

SÉANCE ROYALE.

MOTION DE MONSEIGNEUR  
LE DUC D'ORLÉANS,  
OU  
LES SONGES PATRIOTIQUES,  
DÉDIÉES  
A MONSEIGNEUR  
LE DUC D'ORLÉANS  
PAR MADAME DE GOUGES.

Royal Session. His Lordship the duc d'Orléans' Motion, or Patriotic Dreams, dedicated to His Lordship the duc d'Orléans by Madame de Gouges.<sup>1</sup>

TO HIS LORDSHIP THE DUC D'ORLÉANS.

MY LORD,

I flatter myself that according to your noble maxims you will not refuse the homage of my Patriotic Dreams. You were good enough to graciously accept the dedication of my *Works*: untutored and not even seeking to instruct myself, this style of composition, rough and imperfect that it is, seemed not to displease you. However you must be surprised that I discuss such subjects as politics and philosophy; it was but in a dream that I was able to work at them: but what I manage well, and I felt it vividly when awake, is zeal and love for my Motherland. If all that is needed to save her, in this terrible epoch, are such sentiments then no doubt, MY LORD, I have a lot of talent and as my feeble writings only aim for her prosperity, they prove, on a daily basis, the renewed efforts I make on her behalf.

The bitterest criticism was not able to discourage me for I knew that I would obtain the esteem of honest citizens. With this advantage why care about the approbation of the wicked, those enemies of the Motherland and of public tranquillity? You will allow me, MY LORD, a few thoughts on this subject; I could even veer away from my aim but the interests of the Nation will soon overwhelm my own; that is what I proved to you in my

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<sup>1</sup> Dating from mid to late July 1789 this pamphlet was produced to counter the opprobrium that her poster of 11 July had elicited; in the poster *Séance royale* (reprinted in this pamphlet) she addresses Louis XVI directly, suggesting that he abdicate in favour of a regent as he seems unable to respond to the crisis facing France. Presenting the text as a dream bestowed upon an innocent author did nothing to hide either the temerity of such a direct address or the audacity of the arguments. De Gouges attempted to deliver the poster to the king in Versailles; unsurprisingly she was denied access to the royal personage. She claimed to have had 3000 copies printed. In her text *Depart de Necker et de Mme de Gouges* of 1790 de Gouges justifies her position by reasserting that the king would have solved both his, and the nation's, problems by putting himself above politics: as ever a form of constitutional monarchy 'à l'anglaise' was the preferred option. The *Séance royale* poster created such a fuss, it being assumed that de Gouges favoured a move to take power by the duc d'Orléans, that she was obliged to publish this elaborate explanation of her position; in it she admits authorship of an earlier anonymous, public, letter addressed to the duc d'Orléans in which a reference to Cromwell hints at the duc's own desire for power (see *Lettre à Monseigneur le duc d'Orléans*). The anonymous writer seeks to encourage the duc to become a different kind of leader. If the tone of this piece seems somewhat conciliatory it must be remembered that the royal censor was still in action and punishment could be severe for though the Bastille had gone, other more frequented prisons remained. The result of de Gouges's avowal was that her son was fired from his position in the duc's army (a posting acquired through her solicitations a year earlier); de Gouges's maternal instincts never forgave the duc for punishing the mother through the child, she subsequently never missed an opportunity to vent her spleen against the king's cousin. In this text, as in several others, de Gouges, the voiceless woman, undermines the status quo by expressing her opinions through the mouths of powerful men; she skilfully plays on contemporary ideas of imagination – how did it materialize, could women have it, was it god given – by shape-shifting to suit her needs. She ends the work with her characteristic plea (supposedly voiced by the duc) for better treatment of illegitimate children and a puff for her patriotic tax.

