

L'ENTRÉE
DE DUMOURIER [sic]
A BRUXELLES,
OU
LES VIVANDIERS,

PIÈCE EN CINQ ACTES ET EN PROSE.

PAR OLYMPE DE GOUGES.

Dumourier's Entrance into Brussels or The Sutlers.¹

Five act play in prose by Olympe de Gouges, performed at the Théâtre de la République, rue de Richelieu, on January [blank space] 1793, second year of the Republic.²

¹ In July 1792 France declared itself to be endangered and there was a call to arms among the general population. The combined forces of Prussians, Austrians and some émigrés seemed unbeatable and there was a genuine fear that they would march on Paris to overthrow the government and restore the monarchy to its pre-revolutionary state. On 20 September, with the addition of volunteers, the French army defeated the Prussians at Valmy. Dumouriez allegedly shouted “Vive la Nation” as his battle cry and the army responded by singing the *Marseillaise*. Other French troops were victorious in Savoy, on the Rhine and in the Var. On 6 November Dumouriez continued on the offensive and beat the outnumbered Austrians at Jemmapes. A French army of ill-disciplined professionals and ragtag volunteers overcame the most efficient military machine in Europe. It was seen as a great turning point and allowed Dumouriez’s army to march into Brussels, uncontested, on 14 November 1792. The general came to Paris in November as a conquering hero; de Gouges’s play – written at speed – was of the moment, and due to be performed promptly. Not surprisingly its unprovoked postponement fuelled her anger. It was finally produced on Wednesday 23 January 1793. By then the mood in France had changed considerably. Louis XVI had been guillotined two days earlier and the army was in a chaotic state; there had been nine Ministers of War in a year, and the Army of the North had been led by six different commanders. The winter was harsh. Volunteers headed home leaving the professional soldiers in place, poorly housed, badly nourished and ill-clothed. Many officers had emigrated leaving their men discouraged as inadequately trained recruits took over. It is against this backdrop that de Gouges’s play now saw the light of day, its topicality undone.

The play celebrates, with dramatic licence, the liberation of the Belgians by Dumouriez from their Austrian oppressors, the playwright seeing in that moment a perfect symbol of republican patriotism, the new French regime spreading its message of liberty and equality beyond its borders for the benefit of mankind. For a play centred on a military event women feature strongly; all of them are engaged and astute, equal to the men in courage and valour, and those in business are more than capable partners.

When the piece was finally performed it met with a disastrous reception. Dumouriez’s welcome had been short lived, military enthusiasm had declined and de Gouges was now associated with Louis XVI’s trial; her offer to defend the king had made her into at best a figure of fun, at worst a traitor to the republican cause and it would appear that the audience’s negativity was in part led by a cabal who wished to show this uppity woman that her interferences in political affairs were not to be forgiven. Although it is not her best play the print version (published in the early spring of 1793) was quite well received which rather proves the point that the unfortunate circumstances of its production and timing may well have been responsible for its downfall. One positive commentator observed that the play, with its wide range of characters and situations, was more akin to Shakespeare and the English tradition i.e. not limited by the Aristotelian unities that dominated French drama. Despite breaking many of the theatrical conventions of the day it might have done quite well if events had not taken an unforeseen turn just weeks after its premiere. Dumouriez was defeated at Neerwinden, Belgium lost, and, in an unfortunate reversal of the play’s Austrian officer joining the French, the once acclaimed French general committed treason by defecting to the enemy side.

Throughout de Gouges’s text Dumouriez is spelt Dumourier.

² Following a split along political fault lines at the Comédie-Française (then situated in what is now the Odéon theatre but was at the time known as the Théâtre de la Nation) the progressive actor Talma, and like-minded colleagues, left their theatrical home in 1791 to create their own establishment at the Théâtre français de la rue de Richelieu, soon expediently renamed Théâtre de la République. In 1799 the two factions reunited and the entire troupe took up residence in the rue de Richelieu theatre, which has continued as the Comédie-Française to this day. De Gouges had both a professional relationship with Talma,

IN PARIS,
At REGNAUD, bookseller, jardin de la Révolution, galerie de bois,
And at LE JAY, bookseller, at *Grand Corneille*, rue neuve des Petits-Champs.

1793

PLOTS UNVEILED
OF THE MEMBERS of the supposed Théâtre de la République.³

Criticism is easy, art is difficult.⁴

As an author submissive but not afraid, I plead
To the tumultuous auditorium and to those who attentively read.⁵

Nothing is easier than to lead public opinion astray. There are calumnies so bizarre that when the brilliance of truth's torch, so feared by miscreants, suddenly shines, minds are struck by its light and find it impossible to imagine how they could have seen and believed that which did not exist. Thus I have been the victim of a plot, sustained by the most perfidious appearances. This is how the actors used their art against me however, in order to achieve some justice, I will neither subject them to the animosity of citizens nor to revolutionary crimes.

The price of my civic duty was to be almost assassinated by a band of their followers and if I am still alive, it is perhaps due to one of those miracles that innocence does not always find upon its path. I have been forced to wait for my justification until my play was printed. Doubtless for my part it is not a case of wishing that my play be good, or bad, but what truly matters to me is to prove to the public that it was not my play that was performed on the stage of the République theatre but a pantomime fashioned by the actors. Dragged through the newspapers, insults heaped upon me; what a reward for a woman who has served her motherland so well!

It is known that the République theatre made a most genuine move to tear *The Arrival of Dumouriez in Brussels, or the Sutlers* from another theatre; it is known that it was citizen Cubière [sic] who took it upon himself to deliver a letter from the theatre to me, in order to negotiate this affair;⁶ it is known that this play was announced for 24 November

given he had created the role of Valère in her *Esclavage des nègres* of 1789, and a convivial one since they belonged to the same circles and would meet socially.

3 This prologue was both pasted up as a separate poster to explain to the public why, through no fault of her own, de Gouges's play had been so poorly received, and published along with the complete script which she sent to various government bodies and newspaper offices.

4 'La critique est aisée et l'art est difficile' was an expression coined by Philippe Néricault (1680 - 1754), known by his stage name Destouches, in his play *Le Glorieux* of 1732. It has remained in common usage ever since.

5 'J'en appelle en auteur soumis, mais peu craintif, / Du parterre en tumulte au lecteur attentif' is from *La Métromanie ou le poète* (1738) Act V, scene ix by Alexis Piron (1689 - 1773).

6 Michel de Cubières (1750 - 1820) aka chevalier de Cubières, Dorat-Cubières or Cubières-Palmézeaux was destined for the church until a book of poetry by Dorat changed his vocation (and his name). He gained a place at court thanks to his older brother but spent all his time in Paris writing plays (several of which were performed at the Comédie-Française) and sensual poetry. A free thinker who helped found a famously intellectually liberal masonic lodge he was opposed to the marital state and other social conventions. His

last; it is known that a *Dumouriez* was performed this month, on the 23 January; but what is not known is that the actors allowed themselves to take only a few scraps of my play, to dilute them into a sort of medley, half farce, half pantomime, to not speak a single word in the true spirit of the dialogue, to miss out lines completely, to pitilessly break the action by lowering the backdrop, by eternal intervals, by indecent stage business in place of the interesting situations that existed in my play, of entirely mutilating the characters and the unity; finally, if it is true that *Athalie* failed one day because of the poor ensemble of the actors, how could a play where two armies are constantly fighting, and in which only automatons guided the action, how, I say, can this action have interested an audience right to the end, whilst these automatons only intended to await the catcalls they had wagered so as not to finish my play?⁷ Meanwhile this monstrous play (as their libellous periodicals put it, in print) was judged rather successful by the redoubtable jury that is the audience, where those who are persecuted finally find their due justice. Here is my play, freshly printed; judge it with your impartial severity, and the law will do the rest.

To get an exact understanding of the actors' awful intrigue, read the two extracts that follow.

The actors were obliged to continue performing this novelty, but then they would have been obliged to withstand the penetrating gaze of the spectator revolted by their odious manoeuvres. It was simpler for them to make it disappear from the programme, contrary to all laws, for everyone is aware that the play did not close, despite them rendering it shapeless. To bury my play completely they thought it would suffice to charge the journalists to publicly discredit it.

First and remarkable *panegyric* by M. de Guenegaud, famous aristocrat, author of the *Journal français*, edition of January 25.⁸

Théâtre de la République.

'General Dumouriez had the honour of being vigorously represented on this stage, last Wednesday: it is citizeness Olympe de Gouges who bears the cost of this precocious apotheosis. We will not examine how ridiculous it is to expose on our boards people who rejoice in a certain reputation; that is what Olympe de Gouges has done, in a rhapsody of her own making, entitled: *The Entrance of Dumouriez in Brussels*. It would be impossible to give an exact analysis of this dramatic monster; there are marches, counter marches, columns of artillery that wound no one, and laughable battles.

Furthermore, a complete miscellany of demagogic commonplaces. Among the characters of this heroic farce, we have recognised the duc de Clairfait's son spouting principles like M. de Robespierre, and pursuing the love of his life, a sutler: Dumouriez

literary talent, along with his political persuasion, was fecund and somewhat facile. This allied to his attitudes made him unappealing to a more prudish 19th century and destroyed any reputation he might have had. He was almost certainly de Gouges's lover at one time, wrote a poem in her honour, but was unable to save her from the guillotine despite being in an influential position: it is probable that he never received the letter she wrote to him from her prison cell.

⁷ *Athalie* was Jean Racine's last tragedy. Written in 1690 it was first performed at Saint Cyr, a girl's boarding school, in January 1691. The play's biblical inspiration, along with the religious tensions of the time, led to it receiving few performances beyond private ones ordered by the king. Permission for its first public showing was only granted to the Comédie-Française in 1717, eighteen years after the playwright's demise.

⁸ The *Journal français* was a royalist paper first published in November 1792 [Popkin, Jeremy D. "The Royalist Press in the Reign of Terror." *The Journal of Modern History*, vol. 51, no. 4, 1979, pp. 685–700. JSTOR, www.jstor.org/stable/1877162. Accessed 29 Jan. 2020]. Not able to be overtly pro-monarchy it generally supported the Girondins over the Jacobins yet opposed their policy of using Dumouriez's Belgian success to advance French revolutionary practices abroad. This may explain the review's harshness. Popkin gives the last publication date of the *Journal français* as June 2, 1793 explaining that its writers formed another paper within weeks. Given that the names of Parisian newspapers changed frequently during this period, and that they were further altered in common parlance, de Gouges could be quoting from another publication altogether. I have found no mention anywhere of Guénégaud in a journalistic context.

parodying M. Thuriot with his chattering, that is the sum interest on which this play depends, etc.’⁹

I am far from complaining about this review, it cannot offend me; it falls entirely on the actors. It is sufficient to teach the audience, in general, how I have been the victim of the most perfidious and crudely devised plot. It is very important that the audience be aware that I have been the victim of the rivalry between theatres and the jealousy of one woman. The tyrants of the stage, like despots, never forgive those who do not know how to bend to their caprices or bow to their tyrannical yokes.

As for those infamous journalists, I will be content to expose them forthwith in my *Femme persécutée*, and if I lack the talent to render their style brilliantly, I will leave it to them to put it in French. It is quite strange that the aristocrats accuse me of being a demagogue, and the demagogues of being an aristocrat! How can one succeed when one is the butt of all passions and all parties? Then add in the ambition of mademoiselle Candaille, who did everything to make me lose the benefit of the situation, to make my play fail two months later; that is what the public will recognise in the continuation of this bizarre discussion.¹⁰ I will swiftly move on the editor of the *petites affiches*; one can note nonetheless in a few lines that his conscience troubled him, and that his extract was probably more commissioned than inspired.

*Extract from the ‘petites affiches’ of 25 January.*¹¹

‘The work of a woman always deserves indulgence. Yet citizeness Candaille’s beautiful Fermière has no need of this indulgence, which, as we have already said, and will repeat eternally for fear of it being forgotten, would immortalise the most distinguished

9 Jean-Alexis Thuriot de la Rosière (1753 – 1829) was a lawyer, tribunal judge after 1789 and then deputy. Despite being a radical Jacobin he repudiated Robespierre later on, allying himself with Danton. He was outspoken against the Girondins who supported Dumouriez; the critic, by suggesting that de Gouges has elided the two men in her play, is being particularly ill-natured. Thuriot survived the many upheavals that killed many of his fellow deputies, but as a regicide he was forced into exile in 1816, and died in Liège.

10 Amélie-Julie Candaille (1767 – 1834) was an extraordinarily talented child musician, appearing at court playing the harpsichord. She soon became a successful singer and composer but in adulthood her voice was not strong enough to fill the opera house where she was employed. She joined the Comédie-Française instead, and created the role of Mirza in de Gouges’s *Esclavage des Nègres*. Blessed with brains, creativity and looks she was an able musician, performer, writer, playwright and business woman. She needed all her talents to navigate her complicated life, often supporting father, husband or lover who had fallen on hard times, quite apart from managing to survive the political turmoil of the revolution and its aftermath. Candaille and de Gouges espoused many of the same causes, and had much in common. They were firm friends until the debacle of *L’Entrée de Dumouriez à Bruxelles* drove de Gouges to behave so badly towards Candaille that their relationship ended.

11 The *Journal général de France*, often known as *Affiches, annonces et avis divers*, or simply *Petites affiches*, was a daily paper in which all types of notices were placed, similar to the classified section of a newspaper, and at times included columns on theatrical events. Ducray-Duminil (1761 – 1819), its editor at the time, was a journalist, novelist and playwright, a good businessman who probably had some inherited wealth to support his career. Later he left the *Journal général de France* to set up a more successful rival paper using the title *Petites affiches de Paris*. Despite taking with him most of the personnel and subscribers he managed to avoid prosecution.

littérateur.¹² What a woman, that mademoiselle Candeille! *Stupete gentes!*¹³ One can tell clearly that her modesty played no part in this extract.

'Citizens, do not doubt it; as for Olympe de Gouges, the audience needed more than indulgence, it needed veritable patience to listen right to the end of the play by a woman who shows herself as she is, with all her blemishes, without the art of having recourse to scribblers or hack-writers.

We will not attempt to outline this bizarre work in which one finds neither plan nor development, neither taste nor anything that constitutes veritable theatre; in a word, this work lends itself too easily to criticism to expect anything too severe, it is beneath being given a thorough review.' (This remark, mademoiselle Candeille, is fair and is the perfect praise your soul and your dramatic knowledge deserve); but let us continue with the extract and its knowledgeable comments, particularly stripped of lies; I yet again appeal to the public for this one.

'But we believe that only the moral intent of the work could have persuaded the actors of the théâtre de la République to accept it, *who singularly polished their roles*, especially *the citizenesses Candeille*, Josset and the citizens Dugazon, Michaux, Desrozières, etc. etc..'

What effrontery? To treat the public as a fool who, along with the author, could not fail to say 'I don't understand it, but I gather it's a printer's pie, yes republicans, a printer's pie made in the manner of the actors who had sworn to sink my play in order to please citizeness Candeille, the most modest, most generous, worthiest of women or men.'¹⁴ The aim of such a panegyric needs no mention; it is obvious to the least penetrating of gazes. One knows that citizeness Candeille avoids praise, and that she has never known how to garner any.

After this affiliation of crude lies, the idiocies aimed at my work start up again; then there follows praise for my talents 'when I am prepared to polish them; etc.'

The most mordant part of this extract is the swingeing epigram that the editor made *benignly, without meaning to*, of the actors who performed my play so badly. He was careful not to mention citizens Després, Garnier and Valois who distinguished themselves. I appeal to the audience who were there at the first night, I am not referring to the second; it is easy to see that the actors had been influenced by their comrades' solicitations since I am assured that they were unrecognizable. I feel I can see the audience's surprise and

12 Candeille's musical comedy *Catherine, ou la belle fermière* opened on 27 December 1792 and was a stunning success. Candeille was responsible for both text and music and played the lead role (almost a one-woman show) whilst accompanying herself on the harp. Her beauty, talent and wit were universally praised and the work was performed forty-nine times in 1793 and continued in repertoire until 1839. It broke all records for a theatrical piece written by a woman. De Gouges believed that Candeille had wilfully pushed *Dumouriez* out of its allotted space and stolen the limelight; her anger erupted on its first night when, as the audience harangued the author, Candeille, from the footlights, attempted to pacify them. De Gouges stood up and publicly denounced Candeille and the other actors for making a hash of her work, encouraging the public's already riotous behaviour. Such vitriol directed at a cherished friend in public, then immortalised in print, was uncharacteristic and is an indication of de Gouges's immense frustration. These events took place in the immediate aftermath of Louis XVI's decapitation and may also be an indication of the more general malaise and anxiety abroad at the time.

13 This can roughly be translated as 'people be amazed'; *stupete gentes* 'Nations be amazed', is the first line of a famous hymn by Jean de Santeul (1630 - 1697) that became a catch phrase for any astonishing pronouncement.

14 A printer's pi (or pie) is a mess of disorderly letters and characters dropped by a printer or compositor when setting type, it is disastrous given how much time it takes to rectify the situation and the damage it can inflict on the typeface ('pi' were symbols or characters used infrequently so not accessed in the same way as standard ones, this may have caused some of the clumsiness?). Anxiously waiting for her texts to be finished, de Gouges spent plenty of time in printers' shops and would have been familiar with their technical terms. In French they call the mess a *pâté* which could suggest that 'pie' is the original term and not 'pi'. The Oxford English Dictionary puts its first usage at 1837 but I have used it here nonetheless as I liked the connection between pie and *pâté*.

indignation. What!, they cry, the actors allowed themselves, against all received authority, to chop up a play, to jumble it up, to add ridiculous pantomime with insignificant indecent phrases to a heroic subject, and, in the public eye, to blame all these unbelievable violations on the author, and to cover her in infamous ridicule with no shame or fear of public opinion's terrible backlash that always comes to the rescue of the oppressed. And you, mademoiselle Candelle, if I were a woman, if I could abase myself to imitate you, how different you would seem from what you wish the public to see. The eulogies that you solicit better than I, and that are lavished on you in such profusion, would turn to ridicule; fear the awakening of truth; with wit and talent one can influence dandies and idiots but genius, heroic virtues and stainless probity are gifts that nature does not always ally to the charms that one bears in society. I do not possess these advantages at the expense of the best social manners, I could add without vanity, but with the pride that I acknowledge, that a fair mind may be the crowning glory of my fierce probity and beneficent soul. It costs me dear to push aside the darkness, you know you have torn from me harsh truths. You will be assured that I am not jealous of your success; your excessive pride and my selflessness are well known, I love the glory of women too much to damage it in any way but you have pushed perfidy towards me to such a degree, that you have reduced me to justify myself in the eyes of the world.

Literary citizens, sensible men, judge my play by your knowledge and your consciences.

I do not ask that the théâtre de la République continues to perform my play; I ask that I be paid for this work; the sacrifice of my fortune and my nights in favour of the commonweal, has reduced me to the noble necessity of actually living off my talents; if my play had been performed and judged, no one doubts that I would have been able to rally, and that by renewed efforts I would have been able to obtain the suffrage of the public that perhaps my fifteen years of theatrical exertion have justified.

I admit that as a sensitive author I did not view the massacre of my play with indifference. I spoke to the audience as a great man, by excusing the actors when I had a right to despise them. *To touch on their injustice is to touch the Ark* [of the Covenant]; thus I saw myself assailed by a band of gladiatorial judges who, as Sir Ducray boasts in his libel titled *les Petites Affiches*, vomited over me the rubbish that no doubt suited the actresses who had ordered it. This journalist had the impudence to suggest that the audience had its revenge. Who would believe, if it were not in print, such a calumny against the audience who is deemed to hold me in its esteem, and maybe its admiration. Infamous writer of libels, who are you? You are clearly neither a good citizen, nor even a man. Whatever your aristocracy, you call this an act of justice from the audience who left, pleased with the author, and quite convinced that the play's shortcoming was the work of the actors. You place this audience in a hotchpotch of twelve childish odd actresses who have insulted me. Ah! The audience is far from having shared such a horror. But I cannot waste time on a vile writer like you, it is enough that I remind the public that your venal pen, a few days before the performance of my play, had eulogised me. Go, you and your kind are not capable of appreciating someone like me. I know how to write plays that you are not fit to judge; the one that you and the actors half disfigured certainly bears out your inadequacy, and it goes without saying that on reading it the public will justify me, as I have a right to expect from its enlightenment and impartiality;¹⁵ they will see that I knew how to create a plot, dialogue, intrigue, conceive dramatic action and sustain it all with original humour. And as Mercier and others say, this play, though done in the fashion of Shakespeare, a

¹⁵ The original text, and modern versions, have 'te' in this phrase so that the meaning would be '...on reading it the public will justify you'. I believe this to be a typo and that 'me' i.e. 'justify me' makes much more sense in the context of the following phrase.

genre the French have yet to adopt, though closer to nature, would have taken a consummate author three months to write, whilst I only took four days.¹⁶

No doubt the public will not confuse pride for what is, on my part, only a righteous indignation. Never has an author experienced such harsh treatment, never has a republican play received such insults or been repaid with such black ingratitude. Never has a work, since the revolution, burned with a purer patriotism and everyone knows what has been my reward.....

