

## ACT V

*The park of the convent occupied by the Ladies of the Cross,<sup>1</sup> in Paris. Fifteen years later, in 1655.*

*[Magnificent shady foliage. To the left is the house, whose front steps lead up to a broad landing with several doors opening onto it. An enormous tree stands alone in the middle of the stage in a small oval-shaped open space. To the right is a semicircular stone bench among large box shrubs. It is autumn. The foliage above the green lawn has turned red. Dead leaves are falling and are strewn over the whole stage; they crackle underfoot along the lanes and half*

*cover the bench. Between the bench on the right and the tree stands a large embroidery frame with a small chair in front of it. As the curtain rises, NUNS are coming and going in the park. Some are seated on the bench, around an older NUN.]*

SISTER MARTHE.<sup>2</sup> [*To MOTHER MARGUERITE.*<sup>3</sup>] Sister Claire has stopped in front of the mirror twice, to see how her headdress looks.

MOTHER MARGUERITE. [*Sternly.*] I'll tell Monsieur Cyrano this evening.

1. Ladies of the Cross: religious order.

2. Marthe [mār'tə]

3. Marguerite [mār'gə rēt']



SISTER CLAIRE. [*Alarmed.*] No! He'll make fun of us!

SISTER MARTHE. He'll say that nuns are very coquettish!

MOTHER MARGUERITE. [*Smiling.*] And very good.

SISTER CLAIRE. He's been coming every Saturday for the past ten years, hasn't he, Mother Marguerite de Jésus?

MOTHER MARGUERITE. Longer than that! Ever since his cousin came to us fourteen years ago, mingling her black mourning veil with our linen hoods, like a raven among a flock of white doves.

SISTER MARTHE. In all the time since she first took a room in this cloister, no one but Monsieur Cyrano has ever been able to distract her from the grief that afflicts her night and day.

ALL THE NUNS. He's so amusing!—His visits are delightful!—He teases us!—Such a nice man!—We all like him!—He always appreciates the pastry we make for him!

MOTHER MARGUERITE. Well, the last time he came, he hadn't eaten anything for two days.

SISTER MARTHE. Oh, Mother!

MOTHER MARGUERITE. He's poor.

SISTER MARTHE. Who told you so?

MOTHER MARGUERITE. Monsieur Le Bret.

SISTER MARTHE. Doesn't anyone help him?

MOTHER MARGUERITE. No. It would only make him angry if anyone tried. [ROXANE *appears, walking slowly along a lane in the background. She is dressed in black, with a widow's cap and long veils. DE GUICHE, who has aged gracefully, walks beside her. MOTHER MARGUERITE stands up.*] Come, we must go inside. Madame Magdeleine is strolling in the park with a visitor.

SISTER MARTHE. This is the first time he's come to see her for months!

OTHER NUNS. He's very busy—The court—The army. . . .

SISTER CLAIRE. Worldly concerns!

[*The NUNS leave. DE GUICHE and ROXANE come downstage in silence and stop near the embroidery frame. Several moments pass.*]

THE DUKE. [*Formerly DE GUICHE.*] And so you remain here, letting your blond beauty go to waste, still in mourning?

ROXANE. Still in mourning.

THE DUKE. And still faithful?

ROXANE. Still faithful.

THE DUKE. [*After a moment of silence.*] Have you forgiven me?

ROXANE. [*Simply, looking at the cross of the convent.*] Of course, since I'm here. [*Another silence.*]

THE DUKE. Was he really such a . . .

ROXANE. He showed his true nature only to those who knew him well.

THE DUKE. His true nature? . . . Yes, perhaps I didn't know him well enough. . . . Do you still carry his last letter over your heart?

ROXANE. Yes, like a holy relic.

THE DUKE. You love him even in death?

ROXANE. Sometimes it seems to me that he's not really dead. I feel that our hearts are together, and that his love floats around me, very much alive!

