

[f1]¹Strand

*The
Loves of Arcadia.*

A Comedietta.

In

Two Acts.

1860

Strand Theatre

Mss. Received March 7

License sent 8

W^mB. Donne²

¹ Modern page numbers appear on the top right of each page. British Library foliation is added in brackets where each folio starts. Only the recto side of each folio has been written on and therefore differentiation between recto and verso has been dispensed with. Folio 1 is the cover of the play. The interior pages start with folio 2.

² Signature of William Bodham Donne, Examiner of Plays, 1857-1874. The annotations above his signature, which are part of standard practice of tracking submitted plays, record the date the Lord Chamberlain's office received the manuscript and the date the license was granted.

[f2r]

The
Loves of Arcadia.

A COMEDIETTA.

In
Two Acts.

By

MISS BRADDON.³

³ A scan of the title page, which includes a decorative sketch, can be viewed by clicking [here](#). See the introduction for a detailed discussion of the handwriting and sketch that appear on the title page.

[f3r]

Dramatis Personae

Louis. 15th⁴
 Duke de Richelieu.⁵
 Chevalier de Merrilac⁶
 M de Villefroi
 M de Charloi.
 Léon. (a valet)
 Victoire. (a servant)
 Zamore. (a black page)⁷

Noblemen, Servants, Peasants, etc.

Desirée de Launay.
 Lucie. (her friend)
 Jacqueline. (a milkmaid)⁸

⁴ King of France from 1715 to 1774. Louis XV was famous for his loose morals and in particular for taking a number of mistresses, most famously Madame de Pompadour, although Madame du Barry is mentioned in this play.

⁵ Louis François Armand du Plessis, Duc de Richelieu. Grand nephew of the more prominent Cardinal Richelieu and godson of Louis XIV. The Duc de Richelieu was also known for his loose morals, for his many relationships with courtesans or other women and for being the subject of a duel between two women. One of the characters of *Les Liaisons Dangereuse* (1782) by Pierre Choderlos de Laclos is also supposedly modeled on him.

⁶ Altered spelling of the common French name Marillac, as is the name Villefroi for Villeroy and Charloi for Charleroi. Apart from Louis, Richelieu and Zamore, the characters appear to be Braddon's own inventions.

⁷ Madame du Barry, one of Louis XV's mistresses, was presented with an African page named Zamor by the Duc de Richelieu. Although Madame du Barry does not appear in this play, the inclusion of historical details such as these suggest Braddon's awareness of and interest in the last mistress of Louis XV. However, accounts of Madame du Barry's life differ vastly in the nineteenth century, partly due to the publication of a number of fictional versions of her memoirs. I have attempted to recover the origins of some of these historical details by using nineteenth-century sources Braddon would have had access to. In a fictional version of Madame du Barry's memoirs, the author has du Barry describe Zamore as follows: He 'fancied himself the equal of all he met, scarcely deigning to acknowledge the king himself as his superior' (Lamothe-Langon, chapter 23). Zamor was reputedly instrumental in Madame du Barry's conviction and execution, and perhaps ironically, the Madame du Barry persona recalls, 'I can with truth affirm, that I have never ceased to lavish kindnesses on him, and to be, in every sense of the word, a good mistress to him' (Lamothe-Langon, chapter 23). Etienne Leon Lamothe-Langon, *Memoirs of the Comtesse du Barry. Written by Herself*, (London, 1830-31) <http://www.gutenberg.org/dirs/etext01/7dbry10.txt> [accessed 15 March 2008] (chapter 23).

⁸ The first act is written in a hand that may have been Braddon's and that differs from the hand that wrote the second act. See the introduction for a detailed discussion of this.

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Act I. Scene I. Forest near Versailles.

Enter. The Chevalier de Merrilac, M de Villefroi and M de Charloi.

Char^l

Tell me Merrilac, why you leave the Court.?

Merril^{ac}

It's a long story, Charloi,

Char^l

Oh it won't tire me, we can sit down under this oak - no beech. The day's oppressive, hark how drowsily the bees, poor drudges, hum as they go by. I'd be a drone and nestled in a flower, dream away time this very sultry weather.

Ville^{froi}

I'd be a butterfly, upon the wing from dawn till twilight—kissing every blossom as I flew by, and leaving it to fade and to regret me.

Char^l

You wouldn't be a handsome butterfly Villefroi. I fear for your successes' with the flowers. But come, your story Merrilac be brief and don't talk loud or you'll disturb the Zephyrs.⁹

Merril^{ac}

Well then "Imprimis"¹⁰

Char^l

Don't begin there let's have the pith at once

Merril^{lac}

Well then, the King [f5]

Ville^{froi}

(Fervently) God bless him!

Char^l

Silence Villefroi, he isn't here to hear you.

Merril^l

Well then the King.—

⁹ Zephyrs are west winds and harbingers of spring. They are named for the Greek God Zephyrus who in mythology married one of his sisters, abducted another and had a child with her. He also fell in love with a Spartan prince.

¹⁰ 'First of all'.

Ville^{froi}

You said that before.

Charl

Don't interrupt us Villefroi, we're talking

Merri^{lac}

His Majesty has just now had imported.

Ville^{froi}

Wine?

Merri^l

No, wome^an Villefroi.-a young ward educated in a convent. Some soldiers orphan daughter, richly dowered, pretty, just come to court. No doubt you know the style a young automaton, one third brocade, and the fan and powder. She's appointed Lady of Honour to the Dauphiness,¹¹ and that same honour not being enough for our ambitious damsel, what higher honour do you think she aspires to.

Ville^{froi}

A Bishopric?

Merril

Pshaw! She's a woman.

Ville^{froi}

Oh ah. This weather quite prostrates one's listening powers. [f6] A woman is she? and wants to be highly honoured. O I see, she want [sic] me to notice her. Is that it?

Merri^l

No it is'nt. The King (Heaven knows I never injured him) wants me to marry her.

Ville^{froi}

And you've consented.—?

Merril.

¹¹ Louis XV's marriage with Maria Leszczyńska produced six daughters and two sons, one of whom did not survive to adulthood. Louis XV's surviving son Louis was the Dauphin from 1729 to 1765. He was married to Maria Teresa Rafaela, Infanta of Spain, from 1744 until her death in 1746 and Marie-Josèphe of Saxony from 1747 until his death in 1765. Maria Teresa Rafaela would have held the title of Dauphine (or 'Dauphiness' as Braddon puts it) from 1744 to 1746 and Marie-Josèphe from 1744 to the Dauphin's death in 1765 when his son Louis-Auguste would have received the title. In 1767, Louis-Auguste, who would become Louis XVI, married Maria Antonia Josepha Johanna von Hapsburg-Lothringen or Marie Antoinette, famous for her extravagances and role-playing as a peasant. Marie Antoinette, although she is not identified by name, is the 'Dauphiness' referred to here since the references to Madame du Barry date this text to the period of Marie Antoinette's tenure as Dauphine.

To the sacrifice_Oh no I sent a very polite message to the King and said I was not fit for martyrdom. and that a monarch so beloved as he, should never have such dismal companions as married men.

Ville^{froi}

Then you don't like the lady.

Merri^l

Not at all.

Ville^{froi}

And you dislike her

Merri^l

By no means

Ville^{froi}

Neither like nor dislike her,-how very extraordinary

Merri^l

Not at all, I can easily account for that

Ville^{froi}

How?

Merri^l

Why, because I never saw her. She's still at Trianon,¹² The [sic] [f7] informed me of his marriage scheme yesterday. And I was to have married her in a week. Pleasant upon my honour, It would have taken me that time to make up my mind whether her style of beauty would do.

Ville^{froi}

So you refused.

Merri^l

And the King insisted. So you see me here, a voluntary exile from the court. Let Louis find a more courageous man, I'm alright at the head of my regiment. but matrimony and only a week's consideration!

Ville^{froi}

But why this great repugnance to the lady?

Merri^l

¹² A village demolished by Louis XIV and then used as the site for a building that forms part of Versailles. It was intended as a place of respite from the excitement of the main palace and became famous as the site of Marie Antoinette's pastoral games.

Because I hate this Royal tyranny. That disposes of our hand without asking permission of our hearts. No, when I wed, twill be some simple maid, who never heard of the Kings favourite Merrilac ~~how well I should look in it. And~~ but who can love a Shepherd for himself_his honest self-alone.

Ville^{froi}

So you're determined to be a shepherd.

Merri^l

Yes, don't I look one? Don't I look like Dresden-China¹³

Ville^{froi}

Exactly (aside) And cracked China into the bargain. (Aloud) It's a very good costume Merrilac, how well I should look in it. And how long are you going to stay here? [f8]

Merri^l

Till the King has found another husband for the lady.

Ville^{froi}

I shall be asked no doubt, but I won't have her.

