

CYRANO DE BERGERAC: A Play in Five Acts

By Edmond Rostand

Translated from the French by Gladys Thomas and Mary F. Guillemand

Act III.

Roxane's Kiss.

A small square in the old Marais. Old houses. A perspective of little streets. On the right Roxane's house and the wall of her garden overhung with thick foliage. Window and balcony over the door. A bench in front.

From the bench and the stones jutting out of the wall it is easy to climb to the balcony. In front of an old house in the same style of brick and stone. The knocker of this door is bandaged with linen like a sore thumb.

At the rising of the curtain the duenna is seated on the bench.

The window on Roxane's balcony is wide open.

Ragueneau is standing near the door in a sort of livery. He has just finished relating something to the duenna, and is wiping his eyes.

Scene 3.I.

Ragueneau, the duenna. Then Roxane, Cyrano, and two pages.

RAGUENEAU:

--And then, off she went, with a musketeer! Deserted and ruined too, I would make an end of all, and so hanged myself. My last breath was drawn:-- then in comes Monsieur de Bergerac! He cuts me down, and begs his cousin to take me for her steward.

THE DUENNA:

Well, but how came it about that you were thus ruined?

RAGUENEAU:

Oh! Lise loved the warriors, and I loved the poets! What cakes there were that Apollo chanced to leave were quickly snapped up by Mars. Thus ruin was not long a-coming.

THE DUENNA (rising, and calling up to the open window):

Roxane, are you ready? They wait for us!

ROXANE'S VOICE (from the window):

I will but put me on a cloak!

THE DUENNA (to Ragueneau, showing him the door opposite):

They wait us there opposite, at Clomire's house. She receives them all there to-day--the precieuses, the poets; they read a discourse on the Tender Passion.

RAGUENEAU:

The Tender Passion?

THE DUENNA (in a mincing voice):

Ay, indeed!

(Calling up to the window):

Roxane, an you come not down quickly, we shall miss the discourse on the Tender Passion!

ROXANE'S VOICE:

I come! I come!

(A sound of stringed instruments approaching.)

CYRANO'S VOICE (behind the scenes, singing):

La, la, la, la!

THE DUENNA (surprised):

They serenade us?

CYRANO (followed by two pages with arch-lutes):

I tell you they are demi-semi-quavers, demi-semi-fool!

FIRST PAGE (ironically):

You know then, Sir, to distinguish between semi-quavers and demi-semi-quavers?

CYRANO:

Is not every disciple of Gassendi a musician?

THE PAGE (playing and singing):

La, la!

CYRANO (snatching the lute from him, and going on with the phrase):

In proof of which, I can continue! La, la, la, la!

ROXANE (appearing on the balcony):

What? 'Tis you?

CYRANO (going on with the air, and singing to it):

'Tis I, who come to serenade your lilies, and pay my devoir to your ro-oses!

ROXANE:

I am coming down!

(She leaves the balcony.)

THE DUENNA (pointing to the pages):

How come these two virtuosi here?

CYRANO:

'Tis for a wager I won of D'Assoucy. We were disputing a nice point in grammar; contradictions raged hotly--"Tis so!" 'Nay, 'tis so!" when suddenly he shows me these two long-shanks, whom he takes about with him as an escort, and who are skillful in scratching lute-strings with their skinny claws! 'I

will wager you a day's music,' says he!--And lost it! Thus, see you, till
Phoebus' chariot starts once again, these lute-twanglers are at my heels,
seeing all I do, hearing all I say, and accompanying all with melody. 'Twas
pleasant at the first, but i' faith, I begin to weary of it already!

(To the musicians):

Ho there! go serenade Montfleury for me! Play a dance to him!

(The pages go toward the door. To the duenna):

I have come, as is my wont, nightly, to ask Roxane whether. . .

(To the pages, who are going out):

Play a long time,--and play out of tune!

(To the duenna):

. . .Whether her soul's elected is ever the same, ever faultless!

ROXANE (coming out of the house):

Ah! How handsome he is, how brilliant a wit! And--how well I love him!

CYRANO (smiling):

Christian has so brilliant a wit?

ROXANE:

Brighter than even your own, cousin!

CYRANO:

Be it so, with all my heart!

ROXANE:

Ah! methinks 'twere impossible that there could breathe a man on this earth
skilled to say as sweetly as he all the pretty nothings that mean so much--
that mean all! At times his mind seems far away, the Muse says naught--and
then, presto! he speaks--bewitchingly! enchantingly!

CYRANO (incredulously):

No, no!

ROXANE:

Fie! That is ill said! But lo! men are ever thus! Because he is fair to
see, you would have it that he must be dull of speech.

CYRANO:

He hath an eloquent tongue in telling his love?

ROXANE:

In telling his love? why, 'tis not simple telling, 'tis dissertation, 'tis
analysis!

CYRANO:

How is he with the pen?

ROXANE:

Still better! Listen,--here:--

(Reciting):

'The more of my poor heart you take

The larger grows my heart!'

(Triumphantly to Cyrano):

How like you those lines?

CYRANO:

Pooh!

ROXANE:

And thus it goes on. . .

'And, since some target I must show

For Cupid's cruel dart,

Oh, if mine own you deign to keep,

Then give me your sweet heart!'

CYRANO:

Lord! first he has too much, then anon not enough! How much heart does the fellow want?

ROXANE:

You would vex a saint!. . .But 'tis your jealousy.

CYRANO (starting):

What mean you?

ROXANE:

Ay, your poet's jealousy! Hark now, if this again be not tender-sweet?--

'My heart to yours sounds but one cry:

If kisses fast could flee

By letter, then with your sweet lips

My letters read should be!

If kisses could be writ with ink,

If kisses fast could flee!'

CYRANO (smiling approvingly in spite of himself):

Ha! those last lines are,--hm!. . .hm!. . .

(Correcting himself--contemptuously):

--They are paltry enough!

ROXANE:

And this. . .

CYRANO (enchanted):

Then you have his letters by heart?

ROXANE:

Every one of them!

CYRANO:

By all oaths that can be sworn,--'tis flattering!

ROXANE:

They are the lines of a master!

CYRANO (modestly):

Come, nay. . .a master?. . .

ROXANE:

Ay, I say it--a master!

CYRANO:

Good--be it so.

THE DUENNA (coming down quickly):

Here comes Monsieur de Guiche!

(To Cyrano, pushing him toward the house):

In with you! 'twere best he see you not; it might perchance put him on the scent. . .

ROXANE (to Cyrano):

Ay, of my own dear secret! He loves me, and is powerful, and, if he knew, then all were lost! Marry! he could well deal a deathblow to my love!

CYRANO (entering the house):

Good! good!

(De Guiche appears.)

Scene 3.II.

Roxane, De Guiche, the duenna standing a little way off.

ROXANE (courtesying to De Guiche):

I was going out.

DE GUICHE:

I come to take my leave.

ROXANE:

Whither go you?

DE GUICHE:

To the war.

ROXANE:

Ah!

DE GUICHE:

Ay, to-night.

ROXANE:

Oh!

DE GUICHE:

I am ordered away. We are to besiege Arras.

ROXANE:

Ah--to besiege? . . .

DE GUICHE:

Ay. My going moves you not, meseems.

ROXANE:

Nay. . .

DE GUICHE:

I am grieved to the core of the heart. Shall I again behold you? . . . When?
I know not. Heard you that I am named commander? . . .

ROXANE (indifferently):

Bravo!

DE GUICHE:

Of the Guards regiment.

ROXANE (startled):

What! the Guards?

DE GUICHE:

Ay, where serves your cousin, the swaggering boaster. I will find a way to
revenge myself on him at Arras.

ROXANE (choking):

What mean you? The Guards go to Arras?

DE GUICHE (laughing):

Bethink you, is it not my own regiment?

ROXANE (falling seated on the bench--aside):

Christian!

DE GUICHE:

What ails you?

ROXANE (moved deeply):

Oh--I am in despair! The man one loves!--at the war!

DE GUICHE (surprised and delighted):

You say such sweet words to me! 'Tis the first time!--and just when I must
quit you!

ROXANE (collected, and fanning herself):

Thus,--you would fain revenge your grudge against my cousin?

DE GUICHE:

My fair lady is on his side?

ROXANE:

Nay,--against him!

DE GUICHE:

Do you see him often?

ROXANE:

But very rarely.

DE GUICHE:

He is ever to be met now in company with one of the cadets,. . . one New--
villen--viller--

ROXANE:

Of high stature?

DE GUICHE:

Fair-haired!

ROXANE:

Ay, a red-headed fellow!

DE GUICHE:

Handsome!. . .

ROXANE:

Tut!

DE GUICHE:

But dull-witted.

ROXANE:

One would think so, to look at him!

(Changing her tone):

How mean you to play your revenge on Cyrano? Perchance you think to put him i' the thick of the shots? Nay, believe me, that were a poor vengeance--he would love such a post better than aught else! I know the way to wound his pride far more keenly!

DE GUICHE:

What then? Tell. . .

ROXANE:

If, when the regiment march to Arras, he were left here with his beloved boon companions, the Cadets, to sit with crossed arms so long as the war lasted! There is your method, would you enrage a man of his kind; cheat him of his chance of mortal danger, and you punish him right fiercely.

DE GUICHE (coming nearer):

O woman! woman! Who but a woman had e'er devised so subtle a trick?

ROXANE:

See you not how he will eat out his heart, while his friends gnaw their thick fists for that they are deprived of the battle? So are you best avenged.

DE GUICHE:

You love me, then, a little?

(She smiles):

I would fain--seeing you thus espouse my cause, Roxane--believe it a proof of love!

ROXANE:

'Tis a proof of love!

DE GUICHE (showing some sealed papers):

Here are the marching orders; they will be sent instantly to each company--except--

(He detaches one):

--This one! 'Tis that of the Cadets.

(He puts it in his pocket):

This I keep.

(Laughing):

Ha! ha! ha! Cyrano! His love of battle!. . .So you can play tricks on people?. . .you, of all ladies!

ROXANE:

Sometimes!

DE GUICHE (coming close to her):

Oh! how I love you!--to distraction! Listen! To-night--true, I ought to start--but--how leave you now that I feel your heart is touched! Hard by, in the Rue d'Orleans, is a convent founded by Father Athanasius, the syndic of the Capuchins. True that no layman may enter--but--I can settle that with the good Fathers! Their habit sleeves are wide enough to hide me in. 'Tis they who serve Richelieu's private chapel: and from respect to the uncle, fear the nephew. All will deem me gone. I will come to you, masked. Give me leave to wait till tomorrow, sweet Lady Fanciful!

ROXANE:

But, of this be rumored, your glory. . .

DE GUICHE:

Bah!

ROXANE:

But the siege--Arras. . .

DE GUICHE:

'Twill take its chance. Grant but permission.

ROXANE:

No!

DE GUICHE:

Give me leave!

ROXANE (tenderly):

It were my duty to forbid you!

DE GUICHE:

Ah!

ROXANE:

You must go!

(Aside):

Christian stays here.

(Aloud):

I would have you heroic--Antoine!

DE GUICHE:

O heavenly word! You love, then, him?. . .

ROXANE:

. . .For whom I trembled.

DE GUICHE (in an ecstasy):

Ah! I go then!

(He kisses her hand):

Are you content?

ROXANE:

Yes, my friend!

(He goes out.)

THE DUENNA (making behind his back a mocking courtesy):

Yes, my friend!

ROXANE (to the duenna):

Not a word of what I have done. Cyrano would never pardon me for stealing his fighting from him!

(She calls toward the house):

Cousin!

Scene 3.III.

Roxane, The duenna, Cyrano.

ROXANE:

We are going to Clomire's house.

(She points to the door opposite):

Alcandre and Lysimon are to discourse!

THE DUENNA (putting her little finger in her ear):

Yes! But my little finger tells me we shall miss them.

CYRANO:

'Twere a pity to miss such apes!

(They have come to Clomire's door.)

THE DUENNA:

Oh, see! The knocker is muffled up!

(Speaking to the knocker):

So they have gagged that metal tongue of yours, little noisy one, lest it should disturb the fine orators!

(She lifts it carefully and knocks with precaution.)

ROXANE (seeing that the door opens):

Let us enter!

(On the threshold, to Cyrano):

If Christian comes, as I feel sure he will, bid him wait for me!

CYRANO (quickly, as she is going in):

Listen!

(She turns):

What mean you to question him on, as is your wont, to-night?

ROXANE:

Oh--

CYRANO (eagerly):

Well, say.

ROXANE:

But you will be mute?

CYRANO:

Mute as a fish.

ROXANE:

I shall not question him at all, but say: Give rein to your fancy! Prepare not your speeches,--but speak the thoughts as they come! Speak to me of love, and speak splendidly!

CYRANO (smiling):

Very good!

ROXANE:

But secret! . . .

CYRANO:

Secret.

ROXANE:

Not a word!

(She enters and shuts the door.)

CYRANO (when the door is shut, bowing to her):

A thousand thanks!

(The door opens again, and Roxane puts her head out.)

ROXANE:

Lest he prepare himself!

CYRANO:

The devil!--no, no!

BOTH TOGETHER:

Secret.

(The door shuts.)

CYRANO (calling):

Christian!

Scene 3.IV.

Cyrano, Christian.

CYRANO:

I know all that is needful. Here's occasion
For you to deck yourself with glory. Come,
Lose no time; put away those sulky looks,
Come to your house with me, I'll teach you. . .

CHRISTIAN:

No!

CYRANO:

Why?

CHRISTIAN:

I will wait for Roxane here.

CYRANO:

How? Crazy?
Come quick with me and learn. . .

CHRISTIAN:

No, no! I say.
I am aweary of these borrowed letters,
--Borrowed love-makings! Thus to act a part,
And tremble all the time!--'Twas well enough
At the beginning!--Now I know she loves!
I fear no longer!--I will speak myself.

CYRANO:

Mercy!

CHRISTIAN:

And how know you I cannot speak?--
I am not such a fool when all is said!
I've by your lessons profited. You'll see
I shall know how to speak alone! The devil!
I know at least to clasp her in my arms!
(Seeing Roxane come out from Clomire's house):
--It is she! Cyrano, no!--Leave me not!

CYRANO (bowing):

Speak for yourself, my friend, and take your chance.

(He disappears behind the garden wall.)

Scene 3.V.

Christian, Roxane, the duenna.

ROXANE (coming out of Clomire's house, with a company of friends, whom she leaves. Bows and good-byes):

Barthenoide!--Alcandre!--Gremione!--

THE DUENNA (bitterly disappointed):

We've missed the speech upon the Tender Passion!

(Goes into Roxane's house.)

ROXANE (still bowing):

Urimeadonte--adieu!

(All bow to Roxane and to each other, and then separate, going up different streets. Roxane suddenly seeing Christian):

You!

(She goes to him):

Evening falls.

Let's sit. Speak on. I listen.

CHRISTIAN (sits by her on the bench. A silence):

Oh! I love you!

