

CYRANO DE BERGERAC



EDMOND ROSTAND

A Translation into English by
A. S. KLINE

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ABOUT THIS WORK



ostand's *Cyrano* is a fiction invoking the real Cyrano de Bergerac, a seventeenth century French playwright, poet, and duellist, who was an early creator of science-fiction fantasy, in particular a comic history of a journey to the Moon. From the scanty details of the real Cyrano's life documented by his friend Henri Le Bret, Rostand created a larger than life comic hero, whose wit, courage, spirit and ability partially overcome his physical defect, an embarrassingly large nose. Rostand cleverly and meticulously evokes the historical period in which his hero lived. The play is written in rhyming verse, as is this translation, stylistically supporting some of the play's best wit and verbal effects. The plot centres around Cyrano's unrequited and unrecognised love for Roxanne; his indomitable courage in the face of disappointment and failure; and the many ways in which he defends himself and attacks his enemies while never losing his sense of humour, his delight in words, and his *panache*. There are moments of rare beauty and pathos in the verse, and the overall effect certainly justifies the immense enthusiasm that greeted its first performances, and the many revivals of the play since, especially in film adaptation.



The leaves!
They're made of a Venetian gold.
Look at them falling!

Edmond Rostand - *Cyrano De Bergerac, Act V Scene V*

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THE CHARACTERS



'Coquelin dans la rôle de Cyrano de Bergerac'
L'ILLUSTRATION, 8 January 1898, *Wikimedia Commons*

CYRANO DE BERGERAC
CHRISTIAN DE NEUVILLETTE
COMTE DE GUICHE
RAGUENEAU
LE BRET
CARBON DE CASTEL-JALOUX
THE CADETS
LIGNIERE
DE VALVERT
A MARQUIS
SECOND MARQUIS
THIRD MARQUIS
MONTFLEURY
BELLEROSE
JODELET
CUIGY
BRISSAILLE
THE DOORKEEPER
A SERVANT
A SECOND SERVANT
A BORE
A MUSKETEER
ANOTHER
A SPANISH OFFICER
A PORTER
A CITIZEN
HIS SON
A PICKPOCKET
A SPECTATOR
A GUARDSMAN
BERTRAND THE PIPER
A MONK
TWO MUSICIANS
THE POETS

THE PASTRY COOKS

ROXANE

SISTER MARTHA

LISE

THE ORANGE SELLER

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE

THE DUENNA

SISTER CLAIRE

AN ACTRESS

THE PAGES

THE SHOP GIRL

The Crowd, troopers, citizens (male and female), marquises, musketeers, pickpockets, pastry-cooks, poets, Gascon cadets, actors (male and female), violinists, pages, children, soldiers, Spaniards, spectators (male and female), précieuses (intellectuals), nuns, etc.

ACT ONE

A Theatrical Production at the Burgundy Hotel



he hall of the Hotel Burgundy, in 1640. A sort of tennis-court arranged and decorated for a theatrical production.

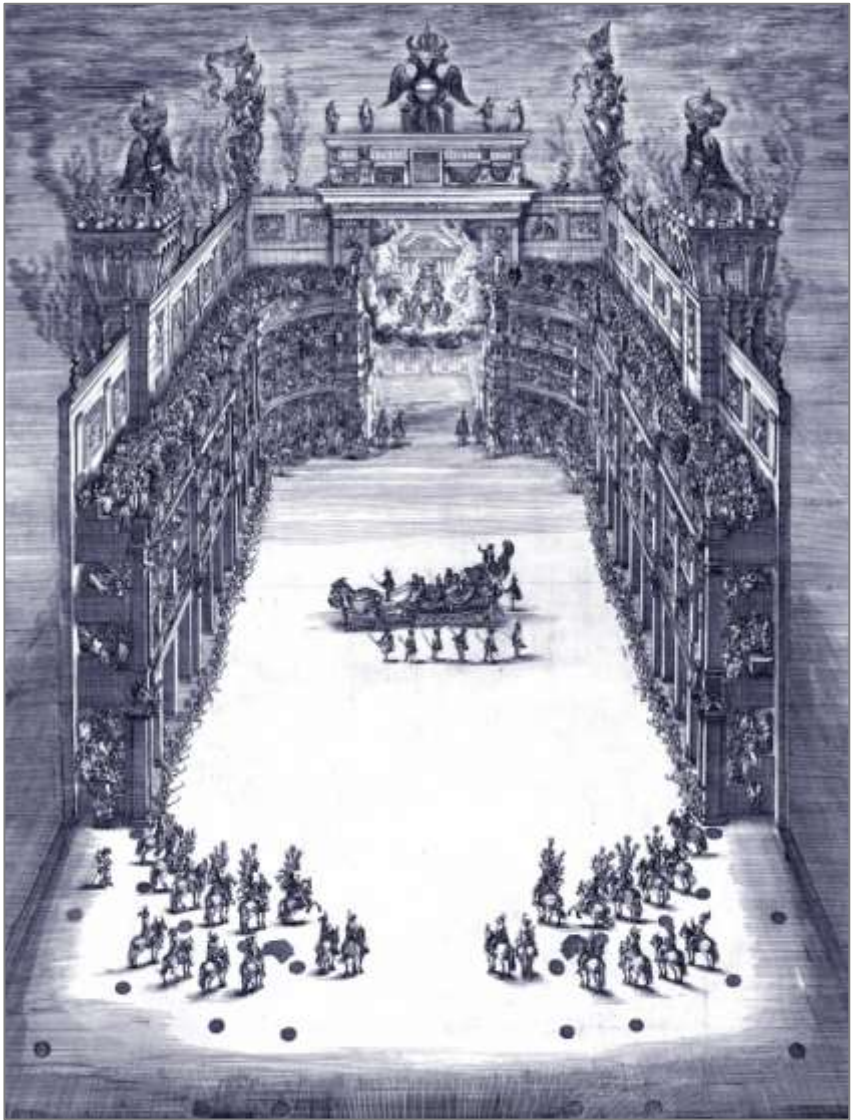
The hall is oblong and we see it obliquely, so that one of its sides forms the back scene and runs from the right foreground, to meet the left background where it makes a right angle with the stage prepared for the production, which is partially visible.

On both sides of the stage along the wings are benches. The curtain is composed of two tapestries that can be drawn apart. Above a harlequin's cloak are the royal arms. Broad steps lead from the stage to the hall; on either side of these steps are places for the violinists. Footlights.

There are two tiers of side galleries: the highest divided into boxes. There are no seats in the pit, which is the real stage of our theatre: at the back of the pit, on the right foreground, some benches form steps, and underneath a stairway which leads to the upper galleries an improvised buffet is ornamented with little tapers, flower vases, crystal glasses, plates of cakes, bottles, etc.

The entrance to the theatre is centre-back, under the gallery of boxes. A large double door is half open to let in the audience. On the panels of this door, and in several corners, and over the buffet, red placards bear the name of the play being performed, 'La Clorise.'

As the curtain rises the hall is in semi-darkness, and still empty. The chandeliers have been lowered into the middle of the pit ready for lighting.



‘Aerial View of Theatre’

Stefano Della Bella (Italian, 1610 – 1664), *The National Gallery of Art*

Act One

SCENE ONE

The public, arrive gradually.

Troopers, citizens, servants, pages, a pickpocket, the doorkeeper, etc., followed by the Marquises Cuigy, Brissaille, the orange-seller, the violinists, etc.

(A tumult of loud voices is heard outside the door and a trooper enters hastily.)

THE DOORKEEPER *(following him)*

Hey! It costs fifteen!

THE TROOPER I go in free.

THE DOORKEEPER And why?

THE TROOPER I'm the King's Household Cavalry passing by!

THE DOORKEEPER *(to another trooper, entering)*

And you?

SECOND TROOPER I don't pay.

THE DOORKEEPER But...

SECOND TROOPER I'm a musketeer.

FIRST TROOPER *(to the second)*

The play doesn't start till two. The floor's clear.

Let's try a round with the foils, then.

(They fence with the foils they have brought.)

A SERVANT (*entering*)

Pst... Flanquin...

ANOTHER (*already arrived*)

Champagne? ...

THE FIRST (*showing him cards and dice which he takes from his doublet*)

Cards. Dice.

(*He sits on the floor.*)

Let's play.

THE SECOND (*doing the same*)

Fine. I'm your man!

FIRST SERVANT (*taking from his pocket a candle-end, which he lights, and sets on the floor*)

I've a little light here stolen from my master!

A GUARDSMAN (*to a flower-girl who appears*)

It's sweet to come before the lights are lit, not after!

(*He seizes her round the waist.*)

ONE OF THE FENCERS (*receiving a thrust*)

A hit!

ONE OF THE CARD-PLAYERS A club!

THE GUARDSMAN (*following the girl*)

A kiss!

THE SHOP GIRL (*freeing herself*)

They'll see!

Act One

THE GUARDSMAN (*drawing her to a dark corner*)

No fear!

A MAN (*sitting on the floor with others who've brought provisions*)

When you come early there's no problem eating here.

A CITIZEN (*leading his son*)

Let's sit here, my boy.

A CARD PLAYER Three aces!

A MAN (*taking a bottle from under his cloak, and also sitting down.*):

A drinker may as well

(*He drinks.*)

sip his Burgundy in the Burgundy Hotel!

THE CITIZEN (*to his son*)

Wouldn't you think we were in some den of vice!

(*He points with his cane to the drunkard.*)

Drunkards!

(*One of the fencers, stepping back, jostles him.*)

Brawlers!

(*He stumbles into the card-players.*)

Gamblers!

THE GUARDSMAN (*behind him, still teasing the shop-girl*)

A kiss!

THE CITIZEN (*hurriedly pulling his son away*)

My Christ!

- To think that's it in this theatre that they play

Rotrou, my son!

THE YOUNG MAN Yes, and Corneille!

A TROOP OF PAGES (*enter hand-in-hand, dancing the farandole, and singing*)

Tra la, la, la, la, la, la, lalere ...

THE DOORKEEPER (*sternly, to the pages*)

You pages, there, no nonsense! ...

FIRST PAGE (*his dignity wounded*)

Oh, sir! - Such suspicion! ...

(*Quickly, to the second page, the moment the doorkeeper's back is turned*)

Have you a bit of string?

THE SECOND Here, with a fish-hook on.

FIRST PAGE We can fish for wigs, from up in the gallery.

A PICKPOCKET (*gathering some evil-looking youths round him*)

Now then, young rascals, take a lesson from me
before you start on your first real thieveries.

SECOND PAGE (*calling up to others in the top galleries*)

Hey! Have you brought peashooters?

THIRD PAGE (*from above*)

And some peas.

(*He blows, and showers them with peas.*)

THE YOUNG MAN (*to his father*)

What play are they doing?

THE CITIZEN 'Clorise.'

THE YOUNG MAN Who wrote that?

Act One

THE CITIZEN It's by Balthazar Baro. It's a play and a half...

(He goes upstage arm-in-arm with his son.)

THE PICKPOCKET *(to his pupils)*

Lace on their knee-ruffles - cut them off shear!

A SPECTATOR *(to another, showing him a corner of the gallery)*

Look, the first night of '*Le Cid*', I was sitting there.

THE PICKPOCKET *(making stealthy movements with his fingers)*

Watches -

THE CITIZEN *(coming downstage again with his son)*

You'll see some famous actors tonight...

THE PICKPOCKET *(as if pulling at something furtively, with little tugs.):*

Handkerchiefs -

THE CITIZEN Montfleury ...

SOMEONE *(shouting from the upper gallery)!*

Come on: let's have some light!

THE CITIZEN ... Bellerose, l'Épy, la Beaupré, Jodelet!

A PAGE *(in the pit)*

Here comes the girl, selling oranges!

THE ORANGE SELLER *(taking her place behind the buffet)*

Lemonade

milk, oranges, raspberry-water....

(An outcry at the door)

A FALSETTO VOICE Make way, you brute!

A SERVANT (*astonished*)

Marquises! - in the pit? ...

ANOTHER SERVANT Oh! For a moment or two!

(*A group of young marquises enter.*)

A MARQUIS (*seeing that the hall's half empty*)

What now! Are we arriving like a pack of tradesmen,

Not crowding people? Not even stamping on them!

- Oh, fie! Fie! Fie!

(*Recognizing some other gentlemen who have entered a little before him*)

Cuigy! Brissaille!

(*Hearty embraces.*)

CUIGY The faithful!

Why yes, we're here even before the candles.

THE MARQUIS Ah! Don't speak of it! I'm in an awful temper.

ANOTHER Console yourself, Marquis! Here's the lamplighter.

ALL THE AUDIENCE (*welcoming the arrival of the lamplighter*)

Ah! ...

(*They form in groups round the chandeliers as they are lit. Some people have taken their seats in the galleries. Lignière enters: a distinguished-looking roué, with disordered shirtfront, arm-in-arm with Christian de Neuville. Christian, who is dressed elegantly, but rather behind the fashion, appears preoccupied, and keeps looking up at the boxes.*)

Act One

SCENE TWO

The same. Christian, Lignière, then Ragueneau and Le Bret.

CUIGY Lignière!

BRISSAILLE (*laughing*)

Not drunk as yet?

LIGNIÈRE (*aside to Christian*)

May I introduce you?

(*Christian nods his assent.*)

Baron de Neuville.

(*They bow.*)

THE AUDIENCE (*applauding as the first lighted chandelier is raised.*)

Ah!

CUIGY (*to Brissaille, looking at Christian*)

A fine fellow!

FIRST MARQUIS (*who has overheard*)

Pah!

LIGNIÈRE (*introducing them to Christian*)

My lords De Cuigy, De Brissaille ...

CHRISTIAN (*bowing*)

Delighted! ...

FIRST MARQUIS *(to second)*

He looks well enough, but it seems he's not quite yet
au fait with the latest fashion.

LIGNIÈRE *(to CuiGY)*

You're from Touraine.

CHRISTIAN Yes, I've scarcely been here in Paris twenty days.

I join the Guards, tomorrow: the Cadets.

FIRST MARQUIS *(watching the people entering the boxes)*

Aha,
here's Justice Aubry's wife.

THE ORANGE SELLER Oranges, milk ...

THE VIOLINISTS *(tuning up)*

La .. la...

CUIGY *(to Christian, drawing his attention to the ball, which is filling fast)*

The people!

CHRISTIAN Ah, yes: a crowd.

FIRST MARQUIS All the world's here!

(They name the different elegantly dressed ladies who enter the boxes, and bow to them, receiving smiles in reply.)

SECOND MARQUIS Madame de Guéméné.

CUIGY Madame de Bois-Dauphin.

Act One

FIRST MARQUIS Of whom we despair!

BRISSAILLE Madame de Chavigny ...

SECOND MARQUIS Who leaves our hearts a ruin!...

LIGNIÈRE Why, Monsieur de Corneille's returned from Rouen!

THE YOUNG MAN (*to his father*)

Are the Academy here?

THE CITIZEN Yes I see quite a number:

there's Boudu, Boissat, and Cureau de la Chambre,
Porchères, Colomby, Bourzeys, Bourdon, Arbaud.
Ah, how fine... all the deathless names we know!

FIRST MARQUIS Look! Our *précieuses* are taking their seats:

Urimédonte, Cassandace, Barthénoïde,
Félixérie ...

SECOND MARQUIS Ah! My God, their names, so sweet!

Marquis, you know every one?

FIRST MARQUIS I know every one, Marquis!

LIGNIÈRE (*drawing Christian aside*)

Dear friend, I came here to do you some service:
but the lady's not coming. I'll slip back to my vice.

CHRISTIAN (*persuasively*)

No, no! You, who sing of Court and City, stay:
who is that lady I die of love for? You can say.

THE FIRST VIOLIN (*tapping on his desk with his bow*)

Violinists! Gentlemen!

(*He raises his bow.*)

THE ORANGE SELLER Almond-biscuits, lemonade ...

(*The violins begin to play.*)

CHRISTIAN I fear she's too fashionable, too fastidious in her ways!

I've no wit, I don't dare: I won't know how to reply.

This language that they speak, today, that they write,
confuses me; I'm just a soldier, honest, shy.

- She's always there: the empty box on the right!

LIGNIÈRE (*making as if to go*)

I'm going.

CHRISTIAN (*detaining him*)

Oh no! Stay.

LIGNIÈRE I can't. D'Assoucy

waits for me at the inn, and my thirst's killing me.

THE ORANGE SELLER (*passing before him with a tray*)

Orange juice?

LIGNIERE Ugh!

THE ORANGE SELLER Milk?

LIGNIERE Pah!

THE ORANGE SELLER Muscadet!

Act One

LIGNIÈRE Wait!

(To Christian)

I'll stay a little while. Let's try this Muscadet.

(He sits near the buffet; the girl pours some Muscadet for him.)

(SHOUTS from the whole audience, at the entry of a plump little man, excited and joyful.)

Ah! Ragueneau!...

LIGNIÈRE *(to Christian)*

It's the pastry-cook Ragueneau.

RAGUENEAU *(dressed like a pastry-cook in his Sunday best, approaching Lignière, hastily.)*

Sir, have you chanced to see Monsieur de Cyrano?

LIGNIÈRE *(introducing him to Christian.)*

The pastry-cook of actors and of poets!

RAGUENEAU *(overcome)*

You do me too much honour...

LIGNIÈRE Peace, a Maecenas yet!

RAGUENEAU Yes, those gentlemen help themselves ...

LIGNIÈRE On credit!

A poet of talent himself...

RAGUENEAU So they have it.

LIGNIÈRE - Mad for verse!

RAGUENEAU It's true, for the tiniest couplet...

LIGNIÈRE You give them a tart...

RAGUENEAU Oh! - Just a little tartlet!

LIGNIÈRE Ah! Such modesty!

- And for a sonnet instead,
didn't you give in return ...

RAGUENEAU Rolls!

LIGNIÈRE (*severely*)

Milk-bread.
- The theatre! You love that?

RAGUENEAU I idolise the stage!

LIGNIÈRE You pay for your theatre tickets - with your cakes!

Your place, to-night, come tell me, *entre nous*,
what did it cost?

RAGUENEAU Four flans, and fifteen *choux*.

(*He looks to both sides.*)
Monsieur de Cyrano's not here? I'm surprised.

LIGNIÈRE Why so?

RAGUENEAU Montfleury acts!

LIGNIÈRE Yes, you're right,
that barrel of wine takes Phédon's part to-night:
what's that to Cyrano?

Act One

RAGUENEAU You're not current, quite?

He's put Montfleury on guard: he's filled with rage,
the actor can't show his face for a month on stage.

LIGNIÈRE (*drinking his fourth glass.*)

Well?

RAGUENEAU Montfleury acts!

CUIGY He can't stop him.

RAGUENEAU Oh no?

That's what I've come to see!

FIRST MARQUIS Who's this Cyrano?

CUIGY A fellow well-versed in fencing etiquette.

SECOND MARQUIS Noble?

CUIGY Noble enough. He's a Guards' cadet.

(*Pointing to a gentleman who is going up and down the hall as if searching for some one.*)

But his friend Le Bret, can tell you.

(*He calls him.*)

Le Bret!

(*Le Bret comes towards them.*)

You're seeking Bergerac?

LE BRET I'm troubled. Yes!...

CUIGY Isn't it true he sings to a different tune?

LE BRET (*tenderly*)

Ah! He's the choicest being under the moon!

RAGUENEAU Poet!

CUIGY Soldier!

BRISSAILLE Philosopher!

LE BRET Musician!

LIGNIÈRE And such a varied physiognomy he's been given!

RAGUENEAU True, I don't think even Philippe de Champagne's
grave hand could paint that likeness for us again:
bizarre, extravagant, wild, a one-man show,
he'd have eclipsed that madman Jacques Callot,
the maddest fighter of all performing faces -
his three-plumed hat, his doublet with six laces,
his sword sticking up behind, under his cloak
proudly, like the cheeky tail of a cock,
fiercer than all the fierce D'Artagnans ever
Gascony produced, or shall, that kindly mother!
He wears, above his Punchinello ruff,
a nose!...Ah! My lords, indeed he's nose enough!....
You can't see a nose like that go by, in state
without crying out: 'Ah no, they exaggerate!'
Then you smile: 'He'll soon take it off.' But never,
Monsieur de Bergerac doesn't remove it, ever.

LE BRET (*throwing back his head.*)

He dangles it - God help whoever takes the bait!

Act One

RAGUENEAU (*proudly.*):

His sword's one half of the blind shears of Fate!

FIRST MARQUIS (*shrugging his shoulders.*):

He won't come!

RAGUENEAU Yes, he will!...I'll bet you a dish

- à la Ragueneau.

THE MARQUIS (*laughing.*)

Done!

(Murmurs of admiration in the hall. Roxane has just appeared in her box. She seats herself in front, the duenna at the back. Christian, who is paying the orange-seller, doesn't see her entrance.)

SECOND MARQUIS (*with little cries of joy.*):

Ah, gentlemen! She is
frightfully ravishing!

FIRST MARQUIS One thinks of a peach
with smiling strawberry blushes!

SECOND MARQUIS And so fresh! If you reached
for her you'd easily catch a fever in your heart!

CHRISTIAN (*raises his head, sees Roxane, and catches Lignière by the arm.*):
That's her!

LIGNIÈRE (*looking at her.*)
Ah! That's her?...

CHRISTIAN Yes. Say who. I fear her art.

LIGNIÈRE (*tasting his wine, in little sips.*):

Magdaleine Robin, called Roxane. - A subtle woman.
An intellect.

CHRISTIAN Alas!

LIGNIÈRE Free. Orphan. Cousin
to Cyrano - of whom we spoke.

(At this moment an elegant nobleman, blue ribbon on his chest, enters the box, and stands there talking to Roxane.)

CHRISTIAN (*starting.*)

That man?

LIGNIÈRE (*who is becoming tipsy, winking at him.*):

Oh ho!

- Comte de Guiche. Taken with her. He's married, though,
to the niece of Armand de Richelieu. Desires
to marry Roxane to a certain sad man, aspires
to use Monsieur de Valvert, viscomte...agreeable.
She won't agree, but then De Guiche is powerful:
He can persecute the plain bourgeoisie.

But I've exposed his sly machinery,
in a song, that ... Ha! I need to sing it, right!

- The ending's wicked...Listen, here!

(He staggers up, and lifts his glass, ready to sing.)

CHRISTIAN No. Good-night.

LIGNIÈRE You're going?

CHRISTIAN To Monsieur de Valvert!

Act One

LIGNIÈRE Have a care!

It's he who'll kill you.

(Showing him Roxane, by a sideways glance)

Stay. She's watching you, there.

CHRISTIAN It's true!

(He stands looking at her. The group of pickpockets seeing him, head in air and open-mouthed, draw close to him.)

LIGNIÈRE It's me that's going. I'm thirsty! My name
is awaited - in the inns!

(He goes out, reeling.)

LE BRET *(who has been all round the hall, coming back to Ragueneau reassured.)*
No Cyrano.

RAGUENEAU *(incredulously)*
All the same ...

LE BRET Ah! I do hope he hasn't seen the notice!

THE AUDIENCE Begin, begin!

SCENE THREE

The same, all but Lignière. De Guiche, Valvert, then Montfleury

A MARQUIS (*watching De Guiche, who comes down from Roxane's box, and crosses the pit surrounded by obsequious noblemen, among them the Viscomte de Valvert.*)

What spirit, this De Guiche!

ANOTHER Bah! ... Another Gascon!

THE FIRST A Gascon, subtle, cold, now
- that's the kind of man succeeds!...Trust me, let's bow.

(They go toward De Guiche.)

SECOND MARQUIS Beautiful ribbons! What colour's that, Comte de Guiche?

'Doe's-belly' or is it 'Sweetheart-give-me-a-kiss?'

DE GUICHE It's the colour called 'Queasy Spaniard.'

FIRST MARQUIS That colour
doesn't lie, since soon now, thanks to your valour,
Spain will suffer badly in Flanders.

DE GUICHE I'll climb up!

Will you come?

(He goes toward the stage, followed by the marquises and gentlemen. He turns and calls.)

Come on, Valvert!

Act One

CHRISTIAN (*who is watching and listening, starts on hearing the name.*):

Ah, the Viscomte!

I'll throw it in his face, where is it, my ...

(*He puts his hand in his pocket, and discovers the hand of a pickpocket who is about to rob him. He turns round.*)

Damn!

THE PICKPOCKET Oh!

CHRISTIAN (*holding him tightly.*)

I was looking for a glove.

THE PICKPOCKET (*smiling piteously.*)

You found a hand.

(*Changing his tone, quickly and in a whisper.*)

Let go. I'll tell you a secret.

CHRISTIAN (*still holding him.*)

What?

THE PICKPOCKET Lignière...

who's just left you ...

CHRISTIAN (*as before*)

Well?

THE PICKPOCKET It's his last hour, beware.

A song he's made has injured a man of might -
a hundred men - I'm one - are gathered, for tonight...

CHRISTIAN By whom?

THE PICKPOCKET Discretion ...

CHRISTIAN (*shrugging his shoulders*)

Ha!

THE PICKPOCKET (*with great dignity*)

Professionals!

CHRISTIAN Where are they posted, then?

THE PICKPOCKET At the Porte de Nesle.

On his way home. Warn him!

CHRISTIAN (*letting go of his wrists.*)

But where will he be?

THE PICKPOCKET Run round to all the inns: The Golden Rookery,
The Fir Cone, The Tightened Belt, The Double Flame,
The Three Funnels, at each one leave his name,
and a little line of writing to tell him their plan.

CHRISTIAN Yes – I'll run! The scum! A hundred against one man!

(*Looking lovingly at Roxane.*)

Ah, to leave her...her!

(*looking with rage at Valvert.*)

And him! ... I must save him,

LIGNIÈRE !

(*He hurries out. De Guiche, the Viscomte, the Marquises, have all disappeared behind the curtain to take their places on the benches placed on stage. The pit is quite full; the galleries and boxes are also crowded.*)

THE AUDIENCE Begin!

Act One

A CITIZEN (*whose wig is drawn up on the end of a string by a page in the upper gallery*)

My wig!

CRIES OF DELIGHT Bravo, you pages!

He's bald! - Ha! Ha! Ha! ...

THE CITIZEN (*furious, shaking his fist*)

Oh you, young villain!

LAUGHTER AND CRIES (*beginning very loud, and dying away*)

Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha! Ha!

(*Total silence.*)

LE BRET (*astonished*)

This silence is sudden ...

(*A spectator says something to him in a low voice.*)

Ah?.....

THE SPECTATOR I heard it just now on good authority.

MURMURS (*spreading through the hall*)

No! Yes, I say! In the box with the grill! Hush! Is it he?

The Cardinal! - The Cardinal? - The Cardinal!

A PAGE Ah! The devil! We'll have to behave ourselves...

(*Someone raps on the stage. Every one is motionless. A pause.*)

THE VOICE OF A MARQUIS (*in the silence, behind the curtain*)

Snuff out that candle!

ANOTHER MARQUIS (*putting his head through the opening in the curtain*)

A chair!

(A chair is passed from hand to hand, over the heads of the spectators. The marquis takes it and disappears, after blowing some kisses to the boxes.)

A SPECTATOR Silence!

(Someone gives three raps again. The curtain opens. Tableau. The marquises in insolent attitudes seated on each side of the stage. The scene represents a pastoral landscape. Four little chandeliers light the stage; the violins play softly.)

LE BRET (*in a low voice to Ragueneau*)

Montfleury enters now?

RAGUENEAU (*also in a low voice*)

Yes, he's the first one on.

LE BRET Cyrano isn't here.

RAGUENEAU I've lost my bet, you'll see.

LE BRET Better that way!

