

# GUY DE MAUPASSANT

COMEDY OF MARRIAGE  
AND OTHER TALES

Ги д. Мопассан

**Comedy of Marriage and Other Tales**

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**Guy de Maupassant**  
**Comedy of Marriage and Other Tales**

**LA PAIX DU MÉNAGE**

**DRAMATIS PERSONAE**

**MONSIEUR DE SALLUS**  
**JACQUES DE RANDOL**  
**MADAME DE SALLUS**

Time: Paris, 1890

## ACT I

### SCENE I

Mme. de Sallus *in her drawing-room, seated in a corner by the fireplace. Enter Jacques de RANDOL noiselessly; glances to see that no one is looking, and kisses Mme. de Sallus quickly upon her hair. She starts; utters a faint cry, and turns upon him.*

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh! How imprudent you are!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Don't be afraid; no one saw me.

MME. DE SALLUS

But the servants!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, they are in the outer hall.

MME. DE SALLUS

How is that? No one announced you

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, they simply opened the door for me.

MME. DE SALLUS

But what will *they* think?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Well, they will doubtless think that *I* don't count.

MME. DE SALLUS

But I will not permit it. I must have you announced in future. It does not look well.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*laughs*]

Perhaps they will even go so far as to announce your husband —

MME. DE SALLUS

Jacques, this jesting is out of place.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Forgive me. [*Sits.*] Are you waiting for anybody?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes — probably. You know that I always receive when I am at home.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I know that I always have the pleasure of seeing you for about five minutes — just enough time to ask you how you feel, and then some one else comes in — some one in love with you, of course, — who impatiently awaits my departure.

MME. DE SALLUS [*smiles*]

Well, what can I do? I am not your wife, so how can it be otherwise?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Ah! If you only were my wife!

MME. DE SALLUS

If I were your wife?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I would snatch you away for five or six months, far from this horrible town, and keep you all to myself.

MME. DE SALLUS

You would soon have enough of me.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, no!

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes, yes!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Do you know that it is absolute torture to love a woman like you?

MME. DE SALLUS [*bridles*]

And why?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Because I covet you as the starving covet the food they see behind the glassy barriers of a restaurant.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, Jacques!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I tell you it is true! A woman of the world belongs to the world; that is to say, to everyone except the man to whom she gives herself. He can see her with open doors for a quarter of an hour every three days – not oftener, because of servants. In exceptional cases, with a thousand precautions, with a thousand fears, with a thousand subterfuges, she visits him once or twice a month, perhaps, in a furnished room. Then she has just a quarter of an hour to give him, because she has just left Madame X in order to visit Madame Z, where she has told her coachman to take her. If he complains, she will not come again, because it is impossible for her to get rid of her coachman. So, you see, the coachman, and the footman, and Madame Z, and Madame X, and all the others, who visit her house as they would a museum, – a museum that never closes, – all the he's and all the she's who eat up her leisure minute by minute and second by second, to whom she owes her time as an employee owes his time to the State, simply because she belongs to the world – all these persons are like the transparent and impassable glass: they keep you from my love.

MME. DE SALLUS

[*dryly*]

You seem upset to-day.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, no, but I hunger to be alone with you. You are mine, are you not? Or, I should say, I am yours. Isn't it true? I spend my life in looking for opportunities to meet you. Our love is made up of chance meetings, of casual bows, of stolen looks, of slight touches – nothing more. We meet on the avenue in the morning – a bow; we meet at your house, or at that of some other acquaintance – twenty words; we dine somewhere at the same table, too far from each other to talk, and I dare not even look at you because of hostile eyes. Is that love? We are simply acquaintances.

MME. DE SALLUS

Then you would like to carry me off?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Unhappily, I cannot.

MME. DE SALLUS

Then what?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I do not know. I only know this life is wearing me out.

MME. DE SALLUS

It is just because there are so many obstacles in the way of your love that it does not fade.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh! Madeline, can you say that?

MME. DE SALLUS [*softening*]

Believe me, dear, if your love has to endure these hardships, it is because it is not lawful love.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Well, I never met a woman as positive as you. Then you think that if chance made me your husband, I should cease to love you?

MME. DE SALLUS

Not all at once, perhaps, but – eventually.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What you say is revolting to me.

MME. DE SALLUS

Nevertheless, it is quite true. You know that when a confectioner hires a greedy saleswoman he says to her, “Eat all the sweets you wish, my dear.” She stuffs herself for eight days, and then she is satisfied for the rest of her life.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Ah! Indeed! But why do you include me in that class?

MME. DE SALLUS

Really, I do not know – perhaps as a joke!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Please do not mock me.

MME. DE SALLUS

I say to myself, here is a man who is very much in love with me. So far as I am concerned, I am perfectly free, morally, since for two years past I have altogether ceased to please my husband. Now, since this man loves me, why should I not love him?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You are philosophic – and cruel.

MME. DE SALLUS

On the contrary, I have *not* been cruel. Of what do you complain?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Stop! you anger me with this continual raillery. Ever since I began to love you, you have tortured me in this manner, and now I do not even know whether you have the slightest affection for me.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, you must admit that I have always been – good-natured.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, you have played a queer little game! From the day I first met you I felt that you were coquetting with me, coquetting mysteriously, obscurely, coquetting as only you can without showing it to others. Little by little you conquered me with looks, with smiles, with pressures of the hand, without compromising yourself, without pledging yourself, without revealing yourself. You have been horribly upright – and seductive. I have loved you with all my soul, yes, sincerely and loyally, and to-day I do not know what feeling you have in the depths of your heart, what thoughts you have hidden in your brain; in fact, I know-I know nothing. I look at you, and I see a woman who seems to have chosen me, and seems also to have forgotten that she *has* chosen me. Does she love me, or is she tired of me? Has she simply made an experiment – taken a lover in order to see, to know, to taste, – without desire, hunger, or thirst? There are days when I ask myself if among those who love you and who tell you so unceasingly there is not one whom you really love.

MME. DE SALLUS

Good heavens! Really, there are *some* things into which it is not necessary to inquire.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, how hard you are! Your tone tells me that you do not love me.

MME. DE SALLUS

Now, what *are* you complaining about? Of things I do not say? – because – I do not think you have anything else to reproach me with.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Forgive me, I am jealous.

MME. DE SALLUS

Of whom?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I do not know. I am jealous of everything that I do not know about you.

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes, and without my knowing anything about these things, too.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Forgive me, I love you too much – so much that everything disturbs me.

MME. DE SALLUS

Everything?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yes, everything.

MME. DE SALLUS

Are you jealous of my husband?

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*amazed*]

What an idea!

MME. DE SALLUS [*dryly*]

Well, you are wrong.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Always this raillery!

MME. DE SALLUS No, I want to speak to you seriously about him, and to ask your advice.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

About your husband?

MME. DE SALLUS [*seriously*]

Yes, I am not laughing, or rather I do not laugh any more. [*In lighter tone.*] Then you are not jealous of my husband? And yet you know he is the only man who has authority over me.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

It is just because he has authority that I am not jealous. A woman's heart gives nothing to the man who has authority.

MME. DE SALLUS

My dear, a husband's right is a positive thing; it is a title-deed that he can lock up – just as my husband has for more than two years – but it is also one that he can use at any given moment, as lately he has seemed inclined to do.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*astonished*]

You tell me that your husband —

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Impossible!

MME. DE SALLUS [*bridles*]

And why impossible?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Because your husband has – has – other occupations.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, it pleases him to vary them, it seems.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Jesting apart, Madeline, what has happened?

MME. DE SALLUS

Ah! Ah! Then you *are* becoming jealous of him.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Madeline, I implore you; tell me, are you mocking me, or are you speaking seriously?

MME. DE SALLUS

I am speaking seriously, indeed, very seriously.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Then what has happened?

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, you know my position, although I have never told you all my past life. It is all very simple and very brief. At the age of nineteen I married the Count de Sallus, who fell in love with me after he had seen me at the Opéra-Comique. He already knew my father's lawyer. He was very nice to me in those early days; yes, very nice, and I really believed he loved me. As for myself, I was very circumspect in my behavior toward him, very circumspect indeed, so that he could never cast a shadow of reproach on my name.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Well, did you love him?

MME. DE SALLUS

Good gracious! Why ask such questions?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Then you did love him?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes and no. If I loved him, it was the love of a little fool; but I certainly never told him, for positively I do not know how to show love.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I can vouch for that!

