

Huit jours à la campagne (A Week in the Country)

(Jules Renard, 1906)

For five years, Georges' friend, Maurice, has been asking Georges to come and spend a few days at his country home. Georges has finally accepted. He has written to Maurice to inform him of his arrival.

Alas! There is no one waiting for him at the station. When he gets to the house, he is "welcomed" by the grandmother, a bitter old woman, who is not even polite, Maurice's mother is somewhat less unpleasant, but not really warm-hearted. True, Georges was not expected; his letter, addressed to Maurice has arrived, but has remained unopened, as Maurice is not at home. Georges was perhaps hoping to strike up a romance with Maurice's younger sister, as he would be happy to spend his old age in the country, but the young woman is almost as unpleasant as her grandmother.

A week in that atmosphere! It would be unbearable. Georges has an idea: he has, in his pocket, an old telegram that he has not bothered to discard. He takes advantage of the women's absence (he is never invited to enter the house) to pretend he has received a wire calling him back to Paris forthwith. He must leave at once.

A total change! The women are so sorry. The grandmother picks some cherries (sour cherries!) for the trip, the sister makes him a sandwich and the mother gives him a bouquet. Of course, they hope he will return, for more than a week next time ...