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Man of Honor

Dion Boucicault Theatre Collection, 1843-1847

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2023

## Man of Honor [Transcript]

Dion Boucicault

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# **A Man of Honor, A Comedy in Five Acts by Dion Boucicault, 1873**

*December, 1873*

## **CHARACTERS**

CATHERINE COLAS, aged 21

CHARLES de SAULIEU, and invalid boy, her lodger

LATOUR, secretly married to Catherine, aged 28

BRISEBARRE, a lawyer, aged 40.

The DOCTOR

JACQUOTTE, a servant girl of all work, aged 25

----An Interval of 20 Years are supposed to elapse

CATHERINE COLAS, aged 41

JACQUES, her son, aged 24

MARQUIS de ROSNY, a noble, aged 65

COUNTESS de ROSNY LATOUR, his sister, aged 60

RENÉE, her granddaughter, aged 17

LATOUR, aged 48

BRISEBARRE, a lawyer, aged 60

JACQUOTTE, a servant, aged 45

SETTING: *Seaside cottage in Southern France, at the present time.*

ACT I.

SCENE I: *A seaside cottage, very neat but modestly furnished. At the back a wide window looks out upon a beach, a sea horizon. Verandah. Flowers. Doors R. and L. Chairs, table, books—the room should be so arranged that when seen again in Act 5 (Twenty years later) it will be easily recognized although the furniture, in some pieces, shall be altered.*

*(Enter JACQUOTTE, crying. She carries a basin. Enter the DOCTOR from R.H. room)*

JACQ Well? Doctor, well?

DOCT 'Tis nothing, a simple fracture. In a few weeks the little fellow will be as well as ever again.

JACQ Oh! Doctor. *(Drying her eyes)* I feared his poor arm was broken.

DOCT So it is. *(He takes the bowl from her. Jacquotte bursts out afresh into sobs)* Stop that! Go into your kitchen! If you must 'boo hoo' like a calf go out and put your head up the chimney and 'boo hoo' there!

JACQ Yes, sir! Please, how does mistress bear it?

DOCT Not so well as the child does! Brave little chap! How did the accident occur?

JACQ He tumbled off his rocking horse.

DOCT *(Speaking off, as if addressing the child in the inner room)* So, sir, the animal was too spirited for you, eh? Ran away with you did he? Ha! Ha! You could not hold him in, ho! ho!

*(Exit DOCTOR into R.H. room)*

JACQ I knew no good would come of that rocking horse—it looks vicious. I'll go and chop his head off—that will be some consolation. I'll break his legs—one by one—and then I'll burn him bit by bit.

*(Enter DE SAULIEU by window C. in F. He walks feebly)*

SAUL Who is the unhappy creature you thus devote to the refinement of torture?

JACQ The horse you gave our Jaques. You ought to have known better—a man of your time of life.

SAUL 21 years of age—next birthday.

JACQ The doctor says he ain't sure but he'll have to cut it off—and he will be a year or two at least afore he can walk—if he ever does.

SAUL Now, Jacquotte, you are telling fibs. I overheard what the doctor said. The mother is more hurt by the accident than the child. *(Takes out his cigarette case)*

JACQ Well, if she be, it ain't the only injury you have done my mistress, sir, since you have lived in this house.

SAUL I! Injure Madame Colas! What do you mean? *(Rolls up a cigarette)*

JACQ I mean that since you come to lodge with us, you have taken more of my mistress's company than is good for either of you—her especially. You know what I mean. You came down here to paint the sea—very well, you painted it. There's only one of 'em about here, so you've no more business here.

SAUL (*Smiling*) You are mistaken, Jacquotte. I came down here to die.

JACQ Lord bless us!

SAUL (*Smoking*) I knew that when I left Paris three months ago. The doctors told me to go to Italy, but I wanted to lie down to rest in my own dear old France. Good fortune brought me to this seaside village—to this house. Your mistress has been very kind to a poor invalid boy, whose love can do her no harm. I shall carry it out of the world with me, and nobody but you and I will be any the wiser. She does not suspect what you have discovered.

JACQ She is too much in love with her husband to think about anybody or anything else.

SAUL Hush! Here she is.

(*Enter CATHERINE R.H.D*)

CATH Jacquotte—prepare some good chicken broth immediately.

(*Exit JACQUOTTE L.D.E*)

SAUL How is the child?

CATH Free from fever, and inclined to sleep, so the doctor sent me away.

SAUL Your anxiety affects and perhaps disturbs the little sufferer.

CATH Yes.

SAUL May I sit by his bedside?

CATH I was about to ask you to do so—he is so fond of you.

SAUL Poor Jacques. I have been his only play fellow.

CATH (*Offering her hand to him*) Oh! You are in a high fever—your hands are burning.

SAUL They are always so.

CATH Then why refuse medical advice?

SAUL Because it is useless. I know what is the matter with me.

CATH From what do you suffer?

SAUL I am the son of a father who died of decline at 22 and of a mother who died at 19 of consumption. Judging my symptoms by those that preceded their decease, I judge I have about one year before I follow the family example.

CATH You cannot be serious!

SAUL I am so used to the inevitable, I accept my fate cheerfully. But for Heaven's sake, don't pity me! I left Paris because I passed my life amidst the most depressing sympathy. "How ill you look, old fellow", said one. "I say Charley you must take care of yourself", said another. "What's the matter with you? How pale you are!" cried a third. But the most insupportable were those who silently turned upon me eyes of melancholy interest! I know I am ill. I don't want to be reminded it is all over with me. There is an insolent pride in good health when it stoops to pity the invalid.

CATH Do you leave nothing behind you in life that you regret to part with?

SAUL Yes. Jacques.

CATH Has no woman loved you?

SAUL Twenty have said so.

CATH Have you never loved?

SAUL Yes—one—but she—(*Turns away*)

CATH She?

SAUL (*A pause as he goes off C., looks off, and then turns*) Do you recollect when Jacques saw a great ship far out at sea, and he set his heart upon having it?

CATH He would listen to no reason, but he stretched out his little arms and cried for it. You brought him a boat to pacify him, but my tyrant son soon wearied of it. You brought another and another until he possessed a perfect fleet—how patient and how good you were.

SAUL That ship he saw in the distance sailing away was the woman I loved—and those twenty toys that could not console him were the playthings of love that failed to console me.

(*Enter the DOCTOR*)

Well, Doctor, how is he?

DOCT Go to him, and see.

SAUL (*Looking in*) Sound asleep. (*He creeps into the room*)

CATH Poor boy!

DOCT That young gentleman little thinks how ill he is. One of these days he will take to the sofa and never rise from it.

CATH He knows the worst.

DOCT Indeed!

CATH He said just now that he had only another year to live.

DOCT He is mistaken.

CATH I was sure of it.

DOCT He will die in a month—or at most six weeks.

CATH Oh, Doctor—that is frightful!

DOCT Yes, it is sad. If the child should be wakeful and fret you will give him this anodyne. He is now free from fever—you need not apprehend the slightest trouble. I shall call again this evening. Do not be uneasy. (*Going*)

CATH Thank you. (*Looks at paper*) I feel quite relieved. Good morning. You can do nothing for M. de Saulieu?

DOCT Oh, no! Hopeless! Quite hopeless. Are his relatives aware of his condition?

CATH He has no relatives, I believe.

DOCT I thought he might be a connection of yours.

CATH No, he is a stranger who took our lodgings here some months ago. I don't know who he is.

DOCT Then my dear Madame Colas you will pardon me if I intrude my advice—your position is—

(*Enter JACQUOTTE C.L*)

JACQ Oh, mistress—here is master!

CATH My husband!

DOCT Bravo! That solves the difficulty.

(*Enter LATOUR*)

CATH Raymond, at last! (*Embraces him*)

LAT Take care—we are not alone.

CATH 'Tis only the doctor.

LAT Sir! (*Bows*)

DOCT (*Bowing*) Good morning. (*Aside as he goes out*) Um! I don't like the husband. (*Exit*)

CATH Oh, how could you leave me alone for six long weeks?

LAT *(Removes his coat coolly and takes off his gloves. His indifferent manner should be a contrast to Catherine's excitement)* Business, my dear, important business.

CATH I do not reproach you, but you do not ask after Jacques—you saw the doctor here.

LAT Is the child ill?

CATH He has met with an accident. Do not be alarmed—he is not seriously hurt.

LAT Ah! *(Rubs his hands)* All children get into scrapes.

CATH He has broken his arm.

JACQ He is fast asleep.

LAT That's all right.

CATH Will you not come in and kiss him?

LAT By and by—when he awakes. I wish to speak to you on some important matters.

CATH Jacquotte, prepare some lunch for your master.

LAT It is unnecessary. I breakfasted heartily at Abbeville.

*(Exit JACQUOTTE)*

CATH I see by your face you have something disagreeable to tell me.

LAT Will you promise me to be reasonable?

CATH Now I am sure of it.

LAT A financial crisis in America has compromised our firm. Our correspondents there have suspended payment. My presence in New York is essential to a settlement of our affairs. I may be absent from France for some time.

CATH For some time—how long?

LAT A year, perhaps—I cannot tell.

CATH Do you go alone?

LAT Yes, alone. Why?

CATH I'll go with you. *(Kneels at his feet)*

LAT Impossible! I shall be moving from city to city, residing in hotels, living how and where I can. Besides, what would become of our child?

CATH We might take him with us.

LAT A child four years of age who is now lying ill—the hardships of such a life might kill him. My dearest Kate, I beg you to be patient under our affliction. Look at me! Banished from my home—from all I love.

CATH Oh, Raymond, my home is where you are. To remain here is banishment. You go away and new scenes and new friends occupy your hours while I remain here alone—alone with these objects that taunt me with my solitude: the book half-read—the pen you have used—an unfinished letter—the chair in which you have slept. These are my companions; my sad friends that occupy my long hours with their silent conversation.

LAT (*Rising, with a sigh*) I expected this.

CATH Oh, my darling, don't be so hard. I will submit to anything you desire. I should suffer, but do be a little kind to me. After six weeks absence you return to find our child sick—my mind in grievous anxiety—and instead of the embrace of your consoling love, you meet me with the announcement that we must part.

LAT If I seem cruel, it is because I hate scenes, and I am trying to conceal the grief this separation causes me under a show of vexation. You know how deeply I love you.

CATH When do you go?

LAT It is possible I may be obliged to sail tomorrow.

CATH Tomorrow!

LAT There is no other mail steamer from Brest before the end of the month.

CATH (*After a silent struggle*) Good bye, Raymond. You see, I say the words for you. Am I not resigned? Raymond, do you know what you might let me do—if you love me? Let me go with you to Brest tonight. I will not trouble—I will not bother you—only let me see the last of you—the very last.

