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1863



BLANCHE DE NEVERS :

An Opera,

IN FOUR ACTS,

MUSIC BY

M. W. BALFE,

WORDS BY

JOHN BROUGHAM,

FIRST PRODUCED AT

THE ROYAL ENGLISH OPERA, COVENT GARDEN,

UNDER THE MANAGEMENT OF

MISS LOUISA PYNE AND MR. W. HARRISON,

SOLE LESSEES,

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 21, 1863.

THE OPERA PRODUCED UNDER THE SUPERINTENDENCE OF
MR. EDWARD STIRLING.

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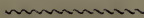
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Dramatis Personæ.



CAPTAIN HENRI DE LAGARDERE	. . .	Mr. W. HARRISON.
THE PRINCE DE GONZAGUES	. . .	Mr. W. H. WEISS.
PHILIP OF ORLEANS (<i>Regent of France</i>)	. . .	Mr. A. ST. ALBYN.
COCARDASSE	. . .	Mr. H. CORRI.
PEYROLLES	. . .	Mr. J. ROUSE.
ÆSOP (<i>the Hunchback</i>)	. . .	Mr. AYNLEY COOK.
NAVAILLES	. . .	Mr. CHARLES LYALL.
CHAVERNAY	. . .	Mr. ARTHUR.
THE LADY BLANCHE DE NEVERS	. . .	Miss LOUISA PYNE.
THE PRINCESS DE GONZAGUES	. . .	Miss EMMA HEYWOOD.
ZILLAH (<i>a Gitana</i>)	. . .	Miss ANNA HILES.

Gipsies—Lords—Ladies—Guards—Servants, &c.

Gen. Rev. 24 Feb 77, Spencer: 2 caps.

NOTICE TO MANAGERS.

MISS LOUISA PYNE and MR. W. HARRISON, having purchased the exclusive acting right of the Libretto of *Blanche de Nevers*, all applications must be made to them, in writing, for permission to perform the same, or any part thereof.

ROYAL ENGLISH OPERA,

Saturday, November 21, 1863.

BLANCHE DE NEVERS.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—Mountain Pass on the Spanish Frontier. Dance of ZINGARI,
Groups of GIPSIES, &c., looking on.

OPENING CHORUS.

What state can compare with the Zingari life,
Evermore joyous, contented and gay?
Nothing they know of the world and its strife,
Glad as the summer-time, free as the day.

Loud let the echoes ring,
While we thus dance and sing,
Merrily, merrily roaming along,
Cheering all hearts with the Zingari song.

[ZILLAH advances with tambourine, singing to the bystanders.]

ZIL. Would you learn the will of fate,
And the future time foresee,
With the stars my skill is great ;
Nothing can they hide from me.
Let but silver cross my palm,
And I'll read for you the sky
In the storm or in the calm,
For the Gipsy Queen am I.

I can tell by marks and lines
If good fortune is in view,
And find out by secret signs
If the one you love be true.

So with silver cross my palm,
 And I'll read for you the sky,
 In the storm or in the calm,
 For the Gipsy Queen am I.

Enter COCARDASSE and PEYROLLES.

ZIN. Remember the Zingari, kind Senors ;
 Your generous donation you won't miss.

PEY. Confound it ! is all mischief out of doors ?
 What dangerous community is this ?

Coc. Don't be frightened, my courageous little friend.
 They are gipsies, who would only tax your purse.

PEY. Is that all ? why then my fears are at an end.
 Hollo ! you troop of mendicants, disperse.

PEY. & Coc.

Confound it ! is all mischief out of doors ?
 What dangerous community is this ?

ZIN. Remember the Zingari, kind Senors,
 Your generous donations you won't miss.

[The ZINGARI retire. COCARDASSE and PEYROLLES advance.

Coc. Well, Master Hector, it's now just twenty years since you
 and I entered into partnership together. I have fought for you
 bravely.

PEY. And I have lied for you voluminously.

Coc. You remember this neighbourhood ?

PEY. Well ! it was near this the Duke de Nevers was slain.

Coc. By whom ?

PEY. I cannot tell.

Coc. You will not, you mean ; shall I remind you it was by
 your master, the Prince de Gonzagues.

PEY. Hush !

Coc. Oh ! I'm very discreet. Yes, my old patron and friend
 was slain here twenty years ago. I then entered into the service
 of his assassin, in the hope of one day assisting to avenge that
 cowardly murder. (*Aside.*)

PEY. I only wish we could find some trace of Nevers' daughter, who was carried off by that proscribed Captain Lagardère at the same time.

Coc. And without whom, or evidence of her death, Gonzagues cannot obtain possession of Nevers' much coveted estate. Ah! the Prince.

Enter GONZAGUES.

GON. Peyrolles!

PEY. My lord!

GON. You must away at once to Paris, where the Council shortly meets. Herald my coming, say I shall return, and to my wife, the widow of Nevers, restore the child whom she so long has mourned.

PEY. The Lady Blanche?

GON. I've found her.

Coc. (*aside*) That's a lie!

PEY. (*aside to Coc.*) What am I to do now?

Coc. (*aside to PEY.*) I'll be by your side.

[COCARDASSE and PEYROLLES retire.]

GON. Yes, yes, that girl must be about her age.

ZIL. (*advancing*) Say, shall I tell you your fortune, kind Senor.

GON. It may be I can better tell your own.

ZIL. A sad one it has been, and must be still.

DUET.

GON. Prepare to hear a secret strange
To you; and in your fate
I can predict a sudden change,
As startling as 'tis great.

ZIL. What can he mean? his words have made
My heart to throb with fear
And hope, by turns, I am afraid
My future lot to hear.

GON. Your rank I can to you restore,
A Princess you were born:

- ZIL. A Princess ! I can hear no more,
With wild amazement torn.
- GON. Yes, she will look a Princess true.
Now I can see success in view.
- ZIL. Ah ! can I be a Princess true.
Thoughts fill my heart as bright as new.
- GON. Now go and bid your friends farewell,
Henceforth to be at rest ;
A mother's love will shortly quell
All doubt within your breast.
- ZIL. Have I a mother ! blessed thought,
In rapture unsurpassed,
The love that I so vainly sought,
Shall I enjoy at last ?
- GON. Yes, I shall lead you back to her,
And wealth, your hopes above.
- ZIL. No greater wealth can fate confer,
Beyond a mother's love.
- GON. Yes, she will look a Princess, &c., &c.
- ZIL. Ah ! can I be a Princess, &c., &c.
- GON. Æsop !

[Exit GONZAGUES, ÆSOP, and COCARDASSE. ZILLAH runs to GIPSIES, and appears as if giving the foregoing intelligence ; they express delight. Chorus of GIPSIES without, taken up by those on stage, so as to be very *forte* as LAGARDERE enters.]

CHORUS.

We hail with cheers the man who bears
A heart in his breast
For the poor and opprest,
The boldest and best of muleteers.

[Enter LAGARDERE, as a Spanish muleteer.]

RECITATIVE.

LAG. Kind friends I thank you for those proofs of love,
Had I but wealth, I would give more than words ;

The little I possess with you I share
 Most freely, wishing from my soul 'twas more.

[LAGARDERE gives money. GIPSIES cheer and retire.]

SONG.

When I think of the days that are gone,
 Of my spring-time so thoughtless and gay,
 And the years which so quickly have flown,
 Making life but a long summer day.
 Though in exile, I'm fated to roam,
 No regret the remembrance can bring,
 For my heart here has found it's true home,
 And I'm happy, yes, as happy as a king!

There's a charm in this tranquil retreat—
 There's a spell in the flower-scented air,
 That the soul fills with ecstasy sweet,
 All unknown to the children of care.
 As the dove from the ark taking flight,
 Found a rest for it's venturous wing;
 Here my heart finds it's source of delight,
 And I'm happy, yes, as happy as a king!

SONG.