(An air on the pipes is heard, and Montfleury enters, enormously fat, in an Arcadian shepherd's dress, a hat wreathed with roses drooping over one ear, blowing into a beribboned flute.)

THE PIT (*applauding*)

Bravo, Montfleury! Montfleury!

MONTFLEURY (*after bowing low, begins the part of Phédon*)

'Happy he who, far from courts, in haunts alone,
creates, for himself, an exile of his own,
and who, while Zephyr whispers in the trees..'

Act One

A VOICE (*from the middle of the pit*)

Fool! Didn't I say a month without these mummeries?

(*General stupor. Every one turns round. Murmurs.*)

DIFFERENT VOICES What? - Who's that? ...

(*The people stand up in the boxes to get a view.*)

CUIGY It's him!

LE BRET (*terrified*)

Cyrano!

THE VOICES King of clowns!

Leave the stage!

ALL THE AUDIENCE (*indignantly*)

Oh!

MONTFLEURY But ...

THE VOICES You defy me! Down!

DIFFERENT VOICES (*from the pit and the boxes*)

Peace! Enough! - Play on, Montfleury - don't be afraid!

MONTFLEURY (*in a trembling voice*)

'Happy he who, far from courts, in haunts...'

THE VOICE (*more fiercely*)

Down, I said!

O Monarch of jesters, must I attack

and plant this clump of fir-trees on your back?

(A hand holding a cane starts up over the heads of the spectators.)

MONTFLEURY *(in a voice that trembles more and more)*

‘Happy he who...’

(The cane is shaken.)

THE VOICES Off!

THE PIT Oh!

MONTFLEURY *(choking)*

‘Happy he who, far from courts...’

CYRANO *(appearing suddenly in the pit, standing on a chair, his arms crossed, his hat cocked fiercely, his moustache bristling, his nose terrible to see)*

Ah! I’m going to get angry! ...

(Sensation.)

Act One

SCENE FOUR

The same. Cyrano, then Bellerose, Jodelet.

MONTFLEURY *(to the marquises)*

Help me, my lords!

A MARQUIS *(carelessly)*

Go on! Go on, then!

CYRANO Fat man! Beware, if you do,

I'll be obliged to fan your cheeks for you!

THE MARQUIS Enough!

CYRANO These lords better sit quietly on their seats,
or truly my cane and their fine ribbons'll meet!

ALL THE MARQUISES *(rising)*

Too much! ... Montfleury ...

CYRANO Montfleury had best take wing,
or I'll slit his gizzard and disembowel him!

A VOICE Yet ...

CYRANO Out he goes!

ANOTHER VOICE But...

CYRANO What, he's here still?

(He makes the gesture of turning up his cuffs.)

Fine! I'll mount the stage now, like a table,
to dissect this fat sausage from Italy!

MONTFLEURY *(trying to be dignified)*

You insult the Muse by insulting me!

CYRANO *(very politely)*

If the Muse, to whom you're nothing, Sir, if she,
had the honour to know you - Sir, then, believe me,
seeing you, so gross a Grecian urn, appear,
her tragic foot would take you in the rear!

THE PIT Let's have Baro's play! Montfleury! Montfleury!

CYRANO *(to those who are calling out)*

For my scabbard, I beg you, show some pity
if you go on, it'll have to shed its blade!

(The circle round him widens.)

THE CROWD *(drawing back)*

Ah!

CYRANO *(to Montfleury)*

Leave the stage!

THE CROWD *(coming near and grumbling)*

No! No!

CYRANO *What* do you say?

(They draw back again.)

Act One

A VOICE (*singing at the back*)

Monsieur de Cyrano,
these are pure tyrannies:
despite the tyrant though
we will have '*La Clorise!*'

ALL THE PIT (*singing*)

'*La Clorise!*' '*La Clorise!*'...

CYRANO If I hear that song again from anyone,
I'll pole-axe the lot of you.

A CITIZEN What, you're no Samson!

CYRANO Your jawbone, Sir, if you'd kindly lend me that thing?

A LADY (*in the boxes*)

An outrage!

A LORD It's scandalous!

A CITIZEN It's so annoying!

A PAGE What fun!

THE PIT Hiss! - Montfleury! - Cyrano!

CYRANO Silence!

THE PIT (*wildly excited*)

Hee-haw! Baaa! Quack, quack! Cock-a-doodle-doo!

CYRANO I command -

A PAGE Meow!

CYRANO I order you to cease!

And I challenge the whole pit: you lot, if you please!

I'll write the names! - Young heroes, round about!

Each of you in turn! I'll call the numbers out! -

So, which of you now will come and start the list?

You, Sir? No! You? No! The first duellist

will be despatched by me with all due honour!

Let all who wish for death just lift a finger!

(A silence.)

You'll see my naked blade? Modesty prevents you?

Not one name? - Not one hand? - Well, I'll continue!

(Turning toward the stage, where Montfleury waits anxiously)

Now, I wish to see the theatre intact,

free of this boil. If not ...

(Puts his hand on his sword.)

The blade must act!

MONTFLEURY I ...

CYRANO *(leaves his chair, sits down in the middle of the circle which has formed, and makes himself at home.)*

I'll clap my hands three times at you, full moon!

At the third clap, eclipse yourself!

THE PIT *(amused)*

Ah!

CYRANO *(clapping his hands)*

One!

Act One

MONTFLEURY I ...

A VOICE (*in the boxes*)

Stay!

THE PIT He goes ... he stays ...

MONTFLEURY Gentlemen, ...I believe

CYRANO Two!

MONTFLEURY I think it might be better if ...

CYRANO Three!

(*Montfleury disappears as through a trapdoor. Tempests of laughter, whistles, shouts, etc.*)

THE WHOLE HOUSE Ah!.... Coward ... come back!

CYRANO (*delighted, sits back in his chair, arms crossed*)

Come back if you dare!

A CITIZEN Call for the Manager!

(*Bellerose comes forward and bows.*)

THE BOXES Ah! Bellerose is there!

BELLEROSE (*elegantly*)

Noble lords ...

THE PIT No! No! Jodelet!

JODELET (*advancing, speaking through his nose*)

Pile of veal!

THE PIT Ah! Bravo! Great! Bravo!

JODELET No bravos, I feel!

The fat tragedian whose stomach you all love so
felt ...

THE PIT He's a coward!

JODELET ... that he was obliged to go.

THE PIT Come back!

SOME No!

OTHERS Yes!

A YOUNG MAN (*to Cyrano*)

Sir, what's your reason for hating,
Montfleury so?

CYRANO (*graciously, still seated*)

Young gosling,
I've two reasons - either one alone will do
Primo: he's a quite deplorable actor who
mouths, and like a hod-carrier, with an Ohhh!
heaves up lines that he should let fly! - *Secundo*
That's my secret ...

THE OLD CITIZEN (*behind him*)

But you deprive us without scruple
Of '*La Clorise*!' I object to it ...

Act One

CYRANO (*turning his chair toward the citizen, respectfully*)

Old mule!

Old Baro's versifying's worth less than zero

I broke in without a thought ...

THE PRECIEUSES (*in the boxes*)

What! Our Baro!-

My dear! - Who ever? Goodness me!...

CYRANO (*turning his chair toward the boxes gallantly*)

Fairest ones,

shine on us, bloom like flowers, be custodians
of dreams, with a smile enchant our failing eyes,
inspire our poetry.....but don't criticise!

BELLEROSE And the monies we must return!

CYRANO (*turning his chair toward the stage*)

Bellerose,

I'll not make any hole in the Muse's cloak.

You've made the only speech that shows intelligence!

(*He rises and throws a bag on the stage.*)

Catch this purse as it flies: it's yours: now, silence!

THE HOUSE (*dazzled*)

Ah!....Oh!...

JODELET (*catching the purse dexterously and hefting it*)

For this I grant permission, as you please,
to come every night, and disrupt ' *La Clorise*,'

THE PIT Boo! ... Boo! ...

JODELET Let's be booed both together, then! ...

BELLEROSE The hall must be cleared now! ...

JODELET All clear off, again!

(The people begin to go out, while Cyrano watches with an air of satisfaction. But the crowd soon halt on hearing the following scene, and their exit ceases. The women, who are already standing up in the boxes, with their cloaks on, stop to listen, and finally sit down again.)

LE BRET *(to Cyrano)*

You're mad! ...

A BORE *(coming up to Cyrano)*

The actor Montfleury! What a scandal!

Why, he's the protégé of the Duc de Candale!

Have you a patron?

CYRANO No!

THE BORE You haven't? ...

CYRANO None!

THE BORE What! No great lord to protect you with his name?

CYRANO *(irritated)*

No, I've told you twice! Must I repeat it? Yes?

No! No protector ...

(His hand on his sword)

But here...a protectress!

THE BORE So, are you going to quit the city?

Act One

CYRANO Maybe.

THE BORE The Duc de Candale has a long arm!

CYRANO But not indeed

As long as mine, (*Shows his sword.*)
when it's extended. There!

THE BORE But you don't dare to pretend.....?

CYRANO Ah yes, I dare!

THE BORE But ...

CYRANO Show your heels! Instantly!

THE BORE But I ...

CYRANO Go!

- Or say why you go on at staring at my nose!

THE BORE (*staggered*)

I ...

CYRANO (*walking straight up to him*)

What's so strange about it?

THE BORE (*drawing back*)

Your Grace has me wrong!

CYRANO Is it soft and dangling, like an elephant's trunk? ...

THE BORE (*as before*)

I never ...

CYRANO Is it hooked then, like the beak of an owl?

THE BORE I ...

CYRANO Do you see something on the tip, a pimple?

THE BORE But ...

CYRANO Or a fly, with little steps, walks up and down?
Has it variety?

THE BORE Oh ...

CYRANO Is it a phenomenon?

THE BORE But I was careful not to cast my eye there!

CYRANO And why not, if you please, why not stare?

THE BORE I was ...

CYRANO It disgusts you?

THE BORE Sir!

CYRANO Is it it's hue
seems unhealthy?

THE BORE Sir!

Act One

CYRANO Or its shape's obscene to you?

THE BORE No, on the contrary! ...

CYRANO Why then that air, so disparaging?
- Perhaps Monsieur thinks it too grand a thing?

THE BORE (*stammering*)
I find it little, quite little, miniscule!

CYRANO Eh? What? You insult with equal ridicule!
Little, my nose? Ha!

THE BORE Heavens!

CYRANO It's vast, my nose!
- Vile snubby, duck-headed, flat-face, let me disclose
I'm proud of such an appendage as this.
It's well known a big nose is indicative
of a genial soul, kind, courteous, intelligent,
free, courageous, such as I am, and such I meant
as you're forbidden from dreaming yourself to be,
Base rascal! That inglorious face I see
my hand is after, at the top of your neck,
is as empty...

(*He cuffs him.*)

THE BORE Ow!

CYRANO Of any pride, address,
or lyricism, sparkle, or picturesque-ness,
or sumptuousity, or NOSE in fact, as this
(*He turns him by the shoulders, suiting the action to the word.*)
my boot finds at the bottom of your spine!

THE BORE (*running away*)

Help! Call the Guard!

CYRANO Take care, audience of mine,
if you find the middle of my visage humorous,
for if the humorist's noble it's known for us
to show him, before we let him flee, *and* feel,
below and above, not leather, but naked steel!

DE GUICHE (*who, with the marquises, has come down from the stage*)

But in the end he bores us!

THE VISCOMTE DE VALVERT (*sbrugging his shoulders*)

Blows his own trumpet!

DE GUICHE Will no one answer him? ...

THE VISCOMTE No one? But wait!

I'll go and trade him one of these same blows!...

(*He goes up to Cyrano, who is watching him, and stands in front of him, with a conceited air*)

You...you have... hmma very large nose!

CYRANO (*graveley*)

Very!

THE VISCOMTE (*laughing*)

Ha!

CYRANO (*imperturbably*)

That's all? ...

THE VISCOMTE But..

Act One

CYRANO Ah no! That's too brief, young man!

You might have said...Oh!... a hundred things, to plan by varying the tone ... for example just suppose...

Aggressive: 'I, Sir, if I had such a nose, I'd have it amputated on the spot!'

Friendly: 'But it must drown itself a lot, you need a drinking-bowl of a special shape!'

Descriptive: 'It's a rock! ... A peak! ... A cape! What's that, it's a cape?..... It's a peninsular!'

Curious: 'That oblong bag what's it serve you for? A sheath for scissors? Or a writing case?'

Gracious: 'Do you love the winged race so much, that you benignly set yourself to provide their little claws with a shelf?'

Insolent: 'Sir, when that pipe of yours glows does the tobacco smoke rise from your nose and make the neighbours cry, your chimney's on fire?'

Considerate: 'Have a care, ... lest your head grow tired of such a weight ... and it's the ground you sit on!'

Tender: 'Have a small umbrella fashioned, for fear lest in sunshine it lose all its colour!'

Pedantic: 'That rare beast, Aristophanes, Sir, named Hippocamp-elephanto-camelos, must have on its head such flesh, such a solid boss!'

Familiar: 'The latest fashion, my friend, that crook for hanging your hat on? True, it's a useful hook!'

Eloquent: 'No winds at all, majestic nose can give you colds! Except when the mistral blows!'

Dramatic: 'When it bleeds it's the Red Seal!'

Admiring: 'What a sign for a perfumery!'

Lyric: 'Is this a conch? ... are you a Triton?'

Simple: 'This monument, when does it open?'

Respectful: 'Sir, allow me to congratulate you that's what we call owning a gabled view!'

Rustic: 'Nah! That thing a nose? No way, not it! That's a dwarf pumpkin, or a giant turnip!'

Military: 'Point that thing towards the cavalry!'

Practical: 'Do you want it entered in the lottery!
Certainly, sir, it would be the biggest prize!
Or lastly ... parodying Pyramus's sighs:
'Behold the nose that mars its owner's nature
destroying harmony! It blushes now, the traitor!
- That's an idea, sir, of what you might have said,
if you'd an ounce of wit or letters in your head:
but of wit, O most lamentable creature
you've never had an atom, and you feature
three letters only, and those three spell: Ass!
And were your wit of sufficient class,
to aim a single foolish pleasantry,
at me, in front of all this noble gallery,
you'd not have been allowed to speak a quarter
of the least beginning of a single one of them, for
though I aim them at myself, so wittily,
I don't let any man aim them at me!

DE GUICHE (*trying to draw the dismayed Viscomte away.*)

Come away, Viscomte Valvert!

THE VISCOMTE (*choking with rage*)

Such an arrogant air!
A country squire who ... who ... has no gloves to wear!
Who goes without knots on his sleeve, or lace, or ribbon!

CYRANO As for me: my elegance is all within.

I don't dress myself like one of your popinjays,
but I'm smarter, if less fussy in my ways:
I wouldn't go about, through negligence,
with an insult un-avenged, or a conscience
yellow with fear still, sleep in its eye-corner,
or scruples dressed in black, the rags of honour.
But there's nothing I walk with that doesn't shine,
plumed with that honest freedom that is mine.
It's not some flattering fashion, but my soul

Act One

that stiffens my back, like your corseted *beau*:
with my exploits, instead of ribbons, attached
twirling my wit as one twirls a moustache,
I pass through the crowds, and the chatterers,
making Truth ring out to the clash of spurs!

THE VISCOMTE But...

CYRANO You say I wear no gloves? So there!
I've only one of them left ...one of an old worn pair,
- which I left behind, quite an irritating waste,
as it seems to me I left it in someone's face.

THE VISCOMTE Scoundrel, rascal, stupid flat-footed fool!

CYRANO (*taking off his hat, and bowing as if Valvert had introduced himself*)
Ah? ... and I, Cyrano Savinien-Hercule
de Bergerac

(*Laughter.*)

THE VISCOMTE (*angrily*)
Buffoon!

CYRANO (*calling out as if he had been seized with the cramp*)
Ohh! Ohhh!

THE VISCOMTE (*who was going away, turns back*)
What on earth's he saying now?

CYRANO (*with grimaces of pain*)
It must be eased - it's getting stiff, and how....
- This comes of leaving it unused. Good Lord!
Ohh! ...

THE VISCOMTE What's wrong with you?

CYRANO I've got....cramp in my sword!

THE VISCOMTE (*drawing his sword*)

Fine!

CYRANO I'll give you a charming little thrust!

THE VISCOMTE (*contemptuously*)

Poet! ...

CYRANO Yes poet, Sir! To prove that's just,
While we fence – On guard! – I'll improvise
I'll compose a ballad.

THE VISCOMTE A ballad?

CYRANO You show surprise,
you're not unsure what a ballad is, I hope?

THE VISCOMTE But ...

CYRANO (*reciting, as if repeating a lesson*)

Know then that the ballade should be composed
of three eight-line stanzas ...

THE VISCOMTE (*stamping*)

Oh!

CYRANO (*still reciting*)

An *envoi* of four.....

Act One

THE VISCOMTE You ...

CYRANO I'll make one all complete, while we're at war,
and hit you, Sir, at the final line.

THE VISCOMTE No!

CYRANO Really?

(declaiming)

'Ballad of a duel in the Hotel Burgundy,
in which Monsieur de Bergerac fought a weasel!'

THE VISCOMTE What's that you say if you please?

CYRANO That's the title.

THE HOUSE *(in great excitement)*

Make room! – What great fun! - Spread out now! - Silence!

(Tableau. A circle of curious spectators in the pit; the marquises and the officers mixed in with the common people: pages climbing on each other's shoulders to see better. All the women standing up in the boxes. To the right, De Guiche and his gentlemen. Left, Le Bret, Ragueneau, Cuiigy, etc.)

CYRANO *(closing his eyes for a moment)*

Wait!....I'm choosing my rhymes ... There, I have them!

(He suits the actions to the rhythm of the words.)

I throw my hat away, lightly,
I, slow as you like, discard
the heavy cloak that warms me,
and I draw my shining sword:
elegant as Celadon,

agile as Scaramouch,
I warn you now, dear Myrmidon,
at the *envoi*'s end, I touch!

(They engage for the first time.)

You'd be better to have stayed neutral:
Where will I skewer you, my turkey?...
In the flank, beneath your medal?...
In the heart, beneath your finery?...
The little bells ring, ding dong!
My point swirls: flies do as much!
In the belly, I can't be wrong,
at the *envoi*'s end, I touch.

You break off - while I find a word -
you're whiter by far than snow,
and furnish me with the rhyme *coward*!
- Tac! I parry the point, so
that you had hopes of giving me;
I straighten my stance, not overmuch...
Hold your spit, Sir Scullion, please!
At the *envoi*'s end, I touch.

(He declaims solemnly.)

Envoi.

Prince, ask God for mercy now!
I turn a quarter - a flourish, and such!
I cut, I feint!
(Thrusting)
....Ah, then, I vow,

(The viscomte staggers. Cyrano salutes.)

at the *envoi*'s end, I touch!

Act One

(Acclamations. Applause in the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs shower down. The officers surround Cyrano, congratulating him. Ragueneau dances for joy. Le Bret is happy, but anxious. The Viscomte's friends hold him up and carry him off.)

THE CROWD *(with one long shout)*

Ah!....

A TROOPER Superb!

A WOMAN Pretty!

RAGUENEAU Marvellous!

A MARQUIS Novel, though!

LE BRET Madman!

THE CROWD *(presses round Cyrano. Chorus of)*

Compliments to you!...Well done!..Bravo...

A WOMAN'S VOICE That's a hero!..

A MUSKETEER *(advancing to Cyrano with outstretched hand)*

Sir, if you will permit me?...

That was really fine - I'm an expert I believe:

Indeed I stamped to express my admiration!

(He goes away.)

CYRANO *(to CuiGY)*

What's that gentleman's name, then?

CUIGY That's D'Artagnan.

LE BRET *(to Cyrano, taking his arm)*

Come, let's speak! ...

CYRANO Wait a moment: let the crowd leave! ...

(To Bellerose)

May I stay?

BELLEROSE *(respectfully)*

Of course!...

(Cries are heard outside.)

JODELET *(who has looked outside)*

They're hooting Montfleury!

BELLEROSE *(solemnly)*

Sic transit! ...

(Changes his tone and shouts to the porter and the lamplighters.)

Sweep. Close up. Don't douse the lights.

We'll be back again after our meal, tonight,
for a rehearsal of tomorrow's newest farce.

(Jodelet and Bellerose go out, bowing low to Cyrano.)

THE PORTER *(to Cyrano):*

You're not dining, then?

CYRANO I?...No.

(The porter goes out.)

LE BRET Because?

Act One

CYRANO (*proudly*)

Be....*cause*

(*Changing his tone as the porter goes away*)

I have no money! ...

LE BRET (*with the action of throwing a bag*)

But! The bag of coins? ...

CYRANO Paternal allowance... a day, and see they're going!

LE BRET To live for a whole month on? ...

CYRANO I've nothing further.

LE BRET To throw that bag away, madness!

CYRANO But what a gesture!...

THE ORANGE SELLER (*coughing, behind her counter*)

Ahem!

(*Cyrano and Le Bret turn. She comes timidly forward.*)

Sir....you'll be hungry...my heart is aching, while..

(*showing the buffet*)

I've everything you need, here.

(*eagerly*)

Take some.

CYRANO (*taking off his hat*)

Dear child,

though my Gascon pride forbids, you understand,

my taking the least sweetmeat from your hand,

I'm more afraid lest a refusal grieve you

so I'll accept ...

(*He goes to the buffet.*)

Oh! Something! - A grape or two
from this bunch...

(She offers him the whole bunch. He takes one.)

Just one!...this glass of water..

(She tries to give him wine, but he stops her.)

Pure!

- And half a macaroon!

(He gives back the other half.)

LE BRET That's madness for sure!

THE ORANGE SELLER Oh! Take something more!

CYRANO Yes. Your hand to kiss.

(He kisses her hand as though she were a princess.)

THE ORANGE SELLER Thank you, Sir!

(She courtesies.)

Good-night.

(She exits.)

SCENE FIVE

Cyrano, Le Bret, then the Porter.

CYRANO *(to Le Bret)*

Now talk - I'm all ears.

(He stands at the buffet, and placing before him first the macaroon.)

Dinner! ...

(then the glass of water)

Wine! ...

(then the grape)

Dessert! ...

(he seats himself.)

So! I sit down to eat!

- Ah!... I was hungry, dear friend, starved as can be!

(eating)

- Well?

LE BRET How these conceited fops, with their warlike airs,
will pervert your spirit if you only listen to theirs! ...
Go and ask a man of sense if you want to see
how your quarrel impressed *him*.

CYRANO *(finishing his macaroon)*

Enormously!

LE BRET The Cardinal ...

CYRANO *(radiant)*

He was there, the Cardinal?

LE BRET Must have thought the whole thing...

CYRANO Very original.

LE BRET But ...

CYRANO He's an author too. It won't displease him
that I've interfered with another of his brethren.

LE BRET You make too many enemies, up for a fight!

CYRANO (*eating his grapes*)
How many, roughly, do you think I've made to-night?

LE BRET Forty-eight. Not counting the women.

CYRANO Count, let's hear!

LE BRET Montfleury, that old man, De Guiche, Valvert,
Baro, the Academy ...

CYRANO Enough! You ravish me!

LE BRET But what will these things lead to, don't you see?
Where's the method in it?

CYRANO I was wandering in a maze
I'd too many complicated paths to take:
I took ...

LE BRET Which?

CYRANO Oh! Of them all, the simplest one.
I decided to be brilliant at everything, with everyone!

Act One

LE BRET (*shrugging his shoulders*)

Fine! But the reason for your detestation
of Montfleury – give me the true explanation!

CYRANO (*rising*)

Silenus, so gross his hands won't reach his navel
still thinks his charms place the girls in peril,
and, while he stammers through his little piece,
makes sheep's eyes with his frog's eyes, if you please!
I hate him since he allowed himself one night
to raise his eyes to her ... Oh! I thought it like
a fat slug sliding towards a flower above!

LE BRET (*stupefied*)

What? Is it possible...

CYRANO (*laughing bitterly*)

That I could be in love? ...
(*Changing his tone, gravely*)
I'm in love.

LE BRET And may one know? ... You've never told me...

CYRANO Whom I love?...Think, let's see. The dream I might be
loved even by an ugly woman's quite denied me: it's,
this nose of mine that precedes me by fifteen minutes.
So, then, whom do I love?...It goes without saying
I love – it's inevitable! – the most beautiful of beings!

LE BRET The loveliest? ...

CYRANO Simply, of all those in the world!

The most brilliant - the finest - the blondest curls!

LE BRET Ah! My God, who is this lady, then?

CYRANO A danger

mortal without knowing it, a snare of Nature's,
exquisite without dreaming it, a damask rose
within which Love sets his traps for those
who've seen her smile, and known perfection.
She conjures grace from nothing, the creation
of everything divine's in her smallest gesture,
and Diana, passing among woodland flowers,
or Venus, aboard your shell, you know not this,
how she aboard her chair passes through Paris!...

LE BRET Sapristi! I know. It's clear!

CYRANO It's transparent, man!

LE BRET Madeleine Robin, your cousin?

CYRANO Yes, Roxane!

LE BRET Well! So much the better! You love her? Tell her so!
You'll be glorious to her, after this evening's show!

CYRANO Look at me, my dear friend, then tell me
what hope this protuberance leaves me!
Oh! I've no illusions! - And yet, that's right,
yes, sometimes, I grow tender, in the blue of night:
I enter some garden that the hour makes sweet,
with my poor ugly devil of a nose, I greet
the Spring - I'm watching, in a ray of silver
some lady on a soldier's arm, dreaming ever
of walking with little footsteps under the moon,
I too delighting in having my lady on my arm,
I'm sublime, lose myself...wake suddenly, and all
that's only my shadow on the garden wall!

Act One

LE BRET (*tenderly*)

My friend! ...

CYRANO My friend, the bitter hours I keep!

Thinking myself so ugly, sometimes, so alone...

LE BRET (*taking his hand*)

You weep?

CYRANO Ah! Not that, never! No, it would be too gross

if a tear trickled down this length of nose!

I won't allow, while I'm still their master,

the divine beauty of tears to mingle there

with such monstrous ugliness!...considering

that tears, nothing's more sublime, no not a thing,

and I wouldn't wish, by inciting mockery,

a single one to be ridiculed, through me!

LE BRET Go on: don't sadden yourself! Love's a chance affair!

CYRANO (*shaking his head*)

No! I love Cleopatra: have I Caesar's air?

I adore Juliet? Have I Romeo's complexion.

LE BRET But your bravery! Your wit! - That little one,

who gave you that modest feast just now, her eye,

you understood it, clearly, showed no dislike!

CYRANO (*impressed*)

That's true!

LE BRET Well, then? ... I saw Roxane grow pale

as she followed your duel, herself.

CYRANO Quite pale?

LE BRET Her heart, her imagination, already glows!
Then dare to speak to her!

CYRANO So she'll mock my nose?
No! – That's the one thing in the world I fear!

THE PORTER (*introducing someone to Cyrano*)
Sir, someone's asking for you ...

CYRANO (*seeing the duenna*)
My God! Her duenna!

SCENE SIX

Cyrano, Le Bret, the duenna.

THE DUENNA (*with a low bow*)

From her valiant cousin, *one* would desire to
know where to meet him - secretly.

CYRANO (*overwhelmed*)

Meet me!

THE DUENNA (*courtesying*)

Meet you!
One has something to tell you.

CYRANO Some? ...

THE DUENNA (*still courtesying*)

Something!

CYRANO (*staggering*)

Ah, my God!

THE DUENNA *One* goes, tomorrow, when the birds begin to sing,
at dawn, to mass at Saint-Roch.

CYRANO (*leaning against Le Bret*)

Ah! My God!