LAT Now my sweet Kate, you must be reasonable. You propose to render our parting more painful than it needs to be. I must be in Paris tonight to leave my last instructions. I have a thousand things to settle.

CATH You are right. I should only embarrass you. It was a foolish thought.

(*Enter JACQUOTTE with a card L.H*)

JACQ A gentleman, Madame, wishes to know when it would be convenient for him to see you on business—it is something about this house.

CATH Ah, 'tis the agent of the landlord for the rent. Leave his card there. Beg him to call tomorrow.

JACQ I told him you were engaged but he—

LAT (*Impatiently*) Very well, that will do. You have your orders. Beg the gentleman to call tomorrow.



(Exit JACQUOTTE L.H)

Now let us speak seriously, for I have much to settle before I leave. I have provided for you and Jacques in case of anything happening to me—

CATH Provided for us—you speak as if we were something apart from you.

LAT I cannot allow you to be dependent on the vicissitudes of life I see before me. So I have deposited with my notary a sum of money to purchase this cottage. Here is an inscription of five thousand francs a year in the 3 per cents.

CATH This forethought strikes a chill to my heart.

LAT You are a foolish girl. Such precautions are simply necessary. I have left your address with my notary—he will retain the deeds of this little estate. You will find his address on the envelope containing that inscription, should you desire to communicate with him: M. Brisebarre, 16, Rue LaFitte, Paris. (*Points to the envelope he has handed to her. Looks at his watch*) Three o'clock. I shall scarcely catch the train for Paris.

CATH Ah, Raymond! Raymond!

LAT Catherine, you promised me to be brave.

CATH I will, I will. But you are not going without bidding Jacques goodbye?

LAT True, I forgot. Where is he? (*Goes into the room*)

CATH He forgot. He was going away—perhaps forever—and he forgot his child was there. Oh, I cannot understand the strange doubt and apprehension that fills my heart. All this seems unreal, impossible. It is a dream from which I would like to awake but cannot. (*Re-enter LATOUR*)

LAT I have not disturbed him. But who is the young gentleman I found sitting asleep beside your son?

CATH That is our lodger of whom I wrote to you.

LAT Ah, true! He seems quite at home here.

CATH Yes.

LAT (*Taking his hat and gloves*) Adieu, Catherine—I have not a moment to lose. Be brave. Keep up your spirits. Let me know how you get on.

CATH Where shall I direct my letters to you?

LAT Oh, I thought I gave you the address.

CATH No!

LAT To the post office, Boston.

CATH You said you were going to New York!

LAT Did I? Oh, well, either will do. You see, it does not matter which. I shall be moving about—and I shall certainly miss the train. Good bye!

CATH Good bye, Raymond.

*(Exit LATOUR)*

He is gone. His fortune is more to him than I am. The credit of his firm is more to him than his son's life.

*(Re-enter JACQUOTTE)*

JACQ The gentleman is waiting in the dining room, Ma'am. He says he has come all the way from Paris and he would like to wait until you were disengaged.

CATH Who is he?

JACQ Here is his card.

CATH *(Reading)* Brisebarre, notary, 16, Rue Lafitte. Where did I hear that name? Ah! *(Looks at the envelope)* Did you not tell him M. Latour was here?

JACQ No, Ma'am, he asked to see you.

CATH Shew him in. *(Exit JACQUOTTE)* I cannot recall what he said about this man—my brain is so dazed. I remember nothing—can think of nothing.

*(Re-enter JACQUOTTE shewing in BRISEBARRE. Exit JACQUOTTE)*

BRIS: Madame, allow me to present myself: Anatole Brisebarre, notary. I believe our client, M. Raymond Latour, mentioned our name.

CATH Pray, sir, be seated.

BRIS *(Bowing. Aside)* A very superior kind of woman this! Good style—very good style. Great pity! *(Aloud)* We received instructions from our client to buy this cottage with two acres of garden land adjoining for the sum of twenty thousand francs. We have affected the purchase—here are the deeds, to which M. Latour forgot that your signature is necessary. We sent the document last night to his hotel in Paris, but found he had left, so we had no alternative but to wait on you in person.

CATH My husband was here at the moment your card was brought to me.

BRIS Indeed. I thought he was on his road to Florence.

CATH To Florence! You mean to New York? He leaves Brest tomorrow.

BRIS Oh! I was not aware. I—ahem—*(Aside)* I am getting out of my depth here. *(Aloud)* You will be good enough to sign in that space where you see your name written in pencil.

CATH Catherine Colas—is it right? Should I sign that name?

BRIS What other would you suggest?

CATH M. Latour has made you acquainted with my position?

BRIS I believe so.

CATH Then you must be aware of the circumstances which have induced me not to intrude it on his family by using the name to which I am entitled.

BRIS Pardon me, I fail to understand you. (*Rising*) May I ask, Madame, whom you conceive yourself to be?

CATH The wife of Raymond Latour, sir. May I ask whom you conceived I was?

BRIS I am afraid I have intruded beyond my instructions by seeking this interview, and I, ahem— (*Aside*) I am decidedly out of my depth.

CATH You are his confidential advisor. Neither he nor I can have any secrets from you.

BRIS Truly, Madame, but I apprehend he may have secrets from you.

CATH You seem to question my right to sign myself his wife—I can readily satisfy your doubts on that point. (*Opens a desk*) I am surprised he left any on your mind. (*Takes a slip of paper, reading it*) This is a certificate of marriage celebrated at Tarbert in the County of Limerick, Ireland, between Raymond Latour and Catherine Colas.

BRIS Good Heavens, Madame, you are surely aware that you are no more his wife than I am.

CATH Not his wife! I am not Raymond's wife?

BRIS You know that Latour belongs to the Protestant parish?

CATH Yes.

BRIS You to the Catholic.

CATH Yes.

BRIS By the laws of Great Britain a marriage between a Catholic and a Protestant if solemnized in Ireland is null and void. When he explained your position he certainly left on my mind the impression that you understood it perfectly, but I must have been mistaken, for it is impossible—I—(*Bursting out*) No, Madame, I was not mistaken, except in the esteem I have entertained for him. Accept my most humble excuses if I have said anything to wound you. The pain you suffer proves to me you have been the victim of an unmanly infamous imposture! I also have been his dupe. Yes, Madame, the words are strong—unguardedly as between attorney and client, and I am bound to represent his interests. But, damme, when I became a lawyer I did not cease to be a man—and M. Latour had no right to place me in this position. No right, Ma'am, no right.

CATH (*Who has been pacing the room holding her head between her hands*) My husband! Raymond gave you this version of our marriage? Not—Raymond's—wife!

BRIS It may be more merciful to put you out of pain at once.

CATH Go on—I can bear anything now.

BRIS He was married a month ago at Bordeaux to Mademoiselle de Brevanne.

CATH Married! Married!

BRIS I drew out the contract and was present at the ceremony.

CATH Married! Oh, Raymond, Raymond, have I deserved this? Would I were dead!

BRIS Nay, Madame—

CATH Dead! Dead! What have I to live for now?

(DE SAULIEU *brings on child*)

BRIS Look.

CATH Oh, yes, for him—my boy. For him—for him. (*Curtain*)

## ACT II

SCENE I: *A drawing room in the country house of Latour. Renée is watching at the window. She goes quickly to the table, picks up a book and sits and reads for a moment, then, rising, goes to the door and listens. Then runs to the mirror and smooths her hair. Then hurries to the piano and plays.*

(*Enter JACQUES R.U.E*)

JAC What are you doing?

REN I am playing on the piano. When I saw you coming, I tried to do several things. At last I sat down to the piano to give myself the air of being unconcerned.

(*Enter GERVAIS with wood for the fire*)

JAC Is the Marquis at home?

REN Gervais, is my grand-uncle in the library?

GER He is engaged with his notary, Mamzelle. (*A pause. GERVAIS sweeps the hearth and arranges the room. While Renée plays Jacques hums the air impatiently. Renée looking around*)

REN That will do, my good Gervais. You will roast us all with that great furnace.

GER Mamzelle forgets that the Countess is expected this morning, and the old lady is fond of a good fire.

*(Exit GERVAIS while RENÉE plays, JACQUES humming)*

JAC You know that melody?

REN Very well.

JAC *(Looking over her shoulder)* You are not playing it from the music before you.

REN No. I suppose I heard it somewhere.

JAC You may have heard me humming it.

REN That may be how I know it by heart.

JAC Is there no melody associated with your childhood that lives at home here—no foolish common tune that by magic touch changes the scene of your mind, and your infancy returns and becomes present?

REN Oh, yes, there is one. A stupid thing, I confess, but it always brings the tears to my eyes. *(She plays another air)* It recalls my grandmamma who used to sing it to herself. Not grandmamma the Countess who is coming here today. She never sings anything. I mean mama's mother who died ten years ago—I remember her so well—with her silver hair and her dear old face where every wrinkle was a smile. I used to nestle at her feet on a cushion after dinner while papa and the grand persons talked politics. She murmured her little song all the while in my ear until I went to sleep on her lap. Then she would take me up in her arms and put me to bed—bending over me to listen to my sleepy prayer—and take my sleepy kiss. I suppose the family group composing the picture of childhood is the same in every mind.

JAC No. The picture of mine is a single portrait. My mother, that lonely figure presents itself to my memory—sad—gentle—and devoted as a saint. Ah! I forgot—there is a second figure in the picture, Jacquotte, poor Jacquotte.

REN What's that? A parrot? Or a dog?

JAC No, but quite as attached and faithful as either. Jacquotte is our servant.

REN Your nurse?

JAC No, simply a maid of all work, who refused a dozen husbands because she was in love with my mother.

REN I am sure I shall fall under the same influence.

JAC Everybody does.

REN How old is she?

JAC You would think she were my sister. She is not 17 years older than I am.

REN Is she not very proud of you? I heard my grand uncle the Marquis speaking of you to the Duke de Brissac the other day; they were speaking of some work you have written on—oh! Something—I forget the name.

JAC Cooperative Associations and Banks of Labor.

REN No!

JAC Our foreign credit?

REN No, it was something about iron and sticks.

JAC Oh. The statistics of our iron trade.

REN That's the one! The Duke said—

JAC The Duke said? What did the Duke say?

REN How can I tell you what the Duke said if you keep fidgeting in that chair? The Duke said, “that young man is a profound and honest thinker—a speaker full of grace and passion—an invaluable ally or a dangerous foe. The government has its eye upon him.”

JAC Oh, Rene, are you sure he said all that?

