

The Bells

Leopold Lewis

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Based on the play by MM. Erckmann-Chatrion, *Le Juif polonais*
CAST

MATHIAS, the burgomaster
CATHERINE, his wife
ANNETTE, his daughter
WALTER & HANS, friends of Mathias
CHRISTIAN, a gendarme
SOZEL, a servant
DOCTOR ZIMMER
NOTARY
TONY, KARL & FRITZ, guests
JUDGE OF THE COURT
CLERK OF THE COURT
MESMERIST
Villagers, Officers of the Court, Crowd
PERIOD--December 24th & 26th, 1833

ACT I

SCENE I.—Interior of a Village Inn in Alsace. Table and chairs, R.; L. an old-fashioned sideboard, with curious china upon it, and glasses; door, R.; door, L.; large window at back cut in scene, R.; large door at back cut in scene, L. A candle or lamp burns upon the table; a stove at back, R., with kettle on it; the pipe of stove going of through the wing at R. The country covered with snow is seen through the window; snow is falling; a large clock in L. corner, at back—hands to work. The Inn is the residence of the Burgomaster. It is Christmas Eve.

CATHERINE, the Burgomaster's wife, discovered seated at a spinning wheel, L. Music upon rising of curtain. HANS passes window; enters through door at back; he is covered with snow; he carries a gun, and a large game bag is slung across his shoulders.

HANS (taking of his hat and shaking away the snow). More snow, Madame Mathias, more snow! (He places his gun by the stove.)

CATHERINE. Still in the village, Hans?

HANS. Yes, on Christmas Eve one may be forgiven some small indulgence.

CATHERINE. You know your sack of flour is ready for you at the mill?

HANS. Oh, yes; but I am not in a hurry. Father Walter will take charge of it for me in his cart. Now one glass of wine, madame, and then I'm off. (He sits at table, laughing.)

CATHERINE. Father Walter still here? I thought he had left long ago.

HANS. No, no. He is still at the Golden Fleece emptying his bottle. As I came along, I saw his cart standing outside the grocer's, with the coffee, the cinnamon, and the sugar, all covered with snow, he, he, he! He is a jolly old fellow. Fond of good wine, and I don't blame him, you may be sure. We shall leave together.

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CATHERINE. And you have no fear of being upset?

HANS. What does it matter? As I said before, on Christmas Eve one may be forgiven some small indulgence.

CATHERINE. I will lend you a lanthorn when you go. Sozel!

SOZEL (from within). Madame!

CATHERINE. Some wine for Hans!

SOZEL. Yes, madame.

HANS. That's the sort. Considering the festive character of weather like this, one really must take something.

CATHERINE. Yes, but take care, our white wine is very strong.

HANS. Oh, never fear, madame! But, where is our Burgomaster? How is it he is not to be seen? Is he ill?

CATHERINE. He went to Ribeauville five days ago.

Enter SOZEL, carrying a decanter of white wine and glass; she places it on table.

Here is the wine, Master Hans. (Exit SOZEL.)

HANS. Good, good! (He pours out a glass, and drinks with gusto.) I wager, now, that the Burgomaster has gone to buy the wine for the wedding.

CATHERINE (laughing). Not at all improbable.

HANS. Only just now, when I was at the Golden Fleece, it was talked about publicly that the pretty Annette, the daughter of the Burgomaster, and Christian, the Quarter-master of Gendarmes, were going to be married! I could scarcely believe my ears. Christian is certainly a brave man, and an honest man, and a handsome man! I do not wish to maintain anything to the contrary. Our village is rather distinguished in that respect. But he has nothing but his pay to live upon, whilst Annette is the richest match in the village.

CATHERINE. Do you believe then, Hans, that money ought always to be the one consideration?

HANS. No, no, certainly not—on the contrary. Only, I thought that the Burgomaster—

CATHERINE. Well, you have been mistaken; Mathias did not even ask, 'What have you?' He said at once, 'Let Annette give her free consent and I give mine.'

HANS. And did she give her free consent?

CATHERINE. Yes; she loves Christian, and as we have no other thought but the happiness of our child, we do not look for wealth.

HANS. Oh, if the Burgomaster consents and you consent and Annette consents, why, I suppose I cannot refuse my consent either. Only, I may make this observation: I think Christian a very lucky dog, and I wish I was in his place!

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Music. Enter ANNETTE.

ANNETTE. Good evening, Hans! (Music ceases.)

HANS. Ah, it is you. Good evening! Good evening! We were just talking about you!

ANNETTE. About me!

HANS. Yes! Oh, oh! How smiling you look, and how prettily dressed; one would almost think that you were going to a wedding.

ANNETTE. Oh, you are always joking.

HANS. No, no, I am not joking! I say what I think, that's all! That pretty cap, and that pretty dress, and those pretty shoes were not put on for the pleasure of a tough middle-aged forest-keeper like myself. It has been all arranged for another—for another I say, and I know who that particular 'another' happens to be—he, he, he!

ANNETTE (blushing). How can you talk such nonsense!

HANS. Oh, yes, it is nonsense to say that you are fascinating, merry, good and pretty, no doubt; and it is nonsense to say that the particular another I refer to—you know the one I mean—the tall one with the handsome moustaches, is a fellow to be envied. Yes, it is nonsense to say it, for I for one do not envy him at all—no, not at all!

FATHER WALTER has passed the window, now opens door at back and puts his head in. ANNETTE turns to look at him.

FATHER WALTER (laughing and coming in—he is covered with snow). Ah, she turned her head! It's not he you expect!

ANNETTE. Who, Father Walter?

WALTER. Ha, ha, ha! That's right. Up to the last minute she will pretend that she knows nothing.

ANNETTE. I do not understand what you mean.

WALTER and HANS both laugh.

CATHERINE. You are a couple of old fools!

WALTER (still laughing). You're not such an old fool as you look, are you, Hans?

HANS. No; and you don't look such an old fool as you are, do you, Walter?

Enter SOZEL with a lighted lanthorn, which she places upon the sideboard; then exits.

WALTER. No. What is the meaning of that lanthorn?

HANS. Why, to act as a light for the cart.

ANNETTE. You can go by moonlight!

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WALTER. Yes, yes; certainly we will go by the light of the moon! Let us empty a glass in honour of the young couple. (They fill glasses.) Here's to the health of Christian and Annette!

They drink—HANS taking a long time in drinking the contents of his glass, and then hearing a deep sigh, and music commences.

WALTER. And now listen, Annette; as I entered I saw Christian returning with two gendarmes, and I am sure that in a quarter of an hour—

ANNETTE. Listen! (Wind off.)

CATHERINE. The wind is rising. I hope that Mathias is not now on the road!

ANNETTE. No, no, it is Christian! (Music, forte.)

CHRISTIAN passes the window, enters the door at back, covered with snow.

ALL. Christian! (Music ceases.)

CHRISTIAN. Good evening, all. (ANNETTE runs to him.) Good evening, Annette.

ANNETTE. Where have you come from, Christian?

CHRISTIAN. From the Hôvald! From the Hôvald! What a snowstorm! I have seen many in Auvergne or the Pyrenees, but never anything like this. (He sits by the stove, and warms his hands. After hanging up his hat, ANNETTE goes out and returns with a jug of wine, which she places upon the stove.)