ROXANE (shutting her eyes):

Ay, speak to me of love.

CHRISTIAN:

I love thee!

ROXANE:

That's

The theme! But vary it.

CHRISTIAN:

I . .

ROXANE:

Vary it!

CHRISTIAN:

I love you so!

ROXANE:

Oh! without doubt!--and then?. . .

CHRISTIAN:

And then--I should be--oh!--so glad--so glad

If you would love me!--Roxane, tell me so!

ROXANE (with a little grimace):

I hoped for cream,--you give me gruel! Say

How love possesses you?

CHRISTIAN:

Oh utterly!

ROXANE:

Come, come! . . .unknot those tangled sentiments!

CHRISTIAN:

Your throat I'd kiss it!

ROXANE:

Christian!

CHRISTIAN:

I love thee!

ROXANE (half-rising):

Again!

CHRISTIAN (eagerly, detaining her):

No, no! I love thee not!

ROXANE (reseating herself):

'Tis well!

CHRISTIAN:

But I adore thee!

ROXANE (rising, and going further off):

Oh!

CHRISTIAN:

I am grown stupid!

ROXANE (dryly):

And that displeases me, almost as much

As 'twould displease me if you grew ill-favored.

CHRISTIAN:

But. . .

ROXANE:

Rally your poor eloquence that's flown!

CHRISTIAN:

I . . .

ROXANE:

Yes, you love me, that I know. Adieu.

(She goes toward her house.)

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, go not yet! I'd tell you--

ROXANE (opening the door):

You adore me?

I've heard it very oft. No!--Go away!

CHRISTIAN:

But I would fain. . .

(She shuts the door in his face.)

CYRANO (who has re-entered unseen):

I' faith! It is successful!

Scene 3.VI.

Christian, Cyrano, two pages.

CHRISTIAN:

Come to my aid!

CYRANO:

Not I!

CHRISTIAN:

But I shall die,
Unless at once I win back her fair favor.

CYRANO:

And how can I, at once, i' th' devil's name,
Lesson you in. . .

CHRISTIAN (seizing his arm):

Oh, she is there!

(The window of the balcony is now lighted up.)

CYRANO (moved):

Her window!

CHRISTIAN:

Oh! I shall die!

CYRANO:

Speak lower!

CHRISTIAN (in a whisper):

I shall die!

CYRANO:

The night is dark. . .

CHRISTIAN:

Well!

CYRANO:

All can be repaired.
Although you merit not. Stand there, poor wretch!
Fronting the balcony! I'll go beneath
And prompt your words to you. . .

CHRISTIAN:

But. . .

CYRANO:

Hold your tongue!

THE PAGES (reappearing at back--to Cyrano):

Ho!

CYRANO:

Hush!

(He signs to them to speak softly.)

FIRST PAGE (in a low voice):

We've played the serenade you bade
To Montfleury!

CYRANO (quickly, in a low voice):

Go! lurk in ambush there,
One at this street corner, and one at that;
And if a passer-by should here intrude,
Play you a tune!

SECOND PAGE:

What tune, Sir Gassendist?

CYRANO:

Gay, if a woman comes,--for a man, sad!

(The pages disappear, one at each street corner. To Christian):

Call her!

CHRISTIAN:

Roxane!

CYRANO (picking up stones and throwing them at the window):

Some pebbles! wait awhile!

ROXANE (half-opening the casement):

Who calls me?

CHRISTIAN:

I!

ROXANE:

Who's that?

CHRISTIAN:

Christian!

ROXANE (disdainfully):

Oh! you?

CHRISTIAN:

I would speak with you.

CYRANO (under the balcony--to Christian):

Good. Speak soft and low.

ROXANE:

No, you speak stupidly!

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, pity me!

ROXANE:

No! you love me no more!

CHRISTIAN (prompted by Cyrano):

You say--Great Heaven!

I love no more?--when--I--love more and more!

ROXANE (who was about to shut the casement, pausing):

Hold! 'tis a trifle better! ay, a trifle!

CHRISTIAN (same play):

Love grew apace, rocked by the anxious beating. . .

Of this poor heart, which the cruel wanton boy. . .

Took for a cradle!

ROXANE (coming out on to the balcony):

That is better! But

An if you deem that Cupid be so cruel

You should have stifled baby-love in's cradle!

CHRISTIAN (same play):

Ah, Madame, I assayed, but all in vain

This. . .new-born babe is a young. . .Hercules!

ROXANE:

Still better!

CHRISTIAN (same play):

Thus he strangled in my heart

The. . .serpents twain, of. . .Pride. . .and Doubt!

ROXANE (leaning over the balcony):

Well said!

--But why so faltering? Has mental palsy

Seized on your faculty imaginative?

CYRANO (drawing Christian under the balcony, and slipping into his place):

Give place! This waxen critical! . . .

ROXANE:

To-day. . .

Your words are hesitating.

CYRANO (imitating Christian--in a whisper):

Night has come. . .

In the dusk they grope their way to find your ear.

ROXANE:

But my words find no such impediment.

CYRANO:

They find their way at once? Small wonder that!

For 'tis within my heart they find their home;

Bethink how large my heart, how small your ear!

And,--from fair heights descending, words fall fast,

But mine must mount, Madame, and that takes time!

ROXANE:

Meseems that your last words have learned to climb.

CYRANO:

With practice such gymnastic grows less hard!

ROXANE:

In truth, I seem to speak from distant heights!

CYRANO:

True, far above; at such a height 'twere death

If a hard word from you fell on my heart.

ROXANE (moving):

I will come down. . .

CYRANO (hastily):

No!

ROXANE (showing him the bench under the balcony):

Mount then on the bench!

CYRANO (starting back alarmed):

No!

ROXANE:

How, you will not?

CYRANO (more and more moved):

Stay awhile! 'Tis sweet,. . .

The rare occasion, when our hearts can speak

Our selves unseen, unseeing!

ROXANE:

Why--unseen?

CYRANO:

Ay, it is sweet! Half hidden,--half revealed--

You see the dark folds of my shrouding cloak,

And I, the glimmering whiteness of your dress:

I but a shadow--you a radiance fair!

Know you what such a moment holds for me?

If ever I were eloquent. . .

ROXANE:

You were!

CYRANO:

Yet never till to-night my speech has sprung

Straight from my heart as now it springs.

ROXANE:

Why not?

CYRANO:

Till now I spoke haphazard. . .

ROXANE:

What?

CYRANO:

Your eyes
Have beams that turn men dizzy!--But to-night
Methinks I shall find speech for the first time!

ROXANE:

'Tis true, your voice rings with a tone that's new.

CYRANO (coming nearer, passionately):

Ay, a new tone! In the tender, sheltering dusk
I dare to be myself for once,--at last!

(He stops, falters):

What say I? I know not!--Oh, pardon me--
It thrills me,--'tis so sweet, so novel. . .

ROXANE:

How?
So novel?

CYRANO (off his balance, trying to find the thread of his sentence):

Ay,--to be at last sincere;
Till now, my chilled heart, fearing to be mocked. . .

ROXANE:

Mocked, and for what?

CYRANO:

For its mad beating!--Ay,
My heart has clothed itself with witty words,
To shroud itself from curious eyes:--impelled
At times to aim at a star, I stay my hand,
And, fearing ridicule,--cull a wild flower!

ROXANE:

A wild flower's sweet.

CYRANO:

Ay, but to-night--the star!

ROXANE:

Oh! never have you spoken thus before!

CYRANO:

If, leaving Cupid's arrows, quivers, torches,
We turned to seek for sweeter--fresher things!
Instead of sipping in a pygmy glass
Dull fashionable waters,--did we try
How the soul slakes its thirst in fearless draught
By drinking from the river's flooding brim!

ROXANE:

But wit? . . .

CYRANO:

If I have used it to arrest you
At the first starting,--now, 'twould be an outrage,
An insult--to the perfumed Night--to Nature--
To speak fine words that garnish vain love-letters!
Look up but at her stars! The quiet Heaven
Will ease our hearts of all things artificial;
I fear lest, 'midst the alchemy we're skilled in
The truth of sentiment dissolve and vanish,--
The soul exhausted by these empty pastimes,
The gain of fine things be the loss of all things!

ROXANE:

But wit? I say. . .

CYRANO:

In love 'tis crime,--'tis hateful!
Turning frank loving into subtle fencing!
At last the moment comes, inevitable,--
--Oh, woe for those who never know that moment!
When feeling love exists in us, ennobling,
Each well-weighed word is futile and soul-saddening!

ROXANE:

Well, if that moment's come for us--suppose it!
What words would serve you?

CYRANO:

All, all, all, whatever
That came to me, e'en as they came, I'd fling them
In a wild cluster, not a careful bouquet.
I love thee! I am mad! I love, I stifle!
Thy name is in my heart as in a sheep-bell,
And as I ever tremble, thinking of thee,
Ever the bell shakes, ever thy name ringeth!
All things of thine I mind, for I love all things;
I know that last year on the twelfth of May-month,
To walk abroad, one day you changed your hair-plaits!
I am so used to take your hair for daylight
That,--like as when the eye stares on the sun's disk,
One sees long after a red blot on all things--
So, when I quit thy beams, my dazzled vision
Sees upon all things a blonde stain imprinted.

ROXANE (agitated):

Why, this is love indeed!. . .

CYRANO:

Ay, true, the feeling
Which fills me, terrible and jealous, truly
Love,--which is ever sad amid its transports!
Love,--and yet, strangely, not a selfish passion!
I for your joy would gladly lay mine own down,

--E'en though you never were to know it,--never!
--If but at times I might--far off and lonely,--
Hear some gay echo of the joy I bought you!
Each glance of thine awakes in me a virtue,--
A novel, unknown valor. Dost begin, sweet,
To understand? So late, dost understand me?
Feel'st thou my soul, here, through the darkness mounting?
Too fair the night! Too fair, too fair the moment!
That I should speak thus, and that you should hearken!
Too fair! In moments when my hopes rose proudest,
I never hoped such guerdon. Naught is left me
But to die now! Have words of mine the power
To make you tremble,--throned there in the branches?
Ay, like a leaf among the leaves, you tremble!
You tremble! For I feel,--an if you will it,
Or will it not,--your hand's beloved trembling
Thrill through the branches, down your sprays of jasmine!

(He kisses passionately one of the hanging tendrils.)

ROXANE:

Ay! I am trembling, weeping!--I am thine!
Thou hast conquered all of me!

CYRANO:

Then let death come!
'Tis I, 'tis I myself, who conquered thee!
One thing, but one, I dare to ask--

CHRISTIAN (under the balcony):

A kiss!

ROXANE (drawing back):

What?

CYRANO:

Oh!

ROXANE:

You ask. . .?

CYRANO:

I . . .

(To Christian, whispering):

Fool! you go too quick!

CHRISTIAN:

Since she is moved thus--I will profit by it!

CYRANO (to Roxane):

My words sprang thoughtlessly, but now I see--
Shame on me!--I was too presumptuous.

ROXANE (a little chilled):

How quickly you withdraw.

CYRANO:

Yes, I withdraw
Without withdrawing! Hurt I modesty?
If so--the kiss I asked--oh, grant it not.

CHRISTIAN (to Cyrano, pulling him by his cloak):

Why?

CYRANO:

Silence, Christian! Hush!

ROXANE (leaning over):

What whisper you?

CYRANO:

I chid myself for my too bold advances;
Said, 'Silence, Christian!'

(The lutes begin to play):

Hark! Wait awhile,. . .

Steps come!

(Roxane shuts the window. Cyrano listens to the lutes, one of which plays a merry, the other a melancholy, tune):

Why, they play sad--then gay--then sad! What? Neither man nor woman?--oh!
a monk!

(Enter a capuchin friar, with a lantern. He goes from house to house, looking at every door.)

Scene 3.VII.

Cyrano, Christian, a capuchin friar.

CYRANO (to the friar):

What do you, playing at Diogenes?

THE FRIAR:

I seek the house of Madame. . .

CHRISTIAN:

Oh! plague take him!

THE FRIAR:

Madeleine Robin. . .

CHRISTIAN:

What would he?. . .

CYRANO (pointing to a street at the back):

This way!

Straight on. . .

THE FRIAR

I thank you, and, in your intention
Will tell my rosary to its last bead.

(He goes out.)

CYRANO:

Good luck! My blessings rest upon your cowl!

(He goes back to Christian.)

Scene 3.VIII.

Cyrano, Christian.

CHRISTIAN:

Oh! win for me that kiss. . .

CYRANO:

No!

CHRISTIAN:

Soon or late!. . .

CYRANO:

'Tis true! The moment of intoxication--

Of madness,--when your mouths are sure to meet

Thanks to your fair mustache--and her rose lips!

(To himself):

I'd fainer it should come thanks to. . .

(A sound of shutters reopening. Christian goes in again under the balcony.)

Scene 3.IX.

Cyrano, Christian, Roxane.

ROXANE (coming out on the balcony):

Still there?

We spoke of a. . .

CYRANO:

A kiss! The word is sweet.

I see not why your lip should shrink from it;

If the word burns it,--what would the kiss do?

Oh! let it not your bashfulness affright;

Have you not, all this time, insensibly,

Left badinage aside, and unalarmed

Glided from smile to sigh,--from sigh to weeping?

Glide gently, imperceptibly, still onward--

From tear to kiss,--a moment's thrill!--a heartbeat!

ROXANE:

Hush! hush!

CYRANO:

A kiss, when all is said,--what is it?
An oath that's ratified,--a sealed promise,
A heart's avowal claiming confirmation,--
A rose-dot on the 'i' of 'adoration,'--
A secret that to mouth, not ear, is whispered,--
Brush of a bee's wing, that makes time eternal,--
Communion perfumed like the spring's wild flowers,--
The heart's relieving in the heart's outbreathing,
When to the lips the soul's flood rises, brimming!

ROXANE:

Hush! hush!

CYRANO:

A kiss, Madame, is honorable:
The Queen of France, to a most favored lord
Did grant a kiss--the Queen herself!

ROXANE:

What then?

CYRANO (speaking more warmly):

Buckingham suffered dumbly,--so have I,--
Adored his Queen, as loyally as I,--
Was sad, but faithful,--so am I. . .

ROXANE:

And you
Are fair as Buckingham!

CYRANO (aside--suddenly cooled):

True,--I forgot!

ROXANE:

Must I then bid thee mount to cull this flower?

CYRANO (pushing Christian toward the balcony):

Mount!

ROXANE:

This heart-breathing!. . .

CYRANO:

Mount!

ROXANE:

This brush of bee's wing!. . .

CYRANO:

Mount!

CHRISTIAN (hesitating):

But I feel now, as though 'twere ill done!

ROXANE:

This moment infinite!. . .

CYRANO (still pushing him):

Come, blockhead, mount!

(Christian springs forward, and by means of the bench, the branches, and the pillars, climbs to the balcony and strides over it.)

CHRISTIAN:

Ah, Roxane!

(He takes her in his arms, and bends over her lips.)

