

THE
REAPERS ;
OR,
FORGET AND FORGIVE!



A Drama,
IN TWO ACTS.

BY
EDWARD STIRLING, ESQ.,

AUTHOR OF

*Lost Diamonds, Blue Jackets, Anchor of Hope, Aline, Jane Lomax,
Pet of the Public, Baby Rattler, Cabin Boy, Rag Picker of Paris,
Legacy of Honour, Nicholas Nickleby, Teacher Taught, Lestelle,
White Slave, Woodman's Spell, Chimes, Royal Command, Struggle
for Gold, Sea King's Vow, Hand of Cards, Idiot of the Mill,
Norah Creina, &c. &c.*

THOMAS H A I L E S L A C Y,
89, STRAND, LONDON, W.C.

THE REAPERS.

First performed at the Strand Theatre, under the management of Mr. Allcroft, August 11th, 1856.

Characters.

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|-----------------------------------------------------------------|---------------------|
| CLAUDE REMY (on <i>old Soldier, now a Reaper, aged 82</i> | MR. E. STIRLING. |
| FAUVEAU (<i>Madame Granderose's Steward, aged 50</i>) | MR. J. HOWARD. |
| SYLVAIN (<i>his Son, aged 25</i>) | { MR. BASIL POTTER. |
| DENIS RONCIAT (<i>aged 25</i>)..... | { MR. J. ROGERS. |
| | { MR. VINCENT. |
| LISETTE (<i>Claude Remy's Grandchild, aged 21</i>) | MISS CLEVELAND. |
| MADAME GEANDEROSE (<i>a Widow, aged 21</i>) | MISS HERBERT. |
| MADAME FAUVEAU (<i>aged 45</i>) | { MRS. WOOLIDGE. |
| | { MRS. SELBY. |

SCENE—A Village in Burgundy.

Act 1.—Farm and Cornfields—FORGET!

Act 2.—Interior of the Farm—FORGIVE!

Costumes.

CLAUDE REMY.—Brown tunic coat, quite plain, full brown breeches, high dark gaiters, grey wig, broad hat, blue linen shirt.

DENIS RONCIAT.—Blue tunic coat, large yellow waistcoat, blue breeches, long linen gaiters, large white hat, black wig.

FAUVEAU.—Light linen tunic coat and waistcoat, black breeches and gaiters, grey wig, large hat.

SYLVAIN.—White tunic coat, flowered waistcoat, blue breeches, shoes and blue stockings.

REAPERS, PEASANTS, &C.—Tunic coats, broad hats, full breeches.

MADAME GRANDEROSE.—Blue silk full old-fashioned dress, white linen petticoat, small cap.

MADAME FAUVEAU.—Flowered cotton gown, apron, woman's high cap.

LISETTE.—A poor dress of dark drab, checked apron, cotton handkerchief, old straw hat.

FEMALE REAPERS.—Cotton dresses.

TIME—1 Hour 20 Minutes.

THE
R E A P E R S ;

OR,
FORGET AND FORGIVE!

ACT I.

SCENE.—*A Farm—a large barn, C.—R. of barn is Madame Granderose's house—Fauveau's house, L.—stables, pigeon houses, &c. in different wings, R. and L. of barn—a low wall, allowing a view of the country beyond—C. of stage, a well and a large washing trough, round which rustic implements, pitchers, &c., are grouped carelessly—table and chairs.*

FAUVEAU *discovered seated at table with a slate, and a large yellow purse, making up his accounts.* MADAME GRANDEROSE *coming from L. U. E.—going towards her house.*

FAUVEAU. (*rises, he limps slightly*) I'm glad to see you back again. It seems such a time since you've been away. I can't get on at all when you're not here.

MAD. G. (*throwing off her mantle*) What could I do ? I was forced to go to town, to sign some papers relative to my husband's will.

FAUVEAU. That will seem as if it never will be settled. Why, you've been a widow three years, and yet

MAD. G. YOU know, Fauveau, one must practise patience in a law suit; however, thank Heaven, I am free from mine at last! I have gained it.

FAUVEAU. What a rich woman you are, madame, with a farm like this. Why you must be worth thirty thousand francs at least!

MAD. G. (*seats herself*) About that, I think. How have you got on with the harvest ? Is it nearly all carted.

FAUVEAU. Faith! you've just arrived in time. In less than an hour, my boy Sylvain will come to see if you have returned to place the rosette on the last sheaf of corn—they've been watching anxiously enough for you—Denis Ronciat has been backwards and forwards all day after you, trotting like a horse in a mill.

MAD. G. Well, I'm sure! What business is it of his ?

FAUVEAU. Excuse me, madame, but folks do say you are going to be married to him. At your age, young, beautiful and rich, they won't let you remain a widow long.

MAD. G. I must first find a husband to my liking—*(rising)*—and then-----

FAUVEAU. Denis Ronciat is not suited for you. I may offend by saying so, but he is not the man you ought to marry.

MAD. G. And yet they say he's very well off—not bad-looking either—his lands are-----

FAUVEAU. His lands—I know them well—the most barren ground with us would be fertile lands to his, because it's badly managed—he hasn't lived there for four or five years, and nothing comes to any good without the master's eye. I wonder what's the reason?

MAD. G. He says it's from love for me he has settled here, poor wretch!

FAUVEAU. Bah! he has only known you six months—where was he before then ? anywhere but at home, and a man who can't be happy at home is no great catch. I warrant he has more debts than he has money to pay them. Now, the sort of husband you ought to have is a man like my son—he can read, write, and keep accounts like a lawyer's clerk, and he loves you to distraction. Why, he never plants a cabbage without thinking of you, and calling it Flory, and when the chance of your marrying Denis Konciat is mentioned, he turns all the colours of the rainbow at once. His mother will tell you the same.

MAD. G. Hush! hush! don't talk such nonsense, pray, Fauveau!

Enter MADAME FAUVEAU from L. U. E., carrying a large basket, covered with a cloth—goes to well, and puts her basket down, then shakes MADAME GRANDEROSE by both hands, heartily—FAUVEAU crosses to her.

FAUVEAU. Wife, hasn't our Sylvain altered for some time past, as if he were worried or ill ?

MAD. F. Yes, I'm afraid he's going to have a fever. I can't tell what's the matter with the lad—he never complains, denies being ill, and yet can't eat his dumplings.

FAUVEAU. He's in love !

MAD. F. I am afraid it is something of the sort—sighing and moping about.

MAD. G. Where is he now ?

MAD. F. With the cart, carrying the last load, waiting for the music, and the rosette for the sheaf.

MAD. G. I'll join them, and comfort this poor lovesick swain. Where are the reapers ?

MAD. F. In the field at the end of the orchard.

MAD. G. I'll find them!

Exit MADAME GRANDEROSE, L. U. E.—FAUVEAU seats himself thoughtfully.

MAD. F. *{touches his shoulder}* What did you mean by asking me all those questions before Madame ?

FAUVEAU. *(rising—his finger to his forehead)* Hold your tongue, wife, I've a great idea.

MAD. F. I am sorry for it. Your great ideas never do good to any one.

FAUVEAU. Silence ; you women don't understand business. What should you say if our son were to marry Madame ?

MAD. F. Don't be a fool! She's pretty, and goodhearted, but between ourselves, she has let people have a little to say about her.

