

ARGUMENT.

The scene is laid in the little village of St. Brieux, in Brittany, during the First Consulate (cir. 1800). To this spot Charles Duval, a young Englishman, has been sent over by his uncle, who is concerned in the endeavor to place the Comte de Provence, then a refugee in England, upon the throne of France. Here he meets the Comtesse de Beaudry, a Royalist, who has come to the village disguised as the Widow Barrie, a Parisian dressmaker, being really his own cousin and boyish love, who, several years before, had made a clandestine match with a Frenchman, and had consequently, been severed from her family. To her he confides certain papers entrusted to him for that purpose, though without recognizing her.

The Comtesse, taking advantage of the passion with which her charms have inspired the Mayor of St. Brieux, an elderly gallant, makes him the unwilling medium of communication between herself and the Royalist party in Paris. Having, however, incurred his animosity by rejecting his addresses, she, with Duval, is placed under suspicion of being a conspirator, and is in danger of arrest. She cleverly clears the difficulty by placing his proposal to herself in a ridiculous light, at the same time threatening to reveal his foolish complicity in her plot. This appeal to his vanity and fears is successful, and she becomes mistress of the situation. In the danger of the moment she has confided to Duval her relationship to himself; and his love for her which has remained constant, bears promise of reward.

There is a slight underplot, turning upon the jealousy of a blacksmith's apprentice, Pierre, and the coquetry of the village belle, Marie, niece of the blacksmith; both are, however, happily removed before the end of the play.