CYRANO:

Aie! Strange pain that wrings my heart!

The kiss, love's feast, so near! I, Lazarus,

Lie at the gate in darkness. Yet to me

Falls still a crumb or two from the rich man's board--

Ay, 'tis my heart receives thee, Roxane--mine!

For on the lips you press you kiss as well

The words I spoke just now!--my words--my words!

(The lutes play):

A sad air,--a gay air: the monk!

(He begins to run as if he came from a long way off, and cries out):

Hola!

ROXANE:

Who is it?

CYRANO:

I--I was but passing by. . .

Is Christian there?

CHRISTIAN (astonished):

Cyrano!

ROXANE:

Good-day, cousin!

CYRANO:

Cousin, good-day!

ROXANE:

I'm coming!

(She disappears into the house. At the back re-enter the friar.)

CHRISTIAN (seeing him):

Back again!

(He follows Roxane.)

Scene 3.X.

Cyrano, Christian, Roxane, the friar, Ragueneau.

THE FRIAR:

'Tis here,--I'm sure of it--Madame Madeleine Robin.

CYRANO:

Why, you said Ro-LIN.

THE FRIAR:

No, not I.

B,I,N,BIN!

ROXANE (appearing on the threshold, followed by Ragueneau, who carries a lantern, and Christian):

What is't?

THE FRIAR:

A letter.

CHRISTIAN:

What?

THE FRIAR (to Roxane):

Oh, it can boot but a holy business!

'Tis from a worthy lord. . .

ROXANE (to Christian):

De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN:

He dares. . .

ROXANE:

Oh, he will not importune me forever!

(Unsealing the letter):

I love you,--therefore--

(She reads in a low voice by the aid of Ragueneau's lantern):

'Lady,

The drums beat;

My regiment buckles its harness on

And starts; but I,--they deem me gone before--

But I stay. I have dared to disobey

Your mandate. I am here in convent walls.

I come to you to-night. By this poor monk--

A simple fool who knows not what he bears--

I send this missive to apprise your ear.

Your lips erewhile have smiled on me, too sweet:

I go not ere I've seen them once again!

I would be private; send each soul away,

Receive alone him,--whose great boldness you

Have deigned, I hope, to pardon, ere he asks,--

He who is ever your--et cetera.'

(To the monk):

Father, this is the matter of the letter:--

(All come near her, and she reads aloud):

'Lady,

The Cardinal's wish is law; albeit
It be to you unwelcome. For this cause
I send these lines--to your fair ear addressed--
By a holy man, discreet, intelligent:
It is our will that you receive from him,
In your own house, the marriage
(She turns the page):
 benediction
Straightway, this night. Unknown to all the world
Christian becomes your husband. Him we send.
He is abhorrent to your choice. Let be.
Resign yourself, and this obedience
Will be by Heaven well recompensed. Receive,
Fair lady, all assurance of respect,
From him who ever was, and still remains,
Your humble and obliged--et cetera.'

THE FRIAR (with great delight):
O worthy lord! I knew naught was to fear;
It could be but holy business!

ROXANE (to Christian, in a low voice):
Am I not apt at reading letters?

CHRISTIAN:
Hum!

ROXANE (aloud, with despair):
But this is horrible!

THE FRIAR (who has turned his lantern on Cyrano):
'Tis you?

CHRISTIAN:
'Tis I!

THE FRIAR (turning the light on to him, and as if a doubt struck him on seeing his beauty):
But. . .

ROXANE (quickly):
I have overlooked the postscript--see:--
'Give twenty pistoles for the Convent.'

THE FRIAR:
...Oh!
Most worthy lord!
(To Roxane):
Submit you?

ROXANE (with a martyr's look):
I submit!
(While Ragueneau opens the door, and Christian invites the friar to enter, she whispers to Cyrano):
Oh, keep De Guiche at bay! He will be here!
Let him not enter till. . .

CYRANO:

I understand!

(To the friar):

What time need you to tie the marriage-knot?

THE FRIAR:

A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO (pushing them all toward the house):

Go! I stay.

ROXANE (to Christian):

Come!. . .

(They enter.)

CYRANO:

Now, how to detain De Guiche so long?

(He jumps on the bench, climbs to the balcony by the wall):

Come!. . .up I go!. . .I have my plan!. . .

(The lutes begin to play a very sad air):

What, ho!

(The tremolo grows more and more weird):

It is a man! ay! 'tis a man this time!

(He is on the balcony, pulls his hat over his eyes, takes off his sword, wraps himself in his cloak, then leans over):

'Tis not too high!

(He strides across the balcony, and drawing to him a long branch of one of the trees that are by the garden wall, he hangs on to it with both hands, ready to let himself fall):

I'll shake this atmosphere!

Scene 3.XI.

Cyrano, De Guiche.

DE GUICHE (who enters, masked, feeling his way in the dark):

What can that cursed Friar be about?

CYRANO:

The devil!. . .If he knows my voice!

(Letting go with one hand, he pretends to turn an invisible key. Solemnly):

Cric! Crac!

Assume thou, Cyrano, to serve the turn,

The accent of thy native Bergerac!. . .

DE GUICHE (looking at the house):

'Tis there. I see dim,--this mask hinders me!

(He is about to enter, when Cyrano leaps from the balcony, holding on to the branch, which bends, dropping him between the door and De Guiche; he pretends to fall heavily, as from a great height, and lies flat on the ground, motionless, as if stunned. De Guiche starts back):

What's this?

(When he looks up, the branch has sprung back into its place. He sees only the sky, and is lost in amazement):

Where fell that man from?

CYRANO (sitting up, and speaking with a Gascon accent):

From the moon!

DE GUICHE:

From?. . .

CYRANO (in a dreamy voice):

What's o'clock?

DE GUICHE:

He's lost his mind, for sure!

CYRANO:

What hour? What country this? What month? What day?

DE GUICHE:

But. . .

CYRANO:

I am stupefied!

DE GUICHE:

Sir!

CYRANO:

Like a bomb

I fell from the moon!

DE GUICHE (impatiently):

Come now!

CYRANO (rising, in a terrible voice):

I say,--the moon!

DE GUICHE (recoiling):

Good, good! let it be so! . . .He's raving mad!

CYRANO (walking up to him):

I say from the moon! I mean no metaphor!. . .

DE GUICHE:

But. . .

CYRANO:

Was't a hundred years--a minute, since?

--I cannot guess what time that fall embraced!--

That I was in that saffron-colored ball?

DE GUICHE (shrugging his shoulders):

Good! let me pass!

CYRANO (intercepting him):

Where am I? Tell the truth!
Fear not to tell! Oh, spare me not! Where? where?
Have I fallen like a shooting star?

DE GUICHE:

Morbleu!

CYRANO:

The fall was lightning-quick! no time to choose
Where I should fall--I know not where it be!
Oh, tell me! Is it on a moon or earth,
that my posterior weight has landed me?

DE GUICHE:

I tell you, Sir. . .

CYRANO (with a screech of terror, which makes De Guiche start back):

No? Can it be? I'm on
A planet where men have black faces?

DE GUICHE (putting a hand to his face):

What?

CYRANO (feigning great alarm):

Am I in Africa? A native you?

DE GUICHE (who has remembered his mask):

This mask of mine. . .

CYRANO (pretending to be reassured):

In Venice? ha!--or Rome?

DE GUICHE (trying to pass):

A lady waits. .

CYRANO (quite reassured):

Oh-ho! I am in Paris!

DE GUICHE (smiling in spite of himself):

The fool is comical!

CYRANO:

You laugh?

DE GUICHE:

I laugh,
But would get by!

CYRANO (beaming with joy):

I have shot back to Paris!

(Quite at ease, laughing, dusting himself, bowing):

Come--pardon me--by the last water-spout,
Covered with ether,--accident of travel!
My eyes still full of star-dust, and my spurs
Encumbered by the planets' filaments!

(Picking something off his sleeve):

Ha! on my doublet?--ah, a comet's hair! . .

(He puffs as if to blow it away.)

DE GUICHE (beside himself):

Sir! . .

CYRANO (just as he is about to pass, holds out his leg as if to show him something and stops him):

In my leg--the calf--there is a tooth
Of the Great Bear, and, passing Neptune close,
I would avoid his trident's point, and fell,
Thus sitting, plump, right in the Scales! My weight
Is marked, still registered, up there in heaven!

(Hurriedly preventing De Guiche from passing, and detaining him by the button of his doublet):

I swear to you that if you squeezed my nose
It would spout milk!

DE GUICHE:

Milk?

CYRANO:

From the Milky Way!

DE GUICHE:

Oh, go to hell!

CYRANO (crossing his arms):

I fall, Sir, out of heaven!
Now, would you credit it, that as I fell
I saw that Sirius wears a nightcap? True!

(Confidentially):

The other Bear is still too small to bite.

(Laughing):

I went through the Lyre, but I snapped a cord;

(Grandiloquent):

I mean to write the whole thing in a book;
The small gold stars, that, wrapped up in my cloak,
I carried safe away at no small risks,
Will serve for asterisks i' the printed page!

DE GUICHE:

Come, make an end! I want. . .

CYRANO:

Oh-ho! You are sly!

DE GUICHE:

Sir!

CYRANO:

You would worm all out of me!--the way
The moon is made, and if men breathe and live
In its rotund cucurbita?

DE GUICHE (angrily):

No, no!

I want. . .

CYRANO:

Ha, ha!--to know how I got up?

Hark, it was by a method all my own.

DE GUICHE (wearied):

He's mad!

CYRANO(contemptuously):

No! not for me the stupid eagle

Of Regiomontanus, nor the timid

Pigeon of Archytas--neither of those!

DE GUICHE:

Ay, 'tis a fool! But 'tis a learned fool!

CYRANO:

No imitator I of other men!

(De Guiche has succeeded in getting by, and goes toward Roxane's door. Cyrano follows him, ready to stop him by force):

Six novel methods, all, this brain invented!

DE GUICHE (turning round):

Six?

CYRANO (volubly):

First, with body naked as your hand,

Festooned about with crystal flacons, full

O' th' tears the early morning dew distils;

My body to the sun's fierce rays exposed

To let it suck me up, as 't sucks the dew!

DE GUICHE (surprised, making one step toward Cyrano):

Ah! that makes one!

CYRANO (stepping back, and enticing him further away):

And then, the second way,

To generate wind--for my impetus--

To rarefy air, in a cedar case,

By mirrors placed icosahedron-wise.

DE GUICHE (making another step):

Two!

CYRANO (still stepping backward):

Or--for I have some mechanic skill--

To make a grasshopper, with springs of steel,

And launch myself by quick succeeding fires

Saltpeter-fed to the stars' pastures blue!

DE GUICHE (unconsciously following him and counting on his fingers):

Three!

CYRANO:

Or (since fumes have property to mount)--
To charge a globe with fumes, sufficiently
To carry me aloft!

DE GUICHE (same play, more and more astonished):

Well, that makes four!

CYRANO:

Or smear myself with marrow from a bull,
Since, at the lowest point of Zodiac,
Phoebus well loves to suck that marrow up!

DE GUICHE (amazed):

Five!

CYRANO (who, while speaking, had drawn him to the other side of the square
near a bench):

Sitting on an iron platform--thence
To throw a magnet in the air. This is
A method well conceived--the magnet flown,
Infallibly the iron will pursue:
Then quick! relaunch your magnet, and you thus
Can mount and mount unmeasured distances!

DE GUICHE:

Here are six excellent expedients!
Which of the six chose you?

CYRANO:

Why, none!--a seventh!

DE GUICHE:

Astonishing! What was it?

CYRANO:

I'll recount.

DE GUICHE:

This wild eccentric becomes interesting!

CYRANO (making a noise like the waves, with weird gestures):

Houuh! Houuh!

DE GUICHE:

Well.

CYRANO:

You have guessed?

DE GUICHE:

Not I!

CYRANO:

The tide!
I' th' witching hour when the moon woos the wave,

I laid me, fresh from a sea-bath, on the shore--
And, failing not to put head foremost--for
The hair holds the sea-water in its mesh--
I rose in air, straight! straight! like angel's flight,
And mounted, mounted, gently, effortless,. . .
When lo! a sudden shock! Then. . .

DE GUICHE (overcome by curiosity, sitting down on the bench):
Then?

CYRANO:

Oh! then. . .

(Suddenly returning to his natural voice):

The quarter's gone--I'll hinder you no more:
The marriage-vows are made.

DE GUICHE (springing up):

What? Am I mad?

That voice?

(The house-door opens. Lackeys appear carrying lighted candelabra. Light.

Cyrano gracefully uncovers):

That nose--Cyrano?

CYRANO (bowing):

Cyrano.

While we were chatting, they have plighted troth.

DE GUICHE:

Who?

(He turns round. Tableau. Behind the lackeys appear Roxane and Christian, holding each other by the hand. The friar follows them, smiling. Ragueneau also holds a candlestick. The duenna closes the rear, bewildered, having made a hasty toilet):

Heavens!

Scene 3.XII.

The same. Roxane, Christian, the friar, Ragueneau, lackeys, the duenna.

DE GUICHE (to Roxane):

You?

(Recognizing Christian, in amazement):

He?

(Bowing, with admiration, to Roxane):

Cunningly contrived!

(To Cyrano):

My compliments--Sir Apparatus-maker!

Your story would arrest at Peter's gate

Saints eager for their Paradise! Note well

The details. 'Faith! They'd make a stirring book!

CYRANO (bowing):

I shall not fail to follow your advice.

THE FRIAR (showing with satisfaction the two lovers to De Guiche):

A handsome couple, son, made one by you!

DE GUICHE (with a freezing look):

Ay!

(To Roxane):

Bid your bridegroom, Madame, fond farewell.

ROXANE:

Why so?

DE GUICHE (to Christian):

Even now the regiment departs.

Join it!

ROXANE:

It goes to battle?

DE GUICHE:

Without doubt.

ROXANE:

But the Cadets go not?

DE GUICHE:

Oh ay! they go.

(Drawing out the paper he had put in his pocket):

Here is the order.

(To Christian):

Baron, bear it, quick!

ROXANE (throwing herself in Christian's arms):

Christian!

DE GUICHE (sneeringly to Cyrano):

The wedding-night is far, methinks!

CYRANO (aside):

He thinks to give me pain of death by this!

CHRISTIAN (to Roxane):

Oh! once again! Your lips!

CYRANO:

Come, come, enough!

CHRISTIAN (still kissing Roxane):

--'Tis hard to leave her, you know not. . .

CYRANO (trying to draw him away):

I know.

(Sound of drums beating a march in the distance.)

DE GUICHE:

The regiment starts!

ROXANE (To Cyrano, holding back Christian, whom Cyrano is drawing away):

Oh!--I trust him you!

Promise me that no risks shall put his life
In danger!

CYRANO:

I will try my best, but promise. . .
That I cannot!

ROXANE:

But swear he shall be prudent?

CYRANO:

Again, I'll do my best, but. . .

ROXANE:

In the siege
Let him not suffer!

