

THE APOSTLE



PAUL HYACINTHE LOYSON



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THE APOSTLE



VOLUME XV

The Drama League Series of Plays

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THE APOSTLE

*A MODERN TRAGEDY
IN THREE ACTS*

BY
PAUL HYACINTHE LOYSON

TRANSLATED BY
BARRETT H. CLARK



WITH AN INTRODUCTION BY
PROFESSOR GEORGE PIERCE BAKER

GARDEN CITY NEW YORK
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Act of March 4, 1909

To
RICHARD E. MYERS

THIS TRANSLATION IS
AFFECTIONATELY
DEDICATED

INTRODUCTION

THE four plays of Paul Hyacinthe Loyson are studies in tragedy resulting, not, as we are accustomed to expect, from folly and unreason, but from proper self-respect and reason. Nor, though he wrote his first play some thirteen years ago, is Mr. Loyson a prolific playwright. "The Apostle" is only his fourth play. He has been busy with many activities, more recently as a fearless fighter for new ideas and the causes of the downtrodden, in the paper of which he has been the editor-in-chief, *Le Droit de l'Homme*. In 1897 he printed a poem, "Les Deux Coupes"; in 1899, "Magor," a dramatic pamphlet; in 1900, his first play, "L'Évangile du Sang"; and in the following year some poems, "Sur les Marges d'un Drame." Almost from the beginning of his publication, then, his chief thought has been for the drama. It was not, however, till 1902, at an experimental performance by Le Cercle des Escholiers, at the Nouveau Théâtre, that he had his first production,

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the "Dramatic Episode in One Act, L'Évangile du Sang."

The work of Miss Emily Hobhouse in behalf of the Boers gave him the hint for his subject. An English admiral, Jack Mansfield, is waiting for daybreak to attack the forts and fleet of the enemy. To him comes his wife, Jane, who has been serving in the hospital corps. A short time before, the English, in pity for the sufferings of the wounded among their foes, whose hospital equipment is almost nil, placed an ambulance at their service. Jane has been in charge of it. She has been so affected by what she has seen and heard among the enemy that she has been protesting to the Government against the war as oppression. The play is her struggle to convince her husband that under no circumstances must he order the bombardment. Though he is himself no lover of war and is devoted to his wife, he is firm in his sense of duty. When she goes, defeated, she leaves a note of final farewell. This the admiral finds just as distant cannonading warns him that the English land forces have been attacked by the enemy. As he is about to give orders to fire on Fort Blanc, a lieutenant rushes in to say that his wife's boat is making straight for that fort. To fire is probably to

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kill her. There is a long pause. Then the play closes thus:

“L’Amiral, *au porte-voix*.

Faites ouvrir le feu!

Une Voix *au dehors*.

Ouvrez le feu!

Une Autre Voix.

Feu!

(*Détonation puissante*).”

In 1903 “Le Droit des Vierges” was produced in Geneva and published in Paris. The play is a protest against parent-made marriages. It has obvious relations with “Un Gant” of Björnson and “Les Trois Filles de M. Dupont” of M. Brieux. The ambitious Brousseau and the wife he dominates are making preparations for the marriage of their daughter, Simonne, to Stephane de Senlis, a leader in the world of fashion and a very successful author of erotic, not to say decadent, novels. Simonne, who does not love De Senlis, has forebodings about the marriage. Possessing herself of one of his books, “L’Invitation,” she finds in it evidence that her marriage is to be for the author but one more experiment in sex. Her vindication of her right to her own person and soul makes the crisis of the

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play. Both these pieces may be regarded as promising but tyro work.

The dramatist of large accomplishment first revealed himself when "Les Ames Ennemies" was produced at the Théâtre Antoine, May 15, 1907, dedicated "To those who believe passionately, to those who deny with energy, to those who investigate loyally." It is the first of three plays intended by the author to study as many aspects of the tragedy of those to-day who honestly and high mindedly would live without conventional religion. "Les Ames Ennemies" treats such a struggle from an intellectual point of view; "L'Apôtre" from a moral point of view; the third play will present the social aspect. Daniel Servan, scientist, the central figure in "Les Ames Ennemies," returns after two years in Java, famous because of his discovery of the *pithecantropus erectus*, a skeleton which he believes the missing link between man and monkey. In his absence his Breton mother-in-law, fearing his frank radicalism, has, with the connivance of Servan's wife, been giving the granddaughter, Florence, the strictest training as a Roman Catholic. Servan finds the delicate, sensitive child absorbed in devotional observances, and talking of entering a convent. Deeply

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annoyed, he insists that the child shall at least hear both sides. The mother-in-law promptly leaves the house. The wife, torn between love for her husband and for her religion, asks the confessor of Florence to intervene. This provokes a quarrel between husband and wife which the child overhears. Madeleine, fearing for her own soul and that of her child, wishes to leave the house, taking Florence with her. Servan will not permit this. Even as the parents contend for her, the overwrought child falls fainting at their feet. In the last act she is hovering between life and death. In a heartrending scene she tells the adoring Servan that his example and his words have undermined her old beliefs, that she, too, has no God. Dying she pleads for reconciliation between the parents. They yield; but even as the child breathes her last, the wife leaves the father standing alone at the foot of the bed, and turns to the entering priest with the cry,

“Ah! mon père! mon père! . . .”

Critics differed widely in their estimate of the play according to their conservative or radical bent. Favorable and unfavorable comment alike, however, showed that the play by its reality of characterization, its thoughtfulness, its outspokenness, its firm

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grasp on certain highly dramatic moments, stirred all hearers deeply. In Belgium, Switzerland, and Italy it had decided success. In this country it has had a private performance by the students of the Academy of Dramatic Arts in New York. Were the interests of our theatre-goers as broad as the founders of the Drama League hope to make them, we should, before this, have seen "Les Ames Ennemies" on our professional stage. We are told, however, that our public would not care for this play because religious differences between parents are fortunately too rare in this country to be of general interest. Such provincialism is the reason why we see so few foreign dramatic masterpieces. Though we have learned to travel, we have not yet as a nation acquired the intellectual sympathy which makes us eager to know the emotional experiences of others even when these experiences have not been and may never be our own. The day of Bowdlerizing great foreign plays because we are so much more moral than our neighbors is well-nigh over. Nor do we as frequently as in the past insist that these foreign plays shall be adapted to fit American conditions, thus twisting them, often, out of all semblance to the original. However, till as a people we can enjoy plays unchanged, which do not

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reflect us as in a mirror, we can in no proper sense call ourselves real lovers of drama.

“L’Apôtre” had its first representation May 3, 1911, at the Odeon, Paris. With Silvaine and Mme. Silvaine of the Comédie Française as Baudouin and Clotilde, it made a strong impression on press and public. Like “Les Ames Ennemies” it was well received elsewhere in Europe.

Evidently M. Loyson does not belong to the dramatists of entertainment, such as Sardou, nor to the jugglers of the old *situation à trois*, who for a generation have supplied “L’Illustration Théâtrale” with old material made to seem new by illuminating characterization, audacious frankness, or a delicate feeling for phrase. He is of the line of Dumas *fils* and Brieux, the men who, thinking fearlessly of weaknesses in the national life, state without fear or favor what they see and what they believe. Such men are, of course, misunderstood. It was the fate of Dumas *fils*; it has been the fate of Brieux; it is the fate of M. Loyson.

Both “Les Ames Ennemies” and “L’Apôtre” have been hailed as thesis plays. The author, in writing of the first play, protested against this, saying, “A considerable portion of the general public has

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wished to see in a play of ideas a thesis play. . . . If such had been my intention, I should never have endowed my hero with certain ideas which are not mine at all, as for instance his atheism, so unqualified and unyielding that it makes him resemble closely a number of real and illustrious scientists of the nineteenth century; I should never have shown him, in the third act, dumb as he faces the enigma of life; nor in the last act distracted as he faces the enigma of death." That is, M. Loyson does not write to offer a solution. Like the safe scientist, he states what he sees; he does not risk conclusions which might be dangerous to humanity in general because based on the few individual cases with which the drama must always work. As a genuine dramatist he does not preach, but moves us deeply by pictures of living men and women struggling with some of the vast problems of the day. Naturally he protested also when critics and even some of his enthusiastic friends declared "Les Ames Ennemies" to be a representation of the present-day conflict between science and religion. The controversy led to the publication of a brochure, "La Critique des Ames Ennemies," a collection of letters and critical notices; and an essay defending M. Loyson, "A Propos des Ames Enne-

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mies," by M. Bornand, a clergyman. The upshot of the two publications is that M. Servan is scientific only in his discovery of the *pithecantropus erectus*. His thinking as to religion does not represent all scientists, but is individual. The opposing religious view is not that of religion in general but of the more rigid type of Catholicism. In other words, M. Loyson sees agnosticism and atheism around him. He sees the bigoted type of Catholic. He sees the woman, who, though rigidly trained, is yet temporarily drawn aside by affection, only to return instinctively, in a crisis, to her original training. He tells a story of these three types—in the Breton grandmother; Madeleine, the wife; and Servan, the husband. He does not say that any one of the three is right or wrong. He merely illustrates the utter misery religious dissension in the family may bring father, mother, and, above all, child.

It has been said that "L'Apôtre" illustrates the cruel injustice done a child who is brought up without religious faith. "Surely," it is urged, "the great speech of Eugénia in the last act can mean only this." Not at all. M. Loyson does not hold a brief for any one idea or figure. His sympathies are with the mother, the wife, the poor little secretary, Rémillot,

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and Baudouin himself. What he does imply is three-fold. He who comes to free thought compelled by his own nature may be able to follow it safely as guide. That is Baudouin. Whoever throws aside religion, not compelled by the force of his own thinking but because of affection for another, is in any great crisis nearly sure to turn back instinctively to old beliefs. That is Eugénie. He who foregoes religion unthinkingly, not moved by deep affection, but because he has never known it, is likely to mistake his inheritance for license. That is Octave.

It is certainly striking that M. Loyson in both his recent plays writes tragedies resulting from the agnosticism or atheism of his heroes. It is his own early experience which colors his work. His father, Père Hyacinthe, coming out of the Church of Rome when his ideas no longer made it possible for him to stay in it, became a leader in French advanced religious thought. He married an American of Puritan stock. Their son, Paul, grew up amidst advanced but high-minded thinking on religious matters. He saw what his father had to undergo because of his change in belief. Naturally the people who gathered about such a leader as Père Hyacinthe gave the son opportunities to watch many tragedies growing

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out of differences in religious belief or failure to accept religion. Fiction and poetry are filled with the idea that most men look back upon their childhood as a time of happy memory, but many a man in middle life, as the subjects of the recent plays of M. Loyson show, still feels the shadows from stern scenes of his childhood.

Technically the two significant plays of M. Loyson are not faultless, but such weaknesses are bound to disappear the more he writes. On the other hand, he has great power of characterization and remarkable skill in writing scenes that will not out of the memory. In "L'Évangile du Sang," Admiral Mansfield reads the morning service to his men just at daybreak. His wife, listening from the cabin, cries out in horror at what seems to her the blasphemy of the calm assumption of commander and men that the Lord is with them in their slaying of other human beings. Like an obligato sound the words of the sanguinary passage from the Bible, as, indignant, protesting, Jane repeats the gentle, merciful words of the Lord's Prayer. In "Le Droit des Vierges" there is a remarkably fresh and moving treatment of the old subject—a nurse of many years' standing parting with the woman on the eve of marriage who seems to

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her still but a child. In "Les Ames Ennemies" there is rare power in the scene when Servan instinctively recoils at his own work as Florence tells him that his teachings have left her no God. In "L'Apôtre" is it possible to read dry eyed the scene in which Baudouin and Eugénie, agonized by the thought of what their son has become, discuss, dispute, and just when a quarrel seems imminent, fall weeping into each other's arms?

Perhaps the most marked characteristic of M. Loyson is what French critics have called his eloquence. They do not mean the facile use of catch phrases to stir our emotions nor even rich and happy phrase for its own sake. They do mean that here is a man in whom thought and emotion combine so perfectly that as he thinks deeply on high things, stirred profoundly by his thinking, he finds words so apt that they stir us deeply on unaccustomed themes. Reading his plays rightly, we come away sober, even sad, but somehow strengthened. After all, in "Les Ames Ennemies" the child Florence dies crying, "I am not afraid—there is light"; and in "L'Apôtre" Baudouin does the utmost that Christianity has taught us to do, sacrifices all for an ideal. Undoubtedly M. Loyson has been sounding certain

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depths of modern emotional experience, but he knows well that often a depth is but the measure of an unseen height.

Since the war began M. Loyson has been serving his government wherever a specially skilled interpreter has been needed. His home in the Rue du Bac, under the guidance of Mme. Loyson, is now a hospital for convalescent but hopelessly maimed soldiers where they are kept till feasible work be found for these men whose scars forbid their returning to their accustomed labors. Until the war is ended there can be for M. Loyson no thought of his beloved art. Surely, however, when peace comes again, all that this sympathetic, thoughtful, fearless observer of his fellows has seen and felt in this time of cataclysm must have its fruit in plays of great significance.