OLYMPE DE GOUGES.

From the Printshop of F. M. BOILEAU, Bookseller and Paper Manufacturer, rue Christine, N° 2, fauxbourg saint-Germain.

OLYMPE DE GOUGES,
TO DUMOURIER,
GENERAL OF THE ARMIES
OF THE FRENCH REPUBLIC.¹⁷

DUMOURIER,¹⁸

I have no idea if you are aware that a woman has dared to make you act and speak in the midst of your wartime labours. I do not know you; I will not even seek to know you. I have heard the report of your exploits; that was enough to allow my imagination to soar up to the heights of the subject I wished to treat. No doubt it required a pen other than mine to recount them, to paint both the valiant soldier and the true philosopher; it required the genius of the great Corneille to describe this bellicose ardour of a regenerated people born for liberty. To focus public opinion on the republican government the courage of my fellow citizens who remained in Paris had to be excited, enflamed. The aristocracy had to be dealt a final crushing blow for, like a chameleon, it adopts any shape and watches out for that moment of counter-revolutionary anarchy to clap us all back in irons.

There is no longer a *Corneille*; our modern authors disdain creating dramas from contemporary events; they are right: more foolhardy than them, or more feeble, I allowed

16 The author and journalist Louis-Sébastien Mercier (1740 – 1814) favourably reviewed the published play in the *Journal de Paris* of 17 February 1793. Michel de Cubières (1752 – 1820), playwright, poet and occasional civil servant (and probably one time lover of Olympe de Gouges) and the Girondin politician Pierre-Victorien Vergniaud (1753 – 1793) also praised the work while condemning the ill-intentioned men who brought about the play's downfall. Quite apart from the theatrical shenanigans, the play apparently fell foul of at least two factions, those who were angry that de Gouges sought to offer Louis XVI a fair trial and, contrarily, those of royalist persuasion who disliked Dumouriez's liberating actions.

17 This section was originally produced as a pamphlet designed to attract audiences to the delayed performances of the play.

18 De Gouges addresses Dumouriez using 'tu' as a style of address rather than the formal 'vous'. When ranting at actors and journalists 'tu' is less startling than here, where the author is addressing the supposed hero of her play, and of the country. In the autumn of 1792 'tu' began to represent the egalitarian ideals enshrined in the Rights of Man, its use marking the advent of citizenship in what had been a population of subjects. Generally only used to address children and servants it was a significant change of usage. The up to the minute language of the play reflects the topicality of its setting as well as the author signalling her patriotic republicanism. Later 'tu' was de rigueur – a law being passed to enforce its use in all administrative areas in November 1793 – and 'vous' became a sign of dangerous aristocratic leanings. When Robespierre fell in July 1794 the old patterns of address returned.

myself to be carried away. In four days I had created a five act play: this avowal will make you tremble, as will the public. Doubtlessly if it had been done in a timely manner, I would have captured the imagination of the audience; now I need all of its indulgence. But, what am I saying? Neither your enemies nor mine could benefit from the cruel delay the théâtre de la République has imposed on the performance of this work. You are not the only one that I have celebrated; as a soldier, you have a share in my homage: but it is my fellow citizens, the army that you commanded that I celebrated; I wanted people to discover a hatred of tyrants and a love of liberty; I particularly wanted to consolidate the glory of my country. But, you will say, what about talent? What does one do without talent? A five act play with only patriotism. But the audience, you will add, includes the ill-intentioned as well as good patriots, plus the timing of this play and the title it bears are already the butt of hatred and anger. Dumourier, I would not insult you by removing your name. Should you have faults, if such could be believed, the brilliance of your great deeds could never be tarnished; they have placed you so high, that calumny could not reach you. Of course you must despise it; of course ingratitude will never rebut you, as you have said, as you believe, you will die or triumph; such must be your motto.

It is not to you that I commend this play, it is to your illustrious companions in arms. Noble defenders of the rights of man, warriors at the Battle of Jemmapes, the good volunteers from all the *départements* at present stationed in Paris, be patriotic and come to support the performance of this play; come and defend it against the aristocracy's attacks, and you will recognise that if the plays of our great philosophers produced the French revolution, one woman's play can truthfully produce the Belgian one, and that of all people yet to be reawakened.

And you, CITIZENS, listen: this concerns your pleasures.

The théâtre de la République, when they heard that I had successfully treated the subject of the *arrival of Dumourier in Brussels*, rushed to ask me for this play. I ceded to their pressing demands although I could have placed this work in another theatre. They received it on the 23 November, with *five acts* but they persist in wanting to perform it only with *four*; pitilessly refusing to play the act with the monks of Brussels, which realistically depicts the betrayals, the conspiracies, of this accursed sect which, at this very moment Dumourier complains of in his letter to the national convention.¹⁹ If I appealed to the public for this act, it was because I was printing my play in five acts; since the roles were half memorized, and they could learn their lines overnight, I encouraged them to play it in order to avoid public opinion blaming them. This study could not, in any way, interrupt the play's progress. It was decided to perform it forthwith; it was announced the next day, and I was obliged to provide roles in *under twenty-four hours*. I surrounded myself with three secretaries; I took all night, and made it my duty to respond to this truly *patriotic* zeal. More enthralled to the circumstance, to the ethics of the revolution, to the drama which may have attracted the envy of some, than to the charlatanism of a pretentious style, I could have hoped that the public, the happy public, surprised by this *republican* play perhaps *dramatically* conceived in so little time, and that could be performed ten days after the news of the surrender of Brussels, would have been appreciably pleased. But barely had they [the actors] been given their roles than their enthusiasm dimmed. Not able to understand the reason for this coolness, and wishing to avoid all forms of disagreement with this company, I suggested taking my play off them. They reassured me, and insisted that had it not been for the play *la Belle fermière*, my *Dumourier* would have gone on *straightaway*; but that they were going to forge ahead. I knew that this play was by a woman; I ceded only because of this for I could have demanded from a *male author* a sacrifice that could not conceivably damage his interests; the subject of this comedy not

¹⁹ Although the people of Brussels were keen to adopt a democratic, republican, form of government, other parts of the country wanted to keep a monarchical Catholic system in place. Dumouriez kept up a continuous correspondence with the powers in Paris both about these problems and the deplorable condition of his army due to a lack of provisions.

being of topical nature, and especially of a topicality as imperative as that of my *Dumourier*. My play preceded the *Belle fermière* on the billing. I was unjustly wronged, that play was the greatest success.²⁰ Why then put off any longer the performance of mine?

I do not accuse this charming author, although it was suggested that she delayed the performance of my play for fear that, if I obtained even the slightest success, hers would be neglected by the public. So much grace, such a concentration of talent and perfection can only be found in the most beautiful soul; meanwhile, should I need to reassure this author, could I not point out that her play is for all time, and that mine has only the briefest moment, of which she has already taken half, no doubt inadvertently; she is too equitable not to put herself in my place.

I know that I have contributed a great deal to the delay of this play; I have exhibited the weakness of a child and not the energy of an author; but that does not take away my right to complain, and the complaint is just and natural to the one who suffers.

A lone woman, without at my disposal authors, no advocates in the newspapers; if on occasion I am appreciated, I can claim to have deserved it. I have not sought to draw the public's attention to the lethal delay of my play nor, as is the practice, have I had it demanded by the groundlings. Oh, company that is encouraged by a nation's rewards! How you should nurture a republican work! I leave this work in your hands, but on that matter, permit me to insist on the act with the monks, that is the exposition of my play, and it renders citizen Balza's patriotism far more ardent, than if it follows three acts of flaming combat. Besides, I repeat, it is the exposition of my play.

In vain I have solicited you, one after the other, and gained nothing. I have chosen to make you display my request, which you cannot mind. I had to justify the performance's delay. The spectator is fair and always indulgent towards a production that is topical. But after six weeks?.....The audience is there to judge my play and I must bring its full attention back to the time of its enthusiasm.

I show you, citizens, my way of thinking with all my characteristic veracity. Suffer then the truth, it will surely serve you better than empty compliments. She who knew how to speak it to despots, to the malicious, in the most tempestuous times, cannot restrain it in light of her own interests. Your lethal delay forced me to call on public opinion. It alone is on my side, it is the safest harbour for those who have been persecuted. And which virtuous man can claim to have been persecuted more than me?

I dare hope that the public, considering that this play was conceived and executed in four days, will treat with some indulgence any errors it may contain, and that the actors will compensate, both the audience and myself, for the delay that they caused to this performance, by supporting the action with the ensemble work it demands, otherwise the *incongruity* will create confusion; the *truncation* of the lines and their meaning, the tactic of whistles and catcalls, which quite befits the actors' performances etc., everything that can actually bring about the downfall of a masterpiece, may be employed *for the first time*, in a play that is *totally patriotic*. I am far from believing that the company of the théâtre de la République, whatever its motives for its delay, could be indifferent to the loss of a work that it received with enthusiasm. But whatever its destiny, I am ready for anything; and my play, already printed as it was received by the actors, will demonstrate to the public, better than I can, whether or not it merited the treatment which it will have undergone at its performance. As for the prudes, I do not oblige them to come and see this play; it would pain them to see exposed the indecency of an amorous monk. Ah! How *Molière* would have made the most of this revolution! As for aristocrats, I do not advise them to come and see it either, unless they wish to learn to be wise, and recognise their crimes.

²⁰ I believe that de Gouges is suggesting that because Candeille's play was such a success it could have been performed, as promised, after *L'entrée de Dumourier à Bruxelles* without incurring any loss; due to its topicality the same was evidently not true of her own play.

PROGRAMME

Regarding the costume and the characters in this play, here is more or less what I would suggest to directors of regional theatres. There are twenty-six speaking roles in this play. They can be reduced to seventeen or eighteen with a few changes of costume and moustaches. The three speaking soldiers can stand in for the three men of the people. The first soldier can take the role of Lafeuillette; general Clerfait can play a city councillor; the German aide-de-camp can play the stammering monk; Lucas can play the criminal judge, and in the greatest need, Suzette can play Madame Lafeuillette; the German officer can play Albert's equerry.

COSTUME.

Madame Charlot should have a blue or pink striped petticoat trimmed with gold at the waist and stomacher; also a small black velvet bonnet, trimmed with gold lace and tassels threaded through her hair. A gold chain at her neck and large earrings, her hair plaited under her mob cap, in short the costume of a rich German woman. Charlotte more or less the same costume, but with a green and silver bodice, a pink and silver petticoat, and a white and silver mob cap.

The Prussian army, [in] Prussian uniforms. The generals, white uniforms with gold braiding; Albert, arch-duke of the Netherlands, richly dressed without forgetting the sashes and chains. The magistrates in black; the people more or less as one dresses everywhere. This play demands the greatest ensemble playing. The dialogue must be produced with warmth so that it does not clash with the warring action that at every moment interrupts the spectacle. Charlot in an elegant sailor suit; Grisbourdon in a Carmelite's habit; Tape-à-l'œil in an old Austrian uniform, with a courier's hat tied under his chin, a black apron knotted to his uniform and a small barrel of eau de vie on a chain around his neck; a French flag; an Austrian flag; sutlers following the army.

As for the props and other objects, everything is indicated in the play; the only thing that I have not indicated is the music needed for the hostilities. The theatre of the republic has ordered a score; no doubt the provinces will obtain it for themselves, or they can choose operatic airs, as they please, and procure a score immediately. Above all a man with a consummate knowledge of military skill is needed to direct this play, or a fine ballet-master; a fairly considerable number of soldiers is needed to produce the effect of two formidable armies in battle.

The regional theatre directors producing this play may address the author, and forward their propositions to citizen Bourg's address, rue du Harlai, near the Palace.

CHARACTERS.

DUMOURIER, General of the Northern army.²¹

²¹ Dumouriez, Charles François du Périer (1739 – 1823) was a French mercenary, diplomat, secret agent, briefly foreign minister and military commander. Victorious over the Prussians and Austrians at Valmy and Jemmapes in autumn of 1792 he was able to march on Brussels and attempt to establish an independent state of Belgium. The goal was to remove the Austrians but also liberate an oppressed people from the grip of the nobility and the church. French soldiers issued decrees and posted proclamations inviting Belgians to plant trees of liberty. By March 1793 Dumouriez was on a losing streak and had to negotiate with the Austrians to retreat from Brussels. His own government began to suspect his loyalty – after Louis XVI's death he plotted to overturn the existing government, with the help of enemy powers, in order to revert to the 1791 Constitution – and he was due to be arrested. To avoid detention he handed himself over to the

L'ÉGALITÉ, General under Dumourier.²²

FRENCH ADJUTANT GENERAL.

The two FERNING sisters.²³

CHARLOT, born in France, and sutler in the Austrian army.

Madame CHARLOT, his German wife.

CHARLOTTE, their daughter.

General CLERFAIT, Austrian general.²⁴

The chevalier de CLERFAIT, the general's son and Charlotte's lover.

LUCAS, Suzette's lover.

SUZETTE, Lucas's lover.

The Prince of WIRTEMBERG.

An AIDE-DE-CAMP to Prince Wirtemberg.

A GERMAN OFFICER.

GRISBOURDON DE MOLINARD, chaplain to the Austrian army.²⁵

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, French spy in the enemy army.

THREE AUSTRIAN SOLDIERS, speaking parts.

ALBERT, archduke, governor of the Netherlands.²⁶

A BURGOMASTER.

Austrian side and went into exile. A known gambler and womaniser, not trusted by anyone, Dumouriez ended up in England, advising Castlereagh's government and died in exile having been banned from returning to France even when the Bourbons returned.

22 Chartres, Louis-Philippe, duc de (1773 – 1850) eldest son of the duc d'Orléans, Philippe Égalité, sixteen in 1789 and educated by Mme de Genlis to appreciate progressive views, he supported the revolution and became an officer in its army in 1791. He served under Dumouriez at Valmy and Jemmapes. Aware that revolutionary politics were becoming more extreme he joined Dumouriez's plot. Too implicated to remain in France, he also went into exile. Shunning the counter-revolutionary émigrés he led a complex, and at times difficult, itinerant life (briefly taking a job as a school master) both in Europe, America and Cuba. Finally able to settle in England, he took up teaching again. Returning to France during the Bourbon Restoration he became regent following the 1830 July Revolution which forced Charles X (Louis XVI's brother) to abdicate in favour of a grandson. However the government pronounced Louis-Philippe king eleven days later seeing in him both a liberal figurehead and a bulwark against republicanism. Charles X took his family into exile in England as the new monarch willingly acceded to the throne. Welcomed at first, the 'bourgeois' king's popularity declined due to his elitist conservatism and the economic depression which led to yet another revolution in 1848. Louis-Philippe also abdicated in favour of a grandson. Instead a Second Republic was proclaimed, with the future Napoleon III elected President. Louis-Philippe died two years later in England having returned to a quiet lifestyle as the Comte de Neuilly. He was the last king to reign in France.

23 Ferning (or Fernig), Marie-Félicité Louise (1770 – 1841) and Marie-Françoise-Théophile-Robertine (1775 – 1819) were teenage sisters who joined up in 1792 after having fought back the Austrians from their home town. Dumouriez took them on as his ADCs and they fought bravely at Valmy and Jemmapes, as well as Anderlecht and Neerwinden. They were both awarded military pensions. Women had a long history of accompanying armies, a few fighting, the majority in the baggage train as washerwomen or sutlers, plus some wives, lovers or professional sex workers. Since 1790 some had attempted to join in order to fight influenced, in part, by the creation of a civilian National Guard. In March 1792 Pauline Léon handed a petition to the government signed by 315 women asking to join up. They were refused and in April 1793 all women, bar sutlers, were banned from any occupation within the armed forces however an intrepid few continued fighting by masquerading as men.

24 Clairfayt (or Clerfait, Clerfayt, Clarfait, Clarfayt, Clairfait, as no accepted spelling of his name was ever adopted), Franz Sebastian Charles Joseph de Croix, Graf von (1733 – 1798) was born near Brussels in what was the Austrian Netherlands and joined the Austrian army. He rose to be a Field Marshall, defeated the French prior to Valmy, retreated, then returned victorious at Neerwinden. In 1795 he again repulsed the French and relieved Mainz but lost favour in Vienna when he signed a winter armistice considered too lenient. His military career over, he died two years later.

25 Of the names created by Olympe de Gouges, most are comic in intent; a *bourdon* has multiple meanings all of which are relevant to this character: bumble bee, the implication being of a rotund and jolly person, while the juxtaposition of *gris* (grey) implying a drab fat man, *bourdon* is also a pilgrim's staff, a drone sound from a musical instrument and a printing term for lacunae; *tape-à-l'œil* means gaudy and ostentatious, not typical spy material; a *feuillette* is a size of wine barrel; in old French *hilaire* means gay and cheerful. Balza probably represents balsam (spelt *balsamine* – pronounced *balzamine*) and may thus evoke the town councillor's conciliatory characteristics.

BALZA, town councillor.

A CRIMINAL JUDGE.

LAFEUILLETTE, wine merchant, half drunk.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE, his wife.

Father HILARION, prior of the Carmelite convent.

SEVERAL MONKS AND PRIORS of different orders. Non-speaking characters.

TWO MEN OF THE PEOPLE, speaking, and who can play the roles of soldiers.

FRENCH TROOPS.

GERMAN TROOPS.

L'ENTRÉE
DE DUMOURIER
A BRUXELLES,
OU
LES VIVANDIERS,

PIÈCE EN CINQ ACTES ET EN PROSE.

FIRST ACT.

FIRST SCENE.

Grisbourdon and a prior from each monastery in Brussels, lined up on stage as the curtain rises, Grisbourdon in the middle of them.

GRISBOURDON.

True supporters of the throne and the church, comforters of the elderly, fathers to orphans, I gathered you here to confer together on the operations of our saintly priesthood, on the disorder in France, and principally on our most cherished interests. Everything slumbers in Brussels but the priors of Brabant's monasteries are keeping watch. Ah! If French monks had had our a vigour, they would still hold the reins of the state. In vain did Joseph II, that false philosopher intrigued by novelties, avid for glory, wish to destroy us; he has gone to his tomb (and that is our work).²⁷ His brother, fearing our supreme strength, has returned us to all our duties. But the French are approaching. If they are the victors, we are lost. Let us prevent their victory; let them find their grave in the middle of this city. I have passed my

26 Prince Albert Casimir of Saxony, Duke of Teschen, (1738 - 1822) Governor of the Austrian Netherlands 1781 – 1793. He built a palace in Brussels to house his growing art collection. Fleeing the city in 1793, he settled in Vienna improving another palace which is now the Albertina museum and houses much of his original collection.

27 Joseph II, Holy Roman Emperor and Emperor of Austria (1741 – 1790) was admired by the anti-clerical community in France for his 1782 Edict of Toleration as well as his reforms aimed at restructuring religious communities within his empire. Monasteries were closed, nearly 40,000 monks had to leave their orders. No financial compensation could heal the wounds which festered among the dispossessed men of God, particularly those in the Austrian Netherlands. He died a lonely and disillusioned man who believed he had failed in his reforms.

plan to the archduke; he has adopted it. The magistrates are not on our side; we have to get rid of those who could thwart our actions, and cause our plans to abort.
(*All the monks draw daggers, simultaneously.*)

[THE MONKS]
Name the victims.

GRISBOURDON.

It is not yet time to strike. Balza, that infamous corruptor, corresponds, so it is said, with General Dumourier. He aims to deliver the city to him. Perhaps he is accused unjustly, but just the manner of his patriotism renders him suspect. How different our religious principles are from those of ordinary justice! Never has an accused escaped us were he even innocent. The politics of the Holy See condemns, but never absolves. It commands us, imperatively, to call on God alone for the expiation of our sins. To go back on our decisions would be to commit a sacrilege, one only dominates feeble human beings through credulity and severity. If, just once, the French doctrine took root in our government, what would become of our orders, our prerogatives? No more benefices, canonries, priories, dioceses, abbeys, cardinalships; their directors, wandering vagabonds along with their monks, would eventually be reduced to living out of a knapsack, rediscovering the principles of the early church; we would see our labours, those centuries of hypocrisy, fade away as swiftly as lightning. Let us prevent such a huge disaster by our measured and adroit conduct. Oh, disciples of a silent but all powerful God, the day is come to make him speak.