*Letter* that I had the honour to address to you: it was not signed so it is necessary that you realise that I was its Author. You have enemies, MY LORD; you have done too much good not to incite the envious. They tried to frighten me, to persuade me that you would never forgive the letter's Author. I give this calumny so little credence that, today, I make myself known publicly; furthermore, I dare surmise, MY LORD, that you will be moved by my zeal and the manner in which I have interpreted your feelings; furthermore I will dare to ask for your public recognition: I am worthy of this moment, though it be far beneath your dignity. You were gracious enough to promise me a position for my son; none was available but your Chancellor while not offering the position of pupil with your engineers, suggested it as an interim until something better became available; I cannot adequately express my satisfaction, I who sought no significant favours, accepted it gratefully, confident that I would be placing my son within reach of his own self-advancement. Today I would be so bold as to say he deserves his position thanks to his zeal and his assiduity; he has no one close to you or your Chancellor and his superiors all have their 'creatures'; you know that I was not importunate, forgive, MY LORD, this pride that suits my sex, whose undertakings are always misinterpreted; it is awful that women do not have the same advantages as men when it comes to advancing their children. Ah! MY LORD, my sex is so unhappy! In general it is only through charm and seduction that it can obtain anything from yours. Ah well! I will have to show the Public that there are nobler means if women want, at last, to play a vital role one day. I have no transcendent worth yet however mediocre my feeble productions may be they nevertheless secure your esteem and your goodwill for the laudable aim that dictated them will always be of interest to you.

The honourable Pensions that you have awarded to writers assure me that you will at least esteem a woman who is a practising author. I am far from deserving such an honour but I do hope that one day women will be able to escape the horrors of poverty thanks to the rewards that talent deserves. And I dare say that by valuing their sex more highly, decency will by the same token be restored. No doubt this revolution will bring about this great change. Such is my opinion, MY LORD; I imitate no one; no one presents their sentiments with so much sincerity. If this is prejudicial to me now perhaps, one day, my contemporaries will cite a few truths from my writings. At present a woman's writings are disdained, however I have the sweet satisfaction of observing that a few are adopted; yet, at the same time, it pains me to recognise that they are the ones that can be found amongst the writings where I have remained anonymous; so influential on men's judgement is the prejudice against women. You will not oppress me with this injustice. You will pay some attention to the observations which, on France's behalf, I venture to submit to your wise reflection. Better than anyone I understand your ambition, MY LORD; it inspires in you only the good of the State and of the Motherland. If your sentiments had been other you would not have rejected the People's unbridled offer though it would have easily fulfilled the wishes of an ambitious man.

I like your glory, MY LORD, and if, in the letter I had printed, I sought to probe your reasoning, following all the rumours that were spreading on your account, it was only to show you as you are; and if I had, for one moment, been able to suspect you, I would have made a point of publicly expiating my guilt.

I will end, MY LORD, by pointing out to the Nation that it has created public alarm and that this alarm in turn frightens the Nation; that it prevents it from according an absolute *veto* to the King: that if the King is not the superior power there will be no French Monarchy. No French Monarchy, no order among the French. These are our principles; these are our traditions. By changing them we will lose the State and the Motherland.

It is said that power reunited in the hands of the King will soon re-establish despotism and abuse. Ah! Has this revolution not proved itself a harsh enough lesson for the Monarch to allow future Kings and Ministers to observe more closely their august functions! A Government such as France needs only one master. He derives his power

from the Nation; but, for its own salvation, the Nation must offer it without reserve. Otherwise anarchy knows no end; disorder is perpetuated and, amidst these agitations, the Kingdom is endlessly endangered.

These, MY LORD, are the results of my visions. May they bear the stamp of reality!

Doubtlessly this latest work will expose me to a rigorous and singular criticism; one half of society will not forgive my attempt to purge the other: that is how the world works, some blame what others praise. A bit of philosophy consoles me in advance of this shipwreck, and if you deign, MY LORD, to adopt my motion, I will navigate without danger on the agitated waves.

[New page.]

ADDRESS,  
TO THE KING.

SIRE,

Truth knows no artifice, and in this painful and stormy epoch, can a sensitive heart have recourse to it? Undoubtedly. Favours, customs, etiquette, all disappear when the good of one's Motherland and of one's King is the sole intent.