GEO. P. BAKER.

*Boulder Farm,
Madison, N. H.*

DRAMATIS PERSONÆ

BAUDOIN, a Senator; later, Minister of Public Instruction

ARNAUT, Speaker of the Chamber of Deputies

OCTAVE BAUDOIN, a Deputy

PUYLAROCHE, a Solicitor

FERRAND, Senator; later, Prime Minister

MICHU, on the "Avant Garde"

GALIMARD, a Deputy

ROQUIN, a Deputy

PRATT, Secretary of the Interior of the Cabinet from which
he has just resigned

LATOCHE, Baudouin's Secretary

MEYERHEIM, a Banker

DUVAL-PORCHERET, President of one of the electoral com-
mittees

A SERVANT

CLOTILDE, Wife of the Younger Baudouin

EUGÉNIE, Wife of Henri Baudouin

THE CHILDREN of the YOUNGER BAUDOIN and CLOTILDE

A MAID

SENATORS, DEPUTIES, DELEGATES, etc.

Act I.

ACT I

An office the appearance of which immediately proclaims it as distinctly middle-class. There is a disorderliness which might well be the result of the carelessness of a bachelor. The desk is covered with papers of various kinds, some of which have fallen to the floor. The well-worn carpet is strewn with crumpled newspapers. The compartments of the bookcase, which is an open one, are filled with unbound volumes, well used, and piled pell-mell with no regard to order or neatness. On the walls are pictures of Gambetta, Thiers, and the "Taking of the Bastille." On the mantel above the fireplace is an empty shell, a relic of the Siege. Through the window is a panorama of the left bank of the river, at Paris. Above the roofs and chimneys is distinguished the cupola of the "Observatoire." To the left is a door leading to the antechamber; to the right, that leading to the living-rooms.

As the curtain rises, BAUDOIN is seated at

his desk, a skullcap on his head and a pipe in his mouth. From time to time he stops writing, blows a puff of smoke into the air, and reads a sentence. EUGÉNIE discreetly opens the door to the left, and hesitates a moment before interrupting BAUDOUIN.

EUGÉNIE. Baudouin? [*He gives vent to a little grunt.*] Time for the paper: Michu is here.

BAUDOUIN. Tell him to come in.

[EUGÉNIE introduces MICHU and goes out.]

MICHU. I'm sorry, boss, I'm early——

BAUDOUIN [*continuing his writing*]. Wait.

MICHU [*after a pause—in an undertone*]. Yes, I am, I'm three minutes ahead of time. There's going to be an exciting session in the Chamber to-morrow—make no mistake about that!—and when the Republic is going through what she is these here days, we on the paper would rather go without our drinks than not get your copy. Don't let me disturb you, though! [*There is another pause.*]

BAUDOUIN [*signing his article*]. I was late, Michu. [*He passes the blotter over the last page.*] There you are. [*Handing MICHU the manuscript.*] Take it. It'll never go into two columns, and you'll have a

hard time cutting it—— [*He takes off his skullcap and throws it onto the table.*]

MICHU. We'll see you get all the place you want; you're the boss! We'll put the news on the second page——

BAUDOUIN. Who does the leader to-morrow?

MICHU [*disdainfully*]. Little Rémillot—we got the copy this morning.

BAUDOUIN. I shan't allow you to do that. Tell Savinet to let the leader go in its usual place. Rémillot's stuff is as good as mine.

MICHU. Nonsense! These young fellows, they want to save the Republic and they never even helped make the Commune!

BAUDOUIN. Well, Michu, neither did I! Let's keep straight on that point.

MICHU [*pointing to the shell on the mantel*]. Ask him if he collects vegetables of that kind!

BAUDOUIN. That's different—that came from the Siege. Ask them to set my article in small type and take out the leads. I refuse to have the younger men make way for me. See you to-morrow, old man.

MICHU. Boss, you'll always be "Father Conscience." They ought to put up a bust of you in the Palais de Justice!

BAUDOIN. Michu, my friend, I've told you I don't like that nickname. Do you want me to get angry?

MICHU. Look here now, can't I defend you now that the Clericals are down on you? Have you seen *La Croix* this morning?

BAUDOIN [*with indifference*]. No, what does it say? [*He looks for "La Croix" amid the heap of newspapers.*]

MICHU. They know very well that it's you who've kept the curés shut out, and how you've forgotten to leave the key under the doormat.

BAUDOIN [*still looking for the paper*]. I get all the papers—everything is so upside down here——

MICHU. Want me to help you arrange things?

BAUDOIN. Hm, will you? There you are talking like Madame Baudouin. I'd never find anything then!

MICHU. Come now, boss, give me the word; that's what the people are making such a fuss about! You're not proud, the Republic has made a leader of you; you're a senator, and people come in here and make themselves quite at home.

BAUDOIN. Thanks, Michu, you're most kind. Well, I'll see you to-morrow.

MICHU [*about to go, looking at the manuscript*].
Begging your pardon, you've forgot the title.

BAUDOIN [*returning to his desk with the manuscript*]. Well, well, I didn't know you could read!
[*Pen in hand, he sits trying to think of a title.*]

MICHU. I'm studying at night school. One morning I says to myself: "The devil! Things are happening to the Republic and you ain't any more advanced than you was under the Empire!"

[BAUDOIN *strikes out the title he has just set down.*]

Why, it's the strangest thing that's happened to me—the words make a noise on paper like when you speak 'em—now I'm beginning to know the words—it's like reading with your ears—and when I take up a paper, look—— [*He takes up a paper in order to demonstrate.*] Why, it's like a crowd talking all at once!

BAUDOIN [*again striking out a title*]. It won't come! [*Rising and going to MICHU.*] How would you phrase this, Michu: "The Church claims the right to instruct the people in order to prevent their learning to read."

MICHU. That's true enough. Like Tartufe teaching school!

BAUDOIN. "Tartufe the Schoolmaster!" Perfect! Do they teach you to write at your night school? Can you write?

MICHU [*describing vast circles in the air*]. Look!

BAUDOIN [*jokingly*]. Sit there, in my place—write—just what you told me——

MICHU [*awed*]. No, boss, you're fooling!

BAUDOIN. Did you hear what I said? Sit down!

MICHU [*going toward the table*]. Well, Michu, if some one'd told you—— [*He sits down.*]

BAUDOIN. There, right under your nose, is the pen—inkstand to the right. Ready? Are you?

MICHU [*dipping the pen in the ink*]. Well, well, Michu——

BAUDOIN [*dictating, as he lights his pipe*]. "Tartufe——"

MICHU. Oh, there goes a blot!

BAUDOIN. That makes no difference, that'll be your signature. "The—Schoolmaster." Sc-h-o-o-l-m-a-s-t-e-r. There, people, it's the Republic that's given you a scrubbing! [*He puffs his pipe.*]

MICHU. There, boss, you are a funny man. I tell you I'm mighty proud of that. [*He rises and*

hands the manuscript timidly to BAUDOUIN, who reads and makes a pencil correction.] Are there two f's to Tartufe?

BAUDOUIN. Three, if you like.

MICHU. That's right, we'll give 'em a he—a devil of a lot of f's! By God, this is the happiest day of my life since the Fourth of September!

BAUDOUIN. The Fourth of September?

MICHU. You know, I'll never forget that. It was thirty-eight years ago I met you for the first time by the tribune of the Palais-Bourbon!

BAUDOUIN. That's so——

MICHU. Lord, what excitement! The Empire on the ground and the people on top. Crowds everywhere: on the railings and the cornices—why, the walls was one living mass of heads. And what enthusiasm! I was hot all over. Then, all at once you came with your father. “The Two Baudouins, proscripts of the Empire.” Ha, you was both lifted up by the crowd. I was only a little kid, I didn't know you, but I wanted to do my share, and I wriggled my way through the mass and touched you—I caught hold of your leg—is that the one there? You know, I got that leg next to my heart—it's there always!

BAUDOUIN [*suddenly*]. What is the Republic, Michu?

MICHU. The Republic? It's when the people are right and the others are wrong!

BAUDOUIN. Not quite, but there's little difference. The Republic stands for reason; we must not allow ourselves to relinquish that principle.

MICHU. Long live the Republic, boss!

BAUDOUIN [*offering his hand to MICHU*]. Long live the Republic, Michu.

[MICHU, *deeply touched, wrings BAUDOUIN'S hand and goes out.*]

EUGÉNIE [*entering from the right, carrying an overcoat, a hat, a cane, and a pair of boots*]. Don't worry, you're not going to the Senate, you're going to take a little walk. Poor Baudouin, what a life you lead; if I didn't look after your health, the way you work and slave your life out——

BAUDOUIN. Don't worry, we manage to have enough bread and butter——

EUGÉNIE. Here, your shoes——

BAUDOUIN. Thank you, Mother. [*He sits down and changes his shoes.*] I'll walk around to the Chamber and see what they're doing. They must be on Article 7.

EUGÉNIE [*quickly*]. Octave doesn't speak to-day, does he?

BAUDOIN. The son speaks to-morrow; you'll be there, Mother, in the front box.

EUGÉNIE. Well, if it isn't till to-morrow, I'm not going to have you asphyxiate yourself in that stable. It's enough to be condemned to go there three times a week. What you need is air, fresh air. Now do take a stroll to Passy; go and see your grandchildren——

BAUDOIN. It sounds tempting, I admit. We don't see them any more now during this infernal session——

EUGÉNIE. Then go—do.

BAUDOIN. What can I do? This law on lay education is something of a family matter for us——

EUGÉNIE. Indeed it is—she's a daughter who will end by killing her father.

[*There is a knock at the door.*]

Come in.

THE MAID [*entering with a packet of letters and a pile of newspapers*]. The mail, Monsieur.

EUGÉNIE [*inspecting the overcoat which BAUDOIN has put on*]. But you're not going out like that?

BAUDOIN. What's the trouble?

EUGÉNIE. Look at this huge mud spot. [*To the MAID.*] Do you mean to say you have brushed this coat?

BAUDOIN. Never mind, Eugénie. It's been raining this morning, and people will imagine it's from that.

EUGÉNIE [*scandalized*]. The idea! I never heard of— Take it off, quick—don't argue! I'll give you your papers—hand me the coat—

BAUDOIN [*allowing EUGÉNIE to take off his coat*]. How troublesome to have a neat woman about the house!

EUGÉNIE [*handing the coat to the MAID*]. Hurry up about it! [*The MAID goes out.*]

BAUDOIN. Let's see the mail. [*Reading the addresses.*] "Monsieur Baudouin," "Monsieur Baudouin," "Monsieur Baudouin," "Madame Baudouin"— That's queer—*La Croix* is addressed to you!

EUGÉNIE. To me?

BAUDOIN. "Madame Baudouin, 126 Boulevard Arago——" [*Jokingly.*] Are you a subscriber?

EUGÉNIE. Why——! [*She takes the paper, breaks the band, and unfolds it.*] What does it mean?

BAUDOIN. That's so—Michu warned me—what

good soul has taken it into his head to do you the favor?

EUGÉNIE. But it's about you. Look at the picture! And all these lines marked with a blue pencil! [*Reading in an undertone; then.*] The low scoundrels! This is really infamous! You must sue them!

BAUDOIN. Well, well, well, well!

EUGÉNIE. Don't laugh, please! You are too patient, too generous. I can't stand this—I—I—— [*She sinks into a chair and continues to read.*]

BAUDOIN. I see, my dear, I see. We must look into this. [*He takes the paper from her.*] Let us see the cartoon: "The Ruffians' School." Not bad. The artist is improving.

EUGÉNIE [*taking back the paper*]. Don't you understand? See that leader of the gallows' gang giving a lesson to those little urchins—it's you, Baudouin!

BAUDOIN. So it seems—— Do I frighten you?

EUGÉNIE. No—you mustn't talk like that—it hurts me to hear you joke about it. Read the article, if you don't believe me. They accuse the Republican schools of educating "a nation of savages," and say that you "have given an example" in the "education of your son."

BAUDOUIN. What? Is that all? Am I not accused of murder?

EUGÉNIE. My little Octave, the best boy who ever lived! Tell me, isn't he? Have we educated him like a little savage? How can those people attack *him*?

BAUDOUIN. Because he is a deputy. Are you surprised at that? Because he is going to make a speech to-morrow that will be their deathblow. Do you expect the Church to thank him?

EUGÉNIE. I say it's infamous, outrageous. You won't read it. You always think your own thoughts, and never pay attention to what others are saying. There is even a direct allusion to me—"Godless mothers"—"Renegades"—

BAUDOUIN. Show me—

EUGÉNIE [*showing him the passage*]. Just at the end—the last lines. And it's signed by an abbé!

BAUDOUIN. Is that what offended you? Look at me, does the word renegade offend you?

EUGÉNIE. No, I promise you it doesn't! I should leave the Church again if I had to, and say, "Yes, my husband converted me! I am a free-thinker! Show me your children educated by the Jesuits and compare them with Octave!"