BLA. (*without*)

As the mountain streams,
 When the bright sunbeams
 Their surface fleck,
 And so gaily deck
 The diamond spray
 In colours gay,
 Ever unwearily, singing so merrily
 All the day long
 Their gladdening song;
 No shadow obscuring the beautiful sky,
 As joyously free and light-hearted am I.

[Enter BLANCHE; she goes eagerly to LAGARDERE; he turns away from her.]

LAG. 'Tis hard, my love from her to hide,
Yet fate wills it must be;
Nevers, whatever may betide,
I'll keep my word to thee.

BLA. There's sadness pictured in his face,
Too well I read it there;
Would I might suffer in his place,
Or else his sorrow share.

BLA. There is some trouble on your mind, dear friend.

LAG. No, Blanche, why should there be?

BLA. Have I done ought to anger thee?

LAG. You could not, that be sure.

BLA. Ah, why is he so cold?

ENSEMBLE.

There's sadness pictured, &c.

[BLANCHE retires, looking at LAGARDERE. Enter ÆSOP and COCARDASSE.]

ÆSOP. I fear this plot; there's not a single trace
Of the Nevers, in that young gipsy.
Now, yonder girl's more like.
(Sees LAGARDERE) Who's this?

I'm sure I know him. If it should be he?

COC. That scowl bodes somebody no good.
Who is he looking at so? Lagardère.
He little thinks that he's so near his foe.
It would be a friendly act to let him know.

I will. (COCARDASSE goes up by side of LAGARDERE, and speaks in an undertone) Lagardère!

LAG. (starts) Who calls?

[Music.]

COC. Don't look, but listen; you are watched by a tiger; across your shoulder you can see the beast now crouching for a spring.

LAG. The Hunchback ?

COC. Yes ; the Prince is here ; failing to find proofs of the Lady Blanche's death, he's about to substitute a false heiress at the Council which meets in Paris.

ÆSOP. (*aside*) It is Lagardère.

COC. The Hunchback has recognised you, I see by the vicious glare in his eye, Have a care, for he's a merciless fiend.

[Exit COCARDASEE up stage, and off, L.

ÆSOP. (*rubbing his hands, and laughing*) Then that must be the real Blanche ! This will be rare news for the Prince.

[Going up stage.

LAG. (*intercepting him*)

You're merry, sir.

ÆSOP. I am.

LAG. In haste, it seems.

ÆSOP. You're right.

LAG. You'll have to listen first to me—

You know me ?

ÆSOP. Yes ; Lagardère.

LAG. You're right.

The lady too—

ÆSOP. Well.

LAG. Is Blanche de Nevers.

ÆSOP. I thought as much ; that's all I want to know.

LAG. Stop. I've a word to say before you leave.

ÆSOP. I have no time.

LAG. But you must hear me.

ÆSOP. How ?

LAG. You mean to tell the Prince this, do you not ?

ÆSOP. That I'm determined, if I have the chance.

LAG. Ah ! but you won't.

ÆSOP. Why ? what will stop me ?

LAG. Death.

When Nevers was slain, I swore to avenge his murder and protect his child—I mean to kill you.

ÆSOP. Kill me ? Fool, I gave you your first lesson.

LAG. And, villain, I'll give you your last. After the valets,
the master.

[Exit LAGARDERE and ÆSOP.]

RECITATIVE.

BLA. What can have caused this sudden change? He's gone
Without a word to me; what have I done
Or said? I strive to tax my simple brain
To find how I have grieved him, but in vain.

SONG.

There is a void within my heart,
A grief I never knew before,
I feel as though the brighter part
Of life had fled for evermore:
My soul from its contentment hurled,
By this great sorrow overthrown,
And now, upon the wide, wide world,
I am all friendless and alone—
Unhappy fate!

Like one who, in some fearful wreck,
Is doomed to see each loving form
Swept far away, yet on the deck
Remains to battle with the storm.
Thus every hope to me is lost—
Before me perils yet unknown,
For on life's ocean tempest-tossed,
I am all friendless and alone—
Unhappy fate!

Enter ZILLAH, who runs to BLANCHE.

ZIL. Oh, Blanche! dear sister, as you still must be,
Have you been told what fate has done for me?
I am no longer the poor Gipsy Queen,
But a true princess. I have just now seen

The nobleman, who says he will restore
To me my proper state, and, what is more,
Present me to my mother very soon.

BLA. Your mother? Ah! that is a priceless boon
I envy most. Alas! could I but rest
My weary head upon a mother's breast,
And find that once our hearts together beat,
The humblest lot with rapture would I greet.

DUET.

BLA. & ZIL. Oh! what a boundless joy is $\left\{ \begin{array}{l} \text{thine,} \\ \text{mine,} \end{array} \right.$
A bliss beyond compare,
Shedding on earth a ray divine,
A mother's gentle care.
Shall my lone heart forget the past,
In rapture far above,
All thought, all hope, and find at last
A mother's tender love.

Enter GONZAGUES, PEYROLLES, and COCARDASSE.

[BLANCHE leans against tree, watching where LAGARDERE went off.

GON. Yes, yes, Peyrolles, I've found the lost one; here in this
gipsy girl you see Blanche de Nevers!

PEY. Her ladyship most humbly I salute.

Coc. (*aside*) A precious plot, but I must yet be silent.

GON. Peyrolles, you must start for Paris, and prepare the
Council for the news I bring; that I have found the true heiress
of Nevers—stay! I must write a few lines to His Royal Highness
the Regent; but where's my living desk. *Æsop'*

[*Music.*

Enter LAGARDERE disguised as the HUNCHBACK.

[GONZAGUES produces and writes on tablets, using LAGARDERE'S
back as a desk.

GON. Cocardasse!

Coc. My Lord!

GON. You know your instructions?

Coc. Perfectly, my lord! I can't see Lagardère anywhere.

[*Exit COCARDASSE looking for LAGARDERE;*

GON. (*to PEYROLLES*) Take this and start at once.

PEY. Alone ! my lord ?

GON. Certainly ! you're not afraid, are you ?

PEY. Afraid, my lord ! what an absurd idea. (*Aside*) Oh, lor !
I shall be murdered on the road, I know I shall.

[Exit up stage, and off, L.

GON. And now, mademoiselle, take leave of your hitherto companions, and prepare to go to Paris with me.

[They retire. ZILLAH joins gipsies. LAGARDERE sits on rock

Enter COCARDASSE.

COC. That villain is unharmed, the worst I fear.

(*To LAGARDERE*) You have been fighting !

LAG. Yes !

COC. And he is—

LAG. Dead !

COC. Misshapen wretch ! prepare to follow !

LAG. Hush ! don't you know me ?

COC. Heavens ! Lagardère ?

LAG. Now that I've proved your courage to be true, I shall entrust to you, my more than life. This monstrous plot must be prevented. Show Blanche this ring, take her to Paris and lodge her safely there. I'll follow with the Prince ; we have no time to speak further now, but we'll meet at the hotel on the road. Farewell ! be secret and discreet.

COC. Depend on me.

[COCARDASSE goes to BLANCHE.

Enter ZILLAH and GIPSIES.

CHORUS OF GIPSIES—FINALE.

Hurrah for our Gipsy Queen, hurrah !

Good fortune still with her abide ;

Hurrah for our Gipsy Queen, hurrah !

Long may she live to be our pride.

GON., LAG. & ZIL.

I have a motive now to strive,
 And future fate control ;
 A purpose, that keeps hope alive
 Within my earnest soul.

COC. & BLA. Thou hast a motive now to strive,

And future fate control ;
 A purpose, to keep hope alive
 Within thy earnest soul.

BLA. & ZIL. Farewell, ye scenes of joy and peace,

Though blest with pleasure, new,
 Till life and memory shall cease
 My thoughts will turn to you.

QUARTETTE.

BLA., ZIL., LAG. & GON.

Hope, no more slumbering,
 Wakes with the day,
 Sorrows past numbering
 Fly far away.

Sunlight, now gladdening
 Life with its beam,
 All that was saddening
 Fades like a dream.

LAG.

