

ЭДВАРД БУЛЬВЕР-ЛИТТОН

**THE LADY OF LYONS;
OR, LOVE AND PRIDE**

Эдвард Бульвер-Литтон

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Or, Love and Pride**

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Baron Edward Bulwer Lytton

The Lady of Lyons; Or, Love and Pride

PREFACE

An indistinct recollection of the very pretty little tale, called “The Bellows-Mender,” suggested the plot of this Drama. The incidents are, however, greatly altered from those in the tale, and the characters entirely re-cast.

Having long had a wish to illustrate certain periods of the French history, so, in the selection of the date in which the scenes of this play are laid, I saw that the era of the Republic was that in which the incidents were rendered most probable, in which the probationary career of the hero could well be made sufficiently rapid for dramatic effect, and in which the character of the time itself was depicted by the agencies necessary to the conduct of the narrative. For during the early years of the first and most brilliant successes of the French Republic, in the general ferment of society, and the brief equalization of ranks, Claude’s high-placed love; his ardent feelings, his unsettled principles (the struggle between which makes the passion of this drama), his ambition, and his career, were phenomena that characterized the age, and in which the spirit of the nation went along with the extravagance of the individual.

The play itself was composed with a twofold object. In the first place, sympathizing with the enterprise of Mr. Macready, as Manager of Covent Garden, and believing that many of the higher interests of the Drama were involved in the success or failure of an enterprise equally hazardous and disinterested, I felt, if I may so presume to express myself, something of the Brotherhood of Art; and it was only for Mr. Macready to think it possible that I might serve him in order to induce me to make the attempt.

Secondly, in that attempt I was mainly anxious to see whether or not, after the comparative failure on the stage of “The Duchess de la Valliere,” certain critics had truly declared that it was not in my power to attain the art of dramatic construction and theatrical effect. I felt, indeed, that it was in this that a writer, accustomed to the narrative class of composition, would have the most both to learn and unlearn. Accordingly, it was to the development of the plot and the arrangement of the incidents that I directed my chief attention;—and I sought to throw whatever belongs to poetry less into the diction and the “felicity of words” than into the construction of the story, the creation of the characters, and the spirit of the pervading sentiment.

The authorship of the play was neither avowed nor suspected until the play had established itself in public favor. The announcement of my name was the signal for attacks, chiefly political, to which it is now needless to refer. When a work has outlived for some time the earlier hostilities of criticism, there comes a new race of critics to which a writer may, for the most part, calmly trust for a fair consideration, whether of the faults or the merits of his performance.

DRAMATIS PERSONAE

BEAUSEANT, a rich gentleman of Lyons, in love with,
and refused by, Pauline Deschappelles MR. ELTON.
GLAVIS, his friend, also a rejected suitor to Pauline MR. MEADOWS.
COLONEL (afterwards General) DAMAS, cousin to Mme. Deschappelles,
and an officer in the French army MR. BARTLEY.
MONSIEUR DESCHAPPELLES, a Lyonnese merchant father to Pauline
MR. STRICKLAND.
GASPAR MR. DIDDEAR.
CLAUDE MELNOTTE MR. MACREADY.
FIRST OFFICER MR. HOWE.
SECOND OFFICER MR. PRITCHARD.
THIRD OFFICER MR. ROBERTS.
Servants, Notary, etc.
MADAME DESCHAPPELLES MRS. W. CLIFFORD.
PAULINE, her daughter MISS HELEN FAUCIT.
THE WIDOW MELNOTTE, mother to Claude MRS.
GRIFFITH.
JANET, the innkeeper's daughter MRS. EAST.
MARIAN, maid to Pauline MISS GARRICK.

Scene—Lyons and the neighborhood.

Time—1795-1798

First performed on Thursday, the 15th of February, 1838, at Covent Garden Theatre.

THE LADY OF LYONS; or, LOVE AND PRIDE

ACT I.—SCENE I

A room in the house of M. DESCHAPPELLES, at Lyons. PAULINE reclining on a sofa; MARIAN, her maid, fanning her—Flowers and notes on a table beside the sofa—MADAME DESCHAPPELLES seated—The gardens are seen from the open window.

Mme. Deschap. Marian, put that rose a little more to the left.—[MARIAN alters the position of a rose in PAULINE's hair.]—Ah, so!—that improves the hair,—the tournure, the j'e ne sais quoi!—You are certainly very handsome, child!—quite my style;—I don't wonder that you make such a sensation!—Old, young, rich, and poor, do homage to the Beauty of Lyons!—Ah, we live again in our children,—especially when they have our eyes and complexion!

