
When it is baked to blondness, starts
To seek the walks that pleasure sings.
These seemly things
Are rightly christened: almond tarts.

THE POETS (*mouths full*).

Most exquisite! Divine!

ONE OF THE POETS (*choking*).

Humph!

(*They go to the rear, still eating. Cyrano, who has been watching them, goes up to Ragueneau.*)

CYRANO.

They seem to drink your verse, my friend; but see you not
How they assimilate your stock of eatables?

RAGUENEAU (*in low tone, smiling*).

I see, but notice not, for fear I'd trouble them;
And reading so my lines affords me double joy,
Since thus I satisfy a weakness that I own,
And feed the while poor souls whose pressing need is food!

CYRANO (*striking him on the shoulder*).

[Pg 61]

I like you, Ragueneau!....

(Ragueneau joins his friends, the poets. Cyrano looks at him for a while, then suddenly says:)

Tell me there, Lise!

(Lise, who seems to be engaged in a very animated flirtation with the Musketeer, starts and comes down to Cyrano.)

This captain.... seems to be besieging you?

LISE (*offended*).

Oh! my eyes have a look haughty enough to vanquish all who attack my virtue.

CYRANO (*very firmly*).

I like Ragueneau very much. For this reason, Mistress Lise, I forbid that anybody should make him ridiculous.^[15]

LISE.

But you mistake....

CYRANO (*speaking loud, so as to be heard by the Musketeer*).

A word to the wise....

(He bows to the Musketeer, and, after looking at the clock, goes to the door, where he stands looking out.)

LISE (*to the Musketeer, who simply returned Cyrano's bow*).

Really, you surprise me!.... Why do you not answer?.... Speak of his nose....

THE MUSKETEER.

His nose.... his nose.... that is easily said....

(Retires rapidly, Lise following.)

CYRANO (*from the door, signals to Ragueneau to draw away the poets*).

Pst!....

RAGUENEAU (*pointing out to the Poets the door to the right*).

[Pg 62]

We shall be much more comfortable in there....

CYRANO (*getting out of patience*).

Pst!.... Pst!....

RAGUENEAU (*pushing the Poets along*).

We'll read some more verses.

FIRST POET (*in despair, with his mouth full*).

But the cakes!....

SECOND POET.

Let us take them along.

(They all go out, following Ragueneau, in a sort of procession, after having loaded themselves with cakes.)

SCENE V.

CYRANO, ROXANE, THE DUENNA.

CYRANO.

I shall hand her my letter if I feel that there is any hope, however slight!....

(Roxane, masked, and followed by the Duenna, appears behind the glazed

door, that Cyrano opens eagerly.)

Be pleased to enter!....

(Walking up to the Duenna). As to you, Duenna, one word!

DUENNA.

Four words, if you will, Sir.

CYRANO.

Are you fond of cake and such?

DUENNA.

[Pg 63]

To and beyond excess.^[16]

CYRANO *(taking paper bags from the counter).*

Good! Here are two sonnets....

DUENNA.

Ugh!

CYRANO.

....That I fill with tartlets.

DUENNA *(looking pleasant).*

Ah!

CYRANO.

Are you fond of cream cakes?

DUENNA.

More than fond when they contain too much cream!

CYRANO.

Here are six for you, wrapped in a poem. Do you like all cakes?

DUENNA.

All, all, all.

CYRANO *(loading her with paper bags full of cakes).*

Here are a few. Go now and eat them.... outside.

DUENNA.

But I....

CYRANO *(pushing her out).*

And do not return until you have eaten them all.

(He closes the door, comes down toward Roxane, takes off his hat, and stops, respectfully, at a distance.)

[Pg 64]

SCENE VI.

CYRANO, ROXANE, *and, a moment,* THE DUENNA.

CYRANO.

Among all moments be the present blessed,
Since, ceasing to forget that I exist,—
However humbly—you have come to say....
To say....

ROXANE *(who has unmasked).*

To say: I thank you heartily.
For, know you now, the fop, the brainless wretch
You vanquished yesterday in noble strife,
Was being forced upon me....

(bashfully)

....As a mate
For life, by one who says he loves me....

CYRANO.

Guiche!....
Who's good at scheming thus....

(saluting)

So then I fought,
Not for my nose, but for your smiling eyes.

ROXANE.

And then I wished.... but the admission needs
That I should find in you.... the brother that
You were of yore....when we were children both.

CYRANO.

When Bergerac was our summer ground....

ROXANE.

And reeds made up your goodly stock of swords....

CYRANO.

While waving corn gave flowing hair for dolls.

ROXANE.

What happy days! For you my will was law....

CYRANO.

[Pg 65]

You're now Roxane; you then were Madeleine.

ROXANE.

And pretty?

CYRANO.

You were not a sorry sight.

ROXANE.

How often, romping, you would get a hurt!
Then, motherly, I'd say, in sternest voice:
"Another frolic and another scratch!"....

(She stops astonished.)

The same to-day! What's this?

(Cyrano tries to withdraw his hand.)

No, let me see!
You're still a boy, it seems.—Say when and how!

CYRANO.

At play just now, around the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE *(taking a seat at one of the tables, and wetting her handkerchief in a glass of water).*

Your hand!

CYRANO *(taking a seat near her).*

How gently thoughtful you've remained!

ROXANE.

How many foes?

CYRANO.

Not quite a hundred.

ROXANE.

Oh!

Do tell me all!

CYRANO.

What for? It's better far
You tell me what you did not dare to say....

But now I dare. The memories of yore
Assist me. I'm....in love with somebody.

CYRANO.

Indeed!

ROXANE.

Who knows it not....

CYRANO.

Indeed!

ROXANE.

.... Not yet.

CYRANO.

Indeed!

ROXANE.

But he shall know it soon.

CYRANO.

Indeed!

ROXANE.

Poor fellow, he has loved me timidly,
And from afar, and never dared to speak!

CYRANO.

Indeed!

ROXANE.

Your hand is feverish.... Oh! I easily could see the truth beneath his bashfulness!

CYRANO.

Indeed!....

ROXANE (*as she finished bandaging his hand*).

And see what a coincidence, dear cousin! He belongs to your regiment!

CYRANO.

Indeed!....

ROXANE (*laughing*).

Why, of course, he is a cadet in your Company!....

CYRANO.

Indeed!

ROXANE.

He bears on his brow the mark of intelligence, of genius!
He is haughty, noble, young, intrepid, handsome,....

CYRANO (*rising, very pale*).

Handsome!

ROXANE.

Why! what is the matter?

CYRANO.

The matter? Nothing It is It is

(*Showing his hand and smiling*). This little scratch.

ROXANE.

Oh! Well, I really love him. I must say, however, that I have seen him only at the Theatre

CYRANO.

Then you have not spoken to each other?

ROXANE.

Our eyes alone have done the talking.

CYRANO.

Well, then, how do you know?

ROXANE.

Beneath the linden trees of the Place Royal there is some gossiping and information has reached me

CYRANO.

He is a cadet, you say?

ROXANE.

[Pg 68]

Yes, a cadet in the Guards.

CYRANO.

His name?

ROXANE.

Baron Christian de Neuville.

CYRANO.

How?... There is nobody of that name among the cadets.

ROXANE.

Oh! yes, there is, since this morning. His Captain is Carbon of Haughty-Hall.

CYRANO.

And so, quick, quick, we throw away our little heart?... But my poor child....

THE DUENNA (*looking in at the door*).

Monsieur de Bergerac, I have finished the cakes!

CYRANO.

Well, then, read the verses that you will find on the bags!

(*Duenna disappears.*)

.... My poor child, for you who are accustomed to refined language, to subtle thoughts,—suppose he were thoroughly uninitiated, in fact, a savage!

ROXANE.

Oh! no, he has the hair of a hero!

CYRANO.

Suppose he were as poor in speech as rich in hair.

ROXANE.

No, all his words are choice; I can tell by seeing him.

CYRANO.

[Pg 69]

Of course, all words are choice when they come through a mustache that is well curled.—But suppose he were a dunce!....

ROXANE (*striking the floor with her foot, impatiently*).

Well, it would kill me! There!

CYRANO (*after a pause*).

And it is to tell me this that you asked me to meet you here? I fail to see the necessity of the appointment, Madam.

ROXANE.

The fact is that somebody frightened me yesterday by telling me that you are all Gascons in your Company....

CYRANO.

And that we challenge any beardless hero who, through influence, and not being really a Gascon,

manages to get assigned to our Gascon Company? That is what you were told.

ROXANE.

And you imagine how I tremble for him?

CYRANO (*between his teeth*).

Not without good reason!

ROXANE.

But then I was reminded of you, and of your skill and courage, your great achievements; and I thought: if he, Cyrano, whom everyone respects, would....

CYRANO.

'Tis well. I'll answer for your little baron.

ROXANE.

Yes, defend him always, please. And many thanks! You know how fond of you I've always been?

CYRANO.

[Pg 70]

Oh! yes, I know.

ROXANE.

You'll be his friend?

CYRANO.

I will.

ROXANE.

And he shall have no duels to fight.

CYRANO.

None; you have my promise.

ROXANE.

Ah! you are my dearest friend.—But I must go.

(She puts on her mask again, throws a lace scarf over her head, and then, in an unconcerned way says:)

But you did not relate to me your battle of last night. You must have been grand!.... Tell him to write me.

(Sends him a kiss with her hand.)

Dear, dear friend!

CYRANO.

All is understood.

ROXANE.

One hundred men against one: you!—So, good bye!—We are the best of friends, are we not?

CYRANO.

Assuredly, we are!

ROXANE.

Tell him to write!.... One hundred men!.... You'll tell me all about it later. To-day I cannot listen. One hundred men! How brave!

CYRANO (*bowing*).

[Pg 71]

Oh! I have done better since.

(Exit Roxane. Cyrano remains motionless, his eyes on the floor. Silence. The door to the right opens, and Ragueneau passes in his head.)

SCENE VII.

CYRANO, RAGUENEAU, THE POETS, CARBON OF HAUGHTY-HALL, THE CADETS, THE CROWD, *etc.*, later LE BRET, and then GUICHE.

RAGUENEAU.

The coast is clear?

CYRANO (*motionless*).

Yes.

(Ragueneau makes a sign, and his friends come in. At the same moment appears in the doorway Carbon of Haughty-Hall, in full uniform of Captain of the Guards; he lifts his arms on discovering Cyrano.)

CARBON.

Here he is at last!

CYRANO (*raising his eyes*).

Captain!....

CARBON (*rejoiced*).

Our hero! We heard it all. Thirty at least of the Cadets are here!....

CYRANO (*falling back*).

But, Captain....

CARBON (*trying to take him along*).

Come! They wish to see you!

CYRANO.

No, I cannot!

CARBON.

[Pg 72]

They are over the way, at the Inn of the Cross.

CYRANO.

I cannot.

CARBON (*going to the door and shouting outside*).

Our hero refuses. He is out of sorts!

A VOICE (*outside*).

Sandious!^[17]

(Noise outside. Sound of swords and boots drawing near.)

CARBON (*rubbing his hands*).

They are crossing the street!....

THE CADETS (*invading the shop*).

Milledious!—Capededious!—Mordious!—Pocapeddious!

RAGUENEAU (*retreating in terror*).

Why, gentlemen, are you all from Gascony?

THE CADETS.

Everyone of us!

A CADET (*to Cyrano*).

Bravo!

CYRANO.

Baron, yours!....

ANOTHER CADET (*shaking Cyrano's hand*).

Bravo!

CYRANO.

Yours, baron!

THIRD CADET.

[Pg 73]

Allow me to embrace you!

CYRANO.

Baron, baron!

SEVERAL CADETS.

Let us all embrace him!

CYRANO.

Baron.... baron.... spare me!....

RAGUENEAU.

But, gentlemen, are you all barons?

THE CADETS.

All of us!

FIRST CADET.

With our coronets alone you could build a tower.

LE BRET (*enters and runs up to Cyrano*).

An enthusiastic crowd is looking for you!

CYRANO (*frightened*).

You didn't tell them where I am?

LE BRET (*rubbing his hands*).

Of course I did!

(The street is crowded with pedestrians, chaises and coaches, all stopping before the door.)

You saw Roxane?

CYRANO (*rapidly*).

Be silent!

THE CROWD (*outside*).

Cyrano! Cyrano!

(They invade the shop, pushing each other, and shower Cyrano with congratulations.)

RAGUENEAU (*standing on a table*).

[Pg 74]

My shop is taken by storm! and almost wrecked! Beautiful! Beautiful!

PEOPLE AROUND CYRANO.

Dear friend!.... Brave friend.... Heroic friend!....

CYRANO.

Yesterday I had nothing like as many friends!....

LE BRET (*delighted*).

Success, you see! Success!

A MARQUIS (*running up with extended hands*).

If you only knew, dear boy....

CYRANO.

Dear boy? Dear boy? On what field did we ever camp together?

MARQUIS.

I should be pleased to present you, Sir, to some ladies who are outside in my coach.

CYRANO.

But, first, you—who will present you to me?

LE BRET (*dumbfounded*).

Why! friend, what ails you?

CYRANO.

Be silent, please!

A MAN OF LETTERS (*with pen and tablets*).

May I not gather some details....

CYRANO.

You may not!

LE BRET (*aside to Cyrano*).

But this is Theophraste Renaudot, who invented the gazette!

CYRANO.

[Pg 75]

I care not!

LE BRET.

.... That sheet in which are found so many things of interest. The idea, it is said, has before it a great future.

A POET.

Dear Sir, I desire to build upon your name a pentacrostic.

ANOTHER POET.

I desire, dear Sir,....

CYRANO.

Enough! Enough!

(Movement. The crowd becomes more orderly and opens. Guiche appears, with an escort of officers: Cuigy, Brissaille, the officers who accompanied Cyrano at the close of Act I.)

CUIGY (*running up to Cyrano*).

Here is Monsieur de Guiche! He is sent by Marshal de Gassion!

GUICHE (*bowing to Cyrano*).

.... Who desires to express to you, Sir, his admiration for the wonderful prowess that we have just heard of.

THE CROWD.

Bravo! Bravo!

CYRANO (*bowing*).

The Marshal is a connoisseur in deeds of valour.

GUICHE.

He never would have believed the feat possible, if these gentlemen had not sworn that they witnessed it.

CUIGY.

With our own good eyes!

LE BRET (*aside, to Cyrano, who seems lost in thought*).

My good friend....

CYRANO (*to Le Bret*).

[Pg 76]

Be silent!

LE BRET (*aside to Cyrano*).

You seem to suffer!

CYRANO (*awakening and drawing himself up*).

Before all these people!.... I Suffer!.... Watch, and you shall see.

GUICHE (*to whom Cuigy has whispered a few words*).

All know that you have accomplished wonders before this. You are serving the King with these hare-brained Gascons, are you not?

CYRANO.

Yes, with the cadets.

A CADET (*in stentorian tones*).

With us!

GUICHE (*looking at the Gascons, who have aligned behind Cyrano*).

Ah! ah!.... So these haughty-looking gentlemen are the famous....

CARBON.

Cyrano!

CYRANO.

Captain?

CARBON.

Since my Company is all here, I believe, present it to the Count, if you please.

CYRANO (*taking two steps toward Guiche, and pointing to the Cadets*).

Fair Gascony's cadets are they,
With Carbon—He of Haughty-Hall,^[18]
They fight and lie without dismay,
Fair Gascony's cadets are they!
In heraldry they've all to say,
And pedigrees like theirs appall.
Fair Gascony's cadets are they,
With Carbon—He of Haughty-Hall!

[Pg 77]

With eagle eye, in crane's array,
With cat's mustache, and tooth for all,
Through rabble growling as they may,
With eagle eye, in crane's array,
They strut with hats in sad decay
Beneath their plumes so bright and tall!
With eagle eye, in crane's array,
With cat's mustache, and tooth for all!

Abdomen-Blade and Slash-Away
Are names to them of pleasant fall.
They thirst for glory night and day
Abdomen-Blade and Slash-Away!
In every battle brawl, or fray....
They congregate as for a ball....
Abdomen-Blade and Slash-Away
Are names to them of pleasant fall!

Fair Gascony's cadets are they
To husbands....writing on the wall!
O woman, wench of godly clay,
Fair Gascony's cadets are they!
Though jealous masters fume and bray,
Let trumpet sound! Let cuckoo call!
Fair Gascony's cadets are they,
To husbands, writing on the wall!

[Pg 78]

GUICHE (*comfortably seated in an armchair that Ragueneau promptly brought in*).

A poet is one of our choice luxuries to-day. Will you be mine?

CYRANO.

No, Sir, nobody's!

GUICHE.

Your ready wit, yesterday, caused much amusement to my uncle Richelieu. I shall take pleasure in recommending you to him.

LE BRET (*dazzled*).

What a good fortune!

GUICHE.

You certainly must have rimed some five-act tragedy?

LE BRET (*whispering to Cyrano*).

Your "Agrippine!" You'll have it played!

GUICHE.

Yes, take your work to the Cardinal.

CYRANO (*delighted and tempted*).

But, really....

GUICHE.

He is quite an expert, but will not make too many corrections!

CYRANO (*whose face has immediately resumed its severe look*).

Impossible, Sir! My blood curdles at the thought of my verse being improved by the displacement or the addition of a single comma.

GUICHE.

But, on the other hand, my dear fellow, when a line pleases him, he pays for it a large price.

CYRANO.

[Pg 79]

Not so large a one as I myself pay. When I have written a line and then I fall in love with it, I buy it from and sing it to myself.

GUICHE.

Your disposition is a proud one!

CYRANO.

Really, you noticed it?

A CADET (*enters with, strung on a sword, a number of hats, crushed, pierced and very much dejected as to plumes*).

Behold, Cyrano! This morning, on the quay, we found this sorry feathered game. The hats of those you put to flight!....

CARBON.

Spolia opima!

(*Everybody laughs.*)

CUIGY.

Whoever paid these cut-throats must to-day regret his bargain.

BRISSAILLE.

Does anyone know who it is?

GUICHE.

It is I!

(*Laughing stops short.*)

I had hired them—a nobleman is above doing these things himself—to chastise—a drunkard rimester.

(*General embarrassment.*)

THE CADET (*aside to Cyrano, pointing to the hats*).

What shall we do with them? They are greasy enough to make a stew.

CYRANO (*taking the sword on which the hats are strung, and allowing them, as he salutes, to slip off at the feet of Guiche*).

[Pg 80]

You may desire, Sir, to return them to your friends.

GUICHE (*rising and in sharp tones*).

My chair, immediately!

(*to Cyrano, angrily*).

As to you, Sir!....

A VOICE (*in the street*).

The chair of his lordship Count de Guiche.

GUICHE (*who has conquered his feelings and now smiles*).

No doubt you've read Don Quixote?

CYRANO.

Yes, and, when

I hear the name of this enthusiast,
I doff my hat.

GUICHE.

Then kindly meditate
The windmill chapter....

CYRANO (*bowing*).

Yes,—I know—thirteenth.

GUICHE.

When windmills are attacked it happens oft....

CYRANO.

Have I attacked some noble weather-vane?

GUICHE.

That, if their mighty arms revolve, a man
Is dashed to earth!....

CYRANO.

Or lifted to the stars!

(Exit Guiche, who enters his chair. His friends, whispering. Crowd withdraws.)

[Pg 81]

SCENE VIII.

CYRANO, LE BRET, THE CADETS, *who have taken seats at the tables, and are eating and drinking.*

CYRANO (*bowing out in an affectedly polite way those who are leaving without taking any further notice of him*).

Gentlemen—delighted—Delighted—gentlemen—

LE BRET (*lifting his arms in despair*).

A pretty mess you've made of it!

CYRANO.