BAUDOIN. Very well, then! [*Crumpling up the paper and throwing it to the floor.*] Give this to Justine with the rest of the waste paper. You have gone through forty years of struggles with me, and it seems you haven't yet fortified yourself against these attacks! I shall have to buy a steel-ribbed corset for you, Mother!

EUGÉNIE. Let me tell you that this politics is disgusting. What good will it do you to sweat out your life's blood for your principles? Are you a Minister yet? You're not even a retired Minister like your old friends, who don't count for anything now.

BAUDOIN. Perhaps that is the reason why I *do* count for something now——

EUGÉNIE. You made no efforts; that was all very well—I agree with you, but what is the good in being as poor now as you were under the Empire when you gave private lessons in London? And here we are living up five flights, and you give half your income to the cause. Why, people don't even give you credit for being honest any more. You never get the credit and you always get the blows.

BAUDOIN. There is one thing better than being

Minister, and that is to be able to say that I have refused. Do you know why? Because of my son! I said to myself: "Baudouin, you must remain the pioneer who has fought his way through the desert, in order that your son may arrive in the Promised Land." And my reward is in finding that I was right—not quite that, but having the right to say, "I have *always been* right! *I have* believed in a Republic run by the people, in Republican schools and Republican morality, and I know that these have come into being partly through my help! I have *always been* right!" You can have no idea what joy I feel in being able to think that!

EUGÉNIE. You are so wonderful that you always carry me away with your enthusiasm!

THE MAID [*returning with the overcoat*]. I've cleaned it thoroughly, Madame.

EUGÉNIE. Good. In the future try to do it well the first time.

[*A bell rings near the door leading into the ante-chamber.*]

BAUDOUIN. A visitor—I'll escape through the dining-room.

THE MAID. I believe it is Madame Octave; I saw her coming upstairs.

EUGÉNIE. Open the door.

[*The MAID goes out.*

BAUDOIN. I do hope it's Clotilde, the dear child!

[EUGÉNIE goes to the door to meet CLOTILDE, who enters precipitately. She wears an elegant walking suit and carries a leather portfolio under her arm.]

CLOTILDE. Hello, Grandmother——

EUGÉNIE. You *are* in a hurry. Aren't you going to kiss me?

[CLOTILDE gives her a hurried kiss.]

BAUDOIN. And what about me?

CLOTILDE. Hello, Grandfather. [*She kisses him as she did EUGÉNIE.*] Don't you know the news? Octave's secretary has disappeared!

EUGÉNIE. Little Rémillot?

BAUDOIN. Disappeared?

CLOTILDE. Yes, this morning—he didn't come as usual, and he's never late a minute, so——

BAUDOIN [*looking at his watch*]. Have you seen him at all during the day?

CLOTILDE. No——

BAUDOIN. Extraordinary. He is most exact and punctual. He's just written his article to the *Avant Garde*—he must be sick——

CLOTILDE. He's not at home. Octave and I went to see him. The concierge told us he hadn't come in the night before——

BAUDOUIN. She might have been mistaken.

CLOTILDE. No: she had his key, and we went to his rooms. His own was empty——

EUGÉNIE. Well, well!

BAUDOUIN. Very strange. If we weren't talking about Rémillot, I should say the man had gone on a spree.

CLOTILDE. Please, Father!

BAUDOUIN. It looks like it——

CLOTILDE. But he would never think of leaving Octave on the eve of a session like to-morrow's. He has all the notes for the speech—Octave is furious! He'll have to sit up all night to get them into shape again.

BAUDOUIN. Let's not give up hope. Little Rémillot is not lost. He is coming here to-night. By now he may have joined Octave at the Chamber.

CLOTILDE. But he wasn't there at two: Octave took me with him, then he gave me any number of errands to do. I'm his secretary for the time being. [*Showing her portfolio filled with papers and documents.*] This contains his solicitor's notes for a

big trial in which he pleads next Saturday, and the new notes that we've been trying to put together for the speech to-morrow. By the way, have you Jules Ferry's speech on the—what law is it? I don't remember—I forget everything——

BAUDOIN. The Education Bill of '82?

CLOTILDE. Yes, have you it?

BAUDOIN. I'll see—— [*He stands on a chair and looks on a high shelf of the bookcase.*]

EUGÉNIE. How awful to have Rémillot run away!

CLOTILDE. Oh, don't say anything more about it!

EUGÉNIE. Octave is killing himself. He looks so preoccupied and tired. Ah, politics——

CLOTILDE. Don't I know? There's a terrible row in the Chamber now.

BAUDOIN [*finding the book, and knocking the dust from it with the palm of his hand*]. For a change——

CLOTILDE. No, I mean it seriously. It's very serious. Pratt was there—nearly worn out, too, waiting in front of the building for Octave. The session began and they went in together.

BAUDOIN [*calmly*]. That will not prevent the law's passing——

[*There are four quick and imperative rings of the bell, from the side of the living-rooms.*]

EUGÉNIE. What's that? [*Voices are heard in the antechamber.*] It—sounds like Octave's voice!

CLOTILDE. Yes, it is Octave——

BAUDOUIN. Good.

EUGÉNIE [*opening the antechamber door and speaking to OCTAVE, who enters.*] Take care—you'll fall—— Why, he hasn't even closed the hall door!

[*OCTAVE comes quickly in. He is evidently under great emotional stress.*]

BAUDOUIN [*coming down from the chair and laying the book on the table.*] What is it?

OCTAVE. It's all over! Our Education Bill is lost!

BAUDOUIN. What are you saying?

OCTAVE. The Cabinet is all changed!

[*General exclamations.*]

BAUDOUIN. The hell it is!

CLOTILDE. Why——!

EUGÉNIE. Oh——

OCTAVE. Only an hour ago—why don't you have a telephone? Infamy! Treason!

BAUDOUIN. The Cabinet that favored us! Impossible! Out of the question!

OCTAVE [*quickly casting aside his overcoat and throwing it onto the table.*] The damned rascals!

The dirty, low—— To have the cheek to do that!
It's a cowardly dagger-thrust in the dark——

BAUDOUIN. But, tell us!

OCTAVE. Give me a drink, Mother, I'm parched!

EUGÉNIE. Let me make you some tea.

OCTAVE. No, no, water! I want only water!

[EUGÉNIE goes into the dining-room with CLOTILDE.]

BAUDOUIN. I don't understand at all. They are not discussing the Bill to-day, are they? Tell me!

OCTAVE. This has nothing to do with the Bill proper. It's an incident—a personal matter. They've invented another Panama!

BAUDOUIN. Another Panama?

OCTAVE. Oh, a—everything's upside down. Our men are coming here to consult with you. The situation is extremely grave. And then my idiot of a secretary leaves me in the lurch. [*A number of voices are heard in heated conversation in the ante-chamber.*] There! There they are!

[*A group of parliamentarians, friends of BAUDOUIN, quickly invade the room.*]

GALIMARD [*who has the Midi accent*]. Ah, my friends, what a mess!

FIRST DEPUTY. A deathblow from the Clericals!

SECOND DEPUTY. Scandalous!

THIRD DEPUTY. Puts the quietus on the Bill!

GALIMARD. Let it be, and it will land on its fore-paws!

FOURTH DEPUTY. And to think it was Roquin who left us!

FIFTH DEPUTY. Serves the Cabinet right! I've never heard of a meaner trick! Never!

SIXTH DEPUTY. Nastier than Roquin himself, which is saying a good deal!

BAUDOIN. But tell me, Messieurs, what happened? A catastrophe, it seems? Is the Cabinet out?

PRATT [*a young man, elegantly dressed*]. Yes, and Clément-Moulin is done for!

[EUGÉNIE and CLOTILDE come in from the dining-room, one carrying a tumbler, the other a carafe filled with water.]

EUGÉNIE [*offering OCTAVE the glass which CLOTILDE has filled*]. Here, dear——

PRATT [*to BAUDOIN*]. Here it is—it's really ridiculous——

EUGÉNIE [*to OCTAVE, who has taken the glass*]. Not so fast—why, the perspiration is running off you!

BAUDOUIN. I must hear this—Mother, please let us discuss this matter by ourselves.

[*General confusion again.*]

EUGÉNIE. We're going, we're going——

OCTAVE [*to CLOTILDE*]. Have you that speech of Jules Ferry?

CLOTILDE. Yes.

OCTAVE. On my desk, with the other papers. Don't forget to see the solicitor.

EUGÉNIE. Oh, dear! oh, dear, what a day!

[*The two women go out.*]

PRATT [*resuming—to BAUDOUIN*]. You have no idea what! Not long ago, as the session opened, Roquin asked to have the floor in order to make a revelation of a fact which was intimately concerned with the honor of the Government and the Chamber.

BAUDOUIN. The idea!

PRATT. Roquin maintains that the Clericals of the Rue de Varenne made overtures to the Department of the Interior regarding the offer of a million— [*laughs, protestations, and general confusion, and exclamations of "A million!" spoken with sarcasm*]— in order to escape the proscription of the religious establishments which are under government regulation, according to the Public Instruction laws.

BAUDOUIN. Try to bribe a Minister like Clément-Moulin! It's downright madness!

PRATT. Idiiotic, as I said!

BAUDOUIN. And is that the reason for the fall?

PRATT. One moment. It was supposed to be with the complicity of several parties, politicians, and officeholders, who are charged by the Clericals with having influenced opinion or tampering with the reports.

BAUDOUIN. And does Roquin, one of our men, make the charge?

PRATT. You know what he's like, a mere figure-head who thinks he's still at school in Pontoise——

OCTAVE. An incapable idiot who is looking for popularity. He wants cheap advertisement at the expense of the party.

BAUDOUIN. The fool! To start a reaction and pose as a little Robespierre. [*Laughing, then.*] Now, Pratt, you are chief Secretary of the Interior, did you ever hear the slightest——?

PRATT. Nothing at all. It's a fairy tale, every word——

OCTAVE. And think, would the Clericals sacrifice a million in order to stay in France?

BAUDOUIN. You don't know as much about that

as I do, my boy. The whole Faubourg has gone to school there. For the right to teach the bourgeoisie and the aristocracy, a million to the "black band" is nothing.

PRATT. But if they are willing to buy, there is no salesman.

BAUDOIN. Of course, of course——

THE MAID [*announcing*]. Monsieur Roquin.
[*Confusion.*]

A DEPUTY. The idea!

GALIMARD. The nerve!

PRATT. I'll talk to him.

[*Enter ROQUIN. He is tall and lean, and looks like the man already referred to in the foregoing dialogue. PRATT advances toward him and says threateningly.*]

Monsieur, you have done a low and mean trick!

ROQUIN [*angrily*]. What's this?

BAUDOIN. Now, Roquin, what have you been saying?

ROQUIN. The impure truth, boss. [*Protestations.*]

PRATT. Nonsense! You like a scandal. In your attempt to help the Republic you'll end by throwing her to the dogs.

ROQUIN. She will drown herself in a mire of bribery!

[*More general confusion. PRATT is about to throw himself on ROQUIN, but is prevented by the others from doing so.*]

BAUDOIN [interposing]. Pratt, if you please!

GALIMARD [to ROQUIN]. Go to hell with those stories of yours!

PRATT. I refuse to allow him to say what he did! [To ROQUIN.] Tell me to my face that you suspect me? I'm a member of the Department of the Interior. I'm the secretary.

ROQUIN. Pardon me, but you are not the only official in the Place Beauveau.

GALIMARD. Come, now, don't fight among ourselves. We must stand together against the Clericals.

OCTAVE [to ROQUIN]. Then who are the guilty parties? Give us the names!

ROQUIN. My investigation will reveal the guilty parties.

OCTAVE. You see, you can't. The whole thing is only an invention of your diseased brain.

PRATT. You missed your vocation, my dear man; you belong on the Committee of Safety.

ROQUIN [*with crushing directness*]. Allow me,

Monsieur! As recently as this morning some one came to solicit from me——

SEVERAL DEPUTIES. What? You? Nonsense!

ROQUIN. Yes, me! I had a visit from a certain Puylaroche—a thin Jesuit, with any number of orders and decorations—looks like a retired cavalry officer. I pretended to fall in with his plans in order to get as much evidence as possible. Then, when I got all I needed, I showed him the door. He had time, however, to give me information which certain of our colleagues have not given me——

PRATT. My dear friend, I think you capable of finding fleas on a china dog!

[Laughter and sounds of approbation.]

ROQUIN *[to PRATT]*. Are you bothered with them?

[Again PRATT is about to strike ROQUIN, and again he is prevented from doing so. Confusion and loud talking.]

BAUDOIN. Please, Messieurs, you are in my home! How did the Cabinet break up?

GALIMARD. I'll tell you. I've been wanting to speak for the past five minutes and you won't listen.

[Laughter.]

A DEPUTY. Clément-Moulin was mistaken in refusing salvation, that is, an investigation——

GALIMARD [*offended*]. Oh, my! This is——

THE SAME DEPUTY. Which was wanted by the majority. To clear his own reputation as well as that of the Cabinet—he took away the means, and the majority overthrew him in order to save its own face——

[*Laughter.*]

ANOTHER DEPUTY. He lacked a majority by five voices——

ROQUIN. Six—mine!

