



THE
LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS

A TRAGIC DRAMA

IN

FOUR ACTS

Freely adapted from the " Dame aux Camelias," of

ALEXANDRE DUMAS, FILS.



T H O M A S H A I L E S L A C Y ,
W E L L I N G T O N S T R E E T ,
S T R A N D ,
L O N D O N .

THE LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS.

First produced at the Theatre du Vaudeville, Paris, February 2nd, 1852.

CHARACTERS.

ARMAND DUVAL, (<i>aged 24</i>)	M. FECHTER.
MONSIEUR DUVAL, (<i>his father</i>)	M. DELANNOY.
GASTON RIEUX, (<i>aged 28</i>)	M. RÈNÉ LUTGUE.
SAINT GAUDENS, (<i>aged 55</i>)	M. GIL-PERES.
GUSTAVE, (<i>affianced to Nichette</i>)	M. LAGRANGE.
MONSIEUR DE VARVILLE	M. DUPUIS.
A DOCTOR - -	M. HIPPI. WORMS.

Domestics.

MARGUERITE GAUTHIER	Mdme DOCHE.
NICHETTE, (<i>a seamstress</i>) -	Mdme WORMS.
PRUDENCE, (<i>a milliner</i>) -	Mdme ASTRUC.
NANINE, (<i>maid to Marguerite.</i>)	Mdme I. GRASSIER.
OLYMPE	} Mdme CLARY. Mdme CLORINDE. Mdme MARIE. Mdme CAROLINE. Mdme BARON.
ARTHUR	
ESTHER } (<i>friends of Marguerite</i>)	
ANAIS	
ADELE	

SCENES AND PROPERTIES.

ACT I.—Handsome light chamber ; valuable pictures on the walls, and objects of virtu unobtrusively visible; set fire-place, R., with transparent wood fire, mantle-piece with large glass over it—set window, L., doors R. 1 E. ; L. 1 E. and R. C, opening into a saloon with table ; door of entrance, L. C., table, L., near window, with work, needle, thread, and small parcel on it; property piano, c, with real piano off R. 3 E., and some one to play ; music stool and music on piano; easy chair near fire, R. 2 E. ; pieces of wood in fire-box by the side of the fire; fender, poker, tongs; candelabras by mantel-piece; chairs and elegant furniture about the stage; table laid for supper ready in room, R. C. ; a dish of birds; china plates, castors, salt-cellar, wine in decanters, wine-glasses, champagne-glasses, wine-cooler with bottles of champagne wired down and effervescent, to drink, knife to cut wire ; knives, forks and napkins folded on plates; candles ; bouquet on L. table ; carpet down.

ACT 2.—Neat chamber, backed by garden; window, R. C, door open, L. C., doors L. and R. 3 E. ; table with writing materials, R. C., blank paper for Prudence ; written note for Nanine.

ACT 3.—Highly decorated casino and play room; arch c, large chandelier before and behind; gaming table, L. 2 E., with lighted candles on it; cards ; plenty of loose money; chairs, sofas, &c.

ACT 4.—Plain sleeping chamber; fire-place and mantel-piece; set window, L. 3 E., with curtains; door R. 2 E. ; a large arm chair, R. C, stool in front; a small table with phials, tea-cup, tea-spoon, sugar-bowl, bon-bon box; miniature; table with toilette glass, R. 1 E. ; letter on it; chairs near it; teapot; candle lighted on mantel-piece; fire, L. 2 E., with fender, poker, tongs; small pan on fire.

Costumes—Modern French.

THE LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS.



ACT I.

SCENE I.—*Marguerite's Boudoir. Door, L. C—fire-place, fire, &c., R. 2 E.—window, L. 3 E.—door, L.—open door, R. C, through which is seen table, and candelabras; door, R.—piano, c, tables, lounges, chairs, &c.*

VAR. Some one rang, Nanine.

NANINE. Valentine will open the door.

VAR. 'Tis Marguerite no doubt.

NANINE. Not yet, 'tis but ten o'clock, and she said she should not return until half past ten. Oh ! it is Ma'amselle Nichette.

NICHETTE. (*looking in at L. C.*) Ma'amselle Marguerite not here?

NANINE. No, ma'amselle ; you wish to see her ?

NICHETTE. Merely to say good evening on my way home.

NANINE. She will not be long.

NICHETTE. Oh ! no matter, I shall not stay, another time, thank you ; good evening. *Exit, door L. C.*

VAR. Who is that young woman ?

NANINE. Ma'amselle Nichette, an industrious and worthy creature.

e.

VAR. Oh!

NANINE. My mistress has long known her, they formerly worked together in the same warehouse.

VAR. Worked?

NANINE. Yes, sir, didn't you know ? Oh, yes, Ma'amselle Marguerite used formerly to work at a large baby linen warehouse.

VAR. Indeed!

NANINE. And you really did not know ? and yet she makes no secret of the fact.

VAR. This Nichette is rather pretty.

NANINE. And about to be married to Monsieur Gustave, a very worthy young man who loves her devotedly.

VAR. Oh! then Monsieur Gustave is more fortunate with *his* lady love, than I am with Marguerite; but, tell me, by what means did Marguerite attain the wealth which has enabled her to be so liberal, and so to surround herself with all that is gay and frivolous?

NANINE. Oh! 'tis a very affecting history! Ma'amselle Marguerite, whose poor mother died of a decline, is, she fears, herself affected with the same malady; in fact, while working as a sempstress she was very ill indeed, and by practising the strictest economy laid by a little sum to enable her to visit the celebrated springs of Bagneres, and drink in, as she hoped, health and strength.

VAR. And she went?

NANINE. Yes, and while there, encountered a young lady, the very counterpart of herself in features, manner, and alas, in misfortune; for that poor girl was also afflicted with the same distressing malady which has long been consuming my mistress, the two young ladies became inseparable, sisters indeed, in love, until the daughter of Monsieur de Maurice died, and then was Ma'amselle Marguerite treated as though really his daughter, educated, and in every way cared for, until, oh, dear! a sudden attack of apoplexy hurried the poor gentleman to the grave; yet he had thought of Marguerite, and by his will left her all he had possessed, not very much, but sufficient for a quiet and respectable maintenance.

VAR. Oh! and then Marguerite—

NANINE. Thought, I suppose, that she was a millionaire, and recklessly squandered her little fortune on, and surrounded herself with a parcel of idle extravagant people, who care nothing for her, and only love the suppers and the parties which she gives; her gay style of living has made her almost the town talk; for when a young lady is very beautiful, the world is always prepared to think and speak ill of her; but all her mirth and seeming gaiety is, I am sure, but assumed that she may drive from her memory the apprehension that she is the prey of a disease which will, ere long, kill her.

VAR. Ridiculous, Nanine!—She is somewhat delicate, certainly, but with proper care—

NANINE. Which of course you would bestow.

VAR. Yes. If she would but consent to become my wife—

NANINE. You would love and nurse her, and likewise pay her debts!

VAR. And they amount to fifty thousand francs. Yes, Nanine, she *must* be mine.

NANINE. I doubt it, sir, Hush! she is here.

Enter MARGUERITE, *from* L. C. ; *she is dressed as for a theatre.*
 NANINE *assists her off with her shawl or mantle.*

MARG. Order supper! Olympia and Saint Gaudens will be here, I met them at the opera. *Exit* NANINE, *R. door, with mantle.* So, you are here again. (*sits near fire, R. 2 E.*)

VAR. It is my destiny ever to hover near you.

MARG. But it is not, I hope, my destiny always to be troubled with your presence—continually forcing yourself into my house. What would you with me now ?

VAR. Oh, well, you know—Is it my fault that I love you ?

MARG. Always the same story—how very tedious. I repeat to you, my good sir, for the twentieth time, I don't like you; be grateful that as a friend I suffer you to visit here; but speak again of love, and henceforth my doors are closed to you.

VAR. And yet, Marguerite, last year at Bagneres, you gave me cause to hope.

MARG. I was then ill and had not energy sufficient to repulse your addresses—now I am in Paris, my health is better, and your presence annoys me dreadfully. Will you go ?

VAR. (*walking about.*) No !

MARG. Then seat yourself at the piano, 'tis all you are fit for.

VAR. What shall I play ?

MARG. What you will, so that it drowns your voice.

Re-enter NANINE, *R., takes up bouquet from table.*

NANINE. I had forgot, ma'amselle; this bouquet—

VAR. (*not playing piano.*) Which I hope you will accept.

MARG. No ! You may keep it, Nanine. (*NANINE goes off, L. C.*)

VAR. You will not—

MARG. Why am I called the Lady of the Camellias ?

VAR. Because you never wear any but those flowers.

MARG. Which means, it is those only that I love. What folly, then, to bring me these. Take them away, their perfume makes me ill.

VAR. I am unfortunate. Adieu! Marguerite. (*going, L. C.*)

MARG. A moment, Varville. Put some coals on the fire—do something useful before you leave—ugh! the evening is very chilly. (*coughs slightly.*) Quick! the coals.

Re-enter NANINE, *L. C.*

NANINE. Madame, here is ma'amselle Olympia and Monsieur St. Gaudens.