REN Quite sure, because I remember wondering if government had only one eye, or if they had two—whether they kept the other one habitually closed. “The government has its eye upon him”, said the Duke, “his name will find a place in the future history of France!” Why did you not tell us you were a great man? If I had suspected who and what you were, do you think I would have dared to approach you disrespectfully enough to fall in love with you as I did? But you made our acquaintance like a common person—you crouched to our level—you acted like that great steam hammer you explained to my grand uncle that can flatten an iron rivet or condescend to tap in a tin tack. If you are a great man, you should behave as such.

JAC Before we met, that passionate nature which now is filled with you, had not found its object. Energy, ambition, glory—is only love in another shape. I embraced the great world with an ardent, loving heart. I yearned to be worthy of its affection and aspired to its noble embrace. I felt within me the soul of a Caesar—a Byron—a Demosthenes—I knew not which. Oh, ye grand, pure, foolish visions of youth! One fine morning, wandering with my thoughts, a young girl overtook me on the road. She turned her eyes upon me—and away went all my aspiring dreams with the mist that flew upwards to the laughing skies. The soul of the Caesar became a child. I felt that fame, glory, ambition were only the consolation of those who could not love—and now all my science is devoted to discover the secret of your heart. And all my logic is unable to prove to you the depth of mine. (*Drops on footstool and embraces her*)

(*Re-enter GERVAIS*)

GER Mamzelle! (*Jacques is going to rise*)

REN Do not stir—well?

GER The Marquis bid me tell you that the carriage of the Countess is entering the drive. (*Renée rises*)

REN Thank you, Gervais, I'll go and meet her.

*(Exit GERVAIS)*

JAC Do you feel nervous?

REN No! Do you?

JAC Very. The Countess inspires me with terror.

REN You have been in battle.

JAC With men—but one is so defenseless against an old woman. *(Puts on gloves)*

REN What are you going to do?

JAC I think I am going to run away.

REN But she is coming to receive your proposition of marriage!

JAC The notary of your grand uncle is my oldest friend.

REN M. Brisebarre!

JAC He has undertaken to make my formal demand for your hand.

REN He has been closeted with the Marquis all the morning. If it depended on my dear old grand uncle, we need not fear—he adores you.

*(Enter the MARQUIS)*

MARQ Ah, sweet rogue, you are abusing me behind my back. *(To Jacques, who has taken up his hat)* You are going, M. de Saulieu—a wise retreat. Let Renée and me receive the brunt of my sister's salvo—she always salutes with shotted guns—we are accustomed to it. Go! my dear boy, you know you have allies here that will not desert your cause.

JAC I cannot express-

MARQ Here she comes.

JAC Ah! *(Exits hastily)*

MARQ Here she comes—what a noble presence. How grandly she sweeps through the files of servants, her mind concentrated on her own proper person. Louis the 14<sup>th</sup> in petticoats. She looks as if she were presenting arms to herself. Where is your uncle Raymond? She is sure to ask for her son.

REN Uncle Raymond is in Normandy, at Havre, I believe; he hasn't been in Paris for two months. You forget grandmamma has refused to see him lately.

MARQ True—ever since his name appeared as Chairman of a steamship company.

REN Yes.

MARQ She is splendid.

*(Enter GERVAIS following two footmen)*

GER The most noble, the Countess of Rosny Latour.

*(Enter the COUNTESS)*

COUN Ha! You are here, Marquis, I feared you were not at home *(He advances)* or you were suffering from indisposition—as you did not receive me at the door—ha!—hum! You feared the draught, perhaps. *(He kisses her hand)*

MARQ Precisely.

COUN I suffer from rheumatism, but I never neglect such courtesies of high life; however, that thing depends on one's sense of delicacy. *(She sits on the chair advanced to her by GERVAIS, who retires with the servants)* I am no better than I was.

MARQ So I regret to perceive.

COUN I give you news of my health though you do not ask 'em—but I'll take the question for granted. *(To Renée, who is kneeling beside her)* Well, little one, now tell me: who is this gentleman—what d'ye call him?

REN What gentleman, grandma?

COUN This person you are all mad about. This man that everybody here wants to marry.

MARQ *(Aside)* This is a bad beginning.

REN There's no one wants to marry him except me, grandma—and I am not mad in the least.

COUN Oh, indeed! Ha! And what is he called?

REN What did you say?

COUN I said: what—is—he—called?

REN Oh! His name, his name is Monsieur de Saulieu.

COUN Saulieu—Saulieu—what's that? Brother!

MARQ Eh?

COUN Do we know that?

MARQ Yes, I know that. That is a young man seven and twenty, dark, and rides I should say about eleven stone six.



COUN I do not ask you brother what his age and complexion may be—nor what he rides. I ask you if we know any family of the name of Saulieu?

MARQ Countess, I am not acquainted with all the families in France.

COUN I am—at least with all those worth my acquaintance. There is no such name as Saulieu. There was a Beaulier, whose only daughter married a Keroll-Sartiges, whose mother was 1<sup>st</sup> lady of the bedchamber to the late Queen. This man is not a Beaulier.

MARQ Evidently not. Since he is a Saulieu.

COUN Some title of finance—or won under the Empire. Perhaps his father gained some battle or other.

MARQ I should not be surprised—a wretched person.

COUN Well—and what does this M. what's-his-name—it is no matter—want?

REN He loves me—and he wants to marry me.

COUN Oh! And you—

REN I love him and I want to marry him.

COUN Ah! Then all that remains is that I—your only relative and guardian—should also give my consent and the thing is settled.

REN That is all.

COUN Ha! Precisely! Very good!

MARQ (*Aside*) It does not sound so.

COUN How did you form this—person's acquaintance?

REN We met him.

COUN In whose house?

REN In no house at all.

COUN Where then?

REN On the road.

COUN The road—what road?

REN See, grandma, the little road that leads to the water. If you will come to the window you can see it quite plain.

COUN With whom was he when you met him?

REN He was alone.

COUN And who introduced him?

REN He introduced himself.

COUN And your grand uncle received him?

REN Oh, yes, you see the Marquis was lame with his gout, and he and I were out on the road for a morning walk--his stick broke, and I was trying to serve in its place, when M. de Saulieu offered my grand uncle his arm and so we came home together. That is how it all began.

COUN Brother!

MARQ Eh?

COUN Did you hear?

MARQ Distinctly.

COUN And what remark have you to make?

MARQ You perceive I say nothing at all.

COUN And this appears to you an ordinary occurrence?

MARQ Ye-es...a gentleman walking on a road meets two other people walking on the same road in opposite directions; it naturally follows--ahem--that these three should meet on the road.

COUN And that one of the gentlemen should immediately promise the hand of the lady to the other gentleman--on the road.

MARQ Chance presented M. de Saulieu to me. His worth and good breeding recommended him to my consideration, and a further knowledge of his excellent nature proved him to be a gentleman who must ennoble any title the justice of society did itself the honor to confer upon him.

REN Thank you, grand uncle.

COUN You don't know what you are talking about.

MARQ Then you should not ask me what remarks I had to make.

COUN And my son, Raymond, M. Latour, what does your uncle say to all this?

REN He has not seen M. de Saulieu yet; but he writes to say he leaves it entirely to you, grandma.

COUN Of course. He is engaged on--what is it--railroads--no! Docks or something.

MARQ Your son is engaged in grand industrial pursuits. He employs his large capital in the construction of ships.

COUN A boat-builder—faugh!

MARQ Not boats—ships.

COUN Ships—boats—’tis all the same thing. He is a working man.

MARQ He does not work in person at a carpenter’s bench, but finds the money to construct great vessels.

COUN The size does not console his family!

MARQ Your husband built houses—I do not appreciate the distinction.

COUN My husband was a person of leisure, sir! He did nothing like a gentleman.

MARQ You are certainly the best judge of that, my dear sister. Let us come to a clear understanding and once for all—you and I are the last of the family of Rosny, and we quarter the Royal Arms of France—with a bar sinister as we derive from a Mademoiselle de Rosny whom King Henry the 4<sup>th</sup> was pleased to distinguish.

COUN Go on—go on.

MARQ It is strange that the condescension of our ancestor should be the source of nobility of her descendants; but if society is content to consider it so—so am I. Well, during the troubles of France, while we were poor, you married M. Latour, a builder.

COUN Architect.

MARQ Boats, ships—it is the same thing. You had two sons; one became Brigadier General and died on the field of battle—that was the father of Renée. The other is M. Latour who is a banker and builds ships.

COUN Takes after his father.

MARQ You became a simple citizen when you married a citizen—such are all your children no more. I, alone, of the family am noble, whatever that may be. I, alone, have the right to carry the name of Rosny, and as I have no children, the title will be extinguished when I consent to die—for nobles like us only die when we are graciously pleased to do so. My dear sister, let us prove our high birth by noble qualities and not by vain assertions. Do not look down on your son who is engaged in an honorable career because it happens to be useful, nor blame M. de Saulieu because he does not derive his name from a source as creditable as our own. It is the man who creates the title, it is not the title that makes the man. There, now I’ve done! And I withdraw, having never delivered so long a speech in the House of Peers—of which I am a member—and you are not—what a pity! (*Exits*)

COUN What is the feudal race coming to? Renée, what are you thinking of?

REN I was thinking, grandma, that my grand uncle is the most perfect gentleman, the most beautiful creature, and noblest man in the world, and I suppose he never married because no woman in the world was ever good enough for him.

COUN Either I am mad or all the present generation are insane.

(*Enter GERVAIS*)

GER Madame—a gentleman below requests the honor of speaking with you.

COUN What is the name of this gentleman?

GER Here is his card.

COUN Ah! (*Reads it with her gold glasses*) Anatole Brisebarre, Notary, 16 Rue LaFitte, Paris.

REN He is the friend of Jacques.

COUN Jacques—what's that?

REN M. de Saulieu, grandma, he comes to propose for me.

COUN Ah! I will receive this person.

(*Exit GERVAIS*)

REN Shall I retire?

COUN Yes, my dear, you may be nervous. Don't be alarmed.

REN I am not at all nervous, and I am never alarmed at anything.

(*Exit RENÉE. Enter GERVAIS preceding BRISEBARRE*)

GER M. Brisebarre.

(*Exit GERVAIS*)

BRIS Madame the Countess of Rosny Latour. (*Puts hat on table*)

COUN Well, sir, what's your business?

BRIS (*Looking round*) Pardon me—did you address me?

COUN Yes. And I said: what is your business?

BRIS I regret to find that something has disturbed your good temper.

COUN What do you mean, sir?

BRIS I mean, Madame, that you address me in a tone that is strange in a lady of your rank when she receives for the first time a person who has not the honor of her acquaintance, and who presents himself in a most respectful manner.

