

Lightly enough myself, about myself,  
But I allow none else to utter them.

DE GUICHE

*(Tries to lead away the amazed VALVERT.)*

Vicomte—come.

VALVERT

*(Choking)*

Oh— These arrogant grand airs!—

A clown who—look at him—not even gloves!  
No ribbons—no lace—no buckles on his shoes—

CYRANO

I carry my adornments on my soul.  
I do not dress up like a popinjay;  
But inwardly, I keep my daintiness.  
I do not bear with me, by any chance,  
An insult not yet washed away—a conscience  
Yellow with unpurged bile—an honor frayed  
To rags, a set of scruples badly worn.  
I go caparisoned in gems unseen,  
Trailing white plumes of freedom, garlanded  
With my good name—no figure of a man,  
But a soul clothed in shining armor, hung  
With deeds for decorations, twirling—thus—  
A bristling wit, and swinging at my side  
Courage, and on the stones of this old town  
Making the sharp truth ring, like golden spurs!

VALVERT

But—

CYRANO

But I have no gloves! A pity too!  
I had one—the last one of an old pair—  
And lost that. Very careless of me. Some  
Gentleman offered me an impertinence.  
I left it—in his face.

VALVERT

Dolt, bumpkin, fool,

Insolent puppy, jobbernow!

CYRANO

*(Removes his hat and bows.)*

Ah, yes?

And I—Cyrano-Savinien-Hercule  
De Bergerac!

VALVERT

*(Turns away.)*

Buffoon!

CYRANO

*(Cries out as if suddenly taken with a cramp.)*

Oh!

VALVERT

*(Turns back.)*

Well, what now?

CYRANO

*(With grimaces of anguish)*

I must do something to relieve these cramps—  
This is what comes of lack of exercise—  
Ah!—

VALVERT

What is all this?

CYRANO

My sword has gone to sleep?

VALVERT

*(Draws)*

So be it!

CYRANO

You shall die exquisitely.

VALVERT

*(Contemptuously)*

Poet!

CYRANO

Why yes, a poet, if you will;  
So while we fence, I'll make you a Ballade  
Extempore.

VALVERT

A Ballade?

CYRANO

Yes, You know

What that is?

VALVERT

I—

CYRANO

The Ballade, sir, is formed  
Of three stanzas of eight lines each—

VALVERT

Oh, come!

CYRANO

And a refrain of four.

VALVERT

You—

CYRANO

I'll compose

One, while I fight with you; and at the end  
Of the last line—thrust home!

VALVERT

Will you?

CYRANO

I will.

*(Declaims)*

“Ballade of the duel at the Hôtel de Bourgogne  
Between de Bergerac and a Boeotian.”

VALVERT

*(Sneering)*

What do you mean by that?

CYRANO

Oh, that? The title.

THE CROWD

*(Excited)*

Come on—

A circle—

Quiet—

Down in front!

*(TABLEAU. A ring of interested spectators in the centre of the floor, the Marquis and the Officers mingling with the citizens and common folk. Pages swarming up on men's shoulders to see better; the Ladies in the boxes standing and leaning over. To the right, DE GOICHE and his following; to the left, LE BRET, CUIGY, RAGUENEAU, and others of CYRANO'S friends.)*

CYRANO

*(Closes his eyes for an instant.)*

Stop . . . Let me choose my rimes. . . . Now!

Here we go—

*(He suits the action to the word, throughout the following:)*

Lightly I toss my hat away,  
Languidly over my arm let fall  
The cloak that covers my bright array—  
Then out swords, and to work withal!  
A Launcelot, in his Lady's hall . . .  
A Spartacus, at the Hippodrome! . . .  
I dally awhile with you, dear jackal,  
Then, as I end the refrain, thrust home!

*(The swords cross—the fight is on.)*

Where shall I skewer my peacock? . . . Nay,  
Better for you to have shunned this brawl!—

Here, in the heart, thro' your ribbons gay?

—In the belly, under your silken shawl?

Hark, how the steel rings musical!

Mark how my point floats, light as the foam,

Ready to drive you back to the wall,

Then, as I end the refrain, thrust home!

Ho, for a rime! . . . You are white as whey—

You break, you cower, you cringe, you . . . crawl!

Tac!—and I parry your last essay:

So may the turn of a hand forestall

Life with its honey, death with its gall;

So may the turn of my fancy roam

Free, for a time, till the rimes recall,

Then, as I end the refrain, thrust home!

*(He announces solemnly.)*

Refrain:

Prince! Pray God, that is Lord of all,

Pardon your soul, for your time has come!

Beat—pass—fling you aslant, asprawl—

Then, as I end the refrain . . .

*(He lunges; VALVERT staggers back and falls into the arms of his friends. CYRANO recovers, and salutes.)*

—Thrust home!

*(Shouts. Applause from the boxes. Flowers and handkerchiefs come fluttering down. The Officers surround CYRANO and congratulate him. RAGUENEAU dances for joy. LE BRET is unable to conceal his enthusiasm. The friends of VALVERT hold him up and help him away.)*

THE CROWD

*(In one long cry)*

Ah-h!

A CAVALIER

Superb!

A WOMAN

Simply sweet!

RAGUENEAU

Magnelephant!

A MARQUIS

A novelty!

LE BRET

Bah!