Now and for evermore,
 While I have life,
 Faltering nevermore,
 Courting the strife,
 Love shall my armour be ;
 Strong in its might,
 Love shall watch over thee,
 Tender as night.

GENERAL CHORUS.

With thee may joy for ever dwell,
 Friends of my heart, farewell! farewell!

ACT II.

SCENE I.—Interior of a Spanish Inn.

Enter PEYROLLES.

PEY. To think of my having to travel by myself, a man of my peculiarly nervous and sensitive nature, amongst these barbarians of the frontier, where every rascal you meet is either a smuggler or a cut-throat. Oh, law! what's that? I thought there was a trap-door opening beneath my feet. Oh! if I only knew where there was a small packet of courage to be bought, I'd give a good price for it. The worst of it is, they all think me as brave as a lion, since I saved the Prince's life once, by mistake.

SONG.

Oh! what an unfortunate humbug am I.
 A two-legged lie,
 I wish I may die
 If I have as much blood as a bluebottle fly.
 For a most unmistakeable coward I am,
 With the heart of a lamb,
 A regular sham,
 Yet the folk with my courage I manage to cram.
 So they hurry me, worry me,
 Fidget and flurry me,
 Send me wherever most danger is nigh.
 Oh! what an unfortunate humbug am I.

I have managed as yet, to keep safely within
 My primitive skin,
 And glory to win,
 By bragging of fights that I never was in.

And yet in continual fear I abide,
 That the lion-like hide
 From my shoulders should glide,
 And discover the pitiful donkey inside.
 And all jeer at me, sneer at me,
 From far and near—at me !
 Thus I am evermore fated to cry,
 Oh ! what an unfortunate humbug am I.

Enter DIEGO suddenly.

PEY. (*starting*) Who's that ?

DIE. Your excellency's mule is ready.

PEY. (*aside*) This now, is a dainty ruffian ! a civil spoken throat-cutter ! (DIEGO *approaches obsequiously*.) Stay where you are ! Be so good as to prepare a hasty repast for my master, the Prince de Gonzagues, and his ward the Lady Blanche de Nevers.

DIE. Immediately ! excellenza !

PEY. You are very obliging ; will you have the excessive condescension to show me my mule ?

DIE. This way, excellenza !

PEY. Do me the prodigious favour to go first ; I have no small vanities—go first—first.

[Exit DIEGO bowing.

A cut-throat ! I'll take my oath, a cut-throat !

[Exit PEYROLLES cautiously. Mule-bells heard.

Re-enter DIEGO.

DIE. Princes and princesses ! by St. Boniface, we shall have rare guests at the Posada to-day.

Enter LAGARDERE. Plain black dress. He carries the HUNCHBACK'S coat over his arm.

LAG. Have a lady and gentleman arrived within the last half-hour ?

DIE. Yes, excellenza ; they are in yonder room.

LAG. Send—(COCARDASSE *appears at door*) No, never mind ! prepare dinner for the Prince.

DIE. Directly, excellenza !

[Exit DIEGO, bowing.

Enter COCARDASSE.

LAG. Blanche ! is she safe ?

COC. Yes, safe in yonder room.

LAG. Send her to me ; we have but little time and I have much to say to her before the Prince arrives ; keep thou upon the watch !

[Exit COCARDASSE, taking ÆSOP'S coat with him.

Be brave my soul, and for this task prepare :
How tell her all, yet hide my own despair ?

[Enter COCARDASSE with BLANCHE at a signal from LAGARDERE.
COCARDASSE exits, D.

BLA. 'Tis you, dear friend ; then fear flies from my heart.
What mystery is this ? Why am I here ?

LAG. Ah, Blanche ! I have a secret to disclose, which, to my shame, I have withheld too long ; but this, the last day of my happiness, shall also be the last of doubt to thee.

BLA. What do I hear ? You fill my soul with dread of coming ill.

LAG. No, Blanche, of certain joy. The *noble* rank to which you have the right, though threatened, I now promise to secure.

BLA. What rank ?

LAG. Amongst the highest of the land, so high, it lifts thee far above my humble state.

SONG.

LAG. Wilt thou think of me
 When fate shall sever
 Our lives for ever ?
 Thus doomed to part,

'Twill my solace be,
 Though hope should perish,
 That thought to cherish
 Deep in my heart.

When fortune at thy feet shall pour
 It's richest gifts in ample store,
 Let me believe thou'lt waste a sigh
 In memory of the days gone by.

When thou'rt far away,
 With joy abounding,
 And friends surrounding
 Each brilliant scene :

When amidst the gay,
 In splendour dwelling,
 Their love compelling,
 Thou mov'st a queen.

And fortune at thy feet shall pour
 Its richest gifts in ample store,
 Let me believe thou'lt waste a sigh
 In memory of the days gone by.

RECITATIVE.

BLA. And is it you who say, thus calmly, we must part ?

LAG. Honour demands it, Blanche.

BLA. 'Twill break my heart.

Why must this be ? The cause I can't divine.

LAG. Thou art the heiress of a princely line ;

I but an outcast exile.

BLA. What are name

And rank to me ? I only grieve they came

My happy life to crush beneath their weight.

LAG. You have been happy, then ?

BLA. As blest as fate

Could make me.

LAG. Ah ! but I have seen the trace

Of sorrow sometimes printed on your face.

Why did you, then, such quiet sadness feel ?

BLA. Must I the secret of my soul reveal !—

It was because I thought—I mean, I feared—

That some one else was to thy heart endeared.

LAG. What do I hear ! You love me, then ? Ah, foolish heart !
Remember, Blanche, you have other ties—a family.

BLA. Thou art my family.

LAG. A home ?

BLA. Thine is my home.

LAG. A mother !

BLA. Sweet thought !—unhoped-for blessing. She will receive
you as a son.

LAG. But if she will *not*, Blanche, you may be called upon to
choose between us, then—

BLA. My mother ! and, oh ! Henri, I love *you*—I love *you* !

CABALETTA.

BLA. As when a sunburst from the sky
With sudden beam lights up the day,
While fast and far the shadows fly,
Like scattered armies in dismay ;
Thus, o'er my life one radiant thought,
Dispelling doubts, bright hopes renew,
While from my soul, with rapture fraught,
Those accents rise : I love but you !

Enter COCARDASSE.

RECITATIVE AND DUETTINO.

COC. The Prince !

LAG. Beloved Blanche, thou must away !

BLA. So soon, alas ! my soul sinks with dismay
That thou should'st be in danger, and through me.

LAG. Danger ! There's no such word, I'm loved by thee.

[Exeunt LAGARDERE and BLANCHE.

Enter GONZAGUES.

GON. Where's Æsop ? Send him quick.

COC. My Lord, he's here !

Re-enter LAGARDERE as ÆSOP.

[Exit COCARDASSE.

GON. Well, Æsop, we have now no cause to fear ;
This gipsy girl will look a Princess true.
My purpose gained, the rest I leave to you.
She must not live, unpleasant truths to tell.
How do you like my plan ?

LAG. I like it well.

GON. On your assistance I can now rely.

I see success before me.

LAG. So do I.

GON. Your aid will bring a triumph in the end.

LAG. Oh ! be assured of that, if Heaven befriend.

[Exeunt GONZAGUES and LAGARDERE.

SCENE II.—The Oratory [in the Hôtel de Gonzagues. Lords and Ladies assembled, also Members of the Household.

CHORUS—FINALE.

The end of this eventful day
 We wait, so full of anxious care ;
 For with it, too, may pass away
 The name and fortune of Nevers,
 May justice guide the Council of to-night.
 And sanctify the cause of truth and right.

Enter PEYROLLES.

PEY. My lords, and friends of the Nevers,
 For most surprising news prepare ;
 The child for whom, with bitter tears,
 The Princess mourned so many years,
 The Lady Blanche, is found at last,
 And now her day of grief has past.

CHORUS.

What joyful tidings to our hearts !
 A thrill of pleasure it imparts.