Merril

Wait till you're asked. Well Charloi, what think you of my decision

Ville^{froi}

Why he's been snoring ever since 'Imprimis'

Char^l

Oh but I've dreamt about it Merrilac, You were quite right

Ville

We left our fellows with the horses down yonder avenue, Come, you'll return to Versailles before supper time, I'd wager a hundred Louis, if I had them (aside)

Merri^l

Return! Not till the King takes pity on his victim and revokes his matrimonial order. Then you may send a coach to fetch me from Arcadia.¹⁴

Ville^{froi}

Arcadia?! Anywhere in this neighbourhood.

Char^l

Pshaw! Don't you remember the Englishmans book?

¹³ Dresden china, first produced in the very early eighteenth century, depicts court life and entertainment with the participants often in the guise of shepherds and shepherdesses.

¹⁴ In literature and mythology, a pastoral setting unspoiled by modern ways of living and populated by shepherds.

Ville^{froi}

Oh yes, Shakespeare, I've read Shakespeare.¹⁵

Char^l

So you've christened your forest Arcadia-a very pretty name, and a very pretty place. But Sir Philip¹⁶ writes [f9] of the summertime,-and I would not give much for your Arcadia in wet weather.

Ville^{froi}

Adieu!¹⁷

Char^l

No, Au revoir-You'll soon be tired of sylvan-beauties,¹⁸ and return to court. Bon voyage thr'o the wood,

Ville^{froi}

And "Bonnes Aventures."

Exeunt Villefroi and Charloi.

Merri^l

To that last prayer, Oh all ye woodland deities hearken I pray, Now Lucien de Merrillac you have begun your pastoral existence, and the first step should be to fall in love, Hear it yea bees and flowers. I, Lucien, swear to entertain a most romantic passion for the first rustic maiden that I see But if she be not pretty- Oh she will be-I've read in twenty poems and romances, of cheeks like roses, hair like gold, and eyes bluer than heaven on a summers day all bred in the country. What a lonely wood this it! I think I shall follow Charlois example and take a nap under this verdant shade. (lies down on bank) and grant my prayer oh spirit of the woods, that when I wake, some Shepherdess be near to win this cold heart. and keep off the flies (falls asleep)

Enter Jacquette, with pails

Jacq [f10]

What a tiresome cow Jeanette is to be milked. She would'nt be milked for half an hour this morning, and she swung her tail about so, that I daresay my cap's a fine figure I know as well as possible what they'll say at the farm! They'll say I've been kissed, and I shall never get over that disgrace One doesn't like to be suspected for nothing, and for the matter of that, in

¹⁵ The text referred to is *As You Like It* by William Shakespeare.

¹⁶ A reference to *The Countess of Pembroke's Arcadia* by Sir Philip Sydney.

¹⁷ Braddon here uses two different French forms of 'good bye'. 'Adieu' is much more final in suggestion than 'au revoir'.

¹⁸ Persons or spirits of the woods.

this abominable forest, one might live from Midsummer to the New Year, and never know what it is to be asked for a kiss. and as for a handsome young man in this stupid wood, you might as well look for diamonds on the trees.

Sits down on Merrilac

Merril^{ac}

(In his sleep) Gracious St Louis save me from an earthquake

Jacq.

Why I do declare I've sat down upon a gentleman, But it hasn't woke him, I'm so very light!
What a sweet young man. If he wakes I daresay he'll want to kiss me, but I'm quite safe, he's so very fast asleep,

Coughs loudly,

Merril

(Waking suddenly) The Gods have heard my prayer, My loveliest! (aside) Ahem! That's provoking she's by no means lovely,

Jacq

Release me, sir

Merril. [f11]

(aside) Release me! that's a hint. (putting his arm round her waist) I've sworn to love the first_she is the first. I wish she was the second. (aloud) Are you a Shepherdess?

Jacq.

No sir, a Milkmaid.

Merri^l

Milkmaid! that [sic] not romantic, though quite rural. And you're a milkmaid. Tell me gentle maid, are the girls hereabouts pretty?

Jacq.

I come from hereabouts.

Merri^l

Ahem! A negative upon the face of it. (aside) Tell me, my star_are you a star in the milky way. tell me, my star, are you not rather_plump is not the word. For you're something that's beyond plumpness. Are you not considered slightly fat?

Jacq.

Fat! I shall faint

Merri^l

No don't, for who could catch you?

Jacq.

Fat! why you whipper snapper, I can tell you I'm called extremely slim. Fat! you should see Madame Gobbo.¹⁹

Merri^l

Who's Madame Gobbo.

Jacq.

The mistress of our farm, Pierre Gobbos wife, and all the little Gobbos mother. She is stout.
[f12]

Merri^l

Well if Madame Gobbo's so stout that in comparison to Madame Gobbo you are slim. why I should imagine Madame Gobbo must be a good handful. But since I have offended you let this seal a long amnesty. (kisses her)

Jacq.

Oh no it won't, I couldn't forgive you, not if you gave me twenty kisses.

Merri^l

You're sure you could'nt

Jacq.

Sure.

Merri^l

Then I won't try the experiment,

Jacq.

You won't?

Merril.

Not for the world.

Jacq.

Then I'll just tell you what you are,

Merril

Don't trouble yourself-I know my own merits.

Jacq.

You're a conceited Jackanapes,²⁰ and deserve to be soused in our duck-pond. And if Jean, or Jacques, or Blaize, or Pierre should catch you near our farm. I'd have you take care they don't spoil your satin-coat, My fine Gentleman,

¹⁹ Potentially in part a reference to 'Gobbo', an Italian figure of myth, portrayed as a hunchback with a top hat and suit, believed to signify good luck.

Exit Jacquette! [f13]

Merri^l

Pleasant upon my life. De Merrillac soused in a duck pond. The sylvan deities have granted my prayer, but the sylvan deities condescension has been a failure. I shall return to Versailles-but on foot, and in this dress, Oh no I couldn't ~~stand~~^{do} it. I'll penetrate into the forest's depths, and find some fairer spirits than fat Milkmaids, or if I don't, in my despair I'll go back to the court, and give myself up to the ridicule of the world, the tyranny of a king, and a wife. Exit Merrillac

Enter Desirée and Lucie.

Desi^f

Come Lucie, here is liberty at last. They say there is no stiffness at Trianon, to me court etiquette is always stiff. even the gardens have a formal look, and nature seems to wear a hoop and powder. Here all is freedom, Hark! Those joyous birds-think you they sing as blithely near the court.

Lucie.

The Dauphiness has a parrot that can say "Vive la belle France" et Louis" [sic] and "j'ai faim".²¹ I don't suppose the birds about here, with all their fine singing can say that.

Desi^f

How do you like my costume.

Lucie.

Oh it's charming, I'll have one like it for a Masquerade. But I'm so tired, Desiree. I must go home.

Desi^f

Tired, why I shall wander thro' the woods for ever. Come [f14] with me Lucie.

Lucie.

No indeed I can't I must go back. I might be late for dinner

Desi^f

Dinner! Who cares for dinner?

Lucie.

Ah, it's all very well for you to look contemptuous, you're not hungry,

Desi^f

Oh, dearest Lucie, ~~here~~ why return to Trianon, here we might dwell for ever.

²⁰ An ape or monkey.

²¹ 'Long live beautiful France' and 'I'm hungry', respectively.

Lucie.

Yes if the sun always shone, but when it rains!

Desi^f

Oh it won't rain, it never does in summer,

Lucie.

Doesn't it, You'd better change your mind before it's too late, The Dauphiness will never forgive you for running away. And his majesty, who was going to Marry you to the husband of his choice.

Desi^f

It will teach his majesty that women have a choice for their own in that matter, and a will of their own too,

Lucie.

And the poor Chevalier de Merrilac will break his heart...

Desi^f

For a woman he never saw in his life. Poor susceptible heart! [f15]

Lucie.

But the Dauphiness said the King intended that he should fall deeply in love with you

Desi^f

Or with my dowry.

Lucie.

Why he's rich himself. You might have reigned a very Empress of balls and fetes if you had married him.

Desi^f

I'd rather be queen of one faithful heart, even a cottagers.

Lucie.

What! have such creatures hearts, when shall I send the carriage for you,

Desi^f

Carriages were made for courts, not forests. Lucie I see you think I jest with you. I am in earnest. I intend to live here all my life, I've left a letter for the Dauphiness to tell her of my intention. If she should be angry, plead for me dear Lucie, Goodbye, dear friend, Think of me sometimes in my forest life, and when you're weary of the world, come here and visit me in my Arcadia,

Lucie.

Well if you're determined to stop in this lonely place, I've heard of wolves in forest's, Desiree. Fancy wolves attending you, Oh dear, it's too dreadful to think of.