Oh! of course! As usual, you must growl!

LE BRET.

Come, now, you must admit that this constant assassination—that is the word—of every passing opportunity is, to say the least, a gross exaggeration.

CYRANO.

Well, yes, I do exaggerate. There!

LE BRET (*triumphant*).

You see!

CYRANO.

But I do so as a matter of principle, for the sake of example. In my opinion, such exaggeration is good.

LE BRET.

Suppose you set aside, a while, your soul
Heroic and success....

CYRANO.

What should I do?....

Set out to find a power, influence,
A master, then? A lowly ivy be
That licks the trunk it uses for support?
Creep up by stealth, instead of rising strong?
I thank you, no!—Inscribe the verse I write
To money bags, and play the low buffoon,
To cause, on lips that I despise, a smile?
I thank you, no! For breakfast eat a toad?
Wear out, or soil, especially my knees?
Forever prove how pliant is a spine?
I thank you, no! Give—only to exact?

[Pg 82]

Have ready praise for all, and strive to be
A pygmy hero in a puny ring?
I thank you, no! Ask publishers to print
My verse—at my expense? I thank you, no!
Seek favour from the solemn councils held
By pompous fools in taverns and the like?
I thank you, no! Or try to build a name
Upon a single sonnet, sooner than
Write other sonnets? No. I thank you, no!
Be terrorized by journals vague and small,
And hope the while they'll not forget me? No,
I thank you! Ever weigh, observe and fear?
Place gossip far above poetic lines?
Solicit, beg, crave notoriety?
I thank you, no! I thank you, nay!.... But, oh!....
To sing, to dream, to laugh, to be alone
And free, with eyes that naught will cause to turn,
And with a voice that naught will cause to shake!
To cock your hat, if you feel so disposed:
For this, or that, to fight—or write a verse!
To plan, without a thought of gold or fame,
A novel trip, perhaps unto the moon!
To write but what is honestly your own,
And, diffident for once, reflect: my boy,
Be satisfied with flower, fruit.... or leaf,
If they have grown on soil that's strictly yours!
Then, if perchance a bit of fame is earned,
To feel that none of it to Cæsar's due!
The truth is there, and so is honesty:
Despise to ape the ivy-parasite,
And try to be an oak, or elm, to rise,
Not very high, perhaps, but rise alone!

[Pg 83]

LE BRET.

Alone, you're right! But not opposing all!
Why should you make so many enemies?

CYRANO.

Because I see you make so many friends,
And smile on them with mouths I'll not describe.^[19]
I'm glad to pass with fewer greetings met,
And proud to think: another enemy!

LE BRET.

You are insane!

CYRANO.

Perhaps. My vice is such.
I'm pleased if I displease. Indeed, I love
To gather hatred. Friend, you've never felt
The thrill that's caused by walking on erect,
While fifty pairs of eyes are sending shot,
As if they were so many guns! And then....
How comical the spots on doublets made
By envy's gall and cowardice's slaver!
—Loose friendships like to those you cultivate
Resemble the Italian collars, soft
And open-worked, that feminize your necks.
They're easy and of tranquil-going mien;
Your head with them can bend to any will.
Not so with me! For Hatred, every morn,
Makes stiff the ruff that forces up my head!
An enemy I gain's another fold
That straightens me the more, perhaps, but adds
A beam to my renown. The Spanish ruff,
Though sitting on the neck as would a yoke,
With some can be a halo 'round the head!

LE BRET (*after a pause, passing his arm through Cyrano's*).

[Pg 84]

Speak out aloud your pride and bitterness,
But whisper to me then: she loves me not!

SCENE IX.

CYRANO, LE BRET, THE CADETS, CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE.

A CADET (*seated at a table in the rear, drinking*).

Cyrano!

(*Cyrano turns.*)

That narrative, please.

CYRANO.

Yes, presently!

(*He takes the arm of Le Bret, going up and speaking in low tone to him.*)

THE CADET (*rising and coming down*).

The details of the fight! They will make the best kind of lesson.... (*stopping near the table before which Christian is seated*) for a timid apprentice!

CHRISTIAN (*looking up*).

Apprentice!

ANOTHER CADET.

Just so, sickly northerner!

CHRISTIAN.

Sickly!

FIRST CADET (*sneeringly*).

Monsieur de Neuville, there's something you must learn, to wit: there exists a thing that, with us, must never be even alluded to—no more than a rope in the house of one who was hung.

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 85]

And what is that?

ANOTHER CADET (*in terrifying tone*).

Look at me!

(*With his finger he, three times, strikes his nose.*)

You understand?

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! you mean the....

ANOTHER CADET.

Hush!.... The word is never pronounced....

(*pointing to Cyrano, who, in the rear, is talking with Le Bret*).

.... Or else trouble is sure.

ANOTHER CADET (*who, while Christian was looking the other way, took a seat on the table*).

Two men were killed by him because they spoke through the nose—a subject he dislikes!

ANOTHER CADET (*springing up from underneath the table, where he had crawled*).

Those who desire to die young have but to come here and speak of the fatal cartilage.

ANOTHER CADET (*placing his hand on Christian's shoulder*).

One word's enough. Did I say: a word? One motion, just one, suffices. And drawing out one's handkerchief is equivalent to weaving one's shroud!

(*Silence. All the Cadets remain, with folded arms, staring at Christian. Christian goes up to Carbon of Haughty-Hall, who has been conversing with an officer and affecting not to notice the proceedings.*)

CHRISTIAN.

Captain!

CARBON (*turning, and with a severe look*).

[Pg 86]

Sir?

CHRISTIAN.

When one encounters southerners possessed of too much braggadocio....

CARBON.

The right thing to do? Prove to them that you may come from the North and still be brave.

(Carbon turns.)

CHRISTIAN.

Captain, I thank you.

FIRST CADET *(to Cyrano)*.

And now your narrative!

OTHER CADETS.

Yes, his narrative!

CYRANO *(coming down to them)*.

My narrative? Well, here it is!

(They gather around him, some seated, some standing. Christian straddles a chair.)

Well, then, I was walking along so as to meet them. The moon, in the sky, looked like a big silver watch; when suddenly some zealous watch-maker, I suppose, began passing over it, with a view to making it shine, no doubt, some cloudy cotton. In consequence, the night became as dark as possible, and, mordious! I could not see further....

CHRISTIAN.

Than the end of your nose.

(Silence. Everybody rises slowly, frightened, and looking at Cyrano, whom the interruption has astounded. General expectancy.)

CYRANO.

Who is this man?

A CADET *(in subdued tone)*.

[Pg 87]

One who joined this morning.

CYRANO *(going toward Christian)*.

This morning?

CARBON.

His name is Baron de Neuville.

CYRANO *(rapidly, stopping)*.

Oh! very well then!....

(He turns pale, then reddens, and appears ready to throw himself upon Christian.)

I must....

(restraining himself, however).

That is different. *(resuming)*. As I was saying....

(with ill-concealed fury).

Mordious!....

(continuing in a natural tone).... I could not see very far.

(General stupefaction. All take their seats again, looking at Cyrano.)

So, I was walking on, thinking how I was going to disappoint some mighty lord desirous of pulling....

CHRISTIAN.

Your nose!....

(Everybody rises again, while Christian rocks on his chair.)

CYRANO *(half choking)*.

My ears!.... and how imprudent some people might find me for thus poking....

CHRISTIAN.

Your nose....

CYRANO.

No, my finger, between the tree and the bark. For this great lord might be powerful enough to rap me....

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 88]

On the nose....

CYRANO (*wiping the perspiration from his forehead*).

No, on the fingers. But I said to myself: go ahead, Gascon; do your duty! On, Cyrano! Then, abruptly, out of the dark, somebody made a lunge at me. I parried: when suddenly, I found myself....

CHRISTIAN.

Nose to nose....

CYRANO (*bounding toward him*).

Ventre—Saint—Gris!....

(All the Gascons advance to witness the scene. But Cyrano, on coming up to Christian, masters himself, and continues:)

Confronted by a hundred drunken rascals.... smelling....

CHRISTIAN.

With their hundred noses....

CYRANO (*pale as death, but smiling*).

....Strongly of onion and garlic! I rushed forward blindly....

CHRISTIAN.

Without nosing....

CYRANO.

And charged them! Down went two of them. A third I ran through. They lunged, I parried, and struck down, how many?....

CHRISTIAN.

Who knows!....

CYRANO (*bursting with rage*).

Thunder and lightning! Clear the room!

(The Cadets rush toward the door.)

FIRST CADET.

[Pg 89]

The tiger wakes!

CYRANO.

All out! Leave me alone with this man!

SECOND CADET.

We'll find the fellow in mince-meat.

RAGUENEAU.

Mince-meat. Not fit, though, for my pies.

(All go out, by the rear, the sides and the staircase. Cyrano and Christian remain face to face staring at each other fiercely.)

SCENE X.

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN.

CYRANO.

Embrace me!

CHRISTIAN.
Sir!....

CYRANO.
You are brave.

CHRISTIAN.
Perhaps. But....

CYRANO.
Very brave. I prefer it so.

CHRISTIAN.
Kindly explain....

CYRANO.
Embrace me! I am her brother!

CHRISTIAN.
Whose brother?

CYRANO. [Pg 90]
Her's! Roxane's!

CHRISTIAN (*running up to him*).
You! The brother of Roxane?

CYRANO.
Well, very much the same: a brotherly cousin.

CHRISTIAN.
And she?....

CYRANO.
Told me all!

CHRISTIAN.
Does she love me?

CYRANO.
Perhaps!

CHRISTIAN (*taking Cyrano's hands*).
How happy I feel, Sir, to know you!

CYRANO.
Rather a sudden sentiment, is it not?

CHRISTIAN.
Forgive me, but....

CYRANO (*looking well at him, and laying his hand on Christian's shoulder*).
It's a fact. A fine-looking fellow, this rascal!

CHRISTIAN.
I only wish you knew, Sir, how much I admire you.

CYRANO.
Yes? But what of all those noses that you....

CHRISTIAN.
I withdraw them, Sir!

CYRANO.
Roxane expects a letter to-night.

CHRISTIAN. [Pg 91]
That is the trouble.

CYRANO.

How so?

CHRISTIAN.

I am lost if I remain silent!....

CYRANO.

Well then?....

CHRISTIAN.

But, I am ashamed to own it, I am too stupid to write.

CYRANO.

Stupid? You are not, friend, since you realise your inability. Moreover, your attack upon me was not that of a dunce.

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! it is easy enough to find words for a fight! Yes, perhaps I have a sort of easy, military wit; but, facing women, I am struck dumb. Oh! their eyes seem favourable enough as I pass them....

CYRANO.

Are not their hearts the same when you stop?

CHRISTIAN.

No, for I belong to those—and I know it—who tremble, and know not how to speak of love.

CYRANO.

Strange!.... It seems to me that, if I were better looking, I should belong to the other class: those who know and dare.

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! that I could with elegance express my feelings!

CYRANO.

[Pg 92]

Or be a pretty little musketeer!

CHRISTIAN.

Roxane is a "*précieuse*," and, in her eyes, I shall be disgraced!

CYRANO (*looking at Christian*).

Oh! that for the feelings of my soul I had such an interpreter!

CHRISTIAN (*despairing*).

What would I not give for eloquence!

CYRANO (*eagerly*).

I'll lend you some! Lend you to me your physical attraction, and the two combined will constitute the hero of a romance.

CHRISTIAN.

What then?

CYRANO.

Would you feel equal to repeating the daily lessons I could give you?

CHRISTIAN.

What is it you propose?

CYRANO.

In Roxane's eyes you shall not be disgraced. Together, if you will, we can gain her love. Will you allow the soul so ill-restrained by my buckskin here to breathe and sing beneath your embroidered doublet?....

CHRISTIAN.

But Cyrano....

CYRANO.

.... Christian, will you?

[Pg 93]

CHRISTIAN.

Would it give you so much pleasure?

CYRANO (*enraptured*).

It would....

(*returning to his senses, and lightly*)

It would amuse me!

A trial this to tempt a poet. Come!
We shall complete each other, if you will.
You'll walk, and I'll be near you in the shade!
I'll be the breath, and you shall be the form!

CHRISTIAN.

But that letter she expects. I cannot write it....

CYRANO (*taking from his doublet the letter he wrote a while before*).

Your letter?... Here it is!

CHRISTIAN.

How is this?

CYRANO.

It lacks nothing but the address. You may send it. Feel no anxiety. It is as it should be.

CHRISTIAN.

But how is it that you?....

CYRANO.

We poets have about us, as a rule,
Fine letters to the women we adore....
In our dreams. For we belong to those
Whose love is but a fleeting fancy blown
Into the rainbow-bubble of a name!
Take this and make a truth of what is feigned.
My rambling words of rapture flutter like
Bewildered birds; you'll cause them to alight.
The letter shows, itself—now take it!—that
My eloquence was born of artifice.

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 94]

But there may be a few words to change. Thus, written at random, will it fit Roxane?

CYRANO.

It will fit her like a glove! Human vanity is so credulous that Roxane will never doubt the letter was written for her!

CHRISTIAN.

You are my dearest friend!

(*He throws himself into Cyrano's arms. They remain embracing.*)

SCENE XI.

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, THE GASCONS, THE MUSKETEER, LISE.

A CADET (*half opening the door*).

Complete silence.... the silence of death.... I fear to look around!

(*after a survey*) What!....

SEVERAL CADETS (*entering and looking at Cyrano and Christian locked in each other's arms*).

Ah!.... Oh!.... Impossible!....

(*Consternation.*)

THE MUSKETEER (*jeeringly*).

Well, well!....

CARBON.

Our quarrelsome demon has become as lamblike as an apostle! Struck on one of his nostrils—he offers the other!

THE MUSKETEER.

So, now we may speak of his nose!....

(calling Lise, triumphantly).

Lise, just come and see!....

[Pg 95]

(sniffing with affectation).

Why!.... Why!.... this is surprising! It smells here of....

(going up to Cyrano).

But you, Sir, must have noticed it? It smells of....

CYRANO *(slapping Musketeer's face).*

Five-leaf clover!

(General rejoicing, Cyrano is himself again. Cadets turn somersaults.)

CURTAIN.



SECOND ACT.



SECOND ACT.

ACT III.

[Pg 96]

THE KISS OF ROXANE.

A small public square in the old Marais quarter of Paris. Old houses, narrow streets. To the right Roxane's house and garden, over the wall of which spread and hang the branches of large trees inside. Above the door, a window and a balcony. By the door a stone bench.

Ivy creeps up the wall, and a jasmine twines around the balcony. By means of the bench and of stones projecting from the wall, it is comparatively easy to climb up to the balcony.

Over the way, an old house in the same style, brick and stone, with a door, the knocker of which is wrapped with rags like a sore finger.

As the curtain rises, the Duenna is seated on the bench. The window on Roxane's balcony is wide open. Standing near the Duenna is Ragoueneau, wearing a sort of livery. He is concluding a story, and wiping his eyes.

SCENE I.

RAGUENEAU, THE DUENNA, *later* ROXANE, CYRANO, *and two pages.*

RAGUENEAU.

.... And then she left with a Musketeer! Deserted and ruined, I hung myself, and I was already off for another world, when enter Monsieur de Bergerac. He unhung me and offered me to his cousin for a steward.

THE DUENNA.

[Pg 97]

But how were you ruined so?

RAGUENEAU.

Lise had a weakness for the military, and I for poets. Mars ate all the cakes that Apollo left. Oh! they made short work of it!

THE DUENNA (*rises and calls toward the window*).

Roxane! Are you ready? We'll be late.

VOICE OF ROXANE (*through the window*).

I'm putting on my cape!

THE DUENNA (*to Ragoueneau, pointing to the door of the house over the way*).

We are expected over there, at Clomire's. She holds her literary assizes. There will be a reading. Subject: The Tender Passion!

RAGUENEAU.

The Tender Passion, indeed!

THE DUENNA (*smirking*).

The Tender Passion. Why not?

(*calling toward the window*).

Roxane, come down! Or we shall miss the discourse on The Tender Passion.

VOICE OF ROXANE.

I am coming!

(*Sound of string instruments growing gradually nearer.*)

VOICE OF CYRANO (*singing in the wings*).

La, la, la, la!

THE DUENNA (*surprised*).

Music for us!

CYRANO (*followed by two pages each with an archlute*).

I say again that it's a demi-semi-quaver, you triple fool!

FIRST PAGE (*with irony*).

[Pg 98]

So then, Sir, you have thorough knowledge of quavers?

CYRANO.

I am a musician, as are all the disciples of Gassendi.

THE PAGE (*playing and singing*).

La, la!

CYRANO (*snatching from him the archlute and continuing the music*).

I can go on! La, la, la, la!

ROXANE (*appearing on the balcony*).

So, it is you?

CYRANO (*continuing the same air*).

Yes, I who come to celebrate the lily, And to extol the glory of the ro....se!

ROXANE.

I'll be down in a moment.

(She leaves the balcony.)

THE DUENNA *(to Cyrano, pointing to the two pages)*.

And who may be these two songsters?

CYRANO.

Oh! they are part of a bet I won. D'Assoucy and I had a discussion on a point of grammar. No! Yes! No! Yes! Of a sudden he points to these two scarecrows here, his constant escort, great in the art of scratching a string with a claw, and he says: "I'll bet you a whole day of music!"—He lost. And now, until to-morrow comes, I must enjoy both the strains and the presence of these two harmonious witnesses of all my acts!.... Pleasant, if you like, in the beginning, but now the pleasure is growing less.

(to the musicians).

Hep!.... Just go and play a pavan—with my compliments—for that actor Montfleury!

(Pages go up. To the Duenna).

[Pg 99]

I've come this evening—as on previous evenings—

(to the Pages who are leaving).

Play long,—and out of tune!

(to Duenna).

To ask Roxane if the friend of her soul is still as faultless as before.

ROXANE *(coming out of the house)*.

How beautiful, how clever he is! and how I love him!

CYRANO *(smiling)*.

Indeed! And is Christian so very clever?....

ROXANE.

Yes, dear friend, more so even than yourself!

CYRANO.

So be it, then!

ROXANE.

To my mind, it would be impossible for anyone to deliver with more elegance and wit than he does these pretty trifles that are nothing, if you will—and still are everything. At times, it is true, he seems quite absent-minded; but, suddenly, he recovers and says the most charming things!

CYRANO *(incredulous)*.

You surprise me!

ROXANE.

You men are really astonishing! Because Christian is handsome, he *must* be stupid!

CYRANO.

I doubt if he can speak of hearts and love.

ROXANE.

He does not speak of, he lectures on them, Sir!

CYRANO.

[Pg 100]

And he writes?

ROXANE.

Still better. Just listen.

(reciting).

"The more you take of what's my heart, the more I've left."

(triumphantly).

What think you of that?

CYRANO.

So! So!

ROXANE.

And of this? (*reciting*).

"Since I must suffer and, to suffer, have a heart,
If you would keep the heart that's mine, then send me yours."

CYRANO.

At first he had too much heart; now he has not enough. It would be interesting to know exactly how much heart would satisfy him.

ROXANE.

You are exasperating! True jealousy!....

CYRANO (*moved*).

What?....

ROXANE.

An author's jealousy! And is not this just as lovely as possible? Listen!

"T'ward you my heart, I swear, has but a single cry,
And, if in written lines fond kisses could be sent,
O Madam, you would read this letter with your lips!"

CYRANO (*with an unconscious smile of satisfaction*).

Ha! ha! the lines are.... hum! hum!....

(*recovering and disdainfully*).

.... really pretty weak!

ROXANE.

[Pg 101]

Indeed! And this?

CYRANO.

Why! do you remember all his letters?

ROXANE.

Every one of them!

CYRANO.