BAUDOUIN. What! Did the Chamber vote for an investigation?

GALIMARD [*finally taking the floor*]. My friend, that was the cause of the mischief—it was like a cold shower over the whole Chamber. The entire Left rose as one man, and demanded the names! The names! The Right shouted for an investigation. The speaker pounded his gavel so hard that he dislocated his wrist. Word of honor, he was like this—— [*He seizes his right wrist with his left hand, picks up a paper-knife, which he swings in the air, and imitates the voice of the speaker.*] “Messieurs, Messieurs, I beg you——!” [*Laughter.*]

BAUDOUIN. What did Clément-Moulin answer?

PRATT. He made a most feeble defence——

A DEPUTY. He wouldn't be sorry to resign now, he's found positions for his whole family——

BAUDOIN. Clément-Moulin is an honest man!

A YOUNG DEPUTY. When a parliamentarian is fifty, he's no good!

[*Protestations of "Oh, oh!" The YOUNG DEPUTY is made to realize that BAUDOIN is a man past middle age.*]

BAUDOIN. What did he answer?

GALIMARD. He declared his innocence. He had a clear conscience before Panama—that was twenty years ago, but to-day——

ROQUIN. We hardly know what to swear by!

ALL. That's enough, now!

GALIMARD. To-day, Messieurs, an investigation was voted; the result is the same: investigation means death——

ROQUIN. We shall see!

PRATT. Especially as the only thing revealed will be the shame of the defamers——

ROQUIN. We shall see!

THE MAID [*announcing*]. Senator Ferrand!

[*Conversation and general approval. Enter FERRAND, a staid man of fifty-five. He*

is followed by a number of parliamentarians, who appear to be more reserved and are better dressed than those who came in before.]

BAUDOUIN [*going to greet FERRAND*]. Well, my friend, is it the downfall of the Cabinet?

FERRAND. I think it only a poor move. I fore-saw it the moment the vote was taken. Clément-Moulin was not watching his game any too carefully. Now, when a Minister is in power for two years, he imagines he's playing dominoes——

BAUDOUIN. What? Are these gentlemen——? How are you, Messieurs?

FERRAND. I have brought them as delegates from the Left——

BAUDOUIN. Why, may I ask?

FERRAND. This is why: the presence of our colleagues here does not in the least prevent my making you a proposal in the name of the entire Republican party——

BAUDOUIN. What is it?

FERRAND. Let me tell you. Immediately after the session, the Speaker asked me to step in and see him; there he told me that this evening I should be proposed by him at the Elysée to make up a Cabinet. You are well acquainted with the good will that the

President of the Republic has toward me for what he calls my old professional qualities——?

BAUDOUIN. My congratulations! [*He grasps FERRAND'S hands and shakes them.*]

FERRAND. But wait! I shan't accept unless I have you at my side. I have come to offer you a position on the Cabinet.

[*Murmurs of approval. OCTAVE starts.*]

BAUDOUIN [*stupefied*]. Never! You can't really mean it!

FERRAND. My dear friend, let us not waste time. If I run any risk with the party, I hope to make up the loss with you.

BAUDOUIN. Messieurs, are you in earnest?

A DELEGATE. Of course we are.

FERRAND. I am not in the habit of joking.

BAUDOUIN. But you know this is out of the question!

ALL. Why? Out of the question?

BAUDOUIN. Because I have always refused: it is a matter of principle.

FERRAND. You will change.

BAUDOUIN. Then I'm a free lance. Let me strike my blows alone. If I were put in command, I might fire on my own men.

[Laughs and exclamations.]

FERRAND. Now you are pleading my cause. You are a new man, and that is just what I need to make an entirely new split.

[Cries of "Bravo! Bravo!"]

BAUDOUIN. But I have no aptitude——

[Protestations.]

FERRAND. I offer you the Department of Religion and Instruction!

[Cries of "Bravo! Bravo!"]

FIRST DELEGATE. This is exactly your job. You, a former Director of Primary Education!

[Murmurs of approval.]

SECOND DELEGATE. Think of your campaign in the "Avant Garde" against religious instruction!

FERRAND. And your manual of lay instruction, that's used in every school in France——

[Exclamations: "Ah! Ah!"]

Here's a copy—— [He takes from his pocket a small bound booklet.] A teacher in the Basse-Loire gave it to me; this copy belonged to one of his pupils whose father is a member of the Association of Catholic Vigilance. Every sentence of yours is marked and corrected, and, furthermore, here are the Church's answers to your charges——

BAUDOUIN [*interested*]. Let me see——

FERRAND. Listen to this: [*He reads.*] “Is the feeling of duty a natural one to man?” Answer, in handwriting: “The sentiment of duty is inseparable from religion——”

[*Exclamations and murmurs.*]

BAUDOUIN. Idiot!

FERRAND [*reading*]. “Can one fulfil his duties with no hope of reward?” Answer, in handwriting: “Without the sanction of a future life man would be hopelessly wrong not to live like a brute in the present life.”

[*Excited exclamations.*]

BAUDOUIN. Pretty kind of morality! Never mind reading any more. [*He tries to take the booklet from FERRAND'S hands.*]

FERRAND. No; let's end with this question that you ask: “What should be man's guide?” You answer: “Reason.” The father replies: “God.”

[*Laughter and jeering.*]

BAUDOUIN. Nonsense, nonsense, nonsense!

FERRAND. Well, my dear friend, you are the father of the laity—[*murmurs of approval*—and I now call upon you to put your theories into practice as Minister of Public Instruction.

[*Applause and cries of "Bravo!"*]

BAUDOUIN [*disturbed*]. Listen to me, my friends; this is the greatest decision I have ever been forced to make. Before giving you my final answer, allow me to consult one whose conscience will help me to see clearly into my own——

FERRAND. Who is that?

BAUDOUIN. My son.

[*Every one turns toward OCTAVE.*]

OCTAVE. I?

BAUDOUIN. What do you think?

[*OCTAVE hesitates.*]

FERRAND. Well?

GALIMARD. Tell him.

PRATT. Speak.

ROQUIN. Go ahead.

BAUDOUIN. What's the trouble? Tell me.

OCTAVE [*perplexed*]. Well, Father, I hardly know what to say. My judgment is less free than your own. I have ambitions for you that you haven't for yourself. I am afraid of advising you to do what I want.

FERRAND. That is what we are asking for.

OCTAVE. But that would not be the right way to treat his confidence. The political situation just

at present is so serious—[*to his father*—]—and your accepting this office would entail such responsibilities——

ALL. No, no! Not at all! Don't discourage him!

BAUDOIN. Let him speak!

OCTAVE. Messieurs, you must see that I am sacrificing my own interests. [*To his father.*] You are a mystic of the Democracy; you have fought your fight on the heights with ideas. Now it is a question of coming down into the depths—[*protestations*]—yes, into the depths.

ROQUIN. You are very severe, young man.

OCTAVE. Yes, yes, Messieurs, to ask him to come face to face with all the sordid realities of man-to-man disputes—that is far below his capacity, his character—no, I cannot advise him to accept.

ALL [*disappointed*]. Oh! Oh!

BAUDOIN [*with deep feeling, as he goes to OCTAVE and takes both his hands*]. Thank you, son!

THE MAID [*entering*]. The Speaker of the Chamber——

[*Excitement, then a pause.*]

BAUDOIN [*shaking his finger at his friends*]. I tell you, if it was you who——

FERRAND. No, no, we have nothing to do with *this*.

GALIMARD. It's a surprise.

A DELEGATE. I swear it is.

ROQUIN. Come, Baudouin, you *will* accept——

BAUDOUIN [*hastening to the door*]. The idea! You here, after the session!

[*Enter ARNAUT. He can scarcely speak. Every one bows deferentially. A chair is offered him. He falls wearily into it.*]

BAUDOUIN. You must be worn out.

ARNAUT. Baudouin accept?

FERRAND. No—not yet.

BAUDOUIN. So you have come to worry me——?

ARNAUT. What reasons?

GALIMARD. Incompetence!

FERRAND. He prefers to sit back quietly——

BAUDOUIN. What the devil! Why don't you take Bernard, or Juliaux, or Marchand?

ARNAUT. Listen to me, please! I'm nearly worn out—my voice is—I've not come here to use any undue influence or pressure: you may decide as you like. I've come to ask you to look into your own conscience——

[*Sounds of approbation: "Bravo!" then "Shh!"*]

BAUDOUIN. But it is precisely my conscience——

ARNAUT. Allow me, please——

ALL. Listen to him! Listen to him!

ARNAUT [*his voice becoming a little stronger as he proceeds*]. Dear old friend, you and I have seen little of each other these past twenty years; each of us has had his life to lead, each of us has fought in the thick of the struggle. But aren't we always sure to find ourselves side by side in the hour of need, under the flag—isn't that true, Baudouin?

BAUDOUIN. It is, Arnaut.

ARNAUT. I am asking for a sacrifice, my friend. It's an ungrateful task I am asking you to undertake. You are going to be a buffer to the whole opposition. All the hopeless rage of the enemy will be spent on you, but you know what cause you will be defending: the education law is in danger. [BAUDOUIN *starts*.] I appeal, Baudouin, to your conscience.

[*Sounds of approval again, and cries of "Bravo!"*]

BAUDOUIN. Why to me rather than to some one else? There are always enough candidates for the offices.

ARNAUT. Because you are poor, Henri Baudouin!

Because at this time, in order to give the lie to the ever-increasing reports of a new scandal, and in order to guarantee that the investigation will be rigorously carried out. There is no man who can do that so well as you: you will inspire confidence in enemies as well as in friends. Let me call you what the people call you: "Father Conscience!" [*Applause.*]

BAUDOUIN. This is very annoying! I'll be stoned some day because of that name. Do you believe in that scandal?

[*Every one turns toward ARNAUT.*]

ARNAUT [*breaking an embarrassing silence*]. I—don't know—it seems too absurd—it would be terrible—— No, I don't believe it!

ALL. Yes, you do! Speak! Speak!

ARNAUT [*in a resonant and strong voice*]. No, Messieurs, I am the leader of all our colleagues, and I have no right to have an opinion on that subject. [*To BAUDOUIN.*] You should understand me. You, my friend, you should understand. I am sorry I appeared so wrought up——

FERRAND. What's this?

ALL. Speak! Speak!

BAUDOUIN. Do you know something——?

ARNAUT. No, I know nothing, absolutely nothing. But during the past twenty years we have suffered enough, we have had enough sadness and shame, we have washed the soiled linen of the Republican family so that there is no need of my making a confession to you. I am suffering keenly, and I hardly know why. I fear that our triumph has been too self-satisfied, too sure of itself. [*Protestations.*] Yes, yes, Messieurs, I almost regret the great purity and openness of our splendid defeats! [*Going to BAUDOUIN.*] Just a few moments ago, as I was coming up your five flights of stairs, I felt I was making a pilgrimage to see certain souvenirs of the past. I saw again our elders under the Empire, to whom the mere name of the Republic was a sublime form of religion. I felt again the awful opprobrium of Cæsarism and the nightmare of invasion; and then the horror, the sudden horror, of seeing at last our dear dream of fraternity enter Paris to the accompaniment of gunshots, through the smoking breach of the Commune! This is all legend to you younger men. It seems, too, that I am a phantom of the past. Sometimes, when I am sitting in the Chamber, on my high bench dominating everything, I think that I have been relegated to a mountain top, and I sit there so alone. My feet mingle

in the *mêlée* below, and become a part of the ambitious struggles and disputes—it's really terrifying to me. [*Murmurs.*]

FERRAND. Now you're surely exaggerating.

BAUDOIN [*deeply impressed*]. Go on! Go on!

ARNAUT. Well, Baudouin, you, too, are a solitary summit, only you are more alone and higher than I. Of all those members of the older generation who gathered round that little table in the café which you remember, just before you left for London on the evening of the second of December—our throats were so contracted that we couldn't empty our glasses, our hearts big with the emotion of the impending drama—you and I are the only survivors. In the name of those who have since disappeared, my dear brother-in-arms, I beg you to take their place. Our fathers made the Republic, we must save it! We are in the presence of the greatest danger she has yet faced. The enemy does not come from another land, it is at our doors, among us. What is threatened is not such and such a cabinet, it is the lay law, the heart of the Democracy, it is the very ideal which has always been the principle of my life and of yours. You haven't the right to desert us. Under the flag, Baudouin, under the flag!

[*There is a tense pause.*]

BAUDOUIN. I'm with you, old man!

ARNAUT. I felt sure!

[*The delegates are delighted; they embrace one another and converse excitedly.*]

GALIMARD. Long live the Republic!

FERRAND. Now to the Elysée!

BAUDOUIN [*authoritatively*]. One word, Messieurs. I wish to make a formal condition to my acceptance. I firmly believe that our friend Arnaut is taking much too pessimistic a view of the political situation. I shall see that the investigation is carried out to the last detail. What if I find the guilty party on our side of the Chamber?