Desi^f

Nonsense Lucie, there are no wolves. I shall search the forest till I find some pretty cottage, and some old woman, [f16] and I'll go and live with her, and be her servant- and mind her sheep, and her fowls, and lead such a happy life. Goodbye, Lucie. Goodbye.

Lucie.

Well, as you're so determined to stop, Goodbye. I shall come and fetch you in a week for you'll be tired of being a servant by that time, and remember what I've told you about wolves.

Exit Lucie

Desiree

What a silly girl Lucie is. Wolves I don't believe there are any in France, I never saw any in Paris. This wood is very beautiful but oh how lonely. No human voice or footfall, all is still. The echoes only mock me as I speak, but they at least do not deceive, as people do at court. I'd rather be in this vast solitude, than live in the sad loneliness, hearts feel in crowds, with none to love, not one.

Re-enter Merrilac.

Merri^l

I've rambled for a mile through brake and briar, and met with no adventures, but with frogs, lizards, and toad stools, I'll go back to court, this execrable wood doesn't contain anything worth looking at but (seeing Desiree). A Divinity!²² A new wild flower for Jean Jacques Rousseau,²³ Now this is something like a shepherdess. Merrilac you're a lucky dog. Shall I speak to her, It's extremely strange, I'm not considered bashful, and yet I can't [sic] begin. (To Desiree) Madame, no at least Mademoiselle,—

Desi^f

Oh Heaven, Sir. [f17]

Merri^l

I've startled you ten thousand pardons

Desi^f

²² The wording here closely resembles another important first meeting in Braddon's fiction: Talbot Bulstrode's first sight of Aurora Floyd where he also calls her 'A Divinity!' Mary Elizabeth Braddon. *Aurora Floyd*. Ed. P.D. Edwards. (Oxford: OUP, 1996.), p. 33.

²³ Presumably a reference to *Le Devin du Village* (first performed in 1752), a one act pastoral opera by Jean Jacques Rousseau (Paris: Chez le Clerc, [c1768]).

I pardon you with pleasure Monsieur Rustic, for I was very lonely in this wood, and very glad to hear a human voice

Merril.

(aside) “Monsieur Rustic” That's rather patronizing. Oh, of course, she takes me for a Shepherd, She's lovelier than the daylight, Ah such eyes never looked sunshine on stately Versailles, but were expressly formed to light the forest, (aloud) Tell me my gentle peasant, do you dwell anywhere in this neighbourhood,

Desi^f

I do, (aside) At least I mean to do so, “My gentle peasant” That's rather familiar_but then he thinks I'm a Shepherdess

Merri^l

And you were born here?

Desi^f

Y,_yes. (aside) I must tell a few sad stories,

Merri^l

And you have always lived here,

Desi^f

As ~~you~~ long as you have,

Merri^l

(aside) That [sic] about half and hour,

Desi^f

And have you lived here long,

Merril.

All my life_as long as you have, [f18]

Desi^f

That's just about ten minutes, (aside)

Merri^l

And whats your name,

Desi^f

(aside) One can tell he's a shepherd, he asks such rude questions. (aloud) My name is Des_no_Daphne,

Merri^l

A lovely name the name of a sweet flower, but not so sweet an one as the she who bears it,

Desi^f

(aside) He's not so very rude after all, (aloud) And what's your name,

Merri¹

(aside) That's very puzzling. I suppose shepherds have names, But I can't hit upon one,

(aloud) My name_is

Desi^f

Yes,

Merri¹

Exactly, that's it,

Desi^f

How stupid you are shepherd, Can't you remember your own name,

Merri¹

Oh I could remember it well enough, (aside) If I'd ever known it. My name is_no it isn't, It's Eureka,²⁴

Desi^f

Why that's a very ugly name! [f19]

Merri¹

Nay gentle shepherdess, my name's Narcissus²⁵

Desi^f

The name of a sweet flower, and a very vain young man, it suits you well,

Merri¹

(aside) She's not very well bred_anyone can tell she's only a country girl, (aloud) and pray Daphne,²⁶ where are your sheep?

Desi^f

Sheep! What would I do with sheep?

Merri¹

A very good question for a shepherdess.

Desi^f

At least I mean my sheep are_my sheep are somewhere, And where are yours.

Merri¹

In the very same place,

²⁴ Greek for 'I have found it', supposedly uttered by Archimedes when he realized while bathing that the volume of an object submerged in water will displace an equal volume of water.

²⁵ In Greek mythology, a boy who is punished for spurning lovers (in some versions male and in others female). A curse is placed on him that causes him to fall in love with his reflection, effectively condemning him to also experience unrequited love.

²⁶ In Greek mythology a nymph and the object of Apollo's infatuation.

Desi^f

That's strange,

Merri^l

(aside) Yes she is beautiful. If ~~might~~ the Kings ward had been like her, I might have been induced to make a sacrifice of myself,

Desi^f

(aside) If M de Merrilac had only been like this young shepherd. I might perhaps have obliged the King

Merri^l

(aside) I wonder whether she's in love with me yet. I've been [f20] ten minutes in her society. I never yet was ten minutes in a womans society but she was in love with me, or pretended to be,

Desi^f

(aside) I wonder whether he has a village sweetheart. I dare say he has, Shepherds always have in Dresden-China,

Merri^l

She must be in love with me by this time, (looking at his watch) It's a quarter of an hour, I'll ask her, Daphne,

Desi^f

Yes Narcissus.

Merri^l

(aside) "Yes Narcissus." It sounds like it. (aloud) I was thinking, Daphne,

Desi^f

What Narcissus.

Merri^l

That' [sic] you've know [sic] me a very long time, a whole quarter of an hour, and that you possibly might have fallen in love with me.

Desi^f

Fallen in love with you, What an absurd idea?!

Merri^l

(aside) That's a new view of the subject, and a very disagreeable one. (aloud) And so you think Daphne it would be very absurd for you to fall in love with me,

Desi^f

Not only very absurd, but utterly impossible for me to [f21] fall in love with you_in a quarter of an hour.,

Merri^l

But you could do it in twenty minutes Daphne. Yes if the remaining three hundred seconds were devoted to the eloquence of love, a very remarkable special pleader in such cases believe me. Now, Voiture,²⁷ Rousseau,²⁸ and all the poets living an [sic] dead come to my aid, Do not doubt my love because it is sudden. The lightning flash gleams on us in an instant. Is it less intense,

Desi^f

But where's the lightning when the storm is over,

Merri^l

Gone, but it leaves the track of it's brightness behind.

Desi^f

Yes, in the scorched tree, and the withered flower. Ah, so is it ever with these sudden passions. Build your love Monsieur Shepherd on the rock of esteem, not on the shifting quicksands of fancy.

Merri^l

And you teach me that esteem as you speak fairest flower of the forest. Wisdom flows so sweetly from those rustic lips, you shall be my instructress. My spirit shall grow pure to match with thine. We'll live for ever in this woodland scene, and Desi^f when we die our spirit's shall return to watch and sanctify all rustic lovers.

kneels to her

Desi^f

Heaven and the priest must first sanctify ours. (he drops [f22] her hand) Ah shepherd you would break your Daphne's heart, and leave her lost to die in the sad forest, or to forget thee in your dark deep esteem.

Merri^l

Upon the honor of a Gentle_Shepherd, there was not such a base thought in my soul. Forgetful of the distant world_myself_all but my love. I looked upon your face and from its sunlight shone a bright sweet dream of how, blessed by your love, this forest might become a second Eden, But you are right sweet Shepherdess, the days of poetry have passed away, and

²⁷ Vincent Voiture, seventeenth-century writer whose poems and letters were favourites of the French aristocracy.

²⁸ Presumably a reference to the seventeenth-century poet, Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, famous for obscene poetry, rather than the Enlightenment figure, Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

waking from the dream that would recall their light, behold how dreary is our life without them, Farewell sweet shepherdess You were not formed to be the consolation of this heart. We have only known each other five and twenty minutes, therefore it must be very easy to say "Farewell" even though that sad word mean [sic] for ever. Farewell, when you marry a real_no, I mean another Shepherd, think of me sometimes-at least, no-of course, that wouldn't do, but don't forget me,_Ah but he wouldn't like that,

Desi^f

Farewell, Narcissus_yours is indeed lightning love. See how the sky grows fair again, when the storm is past, leaves the poor violet scathed by its fire, never again to lift it's head in the sunshine.

Merri^l

(aside) That reproach goes to the core of my heart, (aloud) but you'll forget me Daphne_you didn't love me five minutes ago_it can't be very hard to forget me, (aside) Now Lucien [f23] de Merrilac, you're acting like a very great villain_you wished to win a true heart_you have perhaps_(looking at Daphne). Yes you have won it, And you would cast the precious gift aside, And why? Because you are ashamed of returning to Versailles and saying "I sneered at matrimony and an heiress, and I married a Shepherdess. Why she'd do honor to the court, No her pure soul would sore above our court, She'd be the honor of her husbands home, Lucien de Merrilac, you've been not only a fool but a villain,

Desi^f

He's not gone yet, I wonder what he lingers for, I'm afraid he's a very bad shepherd. I wish he'd go, and ah, how much I wish I'd never seen him, (aside)

Merri^l

(Returning falls at her feet.) My penitence has come at last, Ah Daphne, speak, is it too late too [sic] save me!?