Enter ST. GAUDENS *and* OLYMPIA, *L. C.*

MARG. I thought you would never come.

OLYM. 'Tis all the fault of this troublesome St. Gaudens.

ST. G. Oh, of course! How do, Varville? you sup with us?

MARG. No! Why are not you gone, sir?

VAR. I am going.

OLYM. (R. C.) Prudence is not here.

MARG. She will arrive presently.

OLYM. Of course—if only to borrow a trifle, for she lives by borrowing money, which she never repays.

MARG. (*laughing.*) Oh, wicked! For you know she makes excellent bonnets, which I purchase of her.

OLYM. But never wear.

MARG. Certainly not! sufficient that I purchase. But she is a good creature.

OLYM. No doubt—but 'tis a pity she's always so short of money.

MARG. Do you not think it very cold this evening? (*coughs slightly.*) Varville, stir the fire.

Enter PRUDENCE, L. C.

PRU. Good evening! everybody. (*aside to MARGUERITE.*) Armand is coming.

MARG. Oh, you have seen him?

PRU. Yes, he does nothing but rave about you.

MARG. Psha! He has known me scarce a week.

PRU. Ah! but he has long loved you. You were told how, every day, during your late illness, a young gentleman came to make the most anxious inquiries after you.

MARG. Well?

PRU. Well—'twas he.

MARG. Indeed! 'Twas very kind of him.

PRU. I am certain that you already love him—a little—and there can be no doubt that he would make you a good husband.

MARG. Silence—Prudence! What folly.

PRU. Well, I shall say no more—only, you see, I am somewhat pressed for a little cash, and if it were just now quite convenient to you—

MARG. Certainly.

PRU. Thank you.

Enter GASTON RIEUX, L. C.

GASTON. (*to MARGUERITE.*) I most sincerely hope, madam, that you are in perfect health.

PRU. Yes, yes, we are very well—don't bother. Here is Monsieur Armand Duval.

Enter ARMAND DUVAL, L. C.

ARMAND. (*signs to MARGUERITE, and bows.*) Good evening! madame.

PRUD. Take my word for it, he adores you.

MARG. Prudence!

ARMAND. (*to PRUDENCE.*) Thanks!

(MARGUERITE *gives her hand to* ARMAND, *who, bowing kisses it.*)

GASTON. Still young, my old boy.

ST. G. Of course.

GASTON. Still flirting with the fair ?

ST. G. Yes—there (*pointing to* OLYMPIA.) is the object that I, at present, adore. And poor Varville is not to be permitted to sup with us! Poor fellow! how I pity him.

GASTON. (*to MARGUERITE.*) Is not St. Gaudens superb? He cannot be more than eighteen.

MARG. It is only the aged who never grow old. He really is delightful.

ST. G. (*to* ARMAND.) Any relation, sir, may I ask, to Monsieur Duval, the Receiver General ?

ARMAND. I am his son, sir. Do you know my father ?

ST. G. Formerly met him at the Baroness de Nersay's; your mother, also—a charming and beautiful woman.

ARMAND. Alas! sir, she died three years since.

ST. G. Really, I beg pardon for having—

ARMAND. Oh, sir, I am ever proud to hear my mother named. The brightest joy, after having experienced a great and pure affection, is that of being permitted to remember it.

ST. G. You were an only child, I think ?

ARMAND. No, sir. I have a sister.

MARG. Monsieur Duval!

ARMAND. Madame ! (*VARVILLE hammers at the piano.*)

MARG. Be quiet, Monsieur Varville.

VAR. You desired me to play.

MARG. Psha! Monsieur Duval, I have been told how, two years since, during my long illness, you came each day to my house, and—

ARMAND. Oh! madame!

MARG. You, Varville, did not as much.

VAR. I have known you but a year.

MARG. And this gentleman but a week ; what stupid things you always say.

Enter NANINE, *and* SERVANTS *with table, from* R. C.

PRUD. The table ! I am perfectly famished.

VAR. Adieu, Marguerite!

MARG. Adieu ! when shall we again see you ?

VAR. When it shall please you, madame.

MARG. Then, in that case, good bye for a long time.

VARVILLE *bows and goes off annoyed*, L. C.

OLYM. Good bye, Varville. Poor fellow !

PRUD. You use that poor man very cruelly.

MARG. Oh ! you have no idea how his pertinacity annoys me.

OLYM. You are greatly to be pitied ! he is very rich, and I only wish he would pertinaciously annoy me.

ST. G. What, could you have the cruelty to nip my tender affection in the bud—I, who adore you. *(all sit.)*

MARG. Now eat, drink, and have no quarrels that cannot be easily made up again.

OLYM. *(to MARGUERITE)* You complain of Varville's love, and he is young and rich—what would you say if pestered like me by this antiquated youth—as poor as a mouse ? *(all laugh.)*

ST. G. You hear how she lacerates my poor heart—I'll trouble you for a slice of that fowl. *(all laugh.)*

PRUD. *(pointing to dish.)* What are those white animals ?

GASTON. Partridges.

PRUD. Ah ! *(handing plate.)* Send me a few.

OLYM. A few partridges. *(all laugh.)* I'm sorry, Prudence, that you have no appetite.

GASTON. Marguerite, take wine with Monsieur Duval, he is as melancholy as a drinking song.

MARG. Come then, Monsieur Armand, to my health.

ALL. To the health of Marguerite.

PRUD. Oh, were I but but rich what parties I would give. But, alas, poverty!—I am just now very much pressed, St. Gaudens, and if it were in your power to lend me— *(all laugh.)*

ST. G. Me, I have been myself all the morning trying to borrow. But, never mind, I have an uncle, am his heir, and when he dies—

OLYM. An uncle at his time of life ! Is it likely ?

ST. G. Nevertheless it is a fact, I have an uncle.

OLYM. Then he must be the Wandering Jew. *(all laugh.)*

PRUD. These partridges are delicious.

GASTON. Prudence must have a cast-iron digestion.

PRUD. Why, surely there is no law forbidding one to eat.

GASTON. If there were, you would not survive an hour.

(they laugh.)

PRUD. Marguerite, will you suffer me to be insulted ?

MARG. For shame ! Gaston. You must be treated like a naughty child, and put in a corner till you know how to behave yourself.

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ST. G. I shouldn't object to that, if you would only kiss me when I promised to be good.

GASTON. (*at piano.*) This instrument is out of tune.

OLYM. Let us have a dance.

GASTON. I can only play one polka.

PRUD. Well, don't play it yet, I have two more partridges to finish. (*they laugh.*)

ST. G. Yes, yes—away with the table! A polka!

OLYM. But surely I shall not be expected to dance with this young old gentleman.

MARG. Oh! no, he must be my partner.

ST. G. Ah! you know how to appreciate merit.

OLYM. And you, Monsieur Duval, must dance with me.

(*polka commenced—MARGUERITE stops suddenly.*)

ST. G. What is the matter?

MARG. Nothing—a shortness of breath, that—

ARMAND. (*approaching her.*) You are ill, madame.

MARG. I assure you it is nothing; let us proceed.

(*she again tries, and stops.*)

PRUD. Marguerite is ill!

MARG. Give me a glass of water.

PRUD. But what is it?

MARG. Oh, 'tis nothing new to me, and will presently pass away. Leave me for an instant, I will rejoin you, and—

PRUD. Yes, come along; when she is taken thus she prefers to be left alone.

ARMAND. (*aside.*) Poor girl!

PRUD. Go along. (*aside.*) I must finish those partridges presently. (*all go off, R. C., except MARGUERITE.*)

MARG. Oh! (*looks in the glass.*) how pale I am, oh! (*places her hands to her head, her elbows upon the chimney-piece.*)

Re-enter ARMAND, R. C.

ARMAND. (*tenderly.*) Are you better yet, madame?

MARG. Ah! is it you Monsieur Armand? Yes, thank you, I am better now; besides I am accustomed to these attacks.

ARMAND. You are destroying yourself! This feverish life—these parties given to people so unworthy of your countenance! Oh! would I had the right to compel you to guard your health!

MARG. Oh! they all love me.

ARMAND. Not, Marguerite, as I love you.

MARG. You! why you have known me scarce a week.

ARMAND. 'Tis two years since, unknown to you, I first gazed upon, and became at once enthralled by your sweet face! 'Twas not so much your beauty, as the goodness, which in your eyes I read, that first enchained me; and, oh! that I could win you

to give me the right to watch over and protect you, even from yourself.

MARG. 'Twould be very sad for you should I comply. You would soon regret the possession of a wife, ill, nervous, melancholy, and sometimes with a gaiety more mournful even than grief itself—a woman sprung from amidst the very humblest classes, and who, made rich by a generous benefactor, has wasted the bounty he bestowed upon her, and is now worse than a beggar, owing debts which she has not the means to pay. I believe in your sincerity, and—

ARMAND. Sincerity! Oh! Marguerite could you but love me—

MARG. That would not be, methinks, so very difficult.

ARMAND. Oh! dearest Marguerite! consent then to be mine. We will live quietly, away from this wild Paris, and the friends who now are killing you—we will seek amidst the woods and fields, health and strength for you, and we shall find them. Be my wife! and if the devotion of a heart as true as ever throbb'd within the breast of man can effect it, you shall live! live in happiness and joy!

