

THE DESERTER

by

CHARLES DIBDIN

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THE DESERTER,

A

FARCE,

IN TWO ACTS.

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRE-ROYAL, COVENT GARDEN.

BY

MR CHARLES DIBDIN.

Drawn from:

A COLLECTION OF

FARCES

AND OTHER AFTERPIECES,

WHICH ARE ACTED AT
THE THEATRES-ROYAL, DRURY-LANE, COVENT-GARDEN,
AND HAY-MARKET.

PRINTED UNDER THE AUTHORITY OF THE MANAGERS
FROM THE PROMPT-BOOK:

SELECTED BY

MRS INCHBALD.

IN SEVEN VOLUMES.

VOL. II.
LONDON:
1815.



DRAMATIS PERSONÆ.

HENRY,	<i>Mr Incledon.</i>
RUSSET,	<i>Mr Darley.</i>
SIMKIN,	<i>Mr Simmons.</i>
SKIRMISH,	<i>Mr Munden.</i>
FLINT,	<i>Mr Davenport.</i>

Soldiers, Abbot, Dubois, Lee, Curties, King, and Street.

LOUISA,	<i>Miss Mortimer.</i>
JENNY,	<i>Miss Martyr.</i>
MARGARET,	<i>Mrs Whitmore.</i>



THE DESERTER.

ACT I.

SCENE I.—*A Cottage, with a View of the French Camp at a distance.*

MARGARET *knitting, and* JENNY *spinning at the door of the Cottage*: SIMKIN *and other Villagers come on with Baskets of Fruit.*

AIR I.

Sim. I can't for my life guess the cause of this fuss,
Why there's pipers and fiddlers; while Robin and Harry,
And Clodpole and Roger, and ten more of us,
Have pull'd as much fruit as we are able to carry.

Marg. Why, numskull, that's nothing; her ladyship's wine,
All over the village, runs just like a fountain;
And I heard the folks say, every dish, when they dine,
Will be swimming in claret, madeira, and mountain.

Jen. Then for poultry, and such like—good lord, what a store!
I saw Goodman Gander six baskets full cramming;
Then such comfits and jellies! why one such feast more,
Would certainly breed in the village a famine.

Chorus. What the meaning can be
We shall presently see,
For yonder's old Russet, who certainly knows;
Be what it will,
Our wish shall be still,

Joy and health to the Duchess wherever she goes!

Sim. What can all this feasting be for?

Jen. I'll give you while I wind up this bottom and another, and you sha'n't find it out.

Sim. Why then, if you know so well, why don't you tell us what it is?

Jen. Ah, I thought you would none of you guess it: this grand feasting at the duchess's is because the king's coming to the camp.

Marg. Who told you so?

Jen. I had it from Gaffer Russet himself.

Sim. Does the king come to the camp to-day?

Marg. Why, yes, I knew that.

Sim. Then as sure as can be, I know what will happen.

Jen. Why, what will happen?

Sim. There will be two weddings in the village before to-morrow night.

Marg. How so?

Sim. Why, is not Henry, the young soldier, to marry Louisa, Gaffer Russet's daughter, as soon as the review's over?

Jen. Not if I can prevent it. [*Aside.*]

Marg. Well, that's but one wedding!

Sim. Yes; but Jenny can tell you whose wedding t'other's to be.

Jen. How should I know?

Sim. Ah, you won't say any thing before folks, because you're ashamed.

Jen. What do you mean?

Sim. As if you did not know——

Jen. Not I, indeed.

Sim. Why, did not you promise me, that when Henry married Louisa, you'd marry me?

Jen. Yes, yes, and I'll keep my word; whenever Henry marries Louisa, I'll marry you.

Enter RUSSET *and* LOUISA.

AIR II.

Lou. Why must I appear so deceitful?

I cannot, dear father, comply:

Ah! could I think him so ungrateful,

With anguish I surely should die.

What so tender, at parting, he told me,

Which such joy to my bosom convey'd;

When next he was doom'd to behold me,

Could I think would be this way repaid?

Rus. Well, well: but, child——

Lou. Indeed, father, 'tis impossible; I never can consent to such a thing.

Rus. Odds heart, Louisa, there's no harm in it. Neighbours, come round here, I'll tell you the whole affair; you know what a dear good lady the duchess is.

Marg. Ah! she's a dear good lady indeed, and we all of us ought to do every thing she orders us.

Rus. I and my family in particular ought, for many's the good thing she has given me and my old dame; then how kind she was to all my poor children; she stood godmother to this, and had her christened after her own name.

Sim. Louisa.

Rus. Well, now we come to the point: Henry, you know, who was bred up with my girl, and intended from his infancy for her husband, is a soldier.

Sim. So he is.