THE DUKE. [*After another silence.*] Does Cyrano come to see you?

ROXANE. Yes, often. My old friend gives me all the news; he replaces the gazettes<sup>4</sup> for me. He

4. gazettes: newspapers.

visits me regularly. If the weather is good, his chair is always brought out and placed under this tree. I embroider while I wait for him. When the clock strikes the hour of his arrival, I don't even turn around to look for him, because I know I'll hear his cane coming down the steps immediately after the last stroke. He sits down and laughs at my eternal tapestry. Then he begins telling me about the week's happenings, and. . . [LE BRET appears on the steps.] Ah! Here's Le Bret! [LE BRET comes down.] How is our friend doing?

LE BRET. Badly.

THE DUKE. Oh!

ROXANE. [To the DUKE.] He's exaggerating!

LE BRET. Cyrano is living in isolation and poverty, just as I predicted! His writings constantly make new enemies for him! He attacks false noblemen, false saints, false heroes, plagiarists—everyone!

ROXANE. But his sword fills everyone with terror. No one will ever get the best of him.

THE DUKE. [Shaking his head.] Who knows?

LE BRET. I'm not afraid of his meeting a violent death. Loneliness, hunger, the cold of winter creeping into his dark room—those are the assassins that will end his life! He tightens his belt one more notch every day, his poor nose has turned as pale as ivory, he has only one threadbare black coat. . . .

THE DUKE. It's certainly true that he hasn't scaled the heights of worldly success, but don't feel too sorry for him. He lives without compromise, free in both his thoughts and his acts.

LE BRET. [Still smiling bitterly.] Sir, you. . .

THE DUKE. [Loftily.] Yes, I know: I have everything and he has nothing. But I'd be honored to shake his hand. [Bows to ROXANE.] I must go. Good-by.

ROXANE. I'll accompany you to the door. [The

DUKE bows to LE BRET and walks toward the steps with ROXANE.]

THE DUKE. [Stopping as they are climbing the steps.] Yes, sometimes I envy him. When a man has been too successful in life, even though he hasn't done anything really wrong, he still has all sorts of reasons for feeling a little disgusted with himself. Their combined weight isn't enough to form a burden of remorse, but he can never escape a kind of vague uneasiness. As he continues to climb toward even greater success, he hears dead illusions and old regrets rustling under his mantle, like the fallen leaves swept along by the train of your black dress when you mount these steps.

ROXANE. [Ironically.] You're in a thoughtful mood today.

THE DUKE. Yes, I'm afraid so. [Abruptly, just as he is about to leave.] Monsieur Le Bret! [To ROXANE.] Will you excuse me? I want to have a word with him. [Goes to LE BRET and speaks in a low voice.] It's true that no one would dare to attack our friend openly, but it's also true that he's hated by many people. Only yesterday, during a card game at court, someone said to me, "That Cyrano may have a fatal accident someday."

LE BRET. Oh?

THE DUKE. Yes. Tell him not to go out very often, and to be careful.

LE BRET. [Throwing up his arms.] Careful! . . . He'll soon be here; I'll warn him. But. . .

ROXANE. [Who has remained on the steps, to a NUN coming toward her.] What is it?

THE NUN. Ragueneau would like to see you, madame.

ROXANE. Bring him in. [To the DUKE and LE BRET.] He's come to complain about his poverty. Since the day when he set out to be a writer, he's been a singer. . . .

LE BRET. A bathhouse attendant. . .

ROXANE. A hairdresser . . .

LE BRET. A lute teacher . . .

ROXANE. What can he have become now?

RAGUENEAU. [*Entering rapidly.*] Ah, madame! [*Sees LE BRET.*] Sir!

ROXANE. [*Smiling.*] Tell Le Bret your troubles. I'll be back soon.