MARG. I should bring ruin on you! Your father—

ARMAND. Oh, trust me, we have nought to fear from him. Let us not hesitate—we are young—love each other—who then can have a right to control our happiness?

MARG. You would not trifle with me, Armand? you are not deceiving me? Forget not that my birth was most obscure, perhaps unworthy—that I am poor, am ill, and that a violent emotion would surely kill me.

ARMAND. I remember only that you are an angel, and that I adore you.

MARG. My life, they tell me, cannot be long, and I shall not repine, so that I outlive not your love. Now go, and in the morning—

ARMAND. Yes, dear Marguerite, yes. Oh! how happy you have rendered me.

MARG. Armand, assure me once again that you will ever love me.

ARMAND. Oh, yes! ever! ever!

MARG. Oh! hush! they are returning! Pray leave me! (*laugh without.*) Oh, now how hateful to me sounds that reckless mirth.

ARMAND. I go, dear girl! I tear myself away! (*kisses her hand, and goes off, R.C., gazing on her as he goes.*)

MARG. Life is very strange! Who could have supposed that that man whom a week since I knew not, would so quickly have become the master of my heart—would occupy my every thought

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—would cause me to blush that seeking to still the warnings of a mortal malady, I had linked myself with friends so frivolous, and so heartless. Ah! we foresee that we shall be loved, but not that we ourselves shall love; and he will be my husband. Oh! how happy do I now feel! Joy is the best physician, for I am again well, again strong, and—

(laughter—all the GUESTS enter tumultuously, R. C.

ST. G. Long live Monsieur and Madame Duval!

OLYM. Invite us to the wedding ball.

ST. G. Let's practice for it now. Marguerite for ever! hurrah! *(they dance, GASTON has a woman's bonnet on his head, ST. GAUDENS claps a man's hat an PRUDENCE, loud laughter, &c.*

END OF ACT THE FIRST.

A C T II.

SCENE.—*Chamber. Fire-place, C, a glass door L. of flat opening to garden—doors, R. and L.—tables and chairs.*

NANINE *entering with breakfast things, R., is met by PRUDENCE, L.*

PRUD. Where is Marguerite?

NANINE. In the garden with Ma'amselle Nichette and Monsieur Gustave, who have come down to Auteuil to visit her.

PRUD. I will go to them. *Exit NANINE, L.*

ARMAND *enters, L. C., meeting PRUDENCE.*

ARMAND. Ah! you here, Prudence! 'Tis well—I wished to speak with you.

PRUD. Ah, you are a lucky man; actually going to be married to-morrow. And for your sake, Marguerite has forsaken Paris, renounced all her friends, and settled down here at Auteuil; living comfortably and quietly, regaining health, and, of course, awaiting anxiously the morrow which is to see her a happy bride.

ARMAND. Two weeks since, as I arrived here on my daily visit to dear Marguerite, you were about leaving, and in Marguerite's carriage.

PRUD. Exactly.

ARMAND. Since then neither carriage nor horses have returned. A week since, on leaving, you complained of cold, and Marguerite lent you a cashmere shawl, which I do not think you have returned. Yesterday I saw her place in your hands bracelets and diamonds—to be reset, she said. Where are the horses, the carriage, the bracelets, and the diamonds?

PRUD. Must I tell you?

ARMAND. I entreat you.

PRUD. The horses have taken themselves and the carriage back to the man from whom they came, for they were not paid for.

ARMAND. The diamonds—

PRUD. Pledged. Perhaps you would like to see the duplicates?

ARMAND. Why did you not tell me?

PRUD. Marguerite forbade me.

ARMAND. And why these sales?

PRUD. To obtain money, to be sure. Oh, I suppose you imagine it is quite enough to marry, and live a pastoral and ethereal life. Marguerite has studied the reality, and, like a good girl, resolved that as she could bring you no fortune, neither would she "bring you any debts.

ARMAND. Good Marguerite!

PRUD. Yes, too good Marguerite; for she has not yet done selling. I have now in my pocket a bill of sale on everything she possesses, which was entrusted to me to deliver to her by her man of business.

ARMAND. What sum would be necessary for—

PRUD. Thirty thousand francs at least.

ARMAND. Obtain a fortnight's grace from the creditors, and I will pay all.

PRUD. You will embroil yourself with your father, and infringe on your future fortune.

ARMAND. I had prepared for this. I knew that Marguerite had creditors, and had written to my lawyer's that I wished to dispose of a small estate left me by my mother, and have just received his answer. The deed is quite prepared, and presently I shall return to Paris in order to sign it. In the meantime, pray be careful that Marguerite knows nothing of what I am about to do.

PRUD. But the papers that I bring—

ARMAND. When I am gone, give them to her as if nothing had occurred, for she must be ignorant of our conversation.

PRUD. You may depend on me—and, by-the-bye, Monsieur Armand, I am dreadfully pressed for money just now, and if you could—

ARMAND. Hush! she is here. Silence!

Enter MARGUERITE, L. C.

MARG. Oh, you have arrived then, Armand?

ARMAND. Yes, dear girl, but must again, and instantly, leave you—but will return in an hour or two. Some important letters which I am expecting had not arrived when I left Paris this morning; and it is necessary that I should get them at the earliest possible moment. Nichette and Gustave, I hear, have come to visit you—so that you will not miss me much.

MARG. Have you yet written to your father?

ARMAND. No—but I shall this very day do so.

MARG. Go, then, and hasten your return.

ARMAND. I shall not be absent above an hour.

(he goes off, L., accompanied to the door by MARGUERITE.)

MARG. *(returning.)* All is arranged.

PRUD. Yes.

MARG. The papers.

PRUD. There they are. Your lawyer will, no doubt, come to-day and settle matters with you: but I must go to breakfast, now, for I am famished. You have, I hope, something substantial in the house?

MARG. Nanine will attend to you. *Exit PRUDENCE, R.*

NICHETTE and GUSTAVE enter. L. C.

NICHETTE. Ah, Marguerite, how much your health appears improved, and how joyous your look. How many times I have wished that you would fall in love and marry, and lead a quiet life, instead of the feverish existence to which you have so long accustomed yourself; and, behold my wishes are about to be realised, for to-morrow you are going to be married to a noble young man, by whom you are adored.

MARG. Oh, yes, your wish is accomplished. I love and I am happy.

GUS. Oh, and how lucky is Monsieur Armand, to be sufficiently wealthy to wed where he has placed his heart. Poor me! nothing but a clerk, must wait till I have gained advancement, and with it a better salary, ere I dare marry this little darling, whom for three years I have fondly loved.

NICHETTE. Oh, you will soon be better off; besides, our tastes are very simple. Some little lodging—where, I care not, so that it looks on to some garden in which nobody ever walks, and then, you know, I shall persuade myself 'tis all my own. Oh, bless you! there are plenty of people who have gardens that they never walk in.

MARG. *(giving a hand to each.)* Ah, you are worthy crea-

tures, and will be happy—as happy as now am I. Oh, how I look forward to the tranquil enjoyment of being seated by the side of Armand, of my husband ; instead of the opera, a boat upon the lake; instead of gay parties, a book by the fire-side, and for the bouquets on which I have expended sums that would, for an entire year, have supported a poor family, a simple flower like this culled for me and given to me by dear Armand.

NICHETTE. Ah, Marguerite, you are greatly to be envied.

MARG. But listen to this and be secret. Unknown to Armand, I am about to sell all I possess to liquidate my debts, so that my husband may be spared all importunity. When married, we shall live in Paris—a humble abode near you, Nichette; and we will live, forgetting there is a world beyond ourselves, and in the bright summer we will sojourn in the country, not in so fine a house as this, but simply and unostentatiously. Have I not taken the right path towards happiness ?

GUS. And you will reach the goal.

MARG. I have, for I am happy now, most happy.

NANINE *enters*, L.

NANINE. A gentleman would speak with you.

MARG. The person, doubtless, whom I was expecting, and who has the arrangement of my affairs. If you will walk for a while in the garden, I will rejoin you. (*to NANINE.*) Conduct the gentleman. *Exit NANINE, L.*

(GUSTAVE and NICHETTE go off into garden, L. C. MONSIEUR

DUVAL, *appears and remains in doorway*, L. C.

DUVAL. You are, I believe, Mademoiselle Marguerite Gautier?

MARG. Yes, sir. To whom have I the honour of speaking ?

DUVAL. To the father of him you would marry—would ruin and degrade.

MARG. Pardon me, sir—but I am a woman, and in my own house ; both reasons why I should receive a little courtesy at your hands.

DUVAL. Courtesy to you! a dissipated—perhaps, depraved woman! who have cajoled my infatuated son into a promise of marriage, and to the sale of an estate that—

MARG. How—what sale ? I swear to you that I am ignorant of what you—

DUVAL. It may be; yet you are encumbered with debts contracted to support your extravagance. When married, my son will be compelled to render himself a beggar, and for you!

sprung from the very dregs of the people ; for you, whose conduct in thus endeavouring to steal into an honourable family—

MARG. Oh, sir, forbear, I implore you ! I can bear much from you, for you are Armand's father ; and your son will tell you, sir, that it was only to his prayers, and to his assurances that you would pardon us, that I consented to become his wife. Vain and thoughtless I may have been, but neither vicious nor depraved; and in wedding me, your son would mate himself with one who loves him, and is worthy of his love. (*giving him paper.*) As I could not have expected your presence here, sir, you will know this was not prepared for this emergency.