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, it is possible that I cared for him sometimes, idiotically, like a timid, restless, trembling, awkward, little girl, always in fear of that disturbing thing – the love of a man – that disturbing thing that is sometimes so sweet! As for him, – you know him. He was a sweetheart, a society sweetheart, who are always the worst of all. Such men really have a lasting affection only for those girls who are fitting companions for clubmen – girls who have a habit of telling doubtful stories and bestowing depraved kisses. It seems to me that to attract and to hold such people, the nude and obscene are necessary both in word and in body – unless – unless – it is true that men are incapable of loving any woman for a length of time.

However, I soon became aware that he was indifferent to me, for he used to kiss me as a matter of course and look at me without realizing my presence; and in his manners, in his actions, in his conversation, he showed that I attracted him no longer. As soon as he came into the room he would throw himself upon the sofa, take up the newspaper, read it, shrug his shoulders, and when he read anything he did not agree with, he would express his annoyance audibly. Finally, one day, he yawned and stretched his arms in my face. On that day I understood that I was no longer loved. Keenly mortified I certainly was. But it hurt me so much that I did not realize it was necessary to coquet with him in order to retain his affection. I soon learned that he had a mistress, a woman of the world. Since then we have lived separate lives – after a very stormy explanation.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What do you mean? What sort of explanation?

MME. DE SALLUS

Well —

JACQUES DE RANDOL

About — his mistress?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes and no. I find it difficult to express myself. To avoid my suspicions he found himself obliged, doubtless, to dissimulate from time to time, although rarely, and to feign a certain affection for his legitimate wife, the woman who had the right to his affection. I told him that he might abstain in future from such a mockery of love.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

How did you tell him that?

MME. DE SALLUS

I don't remember.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

It must have been amusing.

MME. DE SALLUS

No, he appeared very much surprised at first. Then I formulated a nice little speech and learned it by heart, in which I asked him to carry such intermittent fancies elsewhere. He understood me, saluted me very courteously, and — did as I asked him.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Did he never come back?

MME. DE SALLUS

Never, until —

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*interrupts*]

Has he never again tried to tell you of his love?

MME. DE SALLUS

No, never, until —

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*interrupts*]

Have you regretted it?

MME. DE SALLUS

That is of small importance. What is of importance, though, is that he has had innumerable mistresses whom he entertains, whom he supports, whom he takes out. It is this that has irritated and humiliated me — in fact, cut me to the quick. But then I took heart of grace, and too late, two years too late, I took a lover — you!

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*kisses her hand*]

And I, Madeline, I love you with my whole soul.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, all this is not at all proper.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What do you mean by “all this”?

MME. DE SALLUS

Life in general — my husband — his mistresses — myself — and you.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Your words — prove beyond a doubt that you do not love me.

MME. DE SALLUS

Why?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You dare to say of love that it is not proper? If you loved me, it might be divine, but a loving woman would abhor a phrase which should contain such an idea. What! True love not proper?

MME. DE SALLUS

Possibly. It all depends upon the point of view. For myself, I see too much.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What do you see?

MME. DE SALLUS

I see too well, too far, too clearly.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You do not love me?

MME. DE SALLUS

If I did not love you – a little – I should have had no excuse for giving myself to you.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

A little – just sufficient to warrant that excuse!

MME. DE SALLUS

But I do not excuse myself: I accuse myself.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Then you did love me a little – and then – now – you love me no more!

MME. DE SALLUS

Do not let us argue.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You do nothing else.

MME. DE SALLUS

No, I only judge the present by the past; the only just ideas and sane notions of life one can form are those concerning that which is past.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

And do you regret —

MME. DE SALLUS

Perhaps!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

And what about to-morrow?

MME. DE SALLUS

I do not know.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Is it nothing to you to have one who is yours, body and soul? MME. DE SALLUS [*shrugs her shoulders*]

Yes, mine to-day.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*vehemently*]

And to-morrow!

MME. DE SALLUS [*shrugs her shoulders again*]

Yes, the to-morrow that follows to-night, but not the to-morrow of a year hence.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*emphatically*]

You shall see. But how about your husband?

MME. DE SALLUS

Does he annoy you?

JACQUES DE RANDOL By heaven —

MME. DE SALLUS

Hush! [*Archly.*] My husband has fallen in love with me again.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Is it possible?

MME. DE SALLUS [*indignantly*]

What do you mean by such an insolent question, and why should it not be possible?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

A man falls in love with his wife before he marries her, but after marriage he never commits the same mistake.

MME. DE SALLUS

But perhaps he has never really been in love with me until now.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

It is absolutely impossible that he could have lived with you – even in his curt, cavalier fashion – without loving you.

MME. DE SALLUS [*indifferently*]

It is of little importance. He has either loved me in the past, or is now beginning to love me.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Truly, I do not understand you. Tell me all about it.

MME. DE SALLUS

But I have nothing to tell. He declares his love for me, takes me in his arms, and threatens me with his conjugal rights. This upsets me, torments me, and annoys me.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Madeline you torture me.

MME. DE SALLUS [*quickly*]

And what about me? Do you think that I do not suffer? I know that I am not exactly a faithful woman since I received your addresses, but I have, and shall retain, a single heart. It is either you *or* he. It will never be you *and* he. For me that would be infamy – the greatest infamy of a guilty woman, the sharing of her heart – a thing that debases her. One may fall, perhaps, because there are ditches along the wayside and it is not always easy to follow the right path. But if one falls, that is no reason to throw oneself in the abyss.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*takes her in his arms and kisses her*]

I simply adore you!

MME. DE SALLUS [*melts*]

And I, too, love you dearly, Jacques, and that is the reason why I fear.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

But, tell me, Madeline how long has it been since your husband reformed?

MME. DE SALLUS

Possibly fifteen days or three weeks.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Without relapse?

MME. DE SALLUS

Without relapse.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I will explain the mystery. The fact of the matter is this, your husband has simply become a widower.

MME. DE SALLUS

What do you say?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I mean that your husband is unattached just now, and seeks to spend his leisure time with his wife.

MME. DE SALLUS

But I tell you that he is in love with me.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yes – yes – and no. He is in love with you – and also with another. Tell me, his temper is usually bad, isn't it?

MME. DE SALLUS

Execrable!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Well, then, here is a man in love with you who shows his wonderful return of tenderness by moods that are simply unsupportable – for they are unsupportable, aren't they?

MME. DE SALLUS

Absolutely.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

If he wooed you with tenderness you would not feel fear. You would say to yourself, "My turn has come at last," and then he would inspire you with a little pity for him, for a woman has always a sneaking sort of compassion for the man who loves her, even though that man be her husband.

MME. DE SALLUS

Perhaps that is true.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Is he nervous, preoccupied?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

And he is abrupt with you, not to say brutal? He demands his right without even praying for it?

MME. DE SALLUS

True.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

My darling, for the moment you are simply a substitute.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh! no, no!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

My dearest girl, your husband's latest mistress was Madame de Bardane, whom he left very abruptly about two months ago to run after the Santelli.

MME. DE SALLUS

What, the singer?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yes, a capricious, saucy, cunning, venal little woman. A woman not at all uncommon upon the stage, or in the world either, for that matter.

MME. DE SALLUS

Then that is why he haunts the Opéra.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*laughs*]

Without a doubt.

MME. DE SALLUS [*dreamily*]

No, no, you are deceiving yourself.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*emphatically*]

The Santelli resists him and repulses him; then, burdened with a heart full of longing that has no outlet, he deigns to offer you a portion.

MME. DE SALLUS

My dear, you are dreaming. If he were in love with the Santelli, he would not tell me that he loves me. If he were so entirely preoccupied with this creature, he would not woo me. If he coveted her, he would not desire me at the same time.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

How little you understand certain kinds of men! Men like your husband, once inoculated with the poison of love, – which in them is nothing but brutal desire, – men like him, I say, when a woman they desire escapes or resists them, become raging beasts. They behave like madmen, like men possessed, with arms outstretched and lips wide open. They must love some one, no matter whom just as a mad dog with open jaws bites anything and everybody. The Santelli has unchained this raging brute, and you find yourself face to face with his dripping jaws. Take care! You call that love! It is nothing but animal passion.

MME. DE SALLUS [*sarcastically*]

Really, you are very unfair to him. I am afraid jealousy is blinding you.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, no, I am not deceiving myself, you may be sure.

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes, I think you are. Formerly my husband neglected and abandoned me, doubtless finding me very insipid; but now he finds me much improved, and has returned to me. It is very easy to understand, and moreover, it is the worse for him, for he *must* believe that I have been a *faithful* wife to him all my life.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Madeline!