Rus. And because she has a value for every thing that belongs to me, this good lady, about three weeks ago, sent to the colonel for his discharge, that the young folks may live at home at their ease, and be as happy as the day is long.

Marg. That will be charming and comfortable for you, neighbour.

Rus. Yes: but now comes the mischief of it; what has occasioned it, I don't know; I never saw any harm of the lad, but there are always busy tongues in this village, doing people ill offices; and such reports, within these few days, have reached the duchess's ears, that she is determined to see farther into this business, before she gives Louisa the portion she promised her.

Jen. You may thank me for that. [*Aside.*]

Lou. But he'll be here to-day; and so well I know his heart, that I'm sure he'll clear himself, to their confusion who could so vilely traduce him.

Jen. Perhaps not. [*Aside.*]

Rus. Well, child, I am sure you can't wish it more than I do; nothing has ever pleased me so much as the thought of your coming together: I wish to see you married with all my heart. But, as I was telling you, the duchess, hearing of these reports, is determined that we shall make a trial of his affections.

Lou. Indeed, father, there's no necessity for it; he loves me most sincerely.

Rus. Nay, nay, child, I really think your love carries you too much away in this affair; it can do no harm; 'tis only an innocent frolic: you are to make believe as if you were a bride: and let me see who—oh, you shall be the bridegroom.

Sim. Shall I! I'cod I'm glad of that.

Rus. But above all, I must instruct you, Jenny, in your part: you are to sit here, and tell Henry, when he comes, that Louisa and Simkin were married yesterday.

Jen. The very thing I wished. [*Aside.*]

Lou. I'm vexed to death that this trick should be played him; I can judge by myself what he'll feel! if I was told such a thing of him, how miserable I should be!

Rus. But he'll be so much the happier when he finds out the deceit, child.

AIR III.

Louisa.

Though prudence may press me,
And duty distress me,
Against inclination, O what can they do!
No longer a rover,
His follies are over;
My heart, my fond heart, says, my Henry is true.
The bee, thus, as changing,
From sweet to sweet ranging,
A rose should he light on, ne'er wishes to stray;
With rapture possessing
In one every blessing,
Till torn from her bosom, he flies far away.

Rus. Well, well, don't make yourself uneasy; I dare say he loves you as sincerely as he thinks he does; if so, he'll soon be undeceived, and we shall finish the day as happily as we could

wish. In the mean time, let us think of what we have to do; we are to pretend we came from the church; the fiddles and bag-pipes are to go first, then the lads and lasses follow; after which, mind this now, we are to go to the duchess's mansion in grand procession, and there to be feasted like so many princes and princesses.

Sim. I'cod that will suit me nicely.—But, Gaffer Russet, Jenny says you told her the feasting was to be for the king.

Rus. For us and the king; yes, yes, the king, after he and his courtiers have had an entertainment at the duchess's, goes to review the camp, where the soldiers are all to appear under arms—ah, girls! that's what none of you know any thing about; when the king goes to the camp, then's the time—the drums beat—the fifes play—the colours are flying—and—and—Lord—Lord! what a charming thing war is!

Sim. It must be then when one comes home again, and it's all over.

Rus. There's no life like the life of a soldier; and then for love! let the girls take care of their hearts; I remember I won my Dorothy just after I came from such a review now as there may be to-day.

Marg. Ah, indeed, the soldiers make sad work with young women's hearts, sure enough.

Rus. And how can it be otherwise?

One conducts for
Both love and war,
The point's to gain possession;
For this we watch
The enemy's coast,
Till we sleeping catch
Them on their post:
Then good bye, form;
The fort we storm,
Make towns or hearts
Surrender at discretion.
In love the only battery,
Which with success we play
To conquer hearts, is flattery:
No fortress can it's power withstand;
Neither cannons, mortars, sword in hand,
Can make such way.
As 'tis in love, so 'tis in war,
We make believe,
Mislead, deceive;
Pray, what serve drums and trumpets for,
Cannons, and all our force of arms,
But with their thund'ring alarms,
To tell, not cover, our designs?
Can these no trenches, breaches, mines,
Blockades, or ambuscades compare?
No, all agree
That policy
Is the true art militaire.

But, come, come, we must go and prepare ourselves; you have not much time to spare, and see where he comes hurrying along there; there, now, he clambers up yonder hill—well done, faith! ah, your lovers have no gout to stop them. Come, child—neighbours, come along.

Lou. Cruel father!

[*Exeunt.*]

Enter HENRY. *Afterwards, in the wedding procession,* RUSSET,
SIMKIN, LOUISA, MARGARET, JENNY, *and Villagers.*

AIR V.

Henry.