PEY. The Prince, my master, comes to-night,
 And brings with him this jewel bright ;
 He badé me thus, the Council greet,
 That he would all accusers meet ;
 And to a mother's heart once more
 The daughter of her love restore.

CHORUS.

The lost is found !
 With soul and voice,
 Let glee abound,
 Rejoice ! Rejoice !

PEY. We must retire, and for the Regent wait,
 Upon whose word depends Nevers' estate !

CHORUS.

The lost is found !
 With soul and voice,
 Let glee abound,
 Rejoice ! Rejoice !

[Exeunt OMNES,

Enter GONZAGUES, ZILLAH, and LAGARDERE as ÆSOP,

GON. Æsop !

LAG. My Lord.

ZIL. (*aside*) I know those eyes !

GON. Be near,
 And when the Regent comes, attend me here.

[LAGARDERE bows and exits.

ZIL. Yes, this thy future happy home shall be,
 Its like a dream ; a lovely dream to me.
 What splendour !

GON. You will soon your mother meet.

ZIL. My mother ! Ah ! my heart begins to beat
 With trembling fear ; for how can I believe
 That she a gipsy daughter will receive.

GON. You must forget that now ; you bear a name
 Amongst the highest on the roll of fame.
 You are the cousin to the King of France.

ZIL. What do I hear ! you make my senses dance !
 I, the poor gipsy, cousin to a king !
 Did anyone e'er hear of such a thing

GON. Yes ; and this evening, at the Regent's fête,
 I shall present you in your true estate.
 These ladies will assist you in your dress.

ZIL. I go to Court ? it's fairy-land, no less.
 Oh, Blanche ! dear Blanche ! if this you could but see.

GON. Blanche ! How I hate that name ; and who is she ?

ZIL. An orphan like myself, to me most dear.

GON. Where did you meet ?

ZIL. In Spain, on the frontier,
And also at the inn upon the road
With the young officer.

GON. Does this forbode
Some evil? What young officer?

ZIL. Why he
Who so long protected her, and she
Loves so devotedly. I saw him here.

GON. What, in the palace—can he be so near?
Impossible!

ZIL. One can't mistake *his* eyes.

GON. Then our young officer was in disguise.

ZIL. Yes, such a strange one.

GON. Ah! disguised, and how!

ZIL. Why as—

LAG. My Lord, the Regent waits you now.

GON. Yes, presently. He was disguised—well, well,
And how? as what?

ZIL. My Lord, I cannot tell;
I'm so confused, my brain is all aglow.

GON. You said you saw him here, now did you?

ZIL. No!

GON. What does this mean? You for the fête prepare.
I'll send my carriage and receive you there.

ZIL. It's Lagardère, there is some scheme, no doubt,
Which, for the sake of Blanche, I must find out.

[Exit ZILLAH with LADIES.]

GON. You heard that girl?

LAG. I did! she's right, he's here!

GON. And this French officer is?—

LAG. Lagardère!

GON. Why was I not informed?

LAG. I thought t'would fret
Your mind just now.

GON. Why should it?

LAG. You forget.

He knows the true assassins of Nevers,
And swore that all who in that act took share,
Master and valets, by his hand should die,
And there are none left now but you and I.

GON. An exiled criminal, why should I fear?
His life is forfeit, if he but appear.

LAG. True: he was sentenced most unjustly though!
In self defence he acted, as you know.

GON. Well, I can leave his fate to you.

LAG. You can.
I'll stick to him closer than his very skin.

GON. We'll find a way to break his doughty sword.

LAG. How?

GON. By the headsman's hand!

LAG. (*laughing*) Or mine, my lord.

[Exit GONZAGUES.]

LAG. The sword of Lagardère has one more stroke
Of vengeance to inflict, ere it is broke;
Thou spirit of the slain be patient still,
The time's at hand my promise to fulfil.
My soul to its intent, like Fate untired,
Moves on, by duty and by love inspired.

[LAGARDERE writes on tablets; tears out the page and places it
on a prie-dieu.]

Enter COCARDASSE.

LAG. Is Blanche in safety?

COC. Yes, not far from here;

Oh her account you've now no cause to fear.

LAG. We've been in peril, but the danger's past,
The day of retribution dawns at last.

COC. The Princess comes!

LAG. Ah me! how sad she seems,
Her eyes are fixed, like one who walks in dreams.

Enter PRINCESS DE GONZAGUES.

[COCARDASSE and LAGARDERE bow and exit.

PRI. When is this long life-martyrdom to cease,
 And death bring me forgetfulness and peace?
 Time with reluctant step moves on,
 All wearisome to me;
 The prisoned heart when hope is gone,
 Longs only to be free.
 The memory of happy days,
 Of joys for ever fled,
 Around me darker shadows raise,
 Like phantoms of the dead.

[Addresses the portrait of NEVERS.

Thou, of the loved and lost, remembrance dear,
 Whose spirit I am sure now hovers near;
 Oh! if my daughter is with thee at rest,
 Give me some sign, my soul makes that request.
 Silent, still silent—ah! what's this I see?
 A written paper, and addressed to me:
 "But little longer wilt thou have to seek
 Thy child, for thee, alone, the dead will speak"—
 Will speak, "thy daughter lives," signed "Lagardère."
 This sudden burst of joy I scarce can bear.

Enter GONZAGUES.

Madame, the Council is assembled near,
 And waits your pleasure to attend you here.
 PRI. I am prepared to meet them, for this gives
 Me life and hope once more—my daughter lives!
 In this no human council will I seek,
 For at the proper time the dead will speak.

[Enter OFFICERS of the household; LORDS, DOMESTICS
 GUARDS; COCARDASSE, PEYROLLES, and the REGENT, &c.

REG. We greet you with respect and love;
 The Prince, by whom this Council was invoked,

We're now prepared to hear.

GON. My liege, to you
And to these noble friends my thanks are due.
'Tis known that calumny has dared with shame
To taint the honour of my princely name ;
And to defend that, I'm here to day
With proof, a living proof none dare gainsay.

Coc. A fine beginning, what will be the end ?

CHO. So just a claim we must attend ;
His princely name he will defend.

GON. When Philippe de Nevers was put away,
His daughter disappeared, and from that day
Left not a trace ; and as she stood before
Me and a large estate, I calmly bore
The taunts that malice flung upon my name,
Self-conscious I did not deserve the blame.
I was accused of crime.

CHO. It cannot be,
Accused of crime, what monstrous calumny.

GON. They told you, madam, that a secret blow
Removed your daughter ?

PRI. Yes, they told me so.

GON. They told you, also, by my hand she fell ?

PRI. They did.

GON. And you believed them ?

PRI. Yes.

GON. Well, well,
To me it matters little what was said ;
I come to tell you now—

PRI. That she is dead ?

GON. To tell you that your daughter lives—in proof,
She's close at hand ; beneath this very roof !

PRI. My daughter lives ? and you have brought her here ?—
Oh ! let me see her quickly—have no fear,
I can support the sudden joy—my child
Restored ! through him—my heart is nearly wild !

GON. (*leading on ZILLAH*)

Blanche de Nevers, behold thy mother?—go ;
Be happy both.

Coc.

Will she receive her? No !

[PRINCESS rushes to embrace ZILLAH, but stops short.]

CONCERTED PIECE.

PRI.

My soul, though anxious to believe,
Gives no responsive sign ;
A mother's love cannot deceive,
Thou art no child of mine !

ZIL.

My soul in sadness, yet must grieve,
My life all hope resign ;
This warning voice, I must believe
I am no child of thine.

GON.

Her soul though anxious to believe,
Gives no responsive sign ;
Yet I this subtle web must weave,
Or else all hope resign.

Coc.

Her soul, though anxious to believe,
Gives no responsive sign ;
A mother's love cannot deceive—
She is no child of thine !

REG. PEY. & CHO.

What new surprise
Now meets our eyes?
Maternal tie
Will she deny !

GON.

You know since childhood she's not seen her mother,
No wonder they don't recognise each other.

REG.