Desi^f

Save you Narcissus.

Merri^l

Can I be forgiven,

Desi^f

Forgiven, Nay I've nothing to forgive. Farewell, go and be happy.

Merri^l

Not if I leave you Daphne, There's no more happiness for me, away from you, than there is light on earth when the sun leaves it,

Desi^f [f24]

Earth has the moonlight when the sun is gone. You're so unlucky in your similes

Merri^l

But oh how pale is the moons radiance, after the glorious sunlight has gone down, So second love succeeds the hearts first passion, poor moonlight of the once sunny soul, the youth and freshness both for ever gone. Autumn to Spring - December to July. You are my first love Daphne, be my last_my wife,

Daphⁿ²⁹

A shepherds wife,

Merri^l

See, o'er the summit of the loftiest trees, the spire of the Village church_so humble, and yet towering up to Heaven. Come Daphne, er'e the sun goes down we'll seek some pious priest who shall unite us

Daphⁿ

(aside) Marry a Shepherd, What will the Dauphiness say?

Merri^l

It's all arranged Daphne ' And how are we're [sic] going to be married let us have a little serious conversation. In the first place who are you?

Daphⁿ

Why, I told you before Narcissus, a Shepherdess!

Merri^l

Yes I know, and you were born here, in some pretty cottage I suppose. Now do describe the cottage where you live, Ah I can fancy it, [f25]

Desi^f

(aside) I wish I could.

Merri^l

A little cot half hidden in a dwell, [sic] a streamlet near it murmuring perpetual music to the skies, and the sun struggling through thick clustered trees shedding a broken halo on the roof_the old bent roof and the old gabled chimneys, and flowers a wealth of flowers, Myrtle and roses straying over the walls, till what was born a cottage lives a bower, Is my description correct.

Desi^f

²⁹ Here the manuscript shifts to use of the name Daphne in the speaking cues for Desirée.

Oh yes exactly, (aside) How shall I tell him I don't live anywhere? (aloud) And now describe your own.

Merri^l

My cottage,

Desi^f

Yes,

Merri^l

Oh never mind my cottage we'll live in yours,

Desi^f

No t'is a husband's privilege to take his wife to his own home,

Merri^l

Oh but I'll forego that privilege. Come Daphne take me to see your cottage, and introduce me to your family. I'm quite anxious to see my mother-in-law that is to be. (aside) I hope she's not in Madame Gobbo's style.

(Horn heard.) [f26]

Desi^f

Hark! Did you hear?

Merri^l

A Horn, t'is the Royal Hunt.³⁰

Desi^f

The Royal Hunt, (aside) I'm lost, the Dauphin may be with them.

Merril.

Hark Daphne, nearer, (aside) The devil himself must have led them this way. (aloud) Come Daphne, let us retire and if they ~~retire~~ pass be silent. (they retire up.)

Enter the King, Richelieu, etc³¹

[Louis]³²

Hunting is the very epitome of ennui³³ Duke. they talk to us of the excitement of the chase, but I really think there's no occupation so wearying under the sun, as riding after an animal

³⁰ During the Ancien Regime, the Royal Hunt was an extensive, well-maintained and integral component of life at court. The Royal Stables contained over two thousand horses as well as hundreds of staff to care for them. On average, the Royal Hunt went out three times per week during Louis XV's reign.

³¹ Although the Lord Chamberlain prohibited the representation of living royalty and politicians on the stage in this period, figures of previous historical periods were regularly represented.

³² The speakers name does not appear before these lines, but from the context it is obviously Louis.

³³ Braddon's depiction of Louis XV seems to have taken some liberties given this affected disinterest in the hunt.

you don't want to catch, and catching for the gratification of the ferocity of a pack of Hounds,
Go Gentlemen, resume your sport if you will. We shall rest in this charming spot, the
prettiest glade in the forest I verily believe

Riche^l

We have no ~~sport~~ pleasure in any sport unshared by your Majesty.

Louis.

Richelieu you are uncommonly civil. (aside) and excessively stupid. (aloud) Now Gentleman
is not this a most delightful scene. I really think that insane individual [f27] from Geneva is
right,³⁴ The wood is Mankinds proper abode,

Riche^l

The abode of mankind sire, not of Kings.

Louis.

Nay Richelieu remember we are flesh and blood,

Riche^l

Your majesty is jesting.

Louis

On my faith no, But what is this?

Enter Shepherdesses and Shepherds à la Watteau for a Rustic fete.

Jacquette amongst the peasant's

Riche^l

A rustic fete sire I imagine. Will you join in it. Aroun Abras-chid walked the streets at night,
and mingled with his people.

Louis

Aroun Abras-chid, was a fool duke. And I dare say he often caught cold. I'll rest on this
mossy bank and look on. Interrogate one of those rustics Richelieu.

Riche^l

The men Sire,

Louis.

³⁴ An allusion to Antoine Watteau, who was famous for depicting the characters of commedia dell'arte in pastoral settings, as well as the eighteenth-century fashion for dressing 'à la Watteau' as noted in the stage directions that follow. Some online images are available from a previous exhibition, 'The Age of Watteau, Chardin and Fragonard', Exhibitions, National Gallery of Art, Washington, DC
<<http://www.nga.gov/exhibitions/frenchgenreinfo.shtm>> [Accessed 1 June 2008].

No the women, Womens answers are always the sweetest and the falsest, Summon the prettiest hither that I may interrogate. See ah yonder-that group, looking at Merrillac and Diree [sic] through his eye glass,³⁵ Its' most decidedly Dresden China

Riche¹ [f28]

Which group your majesty?

Louis

That shepherd, and shepherdess in the background. They are perfect. Is it not a wonderful imitation of nature,

Riche¹

Pardon me sire, it is nature.

Louis.

What are they not China,

Riche¹

No sire, see they move, they're going away.

Louis

Richelieu, I have an idea.

Riche¹

Heavens your Majesty.

Louis

Why you look startled.

Riche¹

At a great event sire,

Louis.

That shepherd, and shepherdess, we'll take them to Versailles.

Riche¹

Should they refuse to go sire,

Louis.

Pardon me Duke, we imagined we were King of France Summon them hither.

Riche¹

Sire. I obey, (crosses to Merrillac and Desirée and talks)³⁶ [f29]

Louis.

³⁵ Unmarked stage directions.

³⁶ Stage direction not underlined here.

(Watching them) The shepherd expostulates, the shepherdess assents No they both expostulate, These rustics have such bad manners

Riche¹

(Aside to Merrilac). Merrilac, is it possible?

Merri¹

Hush your Grace, as you love me,

Riche¹

But masquerading in the forest.

Merri¹

A frolic, Nothing more, Not a word to the King.

Louis.

(To Desiree) Come hither Shepherdess, We are going to take you to Versailles, We will give you an Arcadian fête, and you shall be Queen of it. It will delight the Dauphiness, (aside) and Madame du Barry.³⁷ (aloud) What do you say Gentlemen, would not a fête in the Arcadian style be delightful.

1st Noble.

Yes sire, with coloured lamps,

2nd Noble.

No ~~by~~ daylight,

1st Noble.

By daylight impossible!

Louis.

Settle it amongst yourself gentlemen, (aside) and then you're sure to quarrel. (To Desiree)

What say you sylvan divinity. Will you come to Versailles? [f30]

Desi^r

Nay sire I cannot leave the forest.

Merri¹

(aside) Cruel fate, His majesty will take her to Versailles, everybody will fall in love with her, and then she'll forget me, No she won't tho! There's not one of the Versailles set half so good looking.

³⁷ Jeanne Bécu, Comtesse du Barry or 'Madame du Barry.' The last mistress of Louis XV. Madame du Barry was not of noble birth and accounts of her origins differ. Her position as the King's mistress from 1769 until his death in 1774 was arranged partly through a marriage of convenience with Comte Guillaume du Barry. This gave her the necessary title to be presented at court. She quite famously had a troubled relationship with the Dauphine, Marie Antoinette, as well as other prominent women at court. Madame du Barry is also known as one of the victims of the Reign of Terror. She was executed in 1793 for conspiring with other royalists.

Louis.

Can't leave the forest, Pray sylvan divinity why can't you leave the forest, Do you Grow here?

Desi^r

Sire, I am a shepherdess. I cannot leave my sheep.

Louis.