THE DUENNA On leaving – where might *one* go, to speak a word?

CYRANO (*confused*)

Where? Ah! ... but ... Ah, my God! ...

THE DUENNA Say quickly!

CYRANO I'm thinking!

THE DUENNA Where?

CYRANO At...at...Ragueneau's....the pastry-cook....

THE DUENNA Residing?

CYRANO In the Rue - Oh! My God, My God! - Saint Honoré!

THE DUENNA (*going*)

One goes. Be there. At seven.

CYRANO I'll do as you say.

(The duenna goes out.)

Act One

SCENE SEVEN

Cyrano, Le Bret.

Then actors, actresses, Cuigy, Brissaille, Lignière, the porter, the violinists.

CYRANO *(falling into Le Bret's arms)*

Il...From her!...A meeting!...

LE BRET No longer a pessimist?

CYRANO Ah! Why would I be, she knows that I exist!

LE BRET Now perhaps, you're going to act calmly?

CYRANO *(beside himself with joy)*

Now....

I'll be furious, and glitter like lightning, so,

I need a whole army, to bring them to their knees!

I've ten hearts: twenty arms: it's not enough for me
to split paltry dwarves in two...

(He shouts at the top of his voice)

I must have giants!

(For a few moments past the shadows of actors have been moving on the stage, whispers are heard - the rehearsal is beginning. The violinists are in their places.)

A VOICE FROM THE STAGE Hey! Sssh! You there! Silence! We're rehearsing our lines!

CYRANO *(laughing)*

We're off!

(He moves away. Cuigy, Brissaille, and some officers, enter by the main door, holding up Lignière, who is completely drunk.)

CUIGY Cyrano!

CYRANO What is it?

CUIGY A giant song-thrush,
they're bringing it for you!

CYRANO *(recognizing him)*
Lignière! ... What's up?

CUIGY He's after you!

BRISSAILLE He can't go home!

CYRANO Why not?

LIGNIÈRE *(in a careful, drunken voice, showing him a ragged letter)*
This letter warns me ... a hundred men they've got...
because of...that song....a great danger threatens me ...
the Porte de Nesle...I must, though, to get home you see..
allow me to sleep... under your roof instead.

CYRANO A hundred men, you say? You'll sleep in your own bed!

LIGNIÈRE *(frightened)*
But...

Act One

CYRANO *(in a terrible voice, showing him the lighted lantern held by the porter, who is listening, with curiosity)*

Take that lantern.

(Lignière seizes it, hastily.)

Now, let's go! – I swear

That I'll make your bed to-night once we're there!...

(To the officers)

You, follow behind me, and witness this!

CUIGY A hundred! ...

CYRANO Tonight I couldn't manage with less!

(The actors and actresses, in their costumes, have come down from the stage, and are listening.)

LE BRET But why protect?...

CYRANO Behold! Le Bret the grumbler!

LE BRET That useless drunkard! -

CYRANO *(slapping Lignière on the shoulder)*

Because, this drinker,
this cask of ale, this barrel of Burgundy,
did something once that was extremely pretty:
as he was leaving mass, he saw the one he loved,
taking holy water, as the sacred rites approve,
he, who runs from water, ran towards it
tipped it towards him, and drank every bit!...

AN ACTRESS *(dressed as a comedienne)*

Well! That's nice!

CYRANO Was it not, my comedienne?

THE ACTRESS *(to the others)*

But why face a poor poet with a hundred men?

CYRANO Let's go!

(To the officers)

And you, sirs, seeing me charge in anger,
don't second me, however great the danger!

ANOTHER ACTRESS *(jumping from the stage)*

Oh! But I'll come to see!

CYRANO Come, then!

ANOTHER *(jumping down - to an old actor)*

And you, Cassandre? ...

CYRANO All of you come, the Doctor, Isabel, Léander,
come, and you'll add, you fine, mad swarm a
farce from Italy to this Spanish drama!

ALL THE WOMEN *(dancing for joy)*

Bravo! - a cloak, quickly!- My hood!

JODELET Come on!

CYRANO Play us a march, you gentlemen of the band!

(The violinists etc. join the procession, which is forming. They take the footlights, and share them out as torches.)

Bravo! The officers! The women in costume,
And, twenty paces in front

(He takes his place.)

I all alone, beneath this plume

Act One

that Glory herself lends to adorn my hat,
proud as a Scipio, and triply-nosed at that! ...
- You understand? It's forbidden to interfere! -
One, two three! Porter, open the doors! We're here!
(The porter opens the doors: a view of old picturesque Paris is seen in the moonlight.)
Ah! ... Paris there, nocturnal, nebulous almost:
over blue sloping roofs where moonlight flows:
a set prepared, exquisitely, for this scene:
there, beneath veils of vapour, is the Seine,
a magic mirror filled full with mystery,
that trembles...And you'll see what you will see!

ALL To the Porte de Nesle!

CYRANO *(standing on the threshold)*

To the Porte de Nesle!
(Turning, before going on, to the comedienne)
Didn't you ask why they've sent, mademoiselle,
a hundred men against one maker of rhyme?
(He draws his sword; then, calmly)
That's because they know he's a friend of mine!

(He goes out. Lignière staggers first after him, then the actresses on the officers' arms – then the comedians, leaping about. The procession marches into the night to the sound of violins, in the faint light of the candles.)

Curtain.

ACT TWO

The Poets' Pastry-Shop



agueneau's bakery and pastry-shop. A large place at the corner of the Rue Saint Honoré and the Rue de l'Arbre Sec, which is seen in the background through the glass door, in the first light of dawn.

On the left, in the foreground, a counter surmounted by a stand of forged iron, on which are hung geese, ducks, and white peacocks. In great china vases there are tall bouquets of ordinary flowers, mainly yellow sunflowers.

On the same side, farther back, an immense fireplace, in front of which, between great firedogs on each of which hangs a little saucepan, roasts are dripping into pans.

In the right foreground a door.

Farther back a staircase leading to a little room under the eaves, the interior of which is visible through the open shutter. A table is laid, there. A small Flemish candlestick is alight. It is a private place for eating and drinking. A wooden gallery, continuing the staircase, apparently leads to other similar little rooms.

In the middle of the shop an iron ring is suspended from the ceiling by a rope with which it can be drawn up and down, and game is hung around it, like a chandelier.

The ovens in the darkness under the stairs give out a red glow. The copper pans shine. The spits are turning. Heaps of food formed into pyramids. Hams suspended. It is the busy hour of the morning. Bustle and hurry of scullions, fat cooks, and diminutive apprentices, their caps decorated with cock's feathers and the wings of guinea-fowl.

On metal dishes and wicker platters they bring in quincunxes of cakes and villages of tarts.

Act Two

The tables are covered with rolls and dishes of food. Other tables surrounded with chairs are ready for the winners and diners.

A small table in a corner is covered with papers, at which Ragueneau is seated writing as the curtain rises.



‘Cook with a Pie’

Theodor Matham, Caspar van Baerle, Joachim von Sandrart, 1645

The Rijksmuseum

SCENE ONE

Ragueneau, pastry-cooks, then Lise.

Ragueneau is writing, with an inspired air, at a small table, and counting on his fingers.

FIRST PASTRY COOK *(bringing in an elaborate fancy dish)*

Fruits!

SECOND PASTRY COOK *(bringing another dish)*

Custard!

THIRD PASTRY COOK *(bringing a roast, decorated with feathers)*

Peacock!

FOURTH PASTRY COOK *(bringing a batch of cakes on a slab)*

Cakes!

FIFTH PASTRY COOK *(bringing a sort of pie-dish)*

Beef casserole!

RAGUENEAU *(ceasing to write, and raising his head)*

On copper pans dawn's silver rays, already, glow!

Quench the god who sings within you, Ragueneau!

The lute's hour is done! It's the oven's moment now!

(He rises. To a cook)

You, give that sauce a longer measure, it's too short!

THE COOK How much?

RAGUENEAU Three feet.

(He passes on farther.)

Act Two

THE COOK What!

FIRST PASTRY COOK (*showing a dish to Ragueneau*)

The pie!

SECOND PASTRY COOK The tart!

RAGUENEAU (*before the fire*)

My Muse, be distant, since your lovely eyes
must not be reddened by these vinous fires!

(*To a cook, showing him some loaves*)

You've misplaced the split in these, the poet teaches
that the caesura's between - the double hemistiches!

(*To another, showing him an unfinished pastry*)

To this palace of pastry you must add the roof ...

(*To a young apprentice, who, seated on the ground, is spitting the fowls*)

and you, on your interminable spit, son, you
vary the little pullet and turkey the superb,
alternately, my child, as our old Malherbe
varied his grander verses with the lesser;
and turn the *strophes* of roast fowl in the fire!

ANOTHER APPRENTICE (*also coming up with a tray covered by a napkin*)

Master, I thought of something you might desire.

I've baked it in the oven, to please you.

(*He uncovers the tray, and shows a large lyre made of pastry.*)

RAGUENEAU (*enchanted*)

A lyre!

THE APPRENTICE It's made with brioche pastry.

RAGUENEAU (*touched*)

And candied fruit!

THE APPRENTICE And the strings, see, of sugar, I made them too.

RAGUENEAU (*giving him a coin*)

Here, drink a health to me!

(*Seeing Lise enter*)

Sssh! My wife. Keep it hid
that money!

(*To Lise, showing her the lyre, with a conscious look*)

Isn't it sweet?

LISE It's stupid!

(*She puts a pile of paper bags on the counter.*)

RAGUENEAU Paper bags? Good. Thanks.

(*He looks at them.*)

Heavens! My old manuscripts!

The poems of my friends! Dismembered, torn to bits
to make bags for putting bread and pastries in...

Ah! Orpheus, the Bacchantes, all over again!

LISE (*dryly*)

Haven't I the right to put to good employment
what they leave behind them as their only payment,
those limping lines, from your wretched scribbles!

RAGUENEAU Ant! ... Don't insult those heavenly cicadas!

LISE Before you spent your time with that crew, dear man,
you didn't call me a Bacchante, - or an ant!

RAGUENEAU With poetry...to do that!

LISE What else, do you suppose?

RAGUENEAU Then, madam, what on earth would you do with prose?

Act Two

SCENE TWO

The same. Two children, who've just entered the pastry-shop.

RAGUENEAU What do you want, little ones?

FIRST CHILD Three pies.

RAGUENEAU *(serving them)*

There, well cooked,
and well heated.

SECOND CHILD Please, will you wrap them for us?

RAGUENEAU *(aside, distressed)*

Alas! One of my bags!

(To the children)

What? Must I wrap them? See!

(He takes a bag, and just as he is about to put in the pies, he reads)

'So Ulysses, on the day he left Penelope ...'

Not that one!

(He puts it aside, and takes another, and as he is about to put in the pies, he reads)

'Golden-haired Phoebus ...'

No, nor that! ...

(The same again)

LISE *(impatiently)*

What are you waiting for?

RAGUENEAU Not that! Not that! That!

(He chooses a third, resignedly.)

The sonnet to Phyllis! ...it's hard all the same!

LISE Thank goodness he's decided!

(Shrugging her shoulders)

What a game!

(She climbs on a chair, and begins to range plates on a dresser.)

RAGUENEAU *(taking advantage of the moment she turns her back, calls back the children, who are already at the door)*

Psst! Little ones! ... give me the sonnet to Phyllis,
and instead of those three pies I'll give you six.

(The children give him back the bag, take the pies quickly, and go out.)

RAGUENEAU *(smoothing out the paper, begins to declaim)*

'Phyllis! ...' On that sweet name, a smear of butter!

'Phyllis! ...'

(Cyrano enters hurriedly.)

SCENE THREE

Ragueneau, Lise, Cyrano, then the musketeer.

CYRANO What time is it?

RAGUENEAU (*bowing low*)

Six o'clock.

CYRANO (*with emotion*)

In an hour!

(He paces up and down the shop.)

RAGUENEAU (*following him*)

Bravo! I saw ...

CYRANO What, then?

RAGUENEAU Your duel! ...

CYRANO Well?

RAGUENEAU The one in the Hotel Burgundy!

CYRANO (*contemptuously*)

Ah! ... *that* duel!

RAGUENEAU (*admiringly*)

Yes, the duel in verse! ...

LISE He's full of it...overmuch!

CYRANO That's all the better!

RAGUENEAU (*making passes with a spit that he catches up*)

'At the *envoi*'s end, I touch!...

At the *envoi*'s end, I touch!...' Isn't that fine, though!

(*With increasing enthusiasm*)

'At the *envoi*'s end...'

CYRANO What time is it, Ragueneau?

RAGUENEAU (*stopping short, in the act of thrusting with an imaginary sword, to look at the clock*)

Five after six! ... 'I touch!'

(*He straightens up.*)

... Oh! To write a ballad!

LISE (*to Cyrano, who, as he passes by the counter, has absently shaken hands with her*)

What's wrong with your hand?

CYRANO Nothing. A fight I had.

RAGUENEAU Have you been running some danger?

CYRANO No danger.

LISE (*shaking her finger at him*)

I think you're lying?

Act Two

CYRANO Did my nose grow longer?

It must have taken a giant lie to do so!

(Changing his tone)

I'm waiting for someone. You can leave us though,
if that's alright.

RAGUENEAU That's just what I can't do:

My poets are due...

LISE *(ironically)*

And for their first sitting too!

CYRANO Draw them aside when I make you a sign then, man...

The time?

RAGUENEAU Ten past six.

CYRANO *(nervously seating himself at Ragueneau's table, and drawing some paper toward him)*

A pen?...

RAGUENEAU *(giving him the one from behind his ear)*

A quill, from a swan.

A MUSKETEER *(with a fine moustache, enters, and in a stentorian voice)*

Good-day!

(Lise goes up to him quickly.)

CYRANO *(turning round)*

Who's he?

RAGUENEAU A friend of my wife. A fighter.

Fierce - so he says...

CYRANO (*taking up the pen, and motioning Ragueneau away*)

Hush!

(*To himself*)

I'll write, fold, give it to her,
and run away!

(*Throws down the pen.*)

Coward! ... But then how I'd die
if I dared to speak, to say one word to her!

(*To Ragueneau*)

The time?

RAGUENEAU Six fifteen! ...

CYRANO (*striking his chest*)

...one word of all those I have waiting!

While to write it...

(*He picks up the pen again.*)

Well, let's write the thing!

That letter of love I've written in my heart
and re-written a hundred times, it's easy to start
and then set out my innermost soul on paper,
I've only to copy it out, nothing's simpler.

(*He writes. Through the glass door the silhouettes of figures are visible, thin and hesitant.*)

Act Two

SCENE FOUR

*Ragueneau, Lise, the musketeer. Cyrano at the little table writing.
The poets, dressed in black, their stockings slipping down and covered in mud.*

LISE *(entering, to Ragueneau)*

Here they are your goat's turds!

FIRST POET *(entering, to Ragueneau)*

Brother! ...

SECOND POET *(to Ragueneau, shaking his hands)*

Dear brother!

THIRD POET Eagle among pastry-cooks!

(He sniffs.)

It smells good up here!

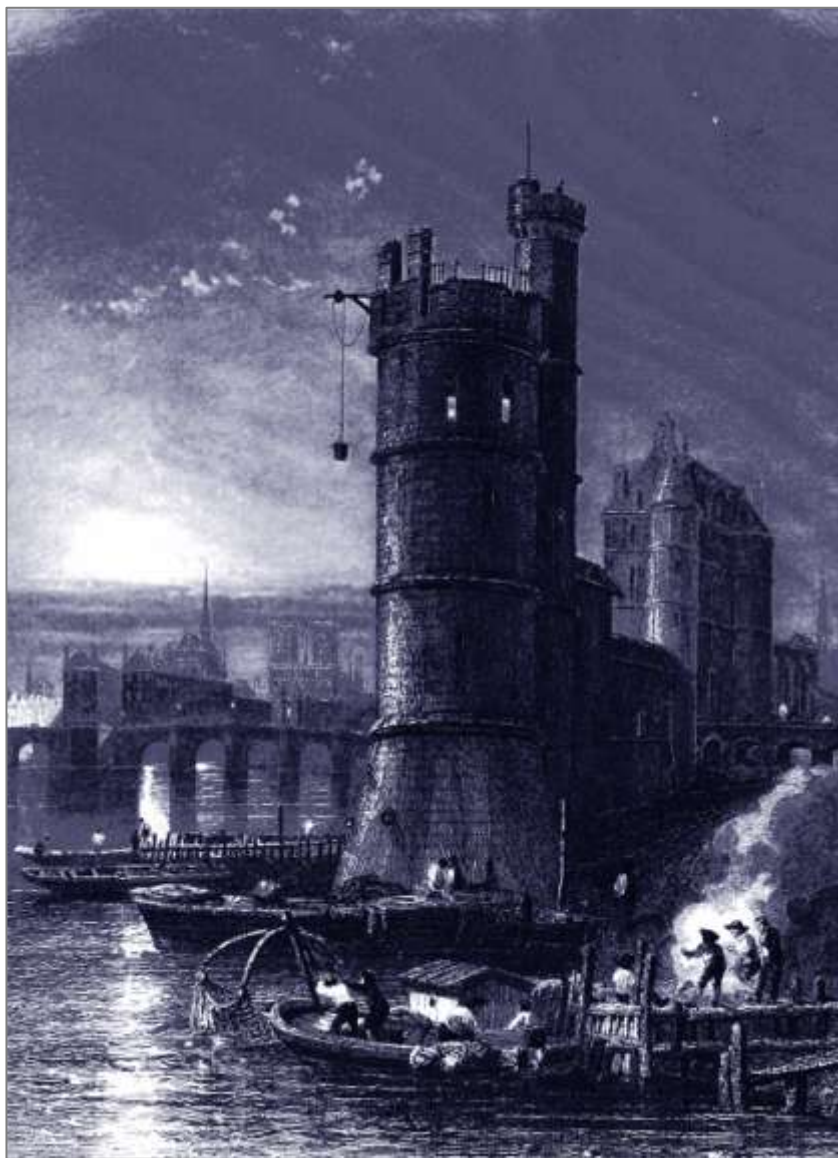
FOURTH POET O Phoebus Oven-blessed!

FIFTH POET Apollo master-chef!

RAGUENEAU *(surrounded, embraced, clapped on the back)*

How quickly you're put at ease by their kindness!...

FIRST POET We were retarded by the crowd that's gathered
at the Porte de Nesle! ...



‘Tour de Nesle’

Histoire physique, civile et morale de Paris ... Quatrième édition –
Jacques-Antoine Dulaure, Louis Batissier (p552, 1846)

The British Library

Act Two

SECOND POET Eight brigands with gashes,
slit-open, all blood-stained, strewn over the stones.

CYRANO (*raising his head a minute*)
Eight? ... Ah, seven I thought.

(*He goes on writing.*)

RAGUENEAU (*to Cyrano*)
Is it perhaps known
who's the hero?

CYRANO (*carelessly*)
I don't know.

LISE (*to the musketeer*)
And you?

THE MUSKETEER (*twirling his moustache*)
Maybe!

CYRANO (*writing a little way off, - he's heard to murmur a word from time to time*)
I love you...

FIRST POET One man, they say, single-handedly,
put the whole lot to flight!

SECOND POET Oh! Quite a surprise!
Pikes and bludgeons all over the ground!..

CYRANO (*writing*)
...Your eyes...

THIRD POET As far as the Quai d'Orfèvres the hats and the cloaks!

FIRST POET Sapristi! He must be ferocious ...

CYRANO (*as before*)

...*Your lips...*

FIRST POET A dreadful giant the author of such a to-do!

CYRANO (*as before*)

....*And I faint with fear whenever I look at you.*'

SECOND POET (*stealing a cake*)

What have you rhymed lately, Ragueneau?

CYRANO (*as before*)

...*Who loves you...*

(*He stops, on the point of signing it, and gets up, slipping the letter into his doublet.*)

No need to sign. I'll place it in her hand, too.

RAGUENEAU (*to the second poet*)

A recipe set to verse.

THIRD POET (*seating himself by a plate of cream-puffs*)

Let's hear this verse!

FOURTH POET (*looking at a cake which he has taken*)

This brioche is cocking its hat at me, or worse!

(*He bites the top off.*)

FIRST POET See how this spice-bread woos the hungry rhymer
with almond eyes, and eyebrows of angelica!

(*He takes it.*)

Act Two

SECOND POET We hear.

THIRD POET (*squeezing a cream-puff gently in his fingers*)
The cream-puff dribbles cream: smiles with desire.

SECOND POET (*biting a bit off the great lyre of pastry*)
For the first time in my life I'm nourished by the lyre!

RAGUENEAU (*who has readied himself for his recital, cleared his throat, settled his cap, and struck a pose*)
A recipe in verse...

SECOND POET (*to the first, nudging him*)
You breakfast?

FIRST POET (*to second*)
You dine, it seems!

RAGUENEAU How one makes '*tartelettes amandines*'.

Beat several eggs, till they're quite
Creamy light:
Mix in slowly with their froth
Juice from your chosen lemon:
Then pour on
Milk of almonds, sweet enough.

Spread a layer of custard paste
Round the waist
Of your tartlet-moulds: and so,
With quick fingers, pinch
Half an inch:
Drop by drop your mousse must go

Into those little wells, and when
The moulds, then,
To and from the oven have been,
Browned, and cheerfully arrayed,
You'll have made
Tartelettes amandines!

THE POETS (*their mouths full*)

Delicious! Exquisite

A POET (*choking*)

Homph!

(They go upstage, eating.)

CYRANO (*who has been watching, goes toward Ragueneau*)

Lulled by your voice,
didn't you see how they stuffed themselves?

RAGUENEAU (*in a low voice, smiling*)

I saw it...
without seeing it, for fear it might trouble them:
poetry gives me double pleasure all the same
since I indulge the sweet weakness I possess
while letting those eat who'd otherwise eat less.

CYRANO (*clapping him on the shoulder*)

You, you please me! ...

(Ragueneau goes after his friends. Cyrano follows him with his eyes, then, rather sharply)

Ho there! Lise!

(Lise, who is talking tenderly to the musketeer, starts in surprise, and comes down toward Cyrano.)

This cavalier...
assails you?

Act Two

LISE (*offended*)

Oh! My eyes know how to conquer,
with a haughty look, those who attack my virtue.

CYRANO Pooh! Those conquering eyes, I see they're conquered too.

LISE (*choking with anger*)

But -

CYRANO (*incisively*)

I like Ragueneau, Lise, that's the reason
I prevent him being mocked by anyone

LISE But ...

CYRANO (*who has raised his voice so as to be heard by the gallant*)

A word to the wise ...

(*He bows to the musketeer, and goes to the doorway to look out, after checking the time by the clock.*)

LISE (*to the musketeer, who has merely bowed in answer to Cyrano's bow*)

Really, you astonish me!
Reply....mock his nose...

THE MUSKETEER His nose? ... yes, his nose, I see...

(*He goes quickly farther away; Lise follows him.*)

CYRANO (*from the doorway, signing to Ragueneau to draw the poets away*)

Psst! ...

RAGUENEAU (*showing the poets the door on the right*)

We'll be better through there ...

CYRANO (*impatiently*)

Psst! Psst! ...

RAGUENEAU (*drawing them farther*)

To read
our verse...

FIRST POET (*despairingly, with his mouth full*)

But the cakes? ...

SECOND POET Take them with us.

(They all follow Ragueneau in procession, after sweeping all the cakes off the trays.)

Act Two

SCENE FIVE

Cyrano, Roxane, the duenna.

CYRANO If I see

I've the least glimmer of hope I'll show my letter,
the very least!...

(Roxane, masked, appears at the glass pane of the door, followed by the duenna. He opens it quickly.)

Enter! ...

(Walking up to the duenna)

You, two words, Duenna.

THE DUENNA Four.

CYRANO You like sweet things?

THE DUENNA I eat myself sick, it's bad!

CYRANO *(catching up some of the paper bags from the counter)*

Good. Here's two sonnets by Monsieur Benserade ...

THE DUENNA What?

CYRANO ...that I fill for you with these éclairs!

THE DUENNA *(changing her expression)*

Oof!

CYRANO Do you like these little cakes they call cream-puffs?

THE DUENNA (*with dignity*)

Sir, I put up with them, so long as it's fresh cream.

CYRANO I'll drown six for you here in the breast of a poem,
by Saint-Amant! And, into these lines of Chapelain,
...I slip a feather-light morsel, for your hand.
- Ah! You like fresh-made cakes?

THE DUENNA Well, they interest me!

CYRANO (*filling her arms with the bags*)

Please go, then, and eat them all, in the street.

THE DUENNA But ...

CYRANO (*pushing her out*)

And don't come back again until they're eaten!

(He shuts the door, comes down toward Roxane, and, removing his hat, stands at a respectful distance from her.)

SCENE SIX

Cyrano, Roxane.

CYRANO How blessed the moment among all these moments
when, ceasing to forget I humbly breathe
you come to speak to me.....to speak to me?

ROXANE (*who has unmasked*)
Why, first to thank you, since that dullard, that jay,
checked outright by your brave sword, yesterday,
it's him whom a great lord, in love with me...

CYRANO De Guiche?

ROXANE (*casting down her eyes*)
Sought to force on me ... as a husband ...

CYRANO In his reach?
(*Bowing*)
Then I fought, Madame, so much the better, I
fought not for my nose, but for your lovely eyes.

ROXANE Then...I wish... But, to say what I came to say,
you must be that almost-brother once again
in the park - by the lake - where we played together!...

CYRANO Yes...you came to Bergerac every summer!

ROXANE The reeds furnished you with leaves to make your swords...

CYRANO And the wheat the golden plaits you wove for your dolls!

ROXANE That was the age of play...

CYRANO And sour mulberries...

ROXANE A time when you did everything I wished! ...

CYRANO Roxane, in her short frock, was called Madeleine...

ROXANE Was I pretty, then?

CYRANO Ah, you were not plain!

ROXANE Often you'd run to me with your hand bleeding

from some fall! – Then, I'd say, playing at being
mother, in a voice that tried to be severe,

(She takes his hand.)

'What is this scratch, again, that I see here?'

(She starts, surprised.)

Oh! This is very bad! And this?

(Cyrano tries to draw away his hand.)

No, show me!

At your age, still! What gave you this injury?

CYRANO Playing, down by the side of the Porte de Nesle.

ROXANE *(seating herself by the table, and dipping her handkerchief in a glass of water)*

Give it me!

CYRANO *(sitting by her)*

So gentle! So joyfully maternal!

ROXANE And tell me - while I just wipe away the blood,

How many were there against you?

Act Two

CYRANO Oh! Not a hundred.

ROXANE Tell me!

CYRANO No. Let it be. But you, you can share
that thing, just now, you dared not say...

ROXANE (*keeping his hand*)

Now, I dare!
the past emboldens me with its perfume!
Yes, I dare now. Well. I love someone.

CYRANO Ah! ...

ROXANE Who doesn't know, besides.

CYRANO Ah! ...

ROXANE Not yet.

CYRANO Ah! ...

ROXANE But who will know soon, if he doesn't know it.

CYRANO Ah! ...

ROXANE A poor boy who's loved me from afar
until now, timidly, without daring to say...

CYRANO Ah! ...

ROXANE Let me have your hand, see how feverish it is! -
But I, I've seen his love trembling on his lips.

CYRANO Ah! ...

ROXANE (*finishes bandaging his hand with her handkerchief*)

And imagine now, hold still, fate has meant
yes, dear cousin, that he serves in your regiment!

CYRANO Ah! ...

ROXANE (*laughing*)

since he's a cadet in your own company!

CYRANO Ah! ...

ROXANE There's intellect in his face, nobility,
he's proud, young, brave and beautiful ...