CYRANO:

All that man can do,
I. . .

ROXANE:

That he shall be faithful!

CYRANO:

Doubtless, but. . .

ROXANE:

That he will write oft?

CYRANO (pausing):

That, I promise you!

Curtain.

ACT IV.

The Cadets of Gascony.

Post occupied by company of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux at the siege of Arras.

In the background an embankment across the whole stage. Beyond, view of plain extending to the horizon. The country covered with intrenchments. The walls of Arras and the outlines of its roofs against the sky in the distance. Tents. Arms strewn about, drums, etc. Day is breaking with a faint glimmer of yellow sunrise in the east. Sentinels at different points. Watch-fires. The cadets of Gascony, wrapped in their mantles, are sleeping. Carbon de Castel-Jaloux and Le Bret are keeping watch. They are very pale and thin. Christian sleeps among the others in his cloak in the foreground, his face illuminated by the fire. Silence.

Scene 4.I.

Christian, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, Le Bret, the cadets, then Cyrano.

LE BRET:

'Tis terrible.

CARBON:

Not a morsel left.

LE BRET:

Mordioux!

CARBON (making a sign that he should speak lower):

Curse under your breath. You will awake them.

(To the cadets):

Hush! Sleep on.

(To Le Bret):

He who sleeps, dines!

LE BRET:

But that is sorry comfort for the sleepless! . .

What starvation!

(Firing is heard in the distance.)

CARBON:

Oh, plague take their firing! 'Twill wake my sons.

(To the cadets, who lift up their heads):

Sleep on!

(Firing is again heard, nearer this time.)

A CADET (moving):

The devil! . . Again.

CARBON:

'Tis nothing! 'Tis Cyrano coming back!

(Those who have lifted up their heads prepare to sleep again.)

A SENTINEL (from without):

Ventrebieu! Who goes there?

THE VOICE OF CYRANO:

Bergerac.

The SENTINEL (who is on the redoubt):

Ventrebieu! Who goes there?

CYRANO (appearing at the top):

Bergerac, idiot!

(He comes down; Le Bret advances anxiously to meet him.)

LE BRET:
Heavens!

CYRANO (making signs that he should not awake the others):
Hush!

LE BRET:
Wounded?

CYRANO:
Oh! you know it has become their custom to shoot at me every morning and to miss me.

LE BRET:
This passes all! To take letters at each day's dawn. To risk. . .

CYRANO (stopping before Christian):
I promised he should write often.

(He looks at him):

He sleeps. How pale he is! But how handsome still, despite his sufferings.
If his poor little lady-love knew that he is dying of hunger. . .

LE BRET:
Get you quick to bed.

CYRANO:
Nay, never scold, Le Bret. I ran but little risk. I have found me a spot to pass the Spanish lines, where each night they lie drunk.

LE BRET:
You should try to bring us back provision.

CYRANO:
A man must carry no weight who would get by there! But there will be surprise for us this night. The French will eat or die. . .if I mistake not!

LE BRET:
Oh! . . .tell me! . . .

CYRANO:
Nay, not yet. I am not certain. . .You will see!

CARBON:
It is disgraceful that we should starve while we're besieging!

LE BRET:
Alas, how full of complication is this siege of Arras! To think that while we are besieging, we should ourselves be caught in a trap and besieged by the Cardinal Infante of Spain.

CYRANO:
It were well done if he should be besieged in his turn.

LE BRET:

I am in earnest.

CYRANO:

Oh! indeed!

LE BRET:

To think you risk a life so precious. . .for the sake of a letter. .
.Thankless one.

(Seeing him turning to enter the tent):

Where are you going?

CYRANO:

I am going to write another.

(He enters the tent and disappears.)

Scene 4.II.

The same, all but Cyrano. The day is breaking in a rosy light. The town of Arras is golden in the horizon. The report of cannon is heard in the distance, followed immediately by the beating of drums far away to the left. Other drums are heard much nearer. Sounds of stirring in the camp. Voices of officers in the distance.

CARBON (sighing):

The reveille!

(The cadets move and stretch themselves):

Nourishing sleep! Thou art at an end! . . .I know well what will be their first cry!

A CADET (sitting up):

I am so hungry!

ANOTHER:

I am dying of hunger.

TOGETHER:

Oh!

CARBON:

Up with you!

THIRD CADET:

--Cannot move a limb.

FOURTH CADET:

Nor can I.

THE FIRST (looking at himself in a bit of armor):

My tongue is yellow. The air at this season of the year is hard to digest.

ANOTHER:

My coronet for a bit of Chester!

ANOTHER:

If none can furnish to my gaster wherewith to make a pint of chyle, I shall retire to my tent--like Achilles!

ANOTHER:

Oh! something! were it but a crust!

CARBON (going to the tent and calling softly):

Cyrano!

ALL THE CADETS:

We are dying!

CARBON (continuing to speak under his breath at the opening of the tent):

Come to my aid, you, who have the art of quick retort and gay jest. Come, hearten them up.

SECOND CADET (rushing toward another who is munching something):

What are you crunching there?

FIRST CADET:

Cannon-wads soaked in axle-grease! 'Tis poor hunting round about Arras!

A CADET (entering):

I have been after game.

ANOTHER (following him):

And I after fish.

ALL (rushing to the two newcomers):

Well! what have you brought?--a pheasant?--a carp?--Come, show us quick!

THE ANGLER:

A gudgeon!

THE SPORTSMAN:

A sparrow!

ALL TOGETHER (beside themselves):

'Tis more than can be borne! We will mutiny!

CARBON:

Cyrano! Come to my help.

(The daylight has now come.)

Scene 4.III.

The SAME. Cyrano.

CYRANO (appearing from the tent, very calm, with a pen stuck behind his ear and a book in his hand):

What is wrong?

(Silence. To the first cadet):

Why drag you your legs so sorrowfully?

THE CADET:

I have something in my heels which weighs them down.

CYRANO:

And what may that be?

THE CADET:

My stomach!

CYRANO:

So have I, 'faith!

THE CADET:

It must be in your way?

CYRANO:

Nay, I am all the taller.

A THIRD:

My stomach's hollow.

CYRANO:

'Faith, 'twill make a fine drum to sound the assault.

ANOTHER:

I have a ringing in my ears.

CYRANO:

No, no, 'tis false; a hungry stomach has no ears.

ANOTHER:

Oh, to eat something--something oily!

CYRANO (pulling off the cadet's helmet and holding it out to him):

Behold your salad!

ANOTHER:

What, in God's name, can we devour?

CYRANO (throwing him the book which he is carrying):

The 'Iliad'.

ANOTHER:

The first minister in Paris has his four meals a day!

CYRANO:

'Twere courteous an he sent you a few partridges!

THE SAME:

And why not? with wine, too!

CYRANO:

A little Burgundy. Richelieu, s'il vous plait!

THE SAME:

He could send it by one of his friars.

CYRANO:

Ay! by His Eminence Joseph himself.

ANOTHER:

I am as ravenous as an ogre!

CYRANO:

Eat your patience, then.

THE FIRST CADET (shrugging his shoulders):

Always your pointed word!

CYRANO:

Ay, pointed words!

I would fain die thus, some soft summer eve,

Making a pointed word for a good cause.

--To make a soldier's end by soldier's sword,

Wielded by some brave adversary--die

On blood-stained turf, not on a fever-bed,

A point upon my lips, a point within my heart.

CRIES FROM ALL:

I'm hungry!

CYRANO (crossing his arms):

All your thoughts of meat and drink!

Bertrand the fifer!--you were shepherd once,--

Draw from its double leathern case your fife,

Play to these greedy, guzzling soldiers. Play

Old country airs with plaintive rhythm recurring,

Where lurk sweet echoes of the dear home-voices,

Each note of which calls like a little sister,

Those airs slow, slow ascending, as the smoke-wreaths

Rise from the hearthstones of our native hamlets,

Their music strikes the ear like Gascon patois! . . .

(The old man seats himself, and gets his flute ready):

Your flute was now a warrior in durance;

But on its stem your fingers are a-dancing

A bird-like minuet! O flute! Remember

That flutes were made of reeds first, not laburnum;

Make us a music pastoral days recalling--

The soul-time of your youth, in country pastures! . . .

(The old man begins to play the airs of Languedoc):

Hark to the music, Gascons! . . . 'Tis no longer

The piercing fife of camp--but 'neath his fingers

The flute of the woods! No more the call to combat,

'Tis now the love-song of the wandering goat-herds! . . .

Hark! . . . 'tis the valley, the wet landes, the forest,

The sunburnt shepherd-boy with scarlet beret,

The dusk of evening on the Dordogne river,--

'Tis Gascony! Hark, Gascons, to the music!

(The cadets sit with bowed heads; their eyes have a far-off look as if

dreaming, and they surreptitiously wipe away their tears with their cuffs and the corner of their cloaks.)

CARBON (to Cyrano in a whisper):
But you make them weep!

CYRANO:
Ay, for homesickness. A nobler pain than hunger,--'tis of the soul, not of the body! I am well pleased to see their pain change its viscera. Heart-ache is better than stomach-ache.

CARBON:
But you weaken their courage by playing thus on their heart-strings!

CYRANO (making a sign to a drummer to approach):
Not I. The hero that sleeps in Gascon blood is ever ready to awake in them. 'Twould suffice. . .

(He makes a signal; the drum beats.)

ALL THE CADETS (stand up and rush to take arms):
What? What is it?

CYRANO (smiling):
You see! One roll of the drum is enough! Good-by dreams, regrets, native land, love. . . All that the pipe called forth the drum has chased away!

A CADET (looking toward the back of the stage):
Ho! here comes Monsieur de Guiche.

ALL THE CADETS (muttering):
Ugh!. . .Ugh!. . .

CYRANO (smiling):
A flattering welcome!

A CADET:
We are sick to death of him!

ANOTHER CADET:
--With his lace collar over his armor, playing the fine gentleman!

ANOTHER:
As if one wore linen over steel!

THE FIRST:
It were good for a bandage had he boils on his neck.

THE SECOND:
Another plotting courtier!

ANOTHER CADET:
His uncle's own nephew!

CARBON:
For all that--a Gascon.

THE FIRST:

Ay, false Gascon! . . trust him not. . .
Gascons should ever be crack-brained. . .
Naught more dangerous than a rational Gascon.

LE BRET:

How pale he is!

ANOTHER:

Oh! he is hungry, just like us poor devils; but under his cuirass, with its fine gilt nails, his stomach-ache glitters brave in the sun.

CYRANO (hurriedly):

Let us not seem to suffer either! Out with your cards, pipes, and dice. . .
(All begin spreading out the games on the drums, the stools, the ground, and on their cloaks, and light long pipes):
And I shall read Descartes.

(He walks up and down, reading a little book which he has drawn from his pocket. Tableau. Enter De Guiche. All appear absorbed and happy. He is very pale. He goes up to Carbon.)

Scene 4.IV.

The same. De Guiche.

DE GUICHE (to Carbon):

Good-day!
(They examine each other. Aside, with satisfaction):
He's green.

CARBON (aside):

He has nothing left but eyes.

DE GUICHE (looking at the cadets):

Here are the rebels! Ay, Sirs, on all sides
I hear that in your ranks you scoff at me;
That the Cadets, these loutish, mountain-bred,
Poor country squires, and barons of Perigord,
Scarce find for me--their Colonel--a disdain
Sufficient! call me plotter, wily courtier!
It does not please their mightiness to see
A point-lace collar on my steel cuirass,--
And they enrage, because a man, in sooth,
May be no ragged-robin, yet a Gascon!
(Silence. All smoke and play):
Shall I command your Captain punish you?
No.

CARBON:

I am free, moreover,--will not punish--

DE GUICHE:

Ah!

CARBON:

I have paid my company--'tis mine.
I bow but to headquarters.

DE GUICHE:

So?--in faith!
That will suffice.

(Addressing himself to the cadets):

I can despise your taunts
'Tis well known how I bear me in the war;
At Bapaume, yesterday, they saw the rage
With which I beat back the Count of Bucquoi;
Assembling my own men, I fell on his,
And charged three separate times!

CYRANO (without lifting his eyes from his book):

And your white scarf?

DE GUICHE (surprised and gratified):

You know that detail?. . . Troth! It happened thus:
While caracoling to recall the troops
For the third charge, a band of fugitives
Bore me with them, close by the hostile ranks:
I was in peril--capture, sudden death!--
When I thought of the good expedient
To loosen and let fall the scarf which told
My military rank; thus I contrived
--Without attention waked--to leave the foes,
And suddenly returning, reinforced
With my own men, to scatter them! And now,
--What say you, Sir?

(The cadets pretend not to be listening, but the cards and the dice-boxes
remain suspended in their hands, the smoke of their pipes in their cheeks.
They wait.)

CYRANO:

I say, that Henri Quatre
Had not, by any dangerous odds, been forced
To strip himself of his white helmet plume.

(Silent delight. The cards fall, the dice rattle. The smoke is puffed.)

DE GUICHE:

The ruse succeeded, though!

(Same suspension of play, etc.)

CYRANO:

Oh, may be! But
One does not lightly abdicate the honor
To serve as target to the enemy

(Cards, dice, fall again, and the cadets smoke with evident delight):

Had I been present when your scarf fell low,

--Our courage, Sir, is of a different sort--
I would have picked it up and put it on.

DE GUICHE:

Oh, ay! Another Gascon boast!

CYRANO:

A boast?
Lend it to me. I pledge myself, to-night,
--With it across my breast,--to lead th' assault.

DE GUICHE:

Another Gascon vaunt! You know the scarf
Lies with the enemy, upon the brink
Of the stream,. . .the place is riddled now with shot,--
No one can fetch it hither!

CYRANO (drawing the scarf from his pocket, and holding it out to him):

Here it is.

(Silence. The cadets stifle their laughter in their cards and dice-boxes. De Guiche turns and looks at them; they instantly become grave, and set to play. One of them whistles indifferently the air just played by the fifer.)

DE GUICHE (taking the scarf):

I thank you. It will now enable me
To make a signal,--that I had forborne
To make--till now.

(He goes to the rampart, climbs it, and waves the scarf thrice.)

ALL:

What's that?

THE SENTINEL (from the top of the rampart):

See you yon man
Down there, who runs? . . .

DE GUICHE (descending):

'Tis a false Spanish spy
Who is extremely useful to my ends.
The news he carries to the enemy
Are those I prompt him with--so, in a word,
We have an influence on their decisions!

CYRANO:

Scoundrel!

DE GUICHE (carelessly knotting on his scarf):

'Tis opportune. What were we saying?
Ah! I have news for you. Last evening
--To victual us--the Marshal did attempt
A final effort:--secretly he went
To Dourlens, where the King's provisions be.
But--to return to camp more easily--
He took with him a goodly force of troops.

Those who attacked us now would have fine sport!
Half of the army's absent from the camp!

CARBON:

Ay, if the Spaniards knew, 'twere ill for us,
But they know nothing of it?