The nymph who in my bosom reigns,
With such full force my heart enchains,
That nothing ever can impair
The empire she possesses there.
Who digs for stones of radiant ray,
Finds baser matter in his way:
The worthless load he may condemn,
But prizes still, and seeks the gem.

But I hear music! what can this be? all the villagers are coming this way—it seems like a wedding—I'll retire—How I envy this couple!

Rus. Charming! he has hid himself—pretend not to see him—don't turn your head that way—he's looking at you now!

Lou. How cruel not to let me have one look!

Sim. No, you must look at nobody but me now: I am the bridegroom, you know.

Rus. Jenny, be sure you play your part well.

Jen. Never fear me—my part's a much more difficult one than they imagine. [*Aside.*]

JENNY, *who sits down to spinning, and* HENRY, *who comes forward during her Song.*

AIR VI.

Jenny.

Somehow my spindle I mislaid,
And lost it underneath the grass:
Damon, advancing, bowed his head,
And said, what seek you, pretty lass?
A little love, but urged with care,
Oft leads a heart, and leads it far.

'Twas passing nigh yon spreading oak,
That I my spindle lost just now:
His knife then kindly Damon took,
And from the tree he cut a bough.
A little love, &c. &c.

Thus did the youth his time employ,
While me he tenderly beheld:
He talked of love; I leaped for joy;
For, ah! my heart did fondly yield.
A little love, &c. &c.

Hen. Good day, young woman.

Jen. [*Sings.*] 'Twas passing nigh, &c.

Hen. Young woman!

Jen. [*Sings.*] 'Twas passing nigh, &c.

Hen. Pray, tell me, what wedding that is?

Jen. What! that wedding?

Hen. Yes.

Jen. Do you want to know whose wedding it is?

Hen. Ay, ay.

Jen. What, that wedding that went past?

Hen. Yes, yes.

Jen. Why, 'tis a wedding in the village here.

Hen. But whose, I ask you?

Jen. [*Sings.*]

Hen. Are you making a jest of me? answer me, I beg of you.

Jen. Why, I do answer you, don't I? [*Sings.*]

Hen. What, again! whose is this wedding? whose is it? speak, or I'll—did I not see amongst them—distraction!—will you answer, you?

Jen. Lord, you are so impatient! why, then, the wedding is Louisa's, old Russet's daughter, the invalid soldier.

Hen. Louisa's wedding!

Jen. Yes; she was married yesterday.

Hen. Married! good heavens! are you sure of what you say? do you know Russet?

Jen. Do I know him? to be sure, I do; why, he is bailiff to the duchess. What makes you so uneasy? you seem as if you had an interest in it.

Hen. An interest in it! oh!

Jen. Dear me, if I remember right, you are the young man that every body thought she'd be married to. O la! what wickedness there is in the world! I am sure I very sincerely pity you.

Hen. I am obliged to you for your concern.

Jen. Nay, it is not more on your own account than my own, that I am uneasy.

Hen. How so?

Jen. Why, she was not content with making you miserable, but she must make me so too: the vile wretch she's married to, has perjured himself; for he has sworn a thousand and a thousand times to marry me.

Hen. What falsehood and treachery!

Jen. If I was you, I could not bear it quietly: not but she'd brazen it all out, for I taxed her with it myself; and she only laughed in my face, and told me that you and I might go mourn together, like two turtles, the loss of our mates.

Hen. Insulting creature!

Jen. Yes; and for my part, I said to myself, says I, 'twould be a

good joke to take her at her word: but then again I thought, that though revenge is sweet, yet people have their likings and their dislikings; and as for me, to be sure, I can't pretend to such a good young man as you.

Hen. [*Not regarding her.*] Infamous wretch! Well might she keep her eyes fixed upon the ground; but I'll see her, upbraid her with her infidelity, and leave her to the guilty reproaches of her own ungrateful heart.

Jen. Young man——

Hen. [*Returning.*] Well, what do you say?

Jen. I believe you did not rightly hear what I said.

Hen. Oh, I have no time for trifling.

[*Exit.*]

Jen. Poor soul, how he takes it to heart! But I must follow him; for if I lose this opportunity, I may not find it easy to get another. But stay, upon second thoughts, if I can but make a tool of Simkin, and by that means alarm Louisa, I shall every way gain my ends; for if she once believes him capable of slighting her, I am sure she has too much spirit ever to see him again.

Enter SIMKIN.

Sim. Oh, Jenny, I am glad I have found you; what do you think brought me away from Louisa and them?

Jen. I neither know nor care.

Sim. Why, I was afraid you'd be jealous.

Jen. I jealous!

Sim. Why, yes, you know, because I pretended to be Louisa's husband.

Jen. No; I'd have you to know I am not jealous! I am only vexed to think I have been such a fool to listen to you so long, you base creature you.