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, what?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Does a girl cease to be a faithful wife, if, when deserted by the man who has assumed charge of her existence, and her happiness, and her love, and her ideals, she refuses to resign herself – young, beautiful, and full of hope – to eternal isolation and everlasting solitude?

MME. DE SALLUS

I think I have already told you that there are certain things which it is *not* necessary to discuss, and this is one of them. [*The front door bell sounds twice.*] Here is my husband. Please be silent. He is in a gloomy mood just now.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*rises*]

I think I shall go. I am not in love with your husband any more, for many reasons, and it is difficult for me to be polite to him when I despise him, and when I know that he ought to despise me, and would despise me when I shake hands with him, did he know all.

MME. DE SALLUS [*annoyed*]

How many times must I tell you that all this is entirely out of place?

## SCENE II

(*The same, including M. de Sallus.*)

*Enter M. de Sallus, evidently in a bad temper. He looks for a moment at Mme. de Sallus and at Jacques de Randol, who is taking his leave; then comes forward.*

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Ah! Sallus.

M. DE SALLUS

How are you, Randol? Surely you are not going because I came.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, but my time is up. I have an appointment at the club at midnight, and now it is half after eleven. [*They shake hands.*] Have you come from the first performance of “Mahomet”?

M. DE SALLUS

Oh! Of course.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

People say that it should be a great success.

M. DE SALLUS

It doubtless will be.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*shakes hands again with De SALLUS and Madame de Sallus*]

Well, till I see you again.

M. DE SALLUS

Till then, my dear fellow.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Madame, adieu.

MME. DE SALLUS

Adieu, Monsieur de Randol. [*Exit Randol.*]

### SCENE III

(M. de Sallus *and* Mme. de Sallus.)

M. DE SALLUS [*sinks into an armchair*]

Was Randol here any length of time?

MME. DE SALLUS

No, possibly half an hour.

M. DE SALLUS [*meditatively*]

Half an hour plus a whole hour makes an hour and a half, does it not? Time seems to fly when you are with him.

MME. DE SALLUS

What do you mean by an hour and a half?

M. DE SALLUS

Just what I say. When I saw the carriage waiting at the door, I asked the footman, who was within. He told me that it was M. Jacques de Randol. "Has he been here long?" I asked. "He has been here since ten," said the footman. Admitting that the man might have been mistaken, we will say, in the matter of a quarter of an hour, that would make an hour and a quarter, at the least.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, ho! What is this new attitude of yours? Have I not a right to receive whom I like now?

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, my dear, I deny you nothing, nothing, nothing. The only thing that astonishes me is that you do not know the difference between half an hour and an hour and a half.

MME. DE SALLUS

Are you looking for a scene? If you wish a quarrel, say so. I shall know how to answer you. You are simply in a bad temper. Go to bed and sleep, if you can.

M. DE SALLUS

I am not looking for a quarrel, neither am I in bad humor. I only state that time flies with you when you pass it in the company of Jacques de Randol.

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes, it does go quickly; far more quickly than when I am with you.

M. DE SALLUS

He is a very charming fellow, and I know you like him; and, moreover, he must like you very much, since he comes here every day.

MME. DE SALLUS

These insinuations are distasteful to me. Please speak plainly and say what you mean. Are you assuming the rôle of a jealous husband?

M. DE SALLUS

God forbid! I have too much confidence in you, and far too much esteem for you, to reproach you with anything, for I know that you have too much tact ever to give rise to calumny or scandal.

MME. DE SALLUS

Do not play with words. You think that M. Jacques de Randol comes too often to this house – to your house?

M. DE SALLUS

I do not find any fault with you for that.

MME. DE SALLUS

Thank you. You simply have not the right. However, since you adopt this attitude, let us settle this question once for all, for I loathe misunderstandings. It seems to me that you have an exceedingly short memory. Let me come to your aid. Be frank with me. Through some occurrence, the nature of which I do not know, your attitude is different today from that of the past two years. Cast your memory over the past, to the time when you began to neglect me in a manner that was plain to all. I became very uneasy. Then I knew – I was told, and I saw – that you were in love with Madame de Servières. I told you how hurt I was, how grieved I was. What did you reply? Just what every man replies when he no longer loves the woman who reproaches him. You shrugged your shoulders, smiled impatiently, told me I was mad, and then expounded to me – I must admit, in a most skillful manner – those grand principles of freedom in love that are adopted by every husband who deceives his wife and thinks she will not deceive him. You gave me to understand that marriage is not a bond, but simply an association of mutual interests, a social rather than a moral alliance; that it does not demand friendship or affection between married couples, provided there be no scandal. You did not absolutely confess the existence of your mistresses, but you pleaded extenuating circumstances. You were very sarcastic upon the subject of those poor, silly women who object to their husbands being gallant toward other women, since, according to you, such gallantry is one of the laws of the polished society to which you belong. You laughed at the foolish man who does not dare to pay compliments to a woman in the presence of his own wife, and ridiculed the gloomy look of a wife whose eyes follow her husband into every corner, imagining that because the poor man disappears into an adjoining room he is at the feet of a rival. All this was very airy, funny, and disagreeable, wrapped up in compliments and spiced with cynicism – sweet and bitter at the same time, and calculated to banish from the heart all love for a smooth, false, and well-bred man who could talk in such a manner. I understood, I wept, I suffered, and then I shut my door upon you. You made no objection; you judged me better than you thought; and since then we have lived completely separate lives. Such has been the case for the past two years, two long years and more, which certainly have not seemed more than six months to you. We go into society as usual, we return from society as usual, and we each enter our own temple of life. The situation was established by you in consequence of your first infidelity, an infidelity which has been followed by many others. I have said nothing; I have resigned myself to the situation; and I have banished you from my heart. Now that I have finished, what do you wish?

M. DE SALLUS

My dear, I am not asking for anything. I do not even wish to answer the very aggressive speech you have done me the honor to make. I only wish to give you advice – the advice of a friend – upon a situation that may possibly endanger your reputation. You are beautiful, always in the public eye, and much envied. Scandal could have easy birth.

MME. DE SALLUS

Pardon me. If we are to speak of scandal, I must have leave to balance my account with you.

M. DE SALLUS

Come, do not let us joke over this thing. I speak to you as a friend – seriously, as a friend. As to what you have said about me, it is all extremely exaggerated.

MME. DE SALLUS

Not at all. You have never tried to conceal, in fact, you have actually proclaimed to all the world your infidelities – a fact which gives me the right to go and do likewise, and, my friend, believe what I say —

M. DE SALLUS

One moment —

MME. DE SALLUS

Let me finish. According to you, I am beautiful, I am young, and yet condemned by my husband to live, and watch him live, as if I were a widow. Look at me [*rises*], is it just to consign me to play the rôle of an abandoned Ariadne, while my husband runs from this woman to that woman, and this girl to that girl? [*Grows excited.*] A faithful wife! I cry you mercy! Is a faithful wife compelled to sacrifice all her life, all her happiness, all her affections, everything, in fact, every privilege, every expectation, every claim, which is hers by birth and for which she has been born? Look at me! Am I made for a nunnery? The fact that I married you should answer that question. And yet, you, *you*, who took me from my father's house, neglect me to run after others. And what others? I am not in their circle, neither am I one of those who would share your life with others. So much the worse for you – for I am free, and you have no right to give me advice since I *am* free.

M. DE SALLUS

My dear girl, be calm. You misunderstand me completely. I have never suspected you. Indeed, I have the most profound esteem and friendship for you – a loving friendship which grows greater every day. I have no wish to comment upon that past with which you reproach me so cruelly. Perhaps I am a little too – too – what shall I say?

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh! Say that you belong to the period of the Regency. I know that method of excusing all male weaknesses and follies. Oh! yes; that eighteenth century, that *dainty* century, so full of *elegance*, so full of delicious *fantasies* and adorable *whims*! Alas! my dear, that is ancient history.

M. DE SALLUS

No, no, you misunderstand me again. Believe me, I am and have been above everything too – too – much of a Parisian, too much accustomed to turning night into day, for the sedate life of marriage. I have been too much accustomed to go behind the scenes of theaters, to various clubs, to a thousand other forms of dissipation; and you know a man cannot change all at once, – it takes time. Marriage seeks to change us all too suddenly. It ought to give us time to get accustomed to it, little by little. You would practically take away from me the joy of life were I to behave as you seem to desire.