FAUVEAU. Bah! stuff! let them say!

MAD. F. YOU know our boy's temper—the woman he loves must never have a breath against her, so don't you interfere with matters that you can't do any good in.

Enter SYLVAIN from L. U. E., working dress, and large straw hat, pitchfork in hand, which he places against one of the wings.

FAUVEAU. Why, you are soon back, lad—did you meet your mistress ?

SYLVAIN. NO, father, I came to ask you to draw the beer ready for the reapers—they are coming home. (MADAME FAUVEAU *wipes the heat from his face, and kisses him*)

FAUVEAU. Get yourself in readiness to present the nosegay to Madame-----

SYLVAIN. I'll leave that office for you—I'm not used to play the gallant! *(his mother takes from her pocket a housewife, threads a needle, and sews a button on his shirt)* She is a very good mistress to us, I don't dispute that for a moment; and has an open heart and a generous hand, but you must not ask more from me than I can give, and for the last fortnight. I have seen what you mean. Madame has plenty of admirers without my being added to the number.

FAUVEAU. What fault do you find with her, silly fellow ?

SYLVAIN. None—only I shouldn't like my wife to be out at fetes, dancing with every puppy who chose to sk her hand. But we are losing time. I came to tell you, father, that four or five of the harvest labourers wish to leave to-night, and they must be paid.

FAUVEAU. *(goes to table, and counts on the slate)* We owe fifteen days to Boussac—twenty days to Stephen Bigot and his brother.

MAD. F, *{who has been arranging the things in the yard,*

looking off) Here comes the old man and his daughter, to be paid also.

Enter REMY and LISETTE, carrying sickles, L. U. E.—SYLVAIN starts, and seems distressed—MADAME FAUVEAU seats herself by the well, and begins sorting the vegetables which she takes from basket— LISETTE has a small knapsack.

REMY. *(taking off his hat)* Pardon our haste, but we wish to return to-night, and we have nine miles to walk before we reach home.

SYLVAIN. *(anxiously)* You don't intend walking so far to-night? It is Claude Remy, father, an old soldier; he must be 80 years old, at least.

REMY. *(drawing himself up)* 82! I'm 82, but I can reap well yet; my arm does not lose its strength. I am an old soldier, and did my duty in the battle-field when young, as I now do in the corn-fields, though aged.

MAD. P. *(rises and goes to LISETTE)* YOU seem overcome with fatigue, my child; take some refreshment before you go.

LISETTE. Thank you, madame, but we do not need it.

MAD. P. Nonsense! I say you shall.

SYLVAIN. YOU must stay and share the fete with us—a good supper will strengthen your grandfather for his journey—and sleep in the farm to-night,

REMY. I thank you for your kindnesses, my good friends, but we are pressed for time, and the walk will not be much in the cool of the evening. But not to seem ungrateful, I'll drink a glass at the christening of the sheaf, and Lisette shall help to prepare the supper. I'll go and meet the cart. *Exit, L. U. E.*

LISETTE. What can I do to help you, madame ? *(puts down her sickle, &c.)*

MAD. P. Wash up those pitchers, and clear away here; then go into the house *(points to door L.)* fetch the tablecloths, and take them into madame's kitchen, it is much larger than ours, for the feast. *Exit, L. U. E.*

FAUVEAU. I'll go pay the reapers, *(takes up his purse)* Lad, you'll never be dressed in time—be off at once. *Exit, L. U. E.*

(LISETTE is drawing water at the well—SYLVAIN is going, when he sees with what difficulty she raises the bucket.)

SYLVAIN. Why don't you rest yourself, instead of working so hard? After a month's field labour, it's about time you did rest a little.

LISETTE. *(sorrowful, yet calm—speaking in a sweet but resolute voice)* Don't pay any attention to me—it will be noticed.

SYLVAIN. Indeed, I shall, *(draws up the well bucket, and empties it into a little tub at the side— LISETTE takes three plates*

which are by the side of the well, washes them in tub, and dries them) She won't notice me. *(to her)* How old are you ?

LISETTE. *(working on)* Twenty-one.

SYLVAIN. Is it far from here to Jeux les Bois where you live ?

LISETTE. Nore than nine miles, *(spreads the towel on back of chair—exit, door L. U. E.—returns immediately with a basket in which are mugs, table cloths, and glasses)*

SYLVAIN. *(watching her)* No use ! she won't enter into conversation with me. What misery she seems to have endured, in spite of the resigned look she wears, *(to her)* Do you live alone with your grandfather ?

LISETTE-. *(washing the tumblers)* Yes.

SYLVAIN. DO your neighbours assist you?

LISETTE. I never ask them.

SYLVAIN. If you would come and live near here, you would always be certain of work in our farm, and if you were ill my mother would help you ; she is very good.

LISETTE. Indeed, she is; but my grandfather is accustomed to our present home, and we need no help.

SYLVAIN. Then you wish to stay there?

LISETTE. *(going with her basket—sorrowfully)* We must do so. *Exit, L. U. E.*

SYLVAIN. Some one there is whom she loves. May she be happy, for she deserves to be so. *(falls into a reverie—watching the door)*

DENIS RONCIAT *enters, L. U. E., dressed for the fete.*

DENIS, *(loudly)* Good evening.

SYLVAIN. *(scarcely noticing him)* Good evening, Monsieur Denis.

DENIS. Has Madame Granderoze returned yet ?

SYLVAIN. I haven't seen her.

Takes up his pitchfork, and exits.

DENIS, *(seats himself—unfastens his leather gaiters, and throws them into a corner)* That fellow thinks to be my rival, does he ? Bah! a beautiful woman and a fine fortune are worth striving for, and I shall—nay, I *will* win her.

LISETTE *enters from floor R-, with more glasses, without seeing*

DENIS—*goes to well.*

I wonder who that is—a new servant. I must make friends with her; it's good policy to get the servants on one's side in love matters, *(aloud)* My pretty one ! *(LISETTE turns round—drops the towel and glass she is wiping—shudders, and remains motionless gazing at him—he draws back as if terrified)* Gracious heavens! For what purpose are you here ?

LISETTE. *(coldly)* What does it matter to you, Denis Ronciat?

DENIS. Matters—it matters—nothing—only I didn't expect to see you. Has your health been good since the time—since when—you know what I mean ? (*wipes his forehead*) How fearfully hot it is to-day!

LISETTE. If that is all you have to say, it was not worth the trouble of hindering me from my work, [*picks up the cloth and the broken glass*]

DENIS. HOW came you here ? Are you a servant in the farm ?

LISETTE. NO; I came as a reaper, and I leave to-night.

DENIS. Then you are the girl I heard spoken of in the fields, who was so clever with her sickle. If I thought that-----

LISETTE. YOU would not have come here to-day, eh?

DENIS. I did not mean that exactly. If you worked so hard, you must be in want, and it is my duty to—to-----

LISETTE. Well, sir, what is your duty ? Speak, man—before heaven and your conscience. What is your duty ?

DENIS. To assist you.

LISETTE. By what right dare you presume to say that, sir?

DENIS. DO you wish for nothing then ? Will you take nothing from me ?

LISETTE. Nothing! I despise—abhor you. Leave me !

DENIS. I gee, you came here purposely to be revenged on me.

LISETTE. Revenged on you? after five years of neglect and misery.