Sim. If I did not think there was something the matter, by your looking so cross.

Jen. And enough to make one; you know I can't help loving you; and this is the way you return my affection.

Sim. Why you know 'twas only in play.

Jen. In play! I could see plain enough how your eyes sparkled upon the bare mention of being the bridegroom.

Sim. Now, Jenny, if you would but hear me speak—

Jen. Speak! get out of my sight, you perjured wretch! I was fool enough not to credit what I heard of you; but I dare say 'tis all true.

Sim. Why, what did you hear of me?

Jen. That it was you who invented all the reports about Henry.

Sim. Me! as I am a living Christian, Jenny——

Jen. Don't say a word to me; you have made me miserable, and now you want to insult me.

Sim. Indeed I don't; you can't think now how happy I could make you, if you would only hear me three words——

Jen. Don't talk to me of happiness, for I never shall be happy as long as I live.

Sim. How dearly she loves me! what a pity it is she won't let me clear up this affair. [*To himself.*]

Jen. And then that demure little minx; oh! I could tear her eyes out! I was always afraid of it; and now I am convinced, that her pretended love for Henry was nothing but a contrivance to blind me the easier.

Sim. Dear, dear——

Jen. But, however, you have both missed your aim; for Henry behaves as he ought to do, and holds her arts in contempt; nay, he told me himself he had fixed his affections on a more worthy object.

Sim. He did!

Jen. Yes, he did; and you may go and tell her so: and as for me,

AIR VII.

Mr Simkin, I'd have you to know,
That for all your fine airs,
I'm not at my last prayers,
Nor put to it so,
That of course I must take up with you;
For I really, sir, think, that though husbands are few,
I need not go far off to seek,
For a better than you any day of the week.
To be sure, I must own, I was foolish enough,
To believe all the tenderness, nonsense, and stuff,
Which for ever you dinn'd in my ears;
And when for a while you've been out of my sight,
The day has been comfortless, dreary at night,
And my only companions my tears:
But now that's all o'er;
I hate you, despise you, will see you no more.

[*Exit* JENNY.]

Sim. Why, what the deuce has got hold of her! for my share, I believe all the folks in our village are gone mad—mad! I'cod, I'll be hanged if any bedlamites are half so mad as folks in love.

[*Exit.*]

SCENE II.

Enter a Party of Soldiers, afterwards HENRY.

1 *Sol.* I'll tell you, my boys, how the matter stands; if we can but catch hold of him, the *summum bonum* of the thing is this,

he'll be first tried, and then shot.

2 *Sol.* Yes; but suppose we don't catch hold of him?

3 *Sol.* Why then he'll neither be tried nor shot.

4 *Sol.* No more he won't.

2 *Sol.* But I have been thinking how we shall do to know him.

1 *Sol.* Ay, you are a fool in these matters; I'll tell you how you'll know him; here! here! I've got his name and his marks.
[*Reading.*] "Hannibald Firebrand, six foot and an inch high, of an orange tawny complexion, a Roman nose, and the letters R. T. burnt in the palm of his hand;" the devil's in it if we can miss him.

3 *Sol.* Well, but you need not have taken all this pains, for you know he was your pot-companion.

1 *Sol.* Faith, I forgot that.

2 *Sol.* And would you go lift your hand against your friend?

1 *Sol.* Against my friend! ay, against my father, if he was to desert; but stay, stand by, perhaps this is he!

[*They draw back.*]

Hen. Where shall I fly! the unhappy have no friends! all I meet make a scoff of my sufferings.

2 *Sol.* It must be him.

1 *Sol.* Keep back.

Hen. Are the inhabitants of this place turned brutes, have they no compassion?

1 *Sol.* There, you see how it is! none of the people will screen him, they are honest, and refuse to do it; I'll take care the king shall know what good subjects he has.

Hen. At my home, where I expected to receive so kind a welcome, I am surrounded with enemies.

1 *Sol.* There! there! he says he expected to receive a kind welcome from the enemy.

2 *Sol.* So he does.

Hen. To desert one so kind!

1 *Sol.* Ah, 'twas an infamous thing of you, sure enough.

Hen. Life is not worth keeping upon such terms, and this instant could I lay it down with pleasure.

1 *Sol.* Mark that!

Hen. I'll go directly, and—

1 *Sol.* [*Stopping him.*] Not so fast, if you please:—Hey! why, this is not the deserter that's my friend. But no matter, one

deserter's as good as another.

Hen. Do you suspect me for a deserter?

1 *Sol.* No, we don't suspect you; we know you for one.

Hen. Me?

