

HELENE. Not here yet! When will he come? (MADAME GIGOT enters L.) Madame Gigot! (*Hastily tries to remark.*)

MAD. GIG. Mam'selle Helene! Too late mam'selle (*laughs ironically*), you're found out. How pleased your dear papa will be to be sure. He thinks you are safe in the convent with the other bread and butter misses.

HELENE. I'm not a bread and butter miss, madam, I'm—

MAD. GIG. The new Professional Beauty, perhaps? Oh, we all saw the glances the Regent threw at you in the dance just now.

HELENE. I'm not going to be a beauty any more than you are going to be—

MAD. GIG. What? (GIGOT enters at back; he starts on seeing MADAME GIGOT.)

HELENE. Marquise de Chateaugris. (*Curtseys.*)

GIGOT. (*Aside.*) Marquise de Chateaugris! It's my wife! Oho, Madame Gigot!

MAD. GIG. That may be nearer than you expect.

GIGOT. (*Aside at back.*) I don't know about that.

MAD. GIG. I shall go and inform your dear papa. (*Go's off L.* GIGOT goes off C. and L.)

HELENE. Do, dear mamma. Spiteful thing. What shall I do! Oh, if Maurice would only come!

(REGENT enters L. 2 F. with saucepan in one hand and ladle in the other.)

REGENT. My fair unknown, you mustn't desert us

HELENE. Ah, sir, where is Maurice?

REGENT. (*Who is slightly excited by wine, mimicking her.*) Where's Maurice? I don't know where Maurice is, but the Duke of Orleans is here; quite at your service; in fact, your most devoted slave. (*Leads her to sofa, setting down saucepan on the ground by it.*)

HELENE. (*Aside.*) I must not quarrel with him, or Maurice is lost. (*Sits. MAURICE, GIGOT and ESCARGOT appear at back. MAURICE sees HELENE and is with difficulty prevented by ESCARGOT from rushing forward.*)

REGENT. I'll wager now, this gay young spark, Maurice, has clean forgotten you. A butterfly of fashion; sipping sweets from every flower. Why should you waste your beauty on a man who has forsaken you? (*Takes her hand.*) Soft as velvet. Come. You shall be the reigning beauty of the hour; the belle of every ball; the toast of every gallant in town; the envy of all women; the adoration of all men.

HELENE. (*Aside.*) Detestable man! but I must conciliate him. (*Aloud.*) But Babette, what will she say? Isn't she the Professional Beauty?

REGENT. (*Disparagingly.*) So, so! but she's getting fat; washed out; *passée*. Why she's been the rage for quite three months now. Come—one kiss is all I ask. Here at your feet most beautiful women I lie. (*He tries to kiss her. MAURICE half draws his sword. ESCARGOT restrains him. HELENE rises hastily, pushing the REGENT, who falls on his hands and knees, upsetting saucepan and ladle. She runs off into the room. R., as ESCARGOT and GIGOT hurry MAURICE off at back, L. PIPANDOR enters at door, R., in time to take in the situation; he holds a saucepan in his hand.*)