What' [sic] do Shepherdess's keep sheep? Remember that extraordinary fact Richelieu, their attributes are crooked sticks_blue ribbons, and lovers in Dresden China. So Sylvan divinity you belong to some sheep,

Desi^r

Nay sire, the sheep belong to me, I cannot leave them,

Louis.

Very well Shepherdess, but you shall come to Versailles for our fetè_and then you shall return to your "Moutons"

Desi^r

They will die in my absence, sire,

Louis.

Then bring them with you, We've a string of carriages awaiting us in yonder avenue, We can accommodate your sheep. [f31]

Riche^l

Sire the shepherd is determined,-he will not come.

Louis.

Very well then, the shepherd may indulge his determination, and stay where he is, we don't know him,

Desi^r

(aside to Merrilac) Cruel Narcissus to desert me, you will marry another shepherdess,

Merri^l

(aside to her) Cruel Daphne to leave me, You will fall in love with some court-butterfly.

Louis.

Come Shepherdess,

Jacq^{te}

(advancing) If your majesty should marry another shepherdess, I'm at your Majesty's service.

Louis.

Pardon me Sylvan divinity on a large scale. I would accept your kind offer, but you are rather stout, the carriage might break down, and there are no blacksmiths in the neighbourhood.

Gentlemen follow me, and conduct the Shepherdess. The small one. (Going)

Desi^r

Cruel, cruel, Narcissus, I shall never see you again,

Merri^l

Heartless Daphne, I shall never live in your cottage.

Desi^r

Adieu, Narcissus for ever, [f32]

Music,-Exit Courtiers, etc

Jacq^{te}

(To peasants): And now let us go on with the dance.

Omnes.

Yes, yes, the dance, the dance.

Jacq^{te}

(To Merrilac) Won't you dance with me Monsieur Shepard, [sic]

Peasant's.

No, with me, with me,

Merrilac

(Breaking from them): To the devil with everyone of you. Leon, Jacques, Pierre, Michael, No I sent all my lacqueys [sic] away, and there isn't so much as a donkey to carry me back to Versailles.

End of Act 1.

[f33]

Act 2nd³⁸ Scene 1st Versailles

A Saloon – opening on one side into the King's apartments – on the other into the ante-room.
leading to Staircase – Walls hung with pictures.
Zamore discovered seated on Cushions playing with Spaniel.³⁹

Zamore

Him am nasty lilly dog – him eat de sugar plums dat Zamore want. Him shall be flog, De great King flog Zamore Zamore flog the great Kings dog. Him hab him Venguns (beating the dog.) Go to him debil nasty lilly ~~dog~~ (listening) Ah some one come! De lilly darling – Ah how um lub de dear leetle dog.

Enter Merrilac from Ante room.

Merrila.

Fashionable Monstrosity, has his Majesty arisen?

Zam.

Yes him great King drink him chocolate. Ha! Ha! Ha! Massa de Merrilac – he make un laugh – Dat funny dress like him picture – like him China

Meril.

Silence little fool. You can be silent? You can hold your tongue Zamore.

Zam.

Him don't know. Him can hold him tongue best when him mouth full of bon bons.⁴⁰ [f34]

Merill

Then take this (Giving him money) And buy a wagon load of bon bons, And if you are not as silent about my appearance here this morning, as the ebony cherubs in the Chapel. My lacqueys shall give you a flogging that will make you remember my dress like a picture, for

³⁸ Act II is written in a different hand, that of 'Chater Sripsit,' as are several other plays licensed for the Strand Theatre in this period. It therefore appears that Chater Sripsit was the Strand copyist in 1860. My thanks to Caroline Radcliffe for pointing me to Chater Sripsit's name.

³⁹ The name of this dog, Minri, appears to be an invention on Braddon's part, although Louis XV had a spaniel named Filou. The following scene, however, may be based on the relationship between Zamor and Madame du Barry's dog Dorine as portrayed in Lamothe-Langon's fictional memoirs of Madame du Barry. Lamothe-Langon has Madame du Barry note that 'a mutual dislike' existed between her dog Dorine and Zamor, 'who was appointed [the dog's] cupbearer' (Lamothe-Langon, chapter 23). Zamore's two-faced behaviour here might also be influenced by the well-known story of Zamor's involvement in Madame du Barry's conviction.

⁴⁰ Chapter 23 of Lamothe-Langon's *Memoirs* also mentions that Zamor's choice of favourites of Madame du Barry's associates is based on the generous provision of sweets.

the remainder of your natural life (Goes to Ante room and calls.) Victoire Henri you may enter.

Enter two Servants from the Ante room carrying a large picture frame, covered as if containing a picture.

Merril.

What did you say to his Majesty's domestics?

Vict.

That we were carrying in de Merrilac's portrait taken in a masquerade dress, as a present to their most gracious master.

Merril.

And they—?

Vict.

Escorted us to the Ante room, And wished to assist us to hang the picture.

Merril.

And you replied - ?

Vict.

That we would infinitely prefer to be hung ourselves than to disobey our Masters orders – which were that we should ourselves place the picture in the cabinet of his Majesty, as a pleasing surprise.— [f35]

Merril.

Enough Victoire, I applaud your discretion. Place the frame between those two windows I think I'd rather stand with my back to the light- it's more advantageous for one's complexion– and more likely to escape detection. Zamore be so good as to bring me that glass (looking in glass.) The costume is certainly perfect. But my face! Heavens! Victoire I am pale (Aside) Ah Daphne, Daphne what a sleepless night, and what a shocking complexion you have to account for (Aloud.) Is the frame fixed Victoire?

Vict

To perfection Monsieur

Merril.

Then you may go – and remember you received an express from me this morning dated at my Château to tell you that I was on the point of starting for Normandy.

Vict

The Courier arrived at nine o'clock Monsieur his horse covered with foam.

Merril.

Good! I depend on your fertile imagination. That will do– or stay– if people ask you who painted this picture (pointing to himself.) say it is an original, and that there are no copies published at present.

Vict

We are prepared to tell any stories Monsieur may Command.

(Ex^eunt Servants.) [f36]

Merril.

Take away the mirror Zamore. No wonder heartless scoundrels are generally handsome fellows in plays and romances for the distraction of the heart are [sic] very bad for the complexion (Stepping into the frame.)⁴¹ So I flatter myself that's rather a graceful attitude. Or I'll lean a little more on my crook – so! It's rather important how one looks when standing for one's picture (To Zamore.) Is his Majesty coming?

Zam.

Not yet Massa.

Merril.

Oh Daphne Daphne you've an amazing deal to answer for. Its so very fatiguing [sic] to stand still. His Majesty's coming Zamore?

Zam.

No Massa

Merril.

Diable! I can't stand this much longer. It tires one to death. (Coming out of frame and throwing himself into an easy Chair in front of the stage.) I'll get back to my place before the King arrives. What can he have done with my Daphne? If these were the days of iron and steel, I would go to him at the head of a troop of armed men and say "King I demand my Daphne", or if physical force didn't succeed I'd try money and say "King name the ransom for my love, name ~~the~~ your price" But in our degenerate. days stratagem is the only mode – so I'll play the spy watch the Kings proceedings and find out where he has hidden my [f37] treasure. Then I'll throw myself at the feet of the Dauphiness who loves her husband and will read my heart she will intercede with the King the abhorred nuptials with the thrice abhorred Mademoiselle de Launay will be avoided ~~and~~ I shall marry my little Shepherdess and –

Zam.

⁴¹ This scene is similar in some ways to a scene in *Lady Audley's Secret* where Robert Audley and George Talboys break into Lady Audley's private chambers to examine a portrait of her. See Mary Braddon, *Lady Audley's Secret* Ed. David Skilton (Oxford: OUP, 1987), pp. 69-72.

Him Majesty cum

Merril.

Does he? The Devil!

(Doors of the inner saloon are thrown open by servants
Enter Louis followed by Leon carrying chocolate Stand. which he places on table. As the
King enters Merrilac gets back to the frame.⁴²

Louis.

Whatever your accomplishments Leon, you cannot make Chocolate

Leon.

Your Majesty will pardon my ignorance. I take pains _

Louis.

Enough Leon You take pains that is not the expression of an artist. Your Chocolate is good, but it is the chocolate of a man who “takes pains”— there is no soul in it. You should taste my chocolate Leon _ you shall one day when happiness is within a mans reach it is hard to withhold. it. You shall taste my chocolate Leon.⁴³

Merril.

(aside) Heaven help him! [f38]

Leon.

Your Majesty is always too good to the humblest of your slaves

Louis.

Do any of my subjects wish to see me this morning Leon.?

Leon

A score your majesty. His Grace M de Choirseul⁴⁴ on, state affairs.

Louis.

Ah they'll keep

Leon.

M. de Sartines⁴⁵ concerning some important discoveries lately made by his agents

⁴² End parenthesis missing from stage direction here.