SIRE, you have nothing to fear on your account despite the volatility that is leading astray all the French. You reign in their hearts but all your subjects are in danger. The best educated are the worst. None of them will admit, or want to admit, the heights of injustice and horror that we have reached.

It is time, SIRE, to be resolutely brave; it is time to surprise your subjects by the greatest of all virtues. Sadness overwhelms them, none has the strength to tell you what remains for you to do.

Well, SIRE, a woman, an unknown being, a visionary spirit, who, in her writings has long warned all her fellow citizens of the obvious peril that threatens us, has the courage to inform her King of the only means that can save France.

Yes, the time has come to speak out, your heart is known, it is good, sensitive and generous but soon it will be considered weak and simple; you may yet have to bemoan your tenderness, your love, for your people if ever they were perfidious enough to blame you for their calamities.

Prevent their injustice by a stroke of heroism; oblige them to bless the Providence that gave us such a virtuous King: show courage and resolve in this action and you will see, SIRE, that the Nation will give you back the absolute power that alone can re-establish order.

If in the project that I am about to suggest to YOUR MAJESTY there are expressions that could give cause for alarm please, SIRE, have the goodness to reflect on the praiseworthy aims that dictated them, and may YOUR MAJESTY recognise that no other Subject has ever spoken to you with such honesty and zeal and that I do so on behalf of your true interests and the common good. Consult your Ministers and if one of them dares to say that this project is senseless, be wary of his zeal and consult another; a second may add that your proposal will be accepted: then in that case you can be satisfied that you have yet again made a sacrifice that will endear you to all good French people and cover the enemies of the throne with opprobrium.

SIRE, allow me to express myself as though I were in your position. I will depict you, as I believe I saw you in a dream, at the heart of the Nation; may this dream be realised and show, as I awaken, the public adulation that I expressed for my King in my sleep.

No doubt the spirit of the day will condemn my zeal, but injustice will fall of its own accord, if it is not inappropriate: today everyone is a judge, but, Sire, not everyone sees

the interests of the Motherland, uninformed by any particular method, through my eyes. May all your Subjects recognise, Sire, that to save the State and the Kingdom at this great time, only sincerity and a love of the common good would be needed. If this love cannot dominate soon the spirit of independence then there will be no remedy for our ills, and all good citizens will bemoan with you the damage, and the new abuses, drawn from the very heart of liberty.

[New page.]

ROYAL SESSION  
THE KING'S SPEECH  
TO THE NATION,  
OR  
THE AUTHOR'S DREAM.

GENTLEMEN, I come to consult you on behalf of all my Subjects while also announcing that I am resolved to sacrifice my own interests, if they are required for the benefit of my People.

I have reflected on the various means that could be employed to please everyone; none has seemed to me to guarantee absolute success. It saddens me to learn of new disasters every day; I learn of new disturbances in Paris, and that a disorder will arise from force and liberty more difficult to destroy than the power that was bestowed upon me. I returned it to you, GENTLEMEN, when you so desired. What am I saying? I returned it? I bestowed it upon you, in my turn, to use it well, to save my People from their fury and to help me alleviate their misfortunes. I see only two methods to prevent so much misery.

Before I instruct you on the particular idea that concerns me I need to warn the representatives of my Nation that they are not safe; Versailles not being large enough to support a Militia capable of parrying the assaults of brigands or the ill-intentioned I have the foresight to offer you immediate assistance. Versailles is defenceless. With you, GENTLEMEN, I therefore wish to jointly re-establish my former household sooner rather than later.

It seems to me proper to restore all the Officers of the Regiment of the French Guards; let us bring back the Musketeers, the Gentlemen at Arms, the Light Horse, and these Troops joined by my Body Guards will no doubt save us from the obvious danger that threatens us.