Pauline [languidly]. Dear mother, you spoil your Pauline!—[Aside.] I wish I knew who sent me these flowers!

Mme. Deschap. No, child!—If I praise you, it is only to inspire you with a proper ambition.—You are born to make a great marriage.—Beauty is valuable or worthless according as you invest the property to the best advantage. Marian, go and order the carriage! [Exit MARIAN.]

Pauline. Who can it be that sends me, every day, these beautiful flowers?—how sweet they are!

Enter Servant.

Servant. Monsieur Beauseant, Madam.

Mme. Deschap. Let him enter. Pauline, this is another offer!—I know it is!—Your father should engage an additional clerk to keep the account-book of your conquests.

Enter BEAUSEANT.

Beau. Ah, ladies how fortunate I am to find you at home!—[Aside.] How lovely she looks!—It is a great sacrifice I make in marrying into a family in trade!—they will be eternally grateful!—[Aloud.] Madam, you will permit me a word with your charming daughter.—[Approaches PAULINE, who rises disdainfully.]—Mademoiselle, I have ventured to wait upon you, in a hope that you must long since have divined. Last night, when you outshone all the beauty of Lyons, you completed your conquest over me! You know that my fortune is not exceeded by any estate in the province,—you know that, but for the Revolution, which has defrauded me of my titles, I should be noble. May I, then, trust that you will not reject my alliance? I offer you my hand and heart.

Pauline [aside.] He has the air of a man who confers a favor!—[Aloud.] Sir, you are very condescending—I thank you humbly; but, being duly sensible of my own demerits, you must allow me to decline the honor you propose. [Curtsies, and turns away.]

Beau. Decline! Impossible!—you are not serious!—Madam, suffer me to appeal to you. I am a suitor for your daughter's hand—the settlements shall be worthy of her beauty and my station. May I wait on M. Deschappelles?

Mme. Deschap. M. Deschappelles never interferes in the domestic arrangements,—you are very obliging. If you were still a marquis, or if my daughter were intended to marry a commoner,—why, perhaps, we might give you the preference.

Beau. A commoner!—we are all commoners in France now.

Mme. Deschap. In France, yes; but there is a nobility still left in the other countries in Europe. We are quite aware of your good qualities, and don't doubt that you will find some lady more suitable to your pretensions. We shall be always happy to see you as an acquaintance, M. Beauseant!—My dear child, the carriage will be here presently.

Beau. Say no more, madam!—say no more!—[Aside.] Refused! and by a merchant's daughter!—refused! It will be all over Lyons before sunset!—I will go and bury myself in my chateau, study philosophy, and turn woman-hater. Refused! they ought to be sent to a madhouse!— Ladies, I have the honor to wish you a very good morning. [Exit.

Mme. Deschap. How forward these men are!—I think, child, we kept up our dignity. Any girl, however inexperienced, knows how to accept an offer, but it requires a vast deal of address to refuse one with proper condescension and disdain. I used to practise it at school with the dancing-master.

Enter DAMAS.

Damas. Good morning, cousin Deschappelles.—Well, Pauline, are you recovered from last night's ball?—So many triumphs must be very fatiguing. Even M. Glavis sighed most piteously when you departed; but that might be the effect of the supper.

Pauline. M. Glavis, indeed!

Mme. Deschap. M. Glavis?—as if my daughter would think of M. Glavis!

Damas. Hey-day!—why not?—His father left him a very pretty fortune, and his birth is higher than yours, cousin Deschappelles. But perhaps you are looking to M. Beauseant,—his father was a marquis before the Revolution.

Pauline. M. Beauseant!—Cousin, you delight in tormenting me!

Mme. Deschap. Don't mind him, Pauline!—Cousin Damas, you have no susceptibility of feeling,—there is a certain indelicacy in all your ideas.—M. Beauseant knows already that he is no match for my daughter!

Damas. Pooh! pooh! one would think you intended your daughter to marry a prince!

Mme. Deschap. Well, and if I did?—what then?—Many a foreign prince—

Damas [interrupting her]. Foreign prince!—foreign fiddlestick!—you ought to be ashamed of such nonsense at your time of life.

Mme. Deschap. My time of life!—That is an expression never applied to any lady till she is sixty-nine and three-quarters;—and only then by the clergyman of the parish.

Enter Servant.

Servant. Madame, the carriage is at the door. [Exit.

Mme. Deschap. Come, child, put on your bonnet—you really have a very thorough-bred air—not at all like your poor father.—[Fondly]. Ah, you little coquette! when a young lady is always making mischief, it is a sure sign that she takes after her mother!