⁴³ Drinking a morning cup of chocolate was an institution of the French court at this time. The recipe used at court was very rich, calling for a tablet of chocolate per cup of water which was then slowly warmed and finished with the addition of an egg yolk.

⁴⁴ Appears to be a slight variation in spelling (as in the main male characters' names) for Étienne François, Duc du Choiseul, who was at different times minister for foreign affairs, ambassador to Rome and a peer of France. However, he had fallen out of favour and been exiled by 1770, so Braddon's chronology may not be historically correct here. Although differing accounts are available, one mid-nineteenth-century popular account offers an extensive description of the way in Madame du Barry succeeded in having Choiseul ejected from court. See Julia Kavanagh, *Woman in France in the Eighteenth Century* (London: Smith Elder, 1850), pp. 299-303.

Louis

M de Sartines agents are always making important discoveries, but I never knew them find out anything yet. M. de Sartines can return to Paris, and employ himself, and spend my money in getting intelligence of what everybody else knew a week ago.

Leon.

A young person – a girl_ whose lover is to be executed tomorrow-supplicates to be allowed to intercede with your Majesty

Louis

Oh yes the usual cry_ Mercy of course. Some people cry out for justice, and others assail us on every side for mercy. I find the only way of being impartial is neither to grant one nor the other. Is the girl pretty? [f39]

Leon.

Quite the contrary your majesty

Louis

Then we must hang her lover. There must be examples Leon. Any more?

Leon.

A diputation [sic] from__

Louis.

That'll do Leon. I'm indisposed and shan't see any one to day. Have the preparations been made for the fête I ordered?

Leon.

They have Sire

Louis

By the bye what became of the little Shepherdess we carried away from the wood yesterday?

Leon.

The young lady passed the night in the apartments of their Royal Highnesses, the Princesses,⁴⁶ who were pleased to be pleased with her.

⁴⁵ Antoine Gabriel de Sartines was lieutenant-general of police of Paris from 1759 to 1774. He was considered an expert in interrogation and political intrigues.

⁴⁶ It is difficult to determine exactly which princesses are referred to here since Braddon's facts and chronology are sometimes slightly inaccurate. Marie Louise-Élisabeth, who became Duchess of Parma, was the elder twin sister to Henriette-Anne and was the only one of Louis XV's daughters to marry. At the age of twelve she was married to Philip of Bourbon, son of King Philip V of Spain, and therefore spent most of her life away from Louis XV's court. Henriette-Anne was raised at court with her sister Marie-Adélaïde and their brother Louis, Dauphin. However, both Marie Louise-Élisabeth and Henriette-Anne had died before the time period of this play. Marie-Adélaïde was the leader of a triumvirate of Louis XV's daughters (with Victoire Louise Marie Thérèse and Sophie Philippine Élisabeth Justine) who first opposed Madame du Pompadour and then Madame

Louis.

Were they really? We were pleased to be pleased with her as well. Tell the young lady (Mad^{lle} Daphne, I think she is called) to attend us here.

Leon.

Yes your Majesty

(Exit Leon.) [f40]

Louis.

What shall I do with the little beauty? Pshaw it was a very ridiculous whim to bring her to the Court

Merril.

(aside) I should rather think it was

Louis.

However as I daresay the little Divinity is ambitious I'll marry her to Charloi, or Villefroi, or some of that set. Now there's Merrilac._

Merril.

(aside.) To be sure there is.

Louis.

He perhaps would'nt mind marrying her to oblige me

Merril.

(aside)⁴⁷ Would'nt mind marrying her to oblige__

Louis.

But no! he must marry Mad^{lle} de Launay.

Merril.

(aside) Must he? We~~H~~ shall see!

Louis.

I'll marry her to Villefroi. I owe him a grudge I'll give him a wife. Nothing like squaring one's accounts.

Merril.

(Loudly.) Villefroi! ten thousand devils!

Zam.

du Barry. Louis XV's youngest daughter Louise-Marie was not raised at court but at the Abbey de Fontevraud with her sisters Victoire and Sophie. While Louise left court in 1770 to become a Carmelite nun, her sisters chose to support Marie-Adélaïde in her disagreements with the King's mistresses. Therefore, the Princesses referred to here would most likely have been Marie-Adélaïde, Victoire and Sophie.

⁴⁷ Underline is missing from stage direction here.

Oh dam! Him neber swear im Majesty

Louis

Go to the Devil_ or – your Mistress. [f41]

(Exit Zamore, after stealing sugar from the Chocolate equipage.)

Louis.

(Looking at Merrilac.) Why whats this? A full length of Merrilac. A very bad likeness. A great deal too handsome. Gad its more like me than Merrilac. What a ridiculous dress. How the sunshine dazzles one’s eyes_ it seemed to move.

(Servants from Ante room. Announce Mad^{lle} Daphne.)

Louis.

Mad^{lle} Daphne. Ah my sweet child, good morning. Why what is this _ you have been crying.

Daphne.

Yes, your majesty I have wept bitterly at being separated from – from – my sheep.

Merril.

(aside.) And so its been crying about its sheep. Poor lamb.

Daphne.

A Sire the lambs especially. Ah what will not one of them suffer, alone, lost, in the long dark night

Merril.

(aside) Ah it is a long dark night, when one can’t sleep for rage and jealousy, and love and despair.

Louis.

I’m very much afraid Daphne that this grief is not so much occasioned by your separation from the sheep, as from that young Shepherd, who, by the bye, was so remarkably bashful that I never saw his face_ dazzled no doubt by the awful majesty of royalty. Poor young man! I’m afraid Daphne you have a sort of sneaking kindness for that young man. [f42] Nay, no womanly denials – he’s a fine fellow and wears a very pretty costume_ just such a one, by the bye as that masquerade affair in the picture behind us. (Pointing to Merrilac Daphne turns, sees him & screams. He places his finger on his lip with a quick gesture.⁴⁸

Louis.

Why Daphne! What on earth is the matter with the picture? You scream as if you had seen a ghost_ or a deputation

⁴⁸ End parenthesis missing from stage direction here.

Daphne.

Yonder terrible dog Sire alarmed me

Louis.

What Minri? Ha! ha! I think it is the first time he was ever called terrible. Upon my honour there is something remarkable about that that picture_ that attitude_ the finger on the lip_ I could have sworn it was not so when I looked at it before. Dear me how we deceive ourselves.

Daphne.

(aside.) Narcissus here! How in Heavens name did he gain access to the Palace? If they discover him they will punish him severely. Be still beating heart thou that so tenderly lovest him shall not betray him.

Louis.

(aside.) I've a great mind to send the girl back to her forest – but that would'nt be Kingly. She was born to be a countess and I must rectify natures mistake. Daphne I will make your fortune.

Daphne.

Ah Sire __ [f43]

Louis.

I will myself give you a dowry, and find a suitable and honourable husband for you.

Daphne.

A husband of my own rank Sire_ A Shepherd?

Louis.

No Daphne! there is in your grace and beauty the stamp of natures nobility. You shall marry a nobleman.

Merril.

(aside.) I shall take delight in shooting that nobleman.

Daphne.

Sire your pardon_ I_ I_ feel the honour you would confer on me but_ but_

Louis.

But_ but_ you refuse it! Go on. Kings were created to be thwarted and disobeyed. I don't know what else they crown us for. Talk of the Divine rights of Kings_ I'm sure it must be the Divine right of being tormented.

Daphne.

Ah sire forgive me, but I would sooner die than_

Louis

(warmly.) Yes of course that's everybody's argument. Propose anything for anybody's especial benefit and they'd always rather die than accept it. The only plan is to let them die. I find a very large majority change their minds at the last push.

Daphne.

(aside.) Oh dear he's in a passion! What shall I do? If I [f44] tell him who I am he'll make me marry that odious Chevalier de Merrilac. And if I don't tell him who I am he'll make me marry some one else; and I'm sure one is as odious as the other_ if not more so.

Louis.

Come Daphne, come, have you decided? Will you marry the nobleman I may choose for you? Now there's my young favourite Merrilac, I would marry you to him_

Merril.

(aside.) Ah it's all right.

Louis.

But he must marry Mad^{lle} de Launay a portege [sic] of mine, who I've never seen, by the bye.

Daphne.

Sire I would'nt marry the Chevalier de Merrilac for a thousand worlds.

Merril.

(aside.) That's my impertinent. Ah but she does'nt know I'm Merrilac.

Daphne.

And as to Mad^{lle} de Launay, Sire I know that she has a perfect aversion to the very thought of an union with the Chevalier.

Merril.

(aside.) Mad^{lle} de Launay's taste is beneath contempt

Louis.

Mad^{lle} de Launay! What do you know of Mad^{lle} de Launay, Daphne? [f45]

Daphne.