COUN (*Rising*) Pardon me.

BRIS (*Bowing*) I accept your courteous excuses.

COUN I beg you to be seated.

BRIS Thank you. Allow me to be concise.

COUN If you please.

BRIS My client, M. de Saulieu, has paid his addresses to your granddaughter, Mademoiselle de Rosny. He has requested me to wait upon you to explain the nature of his fortune and social position.

COUN I shall be glad to find they justify his pretensions.

BRIS There arises the only difficulty.

COUN Ah! There is a difficulty on that point?

BRIS You appear to seize the presumption with pleasure.

COUN Be good enough to come to the point, sir!

BRIS I will. M. de Saulieu—is not M. de Saulieu!

COUN Ah! I thought there was some screw loose.

BRIS He is the adopted son of Charles de Saulieu, a Belgian gentleman, who bequeathed to him his estate and his name.

COUN What might he have been called before he clothed himself with the legacy of this liberal gentleman?

BRIS Jacques Colas! He is not as he imagines himself to be, the son of a widow. He is simply the child of a person who was never legally married to his father.

COUN You jest!

BRIS It is the simple fact, Madame. Why do you doubt it?

COUN Excuse my smiling, sir, but all this is too good to be true!

BRIS You see how charming I am to bring you good news, and how very wrong you were to receive me so unfavorably?

COUN Am I to understand that he has charged you with these explanations?

BRIS He is not aware of my proceedings, for he is ignorant of the secret of his birth.

COUN Impossible!

BRIS I assure you—

COUN Come, I can't believe it!

BRIS On my honor—

COUN Is this all you have to tell me? I hope there is more.

BRIS There is more.

COUN I am delighted.

BRIS His history seems to amuse you.

COUN I am deeply interested.

BRIS The most exciting part of it is yet to be revealed.

COUN I am all suspense.

BRIS Allow me to proceed methodically. After what I have thought it my duty to explain, do you consent to the marriage of your granddaughter Mademoiselle de Rosny with M. de Saulieu—or rather with Jacques Colas, since that is his real name?

COUN Ha! Ha! Ho, sir! Ha! Ha! I do not consent.

BRIS Good. The name of Colas does not seem to strike you.

COUN Colas—Colas—

BRIS Catherine Colas.

COUN No such person has crossed the path of my life that I am aware of.

BRIS How little we know of ourselves! My client, M. Jacques Colas is the cousin of Mademoiselle de Latour—and consequently is your grandson.

COUN My grandson—this person?

BRIS Allow me to explain perfectly. Is not Mademoiselle Renée the only daughter of one of your sons, the General—who is dead?

COUN Yes.

BRIS Then M. Jacques de Saulieu is the only son of the other—Raymond Latour, who is alive.

COUN The son of Raymind—

BRIS By Catherine Colas—whom he deceived and deserted.

COUN Ah—Oh! Ahem! I understand—so—well—sir—I have no desire to enter into any details in the early life of a foolish and improvident young man.

BRIS Oh, Countess, your son is no fool. I have been his lawyer for twenty-five years, and in all his affairs, public and private, I assure you he always gets the best of everybody.

COUN The female you allude to was of course his inferior in rank.

BRIS When he condescended to deceive her, he placed himself on her level.

COUN He had his family to consider—he was not master of his actions.

BRIS No, he was only master of the bad ones. But it is not the past I wish to speak of but the future—you refuse positively your assent to this alliance.

COUN Can you doubt it?

BRIS Never for a moment! It remains then for the young people to take the matter into their own hands—and I wash mine of it.

COUN What do you mean?

BRIS If my client loves your granddaughter, as I am sure he does; if she loves him sincerely as he deserves—for he is just the man to inspire a profound sentiment—well, they will marry—that's all.

COUN In spite of what you have told me? In spite of my opposition?

BRIS Yes, Madame, in spite of both; for it is not just that the crime of the father and the obstinate pride of a grandmother should prevent a future generation from being happy in their own way.

COUN Mademoiselle Latour is not of age.

BRIS In that case, she will wait until she is.

COUN They will weary of one another before the wedding day can arrive.

BRIS In that case they will not weary of it, after it is past.

COUN You miscalculate the strength of my resolution, sir.

BRIS I think, Madame, you miscalculate the strength of their love.

COUN We shall see. We have nothing more to say?

BRIS Nothing. I have the honor to take my leave.

COUN You have my leave sir, to take it.

BRIS (*Bowing*) Madame—

COUN Sir! (*She courtsies and exits*)

BRIS Ah! That is over! Poor boy!

(*Enter JACQUES*)

Jacques—

JAC I have returned to tell Renée that my mother has just arrived from Normandy.

BRIS Your mother has arrived—you have seen her?

JAC Yes, she seems ill. She asked for you.

BRIS I sent for her to come. Her presence here was necessary, but I did not expect she would arrive so promptly. Where is she?

JAC At my lodging. What is the matter, Brisebarre, you have concealed a misfortune from me. My mother's face was troubled when she met me, and now yours is confused.

BRIS My dear boy, listen as patiently as you can—summon your courage. You will require all your manhood to bear the news it grieves me to convey; but you must have learned it some day.

JAC News—what news?

BRIS The Countess declines to bestow upon you the hand of her granddaughter.

JAC Did she assign any reason?

BRIS Yes.

JAC A good one?

BRIS Ver. She refused you because—

JAC Because--?

BRIS Because your father was a scoundrel.

JAC My father? Who says that?

BRIS I say so.

JAC You!

BRIS He deceived your mother by an illegal marriage—you have no right to the name you bear. De Saulieu was not your father.

JAC My life, then, has been a lie. Why has this truth been withheld from me?

BRIS Because a mother did not know how to bow down her face with shame before her son—because she could not find the words to teach you how to hate the man she has never ceased to love.

JAC Does he live still?

BRIS He lives.



JAC An his name is—

BRIS Raymond Latour!

JAC The uncle of Renée?

BRIS The uncle of Renée! (*Jacques takes up his hat and goes to the door*) Where are you going?

JAC I am going to call upon my father.

BRIS What for?

JAC To see him—since I have never seen him.

BRIS Recollect, he is your father.

JAC I wish to see if he has forgotten it.

(JACQUES *exits*. BRISEBARRE *sinks in chair*)

### ACT III

SCENE I: *The lodgings of Jacques. Catherine discovered seated. Enter BRISEBARRE.*

CATH What news?

BRIS Bad!

CATH I am prepared for the worst! You told them all?

BRIS You agreed with me it was best I should do so.

CATH Yes. Well? The Countess rejected my son?

BRIS Of course she did.

CATH And Jacques? He also knows?

BRIS Everything.

CATH Where is he?

BRIS Gone to see his father!

CATH (*Clasping her hands*) Raymond! Oh, what will happen?

BRIS I have not the remotest idea. Such extraordinary things are happening all round me that I have lost my reckoning. If you had taken my advice you would have told the boy long ago—now it is too late!

(Enter JACQUES)

JAC Mother.

CATH My son.

JAC I have come from M. Latour's office. I did not find him so I left my name—at least the only name by which he knows me. As I returned home I felt glad I did not meet him—for I wished to see you first. (To *Brisbarre*) Leave us. (*BRISEBARRE exits*)

CATH Jacques—Jacques—your calmness terrifies me more than your anger. Why did you call on M. Latour?

JAC The simplest thing in the world. I wished to know why a father has abandoned his only son. He will give me a reason.

CATH (*crosses to table L.*) To what end will all this lead?

JACQ To the truth.

CATH I will tell it to you—and my only fault has been I have kept it too long concealed. I hoped to leave you in ignorance until my death. I had not the heart to break yours—and cowardice closed a mother's lips. Go on, my son, you have the right to demand an account of my life. I should not have made you an honest man if I could, now, be ashamed to face my own work.

JAC I never doubted you—all I ask of you, mother, is the assurance that you gave him no cause to desert you—he can allege nothing to justify—nothing to palliate—

CATH Oh, my son, let me testify to my innocence—not to his guilt.

JAC How can I separate them?

CATH Hush!

JAC (*crosses behind table to C.*) What do you hear?

CATH His step upon the stair—'tis Raymond!

JAC (*to R.C.*) After twenty years she remembers it.

CATH I hear his voice—he asks for M. de Saulieu.

JAC (*crosses to door R.*) Go in there—listen to what shall pass between us. Do not fear, neither your dignity nor my honor shall suffer—go. (*Kisses her. CATHERINE follows to R.*)

(Exit CATHERINE. Enter RAYMOND)

LAT M. de Saulieu, I presume.

JAC Yes, sir.

LAT I regret I was absent when you called. I found your card on my return to the bank.

JAC My name is not unknown to you.

LAT The Marquis and my niece have presented you to me in their letters and I learned the honor you proposed to do our family by demanding our alliance. My mother, the Countess, is expected in Paris today.

JAC She is here.

LAT She is the sole guardian of Renée, for whom I naturally entertain the most tender affection. Besides, she will be my heiress as I have no children.

JAC You have no children.

LAT None. My wife died fifteen years ago.

JAC And you never had any family.

LAT Never.

JAC (*After a pause*) I called upon you, sir, to inform you that your mother has refused her consent to my proposal of marriage and I hoped that your objections to me might not coincide with hers.

LAT What are they?

JAC You have no children, sir—that is your misfortune. She objected to me because I have no father—that is mine.

LAT You have no father!

JAC Had I known my position I would not have sought your niece's hand—when I did know it I lost no time in telling you.

LAT Really, I feel your painful attitude, and I confess I am struck with the simple honesty of this revelations.

JAC (*sits*) But nevertheless you agree with the Countess that my pretensions to your niece's hand are unacceptable.

LAT You have afforded me an example of candor—your extreme good sense will perceive that our family belongs to a world in which prejudice is law. Marriage amongst us is not simply a union of two individuals, it is an alliance of two families.

JAC Or of two members of the same family.

LAT Clearly.

JAC One obstacle to my union with your niece then is removed—my mother is Catherine Colas.

LAT Catherine! Your mother was Catherine Colas!

JAC And consequently I am your son.

LAT Then why do you bear the name of Saulieu?

JAC That is what I want to know. Why is my name Saulieu? Why is it not Latour? That's the question you alone can answer.

LAT I—I cannot.

JAC Why not?

LAT Because the past is irreparable.

JAC I don't ask you to repair your conduct, I ask you to explain it. I do not come to beg a name—I come simply to ask a question. Till today I have been deceived as to who I was—I want to know why. You alone can answer me. What was my mother when you first met her?

LAT She was a governess in our family.