Pauline. Good day, cousin Damas—and a better humor to you.—[Going back to the table and taking the flowers]. Who could have sent me these flowers? [Exeunt PAULINE and MADAME DESCHAPPELLES.

Damas. That would be an excellent girl if her head had not been turned. I fear she is now become incorrigible! Zounds, what a lucky fellow I am to be still a bachelor! They may talk of the devotion of the sex—but the most faithful attachment in life is that of a woman in love—with herself. [Exit.

SCENE II

The exterior of a small Village Inn—sign, the Golden Lion—A few leagues from Lyons, which is seen at a distance.

Beau. [behind the scenes.] Yes, you may bait the horses; we shall rest here an hour.

Enter BEAUSEANT and GLAVIS.

Gla. Really, my dear Beauseant, consider that I have promised to spend a day or two with you at your chateau, that I am quite at your mercy for my entertainment,—and yet you are as silent and as gloomy as a mute at a funeral, or an Englishman at a party of pleasure.

Beau. Bear with me!—the fact is that I am miserable.

Gla. You—the richest and gayest bachelor in Lyons?

Beau. It is because I am a bachelor that I am miserable.—Thou knowest Pauline—the only daughter of the rich merchant, Mons. Deschappelles?

Gla. Know her?—who does not?—as pretty as Venus, and as proud as Juno.

Beau. Her taste is worse than her pride.—[Drawing himself up.] Know, Glavis, she has actually refused me!

Gla. [aside]. So she has me!—very consoling! In all cases of heart-ache, the application of another man's disappointment draws out the pain and allays the irritation.—[Aloud.] Refused you! and wherefore?

Beau. I know not, unless it be because the Revolution swept away my father's title of Marquis,—and she will not marry a commoner. Now, as we have no noblemen left in France,—as we are all citizens and equals, she can only hope that, in spite of the war, some English Milord or German Count will risk his life, by coming to Lyons, that this fille du Roturier may condescend to accept him. Refused me, and with scorn!—By Heaven, I'll not submit to it tamely:—I'm in a perfect fever of mortification and rage.—Refuse me, indeed!

Gla. Be comforted, my dear fellow,—I will tell you a secret. For the same reason she refused ME!

Beau. You!—that's a very different matter! But give me your hand, Glavis,—we'll think of some plan to humble her. Mille diables! I should like to see her married to a strolling player!

Enter Landlord and his Daughter from the Inn.

Land. Your servant, citizen Beauseant,—servant, Sir. Perhaps you will take dinner before you proceed to your chateau; our larder is most plentifully supplied.

Beau. I have no appetite.

Gla. Nor I. Still it is bad travelling on an empty stomach. What have you got? [Takes and looks over the bill of fare.]

[Shout without.] “Long live the Prince!—Long live the Prince!”

Beau. The Prince!—what Prince is that? I thought we had no princes left in France.

Land. Ha, ha! the lads always call him Prince. He has just won the prize in the shooting-match, and they are taking him home in triumph.

Beau. Him! and who's Mr. Him?

Land. Who should he be but the pride of the village, Claude Melnotte?—Of course you have heard of Claude Melnotte?

Gla. [giving back the bill of fare.] Never had that honor. Soup—ragout of hare—roast chicken, and, in short, all you have!

Beau. The son of old Alelnotte, the gardener?

Land. Exactly so—a wonderful young man.

Beau. How, wonderful?—Are his cabbages better than other people's

Land. Nay, he don't garden any more; his father left him well off. He's only a genus.

Gla. A what?

Land. A genus!—a man who can do everything in life except anything that's useful—that's a genus.

Beau. You raise my curiosity;—proceed.

Land. Well, then, about four years ago, old Melnotte died, and left his son well to do in the world. We then all observed that a great change came over young Claude: he took to reading and Latin, and hired a professor from Lyons, who had so much in his head that he was forced to wear a great full-bottom wig to cover it. Then he took a fencing-master, and a dancing-master, and a music-master; and then he learned to paint; and at last it was said that young Claude was to go to Paris, and set up for a painter. The lads laughed at him at first; but he is a stout fellow, is Claude, and as brave as a lion, and soon taught them to laugh the wrong side of their mouths; and now all the boys swear by him, and all the girls pray for him.

Beau. A promising youth, certainly! And why do they call him Prince?

Land. Partly because he is at the head of them all, and partly because he has such a proud way with him, and wears such fine clothes—and, in short, looks like a prince.