DE GUICHE:

Oh! they know.
They will attack us.

CARBON:

Ah!

DE GUICHE:

For my false spy
Came to warn me of their attack. He said,
'I can decide the point for their assault;
Where would you have it? I will tell them 'tis
The least defended--they'll attempt you there.'
I answered, 'Good. Go out of camp, but watch
My signal. Choose the point from whence it comes.'

CARBON (to cadets):

Make ready!

(All rise; sounds of swords and belts being buckled.)

DE GUICHE:

'Twill be in an hour.

FIRST CADET:

Good!. . .

(They all sit down again and take up their games.)

DE GUICHE (to Carbon):

Time must be gained. The Marshal will return.

CARBON:

How gain it?

DE GUICHE:

You will all be good enough
To let yourselves to be killed.

CYRANO:

Vengeance! oho!

DE GUICHE:

I do not say that, if I loved you well,
I had chosen you and yours,--but, as things stand,--
Your courage yielding to no corps the palm--
I serve my King, and serve my grudge as well.

CYRANO:

Permit that I express my gratitude. . .

DE GUICHE:

I know you love to fight against five score;
You will not now complain of paltry odds.

(He goes up with Carbon.)

CYRANO (to the cadets):

We shall add to the Gascon coat of arms,
With its six bars of blue and gold, one more--
The blood-red bar that was a-missing there!

(De Guiche speaks in a low voice with Carbon at the back. Orders are given.
Preparations go forward. Cyrano goes up to Christian, who stands with crossed
arms.)

CYRANO (putting his hand on Christian's shoulder):

Christian!

CHRISTIAN (shaking his head):

Roxane!

CYRANO:

Alas!

CHRISTIAN:

At least, I'd send
My heart's farewell to her in a fair letter!. . .

CYRANO:

I had suspicion it would be to-day,
(He draws a letter out of his doublet):
And had already writ. . .

CHRISTIAN:

Show!

CYRANO:

Will you. . .?

CHRISTIAN (taking the letter):

Ay!

(He opens and reads it):

Hold!

CYRANO:

What?

CHRISTIAN:

This little spot!

CYRANO (taking the letter, with an innocent look):

A spot?

CHRISTIAN:

A tear!

CYRANO:

Poets, at last,--by dint of counterfeiting--
Take counterfeit for true--that is the charm!
This farewell letter,--it was passing sad,
I wept myself in writing it!

CHRISTIAN:

Wept? why?

CYRANO:

Oh! . . . death itself is hardly terrible, . . .
--But, ne'er to see her more! That is death's sting!
--For. . . I shall never. . .

(Christian looks at him):

We shall. . .

(Quickly):

I mean, you. . .

CHRISTIAN (snatching the letter from him):

Give me that letter!

(A rumor, far off in the camp.)

VOICE Of SENTINEL:

Who goes there? Halloo!

(Shots--voices--carriage-bells.)

CARBON:

What is it?

A SENTINEL (on the rampart):

'Tis a carriage!

(All rush to see.)

CRIES:

In the camp?

It enters!--It comes from the enemy!

--Fire!--No!--The coachman cries!--What does he say?

--'On the King's service!'

(Everyone is on the rampart, staring. The bells come nearer.)

DE GUICHE:

The King's service? How?

(All descend and draw up in line.)

CARBON:

Uncover, all!

DE GUICHE:

The King's! Draw up in line!

Let him describe his curve as it befits!

(The carriage enters at full speed covered with dust and mud. The curtains are drawn close. Two lackeys behind. It is pulled up suddenly.)

CARBON:

Beat a salute!

(A roll of drums. The cadets uncover.)

DE GUICHE:

Lower the carriage-steps!

(Two cadets rush forward. The door opens.)

ROXANE (jumping down from the carriage):

Good-day!

(All are bowing to the ground, but at the sound of a woman's voice every head is instantly raised.)

Scene 4.V.

The same. Roxane.

DE GUICHE:

On the King's service! You?

ROXANE:

Ay,--King Love's! What other king?

CYRANO:

Great God!

CHRISTIAN (rushing forward):

Why have you come?

ROXANE:

This siege--'tis too long!

CHRISTIAN:

But why? . . .

ROXANE:

I will tell you all!

CYRANO (who, at the sound of her voice, has stood still, rooted to the ground, afraid to raise his eyes):

My God! dare I look at her?

DE GUICHE:

You cannot remain here!

ROXANE (merrily):

But I say yes! Who will push a drum hither for me?

(She seats herself on the drum they roll forward):

So! I thank you.

(She laughs):

My carriage was fired at
(proudly):

by the patrol! Look! would you not think 'twas made of a pumpkin, like
Cinderella's chariot in the tale,--and the footmen out of rats?

(Sending a kiss with her lips to Christian):

Good-morrow!

(Examining them all):

You look not merry, any of you! Ah! know you that 'tis a long road to get
to Arras?

(Seeing Cyrano):

Cousin, delighted!

CYRANO (coming up to her):

But how, in Heaven's name? . . .

ROXANE:

How found I the way to the army? It was simple enough, for I had but to
pass on and on, as far as I saw the country laid waste. Ah, what horrors were
there! Had I not seen, then I could never have believed it! Well, gentlemen,
if such be the service of your King, I would fainer serve mine!

CYRANO:

But 'tis sheer madness! Where in the fiend's name did you get through?

ROXANE:

Where? Through the Spanish lines.

FIRST CADET:

--For subtle craft, give me a woman!

DE GUICHE:

But how did you pass through their lines?

LE BRET:

Faith! that must have been a hard matter! . . .

ROXANE:

None too hard. I but drove quietly forward in my carriage, and when some
hidalgo of haughty mien would have stayed me, lo! I showed at the window my
sweetest smile, and these Senors being (with no disrespect to you) the most
gallant gentlemen in the world,--I passed on!

CARBON:

True, that smile is a passport! But you must have been asked frequently to
give an account of where you were going, Madame?

ROXANE:

Yes, frequently. Then I would answer, 'I go to see my lover.' At that word
the very fiercest Spaniard of them all would gravely shut the carriage-door,
and, with a gesture that a king might envy, make signal to his men to lower
the muskets leveled at me;--then, with melancholy but withal very graceful
dignity--his beaver held to the wind that the plumes might flutter bravely, he

would bow low, saying to me, 'Pass on, Senorita!'

CHRISTIAN:

But, Roxane. . .

ROXANE:

Forgive me that I said, 'my lover!' But bethink you, had I said 'my husband,' not one of them had let me pass!

CHRISTIAN:

But. . .

ROXANE:

What ails you?

DE GUICHE:

You must leave this place!

ROXANE:

I?

CYRANO:

And that instantly!

LE BRET:

No time to lose.

CHRISTIAN:

Indeed, you must.

ROXANE:

But wherefore must I?

CHRISTIAN (embarrassed):

'Tis that. . .

CYRANO (the same):

--In three quarters of an hour. . .

DE GUICHE (the same):

--Or for. . .

CARBON (the same):

It were best. . .

LE BRET (the same):

You might. . .

ROXANE:

You are going to fight?--I stay here.

ALL:

No, no!

ROXANE:

He is my husband!

(She throws herself into Christian's arms):

They shall kill us both together!

CHRISTIAN:

Why do you look at me thus?

ROXANE:

I will tell you why!

DE GUICHE (in despair):

'Tis a post of mortal danger!

ROXANE (turning round):

Mortal danger!

CYRANO:

Proof enough, that he has put us here!

ROXANE (to De Guiche):

So, Sir, you would have made a widow of me?

DE GUICHE:

Nay, on my oath. . .

ROXANE:

I will not go! I am reckless now, and I shall not stir from here!--Besides, 'tis amusing!

CYRANO:

Oh-ho! So our precieuse is a heroine!

ROXANE:

Monsieur de Bergerac, I am your cousin.

A CADET:

We will defend you well!

ROXANE (more and more excited):

I have no fear of that, my friends!

ANOTHER (in ecstasy):

The whole camp smells sweet of orris-root!

ROXANE:

And, by good luck, I have chosen a hat that will suit well with the battlefield!

(Looking at De Guiche):

But were it not wisest that the Count retire?

They may begin the attack.

DE GUICHE:

That is not to be brooked! I go to inspect the cannon, and shall return. You have still time--think better of it!

ROXANE:

Never!

(De Guiche goes out.)

Scene 4.VI.

The same, all but De Guiche.

CHRISTIAN (entreatingly):
Roxane!

ROXANE:
No!

FIRST CADET (to the others):
She stays!

ALL (hurrying, hustling each other, tidying themselves):
A comb!--Soap!--My uniform is torn!--A needle!--A ribbon!--Lend your
mirror!--My cuffs!--Your curling-iron!--A razor!. . .

ROXANE (to Cyrano, who still pleads with her):
No! Naught shall make me stir from this spot!

CARBON (who, like the others, has been buckling, dusting, brushing his hat,
settling his plume, and drawing on his cuffs, advances to Roxane, and
ceremoniously):

It is perchance more seemly, since things are thus, that I present to you
some of these gentlemen who are about to have the honor of dying before your
eyes.

(Roxane bows, and stands leaning on Christian's arm, while Carbon introduces
the cadets to her):

Baron de Peyrescous de Colignac!

THE CADET (with a low reverence):
Madame. . .

CARBON (continuing):
Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac,--Vidame de Malgouyre Estressac Lesbas
d'Escarabiot, Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet, Baron Hillot de Blagnac-Salechan de
Castel Crabioules. . .

ROXANE:
But how many names have you each?

BARON HILLOT:
Scores!

CARBON (to Roxane):
Pray, upon the hand that holds your kerchief.

ROXANE (opens her hand, and the handkerchief falls):
Why?

(The whole company start forward to pick it up.)

CARBON (quickly raising it):

My company had no flag. But now, by my faith, they will have the fairest in all the camp!

ROXANE (smiling):

'Tis somewhat small.

CARBON (tying the handkerchief on the staff of his lance):

But--'tis of lace!

A CADET (to the rest):

I could die happy, having seen so sweet a face, if I had something in my stomach--were it but a nut!

CARBON (who has overheard, indignantly):

Shame on you! What, talk of eating when a lovely woman!. . .

ROXANE:

But your camp air is keen; I myself am famished. Pasties, cold fricassee, old wines--there is my bill of fare? Pray bring it all here.

(Consternation.)

A CADET:

All that?

ANOTHER:

But where on earth find it?

ROXANE (quietly):

In my carriage.

ALL:

How?

ROXANE:

Now serve up--carve! Look a little closer at my coachman, gentlemen, and you will recognize a man most welcome. All the sauces can be sent to table hot, if we will!

THE CADETS (rushing pellmell to the carriage):

'Tis Ragueneau!

(Acclamations):

Oh, oh!

ROXANE (looking after them):

Poor fellows!

CYRANO (kissing her hand):

Kind fairy!

RAGUENEAU (standing on the box like a quack doctor at a fair):

Gentlemen!. . .

(General delight.)

THE CADETS:

Bravo! bravo!

RAGUENEAU:

. . .The Spaniards, gazing on a lady so dainty fair, overlooked the fare so dainty! . . .

(Applause.)

CYRANO (in a whisper to Christian):

Hark, Christian!

RAGUENEAU:

. . .And, occupied with gallantry, perceived not--
(His draws a plate from under the seat, and holds it up):
--The galantine! . . .

(Applause. The galantine passes from hand to hand.)

CYRANO (still whispering to Christian):

Prythee, one word!

RAGUENEAU:

And Venus so attracted their eyes that Diana could secretly pass by with--
(He holds up a shoulder of mutton):
--her fawn!

(Enthusiasm. Twenty hands are held out to seize the shoulder of mutton.)

CYRANO (in a low whisper to Christian):

I must speak to you!

ROXANE (to the cadets, who come down, their arms laden with food):

Put it all on the ground!

(She lays all out on the grass, aided by the two imperturbable lackeys who were behind the carriage.)

ROXANE (to Christian, just as Cyrano is drawing him apart):

Come, make yourself of use!

(Christian comes to help her. Cyrano's uneasiness increases.)

RAGUENEAU:

Truffled peacock!

FIRST CADET (radiant, coming down, cutting a big slice of ham):

By the mass! We shall not brave the last hazard without having had a gullet-full!--

(quickly correcting himself on seeing Roxane):

--Pardon! A Balthazar feast!

RAGUENEAU (throwing down the carriage cushions):

The cushions are stuffed with ortolans!

(Hubbub. They tear open and turn out the contents of the cushions. Bursts of laughter--merriment.)

THIRD CADET:

Ah! Viedaze!

RAGUENEAU (throwing down to the cadets bottles of red wine):

Flasks of rubies!--

(and white wine):

--Flasks of topaz!

ROXANE (throwing a folded tablecloth at Cyrano's head):

Unfold me that napkin!--Come, come! be nimble!

RAGUENEAU (waving a lantern):

Each of the carriage-lamps is a little larder!

CYRANO (in a low voice to Christian, as they arrange the cloth together):

I must speak with you ere you speak to her.

RAGUENEAU:

My whip-handle is an Arles sausage!

ROXANE (pouring out wine, helping):

Since we are to die, let the rest of the army shift for itself. All for the Gascons! And mark! if De Guiche comes, let no one invite him!

(Going from one to the other):

There! there! You have time enough! Do not eat too fast!--Drink a little.-
-Why are you crying?

FIRST CADET:

It is all so good!. . .

ROXANE:

Tut!--Red or white?--Some bread for Monsieur de Carbon!--a knife! Pass your plate!--a little of the crust? Some more? Let me help you!--Some champagne?--A wing?

CYRANO (who follows her, his arms laden with dishes, helping her to wait on everybody):

How I worship her!

ROXANE (going up to Christian):

What will you?

CHRISTIAN:

Nothing.

ROXANE:

Nay, nay, take this biscuit, steeped in muscat; come!. . .but two drops!

CHRISTIAN (trying to detain her):

Oh! tell me why you came?

ROXANE:

Wait; my first duty is to these poor fellows.--Hush! In a few minutes. . .

LE BRET (who had gone up to pass a loaf on the end of a lance to the sentry on the rampart):

De Guiche!

CYRANO:

Quick! hide flasks, plates, pie-dishes, game-baskets! Hurry!--Let us all look unconscious!

(To Ragueneau):

Up on your seat!--Is everything covered up?

(In an instant all has been pushed into the tents, or hidden under doublets, cloaks, and beavers. De Guiche enters hurriedly--stops suddenly, sniffing the air. Silence.)

Scene 4.VII.

The same. De Guiche.

DE GUICHE:

It smells good here.

A CADET (humming):

Lo! Lo-lo!

DE GUICHE (looking at him):

What is the matter?--You are very red.

THE CADET:

The matter?--Nothing!--'Tis my blood--boiling at the thought of the coming battle!

ANOTHER:

Poum, poum--poum. . .

DE GUICHE (turning round):

What's that?

THE CADET (slightly drunk):

Nothing!. . .'Tis a song!--a little. . .

DE GUICHE:

You are merry, my friend!