WALTER. There, look at that! What care she takes of him! It would not be for us that she would fetch the sugar and the cinnamon and warm the wine.

CHRISTIAN (laughing). Do not allow me, Annette, to be crushed by the satire of Father Walter, who knows how to defy the wind and the snow by the side of a good fire. I should like to see the figure he would present if he had been five hours on duty as I have been in the snow on the Hôvald.

CATHERINE. You have been five hours in the snow, Christian! Your duties must be terribly severe.

CHRISTIAN. How can it be helped? At two o'clock we received information that smugglers had passed the river the previous night with tobacco and gunpowder; so we were bound to be off at once. (Music.)

ANNETTE. Drink this, Christian; it will warm you.

CHRISTIAN. Thank you, Annette. Ah! that's good!

WALTER. The Quarter-master is not difficult to please. (Music ceases.)

CATHERINE. Never mind. Christian, you are fortunate to have arrived this early. (Wind heard off.) Listen to the wind! I hope that Mathias will have the prudence to stop for shelter somewhere on the road. (To HANS and WALTER.) I was right, you see, in advising you to go; you would now have been safely at home.

HANS (laughing). Annette was the cause of our stopping. Why did she blow out the lantern?

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ANNETTE. Oh, you were glad enough to stop!

CHRISTIAN. Your winters are very severe here.

WALTER. Oh, not every year, Quarter-master! For fifteen years we have not had a winter so severe as this.

HANS. No—I do not remember to have seen so much snow since what is called 'The Polish Jew's Winter'. In that year the Schnieberg was covered in the first days of November, and the frost lasted till the end of March.

CHRISTIAN. And for that reason it is called 'The Polish Jew's Winter'?

WALTER. No—it is for another and terrible reason, which none of us will ever forget. Madame Mathias remembers it well, I am sure.

CATHERINE (solemnly). You are right, Walter, you are right.

HANS. Had you been here at that time, Quarter-master, you might have won your cross.

CHRISTIAN. How?

WALTER. I can tell you all about this affair from the beginning to the end, since I saw it nearly all myself. Curiously enough, it was this very day, just fifteen years ago, that I was seated at this very table. There was Mathias, who sat there, and who had only bought his mill just six months before; there was old John Roebec, who sat there—they used to call him 'the Little Shoemaker'—and several others, who are now sleeping under the turf—we shall all go there some day! Happy are those who have nothing upon their conscience! We were just beginning a game of cards, when, just as the old clock struck ten, the sound of horse bells was heard; a sledge stopped before the door, and almost immediately afterwards a Polish Jew entered. He was a well-made, vigorous man, between forty and fifty years of age. I fancy I can see him even now entering at that door with his green cloak and his fur cap, his large black beard and his great boots covered with hare skin. He was a seed merchant. He said as he came in, 'Peace be with you!' Everybody turned to look at him, and thought, 'Where has he come from? What does he want?' Because you must know that the Polish Jews who come to dispose of seed do not arrive in this province till the month of February. Mathias said to him, 'What can I do for you?' But the Jew, without replying, first opened his cloak, and then unbuckled a girdle which he wore round his waist. This he threw upon the table, and we all heard the ringing sound of the gold it contained. Then he said, 'The snow is deep; the road difficult; put my horse in the stable. In one hour I shall continue my journey.' After that he drank his wine without speaking to anyone, and sat like a man depressed, and who is anxious about his affairs. At eleven o'clock the Night Watchman came in. Everyone went his way, and the Jew was left alone!

Chord of Music—loud gust of wind—crash of glass off—hurry. ALL start to their feet. Music continued.

CATHERINE. What has happened? I must go and see.

ANNETTE. Oh! no, you must not go!

CATHERINE. I will return immediately. Don't be alarmed. (Exit CATHERINE.)

CHRISTIAN. But I do not yet see how I could have gained the cross in this affair——

WALTER. Stop a minute. The next morning they found the Jew's horse dead under the Bridge of Vechem, and a hundred yards further on, the green cloak and the fur cap, deeply stained with blood. As to what became of the Jew himself has never to this day been discovered. (Music ceases.)

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HANS. Everything that Walter has stated is strictly true. The gendarmes came here the next morning, notwithstanding the snow; and, in fact, it is since that dreadful time that the brigade has been established here.

CHRISTIAN. But was no inquiry instituted?

HANS. Inquiry! I should think there was. It was the former Quarter-master, Kelz, who undertook the case. How he travelled about! What witnesses he badgered! What clues he discovered! What information and reports were written! and how the coat and the cap were analyzed, and examined by magistrates and doctors!—but it all came to nothing!

CHRISTIAN. But, surely, suspicion fell on someone.

HANS. Oh, of course, the gendarmes are never at a loss for suspicions in such cases. But proofs are required. About that time, you see, there were two brothers living in the village who had an old bear, with his ears all torn, two big dogs, and a donkey, that they took about with them to the fairs, and made the dogs bait the bear. This brought them a great deal of money; and they lived a rollicking, dissipated life. When the Jew disappeared, they happened to be at Vechem; suspicions fastened upon them, and the report was that they had caused the Jew to be eaten by the dogs and the bear, and that they only refrained from swallowing the cloak and cap because they had had enough. They were arrested, and it would have gone hard with the poor devils, but Mathias interested himself in their case, and they were discharged, after being in prison fifteen months. That was the specimen of suspicion of the case.

CHRISTIAN. What you have told me greatly astonishes me. I never heard a word of this before.

Re-enter CATHERINE.

CATHERINE. I was sure that Sozel had left the windows in the kitchen open. Now every pane of glass in them is broken. (To CHRISTIAN.) Fritz is outside. He wishes to speak with you.

CHRISTIAN. Fritz, the gendarme!

CATHERINE. Yes, I asked him to come in, but he would not. It is upon some matter of duty.

CHRISTIAN. Ah! good, I know what it is!

ANNETTE. You will return, Christian?

CHRISTIAN. In a few minutes. (Music to take him off. Exit.)

WALTER. Ah! there goes a brave young fellow—gentle in character, I will admit, but not a man to trifle with rogues.

HANS. Yes, Mathias is fortunate in finding so good a son-in-law; but everything has succeeded with Mathias for the last fifteen years. (Music commences.) He was comparatively poor then, and now he is one of the richest men in the village, and the Burgomaster. He was born under a lucky star.

WALTER. Well, and he deserves all the success he has achieved.

CATHERINE. Hark!

ANNETTE. It is, perhaps, Christian returning as he promised.

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Hurry. MATHIAS passes the window, then enters; he wears a long cloak covered with snow, large cap made of otter's skin, gaiters and spurs, and carries a large riding whip in his hand—chord—tableau.

MATHIAS. It is I—It is I! (Music ceases.)

CATHERINE (rising). Mathias!

HANS & WALTER (starting up). The Burgomaster!

ANNETTE (running and embracing him). At last you have come.

MATHIAS. Yes, yes! Heaven be praised! What a snow-storm. I was obliged to leave the carriage at Vechem. It will be brought over tomorrow.

CATHERINE (embracing him and taking of his coat). Let me take this off for you. It was very kind of you not to stop away. We were becoming so anxious about you.

MATHIAS. So I thought, Catherine; and that was the reason I determined to reach home tonight. (Looking round.) Ha, ha! Father Walter and Hans, you will have nice weather in which to go home. (He takes off his hat, etc. and gives them to his wife and daughter.) There! You will have to get all those things dried.