DUVAL. (*reading paper.*) A disposal of all your property for the benefit of your creditors—the surplus to return to you. (*giving back paper.*) Pardon me, madame—I have done you wrong—have been deceived respecting you, and was led—I now see, falsely—to accuse you as the instigator of my son to the ingratitude which he has displayed. And, now, listen to me, child, and do not take amiss that which I shall be compelled to say to you. (*places chairs—they sit.*)

MARG. Oh, I tremble—feel that something terrible is about to happen : my heart foresees it—I was too happy.

DUVAL. I have a daughter, the idol of my heart, betrothed to a young man of a wealthy and an honourable family, who have learnt that my son is about to marry a girl born illegitimately, and of low parents. I know not if such be indeed the fact, but it is that which they believe, and their son is forbidden to wed with one of my name, unless Armand shall at once, and for ever, renounce all thoughts of an alliance with you.

MARG. Oh, Heaven!

DUVAL. Your follies—for I will not join with those who believe you guilty—have reached their ears. They are very proud, most strict in their ideas : my daughter loves the man to whom she is betrothed ; her young affection blighted she would die. Marguerite, the happy future of a young girl who has never done you wrong, would be annihilated should you wed my son. Marguerite, in the name of your love, I ask of you the happiness of my child.

MARG. Yes, yes—our marriage must be postponed. I will conceal myself from Armand, until your daughter shall have been united to him she loves, and then—

DUVAL. That, Marguerite, would not suffice. You must—

MARG. For ever renounce all hope of Armand ? Oh, no, no ! you cannot mean it ?

DUVAL. It must be so.

MARG. Oh, never, sir, never!—'twould be a crime. You know not how we love—know not that I have neither parents

nor friends—am without a relative—that he has sworn to be all these to me, and that on him depends my very life. You know not that I am suffering with a mortal malady—that I have but few years to live, and that I have made of my love the hope of these years. Renounce Armand? better that at once you kill me.

DUVAL. Oh, no, you exaggerate—you will live until you shall have reached the age at which 'tis happiness to die. It is, I know, a sacrifice which I am asking—a sacrifice which the demands of society will compel you to accord. You are so good that you would not wish to destroy the future of both my children: for should my son marry you, his every prospect would be blighted—no career would be open to him—he would be banished from the circles in which he has so long moved: and, when his marriage had destroyed his sister—had broken the heart of a father whose pride, whose dearest hope he was—think you that his love would not change to hatred? think you that he would not curse the fatal cause of all?

MARG. Oh, horror—horror!

DUVAL. It is the esteem in which I hold you which causes me to speak thus. I may seem cruel, but I would owe to your reason, to your heart, and to your love for my son, that which by force of law I might have commanded.

MARG. 'Twere vain to struggle—I must obey. You will tell your daughter—for 'tis to her I sacrifice my happiness—you will say to her, there was a poor girl who had in this world but one hope, one thought, one joy—and that at the invocation of her name, that poor girl renounced all, yielded to her her very heart, and—and—died, (*weeping.*)

DUVAL. Poor girl! (*overcome.*)

MARG. You pity me? Ah, that is something. Well, sir, command me—what must I do? (*drying her eyes.*)

DUVAL. Say to my son that you no longer love him.

MARG. (*smiling sadly.*) He would not believe me.

DUVAL. Quit this place, then.

MARG. He would follow me.

DUVAL. Then—

MARG. Trust to me, sir—the sacrifice shall be complete—I swear to be victorious over my love, and ere a week be ended your son shall return to you, for awhile, perhaps, to be unhappy, but for ever cured of his love for me—nor shall he know aught of this our interview.

DUVAL. Marguerite, you are a noble girl—but I fear—

MARG. Fear nothing, sir. He shall hate me. (*she rings.*)

Enter NANINE, L.

Request Prudence to come to me.

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NANINE. Yes, madame. *Exit, L. C.*

MARG. A last favour, sir.

DUVAL. Oh, pray speak, madame.

MARG. In a few hours Armand will be stricken with the heaviest grief he has yet known, that he perhaps will ever know: he will have need of a heart that loves him—be you then near him. And now, sir, pray leave me; he may return at any moment, and should he see you all would be lost.

DUVAL. What then are you about to do ?

MARG. Were I to tell you, 'twould be your duty to forbid me.

DUVAL. What can I do, Marguerite, to reward you for your generous devotion to my wishes.

MARG. Only this, sir, when I am dead, and Armand shall curse my memory, say to him that I loved him well, and fatally proved my love ; adieu, monsieur, we shall never meet again, may you be happy.

(DUVAL, *kisses her hand, and goes off sadly, L.*
Oh, Heaven, give me strength. (*sits and writes, at table, R.*

Enter PRUDENCE.

PRU. You wish to see me, dear Marguerite ?

MARG. I have something with which I can entrust you.

PRU. What ?

MARG. This letter.

PRU. To whom ?

MARG. Look! (*PRUDENCE starts.*) Silence! go instantly. Now a letter to Armand; but Heavens, what can I say to him ?—Pardon me the wrong I am about to do you—oh, I shall go mad, I cannot do it! impossible ! my courage will fail me! it is too much to ask of poor weak human nature.

ARMAND. (*who has entered unobserved, L.*) Writing, Marguerite ?

MARG. No—yes.

ARMAND. You are pale, agitated; to whom do you write, Marguerite ?

MARG. This letter is for you, Armand, but, in the name of Heaven, ask me not to give it to you now.

ARMAND. A mystery, Marguerite ? but no matter now. My father, Marguerite, has heard of my intended marriage, is incensed against me, and as I have learned will visit you to-day; but I have no fear, for when he shall see you—

MARG. I will retire then awhile, that he may not in his first anger behold me, but, I will be near you—will cast myself at his feet—and be assured he will not separate us.

ARMAND. How strangely you said that, Marguerite; you tremble too, some misfortune—that letter—

MARG. This letter contains that which I could not speak to you—it is, I swear it, a proof of my love for you ; ask me no more.

ARMAND. Oh, keep that letter, Marguerite, I know all. Prudence told me all this morning; for that I went to Paris. How, dear Marguerite can I ever recompense so much devotion.

MARG. And now, now that you know all, suffer me to depart.

ARMAND. Depart!

MARG. Leave you for an instant, I would say ; I shall be in the garden with Gustave and Nichette; call me and I will rejoin you, and whatever may befall, believe that, better than all the world, I love you.

ARMAND. But why do you weep ?

MARG. I—I am calm now. I shall presently return. (*aside.*) Oh, Heaven forgive me! A last look—dear Armand, my soul's joy, farewell for ever. *Exit, L. C.*

ARMAND. Poor Marguerite ! the idea of my father's presence terrifies her, but she need not fear, my father has a noble heart, will be moved by her devotion to his son, he will not oppose our marriage, and to-morrow we shall wed. Oh, what happiness.

Enter NANINE, L. C.

NANINE. My mistress, sir, on leaving the house, desired me to give you this letter.

ARMAND. What say you ? Leave me. *Exit NANINE, L. C.* This from Marguerite, the letter which doubtless I but now—(*about, to open letter.*) Why do I tremble? Psha, I am a child !

DUVAL *enters unseen, L., watching ORMOND.*

(*reading.*) " Armand, when you receive this letter, I shall be on my road to Paris—we must part for ever—I shall be under the protection of—" (*utters a cry.*) Oh ! (*turns and sees DUVAL.*) Father, father, my heart is broken! (*falls to the ground.*)

END OF ACT THE SECOND.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—*Door c, opening on to a brilliantly lighted saloon—doors R. and L.—gambling table L.H.—Music.*

GASTON, ARTHUR, DOCTOR, PRUDENCE, ANAIS, *discovered*.
—*Two players seated at L. table, with their backs to the Audience.—SERVANTS handing refreshments.—PROMENADERS at back.—LADIES and GENTLEMEN in saloon, dancing.*

GASTON. (*seated L. of L. table.*) Make your game, gentlemen.

ARTHUR. (*sits at back of table, L. C.*) How much is there in the pool?

GASTON. A hundred louis.

ARTHUR. Oh, then in that case I shall stake five francs.

GASTON. With the enormous sum of five francs to hazard, no wonder you were anxious to know the amount of the bank.

ARTHUR. I can go in with five francs ready money, or, if that don't please you, I can stake ten louis on credit.

GASTON. You are very good, but, thank you, no. (*to DOCTOR.*) You do not play, Doctor.

DOCTOR. NO.

GASTON. Then why are you here? (*dealing cards.*)

DOCTOR. (*laughing.*) To increase my practice, of course.

PRUD. Stop, I stake ten francs.

GASTON. Where are they?

PRUD. In my pocket.

GASTON, (*laughing.*) I would give fifteen francs to see your ten.

PRUD. Bless me, I have forgotten my purse.

GASTON. I expected as much.