HILARION, *a prior, grotesquely and with a stammer.*
That is not the hardest part. What words will we make him say in this particular circumstance?

GRISBOURDON.

That the end of the world is nigh; that the thrifty earth will no longer produce her gifts; that fecund women will become sterile; that men.....

HILARION, *stammering.*
Eh! Eh! That's not a bad idea; but no one will believe it. You know that's right.

GRISBOURDON, *looking at him with disdain.*
You're always a thousand leagues off the point, father Hilarion.

HILARION, *stammering.*
Me, I see things.....

GRISBOURDON.
You see them very poorly.

HILARION.
And to whom do you wish us to tell these tales?

GRISBOURDON, *furious.*
Oh, for goodness sake! To the devout who will tell their husbands, their children, their friends, and that is how one leads unhappy humankind by the nose. Imitate me, my dear reverends; I have just left the army to come and show you how you should behave in Brussels. Announce prayers for forty hours; order fasting. Don't forget our dear devout

women, they are perfect angels for encouraging terror in timorous souls. As chaplain of the army, I provoke minds, I inflame the soldier's courage with all this poppycock; that is our secret, if it is ever revealed our empire would be destroyed.

HILARION, *stammering*.

It's....it's...true, that is the whole mystery....let's....go, let's all go back each to his own monastery, and, as the holy scriptures say, let's do our work religiously.

GRISBOURDON, *stopping them*.

And above all don't forget the miracles. May God keep you from tumultuous passions, the revolt of the senses, or from those worldly appetites that we are not always able to refuse, and that allow us to lose sight of our most precious duties. I am preaching abstinence, my reverends, and yet I myself am at fault: I am in love.

(*All together lifting their arms.*)

[THE MONKS.]

Father Grisbourdon de Molinard, in love! What a misfortune!

GRISBOURDON.

Yes, in love, my brothers, and in love with a heartless woman. Men are flesh and blood, you know it as well as I do. Ah! Why are we not made of stone, like our saints?

HILARION, *stammering*.

Well we are truly; but only when we're dead.

GRISBOURDON.

Well it's about time then; but do not think that my weakness takes me away from our principles, not for an instant. I can crown my love today and, at the same time, fulfil our saintly duties. I will get back to my post. (*Aside, with an exclamation.*) And you, Madame Charlot, incomparable sutler, put an end to my ordeal, to my torments. But what do I see? Her husband is coming. Oh! Grisbourdon, Grisbourdon! Make the most of his absence and rush back to the camp immediately.

(*All the monks run off stage.*)

SCENE II.

GRISBOURDON, CHARLOT, LAFEUILLETTE.

CHARLOT, *stopping Grisbourdon*.

Hey there, father Grisbourdon, where are you running off to so early in the morning, with all these disciples of Escobar?²⁸ You are the leader of this joyous band. Ha! Bawdy, bawdy! I know what you are!...While husbands are occupied with affairs of state, you take care of their households. They prosper handsomely with your lot; and women have such faith in you!....

GRISBOURDON, *hypocritically*.

Do we not console the afflicted? Women are so unhappy!.....

28 Antonio Escobar y Mendoza (1589 – 1669) was a Spanish Jesuit. A prodigious preacher and writer accused by Blaise Pascal of laxity and hypocrisy. Molière, Boileau and La Fontaine took his name in vain to such an extent that, in French literature, it suggests moral ambiguity.

CHARLOT, *aside*.
Oh! Deceiver!

LAFEUILLETTE, *half-cut*.
As for that, comrade, we have no time to lose; and all the conversations we can have with this rascal, are not worth a good bargain concluded. Are you buying my Bordeaux wine, or not?

GRISBOURDON, *furious*.
Treating a man of my saintly character as a rascal!

CHARLOT, *with derision*.
In vino veritas, reverend....

GRISBOURDON, *angrily*.
Go, wretch, into the eternal fire. God will punish you.

LAFEUILLETTE, *pulling from his pocket a wicker covered bottle with a cup*.
Comrade, have a taste of this wine. It'll do you more good than all this impostor's parables. We know God better than he does. He commanded them to do good and all they do is evil. Isn't that right comrade?

CHARLOT.
What have you got to say for yourself, hmm? He's got the principles right.

GRISBOURDON.
You insult God's ministers. Tremble lest he throws his thunderbolts; he is ready to express himself. (*Aside, as he exits.*) I'll go and try to seduce Madame Charlot, and get revenge for an affronted religion at the same time.

SCENE III.

CHARLOT, LAFEUILLETTE.

CHARLOT, *going to the back of the stage and threatening Grisbourdon*.
Infamous rogue! I also count on the power of God that you invoke: he has already expressed himself in France, and if in his revenge he has enveloped victims, that is your fault. But I hope that in Belgium his justice will pulverise you too. Enough said.

LAFEUILLETTE, *drinking the odd glass of wine*.
You've talked about it for too long; and I, in order not to get bored....(*He drinks some more.*)

CHARLOT, *interrupting him*.
You've finished yourself off, haven't you?

LAFEUILLETTE.
Finished off! I know what state I'm in. I am a wine merchant, from father to son. My ancestors were drunks, it's true. That's the japery of this profession; that, you see, is how one succeeds in business.

CHARLOT, *looking at him.*

You're happy, father Lafeuillette! I wish that like you I could drown my sorrows in the juice of the vine.

LAFEUILLETTE.

You, sorrow? Goodness me! Since when? You're French; your fellow citizens are approaching. You should be rejoicing; even I, who am not, am pleased to see them arrive. Zounds, if it only depended on me, the people of Brussels would head out to welcome them.

CHARLOT, *cheerfully.*

Let me embrace you, father Lafeuillette! You are a good patriot.

LAFEUILLETTE.

Can a drunk be an aristocrat?

CHARLOT.

Sometimes, but it's not common.

LAFEUILLETTE.

If I wasn't a poltroon, and if I were brave, I would have become a soldier for freedom. I would have cut off the heads of all the tyrants, but I don't like blood, I only like the juice of the vine.

CHARLOT.

So I can see. Well then! Sell me, in good faith, that barrel of Bordeaux wine. I will acquire it specifically to delight my fellow citizens.

LAFEUILLETTE.

In that case, I won't overvalue it, and I'll give it to you at cost price. And, for the same price, I'll include this little barrel of Ségur, that I was keeping for that arch-rogue Albert.

CHARLOT, *laughing.*

That trips off your tongue very easily; you mean to say the archduke?

LAFEUILLETTE, *angrily.*

No, no, I didn't mean the archduke. And despite being somewhat tipsy, I know how to speak, and I know French, do you understand? I repeat, he is an arch-rogue, an arch-rascal, an arch-scoundrel, an arch....

CHARLOT.

An arch-liar who has tricked you. He goes about his business like all his type who care nothing for what they've left behind.

LAFEUILLETTE, *pulling out a second wicker covered cup.*

Here; I always have one for my friends. Let's drink to their burial.

CHARLOT, *taking the cup and laughing.*

That's a good one! Hurrah for a drunk who offers happy endeavours. Come on, let's drink to their burial.

LAFEUILLETTE.
And to the prosperity of nations.

CHARLOT, *enthusiastically*.
Oh! As for that one, I can't resist. Best of health to all nations!

LAFEUILLETTE, *having drunk*.
One feels better after that one, doesn't one, comrade?

CHARLOT.
Yes, my friend; it would resuscitate a corpse. Come, help me load the cask onto my barrow. I'll send someone tonight to collect the barrel of wine; unless I come myself as I'm hoping the French will enter Brussels as though they were at home, and I'll accompany them.

LAFEUILLETTE.
Monsieur Charlot, you are a good citizen but be careful that the army don't become suspicious.

CHARLOT.
Hm! I've chosen my side; I'm ready for anything; I fear nothing. I came to Brussels to try and procure that decree in favour of foreign soldiers. They are so on their guard against this epidemic that no Austrian soldier knows off this decree giving him all the rights of man.

LAFEUILLETTE, *offering him some tobacco*.
I know a strapping lad whom I believe is French. Yesterday he bought some eau-de-vie off me to sell, so he said, in the Austrian camp. If I'm not mistaken he had some of those decrees. We were about to have a conversation about it, but my wife, you know my wife, she's such a formidable woman! Well, suffice to say, she stopped me chattering any longer. It's not that I'm not the master nor that she's not a good citizen, a jovial woman, but it wants to have a finger in every pie. Comrade, here she comes. Defend me, you understand? I'm not in a fit state to answer to her just now.

CHARLOT.
I'm sorry for you. She's coming at just the wrong time. Now is the hour when I have to return to camp, and I still have a deadly league to go. Come and help me. (*They move off as if to exit.*)

SCENE IV.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, Madame LAFEUILLETTE, *stopping her husband*.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.
Ah! Master drunkard, at last I've found you! Are you not ashamed to put yourself in such a pitiful state?

CHARLOT.
Are you going to tell him off?

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.

Listen, Monsieur Charlot, you're a nice man, *a good husband*; you never get drunk. Also your wife is fresh-faced, gay; she looks as though she were married yesterday....While I....In truth I look as though I've put up with fifty years of married life, when really I haven't even done thirty. I ask you, isn't that awful, Monsieur Charlot?

LAFEUILLETTE.

It's true that she's younger than me. I'm an old rascal. None of her reproaches have any effect any more. Fancy, my wife, you exhaust yourself more reproaching me than I do saying pretty things to you. I'm sorry for you, my heart. But see, I'm goodnatured, I don't mistreat you, ever. You beat your children all day long, and at night it's the witching hour in the house. I let you do as you will, without batting an eye. Well! Now it's your turn. Let me celebrate the memory of the god Bacchus, he's the master of all goodnatured folk. Isn't that right, comrade?

CHARLOT.

Oh! You can't complain, Madame Lafeuillette. That is what is known as pure reason, and you are the mistress of the house.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE, *angrily*.

Eh! Leave me alone, Monsieur Charlot, I care nothing for being the mistress of the house, when the master is never there. But go, leave me be; the French will perhaps come and establish themselves in Brussels....

CHARLOT.

Comrade, your wife is a patriot.

LAFEUILLETTE.

Oh! Patriot! Yes, yes, so it is said. As for that! Listen, Madame Lafeuillette, never lose your fierce virtue, for I'm warning you that the French could easily plant, on my forehead (*whispering to Charlot*) the tree of liberty....isn't that so, comrade?

CHARLOT.

Hm! That could well be.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE, *angrily*.

The French are charming!

LAFEUILLETTE, *whispering to Charlot*.

Well! When I tell you, the deal is done. (*Taking from his pocket his bottle and cup.*) Come, we must console ourselves. (*He sings grotesquely.*)

I always loved white women;
But even more I love white wine:
I've seen no frank young women;
But I've always drunk French wi...

CHARLOT, *interrupting his song*.

You know, my friends, you are priceless. If I wasn't in such a hurry, we would dine together. But we must part. By the way, Madame Lafeuillette, you usually know everything, what are they saying in Brussels about the French army approaching?

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.

Goodness me! You've just heard me. There is only one opinion on that. The aristocrats and monks can squirm about and make a terrifying monster of liberty but we know by which yardstick to measure their words. They have no currency any more. Here, Monsieur Charlot, you are an important man, I will tell you a great secret.

CHARLOT, *with enthusiasm and confidence*.
Ah! Tell me quickly.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.
You are familiar with the chief councillor of the city, the good Monsieur Balza? He has already put himself at the head of a party, called the sans-culottes. He wants to surrender the city.

CHARLOT.
It will surrender.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.
Oh! I'll answer for that! And without shedding any more blood. As for myself, I'm leading the women to go and meet the French army.

LAFEUILLETTE.
She will do just as she says. Just so long as....Enough, I understand.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.
Oh! I'm worth two. But for this affair, you see, I'll be worth ten. But here's the good Monsieur Balza with our burgomaster. How busy they seem!

CHARLOT.
Let's not interrupt them, my friends. Come, let's end our exchange, and may we awaken tomorrow brothers and fellow citizens!

SCENE V.

THE BURGOMASTER, BALZA.

BALZA, *town councillor*.
The people of Brabant do not see the French arriving as enemies, but as liberators. It is time to choose your party.

THE BURGOMASTER, *with finesse*.
I can sense your zeal, it is the one of a true magistrate. But do you honestly believe that the people of Brussels are resolved to surrender?

BALZA, *warmly*.
Do not doubt it.

THE BURGOMASTER, *aside*.
Let me dissimulate and see how events materialize.

BALZA.
You say nothing.

THE BURGOMASTER.

The position is delicate. Our values, our laws are very different....

BALZA.

To change them would take but a moment. Will you be able to resist the day that dawns; the brilliant destiny that awaits us? Consider that at the time of our first Brabant revolution, we had hoped for a regeneration worthy of free men as we were promised by Joseph II, that despot hiding under a spurious philosophy. Should we count on the word of a king? Remember that our irons are still the same, those irons that have debased and degraded us even more than before. Remember the triumphal entry of the tyrant who subjugated our provinces. Bring to mind Charles V dictating his laws of blood to the people. See those magistrates, burdened by ropes of infamy, kneeling to present to him the keys of the city of Ghent. See what sovereign is right now at our gates: a free people who fight against all tyrants to defend the cause of the people, and who give back to nations their rights, their majesty and their original energy. Nature, dulled for too long, has finally reawakened; tired, exhausted by the shameful yoke that the pride and depravity of courts imposed upon her, she struck the greatest sceptre in the world, and this sceptre is shattered. Could we not, as the magistrates of the people, share this precious enthusiasm that today leads these liberating people into our arms. For myself, I cannot hide from you, I see them approaching our walls with a sort of exhilaration that I no longer wish to deny, and that all good citizens share.²⁹

THE BURGOMASTER, *coldly*.

I fear that you are making a mistake. Everyone sees the French revolution from a different point of view. This much lauded joy may be no more than just the fall of this unfortunate empire. Believe me, like you I love liberty, but should we take as our example a people who is only effervescent, and who changes governments as lightly as they change fashions. Believe me, let us judge the future by the past. For four years the French have not moved from insurrection; their revolution is far from over; it is true that fortune seems to favour their enterprise; they march from victory to victory but you do not speak to me of divisions, of diverging parties, of the ambitions of some and the proscriptions of others, of the civil war that is perhaps on the point of exploding. What will become, I pray, of these famous conquests? If just once the empire catches fire, that will end the republic. The French will have lived....

BALZA.

Ah well! We will lament their downfall, but they will have taken an axe to the thrones of tyrants and the people will bless their memory. I know your soul; entire in its virtue, it sees only the public good. Vain prerogatives, lavish promises given by a woman intoxicated by the highest rank, in your heart can they outweigh for one moment the joy of meriting a civic crown? (*Aside*.) I have to flatter him, it is the only way to restrain him, and spare the blood of the people.

²⁹ This speech offers the audience a pocket sized history of Brabant. Inspired by American events of 1776, and following the fall of the Bastille in France, the Belgians revolted against the Austrian Netherlands in November 1789, infuriated by Emperor Joseph II's reforms. In January 1790 they proclaimed themselves to be the United Belgian States republic. In under a year Hapsburg rule was back in place. Charles V (1500 – 1558) Holy Roman Emperor and Austrian Archduke, King of Spain and ruler of the Netherlands, his reign was dominated by wars on many fronts. Ghent was his natal town yet following the revolt there in 1539 – against increased taxation – he severely punished and humiliated the town's nobility, its leaders and guilds. Those not executed were forced to walk barefoot through the town with gibbet nooses around their necks. The town saw huge fines imposed upon it, along with a restrictive restructuring of its civic institutions.

THE BURGOMASTER.

Do you know what orders I received from the archduke?

BALZA.

No, But I believe they are terrible.

THE BURGOMASTER.

They will make you tremble; read.

BALZA, *takes the paper.*

He looks attentively at the burgomaster and begins to read.

'Thirty thousand men are occupying the heights of Anderlech; they will defend the entrance to Brussels; they will not yield, they will die defending their posts.³⁰ It is incumbent on the magistrates not to surrender the city. If the inhabitants weaken, blow up the mine. The prince of Wirtemberg is there to protect your retreat and that of your friends. The magistrates of my city of Brussels are lost if they betray me.

ALBERT, *archduke and governor of the Austrian Netherlands.*'

(He stops for a few moments, indignant after this reading.)

Oh tyrants! Vomited up by hell and spread on the earth to ravage it! (*To the Burgomaster.*)

And could you yield to his threats? And could you, in cold blood, see the abyss open up where they want to engulf alive an entire population? So many innocent victims throwing up their arms to you! So many piercing cries striking a chord in my heart! Can you not hear the powerful voice of humanity, stronger than all the rights of tyrants, crying out to you: whose interests are you defending? Whom are you immolating? Those who make up the mass of citizens, those of reason, of philosophy, of nature, those of the sovereignty of nations, who only rid themselves of it to ensure the common good, and not to satisfy the whims, the passions of one individual. Now put in to equity's balance the eternal, and immense, interests of the people against the arbitrary ones of kings.

THE BURGOMASTER, *surprised, aside.*

He confuses me. I know not how to reply. What a difficult position I am in! (*Aloud.*)

Follow me to the town hall, the nobility and the clergy will be there now; we cannot deliberate without hearing everyone's opinion....

BALZA, *interrupting him.*

Ha! Let us rather consult the people. If they have decided to surrender, your nobility and your clergy will be powerless.

BURGOMASTER, *entering the town hall.*

You could be right, meanwhile let us take the wisest course.

End of the first act.

Curtain up for second act.

The set represents the enemy camp, outside the gates of Brussels. Many tents are visible, here and there, both those of officers and soldiers. The general's tent is on one side of the

³⁰ Anderlecht is now a part of the greater municipality of Brussels, at the time it was an outlying rural district.

stage, opposite is a provisions tent in which one can see a type of tiered shelving where many comestibles are visible. Madame Charlot is sat behind a sort of counter. Her daughter takes fruit from a basket and occupies herself displaying them. The sutler Charlot enters with the barrow loaded with a barrel of wine. At the back of the stage soldiers are busy heating a cauldron; one is peeling the vegetables, the other cuts bread into the mess dish. All the soldiers are in their early morning dress of vests and caps. During the first scene the soldiers make the soup, eat it, all sitting on the floor around the mess dish. Two sentinels are on guard duty, and alternatively cross the back of the stage. Grisbourdon makes them say grace before the meal, and constantly contemplates Madame Charlot; he comes and goes at the back of the stage, looking at her, pulling out his lorgnette to view her more closely.

ACT II.

FIRST SCENE.

The Chevalier CLERFAIT, Madame CHARLOT, CHARLOTTE, Father GRISBOURDON de Molinard, *at the back of the stage, reading his breviary*, AUSTRIAN SOLDIERS, CHARLOT, *crossing the stage with his barrow, loaded with a barrel of wine.*

THE CHEVALIER, *leaving his father's tent, a notebook in his hand, pulling out his watch.* Middy! The French are approaching, my plan is not complete. I will never complete it, no never. Oh my father! My country! I must give you up. France, you win. I abandon the tyrants standard; from now on I only want to serve under the flag of free men. Oh my Charlotte! Can this day be favourable to us? Yes, if you wish it. Love, be favourable to me, I owe you this joyful enthusiasm for liberty. Here she is. How emotional I feel as she approaches! Her mother is busy. – If I could give her this letter?... – Madame Charlot is a very kind woman. Yes, but she is proud, severe...My father will never let me marry the daughter of a sutler...A count of the Holy Roman Empire!...The honour of his house wounded?...Come, the die is cast, I must carry off my mistress and pass with her into the French army. (*He tears up his plan.*) Go now into battle; crazy men, I will abandon your unjust laws, I will no longer serve but as a simple soldier to defend the people and the glory of nations. I am French....I am, I swear it.....

CHARLOTTE, *suddenly turning round.*

It's him, it's my lover; the sound of his voice pierces straight to my heart.

THE CHEVALIER.

Oh my Charlotte! If only I could whisper a word to you.

CHARLOTTE, *approaching discreetly.*

My mother is there, can't you see her?

THE CHEVALIER.

I see her clearly. She is busy doing her accounts.

CHARLOTTE.

Don't rely on that, she has eyes in the back of her head.

GRISBOURDON, *from the back of the stage, putting his breviary in his pocket, and fixing his lorgnette on Madame Charlot.*

She's so beautiful! So graceful! What a tasty morsel! Ah! Grisbourdon, Grisbourdon de Molinard!

CHARLOTTE, *approaching the Chevalier.*

I'm trembling. Quick, give it to me. (*She takes the letter nimbly then sees Grisbourdon.*) Oh my God, my God! Supposing that horrid man saw me, we are lost!