How you must be suffering, GENTLEMEN, judging your feelings according to my own! The four corners of France are on fire! Your wives, your children are scattered far and wide, and you cannot unite to accept a party that is appropriate in the circumstances?....<sup>2</sup>

I am not weary of doing good but it pains me to see that people are weary of my goodness and that this goodness has not afforded me the consideration that is my due.

Following my request for the re-establishment of my Musketeers, my Light Horse and Men at Arms, I propose, GENTLEMEN, I pray, even, that you name a Regent, or engage whomsoever thinks himself fit, to name himself.

I must admit to you that I would never have imagined myself reduced to such an extreme measure: I always believed that my People would rely entirely on my goodness but as they have abused it so badly, and thereby obliged me to use the authority that I have in hand, I prefer that another exercise it, and if the ambition to occupy such an elevated position can assist him to re-establish order and excellence in Citizens of all classes, without shedding blood, then I would consider him to be not only my best friend

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<sup>2</sup> At the time of this piece what was later termed 'La Grande Peur' was beginning with country-wide riots and insurrection resulting in arson, looting and murder. The deputies gathered in Versailles would have been concerned for their families and properties in provincial France.

but also a second father to my People. At that price, GENTLEMEN, I declare that I would happily place myself in the hands of a guardian: perhaps one day my Subjects will miss me but as long as I live they will find that in my deepest feelings I am forever their kind father.

I trust that you will find no difficulty in re-establishing my Light Troops for you know their value and importance at this time.

I do not make this proposal for my own sake for I only want to be encircled by my People in the future but, as you have said yourselves, GENTLEMEN, the King's Household in its entirety is the ornament and the advantage of the French Monarchy; it is better to cut back on other, less necessary, expenses in favour of one that is so vital. I engage you to reflect on the man that I have requested from you, the choice is not without importance: if your enthusiasm for me were to oblige me to keep the reins of State Power then, GENTLEMEN, find me the means to do so as I choose fit; treat me as I have always treated you. Have no other interests in mind than those of the Motherland for, with these noble sentiments, you will soon put me in a position to save it.

I approve in advance all that you will do regarding this last article.

As for absolute power, you must know whether I am worthy of possessing it and whether you need fear entrusting it to me again: however, if you are forever French, can you doubt that I am forever good and fair? I was the Father of my People before being their King; you may rob me of my title but never of my love for them; by weakening my power you are damaging their happiness and their tranquillity.

[New page.]

HIS LORDSHIP  
THE DUC D'ORLÉANS'  
MOTION  
[IN A DREAM that may reflect reality.]

GENTLEMEN,

You are as profoundly affected as I am by the troublesome disorder and misinformation that reigns in Paris and is spreading throughout France [(alternative version) despite the vigilance of a General, born to lead both the wildest and the most civilised peoples. A second Bayard, without fear or reproach, whose bravery attracts the attention of the universe, is nonetheless not safe from perfidy or betrayal.<sup>3</sup> We are not exempt either. Public complaints against our office are beginning to explode. The lack of reserve and decency that reigns in this assembly and the outrage committed against the sacred character of the President of the nation yesterday, seem to signal a disorder that has no remedy: let us rather consider this excess as a solemn lesson that must preserve us forever from a similar oversight.]<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Pierre Terrail de Bayard (1473 – 1524) was a knight famed for his bravery and good character. Known as 'le chevalier sans peur et sans reproche' (a blameless knight who knew no fear) he became the model of chivalric virtue, standing up for the oppressed and shunning glory. He broke his back in battle but provided cover for his retreating men stating that he must be left there to die for, having never turned his back on the enemy he was not about to do so at the end. The General is presumably La Fayette.