PRUD. My dear sir, as I am just now very much pressed for cash, perhaps you will be good enough—

GASTON. (*laughing.*) Well, there are twenty francs.

PRUD. Thanks, I shall be certain to return them.

GASTON. YOU are certain to do nothing of the kind; and I beg you won't, for the surprise would be too much for me.

PRUD. Well, then, I won't; for sudden shocks, I know, are dangerous. (*stakes money R. of table.*)

GASTON. (*dealing cards.*) I am nine. (*takes up money.*)

PRUD. He always wins—my ten francs already gone.

GASTON. Mine, you mean—returned to their rightful owner.

ARTHUR. That makes fifty louis that I have lost.

ANAIS. A thousand francs! Oh, and he had but two louis in his pocket when he arrived.

ARTHUR. Exactly—I owe the rest.

ANAIS. I pity your creditors. Doctor, cure Arthur of that serious complaint—losing money which he has not got.

DOCTOR. Time is the only remedy for that.

Enter OLYMPIA and ST. GAUDENS, C. from L.

OLYM. Still gambling?

ARTHUR. Still, and for ever.

PRUD. St. Gaudens, I am very much pressed for cash—lend me three louis?

ST. G. There. (*gives them.*) Doctor, I must consult you. Cure me of too much good nature. Madame Olympe, when does your husband return from England?

OLYM. I know not—when the affairs which took him there shall be perfectly arranged.

PRUD. (*aside.*) 'Tis to be hoped, considering his wife's extravagance, that he has gone to take possession of a new fortune.

ST. G. And how is Mademoiselle Marguerite—and will she be here this evening?

OLYM. It is not certain—but I hope so.

GASTON. And Armand—by-the-bye, are they married yet?

PRUD. Bless you! no—'tis all off. Marguerite changed her mind on the day before that, appointed for her wedding with Armand.

OLYM. And has at last consented to give her hand to Varville: and she is quite right, for Varville is very rich.

ARTHUR. And Armand Duval is entirely, or nearly so, they say, dependent on his father.

ST. G. Oh, women are heartless, mercenary animals, and I shall never marry till certain that 'tis not for my wealth, but for myself alone, that I am loved. (*they laugh.*)

PRUD. 'Tis your only chance, poor young old gentleman! though a very forlorn one, to be loved for yourself; for as you have no money—

ST. G. But I shall have when my uncle dies.

PRUD. Nonsense! your uncle will never die; in fact, I don't believe he has ever lived. (*all laugh.*)

GASTON. (*rising.*) Gentlemen, the bank is broken, and the banker has resigned. Had I been offered five hundred francs to deal the cards for an entire evening I would have refused; and yet here have I been banker for only two hours, and have lost two thousand. Ah! 'tis a delightful occupation.

Enter ARMAND, C. from L.

ST. G. Ah! how d'ye do? We were but now speaking of you.

ARMAND. And what said you?

PRUD. (R.) That you were at Tours, and would not be here this evening.

ARMAND. You were, you see, mistaken, my friends.

GASTON. When did you arrive ?

ARMAND. An hour since.

PRUD. (*aside to ARMAND.*) Marguerite will be here this evening.

ARMAND. (*coolly.*) Indeed! I shall see her then.

PRUD. With what a tone you said that.

ARMAND. How would you that I should say it?

PRUD. Your heart then is cured?

ARMAND. Perfectly. Were it not so, think you I should be here?

PRUD. Then you have quite forgotten her ?

ARMAND. Forgotten ! Oh, yes, yes—of course. Forgotten!

PRUD. 'Twas certainly very cruel of her to desert you so, only a day before the one appointed for your marriage—but I can understand how it was. You were poor—and, obliged to sell her carriage and horses, in short, forced to renounce every luxury to which she had been accustomed, her heart failed her; she felt she was not fitted for love in a cottage, or a second floor, and so—

ARMAND. She consented to accept the hand of the Baron de Varville, whose wealth will enable him to surround her with the luxuries which are, it seems, so necessary to her existence. Oh, treacherous, heartless woman !

PRUD. I cannot understand her lately. She still wears the brooch containing your hair ; but, of course, if you were to demand its return—

ARMAND. (*with emotion.*) No, no—let her keep it.

PRUD. And her health has broken fearfully : the doctor, who awhile ago had every hope, is now, as he confesses, greatly alarmed on her account.

ARMAND. And yet she is coming here this evening.

PRUD. Yes, on leaving the opera, whither she has gone with Monsieur de Varville ; it seems she can now rest nowhere.

ARMAND. And—and her marriage with Varville ?

PRUD. Has been twice postponed at the request of Marguerite, on account of her health, I believe; but it has again been fixed for this day week. You will speak to her ?

ARMAND. No, the past is dead—forgotten !

PRUD. Ah ! I am delighted to find that you take the matter so sensibly.

ARMAND. (*seeing GUSTAVE, who enters, c. from L.*) My dear Prudence, here is one of my friends : if you will permit me—

PRUD. Oh, certainly ; but, my dear Monsieur Duval, I am very much pressed, and if—

ARMAND. Certainly—when disengaged. (PRUDENCE *leaves him*—GUSTAVE *advances*.) You received my letter then ?

Gus. Or how came I here ?

ARMAND. You wonder why I should request your presence at one of these soirees to which you so strongly object ?

Gus. I confess it.

ARMAND. You were surprised that my marriage with Marguerite was so suddenly broken off, and believed, did you not, that she loved me ?

Gus. I believe so still.

ARMAND. (*giving him Marguerite's letter*.) Read.

Gus. (*having glanced at letter*.) And Marguerite wrote this ?

ARMAND. Herself.

Gus. When ?

ARMAND. A month since.

Gus. How did you reply to this letter ?

ARMAND. How would you that I should reply ? The blow was so unexpected that I was driven nearly mad. She, Marguerite, whom I so fondly loved, thus to deceive and cast me off—to desert me in a moment for another, without any previous warning, in the midst of my highest joy and pride in her affection, and at the risk of killing me. Oh, women have no heart! Hopeless and inert, stunned by the shock I had received, I accompanied my father to Tours—strove to banish her from my memory, but in vain; I could not sleep, could think of nought but her. She had been too dear to me, and I felt, as I feel now, indifference impossible; and that I must either love or—hate her. I could forbear no longer, I felt that I should die unless I heard, spoken by her own lips, the words she had written to me; I wished by hatred to efface the past, to bury love beneath contempt; and I am here this evening because they tell me she is coming. What may occur I know not; but I may need a friend, and therefore did I write to you.

GUS. My dear Armand, I am entirely at your service ; but, pray, remember that it is a woman whom you are about to address, and do not—

ARMAND. Ay, but she has a lover—the man she is about to wed, whom she has preferred to me now, after having thrice rejected him. He, her *wealthy* lover, will be by her side, and I shall be ready to answer to him, with my blood, for all that I may say to her.

SERVANT. (*announcing, C. from L.*) "Mademoiselle Marguerite Gauthier—Monsieur the Baron de Varville."

ARMAND. She is here. (*goes L.*)

Enter MARGUERITE *and* DE VARVILLE, *C. from L.*

OLYMPE. (*meeting* MARGUERITE.) How late you arrive.

VAR. Marguerite was good enough to accompany me to the opera. (*he shakes hands with gentlemen.*)

PRUD. (*to MARGUERITE.*) You are well—

MARG. (R. C.) Oh, yes—(*sadly.*)—very well.

PRUD. (R.) Armand is here.

MARG. Armand!

PRUD. Yes.

(MARGUERITE *meets the eye of ARMAND, who has gone to the card-table; she smiles timidly, he bows coldly.*)

MARG. I have done wrong in coming here.

PRUD. Not at all: sooner or later you must have encountered Armand; and, in my opinion, better sooner than later.

MARG. He has spoken to you.

PRUD. Yes.

MARG. And of me.

PRUD. Naturally.

MARG. What said he?

PRUD. That he did not blame you—you had acted perfectly right.

MARG. So much the better if he think so; but he does not—no, impossible; he is too pale—bowed too coldly to me.

VAR. (*aside to MARGUERITE.*) Marguerite, Armand Duval is there.

MARG. I know it.

VAR. Will you swear to me that you were ignorant of his presence when we came hither?

MARG. I swear it.

VAR.. And you will promise me not to speak to him?

MARG. Yes; but should he speak, I cannot promise that I will not answer. Prudence, do not leave me. (*sits R.*)

DOCTOR. (C.—*to MARGUERITE.*) Good evening, madame.

MARG. Oh, doctor! is it you? How you look at me.

DOCTOR. What better could I do when in your presence?

MARG. You find me, do you not, much changed?

DOCTOR. I entreat you, madame, to be careful of yourself. To-morrow I shall call on you in order that I may scold you at my ease.

MARG. Ah, doctor, how good and kind you are! But you are not already going?

DOCTOR. Presently. (*retires up.*)

Gus. (*advancing c.*) Good evening, Marguerite!

MARG. Ah, my good Gustave, how glad I am to see you. Dear Nichette is well, I hope—are you married?

GUS. Not yet! but ere long, for I have obtained advancement in the office, and—

MARG. Oh! how happy she must be—so truly loved. (*passes*)

her handkerchief across her eyes.) Oh, Gustave, I am very wretched.