GRISBOURDON, *still casting his eye over Madame Charlot.*

I devour her! If I could commit the pretty sin with her that has damned all the human race!...

THE CHEVALIER, *noticing him.*

Oh! There is father Grisbourdon. The stupid, mean, character!

Madame CHARLOT.

What a boring meditation is a book of expenses! I think I would have preferred another occupation. But I am proud of myself. Feeble mortals, you never reason in keeping with your state. (*Laughing.*) It's not for me to complain, or moralise on the vicissitudes of life. Eh, Charlotte! Where is that little girl? It's amused by a mere nothing, a butterfly flitting past. Well, Mademoiselle, have you finished yet?

CHARLOTTE.

It's done, Mama, it's done. Don't be angry.

Madame CHARLOT.

That's most satisfying.

The CHEVALIER, *aside.*

Yes! Yes, very satisfying.

CHARLOTTE, *looking at her lover.*

I would like to be able to do more, and if I do not fulfil my duty....

Madame CHARLOT, *interrupting her.*

Enough, enough, I am pleased with you.

THE CHEVALIER.

As for me, I am enchanted by her!

CHARLOTTE, *sighing.*

Ah, mother!

GRISBOURDON.

Ah, the pretty little Mama. How I wish I were her son!

Madame CHARLOT, *getting up and coming down stage.*

Well! Charlotte what is the matter? You are sighing my child. Are you afraid of the battle? Your father is not as upset by it as you are, he is French. For him it is a day to celebrate!

(GRISBOURDON approaches and exaggeratedly greets Madame Charlot.)

Madame CHARLOT.

I am your servant, I am your servant father Grisbourdon. (*Aside.*) Oh! The nasty man!

GRISBOURDON.

Light of the sun, beautiful rising sun, star of the night, nature's essence, magnetising men,
I wish you good day, the felicity and the realization of all the joys of this world. (*Everyone
laughs.*)

THE CHEVALIER, *aside*.

The rascal! Ah! Priests, priests!

Madame CHARLOT, *laughing aside*.

The hypocrite. Still I can't help laughing. – What, have you not mended your ways yet? You know that my Charlot does not like compliments, and I abhor them. Trust me, do your job.
We are going into battle, go and collect yourself.

GRISBOURDON, *exiting, trying to hide his shifty look*.

You'll pay me for this. (*He exits.*)

SCENE II.

THE CHEVALIER, PRECEDING CHARACTERS.

THE CHEVALIER.

One has to admit, Madame Charlot, that this father Grisbourdon is an insufferable hypocrite! No one likes him. Luckily Monsieur Charlot is French. Ah! I am so relieved!

MADAME CHARLOT, *gaily*.

Truly, yes, my Charlot is French, Sir, and between ourselves let it be said, the French are equal to the Germans.

(*During this scene Charlotte goes upstage and reads the Chevalier's letter, in a whisper.*)

CHARLOTTE, *aside*.

Flee with him! I can't resolve to do it.

THE CHEVALIER.

One is worth ten. They have become so intrepid, since fighting for liberty! Ah! You are right, Madame Charlot, what a country! What a nation! What a delightful people! They sing as they fight.

MADAME CHARLOT.

Yes, Sir, the French are unique. They are all like my Charlot. What! You hadn't yet noticed, by his activity, his charming urbanity, that he was French? He does more work on his own in two days that a hundred Germans in two months. In the cellar, in the kitchen, at the generals' table, the officers', the soldiers', everything is topped up in the blink of an eye. Ah, my Charlot, if all the French are like you, and they make an incursion into our territory, I'm afraid that all the Germans will join the French army.

THE CHEVALIER.

It is a real shame, Madame Charlot, that you are not French!

MADAME CHARLOT.

Many thanks for the compliment. And what pray do I lack to be one? But I admire my good faith. You are the son of General Clairvoyant, and no doubt you have come to sound me out.

THE CHEVALIER, *interrupting her*.

Ah! Madame Charlot, that is to slight me! I am very fond of you, I assure you. You are so good, so beautiful, so kind, so witty but I fear that you may be too open about your opinions.

MADAME CHARLOT, *looking at her daughter*.

Whoa! What do those looks mean? (*To the Chevalier, imitating him.*) But you are so good, so beautiful, so kind, so witty. And I tremble, Sir, that I am but an idiot with you.

CHARLOTTE, *seeking to distract her mother*.

Mama is right, Monsieur le Chevalier. It is as if she were French, since my father is French. How I would love to go to France!

MADAME CHARLOT, *aside*.

I seriously believe that this little girl is already deceiving me. What if they agreed? Let me finish with this, and examine the other thing more closely.

THE CHEVALIER.

Beautiful Charlotte, we could go there today. The rights of man are felt in all hearts. The French have resurrected them for the benefit of the world.

MADAME CHARLOT.

Do you think so? (*Aside.*) He is convinced of it.

CHARLOTTE, *eagerly*.

And those of women, Monsieur le Chevalier, are they also resurrected?

MADAME CHARLOT, *interrupting her*.

That's a good one! Not yet, mademoiselle, not yet. (*Aside.*) How this germ circulates. Oh! It's all over, it will no longer be possible to hide anything from her. She has the mind of her father, she divines what she doesn't know.

THE CHEVALIER, *interrupting her*.

Forgive me, Madame Charlot, girls reach their majority there at sixteen, and can, contrary to an abusive power, choose a spouse as they wish.

MADAME CHARLOT.

That is not what I am asking you, Sir, that is not what I am asking. You are very keen to instruct my daughter.

CHARLOTTE, *gaily*.

Oh, how charming! But I am only sixteen.

MADAME CHARLOT.

Truly, what a pity! But see how this little girl's mind is inflamed by her rights of man! She thinks she's already in France.

THE CHEVALIER, *aside*.
Heaven willing!

MADAME CHARLOT, *listening to him*.
What! I beg your pardon?

THE CHEVALIER.
I admire the power of nature.

MADAME CHARLOT.
That's all well and good. But between you and me let it be said, Mister Philosopher, your example does nothing for girls in poverty. For some time I've noticed that you follow my daughter closely, but she is not for you. Are you paying attention? You are the son of a general: she will only ever marry a simple brave soldier like her father. I have made myself clear in a few words. I am your servant, Sir. And you, young girl, inside.
(*Charlotte goes in, looking at the Chevalier and making signs at him. Madame Charlot, noticing, follows her.*)

MADAME CHARLOT.
God forgive me, I think she is making signs at him! Oh! Oh! I will tell her father and we'll see how he will take it. Truly, there are no children left.

SCENE III.

CHARLOT, THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS.

CHARLOT.
Wife, daughter, come, help me so that I can finish putting this wine into bottles before dinner.

THE CHEVALIER.
Is your wine good, Monsieur Charlot? Which canton is it from?

CHARLOT, *cheerfully*.
It's from Bordeaux. Excellent, a good patriot, like me. We are from the same country, which says it all. (*Aside.*) Oh my fellow citizens! It is for you that I am bottling it, the Germans will only get a feel of it from the end of a blade, and that's on condition they make themselves patriots. (*Aloud.*) Come, my wife, let's not waste time. The soldiers have dined, the generals will do battle, the French will run the show for us and so I must indeed prepare the meal.

MADAME CHARLOT.
Always cheerful, always genial, in the middle of storms. Nothing upsets you. Meanwhile... (*Looking at her daughter.*) Oh no! It's not the moment. Come, follow me, mademoiselle.
(*She exits.*)

THE CHEVALIER.

And I will prepare everything in order to desert with my adorable Charlotte.

SCENE IV.

A FRENCH SPY [TAPE-A-L'ŒIL], *disguised as a seller of eau-de-vie*, CHARLOT.

THE SPY.

Brandy wine, brandy wine. Soldiers, who wants some?

CHARLOT, *weighing him up*.

That eau de vie merchant is not German, he's French. It's him. (*Approaching him*.)
Comrade, is your eau de vie any good?

THE SPY.

Excellent.

CHARLOT.

Excellent? Good Frenchman! You risk your life to serve the best of all causes. But don't speak, if you don't want to be recognised. Let's keep our voices down, I am French, ready to assist you in your plans. Is the army of my fellow citizens close yet?

THE SPY.

It's only half a league away. It bivouacked for thirty-six hours without stealing anything, and its exhaustion has only augmented its courage.

CHARLOT, *with delirious joy*.

Oh Frenchmen! Oh my motherland! Finish your tale, my friend, tell me everything. What about the intrepid soldier-general, the incomparable Dumourier?

THE SPY.

Alexander would have been but a little boy by his side. It is Mars incarnate who fights for liberty: the enslaved world had one Hercules alone to break the sceptres of tyrants; France has produced thousands to destroy them. Decide for yourself if their reign can extend further.

CHARLOT, *enthusiastically*.

You enchant me! Why am I in the camp of our enemies? Why is Charlot not in the midst of his fellow citizens' army? My fortune, my wife, my children hold me back, in spite of myself. I abandon everything. I want to die French. This arm has not yet lost all its vigour, it must avenge its motherland, so I fly to it.

THE SPY, *catching him by the arm*.

Stop! You can serve your country in a better way. Do you think France lacks manpower? She needs friends among a people still in chains. Your situation puts you in a position to deal with soldiers and with officers. The chains of the tyrants' victims must be broken. They seek only to learn, they must be enlightened.

CHARLOT.

You're right, comrade. If I could only procure the decree that offers an honourable pension to all deserters.

THE SPY, *pulling a quantity of decrees from beneath his jacket.*
Here's a large enough number to rout the enemy army.

CHARLOT, *taking them enthusiastically.*

Give them here, comrade. We must strike while the iron's hot. The generals are busy planning the attack, and the soldiers, lying on the ground that in a few hours will be soaked in their blood, wait peacefully for an order from the tyrant who will be responsible for their slaughter. Let's make the most of this auspicious moment. (*He goes to the back of the stage.*) Hey, comrade! Let's go. Courage, let's drink some brandy. It's the day of victory, (*Aside.*) for France, I hope.

(*All the soldiers get up.*)

A SOLDIER.

Brandy wine, a glassful comrade. Kill all the French, hang all our deserters. Frenchmen no good.

CHARLOT.

Brandy wine merchant, fill the glass, it's my treat.

A SOLDIER.

You, good Frenchman. (*They all drink together.*)

CHARLOT.

Comrade, you are being misled. The French are your friends, they only want to destroy the tyrants to free the nations. They started with their own; imitate them, all soldiers are brothers, and should unite for the universal cause of the people. (*Distributing the decrees to some soldiers who understand French.*) You read French, do you not, comrades? Translate this into German for those who don't.

THE SOLDIER.

Ya, Ya. Comrades, follow me into the tent; I the French read.

CHARLOT, *to the spy.*

French citizens, as you pour your brandy, do the job well; never was it more honourable. It's time to serve the officers and generals. I need to listen to them today.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Come, my friend, we must distinguish ourselves. Courage, strength, we don't need anything more to win; liberty opens all the doors for us.

SCENE V.

CHARLOT, *alone.*

I must take care not to tell Madame Charlot about my plan. She's a charming woman, beautiful, adorable, everyone envies me, but she is a woman, and a female's tongue makes as much noise as a cannon. It's a great shame! If these pretty animals were dumb, they would be perfect. Here she comes.....But how sad she looks! Ah! I see what it is. She's overwhelmed by the battle.

SCENE VI.

CHARLOT, Madame CHARLOT.

CHARLOT.

Ah well! So? What is it, my dear wife? Haven't you got your usual pretty little face on yet?
Oh! As for the one you keep for Sunday best, no one can match it, it is so beautiful, so clear, so restful, that I always feel as though I am seeing it for the first time.

Madame CHARLOT.

Dear Charlot, stop teasing, I'm going to distress you.

CHARLOT.

Distress me?

Madame CHARLOT.

I'm sure of it.

CHARLOT.

That would be a first. But let's see.

Madame CHARLOT.

Your daughter is in love.

CHARLOT.

Is that all? Well you were in love with me at her age, and you were only sixteen when you gave me that lovable daughter.

Madame CHARLOT.

I agree, but you will never guess the one you daughter loves. It's General Clerfait's son, and I'm truly afraid they may soon agree.

CHARLOT, *considering.*

You were right; this news distresses me. He's a grandee who thinks the honour of a soldier is as low as the level of his pay. I will teach him the opposite. If I see him sniffing around my canteen, I'll show him the worth of a true soldier, born a Frenchman (*aside*) and soon to be republican.

Madame CHARLOT, *taking him by the hand.*

You're getting angry, my dear. No outburst, my friend, you're not in France. He's a nobleman's son, and we are merely sutlers.

CHARLOT, *coldly while shrugging his shoulders.*

A nobleman!...My wife, that's good, I know my place, (*aside*) my rights and my courage.

Madame CHARLOT.

So, my friend, you are deceiving me, you a hiding a plan from me....I am so angry with myself that I told you. Kiss me! My Charlotte is sensible, she's a child who see's no harm in anything, let's be careful not to reproach her in any way.

CHARLOT.

You're right, my beautiful friend. Come, get the generals' dinner table laid. (*Aside.*) And I will go and visit the soldiers' tent. Ha! Monsieur the Count of the Holy Roman Empire, generalissimo of the imperial army, today you will pay dear the affront that you wish to do to my honour! I will quarter you just like your sixteen quarters of nobility. *He exits.*

SCENE VII.

Madame CHARLOT, *alone.*

My Charlot is unhappy. His heart and his head give me twice as much to fear. He loves me, his fortune is fixed in Germany, but he yearns to leave it. The French are below Anderlech....Will they be the conquerors? I fear they will, and yet I wish it too for their cause is ours, and my husband is French.

SCENE VIII.

AN AUSTRIAN AIDE-DE-CAMP, CHARLOT, *on the opposite side of the stage to the ADC,*
Madame CHARLOT.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, *in French with a German accent.*

Come, Monsieur Charlot, quick. Serve the generals' dinner. We are leaving in an hour to lay waste to the French.

CHARLOT.

What! The table is not already laid? Hey, Lafrance, Charlotte, wife, Sans-Peur, hey, hurry up. Quickly. The generals' dinner.

(All rush to lay the table, and it is spread with all kinds of fine delicacies laid out as a cold collation.)

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

Come closer, Monsieur Charlot, the victory is ours. You must provide us with a feast today.

CHARLOT.

I will serve you a delicious diner. You need encouragement. You see, the French are marching fiercely through the Low Countries, and to chase them away, you will need courage and strength. (*Aside.*) All the consommés in the world couldn't help you, you will be beaten hollow.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

What were you muttering there so quietly, Monsieur Charlot? You always appear distracted.

CHARLOT.

Is my mind not on many things at once? (*Looking at the table.*) Very good, here is a table dressed as if for a wedding feast. Come, my wife, my daughter, and all of you, leave.

MADAME CHARLOT.

Why, my friend?

CHARLOT.

Run along, my wife, do as I say. I have my reasons. (*They all exit.*)

SCENE IX.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, CHARLOT.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, *slapping him on the shoulder.*

Hurrah for Monsieur Charlot! What artistry, what wisdom, in his meals! (*Slapping him on the shoulder.*) In truth, my dear Charlot, you are the god of the table. You have been, so I've been told, the head chef of the king of Prussia; he was a great Comus.³¹

CHARLOT, *rubbing his chin.*

Don't mind me. (*Taking the ADC's hand away from his shoulder.*) Yes, and I couldn't be more proud, believe me, but times are greatly changed, and kings....

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

They will triumph, do not doubt it: Mirabeau-Tonneau predicted it. His horde has not yet attacked.³²

CHARLOT.

Mirabeau-Tonneau predicted it because his hordes have not yet attacked. Drunkard and bad citizen, if I feared only for myself....

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, *interrupting.*

Listen, Charlot, despite your ruse, you've just given yourself away....You do not like the Germans, and you are under suspicion.

CHARLOT.

I understand; but I am needed.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

What you say is true. Without your art, you would be held tight, I can assure you of that. I marvel at this table! The prince of Wirtemberg will deliver a bloody battle, he needs to build up his strength. I will let him know. (*Coming back on his steps.*) By the way, don't you know? The archduke has just lit the cannon's first wick. Does this prince's heroism not awaken your courage?

CHARLOT, *rubbing his hands.*

31 Comus, in Greek mythology, was the son of Dionysus, and was the god of all things festive, famed for his excesses.

32 André Boniface Louis Riquetti, vicomte de Mirabeau (1754 - 1792) aka Mirabeau-Tonneau due to his drunkenness and rotundity, was the comte de Mirabeau's younger brother. A reactionary writer and deputy, his principle delight was to stir up trouble for his brother (who generally disdained his opinions) and loudly harangue anyone with whom he disagreed. His wit and disregard for decorum initially amused the populace but eventually he was deemed tiresome and his popularity waned. In June 1790 he emigrated, joined the French princes and set up his own regiment with little success given his predilections.

Does he awaken my courage? Oh! I assure you, he redoubles it. Hurry up and fetch his excellence. The dinner is getting cold, and the French are advancing.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

They will stay on the plain, I'm counting on it. (*He exits.*)

CHARLOT, *watching him go.*

Count away, count, you won't be counting on your host, vile and grovelling slave!...He's already far away. The prince of Wirtemberg is busy putting his troops in battle order, and when he comes back to headquarters, he won't find a single soldier. (*Approaching the soldiers' tents.*) Come, my friends, my brave comrades, run off, all of you, fly towards the flags of the French republic and only return to your homes in order to plant the tree of liberty there.³³

SCENE X.

CHARLOT, fifteen hundred Austrians with guns and haversacks.
The stage is full of soldiers.

CHARLOT.

What a tremendous crowd! There are more than fifteen hundred of them. Hey, quick, go down this hill to the plain.

A SOLDIER, *approaching the table.*

Comrade, good food's not for us. Bad salted bacon, black bread, that's our good cheer.³⁴ Oh! The delicious little chickens! This great junket, for our officers, smells good comrade. Mein host, can we taste it? We're all leaving, comrade. (*They all advance, some drink, others help themselves from the serving dishes.*)

33 The planting of a 'tree of liberty', taking its origin from traditional pagan rituals but also from the American Tree of Liberty of 1765, was officially sanctioned in 1792 though the first unofficial ones can be dated to early 1790. The act was to be a powerful symbol of regeneration and new beginnings, its inauguration accompanied by a specified ritual. By 1794 every community, by decree, had to erect an altar to the motherland (republican France) beneath their newly planted tree. These spaces were to be sites of communal gathering and form the basis of an emerging secular state. The ideology that spawned the plantings was contested and trees were disfigured or mutilated despite the risk of a prison sentence or worse. Representing anti-clericalism and anti-monarchism their destruction and replanting mirror the turbulent trajectory of French republicanism. Most trees were torn up and replaced by Christian crosses when Louis XVIII returned in 1814; then welcomed during the July monarchy of 1830; symbolically accepted by the church after the 1848 revolution; torn up again in the early 1850s when republicanism fell out of favour, trees of liberty flourished again after 1870. What genus to plant was much debated; oak for longevity or the fast growing poplar whose latin name *populus* mirrored the symbolism of a people's tree, plane trees, chestnut trees all had their virtues. A tiny number of the original specimens survive, most are oaks though one plane and one chestnut still exist. In an interesting sequel, tree planting has recently resurfaced in France since 2010 with 'trees of secularity', and or 'integration', symbolically representing the country's secular status while also promoting religious tolerance and inclusivity. Like their earlier counterparts these arboreal signs of hope are freighted with complex and sometimes contradictory political and civic messages. In a modern multi-cultural France, some trees have reawakened older animosities between anti-clerical enlightenment values, as represented by a Freemasonry that openly supports the plantings, and a traditional Catholicism that feels under attack, leading to some of these trees being repeatedly pulled up.

34 I have translated the original 'broute souerche' as black bread because nothing else made any sense. I searched in 18th century French dictionaries, in Occitan and then I tried in German given the soldier is Austrian. Schwarzbrot is black bread in German but someone writing in French might naturally construct it as bread black so I am going to assume that this is the answer as phonetically de Gouges's words are close to the German.

CHARLOT, *slapping himself on the head.*

Ha! The madmen! They're starving! They're going to finish it all. (*To the soldiers.*) Hey! My friends, don't waste time, we will all be lost if we're caught together. (*Aside.*) As if they're listening to me! I'll never have the time....Come....come, that's enough. They've got a craving for it, they'll leave nothing; it's like a troop of Norman horses in a field of oats.³⁵

A SOLDIER, *leaving with a leg of lamb.*

Comrade, our good host is right. Let's go and serve now under the flags of the good nation.

CHARLOT.

That one's done well for himself, modest chap.

A SECOND SOLDIER, *carrying off a ham.*

Me, with all my heart France I'll serve.