DENIS. Let's be friends! Tell me what I can do for—
for----- (*hesitating*)

LISETTE. (*with passion and grief*) For whom ? For him—your child—nothing! He is dead ! He died last year, and you had never seen him—he lived and died in want and misery—would that I had died with him. You never troubled about him, or sought to give him bread. Every year the curate wrote to ask you to redeem your promise—letters which you did not even notice. A year since, these letters were no longer sent to you—you ought to have understood why. He was dead, and I had lost all hope—nothing could replace my child!

DENIS. (*affected against his will*) Poor girl! you should have come to me, or sent your father.

LISETTE. (*proudly*) My father ? How dare you insult an old soldier. No—no—he never asked alms in his life—he would die sooner than accept charity, and you would have him solicit it from the man who deceived his granddaughter—a child of fifteen—a simple, foolish girl, betrayed and destroyed by your false promises and entreaties. Do you suppose, my

grandfather, knowing this, would beg of you. No—no—he would have killed you had I not prevented him !

DENIS. IS he here with you ?

LISETTE. Fear not, coward, he is too old to think of revenge.

DENIS. Listen to me. I know I have behaved badly, and you have the right to punish me by destroying my reputation, but don't bear malice, and all may be settled.

LISETTE. It never can be, for I no longer love you.

DENIS, (*laughs*) If I offered you three hundred francs, you'd alter your tone.

LISETTE. (*repulsing him by a gesture*) Wretch ! were you to offer me all you possess, I should think it an additional insult. Leave me! (*crosses*)

DENIS. Ha, ha, ha! I see—you wish me to marry you.

LISKETTE. Marry you? I'd rather perish a thousand times. When my child was living, for his sake, I would have done so—now, I'd sooner die than become the wife of a man I hate and despise. (*Music heard*)

DENIS. Don't let them hear us quarrelling !

Enter MUSICIANS followed by the REAPERS and VILLAGERS—REMY after them—LISETTE joins her grandfather—FAUVEAU with MADAME GRANDEROSE, SYLVAIN, and MADAME FAUVEAU—WOMEN, SERVANTS, and PEASANTRY—a large cart surmounted by an immense sheaf ornamented with flowers, rosettes, and ribbons, supported by REAPERS, drawn by two OXEN—the sheaf is taken from the cart and placed before the well—cart drives off—FAUVEAU places MADAME GRANDEROSE L. of sheaf, then takes his place with his wife and son L. of it—REMY with LISETTE—DENIS, R., between MADAME GRANDEROSE and the MUSICIANS—PEASANTS group around.

FAUVEAU. Sylvain, take the bouquet from the sheaf, and present it to Madame.

SYLVAIN. NO, father—it is the duty of the oldest of the reapers to do that—it is due to him as an' honor to his age. Remy, it is your office.

REMY. Well, as I am the oldest here, I suppose I may claim it ?

MAD. G. YOU shall have the sheaf for your reward, old man.

REMY. (*smiling*) Willyou give me a pair of arms to carry it nine miles, as well ? (*WOMEN place jugs and glasses on table*)

MAD. G. I understand—we'll contribute to its value, and you shall have your choice. Let every one do what they can, for if but a penny, it brings happiness to those who give with a good will. There are five francs for my share, and bless you, with it. (*places them at the foot of the sheaf*)

FAUVEAU. There's mine! (*puts a piece of money down*)

MAD. F. (*takes from her pocket a thimble, pair of scissors, pincushion, knife, and thread—places them, by the sheaf*) There! that's for Lisette.

REMY. Thank you, Madame, but she did not need that to make her love you. (*LISETTE embraces MADAME FAUVEAU*)

SVLVAIN. (*places his watch—REMY attempts to stop him*) You have no right to refuse anything—I know the old customs as well as you. (*shakes his hand—a little CHILD puts down, a large apple*)

REMY. (*kisses it*) I receive your blessing, my pretty one! (*the others contribute rapidly—MADAME GRANDEROSE goes up to DENIS,R.*)

MAD. G. Out of all your riches can you spare none for this poor man ?

DENIS, (*hurriedly*) Yes, yes I I forgot myself, (*takes out money and goes up to add it to the rest—REMY/ sees and stops him*)

REMY. Denis Ronciat here ? Villain! take back your gift—it would poison me to touch it—take it back I say, or I'll trample on it! (*no one but MADAME GRANDERBOSE hears his exclamation in the general movement*)

MAD. G. HOW have you offended the old man ?

DENIS. HOW can I tell? I never saw him before—he's in his second childhood—silly—never heed him.

FAUVEAU. Complete the ceremony, but have a glass of wine first, it will give you strength, and you need it after the harvest.

REMY. (*takes one from MADAME FAUVEAU, women serve the rest*) Now, friends! join with me in drinking to the Harvest Home! (*drinks.*)

ALL. Hurrah for the Harvest Home ! (*they drink.*)

ALL. Long live the Harvest Home!

REMY. May heaven bless the corn this year in the store house as it has in the field! Bread will be cheap, and the poor, who suffer so much, will reap the benefit. Again let's drink to the sheaf!

. OMNES. Long live the Harvest Home.

LISETTE. (*takes the glass from him*) Don't drink any more, dear grandfather, you are not used to it.

REMY. (*presenting to MADAME GRANDEROSE the bouquet on the sheaf*) May heaven reward the charitable! There are people who do wrong to the poor, may it punish them ! there are some who suffer greatly, it sees and watches over them! Corn, corn! if you could speak, you would testify to the sweat of our brow spent in raising you! (*meaningly to DENIS*) Yet there are bad hearts in the world who—yes, I say bad, black hearts. (*stammering and mechanically pushing away LISETTE,*

who tries to draw him away) Leave me, I will speak out: there are people who take from their fellow creatures more than their life—their good name, their honour! (*half falling*)

LISETTE. He is ill! help me to remove him! how fixed his eyes are.

REMY. (*supported by SYLVAIN and LISETTE*) I—I can no longer see—have you all left me? Is it night or is this death? (*touching the sheaf, which falls—he falls with his head on it*) Lisette, child, where are you?

LISETTE. Father, dear father, speak to me! your child! (*kneels*)

SYLVAIN. (*to a REAPER*) Run for assistance, 'tis a fit!

REMY. TOO late! too late! Heaven pardon me! I have had my share of suffering in this world! Lisette, my darling! (*presses SYLVAIN'S hand convulsively*) she is a good girl; whoever you may be, watch over and protect her, and heaven will bless you!

LISETTE. (*throwing herself on him*) Grandfather! grandfather! I will die with you!

REMY. (*raising himself a little*) No, no—bless—bless (*feels the sheaf*) the sheaf! Prosperity—to—the----- (*falls back*)

SYLVAIN. (*supporting LISETTE*) Your father gives you to my care! it shall be a sacred charge!

(*picture—slow music—drop descends and*)

END OF THE FIRST ACT.

ACT II.

SCENE.—*Fauveau's Souse—inferior of kitchen — large, well furnished, but old-fashioned, as a farm house. Door in flat; window L. of door, before which stands a small chest of drawers; large wood fire, L., irons before it; R. of door in flat in a staircase, leading to a gallery, running over door and window in flat, leading to the upper apartments; C. of stage, ironing blanket, &c, on table, linen, &c.*

LISETTE is ironing—REMY seated in the chimney by the fire, with a half idiotic look—MADAME FAUVEAU is spinning.