CATHERINE. Sozel, get ready your master's supper at once, and tell Nickel to take the horse to the stable!

SOZEL (within). Yes, madame.

ANNETTE. We thought perhaps that your cousin Bôth would have detained you.

MATHIAS (unbuttoning his gaiters). Oh, I had finished all my business yesterday morning, and I wished to come away; but Bôth made me stop to see a performance in the town.

ANNETTE. A performance! Is Punchinello at Ribeauville?

MATHIAS. No, it was not Punchinello. It was a Parisian who did extraordinary tricks. He sent people to sleep.

ANNETTE. Sent people to sleep!

MATHIAS. Yes.

CATHERINE. He gave them something to drink, no doubt.

MATHIAS. No; he simply looked at them and made signs, and they went fast asleep.—It certainly was an astonishing performance. If I had not myself seen it I should never have believed it.

HANS. Ah! the Brigadier Stenger was telling me about it the other day. He had seen the same thing at Saverne. This Parisian sends people to sleep, and when they are asleep he makes them tell him everything that weighs upon their consciences.

MATHIAS. Exactly. Annette?

ANNETTE. What, father?

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MATHIAS. Look in the big pocket of my cloak.

Enter SOZEL.

Sozel! take these gaiters and spurs; hang them in the stable with the harness.

SOZEL. Yes, Burgomaster. (Exit.)

ANNETTE, who has taken a small box out of the pocket of the cloak, approaches her father. Music.

ANNETTE. What is it, father?

MATHIAS. Open the box.

She opens the box, and takes out a handsome Alsatian hat, with gold and silver stars upon it--the others approach to look at it.

ANNETTE. Oh, how pretty! Is it for me?

MATHIAS. For whom else could it be? Not for Sozel, I fancy.

ANNETTE puts on the hat after taking off her ribbon, and looks at herself in glass on sideboard--all express admiration.

ANNETTE. Oh! What will Christian say?

MATHIAS. He will say you are the prettiest girl in the province.

ANNETTE (kissing her father). Thank you, dear father. How good you are!

MATHIAS. It is my wedding present, Annette. The day of your marriage I wish you to wear it, and to preserve it for ever. In fifteen or twenty years hence, will you remember your father gave it you?

ANNETTE (with emotion). Yes, dear father!

MATHIAS. All that I wish is to see you happy with Christian. (Music ceases.) And now for supper and some wine. (To WALTER and HANS.) You will stop and take a glass of wine with me?

WALTER. With pleasure, Burgomaster.

HANS. For you, Burgomaster, we will try and make that little effort.

SOZEL has entered with tray of supper and wine which she has placed upon table. MATHIAS now sits at table, helps wine, and then commences to eat with a good appetite. SOZEL draws the curtains across window at back, and exits.

MATHIAS. There is one advantage about the cold. It gives you a good appetite. Here's to your health! (He drinks.)

WALTER & HANS. Here's yours, Burgomaster! (They touch glasses and drink.)

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MATHIAS. Christian has not been here this evening?

ANNETTE. Yes; they came to fetch him, but he will return presently.

MATHIAS. Ah! Good! good!

CATHERINE. He came late today, in consequence of some duty he had to perform in the Hôvald, in the capture of smugglers.

MATHIAS. Nice weather for such a business. By the side of the river, I found the snow five feet deep.

WALTER. Yes; we were talking about that. We were telling the Quarter-master that since the 'Polish Jew's Winter' we had never seen weather like this.

MATHIAS, who was raising the glass to his lips, places it on the table again without drinking.

MATHIAS. Ah! you were talking of that?

Distant sound of Bells heard. To himself—'Bells! Bells!' His whole aspect changes, and he leaves off eating, and sits listening. The Bells continue louder.

HANS. That winter, you remember, Burgomaster, the whole valley was covered several feet deep with snow, and it was a long time before the horse of the Polish Jew could be dug out.

MATHIAS (with indifference). Very possibly; but that tale is too old! It is like an old woman's story now, and is thought about no more. (Watching them and starting up.) Do you not hear the sound of Bells upon the road? (The Bells still go on.)

HANS and WALTER (listening.) Bells? No!

CATHERINE. What is the matter, Mathias? You appear ill. You are cold; some warm wine will restore you. The fire in the stove is low; come, Annette, we will warm your father his wine in the kitchen. (Exeunt CATHERINE and ANNETTE.)

MATHIAS. Thank you; it is nothing.

WALTER. Come, Hans, let us go and see to the horse. At the same time, it is very strange that it was never discovered who did the deed.

MATHIAS. The rogues have escaped, more's the pity. Here's your health! (Music.)

WALTER & HANS. Thank you!

HANS. It is just upon the stroke of ten! (They drink, and go out together.)

MATHIAS (alone—comes forward and listens with terror. Music with frequent chords). Bells! Bells! (He runs to the window and slightly drawing the curtains, looks out.) No one on the road. What is this jangling in my ears? What is tonight? Ah, it is the very night—the very hour! (Clock strikes ten.) I feel a darkness coming over me. (Stage darkens.) A sensation of giddiness seizes me. (He staggers to chair.) Shall I call for help? No, no, Mathias. Have courage! The Jew is dead!

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Sinks on chair; the Bells come closer; then the back of the Scene rises and sinks, disclosing the Bridge of Vechem, with the snow-covered country and frozen rivulet; lime-kiln burning in the distance. The JEW is discovered seated in sledge dressed as described in speech in Act I; the horse carrying Bells; the JEW's face is turned away. The snow is falling fast; the scene is seen through a gauze; limelight. Vision of a MAN dressed in a brown blouse and hood over his head, carrying an axe; stands in an attitude of following the sledge. When the picture is fully disclosed the Bells cease.

MATHIAS (his back to scene). Oh, it is nothing. It is the wine and cold that have overcome me!

He rises and turns; goes up stage; starts violently upon seeing the vision before him. At the same time the JEW in the sledge suddenly turns his face, which is ashy pale, and fixes his eyes sternly upon him. MATHIAS utters a prolonged cry of terror, and falls senseless. Hurried Music.

ACT II

SCENE I.—Best Room in the Burgomaster's House. Door, L.; door, R.; three large windows at back, looking out upon a street of the village, the church and the buildings covered with snow. Large stove in the centre of room, practicable door to stove, tongs in grate; armchair near the stove; at L. (1st grooves) an old escritoire; near L., a table and arm-chair; chairs about room. It is morning; the room and street bright with sunlight.

As the Curtain rises to Music, MATHIAS is discovered seated in armchair at table; CATHERINE and DOCTOR ZIMMER standing at back by stove contemplating him. They advance.

DOCTOR. You feel better, Burgomaster?

MATHIAS. Yes, I am quite well.

DOCTOR. No more pains in the head?

MATHIAS. No.

DOCTOR. No more strange noises in the ears?

MATHIAS. When I tell you that I am quite well—that I never was better—that is surely enough.

CATHERINE. For a long time he has had bad dreams. He talks in his sleep, and his thirst at night is constant, and feverish.

MATHIAS. Is there anything extraordinary in being thirsty during the night?

DOCTOR. Certainly not: but you must take more care of yourself. You drink too much white wine, Burgomaster. Your attack of the night before last arose from this cause. You had taken too much wine at your cousin's, and then the severe cold having seized you, the blood had flown to the head.