Undoubtedly, this is quite a compliment!

ROXANE.

He is a master!

CYRANO (*with modesty*).

Oh!.... a master!....

ROXANE (*with decision*).

A master, I say!

CYRANO.

So be it! A master!

THE DUENNA (*returning from the rear*).

Monsieur de Guiche!

(*to Cyrano, pushing him toward the house*).

Get into the house. It is better he should not see you here—or else he might suspect....

ROXANE (*to Cyrano*).

Yes, discover my secret. He loves me; he is powerful, and he must not know of my love. He could destroy it!

CYRANO (*entering the house*).

Very well, then, very well!

(*Enter Guiche.*)

SCENE II.

ROXANE, GUICHE, THE DUENNA, *at a distance*.

ROXANE (*to Guiche, with a curtsey*).

I was just going out.

GUICHE.

[Pg 102]

And I have come to take leave, before starting for the front.

ROXANE.

Oh!....

GUICHE.

I am ordered to the siege of Arras....

ROXANE.

Oh!....

GUICHE.

.... and I go to-night.

ROXANE.

Oh!....

GUICHE.

My departure does not seem to distress you greatly....

ROXANE.

Oh!....

GUICHE.

.... But I seriously grieve over it. Shall I ever see you again?.... When?.... By the way, I have been given a high command.

ROXANE (*indifferent*).

I congratulate you!

GUICHE.

The Guards regiment.

ROXANE (*interested*).

Oh! the Guards?

GUICHE.

Yes, the regiment in which is your cousin, the man of boastful words. I'll have my revenge when I get him at the siege.

ROXANE (*overcome*).

[Pg 103]

What! the Guards are going there?

GUICHE (*laughing*).

Of course, since they are now my regiment.

ROXANE (*sinking on the bench—aside*).

Christian!

GUICHE.

What ails you?

ROXANE (*moved*).

This.... departure.... grieves me sorely. To know that those you.... care for.... are going to battle!

GUICHE (*surprised and pleased*).

Why is it I hear words so sweet only on the day of my departure?

ROXANE (*changing her manner and using her fan*).

So, then, you mean to seek revenge on my cousin Cyrano?

GUICHE (*surprised*).

Do you take his part?

ROXANE.

I? Not at all. I am against him.

GUICHE.

Do you see him often?

ROXANE.

Very seldom.

GUICHE.

I meet him everywhere.... with one of those cadets.... this Neu.... vil.... Neuvil....

ROXANE.

A tall man?

GUICHE.

[Pg 104]

A blond.

ROXANE.

Red-haired, rather.

GUICHE.

Handsome!....

ROXANE.

For some, perhaps, but....

GUICHE.

But very stupid.

ROXANE.

So it struck me! (*changing her manner*).

...Your revenge as regards Cyrano no doubt consists in holding him under fire, which he relishes. So I hardly see great vengeance for you in that. I can tell you, though, what would wound him to the quick!....

GUICHE.

And that is?....

ROXANE.

To have his regiment and his dear cadets remain, so long as there is war, right here, in Paris, inactive! The only way to punish him is to deprive him of danger.

GUICHE.

Woman! Woman! No one but a woman would think of such a scheme!

(*getting closer to Roxane*).

You have then some regard for me? (*She smiles*.) The fact that you take sides with me, Roxane, is, in my eyes, a proof of love.

ROXANE.

It is one.

GUICHE (*showing several sealed papers*).

[Pg 105]

I have the orders here for every company, and they shall be sent immediately, except....

(*he takes one out of the batch*) this one! It is for the cadets, and (*puts it into a pocket*)

I hold it back! Ha! ha! Cyrano....so eager for the fray! And so you play with people as with mice, Roxane?

ROXANE.

Sometimes!

GUICHE (*quite close to her*).

You enthral me! Roxane, listen. To-night—yes, I know, I must depart. But leave you when I feel that you are moved!...I cannot. Hear me! Close by here is the convent of the Capuchin fathers. Laymen cannot enter it; but, as the fathers serve my uncle Richelieu, they have some regard for his nephew, and they will give me a place of concealment. Officially, I shall have left for the front, but I shall return to you under the cover of a mask. Allow me to delay my departure a few hours, dear waywardness!

ROXANE.

But if you are discovered! Your reputation....

GUICHE.

I'll risk it.

ROXANE.

But the siege.... Arras....

GUICHE.

I care not. Grant me your permission!

ROXANE.

No!

GUICHE.

Do!

ROXANE (*affectionately*).

[Pg 106]

My duty says that I must forbid! I beseech you, go!

(*aside*).

Christian remains here!

(*aloud*).

I would have you be a hero—Antoine!

GUICHE.

Celestial word!—And so you love the one....

ROXANE.

For whom I tremble? Yes!

GUICHE (*enraptured*).

'Tis well, I leave!

(*Kisses her hand.*)

Are you satisfied?

ROXANE.

Yes, dearest friend!

(*Exit Guiche.*)

THE DUENNA (*curtseying mockingly behind Guiche*).

Yes, dearest friend.

ROXANE (*to Duenna*).

Not a word, if you please. Cyrano would never forgive me for stealing his war from him!

(*calling toward the house*).

Cousin!

SCENE III.

ROXANE, THE DUENNA, CYRANO.

ROXANE (*pointing to door of house opposite hers*).

We are going to Clomire's. Alcandre is to speak, so is Lysimon.

DUENNA.

Yes, but my little finger says that we shall be late.

Make haste lest you miss part of their monkey talk.

DUENNA (*looking at knocker*).

That's right, they have gagged this noisy little wretch. It might have interrupted the finest speeches.

(*She knocks very gently. Door opens.*)

ROXANE (*about to pass in. To Cyrano*).

Were Christian to come, as is likely, request him to wait for me, please.

CYRANO.

I shall.

(*As she is passing in the door, she turns, on hearing Cyrano speak.*)

And what question do you intend, as is your wont, to propound to him to-day?

ROXANE.

The question of....

CYRANO (*eagerly*).

Of?....

ROXANE.

But you'll remain silent!

CYRANO.

As a prison wall.

ROXANE.

No question at all!.... I shall simply say to him: Proceed—without a rein!—Extemporise. Speak of love. Be grand!

CYRANO (*smiling*).

Excellent idea!

ROXANE.

Hush!

CYRANO.

[Pg 108]

Hush!

(*Roxane enters, closing the door.*)

CYRANO (*bowing to the door*).

Very many thanks!

(*The door opens and Roxane passes out her head.*)

ROXANE.

He might try to prepare!....

CYRANO.

That would never do!....

TOGETHER.

Hush!

(*Door closes.*)

CYRANO (*calling*).

Christian!

SCENE IV.

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN.

CYRANO.

Now I'm informed! Prepare your memory. There is glory in store for you.—Drop your bad humour, and let us haste to your house, where I shall coach you.

CHRISTIAN.

No!

CYRANO.

What!

CHRISTIAN.

I'll wait for Roxane here.

CYRANO.

Have you gone mad? Come, come!

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 109]

No! I said. I am weary of committing to memory my letters, my speeches.... Weary of playing a part....weary of trembling lest I fail! All good and well in the beginning! But now I feel that she really loves me! Many thanks, I fear nothing now. I'll speak unprompted.

CYRANO.

So, indeed!

CHRISTIAN.

Probably you think that I cannot?... After all, I'm not so stupid! You shall see! Your lessons have improved me. I'll speak unaided. And—speak or not—I'll know enough to clasp her in my arms!

(Perceiving Roxane coming out of Clomire's house).

It is she! Cyrano, for pity's sake, do not leave me!

CYRANO *(bowing to him)*.

You'll speak unprompted, Sir.

(He disappears behind the garden wall)

SCENE V.

CHRISTIAN, ROXANE, THE DUENNA, *a moment*.

ROXANE *(coming out of Clomire's house, in company with several ladies and gentlemen.—Curtsies)*.

Barthénoïde!—Alcandre—Grémione!....

DUENNA *(in despair)*.

We missed the discourse on The Tender Passion!

(Enters house of Roxane.)

ROXANE *(going up to Christian)*.

Oh! here you are!.... Twilight is coming, the air is balmy, and there is nobody about. Let us be seated. Speak. I'm listening.

(She takes a seat on the bench. Christian sits near her. Silence.)

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 110]

I love you!

ROXANE *(closing her eyes)*.

Yes, speak of love!

CHRISTIAN.

I love thee!

ROXANE.

Yes, that is the theme. Amplify!

CHRISTIAN.

I love....

ROXANE.

Expatriate!

CHRISTIAN.

So deeply!....

ROXANE.

Of course.... and then?....

CHRISTIAN.

And then?.... I should feel so happy if you loved me! Roxane, do say that you love me!

ROXANE (*pouting*).

You offer me porridge when I expected cream! Now, say *how* you love me.

CHRISTIAN.

I love you....very much.

ROXANE.

Uncloud your sentiments a little!

CHRISTIAN.

Your neck! Ah! that I could press my lips to it!

ROXANE.

Christian, for shame!

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 111]

I love you!

ROXANE (*about to rise*).

Again!

CHRISTIAN (*restraining her*).

No! I do *not* love you....

ROXANE (*settling again into her seat*).

That is better!

CHRISTIAN.

I adore you!

ROXANE (*rising and from a distance*).

Oh! the same thing!

CHRISTIAN.

Yes—I feel that I am getting stupid!

ROXANE.

Yes, and it displeases me. No more should I like to have you lose your good looks.

CHRISTIAN.

But....

ROXANE.

Come, call up all your eloquence, just now put to flight.

CHRISTIAN.

I....

ROXANE.

Yes, I know, you love me. Farewell!

(*She goes toward the door.*)

CHRISTIAN.

Do not go! Let me tell you....

ROXANE (*opening her door*).

[Pg 112]

That you adore me?.... But I know it already. No! no! you had better leave me!

CHRISTIAN.

But hear me, Roxane....

(She closes the door in his face.)

CYRANO *(who has just appeared without being seen)*.

Quite a success!

SCENE VI.

CHRISTIAN, CYRANO, THE PAGES, *a moment*.

CHRISTIAN.

Help! help!

CYRANO.

No, Sir!

CHRISTIAN.

I'll die if she does not this moment relent....

CYRANO.

What can I do? This very moment drum into you....

CHRISTIAN *(clasping Cyrano's arm)*.

See! There she comes!

(Light in the balcony window.)

CYRANO *(moved)*.

Her window!

CHRISTIAN.

Help me! Or I'll die!

CYRANO.

Speak lower!

CHRISTIAN *(whispering)*.

It is life or death to me!

CYRANO.

[Pg 113]

The night is dark....

CHRISTIAN.

Well, speak!

CYRANO.

The harm can be undone. You do not deserve it, you wretch!....but stand there before the balcony! I'll remain beneath it—and prompt you!

CHRISTIAN.

But, my friend....

CYRANO.

Obey orders!

THE PAGES *(in the rear, to Cyrano)*.

Hep!

CYRANO *(silencing them)*.

Hush!

FIRST PAGE *(in a whisper)*.

We have serenaded Montfleury.

CYRANO *(in a whisper, quickly to Pages)*.

You, stand on this corner....and you, on that one. If anyone comes along, play an air.

What sort of air would suit Gassendi?

CYRANO.

Lively for a woman; for a man a sad one!

(Pages disappear, taking two different streets.)

(To Christian) Now, call her!

CHRISTIAN *(calling)*.

Roxane.

CYRANO *(picking up a few pebbles that he throws against the window)*.

[Pg 114]

Wait! A few pebbles.

ROXANE *(half opening her window)*.

Who calls me?

CHRISTIAN.

I.

ROXANE.

Who is I?

CHRISTIAN.

I, Christian.

ROXANE *(scornfully)*.

Oh! you!

CHRISTIAN.

I must speak to you.

CYRANO *(under the balcony, to Christian)*.

Good! Lower your voice.

ROXANE.

No! You speak too clumsily. Better go!

CHRISTIAN.

Be pitiful!....

ROXANE.

No! You love me no more!

CHRISTIAN *(prompted by Cyrano)*.

You accuse me....merciful Gods!....of loving no more....when....I love more!

ROXANE *(stopping as she was going to close the window)*.

Why! you are improving.

CHRISTIAN *(still prompted)*.

Love grows stronger in the restless soul—mine—that he has chosen....cruel child!....for a cradle!

[Pg 115]

ROXANE *(coming out on the balcony)*.

Better still!....But, since this love is so cruel, you were foolish, indeed, not to smother it at its birth!

CHRISTIAN *(prompted)*.

I tried....but without success: this new-born babe, Madam, is a little Hercules.

ROXANE.

Still better!

CHRISTIAN *(prompted)*.

In fact, he....strangled without an effort....two serpents....Pride and....Doubt....

ROXANE *(leaning on the balcony railing)*.

Very good indeed! But why do you speak so....deliberately? Has your imagination the gout, that it limps so?

CYRANO (*drawing Christian under the balcony, and noiselessly taking Christian's place before it*).

Hush! The task is getting too difficult!....

ROXANE.

To-night you waver in your speech. Why so?

CYRANO (*speaking in a low tone as Christian did before him*).

Because night has come, and, in the dark, my words must wander in search of your ear.

ROXANE.

But my words meet with no such difficulty.

CYRANO.

Yours find a resting-place immediately. Oh! very naturally, since I receive them into my heart. Remember that my heart is large, while your ear is very small. Moreover, your words descend! thus have they speed. While mine must rise, Madam: they require more time!

ROXANE.

[Pg 116]

But they have been rising much better for the last few moments.

CYRANO.

They are getting trained to climbing!

ROXANE.

The fact is that I am speaking to you from quite a height!

CYRANO.

Assuredly, and you would kill me if, from such an elevation, you allowed a sharp word to drop upon my heart!

ROXANE (*moved*).

I'll come down.

CYRANO (*quickly*).

No!

ROXANE (*pointing to the stone bench under the balcony*).

Step upon the bench, then, and climb up here!

CYRANO (*frightened and retreating*).

No!

ROXANE.

You surprise me.... Why not?

CYRANO (*more and more moved*).

Let us rather improve.... this opportunity of.... speaking softly together.... without seeing each other.

ROXANE.

What! To each other almost invisible?

CYRANO.

As now.—Let us enjoy the bliss there is
In seeking to distinguish one the other.
For you, I'm but the darkness of a cloak;
For me, you are the whiteness of a robe.
I'm shadow only, you are blessed light!

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If ever you have thought me eloquent....

ROXANE.

I have.

CYRANO.

Remember now that my words never yet came from my true heart.

ROXANE.

Why not?

CYRANO.

Because.... until now.... I have spoken to you through....

ROXANE.

Through what?

CYRANO.

The spell that you cast upon those who bask in the light of your eyes!.... And so, this night, to me it seems as if I were about to speak to you for the first time!

ROXANE.

Ah! that is why your voice seems different.

CYRANO (*feverish, and coming up closer to the balcony*).

Yes, different; for, now that darkness shields me, I dare to be myself at last, I dare....

(*He stops, bewildered.*)

Where was I?.... I forget.... Pardon my confusion.... All this is so exquisite.... so new to me!....

ROXANE.

So new!

CYRANO (*quite bewildered, and trying to explain*).

So new!.... Why! yes.... It's new to be sincere. And then.... a fear of ridicule....

[Pg 118]

ROXANE.

Ridicule? For what?

CYRANO.

My emotional flights!

My heart, through diffidence, forever calls
Upon my mind to shield it from disdain:
I start to cull a star, and then I halt,
For fear of ridicule, to pick a floret.

ROXANE.

A floret has its charms.

CYRANO.

Disdain them now!

ROXANE.

You never spoke to me as now you speak!

CYRANO.

Oh! let us set aside the pygmy things,
The superannuated niceties
Of love as it is understood to-day!
Why sip by drops the waters of a spring,
When from a river we can freely quaff?

ROXANE.

But mind and wit?

CYRANO.

They serve to make you stay.
But now 'twould be an insult to the night,
To fragrance, and to fate, and nature too,
If we should hold unto affected style.
One look above, and artifice disarms!
I fear that, with this subtle alchemy,
The truth of sentiment might vapourise,
The soul exhaust itself in futile play,
And niceties be carried to a point
So pointed that it end in nothingness!

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ROXANE.

But mind and wit?

CYRANO.

I hate them now. It is
A crime to force sweet love to bandy words!
There comes a time, moreover, be assured—
Oh! how I pity those who feel it not!—
When our breast o'erflows with noble love,
A love that pretty words must desecrate!

ROXANE.

Since now for both of us the time has come,
What words shall I expect from you?

CYRANO.

All, all,
All those I know; accept them scattered loose,
Unsought, unbound. I love you—let me breathe!—
I love thee^[20], and I rave. 'Tis joy too much!
Thy name is in my heart as in a bell,
Roxane, and, as my heart forever throbs,
The bell is e'er the sounder of thy name.
Of thee there's nought I do not hoard and love:
I mind me that, last year, the twelfth of May,
A twist was changed in what's a crown, thy hair!
Thy glowing hair to me is truly light.
When we have gazed too long upon the sun,
We see on things around a halo reign;
'Tis thus when I have lost the light thou shedst:
My dazzled eyes are filled with golden sparks!

ROXANE.

Yes, this is love—

CYRANO.

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The passion in my heart
Is jealous, fierce, with sadness tainted, but
It's really love—love shorn of selfish thought.
Would I could give my happiness for thine—
E'en shouldst thou ne'er suspect whose gift it was—
If I could hear, perchance and from afar,
The music of thy bliss, my offering!
From every glance of thine fresh virtue springs,
Fresh valour, too. Oh! say I'm understood,
And that thou feelst my soul ascend to thee!
All is to-night too beautiful and sweet!
And still it's true! I speak, at last, to thee.
Yes, I to thee! 'Tis bliss too great! My hopes,
My wildest hopes ne'er leaped to such a height;
My dream's no dream, and I can die content.
Because of me she quivers with the trees!
For, leaf divine, you tremble with the leaves!
Thou tremblest, for, against thy will or not,
I feel, oh, bliss! the tremour of thy hand
Descending now along these flowery vines.

(He imprints a passionate kiss upon one of the branches.)

ROXANE.

I tremble, yes; I weep, I love, I'm thine!
I am enthralled!

CYRANO.

May Death then come along,
Since rapture's born of me, of me alone!
What more can I expect of life?—

CHRISTIAN (*under the balcony*).

A kiss!

ROXANE (*falling back*).

What?

CYRANO.

Oh!

ROXANE.

[Pg 121]

You claim?—

CYRANO.

Yes—I—

(aside to Christian).

You go too far.

CHRISTIAN *(aside to Cyrano).*

Now she is moved, it's time for me to act.

CYRANO *(to Roxane).*

Yes, I.... I asked.... it is true.... but now I realise how more than bold I was.

ROXANE *(somewhat disappointed).*

And you do not insist?

CYRANO.

Insist? Of course I do.... but with reserve!.... Yes, I know your modesty's offended. So, I withdraw the kiss.... refuse it to me!

CHRISTIAN *(with a tug at Cyrano's cloak).*

Why so?

CYRANO.

Be silent, Christian!

ROXANE *(leaning over the balcony).*

What are you muttering?

CYRANO.

I was reproving myself for going too far. I was saying: be silent Christian!....

(sound of archlute.)

One moment please!.... Some one comes.

(Roxane closes her window. Cyrano listens to the archlutes; one of them plays a lively air, and the other a sad one.)

Lively?.... Sad?.... A woman or a man? No, a monk!

(Enter monk holding a lighted lantern. He goes from house to house, looking at the doors.)

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SCENE VII.

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, a CAPUCHIN MONK.

CYRANO *(to the Monk).*

Are you a new Diogenes?

MONK.

I'm looking for the house of Madam Magdeleine Robin.