MME. DE SALLUS

I am so grateful; and now, perhaps, you wish to offer me a new proof – a new proof —

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, as you please. Really, when a man who has lived as I have married, he can hardly help looking upon his wife as a new mistress – I mean to say a faithful mistress – and it is only when it is too late that he understands more clearly, – comes to his senses and repents.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, my friend, it *is* too late. As I have already told you, I mean to have my innings. I have taken nearly three years to think it over. You may think that is long, but I need some amusement as well as you. The fact that I have taken nearly three years to think it over is a compliment to you, but you fail to see it.

M. DE SALLUS

Madeline, this jesting is altogether out of place.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh! no, because I am compelled to think that every one of your mistresses was far more attractive than I, since you have preferred them to me.

M. DE SALLUS

What sort of mood are you in?

MME. DE SALLUS

In the same mood that I always am. It is you who have changed.

M. DE SALLUS

True, I *have* changed.

MME. DE SALLUS

And that is to say —

M. DE SALLUS

That I have been an idiot.

MME. DE SALLUS

And that —

M. DE SALLUS

I am sane once more.

MME. DE SALLUS

And that —

M. DE SALLUS

That I am again in love with my wife.

MME. DE SALLUS

You must have returned to your youth.

M. DE SALLUS

What do you say?

MME. DE SALLUS

I say that you must have returned to your youth.

M. DE SALLUS

What do you mean?

MME. DE SALLUS

Let me illustrate. When you are young you are always hungry, and when a youth is hungry he often eats things that he would not eat at another time. Well, I am the dish, — the dish that you have neglected in your days of plenty, the dish to which you return in the days of scarcity — [*slowly*] for which I thank you!

M. DE SALLUS

I have never looked upon you as you think. You pain me as well as astonish me.

MME. DE SALLUS

So much the worse for both of us. If I astonish you, you repel me. Learn now, once for all, that I am not made for the rôle of a substitute.

M. DE SALLUS [*approaches her, takes her hand and presses a long kiss upon it*]

Madeline, I swear to you that I love you, in truth, devotedly, now and forever.

MME. DE SALLUS [*ironically*]

You must really believe it! [*Suddenly.*] But who is the woman that attracts — and repels you — just now?

M. DE SALLUS

Madeline, I swear —

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, a truce to your swearing! I know that you have just broken with one of your mistresses; you need another and you cannot find one, so you come to me. For nearly three years you have forgotten all about me, so that now you find I am somewhat of a novelty. It is not your wife you are seeking

now, but a woman with whom you have formerly had a rupture, and with whom you now desire to make up. To speak the truth you are simply playing the game of a libertine.

M. DE SALLUS

I do not ask you whether you be my wife or not my wife. You are the woman I love, the woman who possesses my heart. You are the woman of whom I dream, whose image follows me everywhere, whom I continually desire. It happens that you are my wife. So much the worse, or so much the better. What matters it?

MME. DE SALLUS

Truly, it is a distinguished part that you offer me. After Mademoiselle Zozo, after Mademoiselle Lilie, Mademoiselle Tata, you have the audacity to offer to your wife – to Madame de Sallus – the place left vacant, asking her to become her husband's mistress for a short space of time.

M. DE SALLUS

No; now, and – forever.

MME. DE SALLUS

Pardon me. You ask that I should re-become your wife forever? That is out of the question; I have already ceased to entertain the idea. The reason may be obscure, but nevertheless it is real; and after all, the idea of making me your *legitimate* mistress seems to be far more entertaining to you than assuming the rôle of a *faithful* husband.

M. DE SALLUS [*laughs*]

Well, why should not the wife become the husband's mistress? You are right in what you say; you are absolutely free and I own my faults. Yet, I am in love with you-for the second time, if you will-and I say to you, here and now, Madeline, since you confess that your heart is empty, have pity upon me, for I tell you that I love you.

MME. DE SALLUS

And you ask me to give you a husband's right?

M. DE SALLUS

I do.

MME. DE SALLUS

And you acknowledge that I am free, absolutely free?

M. DE SALLUS

I do.

MME. DE SALLUS

And you really wish me to become your mistress?

M. DE SALLUS

I do.

MME. DE SALLUS

You understand what I mean – your mistress?

M. DE SALLUS

Yes.

MME. DE SALLUS [*sarcastically*]

Well, well! I think I would rather accept another offer that I have, but since you are good enough to ask me to give you the preference, I may give it to you – for a fair sum.

M. DE SALLUS

What do you mean?

MME. DE SALLUS

Just what I say. Listen! Do you consider me as attractive as any of your mistresses? Now, be frank with me.

M. DE SALLUS

A thousand times more!

MME. DE SALLUS

Really!

M. DE SALLUS

I swear it!

MME. DE SALLUS

What, better than the best?

M. DE SALLUS

A thousand times!

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, tell me, now, truly, how much has the one you liked best among all your numerous mistresses cost you, let us say – in three months?

M. DE SALLUS

I cannot tell.

MME. DE SALLUS

Listen to me. I repeat the question. How much has the most charming of your numerous mistresses cost you in the space of three months – not only in money, but in gifts of jewelry, in dainty little suppers, in ceremonious dinners, in theater boxes, – in everything?

M. DE SALLUS

How can I tell?

MME. DE SALLUS

You should be able to. Come, let us make an estimate. Did you give her a round sum, or did you pay for everything separately? However, I know you are not a man to bother over details, so I conclude that you gave her a round sum.

M. DE SALLUS

Madeline, you are absolutely unbearable.

MME. DE SALLUS

Follow me closely. When you began to neglect me, you took away three horses from our stables – one of them was mine and the other two were yours. Then you took away a coachman and a footman; you then found it necessary to make me economize at home in order that you might be extravagant abroad.

M. DE SALLUS

That is not true.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh! yes, it is. I have every date; do not deny it, for I shall confound you if you do. You also stopped giving me jewels, for, of course, you had other ears, other fingers, other wrists, and other necks to adorn. You also deprived me of one of my nights at the Opéra, and I do not know how many other things less important. And all this, according to my idea, should mean about five thousand francs a month. Am I not right?

M. DE SALLUS

You may be, but you are mad.

MME. DE SALLUS

No, no, confess; did the most expensive one of your mistresses cost you about five thousand francs a month?

M. DE SALLUS

You are crazy.

MME. DE SALLUS

If you are going to answer me thus, I bid you good evening. [*She rises as if to retire, but M. de Sallus interposes.*]

M. DE SALLUS

Come now, Madeline, a truce to this jesting.

MME. DE SALLUS [*in a determined manner*]

Five thousand francs? Tell me, did she cost you five thousand francs?

M. DE SALLUS [*shrugs his shoulders*]

Oh, yes, thereabouts.

MME. DE SALLUS [*looks him straight in the face*]

Ah, ah! Well, listen. If you will give me immediately five thousand francs, you may be my husband for a month – but only a month.

M. DE SALLUS

You have lost your head!

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, farewell, good night!

M. DE SALLUS

What a farce! Stop, Madeline, let us talk seriously.

MME. DE SALLUS

About what?

M. DE SALLUS

Of – of – hang it – of my love for you.

MME. DE SALLUS [*archly*]

But that's not a serious question at all.

M. DE SALLUS

I swear it is!

MME. DE SALLUS

Hypocrite! You make me thirsty with so much talk. [*Goes to a chiffonier, where there is a decanter and various liqueurs, and pours herself out a glass of water. At the instant she begins to drink, M. de Sallus steals up and kisses her on the back of the neck. She turns with a start and throws the glass of water in his face.*]

M. DE SALLUS

I suppose you think that funny.

MME. DE SALLUS

It may or may not be. Certainly what you have done, or tried to do, was ridiculous.

M. DE SALLUS

Madeline, I ask —

MME. DE SALLUS

Five – thousand – francs.

M. DE SALLUS

But that would be idiotic.

MME. DE SALLUS

And why?

M. DE SALLUS

Ask me why a husband should pay his wife – his lawful wife – when he has the right?

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, no, no. You may have the strength, but I can have my revenge.

M. DE SALLUS

Madeline —

MME. DE SALLUS

Five – thousand – francs.

M. DE SALLUS

I should be an object of ridicule forever if I were to pay my wife – yes – not only an object of ridicule, but an idiot, an imbecile.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, don't you think it is still more imbecile, when you have such a wife as I, to – to go outside and – pay mistresses?

M. DE SALLUS

Madeline, I confess it; but now – we are husband and wife, and it is not necessary to ruin me, is it?