MAD. F. Well, you are very silly to leave us; your labour repays all the extra expense incurred by your grandfather's helplessness, since his lit at the harvest home—your work is worth that of three servants—stay until his health is re-established. I don't ask your reasons for wishing to go, though perhaps I guess them, and if I am right, I esteem you more than ever for them; but your grandfather is not in a fit state

to endure privation, and you have no certainty of being able to procure work to support him.

LISETTE. He is very weak, but does not seem to suffer pain; and as I know he loves his native village, I fancy he has a longing to return to it. I am sure of finding employment there in washing and needlework. What does it matter if I overwork myself; *{goes to him and kisses him}* I shall live as long as he does, and if heaven will but spare him, helpless and weak as he is, I shall find strength to work for him! You do not, cannot know what he has been to me. *(weeping)*

MAD. F. *(takes her hand)* It is for that very reason that you must remain with us; here he has all he can wish for, and you can always be near him.

LISETTE. I know that in our poor house he'll never be as comfortable as he is here!

MAD. F. Well then-----

LISETTE. I'll wait for a fortnight, as you wish it.

Goes to REMY and makes him rise from his seat—he does to mechanically, not seeming to care what is done with him—exits with LISETTE, door in flat—SYLVAIN comes from gallery as they go.

SYLVAIN. Will she stay with us, mother ?

MAD. F. I have done all I can to persuade her.

SYLVAIN. *(Joyfully)* She will remain then ?

MAD. F. Only a fortnight longer, *(he sighs deeply)* She is too good a girl to wish to bring discord into a family, *(places her distaff on drainers)*

SYLVAIN. Mother, I don't know how it is, but you seem to have taken it into your head that I'm in love with her.

MAD. F. Silly boy! you can't deceive a mother's eye! *{puts her arm through his}* I know all about it—you love her, and she knows it—this I'm sure of!

SYLVAIN. *(embracing her)* Good mother! have you told her then what I never dared reveal myself ?

MAD. F. Not I! I have told her nothing, nor do I intend. You mustn't talk to her, because you cannot marry her.

SYLVAIN. What's to prevent me? I am rich enough, and we are young and able to work. She is a fortune in herself, so good, so industrious.

MAD. F. Your father is of another opinion, and if he once suspects your love, he'll be the first to send her away. Since he knows that Madame Granderoise has a fancy for you, he is overjoyed at your prospects; and if they were to tell him you wished to marry Lisette, his rage would know no bounds.

SYLVAIN. Father is a little hasty; but I'm not afraid of him. He is easily got over by a little management. It is that Lisette

does not love me—that there's some one at home she loves more.

MAD. P. If so, it's all for the best. We don't know anything about her, having merely kept her from charity, without questioning. I have noticed she avoids answering any remarks that may tend to reveal her past life. Who knows but she may have bad connexions !

SYLVAIN. Bad connexions ? Who can be good and true if she is not so ? Compare her with other girls, is she like them ? does not she refuse all favours but those her work pays for ? Concealing her poverty with such noble pride ; sitting up half the night to mend her own and her father's poor clothes ; and, during the harvest, was the only woman amidst thirty men, yet prevented them, by her modest look of self-respect, from attempting the slightest freedom. Have I not seen her half dead, fainting with fatigue, yet never complaining—forcing respect from others by her own dignity ? No, no, that girl never made a false step, and those who cannot see that must be blind. I'll swear to it.

Enter MADAME GRANDEROSE, FAUVEAU, and DENIS RONCIAT,

Ah ! it's a long time since we saw you last, Denis !

DENIS. YOU are sorry, I believe, to see me now ?

SYLVAIN. NO—it gives me great pleasure-----

MAD. G. Why should he be sorry ? Are you going to run away with all the young girls of the country ?

DENIS. There you are—at me again. I've half a mind to return it.

MAD. G. Try and let us have a specimen of that wit you keep so firmly under lock and key in your muddy brain.

DENIS. I should have more wit than you suppose, if I were to let you into one or two secrets.

FAUVEAU. What are they ?

DENIS. Madame shall hear if she'll give me a few minutes' conversation.

MAD. G. *(laughs)* Willingly. It will be a change to hear sense from you.

SYLVAIN. *{at foot of the staircase with MADAME FAUVEAU}* Father, I have also something to tell you. *(FAUVEAU exits with them up staircase)*

MAD. G. *{seating herself}* Now for this grand explanation.

DENIS. That's just what I want to come to, my charmer ! For three months I've been running after you, and I would rather know my fate at once than pass for a fool, as I shall do, if you intend jilting me and marrying Sylvain.

MAD. G. I never promised you my hand. If you choose to

court me, that was *your* business : you took your chance with the others, goose!

DENIS. I never had a fair chance. You were prejudiced against me from the first. I know you were—I know what about.

MAD. G. YOU do ? then confession is half atonement; so, say at once what it was.

DENIS, (*aside*) The devil! Suppose it shouldn't be no ?

MAD. G. Well—go on.

DENIS, (*aside*) I'm caught in my own trap, (*aloud*) If you believe all you hear-----

MAD. G. I have heard nothing, for he whom I would question would not be able to answer me ; but I think you would be troubled to explain away what the old man uttered at the harvest home. You said you did not know them—that's very odd, sir; your village is so small that you must know every one in it. You have not been here since, doubtless for fear you would meet him again. As for me, I don't choose to swear to "love, honour, and obey" the man to whom I have heard said, " You take more than life, you take our honour." This is the reason I begged you to cease your visits at my farm. Now do you understand me, sir ?

DENIS, (*rising*) If I have offended you, pardon me ; but as for this old man and his daughter-----

MAD. G. Stop, Denis, you are telling me more than I knew, and I guess more still. You are the cause of that young girl's poverty and distress—you deceived her, and that was why the old man spurned your money at the harvest home. I saw it, though no one else did, and saw you tremble.

DENIS. Your eyes are sharp enough, but still they don't happen to see everything.

MAD. G. Pray what don't they see, sir ?

DENIS. Why, that your precious Sylvain is in love with this girl, and that it is her, and not you, whom he intends to marry—ha, ha, ha!

MAD. G. YOU are uttering falsehoods, Denis ! Love her ? Impossible !

DENIS. Ask any one you like, except the parents, whose interest it is to keep you in the dark, and they'll tell you he's passionately fond of her.

MAD. G. Fond of her !—a peasant!

DENIS. Why shouldn't he be ? She's not ugly.

MAD. G. NO, no, she's young and pretty. Well, if she pleases him, why shouldn't he marry her? he's an honest man, and not likely to take advantage of the poor girl.

DENIS. Since you care so little about it, forgive my having vexed you, and become my wife.

MAD. G. No, I shall never marry; let's be friends if you will, but I forbid you to think of me as anything else.

DENIS. And this is because I committed an error when young I As if it hurt you, whom I had never then seen. Come, come, you are playing the prude; surely, if I don't complain of your conduct, or of the lovers you have had, you might have the same indulgence; you are no more perfect than I am.

MAD. G. I insist on your going—you only disgust me. Leave me!

DENIS, (*bowing*) I obey, madame, and will try to become reconciled to my fate, (*aside, as he is going*) You shall pay bitterly for this, Lisette! *Exit door.*

MAD. G. Sylvain cannot love her! his father could not deceive me so much as to say he cares for me, when he is only thinking of her!