GUS. Do not weep ! Why are you here this evening ?

MARG. Because solitude is more than I can bear.

GUS. I fear some evil—Armand—

MARG. Oh, fear not! Armand hates, despises me.

GUS. No—loves you still! observe how pale he is—not master of himself, something terrible may occur between him and Monsieur de Varville. Plead indisposition and depart.

MARG. A duel! oh, Heaven! Yes, yes, you are right, Gustave, I will go. (*rises.*)

VAR. (*approaching her.*) Whither go you, Marguerite ?

MARG. (*haughtily.*) Sir!

VAR. Your emotion on again seeing Monsieur Duval is but too apparent—but remember, madame, I am your accepted husband, and must not be made ridiculous.

MARG. Monsieur Varville, this language—

(*they converse earnestly R.*)

GASTON. (*at table.*) My dear Armand, you are playing like a maniac.

ARMAND. To see if the proverb holds true—"Unlucky in love, lucky at play."

GASTON. Then you must be terribly unfortunate in your love affairs, for you are frightfully lucky at play.

ARMAND. Oh, I wish to win a fortune ; for, doubtless, then the lady who fled from me, as though I were a pestilence, to seek a richer mate, would desert him in his turn, and hasten back to me. Nay, I'm sure she would, were I but able to outbid him with my gold.

(*this is spoken at VARVILLE, who has quitted MARGUERITE.*)

VAR. (*advancing C.*) Sir!

Gus. (*aside.*) Armand, for Heaven's sake !—You are killing Marguerite.

MARG. (*seizing his R. arm.*) Varville, quarrel with Monsieur-Duval, and you shall never see me more.

ARMAND. (*to VARVILLE.*) Did you not speak, sir?

VAR. Yes, sir; you are so lucky at play, that your vein tempts me, and I understand so well the use to which you would apply your gains, that I am really most anxious you should win, and so propose a match.

ARMAND. And I accept gladly.

VAR. A hundred louis.

ARMAND. Agreed. On which side will you—

VAR. On that which you do not take.

ARMAND. A hundred louis on the left. (*at back of table L. C.*)

VAR. (*R. of table.*) A hundred louis on the right.

ARMAND. Proceed.

Sc. 1. THE LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS. 25

GASTON. (*dealing cards.*) Right, four—left, nine. Armand wins.

VAR. (*handing notes.*) Two hundred louis.

ARMAND. With all my heart—two hundred louis. But beware, sir—if the proverb says, "Unlucky in love, lucky at play," it also says, "Lucky in love, unlucky at play."

GASTON. Six—eight. Armand wins again.

MARG. (*aside.*) Oh, Heaven! what is about to happen?

OLYM. (*after speaking to a SERVANT, who has entered L. C.*) Gentlemen, supper is served.

ARMAND. Shall we continue, sir?

VAR. At present—no.

ARMAND. I owe you your revenge, and promise you shall have it—at any game which you may name.

VAR. Rest easy, sir; I shall not fail to avail myself of your kind offer. Will you come, Marguerite?

MARG. Not yet, I would speak a word with Prudence.

VAR. If within ten minutes you do not rejoin me, I shall return, Marguerite, and seek you here.

MARG. Enough, sir, go.

ALL *go off* (*except PRUDENCE and MARGUERITE*) C, *closing the doors.*

MARG. Seek Armand, implore him in the name of all that is sacred to come to me, if but for a moment. I *must* speak with him.

PRU. Should he refuse—

MARG. He will not—will gladly seize the occasion to say how much he now detests me—go. *Exit PRUDENCE, C. and L.* Let me endeavour to be calm; he must continue to believe as he thinks; shall I have strength to complete the promise made to his father? Oh, Heaven! and I must suffer him to hate, and to despise me; for only so may dire calamity be averted—ah, he is here.

Enter ARMAND, C, closing the doors.

ARMAND. You would speak with me, madame?

MARG. Yes, Armand, I—

ARMAND. Proceed, madame; doubtless you would exculpate yourself.

MARG. No, Armand, it is not that; do not, I implore you, recur to the past.

ARMAND. You are right, madame, it covers you with too much shame.

MARG. Have mercy, Armand; do not overwhelm me—you see how weak and ill I am—upon the verge almost of the grave. I cannot defend myself against your reproaches, and if I could I would not. Listen to me, then, without hatred, anger, or contempt. Come, Armand, give me your hand.

ARMAND. Never again, madame, never; and if for this only you sent for me—(*going.*)

MARG. Oh, could I have believed that the day would ever come when you would refuse the hand I tendered; but, that is not now the question—Armand, you must depart—return at once to your father's house.

ARMAND. And why, madame?

MARG. Because, should you stay, the result would be a duel with Monsieur Varville, and I should be the only one to suffer.

ARMAND. And you would have me prove myself a coward? what other counsel could I have expected from such a woman.

MARG. Armand, I have scarcely strength sufficient left to tell how much during the last month I have suffered; my malady increases hourly, is consuming, and destroying me. In the name of our past love—for your sister's sake, shun me, return to your father, and forget me, forget—if it be possible, my very name.

ARMAND. Oh, I understand, you tremble lest with a pistol shot I should deprive you of your rich husband—cheat you of the wealth for which you played the traitress.

MARG. My greatest fear, Armand, is that you might fall.

ARMAND. Whether I live or die, what matters it to you—had you that fear when writing? "Armand, forget me, I am about to be another's." what cared you then? but, I live, you see, for vengeance; did you believe that I would suffer you and your accomplice, with impunity, to break my heart? No, madame, no! I am again in Paris—the question is now between your wealthy suitor, the husband to whom you are about to sell yourself, and the poor dupe whom, having lured to the eve of promised rapture you then laughed at, and discarded. I will kill him, madame, I swear that I will kill him.

MARG. Armand, Monsieur de Varville is innocent of all that has occurred.

ARMAND. You love, and are about to wed him. Sufficient that, to make me hate him.

MARG. You well know, I love him not, that I never can love that man.

ARMAND. Why then will you wed him?

MARG. In Heaven's name, Armand, ask me not that—I dare not answer.

ARMAND. Then I will answer for you. You will wed him because you are a mercenary and heartless fiend, prepared to sell your heart to the highest bidder, because you lacked the courage boldly to face the poverty, which with me, you feared would be your portion; because, in short, the man whom you had sworn you loved, was valueless—when placed beside the horses of your carriage, and the diamonds about your neck.

MARG. Yes, yes, be it so, I am all that you have said; and if so worthless, why, for me, should you expose your life, and risk, too, the lives of those who love you. Armand, on my knees I implore you to depart—and instantly.

ARMAND. Well, yes, I will on one condition only.

MARG. Say it quickly, Armand ; I accept whatever it be.

ARMAND. That you go with me.

MARG. (*recoiling.*) Never.

ARMAND. Never ?

MARG. Oh, Heaven, give me courage.

ARMAND. Listen to me, Marguerite; I am mad—my brain is on fire—fever is in my veins—there is nothing of which I may not now be capable. I thought it was by hatred I was driven towards you; I now know that it was love, invincible, irresistible! a love, in yielding to which (after all that has passed) I blush with shame, and despise my own folly and my weakness. Well, say but that you love me still, that dazzled for a moment by De Varville's wealth, you now repent your cruelty towards me; say but that, and together will we quit Paris—to-morrow you shall be my wife, and if the devotion of a heart whose every fibre throbs with adoration can make you happy, oh, then, Marguerite, felicity will indeed be thine.

MARG. Armand, I would give my life for but one day of that happiness which you propose; but alas, to me that happiness is impossible.

ARMAND. Again!

MARG. An abyss separates us—forget me, we are separated for ever—it must be so, I have sworn it.

ARMAND. To whom ?

MARG. To him who had the right to ask that oath.

ARMAND. To De Varville?

MARG. (*with a struggle.*) Ye—yes.

ARMAND. You do love him, then ? Say but that, and I depart.

MARG. (*after a struggle with her emotions.*) Oh, well, yes, I do love De Varville.

(ARMAND, *rushing up, and dashing open the folding doors.*

Enter all the characters who were in the early part of the scene, C. from R. and L.

MARG. (R.) What would you do ?

ARMAND. (C.) You will see. (*to GUESTS who enter.*) You know this woman ?

ALL. Marguerite Gauthier.

ARMAND. Yes, she sells herself to De Varville, there—for wealth, for which alone she cares; should I retain the money won, but now, from her accepted lover, I fear 'twould break

her heart. I esteem her too much to cause her to suffer, and thus do I restore the wealth for which she has sold herself, and tortured me. Thus—thus—thus, (*dashes bank notes, gold, &c.* at MARGUERITE.)

VAR. Coward, Coward!

ARMAND *darts towards VARVILLE, is intercepted, and with difficulty restrained, and forced back to L.* MARGUERITE *falls senseless to the ground, C., DOCTOR and others hasten to her. Tableau.*

END OF ACT THE THIRD.

A C T I V .