CYRANO (*rising suddenly, very pale*)

Beautiful!

ROXANE What's wrong?

CYRANO I, nothing...It's..It's..

(*He shows his hand, smiling.*)

This scratch, that's all!

ROXANE That's it, I love him. But I should tell you, you see,
I've never seen him except at the Comedy...

CYRANO You've never spoken together?

ROXANE Only our eyes.

CYRANO But how do you know, then?

Act Two

ROXANE Under the limes
of the Place Royale, people talk ... chattering words
inform me ...

CYRANO He's a cadet?

ROXANE A cadet in the Guards.

CYRANO His name?

ROXANE Baron Christian de Neuville.

CYRANO Eh? ...
He's not in the Guards.

ROXANE Yes, since this morning, he is:
Captain Carbon de Castel-Jaloux.

CYRANO Quickly gone,
so quickly, we lose our hearts!... But, my little one...

THE DUENNA (*opening the door*)
I've finished the cakes, Monsieur Bergerac!

CYRANO Well! Read the verses written on the bag!
(*The Duenna vanishes.*)
... My poor child, you who only love pretty language,
fine wit, - what if he's illiterate, a savage?

ROXANE No, he has hair like one of D'Urfé's heroes...

CYRANO If he's as tongue-tied as he is well clothed?

ROXANE No, every word he speaks is fine: I just know it!

CYRANO Yes every word's fine if the face is fine above it!
- But if he were a fool!...

ROXANE (*stamping her foot*)
Well! I'd die of it, there!

CYRANO (*after a pause*)
Was it to tell me this that you brought me here?
I don't quite see the point of it, Madame.

ROXANE Ah, yesterday someone filled my soul with alarm,
by telling me that you're all, all of you, Gascons
in your company ...

CYRANO And we have no mercy on
any of those white-lipped favourites who're admitted
among us pure Gascons, not being one born and bred?
That's what they told you?

ROXANE And is it any wonder
I trembled for him!

CYRANO (*between his teeth*):
Not without cause!

ROXANE But there,
when you appeared to us last night, brave, invincible,
punished that rogue, and those brutes, so formidable -
I thought: if he would, he, who frightens everyone...

CYRANO All right! I'll defend your little Baron.

Act Two

ROXANE Oh! Are you really going to defend him for me?
I've long held such tender friendship for you, truly.

CYRANO Yes, yes.

ROXANE You *will* be his friend?

CYRANO I will be so!

ROXANE And he'll never be in a duel?

CYRANO I swear it. No.

ROXANE Oh! I love you, truly. And now, I must fly.

(She puts on her mask and veil, quickly: then, carelessly)

You haven't told me about your fight, last night

It must have been extraordinary, no less!....

- Tell him to write to me.

(She blows him a little kiss with her fingers.)

Oh! I love you!

CYRANO Yes, Yes.

ROXANE A hundred men against you? Let's go, farewell then. -
We're great friends!

CYRANO Yes, yes.

ROXANE Let him write! - A hundred men! -
I can't stop to listen, now. You'll tell me later.
A hundred! How brave!

CYRANO *(bowing to her)*

Oh! Since then, I've done better.

Cyrano de Bergerac

(She goes out. Cyrano stands motionless, his eyes on the ground. A silence. The door opens. Ragueneau looks in.)

SCENE SEVEN

*Cyrano, Ragueneau, poets, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux,
the cadets, a crowd, then De Guiche.*

RAGUENEAU Can we come in?

CYRANO *(without stirring)*

Yes ...

(Ragueneau signs to his friends, and they come in. At the same time, by the door at back, Carbon de Castel-Jaloux enters in Captain's uniform. He makes a gesture of surprise on seeing Cyrano.)

CARBON Here he is!

CYRANO *(raising his head)*

Ah, Captain! ...

CARBON *(delightedly)*

Our hero! We know all! Thirty of the men
are here!...

CYRANO *(shrinking back)*

But ...

CARBON *(trying to draw him away)*

Come on! They all want to see *you*!

CYRANO No!

CARBON They drink over there, at *The Cross of Toulouse*.

CYRANO I...

CARBON (*going to the door and calling across the street in a voice of thunder*)
The hero refuses! He's in a bad mood!

A VOICE (*outside*)
Ah! San-dious!

(*Tumult outside. Noise of boots and swords is heard approaching.*)

CARBON (*rubbing his hands*)
They're running across to you!

CADETS (*entering*)
Mille-dioux! Cap-de-dioux! Mor-dioux! Pocap-de-dioux!

RAGUENEAU (*drawing back startled*)
Gentlemen, you all come from Gascony?

THE CADETS We do!

A CADET (*to Cyrano*)
Bravo!

CYRANO Baron!

ANOTHER (*shaking his hands*)
Vivat!

CYRANO Baron!

Act Two

THIRD CADET Let us embrace!

CYRANO Baron!

SEVERAL GASCONS Embrace him!

CYRANO (*not knowing whom to reply to*)
Baron! ... Baron! ...your grace...

RAGUENEAU You are all Barons, Sirs!

THE CADETS All?

RAGUENEAU These cadets?...

FIRST CADET You could build a tower with only our coronets!

LE BRET (*entering, and running up to Cyrano*)
They're looking for you! A crowd: they're all alight,
led by those men who followed behind you last night...

CYRANO (*alarmed*)
You haven't told them where to find me?

LE BRET (*rubbing his hands*)
Yes!

A CITIZEN (*entering, followed by a group of men*)
Sir, all the Marais's on its way, at a guess!

(*Outside the street has filled with people. Sedan chairs and carriages have drawn up.*)

LE BRET (*in a low voice, smiling, to Cyrano*)

And Roxane?

CYRANO (*quickly*)

Be quiet!

THE CROWD (*calling outside*)

Cyrano! ...

(A crowd rush into the shop, pushing one another. Acclamations.)

RAGUENEAU (*standing on a table*)

My shop

is invaded! Magnificent! They'll break the lot!

PEOPLE (*crowding round Cyrano*)

My friend... my friend...

CYRANO Yesterday, it would appear

I'd not so many!

LE BRET (*delighted*)

Success!

A YOUNG MARQUIS (*hurrying up with his hands held out*)

If you knew, my dear....

CYRANO Dear?...My dear?... When were we intimate together?

ANOTHER I'd like to present you to some ladies, Sir,
there, in my carriage, who ...

CYRANO (*coldly*)

And you first, my friend,
who'll present you to me?

LE BRET (*astonished*)

What's wrong?

CYRANO Be silent!

A MAN OF LETTERS (*with a notebook*)

May I have a few details? ...

CYRANO No.

LE BRET (*nudging his elbow*)

That's Théophraste
Renaudot! ... Creator of the 'Gazette'.

CYRANO Crass!

LE BRET A *newspaper* where one prints what each day brings!...

They say his idea's quite the coming thing!

A POET (*advancing*)

Sir ...

CYRANO What, another!

THE POET I wish to make a pent-acrostic
on your name...

SOMEONE (*also advancing*)

Sir ...

CYRANO Enough! Enough!

(A movement in the crowd. De Guiche appears, escorted by officers, Cuigy, Brissaille, the officers who went with Cyrano the night before. Cuigy comes rapidly up to Cyrano.)

CUIGY *(to Cyrano)*

Monsieur de Guiche!

(A murmur - everyone makes way.)

He comes on behalf of Marshal De Gassion!

DE GUICHE *(bowing to Cyrano)*

... Who would like to express his admiration,
for your new exploit that's resounding so freely.

THE CROWD Bravo!

CYRANO *(bowing)*

The Marshal's a judge of bravery.

DE GUICHE He'd have considered the thing a pack of lies,
if these gentlemen hadn't seen it.

CUIGY With our own eyes!

LE BRET *(aside to Cyrano, who has an absent air)*

But...

CYRANO Hush!

LE BRET You seem to suffer?

Act Two

CYRANO (*starting*)

Before the world?...

(*He draws himself up, twirls his moustache, and throws back his shoulders.*)

I? Suffer?...You shall see!

DE GUICHE (*to whom Cuigy has spoken in a low voice*)

Your career is filled

by great deeds, now. - You serve with those furious

Gascons, is that right?

CYRANO Yes, with the Cadets.

A CADET (*in a terrible voice*)

With us!

DE GUICHE (*looking at the cadets, ranged behind Cyrano*)

Aha!...These gentlemen, all these haughty men,

Are they the famous? ...

CARBON Cyrano!

CYRANO Yes, Captain!

CARBON Since all my company is, I think, complete,
present them to the count, if you please.

CYRANO (*making two steps toward De Guiche, and with a gesture presenting the cadets*)

They're the Cadets of Gascony,

Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!

Who fight and lie, most shamelessly,

They're the Cadets of Gascony!

They brag of weapons and heraldry,

All nobler than your rascally crew
They're the Cadets of Gascony,
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux:

Eagle-eyed, shanks from a heronry,
Cat's moustaches, and wolves' teeth too!
Slashing the rogues who make too free,
Eagle-eyed, shanks from a heronry,
They pass, – with their ancient hats, you see,
Whose feathers conceal a hole or two! -
Eagle-eyed, shanks from a heronry,
Cat's moustaches, and wolves' teeth too!

'Slit-Your-Throat', 'Pierce-Your-Belly'
They're the gentlest names they choose:
With glory, their souls are a little tipsy!
'Slit-Your-Throat', 'Pierce-Your-Belly',
In every place you'll find them ready
to offer the chance for a *rendez-vous*...
'Slit-Your-Throat', 'Pierce-Your-Belly'
They're the gentlest names they choose!

Here come the Cadets of Gascony,
They'll make jealous cuckolds of you!
O women, adorable to see,
Here come the Cadets of Gascony
Old husbands welcome sullenly:
Blow, the trumpets! Sing, 'cuckoo'!
Here come the Cadets of Gascony,
They'll make jealous cuckolds of you!

DE GUICHE (*seated nonchalantly in an armchair quickly brought by Ragueneau*)

A poet's the fashion, now, to have about one.
- Would you like to be mine?

CYRANO No, Sir, no one's!

Act Two

DE GUICHE Your witty words pleased my uncle Richelieu,
yesterday. I'd like to advance you.

LE BRET (*overjoyed*)
Mon Dieu!

DE GUICHE You've rhymed five acts at least, I'd imagine?

LE BRET (*in Cyrano's ear*)
You'll stage your play, dear friend, your '*Agrippine*'!

DE GUICHE Take them to him.

CYRANO (*beginning to be tempted and attracted*)
In truth...

DE GUICHE He's most expert:
he'll alter only a line or two of your verse...

CYRANO (*whose face stiffens at once*)
Impossible! Sir: my blood is stirred
at the thought of anyone changing a single word .

DE GUICHE But when a verse is pleasing to him, you see,
He pays for it most generously.

CYRANO He pays less generously
than I: when I've made a verse I love to own,
I pay myself, by saying it through alone!

DE GUICHE You're proud.

CYRANO Really? You've noticed that of me?

A CADET (*entering, with a string of old battered plumed beaver hats, full of holes, slung on his sword*)

See, Cyrano, - this morning, along the quay,
the strange feathered game we managed to catch!
The turn-tails' plumage...

CARBON A spoil of princely hats!

ALL (*laughing*)

Ha! Ha! Ha!

CUIGY Whoever laid that ambush, why,
he must be in a rage today!

BRISSAILLE Who was it?

DE GUICHE I.

(*The laughter stops.*)

I ordered them to punish - work one doesn't care
to do oneself, - to punish.... a drunken rhymester.

(*Constrained silence.*)

THE CADET (*in a low voice, to Cyrano, showing him the beavers*)

What should one do with them? They're greasy!...a stew?

CYRANO (*taking the sword and, with a salute, dropping the hats at De Guiche's feet*)

Sir, will you return these to your friends? Please do.

DE GUICHE (*rising, sharply*)

My chair and porters, quickly: I'm leaving here!

(*To Cyrano passionately*)

As to you, Monsieur! ...

Act Two

VOICE (*in the street*)

The porters for Monseigneur
the Comte De Guiche!

DE GUICHE (*who has controlled himself, smiling*)

...Have you read '*Don Quixote*'?

CYRANO Yes!

And take off my hat to that knight of mad excess.

DE GUICHE So think again...

A PORTER (*appearing at back*)

The chair for His Excellency.

DE GUICHE About the chapter on windmills!

CYRANO (*bowing*)

Chapter Thirteen.

DE GUICHE For when you tilt at windmills you often find...

CYRANO You tilt at men who change with every wind?

DE GUICHE That a swirl of the sails on their huge arms
will hurl you in the mire!...

CYRANO Or among the stars!

(De Guiche goes out, and climbs into his chair. The other lords go away whispering together. Le Bret goes to the door with them. The crowd disperses.)

SCENE EIGHT

Cyrano, Le Bret, the cadets, who are eating and drinking at the tables to right and left.

CYRANO *(bowing mockingly to those who go out without daring to salute him)*
Gentlemen ... Gentlemen ...

LE BRET *(coming downstage, despairingly, arms to the heavens)*
Ah! What a fine mess!

CYRANO Oh! You! You're going to moan!

LE BRET Even you must confess,
that to spoil every opportunity that comes your way
is exaggeration!

CYRANO Yes! - I exaggerate!

LE BRET *(triumphantly)*
Ah!

CYRANO But I think it's right as a matter of principle,
to exaggerate that way, and as an example.

LE BRET If you'd set aside your musketeer's pride then you'd,
find fame and glory...

CYRANO What would you have me do?
Find a powerful protector: and choose a patron,
like the dark ivy that creeps round a tree-trunk,
and gains its support by licking at its length,
to climb by a ruse instead of rise by strength?

Act Two

No, thank you! Dedicate, as others do
my poetry to bankers? Become a buffoon
in the base hope of seeing a less than sinister
smile quiver on the lips of some Minister?
No, thank you! Dine each day on a toad?
Own a belly worn out with crawling? Show
a skin that's dirtied quicker than my knees,
and with a supple spine do tricks to please?
No, thank you! Pat the goat's neck all over,
with one hand, water the lettuce with the other,
a dealer in senna for rhubarb lovers, I suppose
always wafting a censer under someone's nose?
No, thank you! Urge myself on from lap to lap:
be a little maestro pacing round in a trap,
or navigate with oars made from madrigals,
and old ladies' sighs the breezes in my sails?
No, thank you! At some editor's in the City
edit *his* verse for pay? No, thank you! Try
to get myself named the high Pope of councils
held in the taverns by imbecilic scoundrels?
No, thank you! Work to be a presence known
for one sonnet, instead of writing many? No,
thank you! Not reveal a talent that amazes?
Not be terrorized by the morning papers?
Not say endlessly: 'Oh, could I but see
myself in small print in the *'Mercury'*'?
No thank you! Calculate, show fear, grow pallid,
prefer to make a visit than a ballad?
Get myself presented, write petitions to the king?
No, thank you! No, thank *you*! No, *thank* you! But...to sing,
to dream, to smile, to walk, to be alone, be free,
with a voice that stirs, and an eye that still can see!
To cock your hat on one side, when you please
at a *yes*, a *no*, to fight, or – make poetry!
To work without a thought of fame or fortune,
on that journey, that you dream of, to the moon!
Never to write a line that's not your own,

and, humble too, say to oneself: My son,
be satisfied with flowers, fruit, even leaves,
if they're from your own garden, your own trees!
And then should chance a little glory bring,
don't feel you need to render Caesar a thing,
but keep the merit to yourself, entirely
in short, don't deign to be the parasitic ivy,
even though you're not the oak tree or the elm,
rise not so high, maybe, but be there all alone!

LE BRET All alone, fine! But not *against* all! What reason
have you for indulging this strange obsession
making yourself enemies on every corner?

CYRANO Because I see *you* make friends of one another,
and laugh at all those friends, of whom you've crowds,
with smiles borrowed from the rump-ends of fowls!
I like to make my greetings rare, you see,
to say, with pleasure: one more enemy!

LE BRET What madness!

CYRANO Well! It's my vice, for a certainty.
To displease is my pleasure. I like men to hate me!
If you knew, dear friend, how much better we advance
under the pressure of that hostile glance!
How the gall of envy, and the froth of fear
makes pretty spots all down their doublets, here!
You - that sluggish friendship that surrounds you
is like those great Italian collars, embroidered too
and floating, in which the neck's bared, effeminate:
one's in an easier...but in a far meaner state,
the forehead has no bearing, shows no nobility,
left to bend in all directions. But Hate teaches me
each day, stiffly fluted, the ruff instead
whose starched rim forces me to raise my head:

Act Two

and each new enemy adds another fold,
one more discomfort, one more shining spoke:
since Hatred's like the Spanish ruff, and though
it forms an iron yoke, it is a halo!

LE BRET *(after a silence, taking his arm)*

Speak loudly of your pride and bitterness, but softly,
say that she does not love you, tell me simply!

CYRANO *(vehemently)*

Hush!

(Christian has just entered, and mingled with the cadets, who do not speak to him; he has seated himself at a table, where Lise serves him.)

SCENE NINE

Cyrano, Le Bret, the cadets, Christian de Neuville.

A CADET (*seated at a table, glass in hand*)

Hey! Cyrano!

(*Cyrano turns round.*)

The story!

CYRANO All in good time!

(*He goes upstage arm in arm with Le Bret. They talk in low voices.*)

THE CADET (*rising and coming downstage*)

The tale of a fight! That would be really fine
to teach...

(*He stops before the table where Christian is seated.*)

...this timid apprentice!

CHRISTIAN (*raising his head*)

Apprentice?

ANOTHER CADET Yes you Hyperborean virus!

CHRISTIAN !

Virus?

FIRST CADET (*mockingly*)

Monsieur de Neuville: understand something:
there's a song, here, one no more dares to sing,
than to say 'rope' in the household of the hanged!

CHRISTIAN And that is?

Act Two

ANOTHER CADET *(in a terrible voice)*

Look, at me!

(He puts his finger three times, mysteriously, on his nose.)

Do you understand?

CHRISTIAN Ah! It's...

ANOTHER Sssh!...Never dare to breathe that word,

(He points to Cyrano, who is talking with Le Bret.)

Or you'll have to deal with him, over there!

ANOTHER *(who, while is turned towards the first cadet, has meanwhile approached noiselessly to sit on the table, behind him)*

Two snivellers were despatched, in a few blows,
because he deplored them talking through their nose!

ANOTHER *(in a hollow voice, darting on all-fours from under the table, where he had crept)*

One cannot, without perishing at a tender age,
make the least allusion to that dread cartilage!

ANOTHER *(clapping him on the shoulder)*

A word's enough? A word? Not one gesture's allowed!
And to lift a handkerchief's to lift your shroud!

(Silence. All, with crossed arms, look at Christian. He rises and goes over to Carbon de Castel-Jaloux, who is talking to an officer, and feigns to see nothing.)

CHRISTIAN Captain!

CARBON *(turning and looking at him from head to foot)*

Sir!

CHRISTIAN What does one do when one finds
Southerners too boastful? ...

CARBON One shows, to my mind,
that one may be a Northerner, yet brave!

(He turns his back on him.)

CHRISTIAN *Merci.*

FIRST CADET *(to Cyrano)*
And now your story!

ALL His story!

CYRANO *(coming toward them)*

My story?...

(All bring their stools up, and group round him, listening eagerly. Christian is astride a chair.)

Well! Off, all alone, to meet them I went, in haste.
The moon in the sky shone like a great watch-face,
when, suddenly, some delicate watchmaker
drew a pale handkerchief of cloudlets over
that watch's round silver case. He gave birth
to the darkest night ever seen on earth,
and the quays were dark, not a light glows,
Mordious! One can see no further ...

CHRISTIAN Than one's nose!

(Silence. All slowly rise, looking in terror at Cyrano, who has stopped dumbfounded. Pause.)

CYRANO Who is that man there?

Act Two

A CADET (*whispering*)

It's a man: it's the same
one who arrived to-day.

CYRANO (*making a step toward Christian*)

To-day?

CARBON (*in a low voice*)

Yes ... his name
is the Baron de Neuvil ...

CYRANO (*checking himself*)

Ah! That's fine...
(*He turns pale, flushes, makes as if to fall on Christian.*)

I ...
(*He controls himself, and in a low voice says*)

That's perfectly fine...

(*He continues*)

I was saying
(*With a burst of rage*)

Mordious! ...

(*Then continues calmly.*)

...one couldn't read a line.

(*Astonishment. The cadets reseal themselves, staring at him.*)

On I went, thinking that for the slightest of quarrels
I was going to provoke some great man, some noble,
who'd surely have me..

CHRISTIAN By the nose!...

(*Every one starts up. Christian balances on his chair.*)

CYRANO (*in a choked voice*)

In his teeth!

Who'd have me in his teeth...and I, imprudently,
Was going to poke...

CHRISTIAN My nose...

CYRANO My finger...between bark
and wood, since he might be strong enough to crack
me a fine blow...

CHRISTIAN On the nose ...

CYRANO (*wiping his forehead*)
...On the fingers.
- I cried: Come, Gascon, do what you must, don't linger !
On, Cyrano! And so saying, I went on, hopeful,
when, from the shadow, someone gave me..

CHRISTIAN A nose-full.

CYRANO I parry it, and suddenly find myself...

CHRISTIAN Nose to nose ...

CYRANO (*bounding towards him*)
Ventre-Saint-Gris!
(*All the Gascons leap up to see, but when he is close to Christian he controls himself
and continues.*)
...With a hundred drunken foes,
Who stank...

CHRISTIAN To the nose...

CYRANO (*white, but smiling*)
Of onions and brandy!
I leap out, head well down ...

Act Two

CHRISTIAN Nose to the wind!

CYRANO And see!

I charge! Disembowel two: impale another thief!

One aims towards me: Paf! And I parry...

CHRISTIAN (*tweaking his own nose significantly, note that Pif means nose, conk, schnozzle in French as well as the sound of a whack!*)

Pif!

CYRANO (*bursting out*)

Thunder! Out! All of you!

(*The cadets rush to the doors.*)

FIRST CADET The tiger's awake!

CYRANO All! And leave me alone with him!

SECOND CADET God's sake!

We'll find him turned into hash!

RAGUENEAU Into hash?

ANOTHER CADET In one of your pies!

RAGUENEAU I've turned to ash:

all white I feel, and limp like a serviette!

CARBON Let's go.

ANOTHER He'll not leave the tiniest bit!

ANOTHER I'm dying of fright imagining what might be!

ANOTHER (*shutting door right*)

Something too horrible!

(All have gone out by different doors, some by the staircase. Cyrano and Christian are face to face, looking at each other for a moment.)

SCENE TEN

Cyrano, Christian.

CYRANO Come, embrace me!

CHRISTIAN Sir ...

CYRANO You're brave.

CHRISTIAN Oh! but...

CYRANO Very brave. If you'd rather.

CHRISTIAN You're telling me?...

CYRANO Embrace me! I'm her brother.

CHRISTIAN Whose?

CYRANO Why hers!

CHRISTIAN What?

CYRANO Why, Roxane!

CHRISTIAN (*rushing up to him*)

O heavens!

You, her brother...?

CYRANO Much the same: fraternal cousin.

CHRISTIAN She's told you...?

CYRANO All!

CHRISTIAN Does she love me?

CYRANO Perchance!

CHRISTIAN (*taking his hands*)

Sir, how happy I am to make your acquaintance!

CYRANO That's what we call a sudden change of heart!

CHRISTIAN Pardon me...

CYRANO (*looking at him, with his hand on his shoulder*)

It's true, he's a handsome work of art!

CHRISTIAN Sir! If you only knew my admiration!

CYRANO But all those noses you own? ...

CHRISTIAN Oh! I withdraw them!

CYRANO Roxane expects a letter...

CHRISTIAN Alas!

CYRANO You meant?

Act Two

CHRISTIAN I'd be lost if I forgot to stay silent!

CYRANO Why so?

CHRISTIAN Ah! I'm a fool who should die of shame!

CYRANO No, you're no fool, since you give yourself that name.
Besides, you didn't attack me like a fool.

CHRISTIAN Bah! One finds the words when war's the rule!
Yes, I've a kind of simple soldierly wit,
but with a woman I'm silent: I confess it.
Oh! Their eyes, when I pass, show kindness to me...

CYRANO Won't their hearts do, more so, if you stop to see?

CHRISTIAN No! For I'm one of those men - I know it...and fear!-
Who don't know how to speak of love...

CYRANO Well!...It's clear,
if they'd taken greater care when I was made,
I'd have been one who knew how to persuade!

CHRISTIAN Oh, to be able to express such things with grace!

CYRANO To be a musketeer, with a handsome face!

CHRISTIAN Roxane's intelligent and I know I'll surely
disappoint Roxane!

CYRANO (*looking at him*)
And yet, if only
I'd a true interpreter to express my soul!

CHRISTIAN (*with despair*)

I need eloquence!

CYRANO (*abruptly*)

I'll lend you all I know:
lend me your charms that conquer every glance:
we'll make, from us both, *one* hero of romance!

CHRISTIAN How?

CYRANO Do you think you've the wit to repeat each day
the things I'll teach you?

CHRISTIAN Then, you mean to say...

CYRANO Roxane will experience no disillusion!

Say, shall we win her with a joint seduction?
Do you wish the spirit I'll fill you with to race
from my leather doublet to your embroidered lace!...

CHRISTIAN But, Cyrano!...

CYRANO Will you, Christian?

CHRISTIAN You make me fear!

CYRANO Since, all alone, you're scared you'll chill her here,
in the heart, shall we create – surely you'll embrace it! -
a collaboration of your lips and my phrases?..

CHRISTIAN Your eyes flash!...

CYRANO Will you, then?...

Act Two

CHRISTIAN What! Will that give you
so much pleasure?

CYRANO (*wildly*)

That...

(*Then calmly, business-like*)

Would amuse me so!

It's an experience to tempt a poet.

Will you complete me, to be yourself complete?

You'll advance – I'll, by your side, a shadow be:

I'll be your wit, and you will be my beauty!

CHRISTIAN But the letter, we must quickly send her!
I could never ...

CYRANO (*taking out the letter he has written*)

See! Here it is, your letter!

CHRISTIAN What?

CYRANO Save the address, it wants for nothing.

CHRISTIAN I ...

CYRANO You can send that. Be calm. It's the very thing.

CHRISTIAN You had...?

CYRANO Oh! We've pockets full, we poets, all the time
of letters to Chloris's....that in our heads we rhyme,
for we are the men who only have, for lovers,
dreams blown into names like soap-bubbles!..
Take it, and you'll change false words to true:
I loosed, at random, vows, complaints: and you,

you'll see these wandering birds come home to roost.
You'll see in this letter I was - take it, you must -
more eloquent, as well, the less I was sincere!
Take it, and be done!

CHRISTIAN Aren't there places where
words need to be changed? Written, not for love,
will it fit Roxane?

CYRANO It will fit her like a glove!

CHRISTIAN But ...

CYRANO The credulity of true love's well known,
and Roxane will think it written for her alone!

CHRISTIAN Ah! My friend!

(He throws himself into Cyrano's arms. They remain clasped.)

SCENE ELEVEN

Cyrano, Christian, the Gascons, the musketeer, Lise.

A CADET (*half opening the door*)

Nothing!... The silence of the dead!

I daren't look ...

(*He puts his head in.*)

What? ...

ALL THE CADETS (*entering, and seeing Cyrano and Christian embracing*)

Oh! ...

A CADET Look at this, instead!

(*Consternation.*)

THE MUSKETEER (*mockingly*)

How's this! ...

CARBON Our demon's surely turned apostle?

Strike him on one – he turns the other nostril?

MUSKETEER So we can talk about his nose, from now on! ...

(*Calling to Lise, boastfully*)

- Hey, Lise, see here!