Oh nothing at all sire (aside.)⁴⁹ I must tell him who I am. He loved my father, and will not force me to marry this hateful Merrilac. No, he cannot be so cruel at that. But then Narcissus will hear me, and that would spoil my little comedy. No, he shall not know who I am till the King has given his sanction to the step, and we are married: then on the day I marry him I will say — "My poor Narcissus, my Shepherd lover, I am a noble mans daughter and a

⁴⁹ Underlining is missing from stage directions here.

portege⁵⁰ [sic] of the Kings_ and I have a large fortune.” And then Narcissus will be struck dumb. and will look so abashed_ no I don’t know whether he would look bashful_ I don’t think he could do it. He’s so very much at his ease_ such an imprudent shepherd_ only imajin [sic] his having the supreme audacity to enter the very apartments of the King. He a poor Shepherd

Merril.

(aside.) I cannot understand the free and easy manner in which my Daphne talks to the King she a poor little Shepherdess.

Louis.

What is the little puss thinking of? Well Daphne, your decision

Daphne.

Sire before you compel me to make that decision will you permit me to speak to you in private

Louis

Certainly commence. [f46]

Daphne.

I would speak in private Sire

Louis.

Well, there is no one to overhear us.

Daphne.

Pardon me Sire, I fear, here we might be overheard

Louis.

Dear me child by whom?

Daphne.

(Looking round.) Why Sire, they say that walls have ears, and_ and_ May I speak to you in yonder apartment.?

Louis.

Certainly Daphne, but there are walls to that room

Daphne.

But those walls may not have ears your Majesty

Louis.

(Rising.) As you will. You’re a woman ergo, You’re capricious_ cause and effect. (Exit.)

⁵⁰ Although the spelling is not accurate, it appears that the intended word is protégé since Desirée is a ward of the King.

Daphne.

(Looking back = aside.) Ah Narcissus! Won't you be inquisitive now.

(Exit.)

Merril.

(Coming down.)⁵¹ Well of all the extraordinary proceedings I ever beheld, this is the most extraordinary. What in the name of all the faries [sic] (they're all women.) induced that cruel Daphne to follow the King into that saloon? What can she want to say to him? She would'nt say it here, therefore she did'nt want me to hear it. Treacherous [f47] coquette, so this is your return for the intense devotion of__ half an hour. Ah Merrillac, Merrillac you should have known that when you placed your highest hopes of happiness upon a womans constancy, you had better have yielded them to the shifting of the wind, or the chances of a dice box. The cruel coquette. I'll live a bachelor all my life. I'll marry Mad^{lle} de Launay just to punish her. Daphne_ I mean_ I'll_ Alas I love her so dearly that while my tongue abuses her at the speed of a race horse my heart, my poor captured heart is full of her beauty and fascination. What is she saying to the King? now I hold in one of the most__ nay I may say the most contemptible thing a man can be capable of, to listen at a keyhole; but there's a little cabinet picture behind that door that I've been wanting to criticise for a twelvemonth and this is a glorious opportunity (Goes behind door of Saloon.)

(Servants Announce Monsieur Villefroi)

Ville.

His Majesty not here?

Servant.

His Majesty is, doubtless, in the adjoining Saloon. Will Monsieur await him there.

Ville.

Yes (Exit Servant.) I've looked at the pictures in this room till the very sight of them wearies me. Art is a great bore_ one must pretend to admire it_ And then all those Italian phrases_ how they bother one⁵² (Looking round [f48] not seeing Merrillac behind the door.) what's this? A Frame without a picture. A very large one too designed for a portrait of his Majesty no doubt. My likeness would'nt look bad in it. I should like to be taken on my war horse

⁵¹ Stage direction is not underlined.

⁵² Examples include 'chiaroscuro', 'sfumato', 'pentimenti'.

Turenne,⁵³ at the head of my forces. He could'nt throw me in a picture_ and I should look so imposing.

(Enter Servants shewing in M. Charloi)

Charl.

Ah Villefroi, good morning, how well you're looking positively rosy.

Ville

You think so

Charl.

Parole d'honneur!

Ville

Oh if you say upon your honour I shall think you're laughing at me.

Charl.

What? (~~W~~ Laying his hand upon his sword.)

Ville

My dear Charloi, it is as you observe a magnificent diamond hilt worth a small Dukedom.

Charl.

Yes! The design is neat Would you like to see the blade

Ville.

My dear Friend I would not give you so much trouble. You say I am looking well_ strange at the moment you entered I was about_ I was thinking of having my portrait painted [f49]

Charl.

Indeed. (During this conversation Merrilac steals back to frame).

Ville.

Yes I will certainly have myself taken on my white horse Terenne [sic]

Charl.

Indeed! Did you ever get on him

Ville.

Get on him! on him! Why no_ not exactly, but I've often thought about it

Char.

But you were saying. __

Ville.

⁵³ The horse appears to be named after Henri de la Tour d'Auvergne, Vicomte Turenne, commonly known as Turenne. A Marshal of France who was acclaimed for his military prowess and was a contemporary of Louis XIV and Cardinal Richelieu.

Yes! But you do so interrupt one_ I was saying, I'd give the picture to his majesty when it is finished. There is a large empty frame hanging yonder, it would fill to perfection

Charl.

(Looking round.) Empty frame! Where?

Ville.

Between the windows

Charl.

Why my dear Villefroi you must certainly be blind. Instead of an empty frame there is a full length life size portrait of that puppy⁵⁴ Merrilac_ in the ridiculous dress he wore in the forest yesterday.

Ville.

(Looking round.) Heaven save us from the spells of the Devil. That [f50] frame was empty five minutes ago_ I'd stake my existence on it.

Charl.

Ah Villefroi, you should'nt drink so early in the morning You'll have a red nose before you're aware of it

Ville.

Red nose! Drink! Merrilac's picture in that frame.

Charl.

Yes and a very bad likeness too. That is'nt Merrilacs nose

Ville.

No, and that is'nt Merrilacs mouth.

Charl.

No, and the eyes are not his

Ville.

Nor the teeth. The teeth have the peculiar pearly appearance of mine. I dare say you've observed it when I smile. Did you ever observe my smile?

Charl.

Certainly the teeth are not Merrilac's

Merril.

(aside.) I shall begin to think I'm not myself at all

Charl.

⁵⁴ Mid-nineteenth-century expression for an ineffectual or bumbling individual.

Do you not observe a great fault in the perspective?

Ville.

To be sure I do. _ What is it?

Charl.

And one of the legs is longer than the other. [f51]

Ville.

A couple of inches at least _ Which of them?

Charl.

But Merrilac's vanity is so unsufferable [sic] that of course as the artist has flattered him grossly, he is satisfied

Ville.

Yes, Merrilac is vain, and vanity is always unsufferable.

Charl.

Always. The lights and shadows are badly managed The shadow of the nose should fall on the other side of the face.

Ville.

Stop, a fly has settled on the nose _ allow me _ (Brushes his handkerchief across Merrilac's face) Merrilac sneezes and comes out of the frame.)

Merril.

M. de Villefroi you've been taking snuff – you should'nt it's a bad habit.

Charl. & Ville.

Merrilac!

Merril.

All that your criticism has left of him. Not Merrilac's nose or Merrilacs eyes _ or Merrilacs teeth _ or Merrilac's mouth __ but for the rest Merrilac at your service.

Charl.

A very bad joke. Quite a failure __

Merril.

And my legs. M. Villefroi pray tell me which is the longest. [f52] I must certainly limp

Ville.

(aside.) I'm afraid we look rather foolish

Merril.

And the shadow of my nose_ which side is it to fall on? How shamefully the artist has flattered me. Beware how you slander dame nature. M. Charloi; for I am a prize specimen of her painting

Charl

Laugh on my dear Merrilac. I saw through your innocent little practical joke, and joined in it. It has been “diamond cut diamond”. I assure you

Merril.

Of course if you assure me, I believe you

Ville.

But pray Merrilac what brings you back to Court? No success in your Arcadia?

Charl.

No pretty Shepherdesses?

Merril.

On the contrary, the loveliest of all Shepherdesses.

Charl.

And you left her_ Cruel.

Merril.

Wrong again! her's the cruelty_ She left me.

Charl.

And you_ ? [f53]

Merril.

As I intend to make her my wife, I followed her!_

Charl.

Followed her_ here.

Merril.

Yes! here

Charl.

And she is_

Merril.

In the adjoining apartment.

Charl.

With the King?

Merril.

With the King.

Charl.

Ehem!

Ville.

Ehem!

Merril.

M. de Charloi you are afflicted with a very sudden cough.

Charl.

Yes, a chronic affection. I've had it from a baby. Its such an affectionate chronic affection.

Merril.

M. de Charloi. the name of my future wife is a polished mirror that shall not be breathed on in my presence. [f54]

Charl.