<sup>4</sup> I have read two versions of this text, the extra sentences in square brackets occur in one version only, suggesting a second print run following hot foot on the first perhaps to keep pace with changing events. The days surrounding the 11 July 1789 were tumultuous: 2 July fury in Paris at concentration of troops around the capital; 3 July election of duc d'Orléans as president of National Assembly (he immediately forgoes the title and the Archbishop of Vienne, Le Franc de Pompignan (1715 – 1790), de Gouges's presumed uncle, takes his place, retaining it until 17 July); 8 July Mirabeau demands removal of troops and the creation of a Parisian national guard; 11 July Necker is sacked by Louis XVI; 12 – 13 July riots in Paris caused by removal

You will allow me to add, GENTLEMEN, that we have not yet tackled the most essential matter: this matter, I say, is the one that represents the imminent loss of France. Creating a wise and firm constitution will be in vain; minds are too animated, too opposed one to the other, for us to taste the fruits of this regeneration.

It seems to me that measures must be taken, and sound methods used, as soon as possible to arrest this widespread ferment. Here is what I propose to the National Chamber:

The fate of the People is of great interest to me; proof of this can be found in my conduct towards it; yet I observe, with sorrow, that this unhappy People is misled, agitated and inclined to try anything at a time when it ought to remain quiet and peaceful.

If we let it be, GENTLEMEN, it will increase its problems, cause our own, and prevent us from ever creating its well-being and rendering its households peaceful.

Today the entire Population spends all its time reading seditious, ill-intentioned, absurd texts. Every minute of the day the Capital drowns in these writings, created by the enemies of public order; they circulate in the Provinces, encourage the People to revolt and alarm good Citizens whose ability to dissuade the misled People is hampered by the bad impressions these appalling texts have produced: in a perilous situation, when evil has made such progress, it is very dangerous to put forward good intentions.

It is now up to us alone, GENTLEMEN, to embolden genuine Authors; to encourage them to take up their pens anew so that their salutary ideas will again enlighten the People encouraging it to return to work, to an excellence that alone can regenerate France. Workshops are deserted, public works abandoned, everything is in frightful disorder and confusion. If in a month all is not in order, I predict, GENTLEMEN, that the winter will prove to be France's grave.

Only Authors can be its Saviours; it is worth remembering Aesop's maxims: France is at the moment experiencing their sad and fatal truth. Slanderers and these calamitous writings have precipitated her into an abyss from which she may not arise for a very long time. We may yet save her; the means are at our disposal but only in her true interests: GENTLEMEN, let us be of one mind, keep freedom of the press but distinguish between merit and the force of mediocrity and vice. Let us determine that any writing not characterised by patriotism, public order, the respect due to the Sovereign and to the State's welfare shall be declared infamous and its Author condemned to perpetual banishment as an enemy of the Nation. This action will be more frightening and prevent many more incendiary tracts than a Decree that condemns these writings to be burnt at the hands of the Executioner.<sup>5</sup>

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of Necker, Camille Desmoulins speaks in favour of insurrection to a crowd assembled at Palais-Royal (the duc d'Orléans' royal palace, a safe haven from the authorities, was a hotbed of political debate), busts of the Swiss financier and the duc d'Orléans are carried through streets by a throng seeking weapons; 14 July fall of the Bastille; 15 July Louis XVI recalls his troops, national guard formed in Paris under La Fayette; 16 July Necker recalled; 17 July Louis XVI enters Paris sporting the tricolour cockade, this date marks the start of the emigration of the royal princes and other nobles.

<sup>5</sup> I have altered this sentence to avoid making the author gender specific; in the original French 'il' referring to the author remains gender neutral (...ce traitement l'effrayera plus et arrêtera bien d'avantage ses dispositions incendiaires, qu'un Arrêt qui condamnerait ses écrits à être brulés par la main du bourreau).

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If we let it be, GENTLEMEN, it will increase its problems, cause our own, and prevent us from ever creating its well-being and rendering its households peaceful.

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At the same time we should declare that the Author who draws attention through writings, universally esteemed, that are imbued with only the good of the Motherland will be accorded a mark of distinction worthy of the Assembly that awards it, and of the true French spirit. But, while we await this great day, let us fly into danger; stop the bad, encourage the good, GENTLEMEN, if we want to rejoice in our efforts and our labours.