CYRANO *(pointing to one of the streets).*

That way—straight ahead—as far as you can go....

MONK.

Thank you, Sir!—I'll tell my beads for you.

(Exit Monk.)

CYRANO.

Peace be with you! I bid you Godspeed!

(Comes down toward Christian.)

SCENE VIII.

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN.

CHRISTIAN.

Obtain for me that kiss!

CYRANO.

No, Sir!

CHRISTIAN.

But, sooner or later, you know....

CYRANO.

True,

The time will come, that time of bliss intense,
When each will fall into the other's arms,
And blond mustache to rosy lips will go!

[Pg 123]

(*aside*)

'Twas better that at least I cause the bliss.

(*Window above opens. Christian conceals himself beneath the balcony.*)

SCENE IX.

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, ROXANE.

ROXANE (*coming out on the balcony*).

Is it you?—Yes.... What were we speaking of?... oh! of a.... well, of....

CYRANO.

A kiss! The word is soft. Why hesitate?
The name, be sure, will not maltreat your lips,
However burning be the thing itself.—
Just now, you left the trifling mood, to glide,
To steal from smile to sigh, and sigh to tears.
Glide on!.... From tear to kiss there's but a thrill!

ROXANE.

Be silent!

CYRANO.

After all, what is a kiss?
An oath that's given closer than before;
A promise more precise; the sealing of
Confessions that till then were barely breathed;
A ruby O to spell the verb: I love!^[21]
A secret that's confided to a mouth
And not to ears; a precious moment of
Infinity that buzzes like a bee;
Communion with the fragrance flowers have;
A gentle way for heart to breathe a heart,
For soul from fervid lips to drink a soul!

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ROXANE.

Be still!

CYRANO.

A kiss is oft a thing so grand
That once a queen of France permitted one
Unto a happy lord. I said: a queen!

ROXANE.

And then?

CYRANO (*excited*).

Like Buckingham, I've suffered long;
Like him I love a queen, the one that's you!
Like him, I'm sad and faithful....

ROXANE.

And like him
You've beauty.

CYRANO (*aside, abashed*).

Yes.... I've beauty.... I forgot!

ROXANE.

Well, then, come up, to cull the flower....

CYRANO (*pushing Christian toward the balcony*).

Go!

ROXANE.

Whose fragrance....

CYRANO (*to Christian*).

Go!

ROXANE.

The buzzing of the bee....

CYRANO (*to Christian*).

[Pg 125]

Go up!

CHRISTIAN (*hesitating*).

But now, it really seems a crime!

ROXANE.

A moment of infinity....

CYRANO (*pushing Christian*).

You fool,
Go up!

(*Christian, by aid of bench, vines and posts, reaches the balcony and steps over the railing.*)

CHRISTIAN.

Roxane!....

(*He clasps her to his breast and kisses her on the lips.*)

CYRANO (*aside*).

What pinches so my heart?....
That kiss!.... a feast where I'm the Lazarus!....
Sweet feast, from thee there falls to me a crumb,
Since on the lips Roxane mistakes, alas!
She drinks the words that I just now pronounced!

(*Sound of instruments.*)

An air that's sad, a lively air!—The Monk!

(*Affecting to run as if coming from a distance. In clear tone:*)

Hello!

ROXANE.

What is it?

CYRANO.

It is I, Cyrano. I was passing.... Is Christian still here?

CHRISTIAN (*as if astonished*).

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Why! it's Cyrano!

ROXANE.

How do you do, cousin?

CYRANO.

Cousin, how do you do?

ROXANE.

I'll come down.

(She disappears into the house. By the rear, enter the Monk.)

CHRISTIAN *(perceiving him)*.

What! he again!

(He follows Roxane.)

SCENE X.

CYRANO, CHRISTIAN, ROXANE, THE MONK, RAGUENEAU.

THE MONK.

She must live here—I insist—Magdeleine Robin!

CYRANO.

Why! You said *Ro-lin*.

MONK.

No! *Bin. B, I, N, bin!*

ROXANE *(appears in the doorway, followed by Ragueneau, carrying a lighted lantern, and by Christian)*.

What is it?

MONK.

A letter.

CHRISTIAN.

What's this?

MONK *(to Roxane)*.

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Oh! it can but be a saintly thing! A worthy gentleman....

ROXANE *(to Christian)*.

Evidently Guiche!

CHRISTIAN.

He would dare?....

ROXANE.

Oh! he cannot long annoy me! I love you, and....

(She opens the letter, and, by the aid of Ragueneau's lantern, she reads to herself, in a low voice:)

"Mademoiselle,

"The drums are beating and my regiment is about to start. All think that I have already gone; but I have remained, thus disobeying you. I am here in the convent. I'll come to you forthwith, but I give you notice of my visit, through an innocent monk who knows not what message he is carrying. Your lips smiled to me just now; I must see them again. Dismiss whoever is near you, and condescend to hear the bold suitor whom you have, I trust, already forgiven, and who remains your most.... et cetera...."

(to the Monk).

Father, listen! Here is what the letter says:

(All come up and listen, as she reads aloud:)

"Mademoiselle,

"You must submit to the will of the Cardinal, however hard it may appear to you. And that is why I send this message by a saintly, most intelligent and discreet capuchin. We desire you to receive his blessing....*(turning the page)* his nuptial blessing immediately. Christian must be married to you secretly. I send him to you, though I know you like him not. Be resigned, remembering that

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Heaven will bless your zeal. Be assured, Mademoiselle, of my respect, for I have been and shall ever be your most humble and very.... et cetera."

MONK (*delighted*).

Worthy gentleman! I knew he could suggest but a saintly thing!

ROXANE (*aside to Christian*).

Do you not think I read letters well?

CHRISTIAN.

It depends....

ROXANE (*aloud, in despair*).

Ah!.... this is terrible!

MONK (*throwing the light of the lantern upon Cyrano*).

Are you the groom?

CHRISTIAN.

I am the one!

MONK (*turning the light upon Christian and as if he was in doubt on seeing Christian's handsome looks*).

But, my son....

ROXANE (*eagerly*).

There is a Post Scriptum: "Donate to the convent one hundred and twenty pistoles."

MONK.

Worthy, worthy gentleman! (*To Roxane*) Be resigned!

ROXANE (*with a martyr's look*).

I am!

(*While Ragueneau shows the Monk into the house, on Christian's invitation, Roxane, in low tone, says to Cyrano*).

Guiche is coming. Detain him here until....

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CYRANO.

I understand.

(*to the Monk*). To give them your blessing will take you.... how long?

MONK.

A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO (*pushing them all into the house*).

Go in, go in! Only one must remain here: I!

ROXANE (*to Christian*).

Come!

(*They all go into the house*).

CYRANO.

How can I detain Guiche fifteen minutes? Oh! I have a plan!

(*He climbs upon the balcony. The archlutes play a sort of dirge*).

This time it must be a man, most certainly. It is!

(*He is on the balcony, with his hat well down over his eyes. Takes off his sword, wraps himself in his cloak, leans over the railing and observes*).

No! Really not too high!

(*Straddles the railing, seizes a long branch of one of the trees and makes ready to drop*).

I'll only slightly disturb the atmosphere!

SCENE XI.

CYRANO, GUICHE.

GUICHE (*masked, and hesitating in the dark*).

What can this infernal monk be doing?

CYRANO.

By the way—my voice?—He might recognise it!

(*He loosens a hand and makes the motion of turning a key.*)

Cric! Crac!

(*Solemnly*) Now, Cyrano, resume the accent of Bergerac!

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GUICHE (*looking at the house*).

Here's the house!

(*He is about to enter, but Cyrano springs from the balcony while holding on to the branch; the latter bends and lets him down between Guiche and the door. He affects to fall heavily, as if from a great height, remaining crushed and dazed. Guiche jumps back.*)

What is this?

(*When Guiche recovers from his astonishment the branch has sprung up again, so that Cyrano appears to have fallen from the sky.*)

From where did this man drop?

CYRANO (*speaking with a Gascon's accent*).

From the moon!

GUICHE.

The moon!....

CYRANO (*as if dazed*).

What time is it? What country is this? What month? What day?

GUICHE.

But, my dear Sir....

CYRANO.

I feel quite dizzy.—Like a bombshell, I have just dropped from the moon!

GUICHE (*out of patience*).

Look here, Sir!....

CYRANO (*rising, and in thundering tone*).

I say that I dropped!

GUICHE (*falling back*).

So be it, then! You dropped!.... (*aside*) He is no doubt insane!

CYRANO (*walking toward him*).

[Pg 131]

And my drop is not metaphorical!.... One hundred years, or one minute ago—I cannot tell how long I was on the way—I was up in that saffron-coloured ball!

GUICHE (*shrugging his shoulders*).

Quite so! But allow me to pass!

CYRANO (*stopping him*).

Be frank now! Where am I? Where have I fallen like a meteorite?

GUICHE.

Zounds, Sir!....

CYRANO.

During my fall, I could make no selection as to my point of arrival. Is it upon a moon or an earth that my dead weight has just landed?

GUICHE.

But I repeat to you, Sir!....

CYRANO (*with a cry of horror that causes Guiche to fall back*).

Good Heavens!.... In this country are people's faces black? Am I in Algiers, and are you a native?

GUICHE (*touching his mask*).

No doubt, this mask....

CYRANO (*seemingly less frightened*).

Oh! then, it's Venice.... or Genoa!

GUICHE (*trying to pass*).

A lady is waiting for me!...

CYRANO (*completely reassured*).

Then I must be in Paris!

GUICHE (*reluctantly smiling*).

The rascal is amusing!

CYRANO.

[Pg 132]

You are laughing.

GUICHE.

Yes,—but I must pass.

CYRANO (*apparently overjoyed*).

So I have dropped in Paris!....

(*Quite at his ease, laughing, dusting himself, and bowing.*)

I have just arrived—pardon me—by the last cyclone, and I must brush off the ether that is still on me. I've travelled! My eyes are still full of astral dust, and my spurs have caught planet hairs.

(*picking something off his sleeve*).

Here, on my doublet, is one from a comet!....

(*He blows, as if to cast off the hair.*)

GUICHE (*enraged*).

Now, look here, Sir!....

(*As Guiche is going to pass, Cyrano stretches out his leg as if to show something that is on it.*)

CYRANO.

In the calf of this leg, Sir, I have a tooth of the Great Bear,—and, as nearing the Trident, I managed to avoid its three lances, I fell in a lump upon the Balance—where my weight up there is still registered!

(*preventing Guiche from passing and holding him by one of his buttons*).

If you were to press my nose, Sir, you would cause a flow of milk!....

GUICHE.

Milk, indeed!

CYRANO.

Yes, Sir.... from the Milky Way!

GUICHE.

Oh! by Satan!....

[Pg 133]

CYRANO.

No! I dropped from heaven! (*crossing his arms*). Would you believe it? I noticed it as I was going by there: Sirius, at night actually wears a turban! (*confidentially*) The other Bear, the little one, is still too small to bite! (*laughing*) As I was passing through the Lyre, I broke one of its strings! (*proudly*) But I intend to write a book on the subject; and the golden stars that I gathered into my scorched cloak, regardless of peril, shall be used by my printer for asterisks!

GUICHE.

Once more, I must insist....

CYRANO.

Oh! Sir, I know what you desire!

GUICHE.

You do?....

CYRANO.

Yes. You desire to hear from me how the moon is made, and if any one inhabits the rotundity of this cucurbit!^[22]

GUICHE (*very loud*).

No! No! I desire....

CYRANO.

To learn how I got up there? Easily. Through an invention of mine.

GUICHE (*discouraged*).

A madman, certainly!

CYRANO (*disdainfully*).

I copied not the stupid eagle of Regiomontanus, or the timid pigeon of Archytas!....

[Pg 134]

GUICHE.

A madman—but a learned one.

CYRANO.

No, Sir. I imitated nothing ever done.

(Guiche, having managed to pass, is nearing Roxane's door, but Cyrano follows, ready to seize him.)

I invented six different ways of assaulting the virgin blue!

GUICHE (*turning*).

Six?

CYRANO (*with increased fluency*).

I could, with body as bare as a taper, have comparisond it with crystal phials o'erflowing with tears from the morning skies, and my person, then, if exposed in the sun, would have been aspirated by the luminary along with the dew!

GUICHE (*astonished, goes toward Cyrano*).

True! That is one way!

CYRANO (*backing, so as to draw him further away*).

Again, I could have created a powerful gust of wind, to lift me, if I had rarefied the air in a cedar box, by means of heated mirrors forming an icosahedron!

GUICHE (*following Cyrano*).

Two ways!

CYRANO (*still backing*).

Or else, being both a machinist and an artificer, have straddled a steel-legged grasshopper, and caused myself, through successive explosions of saltpetre, to be projected into the azure fields where the stars are wont to graze!

GUICHE (*still following him, and counting on his fingers*).

That is three!

CYRANO.

[Pg 135]

Since smoke persists in rising, I might have blown into a globe enough of it to carry me up!

GUICHE (*more and more astonished*).

Four!

CYRANO.

Since Phœbe, when her bow is the thinnest, loves to draw, O beeves! your marrow,.... anoint myself with the same!

GUICHE (*stupefied*).

Five!

CYRANO (*who has managed, while talking, to press Guiche over to the other side of the square, near a bench*).

Last: I could have placed myself upon an iron plate, taken a magnet and thrown it up into the air! This is a capital way. As soon as the magnet starts, the iron rushes in pursuit of it. The magnet is thrown up again; the iron plate follows—and, Cadedis! there is nothing to prevent the ascension from lasting indefinitely.

GUICHE.

Six!—All excellent systems. And, tell me, Sir, which one of the six did you adopt?

CYRANO.

A seventh one!

GUICHE.

Astonishing! And what was it, please?

CYRANO.

You would never dream of it!....

GUICHE (*aside*).

The fellow is really interesting!

CYRANO (*very mysterious and imitating the sound of waves on a beach*).

Houüh! Houüh!

GUICHE.

[Pg 136]

What's that?

CYRANO.

You cannot imagine?

GUICHE.

No!

CYRANO.

The tide!.... As it was running out, in obedience to the attraction of the moon, I lay on the sands—head foremost, so that my hair—hair, you know, does not dry fast—so that my hair was kept bathed in the receding waves. And, thus I was, by the moon's attraction, drawn up, up, erect, like an angel. And up I went, gently, without an effort, until suddenly, I felt a shock!.... Then!....

GUICHE (*interested, takes a seat on the bench*).

Then?....

CYRANO.

Then.... (*resuming his natural tone*). The fifteen minutes have elapsed, Sir, and now I grant you your freedom. The marriage is accomplished!

GUICHE (*jumping up*).

Am I intoxicated?.... That voice!

(*The door of Roxane's house opens; lackeys come out with lighted candelabra. Cyrano takes off his hat that he had kept well down over his face.*)

And that nose!.... Cyrano!

CYRANO (*bowing*).

In person.... Cyrano! They have just exchanged their marriage rings.

GUICHE.

They!.... Who?

(*He turns. Tableau. Behind the lackeys, Roxane and Christian holding each other by the hand. The Monk, smiling, follows them. Ragueneau is behind, also holding a light. And last is the Duenna, bewildered, half dressed, as if she had been hurried out of bed.*)

Merciful heavens!

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SCENE XII.

The same. ROXANE, CHRISTIAN, THE MONK, RAGUENEAU, LACKEYS, THE DUENNA.

GUICHE (*to Roxane*).

You, Roxane!

(*Astounded on recognising Christian*) and he?

(*Bowing admiringly to Roxane.*)

You are admirably shrewd!

(*To Cyrano*) My compliments to you, Sir, as an inventor. Your narrative would have stopped a saint at the gate of heaven! Do not forget to write that book!

CYRANO (*bowing*).

I promise, Sir, to follow your advice.

THE MONK (*with an air of satisfaction calling Guiche's attention to the two lovers*).

A beautiful couple, my son, and good work of yours!

GUICHE (*very coldly*).

Yes.

(*to Roxane*) Be good enough to bid farewell, Madam, to your husband.

ROXANE.

How so?

GUICHE (*to Christian*).

Your regiment is about to march. Join it immediately!

ROXANE.

Is it going to the war?

GUICHE.

Of course it is.

ROXANE.

But you said, Sir, that the Cadets were not going!

GUICHE.

[Pg 138]

They shall go!

(*Drawing from his pocket the paper he had put into it.*)

Here is the order.

(*to Christian*) Bear it yourself, Baron.

ROXANE (*throwing herself into the arms of Christian*).

Oh! dear Christian!

GUICHE (*chuckling, to Cyrano*).

A still very distant honeymoon!

CYRANO (*aside*).

A fact not so annoying to me as he thinks!

CHRISTIAN (*to Roxane*).

Another kiss! Your lips again!

CYRANO.

Come, that is enough! enough!

CHRISTIAN (*still kissing Roxane*).

It is very hard to leave her.... You do not know....

CYRANO (*endeavouring to draw him away*).

Oh! yes, I do!

(*Drums beating a march, in the distance.*)

GUICHE (*who has gone up to the rear*).

The troops are leaving!

ROXANE (*to Cyrano, who is drawing away Christian while she is trying to hold him back*).

Oh!.... I entrust him to you! Promise me that nothing shall endanger his life!

CYRANO.

I shall do my best.... but I can hardly promise....

ROXANE (*still holding on to Christian*).

[Pg 139]

Promise me that he shall be very prudent!

CYRANO.

I'll try, but as to promising....

ROXANE (*still holding on*).

That during this terrible siege he shall never be cold!

CYRANO.

If it is at all possible, but....

ROXANE (*still holding on*).

That he shall remain true to me!

CYRANO.

Yes! of course! But I cannot....

ROXANE (*still holding on*).

That he shall write to me often!

CYRANO (*halting*).

Oh! that—I promise you!

CURTAIN.



THIRD ACT.

ACT IV.

[Pg 140]

THE CADETS OF GASCONY.

The post occupied by the Company of Carbon of Haughty-Hall at the siege of Arras. In the rear, an embankment running across the stage. Beyond, a plain, extending as far as the horizon, covered with siege works. In the distance, the walls of the City of Arras, with the outline of its roofs against the sky. Tents; arms strewn around; drums, etc.—Day is about to dawn; gold in the east. Sentinels here and there. Camp fires.—Rolled up in their cloaks the Cadets of Gascony are sleeping. Carbon of Haughty-Hall and Le Bret are watching. They are very pale and thin. Christian is asleep, in front, his face lighted by a fire. Silence.

SCENE I.

CHRISTIAN, CARBON OF HAUGHTY-HALL, LE BRET, THE CADETS, *later* CYRANO.

LE BRET.

It's awful!

CARBON.

Yes, nothing left to eat.

LE BRET.

Mordious!

CARBON (*motioning to him to speak lower*).

[Pg 141]

Deaden your oaths! or you'll wake the men.

(*to the Cadets*).

Sleep on!

(*to Le Bret*).

He who sleeps eats!

LE BRET.

Yes, but waking starves!

(*A few musket reports are heard in the distance.*)

CARBON.

Confound the muskets!.... They'll wake up my children.

(*to several of the Cadets who lift up their heads*).

Sleep!

(*More musketry, nearer*).

A CADET (*tossing*).

The Devil! again?

CARBON.

It's nothing! Only Cyrano coming back!

(*The lifted heads lie down again.*)

A SENTINEL (*outside*).

Who goes there?

CYRANO (*outside*).

Bergerac!

A SENTINEL (*on the embankment*).

Ventrebieu! who goes there?

CYRANO.

Bergerac, you idiot!

(*He comes down and is met by Le Bret.*)

LE BRET.

What, you! wounded?

CYRANO (*raising his hand*).

[Pg 142]

Hush! You know that they miss me regularly every morning.