FAUVEAU comes down staircase.

I must find out the real state of things without delay. (*FAUVEAU comes down stage, looking concerned and ill at ease*) Why are you looking so wretched? what is the matter with you, man?

FAUVEAU. (*sighs*) Everything's the matter, madame.

MAD. G. It's no use trying to deceive me any longer; you know Sylvain does not love me, and that he wishes to marry your new servant.

FAUVEAU. I don't believe it—he'll soon get over it; he shan't have my consent—I'd die first, and sell my land.

MAD. G. He is of age, and you can't prevent him following his own inclinations; besides, remember you are not quite master in your own house, and are always forced to yield in the end.

FAUVEAU. I won't give up this time; you only support me in what I say, and you shall see I'm master.

MAD. Gr. (*choking with vexation*) I support you in your endeavours to make your son marry me? Are you mad?—Do you think I want your boy? I have lovers willing enough to be my husband, without running after one who does not care for me. You are a fool—you have told him I was in love with him, and made me a laughing-stock to the whole village; but I'll have my revenge! Let him marry that girl—I insist on your giving your consent, I insist on the marriage taking place at once.

FAUVEAU. DO you know anything about her, that might make Sylvain dislike her? If so, say it.

MAD. G. I will not break my word; I say nothing, but let him marry her—let him marry her! that's all! *Exit in a rage, R.*

FAUVEAU. I'm bewildered with this love making! This girl must go at once—no, that'll never do, it would only make

matters worse. I'll first find out what Denis Ronciat told madame about her, that'll be best. (SYLVAIN *descends the staircase—he looks pale and wretched*) Well, sir, do you still intend to offend me by refusing to do as I wish ?

SYLVAIN. I shall do what an honest man ought to do. I will not marry for money—I won't deceive a woman who is good to us and every one. She deserves a man who would love her honestly, truly; now if I were to tell her I did so, it would be a falsehood, and you would not wish your son to be called a liar.

FAUVEAU. I'll put a stop to your marriage with this beggar.

SYLVAIN. Why do you speak of her thus ? have I said I intended to marry her ?

FAUVEAU. Your mother said so before your face, and you didn't deny it.

SYLVAIN. I said that if she was as good and virtuous as she seemed, her poverty was an additional merit—then you flew into a violent passion.

FAUVEAU. And now I am more composed, you tell me you are still obstinate on this point.

SYLVAIN. (*sadly*) No, I have reflected, and am convinced it would not be a suitable match for me. If I have failed in my duty to you, father, forgive me.

FAUVEAU. (*going to him, and taking his hand*) No, no, my boy, I was hasty; don't think any more about it. (*aside*) Come, affairs are mending; it'll be all right after all. I'll run and tell madame this, and stop her showing her vexation to anybody.

Exit hastily R.

SYLVAIN. (*seals himself, weeping*) I will never marry. Since Lisette is guilty, no woman can be pure. The mistress of Denis Ronciat!—of a fool, who has only money, insolence, and self-esteem to back him ! She to love him,—to give her honour to a man like that ! She loves him still, and came here to assist in the harvest, in the hope, he says, of making him marry her, whilst I, idiot as I am, thought she loved me, and only kept it concealed, because her honest pride would not let her avow it. (*rising*) But if all this should be false ! It is not the first time Denis Ronciat has boasted of receiving favours from women who have never even known his name; it is usual with men of his character to do so; they exact the promise not to repeat what they say, and those they slander have no power, no chance of defence. I'll make Lisette tell the truth, if it be so, I must forget her !

Enter LISETTE, R., with the knapsack she had in Act I; she opens the press, takes some clothes from it, which she places, on a chair, he watches her for a time, then speaks.

What are you doing there ?

LISETTE. Putting my clothes together to go away, sir!

SYLVAIN. I thought that you were to remain a fortnight longer ?

LISETTE. (*kneeling, and packing as she speaks*) I had intended doing so, as I thought my services were required for that time; but I have just left Madame Granderose, who spoke harshly to me, giving me to understand that I and my grandfather were useless,—a burden on the estate. I am now going to fetch him, and bid you farewell, thanking you for the great kindness you have shewn us.

SYLVAIN. YOU are no burden to us.

LISETTE. Having worked hardly, I did not imagine that my father's illness would prove an objection; but I am wrong in complaining of those who have been so good to us. As long as I live, I shall ever remember them ; and you, sir, more than all, for you saved my father's life, (*rises*)

SYLVAIN. (*moved—aside*) This is the first time she ever spoke in such a tone. I cannot bear to see her unhappy, (*aloud*) You leave? You have nothing more to say? Do you not know what has offended Madame ? Who can have talked against you ?

LISETTE. I don't wish to know. If any one has uttered falsehoods against me, heaven forgive them.

SYLVAIN. You ought to wish to carry with you the esteem and respect of everybody.

LISETTE. That's my business, sir!

SYLVAIN. And the business of the man who loves you?

LISETTE. I do not wish to be loved.

SYLVAIN. And yet you desire to be married ?

LISETTE. YOU are very much deceived.

SYLVAIN. If Denis Ronciat were to offer to marry you, you would perhaps be fulfilling your duty, and gratifying your inclination by accepting him.

LISETTE. I should be doing neither the one nor the other-----

SYLVAIN. That's not what he says-----

LISETTE. Does he dare----- (*calming herself*) What right has he to mention my name?

SYLVAIN. Come, Lisette, trust in me, I will not abuse your confidence. Tell me since when you became acquainted with that man, and in what manner? I know you will speak the truth, (*she goes a step towards door, he stands before her*) Do not leave me so, it's not kind of you—Lisette, Lisette, you shall tell me all!

LISETTE. I am going, that is all I have to tell you. I shall not attempt to defend myself against your accusations ; whilst I am under your roof I owe you respect, and look upon you as my master—until now you have been humane and kind, let me leave in the belief that you still are so!

SYLVAIN. (*passionately—preventing her exit*) Since I am your master, and you acknowledge it, I have a right to question you so as to be able to defend and justify you if you are wrongfully accused!

LISETTE. If I were going to stay here you would have that right, and it would be my duty to answer, but I will not do so now. [*opens the door sorrowfully, looks at him, and exits*]

SYLVAIN. (*falls on a seat near the door*) How proud and cold she is, yet so patient. If after all she is slandered, Denis is a scoundrel, I a fool! (*looks off*) Gracious heavens! there is the cart—she is going—going to leave us. What will become of me—my hesirt is breaking!

Enter M A D A M E GRANDEROSE, R.

It is through you Lisette leaves us! You insulted her, what cause had you for doing so ?

MAD. G. Nonsense ! I don't trouble myself about her !

SYLVAIN. In that case tell her that you don't object to her grandfather remaining here; she thinks you do so and-----

MAD. G. (*angrily*) She causes me to be thought heartless and miserly, just because I happened to ask her how long she was going to stay here—I don't remember what I said to her, but those girls are always so independent, one can't speak to them without hurting their tender delicate susceptible feelings.

Enter LISETTE and REMY, leaning on her, walking very feebly, but showing more intelligence and knowledge of what is passing than at the commencement of the Act—FAUVEAU and MADAME FAUVEAU enter behind them.