(*Sniffing ostentatiously*)

Oh...Oh!...I'm overcome!

What an odour!

(*Going up to Cyrano, whose nose he gazes at impertinently*)

But you, Monsieur, must have nosed it!

What *is* the smell round here?

CYRANO (*cuffing his head*)

Cabbage head with garlic!

(General delight. The cadets have found the old Cyrano again! They turn somersaults.)

Curtain.

ACT THREE

Roxane's Kiss



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

From the bench and the stones jutting out of the wall it is easy to climb to the balcony.

Facing, an old house in the same style of brick and stone. The knocker of this door is bandaged with linen like a sore thumb.

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

The window onto Roxane's balcony is wide open.

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



‘Man with Candle under Balcony’
Jan Punt, 1740, *The Rijksmuseum*

SCENE ONE

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

RAGUENEAUAnd then, she takes herself off with a musketeer!

Alone, ruined, I hang myself. I depart the earth. Here
comes Monsieur de Bergerac! He draws me earthward,
then comes an offer from his cousin, to be her steward.

THE DUENNA But what was the reason for all your debts?

RAGUENEAU Lise loved soldiers, and I loved the poets!

Mars ate the cakes remaining from Apollo:
- So it didn't take too long, if you follow!

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

Roxane, you're ready?...They're waiting!

ROXANE'S VOICE *(from the window)*

Let me just get
a cloak!

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

It's there they're waiting for us, opposite,
at Clomire's. In her little room, she holds her salon:
they're reading a discourse on the Tender Passion.

RAGUENEAU The Tender Passion?

THE DUENNA (*in a mincing voice*)

Yes, indeed!

(*Calling up to the window*)

Roxane, come down:

we'll miss the discourse on the Tender Passion!

ROXANE'S VOICE I'm coming!

(*A sound of stringed instruments approaching.*)

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

La, la, la, la!

THE DUENNA (*surprised*)

Someone's playing for you?

CYRANO (*followed by two pages with large lutes*)

They're demi-semi-quavers, demi-semi-fool!

FIRST PAGE (*ironically*)

Can you tell, Sir, if they *are* demisemiquavers?

CYRANO I'm a musician too, like all the others,
we disciples of Gassendi!

THE PAGE (*playing and singing*)

La, la!

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

I'll continue!

La, la, la, la!

ROXANE (*appearing on the balcony*)

It's you?

Act Three

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

'Tis I, who come to salute
your lilies, and present my greetings to your ro...ses!

ROXANE I'll come down!

(*She leaves the balcony.*)

THE DUENNA (*pointing to the pages*)

How about these two virtuosos?

CYRANO It's a wager I had with D'Assoucy, and I won.

We disputed a point in grammar. Oui! – Non!
Suddenly he shows me these two gangly jaws,
used to scratching lute-strings with their claws,
whom he always has for escorts: then he said:
'You'll pay me a whole day's music!' Lost instead!
Till Phoebus starts on his daily round once more
I've got these two lute players in my paw,
harmonious accompaniment to all I'm doing!...
Charming at first, but it's already palling.

(*To the musicians.*)

Ho there! Go, instead of me, and play a pavane!
for Montfleury!...

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

I've come here to ask Roxane
as every evening...

(*To the pages, who are going out*)

Play a long time - be tuneless!

(*To the duenna*)

...if the friend of her soul is still quite faultless!

ROXANE (*coming out of the house*)

How handsome he is, how witty, how I love him!

CYRANO (*smiling*)

Christian's very witty?

ROXANE My dear, more than you even!

CYRANO I'll agree!

ROXANE To my mind, no finer poets sing
those pretty nothings that are everything.
At times he's distracted: his Muse is sleeping;
then, suddenly, he says something ravishing!

CYRANO (*incredulously*)

No?

ROXANE That's too much! You men are always cruel:
He can't have wit, because he's beautiful!

CYRANO He knows how to speak his heart in expert fashion?

ROXANE He doesn't speak, Sir, he gives a dissertation!

CYRANO He writes?

ROXANE Better still! Listen a moment or two:

(*Reciting*)

'The more you steal my heart, the more I have!'

(*Triumphantly to Cyrano*)

Well?

CYRANO Pooh!

Act Three

ROXANE And then: *'Since I need another one, to weep,
if you'll have my heart, give me yours to keep!'*

CYRANO One moment he has too much, then not enough: I see!
How much heart does he want?...

ROXANE You're annoying me!
It's jealousy...

CYRANO (*starting*)
What?

ROXANE ...of his poetry, ah yes!
- And this, isn't this the last thing in tenderness?
*'Hear my heart utter a single cry towards you,
and if kisses in these words might travel too,
Madame, you'd read my letter with your lips!...'*

CYRANO (*smiling approvingly in spite of himself*)
Ha! Those last lines are...Hm! Hm! ...
(*Correcting himself - contemptuously*)
But, too Romantic!

ROXANE And this ...

CYRANO (*enchanted*)
Then you have his letters off by heart?

ROXANE All of them!

CYRANO What can I say: you flatter his art!

ROXANE He's a master!

CYRANO (*modestly*)

Oh? ...

ROXANE (*forcefully*)

A master!...

CYRANO Well!.. A master!

THE DUENNA (*coming downstage quickly*)

Monsieur de Guiche!

(*To Cyrano, pushing him toward the house*)

In with you! It might be better
if he doesn't find you here: that would maybe set
him on the track..

ROXANE (*to Cyrano*)

Yes, of my own dear secret!
He loves me, he's powerful, he mustn't know!
He could well deal my love a true deathblow!

CYRANO (*entering the house*)

Good!...

(*De Guiche appears.*)

Act Three

SCENE TWO

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

ROXANE (*curtsying to De Guiche*)

I was going out.

DE GUICHE I came to say goodbye.

ROXANE You're leaving?

DE GUICHE For the war.

ROXANE Ah!

DE GUICHE To-night.

ROXANE Ah!

DE GUICHE I
have my orders. We besiege Arras.

ROXANE Ah – you besiege?...

DE GUICHE Yes. My departure seems to leave you cold indeed.

ROXANE Oh!...

DE GUICHE I'm desolate. Shall I see you again?... When?
- You know I'm named commander of all those men? ...

ROXANE (*indifferently*)

Bravo!

DE GUICHE Of the Guards regiment.

ROXANE (*startled*)

Ah! the Guards?

DE GUICHE In which your cousin serves, a man of boastful words.

I'll revenge myself on him, there

ROXANE (*choking*)

You meant?

The Guards go there?

DE GUICHE (*laughing*)

Well, that's my regiment!

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

Christian!

DE GUICHE What's wrong?

ROXANE (*deeply moved*)

This...departure...makes me despair!

When one's attached to someone – knowing they're at war!

DE GUICHE (*surprised and delighted*)

For the first time, you speak to me words so sweet,
on the day I go away!

ROXANE (*collected, and fanning herself*)

So – you would like to be
revenged on my cousin?

Act Three

DE GUICHE You're on his side?

ROXANE Not at all!

DE GUICHE Do you see him?

ROXANE Seldom.

DE GUICHE You'd find him if he called
with one of the cadets, ...
(searching for the name)
that New...villen...viler...

ROXANE Tall?

DE GUICHE Fair!

ROXANE Red!

DE GUICHE Handsome!

ROXANE Pooh!

DE GUICHE But dull.

ROXANE He has that air!
(Changing her tone)
Your revenge on Cyrano? That would be, I'd guess,
to expose him to what he loves, gunfire?...Hopeless!
I know the way, myself, to hurt him more!

DE GUICHE What then?

ROXANE Why, if when the regiment leaves, he must remain
here with his beloved Cadets, for the whole war:
sits here with folded arms!...That's the true manner
of means to inspire a man of his kind to anger.
You want to punish him? Deprive him of danger.

DE GUICHE (*coming nearer*)

Woman! O, Woman! Who else but a woman
would invent that trick!

ROXANE He'll consume

his soul away, his friends their fists, without a battle:
And you'll be avenged!

DE GUICHE You love me, then, a little?

(*She smiles.*)

You adopt my cause: I'd like to feel that your action
is a proof of love, Roxane!...

ROXANE It is one.

DE GUICHE (*showing her some sealed papers*)

I've the orders here with me: they'll all be sent,
at the same hour, to each of the companies - except -

(*He detaches one.*)

This! The one for the Cadets.

(*He puts it in his pocket.*)

This I'm keeping.

(*Laughing*)

Ha! ha! ha! Cyrano! His love of fighting! ...

So you play tricks on people then, ... you too!

ROXANE Sometimes!

Act Three

DE GUICHE (*coming close to her*)

You madden me! This evening – listen – yes I'm
due to leave. But to depart while I feel that you....
Listen! There's a place, not far from here, in the Rue
d'Orléans, a convent founded by the Capuchins,
by Father Athanasius. No layman's allowed in
- but - I can settle that with the good Fathers!..
They can hide me in their sleeves. They're
role's to serve Richelieu's private chapel too:
in respecting the uncle, they fear the nephew -
They'll think I've gone. I'll come to you, in a mask.
Let me delay a day, dear caprice, is all I ask!

ROXANE But, if it becomes known, your glory ...

DE GUICHE Bah!

ROXANE But
the siege, Arras ...

DE GUICHE So what! Permit me!

ROXANE No!

DE GUICHE Permit!

ROXANE (*tenderly*)
I must protect you!

DE GUICHE Ah!

ROXANE Go now!

(Aside)

Christian stays.

(Aloud)

I would have you be a hero - Antoine!

DE GUICHE O celestial phrase!

You love him, this man? ...

ROXANE ... For whom I trembled, then.

DE GUICHE *(in an ecstasy)*

I go, now!

(He kisses her hand.)

Are you satisfied?

ROXANE Yes, my friend!

(He goes out.)

THE DUENNA *(making a mocking curtsy behind his back)*

Yes, my friend!

ROXANE *(to the duenna)*

Silence about what I've been doing.

Cyrano'd be annoyed with me for stealing his fighting!

(She calls toward the house.)

Cousin!

SCENE THREE

Roxane, The duenna, Cyrano.

ROXANE We're off to Clomire's.

(She points to the door opposite.)

Alcandre and Lysimon
are to speak!

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

Yes! But one's little finger tells one...
we shall miss them.

CYRANO *(to Roxane)*

Ah, don't miss the monkeys!

(They have come to Clomire's door.)

THE DUENNA Oh, look! They've muffled the knocker with draperies!

(Speaking to the knocker)

They've gagged you, then, so that your tongue of metal
won't trouble their fine discourse – a little brutal!

(She lifts it carefully and knocks with precaution.)

ROXANE *(seeing that the door will open)*

Let's go in!

(On the threshold, to Cyrano)

If Christian comes, as he will I assume,
make him wait for me!

CYRANO (*quickly, as she is going in*)

Ah!

(*She turns.*)

What, according to your custom,
do you mean to question him on, to-night?

ROXANE On...

CYRANO (*eagerly*)

On?

ROXANE But you'll be silent?

CYRANO Like a wall, I'll be dumb.

ROXANE On nothing!...I'll tell him: Off! Ride with no bridle!
Improvise. Speak of love. Be remarkable!

CYRANO (*smiling*)

Good!

ROXANE Ssh!...

CYRANO Ssh!...

ROXANE Not a word!

(*She enters and shuts the door.*)

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

A thousand thanks!

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

Act Three

ROXANE He'll be prepared!

CYRANO The devil, no!..

BOTH TOGETHER Ssh!...

(The door shuts.)

CYRANO *(calling)*

Christian!

SCENE FOUR

Cyrano, Christian.

CYRANO I know all that's needed. Ready your memory.
Here's the chance to cover yourself with glory.
No time to lose. Don't let your surliness show.
Quick, to your place, I'm going to train you...

CHRISTIAN No!

CYRANO What?

CHRISTIAN No! I'll wait for Roxane here.

CYRANO What madness
has struck you? Come and learn quickly..

CHRISTIAN No, I confess!
I'm tired of borrowing my letters, my lines
and playing a role, and trembling all the time!...
It was fine at the start! But I feel she loves me!
Thank you. I'm not afraid! I'll speak openly.

CYRANO And how!

CHRISTIAN And who told you I can't speak?
I'm not such a fool as all that! You'll see!
Dear friend, I've profited by your lessons, so
I know how to speak myself! And, by God, I know
perfectly well how to hold her in my embrace!

Act Three

(Seeing Roxane come out from Clomire's house)

- It's her! Cyrano, no, no, don't leave this place!

CYRANO *(bowing)*

Speak for yourself, Monsieur.

(He disappears behind the garden wall.)

SCENE FIVE

Christian, Roxane, the duenna.

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

Barthénoïde! - Alcandre! -
Grémione!...

THE DUENNA (*bitterly disappointed*)

We missed their discourse on the Tender!

(Goes into Roxane's house.)

ROXANE (*still bowing*)

Urimédonte...Farewell!

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

It's you!...

(She goes to him.)

Evening falls.

Look. They're far off. The air's sweet. No one at all
goes by. Let's sit. Speak on. I listen.

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

I love you!

ROXANE (*shutting her eyes*)

Yes, speak of love.

CHRISTIAN I love you!

Act Three

ROXANE That's the theme, true.
Wider, deeper.

CHRISTIAN I...

ROXANE Deeper!

CHRISTIAN I love you so!

ROXANE Doubtless. And then?...

CHRISTIAN And then...I'd be happy, oh,
if you loved me! - Tell me, Roxane, that you love me!

ROXANE (*with a little grimace*)
You offer me water when I hoped for cream!
Speak a little of how you love me?

CHRISTIAN Oh a lot!

ROXANE Oh!...Un-wind your sentiments!

CHRISTIAN (*coming nearer and devouring her with his eyes*)
Your throat!
I wish to touch!...

ROXANE Christian!

CHRISTIAN I love you!

ROXANE (*half-rising*)
Once more!

CHRISTIAN (*eagerly, detaining her*)

No, I love you not!

ROXANE (*reseating herself*)

That's better!

CHRISTIAN You, I adore!

ROXANE (*rising, and going further off*)

Oh!

CHRISTIAN Yes...I'm grown stupid!

ROXANE (*dryly*)

And that displeases me
as it would displease me if you'd become ugly.

CHRISTIAN But...

ROXANE Go and recall your eloquence that's flown!

CHRISTIAN I...

ROXANE You love me, I know. Farewell.

(*She goes toward her house.*)

CHRISTIAN Oh, don't go!

I wish to say...

ROXANE (*opening the door*)

That you adore me...yes, I know.
No! No! Away with you!

Act Three

CHRISTIAN But I...

(She shuts the door in his face.)

CYRANO *(who has re-entered unseen)*

A splendid show!

SCENE SIX

Christian, Cyrano, two pages.

CHRISTIAN Help me!

CYRANO No, Sir!

CHRISTIAN But I'll die if I can't return
to her good graces, instantly...

CYRANO And how will you learn
to do that *instantly*?

CHRISTIAN (*seizing his arm*)
Oh, up there, see!

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

CYRANO (*moved*)
Her window!

CHRISTIAN I'm going to die!

CYRANO Speak quietly!

CHRISTIAN (*in a whisper*)
To die!

CYRANO The night's dark ...

Act Three

CHRISTIAN So?

CYRANO It's recoverable.

You don't deserve it.... Stand there, you heap of trouble!
There, in front of the balcony! I'll stand below
And whisper the words to you ...

CHRISTIAN But ...

CYRANO Silence, now!

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

Ho!

CYRANO Ssh!

(*He signs to them to speak softly.*)

FIRST PAGE (*in a low voice*)

We've played the serenade you said,
To Montfleury!...

CYRANO (*quickly, in a low voice*)

Go and set an ambush there instead,
one at this street corner, one just over there:
and if anyone annoying comes by here,
play a tune!

SECOND PAGE What tune, then, Monsieur Gassendi?

CYRANO Lively, for a woman: and for a man, unhappy!

(*The pages disappear, one at each street corner. To Christian*)
Call her!

CHRISTIAN Roxane!

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

Wait ! Some pebbles too!

SCENE SEVEN

Roxane, Christian, Cyrano still hidden below the window.

ROXANE *(half-opening the window)*

Who calls me?

CHRISTIAN I!

ROXANE Who's I?

CHRISTIAN Christian!

ROXANE *(disdainfully)*

It's you?

CHRISTIAN I want to speak to you.

CYRANO *(under the balcony, to Christian)*

Good. Good. Speak soft and low.

ROXANE No! You speak badly! Go away!

CHRISTIAN Let pity flow!

ROXANE No! You don't love me!

CHRISTIAN *(prompted by Cyrano)*

To accuse me! – Heavenly Father!

Of no longer loving...when....I love you more!

ROXANE (*who was about to shut the window, pausing*)

Better!

CHRISTIAN (*as before*)

Love grew within rocked in my anxious soul...
which that...cruel boy took for..... a cradle!

ROXANE (*coming out on to the balcony*)

That's better! – But, since he's cruel, you were mad
not to stifle that new-born Love in his bed!

CHRISTIAN (*as before*)

I tried that also, but...unsuccessfully.
This ... new-born babe Madame's a young ... Hercules!

ROXANE That's better!

CHRISTIAN (*as before*)

So that he...strangled easily
the twin snakes, of ... Pride and...Doubt!

ROXANE (*leaning over the balcony*)

Well said, indeed!
- But why speak then in such a faltering fashion
Have you started limping with imagination?

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

Ssh! This is getting too difficult!...

ROXANE To-night...

Your words are hesitant. Why?

CYRANO (*imitating Christian-in a whisper*)

As there's no light,
they weave around in the shadows to find your ear.

Act Three

ROXANE For my words no such difficulties appear.

CYRANO They find their way at once? That goes without saying!
Since, deep inside my heart, I receive their straying:
Now I, I have a great heart, you, a tiny ear.
Besides the words you speak fall swiftly here,
mine climb, Madame: that takes them quite a time!

ROXANE Yet, for a while now, they've had an easier climb.

CYRANO From these gymnastics they've acquired the skill!

ROXANE In truth, I speak to you as if from some high hill!

CYRANO True, and you kill me if, from that high part,
you let one harsh word fall upon my heart.

ROXANE (*moving*)
I'll come down ...

CYRANO (*hastily*)
No!

ROXANE (*showing him the bench under the balcony*)
Climb on the bench, then, quickly!

CYRANO (*starting back alarmed*)
No!

ROXANE What..No?

CYRANO (*more and more emotionally*)

Wait a moment so that we
can profit from this chance we're offered...for speaking
sweetly together, without seeing.

ROXANE Without seeing?

CYRANO Yes, it's delightful! The eye scarce distinguishes.

You see the folds of a long cloak of darkness,
I view the whiteness of a summer dress:
I, I'm but a shadow, and you a brightness!
You don't know what these moments are to me!
If I was ever eloquent...

ROXANE You are, indeed!

CYRANO Language has never launched itself till now
from my heart, so truly...

ROXANE Why?

CYRANO Because till now...
I spoke with...

ROXANE What?

CYRANOthe dizziness where trembles
whatever haunts your eyes!...But the night resembles...
a darkened stage where, this first time, I address you.

ROXANE You've a quite different voice, indeed, that's true.

Act Three

CYRANO (*coming nearer, passionately*)

Yes different, for protected by the night

I dare to be myself at last, I dare...

(*He stops, falters.*)

Where was I?

I don't know! – all this – forgive my emotion –
it's so delicious....it's so new this magic potion!

ROXANE So new?

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

So new...why yes...to be so sincere:

fear of being mocked, always grips my heart, here...

ROXANE Mocked, for what?

CYRANO Why for...daring!...Yes, that same

heart of mine is always veiled by wit, through shame:

I reach out for a star, and I stop, instead,

for fear of ridicule, to gather a flower-let!

ROXANE A flower-let is fine.

CYRANO Tonight, I disdain it!

ROXANE Never before have you spoken to me like this!

CYRANO Ah! Like this, far from the quivers, arrows, torches,

you turn yourself towards things...new and fresh!

Instead of drinking fashionable waters, taken cold,

drop by drop, from a pretty thimble, of fine gold,

you find, like this, how the soul might be refreshed

drinking full, from the wide river's endless depth!

ROXANE But the wit?...

CYRANO I employed it to make you stay,
at first, but to do that now would be to pay
an insult to Night, Nature, these scents, the hour:
to speak like a love-letter, written by Voiture!
With a single glance at the stars, the celestial
heavens strip us of all that's artificial:
yet I fear, lest in our exquisite alchemy,
true feeling itself might simply cease to be,
and the soul exhaust itself in empty musings,
and the ultimate be merely...the end of things!

ROXANE But your wit?...

CYRANO I hate it, in love! It's a crime
to prolong such fencing, endlessly, in time!
Besides the moment comes, an inevitable one,
and I grieve for those to whom it never comes,
when we feel that a noble love's within us, so
that each fine word we speak saddens the soul!

ROXANE Well, if that moment's come for us two, then,
what words will you give me?

CYRANO All, all, all again,
that come to me, I'd throw towards you, wild
without making garlands: I love, I'm stifled,
I love you! I'm maddened! No more: I tell
you, your name in my heart's a little bell,
and as I tremble, Roxane, all the time, so
all the time the bell rings your name's its echo!
I remember all about you, love all of it, I say:
I know last year, one day, on the twelfth of May,
going out that morning, you altered your hair!

Act Three

I'm so used to taking it for daylight, like the glare
you find when you stare too long at the sun,
seeing a red disc everywhere when it's gone,
that I, when I quit the flames that flood me, see,
a stain of dazzling gold, clothe all around me.

ROXANE (*agitated*)

Yes, that's love it's true...

CYRANO This feeling, surely,
that fills me, that's terrible and jealous, is truly
that of Love: he always has a melancholy fury!
Of Love - and yet, he's still not selfish, purely!
Ah! How I'd give my happiness for yours, though,
even though you yourself might never know:
if sometime perhaps, far off, I might delight
in the happy laughter born of my sacrifice!
- Each look of yours excites a new virtue,
a new courage in me! Now at last do you,
begin to see? For you yourself, do you allow?
Can you feel my soul, at all, rise through the shadow...
Oh! But truly this night's too beautiful, too sweet!
I saying all this to you, you listening, you, to me!
Too sweet! In my dreams, even the least humble
I never hoped for such! There's nothing else
to do but die now! It's through words alone, I know,
that I say you tremble in the blue branches, though.
For you do tremble, like a leaf among the leaves!
For you do tremble! Whether you wish it so, I feel
your hand's adorable trembling as it plays,
down the whole net of the jasmine sprays!

(*He kisses one of the hanging tendrils, passionately.*)

ROXANE Yes I tremble, and I weep, and I love, and I am
yours! You've intoxicated me!

CYRANO Then let death come!
This intoxication, I, it's I, who've created it!
I ask but one thing more

CHRISTIAN (*under the balcony*)
A kiss!

ROXANE (*drawing back*)
What?

CYRANO Oh!

ROXANE You ask?

CYRANO Yes...I...
(*To Christian, whispering*)
You go too quick!

CHRISTIAN Since she's so moved, I must profit from it!

CYRANO (*to Roxane*)
Yes, I...I asked, it's true...but sweet heavens!
I understand that I was too audacious.

ROXANE (*a little chilled*)
You insist no more strongly than that?

CYRANO Yes! I insisted...
without insisting!...Yes! Your modesty's affronted!
Well! Then this kiss...does not agree with my idea!

CHRISTIAN (*to Cyrano, pulling him by his cloak*)
Why?

Act Three

CYRANO Hush, Christian!!

ROXANE *(leaning over)*

What are you whispering for?

CYRANO Having gone too far I scolded myself, saying

‘Hush, Christian!’

(The lutes begin to play.)

Wait a moment, that playing!..

Someone comes!

(Roxane shuts the window. Cyrano listens to the lutes, one of which plays a lively, the other an unhappy, tune.)

Lively *and* unhappy! What’s their game?

A Man or a woman? - Ah! It’s a Capuchin!

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

SCENE EIGHT

Cyrano, Christian, a Capuchin friar.

CYRANO *(to the friar)*

What's this new version of Diogenes?

THE FRIAR I seek her house, Madame...

CHRISTIAN He's annoying me!

THE FRIAR Madeleine Robin ...

CHRISTIAN What does he want? ...

CYRANO *(pointing to a street at the back)*

This way!

Straight on, keep straight on...

THE FRIAR For you I'll tell,
my rosary as far as the very last bead.

(He goes out.)

CYRANO Good luck! My blessings on your cowled head!
(He returns to Christian.)

Act Three

SCENE NINE

Cyrano, Christian.

CHRISTIAN Win that kiss for me!...

CYRANO No!

CHRISTIAN Sooner or later! ...

CYRANO True!

That moment of dizziness will come, when you
will find your mouths are sure to meet, and sip,
thanks to your blonde moustache, and her rosy lip!

(To himself)

I'd prefer it were thanks to...

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

SCENE TEN

Cyrano, Christian, Roxane.

ROXANE (*coming out on the balcony*)

Is it you I see?

We spoke of...of...of a...

CYRANO Kiss! The word is sweet!

I don't see why your lips shouldn't dare to:
if they burn already, what might the thing not do?
Don't let yourself be frightened by me:
haven't you, now, almost insensibly,
left off our repartee, gliding without a fear
from a smile to a sigh, a sigh to a tear?
Glide onwards, still, a while, in this manner:
from a tear to a kiss, is only a tremor!

ROXANE Hush!

CYRANO What is it, when all's said and done, a kiss?

A deeper pledge, a more exacting promise,
an avowal that wishes to confirm its rights,
a rose-coloured dot on the 'i' of the verb 'to like':
a secret for lips not ears, the infinity
of a moment that makes a noise like a bee,
a communion with the sweet taste of a flower
a way to let the heart breathe a little more,
and taste the soul at the borders of the lips!

ROXANE Hush!

Act Three

CYRANO It's so noble a thing, Madame, a kiss,
that the Queen of France allowed a favoured lord
to steal one of them, the Queen herself!

ROXANE For sure!

CYRANO (*speaking more warmly*)
I, like Buckingham, have suffered silently,
I adore, like him, the queen you are to me,
like him I am sad and faithful...

ROXANE Yes, and you
are handsome like him!

CYRANO (*aside-suddenly cooled*)
Handsome: I forgot: that's true!

ROXANE Then, climb, to gather the peerless flower you see...

CYRANO (*pushing Christian toward the balcony*)
Climb!

ROXANE That sip from the heart! ...

CYRANO Climb!

ROXANE That buzz of a bee!...

CYRANO Climb!

CHRISTIAN (*hesitating*)
But it doesn't seem right to me, now, at all!

ROXANE That infinite moment!...

CYRANO (*still pushing him*)

Climb, then, you animal!

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

CHRISTIAN Roxane!

(*He takes her in his arms, and bends his mouth to hers.*)

CYRANO Oh! My heart, such a strange ache of sadness!

A kiss, is love's feast where I am, Lazarus!

Yet a trace of you comes to me from that shadow -

why yes, I feel it's *my* heart that receives you:

on the lips where Roxane deludes herself, at last,
she kisses the words I spoke but a moment past!

(*The lutes play.*)

An unhappy air, a lively air: the monk!

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

Hola!

ROXANE Who's that?

CYRANO Me. I was passing...Is Christian there?

CHRISTIAN (*astonished*)

Cyrano!

ROXANE Cousin, good evening!

CYRANO Good evening, cousin!

Act Three

ROXANE I'll come down!

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

CHRISTIAN *(seeing him)*

Oh! Back again!

(He follows Roxane.)

SCENE ELEVEN

Cyrano, Christian, Roxane, the friar, Ragueneau.

THE FRIAR This is it - I'm certain
Madeleine Robin!

CYRANO But, you said Ro-*lin*.