MATHIAS. I was cold, but that stupid gossip about the Polish Jew was the cause of all.

DOCTOR. How was that?

MATHIAS. Well, you must know, when the Jew disappeared, they brought me the cloak and cap that had belonged to the poor devil, and the sight of them quite upset me, remembering he had, the night before, stopped at our house. Since that time I had thought no more of the matter until the night before last, when some gossip

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brought the affair again to my mind. It was as if I had seen the ghost of the Jew. We all know that there are no such things, but——(suddenly to his wife) Have you sent for the Notary?

CATHERINE. Yes; but you must be calm.

MATHIAS. I am calm. But Annette's marriage must take place at once. When a man in robust health and strength is liable to such an attack as I have had, nothing should be postponed till the morrow. What occurred to me the night before last might again occur tonight. I might not survive the second blow, and then I should not have seen my dear children happy. And now leave me. Whether it was the wine, or the cold, or the gossip about the Polish Jew, it comes to the same thing. It is all past and over now.

DOCTOR. But, perhaps, Burgomaster, it would be better to adjourn the signing of the marriage contract for a few days. It is an affair of so much interest and importance that the agitation might——

MATHIAS (angrily). Good heavens, why will not people attend to their own business! I was ill; you bled me—I am well again—so much the better. Let the Notary be sent for at once. Let Father Walter and Hans be summoned as witnesses, and let the whole affair be finished without further delay.

DOCTOR (to CATHERINE, aside). His nerves are still very much shaken. Perhaps it will be better to let him have his own way. (To MATHIAS.) Well, well, we'll say no more about it. Only don't forget what I have said—be careful of the white wine.

MATHIAS (angrily striking the table, turning his back). Good! Good! Ah!

The DOCTOR looks with pity towards him, bows to CATHERINE, and exits. The church bell commences to ring. Music.

CATHERINE. Annette! Annette!

ANNETTE (off). I am coming.

CATHERINE (impatiently). Be quick. Be quick.

ANNETTE. Directly—directly!

MATHIAS. Don't hurry the poor child. You know that she is dressing.

CATHERINE. But I don't take two hours to dress.

MATHIAS. You; oh! that is different. She expects Christian. He was to have been here this morning. Something has detained him.

Enter ANNETTE; she is in gala dress, and wears the golden heart upon her breast, and the hat given her by MATHIAS in Act I.

CATHERINE. At last, you are ready!

ANNETTE. Yes, I am ready.

MATHIAS (with affection). How beautiful you look, Annette.

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ANNETTE. You see, dear father, I have put on the hat.

MATHIAS. You did right—you did right.

CATHERINE (impatiently). Are you not coming, Annette? The service will have commenced. Come, come.

ANNETTE. Christian has not yet been here.

MATHIAS. No, you may be sure some business detains him.

CATHERINE. Do come, Annette; you will see Christian by and by. (Exit, ANNETTE is following.)

MATHIAS. Annette, Annette! Have you nothing to say to me?

ANNETTE runs to him, and kisses him—he embraces her with affection.

ANNETTE. You know, dear father, how much I love you.

MATHIAS. Yes, yes. There, go now, dear child; your mother is impatient. (Exit ANNETTE.)

The villagers, MEN and WOMEN in Sunday clothes, pass the window in couples. MATHIAS goes up and looks through the window, ANNETTE and CATHERINE pass and kiss hands to him—a WOMAN in the group says, 'Good morning, Burgomaster.' Church bells cease. Music ceases.

MATHIAS. All goes well! Luckily all is over. But what a lesson, Mathias—what a lesson! Would anyone believe that the mere talk about the Jew could bring on such a fit? Fortunately the people about here are such idiots they suspect nothing. But it was that Parisian fellow at the fair who was the real cause of all. The rascal had really made me nervous. When he wanted to send me to sleep as well as the others, I said to myself, 'Stop, stop, Mathias—this sending you to sleep may be an invention of the devil, you might relate certain incidents in your past life! You must be cleverer than that, Mathias; you mustn't run your neck into a halter, you must be cleverer than that—ah! you must be cleverer than that.' You will die an old man yet, Mathias, and the most respected in the Province—only this, since you dream and are apt to talk in your dreams, for the future you will sleep alone in the room above, the door locked, and the key safe in your pocket. They say walls have ears—let them hear me as much as they please. (Music. Takes bunch of keys out of his pocket.) And now to count the dowry of Annette, to be given to our dear son-in-law, in order that our dear son-in-law may love us. (He crosses, unlocks the escritoire, takes out a large leather bag, unties it and empties the contents, consisting of gold pieces and rouleaux, upon the table.) Thirty thousand francs. (He sits at table and commences to count the money.) Thirty thousand francs—a fine dowry for Annette. Ah! it is pleasant to hear the sound of gold! A fine dowry for the husband of Annette. He's a clever fellow, is Christian. He's not a Kelz—half deaf and half blind; no, no—he's a clever fellow, is Christian, and quite capable of getting on a right track. (A pause.) The first time I saw him I said to myself, 'You shall be my son-in-law, and if anything should be discovered, you will defend me.' (Continues to count, weighing piece upon his finger—takes up a piece and examines it.) A piece of old gold! (Looks at it more closely—starts.) Ah! that came from the girdle; not for them—no, no, not for them, for me. (Places the piece of gold in his waistcoat pocket—he goes to the escritoire, opens a drawer, takes out another piece of gold and throws it upon the table in substitution.) That girdle did us a good turn—without it—without it we were ruined. If Catherine only knew—poor, poor Catherine. (He sobs—his head sinks on his breast. Music ceases—the Bells heard off; he starts.) The Bells! the Bells again! They must come from the mill. (Rushes across to door, calling.) Sozel! Sozel, I say, Sozel!

Enter SOZEL holding an open book; she is in her Sunday dress.

The Bells

MATHIAS. Is there anyone at the mill?

SOZEL. No, Burgomaster. They have all gone to church and the wheel is stopped.

MATHIAS. Don't you hear the sound of Bells?

SOZEL. No Burgomaster, I hear nothing. (The Bells cease.)

MATHIAS (aside). Strange—strange. (Rudely.) What were you doing?

SOZEL. I was reading, Burgomaster.

MATHIAS. Reading—what? Ghost stories, no doubt.

SOZEL. Oh, no, Burgomaster! I was reading such a curious story, about a band of robbers being discovered after twenty–three years had passed, and all through the blade of an old knife having been found in a blacksmith's shop, hidden under some rusty iron. They captured the whole of them, consisting of the mother, two sons, and the grandfather, and they hanged them all in a row. Look, Burgomaster, there's the picture. (Shows book—he strikes it violently out of her hand.)

MATHIAS. Enough, enough! It's pity you have nothing better to do. There, go—go! (Exit SOZEL.)

Seats himself at the table and puts remaining money into the bag.

The fools!—not to destroy all evidence against them. To be hanged through the blade of an old knife. Not like that—not like that am I to be caught!

Music—sprightly military air. CHRISTIAN passes at back, stops at centre window and taps upon it. MATHIAS looks round with a start, is reassured upon seeing who it is, and says, 'Ah, it is Christian!' he ties up the bag and places it in the escritoire. CHRISTIAN enters. MATHIAS meets him half way—they shake hands. Music ceases. CHRISTIAN is in full dress of a Quarter–master of Gendarmes.