MAD. F. NO, no, REMY, you are not sent sway, you leave good friends with us all, and you must drink a glass of wine to our next meeting.

SYLVAIN. (*to MADAME GRANDEROSE aloud*) Speak to them—ask them to stay ?

MAD. G. (R.) I shall not interfere—ask them yourself!

FAUVEAU. (L.) I say they must go at once—it is my will!

REMY. (*speaking with an effort*) They *must* go ?

SYLVAIN. (L. c.) Father, you are an upright man, and ought not to believe lightly in reports, if they are false you will regret to the end of your life having behaved harshly to these poor people.

MAD. G. (*spitefully*) Well, Fauveau, why don't you tell them to stay? What does it signify to me? You see very well that your son is taken up with this girl, that he will marry her in the end—with all my heart let it be so!

FAUVEAU. I don't understand, madame. why you should tell me before that girl, that my son intends marrying her, when

he, himself, told me not half an hour since what he thought of her.

REMY. (*as if to himself*) That girl! What does he mean? Why, that girl?

SYLVAIN. I told you neither harm nor good of her.

FAUVEAU. Right, my son, you must not cause any one to blush, but I may tell madame that you are acquainted with the truth.

SYLVAIN. I know nothing wrong of Lisette—I believe no reports.

FAUVEAU. I thought Denis Ronciat had told you, as he did me, that-----

REMY. (*to himself—rousing a little*). Denis Ronciat!

SYLVAIN. Denis Ronciat is no authority for me!

FAUVEAU. But the register of the civil law is, and if you choose to consult that of her village, (*points to LISETTE*) you will see entered in it, the name of a child of which that girl is the mother, and the father is unknown.

SYLVAIN. Father—father! are you sure of this?

FAUVEAU. Ask her, and if she denies it----- (*LISETTE advances to reply, but REMY, who during this scene, has become more and more agitated, seems to recover his reason entirely, and stops her from speaking*)

REMY. (C.) Silence, my child, say nothing, I will answer for you. (*his voice gradually gains strength*) I believed myself dead to the things of this world, but you have awakened me, and I will live, live if only to tell you that you are wretches, more miserable than I am. You accuse my child, she who is far better than you, who sought no favours, asked no charity, worked like a galley slave for my support, who was as good a mother as she has been a child, my Lisette, my poor, wronged girl! (*she throws herself sobbing into his arms*) It is true she was deceived—true that at the age of fifteen she trusted in the faith and honor of a man without a heart—a villain! She loved him, and it is only those who do not know how to love who are mistrustful. True, a child, abandoned by its father was born in our poor home. (*SYLVAIN falls overpowered in chair*) A little creature, so beautiful, gentle, and loving, it seemed an angel sent for our consolation on earth. We loved it too well to feel ashamed of it. It was sickly—it could not live, nourished as it was with tears, and yet you reproach us with this—hunt my child from your home as you would a thief, yet you allow the man to come here, who after having sworn to marry her, deserted, forgot, trampled on her love for him—and left her in her misery and sorrow. Who dares rake up the injuries he has inflicted by accusing her of a fault he caused her to commit. Shame upon you! You have all seen how she

works and suffers, have you ever heard a murmur or complaint from her lips? and yet you dare say she wishes to marry your son! Is he worthy of her? Has his virtue been tested by proofs like hers? Has he been overwhelmed with misery and grief as we have? No, no! you are rich and we are poor, yet, in the eyes of heaven, we are more than your equals! (*pulling LISEKTE to door*) Come, Lisette, let us go—leave those unjust creatures to their pride; I have strength enough remaining to reach our humble cabin, and die in peace!

MAD. P. and MAD. G. NO, no, you must not leave us thus! (*rushes to him*) Remy, listen-----

REMY. (*threatening*) Back! back! I will have naught to say to you! I cast ye off, spurn you as I did the enemies of France in my young days! Ah! you thought the old man had no power left to defend his child! do not make him put it to the proof! beware! stand back. I say! (*music*) You village curs, I despise you!

Exits with CLAUDINE, C, wildly threatening those who would prevent them—all follow, except FAUVEAU, who seats himself at table moodily—SYLVAIN goes as if maddened, and not knowing what he does.

FAUVEAU. That old man's words move me strangely; after all he has been scurvily treated. If the poor girl had been child of mine, I should have slain the villain, Denis, on the spot. Her manners are so gentle and winning, everybody must like her—they can't help it. My boy shan't, though; she's no match for him. I'll have him keep his head up in the world, and if he won't have our landlady, he shall marry his equal, at any rate, or I discard—disown him, (*throws himself into a chair*)

Enter MADAME FAUVEAU, sorrowfully, from door in flat.

MAD. F. Husband, are you ready for supper?

FAUVEAU. I am not hungry.

MAD. F. Drink a glass of wine then, it will give you an appetite.

FAUVEAU. I'm not thirsty, either.

MAD. F. Are you ill?

FAUVEAU. I'm not well.

MAD. F. Vexed?

FAUVEAU. NO! I'm pleased they are gone!

MAD. F. Pleased?

FAUVEAU. What on earth do you stand there chattering for! You say that our boy is right in loving Lisette—you're a fool! I'd rather cut my arms off than consent to such a marriage!

MAD. F. YOU prefer losing your son, then? (*sits herself*)

FAUVEAU. What do you mean ?

MAD. F. YOU didn't see what Syylvain did when the waggon that was taking Lisette and her father away left the door ? He threw himself, as if fainting, just under the cart wheel—a moment more, and it would have passed over his head—he would have been killed!

FAUVEAU. YOU think then that he threw himself there for the purpose ?

MAD. F. I don't think—I'm certain. He had all his thoughts, all his reason ; he even watched to see he was not noticed, and when he thought I did not see him, when he had Once more called Lisette, who did not even turn her head towards him, he threw himself under the waggon to be crushed to pieces! Ask Thomas, who in raising him, said, " What do you mean by this ?" Ask Madame herself, who told him he wished to kill me by doing so, he answered, "his foot slipped," and smiled to re-assure me. Oh, what a smile! Husband! Husband! if you had seen it, you would not easily have forgotten it! He will die! he will die! (*sobs*)

FAUVEAU. (*quite vanquished*) If you think that we must—we must-----

MAD. F. (*rising*) What is it we must? They will never, return—they were too much insulted and reproached with what was their misfortune, not their fault!

FAUVEAU. I was too severe, perhaps, but I repent it—they would listen to no entreaties, no prayers ! Let them be for a while, they'll come round! Where's the boy ? (*rises*)

MAD. F. In the barn, stretched upon a heap of straw; he threw himself down like a man who has more sorrow than he can bear.

FAUVEAU. Serve him right! let him have his cry out—it'll do him good.

MAD. F. I tell you he'll never survive her loss, and you will be the cause of his death !

FAUVEAU. Wife, wife! you are mad! one would think I had been a bad father and had killed my son !

MAD. F. NO, I don't mean that; but you are ambitious—you have insulted misfortune, and heaven is now punishing us!

MAD. G. (*heard without*) Come, come, good people, I insist Upon it, and I am mistress here.

Enter MADAME GRANDEROSE, C.

MAD. F. (*running to her*) You have brought them back !

MAD. G. (*out of breath*) Not without some trouble : I ran after the cart, ordered Thomas to return in spite of them—I'd have had the carriage upset rather than let them go. We were wrong, very wrong! you more so than I, Fauveau. Was

it their fault that you deceived me ? you know well what I mean; but I forgive you on condition that you welcome them back heartily.