THE FRIAR No: *B, i, n, bin!*

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

What is it?

THE FRIAR A letter.

CHRISTIAN And?

THE FRIAR (*to Roxane*)

Oh, it can only be on some sacred affair!
It's a noble lord who...

ROXANE (*to Christian*)

It's De Guiche!

CHRISTIAN Does he dare?

Act Three

ROXANE Oh! But he won't be troubling me for long!

(Unsealing the letter)

I love you, and so...

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

'Mademoiselle,

The drum

beats: my regiment buckles on its harness:

they leave: and think I'm already departed:

I stayed. I've disobeyed you. I'm at the convent.

I'm coming to you, and send word of my intent,

by a monk who's quite as stupid as a sheep

and won't understand a word of it. Your lips
smiled on me, too sweetly: and I wished to see

them again. Be alone, and wait there for me,

an audacious man, pardoned I hope, my dear,

he who is ever yours - *et cetera*.'

(To the monk)

Father,

here's what this letter says. Listen to it all.

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

'Mademoiselle,

It's essential to obey the will

of the Cardinal. Hard for you though it may be.

That's the reason why I've chosen to remit these

lines to your charming hand, by this true saint

of a monk, discreet and most intelligent:

we wish him to confer on you, and in your

house, the blessing...

(She turns the page.)

...of marriage this very hour.

Christian becomes your husband, secretly.

I send him to you. He displeases you. Let be.

Consider that Heaven will truly bless your zeal,

and be fully assured, dear Mademoiselle,

of his respect who was, and will be ever,

your very humblest, and most - *et cetera*.'

THE FRIAR (*with great delight*)

Noble lord!...I said so. I had no fear
It could only have been a sacred affair!

ROXANE (*to Christian, in a low voice*)

Am I not clever at reading letters?

CHRISTIAN Ha. Yes!

ROXANE (*aloud, with despair*)

Oh!...This is terrible!

THE FRIAR (*who has turned his lantern on Cyrano*)

You?

CHRISTIAN I!

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

But ...

ROXANE (*quickly*)

P.S.

‘Give a hundred and twenty to the Convent.’

THE FRIAR ..Oh!

Noble, noble lord!

(*To Roxane*)

Do you resign yourself?

ROXANE (*with a martyr's look*)

I do!

(*While Ragueneau opens the door, and Christian invites the friar to enter, she whispers to Cyrano.*)

Act Three

You keep De Guiche at bay! He'll be arriving soon!
Don't let him enter till ...

CYRANO Understood!

(To the friar)

How long
do you need?

THE FRIAR A quarter of an hour.

CYRANO *(pushing them all toward the house)*

Go! I stay here.

ROXANE *(to Christian)*

Come! ...

(They go inside.)

CYRANO How to delay De Guiche a quarter of an hour?

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

There! ... Up I go! ... I've a plan! ...

(The lutes begin to play a lugubrious air.)

Ah, it's a man! Ay!

(The music ends on a sinister tremolo.)

This time it really is one!...

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

No, it's not too high!

(He strides across the balcony, and pulling a long branch of one of the trees by the garden wall, towards himself, he hangs on with both hands, ready to let himself fall.)

I intend to lightly trouble the atmosphere!...

SCENE TWELVE

Cyrano, De Guiche.

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

What can that blessed Capuchin be doing, and where?

CYRANO The devil! ... My voice? If he should know it!

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

Cric! Crac!

Cyrano, adopt the accent of Bergerac! ...

DE GUICHE (*looking at the house*)

Yes, it's here. Hard to see with this mask I've assumed!

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

What?

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

Where has this man dropped from?

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

From the moon!

DE GUICHE From *where?*...

CYRANO (*in a dreamy voice*)

What time is it?

Act Three

DE GUICHE Has he lost his reason?

CYRANO What hour? What country's this? What day? What season?

DE GUICHE But ...

CYRANO I'm completely dazed!

DE GUICHE My dear sir...

CYRANO Like a bomb,
I fell from the moon!

DE GUICHE (*impatiently*)
Come now! Sir!

CYRANO (*rising, in a terrible voice*)
From the moon!

DE GUICHE (*recoiling*)
Fine, fine! You fell from there! ...Perhaps he's crazy!

CYRANO (*walking up to him*)
And yet I didn't fall metaphorically!...

DE GUICHE But ...

CYRANO It was a hundred years, or a moment,
- I don't know how long it lasted, that descent! -
I was inside a ball the colour of saffron!

DE GUICHE (*shrugging his shoulders*)
Yes! Let me pass!

CYRANO (*intercepting him*)

Where am I? Be quite open!
Hide nothing from me! On what place, to what site,
dear sir, have I fallen, like a meteorite?

DE GUICHE My God!

CYRANO I could not choose, falling so swiftly,
my point of arrival – know not where I might be!
Is it on a moon or on a planet, may be,
that the weight of my backside has landed me?

DE GUICHE But, I tell you, Sir ...

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

Ah! Good God!...I see
men in this land have a black physiognomy!

DE GUICHE (*putting a hand to his face*)

What?

CYRANO (*feigning great alarm*)

Are you a native? Is this Algeria?

DE GUICHE (*who has remembered his mask*)

This mask!...

CYRANO (*pretending to be reassured*)

So I'm in Venice or in Genoa?

DE GUICHE (*trying to pass*)

A Lady's waiting for me!...

Act Three

CYRANO (*quite reassured*)

So I'm in Paris.

DE GUICHE (*smiling in spite of himself*)

The fool's absurd enough!

CYRANO You laugh?

DE GUICHE I laugh,

But wish to pass!

CYRANO (*beaming with joy*)

I'm back in Paris again!

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

I arrived - excuse me! - by the last hurricane.

A little dusty with ether! I've come so far!

My eyes are filled with ashes from a star.

I've traces of a planet on my shoulder!

(*Picking something off his sleeve*)

See, on my doublet, here's a comet hair!...

(*He puffs as if to blow it away.*)

DE GUICHE (*beside himself*)

Sir!...

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

In the calf of my leg I bring a tooth
of the Great Bear, and, brushing Scorpio close,

while wishing to steer clear of his three flails,

I fell straight downwards, then, into the Scales -

whose needle, up there, shows where my weight lingered!

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

If you squeezed my nose, Sir, in your fingers,
it would shed milk, in fact!

DE GUICHE What, Milk?

CYRANO From the Milky
Way!...

DE GUICHE Oh! Hell take you!

CYRANO (*crossing his arms*)

Ah! It's Heaven that sent me!
Now, would you believe it, as I was falling,
I saw the turban Night has Sirius wearing?
(*Confidentially*)
The Little Bear's not big enough for biting!
(*Laughing*)
I travelled through the Lyre, and snapped a string!
(*Grandiloquent*)
I'll need to write a book, at least, to reveal it all,
and the gold stars, held in my scorched mantle,
I managed to bring away, despite the risks,
when it's printed, will serve as the asterisks!

DE GUICHE Enough of this! I want ...

CYRANO You: I see what you're about!

DE GUICHE Sir!

CYRANO You want to know, from the horse's mouth,
what the moon is made of, and if anyone may be
alive in that rotund pumpkin-icity?

Act Three

DE GUICHE (*angrily*)

No, no! I want ...

CYRANO To know how I ascended?

It was by a means that I myself invented.

DE GUICHE (*wearied*)

He's mad!

CYRANO (*contemptuously*)

I've not made Regiomontanus's
stupid eagle again, nor yet Archytas's
timid pigeon!...

DE GUICHE Mad – but he's a learned madman.

CYRANO No, I imitate nothing men before have done!

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

I found six ways to pierce the sky's pure mantle!

DE GUICHE (*turning round*)

Six?

CYRANO (*volubly*)

I might, stripping my body bare as a candle,
have caparisoned myself with crystal phials,
filled with the tears of the dawn skies, while
in exposing my person to the sunlight, too,
the star would suck me up as it does the dew!

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

Ah! Yes, that's one way!

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

And then, again I could,
have rarefied air, in a chest of cedar wood,
with bright mirrors forming an icosahedron,
and enclosed the wind, ready for my expansion!

DE GUICHE (*taking another step*)

Two!

CYRANO (*still stepping backward*)

Or then, as much engineer as inventor,
mounted upon my steel-sprung grasshopper,
make myself, by successive blasts of saltpetre,
pierce the blue meadows where the stars pasture!

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

Three!

CYRANO Since smoke has a tendency to rise,
fill a globe with enough to carry me to the skies!

DE GUICHE (*as before, more and more astonished*)

Four!

CYRANO Since the Moon, when she's at her darkest phase,
loves to suck bulls' marrow...smear myself with the paste!

DE GUICHE (*amazed*)

Five!

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

Lastly, placing myself in an iron chair,
take a piece of magnet and throw it in the air!

Act Three

That's a good method: the iron follows suit,
when the magnet flies upwards it flies in pursuit:
throw the magnet again, and bravo! If you're quick,
you can climb like that indefinitely.

DE GUICHE Six!

- Well here are six excellent ways!...Which system,
of the six, did you choose, Sir?

CYRANO Number seven!

DE GUICHE Peerless! What was it?

CYRANO I'll tell you the whole thing.

DE GUICHE This fool's starting to become interesting!

CYRANO (*making the sound of waves, with mystifying gestures*)
Hoooh! Hoooh!

DE GUICHE Well.

CYRANO Have you guessed it, yet?

DE GUICHE No!

CYRANO The tide!...

At the hour when the moon draws the waves aside
I lie on the sand – after bathing in the sea –
head-forward, dear sir, since hair, especially,
you'll accept, holds the moisture in its tangle -
I rise in the air, up, straight up, like an angel.
I climb, I climb, gently, without effort, when
I feel a sudden shock!...And then ...

DE GUICHE *(overcome by curiosity, sitting down on the bench)*

And then?

CYRANO And then...

(Suddenly returning to his natural voice)

the quarter hour is past and, Sir, I free you:
the wedding ceremony's done.

DE GUICHE *(springing up)*

Am I mad, too?

That voice?

(The house-door opens. Servants appear carrying lighted candelabra. Lights. Cyrano gracefully takes off his hat.)

And that nose!...Cyrano?

CYRANO *(bowing)*

Cyrano.

- They come from exchanging rings, a moment ago.

DE GUICHE Who?

(He turns round. Tableau. Behind the servants Roxane and Christian appear, holding each other's hand. The friar follows, smiling. Ragueneau too, holding a candlestick. The duenna brings up the rear, bewildered, having dressed hastily.)

My God!

SCENE THIRTEEN

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

DE GUICHE *(to Roxane)*

You?

(Recognizing Christian, in amazement)

Him?

(Bowing, with admiration, to Roxane)

You're very cunning, it seems!

(To Cyrano)

My compliments, Sir Inventor-of-Machines:
it would even have made a saint stop short, your tale,
before the Gates of Heaven! Remember the detail,
since it will certainly serve to fill a book!

CYRANO *(bowing)*

Sir, that's advice I'll follow: wish me luck.

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

A handsome pair, my son, whom you've joined together!

DE GUICHE *(with a freezing look)*

Yes!

(To Roxane)

Madame, please say your farewells to your lover.

ROXANE Why so?

DE GUICHE *(to Christian)*

The regiment is leaving already.

Join it!

ROXANE To go to the war?

DE GUICHE Assuredly!

ROXANE But, Sir, the Cadets are not going?

DE GUICHE They're gone.

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

Here's the order.

(To Christian)

Take it quickly, you, Baron!

ROXANE *(throwing herself in Christian's arms)*

Christian!

DE GUICHE *(sneeringly to Cyrano)*

The wedding-night's still some way off, I guess!

CYRANO *(aside)*

In saying that he thinks he causes *me* distress!

CHRISTIAN *(to Roxane)*

Oh! Your lips, once more!

CYRANO Come on, enough, let's go!

CHRISTIAN *(still kissing Roxane)*

It's hard to leave her...You can't know...

CYRANO *(trying to draw him away)*

I know.

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

Act Three

DE GUICHE The regiment's off!

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

Oh!...I place him in your care!

Promise me nothing will put his life in danger

CYRANO I'll try, but however much I do I can't...
promise...

ROXANE Promise me he'll be very prudent!

CYRANO Yes I swear, but ...

ROXANE That in this terrible siege
he won't catch cold!

CYRANO I'll do whatever you please,
but...

ROXANE That he'll be faithful!

CYRANO Why yes! He'll be true,
But...

ROXANE He'll write to me, often!

CYRANO (*pausing*)
That - I promise you!

Curtain.

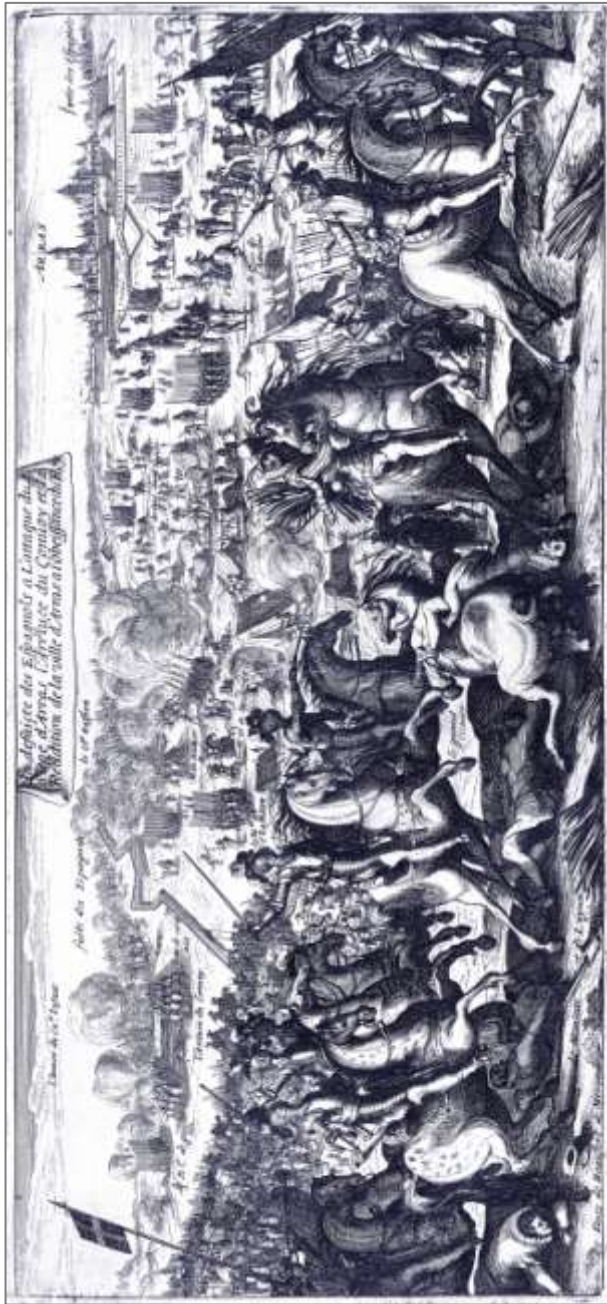
ACT FOUR

The Gascony Cadets



he post occupied by Carbon de Castel-Jaloux's company at the siege of Arras.

In the background an embankment, across the whole stage. Beyond, a view of the plain extending to the horizon. The country is covered with entrenchments. The walls of Arras and the outlines of its roofs against the sky, far off. Tents: weapons strewn about, drums, etc. Day is breaking with a yellow sky in the east. Sentries, spaced about. Watch-fires. The Gascony Cadets wrapped in their mantles, are sleeping. Carbon de Castel-Jaloux and Le Bret are keeping watch. They are very pale and thin. Christian sleeps among the others in his cloak in the foreground, his face illuminated by the fire. Silence.



‘The Siege of Arras’

Anonymous, 1640, *The Rijksmuseum*

SCENE ONE

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

LE BRET It's dreadful.

CARBON Yes, nothing left.

LE BRET Mordious!

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

Curse quietly.

You'll wake them.

(To the cadets)

Hush! Sleep on.

(To Le Bret)

He who sleeps, eats!

LE BRET When you have insomnia that's small blessing! ...
What famine!

(Firing is heard in the distance.)

CARBON Oh, the devil take their firing!

It'll wake my children!

(To the cadets, who lift up their heads)

Sleep on!

(Firing is again heard, nearer this time.)

A CADET *(moving)*

The devil!

Again?

Act Four

CARBON It's nothing! Cyrano, back at the double!

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

A SENTRY *(outside)*

Ventrebieu! Who goes there?

THE VOICE OF CYRANO Bergerac.

THE SENTRY *(who is on the redoubt)*

Ventrebieu!

Who goes there?

CYRANO *(appearing at the top)*

Bergerac, imbecile!

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

LE BRET Mon Dieu!

CYRANO *(making signs that he should not awake the others)*

Hush!

LE BRET Wounded?

CYRANO You know it's become their habit
to miss me every morning.

LE BRET Foolish, isn't it
to carry a letter for her at each day's dawn,
to risk ...

CYRANO (*stopping in front of Christian*)

I promised he'd write to her, often.

(*He looks at him.*)

He sleeps. He's pale! If the poor little one
knew he's dying of hunger...but always handsome!

LE BRET Get to bed, quickly.

CYRANO Don't grumble, Le Bret! Know
that in crossing the Spanish lines I chose
a place where I've seen them drunk every night.

LE BRET One day, you should try to bring us back a bite.

CYRANO You have to travel light to get by! – But I know
there'll be something new tonight. We French go
to eat or die – if I've seen rightly...

LE BRET Tell me! ...

CYRANO No, I'm not sure...You'll see!...

CARBON It's a misery,
to be famished while we're besieging!

LE BRET Alas,
nothing's more complex than this siege of Arras:
we besiege Arras – are caught in a trap ourselves:
the Cardinal Prince of Spain besieges us, as well.

CYRANO Someone should come and besiege him in his turn.

LE BRET I'm not smiling.

Act Four

CYRANO Oh! indeed!

LE BRET To think that every dawn
ungrateful man, you risk a life like yours
to carry...
(Seeing him turning to enter the tent)
Where're you going?

CYRANO To write once more.

(He enters the tent and disappears.)

SCENE TWO

The same, all but Cyrano

The day is breaking. Rosy light. The town of Arras shows golden on the horizon. The report of a cannon is heard in the distance, followed immediately by the beating of drums far away to the left. Other drums are heard much nearer. The drums go on answering each other here and there, they near, beat loudly almost on stage, and die away to stage right, across the camp. Sounds of stirring in the camp. Voices of officers in the distance.

CARBON *(sighing)*

Reveille!...Alas!

(The cadets move and stretch themselves.)

You're done for, nourishing Sleep,

I know what their first cry will be, for sure!

A CADET *(sitting up)*

I'm hungry!

ANOTHER I'm dying.

TOGETHER Oh!

CARBON Up with you!

THIRD CADET Not a step.

FOURTH CADET Not a nibble!

THE FIRST *(looking at himself in a piece of armour)*

My tongue's yellow: the air here's indigestible

Act Four

ANOTHER My baron's coronet for a bit of Brie!

ANOTHER If no one can supply my gastronomy
with the wherewithal to stir my juices,
I'll retire to my tent – as Achilles did!

ANOTHER Yes, some bread!

CARBON (*going to the tent and calling softly*)
Cyrano!

ALL THE CADETS We are dying!

CARBON (*continuing to speak under his breath at the opening of the tent*)
Help me,
you who always know how to speak so cheerfully,
come and cheer them up.

SECOND CADET (*rushing toward another who is munching something*)
What are you munching on?

FIRST CADET On cannon-wads that among the Burgundians
they fry in axle-grease: I've done the same.
The neighbourhood of Arras is thin on game!

A CADET (*entering*)
I've been hunting!

ANOTHER (*following him*)
I've been fishing in the Scarpe!

ALL (*rushing to the two newcomers*)
Well!- What have you got us? - A pheasant? - A carp?
Quick, quick, show us!

THE ANGLER A gudgeon!

THE SPORTSMAN A sparrow!

ALL TOGETHER (*beside themselves*)

Enough! – Let's mutiny!

CARBON Help me, Cyrano!

(The daylight has now come.)

SCENE THREE

The same. Cyrano.

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

What's up?

(*Silence. To the first cadet*)

Why do you drag your legs so painfully?

THE CADET There's something on my mind that weighs on me.

CYRANO What then?

THE CADET My stomach!

CYRANO Me too, I'm another!

THE CADET It must bother you?

CYRANO (*tightening his belt*)

No, it makes me taller.

A SECOND CADET My large appetite!

CYRANO It'll not grow any larger.

A THIRDS My stomach makes a sound!

CYRANO Well beat it, and charge then.

ANOTHER As for me, in my ears I can hear ringing.

CYRANO No, a hungry belly has no ears: you're lying!

ANOTHER Oh, to eat something – tossed in oil!

CYRANO (*pulling off the cadet's helmet and holding it out to him*)
Your salad!

ANOTHER What can we truly devour?

CYRANO (*throwing him the book which he is carrying*)
'The Iliad'.

ANOTHER The Cardinal, in Paris, has four square meals a day!

CYRANO He should send you a few partridges?

THE SAME Why not, I say?
And wine!

CYRANO Richelieu, some Burgundy, *s'il vous plaît?*

THE SAME Brought by His Eminence!

CYRANO The Grape-bearer, or the Grey?

ANOTHER I've a giant's hunger!

CYRANO Well, eat your giant words!

THE FIRST CADER (*shrugging his shoulders*)
Always a joke, a thrust!

CYRANO Yes, a joke, so absurd!

Yet I'd rather die, one evening, under the pale rose
red sky, cracking a good joke in a good cause!
- Oh! Struck by whoever's is the noblest sword,
and an enemy we know is worthy of ours,
on a field of glory, far from the sickbed's eclipse,
to die of a thrust to the heart, with one on my lips!

CRIES FROM ALL I'm hungry!

CYRANO (*crossing his arms*)

So! You think of nothing else but food?...
- Here, Bertrand the Piper! You were a shepherd too:
take one of the flutes from your thick leather case,
and play for this heap of greedy guzzlers. Play
those old country airs, those sweet hypnotic measures,
where every note is like a little sister,
in which the sound of a loved voice is captured,
those airs whose slow tunes are the smoke, enraptured,
that rises from the roofs of our native places,
those airs whose music bears our dialect's traces!...

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

Let your flute today, reluctantly a soldier,
remember for a moment, as your fingers
seem to dance birdlike minuets on your stem
that it was a reed, before it was ebony: then,
let your song surprise us, and bring again
the spirit of rustic, peaceful innocence!...

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

Listen, Gascons! ... it's the camp's shrill pipe no longer,
now it's a woodland flute under his fingers!
That's no longer the call to battle, on his lips,
it's our goatherds' slow song at his fingertips!...
Listen! ... It's the valley, the moors, the forest glade,
the little brown shepherd-boy with a red beret,
it's the sweet greenness of the Dordogne at evening,
Listen, Gascons! It's all of Gascony singing!

(The cadets sit with bowed heads; their eyes have a far-off look as if dreaming, and they surreptitiously wipe away their tears with their cuffs and the corner of their cloaks.)

CARBON *(to Cyrano in a whisper)*

But, you make them weep!

CYRANO With homesickness!... That's an ill
nobler than hunger!...not physical but moral!
I'm glad to see their pain's no longer visceral:
it's in their hearts now that they feel its chill.

CARBON You'll weaken them by softening them too much!

CYRANO *(making a sign to a drummer to approach)*

No! The heroism they carry in their blood
is quickly revived. It's enough...

(He makes a signal: the drum beats.)

ALL THE CADETS *(stand up and rush to take arms)*

Eh? What is it?

CYRANO *(smiling)*

You see, a single roll of the drum will do it!
Farewell dreams, regrets, our native land, and love...
what the flute brought the drumbeat will remove!

A CADET *(looking toward the back of the stage)*

Oh! Oh! Here's Monsieur de Guiche!

ALL THE CADETS *(muttering)*

Boo!...

Act Four

CYRANO (*smiling*)

A flatterer's
greeting!

A CADET He bores us!

ANOTHER CADET With his lace collar
over his armour, playing the proud noble!

ANOTHER As if one wore one's linen over steel!

THE FIRST It's good for the neck though if you've a carbuncle.

THE SECOND He's still the courtier!

ANOTHER CADET The nephew of his uncle!

CARBON He's a Gascon though.

THE FIRST A false one!... So beware!
Since Gascons... should always be weak up there:
nothing's more dangerous than one with brains.

LE BRET He's pale!

ANOTHER As us....he has the same hunger pains!
but like the jewel-studded breastplate he has on
his stomach-ache gleams like ours in the sun.

CYRANO (*hurriedly*)

Let's not seem to suffer either! You, your cards,
pipes, and dice...

Cyrano de Bergerac

(All begin spreading out the games on the drums, the stools, the ground, and their cloaks, and light long pipes.)

And I'll read some more Descartes.

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

SCENE FOUR

The same. De Guiche.

DE GUICHE *(to Carbon)*

Ah! - Good-day!

(They examine each other. In asides, with satisfaction)

He's green.

CARBON *(aside)*

Nothing left but his eyes, then.

DE GUICHE *(looking at the cadets)*

Here are the trouble-makers?...Yes, Gentlemen, they tell me everywhere that they mock me here, that the Cadets, our mountain nobility, country squires from Béarn, barons of Périgord, only have disdain for their colonel, and afford me the name of plotter, courtier! – Distressed, to see a collar of Genoese lace to my cuirass, - and never cease to show their mutual anger that one can be a Gascon, and not a beggar!

(Silence. All smoke and play.)

Shall I order you punished by your Captain?

No.

CARBON I'm a free man, and inflict no pain...

DE GUICHE Oh?

CARBON I've funded my company, and it's mine.

I only obey military commands.

DE GUICHE Oh?...That's fine!

That's enough.

(Addressing himself to the cadets)

I can tolerate your defiance.

It's known how I face the firing, and advance:
yesterday, at Bapaume, they saw how I drove back,
furiously, the soldiers of Comte de Bucquois;
Throwing my men on his defence, pell-mell,
I charged three times!

CYRANO *(without lifting his eyes from his book)*

And in your white scarf, as well?

DE GUICHE *(surprised and gratified)*

You know that detail? ... Actually it happened
that as I advanced, in order to rally my men,
for the third charge, a crowd of fugitives bore me
on, almost into the ranks of the enemy:
I was in danger of being captured, or even
shot, when I thought of the grand expedient
of loosening and then allowing the scarf,
that gave away my rank, to fall to the earth:
so I contrived without attracting notice
to quit the Spaniards, and return among us,
and reinforced by my men, scattered theirs afar!
And now, what say you to that, dear Sir?

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

CYRANO That Henry of Navarre
despite overwhelming odds, never assumed
the right to strip himself of his white plume.

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

DE GUICHE The ruse succeeded, though!

(Same suspension of play, etc.)

CYRANO That's possible, and yet

one should not forgo the honour of being a target.

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

Had I been present when your scarf met the ground,

- our courage, Sir, differs in this I've found -

I would have picked it up, and then put it on.

DE GUICHE Yes, another Gascon boast!

CYRANO Boast? A Gascon?...

Lend it to me. I offer to lead the assault tonight,
with your scarf round my neck, not out of sight.

DE GUICHE Another Gascon offer! You know the scarf
is among the enemy, on the banks of the Scarpe
and in a place that's riddled with shot, I fear,
that no one can go and fetch it from!

CYRANO *(drawing the scarf from his pocket, and holding it out to him)*
It's here.

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

DE GUICHE *(taking the scarf)*

Thank you. With this piece of white material,
I can make the signal - I hesitated before.

(He goes to the rampart, climbs it, and waves the scarf in the air several times.)

ALL What!

THE SENTRY (*from the top of the rampart*)

That man down there, who's running away?...