THE CADET:

The approach of danger is intoxicating!

DE GUICHE (calling Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, to give him an order):

Captain! I . . .

(He stops short on seeing him):

Plague take me! but you look bravely, too!

CARBON (crimson in the face, hiding a bottle behind his back, with an evasive movement):

Oh! . . .

DE GUICHE:

I have one cannon left, and have had it carried there--
(he points behind the scenes):
--in that corner. . . Your men can use it in case of need.

A CADET (reeling slightly):

Charming attention!

ANOTHER (with a gracious smile):

Kind solicitude!

DE GUICHE:

How? they are all gone crazy?
(Drily):
As you are not used to cannon, beware of the recoil.

FIRST CADET:

Pooh!

DE GUICHE (furious, going up to him):

But. . .

THE CADET:

Gascon cannons never recoil!

DE GUICHE (taking him by the arm and shaking him):

You are tipsy!--but what with?

THE CADET (grandiloquently):

--With the smell of powder!

DE GUICHE (shrugging his shoulders and pushing him away, then going quickly to Roxane):

Briefly, Madame, what decision do you deign to take?

ROXANE:

I stay here.

DE GUICHE:

You must fly!

ROXANE:

No! I will stay.

DE GUICHE:

Since things are thus, give me a musket, one of you!

CARBON:

Wherefore?

DE GUICHE:

Because I too--mean to remain.

CYRANO:

At last! This is true valor, Sir!

FIRST CADET:

Then you are Gascon after all, spite of your lace collar?

ROXANE:

What is all this?

DE GUICHE:

I leave no woman in peril.

SECOND CADET (to the first):

Hark you! Think you not we might give him something to eat?

(All the viands reappear as if by magic.)

DE GUICHE (whose eyes sparkle):

Victuals!

THE THIRD CADET:

Yes, you'll see them coming from under every coat!

DE GUICHE (controlling himself, haughtily):

Do you think I will eat your leavings?

CYRANO (saluting him):

You make progress.

DE GUICHE (proudly, with a light touch of accent on the word 'breaking'):

I will fight without br-r-eaking my fast!

FIRST CADET (with wild delight):

Br-r-r-eaking! He has got the accent!

DE GUICHE (laughing):

I?

THE CADET:

'Tis a Gascon!

(All begin to dance.)

CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX (who had disappeared behind the rampart, reappearing on the ridge):

I have drawn my pikemen up in line. They are a resolute troop.

(He points to a row of pikes, the tops of which are seen over the ridge.)

DE GUICHE (bowing to Roxane):

Will you accept my hand, and accompany me while I review them?

(She takes it, and they go up toward the rampart. All uncover and follow them.)

CHRISTIAN (going to Cyrano, eagerly):

Tell me quickly!

(As Roxane appears on the ridge, the tops of the lances disappear, lowered for the salute, and a shout is raised. She bows.)

THE PIKEMEN (outside):

Vivat!

CHRISTIAN:

What is this secret?

CYRANO:

If Roxane should. . .

CHRISTIAN:

Should?. . .

CYRANO:

Speak of the letters?. . .

CHRISTIAN:

Yes, I know!. . .

CYRANO:

Do not spoil all by seeming surprised. . .

CHRISTIAN:

At what?

CYRANO:

I must explain to you!. . .Oh! 'tis no great matter--I but thought of it to-day on seeing her. You have. . .

CHRISTIAN:

Tell quickly!

CYRANO:

You have. . .written to her oftener than you think. . .

CHRISTIAN:

How so?

CYRANO:

Thus, 'faith! I had taken it in hand to express your flame for you!. . .At times I wrote without saying, 'I am writing!'

CHRISTIAN:

Ah!. . .

CYRANO:

'Tis simple enough!

CHRISTIAN:

But how did you contrive, since we have been cut off, thus. . .to?. . .

CYRANO:

. . .Oh! before dawn. . .I was able to get through. . .

CHRISTIAN (folding his arms):

That was simple, too? And how oft, pray you, have I written? . . . Twice in the week? . . . Three times? . . . Four? . . .

CYRANO:

More often still.

CHRISTIAN:

What! Every day?

CYRANO:

Yes, every day,--twice.

CHRISTIAN (violently):

And that became so mad a joy for you, that you braved death. . .

CYRANO (seeing Roxane returning):

Hush! Not before her!

(He goes hurriedly into his tent.)

Scene 4.VIII.

Roxane, Christian. In the distance cadets coming and going. Carbon and De Guiche give orders.

ROXANE (running up to Christian):

Ah, Christian, at last! . . .

CHRISTIAN (taking her hands):

Now tell me why--

Why, by these fearful paths so perilous--

Across these ranks of ribald soldiery,

You have come?

ROXANE:

Love, your letters brought me here!

CHRISTIAN:

What say you?

ROXANE:

'Tis your fault if I ran risks!

Your letters turned my head! Ah! all this month,

How many!--and the last one ever bettered

The one that went before!

CHRISTIAN:

What!--for a few

Inconsequent love-letters!

ROXANE:

Hold your peace!

Ah! you cannot conceive it! Ever since
That night, when, in a voice all new to me,
Under my window you revealed your soul--
Ah! ever since I have adored you! Now
Your letters all this whole month long!--meseemed
As if I heard that voice so tender, true,
Sheltering, close! Thy fault, I say! It drew me,
The voice o' th' night! Oh! wise Penelope
Would ne'er have stayed to broider on her hearthstone,
If her Ulysses could have writ such letters!
But would have cast away her silken bobbins,
And fled to join him, mad for love as Helen!

CHRISTIAN:

But. . .

ROXANE:

I read, read again--grew faint for love;
I was thine utterly. Each separate page
Was like a fluttering flower-petal, loosed
From your own soul, and wafted thus to mine.
Imprinted in each burning word was love
Sincere, all-powerful. . .

CHRISTIAN:

A love sincere!
Can that be felt, Roxane!

ROXANE:

Ay, that it can!

CHRISTIAN:

You come. . .?

ROXANE:

O, Christian, my true lord, I come--
(Were I to throw myself, here, at your knees,
You would raise me--but 'tis my soul I lay
At your feet--you can raise it nevermore!)
--I come to crave your pardon. (Ay, 'tis time
To sue for pardon, now that death may come!)
For the insult done to you when, frivolous,
At first I loved you only for your face!

CHRISTIAN (horror-stricken):

Roxane!

ROXANE:

And later, love--less frivolous--
Like a bird that spreads its wings, but can not fly--
Arrested by your beauty, by your soul
Drawn close--I loved for both at once!

CHRISTIAN:

And now?

ROXANE:

Ah! you yourself have triumphed o'er yourself,
And now, I love you only for your soul!

CHRISTIAN (stepping backward):

Roxane!

ROXANE:

Be happy. To be loved for beauty--
A poor disguise that time so soon wears threadbare--
Must be to noble souls--to souls aspiring--
A torture. Your dear thoughts have now effaced
That beauty that so won me at the outset.
Now I see clearer--and I no more see it!

CHRISTIAN:

Oh!. . .

ROXANE:

You are doubtful of such victory?

CHRISTIAN (pained):

Roxane!

ROXANE:

I see you cannot yet believe it.
Such love. . .?

CHRISTIAN:

I do not ask such love as that!
I would be loved more simply; for. . .

ROXANE:

For that
Which they have all in turns loved in thee?--
Shame!
Oh! be loved henceforth in a better way!

CHRISTIAN:

No! the first love was best!

ROXANE:

Ah! how you err!
'Tis now that I love best--love well! 'Tis that
Which is thy true self, see!--that I adore!
Were your brilliance dimmed. . .

CHRISTIAN:

Hush!

ROXANE:

I should love still!
Ay, if your beauty should to-day depart. . .

CHRISTIAN:

Say not so!

ROXANE:

Ay, I say it!

CHRISTIAN:

Ugly? How?

ROXANE:

Ugly! I swear I'd love you still!

CHRISTIAN:

My God!

ROXANE:

Are you content at last?

CHRISTIAN (in a choked voice):

Ay! . . .

ROXANE:

What is wrong?

CHRISTIAN (gently pushing her away):

Nothing. . . I have two words to say:--one second. . .

ROXANE:

But? . . .

CHRISTIAN (pointing to the cadets):

Those poor fellows, shortly doomed to death,--

My love deprives them of the sight of you:

Go,--speak to them--smile on them ere they die!

ROXANE (deeply affected):

Dear Christian! . . .

(She goes up to the cadets, who respectfully crowd round her.)

Scene 4.IX.

Christian, Cyrano. At back Roxane talking to Carbon and some cadets.

CHRISTIAN (calling toward Cyrano's tent):

Cyrano!

CYRANO (reappearing, fully armed):

What? Why so pale?

CHRISTIAN:

She does not love me!

CYRANO:

What?

CHRISTIAN:

'Tis you she loves!

CYRANO:

No!

CHRISTIAN:

--For she loves me only for my soul!

CYRANO:

Truly?

CHRISTIAN:

Yes! Thus--you see, that soul is you,. . .

Therefore, 'tis you she loves!--And you--love her!

CYRANO:

I?

CHRISTIAN:

Oh, I know it!

CYRANO:

Ay, 'tis true!

CHRISTIAN:

You love

To madness!

CYRANO:

Ay! and worse!

CHRISTIAN:

Then tell her so!

CYRANO:

No!

CHRISTIAN:

And why not?

CYRANO:

Look at my face!--be answered!

CHRISTIAN:

She'd love me--were I ugly.

CYRANO:

Said she so?

CHRISTIAN:

Ay! in those words!

CYRANO:

I'm glad she told you that!

But pooh!--believe it not! I am well pleased

She thought to tell you. Take it not for truth.
Never grow ugly:--she'd reproach me then!

CHRISTIAN:

That I intend discovering!

CYRANO:

No! I beg!

CHRISTIAN:

Ay! she shall choose between us!--Tell her all!

CYRANO:

No! no! I will not have it! Spare me this!

CHRISTIAN:

Because my face is haply fair, shall I
Destroy your happiness? 'Twere too unjust!

CYRANO:

And I,--because by Nature's freak I have
The gift to say--all that perchance you feel.
Shall I be fatal to your happiness?

CHRISTIAN:

Tell all!

CYRANO:

It is ill done to tempt me thus!

CHRISTIAN:

Too long I've borne about within myself
A rival to myself--I'll make an end!

CYRANO:

Christian!

CHRISTIAN:

Or union, without witness--secret--
Clandestine--can be easily dissolved
If we survive.

CYRANO:

My God!--he still persists!

CHRISTIAN:

I will be loved myself--or not at all!
--I'll go see what they do--there, at the end
Of the post: speak to her, and then let her choose
One of us two!

CYRANO:

It will be you.

CHRISTIAN:

Pray God!

(He calls):
Roxane!

CYRANO:
No! no!

ROXANE (coming up quickly):
What?

CHRISTIAN:
Cyrano has things
Important for your ear. . .

(She hastens to Cyrano. Christian goes out.)

Scene 4.X.

Roxane, Cyrano. Then Le Bret, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, the cadets, Ragueneau, De Guiche, etc.

ROXANE:
Important, how?

CYRANO (in despair. to Roxane):
He's gone! 'Tis naught!--Oh, you know how he sees
Importance in a trifle!

ROXANE (warmly):
Did he doubt
Of what I said?--Ah, yes, I saw he doubted!

CYRANO (taking her hand):
But are you sure you told him all the truth?

ROXANE:
Yes, I would love him were he. . .

(She hesitates.)

CYRANO:
Does that word
Embarrass you before my face, Roxane?

ROXANE:
I. . .

CYRANO (smiling sadly):
'Twill not hurt me! Say it! If he were
Ugly! . . .

ROXANE:
Yes, ugly!
(Musket report outside):
Hark! I hear a shot!

CYRANO (ardently):
Hideous!

ROXANE:
Hideous! yes!

CYRANO:
Disfigured.

ROXANE:
Ay!

CYRANO:
Grotesque?

ROXANE:
He could not be grotesque to me!

CYRANO:
You'd love the same? . . .

ROXANE:
The same--nay, even more!

CYRANO (losing command over himself--aside):
My God! it's true, perchance, love waits me there!
(To Roxane):
I . . . Roxane. . . listen. . .

LE BRET (entering hurriedly--to Cyrano):
Cyrano!

CYRANO (turning round):
What?

LE BRET:
Hush!

(He whispers something to him.)

CYRANO (letting go Roxane's hand and exclaiming):
Ah, God!

ROXANE:
What is it?

CYRANO (to himself--stunned):
All is over now.

(Renewed reports.)

ROXANE:
What is the matter? Hark! another shot!

(She goes up to look outside.)

CYRANO:

It is too late, now I can never tell!

ROXANE (trying to rush out):

What has chanced?

CYRANO (rushing to stop her):

Nothing!

(Some cadets enter, trying to hide something they are carrying, and close round it to prevent Roxane approaching.)

ROXANE:

And those men?

(Cyrano draws her away):

What were you just about to say before. . .?

CYRANO:

What was I saying? Nothing now, I swear!

(Solemnly):

I swear that Christian's soul, his nature, were. . .

(Hastily correcting himself):

Nay, that they are, the noblest, greatest. . .

ROXANE:

Were?

(With a loud scream):

Oh!

(She rushes up, pushing every one aside.)

CYRANO:

All is over now!

ROXANE (seeing Christian lying on the ground, wrapped in his cloak):

O Christian!

LE BRET (to Cyrano):

Struck by first shot of the enemy!

(Roxane flings herself down by Christian. Fresh reports of cannon--clash of arms--clamor--beating of drums.)

CARBON (with sword in the air):

O come! Your muskets.

(Followed by the cadets, he passes to the other side of the ramparts.)

ROXANE:

Christian!

THE VOICE OF CARBON (from the other side):

Ho! make haste!

ROXANE:

Christian!

CARBON:
FORM LINE!

ROXANE:
Christian!

CARBON:
HANDLE YOUR MATCH!

(Ragueneau rushes up, bringing water in a helmet.)

CHRISTIAN (in a dying voice):
Roxane!

CYRANO (quickly, whispering into Christian's ear, while Roxane distractedly tears a piece of linen from his breast, which she dips into the water, trying to stanch the bleeding):
I told her all. She loves you still.

(Christian closes his eyes.)

ROXANE:
How, my sweet love?

CARBON:
DRAW RAMRODS!

ROXANE (to Cyrano):
He is not dead?

CARBON:
OPEN YOUR CHARGES WITH YOUR TEETH!

ROXANE:
His cheek
Grows cold against my own!

CARBON:
READY! PRESENT!

ROXANE (seeing a letter in Christian's doublet):
A letter!. . .
'Tis for me!

(She opens it.)

CYRANO (aside):
My letter!

CARBON:
FIRE!

(Musket reports--shouts--noise of battle.)

CYRANO (trying to disengage his hand, which Roxane on her knees is holding):

But, Roxane, hark, they fight!

ROXANE (detaining him):

Stay yet awhile.

For he is dead. You knew him, you alone.