I have no faith in what is called the voice
Of nature ; and, in fact, we have no choice
But from the evidence to judge ; no doubt
You have the proofs.

GON.

What proofs ?

PRI.

Which I tore out

From the book, and gave my husband ?

GON. No ;

I have the Gipsy's declaration though,
Who found the girl and brought her up ; we need
No greater proof than that which here you read.

PRI. Inspire me, Heaven, the real truth to see.

In my great misery I turn to thee.

CHO. With solemn fear

She holds her breath,

As if to hear

The voice of death !

PRI. And thou who promised surely to be near,

Oh ! if the dead can speak, speak now !

LAG. I'm here.

PRI. The miracle is wrought, and hope lives yet.

GON. Madam, if it so pleases you, forget

The hand that served you, but, at least, relieve

This trembling girl, who has such cause to grieve

At your great coldness, and one smile bestow

On her, for is she not your daughter ?

LAG. No !

PRI. No !

GON. Madam, to bear this out requires no less

Than proof the clearest. Have you such ?

LAG. Yes !

PRI. Yes !

GON. Why not produce it then ? Oh ! Monseigneur,

A brilliant spoil's, the fortune of Nevers.

Some knave, in hope to gain by her distress,

Has said he found her ; did he not ?

LAG. Yes !

PRI. Yes !

LAG. She lives !

PRI. She lives, my sorrows to requite,

Through heaven's protection and in your despite:

- GON. To speak another word would touch my pride ;
 'Tis for your Royal Highness to decide.
- REG. Since Madame de Gonzagues will not believe
 This girl her daughter, if she don't receive
 With her the proof, in three days we shall meet ;
 The evidence may be by then complete.
- PRI. Yes, I shall have my proofs.
- LAG. To night !
- PRI. To night !
- LAG. Yes ; at the Regent's ball.
- PRI. The Regent's ball !
- ZIL. Let the poor gipsy girl for pardon sue ;
 Twice orphaned now, since she's denied by you.
- PRI. Thou'rt no accomplice, child, that I can see,
 So have no fear ; you shall remain with me ;
 She will attend you. Now my heart feels light.
 Bid them prepare my carriage for to-night.
- GON. Your carriage, madam ! What is it you say ?
- PRI. Take out my jewels and my best array.
- GON. Carriage and jewels ! Whither do you go ?
- PRI. To the Regent's ball.
- GON. A ball ?
- PRI. Yes, don't you know
 This day my mourning ends—my soul in white
 Reclad ; for I shall see my child to-night.
- GON. That girl was right, and Blanche is here, Peyrolles ;
 Some evil demon has me in control.
 A female travelled with us up from Spain,
 Possession of that girl you must obtain ;
 Find her, and have her taken to my house.
- PEY. I will, my lord. Oh, here's a precious case !
- GON. Who is it mars my plans thus, everywhere ?
- LAG. Why, don't you know ? I'll tell you : **Lagardère.**
- GON. He !

LAG. But to-night he shall atone for all ;
I've laid the trap.

GON. Where ?

LAG. At the Regent's ball.

PRI. Brightly the star of hope now shining,
Soon all my fears will be at rest ;
Lightly my heart, no more repining,
Beats with unwonted joy possest.

GON. & IAG. Brightly the star of hope now shining,
Soon all my fears shall be at rest ;
Fate, but obey my heart's designing,
Life, then, with joy will be possest.

ZIL. Brightly the star of hope was shining,
Soon it has sunk within my breast ;
Sadly my heart, to fate resigning,
Beats with a heavy grief opprest.

PEY. & CHORUS.

Brightly the star, &c.

END OF ACT II.

ACT III.

SCENE I.—An Apartment in LAGARDERE'S House.

Enter BLANCHE.

BLA. Oh ! joyous night, for which throughout the past
 My heart has hungered, hast thou come at last ?
 And yet, obscuring all by its great light,
 One fond remembrance shines supremely bright.

SONG.

As sunlight beaming on a summer lake
 Pervades the deep with warm and gentle ray,
 While o'er its surface countless ripples break
 In lambent waves, like fairy things at play,
 So shines my heart beneath the happy spell,
 From whose bright influence all shadows flee.
 One thought alone can in my bosom dwell,
 But that one thought is all the world to me.

As lesser streams unto the rivers throng,
 As rivers in their turn to ocean tend,
 Still growing deeper as they glide along,
 Until, united, they for ever blend :
 Thus constant runs the current nought can quell,
 By love attracted like the mighty sea.
 One thought alone can in my bosom dwell,
 But that one thought is all the world to me.

(*Reads*) "To-night thou shalt embrace thy mother."

Enter LAGARDERE.

LAG. Yes, to-night, dear Blanche, your life's uncertainty will
 end, and then to fate's decree we both must bow.

BLA. What mean you ?

LAG. Beloved, we must part. After this night we may not meet again.

BLA. After this night ? Am I so soon to die ?

LAG. Forbid it, Heaven !

BLA. Then you no longer love me ?

LAG. Not love thee, Blanche ? Ah ! this heart-sacrifice is proof how earnestly. As from a dream I wake, to see the madness of my hope. No ! I must yield thee up to thy estate without condition, or it might be said I basely sold a mother back her child.

BLA. Who would believe it ?

LAG. Peace, beloved, peace ! for I have need of all my courage now. Here are the proofs which you to-night must give into the Regent's hand.

BLA. I seek them not, but hate them, for they are my worst of foes since they take from me all that I hold dear.

LAG. I shall send one, in whom I can confide, to take you to the ball. Guard well these proofs, for on them your inheritance depends.

BLA. 'Tis worthless, Henri, unless shared by thee. Ah ! I would gladly give up wealth and state but to bring back the love of other days.

DUET.

Must we part, and that for ever,
 Ne'er again this joy to know ?
 Vain my heart will make endeavour
 To sustain the cruel blow.
 Blindly wrapped in thoughts elysian
 Time has passed in rosy hue ;
 Now, alas ! the fairy vision
 Fades for ever from my view ;
 Now the dreamy spell is broken ;
 Now the fatal words are spoken,
 Keener far than death's own dart.
 We must part, love, we must part.

[LAGARDERE leads her to door. Exit BLANCHE.

LAG. Yes, yes, Nevers ! though life itself be wrecked, I must fulfil the sacred charge you gave.

Enter COCARDASSE.

Coc. Well, Captain, here I am at your command. Why, what has happened ? All goes well, I hope.

LAG. As well as I could wish. I have received a safeguard from the Regent, and to-night I have promised to denounce Nevers' assassin.

Coc. A safeguard ! what, to you ?

LAG. To Lagardère, the outlaw ! Yes, you must remain for Blanche—attend her to the ball.

Coc. Don't fear for her, she shall be there, be sure.

LAG. Now let me see, have I forgotten anything ; yes, yes. You may perchance be followed and attacked ; if nothing occur to mar my plans, hold up your gloved hand ; if otherwise, for without ample proof I dare not speak, let your glove fall.

Coc. I shall remember !

[Exit LAGARDERE.]

Fare you well, Captain, may good fortune crown your every hope in life.

Enter ZILLAN.

ZIL. Is this No. 7, Rue de Chantre ?

Coc. (*turns round—starts*) Mam'selle, it is ? What do I see ? The gipsy girl here ! Oh ! then there's mischief stirring, past a doubt. I must be careful.

ZIL. Can I see the Lady Blanche ?

Coc. The Lady Blanche ! There's no such person here.

ZIL. Not here ? Where's Captain Lagardère ?

Coc. I really cannot tell. I do not know him.

ZIL. Why, sir, I was told that they dwelt here.

Coc. You're misinformed ; myself and my old grandmother live here alone !

ZIL. Dear, how provoking ; are you sure she's not here

Coc. My grandmother ?

ZIL. No, no ! the Lady Blanche.

Coc. I'm positive.

Enter BLANCHE.

ZIL. Blanche !

[Running to, and embraces ZILLAH.

BLA. Zillah, is it you ?