Although my opinions differ from those of my entire family I would add a few words regarding my relatives. Can I be so unjust as to crush them when we are getting closer to nature in creating a new Constitution, when we understand that man is master of his opinion, as long as he is just defending his rights? Whatever prejudice afforded them their rights it cannot be denied that the Nobility are overthrown and, GENTLEMEN, I cannot blame those who sought to defend them; I find the opinions held against these men who thought they were doing their duty, as we think we are doing ours, unjust and out of place.

GENTLEMEN, let us pity those who were mistaken and allow me, in particular, to make known to you that I do not view the expatriation of my relatives without sorrow.

May we, GENTLEMEN, return to our bosom those who have moved away from it; may we bring back to the Motherland husbands, brothers, fathers, in a word, sons, still adolescent! Can I pretend, GENTLEMEN, that a similar departure has not plunged my family into the keenest despair; this same blood circulating in my veins can lead me to feel great regret at the loss of dear ones but it does not lead me to change my mind: I will say more, I hope, I trust even, that all my relatives will one day give me the credit I am due. Perhaps it is up to me, GENTLEMEN, to point out to us that Princes are useful to the French Monarchy.

Let us ask the King to recall all the Princes. I will end by pointing out that this recall will not only restore brilliance to the Court, which is no longer the Court of France, but also bring back those foreigners from the four corners of the world who stop at the frontiers and change direction as soon as they are told of the agitation troubling France. All the ferocious acts committed at the will and caprice of the People are making of France an inhabitable desert.

I am informed, GENTLEMEN, that at least a third of good Citizens whose wealth contributed to the flowering of France have gone or are planning to go and live abroad; these fortunes taken out of the Kingdom can only increase its difficulties. This revolution will do it more harm than the revocation of the Edict of Nantes that forced so many families to move away; it is not long since they have been welcomed back, when it was too late.<sup>6</sup> This awful example shows us what is left to be achieved; let us make sure, for the benefit of the People and for the good of the Motherland, that we do not create the same problems as did this Edict. We are about to put everything right but, in order to re-establish confidence, let us add to the Constitution that the Princes who are travelling be engaged to return in order to sign it and, if I am not mistaken, they will fly back to their country with *renewed* zeal.

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<sup>6</sup> As a result of the Revocation of the Edict of Nantes in 1685, hundreds of thousands of Huguenots had fled France; in 1787 the remaining Protestants had been granted citizenship by Louis XVI, and a right to vote and be elected. Article 10 of the Declaration of the Rights of Man adopted on 26 August 1789 (after the publication of this text) enshrined freedom of religious observation so long as it did not break the law or disturb the peace. Property, confiscated from Protestants by Louis XIV in 1685, was finally returned to them in 1790.

The fury of the People will transform into love for Princes always disposed to help [it] and whose opinions were not harmful to its interests; we cannot, GENTLEMEN, bring together the Nation without putting individuals back where they belong.

Is it not enough that we crushed all abuses, that we displayed the rights of man in all its extent; that finally we effected a revolution that will forever be an example to Peoples and a lesson to Potentates?

The universe, GENTLEMEN, will always use us as a model but I cannot hide from you any longer that I see, with sorrow, that you will lose the fruits of such a beautiful labour. Your debates that offer nothing to a good and wise Constitution will create general discontent: praise may be followed by disdain and it will be said that the French Nation, having shown a new and beautiful character, was incapable of sustaining it for long and that the Motherland, admired for its strength of purpose and its noble maxims, resolved to elevate its Deputies to the ranks of the truly great men of the world.

But these great men were not in agreement for very long and far from completing a precious task in favour of all Citizens, they shackled it, with excessive fetters, with useless words, with pointless discourse and with ridiculous sarcasm that they could have dispensed with if they had continually kept in mind the purpose of their office, their duty and their sacred nature.