LE BRET.

What! risk your life thus, every day, just to carry a letter without the camp! That is going too far.

CYRANO (*stopping in front of Christian*).

I promised that he would write often!

(*looking at him*).

He sleeps. How pale!

If sweet Roxane knew that he is starving! But he has not lost his good looks.

LE BRET.

Go get some sleep!

CYRANO.

Don't growl, Le Bret!.... Remember this: To pass through the Spanish lines, I long ago selected a place where they are invariably drunk.

LE BRET.

Why don't you once bring back some provisions?

CYRANO.

A load would not leave me light enough to pass through. But there is going to be a change. We, the French, shall soon eat.... or die,—if my eyes did not deceive me....

LE BRET.

How soon?

CYRANO.

You'll see!.... I'm not sure enough to speak.

CARBON.

Isn't it shameful that the besiegers should be the ones to starve!

LE BRET.

[Pg 143]

An extraordinary siege this! We are besieging Arras, and the Spanish are besieging us.

CYRANO.

Somebody should come now to besiege the Spanish.

LE BRET.

Do not joke so.—When I think that a life, precious as yours is, can be risked daily just to carry....

(Cyrano walks toward one of the tents.)

Where are you going?

CYRANO.

I am going to write another letter.

(Enters tent.)

SCENE II.

The same, less CYRANO.

Day is dawning. Rosy tints in the sky, and golden ones on the distant city. A gun is heard, then drums beat in the distance, to the left. Other drums are heard, successively, nearer, and nearer, until they sound on the stage, the noise then receding gradually, toward the right. Awakening of the Camp. Officers' commands in the distance.

CARBON *(sighing)*.

Reveille!.... Alas!

(the Cadets begin rising.)

Their dream of dinner is finished.... I know what their cry will be now.

A CADET *(rising)*.

I'm hungry!

ANOTHER CADET.

I'm half dead!

OTHER CADETS.

[Pg 144]

We are dead! quite!

CARBON.

Get up!

SEVERAL CADETS.

Can't!

FIRST CADET *(using his breastplate as a looking-glass)*.

My tongue is yellow. Indigestion!

ANOTHER CADET.

As to me, if my gastric organ gets not wherewith to produce a pint of chyle, I'll retire into my tent—like Achilles.

SEVERAL CADETS.

Bread! Something to eat! Now!

CARBON (*going to the tent of Cyrano and speaking low to him*).

Cyrano, help! Come with your ready wit, and put some life into them. Give them new courage.

A CADET (*to another who is chewing something*).

What are you nibbling at?

THE OTHER CADET.

Cannon wad fried in axle grease! There is but little game around Arras.

ANOTHER CADET (*entering*).

I've been out shooting.

STILL ANOTHER CADET (*likewise entering*).

And I've been fishing in the Scarpe.

ALL THE CADETS (*rushing up to them*).

What have you killed? What have you caught?—A pheasant?—A carp?—Quick, quick, show them!

THE FISHERMAN.

[Pg 145]

A gudgeon!

THE HUNTSMAN.

A sparrow!

ALL THE CADETS (*exasperated*).

Enough, enough! too much!—let us mutiny!

CARBON.

Help, Cyrano.

(*Daylight has come.*)

SCENE III.

The same, CYRANO.

CYRANO (*leaving his tent, perfectly tranquil, a pen over his ear, book in hand*).

Hey!....

(*Silence. To the first Cadet*).

What makes you drag your feet along so?

THE CADET.

Something in my heels that should not be there!....

CYRANO.

What's that?

THE CADET.

My stomach!

CYRANO.

Mine's the same. What of it?

THE CADET.

Isn't it inconvenient?

CYRANO.

[Pg 146]

No, it heightens me.

SECOND CADET.

My teeth are very long.

CYRANO.

Well, you can bite off a larger piece.

ANOTHER CADET.

My skin sounds empty.

CYRANO.

We'll use it as a drum, for the charge.

ANOTHER CADET.

There is a humming in my ears.

CYRANO.

Not that; an empty stomach has no ears. Impossible!

OTHER CADET.

Oh! for something to eat,—with good oil!

CYRANO (*taking off the helmet of the Cadet, in whose hand he places it*).

Eat your salad.

ANOTHER CADET.

What could we find to devour?

CYRANO (*throwing to him the book he holds in his hand*).

The Iliad!

OTHER CADET.

Meanwhile, the Minister in Paris has his four meals a day!

CYRANO.

He ought certainly to send you at least a partridge.

SAME CADET.

[Pg 147]

Why not? And some wine with it too!

CYRANO.

Richelieu, some Burgundy, if you please!

SAME CADET.

By one of his capuchins!

CYRANO.

The Grey Eminence is so intoxicating!

OTHER CADET.

I'm as hungry as a bear!

CYRANO.

Well, bear it!^[23]

FIRST CADET (*shrugging his shoulders*).

Forever words, a point!

CYRANO.

A point and words!

'Tis true; and I should like to die—at eve,
The sky aglow—as the defender of
A noble cause, a soldier and a poet too,
With, on my lips, the thrill of daring words,
And in my heart a sword's ennobling point!

ALL.

We're hungry!

CYRANO (*crossing his arms*).

So—you think of naught but food!
Come up here, then, Bertrandou, with your fife.
Seek shepherds' notes, and let these gluttons feast
Upon some old and ne'er forgotten tune
Each sound of which is like a sister's voice;
An air that slowly winds its way aloft,
As does the smoke from lowly cottage roofs,
A lay of youth, of waiting hearts and home!

[Pg 148]

(Bertrandou prepares his fife.)

Let fife a while forget the battle note,
Remembering that it was born a reed.

(Bertrandou begins playing some Gascony airs.)

Ye Gascons, list! 'Tis war no more, but peace.
'Tis hill and dale, 'tis wood and meadow-land,
With red-capped lads beside their gentle herds;
'Tis smiling riverbank and sunny sea.
O Gascons, hark! You are in Gascony!

(All have bowed their heads and are dreaming: many brush away a tear.)

CARBON *(to Cyrano, aside)*.

But, instead of giving them courage, you make them weep!

CYRANO.

I've made them homesick!.... A noble sort of suffering nobler than hunger. It is a comfort to see their pain change organs, and pass from their stomachs to their hearts!

CARBON.

But you will weaken them!

CYRANO *(motioning to a drummer to come up)*.

Never mind! The heroes' blood that is in them will soon arouse them!

(He motions to the drummer, who begins beating his drum.)

ALL THE CADETS *(rushing to their arms)*.

Hey!.... What?.... What is it?....

CYRANO *(smiling, to Carbon)*.

You see that, at the sound of the drum, dreams, longings, thoughts of home, of love,....all fly away. What comes by the fife goes by the drum.^[24]

A CADET *(from the rear)*.

[Pg 149]

Ha! ha! here is Monsieur de Guiche!

ALL THE CADETS *(murmuring)*.

Hou....

CYRANO *(smiling)*.

Quite complimentary!

A CADET.

He is a bore, with his lace collar over his armour. He comes here to exhibit himself!

OTHER CADET.

As if lace were in keeping with iron!

OTHER CADET.

Good if one has a boil on his neck!

OTHER CADET.

Too much of the courtier!

OTHER CADET.

The nephew of his uncle, the Cardinal.

CARBON.

And still he's a Gascon!

FIRST CADET.

Not a true one!....Beware! Because Gascons, you know, must be madcaps. There is nothing more dangerous than a reasonable Gascon.

LE BRET.

How pale he is!

A CADET.

He is hungry.... Just as much as we poor devils. But his breastplate gives a lustre to his cramps!

CYRANO (*quickly*).

We should not appear to suffer more than he does! Here! all of you, take up your cards, your pipes and your dice....

(They all rapidly begin playing, on benches, drums, or on their cloaks spread out on the ground, meanwhile lighting long pipes.)

[Pg 150]

.... and I ... will read Descartes.

(He walks up and down, reading a small book that he has taken out of his pocket.—Tableau.—Guiche enters; everybody seems busy and satisfied. He is very pale; goes up to Carbon.)

SCENE IV.

The same, GUICHE.

GUICHE (*to Carbon*).

Ha! Good morning!

(Aside, after looking at Carbon, with satisfaction). His face is green!

CARBON (*aside*).

There is nothing left of him but his eyes.

GUICHE (*looking at the Cadets*).

So, here are these soreheads!.... Yes, gentlemen, I understand that I am jeered at plentifully here; that cadets, nobility and gentry, barons all, are not over-burdened with respect for their Colonel; that they charge me with intrigue and court-flattery, that my lace collar over my breastplate is an eye-sore to them,—and that it is distressing to them to find that one can be a Gascon and still not out at the elbow!

(Silence. The Cadets continue to play and smoke.)

Shall I have you punished by your Captain? No.

CARBON.

Well, I am free and I punish only....

GUICHE.

Ah!....

CARBON.

[Pg 151]

I paid for my company, and it belongs to me. I obey only to war commands.

GUICHE.

Ah!.... Well, that is sufficient.

(speaking to the Cadets).

I can afford to scorn your bluster. Everybody knows how I behave under fire. Even yesterday, there were enough witnesses to the spirit with which I routed Count de Bucquoi; leading my people against his men like an avalanche, I charged him three successive times!

CYRANO (*without lifting his eyes from his book*).

How about your white scarf?

GUICHE (*surprised and satisfied*).

You know of this trifle?.... True, it happened, while I was circling to gather my people for the third charge, that a party of runaways forced me too close to the enemy; I was in danger of being taken or shot, when, happily, I bethought me to untie and to drop the scarf that told my rank. In this way, and without attracting notice, I managed to get away from the Spaniards, and to turn

back upon them with all my men, beating them terribly!—Now, what do you say to this?

(The Cadets affect not to listen, but they have stopped playing, and they hold back the smoke of their pipes. A wait.)

CYRANO.

I say that Henry IV, even surrounded by a host of foes, never would have consented to diminish himself by casting off his plume of snowy white.

(Silent joy. Playing and smoking are resumed.)

GUICHE.

The device was successful, however!

(Playing and smoking again suspended.)

CYRANO.

[Pg 152]

Possibly! But who would abdicate the honour of being a target?

(Playing and smoking resumed. Growing satisfaction.)

Had I been present when the scarf slipped off,—see how ideas of bravery can vary, Sir,—I should have picked it up and put it on.

GUICHE.

Yes, Gascon boasting again!

CYRANO.

Boasting?.... Lend it to me. I offer to hang it on my shoulder and, this very night, to scale with it the enemy's fortifications.

GUICHE.

A Gascon's offer! You know full well that the scarf remained on the enemy's ground, near the river Scarpe, a place so well covered by Spanish guns that nobody can venture there to get it!

CYRANO *(taking a white scarf from his pocket and handing it to Guiche).*

Here it is!

(Silence. The Cadets restrain their laughter and affect to be very busy playing. Guiche turns and looks at them; they assume an air of great gravity; one of them, in an absent-minded way, half whistles one of the airs the fife played a while before.)

GUICHE *(taking the scarf).*

Thank you! I can use this white fabric to make a signal,—that I hesitated to give.

(He goes to the embankment and waves the scarf several times.)

ALL.

What is this?

THE SENTINEL *(on the embankment).*

[Pg 153]

A man, over there, who is running away!....

GUICHE *(coming down from the embankment).*

One who plays the part of a Spanish spy. He is very useful to us; takes over to the enemy information that I give him, so that we can influence their decision.

CYRANO.

He is a blackguard!

GUICHE *(slowly tying on his scarf).*

Yes, but a great convenience. What were we saying?.... Ah!.... I was going to apprise you of something. Last night, in a desperate attempt to revictual us, the Marshal left for Dourlens; he took with him so many men that an attack upon us just now would certainly be successful. Half of the army is away from the camp!

CARBON.

But the Spanish do not know of it.

GUICHE.

Yes, they do. They are going to attack us. My false spy came to tell me of it. He added: "I can have the attack made wherever you prefer." I answered: "Good. Leave the camp and watch it.

The point to attack will be the one from which I make a signal to you."

CARBON (*to the Cadets*).

Gentlemen, make ready!

(*The Cadets rise and busy themselves preparing for the fight.*)

GUICHE.

The attack will take place in an hour from now.

A FEW CADETS.

Oh!.... that is different!

(*They sit down and resume playing.*)

GUICHE (*to Carbon*).

[Pg 154]

You must gain time, pending the Marshal's return.

CARBON.

And, in order to gain time, what shall we do?

GUICHE.

You will have the goodness to get killed, all of you, in defense of the camp.

CYRANO.

Ah! this is his vengeance!

GUICHE.

I will not pretend that, if I loved you, I should have selected you; but, as your bravery has no equal, by using you I am serving my king as well as my ill-will.

CYRANO.

Allow me, Sir, to be thankful for the honour.

GUICHE.

Oh! I know that you love to fight one against a hundred. You certainly cannot complain, then, that I leave you inactive.

(*He goes toward the rear with Carbon.*)

CYRANO (*to the Cadets*).

Well, then we will add to the Gascon coat of arms, proud of its six chevrons of azure and gold, gentlemen, another chevron, still lacking, one of blood!

(*Guiche speaks, aside, with Carbon in the rear. Orders are given. Preparations against attack. Cyrano goes up to Christian, who has remained motionless with folded arms.*)

CYRANO (*placing his hand on Christian's shoulder*).

Christian!

CHRISTIAN (*shaking his head*).

[Pg 155]

Roxane.

CYRANO.

Alas!

CHRISTIAN.

At least, I should like to condense all the loving farewells of my heart into a beautiful letter!....

CYRANO.

I thought it might be for to-day, and....

(*He draws a letter from his doublet*)

.... I have written your farewell.

CHRISTIAN.

Let me see!....

CYRANO.

You desire to?....

Yes, certainly!

(*He opens the letter, reads, and stops.*)

What is this?....

CYRANO.

What?

CHRISTIAN.

This little round spot?....

CYRANO (*taking the letter and looking at it with an air of innocence*).

A little round spot?....

CHRISTIAN.

Yes, a tear!

CYRANO.

Oh!.... Yes!.... we poets are caught in our own trap, through the swing of our art. You understand.... this letter,—was heart-rending; I drew tears from my own eyes as I was writing it.

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 156]

Tears?....

CYRANO.

Yes.... because.... to die is not so terrible butnever to see her again, that is the torture! for the fact is, I shall never....

(*Christian looks at him.*)

We shall never....

(*Quickly.*)

You shall never....

CHRISTIAN (*snatching the letter from him*).

Give me the letter!

(*A murmur is heard in the rear.*)

A SENTINEL.

Ventrebieu! who goes there?

(*A few musket shots. Voices. Sound of carriage bells.*)

CARBON.

What is it?

SENTINEL (*on the embankment*).

A coach!

(*All rush up to look.*)

CRIES.

What! In the camp?—Coming in!—It seems to come from the enemy!—Diantre! Fire!—No! the coachman shouted!—Shouted what?—Shouted: "Service of the King."

(*They are all on the embankment, looking into the distance. The sound of carriage bells grows nearer and nearer.*)

GUICHE.

What? of the King!....

(*All come down again and form in line.*)

CARBON.

[Pg 157]

Hats off, all!

GUICHE (*to those in the distance*).

Of the King! I said.—Make way, you rabble, so that he can swing around in state.

(The coach enters on a full trot. It is covered with mud and dust. The curtains are closed. Two lackeys behind. It stops short.)

CARBON (*shouting*).

Salute!

(Drums beat.)

GUICHE.

Lower the step!

(Two men advance rapidly. The coach door opens.)

ROXANE (*jumping out of coach*).

How are you all?

(On hearing a woman's voice, they all, from a profound inclination, suddenly straighten up. Stupor.)

SCENE V.

The same, ROXANE.

GUICHE.

Service of the King! You?

ROXANE.

Certainly, of the only king there is: Love!

CYRANO.

Great God.

CHRISTIAN (*rushing up to her*).

You, Roxane! Wherefor?

ROXANE.

Oh! this siege was entirely too long.

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 158]

But the reason?...

ROXANE.

I'll tell you later.

CYRANO (*he has remained motionless, without daring to look at her*).

Heavens! Shall I face her?

GUICHE.

You cannot remain here!

ROXANE (*gayly*).

Oh! yes, I can! Will you be kind enough to bring up a drum?

(One of the Cadets brings up a drum, on which she sits.)

There! thank you.

(laughing).

Do you know that they fired on my coach? It looks like a squash, does it not? As in the fairy tale; and the lackeys like rats.

(sending a kiss to Christian).

How are you, dear?

(looking around at them all).

You don't seem to be very merry here! I didn't know that Arras was so far off.

(looking at Cyrano).

Cousin, delighted!

CYRANO (*advancing*).

Roxane, tell me how?....

ROXANE.

How I managed to find the army? Oh! my dear friend, it was the simplest thing in the world: I drove on so long as I saw the country laid waste. Such horrors must be seen to be believed! If that is the service of your King, gentlemen, my service is a better one.

CYRANO.

[Pg 159]

Come, this is foolhardiness! How could you pass?

ROXANE.

How? Why! Right through the Spanish army.

FIRST CADET.

Oh! women. They are knowing ones!

GUICHE.

But how could you get through their lines?

LE BRET.

It must have been very difficult!

ROXANE.

Why! No. I just went along, in my coach, on a trot. Whenever one of the Dons showed his haughty face, I put on and displayed through the window my most fascinating smile, and these gentlemen being, whatever the French may say, the most courteous people in the world, I passed!

CARBON.

Yes, you have a most excellent passport in that smile! But you must frequently have been called upon, Madam, to declare whither you were going.

ROXANE.

Oh! yes, quite frequently. I answered simply: "I am going to see my lover."—Immediately the most ferocious Spaniard would gravely close the door of my coach, with a knightly wave of the hand order up the muskets already pointed at me, and, with as much grace as haughtiness, the plume of his hat proudly floating on the breeze, bow low and say: "Pass on, Senorita!"

CHRISTIAN.

But, Roxane....

ROXANE.

[Pg 160]

I said: My lover. Yes, husband, you must forgive! You will surely understand that, if I had said my husband, nobody would have let me pass!

CHRISTIAN.

But....

ROXANE.

Well, what?

GUICHE.

You must be gone immediately!

ROXANE.

I?

CYRANO.

Yes, and sooner!

CHRISTIAN.

Yes, at once.

ROXANE.

But how can I get away?

CHRISTIAN (*embarrassed*).

The fact is....

CYRANO (*likewise embarrassed*).

In forty-five minutes....

GUICHE (*also embarrassed*).

Or fifty....

CARBON (*embarrassed too*).

It would be preferable....

LE BRET.

You might....

ROXANE.

[Pg 161]

I remain, for there is going to be fighting.

ALL.

Fighting? Nothing of the kind.

ROXANE (*throwing herself into the arms of Christian*).

He is my husband! And if he is killed, I must be killed too!

CHRISTIAN.

But what is the matter with your eyes?

ROXANE.

I will tell you later!

GUICHE.

But the post is a most dangerous one.

ROXANE (*turning*).

What! So dangerous?

CYRANO.

Yes, and the proof is that he assigned it to us.

ROXANE (*to Guiche*).

So, you desire to make a widow of me?

GUICHE.

I swear to you....

ROXANE.

No! Now I am determined and I will not leave!.... Moreover, it is very exciting.

CYRANO.

What! will the "précieuse" turn out to be a heroine?

ROXANE.

Monsieur de Bergerac, I am your cousin.

A CADET.

Moreover, we will defend you desperately!

ROXANE (*growing more and more excited*).

[Pg 162]

I believe it, my friends!

ANOTHER CADET (*elated*).

A perfume of iris pervades the camp.

ROXANE.

Just so! I put some on this hat, which will be very becoming in the fray!....