Coc. That's beautiful ! I must look like an ass.

ZIL. And you to tell me that they were not here.

Coc. Faith ! it was but from caution that I spoke.

BLA. Fear not for him, he is our friend.

Coc. A true one. Why this alarm ? what tidings do you bring ?

ZIL. The very worst. You're going to the ball ?

BLA. Yes.

ZIL. No ! You will be seized upon the road.

Coc. By whom ?

ZIL. The Prince. My sister, I know all.

BLA. What do you know ? Does danger threaten *him* ? o he be safe, I care not for myself.

ZIL. I know that you are the true Blanche, and I am nothing but a cheat, a counterfeit, set up to rob you of your name and right.

BLA. Let them both go, I freely yield them up ; I seek for nothing now, but love and him, who is the wealth of all the world to me.

ZIL. Dear Blanche, don't go to the ball.

Coc. She must, she must, for I have promised Lagardère. I have it ! *You* are going, are you not ?

ZIL. I am !

Coc. How ?

ZIL. In the Prince's carriage.

Coc. That will do ! I'll see you there at once and then return, and in the Prince's carriage take the Lady Blanche. They will not dare to stop us then ; but we must start at once, for we've no time to spare.

[Going. BLANCHE and ZILLAH embrace:

BLA. I thank thee, Zillab, for this proof of love.

ZIL. Oh, Blanche! I'd give my life to shelter thine.

[Embrace.

Coc. Oh, there's a time for all things—let's away with speed,
Mam'selle! I shall return for you.

TRIO.

Now, fortune bright'ning,
Our path enlight'ning,
Joys of life height'ning,
Meets us at last.
Sorrows that clouded,
Shadows that crowded
Griefs that enshrouded,
Evermore past.

[Exeunt BLANCHE, door L. COCARDASSE and ZILLAH, door F.
MADELON bars the door and exits. PEYROLLES and four
servants, cloaked, appear at window.

Enter PEYROLLES, by window.

PEY. Silence! step softly! I have found the nest—
Yonder it lies, I see, and what is best
The bird is in it that we have to cage;
This is a deed in which I can engage.
Come on! what fear you? Stop! I'd better pause,
For womankind, they say, have cat-like claws,
And a scratched countenance is bad to bear;
So you go first, and—I'll bring up the rear.

[They exit cautiously into door, L.

SCENE II.—The Regent's Ball.

NOBLES, LADIES, GUESTS, GUARDS assembled.

CHORUS.

As freely as the blossoms fling
Their grateful odours on his way,
So freely we our homage bring,
To greet our Prince's natal day:

As freely as the birds rejoice
 To hail the birth of gentle May,
 So freely we join heart and voice,
 To greet our Prince's natal day.

GRAND BALLET.

GONZAGUES and ZILLAH.

- GON. Why do you tremble, when this happy night
 Will end all doubt, and give you back your right ?
- ZIL. I tremble, influenced by shame and fear,
 At the base part you force me to play here ;
 I have no right, as you yourself well know—
- GON. You guess my secret, then ; well, be it so.
 Assist my plot, and you the gain will share ;
 But, if you cross it by a word, beware !
- ZIL. Ah! what a fate is mine, this wrong to see,
 Yet have no strength to stay the infamy !

REGENT, PRINCESS, GONZAGUES, and COURT.

CHORUS.

Hail to the people's friend !
 Joy on his path descend,
 And every blessing send,
 Hail to the Prince !

- REG. Madam, accept my arm ; the light, thus strong,
 May be too much for you, estranged so long
 From the gay world.
- PRI. I visit it to-night,
 In hope that heaven will sustain the right.
- REG. Yes ; you expect to meet with one, you say—
- PRI. Who promised that I should, ere close of day,
 Regain my child.
- REG. The same, beyond a doubt,
 Who wrote to me to say he would point out
 Nevers' assassin also—Lagardère ?

PRI. 'Tis he, indeed !

REG. Seek no assistance there ;
For, though he has my safeguard, be assured
The outlawed reprobate won't keep his word.

A CHAMBERLAIN.

Captain Henri de Lagardère.

OMNES. Lagardère !

Enter LAGARDÈRE.

LAG. Thanks to your clemency, my liege, I'm here ;
'Tis to redeem my word I now appear.

PRI. And Blanche, my daughter--oh ! you recollect—

REG. His promise, yes. Can you this deed effect ?

LAG. My liege, I *can*; before the night is o'er,
Blanche de Nevers I promise to restore,
With proof of her nativity.

GON. My lord,
This is mere lunacy ; *I have* restored
The Lady Blanche : deign on her to bestow
Your royal favour—she is here.

PRI. No, no,
This girl can never to *his* blood belong.

ZIL. Oh, heaven ! must I in silence hear this wrong ?

GON. Pray which is best entitled to be heard,
My word or his, who has so vilely erred ?

LAG. Oh, I have testimony strong and clear,
Beyond all doubt, or I should not be here.

GON. If this obscure adventurer has brought
Some base impostor, one whom he has bought,
Trained up and tutored for sufficient pay,
To steal this girl's inheritance away,
His punishment I now demand.

LAG. And I

On a greater criminal for vengeance cry—
Nevers' assassin ! who, with crimsoned hands
But shameless brow, in this assembly stands.

REG. What do we hear!—can you point out the man,
And prove what you assert?

LAG. My liege, I can.

(*Aside*) Why come they not! I saw the murder done.

Enter COCARDASSE.

Aha Nevers' assassin—

[COCARDASSE throws down the glove.

REG. Well, go on.

PRI. What villain was it through whose hands he fell?

REG. Who was the murderer?

LAG. I cannot tell.

PRI. You said you knew him, let me know, I pray.

REG. Why don't you speak, sir?

LAG. I've no more to say.

Enter PEYROLLES.

PEY. The papers and the girl I have secured.

GON. Then all is safe.

REG. This cannot be endured.

What means your silence?

GON. That I can explain,

It is because his word he can't maintain,

But knows that he's been trading on a lie.

Himself and proof I utterly defy.

His useless malice in his teeth I throw.

REG. Can you an answer find to this, sir?

LAG. No.

REG. No! sir, you must await the law's award,

In close imprisonment. Give up your sword!

GON. & PEY.

Within those walls, his death you must secure.

Go, take the Hunchback with you, and make sure.

[COCARDASSE overhears this.

PRI., ZIL., LAG. & COC.

All is lost ! all is lost ! To fortune bending,
 Might more powerful than right has triumphed o'er,
 It is vain, all in vain with thee contending,
 The light of hope is quenched for evermore.

GON. & CHO.

All is lost ! all is lost to him for ever.
 Soon his mischievous protection will be o'er.
 From his doom, as a tomb, emerging never.
 Now his light of hope is quench'd for evermore.

END OF ACT III.

ACT IV.

SCENE I.—Interior of a Prison. Inner compartment in one arch containing a couch, to be drawn off with scene. Doors, R. and L., with grated openings.

[LAGARDERE discovered. Joyous Chorus of SOLDIERS.

CHORUS.

A cup to the soldier's trade fill high,
 They no sheepskin garments wear,
 But loudly cry,
 As the lambs pass by,
 We are wolves! of our teeth beware!
 Then sing and drink
 Till the tired stars wink,
 And care into limbo fling;
 For a clinking song
 Helps time along,
 It's a very, merry, jovial thing.
 With a ding, ding, dong!
 And a dong, dong, ding,
 Merry, merry, let the glass bells ring.

LAG. What could have happened in so short a time,
 To crush me in the moment of success,
 I cannot think; this agony of doubt
 With terror thrills me to the very soul.
 Oh! Blanche, Blanche! shall I ne'er again behold thee.

SONG.

Oh! my soul's treasure,
 Pulse of my heart,
 Loved beyond measure,
 Must we then part?
 Night gathers o'er me
 Sombre and gray,
 Shadows before me
 Hiding the day.

Oh! my soul's treasure,
 Pulse of my heart,
 Loved beyond measure,
 Must we then part?
 Light that surrounded
 Life like a spell,
 Joys that abounded,
 Ever farewell!