JAC Then you received a character with her, which was justified I presume by your experience of her conduct.

LAT Yes.

JAC You loved her.

LAT Yes.

JAC And finding her honor stood in the way of your designs (*Latour turns away*)—Pardon me if I desire to regard one of my parents with respect. (*Rises*) I have knelt at my mother's knee while I gathered my first prayer from her lips. It is that child now who asks you: was the face into which I looked free from stain? Was the altar at which I knelt pure?

LAT It was.

JAC That's well! When you resolved to marry another woman and desert the mother of your son, did my mother resign you? Did she consent to accept her position? You see, I am obliged to ask these things, for she declines to accuse you, even to justify herself to me.

LAT I did not tell her; I could not.

JAC Why not?

LAT I had not the courage.

JAC I understand. You had the courage to accomplish her ruin, but you had not the courage to witness her despair. (*crosses L. and up to mantle piece*)

LAT Your language leaves me unable how to feel toward you—how to act. Look into your own heart, and confess what sentiments have forced you to seek my presence when you discovered the relations between us. Did you come as a son to find a father? No! Yesterday we were strangers to each other, the difference now is that we know now what we did not know a few hours ago. A misfortune is added to your life—a deeper sense of regret—a livelier feeling of remorse is added to mine. Had I foreseen all this twenty years ago, my fate and yours might have been different—but the past is inexorable.

JAC True, sir, but that past belongs to you and not to me. I yield to your cold and deliberate logic. Let us then forget that we are more to each other than we were some hours ago, when M. de Saulieu was the accepted suitor of your niece. Will you refuse his alliance now because you have discovered that he is your son?

LAT The hand of Renée is not at my disposal. Besides, if I brought the Countess to consent to such an arrangement, what would the world say? They would accuse me of sacrificing the person and the fortune of my niece to repair my fault. They would say that I introduced into my family as her mother-in-law the woman to whom I had refused the name of wife. That I brought to my fireside as Renée's husband, the boy to whom I had refused the name of son. That I endowed him with my niece's fortune, which is my brother's heritage. Which of these brands are you ready to accept for the honor of your wife, the reputation of your mother, and your own dignity?

JAC So all my life is laid waste, my future in ruins, my heart shattered—by a crime committed before I was born. And you, its perpetrator, fling its consequences in my face—you thrust me back into obscurity—a stranger to your race—an outcast from your world. Are there no ties but those society imposes? No laws of nature but those society recognizes? Well, if so, and if I adopt the cold logic with which you put me in my place—if accepting the situation that we are strangers, I ask you for satisfaction. Not as a son to a father, but as man to man, for the dishonor of my mother.

*(Enter CATHERINE quickly)*

CATH Jacques!

LAT Catherine!

JAC It is nothing, mother. Do not be alarmed. This gentleman and I are only talking logic.

LAT Your calmness restores mine. Well, let me remind you that by accepting your position for twenty years without remonstrance, you have lost the right to reproach me with desertion. Your attitude forces me to say what I would rather reserve. I did not desert your mother so heartlessly as you presume. When I found that she would not accept the provision I had made for her, although I overlooked the scorn with which she refused it and I enquired and discovered she had found more ample resources than I could offer—she had taken shelter under another name. It is not to the son of Catherine Colas I must refuse the hand of my niece, it is to M. de Saulieu—a gentleman who bears a title of which no one knows the origin and lives on a fortune of which no one knows the source.

JAC *(To CATHERINE)* I beg you to answer that.

CATH If I raise the veil of the past it is not to accuse your father, but to defend your mother. It is true that in the first passionate agony of my despair I flung back a gift of money which seemed to me as payment for my wrongs. For two months after our parting I lay insensible with brain fever. Then, for a year I was in the asylum. When I was discharged cured I returned home to find that a youth who lodged with me had paid the expenses of my illness and preserved my child's life. M. de Saulieu had died and

left his fortune to you, Jacques, on condition that you assumed his name. He had no relatives—the gift injured no one. I brought you up in ignorance of your birth, and left you to believe your father had died while you were still a child. That is the only falsehood of which I have been guilty.

JAC     *(takes both of Catherine's hands)* Mother, what motive led this young man to bequeath his fortune to us—strangers? What claim had we upon him?

CATH   None.

JAC     Did he love you?

CATH   He never said. *(Jacques drops one hand)*

JAC     Did he love you?

CATH   I believe so. *(Jacques drops the other hand)*

JAC     *(Walking to LATOUR)* You had the right to address me as you did just now and to refuse me the hand of your niece. I beg you to receive my excuses for the words I felt prompted to utter—I believe we have no more to say to each other. *(He bows. LATOUR hesitates. JACQUES rings the bell. A servant enters. LATOUR bows and goes out followed by the servant. JACQUES leans for a while against the mantelpiece, then, taking his hat from the table to his mother says)* Good bye, mother!

CATH   Are you going from me—where?

JAC     I don't know—anywhere.

CATH   Do you doubt what I have said?

JAC     No, it is not doubt, it is the truth that drives me forth.

CATH   What do you mean?

JAC     The presence of this stranger in your past life—this preserver of mine—has enabled my father to cry quits. The world will acquit him; his conscience will absolve him from remorse. And what is my fate? How can I live? How have I lived? Do they not say around me: you see that man, he calls himself de Saulieu, that is not his name, his name is Jacques, he has no father, he is rich, whence comes his fortune, oh, from a youth, a rich invalid to whom his mother was nurse, dominated by her in his last moments, he left her son all that he possessed.

CATH   Jacques!

JAC     That's what the most charitable will say. Others will say worse—and for twenty years I have lived in the midst of this infamy.

CATH   Jacques, Jacques, what could I do?

JAC     Do! For my sake you should have flung away your pride and not the provision my father offered—or let me starve on bread and water rather than accept a tainted fortune. Then when I was old enough to work, you should have told me the truth and have made me an obscure and humble working man—without any other ambition than to earn his daily bread—without any education other than to

respect his honest mother. Or, if you had not even the bread and water to nourish me, you should have thrust me into the foundling hospital, or dashed my brains out on the earth—but not brought me up as an imposter.

CATH Jacques! Spare me! I deserve your reproaches—all! Oh, my son, my son—if I have sinned it was for your sake.

JAC Oh! What a coward passion makes of me.

CATH No, no!

JAC I am doubly a coward for I strike a woman when she is down and that woman is my own mother. Forgive me, mother, forgive your poor Jacques, won't you?

CATH (*Sobbing*) Oh, oh! I—I have been so much to blame.

JAC No, I'm in the wrong; but you know, mother, when I am angry I lose all control of what I say. You often told me that, did you not? It was not you that made me so but he—my father! When he told me so calmly that he had no children and I saw that he had simply effaced you from his life, my heart turned into ice and my soul to bitterness. Don't cry, mother.

CATH It does me good.

(*Enter BRISEBARRE*)

JAC Where have you been?

BRIS In the next room.

JAC You heard what passed just now?

BRIS Every word.

JAC And you didn't rush in and break my head with the poker?

BRIS I felt inclined to.

JAC I was a scoundrel.

BRIS You were.

JAC After all, what do I want with her love and his affections? Is not hers enough for me?

BRIS And does not mine count? And Renée, does she not love you? Is she nobody? Do you dare doubt her also?

JAC Poor child. Why should I count on her—she comes of a proud race. She may change when she discovers who and what I am! Why should I put her heart to the cruel test? She will outlive a girlish fancy and will forget me.

BRIS Will you forget her?

JAC I must begin to learn how to suffer. My mother will teach me! Come, mother, let us return to the old cottage in the country. I will sink out of the world's sight and subside into a happy obscurity.

BRIS In that case, I need not deliver you the message of Renée.

JAC What message?

BRIS She refuses to give you up and the Countess has sent her to a convent.

JAC And for my sake she has gone to prison. And the message?

BRIS Tell Jacques, she said as they took her away, I shall be 21 years of age in 3 years and a half, and then—

JAC And then?

BRIS She sang a little melody I've often heard her sing. I don't remember it.

JAC But I remember it. "Believe in me." Ah! I do believe in her, and I believe in life which she has filled with hope. She had faith in me while I doubted her. She fights for her love, I'll fight for mine!

#### ACT IV

SCENE I: *One year has elapsed. A library in the house of the Marquis de Rosny. Large window at the back. The Marquis standing before the fire. Brisebarre writing at a table folds his papers.*

BRIS I believe I understand your orders, and they shall be attended to.

MARQ My dear notary, as I could not leave the house today, you were good enough to desert your business in Paris, and devote the morning to my affairs in my suburban cottage here at St. Germain. This is my birthday—I trust you will spend the rest of it with my family, who gather round me on these occasions.

BRIS With pleasure.

MARQ I am sorry you did not bring Madame Brisebarre—you have promised me to do so. Can you entice her from her birdcage to the Rue Lafitte?

BRIS My wife is the happy slave of her children.

MARQ How many have you?

BRIS Seven. All boys: Paul, Anatole, Joseph, Pierre, Robert, Sextus and Septimus. Paul, my eldest, is nineteen—he is in the army. Anatole the second is clerk in a merchant's office—I wanted him to enter mine, but he preferred trade to law. I lead my children but I do not attempt to drive their inclinations. It seems to me that man was intended by nature to rear the largest family his heart can cover and his means can support. He should marry when he is young, a good woman, calculated to make an earnest, faithful wife, and a devoted mother, so when the end shall come, as come it must, the old pair can leave the world



hand in hand, bequeathing to their children at their death an example how they should live. That's the simple sum of happiness, my Lord, the rest is all vanity, sin or insanity.

MARQ You are a great philosopher, my dear Brisebarre.

BRIS No, my Lord, I am simply a good citizen—with a contented family, a splendid digestion, and a happy wife.

MARQ Who regards our Jacques as one of her own sons.

BRIS Our eighth—we call him Octavius.

MARQ How comes it that I am sixty-five years of age today, and I find myself a childless, useless old bachelor.

BRIS There are some men, so unselfish, they pass their lives in making the happiness of others instead of attending to their own.

(Enter LATOUR)

MARQ Raymond! I was not aware you had returned to Paris.

LAT I arrived yesterday from Egypt—just in time to offer you my tender felicitations on your birthday.

MARQ You do not perceive M. Brisebarre.

LAT How do you do?

BRIS M. Latour has become one of our Princes of Finance; his eyes are fixed on objects far above the level of ordinary life. (*They exchange greetings*)

MARQ You are very welcome. I like to see all my relatives gathered round my table on my birthday. I hope my sister will bring Renée, poor child. I have not seen her for a year—Brisebarre will dine with us.

LAT Of course, we regard him almost as one of the family—he knows all our secrets. The Countess often has him to dine with her.