1 *Sol.* Me? yes, you. How strange you make of this matter! why, did we not hear you confess, that you expected a kind welcome from the enemy?—I'll tell you what, I am not fond of making people uneasy, but every word you have uttered will be a bullet in your guts.

Hen. What if I favour this, and so get rid of all my woes at once—Oh, Louisa, you have broke my heart!

1 *Sol.* What are you talking to yourself about?—Come, come, you are a deserter, and must go with us.

Hen. Shall I or not?—by heaven, I will!—I own it, I am a deserter, lead me where you please.

1 *Sol.* There! he confesses it, and we shall have the reward.

AIR VIII.

Henry.

I'll fly these groves, this hated shade;
Each sound I hear, each thing I see,
Reminds me, thou perfidious maid!
Of vows so often made by thee.
Blush, blush, Louisa! and look there:

Where's now thy truth! oh, tell me where?
Thy constancy's no more;
And like a wretch by tempest tost,
My peace is gone, nay, hope is lost,
I sink in sight of shore!

1 & 2 *Sol.* Come, brother, come.

3 & 4 *Sol.* We must be gone.

Hen. *Yes, yes; I'll fly to death—lead on.*

1, 2, 3, & 4 *Sol.* Come then.

Hen. *And yet, O cruel fate!*

1, 2, 3, & 4 *Sol.* He's devilish loth.

Hen. *A minute stay.*

One instant, ere I'm dragged away.

1, 2, 3, & 4 *Sol.* You have confessed—'tis now too late.

ACT II.

SCENE I.—*A Prison, a Table, and some old Chairs; FLINT, who, while he speaks, puts the Stage in order; HENRY walks about disturbed; and afterwards SKIRMISH, who comes on as FLINT goes off the Stage.*

Flint. There's some water for you to drink; a table and a chair,

and yonder's your bed; but if you go on at the rate you have begun, there will be no great trouble in making it—"I am a deserter, I have deserted!" I believe you'll find you had better not have confessed quite so soon:—why, what a devil of a fellow you must be! but, come, as I said before, there's some water for you;—and if you choose to have any thing better—money, d'ye see—you understand me right—for money—and, faith, if you have any, you have no great reason to be sparing of it; for I believe your business will soon be settled—do you choose any wine?

Hen. No, no.

Flint. Well, very well; if you won't have wine, you must drink water.

Hen. False, false Louisa!—oh heaven!

Flint. But you seem a little down in the mouth about this business; never mind it, 'twill soon be over;—you are to suffer at five: in the mean time I'll send a lodger of mine to you; he'll put you in spirits, by that you have drank a glass together; his name is Skirmish; he's a devilish hearty fellow.

[*Goes off.*]

Hen. That a few hours should sink me from the expectation of so much happiness to this abyss of misery! perfidious woman!

Skir. Here, my boy; who wants me? who calls for Skirmish? Comrade, did you want me?

Hen. Me! no.

Skir. Why, yes, you did.—Ho, ho, house! here, house! we'll have a glass together; as we never saw one another before, we'll now begin to renew our acquaintance.

Hen. Can you tell me if I could get a sheet of writing paper?

Skir. Yes, surely, you shall have that: here, house! house, I say! where the devil are you all? but, hark ye, friend! what a confounded mistake have you made here?—a mistake! damme, you have made two mistakes! I can prove it: in the first place, to desert at all, was a mistake; then to confess it; oh, damn it, that was a mistake indeed!—I am but a silly ignorant fellow; but had I been in your place, had he been my serjeant, my general, nay, my corporal, I would have said, no, I am no deserter. No, no, my lad, Skirmish scorns to desert.

AIR IX.

Though to have a bout at drinking,
When I hear the glasses chinking,
There's nothing but I'd do or say,
Yet Skirmish shall ne'er run away.
For here is his motto, and so there's an end:
He's none of your flatt'ers, who fawn, and are civil;
But for country, his bottle, his king, and his friend,
Little Skirmish would go half-way to the devil.
Soldiers often fickle prove,
Who can know his mind for ever?
We forgive you false in love,
But deserters never, never.

Enter FLINT with Wine.

Flint. There's a young woman without, asking for a soldier.
[*To SKIRMISH.*] I suppose it must be you she wants.

Skir. Yes, yes, 'tis me, I warrant you: let her come in. [*Exit FLINT.*] But give me the wine. [*Sets the Bottle down on seeing her.*] *Enter LOUISA.* Ah, ha, a smart wench, faith!

Hen. Good heavens! what do I see! you here!

Lou. Me, Henry!

Hen. Is it possible!

Skir. Oh, ho, I smoke this business.—Comrade, I'm off, I'm off; she's your sister, I suppose, or your cousin; but that's no business of mine. Madam, no offence, I hope; my name is Skirmish, I understand what good-breeding is; I'm off, brother soldier.—Faith, she's a fine girl! I'll go and walk a little in the court-yard—d'y'e mind me, I'm off——mum.