Beau. And what could have turned the foolish fellow's brain? The Revolution, I suppose?

Land. Yes—the revolution that turns us all topsy-turvy—the revolution of Love.

Beau. Romantic young Corydon! And with whom is he in love?

Land. Why—but it is a secret, gentlemen.

Beau. Oh! certainly.

Land. Why, then, I hear from his mother, good soul! that it is no less a person than the Beauty of Lyons, Pauline Deschappelles.

Beau. and Glavis. Ha, ha!—Capital!

Land. You may laugh, but it is as true as I stand here.

Beau. And what does the Beauty of Lyons say to his suit?

Land. Lord, sir, she never even condescended to look at him, though when he was a boy he worked in her father's garden.

Beau. Are you sure of that?

Land. His mother says that Mademoiselle does not know him by sight.

Beau. [taking Glavis aside]. I have hit it,—I have it; here is our revenge! Here is a prince for our haughty damsel. Do you take me?

Gla. Deuce take me if I do!

Beau. Blockhead!—it's as clear as a map. What if we could make this elegant clown pass himself off as a foreign prince?—lend him money, clothes, equipage for the purpose?—make him propose to Pauline?—marry Pauline? Would it not be delicious?

Gla. Ha, ha!—Excellent! But how shall we support the necessary expenses of his highness?

Beau. Pshaw! Revenge is worth a much larger sacrifice than a few hundred louis;—as for details, my valet is the trustiest fellow, in the world, and shall have the appointment of his highness's establishment. Let's go to him at once, and see if he be really this Admirable Crichton.

Gla. With all my heart;—but the dinner?

Beau. Always thinking of dinner! Hark ye, landlord; how far is it to young Melnotte's cottage? I should like to see such a prodigy.

Land. Turn down the lane,—then strike across the common,—and you will see his mother's cottage.

Beau. True, he lives with his mother.—[Aside.] We will not trust to an old woman's discretion; better send for him hither. I'll just step in and write a note. Come, Glavis.

Gla. Yes,—Beauseant, Glavis, and Co., manufacturers of princes, wholesale and retail,—an uncommonly genteel line of business. But why so grave?

Beau. You think only of the sport,—I of the revenge. [Exeunt within the Inn.]

SCENE III

The interior of MELNOTTE'S cottage; flowers placed here and there; a guitar on an oaken table, with a portfolio, etc.; a picture on an easel, covered by a curtain; fencing foils crossed over the mantelpiece; an attempt at refinement in site of the homeliness of the furniture, etc.; a staircase to the right conducts to the upper story.

[Shout without]. "Long live Claude Melnotte!" "Long live the Prince!"

The Widow Mel. Hark!—there's my dear son;—carried off the prize, I'm sure; and now he'll want to treat them all.

Claude Mel. [opening the door]. What! you will not come in, my friends! Well, well, there's a trifle to make merry elsewhere. Good day to you all,—good day!

[Shout]. "Hurrah! Long live Prince Claude!"

Enter CLAUDE MELNOTTE, with a rifle in his hand.

Mel. Give me joy, dear mother!—I've won the prize!—never missed one shot! Is it not handsome, this gun?

Widow. Humph!—Well, what is it worth, Claude?

Mel. Worth! What is a riband worth to a soldier? Worth! everything! Glory is priceless!

Widow. Leave glory to great folks. Ah! Claude, Claude, castles in the air cost a vast deal to keep up! How is all this to end? What good does it do thee to learn Latin, and sing songs, and play on the guitar, and fence, and dance, and paint pictures? All very fine; but what does it bring in?

Mel. Wealth! wealth, my mother! Wealth to the mind—wealth to the heart—high thoughts—bright dreams—the hope of fame—the ambition to be worthier to love Pauline.

Widow. My poor son!—The young lady will never think of thee.

Mel. Do the stars think of us? Yet if the prisoner see them shine into his dungeon, wouldst thou bid him turn away from their lustre? Even so from this low cell, poverty, I lift my eyes to Pauline and forget my chains.—[Goes to the picture and draws aside the curtain.]

See, this is her image—painted from memory. Oh, how the canvas wrongs her!—[Takes up the brush and throws it aside.] I shall never be a painter! I can paint no likeness but one, and that is above all art. I would turn soldier—France needs soldiers! But to leave the air that Pauline breathes! What is the hour?—so late? I will tell thee a secret, mother. Thou knowest that for the last six weeks I have sent every day the rarest flowers to Pauline?—she wears them. I have seen them on her breast. Ah, and then the whole universe seemed filled with odors! I have now grown more bold—I have poured my worship into poetry—I have sent the verses to Pauline—I have signed them with my own name. My messenger ought to—be back by this time. I bade him wait for the answer.