BRIS (*Bowing*) I have waited at table. (*Comes to C. with bundle of papers in his hand*) Pardon me, but you are both my clients, nothing is more embarrassing than to see two of the same family in the presence of each other, as one cannot keep their secrets separate—and in an unguarded moment I might pop out the truth between you, and I should never forgive myself for the trouble it would create. Marquis, will you allow me to ramble about your garden?

MARQ Enjoy yourself, you abominable old Diogenes, as you please.

(Exit BRISEBARRE)

That man is a lump of honesty.

LAT Yes: but honesty is like ambergris or civet- a slight sniff of the essence affords a perfume. While a lump of it thrust under your nose is a stink.

MARQ I believe you visited Egypt with the view of establishing some grand operations in that country?

LAT Eight months ago I withdrew my capital from commerce to invest it in finance.

MARQ When you became the bill discounter of Prodigal Princes and Bankrupt Governments, my sister withdrew her interdict, you were restored to a proud mother's arms- I mean, of course, to her purse. Well your mission succeeded?

LAT Perfectly.

MARQ I am glad to hear it- you never wrote me a line during the last year so you will excuse my ignorance of your triumphs. Well?

LAT His Highness the Khedive received me with the greatest distinction- he invited me to dinner, posted a sentry at my lodgings, and afforded me every facility and encouragement. I have engaged ten millions of francs in the enterprise, half of which is contributed by my mother.

MARQ Charming! It only remains to see whether you both are destined to become the fat or lean Line of Pharaoh.

LAT That depends on our Minister of Commerce, if the treaty now in suspense between France and Egypt be ratified, success is certain. I can bring out my Red Sea Loan at a premium.

MARQ And our Minister of Commerce depends on the report which his secretary shall make of his late mission to the Nile.

LAT Eh! Eh! What? The government sent an envoy to Egypt?

MARQ He arrived a month after you and was received by the viceroy with the highest distinction. He had apartments in the Palace, dined with his Highness every day, who gave him a Review.

LAT I never heard of all this.

MARQ The secretary is a very retiring kind of person.

LAT Then how came you to know these particulars?

MARQ Jacques wrote me from Cairo by every mail.

LAT Jacques!

MARQ Your son: he is the Secretary of the Minister of Commerce, he was the envoy dispatched by our government to report on the proposed Treaty of Commerce.

LAT Jacques!

MARQ When you entered finance he entered diplomacy. Success runs in your branch of the family.

LAT His progress is astounding. He owes it, I presume, to your influence?

MARQ No, my dear fellow, he owes it entirely to yours.

LAT You flatter me.

MARQ Not in the least. All I said in the matter was simply to circulate in the House of Peers the details of his history. It was the least I could do for my grand-nephew for such of course he is.

LAT You published his misfortune!

MARQ As delicately as I could. Jacques found friends in all of your foes. Just think what powerful support that has been to him!

LAT He is too noble minded to permit any feelings of resentment to influence. One of these days I may be in a ministerial position and able to promote his fortunes.

MARQ In the meanwhile he is in a position to promote yours. Do you intend entering on a political career?

LAT I am about to seek election to the Department of Finisterre, where your estates and our family connections will ensure my success.

MARQ I fear you are too late. A deputation of the citizens from Brest arrived in Paris last week to tender the seat to Jacques.

LAT Jacques!

MARQ He declined the honor.

LAT Declined?

MARQ He thinks that a foreign mission is more suitable and an easier path to great social distinction.

LAT A foreign mission! But I thought such honors were generally bestowed on persons of rank?

MARQ My dear nephew, you forget he is your son.

LAT But he does not bear the title.

MARQ I have resolved that he shall wear mine.

LAT Your title?!

MARQ I have no children, the law permits me to adopt an heir. The House of Peers regretting to see old names fading out of the land will permit me to transmit mine to Jacques.

LAT Stop! Can't I adopt him? I'll recognize him at once. This is more legitimate. It is proper he should derive through me. It would look absurd to skip a generation in this manner on purpose. What possible excuse could be assigned to such a step?

MARQ The best- you have no children. Besides, I owe no explanation to you for my conduct except to my own family.

LAT Well, we have the right then to protest, to appeal, again an insult.

MARQ You have the right to enumerate all the wrongs you have inflicted on your son as good reasons why no reparation should be made to him, but the formula sounds odd, does it not? When he applied to you to redress those wrongs you simply cast upon his mother an imputation you knew to be as hollow and false as the heart that conceived it and turned your back upon him. When he applied to my sister for leave, she shut the house door in his face. There remains but Renee and the old curmudgeon of an uncle, he came to us. Renee said I'll share your infamy, and I say I'll cover it with the mantle of my peerage and the coronet that believe me would never fit you, it is too large, it would tumble over your nose, you would look ridiculous. (*moves up C.*)

(*Enter the COUNTESS and RENEE*)

MARQ My dear sister I am charmed to see you.

COUNT Marquis, I have the honor to wish you many happy returns of the day. (*sits R*)

MARQ So my dear Renee, they have let the bird out of its cage?

REN On this occasion! I wish you had more birthdays in the year.

MARQ How does the convent agree with you?

REN I never was in better health or better spirits.

MARQ You look rosy and you have grown I do believe.

REN Contentment of mind has added eighteen pounds to my weight and I am five eighths of an inch taller.

COUNT You held your head quite high enough Mam'zelle before you went into the convent.

MARQ And you enjoyed your seclusion?

REN Immensely!

COUNT I am glad to say the superior assured me that Renee has not exhibited a shadow of the perversity we anticipated. She has been the gayest, most obedient and most studious of all the young ladies under her care.

MARQ So you have surmounted your weakness, you are cured of your folly, eh?

REN May I read this book, granduncle? I mean is it fit for me to read?

MARQ Yes, but it is a Treatise on Harmony.

REN I have been studying counterpoint for the last year. *(she goes and sits on stool R)*

MARQ *(Aside)* Smooth waters run deeper than my sister can fathom.

LAT *(Apart to the Countess)* I have the most astounding news. Our plans are all undone. I cannot explain now fully at present, but who do you think is my opponent in the election and my uncles nominee?

*(Enter GERVAIS)*

GERV M. Jacques Colas

*(Enter JACQUES. GERVAIS exit R. arch)*

MARQ *(Meeting him)* I am delighted to see you. Now our party is complete. Gervais, order the dinner. I feared your official duties might detain you from us, and I wished all my family to surround me on this occasion. Allow me to present you to my sister, Madame Latour. But I hoped your mother would have accompanied you. *(Rises and cross to C)*

COUNT What jest is this? Where are my spectacles? Why that young man is Raymond. Do my eyes deceive me?

LAT *(Aside to her)* Allow me to explain.

MARQ *(Presenting Jacques)* My nephew, M. Latour.

JACQ I have already had the honor of meeting the gentleman.

COUNT What does it all mean?

LAT (*Aside to her*) Do restrain yourself, you do not know what has happened?

JACQ (*Going straight to Renee*) How do you do, Renee? (*offers his hand*)

REN (*On stool R. Looking up*) How do you do, Jacques? You never doubted me?

JACQ Not for a moment!

REN Nor I you!

COUNT (*Enraged*) Are you in your senses, Renee?

REN Yes grandmamma, perfectly.

COUNT Then will you take your hand out of that gentleman's and explain your conduct?

REN It is very simple. This gentleman and I loved each other and he promised to be my husband, I promised to be his wife. You thought proper to oppose our marriage without telling us why, and I could not oblige you to give me any reason because I am under age. Besides, you are older than I am. You have experience while I may be mistaken in my feelings. Therefore to guard me against myself you put me in a convent and you did quite right, but when people like this gentleman and me give our word we keep the pledge. So after a year's separation we meet now under the roof an honorable man, your own brother, where I find this gentleman received as a friend. A proof that he is still worthy of my esteem, we offer each other our hands, before you all-without hesitation or disguise which appears to me more honest than to exchange looks and signals and seeking an opportunity to meet privately in a corner. You ask me for an explanation of my conduct. That's it. (*Takes his arm*)

COUNT (*Rises*) And may I ask the favor of your candor to explain your further projects?

REN Certainly grandmamma (*Cross to her*) if you had asked one month ago I would have told you then. My project is to marry M. Jacques Colas, as I love him as much as I loved M. Jacques Saulieu. It is not the same name but it is the same man.

COUNT And what part do you think I shall play in all this? (*Sits*)

REN You will take me back to the convent and you will do what is quite right. Then you will keep me until I am twenty one years of age.

COUNT And then?

REN Ah! Then grandmamma, as I shall have proved my respect to you by my cheerful submission, as I shall live my own life and would take the consequences of my mistake than yours, I shall feel justified in giving my hand to this gentleman if he remains in the same mind to ask it. (*Goes to Jacques*)

COUNT The world is coming to an end! (*To LATOUR L. of her, who vainly endeavors during the foregoing scene to interpose*) Don't talk to me! Don't attempt to apologize for her!

(*LATOUR goes up L.*) From whom did you learn such abominable principles? Who put such horrible thoughts into your head?

REN Nature!

COUNT Here's a girl of 18 talking of nature like a common artist or a-a-a-a- This comes of letting newspapers lie about- to poison the innocent of a rising generation. Come back to your convent this moment.

REN (*Going to take up her hat*) I am ready!

COUNT As for you, brother, you see me under your roof for the last time. Had I known what company you had invited to meet me you might have spared us both this insult.

MARQ As you please my dear sister.

LAT (*Aside*) She won't listen, she is playing the devil with all my plans.

REN I am sorry, granduncle, to leave you.

MARQ I am sorry to part from you my child.

COUNT Now, mam'zelle!

REN I'm coming, grandmamma. Goodbye Jacques!

JACQ Goodbye-Renee.

(*The COUNTESS takes off RENEE L. arch*)

JACQ (*To the Marquis*) My presence has driven your sister from your house and frankly I cannot say she is to blame in all this, nor am I, yet who is in the right?

MARQ That's the worst of it, you are in the right, so is she, so am I, so is Renee, we are all in the right. (*They go up. JACQUES looks after RENEE*)

LAT (*Aside*) Except one and I am infernally in the wrong whichever way I turn! (*Cross R.*) Jacques holds my fortune in his hands. If his treaty with Egypt falls through, I go with it and I carry the Countess with me. Ten million of francs lie in the viceroy's treasury. I'll never see a son of it again. They are sunk in the hole! All depends on the report Jacques will make. I perspire all over when I think of my position. Then if my uncle carries his title over my head to fall on

his, I should be obliged to hide mine forever! If one could only foresee these things but it is not too late, how for a Master Stroke!