A THIRD SOLDIER, *biting into a hare and choking as he speaks.*

With pleasure to France I go. Never such a good morsel I eat.

CHARLOT, *in a fury.*

Zounds! I can believe it, and I would never have larded it so well for your mouth. But, by all means, finish it all up, take everything with you, and be gone quickly, I'd rather be shot of it.

Each soldier throws himself at the table. Some take bottles, others bread, meat or the dessert. In the blink of an eye the table is clear; one soldier holds a bowl of cream cheese in his hand, and eats it so fast that he gets it on his face. He gives some to one of his friends who imitates him, they laugh as they look at each other. The all exit through the furthest front-stage wings. One of the last soldiers returns to embrace Charlot, and says in German, good French host, me, I'll never forget you, me will always remember you, farewell, good French host.

CHARLOT.

I can well believe it. At least he is grateful.

CHARLOT, *alone, looking at the table.*

How tidy it is! Ah! Soldiers are good at clearing a table! I'll get no profit from it but I'm serving my country, and those soldiers from both nations who yearn to unite for the common cause of liberty. Let's see, what pretext can I find? I have enough to provide another dinner but it won't be so easy to hoodwink my wife. Ah! If she but knew....ah well! If she did know...hm, hm....she would be angry. I love her madly, but my wife is a woman, and I have only one motherland. What will I say? Firstly I wasn't there....fifteen hundred men against one, deserters like starving wolves, that's my excuse....Zounds! An excellent one, and the prince of Wirtemberg himself could not exaggerate better....Though, on reflection, I'm playing a dangerous game! The general's aide-de-camp told me that I was under suspicion; and I haven't seen that poor devil the brandy merchant return. He's good at his work and risks his all on it. He has only one life to lose, and thirty thousand men to win over....Right, we'll do this together...(Rubbing his neck.) But let me see about

³⁵ Normandy is famed for its horses, due to its lush grass. It is said that the Normans of the 10th and 11th centuries gained some of their power from breeding horses in that part of Europe and deriving military success from their steeds' great power and strength.

replacing the dinner, I've enough time. They're all busy today with their plan of attack. (*A loud noise can be heard from the wings, and several soldiers are saying: he's a French spy, he must be hung.*) Oh! The poor man! That's him done for. And me, someone's coming....Courage and nerve, he won't betray me; he's French.

SCENE XI.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, CHARLOT, SEVERAL SOLDIERS *holding the brandy merchant spy by the collar*, SEVERAL OFFICERS, Madame CHARLOT, CHARLOTTE.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
Villain! Who are you? You're not German?

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *mimicking German*.
I, son of a Swiss, from father to son.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
I'll wager he speaks better French than we do.

CHARLOT.
The poor devil! Is it his fault if his father has always spoken to him in that tongue?

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
Master of sarcasm, you forget that he has just said he was Swiss from father to son.

CHARLOT.
I heard him well enough; but from a Swiss household, surely? (*Looking at the spy.*)

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *looking at Charlot*.
Ja, Ja, Swiss household, left to live in France.

CHARLOT, *laughing*.
What did I tell you. Oh! I know a bit about French, but far be it for me to force it upon you.
(*Aside.*) I know what I mean.

Madame CHARLOT, *whispering*.
Are you not forcing it on me?

CHARLOT, *whispering*.
Shh! Wife, you are my divinity, I can hide nothing from you.

(*Madame Charlot threatens him with her fist.*)

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
Here is the general, and soon.....

SCENE XIII.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, GENERAL CLERFAIT, THE CHEVALIER, THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG, GRISBOURDON.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

Your highness, fifteen hundred men from headquarters have just deserted, and here is the traitor who corrupted them. (*Pointing to the spy.*)

GRISBOURDON, *aside, to the ADC.*
Don't forget that Charlot is his accomplice.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

Now is not the moment...This needs deliberation: Monsieur Charlot is the best chef in the army.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Sir, me innocent, me good German.

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG, *in a fury.*

Villain! I will not limit myself to putting you to death, your death will be a frightful torment. Chain him up, and keep him in detention...Let's go and eat...What, am I not served yet?
(*The spy is taken away.*)

GRISBOURDON, *aside.*
And that rascal Charlot won't be carried off? After dinner maybe.

Madame CHARLOT, *terrified.*
Mercy! We've nothing left.

CHARLOT.

Sir, I was just decanting, for your excellency, an excellent Bordeaux wine; the table was set, and when I returned, I thought that your excellency had already dined, but several dishes strewn about made me realise that it was the deserters who had swept away the dinner. Sir, the damage will be charged to me. I have supplies enough to immediately offer you a second service.

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG, *resentfully.*

Well then hurry up, Monsieur. (*Aside.*) If anyone other than father Grisbourdon had denounced this man, I would distrust him further. For the time being I wish to observe him.

CHARLOT.

Your will be obeyed instantly. Come, wife, come Charlotte, set the table again.

Madame CHARLOT.
My God! My God! What a terrible day! It will ruin us, my dear Charlot.

CHARLOT.

Go on, and have no fear. (*All three of them hurry to restock the table.*)

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG.

Gentlemen, have you fulfilled my orders? Are the heights of Anderlech well manned? The only way to occupy them to our advantage is to send an advance party of two thousand

men ahead of the enemy, in order to provoke it into a false attack. I am not vexed that they are advancing, as we have all the advantage.

(The Chevalier turns away to look at Charlotte.)

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

Sir, what are you looking at? Ah! I see, our host's daughter has you in her sights. She is, upon my honour, pretty, but the mother is even more beautiful.

GENERAL CLERFAIT.

Madame Charlot? She's the army's most beautiful woman.

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG.

And Germany's too, you should add. Do you know that Madame Charlot is more than just a beauty? She has the spirit of an angel; I strongly make the case!

CHARLOT, *whispering to his wife.*

Listen, listen, wife, this needs all of your attention. They're talking about you, they're applauding your charms. (Ah damn! That's more than can be said.) Come closer, justify the way they're praising you; try and cheer up the prince of Wirtemberg for me, it all depends on you.

Madame CHARLOT.

Ah! Stop joking, Monsieur Charlot, I am angrier with you than you think.

CHARLOT, *arranging the table.*

Angry with me, my angel, that's new. Bless women for resuscitating their husbands. All I needed was a good old squabble to make me the maddest of men and the most amorous of husbands.³⁶ A woman of wit understands that so well.

Madame CHARLOT, *with peals of laughter.*

Ha! Ha! Ha! My Charlot is so affable! It's impossible for me to be angry with him. Ah! If all the French were like you.

CHARLOT.

Ah! If all women were like you.

THE CHEVALIER, *aside.*

They're happy. But I, but their amiable child...

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG, *calling out.*

Madame Charlot?

Madame CHARLOT, *approaching quickly.*

How may we be of service, Sir?

³⁶ De Gouges used the term 'querelle d'allemand' i.e. a German quarrel, meaning a pointless one, with the bonus that it provided a joke for her audience – lost in translation – given the scene's and France's actual circumstances. Many opinions exist as to the phrase's origin (the Germans being considered particularly bellicose) including that the Holy Roman Empire (considered Germanic) was made up of small states that constantly fought each other, or that German soldiers drank vast amounts and were consequently more quarrelsome, or that German students had a habit of fighting each other, or perhaps it comes from German territories bordering France being thought prone to skirmishing into French territory.

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG.
You are always obliging. (*Aside.*) Let's question her.

Madame CHARLOT.
I am only doing my duty, Sir.

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG.
You have several children?

Madame CHARLOT.
Three, Sir; two sons, and my daughter.

GENERAL CLERFAIT.
She is pretty, your daughter. She looks like you, Madame Charlot.

THE CHEVALIER, *looking at Charlotte.*
Ah! Indeed father, she is pretty, sweet, amiable, she is the image of her mother.

GENERAL CLERFAIT, *aside.*
I believe my son is in love. One could fall for less. (*Examining Charlotte.*)

Madame CHARLOT.
Hey! Gentlemen, I beg you, enough of your praises. Do women of our rank care about beauty? A few common virtues are all the ornaments we need.

CHARLOT.
Gentlemen, there's your reply. A woman at court could not have done better.

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG.
We single out Madame Charlot, and her reputation is made. (*Aside.*) I would find it very hard to believe that they are guilty.

CHARLOT.
Ah! If fate had willed it, Sir, she would have been far away from here, but she stayed her journey to be with me.

Madame CHARLOT.
Sir, don't listen to him, he is always teasing me, but I give it back in good measure.

CHARLOT.
Hey! Three cheers to my wife! If she were French she wouldn't treat you any better.

CHARLOTTE.
Mama?

Madame CHARLOT.
Well! Miss? Leave.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
You are too severe, Madame Charlot, for a woman of wit.

Madame CHARLOT.

This severity is not always to be found in men's teachings, and I know very well, gentlemen, that in order to seduce girls, one compliments their mothers. But I am no dupe.

CHARLOT, *aside*.

Hit the mark. (*Aloud.*) Sir, dinner is served. (*They go to sit at table, a trumpet and gunshot can be heard in the distance.*)

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG.

There is the signal for the attack. Gentlemen, to your positions. We will dine even better this evening, after our victory. (*Drums beating the general and the canon are heard.*)³⁷
(*To the officer.*) Order the troops to march past.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

Tents down, to arms, officers lead your troops.
(*A great number of soldiers strike the tents. Drummers cross the stage, beating the general, the camp disappears, leaving the stage empty.*)

THE PRINCE of WIRTEMBERG, *to father* GRISBOURDON.

Almoner, bless the army. I am going into battle.

GRISBOURDON, *stands on a bench, and sprinkles the Austrian army with holy water, saying:*

Soldiers, may God bless your arms and sanctify your souls.

CHARLOT, *aside*.

Scoundrel, you're giving them their money's worth. I could swear they'd decided not to dine.

THE CHEVALIER.

What is to become of me? Let's explore, and choose the shortest path that will take me, with my beloved Charlotte, into the French army.

CHARLOT.

Wife, do not move from here, I am coming back to strike everything. (*He exits.*)

SCENE XIV.

GRISBOURDON, *from the back of the stage*.

At last, here I am, in charge of the battlefield. Ah! Madame Charlot, Madame Charlot! You will find out what an amorous man and an irritated monk can do.

Madame CHARLOT, *noticing him*.

Mercy! Alone with my daughter and that villain! But let us not be afraid. My fear will only encourage his audacity.

GRISBOURDON, *with a shifty look*.

The God of wars exempts his ministers and the beautiful sex from risking an homicidal career. Let's live, Madame Charlot, let's live. Perhaps at this very moment, as I speak to

³⁷ The general or 'la générale' was drummed around a military encampment to signify that everyone must strike camp and prepare to march.

you, Monsieur Charlot is no longer of this world. You are beautiful, I am amorous, and we are alone.

CHARLOTTE.

Ah, Mama! He's making terrible eyes at you!

GRISBOURDON, *wanting to kiss Madame Charlot.*

Madame Charlot, I want to kiss you.

Madame CHARLOT, *backing off indignantly.*

Don't come near me, fiend of the Devil masquerading as a minister of peace.

GRISBOURDON.

Ha! So that's your tone, Madame Charlot! I'll teach you not to play that game with a strapping man like me.

Madame CHARLOT, *running to the back of the theatre.*

Help! Help!

CHARLOTTE, *screaming.*

Father! Father!

SCENE XV.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, [THE AIDE-DE-CAMP], *several Austrian soldiers crossing the stage in flight.*

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

Save yourself, Madame Charlot, here come the French. General Dumourier is at their head. He's furious, and wouldn't spare his father. If you fall into his hands he will take you prisoner. *(He exits.)*

Madame CHARLOT, *joyfully.*

Ah! Thank goodness! I've less to fear from the French than from this abominable man.

GRISBOURDON, *as he exits.*

You escaped me, but I'll find you again. *(He runs off.)*

SCENE XVI.

GENERAL DUMOURIER, the PRECEDING CHARACTERS.

(A clash of sabres can be heard coming from the wings.)

Dumourier is at the head of a detachment. The advance guard of the French army easily repulses enemy troops, crossing the stage as they fight. Madame Charlot puts her arm around her daughter and walks backwards towards the front of the stage.

CHARLOTTE.

Ah! Mother, what will become of us?

Madame CHARLOT, *trembling*.
Do not fear, daughter, the French will not hurt you.

(The French comprehensively drive the Austrians back into the wings.)

GENERAL DUMOURIER, *at the head of his troops*.

Bravo! My dear companions in arms, bravo! What excellent soldiers these French republicans are! You have reached the level of heroes of the republic. What a glory it is for me to command men like yourselves! But what do I see?....Two women, two women full of terror. (*Advancing.*) Rest assured, ladies, we are not followers of tyrants. Far from overwhelming your sex, we protect it; we avenge humanity and the sainted laws of misunderstood nature. We are, men, friends of mankind, and not your enemies.

Madame CHARLOT.
He's a Frenchman!

GENERAL DUMOURIER.
Is this you daughter, Madame?

Madame CHARLOT.
Yes, Sir.

GENERAL DUMOURIER.
The sweet child, she's as lovely as she is fair. And you are her mother? May I ask, without indiscretion, what is the state of your husband?

Madame CHARLOT, *lowering her eyes*.
He's French, and....

GENERAL DUMOURIER.
I understand, he is attached to Leopold's retinue.

Madame CHARLOT.
Yes, Sir, he is the army's cook.

DUMOURIER, *embracing her*.
How, Madame! You are the spouse of that good man, of that respectable Frenchman? If he is attached to the enemy camp, he has nonetheless served his motherland. I have just received, from him, fifteen hundred Austrian deserters. Judge, Madame, how dear your husband is to me!

Madame CHARLOT, *agreeably surprised*.
Ah, the scoundrel, how he tricked me! But I forgive him.

DUMOURIER.
What! Madame, would you have blamed him for serving his motherland and the cause of liberty?

Madame CHARLOT.
No, Sir, I am far from blaming him. May the French under your command break all the tyrants' sceptres. Reestablish, across the universe, equality, the union of peoples, that

paternal love of our ancestors. That is the wish of all Europe, and it the one I hold dearest for the good of the entire world.

DUMOURIER.

Madame, if you are not French, then you were made to become one. I have two intrepid warriors at the head of my army; the revolution has achieved the greatest feats, even for your sex. They emulate each other and distinguish themselves; it's a matter of who serves the public cause the best. In politics, in battle, everywhere women follow in our footsteps, and your sex now competes with our own; that is the fruit of this sovereign revolution.

CHARLOTTE.

Oh! Mama, how I would like to see these French women! If only I could be like them.

DUMOURIER, *stopping her.*

You will see them shortly, Mademoiselle. But we are exhausted, and famished. Would you, Madame, serve us a morsel of dinner, as fast as you can? (*Going to the back of the stage.*) Here is a fine collation, conveniently fit for purpose. With your permission?

Madame CHARLOT.

Sir, that is our Generals' dinner. It's the second time we have served it. The soldiers corrupted by my husband took away the first one, and....

DUMOURIER, *laughing.*

And we can dispose of the second, can't we? That's delightful! (*Cutting a piece of bread and a chicken leg.*) Come, my illustrious companions, my dear comrades, copy me. This is the dinner of our enemies, it must be excellent as it is served by the Graces. (*They eat everything with a devouring appetite, without sitting down.*) We have the devil of an appetite, a soldier's hunger, that says it all.

Madame CHARLOT, *approaching the table and taking a bottle.*
I wish to pour you a drink.

DUMOURIER.

Would you drink a toast with us, and this beautiful angel too.

Madame CHARLOT.

Most willingly.

DUMOURIER.

Come, my friends, to the health of the French soldiers.

Madame CHARLOT.

And I, I drink to the health of Mars who commands them.

DUMOURIER.

Good mistress, that is too kind, and I do not merit this tribute. (*Looking at Charlotte.*) Come friends, to the health of the French republic, and of free men.

THE SOLDIERS.

And of our General.

SCENE XVII.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, CHARLOT, *at the rear of the stage, lifting his arms to the sky.*

CHARLOT.

What do I see! My wife clinking her glass with General Dumourier? (*Rushing into Dumourier's arms.*) Oh! Our liberator, god of battle, magnanimous hero, allow me to embrace you in friendship, in brotherhood, and you too my dear fellow citizens. Let me hold you in my arms. I feel I am crying, despite myself, but they are tears of joy! My dear, have you given them everything they needed? What do you want? What do you desire? My money, my fortune, it is all yours. Oh my fellow citizens! Can you forgive me? I only took on the job of cook to the enemy army to serve my country better. But do not risk yourselves down on the plain. You are expected at the gates of Brussels, and you could be ambushed. All the avenues, the forest ways, the hills, are laid with traps. Everywhere death awaits you. The tyrants' war is not the honest war of the people.

DUMOURIER.

I know. But everywhere victory awaits us. We were rather tired. Here is something towards what we have taken. My friend, we will meet again I hope. We must rejoin the army. Come, comrades, let's go and find our beds in the middle of the fields, we won't have the bother of undressing. My friends, tomorrow, I offer you lunch in Brussels. We are going to have such a good night!

CHARLOT.

I wish to know where you will station yourselves so that I can bring some reinforcements....

Madame CHARLOT.

And I want to see these young warrior women.

CHARLOTTE.

Me too, Mama.

Madame CHARLOT.

No, Mademoiselle. Go and join the canteen wagons, we won't be long.

DUMOURIER.

What good people! The dear child! Citizen warriors, fall in. Get the troops to march.

(They march in single file, to the sound of the 'carmagnole'.³⁸ Charlot takes his wife and his daughter, and they skip offstage.)

End of the second act.

ACT III.

FIRST SCENE.

³⁸ The 'carmagnole' was a popular song named after the Piedmontese citadel of Carmagnola taken by the French army of the South in September 1792. Its chorus would fit perfectly in this scene as it concerns victory and the sound of the canon; the verses are crudely anti-monarchist and satirise the royal family's imprisonment which had taken place the previous month.

*The set represents the valley of the Anderlech hills.
(Two detachments of German soldiers and German officers.)*

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP (*To the soldiers.*)

Soldiers, create an ambush at the entrance of the forest. You, over there. I will go this way.

(They divide themselves in two, and leave through opposite wings. Grisbourdon enters in between the two detachments, as they march off.)

SECOND SCENE.

GRISBOURDON, *alone.*

Come, I must choose my side. There's nothing to hope for from Madame Charlot. As for that spy, their worthy colleague, that plundering liar, he's hung now, thanks to me. I hope that Monsieur Charlot will follow him soon. I'll wait for him at our entry into Brussels. Ah! Madame Charlot, have you no idea what a priest's spurned desires can achieve? We are not those worldly men whose heads can be turned by love. We keep our sang-froid, our aplomb. We repay your disdain with calumny and revenge. Ah! You are spirited yet you are not wise enough to fear Molinard Grisbourdon's resentment. I will start by humiliating her sense of self. I will write and tell her that she is ugly, that I only wanted to test her, and at the same time I will spread a scandalous libel about her and the army. She already has many enemies. Despite her amiability she has a certain pride, something revolting, that freezes the blood. Come, Grisbourdon, don't waste time, first deliver up her husband, that is the only way to obtain the wife, and maybe I can seduce the daughter too. She is really nice. Ha! I should get the wife arrested along with the husband. That would be much better, not a bad idea. I must pursue it, and rejoin General Clerfait to execute my plan.

SCENE III.

THE CHEVALIER, CHARLOTTE (*coming down from the hill, and stopping half-way to let Grisbourdon leave.*)

THE CHEVALIER, *holding Charlotte by the hand.*

He's already gone. Beautiful Charlotte, let your fears go. Love, let me triumph over tyranny and convince my lover. Everything is ready for our flight, it's the only way to overcome all the obstacles.

CHARLOTTE.

Ah! Chevalier, what do you require of me? What must I do?

THE CHEVALIER.

Follow the most tender, the most faithful of lovers.

CHARLOTTE.

At my age it's possible to feel the first signs of love; they penetrated my heart when I first saw you. But my duty, my duty....I depend on a father, and a mother who love me dearly.

THE CHEVALIER.

They will not love you any less. It is not them that I fear the most, it's my father, his tyranny....He will never consent to our union, but, my Charlotte, you know my plan, I am abandoning my motherland to serve the cause of liberty. That plan, once executed, will obtain the consent of your parents. What do I care for my nation or the vain titles of my family! Their only purpose is tyranny. I will serve in the army of the French republic; I embrace your father's state, there is nothing I would not do to gain you.

CHARLOTTE.

How can I resist your ability to persuade a trusting heart, and from this moment, I feel enflamed by the same heroism that animates those two young French women. I want to imitate them, to disarm my father, and to obtain for my lover his recognition. But to flee with you?...The clothes of my sex....