(*looking at Guiche*).

But perhaps it is time the Count should leave: the fight might begin.

GUICHE.

Ah! this is too much! I will inspect the guns and return You have a little time left still,....change your mind!

ROXANE.

Never!

(Exit Guiche.)

SCENE VI.

The same, except GUICHE.

CHRISTIAN *(supplicating)*.

Roxane!....

ROXANE.

No!

FIRST CADET *(to the others)*.

She remains!

ALL *(rushing around hurriedly, and brushing up)*.

A comb!—Soap!—My doublet is torn: a needle!—A bright bow!—Your looking glass!—My cuffs!—Your curling iron!—A razor!

ROXANE *(to Cyrano, who continues begging her to leave)*.

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No! I will not budge from here!

CARBON *(after having, like the others, tightened his belt and arranged his cuffs, advances toward Roxane and says ceremoniously)*:

Such being the case, it may not seem improper for me to present to you a few of the gentlemen who will have the honour of dying before your eyes.

(Roxane bows, and waits leaning on the arm of Christian. Carbon makes the presentations.)

Baron de Peyrescous de Colignac!

A CADET *(bowing)*.

Madam....

CARBON *(continuing)*.

Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac!—Baron de Malgouyre Estressac Lesbas d'Escarabiot!—Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet!—Baron Hillot de Blagnac—Salechan de Castel Crabioules!

ROXANE.

But how many names has each of you.

BARON HILLOT.

More than many.

CARBON *(to Roxane)*.

Kindly open the hand that holds your handkerchief.

ROXANE *(opens her hand; her handkerchief falls)*.

What for?

(The whole company darts forward to pick it up.)

CARBON *(heading them off and seizing it)*.

My company had no flag! Now it will have the finest in the camp!

ROXANE *(smiling)*.

It is rather small!

CARBON *(tying the handkerchief to his lance)*.

[Pg 164]

It is lace.... and yours!

A CADET *(to the others)*.

I would die most willingly for eyes so beautiful, if only I could have a crust of bread or two.

CARBON *(indignant)*.

For shame! How can you think of eating before so exquisite a woman?....

ROXANE.

But he is right. The morning air is sharp, and I myself am famished. Meat-pie,—cold game and jelly, some good wine,—I'll have nothing else, thank you! Suppose we have them now? There is still time.

A CADET.

But where shall we get all these good things?

ROXANE (*quietly*).

In my coach.

ALL.

What!....

ROXANE.

But somebody must serve and carve. Look at my coachman more attentively, gentlemen, and you will see that he is a very valuable man.

THE CADETS (*running up to the coach*).

Why! It's Ragueneau!

ROXANE (*looking at them*).

Poor hungry fellows!

CYRANO (*kissing her hand*).

What a kind fairy you are!

RAGUENEAU (*standing on his seat*).

Gentlemen!....

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THE CADETS.

Speech! Speech!

RAGUENEAU.

The Spaniards, when so much beauty passed, did not see the repast. (*Applause.*) They are so bony that they did not notice the boned turkey.

(*He takes a dish from under his seat and passes it down.*)

CYRANO (*aside to Christian*).

A word with you for pity's sake!....

RAGUENEAU.

They were so busy with Venus that they allowed Diana's spoils to pass.

(*He hands down a stag's leg.*)

CYRANO (*aside to Christian*).

I must speak to you!

ROXANE (*to the Cadets who come up loaded with eatables*).

Place all that on the ground.

(*She spreads a table-cloth on the grass, and, with the assistance of the two lackeys, prepares the cover.*)

(*to Christian, whom Cyrano is endeavouring to draw aside*).

Come, make yourself useful.

(*Christian helps her. Cyrano looks anxious.*)

RAGUENEAU.

A stuffed peacock!

A CADET (*cutting for himself a large slice of ham*).

Jupiter's thunder! We'll not die without previouslystuffing our....(*noticing Roxane*) your pardon.... feasting!

RAGUENEAU (*tossing to them the coach's cushions*).

These cushions are stuffed with ortolans!

Ah! Viédaze!

RAGUENEAU (*handing out bottles of red wine*).

Liquid rubies!....

(*Bottles of white wine.*)

Melted topaz!....

ROXANE (*throwing a table-cloth that falls on Cyrano's head*).

Attend to this!.... Be nimble!

RAGUENEAU (*handing down one of the lanterns*).

Each one of the lanterns is a diminutive larder!

CYRANO (*unfolds the table-cloth, getting near to Christian, who assists him*).

I must speak to you before you speak to her!

RAGUENEAU (*growing lyrical*).

The handle of my whip is a sausage from Arles!

ROXANE (*passing the dishes and filling glasses*).

Since we are ordered to die, what care we for the rest of the army?—Yes! all for the Gascons!—and, if Guiche comes, we'll not invite him! (*going from one to the other*).

Come, you have plenty of time. Do not eat so fast! Drink a little.—Why have you tears in your eyes?

FIRST CADET.

Because it's all too good!....

ROXANE.

Hush!—Red or white?—Bread, Monsieur de Carbon!—A knife?—Your plate!—Meat pie?—Champagne wine?—Chicken?

CYRANO (*following her, loaded with eatables, and helping her to serve. Aside*).

How I love her!

ROXANE (*going up to Christian*).

[Pg 167]

And what will you have?

CHRISTIAN.

Nothing.

ROXANE.

Yes, just a cake and a little Muscatel!

CHRISTIAN (*endeavouring to detain her*).

Oh! tell me why, why you came?

ROXANE.

Hush! Let me first give these poor starving fellows something to eat.... I'll tell you by and by....

LE BRET (*who had gone to the rear, to pass, on the end of a lance, a loaf of bread to the sentinel on the embankment*).

Here is Guiche!

CYRANO.

Make haste, hide bottles, dishes, plates, baskets, everything! Be lively there! Let him notice nothing!....

(*to Ragueneau*).

You, get up to your box again!—Be quick! Everything out of the way!

(*It has taken only a few seconds to conceal everything, under tent, doublet, cloak or hat.—Enter Guiche. He stops and sniffs the air.—Silence.*)

SCENE VII.

The same, GUICHE.

GUICHE.

It smells good here!

A CADET (*humming an air, unconcernedly*).

To lo lo!....

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GUICHE (*stopping and looking at him*).

Why! what is the matter?... You are as red as a beet!

THE CADET.

I?... Oh! nothing. Merely my blood. We are going to fight. It boils!

ANOTHER CADET.

Poum.... poum.... poum.... patapoum....

GUICHE (*turning to him*).

What is this, now?

THE CADET (*slightly feeling the effects of wine*).

That, oh! nothing. Just a little song!

GUICHE.

You are of a lively disposition, my boy!

THE CADET.

Oh! the approach of danger!

GUICHE (*calling Carbon to give an order*).

Captain,....

(*looking at him with astonishment*).

Zounds! You, too, have an over-healthy look!

CARBON (*very red in the face, and hiding a bottle behind his back*).

Oh! constitution....

GUICHE.

I had a field-piece left and I ordered it placed in that corner (*pointing to the wings*).

Your men may have occasion to use it.

ONE OF THE CADETS (*with an affectation of thankfulness*).

Delightful attention!

ANOTHER CADET (*smiling gracefully*).

Exquisitely thoughtful!

GUICHE (*aside*).

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Why! they have all gone mad!—

(*sternly*).

As you are not accustomed to using cannon, beware of the recoil.

FIRST CADET.

Who cares for recoil?

GUICHE (*going up to him, in rage*).

Look here, Sir!....

THE CADET.

Gascon guns never move backward.

GUICHE (*taking him by the arm and shaking him*).

You are intoxicated, Sir!.... with what?

THE CADET (*proudly*).

With the smell of gun powder!

GUICHE (*shrugs his shoulders, pushes him, and goes up to Roxane*).

You must decide quickly. What will you be pleased to do?

ROXANE.

I remain!

GUICHE.

No, better escape!

ROXANE.

Fly? Never.

GUICHE.

Such being the case, give me a musket!

CARBON.

What for?

GUICHE.

[Pg 170]

I, too, will remain.

CYRANO.

At last, Sir, you show your courage!

FIRST CADET.

So you are a true Gascon, after all, in spite of your lace?

GUICHE.

I never abandon a woman in danger!

SECOND CADET (*to the first Cadet*).

Say! don't you think he deserves something to eat?

(*Eatables and drinkables instantly reappear.*)

GUICHE (*whose eyes brighten*).

Provisions!

THIRD CADET.

Every doublet covers some!

GUICHE (*mastering himself, proudly*).

I eat nobody's leavings!

CYRANO (*bowing*).

You are improving, Sir!

GUICHE (*proudly and forgetting to master his natural Gascon accent*).

I know how to fight on an empty stomach! *A jeung!*

FIRST CADET (*overjoyed*).

He said it with the Gascon accent!

GUICHE (*laughing*).

Did I?

THE CADET.

He is one of us!

(*They all begin to dance.*)

CARBON (*who has been away a moment behind the embankment, reappearing on top of it*).

[Pg 171]

My men are placed, and determined!

(*He points to a row of lances that show over the crest of the embankment.*)

GUICHE (*to Roxane, bowing*).

Will you accept my hand to pass them in review?....

(She gives her hand and they go up to the embankment. Hats come off, and everybody follows.)

CHRISTIAN (*going up to Cyrano*).

Now! speak quickly!

(As Roxane appears on the crest, the lances disappear in a salute; she bows.)

THE MEN (*outside*).

Hurrah!

CHRISTIAN.

What is your secret?....

CYRANO.

In case Roxane...

CHRISTIAN.

Well?

CYRANO.

Should speak to you of letters....

CHRISTIAN.

Yes, yes, I know!....

CYRANO.

Do not be silly enough to appear surprised....

CHRISTIAN.

Surprised by what?

CYRANO.

[Pg 172]

Oh! I must tell you.... The simplest thing in the world and I happened to think of it only to-day, on seeing her. You have....

CHRISTIAN.

I have what?

CYRANO.

You have....written to her more often than you think.

CHRISTIAN.

How so?

CYRANO.

Well! I had undertaken to speak for you, and I interpreted your love. Sometimes I wrote without saying to you: I'm writing!

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! you did?

CYRANO.

Yes, the simplest thing in the world, as I said!

CHRISTIAN.

But, since we have been hemmed in, how did you manage to....

CYRANO.

Oh!.... Before dawn I could pass through the lines....

CHRISTIAN (*folding his arms*).

Ah! another very simple matter, I suppose? And how many times a week did I write?.... Twice?—Three times?—Four times?—

CYRANO.

More.

CHRISTIAN.

Every day?

CYRANO.

[Pg 173]

Yes, every day,—twice.

CHRISTIAN (*with violence*).

And this enraptured you, and the rapture was such that each day you faced death....

CYRANO (*noticing Roxane, who is returning*).

Hush! not in her presence!

(*Exit rapidly, under his tent.*)

SCENE VIII.

ROXANE, CHRISTIAN; *in the rear* CADETS, *going and coming*: CARBON *and* GUICHE *giving orders*.

ROXANE (*running up to Christian*).

And now, dear Christian!....

CHRISTIAN (*taking both her hands*).

And now tell me why, over impassable roads, why, through the ranks of brutal soldiery, you joined me here.

ROXANE.

On account of your letters.

CHRISTIAN.

My letters?

ROXANE.

Yes, and it is your fault if I took so many risks. Your letters intoxicated me. Ah! remember how many you wrote me, during this last month, and all so beautiful!

CHRISTIAN.

What! Do you mean to say that for a few short love letters?....

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ROXANE.

Your letters, yes! My ardent love for you,
Love passionate, was born that night of bliss
When, from beneath my willing balcony,
In accents that to both of us were new,
A soul revealed itself to me....'twas yours....
So that, each time your letters came, it seemed
As if I lived those minutes once again,
And, rapture-bound, I heard your voice itself,
Those tender tones that twined around me then.
So here am I! Penelope would not
Have persevered in waiting labour if
Ulysses could have written grandly so;
But, daft as Helen, she, to join him, would
Have flung away her tedious worsted balls.

CHRISTIAN.

But....

ROXANE.

Yes, I read and read, while every thrill
Confirmed me yours. Each leaflet that I held
Was like a petal wafted from your soul,
Each word was one of love sincere and strong....

CHRISTIAN.

Indeed, sincere and strong?—You felt it so?....

ROXANE.

Oh! yes, so strongly!

CHRISTIAN.

And, Roxane, you came....

ROXANE.

I came because.... O Christian, dearest conqueror,
You'd bid me rise, if I should clasp your knees;
So 'tis my soul that's at your feet. My soul
You never can remove from reverence.
I came to seek forgiveness (and the time
Is meet, indeed, since death is near, perhaps!),
Your pardon for—how frivolous I was!—
Once loving you for beauty's sake alone.

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CHRISTIAN (*frightened*).

Roxane!

ROXANE.

But later, dear, with growing sense,
—A bird will hop before it learns to soar—
I marked your soul outshining e'en your looks,
And then I loved you more for both.

CHRISTIAN.

And now?

ROXANE.

You have, in short, yourself outshone yourself,
And now I love you for your soul alone.

CHRISTIAN.

Roxane!

ROXANE.

Rejoice! What is a love we owe
To passing gifts, to beauty doomed to fade?
It's torture for an eager, noble heart.
My thoughts of you recall no handsome face;
Your beauty that, at first, had captured me,
Now that my eyes are opened, strikes me not.

CHRISTIAN.

Oh!

ROXANE.

Doubt you not what victory is yours!

CHRISTIAN.

Roxane!

ROXANE.

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I understand. Such love as this
Is past belief.

CHRISTIAN.

'Tis not the love I seek.
I wish to be belovèd simply for....

ROXANE.

For what some others prized before to-day?
Oh! let your heart make room for better love!

CHRISTIAN.

Roxane, your former love was better.

ROXANE.

Nay!
'Tis now I love you better, most and well!
'Tis what is really you that now I love,
And I should love you still if you should cease....

CHRISTIAN.

Oh! hush, Roxane.

ROXANE.

Yes, cease to look so grand.

CHRISTIAN.

If I were homely?

ROXANE.

Even hideous!

CHRISTIAN.

Roxane!....

ROXANE.

The thought should give you joy profound.

CHRISTIAN (*in a husky voice*).

Yes....

ROXANE.

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What troubles you?

CHRISTIAN (*gently pushing her off*).

Nothing. I have an order to give! One second, please....

ROXANE.

But....

CHRISTIAN (*pointing to a group of Cadets in the rear*).

My love for you, my selfishness, has deprived these poor fellows of your sweet company. Go smile to them a little, since they are about to die.... Go!

ROXANE (*moved*).

How good you are, dear Christian!....

(*She goes up to the Gascons, who respectfully surround her.*)

SCENE IX.

CHRISTIAN, CYRANO: *in the rear*, ROXANE *speaking with CARBON and some of the Cadets.*

CHRISTIAN (*calling out in the direction of Cyrano's tent*).

Cyrano!

CYRANO (*coming out armed for battle*).

What is it? You are white as a ghost!

CHRISTIAN.

She loves me no more!

CYRANO.

How so?

CHRISTIAN.

You are the one she loves.

CYRANO.

Nonsense!

CHRISTIAN.

[Pg 178]

Now my soul is all she loves.

CYRANO.

Fiddlesticks!

CHRISTIAN.

I tell you it is so! You therefore are the one she loves,—and you love her.

CYRANO.

I?

CHRISTIAN.

I know it!

CYRANO.

Well, it is true.

CHRISTIAN.

You love her madly.

CYRANO.

More than that.

CHRISTIAN.

Tell her so!

CYRANO.

No!

CHRISTIAN.

Why not?

CYRANO.

Look at my face!

CHRISTIAN.

She said she would love me even if I were homely!

CYRANO.

She really told you so?

CHRISTIAN.

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She did!

CYRANO.

I am very glad she said so! But you must not believe anything so wild. Do not lose your beauty, for then she would hate me too much.

CHRISTIAN.

That we shall see. Let her choose! Tell her all.

CYRANO.

No, no! Do not put me to such torture!

CHRISTIAN.

Would you have me destroy your happiness because of my good looks? That would be too unjust!

CYRANO.

And I should ruin yours because I happen, by mere chance, to have the gift of expressing.... that which no doubt you feel?

CHRISTIAN.

Tell her all, I say!

CYRANO.

You persist in tempting me. It is wrong!

CHRISTIAN.

I am tired of having a rival in myself!

CYRANO.

Oh! Christian!

CHRISTIAN.

Our marriage.... without witnesses.... quite secret, in fact, could be annulled.... should we survive!

CYRANO.

How obstinate he is!....

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CHRISTIAN.

Perhaps,...but I desire to be loved for myself,...or not at all!—But enough!... I had better go see how things are progressing. I'll return presently; meanwhile, speak, and let her prefer one of us two!

CYRANO.

It shall be you!

CHRISTIAN.

Well.... I hope so!

(he calls out) Roxane!

CYRANO.

No, do not call her, please!

ROXANE *(running in)*.

What is it?

CHRISTIAN.

Cyrano will tell you... something.... important....

(She runs up to Cyrano. Exit Christian.)

SCENE X.

ROXANE, CYRANO, *later* LE BRET, CARBON OF HAUGHTY-HALL, THE CADETS, RAGUENEAU, GUICHE, *etc.*

ROXANE.

Something important?....

CYRANO *(bewildered)*.

What! he is gone!.... *(to Roxane)*

Oh, nothing!.... he attaches—Oh! well, you must know him!—a great deal of importance to trifles!

ROXANE *(eagerly)*.

He doubts, perhaps, the truth of what I said?.... I could almost see he did not believe it!....

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CYRANO *(taking her by the hand)*.

But was what you said really true?

ROXANE.

Certainly. I would love him even.... *(she hesitates a second.)*

CYRANO *(smiling sadly)*.

You stop at the word.... in my presence?

ROXANE.

But....

CYRANO.

It will not hurt my feelings! You meant: Even if he were homely!

ROXANE.

Yes.... homely!

(Sound of musketry in the rear.)

CYRANO *(ardently)*.

Abominably so?

ROXANE.

Yes!

CYRANO.

Disfigured?

ROXANE.

Yes, disfigured!

CYRANO.

Grotesque?

ROXANE.

Nothing can make him look grotesque.... to me!

CYRANO.

And then you would love him still?

ROXANE.

[Pg 182]

More, perhaps!

CYRANO (*losing his self control, aside*).

Good God! It is true, perhaps, and happiness is there! (*to Roxane*). Well, then.... Roxane.... listen!....

LE BRET (*entering rapidly and calling in a low voice*).

Cyrano!

CYRANO (*turning around*).

What is it?

LE BRET.

Hush! (*whispers to him a few words*.)

CYRANO (*dropping Roxane's hand*).

Great God!....

ROXANE.

What has happened?

CYRANO (*stupefied*).

It is all over!

(*Sounds of musketry again*.)

ROXANE.

What is it? Why all this firing?

(*She goes up and looks beyond the embankment*.)

CYRANO.

All over! I never can tell her!

ROXANE (*as if going to rush out*).

What is going on?

CYRANO (*restraining her*).

Nothing! nothing!

(*Cadets enter bearing something which they conceal by forming around it a group that keeps Roxane at a distance*.)

ROXANE.

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What are these men here for?

CYRANO (*leading her away*).

Never mind them!....

ROXANE.

But what is it you were going to say before this disturbance?

CYRANO.

Going to say?... Nothing. Oh! nothing, I swear it, Madam! (*Solemnly*) I swear that the spirit of Christian and his soul were.... (*correcting himself*) are the greatest....

ROXANE.

You said: were!

(*With a shriek*). Ah!.... (*she rushes back, pushing the men aside.*)

CYRANO.

The end has come!