DE GUICHE (*descending*)

He's a traitorous Spanish spy, who's on his way to do us a great service. The messages he'll take to the enemy are those I gave him, and carry fake news that will influence their decision-making.

CYRANO He's a scoundrel!

DE GUICHE (*carelessly knotting his scarf*)

It's very useful. We were saying?
Ah! I have news for you. This very evening, the Marshall moved to Dourlens, he's attempting a master stroke to re-supply us: he passed silently - the King's quartermasters are there - via the fields. He's reached them: but, to return more easily, took with him such a large *tranche* of soldiery. the enemy would have fine sport if they came: Half of the army's absent, in all but name!

CARBON Yes, if the Spaniards knew it would be bad though.
But they know nothing of it?

DE GUICHE Well, they do know.
They'll attack us.

CARBON Ah!

DE GUICHE Because that traitor,
came to warn me in advance of the whole affair.
He added: 'I can determine a specific place:
where do you want their attack to concentrate?
I'll tell them it's the point that's worst defended,

Act Four

and they'll make their assault there.' I answered:
'Good. Leave the camp, but keep watch on the line:
the place will be that from which I'll make a sign.'

CARBON *(to cadets)*

Gentlemen, prepare!

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

DE GUICHE In an hour.

FIRST CADET Ah!...That's fine

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

DE GUICHE *(to Carbon)*

The Marshal will be returning. We must gain him time.

CARBON And to gain time?

DE GUICHE Be so good as to oblige me
by getting yourselves killed.

CYRANO Ah! Revenge is sweet?

DE GUICHE I don't pretend that if I liked you better
I'd have chosen you and yours – however,
since none show equal bravery in fighting,
I'll serve my rancour while I serve my King.

CYRANO Sir, allow me to express my thanks then.

DE GUICHE I know you love to fight with a hundred men:
You'll not complain, this time, you lack a cause.

(He goes up with Carbon.)

CYRANO *(to the cadets)*

Well now! We'll add to the Gascon arms: one more
chevron to its six chevrons of gold and blue,
the chevron of blood red that's lacking, too!

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

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

Christian!

CHRISTIAN *(shaking his head)*

Roxane!

CYRANO Alas!

CHRISTIAN I'd like to send her
all of my heart's farewells in a final letter!...

CYRANO I had a feeling that it would be to-day, my guess,
(He draws a letter out of his doublet.)
and I've written your farewells...

CHRISTIAN Show me!

CYRANO You wish it?

Act Four

CHRISTIAN (*taking the letter*)

Yes!

(*He opens and reads it.*)

Here!...

CYRANO What?

CHRISTIAN This little mark!

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

A mark?

CHRISTIAN It's a tear!

CYRANO Yes...Poets, caught up in the act, the charm's there...

you understand...this letter...it was very moving:

I made myself cry with feeling as I was writing.

CHRISTIAN Cry?

CYRANO Yes...because...to die is nothing fearful.

But...never to see her again...that is terrible!

And I'll not see her...

(*Christian looks at him.*)

We'll not...

(*Quickly*)

You'll not...

CHRISTIAN (*snatching the letter from him*)

Give me that letter!

(*They hear a noise, far off, in the camp.*)

VOICE OF SENTRY Ventrebieu, who goes there?

(Shots, voices, the jingle of harness.)

CARBON What is it?...

A SENTRY *(on the rampart)*

A carriage!

(All rush to see.)

CRIES What? In the camp? It's here!

Looks like it comes from the enemy! – Let them disappear!

Fire! - No! The coachman calls to us! – What's he shouting?

He's shouting: 'On the King's service!'

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

DE GUICHE Eh? The King?...

(All descend and draw up in line.)

CARBON Hats off!

DE GUICHE The King! Draw up in line, you rabble!

Let him make his approach as he should: at the double!

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

CARBON Beat the salute!

(A roll of drums. The cadets all uncover.)

DE GUICHE Lower the steps!

(Two cadets rush forward. The door opens.)

Act Four

ROXANE *(jumping down from the carriage)*

Good evening!

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

SCENE FIVE

The same. Roxane.

DE GUICHE On the King's service! You?

ROXANE Yes, Love, the only King!

CYRANO Good God!

CHRISTIAN (*rushing forward*)
You! Why??

ROXANE This siege is taking forever!

CHRISTIAN Why? ...

ROXANE I'll tell you!

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

My God! Dare I look at her?

DE GUICHE There's no way you can stay here!

ROXANE (*merrihly*)
But yes! Yes I can!

Will you bring up a drum for me?
(*She seats herself on the drum they roll forward.*)
There, my thanks.

Act Four

(She laughs.)

My carriage was fired at!

(proudly)

By the soldiers patrolling!

- It has the air of being made from a pumpkin,
has it not, as in the tale, and the footmen
made out of rats?

(Sending a kiss with her lips to Christian.)

Good day!

(Examining them all)

Why so unhappy, then?

Do you know it's a long way, Arras?

(Seeing Cyrano)

Cousin: lovely!

CYRANO *(coming up to her)*

Indeed! But how? ...

ROXANE Have I found my way to the army?

Oh! Good heavens, my friend, it's quite simple: I
travelled till I saw the signs of a ravaged country.
Ah! What horrors: it was necessary to see them
to believe them! If that's the service, Gentlemen
you give your King, mine's better!

CYRANO Look, this is mad!

How in the devil's name did you get past?

ROXANE Get past?

Through the Spanish Camp.

FIRST CADET How shrewd Women are, I find!

DE GUICHE But how did you pass through the Spanish line?

LE BRET That must have been very difficult! ...

ROXANE It was not.

I simply passed in my carriage, at the trot.
When some hidalgo showed his haughty face,
I sat at the window, my sweetest smile in place,
and those Señors being, no disrespect to France,
the most gallant men in the world – I advanced!

CARBON Yes, that smile is a passport, certainly!

But you must have been asked, frequently,
to say where you were going to, Madame?

ROXANE Frequently.

Then I'd answer, 'It's my lover I go to see.'
At that the fiercest Spaniards of them all
would gravely close the open carriage-door,
and, with a gesture that the King might envy,
have the muskets lowered, they pointed at me,
and at once, with superb grace and haughtiness
their spurs thrust out under their cloak no less,
their hats in the breeze so the plumes would flutter,
bow low, saying, 'Pass, then, Senorita!'

CHRISTIAN But, Roxane ...

ROXANE Yes. I said, 'my lover!' Pardon me.

Because, if I'd said 'my husband,' you'll agree
none would have let me pass!

CHRISTIAN But ...

ROXANE What's wrong?

DE GUICHE You must
leave this place!

ROXANE I?

CYRANO And that instantly!

LE BRET No time to lose.

CHRISTIAN Yes!

ROXANE But why?

CHRISTIAN (*embarrassed*)
It's that...

CYRANO (*the same*)
In three quarters of an hour...

DE GUICHE (*the same*)
or...four...

CARBON (*the same*)
It were best...

LE BRET (*the same*)
You might...

ROXANE They'll attack you. I stay here.

ALL No, no!

ROXANE He's my husband!
(She throws herself into Christian's arms.)
Together let us die!

CHRISTIAN But what a look you give me?

ROXANE I'll tell you why!

DE GUICHE *(in despair)*
It's a place of danger!

ROXANE *(turning round)*
Danger!

CYRANO And how I know
is that he's put us here!

ROXANE *(to De Guiche)*
You'd make me a widow?

DE GUICHE Oh! I swear to you...

ROXANE No! I'm reckless currently,
and I'm not going anywhere! Besides it amuses me.

CYRANO Oh! So our intellectual proves a heroine!

ROXANE Monsieur de Bergerac, I am your cousin.

A CADET We will defend you well!

ROXANE *(more and more excited)*
My friends, I know that!

Act Four

ANOTHER (*in ecstasy*)

The whole camp smells of lilies!

ROXANE And I've a hat

that will do perfectly for the battlefield!...

(*Looking at De Guiche*)

But perhaps it's time for the Count to retire?

They may start the attack.

DE GUICHE Ah! That's enough! I go

to inspect the cannon, and shall return...You though

still have time: to change your mind!

ROXANE Never!

(*De Guiche goes out.*)

SCENE SIX

The same, all but De Guiche.

CHRISTIAN (*entreatingly*)

Roxane!...

ROXANE No!

FIRST CADET (*to the others*)

She stays!

ALL (*hurrying, hustling each other, tidying themselves*)

A comb! - Soap! - My uniform
is damaged: a needle! - A ribbon! - Your mirror! -
My cuffs! - My moustache: your curling-tongs! - A razor!...

ROXANE (*to Cyrano, who still pleads with her*)

No! Nothing at all will make me stir from this place!

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

Perhaps I might take the chance, that being the case,
to present to you some of these brave gentlemen,
who'll have the honour to die where you will see them .
(*Roxane bows, and stands leaning on Christian's arm, while Carbon introduces the cadets to her.*)

Baron de Peyrescous de Colignac!

THE CADET (*with a low reverence*)

Madame ...

Act Four

CARBON (*continuing*)

Baron de Casterac de Cahuzac, - Vidame
de Malgouyre Estressac Lésbas d'Escarabiot -
Chevalier d'Antignac-Juzet - Baron Hillot
de Blagnac-Saléchan de Castel Crabioules...

ROXANE But how many names have you, each?

BARON HILLOT A few!

CARBON (*to Roxane*)

Open the hand that holds your handkerchief.

ROXANE (*opens her hand, and the handkerchief falls*)

Why?

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

CARBON (*quickly raising it*)

My company had no flag! But now, by my
faith, the finest in the camp will flutter in place!

ROXANE (*smiling*)

It's a little small.

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

Ah! But it's made of lace!

A CADET (*to the rest*)

I'd die without regret, with this sweet face in view,
if I'd something in my belly, even a nut or two!

CARBON (*who has overheard, indignantly*)

Shame! Talking of food when a lovely woman is...

ROXANE But the air in camp is keen: and I too am famished:

Pâté, chicken in aspic, fine wine - there's my menu!

Bring it all here, to me.

(Consternation.)

A CADET All that? To you?

ANOTHER Where could we find it?

ROXANE *(quietly)*

In my carriage, gentlemen.

ALL What?

ROXANE But you'll have to serve, and slice, and bone! Then,

look at my coachman, again, much more closely

it's the face of a dear man you know: you'll see:

each sauce can be reheated if you wish, trust me!

THE CADETS *(rushing to the carriage)*

It's Ragueneau!

(Acclamations.)

Oh, oh!

ROXANE *(looking after them)*

Poor fellows!

CYRANO *(kissing her hand)*

Good fairy!

RAGUENEAU *(standing on the box like a charlatan in a crowd)*

Gentlemen! ...

(General delight.)

THE CADETS Bravo! Bravo!

RAGUENEAU The Spaniards, at the pass,
as surpassing beauty passed, saw no repast go past!
(*Applause.*)

CYRANO (*in a whisper to Christian*)
Psst! Christian!

RAGUENEAU Occupied with gallantries,
they missed...
(*His draws a plate from under the seat, and holds it up.*)
the galantine! ...

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

CYRANO (*still whispering to Christian*)
Here with me,
a word!...

RAGUENEAU And Venus was the one their eyes were on,
so Diana secretly conveyed...
(*He holds up a shoulder of venison.*)
her venison!

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

CYRANO (*in a low whisper to Christian*)
I must speak to you!

ROXANE (*to the cadets, who come down, their arms laden with food*)
Put all of it down here!

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

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

Come, and be useful!

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

RAGUENEAU Peacock with truffles!

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

Tonerre!

We'll not have to face the last assault, at least,
without a gut-full!...

(quickly correcting himself on seeing Roxane)

pardon! Belshazzar's feast!

RAGUENEAU *(throwing down the carriage cushions)*

The cushions are stuffed with pigeons!

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

THIRD CADET Ah! Viédaze!

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

Flasks of rubies!...

(and white wine)

- And these are flasks of topaz!

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

Unfold that tablecloth! - Hop to it! Be nimble!

RAGUENEAU *(waving a lantern)*

Each lamp's a little larder, with no candle!

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

I must speak to you, before you and she speak!

Act Four

RAGUENEAU An Arles sausage is the handle of my whip!

ROXANE (*pouring out wine, helping*)

Since we're to die, forget the other battalions
by heaven! - Yes, this is all for the Gascons!
And if De Guiche comes, let no one invite him!
(*Going from one to the other*)
There's plenty of time - Don't eat so quickly, then!
Drink a little - Why are you crying?

FIRST CADET It's so good! ...

ROXANE Tut! - Red or white? - Monsieur de Carbon, some bread!
- A knife! - Your plate! - A little crust? Some more here?
Let me help you! - Burgundy? - A wing?

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

I adore her!

ROXANE (*going up to Christian*)

You?

CHRISTIAN Nothing.

ROXANE Yes! This biscuit, in Muscat...two drops!

CHRISTIAN (*trying to detain her*)

Oh! Tell me why you came here?

ROXANE I must stop

and see to these fellows...Hush! In a while...

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

De Guiche!

CYRANO Quick! Hide the flasks, plates, baskets, and that pie-dish!

Hurry!- Let's all look hungry!...

(To Ragueneau)

You, back on your tub!

Is it all hidden?

(In the twinkling of an eye everything has been pushed into the tents, or hidden under doublets, cloaks, and hats. - De Guiche enters hurriedly - stops suddenly, sniffing the air. - Silence.)

SCENE SEVEN

The same. De Guiche.

DE GUICHE Something round here smells good.

A CADET (*humming*)

La! La-la!

DE GUICHE (*looking at him*)

What is the matter with you? - You're all red.

THE CADET Me?...Nothing! It's blood. A fight sends it to my head!

ANOTHER Poum...poum...poum...

DE GUICHE (*turning round*)

What's that?

THE CADET (*slightly drunk*)

Nothing! It's a song!

A little bit of a...

DE GUICHE You're very merry, my son!

THE CADET The approach of danger!

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

Captain! I...

(*He stops short on seeing him.*)

Plague me!

You look well set, too!

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

Oh! ...

DE GUICHE I've a cannon, you'll see,
that I've had carried...
(*He points behind the scenes.*)
there, into that corner,
your men can use it in case they need its cover.

A CADET (*reeling slightly*)
Delightful attention!

ANOTHER (*with a gracious smile*)
Kind solicitude!

DE GUICHE What? They're all crazy! -
(*Drih*)
As none of you are used
to cannon, beware of the recoil.

FIRST CADET Ah! Pfft!

DE GUICHE (*furious, going up to him*)
But!...

THE CADET The cannon of Gascony never recoil a foot!

DE GUICHE (*taking him by the arm and shaking him*)
You're drunk! On what?

THE CADET (*grandiloquently*)
On the smell of gunpowder!

Act Four

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

Quickly, Madame, what do you deign to order?

ROXANE I stay here!

DE GUICHE Leave!

ROXANE No!

DE GUICHE Well, since you won't go,
Someone give me a musket!

CARBON Why?

DE GUICHE I stay also.

CYRANO At last, Monsieur! This is courage, simple, pure!

FIRST CADET Are you a Gascon then despite your lace collar?

ROXANE What's this?...

DE GUICHE I'll not quit a woman in danger.

SECOND CADET (*to the first*)

Well said! I think we should address his hunger!

(*All the viands reappear as if by magic.*)

DE GUICHE (*whose eyes sparkle*)

Food!

THE THIRD CADET From under every coat, you'll find!

DE GUICHE (*controlling himself, haughtily*)

Do you think I'll eat what *you* have left behind?

CYRANO (*saluting him*)

You're progressing.

DE GUICHE (*proudly, with a slight touch of accent on the final word*)

I'll fight on an empty stom-*ad*!

FIRST CADET (*with wild delight*)

Stom-*ad*! He'll soon have an *ac*-cent!

DE GUICHE (*laughing*)

I?

THE CADET The Gascon's back!

(*All begin to dance.*)

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

I've lined up my pike-men: the ranks are resolute!

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

DE GUICHE (*bowing to Roxane*)

Will you accept my hand to perform the review?

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

CHRISTIAN (*going up to Cyrano, eagerly*)

Tell me quickly!

Act Four

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

THE PIKEMEN *(outside)*

Vivat!

CHRISTIAN What's this mystery?

CYRANO If Roxane should...

CHRISTIAN Should? ...

CYRANO Speak to you, presently,
about the letters.

CHRISTIAN Yes, I know!...

CYRANO Don't make a mess
of it, by being surprised...

CHRISTIAN At what?

CYRANO I'll confess!...
Oh! Heavens, I thought of it today...it will prove
quite simple...seeing her there. You've...

CHRISTIAN Say, quickly!

CYRANO You've
written more often than you thought...

CHRISTIAN What?

CYRANO Often!

I was charged with it: I, to translate your passion!
I wrote sometimes without saying: 'I'm writing!'

CHRISTIAN Ah?...

CYRANO Simple!

CHRISTIAN It must have taken some contriving
for you to send them, since we've been?...

CYRANO Oh!...Before morning,
I could get through...

CHRISTIAN (*folding his arms*)
That too was a simple thing?
And I wrote...how many times a week?...Twice?...- Thrice?...
Four times? -

CYRANO More.

CHRISTIAN Every day?

CYRANO Yes, every day - Twice.

CHRISTIAN (*violently*)
And that made you drunk, and that drunkenness...
was such that you braved death...

CYRANO (*seeing Roxane returning*)
Not in front of her! Hush!

(*He goes hurriedly into his tent.*)

SCENE EIGHT

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

ROXANE *(running up to Christian)*

And now, Christian!...

CHRISTIAN *(taking her hands)*

And now, you tell me why,
on these appalling roads, through all of these lines
you've travelled, through ranks of ruffians and soldiers,
to join me here?

ROXANE It's because of the letters!

CHRISTIAN You're saying?

ROXANE It's your fault I ran all these dangers!

Your letters intoxicated me! Consider
how many times this month you've written to
me, and always better each time!

CHRISTIAN What! For a few
little love-letters!

ROXANE Hush!..Do you know what you're saying!

Heavens, I've adored you, it's true, since that evening
when, under my window, in a voice I didn't know,
your soul began to reveal itself.....And so,
your letters, you see, through all of this month that's gone,
as if all the time I was hearing it, your voice, as on

that evening there, so tender, enveloped me!
It's all your fault, I say! That wise Penelope
wouldn't have stayed at home with her embroidery,
if Ulysses had written to her as you to me,
but, as mad for love as Helen, she, to join him,
would have sent all her balls of wool packing!...

CHRISTIAN But ...

ROXANE I read, I read again, I felt faint with love,
I was yours. Every one of those little leaves
was like a petal torn from your soul, again,
I felt, at every word of those letters of flame,
a powerful love, sincere...

CHRISTIAN Ah! Sincere, powerful?
That's what you felt, Roxane!

ROXANE Oh! Yes that's what I felt!

CHRISTIAN And you came?

ROXANE I came (O my Christian, my lover!
You'd lift me if I threw myself down before
you, on my knees, so it's my soul I throw there,
and you can't lift that from its place, not ever!)
I come to ask forgiveness (and it's a good time
to ask forgiveness, since we may be about to die!)
for having committed, at first, and frivolously,
the crime of loving you only for your beauty!

CHRISTIAN (*horror-stricken*)
Ah! Roxane!

Act Four

ROXANE And later, love, less frivolously
- A bird that flutters, before it learns to fly -
your beauty seizing me, your soul leading me on,
I loved you for both, together!

CHRISTIAN And then?

ROXANE Ah! You yourself have surpassed yourself, too,
and now it's only for your soul that I love you!

CHRISTIAN (*stepping backward*)
Roxane!

ROXANE Be happy, then. For, only to be loved
for that with which one is for a moment clothed,
must put a noble, burning heart to the torture:
but your dear thought effaces all that figure,
and that beauty, you pleased me with before,
I see more clearly now...and see it no more!

CHRISTIAN Oh!...

ROXANE You have doubts of winning such a victory?

CHRISTIAN (*pained*)
Roxane!

ROXANE You can't quite believe in it still, yes, I see:
in such a love?...

CHRISTIAN I don't wish for such a love! For
I'd be loved with more simplicity, more...

ROXANE More

for that for which women have loved you, till today?
Then let yourself be loved in a better way!

CHRISTIAN No! It was better before!

ROXANE Ah! You don't see!

It's now, that I love you better, love you truly!
It's what you've made of you, that I love so well,
and less handsome...

CHRISTIAN Hush!

ROXANE I would love you still!

If all your beauty vanished in a single breath...

CHRISTIAN Oh! Don't say that!

ROXANE Yes!

CHRISTIAN What? Achieved ugliness?

ROXANE Ugliness! I swear it!

CHRISTIAN My God!

ROXANE And you're happy?

CHRISTIAN (*in a choked voice*)

Yes! ...

ROXANE What's wrong?

Act Four

CHRISTIAN (*gently pushing her away*)

Nothing. A moment: I've something to say...

ROXANE But?...

CHRISTIAN (*pointing to the cadets*)

My love takes you from those poor fellows:

Go, smile on them a little since they go to die...go!

ROXANE (*deeply affected*)

Dear Christian! ...

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

SCENE NINE

Christian, Cyrano. Roxane upstage talking to Carbon and some cadets.

CHRISTIAN *(calling toward Cyrano's tent)*
Cyrano!

CYRANO *(reappearing, fully armed)*
What? Pale as a dove?

CHRISTIAN She no longer loves me!

CYRANO What?

CHRISTIAN It's you she loves!

CYRANO No!

CHRISTIAN She only loves my soul!

CYRANO No!

CHRISTIAN Yes, it's true!
So it's really you she loves – and you love her, too.

CYRANO I?

CHRISTIAN I know it!

CYRANO It's true!

Act Four

CHRISTIAN Like a madman.

CYRANO More so.

CHRISTIAN Tell her!

CYRANO No!

CHRISTIAN Why not?

CYRANO Look at my face though!

CHRISTIAN She'd love me if I were ugly.

CYRANO She said so?

CHRISTIAN True!

CYRANO Ah! I'm delighted she said that to you!

But no, no, don't believe that foolishness!
Heavens, I'm happy that she had the sweetness
of thought to say it – but no, don't believe such
things, no, don't become ugly: she'd hate me too much!

CHRISTIAN That's what I'd like to find out!

CYRANO No, No!

CHRISTIAN Let her choose!

Tell her everything!

CYRANO Not that torment. I refuse!

CHRISTIAN Shall I kill your happiness because I'm handsome?
That's too unjust!

CYRANO And I, shall I provide a tomb
for yours, because, thanks to what nature revealed
I've the gift of expressing...what perhaps you feel?

CHRISTIAN Tell her all!

CYRANO He persists in tempting me, it's wrong!

CHRISTIAN I'm tired of carrying a rival inside myself so long!

CYRANO Christian!

CHRISTIAN Our pact - secret - without witnesses -
- can be dissolved - if we survive!

CYRANO He persists!...

CHRISTIAN Yes, I wish to be loved for myself, or not at all!
- I'll go and see what they're up to! I'll just walk
to the rampart's end and back, you speak, she'll prefer
one of us two!

CYRANO It will be you!

CHRISTIAN Well...I hope for her!
(*He calls.*)
Roxane!

CYRANO No! no!

Act Four

ROXANE (*coming up quickly*)
What?

CHRISTIAN Cyrano has something
important to say...

(She hastens to Cyrano. Christian goes out.)

SCENE TEN

Roxane, Cyrano

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

ROXANE Important, what?

CYRANO *(in despair, to Roxane)*

He's going!

Nothing...He attaches, - Oh! God! You must know -
importance to nothings!

ROXANE *(warmly)*

Perhaps, he doubted, though
the words I said there?...I saw that he doubted!

CYRANO *(taking her hand)*

But was there really truth, then, in what you said?

ROXANE Yes, I would love him even...

(She hesitates a moment.)

CYRANO *(smiling sadly)*

Does it embarrass
you to tell me?

ROXANE Well...

CYRANO It won't hurt me, alas!

- even if he were ugly! ...

Act Four

ROXANE Even then!

(Musket report outside.)

They fired!

CYRANO *(ardently)*

Hideous?

ROXANE Hideous!

CYRANO Disfigured?

ROXANE Disfigured!

CYRANO Grotesque?

ROXANE Nothing could make him grotesque to me!

CYRANO You'd love him still?...

ROXANE I'd almost love him more dearly!

CYRANO *(losing command over himself, aside)*

My God, it's true, perhaps, and happiness is there!

(To Roxane)

I... Roxane... listen...

LE BRET *(entering hurriedly, calling loudly)*

Cyrano!

CYRANO *(turning round)*

What?

LE BRET Hush!

(He whispers something to him.)

CYRANO *(letting go Roxane's hand and exclaiming)*
Ah!

ROXANE What's wrong?

CYRANO *(to himself, stunned)*
It's over.

(Renewed reports.)

ROXANE What? Are they still firing?

(She goes up to look outside.)

CYRANO It's over, now I can never say a thing!

ROXANE *(trying to rush out)*
What's happened?

CYRANO *(rushing to stop her)*
Nothing!

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

ROXANE Those men?

CYRANO *(drawing her away.)*
Come away!

ROXANE What were you going to say to me before...?

CYRANO Say?

to you... Nothing, Oh! Nothing I swear, Madame!

(Solemnly)

I swear that Christian's mind, the soul of the man
were...

(Correcting himself, fearfully)

are, the noblest...

ROXANE Were?

(With a loud scream)

Ah...!

(She rushes up, pushing every one aside.)

CYRANO It's done!

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

Christian!

LE BRET *(to Cyrano)*

The First shot from the enemy gun!

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

CARBON *(with sword in the air)*

An attack! To your muskets.

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

ROXANE Christian!

THE VOICE OF CARBON *(from the other side)*

You, and you!

ROXANE Christian!

CARBON *Form ranks!*

ROXANE Christian!

CARBON *Measure... your fuse!*

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

CHRISTIAN *(in a dying voice)*

Roxane!

CYRANO *(quickly, whispering into Christian's ear, while Roxane distractedly tears a piece of linen from his breast, which she dips into the water, trying to stanch the bleeding)*

I told her all. It's you she loves still: you!

(Christian closes his eyes.)

ROXANE How, my love?

CARBON *Draw your ramrods!*

ROXANE *(to Cyrano)*

He's not dead, no?

CARBON *Open your charges with your teeth!*

ROXANE I feel his face
is growing cold against my own!

CARBON *Take aim!*

Act Four

ROXANE (*seeing a letter in Christian's doublet*)

A letter, on him!

(*She opens it.*)

For me!

CYRANO (*aside*)

My letter!

CARBON *Fire!*

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

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

But, Roxane, they fight!

ROXANE (*detaining him*)

Stay with me awhile.

He's dead. You were the only one who knew him.

(*Weeping quietly*)

Wasn't he an exquisite being, a being...

wonderful!

CYRANO (*standing up - bareheaded*)

Yes, Roxane.

ROXANE A sublime spirit?

CYRANO Yes,

Roxane!

ROXANE A profound heart, unknown to the profane,

A soul, magnificent and delightful?

CYRANO (*firmly*)

Yes, Roxane!

ROXANE (*throwing herself on Christian's dead body*)

He's dead!

CYRANO (*aside - drawing his sword*)

And I have only to die it seems,
Since, without knowing it, she weeps for me!

(Sounds of trumpets in the distance.)

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

It is the agreed signal! A fanfare of trumpets!
The French bring provisions, now, to the cadets!
Hold for a little longer!

ROXANE Blood, on his letter,
tears!

A VOICE (*outside-shouting*)

Surrender!

VOICE OF CADETS No!

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

The danger's grows greater!

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

Get her away! We'll charge them!

Act Four

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

His blood! His tears!...

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

She's fainted!

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

Hold fast!