(Weeping quietly):

Ah, was not his a beauteous soul, a soul

Wondrous!

CYRANO (standing up--bareheaded):

Ay, Roxane.

ROXANE:

An inspired poet?

CYRANO:

Ay, Roxane.

ROXANE:

And a mind sublime?

CYRANO:

Oh, yes!

ROXANE:

A heart too deep for common minds to plumb,

A spirit subtle, charming?

CYRANO (firmly):

Ay, Roxane.

ROXANE (flinging herself on the dead body):

Dead, my love!

CYRANO (aside--drawing his sword):

Ay, and let me die to-day,

Since, all unconscious, she mourns me--in him!

(Sounds of trumpets in the distance.)

DE GUICHE (appearing on the ramparts--bareheaded--with a wound on his forehead--in a voice of thunder):

It is the signal! Trumpet flourishes!

The French bring the provisions into camp!

Hold but the place awhile!

ROXANE:

See, there is blood

Upon the letter--tears!

A VOICE (outside--shouting):

Surrender!

VOICE OF CADETS:

No!

RAGUENEAU (standing on the top of his carriage, watches the battle over the edge of the ramparts):

The danger's ever greater!

CYRANO (to De Guiche--pointing to Roxane):

I will charge!

Take her away!

ROXANE (kissing the letter--in a half-extinguished voice):

O God! his tears! his blood!. . .

RAGUENEAU (jumping down from the carriage and rushing toward her):

She's swooned away!

DE GUICHE (on the rampart--to the cadets--with fury):

Stand fast!

A VOICE (outside):

Lay down your arms!

THE CADETS:

No!

CYRANO (to De Guiche):

Now that you have proved your valor, Sir,

(Pointing to Roxane):

Fly, and save her!

DE GUICHE (rushing to Roxane, and carrying her away in his arms):

So be it! Gain but time,

The victory's ours!

CYRANO:

Good.

(Calling out to Roxane, whom De Guiche, aided by Ragueneau, is bearing away in a fainting condition):

Farewell, Roxane!

(Tumult. Shouts. Cadets reappear, wounded, falling on the scene. Cyrano, rushing to the battle, is stopped by Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, who is streaming with blood.)

CARBON:

We are breaking! I am wounded--wounded twice!

CYRANO (shouting to the Gascons):

GASCONS! HO, GASCONS! NEVER TURN YOUR BACKS!

(To Carbon, whom he is supporting):

Have no fear! I have two deaths to avenge:

My friend who's slain;--and my dead happiness!

(They come down, Cyrano brandishing the lance to which is attached Roxane's handkerchief):

Float there! laced kerchief brodered with her name!

(He sticks it in the ground and shouts to the cadets):

FALL ON THEM, GASCONS! CRUSH THEM!

(To the fifer):

Fifer, play!

(The fife plays. The wounded try to rise. Some cadets, falling one over the other down the slope, group themselves round Cyrano and the little flag. The carriage is crowded with men inside and outside, and, bristling with arquebuses, is turned into a fortress.)

A CADET (appearing on the crest, beaten backward, but still fighting, cries):

They're climbing the redoubt!

(and falls dead.)

CYRANO:

Let us salute them!

(The rampart is covered instantly by a formidable row of enemies. The standards of the Imperialists are raised):

Fire!

(General discharge.)

A CRY IN THE ENEMY'S RANKS:

Fire!

(A deadly answering volley. The cadets fall on all sides.)

A SPANISH OFFICER (uncovering):

Who are these men who rush on death?

CYRANO (reciting, erect, amid a storm of bullets):

The bold Cadets of Gascony,

Of Carbon of Castel-Jaloux!

Brawling, swaggering boastfully,

(He rushes forward, followed by a few survivors):

The bold Cadets. . .

(His voice is drowned in the battle.)

Curtain.

Act V.

Cyrano's Gazette.

Fifteen years later, in 1655. Park of the Sisters of the Holy Cross in Paris. Magnificent trees. On the left the house: broad steps on to which open several doors. An enormous plane tree in the middle of the stage, standing alone. On the right, among big boxwood trees, a semicircular stone bench.

The whole background of the stage is crossed by an alley of chestnut trees leading on the right hand to the door of a chapel seen through the branches. Through the double row of trees of this alley are seen lawns, other alleys, clusters of trees, winding of the park, the sky.

The chapel opens by a little side door on to a colonnade which is wreathed with autumn leaves, and is lost to view a little farther on in the right-hand foreground behind the boxwood.

It is autumn. All the foliage is red against the fresh green of the lawns. The green boxwood and yews stand out dark.

Under each tree a patch of yellow leaves.

The stage is strewn with dead leaves, which rustle under foot in the alleys, and half cover the steps and benches.

Between the benches on the right hand and the tree a large embroidery frame, in front of which a little chair has been set.

Baskets full of skeins and balls of wool. A tapestry begun.

At the rising of the curtains nuns are walking to and fro in the park; some are seated on the bench around an older Sister.

The leaves are falling.

Scene 5.I.

Mother Marguerite, Sister Martha, Sister Claire, other sisters.

SISTER MARTHA (to Mother Marguerite):

Sister Claire glanced in the mirror, once--nay, twice, to see if her coif suited.

MOTHER MARGUERITE (to Sister Claire):

'Tis not well.

SISTER CLAIRE:

But I saw Sister Martha take a plum
Out of the tart.

MOTHER MARGUERITE (to Sister Martha):

That was ill done, my sister.

SISTER CLAIRE:

A little glance!

SISTER MARTHA:

And such a little plum!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

I shall tell this to Monsieur Cyrano.

SISTER CLAIRE:

Nay, prithee do not!--he will mock!

SISTER MARTHA:

He'll say we nuns are vain!

SISTER CLAIRE:

And greedy!

MOTHER MARGUERITE (smiling):

Ay, and kind!

SISTER CLAIRE:

Is it not true, pray, Mother Marguerite,
That he has come, each week, on Saturday
For ten years, to the convent?

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

Ay! and more!
Ever since--fourteen years ago--the day
His cousin brought here, 'midst our woolen coifs,
The worldly mourning of her widow's veil,
Like a blackbird's wing among the convent doves!

SISTER MARTHA:

He only has the skill to turn her mind
From grief--unsoftened yet by Time--unhealed!

ALL THE SISTERS:

He is so droll!--It's cheerful when he comes!--
He teases us!--But we all like him well!--
--We make him pasties of angelica!

SISTER MARTHA:

But, he is not a faithful Catholic!

SISTER CLAIRE:

We will convert him!

THE SISTERS:

Yes! Yes!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

I forbid,
My daughters, you attempt that subject. Nay,
Weary him not--he might less oft come here!

SISTER MARTHA:

But. . .God. . .

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

Nay, never fear! God knows him well!

SISTER MARTHA:

But--every Saturday, when he arrives,
He tells me, 'Sister, I eat meat on Friday!'

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

Ah! says he so? Well, the last time he came
Food had not passed his lips for two whole days!

SISTER MARTHA:

Mother!

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

He's poor.

SISTER MARTHA:

Who told you so, dear Mother?

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHA:

None help him?

MOTHER MARGUERITE:

He permits not.

(In an alley at the back Roxane appears, dressed in black, with a widow's coif and veil. De Guiche, imposing-looking and visibly aged, walks by her side.

They saunter slowly. Mother Marguerite rises):

'Tis time we go in; Madame Madeleine

Walks in the garden with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHA (to Sister Claire, in a low voice):

The Marshal of Grammont?

SISTER CLAIRE (looking at him):

'Tis he, I think.

SISTER MARTHA:

'Tis many months now since he came to see her.

THE SISTERS:

He is so busy!--The Court,--the camp!. . .

SISTER CLAIRE:

The world!

(They go out. De Guiche and Roxane come forward in silence, and stop close to the embroidery frame.)

Scene 5.II.

Roxane; the Duke de Grammont, formerly Count de Guiche. Then Le Bret and Ragueneau.

THE DUKE:

And you stay here still--ever vainly fair,
Ever in weeds?

ROXANE:

Ever.

THE DUKE:

Still faithful?

ROXANE:

Still.

THE DUKE (after a pause):

Am I forgiven?

ROXANE:

Ay, since I am here.

(Another pause.)

THE DUKE:

His was a soul, you say?. . .

ROXANE:

Ah!--when you knew him!

THE DUKE:

Ah, may be! . . .I, perchance, too little knew him!

. . .And his last letter, ever next your heart?

ROXANE:

Hung from this chain, a gentle scapulary.

THE DUKE:

And, dead, you love him still?

ROXANE:

At times,--meseems

He is but partly dead--our hearts still speak,

As if his love, still living, wrapped me round!

THE DUKE (after another pause):

Cyrano comes to see you?

ROXANE:

Often, ay.

Dear, kind old friend! We call him my 'Gazette.'

He never fails to come: beneath this tree

They place his chair, if it be fine:--I wait,

I broider;--the clock strikes;--at the last stroke

I hear,--for now I never turn to look--

Too sure to hear his cane tap down the steps;

He seats himself:--with gentle raillery

He mocks my tapestry that's never done;

He tells me all the gossip of the week. . .

(Le Bret appears on the steps):

Why, here's Le Bret!

(Le Bret descends):

How goes it with our friend?

LE BRET:

Ill!--very ill.

THE DUKE:

How?

ROXANE (to the Duke):

He exaggerates!

LE BRET:

All that I prophesied: desertion, want!. . .
His letters now make him fresh enemies!--
Attacking the sham nobles, sham devout,
Sham brave,--the thieving authors,--all the world!

ROXANE:

Ah! but his sword still holds them all in check;
None get the better of him.

THE DUKE (shaking his head):

Time will show!

LE BRET:

Ah, but I fear for him--not man's attack,--
Solitude--hunger--cold December days,
That wolf-like steal into his chamber drear:--
Lo! the assassins that I fear for him!
Each day he tightens by one hole his belt:
That poor nose--tinted like old ivory:
He has retained one shabby suit of serge.

THE DUKE:

Ay, there is one who has no prize of Fortune!--
Yet is not to be pitied!

LE BRET (with a bitter smile):

My Lord Marshal!. . .

THE DUKE:

Pity him not! He has lived out his vows,
Free in his thoughts, as in his actions free!

LE BRET (in the same tone):

My Lord!. . .

THE DUKE (haughtily):

True! I have all, and he has naught;. . .
Yet I were proud to take his hand!

(Bowing to Roxane):

Adieu!

ROXANE:

I go with you.

(The Duke bows to Le Bret, and goes with Roxane toward the steps.)

THE DUKE (pausing, while she goes up):

Ay, true,--I envy him.
Look you, when life is brimful of success

--Though the past hold no action foul--one feels
A thousand self-disgusts, of which the sum
Is not remorse, but a dim, vague unrest;
And, as one mounts the steps of worldly fame,
The Duke's furred mantles trail within their folds
A sound of dead illusions, vain regrets,
A rustle--scarce a whisper--like as when,
Mounting the terrace steps, by your mourning robe
Sweeps in its train the dying autumn leaves.

ROXANE (ironically):
You are pensive?

THE DUKE:
True! I am!
(As he is going out, suddenly):
Monsieur Le Bret!
(To Roxane):
A word, with your permission?
(He goes to Le Bret, and in a low voice):
True, that none
Dare to attack your friend;--but many hate him;
Yesterday, at the Queen's card-play, 'twas said
'That Cyrano may die--by accident!'
Let him stay in--be prudent!

LE BRET (raising his arms to heaven):
Prudent! He!. . .
He's coming here. I'll warn him--but!. . .

ROXANE (who has stayed on the steps, to a sister who comes toward her):
What is it?

THE SISTER:
Ragueneau would see you, Madame.

ROXANE:
Let him come.
(To the Duke and Le Bret):
He comes to tell his troubles. Having been
An author (save the mark!)--poor fellow--now
By turns he's singer. . .

LE BRET:
Bathing-man. . .

ROXANE:
Then actor. . .

LE BRET:
Beadle. . .

ROXANE:
Wig-maker. . .

LE BRET:

Teacher of the lute. . .

ROXANE:

What will he be to-day, by chance?

RAGUENEAU (entering hurriedly):

Ah! Madame!

(He sees Le Bret):

Ah! you here, Sir!

ROXANE (smiling):

Tell all your miseries

To him; I will return anon.

RAGUENEAU:

But, Madame. . .

(Roxane goes out with the Duke. Ragueneau goes toward Le Bret.)

Scene 5.III.

Le Bret, Ragueneau.

RAGUENEAU:

Since you are here, 'tis best she should not know!

I was going to your friend just now--was but

A few steps from the house, when I saw him

Go out. I hurried to him. Saw him turn

The corner. . .suddenly, from out a window

Where he was passing--was it chance?. . .may be!

A lackey let fall a large piece of wood.

LE BRET:

Cowards! O Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU:

I ran--I saw. . .

LE BRET:

'Tis hideous!

RAGUENEAU:

Saw our poet, Sir--our friend--

Struck to the ground--a large wound in his head!

LE BRET:

He's dead?

RAGUENEAU:

No--but--I bore him to his room. . .

Ah! his room! What a thing to see!--that garret!

LE BRET:

He suffers?

RAGUENEAU:

No, his consciousness has flown.

LE BRET:

Saw you a doctor?

RAGUENEAU:

One was kind--he came.

LE BRET:

My poor Cyrano!--We must not tell this

To Roxane suddenly.--What said this leech?--

RAGUENEAU:

Said,--what, I know not--fever, meningitis!--

Ah! could you see him--all his head bound up!--

But let us haste!--There's no one by his bed!--

And if he try to rise, Sir, he might die!

LE BRET (dragging him toward the right):

Come! Through the chapel! 'Tis the quickest way!

ROXANE (appearing on the steps, and seeing Le Bret go away by the colonnade leading to the chapel door):

Monsieur le Bret!

(Le Bret and Ragueneau disappear without answering):

Le Bret goes--when I call!

'Tis some new trouble of good Ragueneau's.

(She descends the steps.)

Scene 5.IV.

Roxane alone. Two sisters, for a moment.

ROXANE:

Ah! what a beauty in September's close!

My sorrow's eased. April's joy dazzled it,

But autumn wins it with her dying calm.

(She seats herself at the embroidery frame. Two sisters come out of the house, and bring a large armchair under the tree):

There comes the famous armchair where he sits,

Dear faithful friend!

SISTER MARTHA:

It is the parlor's best!

ROXANE:

Thanks, sister.

(The sisters go):

He'll be here now.

(She seats herself. A clock strikes):

The hour strikes.

--My silks?--Why, now, the hour's struck!
How strange
To be behind his time, at last, to-day!
Perhaps the portress--where's my thimble?. . .
Here!--Is preaching to him.
(A pause):
Yes, she must be preaching!
Surely he must come soon!--Ah, a dead leaf!--
(She brushes off the leaf from her work):
Nothing, besides, could--scissors?--In my bag!
--Could hinder him. . .

A SISTER (coming to the steps):
Monsieur de Bergerac.