ROXANE (*seeing Christian laid out in his cloak*).

Christian!

LE BRET (*to Cyrano*).

The first shot fired by the enemy!

(*Roxane throws herself upon the body of Christian. Musketry again. Clash of arms. Shouts. Drums.*)

CARBON OF HAUGHTY-HALL (*sword in hand*).

The attack! to your arms!

(*Followed by the Cadets he goes to the other side of the embankment.*)

ROXANE (*in despair*).

Christian! Christian!

THE VOICE OF CARBON (*from behind the embankment*).

Make haste there!

ROXANE.

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Christian!

CARBON.

Fall into line!

ROXANE.

Christian!

CARBON.

Measure.... match!

(*Ragueneau has rushed up bringing some water in a helmet.*)

CHRISTIAN (*in dying tone*).

Roxane!....

CYRANO (*quickly and in a low tone, in the ear of Christian, while Roxane, frantic, dips into the water of the helmet a piece of linen which she has torn from her breast.*)

I told her all! and it is you she still loves!

(*Christian closes his eyes.*)

ROXANE.

What is it, my love?

CARBON.

Ramrods.... high!

ROXANE (*to Cyrano*).

He is not dead?....

CARBON.

Open charge.... with teeth!

ROXANE.

I feel, here against mine, his cheek getting cold!

CARBON (*outside*).

Take aim!

ROXANE.

[Pg 185]

A letter in his bosom! (*she opens the letter*) for me!

CYRANO (*aside*).

My letter!

CARBON.

Fire!

(*Musketry. Cries. Noise of battle.*)

CYRANO (*trying to draw away his hand that is held by Roxane, who is on her knees*).

But, Roxane, I must join in the fight!

ROXANE (*holding him back*).

Stay just a little. He is dead, and you were the only one who really knew him.

(*She weeps softly.*) Is it not true that he had an exquisite soul, a marvellous one?

CYRANO (*standing bareheaded*).

Yes, Roxane!

ROXANE.

That he was a thrilling poet, an adorable one?

CYRANO.

Yes, Roxane!

ROXANE.

A sublime spirit?

CYRANO.

Yes, Roxane!

ROXANE.

That he had a heart large and brave, too deep to be fathomed by the crowd?

CYRANO (*firmly*).

Yes, Roxane!

ROXANE (*throwing herself upon the body of Christian*).

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And he is dead!

CYRANO (*aside, as he draws his sword*).

And I to-day can but die, since, though she knows it not, it is for me she is weeping over him!

(*Sound of trumpets in the distance.*)

GUICHE (*reappearing on the embankment, hatless, wounded in the forehead; with a voice of thunder*).

It is the signal that was promised! the trumpets! our comrades come with help and food! Hold fast a few minutes!

ROXANE.

On his letter blood and tears!

A VOICE (*outside the embankment*).

Surrender!

THE CADETS.

No!

RAGUENEAU (*who has climbed upon the coach, and is looking at the battle over the embankment*).

We are lost!

CYRANO (*to Guiche, pointing to Roxane*).

Carry her off! I will charge!

ROXANE (*in dying tones, as she kisses the letter*).

His blood! His tears!....

RAGUENEAU (*jumping off the coach and running toward her*).

She is fainting!

GUICHE (*on the embankment, fiercely, to the Cadets*).

Steady, for your lives!

A VOICE (*outside*).

[Pg 187]

Lay down your arms!

THE CADETS.

Never!

CYRANO (*to Guiche*).

You have proved your valour, Sir! You can afford to fly (*pointing to Roxane*) and save her!

GUICHE (*runs to Roxane and takes her in his arms*).

So be it! Hold fast a few moments and we shall win the day!

CYRANO.

We'll hold to the death!

(In a voice of anguish, looking toward Roxane, whom Guiche and Ragueneau are carrying away senseless).

Farewell, Roxane!

(Tumult. Cries. Wounded Cadets reappear and fall within the embankment. Cyrano, rushing to the fray, is stopped on the crest of the embankment by Carbon of Haughty-Hall, covered with blood.)

CARBON.

We are wavering! I have received two gun shots.

CYRANO (*shouting to the Gascons*).

Steady there! Hold fast, you rascals!

(to Carbon, holding him up).

Have no fear! I have two deaths to avenge: Christian's and that of my happiness!

(Both come down. Cyrano brandishes a lance to which is attached the handkerchief of Roxane.)

Float bravely on, you little flag of lace that is hers! (*He plants the lance into the ground and cries to the Cadets*).

Fall upon them now! Crush them! (*to the fife player*) And you, strike up!

(The fife plays. The wounded rise to their feet. The Cadets form a group around Cyrano and the little flag; others climb into and upon the coach, making it look like a small fortress.)

A CADET (*coming up from the outside of the embankment, backward, still fighting*).

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They come! they come!

(Falls down dead.)

CYRANO.

We'll give them a salute!

(The embankment is at once occupied by a troop of the enemy, with large flags waving.)

Fire!

(General discharge.)

ORDER (*from the enemy's ranks*).

Fire!

(Most of the Cadets fall, either wounded or dead.)

A SPANISH OFFICER (*taking off his hat*).

Who are these people dying so bravely?

CYRANO (*erect and proudly reciting*).

Fair Gascony's cadets are they,
With Carbon,—He of Haughty-Hall;
They fight and lie without dismay,

(He rushes on to enemy, followed by a few surviving Cadets.)

Fair Gascony's cadets....

(The rest is lost in the noise of battle.)

CURTAIN.



FOURTH ACT.

ACT V.

[Pg 189]

CYRANO'S GAZETTE.

Fifteen years later, in 1655. The garden of the Convent of the Ladies of the Cross, in Paris.

Beautiful shade trees. To the left, the house. Wide porch on which several doors open. In the centre of the stage, an enormous overspreading tree standing alone in a sort of open circle. To the right, first entrance, backed by high box-wood bushes, a semi-circular stone bench.

In the rear an avenue of chestnut trees leading up to fourth entrance, right, where the door of the Chapel can be seen through the branches. Beyond the avenue, lawns, other rows of trees, shrubbery and the sky.

The Chapel has a small side door, from which starts, running down to the right, first entrance, behind the box-wood bushes, a sort of colonnade entwined with creepers rich in hues of gold and red.

It is Autumn. The russet leaves of the trees are in bright contrast with the green lawns, except the box-wood and yew-trees that form dark spots here and there. Yellow leaves beneath the trees; fallen leaves everywhere on the ground, on the porch and on the benches.

Between the stone bench to the right and the tree in the centre, a tapestry frame, and in front of it a chair. Baskets full of worsted skeins and balls. On the frame, a piece of tapestry-work, unfinished.

As the curtain rises, sisters are going and coming through the garden; some are seated on the bench, on either side of an elderly sister. Leaves are falling.

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SCENE I.

MOTHER MARGARET, SISTER MARTHA, SISTER CLAIRE, *other* SISTERS.

SISTER MARTHA (*to Mother Margaret*).

Sister Claire looked at herself twice in the mirror.

MOTHER MARGARET (*to Sister Claire*).

That was very wrong!

SISTER CLAIRE.

But Sister Martha pulled a plum out of the pie this morning; I saw her do it.

MOTHER MARGARET (*to Sister Martha*).

Very wrong, indeed, Sister Martha!

SISTER CLAIRE.

A little bit of a look!

SISTER MARTHA.

A little bit of a plum!

MOTHER MARGARET.

I'll have to tell Mr. Cyrano.

SISTER CLAIRE (*frightened*).

Oh! please, do not, he would tease us!....

SISTER MARTHA.

.... Say that we are vain!....

SISTER CLAIRE.

.... Or great gluttons!....

MOTHER MARGARET (*smiling*).

But full of goodness.

SISTER CLAIRE.

Is it not true, Mother, that he has been coming here, every Saturday, for the last ten years?

MOTHER MARGARET.

[Pg 191]

And more. Ever since his cousin, fourteen years ago, saddened the whiteness of our caps with the darkness of her widow's veil, as would a bird of sombre hue alighting 'mid a flight of brighter birds.

SISTER MARTHA.

And he alone can relieve with a ray of light the grief that she persists in feeding.

THE OTHER SISTERS.

He is so entertaining!—It is fun when he comes!—He teases us!—He is so kind!—We love him so!—And we make sweets for him!

SISTER MARTHA.

But he is not a very good Catholic!

SISTER CLAIRE.

We'll convert him!

THE OTHER SISTERS.

Assuredly, we will!

MOTHER MARGARET.

I forbid your tormenting him on that score, children. He might come here less often?

SISTER MARTHA.

But.... dear Mother.... God....

MOTHER MARGARET.

Have no fear.... God knows him!

SISTER MARTHA.

But, every Saturday, as he enters, he says proudly: "Sister, like a bad Catholic, I ate meat yesterday!"

MOTHER MARGARET.

Is that what he says? Well, the last time he came he had eaten nothing whatever for two days.

SISTER MARTHA.

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Mother!

MOTHER MARGARET.

He is very poor. Mr. Le Bret told me so.

SISTER MARTHA.

And no one assists him!

MOTHER MARGARET.

He is proud and would not accept assistance.

(Roxane is seen in the rear; she is in black, wearing the long veil of a widow. Guiche, grown older, but magnificently clad, accompanies her. They walk slowly, Mother Margaret rises.)

Come, it is time to get in.—Here is Madam Madeleine, with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHA (*aside to Sister Claire*).

It is the Marshall—Duke de Grammont.

SISTER CLAIRE.

Yes, I think it is.

SISTER MARTHA.

He has not come to see her for months!

SISTER CLAIRE.

The court—the army—the world—keep him away, I suppose.

(Exeunt Sisters. Guiche and Roxane come down in silence, and stop near the tapestry frame. A pause.)

SCENE II.

ROXANE, DUKE DE GRAMMONT (*formerly Count de Guiche*); *later* LE BRET *and* RAGUENEAU.

DUKE.

And so you persist in remaining in this seclusion, uselessly lovely, forever in mourning?

ROXANE.

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Forever!

DUKE.

Ever true to his memory?

ROXANE.

Ever!

DUKE.

You have forgiven me?

ROXANE.

Yes! Since I am here.

(A pause.)

DUKE.

And he was truly so?....

ROXANE.

You never really knew him!

DUKE.

Probably!.... And his last letter lies on your heart always?

ROXANE.

Like a blessed talisman it hangs on this ribbon.

DUKE.

You love him even dead?

ROXANE.

At times it seems as if he'd left me not,
As if our hearts still beat as one, as if
His love still coiled around me, strong, alive!

(Another pause.)

DUKE.

Does Cyrano ever come to see you?

ROXANE.

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Yes, often. He is a very dear old friend, and he brings me all the news. He comes regularly, every Saturday. As the hour strikes, while I am at work on my tapestry, I know, without even turning around to see, that he is here, for I can hear his stick on the stone steps. If the weather is fine, he sits under this tree, where his chair awaits him. He laughs at what he calls my eternal work, relates to me the events of the week, and....

(Le Bret appears on the porch.)

Why! here is Le Bret!

(to Le Bret, who has come down).

And how is our friend?

LE BRET.

Not at all well.

DUKE.

Oh! I'm sorry.

ROXANE *(to Duke)*.

Le Bret exaggerates!

LE BRET.

All as I predicted: desertion and poverty!.... His epistles have made him new enemies! He denounces mock nobility, mock piety, mock bravery, plagiarism,—in fact everybody!

ROXANE.

But the fear of his wonderful sword holds them all in respect. They'll never reach him.

DUKE *(shaking his head)*.

Who knows?

LE BRET.

What I fear for him is not an assault; it is solitude, hunger, winter stealthily entering his poor abode. These are the enemies that may lay him low.—Each morning he buckles his belt a little tighter. His nose has now the sallowness of old ivory. His wardrobe is reduced to one suit of black.

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DUKE.

Ah! he at least is not a parvenu. So, do not pity him too much. He has lived free from obligations and humiliating restraint.

LE BRET *(smiling sadly)*.

Duke, Duke!....

DUKE.

Yes, I know: I have everything, and he has nothing.... But I should very much like to shake his hand.

(bowing to Roxane). Farewell.

ROXANE.

I'll see you to the gate.

(The Duke bows to Le Bret, and goes, with Roxane, towards the house.)

DUKE *(stopping a moment)*.

I envy him at times. You see, Roxane,
When we have had too much success in life,

Although we've done no very wicked act—
We feel within a thousand sickly stings
Of self-reproach; their total is too small
To constitute remorse, but large enough
To keep us in a dull uneasiness.
Thus ducal mantles sweep, as we ascend
The steps of greatness, with their fringe of furs
A rustling heap of withered sentiments,
As now your sombre train, upon the porch,
Draws in its folds a bunch of autumn leaves.

ROXANE (*ironically*).

You are in a very sentimental mood.

THE DUKE.

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Alas! yes.

(*as he is about to go out, abruptly*).

Monsieur Le Bret!

(*to Roxane*).

By your permission, one word.

(*to Le Bret in a low tone*).

It is true; no one would dare to attack your friend. But there are many who hate him, and somebody said to me, yesterday, at the Queen's reception: "This Cyrano is not unlikely to meet some day with an accident." Tell him not to be about too much. To be prudent.

LE BRET (*throwing up his arms*).

Prudent, he! But he is coming here to-day, and I must warn him, though I doubt if that will do much good.

ROXANE (*who has remained on the porch, to a sister coming up to her*).

What is it?

THE SISTER.

Ragueneau wishes to see you, Madam.

ROXANE.

Let him in.

(*Exit Sister.*) (*to Duke and to Le Bret*).

He comes to tell his woes.

He started to be an author, but became in turn a chanter....

LE BRET.

A bath-keeper....

ROXANE.

An actor....

LE BRET.

A beadle....

ROXANE.

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A barber....

LE BRET.

An archlute-teacher....

ROXANE.

To-day what can he have become?

RAGUENEAU (*entering rapidly*).

Oh! Madam!

(*noticing Le Bret*). Oh! Sir!

ROXANE (*smiling*).

Tell your misfortunes to Le Bret. I shall be back presently.

(Exit Roxane, with the Duke, without listening to Ragueneau, who comes down toward Le Bret.)

SCENE III.

LE BRET, RAGUENEAU.

RAGUENEAU.

After all, since you are here, Sir, it is just as well that she should be kept in ignorance! I was on my way to see your friend, this afternoon, when, as I was nearing his door, I saw him coming out. As I was endeavouring to overtake him, and as he was turning the corner, a window above him opened, and,—was it through accident? perhaps! a lackey dropped upon him a heavy log of wood.

LE BRET.

Cowards!.... Abominable!

RAGUENEAU.

Our friend, Sir, our poet, lay there on the ground with a large hole in his head!

LE BRET.

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Is he dead?

RAGUENEAU.

No! but in what a state! I carried him up to his room... his room! You should see what it is!

LE BRET.

He is in great pain?

RAGUENEAU.

No, Sir, he has not recovered his senses.

LE BRET.

You found a doctor?

RAGUENEAU.

Yes, one who was good enough to come.

LE BRET.

Unfortunate Cyrano!—We must break the news gently to Roxane.—And what said the doctor?

RAGUENEAU.

He spoke of fever.... meningitis. Oh! if you saw him.... with his poor head bandaged!.... Come quickly, Sir, there is nobody with him! It would be death to him if he left his bed!

LE BRET (*urging him toward the right*).

This way is shorter; through the Chapel!

ROXANE (*appearing on the porch, and seeing Le Bret and Ragueneau running up the colonnade to the Chapel!*)

Monsieur Le Bret!

(Exeunt Le Bret and Ragueneau without answering.)

No doubt another of good Ragueneau's troubles.

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SCENE IV.

ROXANE *alone, two SISTERS a moment.*

How beautiful these last September days!
My sadness fain would smile. Spring's ardour oft
Offends our grief, but Autumn chastens it.

(She sits down before her work. Two sisters sally from the house carrying a large armchair that they place under the tree.)

Ah! here's the chair in which Cyrano sits.

(Exeunt Sisters.)

The hour strikes.... he's coming.—Where are my skeins!—He's not here yet? The first time he is

late.... My thimble.... Here it is. Some sister preaching to him, no doubt.

(A pause.)

How thickly fall the leaves!....

(She removes some dead leaves from her work.)

Moreover, what could prevent his coming?

A SISTER *(from the porch)*.

Monsieur de Bergerac.

SCENE V.

ROXANE, CYRANO, *and, one moment*, SISTER MARTHA.

ROXANE *(without turning around)*.

Why did I worry so?

(She works.—Enter Cyrano, very pale, with his hat well over his eyes. Exit sister who announced him. He descends the steps slowly, with a visible effort to remain erect, leaning heavily on his stick.)

For the first time in fourteen years, you are late!

CYRANO *(who has gained his chair and seated himself, speaks in a cheerful tone, in contrast with his looks)*.

Yes, and, in truth, I boil with rage. I was delayed....

ROXANE.

[Pg 200]

By what, by whom?

CYRANO.

By an intruder.

ROXANE *(distraught)*.

Some bore? But you got rid of him, or her.

CYRANO.

Yes. "Excuse me," said I, "but this is Saturday, and I have a weekly engagement that nothing can prevent me from keeping. Return an hour hence!"

ROXANE *(lightly)*.

The person shall wait. I'll keep you here until evening.

CYRANO.

I may be compelled to leave you sooner.

(He closes his eyes and remains silent a moment. Sister Martha appears in the rear going to the Chapel. Roxane sees her, and nods.)

ROXANE *(to Cyrano)*.

How is it you do not tease Sister Martha to-day?

CYRANO *(rapidly, opening his eyes)*.

Tease? Of course!

(with affected severity).

Sister Martha! Come here.

(Sister Martha goes up to him.)

Ha! ha! Your eyes are too fine to remain thus forever down!

SISTER MARTHA *(smiling)*.

But....

(She notices his pale looks.)

Oh!

CYRANO *(aside, pointing to Roxane)*

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Hush! It's nothing.

(aloud, in boastful tone).

I ate meat yesterday! Friday!

SISTER MARTHA.

Yes, I know.

(aside). That is the reason he looks so pale!

(to Cyrano rapidly and in a low tone). Come to the refectory by and by. I want to make you taste some broth..... Will you come?

CYRANO.

Yes, yes, yes.

SISTER MARTHA.

Oh! you are very reasonable to-day.

ROXANE *(who notices their whispering).*

Is she trying to convert you?

SISTER MARTHA.

Oh! nothing of the kind!

CYRANO.

It is a fact! You always have an abundance of saintly sermons, and to-day, Sister, you are not preaching to me.

(with affected fury).

Swords and muskets! I, too, shall astonish you! See here, I will permit you....

(Affects to be thinking and to have found a good jest.)

Ah! this is something new.... to.... to pray for me, to-night, in the chapel.

ROXANE.

Oh! oh! this is serious.

CYRANO *(laughing).*

Sister Martha is dumfounded!

SISTER MARTHA *(gently).*

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I did not wait for your permission.

(Exit Sister Martha.)

CYRANO *(returning to Roxane, who is leaning over her work).*

I verily believe there never will be an end to this task of yours.

ROXANE.

I am getting accustomed to this remark.

(Just then a few dead leaves fall on Roxane's work.)

CYRANO.

Oh! withered leaves!

ROXANE *(looking at the landscape).*

Poor blondes of Venice hue,
How fast they fall!

CYRANO.

They fall, but see how well!
Their race is short, and still they sweetly show
How beauty e'er recoils from rottenness:
For, as they drop, they do not in their grace
Appear to fall, but rather to alight!

ROXANE.

Unusually sad thoughts for you!

CYRANO *(recovering his presence of mind).*

Sad? Not at all, Roxane!

ROXANE.

Come, let the dead leaves fall as they will....Better give me the news, be my weekly gazette.