MME. DE SALLUS

Allow me. When you took your wealth – the wealth which was also partly mine by marriage – to pay for your folly, you committed an action that was more than doubtful. In fact, it was criminal, for you ruined me at the same time you ruined yourself. I use your own language. I have refrained from asking you more about the folly that is in question; moreover, the five thousand francs that you must give me will be spent upon your own house. You must admit that is practical economy. But I know you; I know that you are never in love with anything that is lawful and right; so in paying dearly – very dearly, because I shall probably seek an increase – for what you have the right to take, you will find our —*liaison*— far more to your taste. [*Smiles.*] Good night, I am going to bed.

M. DE SALLUS [*angrily*]

Will you take it in cash, or have a cheque?

MME. DE SALLUS [*haughtily*]

I prefer cash.

M. DE SALLUS [*opening a pocketbook*]

I have only three bank-notes. I will give you the rest in a cheque. [*Writes a cheque and hands it to Mme. de Sallus.*]

MME. DE SALLUS [*takes the cheque, looks at M. de Sallus with disgust, and Speaks in harsh tones*]

You are just the kind of man I took you to be. After paying your numerous mistresses, you actually consent to pay me as if I were like them – without any feeling of disgust or realizing the difference in our situation. You have said that I asked too much, you have pleaded the fear of ridicule, but you could not understand that you were consenting to *buy* me —*me*— your *wife*! You wished to possess me for a little, as a sort of variation to your usual list, although your heart must have told you that it was degrading to me to be placed on such a plane. You did not recoil from such an idea, but pursued it, just as you pursue them, and the more eagerly, because I was more expensive. But you have deceived yourself, not me. Not thus will you ever regain possession of your wife. Adieu, Monsieur! [*Throws the money in his face, and makes a haughty exit.*]

## ACT II

### SCENE I

Madame de Sallus *alone in her drawing-room, as in Act I. She is writing; she stops and looks at the clock. A servant announces Monsieur Jacques de Randol.*

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*after kissing Mme. de Sallus's hand*]

I trust you are well, Madame.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, yes, thank you.

[*Exit servant.*]

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What is it all about? Your letter has completely upset me. I thought some accident had occurred, and I came immediately.

MME. DE SALLUS [*looks at him steadfastly*]

My dear Jacques, we must decide upon some course of action immediately. The important hour has come.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*surprised*]

What do you mean?

MME. DE SALLUS

For two days I have undergone all the anguish that a woman's heart can endure.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*still more surprised*]

What has happened?

MME. DE SALLUS

I am about to tell you, but I wish to do so with calmness and moderation lest you think me mad. That is the reason why I sent for you.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You know that I am yours entirely. Tell me what I must do.

MME. DE SALLUS

I cannot live near him any longer. It is absolutely impossible. It is an hourly crucifixion.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Near your husband?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes, my husband.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What has he done?

MME. DE SALLUS

It is necessary to revert to the other evening, after you took your leave. When we were alone he tried to make a jealous scene, with you as the subject.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

With me as the subject?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes, a scene which proved to me that he had been watching us.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

How?

MME. DE SALLUS

He had been questioning a servant.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Nothing more than that?

MME. DE SALLUS

No. That in itself, however, is not of much importance, for I believe he really likes you. But, after that, he told me of his love for me. Perhaps I was a little too insolent, too disdainful. I do not know exactly how far I went; but I found myself in such a perplexing, such a painful, such an extraordinary situation, that I dared everything to escape it.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What did you do?

MME. DE SALLUS

I sought to wound him so deeply that he would leave me forever.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Apparently you have not succeeded.

MME. DE SALLUS

No.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Of course not; that method never does succeed. On the contrary, it often brings about a reconciliation.

MME. DE SALLUS

The next day, during luncheon, he was sulky, irritable, and gloomy. Then, as he was rising from the table, he said, "I have not forgotten your behavior of yesterday, and shall not let you forget it. You wish for war, let it be war; but I warn you that I shall conquer you, because I am your master." I answered him, "Be it so; but if you drive me to extremity, take care, – it is not always safe to make a woman desperate."

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Especially when that woman is his wife. And what did he reply?

MME. DE SALLUS

He did not reply in words; but he treated me brutally.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Did he strike you?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes and no. He jostled me, he squeezed me, he suffocated me. I have bruises all along my arms, but he did not strike me.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Then what did he do?

MME. DE SALLUS

He hugged and embraced me, trying to overcome my resistance.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Is that all?

MME. DE SALLUS

What do you mean by saying, "Is that all?" Don't you think that is enough?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You do not understand me. I only wish to know whether he struck you.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, no. I am not afraid of that from him; but luckily I was able to ring the bell.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You rang the bell?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What a thing to do! [*Smiles.*] And when the servant came, did you ask him to show your husband out?

MME. DE SALLUS [*pouts*]

You seem to find this very funny.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, no, my dear Madame; it is all exceedingly painful to me, but I cannot help realizing the grotesqueness of the situation. Pardon me, – and what then?

MME. DE SALLUS

I ordered my carriage. And then, as soon as Joseph had gone out, my husband said, with that arrogant air which you know so well in him, “Today, or to-morrow – it matters not which.”

JACQUES DE RANDOL

And —

MME. DE SALLUS

And that is almost all.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Almost?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes, because since then I have locked myself in my room as soon as I heard him coming in.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Haven't you seen him since?

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, yes, several times, but only for a few minutes each time.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

What has he said to you?

MME. DE SALLUS

Little or nothing. He either sneers or insolently asks whether I am less savage to-day. Last night at the table he brought out a little book, which he read during dinner. As I did not wish to appear embarrassed or anxious, and desired to maintain my dignity, I said: “Your manners toward me are certainly exceedingly courteous.” He smiled and replied: “What did you say?” “It is strange that, for reading, you should choose the time that we are together,” I said. He answered: “Great heavens! It is all your fault, since you do not care to be amiable. Besides, this little book is very interesting. It is the Civil Code. Perhaps you would like to become acquainted with some clauses in it. They would certainly interest you.” Then he read me the law concerning marriage; the duties of a wife and the rights of a husband. Then he looked me full in the face, and asked me whether I understood. I answered in the same tone that I understood too much, – especially did I understand the kind of man I had married. Then I went out and I have not seen him since.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Haven't you seen him to-day?

MME. DE SALLUS

No. He lunched alone. As for myself, I have thought over the situation, and have decided not to meet him *tête-à-tête* any more.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

But are you quite sure that at bottom his attitude is not induced by anger, by wounded vanity, by disappointment, and perhaps by a little bravado? Possibly he will behave himself better in future. To-night he is at the Opéra. The Santelli has scored a great success in “Mahomet,” and I think she has invited him to supper after the performance. Now, if the supper is very much to his taste, he will probably be in good humor when he comes home.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh! How provoking you are. Can't you understand that I am in the power of this man, that I belong to him even more than his valet or his dog, because he has those abominable legal rights over me? The Code, your barbarous Code, puts me entirely in his power without any possible defense on my part; save actually killing me, he can do everything. Can't you understand that? Can't you realize the horror of my situation? Imagine, save actual murder, he can do anything to me, and he has the strength – not only physical but legal – to obtain anything from me. And I, I have not a single avenue of escape from a man whom I despise and hate. And that is the law made by you men! He took me, married me, deserted me. On my part, I have an absolutely moral right to leave him. And yet, despite this righteous hatred, this overpowering disgust, this loathing which creeps through me in the presence of the man who has scorned me, deceived me, and who has fluttered, right under my eyes, from girl to girl – this man, I say, has the right to demand from me a shameful and infamous concession. I have no right to hide myself; I have no right even to a key to my own door. Everything belongs to him – the key, the door, and even the woman who hates him. It is monstrous! Can you imagine such a horrible situation? That a woman should not be mistress of herself, should not even have the sacred right of preserving her person from a loathsome stain? And all this is the consequence of the infamous law which you men have made!

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*appealingly*]

My darling! I fully understand what you must be suffering; but how can I help it? No magistrate can protect you; no statute can preserve you.

MME. DE SALLUS

I know it. But when you have neither mother nor father to protect you, when the law is against you, and when you shrink from complicity in those degrading transactions to which many women yield themselves, there is always one means of escape.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

And that?

MME. DE SALLUS

Flight.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You mean to say —

MME. DE SALLUS

Flight.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Alone?

MME. DE SALLUS

No – with you.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

With me! Are you dreaming?