JACQ (*Coming down*) They are gone.

MARQ What a world of love was in the smile that Renee threw you from the carriage window! (*Crossing to R.*)

JACQ Surprised by the Countess who plucked down the blind.

LAT Ah- had she known the change that has taken place in my feelings during the past year! But she is so petulant.

MARQ If she had allowed me to explain the views I entertain towards this young gentleman, hers might have undergone some change.

LAT I appreciate the false position we occupy before the world.

JACQ Certainly, sir, had I known the effect my presence here would produce on the relatives gathered here today around the table of my benefactor-

LAT Granduncle! Your granduncle who is proud I am sure to remember the fact.

MARQ (*Aside*) Hollo. Sets the mind in what quarter?

JACQ May I ask what these transports mean?

LAT They mean that I am above the narrow prejudices of society. The appeal you made to my feelings when we last met-

JACQ And parted-

LAT Precisely- left an impression I have never been able to remove- the voice of nature.

MARQ (*Aside*) Oh! Oh! (*Up R. of C*)

LAT Vibrates through my heart. I cannot resist its influence. I shall acknowledge you to be my son.

JACQ Sir, you are very polite, I scarcely known how to reply to a voice I hear for the first time.

(JACQUES *standing between the two turns from one to the other with amused gravity during the ensuing scene.* MARQ R. JACQUES C. LATOUR L.)

MARQ Pardon my interference here, but your project rather interferes with mine. I have resolved to adopt the boy.



JACQ Adopt me! Marquis?

MARQ You are just the kind of person I desire for a son and heir, and as circumstances-

LAT Excuse me, but I think my claim-

MARQ What claim?

LAT I am his father!

MARQ Accidentally!

LAT You do not prelude to dispute he owes me...

MARQ Nothing. The Statute of Limitation bars the debt of nature. It has stood for over twenty years and you never applied for it.

LAT The law will give me the preference-

MARQ What law? I like that, eh Jacques?

JACQ On, don't mind me, I rise immeasurably in my own estimation at every word you expend upon the subject.

*(Enter BRISEBARRE)*

MARQ Oh! Here is the law in person. Come here my worthy notary. There is a knotty point in discussion and we require some of your legal light upon the question.

BRIS *(Bowing)* M. Latour! Ah! I am at your service.

LAT You begin, uncle.

MARQ No, it is your right. Ah Jacques?

BRIS What is the matter?

JACQ I'm the matter.

LAT Yes, it concerns my son.

BRIS Ah! You have a song!

LAT Certainly, Jacques.

BRIS Since when? He was not so six months ago.

LAT Well he is now.

BRIS For how long?

LAT Forever.

BRIS Ah! You intend to acknowledge him?

LAT I have the right to do so.

BRIS Not only your right. It is your duty.

LAT Clearly! What are the formalities required for this purpose by the law?

BRIS The simplest in the world. You execute a deed to that effect which must be acknowledged before the proper officer. Article of the Code 263.

LAT Is that all?

BRIS That's all!

LAT There you see, Marquis, my right is clear.

BRIS Indisputable.

MARQ (*Down R*) Your pardon. Allow me, M. Brisebarre. I wish to adopt the son of my nephew. Can I do so?

BRIS Clearly!

MARQ What formalities are required by law?

BRIS You must execute a deed to that effect which must be acknowledged before a proper officer. Article of the Code 327.

MARQ Is that all?

BRIS That's all.

MARQ There you see, nephew, my right is palpable. (*Up cross round to L*)

LAT M. Brisebarre, allow me to observe that this question is a serious family affair.

BRIS Excuse me. You put to me a legal question and I answered it categorically. If you desire to put the matter on another footing, I am ready to regard it in that light. Only be precise, do you

consult me as a lawyer or as a friend? Here is the friend, on this side, and here is the lawyer on that. Now proceed. I'm a machine that answers questions.

LAT No, I wish you to investigate the matter.

BRIS Good! The lawyer then is applied to Jacques. You are the goods in dispute. Stand there. You are the "corpus."

LAT Really sir, I must entreat you, you place my son in a very absurd position.  
(BRISEBARRE brings JACQUES to C and brings chair. LATOUR stands R and MARQUIS stands L)

JACQ If there be anything ridiculous in the position where I stand, sir, I may be the victim but I am the object of it. (*Sits*)

LAT No. Of course not.

BRIS You wish to recognize this gentleman?

LAT Yes!

BRIS Better late than never. Have you any relatives who may object?

LAT My mother may do so.

BRIS Ah! Are you prepared to resist her appeal if necessary before a court of justice?

LAT I will overrule it.

BRIS Nature and propriety go with you, Sir. (*Passing over Jacques*) The weight of evidence is on your side. Now for you, Marquis, do you wish to adopt him?

MARQ Yes!

BRIS Have you any relatives who may object?

MARQ None whatever.

BRIS Then the matter cannot be the subject of a lawsuit and a family rupture involving the scandal of litigation in which the feelings of the corpus would be painfully injured, his interests lie decided in this direction. (*Passes Jacques over*)

LAT Stay, if the Marquis pleases to add his influence to mine, my mother would not object.

JACQ Pardon me, gentlemen, but mine seems to have escaped your consideration.

BRIS Your mother!

JACQ You are so engaged in debating my position that you seem to have forgotten hers.

BRIS The solution of the whole question has been found in the mouth of the babe. He is right, your course is clear, marry the mother.

BRIS And I will procure the legalisation of your first marriage, my title can then descend in line directly to Jacques, who will thus become your legitimate son and heir.

LAT (*After a pause*) I consent.

MARQ and BRIS (*Together with satisfaction*) Ah!

JACQ (*Quietly*) Stop! There is another difficulty you seem to have overlooked: will my mother consent to accept you?

LAT Not consent to accept me? I do not quite understand.

JACQ Let me bring the matter, sir, within the scope of your clear and calculating mind. What is she to gain by marrying you? For more than 20 years she has occupied the position you made for her. She has become reconciled to it. Do you think that her love survives an age of wrongs? You cannot reasonably expect to find the simple, confiding girl you deserted still waiting for you like patience on a monument. I shall not accuse your vanity of entertaining such a hope as that!

LAT But for your sake-

JACQ And do you imagine I should permit such a sacrifice?

LAT Sacrifice?

JACQ Sir, she loved you for what she thought you were. You undeceived her. You now propose she should marry what she knows you are. See yourself for a moment with her eyes.

LAT (*Looking round helplessly*) Really things do take a turn so strange, so unexpected. I am out of my senses I believe, or somebody is- (*Down R*)

MARQ No. Simply out of your element. A fish out of water. My dear financial nephew, I fear that honesty has made a corner for you and you find yourself short of the market.

LAT But my dear Marquis, I am quite ready to do, do anything, right. What do you suggest?

MARQ Oh! Don't appeal to me. (*Turns up right*)

LAT (*To Brisebarre*) Surely, dear sir, both as a lawyer and a friend, you cannot advise-

BRIS In both capacities? I am retained on the other side. (*Goes up L*)

LAT (*To Jacques*) Will you allow me to wait upon your mother? Will you permit me to- to give me the chance- to redeem myself to- (*In his agitation he wipes the perspiration from his face*) God bless me, this is so very sudden. I scarcely know what I say or do.

JACQ Go sir, here is her address. She still inhabits the cottage in which you left her so many years ago. If your heart has not forgotten the way to it you will find here there. Go, make your peace with her if you can, if you succeed in persuading her to forgive you, I will consent to adopt you as my father.

LAT I fly to her feet. (*Aside*) My mother is right, the world is coming to an end.

(*LATOUR exits hastily. Enter GERVAIS and FOOTMAN. The curtains of the dining room are drawn aside and discover the dinner table laid for several guests. Footmen in rich liveries behind the chair.*)

GER The Marquis is served.

JACQ And only two friends left to grace your table.

MARQ (*Between them taking their arms*) I'm an old epicure in friendship, my appetite for fellowship is small but very choice. Gervais, how many bottles have we left of that Schloss Johannisberg the prince sent us?

GER (*Bowing*) Three, your grace.

MARQ Three! And no one else expected.

## ACT V

SCENE I: *The room in the cottage of Catherine Colas as seen in Act the first. Such changes as might have occurred in the furniture and decoration of the apartment indicate the lapse of time. LATOUR is discovered listening at the door R. H.*

LAT I cannot overhear what they say. This suspense is terrible. (*He walks about*) Who could have dreamed that she would hesitate to exchange this cottage for a palace—obscurity for grandeur. Women are the most unreliable.

*Enter the COUNTESS*

LAT Well mother? Well?

COUNT I can make nothing of her. She will not speak until she sees her son. What is beneath all this?

LAT Our ruin if we fail to secure his support.

COUNT I knew what would come of your boat-building.

LAT Oh that I had kept to that, but to gratify your pride. I went into finance.

COUNT If you had not the head for it why did you not say so?

LAT Who would have foreseen that Egypt would have seized a Russian vessel and brought about a rupture of diplomatic relations. Our Red Sea Loan is disappearing under water like Pharaoh's host.

*Enter BRISEBARRE, he has a newspaper under his arm.*

LAT My dear sir, you bring the latest news from Paris?

BRIS Here is the Moniteur, with an official communication on the subject of our attitude with Egypt. But where is my dear friend Madame Colas?

COUNT Oh never mind her at present.

LAT She is very well and can wait. The news.

BRIS (*Reads*) The public mind is needlessly alarmed. It is true that the peaceful relations between Egypt and Russia were seriously disturbed. The Russian minister had demanded his passports and a new rupture between the Ottoman Empire and the Czar appeared unavoidable. Such a misfortune must have precipitated a general war in Europe.

COUNT Worse. Much worse- it would have precipitated me.

LAT Go on, sir.

BRIS Fortunately our own Charge d'affairs intervened, although dispatched to Cairo for other and special purposes, he assumed the responsibility. Being a guest of the viceroy at the moment, he exercised such influence on his host that certain concessions were made and the Russian withdrew his demands. The matter was thus brought within the limits of diplomacy and the first sparks of a European conflagration were bravely stamped out by one whose name is destined to stand high in the history of France: honor to M. Jacques Colas.

LAT Ha! Ha! (*Striding up and down the stage*) My son! Nobody can deny it!

COUNT By, my dear sir, the young man left that place, Egypt, three weeks ago.

BRIS The news was kept secret by the department.

COUNT Secret? But when I met him yesterday in the house of the Marquis and treated him so badly.

BRIS Like a dog, Countess, like a dog.

LAT I tried to stop your mouth.