MAD. P. YOU went yourself after them—you consent to—*(throws her arms round MADAME GUANDEROSE'S neck)* Oh! you are a kind mistress, with a heart always in the right place! *(aside to her)* Complete the good work you have began.

MAD. Gr. I understand you! *{goes up}*

FAUVEAU. Where are you going ?

REMY and LISETTE appear at the door.

MAD. G. That's our secret. Remy, Lisette, sit down and rest yourselves. Remember, you are at home, understand that. My steward will tell you so bye-and-bye.

Exit with MADAME FAUVEAU, C.

FAUVEAU. *(uncomfortable, is following them, when he finds himself face to face with REMY and LISETTE, who stand aside to let him pass—REMY watches him coldly—LISETTE seems not to notice what is passing around her)* I am glad you've returned, old fellow. I had no quarrel with you, you understand that—it was because our mistress—and one's temper—you know I Often say things I don't mean—sit down. I must go and see where they are.

Exit, c.

REMY comes down with LISETTE, who remains listless and mournful.

LISETTE. Grandfather, why did you bring me back here ?

REMY. I thought you wished it, and what could I do? Madame was so good, and cried so bitterly, how could I refuse her! besides you will be happy in forgiving and in seeing once more Madame Fauveau, who is so fond of you.

LISETTE. I forgive every one; but I didn't wish to return to here, only you wouldn't listen to me.

REMY. Don't be angry, my child; what would you have me do ? I am tired, very tired, darling! *(sits L.)*

LISETTE. *(puts his hat and stick on table, knee's before him)* Dear father, you must be so. I shall be the cause of your death !

REMY. Why do you say so ? Have I ever complained!—have I ever reproached you with anything?

LISETTE. NO—no —you have been my protector! father! friend!

REMY. NO, Lisette, I am but a poor man, on whom misfortune has fallen heavily. I have had my share of sorrow in this world, but heaven sent me a recompence for all, in giving me a child like you.

LISETTE. One who has dishonoured your name!

REMY. Hush! hush! you have no right to accuse and to

curse the child I love! *(rising with her)* The shepherd carries the lost sheep, and shall not a father be equally merciful to his child. You have repented, suffered, and wept enough to expiate your error, my poor darling. We were too trusting, not believing the human heart could be so vile, but our punishment is bitter. You have been too long reproaching yourself; I insist on your forgetting the past,—I insist upon it! *(undoes the strings of her cape, and seats her on a chair, R.)*

LISETTE. Father, I have only you to love in this world!

Enter MADAME FAUVEAU, C, and MADAME GRANDEROSE, bringing SYLVAIN in, as if against his will.

MAD. Gr. It's no use ! I will be obeyed to-day, by everybody *(he is brought face to face with LISETTE, shudders, and tries to release himself from them)*. Tell father Remy that you are glad to see him back, then I shall take him with me, as I have a grand secret to tell him alone! *(takes REMY'S arm.)*

MAD. F. *(takes his other arm)* Remy, come with us!

REMY. *(takes his hat and stick, hesitating)* Secrets ? what do you mean ?

MAD. G. You'll know all in good time—come along. Are you afraid of a woman ? Why, where is your gallantry ?

(LISETTE is following, MADAME FAUVEAU stops her, laughing)

MAD. F. Don't be inquisitive, miss, stop where you are !

(SYLVAIN is following his mother, MADAME GRANDEROSE interferes)

MAD. G. DO have a little patience, sir, stay and talk to Lisette; I am going to confess my faults to Remy, and don't want you as a witness, *(pushes him towards LISETTE—they exeunt, c, leaving them alone)*

SYLVAIN. *(making an effort to speak)* I am glad to see you back again, Lisette, for as they were wrong in offending you, it is but just they should try to console you, though it's no business of mine.

LISETTE. I know it, and had no wish to return, but my father yielded to persuasions. We are not going to stay though.

SYLVAIN. I shall not prevent your going or remaining. You are your own mistress—do as you like, I have no wish to call you to account for your conduct.

LISETTE. Who ever asked you to do so, sir ? By what right dare you allude to me or my conduct ? Are you my master, father, or friend? My grandfather and I were your hired servants, we gave you our strength and time—you repaid us with money—there all obligations ceased—yet you now think proper to insult me by alluding to that which must ever bring

the blush of shame on the brow of a true woman. Man—man! Is this the way to waken repentance, or to restore the peace of the injured and oppressed ?

SYLVAIN. Have I ever said anything to you that all the world might not have heard ?

LISETTE. An honest, good man would never refer to my position, and as you seem to be neither, I forbid you ever speaking another word to me.

SYLVAIN. *[walking up and down with long strides]* I did not mean to insult—I pity you.

LISETTE. The misfortune that asks not for pity has at least the right to claim respect.

SYLVAIN. *[hiding his grief by seeming in a passion]* Misfortune that asks not for pity, generally resembles hidden shame. Why not have told me all ?

LISETTE. Told you? Why? To be sneered at by my fellow labourers, shunned by my superiors—those worldly-prudent people who so closely wrap themselves in the cloak of sanctity and virtue that no appeal can ever reach their hearts or feelings. No, no ! I have been taught a bitter lesson—to be poor and friendless, no matter from what cause, is to be despised—the poor must work or starve. Had my misery been made known, who would have employed or trusted me ?

DENIS RONCIAT. *[without, c.]* Halloo there!

SYLVAIN. *(half suffocating)* Well then, keep your secrets for Denis Ronciat, whose voice I hear.

LISETTE. *(weeping—aside)* This is more than I can bear. *[falls on chair half fainting—SYLVAIN seats himself on the other side affecting indifference to all that is passing]*

Enter MADAME GRANDEROSE, MADAME FAUVEAU, DENIS RONCIAT, REMY, *and* FAUVEAU, C.

MAD. Gr. *(enters first)* If you wish an explanation, it must be here, before everybody.

DENIS, *(following)* With all my heart! I'm not afraid.

FAUVEAU. *(comes in with REMY)* Be calm—don't get too excited, *(seats himself corner of table L.—MADAME F. goes to SYLVAIN and watches him uneasily—REMY goes behind LISETTE'S chair as if to protect her—DENIS centre of stage)*

DENIS. You're astonished to see me again, eh?

MAD. Gr. Yes, for I ordered you not to return. You mean some evil, but this time it shan't be worked in secret, and those you accuse shall defend themselves.

DENIS. Let me speak to the old man. Call all the village in to hear me if you like, you've my free consent.

FAUVEAU. There shall be no quarrelling—we've had enough of that for one day!

REMY. (*very calm*) I will answer for that—no quarrelling!

DENIS. (*getting bolder*) All right, old gentleman ; after what I am going to say to you we shall be capital friends, (*claps him on the shoulder*) Are you better ?

REMY. (*satirically*) I am much better!

FAUVEAU. He'll knock him down ! Remy-----

REMY. Don't interrupt the gentleman in what he is about to say.

DENIS. This is it, then. You wish to make me out for a villain—you make every to-do about your daughter, and have raised the whole village against me. In coming here the men pelted me with stones, the women shook their fists, and the children hooted at me! I can't—I won't bear this! Tell me what sum of money will satisfy you for the injury I've done you—name it, and you shall have it.