MME. DE SALLUS

No; so much the better. The scandal of it will prevent him from taking me back. I have gained courage now. Since he forces me to dishonor, I shall see that that dishonor is complete and overwhelming – even though it be the worse for him and for me.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh! Beware, beware, my darling! You are in one of those moments of exaltation and nervous excitement in which a woman sometimes commits a folly that is irreparable.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, I would rather commit such a folly and ruin myself – if that be ruin – than expose myself to the infamous struggle with which each day I am threatened.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Madeline, hear me. You are in a terrible situation, but for God's sake do not throw yourself into one that is irretrievable. Be calm, I implore you.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, what do you advise?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I do not know; we shall see. But I do not, I cannot, advise you to venture on a scandal which will put you outside the pale of society.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, yes, there is another law, an unwritten law which permits one to have lovers, even though it be shameful, because [*sarcastically*] it does not outrage society.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

That is not the question. The thing is to avoid taking up a wrong position in your quarrel with your husband. Have you decided to leave him?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Finally and forever?

MME. DE SALLUS

Yes.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Do you mean for *all* time?

MME. DE SALLUS

For *all* time.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Well, now, be cautious; be careful and cunning; guard your reputation and your name. Make neither commotion nor scandal, and await your opportunity.

MME. DE SALLUS [*ironically*]

And must I continue to be very charming when he returns to me, and be ready for all his fancies?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, Madeline, I speak to you in the truest friendship.

MME. DE SALLUS [*bitterly*]

In the truest friendship!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yea, as a friend who loves you far too dearly to advise you to commit any folly.

MME. DE SALLUS

And loves me just enough to advise me to be complaisant to a man I despise.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I! Never, never. My most ardent desire is to be with you forever. Get a divorce, and then if you still love me, let us wed.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, yes, yes – two years from now. Certainly, you *are* a patient lover!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

But supposing I were to carry you off, he would take you back to-morrow; would shut you up in his house, and would never get a divorce lest you should become my wife.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, do you mean to say I could fly nowhere but to your house, that I could not hide myself in such fashion that he would never find me?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yes, you could hide yourself, but it would be necessary for you to live abroad under another name, or buried in the country, till death. That is the curse of our love. In three months you would hate me. I never will let you commit such a folly.

MME. DE SALLUS

I thought you loved me enough to fly with me, but it seems that I am mistaken. Adieu!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Madeline, listen to me for God's —

MME. DE SALLUS Jacques, take me, or leave me — answer!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Madeline, I implore you!

MME. DE SALLUS

Never! Adieu! [*Rises and goes to the door.*]

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Once more I implore you, Madeline, listen to me.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, no, no; adieu! [*De Randol takes her by the arms; she frees herself angrily.*] Unhand me! Let me go, or I shall call for help!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Call if you will, but listen to me. I would not that you should ever be able to reproach me for the madness that you meditate. God forbid that you should hate me, but, bound to me by this flight that you propose, you would carry with you forever a keen and unavailing regret that I allowed you to do it.

MME. DE SALLUS

Let me go! I despise you! Let me go!

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Well, if you wish to fly, why, let us fly.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, no, not now. I know you now. It is too late. Let me go.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I have done exactly what I ought to have done; I have said exactly what I ought to have said; consequently, I am no longer responsible for you, and you have no right to reproach me with the consequences. So let us fly.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, no, it is too late, and I do not care to accept sacrifices.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

There is no more any question of sacrifice. To fly with you is my most ardent desire.

MME. DE SALLUS [*astonished*]

You are mad.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Well, suppose I am mad. That is only natural, since I love you.

MME. DE SALLUS

What do you mean?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I mean what I say. I love you; I have nothing else to say. Let us fly.

MME. DE SALLUS

Ah, you were altogether too cautious just now to become so brave all at once.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Will you ever understand me? Listen to me. When I first realized that I adored you, I made a solemn vow concerning what might happen between you and me. The man who falls in love with a woman such as you, a woman married yet deserted; a slave in fact yet morally free, institutes between

her and himself a bond which only she can break. The woman risks everything. Ay, it is just because she does this, because she gives everything – her heart, her body, her soul, her honor, her life, because she has foreseen all the miseries, all the dangers, all the misfortunes that can happen, because she dares to take so bold, and fearless a step, and because she is ready and determined to hazard everything – a husband who could kill her, and a world that would scorn her – it is for all this and for the heroism of her conjugal infidelity, that her lover, in taking her, ought to foresee all, to guard her against every ill that can possibly happen. I have nothing more to say. I spoke at first as a calm and foreseeing man who wished to protect you against everything – now I am simply and only the man who loves you. Order me as you please.

MME. DE SALLUS

That is all very prettily said; but is it true?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I swear it!

MME. DE SALLUS

You wish to fly with me?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yes.

MME. DE SALLUS

From the bottom of your heart?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

From the bottom of my heart.

MME. DE SALLUS

To-day?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yes, and whenever you please.

MME. DE SALLUS

It is now a quarter to eight. My husband will be coming in directly, for we dine at eight. I shall be free at half past nine or ten o'clock.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Where shall I wait for you?

MME. DE SALLUS

At the end of the street in a *coupé*. [*The bell rings.*] There he is, and for the last time, thank God!

## SCENE II

(*The same characters, and M. de Sallus.*)

M. DE SALLUS [*enters. To Jacques de Randol, who has risen to take his leave*]

Well, you are not going again, are you? Why, it seems that I need only come in to make you take your leave.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, no, my dear fellow; you don't make me go, but I must.

M. DE SALLUS

That is just what I say. You always go the very moment I come in. Of course, I understand that a husband is less attractive than a wife. But, at least, let me believe that *I* am not objectionable to you. [*Laughs.*]

JACQUES DE RANDOL

On the contrary, my dear fellow, you know I like you. And if you would acquire the habit of coming into your own house without ringing the bell, you would never find me taking my leave when you come.

M. DE SALLUS

How is that? Is it not natural to ring the door bell?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, yes; but a ring of the bell always makes me feel that I must go, and surely, coming into your own house, you can dispense with that habit.

M. DE SALLUS

I don't understand you.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Why, it is very simple. When I visit people whom I like, such as Madame de Sallus and yourself, I do not expect to meet the Paris that flutters from house to house in the evening, gossiping and scandalizing. I have had my experience of gossip and tittle-tattle. It needs only one of these talkative dames or men to take away all the pleasure there is for me in visiting the lady on whom I happen to have called. Sometimes when I am anchored perforce upon my seat, I feel lost; I do not know how to get away. I have to take part in the whirlpool of foolish chatter. I know all the set questions and answers better than I do the catechism itself, and it bores me to have to remain until the very end and hear the very last opinion of some fool upon the comedy, or the book, or the divorce, or the marriage, or the death that is being discussed. Now, do you understand why I always get up and go at the sound of a bell?

M. DE SALLUS [*laughs*]

What you say is very true. Drawing-rooms now are not habitable from four o'clock to seven, and our wives have no right to complain if we leave them to go to the club.

MME. DE SALLUS [*sarcastically*]

Nevertheless, I do not see my way to receiving ballet girls, or chorus girls, or actresses, or so-called painters, poets, musicians, and others – in order to keep you near me.

M. DE SALLUS

I do not ask so much as that. All I desire is a few witty fellows, some charming women, and by no means a crowd.

MME. DE SALLUS

You talk nonsense; you cannot pick and choose.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, truly, you cannot sift and strain the flow of idiocy that you meet in the drawing-rooms of to-day.

M. DE SALLUS

Why?

MME. DE SALLUS

Simply because it is as it is – to-day.

M. DE SALLUS

What a pity! How I should love the intimacy of a small and carefully selected circle of men and women.

MME. DE SALLUS

You?

M. DE SALLUS

Yes, why not?

MME. DE SALLUS [*laughs*]

Ha, ha, ha! What a charming little intimate circle you would bring to me! Ha, ha, ha! The fascinating men, and the fashionable women that you would invite! My dear sir, it is I who would leave the house then.

M. DE SALLUS

My dear girl, I only asked for three or four women like yourself.

MME. DE SALLUS

Pray repeat that.

M. DE SALLUS

Three or four such women as you.

MME. DE SALLUS

If you need four, I can understand how you found your house lonesome.

M. DE SALLUS

You understand very well what I wish to say, and it is not necessary for me to explain myself. And you know that you need only be alone to please me better than I could possibly be pleased elsewhere.

MME. DE SALLUS

Really, I do not recognize you. I am afraid you must be ill – very ill. You are not going to die, are you?

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, chaff me as much as you like, you won't worry me.

MME. DE SALLUS

And is this mood of yours going to last?

M. DE SALLUS

Forever.

MME. DE SALLUS

Men often change.

M. DE SALLUS [*turns to Jacques de Randol*]

My dear Randol, will you give us the pleasure of your company at dinner to-night? You may help me to turn aside the epigrams that my wife seems to have barbed and ready for me.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

A thousand thanks, my dear Sallus! You are very, very good, but unfortunately, I am not free.

