

*Enter Chamarrante, ushering in de Lauzun.*

CHAM.—The Count de Lauzun. (*Exit.*)

KING.—(*aside, turning his back on de Lauzun.*) The traitor! The recollection of the letter restores my firmness.

DE L.—(*aside.*) Nothing shall now prevent the avowal.

KING.—Monsr. de Lauzun, we await your pleasure!

DE L.—It may not have escaped your Majesty's memory, that I was appointed an audience at this hour.

KING.—Well, sir!

DE L.—Grateful for the indulgence, I venture to cast myself at your Majesty's feet, (*kneels.*) to solicit a boon on which depends the happiness or misery of my future existence.

KING.—(*aside.*) His misery. his existence, compared with mine!

DE L.—(*aside.*) The moment is unpropitious, I read it in his aspect. (*aloud.*) Your Majesty has ever vouchsafed to me the indulgence of a friend, rather than the condescension of a sovereign, deign still to honour me with your regard, whilst I confess that I have the presumption to aspire to the hand of a lady.

KING.—Ha!

DE L.—The brightest ornament of your brilliant court.

KING.—(*aside.*) No other than Louise! unparalleled audacity.

DE L.—One in whose welfare, you Sire, evince the deepest interest.

KING.—(*aside.*) It must be Louise! I can bear it no longer. (*aloud.*) And you have dared, sir, to apprise the lady of your insolent pretensions!

DE L.—(*rising abruptly.*) Insolent pretensions! (*aside.*) The expression is offensive, but shall be endured for her sake. (*aloud.*) Sire! I am fully conscious of my own demerits, but feel, nevertheless, that a Scion of the illustrious house of de Grammont may venture to address a lady, aye, and a noble one, without incurring so harsh an epithet as that which but now escaped your Majesty. As a nobleman of France, I—

KING.—(*interrupting.*) When a nobleman of France stoops to so base an action as the fabrication of a letter, aye, Sir! a forged letter! no epithet, however harsh, is undeserved.

DE L.—Sire! I know of no such letter. My correspondence with the lady—

KING.—Unworthy subterfuge!

DE L.—Subterfuge! this is too much! It compels me to reply that, such a word applies more justly to your Majesty than to your humble servant.

KING.—This insolence surpasses all endurance.

DE L.—If there be subterfuge, 'tis you, Sire, who merit its application. You! who after promising me the post of Commandant of the Artillery, have broken your royal word, and conferred the office on another.

KING.—The promise, you allude to, was conditional.

DE L.—(*contemptuously.*) Conditional!

KING.—Yes! depending on your secrecy, until the appointment was officially confirmed. You revealed it prematurely. 'Tis you, Sir, who have broken faith, and thus absolved us from our promise! But the letter, Sir! the letter! No more prevarication.

DE L.—Prevarication! Oh, intolerable! Sire, I have been educated in the creed that, the man who breaks his word is utterly dishonoured, however exalted his station. From you I learn that breach of faith has become the prerogative of royalty!