ALL. But you won't!

BAUDOUIN. But if I do?

ARNAUT. You will do justice!

BAUDOUIN. Is that clearly understood? I refuse to be curbed afterward—no matter who he is or how high he stands.

ALL. Of course! We understand.

BAUDOUIN. Shall I have the confidence and good will of our friend, Roquin? I should appreciate—

ALL. Well? Shall he?

ROQUIN [*after a moment's reflection*]. Yes, yes, I

admit that if Baudouin is to superintend the investigation——

ALL. Good!

PRATT. There's a just man for you!

FERRAND. My dear Baudouin, I feel this very deeply—— I can't thank you——

ALL. Long live Baudouin! To the Elysée! Long live Arnaut! Long live the Republic! To the Elysée!

[BAUDOUIN is given a cordial ovation. The men go out amid great enthusiasm. ROQUIN, who lingers and is the last of the delegation to leave, casts a cold glance at OCTAVE. OCTAVE stands, oblivious of everything, with one hand on his forehead, his eyes staring into the void.]

BAUDOUIN [*reëntering—pensive and solemn*]. Octave?

OCTAVE [*quickly coming to himself*]. Yes? What is it?

BAUDOUIN. Come here, son. You are excited, aren't you? So am I. Come, kiss me. [OCTAVE allows his father to kiss him.] Let me look into your eyes for the power I shall need. You will help me, won't you?

EUGÉNIE [*entering, right*]. What has happened?

BAUDOUIN. I am Minister——

EUGÉNIE. Minister, you?

BAUDOUIN [*pointing to his son, who is pressed close to his breast*]. And here is my right arm, Mother!

Curtain

ACT II

ACT II

The same scene as in the preceding act, except that BAUDOUIN'S office has been overhauled, and now presents an official appearance. There is no more disorder: the bookshelves have glass doors, there is a bronze bust of the Republic, new furniture, a desk suitable for a cabinet minister on the right, with a telephone on it. To the left, a smaller desk, opposite the large one.

LATOCHE, a young secretary, sits at the small desk, working. BAUDOUIN, in a jacket, and very well dressed, walks back and forth, his hands clasped behind him.

LATOCHE. Let me reread the list of witnesses: Rosserand, Gigou, Walter, Ribauval, Poitevin, de Flersac, Nanteuil, Petit de Blommeville, Juniot, Valentin, Meyer.

BAUDOUIN. Is that all?

LATOCHE [*rather annoyed*]. You really must see

Monsieur Puylaroche. You won't forget that, will you, Monsieur le ministre?

BAUDOUIN. Puylaroche?

LATOUCHE. Yes, he's a delegate: the man from the Clericals who made that offer to Monsieur Roquin. They are bringing a charge of attempted bribery——

BAUDOUIN. Yes, you insist on my seeing him. I can't make the investigation myself, my connection is purely official——

LATOUCHE [*as he writes*]. So far, his answers before the commission have been nothing at all——[*Looking at BAUDOUIN.*] I assure you, Monsieur le ministre, it is very important that you see him——

BAUDOUIN. But why? Tell me——

LATOUCHE [*writing again*]. He knows a great deal, but he refuses to talk except in private.

BAUDOUIN. He's a nasty solicitor. Really, I don't like the idea of seeing him. Oh, very well, then, Latouche, I consent. We can't have too much light on the subject—let us have more! [*He looks for something in his desk.*] Have you seen my pipe, Latouche? I can't find anything, now that things have been rearranged.

LATOUCHE. I beg your pardon, Monsieur le

ministre, but you promised Madame Baudouin that you would smoke only cigars. Allow me? [*He offers BAUDOUIN his case of cigars.*]

BAUDOUIN. Very well: the ministerial cigar. [*He takes a cigar.*] I see, you're an accomplice of my wife's. [*He lights the cigar.*] Your cigars are very good, by the way. [*He walks back and forth.*] Do you know, Latouche, Gerberoi's evidence was something astounding! Pratt is certainly compromised—and I had such confidence in that fellow! He had the nerve to come here and announce that the Cabinet had been overthrown! And Fontanez—and Villardieu! It's really—— Why do you smile, Latouche?

LATOCHE. It's nothing, Monsieur le ministre.

BAUDOUIN. Tell me, what are you thinking?

LATOCHE [*after a moment's hesitation*]. You are new to the business——

BAUDOUIN [*laughing*]. Oh, no, I'm only an old fogey!

LATOCHE. You know, without your intervention, the report of the trial would not have been published *in toto*——

BAUDOUIN. Oh, there was plenty of opposition, but you know my principles, and you are aware of my reasons for accepting this office. I stand for a

thorough cleaning-up without regard to consequence.
[*There is a knock on the door.*] Come in!

Enter a SERVANT in a white apron.

What is it? I am working, and I can receive no one.

THE SERVANT [*presenting cards on a salver*]. These gentlemen say they have an appointment——

BAUDOIN [*without looking at the names on the cards*]. That is not true; they have no appointment. I wish to be alone.

LATOUCHE [*glancing at the cards*]. Monsieur le ministre, it's Monsieur Galimard——

BAUDOIN. Again! He's obsessed! I know what he wants. I shan't give in, however. I have said No, and I repeat it!

LATOUCHE. Monsieur Galimard is head of the——

BAUDOIN [*hesitating a moment*]. Tell him to come in, Jules. Now I'll give them to understand once for all!

[*The SERVANT goes out.*]

No matter what you say, it is scandalous to see honest men interceding for a scamp——

Enter GALIMARD, DUVAL-PORCHERET, and MEYER-HEIM.

GALIMARD. Only a word, my dear Minister——

BAUDOUIN. Galimard, my friend——

GALIMARD. Let me introduce these gentlemen. Monsieur Meyerheim, the well-known banker—our party—Monsieur Duval-Porcheret, president of the Republican Democratic committee of Villeneuve-sur-Marne——

BAUDOUIN. Galimard, my friend, you are the best fellow in the world, but if you brought here the whole party and every banker on the Rue Laffitte—I beg your pardon, Messieurs—you could not move me one inch. I am firm; I believe Pratt is dishonest. Let justice take its course.

GALIMARD. But you can't sacrifice Pratt; he's our candidate for election next month in the Basse-Marne. He has all the votes of the Grand-Morin. It would mean the loss of a whole department!

BAUDOUIN. We'll find another.

DUVAL-PORCHERET. That is easily said, Monsieur le ministre. I beg your pardon, but I come from that district. You have no idea what efforts the Church party is now making there to ruin the lay schools. Monsieur Pratt may not be all he should be, but still he is the only man in the party who has the confidence of the rural districts. He has been

working them for the past three years, and spent any amount of money——

BAUDOUIN. Which he got out of the pockets of others.

MEYERHEIM. Money, Monsieur le ministre, is always taken out of some one's pocket. I have had business relations with Monsieur Pratt for a great many years. He is connected with numerous houses; his fall would cause widespread ruin among any number of small stockholders: the obscure pillars of the Republic. You have no wish to strike these innocent people——?

BAUDOUIN. In defending the cause of honesty I am rendering a service to all the humble men and women who are the victims of a few thieves.

GALIMARD. But, my dear friend, Pratt is an intelligent man—former Secretary of the Interior. He would go into the Chamber and there make use of his wide experience——

BAUDOUIN. Fine experience!

GALIMARD. This would mean a big scandal. Are you considering that? Then, Pratt is on our side. Your son knows him, so do you——

BAUDOUIN. Oh, we have known him as an official, that is all.

GALIMARD. But he used to come to see you. I met him here ten days ago when we were forming the Cabinet. Why, he was one of the most enthusiastic supporters of your candidacy as Minister——

BAUDOIN. But do I want to owe anything to a political schemer who was counting on my complacency in this matter?

GALIMARD. But you do, I tell you——

[FERRAND enters unannounced. He is evidently in a hurry and preoccupied. He speaks quickly and briefly.]

FERRAND. Good day, Messieurs!

ALL [except BAUDOIN, bowing]. Monsieur!

FERRAND. You will excuse me, Messieurs? Urgent business. I must speak with Baudouin.

GALIMARD. Don't forget! A word about Pratt——

FERRAND. Yes, yes. [Getting rid of GALIMARD.] See you at the Chamber, Galimard?

MEYERHEIM. Monsieur, we shall leave you——

GALIMARD [as he leaves]. Then you'll think about it, Baudouin? I am speaking for our common interest——

LATOUCHE. Shall I go out with these gentlemen?

FERRAND. Yes, please, just for a minute.

[The four men go out.]

BAUDOUIN. Sit down, will you?

FERRAND. I haven't time——

BAUDOUIN. What is it? Nothing serious, I hope!

FERRAND. Serious, no, but rather disagreeable. You remember your son's secretary, who disappeared?

BAUDOUIN. Yes, ten days ago. My son thinks it was some crazy idea. I had a search made for him. But what is it? I'm busy. Do you know something about the matter?

FERRAND. Well, my friend, he committed suicide.

BAUDOUIN [*thunderstruck*]. What's that?

FERRAND. I have just learned the news from the prefecture. His body was found in a ditch in the Bois de Boulogne. Here is the report of the investigation. Suicide was evident. [FERRAND *hands* BAUDOUIN *a sheet of paper and watches closely the effect produced on him.*]

BAUDOUIN [*having read the paper*]. Poor fellow! I'm terribly sorry! It's unbelievable!

FERRAND. As to the reasons that led him to kill himself, you see nothing is said——

BAUDOUIN. No, I see——

FERRAND. Can't you surmise, perhaps——

BAUDOUIN. No, I have no idea. From what I

know of the young man—no, I can't imagine. Why, it's unbelievable——

FERRAND. I know less about it all than you. [*A pause.*] Between you and me, what sort of man was this Rémillot?

BAUDOUIIN. Honest and upright—a good clean character, and faithful worker. But you know of Rémillot—the professor who refused to swear his oath under the Empire—that was his father. The little fellow wrote for the “*Avant Garde.*” This suicide seems so unreasonable——

FERRAND. Possibly your son could help us out? It is certainly to his interest that the papers don't get hold of the story and invent one of those fantastic tales——

BAUDOUIIN. What could they possibly say?

FERRAND. Well—you know—the secretary of a prominent deputy, who is the son of a new minister whom the enemy are watching day and night—— I thought it wise to let you know at once, before any one else got wind of it. I am quite sure the poor fellow was all right, only—well, explain it; we must have an explanation. We can't have any mystery about it. See your son, and then don't do anything without first consulting me.

BAUDOIN. I'll see about it at once. Are you going now?

FERRAND. I have business at the Department of the Interior—this call has already made me late. See you to-morrow, old man, at the Cabinet meeting in the Elysée. [*Just before he leaves.*] Oh, by the way, that investigation! Tell me, are you really going to sacrifice Pratt and Fontanez?

BAUDOIN. Absolutely.

FERRAND. You are hard, Baudouin; that will be a severe blow for us. People will see only the fault of the guilty men and not the virtue of the judges——

BAUDOIN. Ferrand, is it you who speak to me this way? Don't you remember that we agreed——?

FERRAND. Yes, yes, we did.

BAUDOIN. Well, then, don't you approve of what I am doing? [*A pause.*]

FERRAND. Frankly, you can't do it.

BAUDOIN. Why?

FERRAND. Because——

BAUDOIN. Tell me, why?

FERRAND. Wait for a few days. [*He goes out quickly.* BAUDOIN stands in astonishment before the door.]

BAUDOIN [*calling*]. Latouche, come here!

Enter LATOUCHE.

Please call up my son on the telephone, and tell him that his secretary killed himself.

LATOUCHE. René Rémillot? [*His astonishment shows that he realizes the gravity of the news.*]

BAUDOIN. Hurry up.

LATOUCHE [*at the telephone*]. Hello—hello—Mademoiselle? 556-79.

[*A pause, during which BAUDOIN walks back and forth. His attitude is feverish and nervous.*]

Monsieur Octave Baudouin? [*To BAUDOIN.*] He is at the Palais de Justice—busy with a case.

BAUDOIN. Have some one send for him and ask him to come to see me as soon as he is through.

LATOUCHE [*into the telephone*]. Go to the Palais and tell Monsieur Octave Baudouin that his father wishes to have him come immediately after the hearing—yes, at once—important business—very well.

[*CLOTILDE pushes the door of the antechamber halfway open.*]

CLOTILDE. May I come in? Are there no more officials? [*She comes in with her two children: one a boy of eight, the other a girl of six.*]

THE BOY. Hello, Grandpa!

THE LITTLE GIRL. Heyyo, Grandpa! [*They run to BAUDOUIN.*]

BAUDOUIN. Ah, it's you, Clotilde! You've come at a time——

THE BOY. Guess what we've brought you, Grandpa?

THE LITTLE GIRL. Somefing you've never never seen.

THE BOY. It's wonderful!

BAUDOUIN. I haven't time just now, children—— another time!

CLOTILDE. And you were complaining that you never saw them nowadays. Grandma's going to take them to the Luxembourg Gardens——

BAUDOUIN. Yes, yes, very good! But I want to tell you something very serious——

CLOTILDE. What is the matter?