RAGUENEAU. But madame . . . [*ROXANE ignores him and leaves with the DUKE. RAGUENEAU goes to LE BRET.*]

RAGUENEAU. Since you're here, I'd rather she didn't know. . . . As I was approaching our friend's house this afternoon, on my way to visit him, I saw him come out. I hurried to catch up with him. I can't say for certain that it wasn't an accident, but when he was about to turn the corner a lackey dropped a piece of firewood on him from an upstairs window.

LE BRET. The cowards! . . . Cyrano! . . .

RAGUENEAU. I ran to him. . . .

LE BRET. It's horrible!

RAGUENEAU. Our friend, sir, our poet, was lying on the ground with a big hole in his head!

LE BRET. Is he dead?

RAGUENEAU. No, but . . . I carried him back into his house, to his room, rather. Oh, that room! What a wretched little closet!

LE BRET. Is he in pain?

RAGUENEAU. No, sir, he's unconscious.

LE BRET. Did you bring a doctor?

RAGUENEAU. Yes, I found one who was willing to come out of charity.

LE BRET. Poor Cyrano! . . . We mustn't tell Roxane all at once. . . . What did the doctor say?

RAGUENEAU. I don't remember very clearly,

something about fever. . . . Oh, if you'd seen him lying there, with his head wrapped in bandages! . . . Come with me quickly! There's no one with him now, and he may die if he tries to get up!

LE BRET. [*Leading him to the right.*] Let's go this way, through the chapel. It's shorter. [*ROXANE appears on the steps and sees LE BRET hurrying along the colonnade that leads to the side door of the chapel.*]

ROXANE. Monsieur Le Bret! [*LE BRET and RAGUENEAU leave without answering.*] Le Bret runs away when I call him? Poor Ragueneau must really be in trouble this time! [*She comes down the steps.*] What a beautiful autumn day! Even my sorrow is smiling. It's offended by April, but gives in to the gentler charm of September. [*She sits down in front of her embroidery frame. Two NUNS come out of the house, carrying a large armchair, and set it down under a tree.*] Ah, here's the chair for my old friend! He'll soon be here. [*She begins working. The clock strikes.*] There, it's time. I'll take out my skeins<sup>5</sup>. . . . This is surprising: the clock has finished striking and he's not here yet. Is he going to be late for the first time? The Sister at the door must be—Where's my thimble? There, I see it—must be trying to persuade him to repent of his sins. [*Several moments pass.*] Still persuading him! He'll surely be here before long. . . . A dead leaf. . . . [*She brushes aside the leaf that has fallen onto the embroidery frame.*] Nothing could—My scissors. . . in my bag!—prevent him from coming!

A NUN. [*Appearing on the steps.*] Monsieur de Bergerac is here.

ROXANE. [*Without turning around.*] I knew it! [*She continues her work. CYRANO appears. He is very pale, and his hat is pulled down over his eyes. The NUN who has accompanied him leaves.*]

5. skeins [skānz]: thread or yarn wound in a coil.

*He slowly comes down the steps, leaning on his cane and making an obvious effort to stay on his feet. ROXANE is still working.]* Oh, these faded colors! . . . How will I ever match them? *[To CYRANO, in a tone of friendly rebuke.]* Late, for the first time in fourteen years!

*[CYRANO has succeeded in reaching his chair and sitting down in it. When he speaks, his cheerful voice contrasts with his face.]*

CYRANO. Yes, it's scandalous! I can't tell you how annoyed I am. I was delayed by . . .

ROXANE. By what?

CYRANO. By an untimely visit.

ROXANE. *[Distractedly, still working.]* A friend of yours?

CYRANO. An old acquaintance. We've met on the battlefield, among other places. I knew we'd meet again some day, but this wasn't the time for it.

ROXANE. You sent him away?

CYRANO. Yes, I said to him, "Excuse me, but this is Saturday, the day when I always keep a certain appointment. Nothing can make me miss it. Come back in an hour."

ROXANE. *[Lightly.]* Well, I'm afraid he'll have to wait for you, because I won't let you leave before nightfall.