SCENE.—*Marguerite's sleeping chamber, meanly furnished—couch bed at back with curtains half drawn. Fire-place L.H., before which is an arm-chair, in which GASTON is discovered asleep, a night-light burning on table, piano L.H., opposite fire-lace, doors, R. and L., MARGUERITE on bed, asleep.*

GASTON. (*raising his head.*) I declare I have dropped off for a minute or two. I hope she has not wanted anything. (*listens.*) No, still asleep. I wonder what time it is. Seven o'clock! Not daylight yet, and here is the fire gone out. Oh, hang the fire—I must set it going again. (*kneels, puts wood, &c. to fire, which is seen burning.*)

MARG. (*awaking, with a cough.*) Nanine, give me some drink.

GASTON. (*speaking 0 gently, but cheerfully.*) Here you are.

MARG. (*raising her head.*) Who is that?

GASTON. (*pouring out drink.*) Oh, only me, Gaston.

MARG. How came you in my chamber?

GASTON. (*giving cup.*) Drink first, and then I will tell you. Is it sweet enough?

MARG. Yes.

GASTON. I must have been born for a nurse.

MARG. But where is Nanine?

GASTON. Fast asleep. I came here at eleven o'clock last night to learn how you were, and found poor Nanine regularly done over with fatigue and want of sleep, while I, bless you, was, as I always am, wide awake. You had already fallen asleep, so I bundled Nanine off to bed, and threw myself on the chair there before the fire, and have passed a beautiful night. You slept so quietly that it did me more good than if I had had the finest snooze in the world; and now, how are you this morning?

MARG. Very well, my good Gaston, but why should you fatigue yourself?

GASTON. Excuse me if I say "rubbish." I pass many a night on the spree, and I shall profit a good deal more by passing a few by a sick bed; besides, I have something to say to you.

MARG. To me ?

GASTON. Yes. Nothing like coming to the point at once—you are short of money—your marriage broken off. Monsieur Varville—but never mind him now—thrown on a sick bed, one needs money then, and I happen to have some, not much, for I have lately lost a lot at play, and have besides made a heap of useless purchases for this New Year's day. Ah, I hoped on this day to see you well and happy ! But to cut it short, look here, here are twenty-five louis! I am going to put them in that table drawer, and when they are gone, why—why I dare say I shall be able to find a few more.

MARG. (*moved.*) Oh, Gaston, you have a noble heart! You of whom I knew so little, thus to guard and care for me !

GASTON. Oh, bless you, 'tis always so; where we expect the least we generally get the most; but I always loved you, for in your highest prosperity you were ever good and generous ; besides 'twas easy to perceive that you suffered.

MARG. Good fellow!

GASTON. And now I tell you what—'twill be a splendid day, you have had eight hours good sleep, and you must sleep a little longer. From one o'clock to three in the day 'tis nice and warm ; the sun will shine beautifully to-day, I know he will, though he hasn't exactly told me so; I will come for you; wrap yourself well up, and we will have a nice little ridey, pidey in a coachey poachey.

MARG. (*smiling.*) Worthy Gaston!

GASTON. And to-night again you will sleep like a little piggy wiggy; and in the meantime I will go and breakfast with my mother; haven't been to see her this fortnight, and shall no doubt catch it finely; but never mind, I daresay I shall get over it. I will be back here by one o'clock. What do you say, eh ?

MARG. I will endeavour to gain strength for—

GASTON. You shall have it. Why you look charming this morning.

Enter NANINE, L. door.

Come along, Nanine. Ma'amselle Marguerite is awake.

MARG. Poor Nanine, you were then greatly fatigued ?

NANINE. Rather, I own, Madame.

MARG. Open the window, I need a little air. I wish to rise.

30 THE LADY OF THE CAMELLIAS. Act 4.

NANINE. (*opening window, and looking into the street.*)
Madame, the doctor is coming.

MARG. Good doctor ! his first visit is always to me. Gaston, open the door to him as you are going. Nanine, assist me to rise.

NANINE. But, Madame—

MARG. I will, I tell you.

GASTON. Good bye! Remember one o'clock.

MARG. Oh, yes!

(*before going off GASTON arranges the arm-chair, C., and places pillows on it; MARGUERITE is assisted by NANINE from the bed, but unable to stand, sinks back again; at length, supported by NANINE, she walks towards the chair; DOCTOR enters L. door and helps NANINE to seat MARGUERITE, who immediately falls back, half-fainting.*)

MARG. (*recovering a little.*) Oh, doctor, how kind of you to think so of me every morning. Nanine, go and see if there are any letters. (*NANINE goes off, L. door.*)

DOCTOR. (*feeling her pulse.*) How do you feel this morning?

MARG. Worse and better, worse in body and better in mind, last evening I thought myself so near to death that I sent for a priest—I was sad, despairing, feared to die; that good man came, conversed an hour with me, and sadness, despair, terror, and remorse, all fled from me, and I slept soundly, and happily.

DOCTOR. Well, madame, I think I may promise, that, with the early spring your health will be restored.

MARG. Ah, doctor, you feel it your duty to make that promise—I thank you. It is permitted to the physician to console his patient, but I am not deceived, doctor. (*to NANINE, who re-enters L. door.*) What have you here?

NANINE. Some presents for you, madame.

MARG. Oh, true, to-day is the first of January; I am not, then, quite forgotten—a year since, how different was all to me! all was then mirth. How joyfully did I welcome the new year, for it seemed to bring to me renewed health—alas! what am I now? where the happiness I hoped for—fled! and in its stead a grave yawning to receive me. But was there no letter.

NANINE. Yes, madame, this. (*giving one.*)

MARG. From whom? (*opening letter.*) "My dear Marguerite, I have called several times but have not been permitted to see you—Gustave and myself are to be married on the first of January at St. Therese's Chapel; do, my love, try to be present—nine o'clock in the morning is the hour. I embrace you with all my heart—Nichette." All but me are happy—yet, no,

no! I am ungrateful. Doctor, pray close that window, I am cold, and give me pen and paper. Ah! the few moments of life yet remaining to me cannot be devoted better than to those I love.

(buries her face on the couch. DOCTOR places writing materials on small table near her.)

NANINE. *(aside to DOCTOR.)* Well, doctor.

DOCTOR. *(shaking his head.)* She is very, very ill.

MARG. *(aside.)* They think I can't hear them. Doctor, will you be kind enough to convey this letter to the church at which Nichette is to be married, and to request her to come to me immediately after the ceremony. *(writes, folds, and seals letter.)* You will forgive me for so troubling you—thanks! *(pressing his hand.)* Pray return to me, if you can. *Exit DOCTOR, L. door.*

MARG. Now, put this room a little in order. *(bell rings.)* Some one rings—go the door, Nanine.

NANINE. *(looking off.)* It is Madame Duvernoy.

MARG. Oh, let her come in.

Enter PRUDENCE, L. door.

PRUD. Well, my dear Marguerite, how are you this morning?

MARG. Well, dear Prudence, thank you.

PRUD. Send Nanine away for a moment—I have something particular to say to you.

MARG. Nanine, arrange the next room, will you. I will call when I want you.

NANINE. *(aside.)* Of course—she has come to try to borrow money. *Exit, L. door.*

PRUD. My dear Marguerite, I have a very great favour to ask of you.

MARG. Speak.

PRUD. I am just now very much pressed, and if you could lend me two hundred francs—only till the end of the month—

MARG. *(casting up her eyes.)* The end of the month?

PRUD. But, of course, if inconvenient to you—

MARG. I have but little money, of which indeed I am in urgent want.

PRUD. Then we will say no more about it.

MARG. But no matter, open that drawer—how much is there?

PRUD. Five hundred francs.

MARG. Well, take from them the two hundred you require.

PRUD. *(taking money.)* Ah, you render me a great service.

MARG. I am very glad, dear Prudence—very glad.

PRUD. I must go now, but shall see you again soon. You are looking much better.

MARG. Oh, yes, much better.

PRUD. The return of fine weather and country air will completely restore you.

MARG. No doubt.

PRUD. (*going.*) Good bye, once more.

MARG. Send Nanine to me.

PRUD. Yes—good bye !

MARG. Her hopes and wishes for my health are too expensive—but 'tis the last time.

Enter NANINE, L. door.

NANINE. Oh, madame, she has been borrowing of you again.

MARG. Yes.

NANINE. Oh, why did you—

MARG. Oh, she needed money, she said, so greatly : we also need it, Nanine; so here, take this bracelet to the jeweller's, and sell it. Go—and hasten your return.

NANINE. But during my absence—

MARG. I can remain alone—shall want nothing. Besides, you will not be long : you know the way to the jeweller's : you have been there, during the last three months, on similar errands very many times.

NANINE. (*sighing.*) All—yes !

Exit, L. door.