CHRISTIAN. Good morning, Burgomaster; I hope you are better.

MATHIAS. Oh, yes, I am well, Christian. I have just been counting Annette's dowry, in good sounding gold. It was a pleasure to me to do so, as it recalled to me the days gone by, when by industry and good fortune I had been enabled to gain it; and I thought that in the future my children would enjoy and profit by all that I had so acquired.

CHRISTIAN. You are right, Burgomaster. Money gained by honest labour is the only profitable wealth. It is the good seed which in time is sure to bring a rich harvest.

MATHIAS. Yes, yes; especially when the good seed is sown in good ground. The contract must be signed today.

CHRISTIAN. Today?

MATHIAS. Yes, the sooner the better. I hate postponements. Once decided, why adjourn the business? It shows a great want of character.

CHRISTIAN. Well, Burgomaster, nothing to me could be more agreeable.

MATHIAS. Annette loves you.

The Bells

CHRISTIAN. Ah, she does.

MATHIAS. And the dowry is ready—then why should not the affair be settled at once? I hope, my boy, you will be satisfied.

CHRISTIAN. You know, Burgomaster, I do not bring much.

MATHIAS. You bring courage and good conduct—I will take care of the rest; and now let us talk of other matters. You are late today. I suppose you were busy. Annette waited for you, and was obliged to go without you.

He goes up and sits by stove in arm-chair, opens stove door, takes up tongs and arranges fire.

CHRISTIAN (unbuckling his sword and sitting in chair). Ah, it was a very curious business that detained me. Would you believe it, Burgomaster, I was reading old depositions from five o'clock till ten? The hours flew by, but the more I read the more I wished to read.

MATHIAS. And what was the subject of the depositions?

CHRISTIAN. They were about the case of the Polish Jew who was murdered on the Bridge of Vechem fifteen years ago.

MATHIAS (dropping the tongs). Ah!

CHRISTIAN. Father Walter told me the story the night before last. It seems to me very remarkable that nothing was ever discovered.

MATHIAS. No doubt—no doubt.

CHRISTIAN. The man who committed that murder must have been a clever fellow.

MATHIAS. Yes, he was not a fool.

CHRISTIAN. A fool! He would have made one of the cleverest gendarmes in the department.

MATHIAS (with a smile). Do you really think so?

CHRISTIAN. I am sure of it. There are so many ways of detecting criminals, and so few escape, that to have committed a crime like this, and yet to remain undiscovered, showed the possession of extraordinary address.

MATHIAS. I quite agree with you, Christian; and what you say shows your good sense. When a man has committed a crime, and by it gained money, he becomes like a gambler, and tries his second and his third throw. I should think it requires a great amount of courage to resist the first success in crime.

CHRISTIAN. You are right, but what is most remarkable to me in the case is this, that no trace of the murdered man was ever found. Now do you know what my idea is?

MATHIAS (rising). No, no! What is your idea?

CHRISTIAN. Well, I find at that time there were a great many lime-kilns in the neighbourhood of Vechem. Now it is my idea that the murderer, to destroy all traces of his crime, threw the body of the Jew into one of these kilns. Old Kelz, my predecessor, evidently never thought of that.

The Bells

MATHIAS. Very likely—very likely. Do you know that idea never occurred to me? You are the first who ever suggested it.

CHRISTIAN. And this idea leads to many others. Now suppose—suppose inquiry had been instituted as to those persons who were burning lime at that time.

MATHIAS. Take care, Christian—take care. Why, I myself had a lime-kiln burning at the time the crime was committed.

CHRISTIAN (laughing). Oh, you, Burgomaster!

MATHIAS laughs heartily. ANNETTE and CATHERINE pass the window.

ANNETTE (as she passes the window before entering). He is there!

Enter ANNETTE and CATHERINE.

MATHIAS. Is the Notary here?

CATHERINE. Yes, he is in the next room with Father Walter and Hans, and the others. He is reading the contract to them now.

MATHIAS. Good—good!

CHRISTIAN. Oh, Annette, how that pretty hat becomes you!

ANNETTE. Yes; it was dear father who gave it to me. (Music.)

CHRISTIAN. It is today, Annette.

ANNETTE. Yes, Christian, it is today.

MATHIAS. Well; you know what is customary when father, mother, and all consent.

CHRISTIAN. What, Burgomaster?

MATHIAS (smiling). You embrace your intended wife.

CHRISTIAN. Is that so, Annette?

ANNETTE. I don't know, Christian. (He kisses her forehead, and leads her up to stove, talking.)

MATHIAS. Look at our children, Catherine; how happy they are! When I think that we were once as happy! It's true; yes, it's true, we were once as happy as they are now! Why are you crying, Catherine? Are you sorry to see our children happy?

CATHERINE. No, no, Mathias; these are tears of joy, and I can't help them. (Throws herself upon MATHIAS' shoulder. Music ceases.)

MATHIAS. And now to sign the contract! (Crosses to door and throws it open.) Walter, Hans, come in! Let everyone present come in! The most important acts in life should always take place in the presence of all. It is an

The Bells

old and honest custom of Alsace. (Music—"The Lauterbach," played forte.)

Enter, HANS with two GIRLS on his arm—FATHER WALTER with two GIRLS—MEN and WOMEN villagers arm-in-arm—they wear ribbons in their button-holes—the NOTARY with papers—SOZEL. The MEN wear their hats through the whole scene. MATHIAS advances and shakes hands with the NOTARY and conducts him to table on which is spread out the contract—pen and ink on table. The COMPANY fill the stage in groups.

NOTARY. Gentlemen and witnesses—You have just heard read the marriage contract between Christian Bême, Quarter-master of Gendarmes, and Annette Mathias. Has anyone any observations to make?

SEVERAL VOICES. No, no.

NOTARY. Then we can at once proceed to take the signatures.

MATHIAS (goes to the escritoire and takes out the bag of gold which he places on the table before the NOTARY). There is the dowry. It is not in promises made on paper, but in gold. Thirty thousand francs in good French gold.

ALL. Thirty thousand francs!

CHRISTIAN. It is too much, Burgomaster.

MATHIAS. Not at all, not at all. When Catherine and myself are gone there will be more. And now, Christian—(music commences)—I wish you to make me one promise.

CHRISTIAN. What promise?

MATHIAS. Young men are ambitious. It is natural they should be. You must promise me that you will remain in this village while both of us live. (Takes CATHERINE'S hand.) You know Annette is our only child; we love her dearly, and to lose her altogether would break our hearts. Do you promise?

CHRISTIAN (looks to ANNETTE; she returns a glance of approval). I do promise.

MATHIAS. Your word of honour, given before all?

CHRISTIAN. My word of honour, given before all. (They shake hands. Music ceases.)

MATHIAS (aside). It was necessary. And now to sign the contract. (He goes to table; the NOTARY hands him the pen, and points to the place where he is to sign his name. MATHIAS is about to write.

The Bells heard off. MATHIAS stops, listens with terror—his face to the audience, and away from the persons upon the stage aside.) Bells! Courage, Mathias! (After an effort he signs rapidly—the Bells cease—he throws the pen down.) Come, Christian, sign! (CHRISTIAN approaches the table to sign—as he is about to do so WALTER taps him on the shoulder. MATHIAS starts at the interruption.)