CYRANO. *[Gently.]* I may have to leave a little sooner than that. *[He closes his eyes and remains silent. SISTER MARTHE walks across the park, from the chapel to the steps. ROXANE sees her and nods to her.]*

ROXANE. *[To CYRANO.]* Aren't you going to tease Sister Marthe today?

CYRANO. *[Quickly, opening his eyes.]* Yes, of course! *[In a comically gruff voice.]* Sister Marthe! Come here! *[She comes to him.]* When

you have such lovely eyes, why do you keep them cast down?

SISTER MARTHE. *[Looking up with a smile.]* I . . . *[Sees his face and makes a gesture of astonishment.]* Oh!

CYRANO. *[In an undertone, pointing to ROXANE.]* Sh! It's nothing. . . .

ROXANE. *[Who has heard them whispering.]* She's trying to convert you!

SISTER MARTHE. I'm doing no such thing!

CYRANO. Now that I think of it, you never preach to me! It's amazing! *[With mock ferocity.]* I'll show you that you're not the only one who can be amazing! Just listen to this! I'm going to . . . *[Seems to be trying to think of a good way to tease her.]* Ah! I've got it! I'm going to allow you to pray for me tonight in the chapel!

ROXANE. Oh! Oh!

CYRANO. *[Laughing.]* Sister Marthe is dumbfounded!

SISTER MARTHE. *[Gently.]* I haven't waited for your permission. *[She goes into the house.]*

CYRANO. *[Turning back to ROXANE, who is leaning over her work.]* May the devil take me if I ever see that tapestry finished!

ROXANE. I was expecting some such remark. *[A breeze makes some leaves fall.]*

CYRANO. The leaves. . . .

ROXANE. *[Raising her head and looking into the distance.]* They're Titian red<sup>6</sup>. . . . Look at them falling.

CYRANO. How well they fall! Such beauty in that short drop from branch to earth! They give their fall the grace of flight.

6. Titian [tī'shən] red: a particular shade of red used by Titian (1477–1576), an Italian painter.

ROXANE. Can it be that you're melancholy—you?

CYRANO. [*Catching himself.*] Not at all!

ROXANE. Then forget about the falling leaves and tell me the latest news. Aren't you still my gazette?

CYRANO. I'll begin this very moment.

ROXANE. Good.

CYRANO. [*More and more pale, struggling against his pain.*] Last Saturday, the nineteenth, after eating eight helpings of preserved fruit, the King took to his bed with a fever; his illness was convicted of high treason and executed by his physician, and since then the royal pulse has returned to normal.

ROXANE. That will do, Monsieur de Bergerac!

CYRANO. [*Whose face is increasingly twisted by pain.*] On Tuesday, the whole court went to Fontainebleau.<sup>7</sup> On Wednesday, Madame Montglat<sup>8</sup> said no to Count de Fiesque.<sup>9</sup> On Thursday, Olympe<sup>10</sup> Mancini was the Queen of France—or almost! On Friday, the twenty-fifth, Madame Montglat said yes to Count de Fiesque. And today, Saturday the twenty-sixth. . . [*He closes his eyes and his head falls. Silence. Surprised at no longer hearing him speak, ROXANE turns and looks at him, then stands up in alarm.*]

ROXANE. Has he fainted? [*Hurries to him with a cry.*] Cyrano!

CYRANO. [*Vaguely, opening his eyes.*] What is it? . . . What. . . [*Seeing her leaning over him, he quickly puts his hand to his hat to make sure it is still pulled down, and draws away from her in his chair.*] No! It's nothing, believe me! Go back to your chair.

7. Fontainebleau [fon'tən blō']: town near Paris and site of the royal palace.

8. Madame Montglat [mon gla']

9. Count de Fiesque [də fē esk']

10. Olympe [ō lēmp']

ROXANE. But you. . .