MARG. (*taking letter from her bosom and reading.*) "Madame, I have heard of the duel between Armand and Monsieur de Varville, not from my son, for—you will scarcely believe it—he fled without attempting to see or to embrace his father. Thank Heaven ! de Varville is at length out of danger, and I know all. You have kept your oath at hazard of your life—you suffered your reputation to perish, that my son's love might perish in his hate. I now acknowledge your purity. I have written the truth to Armand : he is far distant, but will return to ask pardon of you, not only for himself, but for his father. I would repair the evil I have been compelled to inflict upon you : take especial care of yourself, my child, and hope : your courage and your self-denial merit a bright future, and I promise you it shall be yours. My own daughter is married—I hope you will soon supply her place at the fire-side of—George Duval, 15th of November." 'Tis six weeks since I received this letter from Armand's father, which I have read and read again, hoping to gain a little courage. Oh, could I but receive one word from *him*—or if I might live till spring, (*rises and looks in glass.*) Oh, how changed I am ! And yet the doctor promised I should recover. I will have patience—but ah ! just now did he not condemn me ? I heard him, to Nanine, say that I was very, very ill; but there is yet hope for me—I shall live yet some months, and if during that time Armand should return—oh,

then I should be saved! The first day of the new year!—ah ! it is the time for hope : besides, I cannot really be in danger, or Gaston would not jest with me, as but now he did; the doctor would not leave me—oh, no! (*having gone to window.*) Ah, that happy child, how merrily its laugh rings out. (*extending her arms.*) Oh, how I long to embrace that infant! Little darling, thou art gay and innocent, art commencing life, whilst I—I—

(*buries her face in her hands.*)

NANINE. (*having entered and placed money on mantel-piece.*)
Madame!

MARG. What is it, Nanine ?

NANINE. You feel better to-day, do you not ?

MARG. Yes—why?

NANINE. Promise me you will be calm.

MARG. What then has happened ?

NANINE. I wished to prepare you—too sudden joy is difficult to bear.

MARG. Joy, say you ?

NANINE. Yes, madame.

MARG. Armand—you have seen Armand ? Armand is coming to me ? (NANINE *assents*—MARGUERITE *running to door.*)
Armand!

Enter ARMAND, L. door, very pale. MARGUERITE rushes to his arms, and clings around his neck—he places her on the chair, R. C, and kneels at her feet.

And is it indeed you ? Can it be that Heaven is so kind to me ?

ARMAND. Yes, Marguerite, it is indeed me, so repentant, but so guilty towards you, that I dared not cross your door. Had I not encountered Nanine, I should still have been beneath your window, praying for you, weeping my sad fault. Oh, do not curse me, Marguerite ! My father has written to me all the truth : I was far hence ; but where'er I went, my love and my remorse still followed me. Like a madman did I fly from Paris—travelled night and day, with neither rest nor sleep, my heart borne down with horrible presentiments—your dwelling clad with mourning ever before me. Oh, had I not found you living, I would not have survived you, for I should have known and felt myself your murderer. Marguerite, my father repents his cruelty towards you—I, on my knees, implore your pardon. Oh, Marguerite, you are generous—you will forgive us both—oh, will you not, dear Marguerite ?

MARG. Pardon you, dear Armand ? 'Tis I alone was culpable ; but could I have acted otherwise ? I sought your happiness in preference to my own ; but now your father wishes not to separate us, I can now become your wife. It is not the Marguerite of former days you now behold ? but I am still young

and with happiness the little beauty you so praised will soon return—the past be all forgotten. 'Tis only from to-day we will begin to live.

ARMAND. Oh yes—we shall no more be separated. You must instantly quit this house—must to the country : there you will soon be restored to health. My father knows and appreciates now your noble heart, will love you as the good genius of his son. My sister is married—the future is for us.

MARG. Oh, speak on—speak on! at your words my soul revives, health grows and strengthens beneath the shelter of your love. But this morning did I say 'twas only your return could save me. I did not hope it—and yet you are here. Oh, let me to the pure air of the country—no time must be lost—life is hastening from me, and I must check it in its flight. Oh, you do not know—Nichette and Gustave are married now, this very morning. We shall see them. Oh, what joyful surprises Heaven has reserved for me for this the first day of the year. Oh, Armand, once again, I pray you, tell me that you love me.

ARMAND. Yes, Marguerite, yes—my life, my very soul is devoted to thee.

MARG. Nanine, my shawl—I am going out. (NANINE brings bonnet, &c.)

ARMAND. Thanks, good Nanine, for the care which you have taken of her.

MARG. We were always speaking of you—were we not, Nanine ? It was only she who sought ever to console me ; she has always said you would return, that I should yet become your wife, and she was right, was she not, Armand ? Oh, you have wandered into many lovely lands; well, you shall travel to them once again, and with me by your side, dear Armand.

(totters.)

ARMAND. Marguerite, how pale you are !

MARG. (with effort.) Oh, 'tis nothing, Armand—nothing. Happiness thus suddenly restored to a heart so long left desolate is too oppressive. Joy sometimes is hard to bear as grief itself.

(sinks on to chair, her head falling back.)

ARMAND. Oh, Heaven ! Marguerite, speak to me, I implore you—Marguerite!

MARG. Be not alarmed, dear Armand. I have, you know, been ever subject to these attacks—these sudden weaknesses; but they quickly pass, and—already, you see, I am better—can smile again—am strong. 'Tis the joy of knowing that I shall live which suffocates me.

ARMAND. (taking her hand.) You tremble ?

MARG. No, no, 'tis nothing, I assure—nothing. Come, Nanine, quick—give me my shawl and— (staggers and coughs.)

ARMAND. (terrified.) Oh, great Heaven !

MARG. (*having tried vainly to walk, and casting the shawl angrily aside.*) Oh, I cannot! I cannot! (*falls on to chair.*)

ARMAND. Nanine, hasten to the physician.

MARG. Yes, yes—say to him that Armand has returned, that I would live—must live. *Exit NANINE, L. door.*

But if your return cannot save me, the physician's skill will avail me nothing. I have lived only that I might see you once again, and shall die happy now enshrouded with your love.

ARMAND. Oh, Heaven! it cannot be that I have returned but to see her die. No, no! Marguerite, you will—you must live.

MARG. Sit near me, Armand, very near, and listen to me well. A moment since I was angry at death's approach; I am sorry now, and welcome it—rejoice that ere stricken I have been permitted to behold you once again. It is necessary for me to die—if my death had not been certain, your father would not have sanctioned our marriage.

ARMAND. Dear Marguerite, talk not thus, or you will drive me mad. Say not that you wish to die; assure me rather that you will live: for should you not—Oh! I dare not think of it, for the thought is torture, madness!

MARG. No—it is better that I should die. Although my innocence of the fearful charges brought against me has been proved, the world will always remember that I was accused, that I was "The Lady of the Camellias." It would bring shame upon your name to marry me, because they would say there must have been some foundation for the calumnies against me. When I die, your recollection of me, your love, and your grief, will be pure, sincere. 'Tis hard to leave you, Armand—to bid farewell to all our promised joy: but I will not murmur—'tis Heaven's decree, my Armand; and, believe me, that which Heaven does, is ever well done.

ARMAND. (*rising.*) Oh! I am choking—Marguerite—

MARG. (*drawing him again to her side.*) Ah! and am I forced to give you courage. Come, then, obey me—open yonder drawer, you will find there my portrait, drawn ere I became the wreck you now behold me; it was prepared for you—keep it, then 'twill help you to remember me. But if some day, again loving and beloved—if—as indeed you ought—as I sincerely hope—if you should one day wed a pure, and lovely girl, and she should see that portrait, say to her it is that of a friend, who, if permitted a space in Heaven, prays daily, hourly for her, and thee. If jealous at the first, as we women sometimes are, she should demand of you the sacrifice of that portrait, grant it to her, without fear, without remorse—'twould be justice, and, in advance, I pardon you. Are you listening, Armand, have you well understood me?

(NANINE, NICHETTE, and GUSTAVE, enter L. door. NICHETTE with terror, but advances more assured as she sees MARGUERITE smiling and ARMAND at her feet, who, at the conclusion of Marguerite's last speech, has sunk to his knees quite overpowered.)

NICHETTE. Dear Marguerite, how could you terrify me so? you wrote me word that you were dying, and here I find you erect and smiling.

GUSTAVE. Armand!

ARMAND. Oh, Gustave, my friend, I am very, very wretched.

MARG. I *am* dying, but I am happy, and my happiness has taken the sting from death. You are married—believe me, that even in this moment, I rejoice at your felicity—you will think and speak sometimes of me, will you not? Armand, give me your hand, think not it is difficult to die—thus happy, thus surrounded—'tis rapture.

GASTON. (*entering.*) Now, Marguerite, all is ready, a coach at the door, and—(*stops suddenly.*)

MARG. Oh, here is Gaston come for me. Ah! poor Gaston! but I am glad to see you once again—good fellow—in happiness we are ungrateful, and I had forgotten you. (*to ARMAND.*) He has been very, very good to me! Ah! (*rising.*) How very strange!

ARMAND. What, dear girl?

MARG. I no longer suffer; life and health are surely returning to me—sudden strength has come to me, I am well—quite well; I shall live—yes, yes, Annand, I shall live. (*sits, and reclines quietly, as if she slept.—Music till end.*)

GASTON. (*R. of the chair, in a low tone.*) She sleeps.

ARMAND. (*first uneasily, then with terror.*) Marguerite! Marguerite! Marguerite! (*uttering a loud cry, and with difficulty withdrawing his hand from that of MARGUERITE.*) Ah! (*recoiling in alarm.*) Dead! (*running to GUSTAVE.*) Great Heaven! she is dead—dead—dead!

(DOCTOR appears at door. *Tableau.*)

CURTAIN.