COUNT Hold your tongue. (*To Brisebarre*) He should have told me how high he stood before the world. He must have felt that if I had known all this I should have taken a very different view of his position.

BRIS He has no idea that he is a great personage. He is blind to his own eminence.

LAT I have met such characters in the world. Persons who are insensible to their own advantages.

BRIS And allow others to make use of them, for true talent is to know how to make proper use of the talents of other people.

LAT (*Not perceiving the sarcasm*) Precisely! He cannot perceive his own value. That condition will not last. Let us take advantage of it while it does.

BRIS Admirable! Meanwhile I'll go and read this to his mother. I wish you all the success you deserve. (*Exit R.D.*)

LAT (*Looking after him*) Mother, I fear that man is laughing at us.

COUNT At you my son, I've perceived that for some time.

LAT Making a fool of me?

COUNT My dear he found you ready made.

LAT I begin to doubt in myself.

COUNT I never doubted in myself for a moment, nor do I allow circumstances to change my nature. All this business is most degrading. These people are offensive to the last degree. If I am obliged to share your position, I bring down to it a proper sense of my degradation. The soul of the bricklayer I transmitted to you belongs exclusively to your father.

LAT Architect!

COUNT Bricklayer or Architect 'tis all the same thing. Boatbuilding and business. I knew what it would lead to. (*Crosses L.*)

LAT What is to be done?

COUNT Buy these people, everyone has a price. It must be paid.

LAT What price will Jacques take?

COUNT Renee.

LAT Renee.

COUNT I suppose I must pay it.

LAT Her fortune is engaged with yours in this Egyptian Loan, to recuse that he will make a flourishing report.

COUNT Oh Raymond! Raymond! When will you understand that money is not the main spring in life. It is not the only means, my son, no greatness rests upon it. We are moved by two great influences: pride and love. I'll go fetch Renee since I see it will come to that at last (*Exit L. D.*)

LAT (*Alone*) There goes pride. (*Turns and looks into the chamber R. H.*) and there sits love. No doubt of it. Brisebarre reads the news to her, she listens to the praises of her son, what rapture there is in that pale upturned face. What joy in the tears that chase each other down to the smile upon her trembling mouth. Oh if she would only wise one up with that emotion and remember she owes him to me. There is a responsive tear in my eye. Oh! If I could preserve it there until she could see it. (*Goes up*)

(*Enter CATHERINE with the newspaper trying to read it, while she wipes away the tears from her face. She crosses to L and sits. Enter BRISEBARRE*)

CATH He never told me this. No, not one word. He wrote almost daily but his letters were all about me and mine to him were filled with reproaches that he would not tell me about himself. My noble Jacques, my darling boy, my son, my son.

LAT (*Leaning over her chair*) Our son...

CATH Yes, our son.

LAT Let us unite our hearts over his triumphs and let the past be drowned in our mutual tears.

BRIS (*Aside*) Mutual tears is good, he has been reading up for this occasion.

LAT The future may repair that past, if Jacques will make room for me in your heart.

BRIS She is a woman, a weak woman. (*A pause*) Silence is hesitation and a woman who hesitates- (*CATHERINE rises*)



CATH (*Going to BRISEBARRE*) Dear friend, leave us. I expect my son to arrive every moment.  
BRIS I will go and watch for him. (*Exits*)

CATH Raymond, we parted in this very room twenty years ago. I do not recall the moment to your mind that I may reproach you with it. I did not know you then as I have learned to know you since.

LAT I forfeited your love.

CATH No. Love is never forfeited. (*Cross to L.*) See? (*Opens her desk*) In the first impulse of my passion I tore up your letters, but I have kept those pieces until now so my broken heart has lain beside you, under your feet for twenty years. You never \_\_\_\_\_ it. I knew that I said to myself every night as I filled my empty heart with your \_\_\_\_\_ words of endearment.

LAT I did not know the treasure I possessed.

CATH You knew it but your heart was full of another treasure. There was no room for me, my poor Raymond. I have followed your life and long since I learned to forgive you. I saw your faults and blamed myself for my idolatry, a great compassion filled and overcame me, my idol had ceased to be my God. I looked down upon a weak and erring man.

LAT You despised me?

CATH Ah, no Raymond. How little you know of me.

LAT Then take that weak and erring man to your heart again.

CATH My future is not my own. It belongs to our son. I could not live without something to worship and on the pedestal from which you fell I have set up another human God.

LAT But what do you propose to do?

CATH I must ask for his consent.

LAT To our marriage?

CATH Yes.

(*Enter BRISEBARRE R.*)

BRIS He is coming.

CATH Jacques!

BRIS He is scampering across the fields from the railway station, bounding over the ditches, he is too impatient to walk like a sensible man along the road. (*She joins BRISEBARRE at the back. Looks off*)

LAT (*Aside*) A father and mother obliged to ask their own son's consent to their marriage? The world is upside down. (BRISEBARRE *advances R. to LATOUR*)

BRIS (*Aside to him*) Don't you think it would be delicate to leave them alone?

LAT But he is my son.

BRIS Not yet.

LAT True. I forgot.

(BRISEBARRE *leads him out R.H.*)

CATH Jacques! (*extending her arms*) Jacques!

(*Enter JACQUES*)

JACQ Mother! (*They embrace*) dear, dear mother.

CATH Sit down, you are fatigued, breathless.

JACQ The sight of you restores me.

CATH I have read. I know all.

JACQ All what?

CATH (*At his feet*) You bad... you unfeeling boy.

JACQ Oh go on, beat me, what have I done now?

CATH You have saved Europe and you never told me.

JACQ Saved Europe, who put that into your head?

CATH Why it is in the newspaper.

JACQ Oh, if it is in the newspapers, why of course it must be true.

CATH You are laughing at me.

JACQ My dear darling mother, I have saved nothing at all.

CATH But here are all the particulars.

JACQ Did it give you pleasure to read them?

CATH You can ask me?

JACQ Then they are all true.

CATH You shall give an account of yourself and let me \_\_\_\_ your lips, let my heart swell with the pride you refuse to feel, for you are my past, my present, my future. You are the only reason for my being in this world.

JACQ Let us not think of me, mother, but of yourself. M. Latour has been here.

CATH Yes, he is here now.

JACQ He made a proposition?

CATH He offered to recognize our marriage.

JACQ And if necessary, repeat the ceremony?

CATH Yes.

JACQ Well?

CATH I asked time to reflect.

JACQ On what?

CATH What service it might be to you. They offer you a title, then you love his niece and she has been so good so patient and so loving.

JACQ So like my mother, yes, go on...

CATH I had only my name to give you, a poor one, the name of people very obscure, very ignorant, very low. When you were a child, I see you now playing beside my worktable, and looking up into my face with those honest \_\_\_\_ eyes as you watched me. "For whom are you working so late mama" you said. "For you my Jacques." Then you climbed upon my chair and stealing your little arms around my neck you said "Never mind when I am big I'll work for you and you shall be rich and we'll be happy." (*Embraces him*)

JACQ And so we are.

CATH So happy. So happy.

(Enter BRISEBARRE D. R.)

BRIS That is a queer way of showing it. Are you crying together?

JACQ Just to keep one another company.

BRIS You should told a fellow and we could have had a pleasant water party. Well, what is to be the result?

JACQ Do you hear?

CATH Do with me what you will.

JACQ Then I'll keep the promise I made you when I was a child, one half of it is accomplished, you are rich. You shall be happy. Where is M. Latour?

BRIS Here.

(Enter LATOUR)

LAT Ah, my dear boy, my dear Jacques, come to your father's arms.

JACQ (*Coolly stopping his emotion*) Presently, plenty of time, I hope I see you well. And the Countess—

LAT Your grandmother has gone to bring my niece here.

JACQ Oh, in that case, I presume you represent the whole family.

LAT Certainly. We are all of one mind I assure you.

JACQ Then I may repeat a proposition I made some time ago at a moment when you were not all of one mind. My name is Jacques Colas, you know my history. (CATHERINE *takes his arms*) I love your niece, I believe she loves me. I ask her hand in marriage.

LAT By all means, my dear boy. Only you mistake you mistake your name is no longer Jacques Colas, it is Jacques de Latour.

JACQ Since when?

LAT Since I executed these papers recognizing you as my son.

JACQ It is too late. I should have known this sooner, because, having no name I understood to make one and I am satisfied with it.

LAT But I have been confessing to every one that you are my son.

JACQ I regret to say sir, that you have done wrong, for I have not been confessing to anybody that you are my father.

LAT But you do not oppose my marriage?

JACQ No. For her sake she loves you still.

CATH Jacques.

JACQ I shall endeavor to regard you as nature intended I should do. My mother will change her name, or rather, resume that to which she has always been entitled to but as for me? I cannot decide on mine until I have taken counsel.

LAT With whom?

*(Enter RENEE, the MARQUIS, and the COUNTESS)*

JACQ With her who is destined to bear it. She has two to choose between- Renee. I have obtained the consent of your family to our union. I now must seek yours.

REN I gave that long ago.

JACQ At that time you were ignorant of the objection they entertained me. Perhaps when you know it you may wish to withdraw the hand you offered with your heart.

REN I know the objection

.

JACQ Have you reflected?

REN My life has been one long reflection. Even before I learned the truth. My heart taught me there was a sorrow in you. I had to console a mystery in your life I had to respect, and a misfortune I had to make you forget. To do all this I must learn to love you. Not more, that is impossible, but better. Learn how to be your tender friend after I had become your wife.

JACQ Here is my mother, Renee, can you feel for her in spite of all the respect a daughter should entertain?

REN She is your mother, Jacques. Madame, will you be mine?

CATH *(Embracing her)* My child.

JACQ So far, good. Now, Renee. One question more. My father who forgot my existence for twenty years, is pleased to offer me his name. Might I to accept it or will you share the name of my mother?

REN Keep the name you have made noble and into render illustrious. That name borne by us will be the absolution of your mother and the record of her lifelong love. For my part, I want no other, so proud am I of that.

JACQ (*Embracing her*) Renée!

REN She is an angel, although her grandfather was a bricklayer.

LAT Architect!

BRIS Both. Don't you see his nature in Jacques—he has built his own fortune! Why may not he be the founder of a noble race? His future generations may look back to him with as much pride as you regard the founder of Paris.

MARQ Oh! Much more. We don't care to look back too closely.

LAT A double alliance will unite us. (*to JACQUES*) You will marry my niece. I shall marry your mother. Now Jacques may I not call you my love?

JACQ Yes, Uncle.

COUNT I confess I'm vanquished. That young man is proudly to bear our name and title.

JACQ Meanwhile let me be working to bear the only title no Empire can bestow, no constriction can reverse—and that is of a man of honor.