Do not let us lose from sight, GENTLEMEN, this sacred nature and let us see only the good of the State and the People so that, from today, all aspects of personal interest will disappear. Let the evil that has almost reached desperate levels be halted by our union and our activity; let us cut back on words and only consider the matter in hand; the rights of man are simple, the good Constitution is so pure that there is no need, GENTLEMEN, to exhaust your eloquence in inflating something that is so easy to present. Let us destroy the incendiary projects that make themselves too readily felt in this Assembly.

I should show myself as I am, or as I should be, teach my King and my country and the People that I will always be the duc d'Orléans of Bourbon blood, great-grandson of Henri IV and worthy, at last, to walk in his steps. If I supported the People it was not to jeopardise them. If I attracted the hate of my entire family, it was not to betray it; one day, one day, no doubt, it will favour me with its esteem; but it suffers, it is afflicted and it is up to me, GENTLEMEN, to work to restore to it the public affection that it has unjustly lost. We are persuaded of this, but it is not enough that we are convinced; the public must be convinced; we still have work to do that is not indifferent to the well-being of France or of Society. Let us see who amongst us will contribute the most to the general good; it is within our means; the fate of the country is in our hands and if we neglect the precious moment that is left to us we will be lost along with France. What am I saying? Are you not as zealous as I to see an entire people fly in your footsteps; to bless us and consider us as gentle fathers, to see us as so many tutelary Gods, following this undertaking? Each one returning home will hear, along the way, cries of joy; these cries will accompany him into the bosom of his family. Could you despise such delightful behaviour? And would you not tremble at what awaits us if we continue to quarrel and to argue? But what am I saying? Love, love for the Motherland will have more influence in your hearts than all the horrors that my zeal can suggest to you. I could not dissimulate any longer, this avowal preyed on my mind; the fear of seeing the Nation's ruin is a heavy burden for a tender soul!

You will neither blame me nor misunderstand my observations: it only leaves me, GENTLEMEN, to propose an article inseparable from the rights of man.

I will not insist on divorce, which I have previously proposed, although I believe it to be essential to propriety and the freedom of man. A man's most cherished interest is that of his descendants meanwhile a disgraceful prejudice deprives his natural children from any chances to compete for positions or rank in ordinary society. We are extirpating all abuses, how can we let this one exist! This prejudice seems to me particularly absurd, ridiculous and unnatural for if a Prince gives life to a child born of the lowest woman, that

child will nonetheless be a gentleman who can assume honours and privileges, but a natural child born of a good man, a simple individual, is to be considered a vile bastard? Spain, the country of the inquisition, shows us that this injustice was beneath even its beliefs. Are we to be less humane, less just than the Spaniards? And can you, GENTLEMEN, prevent yourselves from working to destroy this horrible prejudice? Let us not however touch the rights of marriage for fear of shaking Society's order; let us simply seek to eradicate the injustice that has, for too long, caused the downfall of half of mankind; let us give natural children the same means to distinguish themselves in Society, through honour and merit; a bastard can combine talent and the qualities of an honest man, and his birth ought not to prevent him from allying himself to a respectable family, or to achieve an honourable position, or to become, at all times, a useful and beneficial member of Society. The Constitution lacks this measure; if you adopt it, GENTLEMEN, I will ceaselessly applaud you for proposing it.

I will end by observing that it is important for the French Constitution to restore absolute power to the Head of State; this power is like that of a father emancipating his son and must not be arbitrary even though it comes from the Nation; the Nation can only be strengthened if its force and vigour are in the hands of one individual: it is weakened and dismembered if it is at the disposition of several legislators.

The permanence of the National Assembly is not incompatible with the Royal sanction: let us unite the Sovereign to the Nation but let us distinguish between the rights of the Sovereign and those of the Nation. I see only one patriotic act that can alleviate the misery of the State and can allow the true spirit of the French to be reborn: several provinces have offered a patriotic tax and even Versailles has recently proposed it. GENTLEMEN, let us not rebuff such valuable enthusiasm. This tax will characterise the soul and the love of the Motherland: this project was brought to us by a woman but what matters the sex if France is saved by the simplest and the most fraternal means!

How dear is the Motherland to all good hearts!