CYRANO. It's only my old wound from Arras. Sometimes it. . . You know. . . .

ROXANE. My poor friend!

CYRANO. It's really nothing. It will soon go away. [*Smiles with an effort.*] There, it's gone.

ROXANE. [*Standing beside him.*] Each of us has his wound. Mine is old but still unhealed, here. . . [*Puts her hand to her bosom.*] . . . under the yellowed paper of a letter still stained with tears and blood! [*Twilight is beginning to fall.*]

CYRANO. His letter! . . . Didn't you once tell me that you might let me read it some day?

ROXANE. You want to read. . . his letter?

CYRANO. Yes, I do. Now.

ROXANE. [*Removing the little bag that hangs from around her neck.*] Here!

CYRANO. [*Taking it.*] May I open it?

ROXANE. Yes, read it. [*She goes back to the embroidery frame and begins putting away her thread.*]

CYRANO. [*Reading.*] "Farewell, Roxane! Death is near. . . ."

ROXANE. [*Stopping in surprise.*] You're reading it aloud?

CYRANO. [*Reading.*] "I believe this will be my last day, my beloved. My soul is still heavy with unexpressed love, and I must die! Never again will my eyes delight. . . ."

ROXANE. How well you read his letter!

CYRANO. [*Continuing.*] ". . . will my eyes delight in kissing each of your graceful gestures. I remember one of them, a way of putting your hand to your forehead, and I want to cry out. . . ."

ROXANE. [*Troubled.*] How well you read. . . that letter! [*The twilight is turning to darkness.*]

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CYRANO. "... to cry out, 'Good-by!' ..."

ROXANE. You read it ...

CYRANO. "... my dearest, my darling, my treasure ..."

ROXANE. [*Thoughtfully.*] ... in a voice that ...

CYRANO. "... my love!"

ROXANE. ... that ... [*She starts.*] A voice that I'm not hearing for the first time! [*She slowly approaches him without his seeing her, stands behind his chair, silently bends down, and looks at the letter. The darkness is deepening.*]

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CYRANO. "My heart has never left you for a moment, and in the next world my love for you will still be as boundless, as . . ."

ROXANE. [*Putting her hand on his shoulder.*] How can you read now? It's dark. [*He starts, turns around, sees her standing close to him, makes a gesture of alarm, and bows his head. A long silence. Then, in the shadowy darkness, she clasps her hands and speaks slowly.*] And for fourteen years you played the part of an old friend who came to be amusing!

CYRANO. Roxane!

ROXANE. It was you.

CYRANO. No, Roxane, no!

ROXANE. I should have guessed it each time I heard you say my name!

CYRANO. No! It wasn't . . .

ROXANE. It was you!

CYRANO. I swear . . .

ROXANE. I see the whole selfless imposture now! The letters . . . It was you.

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. The wild, endearing words . . . It was you.

CYRANO. No!

ROXANE. The voice in the night . . . It was you.

CYRANO. I swear it wasn't!

ROXANE. The soul . . . It was yours!

CYRANO. I didn't love you!

ROXANE. You did love me!

CYRANO. [*Desperately.*] It was Christian!

ROXANE. You loved me!

CYRANO. No, no, my love, I didn't love you!

ROXANE. Ah, how many things have died, and how many have now been born! Why were you silent for fourteen years, knowing that he hadn't written that letter, and that the tears on it were yours?

CYRANO. [*Handing her the letter.*] The blood was his.

ROXANE. And why have you let that sublime silence be broken this evening?

CYRANO. Why? . . .

[*LE BRET and RAGUENEAU enter, running.*]

LE BRET. What foolhardiness! I knew we'd find him here!

CYRANO. [*Smiling, and sitting more erect.*] You were right. Here I am.

LE BRET. [*To ROXANE.*] He's killed himself by leaving his bed!

ROXANE. [*To CYRANO.*] Your faintness a little while ago . . . Was it . . .