Oh! my soul's treasure,
 Pulse of my heart,
 Loved beyond measure,
 Must we then part?

Enter COCARDASSE, cautiously—great laugh without—he carries the Hunchback's coat under his cloak.

Coc. Hush!

LAG. What has befallen Blanche?

Coc. I cannot tell,

I fear she's in the power of Gonzagues;
 By him, in my brief absence, forced away.

LAG. Oh, Heaven! all pitiless must I remain
 Imprisoned here, without the strength to aid?

Coc. I've made those fellows nearly blind with drink,
 We must bestir before it is too late;
 The Prince declares that you must never leave
 These walls alive! I heard him tell Peyrolles!

- LAG. Oh, monstrous villany !
 Coc. Nay, more, that you should help
 To slay yourself.
- LAG. What do I hear ?
 Coc. He bade him take the Hunchback.
 LAG. Ha ! there might yet be hope could I obtain
 The dress.
- Coc. I thought of that, and have it here !
 LAG. Firm and devoted friend, we're saved ! we're saved !
 Where has he taken Blanche ?
- Coc. That I know not ;
 He sups to-night in the Rue St. Magloire.
- LAG. She must be there ! it is a fitting place
 For any crime ; fresh hope inspires my heart,
 Giving assurance I shall foil him yet.
 Go to the Regent, tell him to be there
 At twelve o'clock, would he see justice done.
- Coc. Peyrolles is coming !
 LAG. I shall deal with him !
 You place those in the cell, and wait me there.

[Exit COCARDASSE. LAGARDERE reclines on couch.]

Enter PEYROLLES, very cautiously ; he looks round.

- PEY. Oh, patron saint of cowards ! whosoe'er
 Thou art, protect me in this awful hour ;
 That cursed Hunchback I can nowhere find,
 And I must do the bloody deed alone !
 Or die instead ; and I am ill prepared
 For that. What do I see ? he's there asleep !
 Could I be certain that he wouldn't wake,
 I think I'm brave enough to make his rest
 A long one.

[Steals over. LAGARDERE starts up. PEYROLLES shrinks back.]

- LAG. Ho ! who's this, what want you here ?

PEY. Hush! no one! only me, your friend, Peyrolles.
I've come to tell you that you'll have to die.

LAG. To die!

PEY. Yes, die! The Prince has sent me here
To kill you—

LAG. What?

PEY. But I'm not going to do it,
What! raise my hand against an unarmed man?
But, as you're doom'd, an hour or two of life
Can't matter much, you know, to one so brave!
So, if you'd only hang yourself at once,
You don't know what a comfort it would be!

LAG. And so the Prince has sent you here to kill me—

[Takes PEYROLLES sword away.]

Or, to be killed? a word, and you are dead!
Come, you must take my place in yonder cell.

PEY. But they will murder me?

LAG. I can't help that.

Away! what mercy would you show to me?
If you would save your miserable life
Be silent!

PEY. I shan't breathe a sound.

Enter COCARDASSE.

COC. You're wise.

LAG. In, in!

[Drags PEYROLLES in. COCARDASSE lights his pipe with flint
and steel, humming a tune.]

Enter a number of rough SOLDIERS.

SOL. Ha, ha! jolly dog! Here you are! where's the prisoner?

COC. Hush! the Hunchback's with him.

[All shrug their shoulders.]

SOL. How did he enter? for we saw him not.

Coc. I cannot tell. I found the wizard here.
He comes ! 'twere best not meet his evil eye.

[LAGARDERE, as ÆSOR, passes across.

Remorseless villain ! what atrocious deed
Has he been doing now ? the prisoner ! Ha, ha !
He's safe enough.

[Looks through door.

But faith, he's wondrous dull,
Let's cheer his heart up with a jolly song.

SONG—*Friendship.*

Love may have its pleasure, I freely admit,
Though I can't from my own knowledge say,
For the tyrant has never yet shackled my wit,
And may fortune long keep him away :
To me it but seems like the fatuous light,
That to grief leads all those it allures ;
Blazing up for an instant, then fading from sight,
But *true* Friendship for ever endures.

Wine has its delirium, the maddening cup
A riotous joy may impart ;
When the brain over thought, yields its custody up,
But the spell never reaches the heart :
As bright and as brief as the lightning 'twill pass,
That a still deeper darkness ensures,
And as frail as the bubbles that float on the glass,
But true Friendship for ever endures.

[Great noise. SOLDIERS endeavour to look through the opening
at door. COCARDASSE prevents them. All exeunt.

SCENE II.—Grand Staircase in the house of GONZAGUES. Conservatory beneath. A Table on which wine-glasses are laid, dessert, &c. The supper-room seen above.

Enter BLANCHE, from door, L.

BLA. What is this house, and why was I brought here ?
My soul within me sinks with trembling fear.

SCENA.

As some lone traveller in the night,
Whose way is dark,
Shrinks at each step with greater fright,
And seeks in vain a guiding light
Or friendly mark ;
Distracting doubts my sense enthrall,
While everywhere
Around me deeper shadows fall,
Veiling my future like a pall
Of black despair.

Some inspiration makes my spirit brave—
Would I could find a way to quit this house !

Enter GONZAGUES from door at top, down stairs.

GON. How now, fair mistress ! whither would you go ?

BLA. To seek protection !

GON. Why you have it here !

DUET.

BLA. If gentle mercy dwell within your heart,
Have pity now, in this my great distress,
From hence, in safety, let me but depart,
And I your name in gratitude will bless.

GON. 'Tis gentle mercy that within my heart
Now urges me to pity your distress ;
When I have saved you from a villain's art,
Then you my name in gratitude will bless !

GON. Whom would you go to ?

BLA. To the only friend
I have on earth.

GON. You mean, to Lagardère.
Poor simple girl ! you have been made the dupe
Of this audacious criminal.

BLA. I love him !

GON. One who has cheated you with lies !

BLA. I love him !

GON. A lawless, outcast reprobate !

BLA. I love him !

GON. Well, have your way, be obstinate of soul ;
It is your sex's custom ! I but spoke
In kindness, that you might not blindly rush
On fate.

BLA. Is he in peril ?

GON. No, not now !
Ere this I trust his troubles will be past.

BLA. You will befriend us then ?

GON. As you shall see.

BLA. Oh, my heart thanks you, I am happy now.

[Exit BLANCHE.]

GON. If spirits meet,
A pair of happy ghosts I'll make ere long.

[Enter CHAVERNAY, NAVAILLES, NOTARY, and several NOBLES,
at top of stairs.]

CHA. Is this the way you play the host, Gonzagues ?

GON. I was preparing for you. See, in this cool place
We can enjoy our wine.

CHA. An excellent idea !

[All seat themselves. Servants attending:]

GON. Now, sirs, I call on you to fill with me
A cup in honour of the old vine tree !

SONG—*The Old Vine Tree.*

A song, a song, for the champion strong,
 From the glance of whose defiant eyes
 Grief speeds away,
 As the night from day,
 And care like a routed giant flies.
 He bears no brand
 In his good right hand,
 But he waves a wand
 Of the Old Vine Tree,
 That the sense enthralls,
 And a rapture falls
 On the soul, like a spell of sorcery.
 To the mighty wizard, pledge with me,
 Who beareth the wand of the Old Vine Tree!

A song, a song, for the friend so strong,
 Who health to the weak imparts anew ‘
 For he freely drains
 Out his purple veins,
 Giving life to our sinking hearts anew ;
 And the echo rings
 With the joy he brings,
 While the dew he flings
 From the Old Vine Tree
 Falls flashing bright
 In the sunny light,
 Like a shower of regal jewelry.
 To the mighty wizard pledge with me,
 Who beareth the wand of the Old Vine Tree !

CHA. But come, Gonzagues, remember what you said.

GON. That I to-night would all my debts repay ;

It is for that my Notary is here.

If all go well, you won't have long to wait.