REMY. Money ! you offer me money ! for what is it offered ?

DENIS. What, don't you understand?

REMY. (*very calm*) No; you must pardon me, but I am just recovering from illness, and am forgetful; I cannot take your money without knowing how I have earned it.

DENIS. Earned? Stuff!—I don't mean that. You thought I sought Lisette's hand in marriage.

REMY. Did you ask for it, then ? upon your word of honour ? I don't remember-----

DENIS. Come, come, you remember all, and I am not attempting to deny it. You know I gave you my word, and I didn't intend to deceive—I was young, in love, and full of confidence in myself—Lisette was a child, and knew not the danger she was in; there is not much harm when marriage repairs the fault.

REMY. (*reproachfully*) But there is much harm when the man refuses to marry—to keep his promise, for it proves he has good reasons for it. Doubtless, honest man, you found my girl was unworthy of you! (*LISETTE rises and takes her father's hand, who makes her sit down again without taking his eyes from DENIS*)

DENIS. I see you are forcing me to a confession. Well, then, the crime was all mine; Lisette was a good girl, devoted to me, and I only gave her up lest I should become poor by marrying one who possessed no dowry.

REMY. True, true, she had no money ! Her rich aunt thought proper to marry in her old age, just when you were to have wedded her; and then you suddenly changed your mind, and refused her hand, eh ?

DENIS. Well, many others would have done the same. I gave up love for fortune, perhaps it was wrong, and I've missed more than one good marriage through it; that's why I came

here for a rich wife, intending to make a settlement on you when I had accomplished my object, but instead of assisting, you have prevented me from doing so. Let's have done with it—tell me what money you want, and when it is known that I have repaired my fault, I shall not be rejected elsewhere.R

EMY. (*advances a step*) Good friends—you who assisted and knew me last harvest—tell me if, whilst I was ill and insensible, I committed any crime or did anything base enough to authorize this man in offering me money in exchange for my honour?

FAUVEAU. NO, no !

MAD. G. Only a coward would dare insult thus !

MAD. F. Don't excite him! (*SYLVAIN rises brusquely, appears to awake from a reverie, and keeps his eyes fixed on LISETTE*)

' REMY. Don't fear, I am as calm now as I shall be on my death-bed. You have perhaps wondered why I, an old soldier of the Empire, had not crushed you like dust beneath my feet. I'll tell you why—I was blind and unjust towards my child; I did her the wrong to fancy she still loved you, base as you were; I ask pardon of her to-day, (*embraces her*) But I imagined, notwithstanding her denials, that the tears shed in secret were caused by fond remembrance of you. A hundred times have I taken my hatchet to slay you like a dog, and as often thrown it away when I looked upon her sorrowful face—I would not revenge her injuries, lest I should break her heart. To-day I discovered the truth; this is why you see me so calm, because I am free to punish you, and I will do so, cowardly villain !

FAUVEAU. Forbear!

DENIS, (*goes up a little*) Let him alone. I shan't defend myself against a man of his age !

REMY. YOU are safe, serpent; the only punishment I inflict is my scorn—my pity! Go, wretched man—go, with your ambition and your indolence, your money, and the shame and disgrace of having offered it to an honest man.

DENIS, (*crushed by the indignant looks he meets from all*) You think to send me away so, penitent and mortified, do you ? but you are deceived. I'll show you that I am better than you think. Lisette, say that you love me still, and for me you have refused other offers—(*SYLVAIN starts*)—and may I die if I don't marry you at once! (*silence*) Are you listening to me ? I offer you my hand !

REMY. (*to LISETTE, who has remained as if petrified through the scene*) My child, do you hear ? It is for you to answer.

LISETTE. (*rising*) To marry a man, one must swear before heaven to love and respect him; and when only contempt is felt, to do so would be a lie. I refuse!

DENIS, (*astonished*) Refuse me! Are you serious ?

LISETTE. I refuse!

REMY. YOU have offered reparation : it is not accepted. Now I have the right of exacting one. I insist upon your leaving this place this instant, And for ever.

DENIS. (*putting on his hat*) I meant to do that for a long time. I'll go to my uncle Raton's— thirty leagues distance— there I shall be sure to make a good marriage, if you don't come to the harvest. Promise to let me be there in peace.

REMY. I have no conditions to make with you. I forbid you ever again setting your foot in this village, or anywhere that my child might meet you. (*shakes him*) Swear this!

DENIS. I do.

REMY. (*signing him to go*) May heaven forgive you as we do!

DENIS. (*hesitates to salute LISETTE, who does not look at him—he dares not—puts his hat on with bravado*) Now for one more trial of my skill in matrimony. *Exits door in flat,*

(MADAME FAUVEAU, *uneasy at SYLVAIN'S silence, goes near him—MADAME GRANDEROSE goes to LISETTE—FAUVEAU brings REMY down*)

FAUVEAU. Remy, you are an honorable man ! I was very wrong this morning in behaving as I did; shake hands in token of forgiveness.

REMY. (*shakes hands heartily*) With all my heart. My pride has all gone to-day. I thank heaven for having enabled me to recover my strength and reason at a time when my child had so much need of it. Providence is just and merciful in all its actions and wishes justice to be done on earth.

SYLVAIN. (*kneels before him respectfully*) You are right; and my pride, my bad spirit shall humiliate itself before you. I ask the hand of your daughter ! (REMY *signs that he must appeal to LISETTE, he rises and goes to her*) Lisette, forgive me, and accept me for your protector! I loved you so dearly; and heaven is my witness, that when I learnt the truth it was jealousy drove me nearly mad, and made me speak as I did. I knew not what I was saying; trust your happiness to my keeping, I will defend your name with a heart equal to your father's! Confide in me.

LISETTE. (*turning to him*) It cannot be ! Ask me my life, it is all I can give you to prove my gratitude !

MAD. G. Lisette, it is I who sinned most against you. Must I beg of you ?

LISETTE. I cannot grant what you wish.

FAUVEAU. In mercy to yourself and my poor boy, trust to his word and to mine.

SYLVAIN. (*throws himself in his arms*) Thanks, father, thanks.

LISETTE. I respect and love, but cannot obey you.

SYLVAIN. She never, never loved me!

REMY. (*takes her hand*) Will you refuse me ? I command you to obey me, and marry the man who loves you!

LISETTE. Father, I consent. Sylvain I (*her head falls on REMY'S breast*)

SYLVAIN. She is fainting ! it is dislike for me.

REMY. NO, no, it is love; 'tis but the violence with which she has striven to conceal her affection that overpowers her ! I know it; when we left this house, she wept bitterly, murmuring your name. Heaven has permitted me to live to see her happy once again, (*bell heard*) Kneel, my children ! (*all do to—he remains standing*) It is the hour of rest! May the repose of heaven sink deep into our hearts after this day of trial, in which each of us has fulfilled their duty. To-morrow that bell will again sound to awaken us to work with happy faces and easy minds; (*raises LISETTE and SYLVAIN—all rise*) for work is not the punishment of man—it is his strength and reward. Let our trials teach us, my children, to practise life's great lesson—"Forget and Forgive" our enemies !

(*Picture—slow music*)

MADAME F. SYLVAIN. REMY, LISETTE. FAUVEAU. MADAME G.
R. L.

Curtain.