THE BOY. You'll be surprised, I tell you!

THE LITTLE GIRL. Won't you look?

BAUDOUIN. Take them away, Clotilde, please!

CLOTILDE. Come, children, we'll go to Grandma——

THE BOY. Look, it's your picture—you don't like to have it taken——

THE LITTLE GIRL. I put on the paints——

BAUDOIN [*to* CLOTILDE]. Please take them away—I can't stand them!

CLOTILDE. Come, children, don't you hear me? [*She takes them by the hand. The LITTLE GIRL bursts out crying, frightened by BAUDOIN's harsh tone.*]

BAUDOIN. Now, now, there she is crying! Wait a minute, Clotilde. Leave her with me a moment. [*He takes the LITTLE GIRL on his knee.*] Oh, dear, dear, are you afraid? There, dear, I'm not angry at all. You know Grandpa has such a heap of things to worry him. Now, it's all over—quick, kiss me. There, there's five francs for your picture. You may have a ride on the donkey in the Luxembourg Gardens——

THE BOY. That's fine! Say, you're a fine Minister! A fine one!

CLOTILDE [*taking the children out through the door at the right and speaking to their grandmother, who is in the next room*]. There they are, Grandma, you may take them to the Luxembourg. [*She closes the door and goes to BAUDOIN.*] Now, what is it?

BAUDOIN. One second. Latouche, please be good enough to carry those notes to the prefecture. Then ask, for me, whether the investigation has

brought forth any new information about the Rémillot affair. Come back then and report to me.

CLOTILDE. Have they found any clue yet?

LATOUCHE. Very well, Monsieur le ministre. You won't forget that you have made an appointment to see Monsieur Puylaroche at half-past three?

BAUDOUIN. That's so.

LATOUCHE [*bowing*]. Madame.

[*He goes out.*]

CLOTILDE. Now, what is it? You make me so afraid——

BAUDOUIN. Little Rémillot committed suicide.

CLOTILDE [*with a piercing cry*]. How horrible!

BAUDOUIN. The prefecture reported that to me. I have just received the first report of their brief inquest. His body was discovered in a ditch in the Bois de Boulogne.

CLOTILDE. But that's impossible. There must be some mistake! It's not he!

BAUDOUIN. Certain papers found on his body leave no doubt of his identity.

CLOTILDE. But how do they know it wasn't a murder?

BAUDOUIN. He was still holding his revolver. There was not a single trace of any struggle—his pocketbook had not been touched.

CLOTILDE [*becoming more and more alarmed, with tears in her eyes*]. The poor young man! Killed himself!

BAUDOUIN. The body was already in a state of decomposition——

CLOTILDE. Don't!

BAUDOUIN. It happened ten days ago: that is, the day he disappeared.

CLOTILDE. Friday the twenty-second: the very day we saw the last of him?

BAUDOUIN. Probably——

CLOTILDE. Where did he shoot himself?

[BAUDOUIN *points to his heart*.]

Awful! The poor young man! [*She falls into a chair, and bursts into a fit of sobbing*.]

BAUDOUIN. Now, my dear, control yourself. You must see that under the circumstances, with this big investigation going on, I cannot allow my enemies to find out about this and profit by the coincidence. You see, there must be no mystery of any kind. Have you any idea of his motive?

CLOTILDE. I? I haven't the slightest suspicion.

Not the slightest. I don't know what to think now! Why do you ask *me*?

BAUDOIN. Whom should I ask? You saw him from morning till night every day.

CLOTILDE [*suddenly apprehensive*]. Tell me, Father, among the papers that were found on him, was there a letter for any one?

BAUDOIN. Nothing—not a word. That is precisely what troubles me. He seems to have taken precautions so that no one should discover his motive.

[CLOTILDE *shows a look of anguish.*]

Well, he was twenty-three—isn't it reasonable to suppose that there was a woman in the case?

CLOTILDE. Oh, no!

BAUDOIN. Why not?

CLOTILDE. Because—well, I told you the other day: he was a most upright and honorable young man, of very high ideals. He never had anything to do with women—the way you imply: he had the strictest possible principles.

BAUDOIN. Exactly. I don't mean to say that he killed himself for some prostitute. He was a serious young fellow, and possibly some deep passion——?

CLOTILDE. Oh, don't say that! No, you mustn't. He would never do anything so foolish as that!

BAUDOUIN. You are quite sure he had no affair?

CLOTILDE. Quite!

BAUDOUIN. Any financial troubles?

CLOTILDE. No! He cared nothing about money—he was even very careless.

BAUDOUIN. Then can you explain why a pawn ticket was found on his body?

CLOTILDE. A pawn ticket? Impossible!

BAUDOUIN. For a gold watch and chain: sixty-five francs.

CLOTILDE. Was he so short of money?

BAUDOUIN. So it seems. But how can we explain it, unless he spent his money in some vicious way? He was well paid——

CLOTILDE. You're on the wrong scent.

BAUDOUIN. What do you mean? Do you know something about this?

CLOTILDE. I know absolutely nothing.

BAUDOUIN. My child, this is not the moment for keeping anything back. You must tell me the truth, Clotilde.

CLOTILDE. Well, Father—— [*She is about to speak.*] I'm afraid.

BAUDOIN. No, tell me. You must: I insist. Please.

CLOTILDE. Very well, then! You would have learned everything sooner or later. If Rémillot was short of money—[*she hesitates once more*]—it was because for the past three months he was going without his salary.

BAUDOIN. What! Didn't Octave pay him? What are you saying? What does it mean?

CLOTILDE. It was wrong of me!

BAUDOIN. No, no. Tell me, tell me. Why didn't Octave pay him?

CLOTILDE. Because just now we are very short ourselves.

BAUDOIN. You short! But Octave has an income of over thirty thousand francs—as a lawyer. You have no extra expenses: you have no mania for jewels, and he has no debts. Well, then?

CLOTILDE. I can't tell you.

BAUDOIN. You poor woman, don't you realize what I'm suffering? What is this I am finding out? You tell me of a deficit and you give me no reasons, and at the very moment when your husband's secretary—

CLOTILDE. Don't! Please!

BAUDOIN. What has Octave done? What has he done?

CLOTILDE. I—it seems as if I were lowering myself in telling this.

BAUDOIN. What have you to complain of about your husband?

CLOTILDE. You are the only person who doesn't know. All of Paris points out his mistress!

BAUDOIN. Octave's mistress?

CLOTILDE. Mademoiselle Solange, of the Grand-Théâtre—if you want to know her name!

BAUDOIN [*utterly dumbfounded*]. It isn't true! I don't believe you. No, no, my child, I don't believe you. Accuse Octave of that at a moment like this, when his honor is at stake! Please, I beg you, don't make a statement like that—you don't know what it means! What proofs have you? Formal, indisputable proofs?

CLOTILDE. I have them: formal and indisputable. You don't imagine that I believed it either? I didn't until a woman friend of mine took me to a picture exhibition—dragged me by main force. She wanted to enjoy my embarrassment, and I took up her offer, for my pride was hurt by the insinuation. I went and I saw them—with my own eyes!

BAUDOIN. He and that woman?

CLOTILDE. He and that woman! Of course, they behaved respectably to all appearances. They seemed to enjoy parading themselves before every one—though their hypocrisy was too apparent. But one instant, when they were not in the midst of the crowd, they stopped in front of a nasty picture. Just a fraction of a second—I saw the way he took her hand. Their heads were close together as they devoured that voluptuous nude picture. It seemed to me then, that by the looks they exchanged, their bodies were before me, like their looks, and that I, too, stood in their presence—naked! I felt dizzy with shame and I ran away as if I were in a nightmare—

BAUDOIN. Oh, the miserable cad! [*Seeing CLOTILDE wipe away a tear of rage.*] My poor child!

CLOTILDE [*with a certain ferocity*]. Oh, no! You mustn't pity me. [*A pause.*]

BAUDOIN. You won't forgive your husband?

CLOTILDE [*rising*]. A woman may forgive: love never does! [*Another pause.*]

BAUDOIN. Is it possible! Octave! Octave! We are speaking of Octave, are we not? So, he is keeping that woman?

CLOTILDE. Ruining himself for her! I scarcely have enough money for household expenses. We are running into debt every day: I must even send away a servant——

BAUDOUIN. You are in debt?

CLOTILDE. A mistress of the Grand-Théâtre is an expensive luxury. Then as a deputy Octave gets reduced rates!

BAUDOUIN. Please, Clotilde, let's not joke at such a time as this! If you knew what mad ideas are running through my head now! So you say he is ruining himself for her?

CLOTILDE. He bought her an automobile.

BAUDOUIN. What? An automobile?

CLOTILDE. Oh, it's the style now!

BAUDOUIN. Then—how much do you suppose——

CLOTILDE. Oh, I don't know. He can pay the price—she is for sale!

BAUDOUIN. For God's sake, tell me where he finds the money?

CLOTILDE. He doesn't find it, to begin with, and then he earns extra money by killing himself with work. He pleads any and every case he can get. His friend Pratt helps him get new cases.

BAUDOUIN. Pratt? Did you say Pratt?

CLOTILDE. Yes, the former Secretary of the Interior. He is the one who first debauched him.

BAUDOUIN. My child, this is the end of everything for us. We are lost.

CLOTILDE. Lost? Why? What do you mean?

BAUDOUIN. This investigation of mine has discovered the most damaging evidence against Pratt.

CLOTILDE. Are you sure?

BAUDOUIN. Absolutely. He may be arrested at any moment. So Pratt is on intimate terms with Octave?

CLOTILDE. Don't talk about it. That makes no difference! I am sure Octave knows nothing about——

BAUDOUIN. I, too!

CLOTILDE. Then what is the trouble? What are you thinking of?

BAUDOUIN. Nothing.

CLOTILDE. Yes, you are.

BAUDOUIN [*looking her straight in the eyes*]. Clotilde, Clotilde!

CLOTILDE [*suddenly realizing what he is thinking*]. Don't, don't! [*A long pause of intense emotional agony. Then there is a knock on the door.*] Come in.

Enter the SERVANT.

THE SERVANT. Some one to see Monsieur le ministre. I said that Monsieur le ministre would see no one, but the gentleman tells me he has an appointment.

BAUDOUIN. Have you his card?

THE SERVANT. No, Monsieur le ministre, he wouldn't give me one. He just said, "Puylaroche."

BAUDOUIN. That's so. Tell him to come in, Jules. [*To CLOTILDE.*] Now go, my dear, this is a political matter——

CLOTILDE. But not a word to Octave, remember!

[*She goes out, right.*

[*Enter PUYLAROCHE, left. He wears the ribbon of the Legion of Honor.*]

PUYLAROCHE [*bowing*]. Monsieur le ministre——

BAUDOUIN. Monsieur, you have refused to testify before the investigation committee. May I know the reason? I have only an instant. I am waiting for your answer.

PUYLAROCHE. I beg your pardon, Monsieur le ministre, it was you who asked to see me. I hope you are not going to blame me for accepting your invitation? I come here with the best of intentions, in order to give you information that will not sound

any too well in a public assembly. It will, none the less, be very precious to you.

BAUDOUIN. May I ask you again to speak, Monsieur?

PUYLAROCHE. I believe you are aware that your son's secretary——

BAUDOUIN. I know, Monsieur, but I don't see what that has to do with the matter? What do you mean to insinuate?

PUYLAROCHE. Nothing at all: it has nothing to do with the question. I simply wished to state that your son, whose best interests I have at heart——

BAUDOUIN. Then you know him?

PUYLAROCHE. I have that honor. That your son, as a result of this, is going to find himself placed in a most delicate situation, and that my advice will possibly be of some service to him——

BAUDOUIN. You of service to him? How? Do you know the motive of the suicide?

PUYLAROCHE. Oh, Monsieur le ministre, I never know anything; I don't want to know anything. It goes without saying that any one may have a secretary, who for personal reasons—— But the public, you know, is always only too ready to look on the worst side of things, and in this particular instance

will draw a regrettable parallel between the suicide and a certain other affair which will not long remain secret.

BAUDOUIN. Why—what affair?

PUYLAROCHE. Hasn't your son told you? In that case, Monsieur le ministre, I must say nothing.

BAUDOUIN. Yes, yes, my son did drop some remark—but I forget: what about it?

PUYLAROCHE. Well, I am known to be discreet, and——

BAUDOUIN. Speak, Monsieur.

PUYLAROCHE. You will allow me then to divulge this professional secret on behalf of your son?

BAUDOUIN. Yes, I do. Now, proceed.

PUYLAROCHE. Well, Monsieur le ministre, let us be frank. You should know this, because you are conducting the investigation. A number of persons are implicated. Now I don't imagine that you are going to defend Pratt, for instance?

BAUDOUIN. I have nothing to say about that: the investigation will see to such matters.

PUYLAROCHE. I shan't insist. Nor is there any doubt that the Republican deputies and high officials of the former cabinet were implicated in the scheme. I can assure you that I am not mistaken.

