

not when they have approached. "What do you say, Frank?"

"I say nothing," says Frank, sulkily.

Frank would die at the stake sooner than coincide with any idea of Durand's. Durand laughs in his airy fashion, and lays one white and shapely hand on Dexter's stalwart shoulder.

"Francois, *mon ami*——"

"My name's Frank," growls Mr. Dexter, still more sulkily.

"*Ecoutez, mon cher Frank*——"

"Speak English if you want to talk to me, Mr. Durand."

He shakes off the hated hand, and moves away closer to Miss Landelle's side.

"Listen, then, Frank, and all you messieurs and mesdames. I say let us have a play—a play is my strong point. I will be stage manager. I will take all the labour of arrangements upon myself. You shall do nothing but accept your parts and cover yourselves with distinction."

"Ah! cover ourselves with distinction," repeats Miss Harriott with a groan; "what fiendish sarcasm is here?"

"What say you, Reine?" inquires Longworth, smiling, and Reine lifts two eyes dancing with delight. "You look as if you might like it."

"Monsieur, to perform in a play is the one unsatisfied ambition of my life."

"And of mine," chimes in Miss Harriott. "Let me strut my little hour upon the stage and I'll die happy."

"It ain't half a bad idea," says Mr. Beekwith, coming up, "it's new and nice, and will pay. Fairs are bores, a ball this hot weather is not to be thought of, and pic-nics are played out. I say a play."

"A play! a play! my kingdom for a play!" cries little Mrs. Beekwith, dancing up. "Mr. Durand you are a perfect angel."

"A h, madame," says M. Durand, and removes his hat, and lays his hand upon his heart; "as you are strong be merciful! Your lightest word of praise overpowers me."

Frank looks on and listens with a face of unmitigated disgust.

"What a little simpering fool that wife of Beekwith's is," he is charitably thinking; and what grinning, chattering monkeys Frenchmen invariably are!

"Let us form a committee of ways and means," says Beekwith, "and let us decide the matter at once. Here's a cool place under these trees; let us sit down. Now, then, monsieur, you're the leader and chief of this project. What's the play, to begin with?"

A confusion of tongues immediately ensues.

"The Lady of Lyons," cries shrilly Mrs. Beekwith. "I will play *Pauline* and Monsieur Durand the fascinating *Claude Melnotte*."

"Did ever a collection of amateur noodles murder a good drama, I wonder, without beginning with 'The Lady of Lyons'?" comments Mr. Dexter, still disgusted, to Miss Marie.

Miss Marie smiles, reposes under the pink parasol, listens, and takes no part in the discussion. Some one proposes "Macbeth," with Mr. O'Sullivan as the Thane of Cawdor and Miss Harriott as the tremendous heroine. This is overruled with much laughter. "Hamlet," is ambitiously asked for next by Mr. Beekwith; Durand can play *Hamlet*. Mr. B. opines he rather looks like that sort of thing, and he might throw a little originality into the performance by singing a French comic song, say in the grave-digging scene, or just before the *Ghost* enters. He, Mr. Beekwith, thinks he might distinguish himself as the *Ghost*. His, too, meets with objection.

"Then they discuss the 'School for Scandal,'" but here Mr. Beekwith takes high moral ground. The "School for Scandal" isn't proper, by George, and he isn't going in for what is not strictly virtuous and correct. No married man ought to countenance such a rascal as *Joseph Surface* and *Charles* was not much better. Saw it once played in Boston, and was sorry he took Mrs. Beekwith. The man who wrote it ought to be ashamed of himself.

"Speaking of the 'School for Scandal,' what do you say to Sheridan's other comedy 'The Rivals,' inquires Durand; "it is not beyond ordinary amateur histrionic efforts, and Mr. Beekwith's moral scruples do not apply. You have all seen 'The Rivals,' I suppose?"

Yes, all have seen "The Rivals"—it would do capitally.

"Let me see," says Durand, frowning reflectively; "There are enough of us I