WALTER. It is not every day you sign a contract like that.

ALL laugh. MATHIAS heaves a sigh and is reassured. CHRISTIAN signs—the NOTARY hands the pen to CATHERINE, who makes her cross—she then takes ANNETTE to table, who signs her name. CATHERINE kisses her affectionately and gives her to CHRISTIAN.

The Bells

MATHIAS (aside). And now should the Jew return to this world, Christian must drive him back again. (Aloud.)
Come, come, just one waltz and then dinner.

WALTER. Stop! stop! Before we go we must have the song of the betrothal.

ALL. Yes, yes, Annette! Annette! the song of the betrothal.

Song, ANNETTE. Air—"The Lauterbach"

Suitors of wealth and high degree,
In style superbly grand,
Tendered their love on bended knee
And sought to win my hand.

Tyrolienne by all, and waltz.

But a soldier brave came to woo.
No maid such love could spurn
Proving his heart was fond and true,
Won my love in return.

Tyrolienne as before by all, and waltz. MATHIAS is seated—in the midst of the waltz Bells are heard off.
MATHIAS starts up and rushes into the midst of the WALTZERS.

MATHIAS. The Bells! The Bells!

CATHERINE. Are you mad?

MATHIAS seizes her by the waist and waltzes wildly with her.

MATHIAS. Ring on! Ring on! Houp! Houp!

Music, forte while the waltz is at its height the drop fall.

ACT III

SCENE I.—Bedroom in the Burgomaster's House. The whole back of Scene painted on a gauze, alcove on left; door, R.; two windows at back, small table by bed; chair, L. Night.

Music—Enter MATHIAS, FATHER WALTER, HANS, CHRISTIAN, ANNETTE, and CATHERINE; SOZEL carrying a lighted candle, bottle of water and glass, which she places on table. They enter suddenly, the MEN appear to be slightly excited by wine.

HANS (laughing). Ha, ha! Everything has gone off admirably. We only wanted something to wind up with, and I may say that we are all as capitably wound up as the great clock at Strasbourg.

WALTER. Yes, and what wine we have consumed! For many a day we shall remember the signing of Annette's marriage contract. I should like to witness such a contract every second day.

HANS. There I object to your argument. Every day, I say!

CHRISTIAN. And so you are determined, Mathias, to sleep here tonight?

The Bells

MATHIAS. Yes, I am decided. I wish for air. I know what is necessary for my condition. The heat was the cause of my accident. This room is cooler, and will prevent its recurrence. (Laughter heard outside.)

HANS. Listen, how they are still revelling! Come, Father Walter, let us rejoin the revels!

WALTER. But Mathias already deserts us, just at the moment when we were beginning to thoroughly enjoy ourselves.

MATHIAS. What more do you wish me to do? From noon till midnight is surely enough!

WALTER. Enough, it may be, but not too much; never too much of such wine.

HANS. There again, I object to your argument—never enough, I say.

CATHERINE. Mathias is right. You remember that Doctor Zimmer told him to be careful of the wine he took, or it would one day play him false. He has already taken too much since this morning.

MATHIAS. One glass of water before I go to rest is all I require. It will calm me—it will calm me.

KARL, FRITZ and TONY, three of the guests of the previous Act, enter suddenly, slightly merry, pushing each other.

GUESTS. Goodnight, Burgomaster, Goodnight.

TONY. I say, Hans! don't you know that the Night Watchman is below?

HANS. The Night Watchman! What in the name of all that is political does he want?

KARL. He requires us all to leave, and the house to be closed. It is past hours.

MATHIAS. Give him a bumper of wine, and then goodnight all!

WALTER. Past hours! For a Burgomaster no regulations ought to exist.

HANS & OTHERS. Certainly not.

MATHIAS (with fierceness). Regulations made for all must be obeyed by all.

WALTER (timidly). Well, then, shall we go?

MATHIAS. Yes, yes, go! Leave me to myself.

CATHERINE. Don't thwart his wish. Follow his directions.

WALTER (shaking hands with MATHIAS). Goodnight, Mathias. I wish you calm repose, and no unpleasant dreams.

MATHIAS (fiercely). I never dream. (Mildly.) Goodnight, all. Go, friends, go.

Music. Exeunt WALTER, HANS, and the three GUESTS, saying, 'Goodnight, Burgomaster.' CATHERINE, ANNETTE and CHRISTIAN remain.

The Bells

MATHIAS. Goodnight, Catherine. (Embracing her.) I shall be better here. The wine, the riot, those songs have quite dazed my brain. I shall sleep better here; I shall sleep better.

CHRISTIAN. Yes, this room is fresh and cool. Goodnight.

MATHIAS. The same to you, Christian; the same to you. (They shake hands.)

ANNETTE (running to her father and kissing him). Goodnight, dear father; may you sleep well!

MATHIAS (kissing her with affection). Goodnight, dear child; do not fear for me—do not fear.

Music. Exeunt all but MATHIAS. Music ceases. He goes up cautiously, locks the door, and puts the key in his pocket.

At last I am alone! Everything goes well. Christian the gendarme is caught! Tonight I shall sleep without a fear haunting me! If any new danger should threaten the father-in-law of the Quarter-master, it would soon be averted. Ah! What a power it is to know now to guide your destiny in life. You must hold good cards in your hands. Good cards! as I have done, and if you play them well you may defy ill fortune.

CHORUS OF REVELLERS outside (Without accompaniment).

Now, since we must part, let's drain a last glass;
Let's drink!
Let us first drink to this gentle young lass:
Let's drink!
From drinking this toast, we'll none of us shrink;
Others shall follow, when we've time to think.
Our burden shall be, let us drink!
The burden to bear is good drink.

Loud laughter heard outside.

MATHIAS (taking off his coat). Ha, ha, ha! Those jolly toppers have got all they want. What holes in the snow they will make before they reach their homes! Drink! Drink! Is it not strange? To drink and drown every remorse! Yes, everything goes well! (He drinks a glass of water.) Mathias, you can at least boast of having well managed your affairs—the contract signed—rich—prosperous—respected—happy! (Takes off waistcoat.) No one now will hear you, if you dream. No one! No more folly!—no more Bells! Tonight I triumph; for conscience is at rest!

He enters the alcove. The Chorus of Revellers heard again in the distance. A hand is extended from alcove and extinguishes the candle—stage dark. Curtain at back of gauze rises, disclosing an extensive set of a Court of Justice, arched, brilliantly lighted—at back, three JUDGES on the bench, dressed in black caps and red robes—at R. and L., the PUBLIC, in Alsatian costumes—in front of the JUDGES, but beneath them, a table, on which lies the Jew's cloak and cap—on R., the PUBLIC PROSECUTOR and BARRISTERS—on L., the CLERK or REGISTRAR OF THE COURT, and BARRISTERS—a GENDARME at each corner of the Court. MATHIAS is discovered seated on a stool in C. of Court—he is dressed in the brown blouse and hood worn by the MAN in the vision in Act I—he has his back to the AUDIENCE, face to JUDGES.

THE CLERK. Therefore, the prisoner, Mathias, is accused of having, on the night of the 24th December, 1818, between midnight and one o'clock, assassinated the Jew Koveski upon the Bridge of Vechem, to rob him of his gold.