M. DE SALLUS

But, my dear fellow, send your excuses.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I cannot.

M. DE SALLUS

Are you dining in town?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yes, well – not altogether. I have an appointment at nine o'clock.

M. DE SALLUS

Is it very important?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Very important

M. DE SALLUS

With a lady?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

My dear fellow, what a question!

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, I am discreet! But that need not prevent you from dining with us.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Thank you, my dear fellow, I cannot.

M. DE SALLUS

You know you can go away when you wish.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

But I am not in evening dress.

M. DE SALLUS

I can easily send for your things.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, truly, thank you; I cannot.

M. DE SALLUS [*to Mme. de Sallus*]

My dear girl, won't you keep Randol?

MME. DE SALLUS

Why ask me? You know that I have no influence over him.

M. DE SALLUS

You are charming enough to influence the world this evening, so why can't you make him stay?

MME. DE SALLUS

Good gracious! I cannot make my friends stay in order to please you, and keep them in your house against their wish. Bring *your* friends.

M. DE SALLUS

Well, I shall remain at home this evening in any case, and we shall then be *tête-à-tête*.

MME. DE SALLUS

Really?

M. DE SALLUS

Yes.

MME. DE SALLUS

You will be at home all the evening?

M. DE SALLUS

All the evening.

MME. DE SALLUS [*sarcastically*]

Good gracious! How you surprise me – and how you honor me!

M. DE SALLUS

No, it is a pleasure to be with you.

MME. DE SALLUS

What a charming mood you are in to-night!

M. DE SALLUS

Now ask Randol to remain.

MME. DE SALLUS

My dear sir, Monsieur de Randol will do as he pleases. He knows that I am always glad to see him. [*Rises, and after reflecting for a second.*] Will you dine with us, Monsieur de Randol? You know you can go directly after dinner.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

With the greatest pleasure, Madame.

MME. DE SALLUS

Excuse my absence for a minute. It is eight o'clock, and I must give some new directions for dinner.

[*Exit Mme. de Sallus.*]

### SCENE III

(M. de Sallus *and* M. Jacques de Randol.)

M. DE SALLUS

My dear fellow, you will do me the greatest service if you will pass the whole evening here.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

But I have told you that I cannot.

M. DE SALLUS

Is it altogether – absolutely – impossible?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Absolutely.

M. DE SALLUS

I most earnestly ask you to remain.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

And why?

M. DE SALLUS

For the best of reasons – because – because I want to make peace with my wife.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Peace? Is there a rupture between you?

M. DE SALLUS

Not a very great one, but you know what you have seen this evening.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Is it your fault or hers?

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, mine, I suppose.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

The devil!

M. DE SALLUS

I have had annoyances outside, serious annoyances, and they have made me bad-tempered, so much so that I have been unpleasant and aggressive in my behavior toward her.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

But I don't see how a third party can contribute toward peace between you.

M. DE SALLUS

My dear fellow, you will enable me to make her understand in an indirect manner, while avoiding all indelicate and wounding explanations, that my ideas concerning life have altogether changed.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Then you wish to be – to be – reconciled to her altogether?

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, no, no, no – on the contrary —

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Pardon me, I do not understand you.

M. DE SALLUS

Listen: I wish to establish and maintain a *status quo* of a pacific neutrality – a sort of Platonic peace. [*Laughs.*] But I am going into details that cannot interest you.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Pardon me again. From the moment that you ask me to play a part in this very interesting affair, I must know exactly what part I am to play.

M. DE SALLUS

Why, just a conciliatory rôle.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Then you wish to conclude a peace without restrictions for yourself?

M. DE SALLUS

Now you have it.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

That is to say, that, after the disappointments and annoyances of which you have just told me, and which I presume are ended, you wish to have peace at home and yet be free to enjoy any happiness that you may acquire outside.

M. DE SALLUS

Let me go farther. My dear fellow, the present situation between my wife and myself is very much strained, and I never care to find myself alone with her altogether, because my position is a false one.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, in that case, my dear fellow, I will remain.

M. DE SALLUS

All the evening?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

All the evening.

M. DE SALLUS

My dear De Randol, you are indeed a friend! I shall never forget it.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, never mind that. [*A short silence.*] Were you at the Opéra last night?

M. DE SALLUS

As usual.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

So it is a good performance?

M. DE SALLUS

Admirable.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

The Santelli scored a great success, didn't she?

M. DE SALLUS

Not only a success, but a veritable triumph. She was recalled six times.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

She *is* good, isn't she?

M. DE SALLUS

More than admirable. She never sang better. In the first act she has a long recitative: "O God of all believers, hear my prayer," which made the body of the house rise to their feet. And in the third act, after that phrase, "Bright heaven of beauty," I never saw such enthusiasm.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

She was pleased?

M. DE SALLUS

Pleased? She was enchanted.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You know her well, don't you?

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, yes, for some time back. I had supper with her and some of her friends after the performance.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Were there many of you?

M. DE SALLUS

No, about a dozen. You know she is rather particular.

JACQUES DE RANDOL.

It is pleasant to be intimate with her, is it not?

M. DE SALLUS

Exquisite! And then, you know, she is a woman in a million. I do not know whether you agree with me, but I find there are so few women that are really women.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*laughs*]

I have found that out.

M. DE SALLUS

Yes, and you have found out that there are women who have a feminine air, but who are not women.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Explain yourself.

M. DE SALLUS

Good gracious! Our society women, with very rare exceptions, are simply pictures; they are pretty; they are distinguished; but they charm you only in their drawing-rooms. The part they play consists entirely in making men admire their dress, their dainty ways, all of which are assumed.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Men love them, nevertheless.

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, very rarely, my dear fellow.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Pardon me!

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, yes, dreamers do. But men – real men – men who are passionate, men who are positive, men who are tender, do not love the society woman of to-day, since she is incapable of love. My dear fellow, look around you. You see intrigues – everyone sees them; but can you lay your finger upon a single real love affair – a love that is disinterested, such a love as there used to be – inspired by a single woman of our acquaintance? Don't I speak the truth? It flatters a man to have a mistress – it flatters him, it amuses him, and then it tires him. But turn to the other picture and look at the woman of the stage. There is not one who has not at least five or six love affairs on the carpet; idiotic follies, causing bankruptcy, scandal, and suicides. Men love them; yes, they love these women because these women know how to inspire love, and because they are loving women. Yes, indeed, *they* know how to conquer men; they understand the seduction of a smile; they know how to attract, seize, and wrap us up in their hearts, how to enslave us with a look, and they need not be beautiful at that. They have a conquering power that we never find in our wives.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

And the Santelli is a seductress of this kind?

M. DE SALLUS

She is first among the first! Ah, the cunning little coquette! *She* knows how to make men run after her.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Does she do only that?

M. DE SALLUS

A woman of that sort does not give herself the trouble of making men run after her unless she has some further object in view.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

The devil! You make me believe you attend two first nights in the same evening.

M. DE SALLUS

My dear boy, don't imagine such a thing.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Great heavens! you have such a satisfied and triumphant air – an air so desirous of calm at home. If I am deceived I am sorry – for your sake.

M. DE SALLUS

Well, we will assume that you are deceived and —

## SCENE IV

*(The same, and Mme. de Sallus.)*

M. DE SALLUS [*gaily*]

Well, my dear, Jacques remains. He has consented for my sake.

MME. DE SALLUS

I congratulate you. And how did you achieve that miracle?

M. DE SALLUS

Oh, easily enough, in the course of conversation.

MME. DE SALLUS

And of what have you been talking?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Of the happiness that comes to a man who remains quietly at home.

MME. DE SALLUS

That sort of happiness has but little attraction for me. I like the excitement of travel.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

There is a time for everything; and travel is very often inopportune and very inconvenient.

MME. DE SALLUS

But how about that important appointment of yours at nine o'clock? Have you given it up altogether, Monsieur de Randol?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I have, Madame.

MME. DE SALLUS

You are very changeable.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, no, I am simply adapting myself to circumstances.

M. DE SALLUS

Will you pardon me if I write a note? [*Sits at desk at the other end of the drawing-room.*]

MME. DE SALLUS [*to Jacques de Randol*]

What has happened?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, nothing; everything is all right.

MME. DE SALLUS

When do we go?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Not at all.

MME. DE SALLUS

Are you mad? Why?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Please don't ask me now about it.

MME. DE SALLUS

I am sure that he is laying a trap for us.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Not at all. He is very quiet, very contented, and has absolutely no suspicion.