BAUDOUIN. Well, Monsieur?

PUYLAROCHE. I hasten to assure you that I believe that Monsieur Octave's case is not in the least like the other's. Of course, he would never have made up from his personal credit a sub-letting of—

BAUDOUIN. Take care, Monsieur, that simple hypothesis that you reject amounts already to a serious charge. One more word and I shall show you the door.

PUYLAROCHE. Monsieur le ministre, I cannot allow you to assume that tone with me. If you showed me the door, you would be the first to regret it. I beg you, let us be calm about this, or else let us put an end to the conversation. [*A pause.*]

BAUDOUIN [*giving in to his anxious curiosity*]. Sit down, sit down—

PUYLAROCHE [*sitting down*]. Thank you. Really, you astonish me. There are very few men who would be capable of—

BAUDOUIN. I am listening, Monsieur.

PUYLAROCHE. Well, once your son's honor is open to question, there is no reason why during the debates on the education law—well, here is where a regrettable coincidence comes in, because your son has had dealings with a Catholic bank: the Banque

Française, to be exact. The name of that bank has been pronounced several times during the investigation, in connection with some attempts at bribery.

BAUDOUIN [*enraged*]. Leave this house at once, Monsieur! I shall allow no such insinuations about my son——

PUYLAROCHE [*rising*]. You are mistaken, Monsieur le ministre. I don't maintain that your son is compromised, or even that any one ever attempted to bribe him; I simply say that he has business relations—just what, I don't know—with the bank I have mentioned.

BAUDOUIN. That's not true! And *you* are lying!

PUYLAROCHE. Oh, I beg your pardon. We have absolute proof.

BAUDOUIN. Proof of what?

PUYLAROCHE. Of a payment of twenty thousand francs to Monsieur Octave Baudouin, Republican deputy, by a Catholic bank. The payment was made during a session on the education bill.

BAUDOUIN. Show me your proof, Monsieur!

PUYLAROCHE. I have the receipt given me by your son's secretary while Monsieur Octave was away. I called at his home.

BAUDOUIN. You?

PUYLAROCHE. I.

BAUDOUIN. A receipt by Rémillot? That's not true!

PUYLAROCHE. We have it at the bank!

BAUDOUIN. It's a forgery! [*He rushes at PUYLAROCHE.*] You damned scoundrel, now I see the trick! You're taking advantage of a dead man in order to kill a living one! You are trying to get at me through my son because you know very well I am trying to crush your party, a party that dares make use of such a man as you! Well, you may go at once and tell them that they don't know Henri Baudouin! And you, I'll have you sent to jail for this business, you with your cross of the Legion of Honor! As to the people who sent you, I'm going to denounce them to-morrow in public!

PUYLAROCHE. In public?

BAUDOUIN. Yes, in public!

PUYLAROCHE. Really, you are most extraordinary! In public!

BAUDOUIN. Ah, that staggers you. That simple little threat calms you.

PUYLAROCHE. Nothing of the kind. That isn't the point. Just think what it will cost your party,

our party, for I can tell you, Monsieur le ministre, that I, too, am a Republican.

BAUDOUIN [*with a loud mocking laugh*]. The idea!

PUYLAROCHE. You know very well that your adversaries will make the name public. It will be a bomb—and the destruction of the Cabinet.

BAUDOUIN. The bomb is not loaded. Throw it!

PUYLAROCHE. Now, Monsieur le ministre, don't lose your head. Think of it: it's only a small matter, the kind you run across twenty times a day. Where would we end if every one were like you?

BAUDOUIN [*imperiously*]. Leave the room!

PUYLAROCHE. Look here, I'm not trying to make it difficult for you. My name would be mixed up in all this just as yours would, and I care something for my political reputation. Let us understand each other. I promise you absolute silence if you will guarantee me——

BAUDOUIN [*a prey to doubts—his voice a little weakened*]. Get out!

PUYLAROCHE. I'll give you Rémillot's receipt.

BAUDOUIN [*feebly*]. Get out, get out!

PUYLAROCHE. Think well, it's a most advantageous proposition. Grant that your son knew nothing

of the affair, even; still, appearances are against him. People will say that Rémillot was only a blind, and that the secretary killed himself because his employer threw all the responsibility on him.

[BAUDOUIN *falls into a chair near his desk.*]

Here is a photograph of the original receipt.

[PUYLAROCHE *goes to BAUDOUIN and slips the photograph into his hand.*]

You may keep this—see, there's no trick about it. That's Rémillot's handwriting. Think, what do I ask you? A few slight modifications in the new education law. Will you give me another appointment? Then we can go into detail and arrange it—

BAUDOUIN [*revolted*]. This is too much! Monsieur, you're a low-down trickster! [*He presses a button on the desk.*]

PUYLAROCHE. You're crazy!

BAUDOUIN. You scoundrel, you underhanded—! [*He seizes a chair.*]

PUYLAROCHE. You must be out of your mind!

BAUDOUIN [*swinging the chair in the air*]. Get out, or I won't be responsible for what I do.

Enter the SERVANT.

[*To the SERVANT.*] Take him out.

THE SERVANT. Go, Monsieur.

PUYLAROCHE [*to the SERVANT*]. Don't touch me!

Enter OCTAVE.

OCTAVE. What's the matter?

PUYLAROCHE. Ask your father.

BAUDOUIN. Throw him out! Throw him out!

PUYLAROCHE [*to BAUDOUIN*]. You'll pay for this!

[He goes out.]

OCTAVE [*trying to retain PUYLAROCHE*]. Wait a moment! Don't go. I don't understand——

BAUDOUIN [*running to OCTAVE and bringing him back into the room*]. Octave! Octave! Octave!

OCTAVE. Father, this is ridiculous, mad! What are you doing? That man is a dangerous man, very dangerous.

BAUDOUIN. Do you know him?

OCTAVE. Why did he threaten you? What did he want here? Why did he come to see you?

BAUDOUIN. Do you know him?

OCTAVE. Slightly, the way every one knows him: he's a colleague of mine. What did he have to say to you?

[Enter CLOTILDE, through the door leading into the living-rooms.]

CLOTILDE. What's the matter?

OCTAVE. Please go, Clotilde.

BAUDOUIN. Is it true that you received money from the Banque Française?

OCTAVE. From the Banque Française? Does he say that? That I accepted money from——? Did Puylaroche say that?

BAUDOUIN. Is it true? Yes or no?

OCTAVE. No, it is not true. [*A pause.*]

BAUDOUIN. How about your secretary? You say nothing about him?

OCTAVE. My secretary? What about him?

BAUDOUIN. He committed suicide. His body has been found in a ditch in the Bois de Boulogne. [*A pause.*]

OCTAVE. Damned fool!

BAUDOUIN. Is that all you have to say? A man who is intimately bound up in your affairs, in your private life, and you call him a "damned fool?" You don't even ask what his motive was, and you don't seem to realize the danger of this coincidence, nor the very serious results it may have for you. For the love of God, say something else! You don't know what I've seen!

OCTAVE. What? No, I don't know——

BAUDOIN [*handing him the photograph of the receipt*]. Look!

OCTAVE. What's that?

BAUDOIN. Facsimile of a receipt for twenty thousand francs, signed in your name by your secretary, on your own letterhead. That rascal Puylaroche has threatened to publish this if I don't modify my program on the education law.

CLOTILDE. Let me see it!

BAUDOIN. Do you recognize Rémillot's handwriting?

OCTAVE. Yes, yes, it's his. There's no doubt about that.

BAUDOIN. Well, Octave? [*A pause.*]

OCTAVE. Well, it's all very simple. I am the victim of a conspiracy on the part of the Clericals. That little scoundrel is an accomplice of theirs!

CLOTILDE. Stop it!

OCTAVE. "Stop it?" It seems to me that the facts are very clear. The Banque Française now possesses this receipt for twenty thousand francs; this sum, which it pretends to have given to me, went to Rémillot——

CLOTILDE. Don't believe him!

OCTAVE. The proof of his guilt is that he killed

himself just before the scandal, when he would have been discovered. The truth is self-evident, and the public will not be mistaken.

CLOTILDE. Oh! [BAUDOUIN and OCTAVE suddenly turn to her.] Let me tell the truth! I am the only one who knows it; I know why Rémillot killed himself. [To BAUDOUIN.] I knew the moment you told me.

BAUDOUIN. Why?

OCTAVE. Tell us!

[*She hesitates.*]

BAUDOUIN. Well, tell us!

OCTAVE. Go ahead! Tell us, will you?

CLOTILDE [*making a sudden decision*]. Rémillot killed himself because of me.

OCTAVE [*at first dumbfounded*]. What are you saying? Do you mean to say that Rémillot——? [*Collecting his wits.*] Oh, the idea! A little whelp like that!

CLOTILDE [*protesting*]. Octave!

OCTAVE. A pretty love story for a diversion! To put that little puppy on a romantic pedestal!

CLOTILDE [*coldly*]. Rémillot killed himself because of me.

OCTAVE. Ha, why do you invent this story? Do

you, too, want to ruin me? Are you with my enemies?

CLOTILDE. I want only the truth, and that is what I am now telling. I'm not trying to recall some sad memory—— [*Repeating in a thick voice.*] Rémillot killed himself because of me.

BAUDOIN. But explain! Tell us! How did——?

CLOTILDE. I'll tell you the whole story if you want to hear it.

OCTAVE. That's enough—you don't take her seriously, do you?

BAUDOIN. Of course I do. Tell us.

OCTAVE. This is too much!

BAUDOIN [*to* OCTAVE]. Keep still! [*To* CLOTILDE.] I am listening.

CLOTILDE. When I felt that I was left utterly alone in my home—— [*OCTAVE starts.*] Yes, Octave, your father made me tell about that—Rémillot was the first to notice my loneliness. Like the real cynic you are, you confided in him—you forced your confidence on him—about all your debauchery, and even at times made him a witness of it. You made him take orders from your mistress when you were regaling yourself with her at banquets. Then Rémillot returned here and dined with

me—I was alone at the table. He sat down opposite me, dumb and very shy, an accomplice against his will, of Octave's infidelity. Then his manly nature showed itself and he protested against you and pitied me. Finally that pity and tenderness turned to love—a heartbreaking love. The poor boy tried so hard to hide his real feelings from me. You know me; I'm not a flirt, and it was a long time before I noticed anything. But one day I discovered the truth; you were with her! I waited for you the whole evening in your office; Rémillot was busy there, too. All at once he stood up, after having come across some sentence in one of your speeches, the one on—[*sarcastically*]—Lay Morality, he launched into a fierce attack on you. I defended you—your very faults made it a duty—but Rémillot refused to retract a single syllable. He was so furious that he seemed to be angry with me. I can still see him: his lips were white and his eyes flashing. It seemed as if some undiscovered force were rising up in him. I see that silhouette of the young puritan—he was handsome, poor little Rémillot! Then all of a sudden I understood everything; I couldn't believe it. That child was in love with me! Oh, I know, I should have left him at once, but he spoke to me so pathetically about his

loneliness, he recalled so vividly what our home was before the downfall, how happy we were, you and I, that I was fascinated, although I was angry with him even if he was telling the truth. I was angry that such words were coming from the lips of any one but you! [*A pause.*]

OCTAVE. So he loved you, the little rat! He *was* careful about it, the damned——! He wasn't satisfied with spying on me for the Jesuits; he wanted to steal my wife from me!

CLOTILDE. Naturally! You can't imagine a man loving a woman without wanting to take her—no, *you* can't think of love without soiling it! Let me tell you, he never—never, mind you—raised his eyes to me! He loved me with all the strength and purity of his young heart—respectfully—— You're surprised! There still are some of that sort of men left!

OCTAVE. I really admire you! How well you defend him, glorify him, your little Rémillot! Do you know what that proves? It proves that you loved him yourself!

CLOTILDE. If I had loved him he would not have killed himself!

OCTAVE. He did kill himself—because you re-

fused him. And if you refused him, then that proves that he wanted you!

CLOTILDE. What I refused him, what he begged me for was a little pity, a simple proof of kindness, and that I would not give him. He wanted a smile that would tell him: "I don't love you, but I am suffering because I make you suffer." Well, I didn't give that much help. I was harsh, cruel—I didn't know it until it was too late. [*Her voice becomes choked.*] It was for your sake I did that! I kept everything for you, you who kept nothing for me. I was wearing myself out trying to make you my perfect ideal, while you were parading yourself in public with women—meantime that poor child was dying of despair for a single word from me! [*She throws herself into a chair, shaken with sobs.*]

OCTAVE. You hear her, Father, you hear her? She is now regretting she didn't love that little fool, that little idiot——

CLOTILDE [*rising*]. Take care, Octave. If you insult his memory I may feel a great deal more for him now than I did when he was living.

BAUDOIN [*intervening*]. Stop it now, keep still, both of you. [*A pause.*] Listen, Clotilde, what you

have told me seems hardly credible. You swear that is the absolute truth?

CLOTILDE. I do.

OCTAVE. But I tell you not to listen to her. She's making it all up. Ask her for a single proof!

