

**THE REGISTERED  
LETTER: A COMEDY  
IN ONE ACT**

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The registered letter: a comedy in one act by Gustave Droz

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**GUSTAVE DROZ**

**THE REGISTERED  
LETTER: A COMEDY  
IN ONE ACT**



# THE REGISTERED LETTER

A Comedy in One Act

BY

GUSTAVE DROZ

AUTHOR OF "THE CARDINAL'S ILLNESS"

TRANSLATED BY MEMBERS OF THE  
BELLEVUE DRAMATIC CLUB  
OF NEWPORT

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F. E. Chase

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#### NOTE.

There is no change of scenery in this play. The division of the text into "scenes" merely follows the French literary custom, and indicates no interruption of the action whatever. The stage is set to represent an interior, but no scenery is actually necessary.

# THE REGISTERED LETTER.

BY GUSTAVE DROZ.

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## CHARACTERS.

HORTENSE, *a Young Widow.*

FRANCINE, *a Lady's Maid.*

FERGUSON, *an American.*

HECTOR COVILLE, *a Deputy.*

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## SCENE I.

HORTENSE—HECTOR [*sleeping*].

Hortense [*reading*].

Down the stream my love and I  
Glide in peace together;  
Nature laughs as we pass by  
In the summer weather.  
I am brave and young and strong,  
She is fair and——

[*looking at Hector.*] Why, he's asleep; [*going towards the audience.*] Let me present to you my future husband, Mr. Hector Coville, deputy at the

tribunal of Orleans...he has obtained leave of absence to come here and make love to me. Look at him!...he doesn't care much for poetry.

**Hector** [*still asleep*]. Charming! Delightful!

**Hortense**. He thinks I am still reading... While he sleeps, let us talk of his faults. He has...how shall I say it?—he has an infirmity...Oh, not serious! but annoying!...he mixes an unending supply of adverbs into all he says. Yesterday he introduced an awful long one—in-com-men-sur-a-bly! I came near jumping out of the window!

**Hector** [*still asleep*]. Delicious!...Delicious!

**Hortense**. Yes [*turning to him*], "She is fair." [*To the audience.*] But he has an excellent heart—is very amiable and devoted to me—but always sleepy...everything considered, I think we will be married in the spring, if the weather is good [*looking at him*]. I had better wake him. [*She sits down and knocks loudly on the table with her book; the noise wakens Hector.*]

**Hector**. Eh! What, cousin, have you finished already?

**Hortense**. Yes, cousin,...how do you like the ending?

**Hector**. Superb...you read...adorably!

**Hortense**. An adverb!

**Hector**. And I could listen to you...indefinitely.

**Hortense**. Two.

**Hector**. You are a first-rate reader...incontestably.



**Hortense.** Three !... have you finished ?

**Hector.** What ?

**Hortense.** Three adverbs in three phrases ! why, it's a perfect disease with you ! a grammatical eruption.

**Hector.** I do it without knowing ; it's a way we have in court...when ideas won't come, we introduce adverbs, which gives us time to think ...~~but~~ I promise to avoid them hereafter. Look here, cousin, my leave definitely expires to-morrow, and I shall be absolutely obliged to return to Orleans ; you won't let me go without hope ; you know I love you passionately.

**Hortense.** You are not aware of one thing, cousin, that is, that while you have been introducing adverbs, as you express it, a rival has introduced himself.

**Hector.** A rival ! Who is he ?

**Hortense.** I don't know...but here is a curious letter I received three days ago [*reading*] : "Madam, you are a widow, so am I ; you desire to marry again, so do I ; we are suited to each other in every way. I had my photograph taken to send you, but it turned out so badly that I prefer showing you the original. I remain in Paris two days longer.

"Answer to Grand Hotel, room 124.

"PETER FERGUSON, American, age 47 years."

**Hector.** What a mystification !

**Hortense.** A mystification that still continues, for yesterday, I received a second letter [*repeating from*

*memory*]. "Madam, I am astonished at receiving no reply to my favor of the 27th..."

**Hector.** He is a madman assuredly...indubitably.

**Hortense** [*nervously*]. B-r-r-r!

**Hector.** What?

**Hortense.** Indubitably.

**Hector.** Oh! I beg your pardon—slip of the tongue—give me this letter. Fortunately I have a friend at the Prefecture of Police, who just happens to be in the strangers' bureau, and he will inform us satisfactorily and explicitly.

**Hortense.** There—take breath!...You have just used three more in your speech.

**Hector.** What?

**Hortense.** Fortunately, satisfactorily, explicitly... listen to me, cousin, I can't help it, but I can never marry a man who uses so many adverbs.

**Hector.** Calm yourself, I beg you...It is the last, or the one before the last.

**Hortense.** You have another that worries you?

**Hector.** Yes.

**Hortense.** Out with it.

**Hector.** Eternally [*kissing her hand*].

**Hortense.** Oh! I'll forgive you that one...now go, quick!

**Hector.** I will run to the Prefecture, and bring you back all the information they have there of your friend—Ferguson [*kisses her hand and goes out*].

## SCENE II.

HORTENSE, afterwards FRANCINE.

**Hortense** [*alone*]. He is a good fellow... This is the third time I have made him come from Orleans to arrange our marriage. I must give him an answer to-day... I can't put it off indefinitely—good, an adverb! I've caught his bad habit already.

**Francine** [*entering with a book and large letter in her hand*]. Madam, here is a registered letter, with five red seals.

**Hortense**. A registered letter?

**Francine**. The postman says you must sign your name in this book.

**Hortense**. Where?

**Francine**. Here. [*Hortense signs, Francine goes out with book.*]

## SCENE III.

HORTENSE, afterwards FRANCINE.

**Hortense** [*opening the letter*]. Who can have sent me a registered letter? [*Reading.*] "Madam, I write you for the third time, asking your hand in marriage." [*Spoken.*] Ah! this is too much! [*Reading.*] "Fearing that my two favors of the 26th and 27th have not reached you, I take the liberty of registering my third... Answer, Grand Hotel, room 124." [*Spoken.*] This must be a wager! The man won't let me