The Bells

PRESIDENT. Prisoner, you have heard the Act of Accusation read; you have already heard the depositions of the witnesses. What have you to say in answer?

MATHIAS (violently—throws back hood, and starting up). Witnesses! People who saw nothing; people who live miles from the place where the crime was committed; at night, and in the winter time! you call such people witnesses!

PRESIDENT. Answer with calmness; these gestures—this violence will avail you nothing. You are a man full of cunning.

MATHIAS (with humility). No, I am a man of simplicity.

PRESIDENT. You knew well the time to select; you knew well how to evade all suspicion; you knew well how to destroy all direct evidence. You are a dangerous man!

MATHIAS (derisively). Because nothing can be proved against me I am dangerous! Every honest man then is dangerous when nothing can be proved against him! A rare encouragement for honesty!

PRESIDENT. The public voice accuses you. Answer me this; how is it that you hear the noise of Bells?

MATHIAS (passionately). I do not hear the noise of Bells!

Music. Bells heard was before. MATHIAS trembles.

PRESIDENT. Prisoner, you speak falsely. At this moment you hear that noise. Tell us why is this?

MATHIAS. It is nothing. It is simply a jangling in my ears.

PRESIDENT. Unless you acknowledge the true cause of this noise you hear, we shall summon the Mesmerist to explain the matter to us.

MATHIAS (with defiance). It is true then that I hear this noise. (Bells cease.)

PRESIDENT (to the CLERK OF THE COURT). It is well; write that down.

MATHIAS. Yes; but I hear it in a dream.

PRESIDENT. Write that he hears it in a dream.

MATHIAS (furiously). Is it a crime to dream?

THE CROWD (murmur very softly among themselves, and move simultaneously, each person performing exactly the same movement of negation). N–N–N–o!

MATHIAS (with confidence). Listen, friends! Don't fear for me! All this is but a dream—I am in a dream. If it were not a dream should I be clothed in these rags? Should I have before me such judges as these? Judges who, simply acting upon their own empty ideas, would hang a fellow creature. Ha, ha, ha! It is a dream—a dream! (He bursts into a loud derisive laugh.)

PRESIDENT. Silence, prisoner—silence! (Turning to his companion JUDGES.) Gentlemen—this noise of Bells arises in the prisoner's mind from the remembrance of what is past. The prisoner hears this noise because there

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rankles in his heart the memory of that he would conceal from us. The Jew's horse carried Bells.

MATHIAS. It is false; I have no memories.

PRESIDENT. Be silent!

MATHIAS (with rage). A man cannot be condemned upon such suppositions. You must have proofs. I do not hear the noise of Bells.

PRESIDENT. You see, gentlemen, the prisoner contradicts himself. He has already made the avowal—now he retracts it.

MATHIAS. No! I hear nothing. (The Bells heard.) It is the blood rushing to my brain—this jangling in my ears. (The Bells increase in sound.) I ask for Christian. Why is not Christian here?

PRESIDENT. Prisoner! do you persist in your denial?

MATHIAS (with force). Yes. There is nothing proved against me. It is a gross injustice to keep an honest man in prison. I suffer in the cause of justice. (The Bells cease.)

PRESIDENT. You persist. Well! Considering that since this affair took place fifteen years have passed, and that it is impossible to throw light upon the circumstances by ordinary means—first, through the cunning and audacity of the prisoner, and second, through the deaths of witnesses who could have given evidence—for these reasons we decree that the Court hear the Mesmerist. Officer, summon the Mesmerist.

MATHIAS (in a terrible voice). I oppose it! I oppose it! Dreams prove nothing.

PRESIDENT. Summon the Mesmerist! (Exit GENDARME.)

MATHIAS (striking the table). It is abominable! It is in defiance of all justice!

PRESIDENT. If you are innocent, why should you fear the Mesmerist; because he can read the inmost secrets of your heart? Be calm, or, believe me, your own indiscretion will prove that you are guilty.

MATHIAS. I demand an advocate. I wish to instruct the advocate Linder of Saverne. In a case like this, I do not care for cost. I am calm—as calm as any man who has no reproach against himself. I fear nothing, but dreams are dreams. (Loudly.) Why is Christian not here? My honour is his honour! Let him be sent for. He is an honest man. (With exultation.) Christian, I have made you rich. Come, and defend me!

Music. The GENDARME who has gone out returns with the MESMERIST.

MESMERIST (bending to the Court respectfully). Your honours, the President and Judges of the Court, it is your decree that has brought me before your tribunal; without such direction, terror alone would have kept me far from here.

MATHIAS. Who can believe in the follies of the Mesmerists? They deceive the public for the purpose of gaining money! They merely perform the tricks of conjurers! I have seen this fellow already at my cousin Bôth's, at Ribeauville.

PRESIDENT. Can you send this man to sleep?

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MESMERIST (looking full at MATHIAS, who sinks upon chair, unable to endure the MESMERIST'S gaze). I can!

MATHIAS (starting up). I will not be made the subject of this conjurer's experiments.

PRESIDENT. I command it!

MATHIAS. Christian—Where is Christian? He will prove that I am an honest man.

PRESIDENT. Your resistance betrays you.

MATHIAS (with defiance). I have no fear. (Sits.)

The MESMERIST goes up stage to back of MATHIAS, makes some passes. Music.

MATHIAS (to himself). Mathias, if you sleep you are lost. (His eyes are fixed as if struck with horror—in a hollow voice) No—no—I will not sleep—I will—(in a hesitating voice) I will not—no—(Falls asleep. Music ceases.)

MESMERIST. He sleeps. What shall I ask him?

PRESIDENT. Ask him what he did on the night of the 24th of December, fifteen years ago.

MESMERIST (to MATHIAS, in a firm voice). You are at the night of the 24th December, 1818?

MATHIAS (in a low voice). Yes.

MESMERIST. What time is it?

MATHIAS. Half—past eleven.

MESMERIST. Speak on. I command you!

MATHIAS (still in the same attitude, speaking as if he were describing a vision presented to his sight). The people are leaving the inn—Catherine and little Annette have gone to rest. Our man Kasper comes in. He tells me the lime—kiln is lighted. I answer him, it is well; go to bed, I will see to the kiln. He leaves me; I am alone with the Jew, who warms himself at the stove. Outside, everything sleeps. Nothing is heard, except from time to time the Jew's horse under the shed, when he shakes his bells.

MESMERIST. Of what are you thinking?

MATHIAS. I am thinking that I must have money—that if I have not three thousand francs by the 31st, the inn will be taken from me. I am thinking that no one is stirring; that it is night; that there are two feet of snow upon the ground, and that the Jew will follow the high road quite alone!

MESMERIST. Have you already decided to attack him?

MATHIAS (after a short silence). That man is strong. He has broad shoulders. I am thinking that he would defend himself well, should anyone attack him. (He makes a movement.)

MESMERIST. What ails you?

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MATHIAS (in a low voice). He looks at me. He has grey eyes. (As if speaking to himself.) I must strike the blow!

MESMERIST. You are decided?

MATHIAS. Yes—yes; I will strike the blow! I will risk it!

MESMERIST. Go on!

MATHIAS. I must, however, look round. I go out; all is dark! It still snows; no one will trace my footsteps in the snow. (He raises his hands as if feeling for something.)