Enter LAGARDERE, as ÆSOP, from Conservatory.

LAG. (*aside*)

No trace of Blanche!

GON. (*to* LAGARDERE) Well, Æsop, is it done?

LAG. It is, my lord; your enemy is dead.

Mine was the hand that set his spirit free.

GON. Then the estate is mine! You may prepare
Those documents (*to the* NOTARY).

[OMNES go up stairs.

LAG. (*aside*)

Can she be here?

GON. You are excited!

LAG. Yes; I'm getting old,

And truth to say my nerves are not so strong

As they were wont to be.

GON. What's this? I deemed
That you were conscience-proof!

LAG. I never thought
Of conscience: mine, you know, was but the hand
That smote; but yours, my lord, the inspiration.
Of the two foes, you had the most to dread:
One I have dealt with; if the other's gone,
I'm not to blame.

GON. What, Blanche? she's in this very house!

LAG. Here in this house! then you've no cause to fear.

GON. From whence she never goes forth living.

LAG. Why?

GON. Have you forgotten she must die,
Before I can possess the fortune of Nevers.

LAG. Or wed below her state! give her to me!

GON. To thee? thou'rt mad!

LAG. I am, I am. I love—
Love her to madness; 'twas for that I toiled,
For that I followed up this Lagardère,
Like his own shadow, kept him in my view.

GON. Give Blanche to thee?

LAG. Ay! ay! give Blanche to me!
 Wedding so infamous a thing would doom
 Her to a living death.

GON. It would—it would!

LAG. Do you consent?

GON. What matter if I do,
 Hers you can never get.

LAG. I'll dare the proof;
 Life's very precious—faith, I don't despair.

GON. I'll aid, as far as may be in my power,
 But mark me, if she should refuse—

LAG. She dies!

[GONZAGUES rings bell.

Enter SERVANT.

GON. Tell Angelique to bring the lady here
 Entrusted to her charge. Navailles!
 Chavernay! come here all;
 We have a play on hand will move your mirth,

Enter all the NOBLES and COCARDASSE.

We're going to have a wedding here to-night.

COC. Who is the happy man?

GON. Behold him there!

COC. The Hunchback! Æsop! faith a bridegroom rare!
 Who then is the bride? the kitchen wench!

[All laugh.

LAG. Laugh on, my lords, it is your privilege.
 I laugh myself when I see brutes below me.
 Ha! ha! my lords, you cannot anger me—
 A man should laugh upon his wedding day;
 Your smiles will turn to envy when you see
 The lady who's to be the hunchback's bride!

COC. The lady?—oh, my lord!

LAG. Yes, every *lord*
 Should have his lady, sirs, and why not I?

COC. A hunchback wed a lady? It must be
Through magic!

LAG. Yes, through magic, you shall see,
Give me five minutes only, here apart,
You'll own me master of the mystic art!

CHORUS.

What mad pretence,
So brief a time,
His impudence
Is most sublime!
A thing of dread
This ape must be;
A wife to wed
Through witchery!

LAG. The contract let the Notary prepare,

COC. You hear his folly! Here's the lady fair.

Enter BLANCHE.

GON. Come hither, girl! I said your friend I'd be.

BLA. Yes, and that him again I soon should see.

GON. I've found a husband for you!

BLA. Lagardère!

GON. No! one more fitting for your humble sphere.

BLA. My heart is stricken by this cruel blow.

[She faints.

CHA. She faints! and faith a pearl of beauty, too.

Your chances, Master Hunchback, are but few.

LAG. I shall know better when I try my power;

Leave us together, you need not retire

Beyond the corridor.

[Chorus repeated with much laughter as they go up stairs.

BLANCHE and LAGARDÈRE.

LAG. She is reviving! Blanche!

BLA. Ah! do I dream,

Or is his spirit near?

- LAG. Have no alarm, but still unconscious seem.
Beloved, I am here !
Do you love me, Blanche ?
- BLA. I answer with my soul !
- LAG. Then turn to me,
As though some magic held you in control.
- BLA. My life belongs to thee !
- LAG. Fear not my look ; but when my knee is bent
Then place your hand in mine.
- BLA. Oh, with what perfect joy !
- LAG. Do you consent ?
- BLA. My heart speaks—I am thine !
- BLA. & LAG. For evermore—for evermore,
Whate'er the future send,
Through good or ill,
United still,
Our lives for ever blend.

CHORUS.

In wonder lost,
Amazed are we,
This Hunchback must
A wizard be !

- CHA. Now we shall see
The rascal's name.
- COC. If he own such a thing !
- GON. (*laughing*) The contract's ready here for you to sign.
This is the rarest marriage ever known.
- LAG. I am the humblest, and should be the last.
Will you sign first, my lord ?
- GON. With all my heart !
And wish your bride much joy in her sweet lord.

[GONZAGUES signs.]

Will you witness it ?

Coc. Yes, just to have a hand
In the amusing jest. (*Signs.*) Now for the lady!

GON. Will she sign it? No!

LAG. (*aside to Blanche*) Beloved Blanche,
On the next moment hang your fate and mine.
Wilt share it with me?

BLA. Yes! for life or death!

[BLANCHE signs.

NOT. (*reads*) Blanche de Nevers!

OMN. What?

LAG. Heiress of Lorraine!
I told you that you'd envy the poor Hunchback!

GON. Now for the bridegroom. (*Laughing*) Has he got a name?

LAG. Oh, yes, and one you'll laugh at when you see it.
(*Aside*) It must be near the time.

[Clock strikes twelve.

The hour has come!

[LAGARDERE signs.

My lords! you wish to know my name—'tis there,
Behold it!

[Throws off disguise.

GON. What? "Henri de Lagardere?"

Upon him! cut the villain down!

[COCARDASSE draws, and stands by LAGARDERE.

Enter the REGENT and COURT. Range down Stage.

REG. What's here?

Cease this rude brawl, what does this outrage mean?

LAG. My liege! I promised that I would restore
The daughter of Nevers, and here she stands—
Blanche de Nevers, go, and embrace your mother!

PRI. It is, it is, there is no need of proof.
For in that face my Philippe lives again.

GON. My gracious lord ! I call for the arrest
Of this vile criminal !

REG. That is he not.
Or he would now be far away from this ;
He holds my safeguard. What must I believe ?

GON. (*producing papers*)
Believe ! in these the proofs within my hand !

LAG. Yes, yes, the proofs—of more than you desire,
For in those very papers you will find
Nevers wrote down the name of his assassin
Before he died ; so, break the seal, my lord,
And see who's name is written, yours or mine :
Open, my lord ! and then the dead will speak !

[GONZAGUES tries to burn the papers.]

PRI. Your Highness, see ! he would destroy the proofs !

LAG. Ha ! the dead speaks ! for in it there's *no* name,
My lord, but you have written down your own !

[LAGARDERE half draws his sword, but is restrained by the
REGENT.]

After the valets, the master !

REG. Unhappy man ! you have condemned yourself.
Arrest him !

[At a signal from the REGENT, OFFICERS go to GONZAGUES,
who delivers up his sword.]

LAG. Where is the marriage contract ?

[NOTARY gives it.]

Your life is safe, Blanche ! You are free !

[Tears contract. BLANCHE appeals to REGENT.]

REG. Colonel de Lagardère, you have nobly won your wife,
From my hand receive her.

[The REGENT joins the hands of BLANCHE and LAGARDERE.
They embrace.]

GENERAL CHORUS.

'Thus may devoted love be crowned,
 With every blessing fate can send,
 And with a perfect joy surround
 True hearts united to the end.

BLA.

As when the fierce and angry deep,
 With storms o'ercast,
 By gentle mercy lulled to sleep,
 Is calm at last
 And weary watchers through the night,
 When hope was o'er,
 With rapture hail the morning light,
 And welcome shore—
 So thrill our hearts with joy supreme ;
 For all our sorrows, like a dream,
 Have fled before the brilliant ray
 Of this all-happy day.

[CURTAIN.]

FINIS.

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