Hen. This insult, Louisa, is beyond enduring! is it not enough—but I will not upbraid you.

Lou. Hear me but a moment.

Hen. Away! don't I know you false?—barbarous, faithless wretch!

Skir. [*Coming on.*] Don't mind me; don't let me disturb you: I only come to fetch the wine, for I believe you don't care to drink; will you take a sup? no—well, your servant—I'm off again.

[*Exit.*]

Hen. It is not from your hands, but from your father's that I shall expect—

Lou. 'Tis true, my father—

Hen. That infamous old man! but go—I have no more to say. O Louisa! I doat upon you still; is it possible you can have entirely forgot me?

Lou. Believe me, Henry!——

Hen. But with what assurance—what composure—

Lou. What I tell you is true:—some reports to your disadvantage having reached the duchess, which I then knew, and we have since found to be false, she ordered this mock-wedding, for such only it was, to prove your affections; so that every thing you saw and heard was contrived on purpose to deceive you, and the whole affair was but a joke.

Hen. [*Sitting down in the Chair, rests his Hands on the Table.*] Was but a joke!

Lou. What means this grief, my love? do you still doubt the truth of what I say?

Hen. No, Louisa; 'tis because I believe you.

Lou. Here's my father.—Oh, sir! I am glad you are come. Ask him what's the matter: make him tell the cause of his distress.

Enter RUSSET.

Rus. Henry, my dear boy, good day to you; I am overjoyed to see you. Well, all matters are cleared up, and you may take Louisa for your pains; whenever you will, I give her to you.

Hen. I beseech you, desire your daughter to step into the court-yard for a minute or two.

Rus. Why so?

Hen. Oblige me only; desire she will.

Rus. Louisa, we have something to say to each other: step out for a minute or two; I'll call you back presently.

Hen. [*Taking her Hand as she goes out.*] Louisa, 'tis an age since I saw you last.

Lou. And yet you send me away from you already.

[*Exit.*]

Hen. You shall come back again immediately.

Rus. I was surprised to hear you was put in prison, though they tell me 'tis but for a trifle. I am overjoyed to see you; the duchess will soon get you released, and then—but you seem thoughtful.

Hen. Have you command enough of yourself not to betray any thing to your daughter of what I am going to tell you?

Rus. To be sure, I have.

Hen. I am afraid she'll return before—

Rus. [*Looking out.*] No, no, we are very safe.

Hen. This wedding trick—

Rus. Yes; 'twas I managed it.

Hen. It threw me into despair—

Rus. Good, very good! I knew it would.

Hen. And in my fury—

Rus. Ha, ha, ha! what, you was furious then? delightful!

Lou. [*Running in.*] O cruel father! O unfortunate accident! this wedding has undone us all; he has confessed himself a deserter, and is condemned to suffer death.

Rus. What's this I hear?

Hen. She knows it all—O torture!

Rus. A deserter! condemned! Henry, can this be as she says?

Hen. 'Tis but too true.

Rus. Good heavens!

Enter FLINT.

Flint. You are wanted without.

Hen. Me!

Flint. You—you must go directly.

Hen. Adieu, Louisa!

AIR X.

Hen. Adieu! adieu! my heart will break;
This torment's beyond bearing.

Lou. Adieu! ah why, my love? oh speak,
And banish this despairing!
Give thy Louisa's pangs relief.

Hen. I cannot speak: oh love! oh grief!

Hen. Lou. & Rus. Ye pitying powers, some comfort send!
When will our sorrows have an end?

[*Exit* HENRY.]

Lou. For heaven's sake, sir, where is he gone? who wants him?

Flint. Only some friends.

Lou. Surely it can't be to—

Flint. Oh, no! it is not for that yet—'tis too soon yet awhile;
about five or six—perhaps it may be seven first.

Lou. Oh! support me, sir!

Rus. No, child, we may yet prevent it. I'll go to the duchess, and tell her the whole affair.

Lou. She has brought me into this trouble.

Rus. I'll seek her this instant; do you follow me. [*Goes off.*]

Lou. Oh sir! on my knees, I beseech you.

Flint. There's no occasion for kneeling to me: what would you have?

Lou. Is not the king to be at the camp to-day?

Flint. Yes; and what then?

Lou. Tell me, sir; in such a case, 'tis an act of justice: the king surely will do justice.

Flint. Certainly; he never does otherwise.

Lou. Alas, sir! I am poor, so very poor.

Flint. That won't hinder it a bit; the king's too good to despise folks because they are poor.

Lou. But 'tis for you I mean.

Flint. For me?