CYRANO. That reminds me: I didn't finish my gazette! Today, Saturday the twenty-sixth, an hour before dinner time, Monsieur de Bergerac was murdered. [*He takes off his hat, showing the bandages around his head.*]

ROXANE. What is he saying? . . . Cyrano! . . . Those bandages! . . . What have they done to you? Why?

CYRANO. "To be struck down by the only noble weapon, the sword, wielded by an adversary worthy of me . . ." Yes, I once said that. Fate is a great jester! I've been struck down, but from behind, in an ambush, by a lackey wielding a log! I've been consistent to the end. I've failed in everything, even in my death.

RAGUENEAU. Oh, sir! . . .

CYRANO. Don't weep so loudly, Ragueneau.



[*Takes his hand.*] Tell me, brother poet, what are you doing these days?

RAGUENEAU. [*Through his tears.*] I'm the candle-snuffer in a theater. . . . Molière's<sup>11</sup> company. . . .

CYRANO. Molière!

RAGUENEAU. Yes, but I'm leaving him tomorrow. I'm outraged! Yesterday they played his *Scapin*, and I saw that he'd taken a scene from you!

LE BRET. A whole scene!

CYRANO. Be calm. He was right to take it. [*To RAGUENEAU.*] How did the audience react to the scene?

RAGUENEAU. [*Sobbing.*] Oh, sir, they laughed and laughed!

CYRANO. Yes, my life has been that of a man who provides words and ideas for others, spurs them to action, and is then forgotten. [*To ROXANE.*] Do you remember the evening when Christian spoke to you below your balcony? Well, that evening was the essence of my life: while I remained below, in the shadows, others climbed up to receive the kiss of glory. But now, on the threshold of my grave, I acknowledge the justice of it all—Molière is a genius, and Christian was handsome! [*The chapel bell has begun ringing; the NUNS are now seen walking along the lane in the background, on their way to Vespers.*<sup>12</sup>] Let them go to their prayers, since their bell is ringing.

ROXANE. [*Looking up and calling.*] Sister! Sister!

CYRANO. [*Holding her back.*] No, no, don't go to bring anyone! You'd find me gone when you returned. [*The NUNS have entered the chapel, and the organ is heard.*] I needed a little harmony, and there it is.

11. Molière's [mō lyārz']: Moliere (1622–1673) was a famous French dramatist, actor, and director.

12. Vespers: church service held in the evening.

ROXANE. I love you! You must live!

CYRANO. No. In the fairy tale, when Beauty said, "I love you" to the prince, his ugliness melted away like snow in the warmth of the sun, but as you can see, those words have no such magic effect on me.

ROXANE. Your life has been unhappy because of me! Me!

CYRANO. No, Roxane, quite the contrary. Feminine sweetness was unknown to me. My mother made it clear that she didn't find me pleasant to look at. I had no sister. Later, I dreaded the thought of seeing mockery in the eyes of a mistress. Thanks to you, I've at least had a woman's friendship, a gracious presence to soften the harsh loneliness of my life.

LE BRET. [*Pointing to the moonlight shining through the branches.*] Your other friend has come to visit you.

CYRANO. [*Smiling at the moon.*] Yes, I see her.

ROXANE. I've loved only one man, and I've lost him twice!

CYRANO. Le Bret, I'll soon be soaring up to the moon, this time without having to invent a machine. . . . "Philosopher, scientist, poet, swordsman, musician, aerial traveler, maker of sharp retorts, and lover (not to his advantage!), here lies Savinien<sup>13</sup> de Cyrano de Bergerac, who was everything, and who was nothing." [*Half raising himself from his chair.*] Excuse me, I must go now: a moonbeam has come to take me away, and I can't keep it waiting! [*He falls back into his chair. ROXANE's weeping recalls him to reality. He looks at her and strokes her veils.*] I don't want you to mourn any less for that good, charming, handsome Christian; my only hope is that when the great cold has seeped into my bones, you'll give a double meaning to those

13. Savinien [sa vē nyan']: Cyrano's first name.



black veils, and mourn for me a little when you mourn for him.

