

befuddled state. Even as they speak, the youth appears, in such a dazed condition owing to liquor that the kind-hearted barmaid leads him to the stables and makes up a bed of straw on which he may lie and sleep off the effects of his over-indulgence in alcohol.

The Chemineau enters, travel-stained and aged, but as hearty and as cheery as ever. He calls for drink, and a long scene ensues, in which the two old toppers finally recognise in him their old comrade of twenty years ago. The talk turns on Toinette, whom they recall to his memory. On learning that she is married and has a son, the idea occurs to him that the boy may be his, and he cannot get it out of his head. The three go into the inn to eat.

Then Toinette comes up, calling for her son. Catherine takes her in her arms and cares for her, kindly, while the mother sadly bewails her lot, telling how she seeks her son here and there, never knowing where she is going, or where she will find him. Catherine tells her he is lying asleep in the stable, and she goes to him, mournfully recalling the days when he was a very different youth.

Thomas and Martin leave, and the Chemineau talks with Catherine about Toinette and her trouble with her son. The Chemineau says he will wait and see the boy, and maybe he can do something to soften Maitre Pierre's hard heart.

The Chemineau, left alone, expresses his fear to meet Toinette after his bad treatment of her twenty years before. He is overcome with tenderness as he recalls the days they spent together on the farm of Maitre Pierre. He half decides to go away without seeing the lad, but finally decides he will stay and do what he conceives to be his duty in helping Toinette and her son.

Suddenly he and Toinette come face to face, and a pathetic and beautifully written scene ensues, in which both recall the past, and he tells her of his desire to repair the past by doing what he can to help her in her trouble. Toinette tells him that she pardons the wrong he did her years ago, and then she tells him that Toinet is their son, and resembles him.

Together the two go to the stable, and the Chemineau calls to Toinet. The latter, aroused from his slumber, asks who the Chemineau is. Toinette says he is a friend of her youth before Toinet was born, and the Chemineau embraces the lad, straining him passionately to his breast.

Then he tells the lad that he knows all about his trouble, and also of a way out. He encourages Toinet to hope, and the curtain goes down on the youth looking more cheerful, the Chemineau singing and crying at once in his emotion and the pleasure he feels, and Toinette seeming as if a great load had been lifted from her mind.

FOURTH ACT.

The final act is one of supreme pathos. The scene is in Francois' cottage once more. The latter, feebler and evidently drawing near the end, is lying in his armchair, which is turned towards the fire. Toinette, Aline, and Toinet are busy preparing a meal. There is a general air of happiness about them, despite the invalid, for Maitre Pierre has given his consent to the marriage of

Aline and Toinet, at the request of the Chemineau, in return for the favor the latter did him twenty years before, in curing his sick cattle. It is Christmas Eve, and the three intend to go to midnight Mass together.

"But who will sit with my poor husband while we are gone?" asks Toinette.