Widow. And what answer do you expect, Claude?

Mel. That which the Queen of Navarre sent to the poor troubadour:—"Let me see the Oracle that can tell nations I am beautiful!" She will admit me. I shall hear her speak—I shall meet her eyes—I shall read upon her cheek the sweet thoughts that translate themselves into blushes. Then—then, oh, then—she may forget that I am the peasant's son!

Widow. Nay, if she will but hear thee talk, Claude?

Mel. I foresee it all. She will tell me that desert is the true rank. She will give me a badge—a flower—a glove! Oh rapture! I shall join the armies of the republic—I shall rise—I shall win a name that beauty will not blush to hear. I shall return with the right to say to her—"See, how love does not level the proud, but raise the—humble!" Oh, how my heart swells within me!—Oh, what glorious prophets of the future are youth and hope!

[Knock at the door.]

Widow. Come in.

Enter GASPAR.

Mel. Welcome, Gaspar, welcome. Where is the letter? Why do you turn away, man? where is the letter? [GASPAR gives him one.] This! This is mine, the one I intrusted to thee. Didst thou not leave it?

Gaspar. Yes, I left it.

Mel. My own verses returned to me. Nothing else!

Gaspar. Thou wilt be proud to hear how thy messenger was honored. For thy sake, Melnotte, I have borne that which no Frenchman can bear without disgrace.

Mel. Disgrace, Gaspar! Disgrace?

Gaspar. I gave thy letter to the porter, who passed it from lackey to lackey till it reached the lady it was meant for.

Mel. It reached her, then; you are sure of that! It reached her,—well, well!

Gaspar. It reached her, and was returned to me with blows. Dost hear, Melnotte? with blows! Death! are we slaves still, that we are to be thus dealt with, we peasants?

Mel. With blows? No, Gaspar, no; not blows!

Gaspar. I could show thee the marks if it were not so deep a shame to bear them. The lackey who tossed thy letter into the mire swore that his lady and her mother never were so insulted. What could thy letter contain, Claude?

Mel. [looking over the letter]. Not a line that a serf might not have written to an empress. No, not one.

Gaspar. They promise thee the same greeting they gave me, if thou wilt pass that way. Shall we endure this, Claude?

Mel. [wringing GASPAR's hand]. Forgive me, the fault was mine, I have brought this on thee; I will not forget it; thou shalt be avenged! The heartless insolence!

Gaspar. Thou art moved, Melnotte; think not of me; I would go through fire and water to serve thee; but,—a blow! It is not the bruise that galls,—it is the blush, Melnotte.

Mel. Say, what message?—How insulted!—Wherefore?—What the offence?

Gaspar. Did you not write to Pauline Deschappelles, the daughter of the rich merchant?

Mel. Well?

Gaspar. And are you not a peasant—a gardener's son?—that was the offence. Sleep on it, Melnotte. Blows to a French citizen, blows! [Exit.]

Widow. Now you are cured, Claude!

Mel. tearing the letter. So do I scatter her image to the winds—I will stop her in the open streets—I will insult her—I will beat her menial ruffians—I will—[Turns suddenly to Widow.] Mother, am I humpbacked—deformed—hideous? Widow. You!

Mel. A coward—a thief—a liar?

Widow. You!

Mel. Or a dull fool—a vain, drivelling, brainless idiot? Widow. No, no. Mel. What am I then—worse than all these? Why, I am a peasant! What has a peasant to do with love? Vain revolutions, why lavish your cruelty on the great? Oh that we—we, the hewers of wood and drawers of water—had been swept away, so that the proud might learn what the world would be without us! [Knock at the door.]

Enter Servant from the Inn.

Servant. A letter for Citizen Melnotte.

Mel. A letter! from her perhaps—who sent thee?

Servant. Why, Monsieur—I mean Citizen—Beauseant, who stops to dine at the Golden Lion, on his way to his chateau.

Mel. Beauseant!—[Reads].

“Young man, I know thy secret—thou lovest above thy station: if thou hast wit, courage, and discretion, I can secure to thee the realization of thy most sanguine hopes; and the sole condition I ask in return is, that thou shalt be steadfast to thine own ends. I shall demand from thee a solemn oath to marry her whom thou lovest; to bear her to thine home on thy wedding night. I am serious— if thou wouldst learn more, lose not a moment, but follow the bearer of this letter to thy friend and patron,—CHARLES BEAUSEANT.”

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.

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