CYRANO.

Agreed!

ROXANE.

I'm listening.

CYRANO (*getting paler and paler, as he struggles against pain*).

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Saturday, the 19th, having over indulged in grape-jam from Cette, the King was taken with fever; his indisposition was sentenced, for high treason, to be twice lanced, and the royal pulse was relieved of febricity!^[25] At the Queen's ball, on Sunday, seven hundred and sixty-three candles of white wax were burned. Our troops have been victorious, it is said, over those of John the Austrian; four sorcerers have been hung! the little dog of Madam d'Athis was given....

ROXANE.

Monsieur de Bergerac, you may omit the details!

CYRANO.

Monday.... nothing. Oh! yes, Lygdamire took a new lover.

ROXANE.

Oh!

CYRANO (*whose suffering is evidently increasing*).

Tuesday, all the Court was at Fontainebleu. Wednesday, the beauty Montglat said to Count de Fiesque: No! Thursday, Mancini, Queen of France,—or almost! the 25th, Montglat said to Fiesque: Yes; and Saturday, 26th....

(*His eyes close. His head falls upon his shoulder. Silence.*)

ROXANE (*surprised at hearing nothing more, turns around, looks at him, and rises very much frightened*).

Has he fainted?

(*Runs up to him.*) Cyrano!

CYRANO (*opening his eyes and speaking somewhat indistinctly*).

What is it?.... Who?.... When?....

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(*He sees Roxane leaning over him, and, quickly securing his hat on his head, backs up into his armchair.*)

No! no! I assure you, it is nothing.

I am quite myself again.

ROXANE.

But allow me....

CYRANO.

It is the old wound I received at Arras.... that.... sometimes.... you know....

ROXANE.

Dearest friend!

CYRANO.

But, it is nothing serious. Soon over.

(*makes an effort to smile*).

Quite well again now.

ROXANE (*standing near him*).

We each of us have our wound: I, too, have one, ever smarting; I feel it here, old though it be,

(*placing her hand on her breast*)

right here, beneath the time-worn letter on which can still be seen the trace of tears and blood!

(*Dusk begins to come on.*)

CYRANO.

His letter!.... Did you not say that some day, perhaps, you would allow me to read it?

ROXANE.

What! you wish?.... his letter?....

CYRANO.

Yes.... I wish.... to-day....

ROXANE.

(handing him the sachet she carries suspended to her neck).

Here it is!

CYRANO *(taking it)*.

I may open?

ROXANE.

You may open and read!....

(She returns to her work, folds it up and arranges her worsteds.)

CYRANO *(reading)*.

"Roxane, farewell! The time...."

ROXANE *(stopping, astonished)*.

You read aloud?

CYRANO *(reading)*.

"Roxane, farewell! The time of death has come;
This eve, I think, beloved, is my last.
My soul's still rich in unexpressed love,
And I must die! My dazzled eyes no more,
My eyes for which you were...."

ROXANE.

Why! how you read

His lines!....

CYRANO *(continuing)*.

".... for which you were a thrilling feast,
No more will drink your ev'ry motion, dear.
There's one that I recall, so truly yours,
To smooth your hair, and I would cry aloud...."

ROXANE.

How can you know?....

(Darkness comes on by degrees.)

CYRANO *(continuing)*.

Farewell!...."
"....And now I cry, indeed:

ROXANE.

You read as if....

CYRANO *(continuing)*.

".... My dearest dear,
My treasure...."

ROXANE.

Oh! that voice!

CYRANO *(continuing)*.

"My love!...."

ROXANE.

That voice!

That voice.... I know I heard it once before!

(She passes behind him, leans over the chair, without his noticing her, and looks over the letter. Darkness increases.)

CYRANO (*continuing*).

"My yearning heart has never left you once.
And I am he, and Death will leave me he
Who loved you, dear, beyond all measure, he...."

ROXANE (*placing her hand on his shoulder*).

But how is it you still can read? Night has come.

(He shudders, turns, sees her near by, moves as if greatly alarmed, and hangs his head. Long silence. It is quite dark. She joins her hands, and speaks slowly:)

And during fourteen years you have played this part of an old friend who comes to amuse!

CYRANO.

Roxane!

ROXANE.

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It was you.

CYRANO.

No, no, Roxane, you mistake!

ROXANE.

I should have felt it each time you said my name!

CYRANO.

It was not I!

ROXANE.

It was!

CYRANO.

I swear to you....

ROXANE.

Swear not, for now I understand your generous deceit. The letters were yours....

CYRANO.

No!

ROXANE.

The dear and tender words were yours....

CYRANO.

No!

ROXANE.

That voice in the night was yours!

CYRANO.

I swear it was not!

ROXANE.

That soul was yours!

CYRANO.

I loved you not!

ROXANE.

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You did!

CYRANO.

It was the other!

ROXANE.

You loved me!

CYRANO.

No!

ROXANE.

You did, for each of your denials is lower than the one before!

CYRANO.

No, no, my dearest, no, I loved you not!

ROXANE.

How many things are dead!.... how many born!....
—Oh! through these years why were you silent thus,
Since on these lines, not his by word or thought,
The tears were yours?

CYRANO.

Because the blood is his!

ROXANE.

Why then allow a silence that's sublime
To break as now?

CYRANO.

Roxane, oh! why, indeed?

(Le Bret and Ragueneau enter on a run.)

SCENE VI.

The same, LE BRET and RAGUENEAU.

LE BRET.

How imprudent! I was sure of it! He is here!

CYRANO *(smiling and straightening himself up)*.

[Pg 209]

Of course, I'm here!

LE BRET.

It is suicide, Madam, for him to have left his bed!

ROXANE.

Great God! But just now, then....this weakness?.... this fainting?

CYRANO.

Oh! by the way, I did not finish my weekly chronicle:and Saturday, 26th, one hour before dinner, Monsieur de Bergerac was assassinated in the street.

(He takes off his hat, and his head is seen wrapped in bandages.)

ROXANE.

What did he say?—Cyrano!—his poor head!.... What have they done to you?

CYRANO.

"And in my heart a sword's ennobling point!"
—So said I once!.... What mockery in fate!....
And now I'm killed ignobly from behind,
O'erpowered by a lackey with a log.
I missed my life; my death's a failure too!

RAGUENEAU.

Oh! sir....Oh! sir....

CYRANO.

Good Ragueneau, grieve not so!....

(Extends his hand to him.)

And what are you doing now, my brother poet?

RAGUENEAU *(through his tears)*.

I am the one who.... who snuffs the candles at Molière's.^[26]

[Pg 210]

CYRANO.

Molière!

RAGUENEAU.

But I shall leave him to-morrow. For I am indignant!.... Yesterday he gave *Scapin*, and I saw that he had taken from you a whole scene!

LE BRET.

Entire?

RAGUENEAU.

Yes, sir; the famous: "What the deuce was he doing?...."

LE BRET (*to Cyrano*).

Molière has robbed you!

CYRANO.

Hush! hush! he did well!....

(*to Ragueneau*).

The scene was very effective, was it not?

RAGUENEAU (*sobbing*).

Oh! sir, what a laugh! what a laugh! through the whole audience!

CYRANO.

My life, you see, is all in this: I've been
The one who prompts—and ever is forgot!

(*to Roxane*).

Do you recall the night when Christian spoke
His love for you—beneath your balcony?
The words were mine, and mine the fondest thoughts;
But I remained below, unknown, in darkness, while
Another went aloft to gather light and love!
'Tis justice, and my dying breath approves;
Molière has genius, Christian's beauty won.

(*The chapel bell sounds. Sisters pass in the rear, going to evening service.*)

It's time for prayer; the bell that tolls is right!

ROXANE (*rising to call*).

[Pg 211]

Come, Sister!

CYRANO (*restraining her*).

Leave me not to call for help!
On your return, you would not find me here.

(*The sisters have entered the chapel, and the organ begins to play.*)

I yearned for harmony; and now it's come!

ROXANE.

I love you, live!

CYRANO.

In fairy tales alone
Can love dispel the curse of homeliness.
You'd soon discover that I cannot change.

ROXANE.

You've suffered....and through me!

CYRANO.

Through you? Not so!
I never knew a woman's gentleness.
My mother found me homely. Sister, none;
And as to lady-loves, they would have laughed
At me. Through you, at least, I had a friend;
Through you I've known the spell a gown can bring!

LE BRET (*showing the moonlight through the trees*).

Another friend of yours is there!

CYRANO (*smiling to the moon*).

I see.

ROXANE.

I loved but one, and here I lose him twice!

CYRANO.

And now, Le Bret, I'll mount, and reach the moon,
Although I've not completed that machine....

LE BRET.

[Pg 212]

Oh! speak not thus!

CYRANO.

Why not? 'Tis there, I say,
That I'll be sent to seek for paradise.
How many souls I love are there in bliss!
Good Socrates and Galileo too!

LE BRET (*indignant*).

No! no! this is too stupid, too unjust! Such a poet! A heart so big and lofty! To die thus!.... To die!....

CYRANO.

There is Le Bret growling again!

LE BRET (*bursting into tears*).

My dearest friend!....

CYRANO (*rising, with wildness in his eyes*).

Fair Gascony's Cadets are they.... The elementary mass.... Why! yes!....—There is the rub....

LE BRET.

Alas! delirious!

CYRANO.

Copernicus said....

ROXANE.

Dreadful! dreadful!

CYRANO.

What the deuce was he doing, what the deuce was he doing in that galley?....

Philosopher and physicist,
A rimester, swordsman and musician,
A man who travelled in the air
As prompt with parry as reply,
A lover too—alas!—here lies
Sir Hercules, Savinian
De Cyrano de Bergerac,
Who compassed all and still was naught.

But I must leave! I would not cause a wait.
Your pardon. See! the moon sends down for me!

[Pg 213]

(A ray of light from the moon is on him. He falls back into his chair. The weeping of Roxane wakes him from his dreamy state. He looks at her and strokes her veil.)

I would not have you weep a wit the less
For Christian, who was all that's good and grand.
But, when the hand of ice has laid me low,
I would your weeds might have a double sense
Of mourning: first for him....and then for me!

ROXANE.

I swear to you....

CYRANO (*shaking with fever, rises suddenly*).

No! never! In a chair!

(to those who advance to assist him).

No help!.... From anybody!....

(leaning back against the tree).

.... But the tree!

(Silence.)

It^[27] comes!—I have already marble boots....
And gloves of lead!....

(He straightens up.)

What matters?—Since It's here,
I'll meet it standing and....

(draws his sword)

....with sword in hand!

LE BRET.

Cyrano!

ROXANE *(overcome).*

God!

(All fall back aghast.)

CYRANO.

[Pg 214]

Ha! ha! I think it looks....
It dares to look—the flat face—at my nose!

(Brandishes his sword.)

What say you?....That it's useless?....Don't I know?
But valiant hearts contend not for success!
It's nobler to defend a hopeless cause!
—Who are you all? I count a thousand....more!
I know you now: my enemies of old!
You're Falsehood!—

(Strikes the open air with his sword.)

Here!—Ha! ha! and Compromise,
And Prejudice, and Cowardice!....

(He strikes.)

Submit?

No, never! Ah! here's Imbecility!....
I know that, in the end, I must succumb,
I dare you, though, and strike! and strike! and strike!

(Strikes right and left with his sword, and stops exhausted.)

You take my all, the laurel and the rose!....
Well, take them!.... But, in spite of you, there is
A something that I bear along with me
To sweep to-night with grandeur, as I pass,
The threshold and the gates of heaven's blue;
A something that's unsullied and is mine....
Do what you will!

(Rushes forward, sword aloft.)

It is....

(Sword drops out of his hand. He staggers and falls into the arms of Le Bret and Ragueneau.)

ROXANE *(leaning over him and kissing his forehead).*

It is?....

CYRANO *(opens his eyes, recognises her and smiles).*

....My plume!^[28]

**FIFTH ACT.**

- [1] Note. As to translation of the name Carbon de Castel-Jaloux (such was the name of Cyrano's captain) see [note](#) page [77](#).
- [2] Note. "La dentelle des canons."—"Canons" were ornamental lace, embroidery or ribbons around the lower edge of knee-breeches.—Not, as one translation has it: "the canonical gentlemen's lace."
- [3] Query.—Might it not be argued that the "précieuses" were perhaps spiritual daughters of the *euphuists*, disciples of John Lyly, who flourished in England under Queen Elizabeth, about half a century before the time of action here?
- [4] Note.—Not "an insolent cocktail," as one translation has it.
- [5] Note.—Literal translation of "nasigère," a word invented by Ragueneau, would be euphuist.
- [6] Note.—The play on the word "fraise" (both "strawberry" and "ruff") could not be reproduced.
- [7] Note.—Alexandrine verse adopted here and further on (beginning of [Act II](#)) as being more pompous.
- [8] Note.—The words "you kick," in the place of "tu récalcitres," were suggested by a friend, as a better translation. But the good critic failed to realise that Cyrano does not use slang, and is almost always, on the contrary, somewhat hyperbolic, addicted to willful oddity of speech.—"Récalcitrant," adj.-part. (doggedly resisting), is frequently used in French. But the infinitive "récalcitrer," though it exists, and the other forms of the verb are seldom, if ever, heard.—Cyrano, therefore, calls up a smile, if not a laugh, by resorting to the verb in the second person, singular, present, indicative.—*To recalcitrate* is a good English word (see Longfellow), but it is so seldom used that it creates on the English ear the same impression of amused surprise that is induced by the original.
- [9] Note.—One of the translations that have appeared in the New York daily press renders "Céladon" by reference to Lord Chesterfield! The time of action (first four acts) of "Cyrano de Bergerac" is 1640, and Lord Chesterfield was *born* only 54 years *later*.
- [10] Note.—In the original, Cyrano calls his opponent "Laridon." This is the name of a degenerate *dog*. See fables of La Fontaine ("L'Education").
- [11] Note.—"L'Envoi," as often written, supposedly in French, is incorrect. It is, in French, when heading the last four lines of a ballade, "Envoi," without the article, l' (le).
- [12] Note.—Alexandrines were adopted, instead of pentameter, here and further on, with the poets, for the reason that they seem more pompous and better in keeping with the affectation shown by the personages.
- [13] Note.—The spelling *rime* seems preferable to *rhyme*, since rime and rhythm are two very distinct things.
- [14] Note.—The miserable pun on "puits" (well) was found possible to reproduce. Needless to add that this is ambitious confectioner's verse, intentionally nonsensical.
- [15] Note.—*Ridicuckoldulous* would be an exact translation.
- [16] Note.—The Duenna, like Roxane, is a "précieuse," an euphuist.
- [17] Note.—This is a Gascon oath. Like the similar oaths following, it would if translated literally (Blood of God,) lose its picturesque and really innocent character. All of these are oath-sounds rather than oaths, and somewhat oath-evading, after the fashion of "goldarn it," in America.
- [18] Note.—The name "Castel-Jaloux," in the original, being indicative of Gascon pride and superlativeness, it was thought better to translate it in order to preserve colour. But here arose the question: "Him" or "He" of Haughty-Hall? Both cases have their champions, with most excellent reasons. It was thought, however, that argument might be avoided and the line be made more effective by the insertion of a dash after "Carbon," thus leaving time for the imaginary interrogation: "What Carbon?" following which suspension, the answer is. "He of Haughty-Hall" is the Carbon meant.

- [19] Note.—The text here, justified by a current French expression, would be too broad in English.
- [20] Note.—In this tirade, and in the following one, *you*, *thou* and *she* are intentionally interwoven. When Cyrano is carried by his emotion, he passes from *you* to *thou*, which latter is, in French, familiar and endearing much more than in English. Then, reclaimed by reason and fearing that he has overstepped the bounds, he returns to the (in French) more formal *you*, or resorts to a discreet *she*, only to forget himself again and to resume the caressing *thou*.
- [21] Note.—"Un point rose qu'on met sur l'i du verbe aimer."
"A ruby O"...., as above, may prove, it is thought, a good example of *equivalence*, the *i*, impossible here in English, finding in O a good substitute, calling up, if not exactly the very same image, at least a kindred one fully as good.
- [22] Note.—*Cucurbit* ("cucurbite") for moon is, in French, as odd as it appears in English. The oddity of the expression, that assimilates Luna to the rotund melon, pumpkin, etc., of the genus of plants known as *cucurbita*, is in keeping with Cyrano's intentional extravagance of speech.
- [23] Note.—"Tu croques le marmot" (literally "you are eating the baby") is an allusion to ogres' proverbial taste for infants, coupled with the somewhat slangy meaning: "you are waiting long and impatiently." This in English would be meaningless, and was perforce replaced by what seems to be a fair equivalent.
- [24] Note.—A French proverb.
- [25] Note.—Intentional affectation, like that of "his indisposition was sentenced, for high treason."
- [26] Note.—An evident anachronism, since Molière did not open his Paris theatre until three years later (1658). Given, however, the deep knowledge of seventeenth century matters displayed throughout this drama, the anachronism must be intentional, the poet's object doubtless having been to embody the tradition according to which the "Qu'allait-il faire dans cette galère?" of Molière's "Fourberies de Scapin" (produced only in 1671) was taken from Cyrano de Bergerac's "Le Pédant Joué."
- [27] Note.—"It" here is Death (feminine in French). The personifying *he* somewhat customary in English poetry, was set aside, and the *neuter* gender was intentionally preserved, because, being more vague, it better represents the terror-striking *unknown*, and is more expressive of Cyrano's daring *contempt* and repulsion for a loathsome *thing*. Cyrano, who put to flight one hundred men, could not be expected to fear a person, much less a personification.
- [28] Note.—See [Introduction](#), [Preface](#) and [Prefatory Triolets \("Le Panache"\)](#).

Transcriber's Note

Apparent printer's errors have been retained, unless stated below.

Capitalization, accents and formatting markup have been normalized. Please note that although ellipses as well as punctuation around brackets appear inconsistent, these have been kept true to the text.

Although the original text did not have one, a [Table of Contents](#) has been added for the reader's convenience.

Missing page numbers are attributed to blank or unnumbered pages in the original text.

Illustrations have been moved to the end of each Act.

Page [139](#), "seige" changed to "siege". (That during this terrible siege he shall never be cold!)

Page [139](#), "CHRISTIAN" changed to "CYRANO". Other editions have Cyrano speaking this line, and it only makes sense when it is spoken by him. (CYRANO (*halting*).)

Page [141](#) and [156](#), "Ventrebieu" has been retained. It is believed that this may be a typo for "Ventrebleu", however, multiple volumes in both French and English use the same term.

Page [150](#), "Decartes" changed to "Descartes". (... and I ... will read Descartes.)

Page [188](#), CYRANO's name appeared twice in a row without a second character speaking in between. (Once before his line, "We'll give them a salute!" and again before he said "Fire!") This redundancy was corrected.

Page [192](#), "vail" changed to "veil". (Roxane is seen in the rear; she is in black, wearing the long veil of a widow.)

Page [209](#), "Youé" changed to "Joué". (Given, however, the deep knowledge of seventeenth century matters displayed throughout this drama, the anachronism must be intentional, the poet's object doubtless having been to embody the tradition according to which the "Qu'allait-il faire dans cette galère?" of Molière's "Fourberies de Scapin" (produced only in 1671) was taken from Cyrano de Bergerac's "Le Pédant Joué.")

Page [210](#), "genuis" changed to "genius". ('Tis justice, and my dying breath approves; Molière has genius, Christian's beauty won.)

Page [212](#), "ROXANE" changed to "LE BRET". Other editions have Le Bret speaking this line, and as Cyrano has just addressed him, it makes better sense. (LE BRET. Oh! speak not thus!)

Updated editions will replace the previous one—the old editions will be renamed.

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