Lou. To thank you with, to entreat you: here is a small ornament, of no great value indeed; I give you this, sir; I wish I had more to give; 'tis silver: delay it but till to-morrow.

Flint. Do what? delay it:—[*Looking at the Trinket.*] Hey! it seems to be hollow: are you sure 'tis silver?

Lou. This suspense is dreadful. [*Goes off.*]

Flint. Why, I'll tell you; I can't absolutely delay his execution, but I'll let him have as much wine as ever he can drink.—What, gone!—gad, this girl has a generous spirit.

Enter SKIRMISH, who holds a Bottle and Glass in one Hand, a Sheet of Paper under his Arm, and with the other drags in SIMKIN.

Skir. Come along, what the devil are you afraid of? Here's a young man who wants to see this soldier, and the girl that was here: where are they? [*To FLINT.*]

Flint. She's gone away.

Skir. But where's he?

Flint. He was sent for out to some friends; he'll be here again.

[*Exit.*]

Sim. If you please, sir, I will follow the gentleman.

Skir. You and I must take a glass together.—So this soldier is your cousin, is he?

Sim. Yes, sir——

Skir. Sit yourself down, then—and he was here yesterday?

Sim. Yes, sir.

Skir. Well then, sit down, I tell you.

Sim. But, sir!—

Skir. Sit down, I say: sit down there—hell and fury! will you sit down when I bid you?—there!—now we'll take a glass together; he'll soon be here: come, fill.

Sim. Sir, I thank you, but I am not dry; besides, I don't care much for drinking without knowing my company.

Skir. Without knowing your company! why, you little, starved, snivelling—an't you in company with a gentleman? but drink this minute, or I'll—

Sim. I will, sir, if you won't be angry.

Skir. Not I: I won't be angry. So you say that—

Sim. I, sir? I did not say any thing.

Skir. Well then, if you did not say any thing, sing:—sing me a song.

Sim. I am not in spirits for singing.

Skir. Spirits! why, a song will raise your spirits; come, sing away.

Sim. But, sir, I can't sing.

Skir. Ever while you live, sing.

Sim. Indeed, sir, I can't.

Skir. You can't?—why then, I will.

Sim. Well; but, sir——

Skir. Sit still, I tell you.

Sim. But—I wish my cousin——

Skir. He can't be long now; hear my song.

AIR XI.

Women and wine compare so well,
They run in a perfect parallel;
For women bewitch us when they will;
And so does wine.
They make the statesman lose his skill,
The soldier, lawyer, and divine;
They put strange whims in the gravest skull,
And send their wits to gather wool.
Then since the world thus runs away,
And women and wine
Are alike divine,
Let's love all night, and drink all day.

There's something like a song for you! now we'll sing together.

Sim. Together?

Skir. Ay, both together.

Sim. But, sir, I don't know your song.

Skir. Why, who the devil wants you to sing my song?

Sim. I never saw such a man in my life: how shall I get away from him?—sir!

Skir. Well, what d'ye say?

Sim. I believe there's somebody looking for you yonder!

Skir. Is there?

[*While SKIRMISH looks round, SIMKIN takes an opportunity of running off.*]

Skir. O you young dog! I'll be after you: but stay, here comes the poor unfortunate young man, his cousin.

Enter HENRY.

Skir. How are your spirits? take a sip of this: oh, here's your writing paper.

Hen. Thank you, friend—oh, my heart! I wish I could have seen Louisa once more.

[*Sits down to write.*]

Skir. Ah, you're a happy man, you can write!—[*Loud.*] Oh, my cursed stars, what a wretched fellow I am!

Hen. Why, what's the matter! [*Looking round.*]

Skir. The matter?—confusion!—I blush to say it; but since it must out, what will you say to such a poor miserable—and, but for this one misfortune, fit to be a general: if I had known how to write, I might have had a regiment five years ago;—but company is the ruin of us all; drinking with one, and drinking with another: why, now here, I was in hopes here I should be able to study a little; but the devil a bit; no such thing as getting the bottle out of one's hand:—ah, if I could hold the pen as I have held the bottle, what a charming hand I should have wrote by this time!

Hen. Skirmish, do me one favour.

Skir. What is it?

Hen. May I depend upon you?

Skir. To the last drop of my blood.

Hen. Promise me to deliver this letter.

Skir. I'll go directly.

Hen. You can't go with it now;—you are a prisoner, you know.

Skir. Damn it, so I am; I forgot that:—well, but to-morrow I shall have my liberty; and then—

Hen. A person, whose name is Russet, will be here to enquire after me; deliver it to him.

Skir. May I perish if I fail.

Hen. Let me speak to you. [*They talk apart.*]

Enter MARGARET, JENNY, *and* SIMKIN.