Scene 5.V.

Roxane, Cyrano and, for a moment, Sister Martha.

ROXANE (without turning round):
What was I saying?. . .
(She embroiders. Cyrano, very pale, his hat pulled down over his eyes, appears. The sister who had announced him retires. He descends the steps slowly, with a visible difficulty in holding himself upright, bearing heavily on his cane. Roxane still works at her tapestry):
Time has dimmed the tints. . .
How harmonize them now?
(To Cyrano, with playful reproach):
For the first time
Late!--For the first time, all these fourteen years!

CYRANO (who has succeeded in reaching the chair, and has seated himself--in a lively voice, which is in great contrast with his pale face):
Ay! It is villainous! I raged--was stayed. . .

ROXANE:
By?. . .

CYRANO:
By a bold, unwelcome visitor.

ROXANE (absently, working):
Some creditor?

CYRANO:
Ay, cousin,--the last creditor
Who has a debt to claim from me.

ROXANE:
And you
Have paid it?

CYRANO:
No, not yet! I put it off;

--Said, 'Cry you mercy; this is Saturday,
When I have get a standing rendezvous
That naught defers. Call in an hour's time!'

ROXANE (carelessly):

Oh, well, a creditor can always wait!
I shall not let you go ere twilight falls.

CYRANO:

Haply, perforce, I quit you ere it falls!

(He shuts his eyes, and is silent for a moment. Sister Martha crosses the park from the chapel to the flight of steps. Roxane, seeing her, signs to her to approach.)

ROXANE (to Cyrano):

How now? You have not teased the Sister?

CYRANO (hastily opening his eyes):

True!

(In a comically loud voice):

Sister! come here!

(The sister glides up to him):

Ha! ha! What? Those bright eyes
Bent ever on the ground?

SISTER MARTHA (who makes a movement of astonishment on seeing his face):

Oh!

CYRANO (in a whisper, pointing to Roxane):

Hush! 'tis naught!--

(Loudly, in a blustering voice):

I broke fast yesterday!

SISTER MARTHA (aside):

I know, I know!

That's how he is so pale! Come presently
To the refectory, I'll make you drink
A famous bowl of soup. . . You'll come?

CYRANO:

Ay, ay!

SISTER MARTHA:

There, see! You are more reasonable to-day!

ROXANE (who hears them whispering):

The Sister would convert you?

SISTER MARTHA:

Nay, not I!

CYRANO:

Hold! but it's true! You preach to me no more,
You, once so glib with holy words! I am
Astonished! . . .

(With burlesque fury):

Stay, I will surprise you too!

Hark! I permit you. . .

(He pretends to be seeking for something to tease her with, and to have found it):

. . .It is something new!--

To--pray for me, to-night, at chapel-time!

ROXANE:

Oh! oh!

CYRANO (laughing):

Good Sister Martha is struck dumb!

SISTER MARTHA (gently):

I did not wait your leave to pray for you.

(She goes out.)

CYRANO (turning to Roxane, who is still bending over her work):

That tapestry! Beshrew me if my eyes

Will ever see it finished!

ROXANE:

I was sure

To hear that well-known jest!

(A light breeze causes the leaves to fall.)

CYRANO:

The autumn leaves!

ROXANE (lifting her head, and looking down the distant alley):

Soft golden brown, like a Venetian's hair.

--See how they fall!

CYRANO:

Ay, see how brave they fall,

In their last journey downward from the bough,

To rot within the clay; yet, lovely still,

Hiding the horror of the last decay,

With all the wayward grace of careless flight!

ROXANE:

What, melancholy--you?

CYRANO (collecting himself):

Nay, nay, Roxane!

ROXANE:

Then let the dead leaves fall the way they will. . .

And chat. What, have you nothing new to tell,

My Court Gazette?

CYRANO:

Listen.

ROXANE:

Ah!

CYRANO (growing whiter and whiter):

Saturday

The nineteenth: having eaten to excess

Of pear-serve, the King felt feverish;

The lancet quelled this treasonable revolt,

And the august pulse beats at normal pace.

At the Queen's ball on Sunday thirty score

Of best white waxen tapers were consumed.

Our troops, they say, have chased the Austrians.

Four sorcerers were hanged. The little dog

Of Madame d'Athis took a dose. . .

ROXANE:

I bid

You hold your tongue, Monsieur de Bergerac!

CYRANO:

Monday--not much--Claire changed protector.

ROXANE:

Oh!

CYRANO (whose face changes more and more):

Tuesday, the Court repaired to Fontainebleau.

Wednesday, the Montglat said to Comte de Fiesque. . .

No! Thursday--Mancini, Queen of France! (almost!)

Friday, the Monglat to Count Fiesque said--'Yes!'

And Saturday the twenty-sixth. . .

(He closes his eyes. His head falls forward. Silence.)

ROXANE (surprised at his voice ceasing, turns round, looks at him, and rising, terrified):

He swoons!

(She runs toward him crying):

Cyrano!

CYRANO (opening his eyes, in an unconcerned voice):

What is this?

(He sees Roxane bending over him, and, hastily pressing his hat on his head, and shrinking back in his chair):

Nay, on my word

'Tis nothing! Let me be!

ROXANE:

But. . .

CYRANO:

That old wound

Of Arras, sometimes,--as you know. . .

ROXANE:

Dear friend!

CYRANO:

'Tis nothing, 'twill pass soon;
(He smiles with an effort):
See!--it has passed!

ROXANE:

Each of us has his wound; ay, I have mine,--
Never healed up--not healed yet, my old wound!
(She puts her hand on her breast):
'Tis here, beneath this letter brown with age,
All stained with tear-drops, and still stained with blood.

(Twilight begins to fall.)

CYRANO:

His letter! Ah! you promised me one day
That I should read it.

ROXANE:

What would you?--His letter?

CYRANO:

Yes, I would fain,--to-day. . .

ROXANE (giving the bag hung at her neck):

See! here it is!

CYRANO (taking it):

Have I your leave to open?

ROXANE:

Open--read!

(She comes back to her tapestry frame, folds it up, sorts her wools.)

CYRANO (reading):

'Roxane, adieu! I soon must die!
This very night, beloved; and I
Feel my soul heavy with love untold.
I die! No more, as in days of old,
My loving, longing eyes will feast
On your least gesture--ay, the least!
I mind me the way you touch your cheek
With your finger, softly, as you speak!
Ah me! I know that gesture well!
My heart cries out!--I cry "Farewell"!'

ROXANE:

But how you read that letter! One would think. . .

CYRANO (continuing to read):

'My life, my love, my jewel, my sweet,
My heart has been yours in every beat!'

(The shades of evening fall imperceptibly.)

ROXANE:

You read in such a voice--so strange--and yet--
It is not the first time I hear that voice!

(She comes nearer very softly, without his perceiving it, passes behind his chair, and, noiselessly leaning over him, looks at the letter. The darkness deepens.)

CYRANO:

'Here, dying, and there, in the land on high,
I am he who loved, who loves you,--I. . .'

ROXANE (putting her hand on his shoulder):

How can you read? It is too dark to see!

(He starts, turns, sees her close to him. Suddenly alarmed, he holds his head down. Then in the dusk, which has now completely enfolded them, she says, very slowly, with clasped hands):

And, fourteen years long, he has played this part
Of the kind old friend who comes to laugh and chat.

CYRANO:

Roxane!

ROXANE:

'Twas you!

CYRANO:

No, never; Roxane, no!

ROXANE:

I should have guessed, each time he said my name!

CYRANO:

No, it was not I!

ROXANE:

It was you!

CYRANO:

I swear!

ROXANE:

I see through all the generous counterfeit--
The letters--you!

CYRANO:

No.

ROXANE:

The sweet, mad love-words!
You!

CYRANO:

No!

ROXANE:

The voice that thrilled the night--you, you!

CYRANO:

I swear you err.

ROXANE:

The soul--it was your soul!

CYRANO:

I loved you not.

ROXANE:

You loved me not?

CYRANO:

'Twas he!

ROXANE:

You loved me!

CYRANO:

No!

ROXANE:

See! how you falter now!

CYRANO:

No, my sweet love, I never loved you!

ROXANE:

Ah!

Things dead, long dead, see! how they rise again!

--Why, why keep silence all these fourteen years,

When, on this letter, which he never wrote,

The tears were your tears?

CYRANO (holding out the letter to her):

The bloodstains were his.

ROXANE:

Why, then, that noble silence,--kept so long--

Broken to-day for the first time--why?

CYRANO:

Why? . . .

(Le Bret and Ragueneau enter running.)

Scene 5.VI.

The same. Le Bret and Ragueneau.

LE BRET:

What madness! Here? I knew it well!

CYRANO (smiling and sitting up):

What now?

LE BRET:

He has brought his death by coming, Madame.

ROXANE:

God!

Ah, then! that faintness of a moment since. . . ?

CYRANO:

Why, true! It interrupted the 'Gazette:'

. . . Saturday, twenty-sixth, at dinner-time,

Assassination of De Bergerac.

(He takes off his hat; they see his head bandaged.)

ROXANE:

What says he? Cyrano!--His head all bound!

Ah, what has chanced? How?--Who?. . .

CYRANO:

'To be struck down,

Pierced by sword i' the heart, from a hero's hand!

That I had dreamed. O mockery of Fate!

--Killed, I! of all men--in an ambushade!

Struck from behind, and by a lackey's hand!

'Tis very well. I am foiled, foiled in all,

Even in my death.

RAGUENEAU:

Ah, Monsieur!. . .

CYRANO (holding out his hand to him):

Ragueneau,

Weep not so bitterly!. . . What do you now,

Old comrade?

RAGUENEAU (amid his tears):

Trim the lights for Moliere's stage.

CYRANO:

Moliere!

RAGUENEAU:

Yes; but I shall leave to-morrow.

I cannot bear it!--Yesterday, they played

'Scapin'--I saw he'd thieved a scene from you!

LE BRET:

What! a whole scene?

RAGUENEAU:

Oh, yes, indeed, Monsieur,
The famous one, 'Que Diable allait-il faire?'

LE BRET:

Moliere has stolen that?

CYRANO:

Tut! He did well!. . .

(to Ragueneau):

How went the scene? It told--I think it told?

RAGUENEAU (sobbing):

Ah! how they laughed!

CYRANO:

Look you, it was my life

To be the prompter every one forgets!

(To Roxane):

That night when 'neath your window Christian spoke

--Under your balcony, you remember? Well!

There was the allegory of my whole life:

I, in the shadow, at the ladder's foot,

While others lightly mount to Love and Fame!

Just! very just! Here on the threshold drear

Of death, I pay my tribute with the rest,

To Moliere's genius,--Christian's fair face!

(The chapel-bell chimes. The nuns are seen passing down the alley at the back, to say their office):

Let them go pray, go pray, when the bell rings!

ROXANE (rising and calling):

Sister! Sister!

CYRANO (holding her fast):

Call no one. Leave me not;

When you come back, I should be gone for aye.

(The nuns have all entered the chapel. The organ sounds):

I was somewhat fain for music--hark! 'tis come.

ROXANE:

Live, for I love you!

CYRANO:

No, In fairy tales

When to the ill-starred Prince the lady says

'I love you!' all his ugliness fades fast--

But I remain the same, up to the last!

ROXANE:

I have marred your life--I, I!

CYRANO:

You blessed my life!

Never on me had rested woman's love.

My mother even could not find me fair:

I had no sister; and, when grown a man,

I feared the mistress who would mock at me.
But I have had your friendship--grace to you
A woman's charm has passed across my path.

LE BRET (pointing to the moon, which is seen between the trees):
Your other lady-love is come.

CYRANO (smiling):
I see.

ROXANE:
I loved but once, yet twice I lose my love!

CYRANO:
Hark you, Le Bret! I soon shall reach the moon.
To-night, alone, with no projectile's aid! . . .

LE BRET:
What are you saying?

CYRANO:
I tell you, it is there,
There, that they send me for my Paradise,
There I shall find at last the souls I love,
In exile,--Galileo--Socrates!

LE BRET (rebelliously):
No, no! It is too clumsy, too unjust!
So great a heart! So great a poet! Die
Like this? what, die. . .?

CYRANO:
Hark to Le Bret, who scolds!

LE BRET (weeping):
Dear friend. . .

CYRANO (starting up, his eyes wild):
What ho! Cadets of Gascony!
The elemental mass--ah yes! The hic. . .

LE BRET:
His science still--he raves!

CYRANO:
Copernicus
Said. . .

ROXANE:
Oh!

CYRANO:
Mais que diable allait-il faire,
Mais que diable allait-il faire dans cette galere?. . .
Philosopher, metaphysician,
Rhymer, brawler, and musician,

Famed for his lunar expedition,
And the unnumbered duels he fought,--
And lover also,--by interposition!--
Here lies Hercule Savinien
De Cyrano de Bergerac,
Who was everything, yet was naught.
I cry you pardon, but I may not stay;
See, the moon-ray that comes to call me hence!
(He has fallen back in his chair; the sobs of Roxane recall him to reality; he
looks long at her, and, touching her veil):
I would not bid you mourn less faithfully
That good, brave Christian: I would only ask
That when my body shall be cold in clay
You wear those sable mourning weeds for two,
And mourn awhile for me, in mourning him.

ROXANE:

I swear it you!. . .

CYRANO (shivering violently, then suddenly rising):

Not there! what, seated?--no!

(They spring toward him):

Let no one hold me up--

(He props himself against the tree):

Only the tree!

(Silence):

It comes. E'en now my feet have turned to stone,

My hands are gloved with lead!

(He stands erect):

But since Death comes,

I meet him still afoot,

(He draws his sword):

And sword in hand!

LE BRET:

Cyrano!

ROXANE (half fainting):

Cyrano!

(All shrink back in terror.)

CYRANO:

Why, I well believe

He dares to mock my nose? Ho! insolent!

(He raises his sword):

What say you? It is useless? Ay, I know

But who fights ever hoping for success?

I fought for lost cause, and for fruitless quest!

You there, who are you!--You are thousands!

Ah!

I know you now, old enemies of mine!

Falsehood!

(He strikes in air with his sword):

Have at you! Ha! and Compromise!

Prejudice, Treachery!. . .

(He strikes):

Surrender, I?

Parley? No, never! You too, Folly,--you?

I know that you will lay me low at last;

Let be! Yet I fall fighting, fighting still!

(He makes passes in the air, and stops, breathless):

You strip from me the laurel and the rose!

Take all! Despite you there is yet one thing

I hold against you all, and when, to-night,

I enter Christ's fair courts, and, lowly bowed,

Sweep with doffed casque the heavens' threshold blue,

One thing is left, that, void of stain or smutch,

I bear away despite you.

(He springs forward, his sword raised; it falls from his hand; he staggers, falls back into the arms of Le Bret and Ragueneau.)

ROXANE (bending and kissing his forehead):

'Tis? . . .

CYRANO (opening his eyes, recognizing her, and smiling):

MY PANACHE.

Curtain.

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