ROXANE. I swear to you that... [CYRANO is shaken by a great tremor, and abruptly stands up.]

CYRANO. No! Not there! Not in a chair! [The others move toward him.] Stand back! I want no support from anyone! [Leans against the tree.] Only from this tree! [Silence.] He's coming. I already feel stone boots... lead gloves... [Stiffens himself.] Yes, he's coming, but I'll meet him on my feet... [Draws his sword.]... sword in hand!

LE BRET. Cyrano!

ROXANE. [Half fainting.] Cyrano! [They all draw back in terror.]

CYRANO. I believe I see... yes, I see him, with his noseless face, daring to look at my nose! [Raises his sword.] What's that you say? It's useless? Of course, but I've never needed hope of victory to make me fight! The noblest battles are always fought in vain!... You there, all of you, who are you? Your numbers seem endless... Ah, I recognize you now: my old enemies! Lies! My greetings to you! [Thrusts his sword into the empty air.] And here's Com-

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promise! And Prejudice! And Cowardice! [*Thrusts again.*] What's that? Come to terms with you? Never! Never! . . . Ah, there you are, Stupidity! . . . I know I can't defeat you all, I know that in the end you'll overwhelm me, but I'll still fight you as long as there's a breath in my body! [*Swings his sword in great arcs, then stops, panting.*] Yes, you've robbed me of everything: the laurels of glory, the roses of love! But there's one thing you can't take away from me. When I go to meet God this evening, and doff my hat before the holy gates, my salute

will sweep the blue threshold of heaven, because I'll still have one thing intact, without a stain, something that I'll take with me in spite of you! [*Springs forward with his sword raised.*] You ask what it is? I'll tell you! It's . . . [*His sword drops from his hand; he staggers and falls into the arms of LE BRET and RAGUENEAU.*]

ROXANE. [*Bending down and kissing him on the forehead.*] What is it?

CYRANO. [*Opening his eyes and smiling at her.*] My white plume.

## STUDY QUESTIONS

### Recalling

1. According to the nuns, what has happened since Christian's death? What do they and Le Bret reveal about Cyrano's circumstances?
2. Describe Cyrano's condition when he arrives at the convent. How does he disguise it from Roxane?
3. How does Cyrano finally reveal his feelings to Roxane? How does she respond?
4. What "old enemies" does Cyrano see in his dying vision? What are his last words?

### Interpreting

5. Why do you think Cyrano finally reveals his love to Roxane?
6. What does Roxane mean when she says that she has lost the man she loved twice? Do you agree?
7. Show that Cyrano meets his death in a style that is consistent with his life. What do his very last words mean?
8. Cyrano says of himself that he "was everything and was nothing." Why would he make such a comment about his life? Do you agree with him?

### Extending

9. Cyrano is a very colorful character. Do you think that he is too flamboyant for real life, or do you believe that people like Cyrano actually exist?

## VIEWPOINT

The introduction to one of the first English translations of Rostand's play notes that Cyrano's idealism might serve as a model for all of us:

The brilliant author of *Cyrano* tells of things better than those we see around us, of things of beauty which [we might] bring somewhat nearer to our touch, if we will only have the courage to live up to them.

—A. Cohn

- What ideals does Cyrano live up to in this play, and why might it take courage to live up to them? In what way does the play point to a better world than the one in which we live?

## LITERARY FOCUS

### The Total Effect

In staging a play, a director tries to present the audience with an integrated view of the entire work. *Cyrano de Bergerac* presents a fascinating challenge to any director, because it is full of contrasting emotions and effects that move audiences both to laughter and to tears. Anyone who directs this rich work must be aware of the impact of each of the various elements in the play—its plot, characters, setting, symbols, irony, and themes—on the work as a whole.