Oh certainly, my dear Merrilac. But I must say if my future wife were so very high in the favour of his majesty I should__

Merril.

Well sir what should you do?

Charl.

Why, I should be on the look out for a pension.

Merril.

For that base insinuation_ that double slander against the King your Master, and the lady who will become my wife, you must account to me. (drawing his sword.)

Charl.

Ah a more fitting time Monsieur

Merril.

Ah this moment. Monsieur allow me on this occasion to dispence [sic] with ceremony, as my time is remarkably short. I must fight you and return to my frame yonder before his Majesty returns. Defend yourself!

Charl.

As you please_ (They fight.)

Ville.

(aside.) I hope he won't want to fight me afterwards. I coughed. That Charloi is always getting me into scrapes. I hope Merrilac will pink⁵⁵ him.

⁵⁵ Obsolete word for stab or puncture.

Daphne rushes in followed by Louis.

Daphne.

Oh mercy! Narcissus_ they'll kill him. [f55]

Louis

Fighting in our private apartments! Gentlemen! Gentlemen pray have a little consideration for our feelings and our carpets. For mercy's sake do not kill each other here. You will afflict me so intensely and make such a terrible mess Go Daphne. (aside to her) go and change this masquerade dress and return here.

Daphne.

(aside to the King.) Ah Sire, not to see that odious Chevalier de Merrilac (During this conversation Merrilac and Charloi put up their swords)

Louis.

Go my Child_ trust in me

Daphne.

I do sire, with my whole heart but do not condemn me to marry the Chevalier. I would rather be sent to the Bastille.⁵⁶

Louis.

No more Desree. Go, Return here, and if you still refuse to marry Merrilac _ you shall go to the Bastille.

Daphne.

I am prepared to obey you Sire, and to choose__

Louis.

The husband?

Daphne.

No Sire the prison! (Curtsies to the King and Exit.)

Louis.

Lucian de Merrilac_ I should be very angry with you for having played the listener in yonder frame_ had I [56] not myself followed your example. I have listened. Lucien I have always been fond of you_ to day I am proud of you. You could trust the honour of the woman you loved in the hands of your King. You M. de Charloi judging the heir of all the ~~Bour~~ Bourbons by your own soul. though[t] that Louis was a vulgar villian, [sic] who, having a jewel trusted to his keeping, would, if not well looked after, steal it. Sir there is a gem of

⁵⁶ Bastille Saint Antoine was a prison at this time. It is more famous for the storming of the Bastille, which marked the commencement of the French Revolution on 14 July 1789.

holiest light that gentlemen call honour. Kings wear it in their breasts; soldiers die to preserve it; nations fight for it. You know not the meaning of it! Adieu. I think you mentioned just now your intention of returning to your estate in Normandy, did you not?

Charl.

Nay Sire

Louis.

You did not?

Charl.

No, indeed Sire.

Louis.

Then you meant to do so. I sire, will not frustrate your intention, It is a good intention, and will pave the way to your__ Chateau.

Charl.

(aside.) Banish the Court. Ten thousand furies!

(aloud.) You are right Sire as you always are. It is my intention to quit Versailles, but I have a little business to settle before I go. [57]

Louis.

Indeed to pay your debts?

Charl.

No Sire! I am not so utterly lost to court etiquette. [sic] M. de Merrilac. [sic] indulged in some expressions just now. which your Majesty's (for him.) opportune arrival prevented his attoning for.

Louis.

You would appoint a meeting for a duel. Allow me to name the place.

Charl.

Willingly Sire. What spot would your Majesty select

Louis.

The Bastille. To which place I shall send you both, if a duel be contemplated between you.

Charl.

In a duel your Majesty both Gentlemen brave death. Therefore the fear of imprisonment could not deter them.

Louis.

Nor the fear of their Kings displeasure. it appears M de Charloi. Once more Adieu, you will not compel your King to undertake the office of his laqueys and shew you to the door.

Charl.

Sire Adieu Your command banishes me to my Château your frown makes me wish that Chateau were my grave. Farewell Sire (Going.) [f58]

Louis.

(aside.) He looks very penitent I'm not good enough to be too severe. A word M. de Charloi. When you have learnt to think better of your King, you will once more be welcome to his Court

Charl.

Sire you have nobly taught me that lesson it is already written upon my heart (Kneeling and giving the King his Sword.) I present you Sire with my sword do not return it to me till you think I am worthy the privilege [sic] of defending the Kingly honour my idle words have sullied.

Ville.

(Aside.) I suppose I must do what he does (Kneeling to the King.) Sire I present you with my sword (confused.) Sire I most humbly beg ten thousand pardons of your Majesty. I hav'nt got one.

Louis.

Keep your sword M. de Charloi I fear if you draw it every time you hear your King abused it will not rest long in its scabbard. We invite you Gentlemen to witness the signing of the Contract of the marriage between the Chevalier de Merrilac and Md^{lle} Desiree de Launay. Will you summon the Court to this apartment, where the ceremony will take place (Exeunt Charloi and Villefoi.) (To servant.) Tell my notary to bring the contract we desired him to draw up this morning

(Exit Servant.)

Merril.

Sire amongst the papers on yonder table is there such a document as lettre de cachet?⁵⁷

Louis.

I have no doubt there is. [f59]

Merril

Then sire would you do me the extreme [sic] the unspeakable favour of filling it up with my name?

Louis.

⁵⁷ Lettres de cachet enforced an action or declaration of the King that could not be appealed.

Why Lucien what is the meaning of this extraordinary request?

Merril.

Extraordinary Sire. You ask a man to marry and you are astonished because ~~you~~ he prefers to go to prison.

Louis.

Yet you would marry the little Shepherdess

Merril.

Yes sire! because I love her. To marry the woman you love is — Heaven_ To marry the woman you hate is — Sire I would'nt say what that is

Louis.

Then you won't marry Md^{lle} de Launnay.

Merril.

No Sire I will not I would'nt marry her if your Majesty sent a regiment of musketeers to drive me ~~her~~ into her ~~my~~ arms.

Louis.

Traitor! Here she is.

(Enter Desiree in Court Costume – Masked followed by the Court.)

Merril.

(aside.) Masked! She must be as ugly as the Devil or She would'nt be ashamed to shew her face.

Louis.

Disiree, [sic] come hither (Louis and Desiree on one Side of the Stage [f60] Merrilac on the other.) Be seated Child is the contract ready for signature (To Notary.)⁵⁸

Notary

It is Sire

Louis.

(To Disiree.) [sic] Then sign my child.

Desiree.

(aside.) Poor Nacissus, [sic] how wretched he looks I suppose they've told him who I am. I wonder which is M. de Merrilac? Poor poor Narcissus all the bright dreams of our Arcadia, broken

Louis.

⁵⁸ Stage direction not underlined here.

Why Desiree you're going to sleep. Sign immediately

Desiree

I told you Sire, I would sooner die than marry M. de Merrilac.

Louis.

You're sure you would.?

Disiree

Sure, Sire

Louis.

Very well you shall then_ but stop. I may as well tell you something first. You see yonder young gentleman in the Shepherdess dress?

Desiree.

See him Sire! I see no one else in the whole room

Louis.

Very complimentary to us. Well Desiree that's M. de Merrilac [f61]

Desiree.

That Sire _ ! _ _ Narcissus!

Louis.

On my honour_ Come sign or die?

Desiree.

Well then I thank your Majesty I'd rather sign (Signing.)

Louis.

(Crosses to Merrilac.) Md^{lle} de Launnay has signed we want your autographe [sic] Lucien.

Merril.

You Know my Determination Sire. I will die ere I wed her.

Louis.

Very well. But to gratify my whim sign that document first

Merril.

With pleasure Sire. A dying man is happy to oblige you (signs.) There Sire. now lead me to my executioner.

Louis.

Give me your hand then (Leading him to Desiree.) who drops her mask.)⁵⁹ Thus do I lead you to your executioner.

⁵⁹ Stage direction as it appears in manuscript.

Merril.

Daphne! My angel! [sic] My Shepherdess! Oh Sire, surely I've been beheaded without knowing it_ and this is the opening of Elysium. My adored! My betrothed! Oh wild rapture too intense for words, how shall I tell you all I feel Daphne [f62]

Louis.

Why Lucien, I thought a regiment of musketeers would'nt drive you into that lady's arms.

Merril.

Sire I have been a fool and a traitor. I should have known the most gracious of Monarchs would never have forced me to anything but my happiness. Daphne Kneel and thank your King.

Disiree

You must call me Desiree now.

Merril.

Nay I will call you by another and a sweeter name my bride.

Louis.

You see we are not quite such a tyrant as we look. Ladies and Gentlemen there will be a fête this evening, and I beg that every glass of Champagne [sic] that is drunk shall be quaffed in honour of our young proteges the__

Desiree

The Loves of Arcadia.

Curtain.