THE CHEVALIER.

I've seen to all of that. I've brought clothes, and all that can help my love, and our flight. They are right when they say that happy lovers are watched over by a beneficent intelligence; the god of love more powerful than any watchmen, puts to sleep their vigilance. But I hear a noise.

SCENE IV.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, a battalion of French soldiers.

A FRENCH ADJUTANT.

Soldiers, prepare arms, the enemy occupies this hill.

THE CHEVALIER, *running up to him.*

French warrior, free man, in the name of sainted humanity, deign to receive a German officer into the ranks of your citizen army. I, with my lover, cross over to your army. I want to give all my blood to wash the sin of the one I inherited from my fathers.

THE FRENCH ADJUTANT *drops his sword and throws his arms around the Chevalier's neck.*

All men are brothers, when honour brings them together. Brave young man, I receive you with gratitude, become our worthy companion in arms.

THE CHEVALIER.

If I could have the pleasure of speaking to General Dumourier.

THE ADJUTANT.

Nothing could be easier, the only problem is knowing where to find him. But we will all see him in Brussels.

THE CHEVALIER, *turning around.*

I can see my father's aide-de-camp approaching at the head of an Austrian detachment. Let's charge on those vile minions.

SCENE V.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, *at the head of an Austrian detachment, on top of the hill.*

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP *looking at the Chevalier.*

I am not mistaken, it is General Clerfait's son, the Chevalier, at the head of our enemies.
Lower your arms, officer, or I will kill you.

THE FRENCH ADJUTANT.

Intrepid soldiers of freedom, fire on the enemy.

After the discharge.

THE CHEVALIER.

Advance on them. (*He climbs the hill, holding Charlotte by the hand.*) Don't worry, my adorable Charlotte, we are free now. (*Seeing Charlot.*) Run as fast as possible, here is your father.

CHARLOTTE.

I obey love and glory.

SCENE VI.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, Madame CHARLOT, CHARLOT.

They enter while the French are climbing the hill. The spy and Charlot enter from opposite wings.

CHARLOT, *recognising the spy and running to embrace him.*

What, my friend, are you free? How comes it you are not dead? What on earth happened to you, your collar is all askew.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *with his collar askew.*

Oh! It's almost nothing any more, an adventure's stiff neck.

CHARLOT.

I begin to understand.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

At the point of battle, the furious Austrians beat a retreat. Very encumbered by my person, they decided to string me up; lucky for me that a few soldiers that I had won round, and who hadn't had the opportunity to desert, had the courage and good manners to cut the rope that held me ceremoniously suspended on behalf of the old regime; another gave me a glass of brandy wine and here I am, resuscitated. All that's left is a slight sprain of the neck, but that's nothing. It's getting better already, long live liberty, it only cost me the slightest tug. But that's the fantastical side of the job, and out of two thousand slaves I created two thousand men.

CHARLOT.

What happiness! Well, my friend, you escaped, perhaps maimed for life. There's a lesson that certainly takes the heat out of the fire of courage, don't you think.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Before the ceremony maybe; but having survived one could confront the army of the janissaries.

CHARLOT, *laughing*.

Ho! Ho! Ho! Never was a hanged man so amiable. Come my friend, long live the French republic! The men who defend it can no longer perish.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

I am, I believe, a fine example, and I am proud of it.

CHARLOT.

You're right, and I admire you but, as I look at you I can't stop myself laughing....Ho! Ho! My wife looks most agitated.

Madame CHARLOT, *at the back of the stage, looking into the wings, calling out*.
Charlotte, Charlotte, I can't find her anywhere. (*Leaning on her husband's arm.*) Oh! My friend, we have lost her. She's been abducted, it's done.

CHARLOT, *despairingly*.

My daughter has been abducted! Oh unhappy father! It's our fault. How could we have left her alone for a moment, when we knew what was happening? I will search for her everywhere. I will take the life of this base seducer, or he shall have mine. How do we know? Perhaps he has taken her into the depths of Germany?

Madame CHARLOT, *in the deepest sorrow*.

Oh my god, my god, I'm so unhappy. I will die of sorrow.

CHARLOT.

Here is the father of that base seducer.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *running away*.

I'm running away.

SCENE VII.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, THE GENERAL, GRISBOURDON, Soldiers at the rear of the stage.

Madame CHARLOT, *going up to the General*.

Sir, I beg you for justice; we are just poor sutlers but as you know our honour was our fortune. The Chevalier has taken our daughter.

GRISBOURDON, *whispering to the General*.

It's a ruse, Sir.

THE GENERAL, *whispering to Grisbourdon*.

I know. (*Aloud.*) I was assured that you were an accomplice in the abduction, that you even favoured my son's love in order to make him cross over and serve the French.

Madame CHARLOT.³⁹

Accomplice! I am beside myself. Here they are, these nobles who never understood virtue, and who never knew true honour. They believe the same is true of the people. I only have two words to say to you; your son will marry my daughter or I will shoot his brains out. I will find him, hiding in hell itself, and he shall not escape me.

GRISBOURDON.

Sir, you heard her [him?], make an example of the wretch.

THE GENERAL, *proudly*.

Marry your daughter? What audacity! Is that the tone, the language of a sutler, of a man of your type?

CHARLOT.

It's the one of a Frenchman, of a free man, and this type is equal to that of slaves like you.

Madame CHARLOT.

My friend, what are you doing?

CHARLOT.

My duty. My fate is accomplished.

THE GENERAL.

Such audacity? Soldiers, come here. (*The soldiers advance.*)

Madame CHARLOT, *throwing herself at the General's feet*.

Sir, for his sake, I beg your pardon. It is my son....it is my daughter...

THE GENERAL, *proudly*.

I listen to nothing but my own righteous animosity.

CHARLOT, *angrily*.

Get up. One can see that you're not French, though you will be soon.

Madame CHARLOT, *with feeling*.

Cruel man, I am a mother, and a wife.

SCENE VIII.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, PRECEDING CHARACTERS.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.

General, the French army is invincible. Already half our men have fallen. Your son....I fear upsetting you, is leading a French detachment. He ran to the enemy camp; he is turning weapons on his country, on his father.

THE GENERAL.

The traitor!

³⁹ In this scene Madame Charlot is written as addressing the General, and yet when Grisbourdon interjects he refers to 'the wretch' in the masculine form as though it were Charlot speaking and not his wife, equally the General responds as though Charlot had spoken so conceivably the first two speeches should belong to Charlot and 'Madame' is a typo.

CHARLOT, *aside gaily*.
I forgive him.

Madame CHARLOT.
And my daughter, Sir.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
Your daughter, Madame! You know very well that she followed the Chevalier and that she crossed with him into the French army. We wanted to stop them but they fired on us at point-blank range.

CHARLOT, *even more enthusiastically*.
Charming girl, the Chevalier will return her, yes, yes, he'll return her but goodness knows how he'll restore her to us.

THE GENERAL, *in a fury*.
Traitors, were you not their accomplices! Let them be chained up, both of them, and taken to the cells in Brussels. I want to make a terrible example of them.

Madame CHARLOT, *throwing herself into her husband's arms*.
Oh my friend, I wished for nothing, I was so happy.

CHARLOT.
All that you lacked was to be French, but rest assured your fate will soon be fulfilled.

THE GENERAL.
Take them ought of my sight (*They are taken away*.) Ten thousand men must be sent to Brussels as reinforcement. The Prince of Wirtemberg gave me the order, despite the place being impregnable we must anticipate all contingencies.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
Sir, there is talk of the city surrendering and I am doubtful of success.

THE GENERAL.
Come, since the Prince of Wirtemberg is occupying the heights of Anderlech, and advantageously fires on the French, lets us go and encourage the inhabitants of Brussels with our steady composure.
To the aide-de-camp.
And you officer, aide-de-camp, assemble all the detachments on the heights of Anderlech.

SCENE IX.

GRISBOURDON, *alone rubbing his hands*.
Well here at least is a partial success. The young lass escaped me but I hold the mother, and her rascally husband. I hope to have them seized at the same time. Ah! Madame Charlot, now you know what the pride of an irritated priest can achieve. How I hate her! How ugly she is now! Let me see what other crimes I can level against them. (*He reflects*.)

SCENE X.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, GRISBOURDON.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *at the back of the stage, holding a cudgel.*

There he is! Oh villain! Hypocrite from hell! If only I could wrap you in your heinous habit, and knock you senseless with this cudgel. Let me get the measure of him before I seize him....*He walks up and down.* The bawdy man has lean arms, he hasn't over-taxed them with hard work.

GRISBOURDON.

I must run to Brussels, there's no time to be lost, their case is already made. How I will enjoy contemplating that Madame Charlot! She will gain nothing from her tears, her cries, her pretty face. The more beautiful she is, the more her example is worthy of our maxims. (*Seeing Tape-à-l'œil he leaves, fearfully walking backwards.*) What's that I see! Is it a ghost?....It is him....I am not mistaken....That rascal of a spy.....Ah Saint Francis de Sales....his cord must have been cut and the scoundrel survived.⁴⁰

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *checking that no one is coming.*

Yes, you peevish disgrace, I have survived in order to knock you senseless.

GRISBOURDON, *hypocritically.*

One moment, one moment, my son. We can, if you want, come to an agreement. We are more or less of the same profession. Mercury never said that wolves would eat each other. Let us make peace for the honour of our group.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *in a fury.*

Me, of your profession! Rascal, I am a spy, truly, and I'm not proud of it, but it's for a good cause. This position is an honour, and I represent it now, but you, you gluttonous, lazy, cowardly, useless to society, corruptor or men and profanation of the lesson of a clement God, take the punishment that his justice has reserved for you....(*He hits him with the cudgel, floors him, walks on his body, and asks as he jumps on him.*) Are you dead, rascal?

GRISBOURDON.

Phew! My soul departs.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Not towards God, clown. But someone is coming....Supposing I were caught. I must reach the town of Brussels. I must spare no effort and all will be well. (*He exits.*)

GRISBOURDON, *half getting up, and looking to see if he is gone.*

Phew! The wretch has broken my bones.

SCENE XI.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, GRISBOURDON, a rear guard of Austrian soldiers.

40 Saint Francis de Sales (1567 - 1622) was born in Savoy to a wealthy family. He trained in Paris and Padua as a lawyer before eventually joining the priesthood. In 1602 he was consecrated Bishop of Geneva and in 1610 he founded The Order of Visitation. He was an early pamphleteer and unflagging letter writer; his writings and sermons encouraged lay people to achieve holiness through their daily lives. Prayer and love, characteristics available to all, were at the heart of his message. He was beatified in 1661 and canonized in 1665.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, *stopping to look at Grisbourdon.*
Halt. It's Father Grisbourdon. Ah! My poor reverend. Who has reduced you to such a pitiful state?

GRISBOURDON.
That wretched spy we hanged this morning.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP.
What! Did it not kill him. That's very surprising.

GRISBOURDON.
No, by all the devils.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, *helping him to his feet.*
You swear, reverend. Come, it will be nothing. Soldiers, accompany Father Grisbourdon, and let us quickly return to Brussels. The French are chasing us from everywhere.

SCENE XII.

DUMOURIER, *at the head of four men on horseback or on foot, PRECEDING CHARACTERS.*

DUMOURIER, *whispering to his companions.*
My brave comrades, now is the moment to make ourselves known. There are only four of us, and there are at least forty of them. Come, my friends, let us once again be victorious. (*They run at the enemy.*) Give yourselves up, or you will all feel the edge of my sword. (*All the soldiers and officers lower their arms.*)

THE OFFICER, *trembling.*
Brave general, we have no resistance, the soldiers and I, we surrender.

DUMOURIER, *looking at the monk, and pulling him out of the ranks with the point of his sword.*

As for this ghost, as lugubrious as he is villainous, I don't want him. I only take men. Remove yourself. Go, disciple of Escobar, swell the confused horde of your fellows, I will reduce you all in one go.

GRISBOURDON, *hitching up his habit and running away.*
Thank you very much, Sir, French general, I'm off.

DUMOURIER, *putting himself at the head of his detachment, notices the two Ferning sisters who are fighting five German officers at the top of the hill.*

SCENE XIII.

DUMOURIER, *moving to the back of the stage.*
This combat is equal to ours; two women against five Germans. I'll wager the men will be beaten. Let's watch for it is in truth a curiosity, a marvel.

FERNING, *the younger*.
Sister, we must disarm them.

FERNING, *the elder*.
Charge your pistols, sister, and let me go first.

FERNING, *the younger, charges her pistols and runs at the enemy*.
Give yourselves up. (*She discharges a pistol, a soldier falls to the ground and combat is engaged. The two Ferning sisters beat the Austrians and disarm them.*)

FERNING, *the elder*.
This one, sister, is well and truly ours; we're on our own but these gentlemen won't argue with us. But here is the general.

SCENE XIV.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, General DUMOURIER.

FERNING, *the elder*.
General, here are four prisoners. They were right to surrender. (*Pointing to the dead soldier.*) Blessed day, you have the proof, you can see that we're not in jest. This is no small advantage. (*To the Austrians, pulling the officers by the arms, and dragging them towards Dumourier.*) Come, cowards, vile followers of tyrants, humiliate yourselves in front of the French republic's sword. With an exemplary pardon in front of the Supreme Being, rid yourselves of your base servitude. On your knees, it's an order. (*They fall on their knees at Dumourier's feet, and lift their prayerful hands to the sky.*)

FERNING, *junior to Dumourier*.
Do you not find this attitude novel, General? It's worse than surrender.

DUMOURIER, *laughing*.
Ha, Ha, truly! I can hardly believe what I'm seeing. (*To the Austrians.*) Get up, wretches, cowards that you are. You were five against two, one of you is killed, and the four who are left are defeated and reduced to surrender. And which heroes of the French republic defeated you? Two women! (*The two Ferning sisters show their indignation at the General's words.*) Do not be angry, ladies, this will not make you less worthy, nor less famous, but it is necessary that I make them feel the absolute feebleness of the cause they defend, and the invincible courage that ours gives to those of us who serve it. Look at them, they cannot hide their astonishment; ladies, see their surprise. Well! Yes, these are two women, two young people who have beaten you and made you prisoners. Bellicose enthusiasm; if glory is prestigious, then it is liberty that has created prodigies who will serve as examples to the world for a long time. Come, warrior women, pursue your conquest, it prepares new laurels for you. The enemy is gathered in large numbers on the heights of Anderlech. I'm counting on these gentlemen being willing to clear a path to allow us on our way.

FERNING, *the elder*.
General, I trust you will allow us to join this ambush. I think we acquitted ourselves rather well. This favour is the only one we beg of you.

DUMOURIER, *leaving*.

This favour! Unjust men, why are you not eager to render justice, as I do, to this amiable sex that is as full of valour as our own.

*He exits as the band plays: Allons, enfants de la patrie.*⁴¹

END of the third act.

ACT IV.

FIRST SCENE.

On one side the set represents a forest and at the back the heights of Anderlech.

SUZETTE, LUCAS.

Canon and gunshot can be heard; they enter running.

LUCAS, *looking all around*.

Ah! My God, my God! What a racket! My eardrums'll burst what with the ringing. War, Suzette, that's a terrible thing.

SUZETTE, *with candour*.

That is too true, Lucas. We've never seen the like, how they all do kill each other, those men.

LUCAS.

Ah! Suzette, what if they were to kill us too, that is frightening.

SUZETTE.

Oh! Marry, if they had a fancy for it, it could well happen.

LUCAS.

And who would mind our beasts, if they do kill us all, Suzette? I know nothing of them politics. But for all that the French are honest, they've been at our farm since yesterday, and haven't even touched this much (*He makes a sign with his finger.*) and the Germans eat you out of house and home.

SUZETTE.

Ah! That's so true, you're right Lucas, they devour us. When they pass near the vines it's like a hailstorm, nothing's left, they eat right down to the stumps.

A bagpipe is heard.

LUCAS, *listening*.

⁴¹ These words form the opening line of *La Marseillaise*. Composed in April 1792 by Rouget de Lisle, while in the army, it was originally known as the battle song of the army of the Rhine and was first heard in Strasbourg, sung by the composer. It spread through the army and volunteers, those from Marseille singing it as they marched to Paris in August of that year, hence its new name. It became the French national anthem on 14 July 1795. Like many other symbols of that revolutionary time its usage went in and out of fashion until being decisively reinstated in 1879.

Can you hear the shepherd's bagpipe? We must gather the flock. Come, Suzette, how time flies by with you! Not a word have you said to me for a few days, Mademoiselle Suzette.

SUZETTE.

It's not for me to start. You're always running after the French, and you leave me all alone half the time.

LUCAS.

Oh! I'm too upset about that. I do love you though, really, but you see Mamzelle Suzette, that's not all. If I were a boy from a farm, with no father and no mother, ah I can't answer for what I'd do! This love of liberty, 'tis that beautiful! It touches your soul. It gives spirit to those what don't have any. I can feel well enough what I'd do if I sees red. (*He pulls a cockade from his pocket*) 'Ere, see this sign? I was going to put it on my hat what was given me by a brave French soldier. (*He puts on his hat with a jolly air.*) Well! Mamzelle Suzette, ain't I beautiful? I look like a jolly fellow, don't I.

SUZETTE, *sadly*.

Go on, Monsieur Lucas, I can see that you want to leave me. I don't love you any more, and I won't for the rest of my life. I know that I'll die afterwards and you'll be the reason.

LUCAS.

Don't speak to me like that, don't speak to me like that. That kills us all while we live, do yer see?

SUZETTE.

Very well! I won't talk of it any more, but on condition that you stop saying you'll leave us. I've enough to bear when I think your father won't want me to marry you, 'cos I'm not rich.

LUCAS, *with a simple air*.

So, about fathers now? They must always be respected. That's fair enough, but with marriages of boys and girls, it's none of their business, it's natural. Before we go there's a song I want to sing you, what I learned yesterday. (*He looks towards the sun.*) I've got the time, sun's only just setting.

SUZETTE.

And if night creeps up on us? Here, Lucas, let's not stay any longer, let's go gather our animals. You know perfectly well I'm going to Brussels tomorrow morning early. Come along, come along, I've no time to lose.

LUCAS.

Od's bobs, you will hear my song, I didn't get m'self going for nothing, what's more I know that it'll please you. Blast it would be better if you sang it, yours is a prettier voice than mine. 'Ere spout out these couplets, you knows how to read, the letters is good. Oh! Marry, 'twas a good republican what gave it to us. (*Lucas hums the tune of We'd Count Diamonds.*)⁴²

SUZETTE.

⁴² I've only found two references to the tune *On compterait les diamants*, both on Gallica. One accompanies a saucy song about seduction by Monsieur de Belle fils (undated) the other has anti-Jacobin lyrics from 1794.

I can't resist. But I'm telling you, if I sings badly 'tis no fault of mine. I only know this tune one way.

LUCAS.

Sing then, hurry up.

Verses to the tune of: We'd Count Diamonds.

SUZETTE *sings the verses.*

A handsome boy was Harry,
Who fondly loved his papa,
But he also loved sweet Carrie,
Which displeased his dear mama.
To put an end to his despair,
He says one day, with anger raw:
I'll make you weep, see if I care;
Tomorrow I go off to fight this war. (*bis*)

Father suddenly charges in,
And Harry flees from home,
In a sing-song voice a sayin':
Oh! I've read the wise man's tome.
In a few words, we can learn,
The limits of a father's reach,
Suitably we must discern
To follow the way they teach. (*bis*)

We must live for our neighbours,
That is the motto of France,
Free humankind with our labours,
Through treaties and alliance,
Give to men the sainted laws
Of nature that is sovereign.
Fathers, these rights are yours.
Children, there is your chain. (*bis*)

LUCAS.

Didn't I say so, Mademoiselle Suzette, that is were good. By golly, I loves you doubly twofold now that I knows you sings so good!

SUZETTE.

Oh! I don't sing better than any other, but I didn't know all these things. You were right, Monsieur Lucas, to tell me this song was really pretty. I also want to learn it by heart. But it's dark now. I'll never have time to gather my sheep, and you know perfectly well...

LUCAS, *laughing.*

Here, Suzette, it's done. Here's the shepherd heading home. I'll bet he's gathered your flock and mine.

SUZETTE.

Well, let's go then, but I'm a bit scared, Lucas.

LUCAS, *taking her in his arms.*

Come, give me your pretty hand. Eh! Are you not mine? Fie! How awful to be afraid when you're with your lover. Ah! Marry, I'll go to Brussels tomorrow morning with them; you won't be afraid: perhaps I'll journey with those French fellows.

(They exit.)

SCENE II.

CHARLOTTE, THE CHEVALIER.

CHARLOTTE, *wearing an officer's uniform.*

I'm trembling....Oh mama!....Oh papa! What have I done?