MME. DE SALLUS

Then what does it all mean?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Now, be calm. He is happy, I tell you.

MME. DE SALLUS

That is not true.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

I tell you it is. He has made me the confidant of all his happiness.

MME. DE SALLUS

It is just a trick; he wishes to watch us.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, no; he is confiding and conciliatory. The only fear he has is of you.

MME. DE SALLUS

Of me?

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Yes; in the same way that you are, all the time, afraid of him.

MME. DE SALLUS

Great heavens! You have lost your head. You are talking at random.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Listen – I am sure that he intends to go out this evening.

MME. DE SALLUS

Well, in that case, let us go out too.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

No, no, – I tell you there is nothing more for us to fear.

MME. DE SALLUS

What nonsense! You will end by maddening me with your blindness.

M. DE SALLUS [*from the other end of the drawing-room*]

My dear, I have some good news for you. I have been able to get another night at the Opera for you every week.

MME. DE SALLUS

Really, it is very good of you to afford me the opportunity of applauding Madame Santelli so often.

M. DE SALLUS [*from the same place*]

Well, she is very clever.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

And everybody says she is charming.

MME. DE SALLUS [*irritably*]

Yes; it is only such women who please men.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

You are unjust.

MME. DE SALLUS

Oh, my dear Randol; it is only for such women that men commit follies, and [*sarcastically*], understand me, the measure of a man's folly is often the measure of his love.

M. DE SALLUS [*from the same place*]

Oh, no, my dear girl, – men do not marry them, and marriage is the only real folly that a man can commit with a woman.

MME. DE SALLUS

A beautiful idea, truly, when a woman has to endure all man's caprices.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Oh, no, not having anything to lose, they have nothing to risk.

MME. DE SALLUS

Ah, men are sad creatures! They marry a young girl because she is demure and self-contained, and they leave her on the morrow to dangle after a girl who is not young and who certainly is not demure, her chief attraction being that all the rich and well-known men about town have at one time been in her favor. The more danglers she has after her, the more she is esteemed, the more she is sought after, and the more she is respected; that is to say, with that kind of Parisian respect which accrues to a woman in the degree of her notoriety – a notoriety due either to the scandal she creates, or the scandal men create about her. Ah, yes, you men are so nice in these things!

M. DE SALLUS [*laughs gently*]

Take care! One would think you were jealous.

MME. DE SALLUS

I? Jealous? For whom do you take me? [*The butler announces.*] Madame is served. [*Hands a letter to M. de Sallus.*]

MME. DE SALLUS [*to Jacques de Randol*]

Your arm, M. Jacques de Randol.

JACQUES DE RANDOL [*in a low tone*]

How I love you!

MME. DE SALLUS [*indifferently*]

Just a little, I suppose.

JACQUES DE RANDOL

Ah, no; with all my soul!

M. DE SALLUS [*after reading his letter*]

Come along, then, let us go to dinner. I have to go out this evening.

**Curtain**

# MUSOTTE

## OR A CRITICAL SITUATION A COMEDY IN THREE ACTS

### DRAMATIS PERSONAE

JEAN MARTINEL

Nephew of M. Martinel, a painter; not yet thirty years of age, but already well known and the recipient of various honors.

LEON DE PETITPRÉ

Brother to Gilberts Martinel, a young lawyer about thirty years of age.

M. MARTINEL

An old gunmaker of Havre, aged fifty-five.

M. DE PETITPRÉ

An old magistrate, officer of the Legion of Honor. Aged sixty.

DR. PELLERIN

A fashionable physician of about thirty-five.

MME. DE RONCHARD

Sister to M. de Petitpré, about fifty-five years of age.

HENRIETTE LÉVÊQUE

Nicknamed Musotte; a little model, formerly Jean Martinel's mistress. Twenty-two years of age.

MME. FLACHE

A midwife. Formerly a ballet-dancer at the Opera. About thirty-five years of age.

GILBERTE MARTINEL

Daughter of M. and Mme. de Petitpré, married in the morning to Jean Martinel. About twenty years old.

LISE BABIN

A nurse, about twenty-six.

SERVANTS

*Time: Paris of to-day. The first and third acts take place in M. de Petitpré's drawing-room.*

*The second act takes place in Musotte's bedchamber.*

## ACT I

### SCENE I

*(A richly yet classically furnished drawing-room in M. de Petitpré's house. A table, C.; sofas, R.; chairs and armchairs, L. Wide doors, C., opening upon a terrace or gallery. Doors R. and L. of C. Lighted lamps.)*

*Enter from R. M. de Petitpré, Monsieur Martinel, Madame de Ronchard, Léon de Petitpré, Jean and Gilberte. Gilberte is in her bridal attire, but without wreath and veil.*

MME. DE RONCHARD [*after bowing to M. Martinel, whose arm she relinquishes, seats herself R.*]

Gilberte, Gilberte!

GILBERTE [*leaves Jean's arm*]

What is it, Auntie?

MME. DE RONCHARD

The coffee, my dear child.

GILBERTE [*goes to the table*]

I will give you some, Auntie.

MME. DE RONCHARD

Don't soil your gown.

LÉON [*comes up*]

No, no, not to-day shall my sister serve coffee. The day of her marriage! No, indeed, I will take care of that. [*To Mme. de Ronchard.*] You know that I am a lawyer, my dear Aunt, and therefore can do everything.

MME. DE RONCHARD

Oh, I know your abilities, Léon, and I appreciate them —

LÉON [*smiles, and gives his Aunt a cup of coffee*]

You are too good.

MME. DE RONCHARD [*taking cup, dryly*]

For what they are worth.

LÉON [*aside, turns to the table*]

There she goes again – another little slap at me! That is never wanting. [*offers a cup to Martinel.*] You will take a small cup, won't you, M. Martinel, and a nip of old brandy with it? I know your tastes. We will take good care of you.

MARTINEL

Thank you, Léon.

LÉON [*to Petitpré*]

Will you have a cup, father?

PETITPRÉ

I will, my son.

LÉON [*to the newly married couple, seated L. and talking aside*]

And you, you bridal pair there? [*The couple, absorbed in each other, do not answer.*] Oh, I suppose we must not bother you. [*He sets cup down on the table.*]

PETITPRÉ [*to Martinel*]

You don't smoke, I believe?

MARTINEL

Never, thank you.

MME. DE RONCHARD

You astonish me! My brother and Léon would not miss smoking each day for anything in the world. But what an abomination a cigar is!

PETITPRÉ

A delicious abomination, Clarisse.

LÉON [*turns to Mme. de Ronchard*]

Almost all abominations are delicious, Auntie; in fact many of them, to my personal knowledge, are exquisite.

MME. DE RONCHARD

You naughty fellow!

PETITPRÉ [*takes Léon's arm*]

Come and smoke in the billiard-room, since your aunt objects to it here.

LÉON [*to Petitpré*]

The day when she will love anything except her spaniels —

PETITPRÉ

Hold your tongue and come along. [*Exit C.*]

MARTINEL [*to Mme. de Ronchard*]

This is the sort of marriage that I like – a marriage that, in this Paris of yours, you don't have very often. After the wedding breakfast, which takes place directly after you come from the church, all the guests go home, even the maids of honor and the ushers. The married couple remain at home and dine with their parents or relatives. In the evening they play billiards or cards, just as on an ordinary night; the newly married couple entertain each other. [*Gilberte and Jean rise, and hand in hand slowly retire C.*] Then, before midnight, good night!

MME. DE RONCHARD [*aside*]

Which is altogether very *bourgeois*!

MARTINEL [*sits R. upon the sofa beside Mme. de Ronchard*]

As to newly married couples – instead of going on that absurd and traditional thing you call a honeymoon, it is far better for them to go at once to the apartment or house prepared for them. I dare say you will think my plan lacking in fashion and display, but I cannot help that. For myself, I must say that I like absence of all ostentation.

MME. DE RONCHARD

Your plan is not according to the customs of polite society, Monsieur.

MARTINEL

Polite society, indeed! Why, there are thirty-six different kinds of polite society. For instance, take Havre.

MME. DE RONCHARD [*interrupts*]

I know only ours. [*Corrects herself.*] That is, I mean to say, mine, which is the correct one.

MARTINEL

Oh, naturally, naturally! Nevertheless, simple as it may be, this marriage is an acknowledged fact, and I hope that you have taken into your good books my dear nephew, who, until now —

MME. DE RONCHARD

I can hardly help doing so since he is my brother's son-in-law, and my niece's husband.

## **Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.**

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