

THE FORTUNES OF FIFI

ately bad lot. I carried Fifi off by the hair of her head—she had only been with them a single day—and frightened her so that I don't think she will ever dare to follow her own will again; but I saw that acting was in her blood, so at last I got Duvernet, the manager, to give her a small place. That was a year and a half ago, and to-day she is his leading lady."

"And you are not in love with her?"

"I did not say that, your Majesty. I said she was not my sweetheart; but I wish I were good enough for her. However, Fifi knows nothing about that. All she knows is, that Cartouche belongs to her and is ready to thrash any rogue, be he gentleman or common man, who dares to speak lightly to her, or of her, for, although the goat ruined my leg, my arms are all right, and I know how to use them."

"Fifi will be a great fool if she does not marry you," said the Emperor.

"Your Majesty means, she would be a great fool if she thought of marrying me—me—me! Her father was a Chiaramonti—that much I found out—and my father was a shoemaker."