A VOICE (*outside*)

Lay down your weapons, there!

THE CADETS No! No!

CYRANO (*to De Guiche*)

Now that you've proved your courage, Sir,

(*Pointing to Roxane*)

run, and save her!

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

So be it! But we'll conquer,

if you can win us time!

CYRANO Good.

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

Farewell, Roxane!

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

CARBON I've been wounded twice by a halberd! We're broken!

CYRANO (*shouting to the Gascons*)

My braves! Don't retreat, you fools!

(To Carbon, whom he is supporting)

Now, be fearless!

I've two deaths to avenge: Christian's, and Happiness!

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

Float there, little flag of lace as her emblem!

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

Fall on them,

(To the Piper)

A tune on the pipes! *Let's crush them.*

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

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

They're climbing the redoubt!

(and falls dead.)

CYRANO Well, let's salute them, then!

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

Fire!

(General discharge.)

(A cry in the enemy's ranks)

Fire!

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

Act Four

A SPANISH OFFICER (*uncovering*)

Who are these death-intoxicated men?

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

They're the Cadets of Gascony,
Of Carbon de Castel-Jaloux!
Who fight and lie, most shamelessly,
(*He rushes forward, followed by a few survivors.*)
They're the Cadets...!

(*The rest is drowned in the battle.*)

Curtain.

ACT FIVE

Cyrano's Gazette



ifteen years later, in 1655, the Park of the Convent that the Sisters of the Holy Cross occupy in Paris.

Magnificent trees. On the left the house: broad steps onto which open several doors. An enormous plane tree in the middle of the stage, standing alone. On the right, among big boxwood trees, a semicircular stone bench.

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

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

It is autumn. All the foliage is red against the fresh green of the lawns. The green boxwood and yews stand out dark. Under each tree a patch of yellow leaves. The stage is strewn with dead leaves, which rustle under foot in the alleys, and half cover the steps and benches.

Between the bench on the right and the tree a large embroidery frame, in front of which a little chair has been set. Baskets full of skeins and balls of wool. A tapestry begun.

As the curtain rises, nuns are walking to and fro in the park; some are seated on the bench around an older Sister. The leaves are falling.



‘Entrance to the Convent of the French Capuchins in Athens’
Charles Meryon, Jacques-Philippe Le Bas, Auguste Delâtre, 1854,
The Rijksmuseum

SCENE ONE

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

SISTER MARTHA *(to Mother Marguérite)*

Sister Claire glanced twice in the mirror, to see
how her coif looked,

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE *(to Sister Claire)*

It's unattractive.

SISTER CLAIRE But Sister Martha took a plum from the tart
this morning: I saw it.

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE *(to Sister Martha)*

That's bad, sister Marthe.

SISTER CLAIRE Quite a tiny glance!

SISTER MARTHA Quite a tiny plum, though!

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE This evening I'm going to tell Monsieur
Cyrano.

SISTER CLAIRE No! He'll laugh at us!

SISTER MARTHA He'll say we nuns
are very vain!

SISTER CLAIRE And greedy!

Act Five

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE (*smiling*)

And very good!

SISTER CLAIRE For ten years now, Mother Marguérite de Jésus,
he's come here every Saturday, hasn't he!

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE True,
longer! Ever since his cousin, fourteen years today,
brought here the worldly grief of her widow's veil,
to join our woollen coifs, and fell among the nuns,
like a great dark bird among a flock of white ones!

SISTER MARTHA He alone, since she's taken refuge in this convent,
has known how to ease a grief that will not lessen.

ALL THE SISTERS He's so droll! - It's cheerful when he visits, truly!
- He teases us! He's kind! - We all love him dearly!
- We make pastries for him, with angelica!

SISTER MARTHA But, he's not a Catholic very strong in prayer!

SISTER CLAIRE We'll convert him!

THE SISTERS Yes! Yes!

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE I forbid you,
my children, even to begin to try to.
Don't torment him: perhaps he'll visit us less!

SISTER MARTHA But... God...

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE Be assured: God knows of his goodness!

SISTER MARTHA On Saturdays, when he arrives, in his proud way,
he tells me, 'Sister, I ate meat yesterday!'

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE Ah! Did he tell you that?... Well, last time,
before
we saw him, for two days he'd not eaten!

SISTER MARTHA Mother!

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE He is poor.

SISTER MARTHA Who told you so?

MOTHER MARGUERITE Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHA No one helps him at all?

MOTHER MARGUÉRITE No, that, he won't permit.

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

- Come now, we must go in... Madame Madeleine
is walking, with her visitor, in the garden,.

SISTER MARTHA *(to Sister Claire, in a low voice)*
It's the Marshal de Grammont?

SISTER CLAIRE *(looking at him)*
Yes, I think so.

SISTER MARTHA He hasn't been to see her for months, you know!

Act Five

THE SISTERS He's so busy! - The Court! – The Field!

SISTER CLAIRE The world's cares!

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

SCENE TWO

*Roxane, the Duke de Grammont, formerly Comte de Guiche.
Then Le Bret and Ragueneau.*

THE DUKE And you remain, wasting your beauty, there,
always in black?

ROXANE Always.

THE DUKE Ever faithful?

ROXANE Ever.

THE DUKE *(after a pause)*
You've forgiven me?

ROXANE *(humbly, gazing at the convent's cross)*
I have, since I came here.

(Another pause.)

THE DUKE Truly a great spirit?...

ROXANE One had to know him!

THE DUKE Ah! One had to?... I knew him too little it seems!
... His last letter: always next to that heart of yours?

ROXANE Like a sweet rosary, it hangs from this velvet cord.

Act Five

THE DUKE And, though he's dead, you love him?

ROXANE At times it seems
he isn't wholly dead, our hearts meet, in dreams,
and his love hovers round me, still living, then!

THE DUKE (*after another pause*)
Does Cyrano come to see you?

ROXANE Yes, often.
- My old friend is just like the Gazette to me.
He visits: a regular thing: here, under this tree,
they place his chair, if it's fine: I wait for him
I sew: the clock strikes: - and at the last chime
I hear - I never even turn to look! - his cane
tapping on the steps: he sits down: mocks, again,
my eternal tapestry: gives me a vignette
of all the week's news, and...
(*Le Bret appears on the steps.*)
Why, here's Le Bret!
(*Le Bret descends.*)
How is our friend?

LE BRET Ill.

THE DUKE Oh?

ROXANE (*to the Duke*)
An exaggeration!

LE BRET All I predicted: loneliness, destitution!...
His writings only make him fresh enemies!
He attacks false courtiers, false piety,
false heroes, plagiarisers, - everyone!

ROXANE But their terror of his sword is genuine.
No one will ever subdue him.

THE DUKE (*shaking his head*)
Who knows?

LE BRET It's not his being attacked I fear, it's those
December days that steal, on wolf's paws,
into his dark room, loneliness, famine's claws:
those are the assassins who'll finish him off!
- Each day he tightens his belt another notch.
His poor nose is the colour of old ivory.
He's only a black serge coat, and that one's shabby.

THE DUKE Ah! He's no coming man, that's for certain! – But all
the same, don't pity him too much.

LE BRET (*with a bitter smile*)
My Lord Marshal...

THE DUKE Don't pity him too much: living his convictions,
free in his thoughts, as well as in his actions!

LE BRET (*in the same tone*)
My Lord! ...

THE DUKE (*haughtily*)
I know, yes: I have everything, and he
has nothing...
but I'd shake his hand, most willingly.
(*Bowing to Roxane*)
Adieu!

ROXANE I'll accompany you.

Act Five

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

THE DUKE *(pausing, while she climbs the steps)*

Yes, I do envy such
as him – Don't you see, that if one succeeds too much
in life, one feels – having done nothing truly bad,
heaven knows - a thousand small self-disgusts, that add
to the sum of what's not remorse, but a vague unease:
a Duke's robes draw after them, among furred draperies,
as one climbs to grandeur, by grandeur's icy steps,
the rustle of dry illusions and regrets,
as when you climb these steps, among the trees,
your widow's robe draws after it...dead leaves.

ROXANE *(ironically)*

You're a great dreamer, then?...

THE DUKE Ah! Yes!

(As he is going out, suddenly)

Monsieur Le Bret!

(To Roxane)

A word, if you'll allow?

(He goes to Le Bret, and in a low voice)

It's true, that no one yet
dares to attack your friend: - but many hate him:
and someone said yesterday, in the Queen's card-game:
'That Cyrano may be killed in some accident.'

LE BRET Ah?

THE DUKE Yes. Let him not go out: be prudent.

LE BRET *(raising his arms to heaven)*

Prudent!

He's coming here. I'll warn him. Yes, but! ...

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

THE SISTER Ragueneau to see you, Madame.

ROXANE He may visit.
(*To the Duke and Le Bret*)
He comes to tell his woes. Feeling dissatisfied
one day with being an author, in turn he's tried
singer...

LE BRET Bath-house keeper ...

ROXANE Actor...

LE BRET Sexton...

ROXANE Wig-maker...

LE BRET Master of the lute ...

ROXANE And what now, I wonder?

RAGUENEAU (*entering hurriedly*)
Ah! Madame!
(*He sees Le Bret.*)
Monsieur!

ROXANE (*smiling*)
Tell all of your troubles
to Le Bret, I'll be back.

Act Five

RAGUENEAU But, Madame ...

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

SCENE THREE

Le Bret, Ragueneau.

RAGUENEAU After all,
since you're here I'd prefer she doesn't know!
I was going to see your friend a moment ago...
was still twenty paces away... when I saw him
go out. I went to meet him. Saw him turning
the corner...and I ran...when out of a window
as he passed – did it happen by chance?...perhaps so! -
A Servant let a large piece of timber fall.

LE BRET The cowards!...Cyrano!

RAGUENEAU I reached him and I saw...

LE BRET It's atrocious!

RAGUENEAU Our friend, dear Sir, our poet...
saw him there, on the ground - a great wound to his head!

LE BRET He's killed?

RAGUENEAU No! But...my God! I carried him home,
up to his room!...Ah! You should see that tiny room!

LE BRET Is he in pain?

RAGUENEAU No, Sir, he lost consciousness.

Act Five

LE BRET A doctor?

RAGUENEAU One of them came, out of goodness.

LE BRET My poor Cyrano! - Let's not say anything sudden to Roxane! - The doctor?

RAGUENEAU He was talking
of fever – and I know not what – brain damage!
Ah! If you saw him - his head swathed in a bandage!...
Let's go quickly! - There's no one by his bedside! -
if he gets up!... He might kill himself if he tries!

LE BRET (*dragging him toward the right*)
Go this way! It's quicker! Go, through the chapel!

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

Monsieur Le Bret!
(*Le Bret and Ragueneau disappear without answering.*)
Why does Le Bret go, though I call?
It's some new trouble of our good Ragueneau's.

(*She descends the steps.*)

SCENE FOUR

Roxane alone. Two sisters, for a moment.

ROXANE Ah! How sweetly the last day of September glows!

My sorrow herself smiles. She whom April offends,
allows herself to be wooed at calm Autumn's end.

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

Ah! Here comes the ancient chair that seats my dear
old friend!

SISTER MARTHA But it's the best one in the parlour!

ROXANE Thank you, sister.

(The sisters go.)

He'll come now.

(She seats herself. A clock strikes.)

There... the hour's striking.

- My silks! - The hour has struck! That's surprising!

Today, for the very first time, will he be late?

The sister at the door - my thimble?...Ah, I see it! -

is exhorting him to penitence.

(A pause.)

She is indeed!

- He won't be much longer, now. - Oh! A dead leaf! -

(She brushes the leaf from her sewing.)

Besides, nothing could - my scissors?...In my bag! -

prevent him coming here...

A SISTER *(coming to the steps)*

Monsieur de Bergerac.

SCENE FIVE

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

ROXANE *(without turning round)*

What did I say!...

(She embroiders. Cyrano appears, very pale, his hat pulled down over his eyes. The sister who had announced him retires. He descends the steps slowly, with visible difficulty in holding himself upright, bearing heavily on his cane. Roxane still works at her tapestry.)

Ah! These faded colours...

How to match them, now?

(To Cyrano, with playful reproach)

After all these fourteen years,
late, for the very first time!

CYRANO *(who has succeeded in reaching the chair, and has seated himself - in a lively voice, which makes a great contrast with his pale face)*

Yes, it's maddening!

I'm furious. I was delayed, such an irritating thing!...

ROXANE By? ...

CYRANO By a visit: one unwelcome enough.

ROXANE *(absently, working)*

Ah! Yes! Something troublesome?

CYRANO Cousin, it was
troublesome.

ROXANE You resolved it?

CYRANO Yes, I had to say:
excuse me, but today is Saturday,
the day when I must knock on a certain door:
nothing must stop me: so, return in an hour!

ROXANE (*carelessly*)
Well! That person will certainly wait to see you:
before evening falls, I can't do without you.

CYRANO Maybe a little earlier I might depart.

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

ROXANE (*to Cyrano*)
You've not teased Sister Marthe?

CYRANO (*hastily opening his eyes*)
True!
(In a comically loud voice)
Sister Marthe!
Come here!
(The sister glides up to him.)
Ah, ha! Bright eyes and always downcast!

SISTER MARTHA (*lifting her eyes and smiling*)
But...
(she makes a gesture of astonishment on seeing his face)
Oh!

Act Five

CYRANO (*in a whisper, pointing to Roxane*)

Hush! It's nothing! -

(*Loudly, in a blustering voice*)

Yesterday I broke fast!

SISTER MARTHA I know.

(*Aside*)

That's why he's so pale! Come to the refectory,
and I'll make you drink a bowl of soup, presently,
a big bowl of hot soup...Will you be there?

CYRANO Yes, yes!

SISTER MARTHA Ah! You're much more reasonable to-day, dear guest!

ROXANE (*who hears them whispering*)

Is she trying to convert you?

SISTER MARTHA I stop myself, you see!

CYRANO But it's true! You, always chattering so religiously,

You don't preach at me? That's astonishing, isn't it!...

(*With burlesque fury, flourishing his stick*)

By my wooden sabre! I'll astonish you a bit!

Wait! I'll allow you ...

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

Ah! Is this not something novel!...

To...to pray for me, this evening, in your chapel!

ROXANE Oh! Oh!

CYRANO (*laughing*)

Sister Martha's filled with stupefaction!

SISTER MARTHA (*gently*)

But, I didn't wait to receive your permission.

(*She goes out.*)

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

The devil if I'll ever see, dear tapestry,
your completion!

ROXANE I waited for that pleasantry.

(*At that moment a light breeze causes the leaves to fall.*)

CYRANO The leaves!

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

They're made of a Venetian gold.
Look at them falling!

CYRANO How lovely as they go!

From branch to soil, in so short a trajectory,
how they contrive to show that final beauty:
despite their terror of rotting, in earth's night,
they wish their fall to have the grace of flight!

ROXANE Melancholy, you?

CYRANO (*collecting himself*)

No, not at all, Roxane!

ROXANE Then let the plane-tree leaves fall, and you can...

tell me a little of the news you bring today.
My Gazette?

CYRANO Listen.

Act Five

ROXANE Ah!

CYRANO (*growing paler and paler*)

The nineteenth, Saturday:
having eaten eight helpings of fruit conserve
the King had a fever: two lancet cuts served
to condemn the sickness for lèse-majesté,
and the royal pulse was calm again, they say!
On Sunday, were consumed, at the Queen's grand ball,
seven hundred and sixty three white wax candles:
our troops, they say, have beaten the Austrians:
four witches were hanged. The little dog of Madame
d'Athis sadly required to be purged again...

ROXANE Monsieur de Bergerac, will you please be silent!

CYRANO Monday – nothing – Lygdamire changed her lover.

ROXANE Oh!

CYRANO (*whose face changes more and more*)

Tuesday, all the Court were at Fontainebleau.
Wednesday, La Montglat said to Comte de Fiesque:
'No!' Thursday - Mancini, was Queen!- Well scarcely less!
The twenty-fifth, La Monglat, to Comte Fiesque, said:
'Yes.' And Saturday, the twenty-sixth...

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

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

He's fainted?

(*She runs toward him, crying*)

Cyrano!

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

What is it?...What?...

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

No! No! I assure you,
it's nothing! Let me be!

ROXANE But ...

CYRANO It's only my wound ...

from Arras...that...sometimes...you know ...

ROXANE My poor friend!

CYRANO But it's nothing. It's ending.

(*He smiles with an effort.*)

See! It's at an end!

ROXANE Each of us has his wound: mine is still living:

always fresh, it's here, all that old suffering,

(*She puts her hand to her breast.*)

It's here, beneath this fading letter where you could,
if you looked, still see the tears, the stains of blood!

(*Twilight begins to fall.*)

CYRANO His letter! Didn't you say one day you'd suffer
me to read it?

ROXANE Ah you wish to? His letter?

CYRANO Yes...I would...to-day...

ROXANE (*giving him the bag from round her neck*)

Take it!

Act Five

CYRANO (*taking it*)

Can I open it?

ROXANE Open...read!...

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

CYRANO (*reading*)

'Roxane, farewell, since I shall die!...

ROXANE (*stopping, astonished*)

Aloud?

CYRANO 'I think my love that it will be tonight!

My soul still heavy with unspoken love, I pass!

*No more, no longer, will my intoxicated eyes, alas,
my glances for which...'*

ROXANE How you read, so fine!...

His letter.

CYRANO (*continuing*)

*...for which it meant tremulous delight,
be able to kiss the gestures you make, in flight:
and I see, again, that little familiar way
you have of touching your forehead, and wish to say...'*

ROXANE How you read it, now - that letter!

CYRANO 'And say, again:

Farewell!...

ROXANE You read it...

CYRANO *'My dear, my dear one,
my treasure...'*

ROXANE *(dreamily):*
In a voice, so...

CYRANO *'My love!...'*

ROXANE In a voice, so...
(she shivers)
Ah...not one that I hear for the first time, though

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

CYRANO *'My heart has never forgotten you for one second,
and I am, and will be, even in the world beyond,
the one who loves you beyond measure, the one...'*

(The shades of evening fall imperceptibly.)

ROXANE *(putting her hand on his shoulder)*

How are you able to read, now? Night has fallen!

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

Was this, for fourteen years, the role he was playing:
of the kind old friend, here merely to be amusing?

CYRANO Roxane!

ROXANE Then, it was you!

Act Five

CYRANO No, no, Roxane!

ROXANE I should have guessed it when he said my name!

CYRANO No! It was not me!

ROXANE It was you!

CYRANO Roxane, I swear!

ROXANE I see through the whole generous affair:
The letters: that was you!

CYRANO No!

ROXANE The sweet, mad words, too,
that was you!

CYRANO No!

ROXANE The voice in the night: that was you!

CYRANO I swear to you it was not.

ROXANE The soul, it was yours!

CYRANO I did not love you.

ROXANE You loved me!

CYRANO (*desperately*)
It was his!

ROXANE You loved me!

CYRANO *(in a weaker voice)*
No!

ROXANE Already you speak more softly!

CYRANO No, no, my dear love, I did not love you, truly!

ROXANE Ah! The things that have died...that are re-born!
- Why were you silent for fourteen years, when,
on this letter, which means nothing as far as he's
concerned, the tears were yours?

CYRANO *(holding out the letter to her)*
The blood was his.

ROXANE Why, then, choose to allow that sublime silence
to be broken to-day?

CYRANO Why? ...

(Le Bret and Ragueneau enter running.)

Act Five



‘Edmond Rostand: *Cyrano de Bergerac* – Before the Final Scene’
L'ILLUSTRATION, 8 January 1898, *Wikimedia Commons*

SCENE SIX

The same. Le Bret and Ragueneau.

LE BRET What nonsense!
Ah! I was sure of it! He's here!

CYRANO (*smiling and sitting up*)
Now what?

LE BRET He's killed himself being here, Madame!

ROXANE Dear God!
But, just a moment ago...that faintness?...that?...

CYRANO It's true! I've not completed my 'Gazette:
...Saturday, the twenty-sixth, an hour before dining,
Monsieur De Bergerac killed, by an assassin.

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

ROXANE What is he saying? Cyrano! - His head all bandaged!
Ah! What have they done to you? Why?...

CYRANO 'By the sword,
struck by a hero, to die of a thrust to the heart!'
- Yes, that's what I said!...Fate knows the jester's art!...
And now for me to be killed, by a servant, my God,
ambushed, struck from behind by a blow from a log!
That's fine. I've failed in everything, even my dying.

RAGUENEAU Ah, Monsieur!...

Act Five

CYRANO Ragueneau, let's have less crying!
(*holding out his hand to him*)
What have you turned to now, old friend, and where?

RAGUENEAU (*amid his tears*)
I'm a snuffer of candles for...for...Molière

CYRANO Molière!

RAGUENEAU But I'm leaving tomorrow, fast as I can:
Ah, I can't bear it!...Yesterday, they played '*Scapin*'
and he's stolen your scene!

LE BRET Lock stock and barrel too!

RAGUENEAU The famous: 'What the Devil was he going to do?...'

LE BRET Molière's stolen that from you?

CYRANO Ah! He's quite correct!...
(*to Ragueneau*)
That scene, didn't it produce a fine effect?

RAGUENEAU (*sobbing*)
Ah! Monsieur, they laughed so!

CYRANO Yes, what my life was for
was to be the one who prompts – and is ignored!
(*To Roxane*)
Remember the night when Christian filled the air
with words beneath your balcony? All my life's there:
while I remained below, in the shadowy blackness,
others climbed higher, to gather glory's kiss!
That's just, and I declare, on the tomb's dark sill,

Molière has genius: Christian was beautiful!
(The chapel-bell chimes. The nuns are seen passing down the alley at the back, to perform their offices.)

Let them go and pray, now that the bell rings!

ROXANE *(rising and calling)*

Sister! Sister!

CYRANO *(holding her fast)*

No, no! Don't run and bring
anyone! When you return, I won't be there.
(The nuns have entered the chapel. We hear the organ.)
I lacked a little harmony...and now it's here.

ROXANE I love you, live!

CYRANO No! It's only in storybooks

one says: 'I love you!' to the Prince of the Sorry Looks,
and he feels his ugliness fade, at those words of light...
but you'll see I'm as I was, the same, in your sight !

ROXANE I've been your unhappiness, I, I!

CYRANO You?...Never!

I never knew feminine sweetness. Even my mother
could never find me handsome. I had no sister, I
feared, later still, some mistress's mocking eye.
But through you one love, at least, has been my own.
Through my life, by your grace, passed *one* silken gown.

LE BRET *(Showing him the moon, which is seen descending among the branches)*

Your other love's there: come to see you!

CYRANO *(smiling)*

To my eyes.

Act Five

ROXANE I've only loved one being, and I've lost him twice!

CYRANO Le Bret, I'm going to climb to the moon's bright gleam,
without the need, this time, to invent a machine...

LE BRET What are you saying?

CYRANO Why yes, I tell you, *there* lies
the place they'll send me to find my Paradise.
There's more than one soul, exiled there, I love:
I'll find Socrates and Galileo again, above.

LE BRET (*rebelliously*)
No, no! It's too stupid in the end, and it's too
unjust! Such a poet! So great a heart, such virtue!
To die like this?...

CYRANO Here's Le Bret, grumbling, you see!

LE BRET (*weeping*)
My dear friend ...

CYRANO (*starting up, his eyes wild*)
They're the Cadets of Gascony!
- The elemental mass...Yes?...There's the snag...Discuss...

LE BRET Science...in his delirium!

CYRANO Copernicus
Said...

ROXANE Oh!

CYRANO But what the Devil was he doing, you see,
what the Devil was he doing there, in the galley?...

Physicist, Metaphysician,
Poet, duellist, and musician,
And Voyager to the Heavens,
Master of how to answer-back,
A Lover too - but not to his gain! -
Here lies Hercule Savinien
De Cyrano de Bergerac,
Who was all things, and all in vain.

But I must go, I cannot stay: forgive me:
you see, the moonlight comes to take me!

(He has fallen back in his chair: Roxane's sobbing recalls him to reality; he gazes at her, and touches her veil)

I'd not have you grieve any the less for your fine
good, handsome Christian: only, when my spine
has been gripped by the great frost, I'd request
a double meaning be given that widow's dress:
in your grief for him, grieve for me a little, though.

ROXANE I swear it!...

CYRANO *(shivering violently, then suddenly rising)*

Not there! Not sitting in my chair! No!

(They spring toward him.)

- Don't help me! - None of you!

(He props himself against the tree.)

Only this tree!

(Silence.)

He comes. Already I feel I've feet of marble,

- And gloves of lead!

(He stands erect.)

Act Five

Oh! But...since he's on his way,
I'll meet him standing,
(*He draws his sword.*)
And with my sword, at bay!

LE BRET Cyrano!

ROXANE (*half fainting*)

Cyrano!

(*All shrink back in terror.*)

CYRANO I believe he's staring...

that he dares to stare at my nose, that Ruffian!

(*He raises his sword.*)

What do you say? It's useless?...I know, ah yes!

But one cannot fight hoping only for success!

No! No: it's still more sweet if it's all in vain!

- Who are all you, there! – Thousands, you claim?

Ah, I know you all, you old enemies of mine!

Deceit!

(*He strikes in air with his sword.*)

There! There! Ha! And Compromise!

Prejudice, Cowardice! ...

(*He strikes.*)

That I make a treaty?

Never, never! – Ah! Are you there, Stupidity?

- I know that you'll lay me low in the end

No matter! I fight on! I fight! I fight again!

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

Yes you take all from me: the laurel and the rose!

Take them! Despite you there's something though

I keep, that tonight, as I go to meet my Deity,

will brush the blue threshold beneath my feet,

something I bear, in spite of you all, that's

free of hurt, or stain,

Cyrano de Bergerac

(He springs forward, his sword raised;
and that's...

(The sword falls from his hand; he staggers, and falls back into the arms of Le Bret and Ragueneau.)

ROXANE *(bending and kissing his forehead)*
that's? ...

CYRANO *(opening his eyes, recognizing her, and smiling as he speaks: the actor must try to convey the multiple meanings of the word panache, a feather, the plume in his hat, display, swagger, attack, or just spirit.)*
My panache.

Curtain.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR



Edmond Rostand, the French poet and dramatist, usually associated with neo-romanticism, was born in 1868 in Marseille, into a distinguished and wealthy family. His early poetry and plays achieved modest success, but it was the creation of his mock-heroic drama *Cyrano de Bergerac*, in 1897, with the great French actor Coquelin playing the title role, that brought him wider fame. A later play *L'Aiglon*, concerning the unhappy life of Napoleon's son, the Duke of Reichstadt, produced and performed by Sarah Bernhardt, at her own theatre, in 1900, was also well received. Rostand moved to live in the French Basque country during the 1900's, seeking a favourable climate for the pulmonary disease with which he was afflicted, and became a victim of the flu pandemic at the close of World War I, dying in 1918. He is buried in Marseille.



‘Edmond Rostand, Aged 29, at the First Performance of *Cyrano de Bergerac*’
L'ILLUSTRATION, 8 January 1898, *Wikimedia Commons*

ABOUT THE TRANSLATOR



Anthony Kline lives in England. He graduated in Mathematics from the University of Manchester, and was Chief Information Officer (Systems Director) of a large UK Company, before dedicating himself to his literary work and interests. He was born in 1947. His work consists of translations of poetry; critical works, biographical history with poetry as a central theme; and his own original poetry. He has translated into English from Latin, Ancient Greek, Classical Chinese and the European languages. He also maintains a deep interest in developments in Mathematics and the Sciences.

He continues to write predominantly for the Internet, making all works available in download format, with an added focus on the rapidly developing area of electronic books. His most extensive works are complete translations of Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Dante's *Divine Comedy*.