Mar. Yes, yes, you vile hussey, 'twas all your fault.

Jen. Well, have I not confessed it?

Mar. Confessed it indeed! is not the poor young man going to lose his life, and all upon your account?

Jen. I own it, I own it! I never shall joy myself again as long as I live; I shall see his ghost every night.

Sim. And it serves you right; and I'll tell you more news for your comfort; I would not marry you, now you have been so wicked, if you was worth your weight in gold.

Mar. Ah, you need not talk: for you know well enough you was told to run after him to call him back, and you never once offered to move.

Sim. Why, how could I? I was the bridegroom, you know.

Jen. See! there he is!

Mar. Bless us, how altered he looks!

Hen. Good day, aunt;—good day, [*To the others.*] give us leave, brother soldier.

Skir. Yes, yes, I'll go! I won't disturb you; I'll go and see what they are doing;—I'm afraid no good, for the time draws near.

Mar. Ah, my poor boy! can you forgive us? 'twas all our doing.

Jen. No, 'twas my doing.

Hen. Let us say no more about it; 'twas an unfortunate affair. Where's Louisa and her father?

Mar. Ah, poor man, her father came running into the village like one distracted: flung himself on the ground, tore his hair; we could not get him to speak to us.

Hen. And Louisa, who has seen her?

Sim. We none of us can tell where she is.

Enter FLINT and SKIRMISH.

Skir. Comrade, I am sorry to bring you bad news, but you must now behave yourself like a man; the hell-hounds are coming for you.

Hen. Already?

Skir. They are indeed:—here, here, you've occasion enough for it; drink some of this.

Hen. I am obliged to you—none. Aunt, adieu! tell my Louisa, I thought on her to my last moment; and—oh, my heart! bear up a

little, and I shall be rid of this insupportable misery.

AIR XII.

To die, is nothing; it is our end, we know;
But 'tis a sure release from all our woe:
'Tis from the mind to set the body free,
And rid the world of wretched things like me.
A thousand ways our troubles here increase;
Whilst cares succeeding cares destroy our peace:
Why fly we then? what can such comfort give?
We cease to suffer when we cease to live.

*[During the Song, a Messenger comes on, and talks with
FLINT.]*

Enter RUSSET.

Rus. Where is he? where's my boy, my son? Louisa, Henry,
has done it all! Louisa has saved your life!

Hen. Charming angel!—tell me how, dear sir!

Rus. As the army were returning to the camp, assisted in her resolution by her love for you, to the astonishment of all who saw her, she rushed like lightning through the ranks, made her way to the king himself, fell at his feet—and, after modestly relating the circumstances of thy innocence and her own distress, vowed never to rise till she obtained the life of her lover. The king having heard her story, with that clemency which always accompanies a noble mind, granted thy life to her intercession: and the pomp passed on amidst the acclamations of the people.

Hen. Charming, generous creature!

Skir. Death and damnation!

Flint. Why, what ails thee, Skirmish?

Skir. The king at the camp, and I not there!

Sim. I shall love my cousin Louisa for it as long as I live.

Rus. The king wept, and the nobles filled her lap with money; which she threw to the ground, lest it should retard her in her way to you.

Hen. How can I reward such tenderness!

Rus. See, see, here she comes.

Enter LOUISA.

Lou. My Henry! [*Falling into his Arms.*]

Hen. My Louisa!

AIR XIII.

Hen. My kind preserver! fain I'd speak,
Fain would I what I feel express;
But language is too poor, too weak,
To thank this goodness to excess.
Brothers, companions, age, and youth,
Oh, tell to all the world her fame!
And when they ask for faith and truth,
Repeat my dear Louisa's name.

Lou. And have I saved my Henry's life?—
Dear father, in my joy take part;
I now indeed shall be a wife,
Wife to the idol of my heart.
Thus when the storm, dispersing, flies,
Through which the sailor's forced to steer;
No more he dreads inclement skies,
But with the tempest leaves his fear.

Rus. Why, why, I pray you, this delay?
Children, your hands in wedlock join,
That I may pass my hours away
In ease and peace through life's decline.
This joy's too great; my pride, my boast!
Both, both in my affection share;
May who delights the other most,
Henceforward be your only care!

Skir: I wish your joy may hold you long;
But yet I am not such a sot,
As not to see you all are wrong;
Why is the king to be forgot?
You had been wretched but for him:
Then follow Skirmish, dance and sing;
Raise every voice, strain every limb,
Huzza! and cry, Long live the King!

[*Exeunt.*]

TRANSCRIBER'S NOTE

Punctuation has been added or corrected where required.

Contemporary spellings have been retained. No substantive corrections were made to the text.

[The end of *The Deserter* by Charles Dibdin]