THE CHEVALIER.

My adorable Charlotte, how your fears pierce my heart! You haven't left you parents to separate yourself from them for ever. Remember that you distanced yourself from them in the hope of uniting yourself to me. Ah! Charlotte, if you remember their severity, consider that it was as terrible as my father's. They would never have approved of our union. Either we had to stop loving each other, or together decide to be party to the flight. Why repent of a step that takes our happiness to its highest level? The French army is camped near here. I will ask the General for help. He knows you already, and takes an interest in your family; since your father is French, he will marry us, we'll be happy, we will. Cease distressing yourself.

CHARLOTTE.

Ah! Clerfait! Why must the voice of love be more persuasive than duty's.

THE CHEVALIER.

Your duty will be fulfilled, beautiful Charlotte. Your parents will soon realise that you haven't followed a dishonourable man but a tender and respectful husband.

CHARLOTTE.

So! I will trust you. Come, take me to these two warrior women who fight at the head of the French army. I must distinguish myself: I want to be worthy of my lover, but night has fallen and it is totally dark. How will we get there!

THE CHEVALIER, *taking her hand.*

I know the way.

CHARLOTTE, *listening.*

I can hear a noise.

THE CHEVALIER.

It's the leaves trembling.

CHARLOTTE.

Alas! My heart is as agitated as they are.

THE CHEVALIER.

What a beautiful night!

CHARLOTTE.
But what of the day that follows it?

THE CHEVALIER.
It will be one of marriage and love.

SCENE III.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, THE TWO FERNING SISTERS, GENERAL ÉGALITÉ
at the head of a detachment of volunteers.

FERNING *the elder, quietly to her soldiers.*
Halt.

ÉGALITÉ.
Who goes there?

FERNING, *the elder.*
French.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
Advance guard?

FERNING, *the elder.*
The enemy is over there.

FERNING, *the younger.*
Are you not mistaken? On the contrary I believe they are on this side.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
Women let us separate, and try and block them, it's only a detachment. *They divide into three and surround the Chevalier and Charlotte putting bayonets against their chests.*

FERNING, *the elder.*
Drop your weapons.

FERNING, *the younger.*
Surrender.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
If you move, you die.

THE CHEVALIER.
French, stop.

CHARLOTTE, *with a piercing cry.*
Ah! Chevalier, we are lost!

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
That is the voice of a woman.

FERNING, *the elder*.
Truly, it is a woman.

THE CHEVALIER, *low*.
French, protect us. I am the son of General Clerfait. I am passing over into your army, I have already fought our common enemy at the head of one of your detachments.

FERNING, *the elder*.
And this woman?

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
What an unusual adventure!

THE CHEVALIER.
This is my lover, the daughter of the Austrian army's cook.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
We are willing to believe you, but as one should always guard against those one does not know, you will tell us where the enemy is and follow us.

THE CHEVALIER.
Yes, most willingly! The camp is on the Anderlech heights, and there is a detachment nearby of two thousand men.

FERNING, *the younger*.
Is that not a war time ruse.

CHARLOTTE.
Oh! No, I protest. I followed my lover only in order to fight alongside the two Ferning warrior women, and to be like them.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ, *laughing*.
My word, ladies, this adventure is delightful for you.

FERNING, *the younger*.
Do not tease, General, this adventure will make the devil of a racket.

FERNING, *the older*.
I take this seriously, I do. I will enrol her, and place her by my side. As for the lover General Égalité, you take care of him.

FERNING, *the younger, listening, going to the back of the stage*.
Quiet, quiet, the enemy is approaching.

SCENE IV.

A detachment of Austrians, THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, AN AUSTRIAN OFFICER.

THE AUSTRIAN OFFICER.
Who goes there?

FERNING, *the elder*.
French, give yourself up Austrian.

THE AUSTRIAN OFFICER.
Soldiers, charge, the enemy is here.

FERNING, *the elder*.
Soldiers of freedom, help me. (*She takes the officer by the collar.*) I'm holding the officer.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
Give no quarters, comrades, since they resist. (*They fall upon the Austrians, engage in combat, the Austrians are knocked to the ground.*)

FERNING, *the elder*.
Sister, Égalité, count your men.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
We are champions of the battle field.

FERNING, *the younger*.
I have not lost one soldier.

FERNING, *the elder*.
Neither have I.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
Nor I.

CHARLOTTE.
For my part, I killed two Austrians.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
For a beginner, that is not bad. What do you think, intrepid warrior women?

FERNING, *the elder*.
Very good, take heart, my child.

THE CHEVALIER.
My hand is wounded, but it is nothing.

CHARLOTTE.
Wounded.

FERNING, *the elder*.
Yes, wounded, my child, in a glorious combat. These wounds are certainly equal to those of love.

SCENE V.

DUMOURIER, THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, *at the back of the stage*.

DUMOURIER, *listening and calling*.
I am not mistaken, Égalité, Ferning.

FERNING, *the younger*.
I think that is our General's voice.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
What! General, you too are skirmishing?

DUMOURIER.
Why not, just like anyone else, my friends, and I am not unhappy about it.

FERNING, *the elder*.
Oh! General, do not complain, we have not left one Austrian, they are all knocked to the ground.

DUMOURIER, *gaily*.
In that case, my braves, I am happier than you. I have not killed one man, yet I have two thousand prisoners.

FERNING, *the younger*.
Ah! You are right, General, your fearlessness and your happiness are of equal measure, and if we reddened the earth with the blood of our enemies, it is not our fault.

DUMOURIER.
I am assured of it.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
Sir, I wager that you have not conquered as agreeably as we have.

DUMOURIER.
That may well be. Nothing concerning your courage, or that of these two amiable warrior women, can surprise me.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
Now you must consider three of them.

DUMOURIER.
Are you teasing?

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
I am serious. (*Taking Charlotte by the hand.*) Look at this amiable child.

DUMOURIER, *looking at her closely*.
My word she's pretty! As far as I can tell in this twilight.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.
You are quite right, Sir, you have an understanding of pretty women

DUMOURIER, *looking at her even more closely*.
This physiognomy is not unknown to me.

CHARLOTTE.

Sir, I am Madame Charlot's daughter.

DUMOURIER.

Yes, certainly, my child, I recognise you. And by what adventure.....?

THE CHEVALIER.

Intrepid man, allow me to relate the details.

DUMOURIER, *stopping him.*

You are a lover, I can guess the rest. I will take an interest in you. My friends, you have not forgotten that you are dining with me in Brussels, and I hope that the Brabantians will, in their turn, alleviate our fatigue. Come, follow me, you can tell me everything en route. Let's not lose any time, this war is as glorious as it is surprising.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.

You are right, Sir, I am beginning to think that the mythical is joining with reality to render the French invincible. We can rightly name you the genius of the Republic.

DUMOURIER.

My friends, let's go, let's go. Courage and the righteousness of the cause will protect us, that is the genius that fights on our behalf. Believe me, young man, an old soldier does not view this warlike triumph with the same enthusiasm as you. I know how to wage war, it is true; I have never fought tyrants with more courage; I am defending the glory of nations, and not the humiliated pride of a despot. But I abhor war. My eye looks away as my arm strikes, and I aspire only to a time when the earth will be rid of tyrants so I can finish my days peacefully under the roof of a thatched cottage, and hang up this sword on the nail that secures the rights of man it defended. There, that is my sole ambition. The world is conquered; tyrants are vanquished; that is the work of the French. (*Gunshots and cannon fire can be heard.*) Comrades, it seems that we are closely followed. I think we are at the foot of the Anderlech heights.

GENERAL ÉGALITÉ.

Sir, you are not mistaken and I think that all the troops are on this side.

THE CHEVALIER.

Yes, you are right, they are massed; the body of the army is situated on the heights and, if the General will take my word for it, he should leave a few detachments of volunteers to keep the enemy on tenterhooks.

DUMOURIER.

Bravo, young man, I am delighted that we met each other. (*A second round of cannon shot sends cannonballs onto the stage; a fire is lit on the heights.*)

DUMOURIER, *picking up a cannonball that has fallen at his feet.*

This bonbon, my friends, is no small thing. (*He looks up the mountain.*) Ah! Those gentlemen are lighting themselves up.

THE CHEVALIER.

I can assure you, Sir, that they can't see a thing, they have lost their heads.

FERNING, *the elder*.

I agree, but that doesn't stop them randomly shooting at us and, without in any way diminishing our courage, I believe that we could use it elsewhere. What do you think, General?

DUMOURIER.

Truly, in centuries to come they will hardly believe this war. Children, women, all fight like heroes. How happy I am! My friends, despite myself, I am softened by pleasure. Come, my brave comrades, let's face the enemy, and when we have defeated them, I will fulfil my promise. (*The cannon fires.*) My brave companions, this last cannonade tells us what work we have yet to do. General Égalité, advance the army, we must climb this mountain and swoop on the enemy, swords unsheathed. I will be there first to mount the attack, the tyrants' beacon will light the way for the soldiers of liberty.

They climb speedily, and all the army follows. Cannon shot can be heard, as well as lugubrious cries and the clash of arms on the heights, fighting only involves swords.

DUMOURIER, *on the heights*.

The victory is ours. The enemy is defeated and is fleeing. Republican soldiers, nothing can now oppose our success. Plant, on the summit of this mountain, the standard of liberty in place of the tyrants' one, and let us pursue the enemy.

The flags are exchanged, and they all march past to the tune of 'ça ira', and exit without coming down, by crossing the mountain.

END of the fourth act.

ACT V.

The set represents the main square in Brussels. On one side is the town hall, opposite the Burgomaster's house; at the back of the stage one can see the French Gate.

FIRST SCENE.

GRISBOURDON, *alone*.

Ha! Cunning spy and you, rascal Charlot, finally I've got you both, and I defy you to escape me now. As for Madame Charlot, she obtained her pardon. The General is weak, the tears of a woman, her despair...the officers' prayers, the soldiers' pity, all that cacophony disarmed him. How different our ecclesiastical principles are from those of the military, they only have high spirits, unfounded pride. Generosity and points of honour. Ah! Yes, that's all very well. Governments fall on the basis of that principle. Poor humankind, what would you be without us! We have no need of cannon to reduce you, one word suffices, the holy mystery. That is how we will save the state, and soon the French...someone's coming, let me feign...

SCENE II.

GRISBOURDON, THE BURGOMASTER, BALZA, the town councillor.

GRISBOURDON, *with a cowardly air*.

Organs of the law, worthy magistrates of the city of Brussels, is it time to prepare the guilty to appear before the divine tribunal?

BALZA.

Alas! Reverend, there is no point in your hurrying, the moment will arrive only too soon, and I do not believe this is the time for examples.

GRISBOURDON, *angrily*.

What are you saying, Sir, it's the most favourable one. Have you forgotten their crimes?

BALZA.

No, but you must forget them, you the minister of a god of peace. Leave us, we are busy with something more important. Go, Reverend, go and exercise your sorry duties. The arrest of one of the guilty parties is announced. This quarry that you await so impatiently will be placed in your hands.

GRISBOURDON, *saluting him hypocritically*.

God bless the judgement of men and may heaven be praised. *He exits*.

SCENE III.

BALZA, THE BURGOMASTER.

BALZA, *watching him go*.

Dreadful hypocrite, I know what you are. (*To the Burgomaster*) When, I pray, will we be rid of these men who are of no use to society. There is the wretch they are taking to die: dreadful spectacle! Let's avoid it, come in. All the inhabitants are assembled. No doubt you will not wait any longer to decide which side to choose when danger is so imminent.

SCENE IV.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, THE MASTER OF CEREMONIES, GRISBOURDON, Soldiers, THE CRIMINAL JUDGE (*with a paper in his hand and a writing desk*), men of the people, [CLERK of the court].

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *coming out of the town hall*.

What tragic trappings! What a funeral! I can no longer back out. (*Looking at everyone*.) Come, Tape-à-l'œil, have courage, it is the moment to stand out, today my friend you will immortalise yourself. (*Noticing Grisbourdon approaching with an unctuous look*.) Oh! The scoundrel, I didn't finish him. If I could at least hope to find him in hell one dayhow I would shake him.

THE CRIMINAL JUDGE, *showing him Grisbourdon*.

Come, wretch, I am ready, speak....Unburden your conscience, put yourself in the hands of your confessor, and name your accomplices.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Me! Tell my sins to that rascal? I'd rather confess to the devil.

GRISBOURDON, *hypocritically to the soldiers and the clerk of the court*.

Stand off a little way, leave me alone with this wretch, that I may reconcile him to God through my prayers.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *grotesquely angry*.

Reconcile myself to God! Firebrand of hell! If I wasn't in your clutches. (*Menacingly*.) Come and hear my confession, come closer.

GRISBOURDON, *not caring*.

I wish to reconnect you with heaven, it orders me to pardon you. I am obeying its supreme will. Come my friend, try and reflect, admit your crimes to me, name your accomplices, and ask for forgiveness from God, and men. For my part I forgive you with all my heart, I want to save you from the snares of satan.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *angrily*.

You want to save me from Satan? Are you not yourself Satan in person, that has been used to terrify the human race, since the earth was made? Oh, General of the infernal army! How happy I would be to see you boil in your accursed cauldron, while I myself fed the fire.

GRISBOURDON, *pulling an aspergillum from his pocket, intones:*

*Aspergo te domine hisopo et mundabor
lavabo te, et super nivem dealbabor.*⁴³

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *moving back angrily and wiping himself*.

Oh, what an outrage! What is he mumbling? (*Crying*) Wretch! Have you no conscience, to beat a man when he is down, given he is defeated? You are giving me back what I did to you, but if you want, we can make peace. Let me escape. (*Confidently*.) I can serve you at another time.

GRISBOURDON, *hypocritically*.

Me, steal from God a repentant and sanctified soul. My friend, a glorious prize awaits you in heaven. (*He calls*.) Come....Take this wretch to the scaffold, his conscience is clear.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Rascal, you are manipulating me, but so be it, I hope the French manipulate you in their turn.

Everyone approaches.

THE CRIMINAL JUDGE, *in robes*.

Come, my friend, for the last time, name your accomplices. No doubt that chap Charlot, the Austrian army's cook, is as guilty as you....

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *grotesquely*.

What more does that one want, with his arcane look?

GRISBOURDON.

That is the Criminal Judge, who will submit your cross-examination to the court.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Well, well! I offer him your body, to make a mummy of it and submit it to the court. No one will claim it, and I will have done one fine thing before my death.

⁴³ De Gouges has taken these words from the Asperges Rite of the traditional Latin Mass and changed them slightly. This is a translation of the original: Thou shalt sprinkle me, O Lord, with hyssop, and I shall be cleansed; Thou shalt wash me, and I shall become whiter than snow. De Gouges's alteration shows Grisbourdon usurping God's place by saying 'I shall sprinkle you'.

GRISBOURDON, *angrily*.

He cannot be saved. He is a heretic, an apostate, a lion, a Jew. He observes every damned sect, and he is not a Christian.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *laughing*.

Fancy that! I am not a Christian? Just listen to this, everyone, I am here by the grace of God, and what's more as a good republican. So! No you're stuck, you rascal.

GRISBOURDON, *fidgiting*.

You heard him. Republican! Mercy! Quick, Gentlemen, hurry up, he is a scabby sheep who will spoil the herd, if he stays in it any longer.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *running towards Grisbourdon*.

Oh! Let me do it. (*He is stopped by being held. The Master of Ceremonies approaches Tape-à-l'œil.*)

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

What man is this? I begin to understand, it's the Master of Ceremonies. (*Coming up to him.*) Listen, my friend, stupid professions don't exist anymore so if you hurt me, it's not your fault. But do try, I beg you, not to bungle it. (*Crying.*) For I've already found out that the agony of this ceremony is far from bearable.

(*The Master of Ceremonies makes a few signs to him.*)

He's good-natured, he promises. (*Looking furiously at Grisbourdon.*) As for that rascal, don't let him near me. Come, as I must resign myself, farewell my friends, farewell my dear country, it is for you that I will die. (*He takes the arm of the Master of Ceremonies.*) Give me your arm. I prefer to chat to you on the way, than with that wretch. (*To the Criminal Judge.*) And you, with your face as miserable as sin, you asked me a little while ago whether or not I had anything to reveal. I have a will to make, and plenty of things to say. Let me be served a good capon baked in salt, and a bottle of Bordeaux wine. After that I will talk as much as anyone wants. I need all my courage for even the bravest man doesn't view his last moment with indifference. Zounds. I want to die happily, and who knows whether or not the world will last a week after I'm gone. Come, Tape-à-l'œil, you must end your illustrious career as a hero, as a Frenchman, as a friend. You will not, I hope, refuse me this last favour.

THE CRIMINAL JUDGE.

No, you will be returned to prison.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Good! This is beginning to take a turn for the better... Oh! I mustn't start to flatter myself. I won't escape it. (*He listens, a tocsin can be heard.*) Ah! It's done, they're tolling my death knell. *He exits.*

SCENE V.

BALZA, THE BURGOMASTER *coming out of the town hall, the monks and a few faithful.*

BALZA.

What's changed; that peel is out of the ordinary, it's the tocsin, Burgomaster.

THE BURGOMASTER, *surprised*.
I am as surprised by it as you are. We must find out more.

FATHER HILARION, *stammering to the faithful*.
Come, come to our cells, angels of a compassionate god. The French are entering Brussels. Come and shelter from the pillage, and perhaps the.....quickly, run to the convent.
The exit.

SCENE VI.

BALZA, THE BURGOMASTER.

BALZA, *going to the back of the stage*.
Come, I will choose a side. We can no longer be compromised by the interests of offices. I can only judge by what is good for the people. (*They go to exit, the tocsin redoubles.*)

SCENE VII.

THE CRIMINAL JUDGE, THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS.

THE CRIMINAL JUDGE.
It is time to put an end to the independence that is already manifesting itself among the people. There is talk of going to the prisons to drag out the sutler and his accomplice who is about to be taken to the scaffold.

THE BURGOMASTER, *going to the back of the stage*.
A great example is needed: they must both perish.

BALZA, *stopping him*.
Stop, you are risking your own end if you irritate the people now. Listen hear those murmurings.

SCENE VIII.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, Madame CHARLOT, *hair dishevelled*.

Madame CHARLOT.
Yes, my fellow citizens, I will say it again, my husband is innocent; he is in irons at the back of a dungeon. His only crime is to have resisted oppression and the tyranny of the father of my daughter's abductor. Kneeling, I implored his justice; the tiger! His response was to put them in irons, and drag both of them to prison. My sex, my despair, have disarmed the soldiers, I am free. But my husband, my dear Charlot....Oh people, oh Belgians, would you be less generous than the French people? Whose first steps towards liberty were to go and release their generous supporters from prison, the French guards who, like my Charlot, had only ever served the common cause.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.

Yes, yes, let's release them, we will be French too, and to prove it, we will fly to the prisons. Come my friends, let us no longer fear tyrants, we don't want them anymore, and we won't have any trouble doing without.

FIRST MAN OF THE PEOPLE.

Goodness me! That won't be too hard. They have cost us too much for us to want to keep them any longer.

BALZA, *to the magistrates.*

You hear him. Would you attempt to dam this torrent?

THE BURGOMASTER, *terrified.*

You are right, we must use moderation. (*To the people.*) My friends, I will look into the affair of the sutler, and I promise you....

Madame LAFEUILLETTE, *interrupting him.*

We don't need promises. Here, you see these arms (*She points to the people.*) They have more energy than all your words.

FIRST MAN OF THE PEOPLE, *showing a large gnarled stick.*

It's got some weight, this one!

THE CRIMINAL JUDGE.

Do your duty, that's an order, in the name of the law.

Mme LAFEUILLETTE.

Hark at him with his law. Oh! We're happy to have laws, but laws for all and not just for you alone, and then you'll see if we know how to respect them.

Madame CHARLOT.

Cruel law! Can you name one that is not a reproach to your injustice? Vile magistrate.

THE BURGOMASTER, *to the people.*

Have fear, Madame, and you, unreasonable people.

THE PEOPLE *group themselves and speak, showing their fists menacingly.*

We do not fear you anymore. (*They raise their sticks.*) It is your turn to tremble.

BALZA, *putting himself in their midst.*

Oh my friends! My fellow citizens!.... Control your tumultuous actions. The French are at our gates, and we need to unite, to decide which side we should take. We must decide according to your most cherished interests.

They all drop their sticks.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE. *to the town councillor.*

We are listening to you, we know that you are a good man, an unblemished magistrate; we will find you very difficult to replace. We will remember you for a long time, but as for these wretches, we will only remember them to revile their memory.

FIRST MAN OF THE PEOPLE.