MESMERIST. What are you doing?

MATHIAS. I am feeling in the sledge—should he carry pistols! There is nothing—I will strike the blow! (He listens.) All is silent in the village! Little Annette is crying; a goat bleats in the stable; the Jew is walking in his room!

MESMERIST. You re-enter?

MATHIAS. Yes. The Jew has placed six francs upon the table; I return his money; he fixes his eyes steadily upon me!

MESMERIST. He speaks to you.

MATHIAS. He asks me how far it is to Mutzig? Four leagues. I wish him well on his journey! He answers—'God bless you!' He goes out—he is gone! (MATHIAS, with body bent, takes several steps forward as if following and watching his victim; he extends his hands.) The axe! Where is the axe? Ah, here, behind the door! How cold it is! (He trembles.) The snow falls—not a star! Courage, Mathias, you shall possess the girdle—courage!

MESMERIST. You follow him?

MATHIAS. Yes, yes. I have crossed the fields! (Pointing.) Here is the old bridge, and there below, the frozen rivulet! How the dogs howl at Daniel's farm—how they howl! And old Finck's forge, how brightly it glows upon the hillock. (Low, as if speaking to himself.) Kill a man!—kill a man! You will not do that, Mathias—you will not do that! Heaven forbids it. (Proceeding to walk with measured steps and bent body.) You are a fool! Listen, you will be rich; your wife and child will no longer want for anything! The Jew came; so much the worse—so much the worse. He ought not to have come! You will pay all you owe; you will no more be in debt. (Loud, in a broken tone.) It must be, Mathias, that you kill him! (He listens.) No one on the road—no one! (With an expression of terror.) What dreadful silence! (He wipes his forehead with his hand.) One o'clock strikes, and the moon shines. Ah! The Jew has already passed! Thank God! Thank God! (He kneels—a pause—he listens—the Bells heard without as before.) No! The Bells! The Bells! He comes! (He bends down in a watching attitude, and remains still—a pause—in a low voice.) You will be rich—you will be rich—you will be rich! (The noise of the Bells increases—the CROWD express alarm simultaneously—all at once MATHIAS springs forward, and with a species of savage roar, strikes a terrible blow with his right hand.) Ah! ah! I have you now, Jew! (He strikes again—the CROWD simultaneously express horror. MATHIAS leans forward and gazes anxiously on the ground—he extends his hand as if to touch something, but draws it back in horror.) He does not move! (He raises himself, utters a deep sigh of relief and looks round.) The horse has fled with the sledge! (The Bells cease—kneeling down.) Quick, quick! The girdle! I have it. Ha! (He performs the action in saying this of taking it from the JEW'S body and buckling it round his own.) It is full of gold, quite full. Be quick, Mathias, be quick! Carry him away. (He bends low down and appears to lift the body upon his back; then he walks across stage, his body bent, his steps slow, as a man who carries a heavy load.)

The Bells

MESMERIST. Where are you going?

MATHIAS (stopping). To the lime-kiln. I am there. (He appears to throw the body upon the kiln.) How heavy he was! (He breathes with force; then he again bends down to take up a pole—in a hoarse voice) Go into the fire, Jew, go into the fire! (He appears to push the body with the pole, using his whole force; suddenly he utters a cry of horror and staggers away, his face covered with his hands.) Those eyes, oh, those eyes! How he glares at me. (He sinks on to stool, and takes the same attitude as when first thrown into sleep.)

PRESIDENT (with a sign to the MESMERIST). It is well. (To the CLERK OF THE COURT.) You have written all?

CLERK. All!

PRESIDENT. It is well—awake him now, and let him read himself.

MESMERIST. Awake! I command you!

MATHIAS (awakes gradually—he appears bewildered). Where am I? (He looks round.) Ah! Yes; what is going on?

CLERK (handing him paper). Here is your deposition—read it.

MATHIAS (takes it and, before reading it, aside). Wretched, wretched fool! I have told all; I am lost! (With rage, after reading the paper.) It is false! (Tears the paper into pieces.) You are a set of rogues! Christian—where is Christian? It is a crime against justice! They will not let my only witness speak. Christian! They would kill the father of your wife! Help me—help me!

PRESIDENT. You force me to speak of an event of which I had wished to remain silent. Your son-in-law Christian, upon hearing of the crimes with which you are charged, by his own hand sought his death. He is no more.

MATHIAS. Ah! (He appears stupefied with dismay.)

PRESIDENT (after consulting the other JUDGES, rises, speaks in a solemn tone of voice.) Considering that on the night of the 24th December, 1818, between midnight and one o'clock, Mathias committed the crime of assassination upon the person of one Koveski, and considering that this crime was committed under circumstances which aggravate its enormity such as premeditation, and for the purpose of highway robbery, the Court condemns the said Mathias to be hanged by the neck until he is dead!

MATHIAS staggers and falls on his knees. The CROWD makes a movement of terror—the death-knell tolls—lights lowered gradually—then curtain at back of gauze descends, disclosing the Scene as at commencement—lights up. Music—a peal of joy bells heard ringing.

CROWD (without). Annette! Annette! The bride!

Hurried steps are heard upon the stairs outside, and then a loud knocking at the door of the room.

CATHERINE (without). Mathias! Mathias! get up at once. It is late in the morning, and all our guests are below. (More knocking.)

CHRISTIAN (without). Mathias! Mathias! (Silence.) How soundly he sleeps!

The Bells

WALTER (without). Ho! Mathias, the wedding has commenced—Houp, houp! (More knocking.)

THE CROWD (outside). Burgomaster! Burgomaster! (Loud knocking.)

CATHERINE (in an anxious voice). He does not answer. It is strange. Mathias! (A discussion among many voices is heard without.)

CHRISTIAN. No—it is useless. Leave it to me!

At the same moment several violent blows are struck upon the door, which falls into the room from its hinges. Enter CHRISTIAN hurriedly—he runs to the alcove. Music, hurry.

CHRISTIAN. Mathias! (Looks into alcove and staggers back into room.) Ah!

Enter CATHERINE and ANNETTE, followed by WALTER, HANS, and the CROWD, all dressed for the wedding.

CATHERINE. What has happened, Christian; what has happened? (She is rushing to alcove.)

CHRISTIAN (stopping her). Don't come near—don't come near.

CATHERINE (endeavouring to pass). I will see what it is. Let me pass; do not fear for me.

MATHIAS appears from the alcove—he is dressed in the same clothes as when he retired into the alcove at the commencement of the Scene, but his face is haggard, and ghastly pale—he comes out, his eyes fixed, his arms extended—as he rushes forward with uncertain steps, the CROWD fall back with horror, and form groups of consternation, with a general exclamation of terror.

MATHIAS (in a voice of strangulation). The rope! the rope! Cut the rope!

He falls suddenly, and is caught in the arms of HANS and WALTER, who carry him to the chair. The Bells heard off. Music, the melody played in the Second Act when promise given. His hands clutch at his throat as if to remove something that strangles him—he looks pitifully round as if trying to recognise those about him, and then his head falls on his breast. CATHERINE, kneeling, places her hand on MATHIAS heart.

CATHERINE. Dead! (The Bells cease.)

ANNETTE bursts into tears. The WOMEN in the crowd kneeling; MEN remove their hats and bend their heads upon their breasts tableau.

CURTAIN