We all love him, and as for you, we hate you. [*Presumably to the Burgomaster.*]

Madame CHARLOT, *to the town councillor*.
Oh, honest magistrate! You are my only hope, not for a pardon for my husband since he is not guilty, but for an act of justice that will give him back his freedom.

BALZA.

Oh my friends! Do not heap your praise on me. Wait until I have deserved it. My colleagues are just as worthy. We all want what is best for you, return peacefully to your venerable work. But someone is coming; the archduke's equerry.

The people who had begun to move away, stop when they see the equerry.
We will obey.

SCENE IX.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, THE AIDE-DE-CAMP *in the uniform of an equerry, speaking good French*.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP .

The archduke is coming, in person, to inform you of his latest orders.

A BRABANTIAN.

What more does that archduke want from us. I thought he was far away.

Madame CHARLOT, *with feeling*.

Alas! He may be well informed and will no doubt order my Charlot's end.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.

I also believed he was gone, but do not fear Madame Charlot, we'll wait for him here to see what he will say to us. If he wants us to close our gates to the French we will put him at our head so that the first of the good people's cannon ball will at least be for him.

All together.

Bravo! Bravo! Bravo!

FIRST MAN OF THE PEOPLE.

Millions of trumpets! What a good idea! Here, cousin, meanwhile that is your virago.

LAFEUILLETTE, *half-drunk*.

She'd fight like a horse.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE.

Would I fight? Don't French women fight like men? See those two Ferning sisters, they are fearless warriors. One can see them at the head of the French army, one on each side of General Dumourier, guns on their shoulders, pistols in their belts, sabres by their sides, haversacks on their backs, and a hat at a jaunty angle. Come, soldiers of freedom, let's march on the tyrants and their awful followers. Kill, kill, kill, but spare the people.

The actress must not notice the arrival of the Archduke. She has taken a stick from a man of the people and is swinging it around and touches, without noticing, the Archduke.

SCENE X.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, THE ARCHDUKE, *his Gentlemen, his negroes, and his Hungarian mercenaries.*

THE ARCHDUKE, *backing off.*
What insolence!

Madame LAFEUILLETTE, *leaning firmly on her stick.*
Oh goodness! I had not seen you, and I touched you without meaning to. (*Aside.*) I won't always put it that way.

THE AIDE-DE-CAMP, *violently pushing Madame Lafeuillette.*
Move off, insolent woman!

LAFEUILLETTE, *pulling his wife from behind.*
Come now, things are not good here.

Madame LAFEUILLETTE, *to her husband.*
Oh the fool! Leave me alone, idiot, I'm going... (*Her husband put his hand over her mouth, and pulls her into the crowd. The people rub their hands, and one can hear a sort of murmur.*)

THE ARCHDUKE.
Magistrates, what does this mean, this popular movement, these scandalous riots?

THE PEOPLE, *with concentrated indignation.*
Scandalous?

BALZA, *aside.*
How fitting for tyrants to treat legitimate indignation as a scandal!They...

THE ARCHDUKE, *to the Burgomaster.*
I returned here to see my orders executed with my own eyes: in vain did my spouse seek to make me leave. I, myself, want to fight to avenge my people and my rights.

FIRST MAN OF THE PEOPLE, *whispering.*
Why hasn't the devil taken him with her?

LAFEUILLETTE, *replies also whispering.*
That will come, that will come, don't you worry.

THE ARCHDUKE, *continuing diplomatically.*
People, listen to me I only want, I only desire, your happiness. These rights are the ones I am fighting the French for today. (*The people murmur. To the magistrates.*) And you, magistrates, deploy all the severity of the power entrusted to you.

THE BURGOMASTER, *trembling.*
I fear that your Royal Highness.....

THE ARCHDUKE, *brusquely.*

What do you fear? Show more courage. Are you forgetting that I am with you?

BALZA, *firmly*.

I will speak....Albert, times have changed. You call down upon us the plagues of tyranny in vain. We are the magistrates of the people, and we defend their rights.

THE ARCHDUKE, *backing off in a fury*.

What a speech! What audacity! Have I heard aright? Worthless magistrate! If I could stoop so low as to punish you, you would die on the spot. My soldiers, more faithful than you, just await my signal to avenge me. But, I am willing to pardon you, return to your duty, serve the people by obeying me, start by executing the two French spies that, in vain, the people want to save.

Madame CHARLOT, *deliriously*.

My husband, barbarian! Your ferocity restores my courage. I wish I could share with you all I feel, and all that you deserve. (*Menacing him.*) I wish I could....

The entire Archduke's retinue moves to stop Madame Charlot.

THE PEOPLE, *advancing with sticks held high*.

Touch her.

Madame CHARLOT, *enthusiastically*.

Tiger, your efforts are powerless, I challenge you, and you can do nothing, your reign is over. It is time for the people's reign, now your sovereign, to start. Yes, I declare that my husband created insurrection in your army, and I glory in it. And I, I nurtured, in the minds of my fellow citizens the germ of liberty which, for a long time, had been brewing in their hearts. We await the French republic's general as a liberating God. Do not believe that Brussels will resist or oppose his entry. You give orders for my husband's execution, but do you know that the general holds him in high esteem? His days are blest, they no longer depend on you. (*To the people.*) My friends, let us all run to his prison, break his chains, and give me back my Charlot.

THE PEOPLE, *as they leave*.

It won't be long, it won't be long.

SCENE XI.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, *except for Madame Charlot and the People*.

THE ARCHDUKE, *to the magistrates*.

All three of you are immobile. You can see the danger we are all in, and yet you do not oppose force with force? Do you want to reduce me to training weapons on my people?

THE BURGOMASTER.

Your Royal Highness does not question that the smallest act of force, in a moment of ferment, can produce a bloody insurrection, and that a spark can light a fire.

BALZA.

My enthusiasm may appear suspect, but I am true. The French court was lost only because it sought to extend its powers beyond the limits that circumstances dictated. You wish to imitate it, you yourself will accelerate your own downfall.

SCENE XII.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, THE PRINCE OF WIRTEMBERG, *followed by several Officers.*

THE ARCHDUKE, *troubled.*

What do I see? The Prince of Wirtemberg is coming towards me. *He trembles.*

THE PRINCE OF WIRTEMBERG.

Sir, it is done, our defeat is complete. The French are the conquerors. A god seems to guide their arms, they are invincible, invulnerable. We are losing entire battalions, while they don't lose a single man. No battle plan, no order in their army, no officer, no general, no rank. All are soldiers, all fight like heroes, and despite our defeat, we are forced to admire them. Albert, in twenty minutes at the most, they will be here. I have sent a request to the French general for an hour's cease-fire, to facilitate your retreat. Save yourself. Maybe our luck will change but we must go further away to await victory.

THE ARCHDUKE.

Is it thus that my soldiers defend me?

THE PRINCE OF WIRTEMBERG.

Eh! Sir, what would you want them to do more?

THE ARCHDUKE.

To die, to die down to the last man.

Cries of joy can be heard; several cries from the wings: long live the French, long live liberty.

THE ARCHDUKE, *to the magistrates.*

Are you just going to wait until these crazed people assassinate me in front of you?

BALZA.

No, Albert, these people that you calumniate, will not come near you. Let us run ahead of them, worthy colleagues. *They exit.*

SCENE XIII.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS.

THE PRINCE OF WIRTEMBERG.

Your courage enflames the hearts of the soldiers, but they are worn out by exhaustion and disease, and the people are not on our side. I repeat, save yourself. I am awaiting the French Adjutant General, and I will consult with the magistrates, to deliberate on the fate of this city.

THE ARCHDUKE.

With those traitors! Here they come with their people. I will only leave after I have shown them my indignation. Whoever shows fear is already defeated.

SCENE XIV.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, THE MAGISTRATES, CHARLOT, Madame CHARLOT, all the PEOPLE.

THE PEOPLE.

Here is the worthy Frenchman!

THE BURGOMASTER.

The city wants to surrender; it is over Sir.

CHARLOT, *to the People.*

You saved me but this poor Frenchman will perish. Alas! It is done, the executioner and that awful Grisbourdon had already taken charge of it.

BALZA, *to the Burgomaster.*

I agree with the resolution of the inhabitants of Brussels. Their wish is the only way to save the city from pillage and the horrors of war.

THE ARCHDUKE.

What shame!

BALZA.

What a victory!

THE PRINCE OF WIRTEMBERG.

Time is passing in empty arguments, we must respond to the French general.

SCENE XV.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, AN AUSTRIAN OFFICER, THE FRENCH ADJUTANT.

THE SECOND TOWN COUNCILLOR.

The French Adjutant General brings you General Dumourier's orders.

THE ARCHDUKE, *furiously.*

His orders?

THE ADJUTANT GENERAL, *carrying a pike with a bonnet of liberty on top of it.*

Belgian people, magistrates, here are the wishes of the French general.

The magistrates of the city of Brussels are ordered to immediately cede this place, unconditionally, to the French army, as well as shutting all the gates of the city, apart from the French gate.

THE BURGOMASTER, *having listened, looks at the other magistrates, and the Archduke.*

THE ADJUTANT.

What reply should I take back to the General?

CHARLOT, *removing his hat, as if he is giving a signal to the people.*
Liberty! Liberty!

FIRST AND SECOND, *together.*
Liberty! Liberty!

CHARLOT.
That is the reply of the Brabantians.

THE ADJUTANT.
I expected no other, and I place before you the first pledge of this long desired liberation.
He plants his pike into the ground.

THE BURGOMASTER.
We will adhere to the summons that you make to us today with gratitude, in the name of General Dumourier, and immediately cede this place, unconditionally, to the French army. We swear, in as much as it is in our power, to consent to the capitulation of the city. The gatekeepers will be enjoined to close their respective gates, with the exception of the French one.

THE ADJUTANT.
I will report back these words of peace. *He exits, looking scornfully at the Archduke.*

SCENE XVI.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS.

THE ARCHDUKE, *beside himself.*

Appalling liberty, idol of the French, you win! And you, Brabantian people, and you cowardly magistrates, listen! You are surrendering to our common enemies but very soon you will repent of this deadly enthusiasm and recognise your mistake. Like the Romans, these thieves of the absolute power of kings will dictate laws to you that are more rigorous than those of one king alone. You fear a tyrant, you will have a thousand. You will abolish the monarchy, you will have slavery. You want to be equals and so you will be by appearance, by rights, but divided by interest, by ambition, by favours, by all sorts of cabals. You will mutually tear each other from you positions, your employment. All will fight over the rags of one, and tired of successive change, of ceaselessly recurring calamity, of perpetual misery, you will finally, and in vain, mourn the leader you had gained through so many centuries of wisdom. I have nothing more to say to you, I will rejoin the army. Albert is not yet defeated. *He exits.*

SCENE XVII.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS.

CHARLOT.

That's a brickbat he threw my way. But never mind, we'll make a liar out of you. We'll be free, united, republican, and we will fight off traitors, like tyrants, you can count on it.

THE BURGOMASTER.

Frenchman, I applaud your enthusiasm but we must fear Albert's prediction. True, it comes from a tyrant but sometimes they have been great prophets.

BALZA.

Yes, people, the Burgomaster is speaking the truth. We owe the French this first ray of liberty, but let us be wise and be wary of becoming divided. Let us always remember that without obedience to the law there can be no government. (*Military music can be heard from afar.*) I can hear French troops advancing. First magistrate of the people, give your orders.

THE BURGOMASTER, *to the criminal judge.*

Go and fire the cannon to receive them and bring me the keys to the city.
The criminal judge goes to leave.

SCENE XVIII.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, TAPE-A-L'ŒIL, *running on.*

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Oh, my God! My God! How wonderful! *Coming on he bumps into the judge who is leaving, they both step back, recognising each other.*

THE CRIMINAL JUDGE.

What! That joker has once again escaped execution?

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Yes, truly, here I am again.

CHARLOT.

The poor wretch! By what new miracle, my friend?.....

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Well, a miracle!...(In *Charlot's ear.*) I converted the executioner, I turned him into a patriot. The crowd grew, we heard the French army's fanfares and the brave Belgian sans-culottes did the rest. And they hanged the reverend father Grisbourdon de Molinard in my place.

CHARLOT.

Father Grisbourdon! Oh, Saint Joan of Arc, heroine of the French, we are all avenged. Has he been strung up?

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Yes, he was strung up in the blink of an eye. I was released and the entire ceremony, which can no longer frighten me, faded away in front of my contemplative gaze.

CHARLOT, *laughing.*

So now we can send you into the deepest dungeons of the inquisition and you wouldn't moulder there, you'd manage to get everyone hung, right up to the grand inquisitor.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

You're not joking, I would finish it off, or lose my Tape-à-l'œil name. Do you see?

During all this scene preparations are taking place for the celebrations welcoming the French army. The magistrates are coming and going across the stage, as are the people bringing crowns of laurels, baskets of flowers and ribbons. Tricolour ribbons are placed around the various drums that are brought on at the end of the scene. The keys to the city are on a gilded plate. As the magistrate opens the city gate one can hear a cannon fire and the people cry: Long live the French, long live our liberators.

SCENE XIX AND LAST.

THE PRECEDING CHARACTERS, GENERAL DUMOURIER *entering*, THE BURGOMASTER *advancing, bowing as he presents him with the keys, Dumourier hurries to raise him.*

DUMOURIER.

Stop, magistrates of the people, spare us these shameful ceremonies, this feudal habit that tyrants called their supreme power, and that they conserved as long as they were victorious. A triumphant people come in brotherhood to break the shameful ties of a people still in irons. Citizens of Belgium, the French owe the universe a great example: they want to sacrifice themselves for the good of the world. Emulate us in such a beautiful conquest. The era of universal revolution has at last arrived; in the centuries of ignorance revolutions only erupted intermittently among divided people. Today the same cause must unite us all. Despite sedition our enemies are conquered, and when peoples become wise, kings are no longer right.

THE BURGOMASTER.

Philosophy brought about this august revolution. France will spread it to the four corners of the earth. She chose you for this enterprise, hero of the French republic, magnanimous warrior, intrepid soldier, illustrious defender of the natural rights of man. Brave and generous Dumourier, accept our greetings and our gratitude.

GENERAL DUMOURIER, *going in front of the three heroines.*

Come, charming sex, and become even more redoubtable in new circumstances. I only had two young warrior women, now I have three to present to our Belgian brothers.

CHARLOT and his WIFE, *crying out.*
My daughter. *Running into her arms.*

CHARLOT.

She's also its mischief-maker.

CHARLOTTE.

Oh father! Oh mother! Can you forgive me?

CHARLOT.

Zounds, I have to.

THE CHEVALIER.

Ah! Monsieur Charlot, could you be less generous towards me? Become my father.

CHARLOT, *signing him to be quiet.*
Shh!

All the Brabantian women crowd around the Ferning sisters.
Aren't they fine in that uniform, but they're so young!

A FERNING SISTER.
We are young, it's true, but valour has neither age nor sex.

A BRABANTIAN WOMAN.
What a proud masculine look! It makes me want to go to war too.

THE OTHER FERNING SISTER.
Imitate us. Let us do more today than the men, let us fight to defend their rights but also to seek vengeance for our sex against a tyrannical prejudice. Let us compel the conceit, the pride, of these haughty men to pay tribute to our valour, and let them finally learn that women can die at their sides for the common cause of the motherland and the destruction of tyrants.

GENERAL DUMOURIER, *pointing to them.*
Women, you have just heard it. The wise of Athens and Rome would have recognised in these two young people, two valiant warriors. The men of the French republic will be no less fair towards your sex during a natural revolution that must reach everyone without any distinctions. Come, Égalité, young Achilles, as kind as you are intrepid, conduct these three heroines to the head of the army, and let us take all the posts within the city. *General Égalité places the three warrior women at the head of the army, which then marches onto the stage to the tune: 'Where is one better than in the bosom of one's family?'*⁴⁴ *A tree is planted, young women dressed in white, with tricolour sashes, carry swags and baskets of flowers that they place around the tree. Houses are full of inhabitants crying: Long live liberty! Long live our liberators!*

GENERAL DUMOURIER *continues.*
I promised to celebrate a civic wedding, if Monsieur and Madame Charlot will give their blessing. A count of the Holy Roman Empire is abandoning his empty prerogatives to marry this amiable child; he loses nothing by this exchange. Do you consent, my friends?

CHARLOT.
With pleasure, general. Who could defy you? The city has surrendered, I must surrender too.

Madame CHARLOT.
This marriage will be happy since it takes shape with your support.

GENERAL DUMOURIER.
Come. And let the tree of liberty serve as an altar. (*To the spy.*) And you, lucky mortal whose inventive and subtle spirit united the Belgians to the French, you also will have your

⁴⁴ The melody *Où peut-on être mieux qu'au sien de sa famille?* (Where can one be happier than in the bosom of one's family?) was composed by André-Ernest-Modeste Grétry (1741 – 1813) for the musical comedy *Lucile* (1769) by Jean-François Marmontel (1723 – 1799). Popular since its composition it was taken up by the Bourbon party as their unofficial anthem at their restoration following the defeat of Napoleon Bonaparte.

reward, it is in the heart of your fellow citizens. And the example that you have just given through your courage will create converts among all peoples. You will always follow Dumourier's army.

THE SPY.

Many thanks, general. The sentinel of Mars can no longer die.

During this scene several citizens have approached Balza and then all retired to the back of the stage.

BALZA *to Dumourier.*

Brave Dumourier, see your ascendance among a free people. From this instance we will constitute ourselves as a provisional assembly of representatives of the Belgian people. We swear to die defending the rights of liberty and equality.

THE BELGIANS *all together.*
We swear it.

DUMOURIER, *to Balza.*

I swear in my turn to be faithful to the cause of liberty and equality. To defend with all my strength the rights of the sovereign Belgian people and to die, if needs must, at my post defending them. And you, citizen Balza, receive this kiss of peace in the name of the French republic which promises you, through me, to defend with all its might and all its wealth, the freely elected representatives of the society of friends of liberty. Brothers and fellow citizens, no longer be Flemish, from Hainaut, Tournai, Namur, or Brabant. Let all these names disappear for ever, let the name of Belgian be henceforth the only one known in all these provinces, and let it create one brotherhood under a single designation.

A tree of liberty is planted. The play ends with couplets, with a military procession, and with the crowning of Dumourier. Fame descends accompanied by a genie, who places a crown of myrtle and laurels on his head. Fame blows her trumpet, from which hangs a type of flag on which can be read 'I will sound your victories', as she ascends into the heights.

DUMOURIER *sings.*

Tune: [La Marseillaise] Allons enfants de la patrie.

Come, children who are Belgic,
Come, brave French soldiers too,
You must, for our republic,
Fly to successes new; (*bis.*)
We must, from the despot of Liège
Visit the smaller states:
For the thrones of all the potentates,
Must by us be put to siege.
To arms, etc.

CHARLOT.
Same tune.

Tremble, perfidious ones and autocrats,
The opprobrium of all parties;

Tremble, your parricidal projects,
Will finally earn their penalties. (*bis.*)
All become soldiers in order to fight you;
Our young heroes, should they fall,
France is ready to replace them all.
The battle is ready, we fight against you.
To arms, etc.

Madame CHARLOT, *to Dumourier.*
Same tune.

Our triumphs are your creation
Dumourier, generous and undaunted,
The republic, to your determination,
Today's laurels has awarded.
They are not a recompense
Offered to your felicitous deeds,
But given in honour of future feats
That give us safety and assurance.
Return Dumourier,
Return to the glorious field,
Pursue, pursue,
Belgians in irons
Await the sword you wield.

BALZA.

Tune: You of amorous adventure.⁴⁵

Let us safeguard the empire,
Let us maintain rights for all,
If despotism is to conspire,
We'll conspire that kings will fall.
Freedom, freedom, all mortals sing your eulogy;
Tyrants tremble, for your crimes you will atone.
Rather death than slavery,
That is every Frenchman's motto.

TAPE-A-L'ŒIL.

Same tune.

Our fatherland's salvation
Is the universe's guarantee;
Should it suffer domination,
No peoples will ever be free.
Liberty, liberty, etc.

THE END.

⁴⁵ The melody, composed by Nicolas Dalayrac (1753 – 1809), is from *Renaud d'Ast* a two-act comedy first performed in 1787. Later it accompanied these new verses written by Adrien-Simon Bay (1764 – 1795), Surgeon-General of the Army of the Rhine, in 1791. Its popularity was such that it rivalled the *Marseillaise* as a potential national anthem. While de Gouges alters the words of the *Marseillaise* to suit her purposes, the verses of *Vous qui, d'amoureuse aventure* are given verbatim. At the time 'empire' referred to France, later Napoleon Bonaparte took up the song as a march, choosing to interpret the word in its widest sense.