CLOTILDE [*taken aback at this doubt*]. The proof that——? You don't believe me? Let me give you one. That Friday evening, when Octave was out, Rémillot asked me to come to see him. I thought it was a matter of business. I went into the office. He was perfectly calm. He asked my permission for the last time to let him love me—at least to feel some sisterly affection for him. I was just on the point of leaving when he ran to me and, not giving me a chance even to cry out, he grasped my wrist—I never knew he was so strong. All the despair of his soul was in his hand. He begged me to listen to him: his whole life depended on my answer. I hardly understood him. Still, it was scarcely anything that he asked—I can't explain—he was without parents or relatives—I was his “Madonna of solitude.” [*To OCTAVE, who shrugs his shoulders.*] I'm not telling all this for the sake of exploiting myself, only I want to rid myself of that idea of adoration—that nightmare! But that day I understood noth-

ing, and I was merciless. "For the last time, will you listen to me? This is the last time I shall speak to you." "Leave me, or I'll call for help. You behave like a little saint, but now I know what you want!" He trembled like a leaf and then ran quickly out without looking back. I had no idea what he was going to do!

BAUDOUIN. Is it possible——!

OCTAVE. Nonsense, your whole behavior proves that you were his mistress! You did give yourself! You were his! You still love the dirty little——!

CLOTILDE [*outraged*]. Oh, oh, oh! Yes, I do love him! All the power that your hate inspires in me has turned into love for him! When he was alive I felt only irritation and pity; now I love him with all the love I did not feel before, for a past that never existed! I love him! Do you hear? I love him, I love him!

OCTAVE. Now, Father, you can't deny—— You're a witness of her outrageous conduct!

BAUDOUIN [*as if emerging from deep thought*]. Octave, Octave, you know very well that young man was never guilty of what you accuse him of. I remember him distinctly; it seems as if I could see him now. I knew him better than you did, and I knew him

before you did. I was the one who recommended him to you. I have known him from his early childhood. His father told me proudly: "My little René has never told a lie!" And I watched him grow up: honest and straight. He came to consult me when I was writing for the "Avant Garde" about the minor points in his articles when he was afraid of obscuring his thought or making a false impression. His duty was everything to him, as it was to us of a former generation; that was what attracted me to him. His conscience, his ability, would have made him the idol of the party: what you should have been! I deeply regret that I did not do my duty by that boy. Now I appreciate his full value: he has been revealed to me, and seems to cry out to me—ah, if we could only appreciate people before they died! [*A pause.*]

OCTAVE. Yes, yes. A little fellow you saw only once every two weeks has now become a god! You think nothing of me, your son!

BAUDOIN. You dare say that to me! I have just learned about your behavior, your mad extravagances, your debts that are ruining your home and family. Every one knew it except me.

OCTAVE. Oh, let's drop that nonsense!

BAUDOIN. And I had such implicit faith in you! I was surer of you than of myself. You were my living conscience! You call that nonsense! And then your intimacy with that scoundrel Pratt—your comradeship in vice, the corruption of your private life that is now beginning to be made public. I don't believe that yet, I refuse to believe it. It seems these walls are crumbling! It can't be my son——! [*A long pause.*]

OCTAVE. Thank you, Clotilde, for what you have done!

CLOTILDE. I only tried to defend you. Your father asked me all sorts of questions. I assured him that your honor was not touched!

BAUDOIN. Honor not touched? I don't know about that! Since you've been talking—your whole attitude—your lies—I am beginning to see to the bottom of it all. Deep down in your soul I see awful things—— I am now afraid to look at you. Now, let's put an end to this torturing doubt. If Rémillot is innocent, then you are guilty: is that so?

OCTAVE. No, but—the way you ask questions—— Why do you think I am guilty? Here—this—this proof is in my hands! There is his confession: signed!

BAUDOIN. That's not true. Rémillot would

never have sold himself to the enemy—or receive a bribe!

OCTAVE. The idea! But, see, this is his handwriting. You can't deny that!

CLOTILDE. He did it for you in perfectly good faith. He was caught in a trap. The Banque Française made him sign it in order to have a weapon against you.

OCTAVE. Exactly what I say—and he was in the trick!

CLOTILDE. That's not true. Rémillot was acting in good faith. You were away then on purpose, so that he would have to sign for you, and that you might lay all the blame on him.

OCTAVE. Clotilde!

CLOTILDE. That is the truth!

OCTAVE. It is, is it? Do you believe that? I have the right to say that it is a lie, and I'll do my best to maintain that. Every appearance is in my favor.

BAUDOIN [*indignantly*]. Every appearance! Yes, appearances are in your favor—they can save your face, but would you consent to soil the good name of the dead?

OCTAVE. Why should I trouble about that little fool?

BAUDOIN. Don't you understand me? You admit he is innocent, yet would you consent to dishonor him in the eyes of the world?

OCTAVE. But I tell you he was guilty. What's he to me, then?

BAUDOIN. What——?

OCTAVE. Isn't he dead? What difference can it possibly make to him?

BAUDOIN. I see! Are you out of your mind? Have you lost your sense of decency, or am I seeing my son change into a demon before my very eyes? Is this his moral suicide? [*A pause.*]

OCTAVE. You are mad! What's all this sentimental rot to do with the case? Is it merely a question of me or Rémillot? No, it concerns us all—it may determine whether you are to remain in the Cabinet—it concerns our families. [*To his wife.*] The good name and the future of our children. Now, do you see how serious it is? [*To his father.*] Are you going to accept Puylaroche's offer? Shall we come to terms with the enemy? [BAUDOIN *makes a gesture of indignant protestation.*] Very well; if my name appears in the papers without my complete justification, none of us can live a day longer in Paris. It means we must all take a train to Brussels within

twenty-four hours; we'll be hooted out by every party. Do you want that? Do you realize the situation? [*A pause.*]

BAUDOIN [*crushed*]. Do I want——? I want—I don't—don't know what! [*He falls into a chair.*] What is certain is that I refuse to shield you, cover up your crimes, and that I am going to resign at once——

OCTAVE. Resign?

BAUDOIN. Immediately.

OCTAVE. Which is a confession that you have nothing to do with me! That will only confirm their charges!

BAUDOIN. Defend yourself as you like.

OCTAVE. You are really ridiculous! Here we have in our hands every possible means for a complete justification; and we can win public opinion. Why, you don't have to say a word: all you have to do is to keep still—I'll take care of the rest. Now you want to ruin us all for some idiotic moral scruple or other, some out-of-date——

BAUDOIN. What are you saying?

OCTAVE. What every one else would say in my place. You're really exasperating, with your saintly honesty——

BAUDOIN. A man who can talk that way is guilty! [*He seizes his son by the throat.*]

OCTAVE [*violently disengaging himself*]. Well, I am—and what of it? [*BAUDOIN and CLOTILDE are thunderstruck.*] Was I bribed? So is every one. Among all the men you call your friends there aren't ten with clean slates. I belong to my age, and I do as every one else does! Only they don't admit it! I at least have the courage to do that! I tear off those rags of prejudice which they try to drape round themselves. I have only one life to live, and before I die I want to live it to the fullest extent; I want all the honors and the pleasures, everything that is worth the struggle for existence. I have all that now between my hands, and I don't intend to allow a dead man's ghost to stand in my way.

BAUDOIN [*as if coming to himself*]. You were right: that little secretary was my son, and I am now defending his rights against the usurping, illegitimate son who gives the lie to all my principles. Since you are one of those thieves who are now robbing the Republic, I shall at least accomplish a mission which is sacred to me, and punish you.

OCTAVE. On what grounds? What the devil are these curates' phrases doing in the mouth of an

atheist? Does your conscience demand my punishment? Your sacred mission? The rights of the dead? Does death have any rights? One would think you still believed in the immortality of the soul, and the Decalogue, and all those damned silly ideas you've been working forty years to destroy. It's all as dead as the notion of God!

BAUDOIN. Don't say another word, you——! Your cheap cynicism isn't deceiving me! And you know as well as I do that the instinct of decency, that the laws of morality——

OCTAVE [*repeating as his father did in the first act*]. Nonsense, nonsense! [*He darts toward the door.*]

CLOTILDE. Where are you going?

OCTAVE. To defend myself. This is *my* affair!

[*He goes out. BAUDOIN, overcome, sinks back; CLOTILDE screams and runs to him.*]

Curtain

ACT III

ACT III

The scene is the same.

The following day, toward evening. BAUDOUIN is reclining in a chair, mechanically reading a newspaper, the "Quotidion," as if to impress himself especially with the evidence. On the first page is a cut of RÉMILLOT'S receipt. EUGÉNIE stands by BAUDOUIN'S side, trying to distract him.

EUGÉNIE. Come, now, Baudouin, don't read that paper! You've read it through a hundred times since this morning, and you're literally poisoning yourself with that infamy. The doctor said you must rest. You don't want to have another attack, do you?

BAUDOUIN [*reading*]. "Monsieur Baudouin the younger sells himself to the enemies of lay education"—

EUGÉNIE. But it's not true! I tell you, Baudouin, it's not true! What does that photograph prove? It's not signed by Octave—Rémillot was the one who sold himself.

BAUDOIN [*protesting with all his power*]. No, no! Don't say that!

EUGÉNIE. Now, Henri, stop this—it's all a fearful nightmare. You really must have lost your senses. You tell me that Octave is unworthy to be your son, and when I ask you what he has done, you talk about debts and his mistress. Can't you forgive him? He's done nothing to ruin his name and honor! Parents' love isn't mistaken. We know our child! People don't commit crimes that way, all of a sudden. You don't mean to tell me he has been lying to us all these years! You have no right to say that, and you can't prove it. Answer me! What happened here yesterday? What are you hiding from me, you and Clotilde? Where is Octave? I can't stand this.

BAUDOIN. Please leave me, Mother, I want to be alone, absolutely alone——

EUGÉNIE. But there are people in the ante-chamber: newspaper men, your secretary——

BAUDOIN. No one, no one——

EUGÉNIE. And they can't even telephone you. Some one was sent from the Cabinet office to ask whether your telephone was out of order.

BAUDOIN. I've taken off the receiver. [EUGÉNIE

turns on the electric light.] What are you doing? I don't want any light, and I don't want to see any one. Put it out, I tell you, put it out!

EUGÉNIE [*extinguishing the light*]. It's so gloomy—you can't see a thing. [*There are insistent knocks at the door of the antechamber. EUGÉNIE goes toward it.*]

BAUDOIN. Don't let any one in.

EUGÉNIE [*at the door*]. What is it, Jules?

SERVANT'S VOICE. Madame, the man from the "Avant Garde," who insists on giving the paper to Monsieur le ministre——

MICHU'S VOICE. It's me, Madame Baudouin! I've brought the extra, all about the search in Rémillot's house!

EUGÉNIE [*turning toward BAUDOIN*]. It's Michu with an extra edition of the "Avant Garde"—there's been a search in Rémillot's rooms.

BAUDOIN [*starting*]. What's that? A search of Rémillot's rooms? Tell Michu to come in. Hurry up, now!

[EUGÉNIE *unlocks the door and admits MICHU.*]

MICHU. Victory, Monsieur le ministre! The Clericals are floored! We've got their skin, Monsieur le ministre, we've got their skin!

BAUDOIN. What is it?

MICHU. Don't you know? The police have searched Rémillot's rooms; they found two thousand francs hidden in a drawer—that was what was left over from the bribe he got. But that isn't all: they found out he's been betting on the races, and found some tickets for the "Pari Mutuel." And then everything was turned upside down. [*He whispers in BAUDOIN'S ear.*] They got some nasty pictures on the mantelpiece!

BAUDOIN [*dumbfounded*]. That can't be true!

MICHU. Here, look at this article in the *Avant Garde*! [*He searches through his pockets and takes the paper from one of them, unfolds it and hands it to BAUDOIN.*] What do you think of that? "Justification of Baudouin the younger—Guilt of Rémillot."

BAUDOIN [*to EUGÉNIE*]. Turn on the light! [*She does so.*]

MICHU. Ah, you didn't know that little fellow, Monsieur le ministre. He made believe he was a little saint, but we know he was a Tartufe, a nasty little, vicious—— Why, on his bed, which wasn't made up, there was some lady's underwear with pink ribbons——

BAUDOIN. No, no!

MICHU. You wouldn't have believed it, Monsieur le ministre. There! Look! In the middle of the page—your son even saved him from jail for a lot of things that he'd proved against him——

BAUDOIN. Who said that?

MICHU. Why, Monsieur Octave—he's telling the whole story. Didn't you know that, Monsieur le ministre? Ah, Monsieur Octave's your son, sure enough—why, I tell you, he's too generous, too good! When I think of those low-down Clericals and this story they made up so's they could knock out our "Father Conscience!"

BAUDOIN. Don't use that name—at least just now!

MICHU. But I will—I must; 'cause you live here on the fifth floor when you could sleep in a silk bed!

BAUDOIN. Go away, Michu! Go away!

MICHU. Yes, yes, I'll leave you, I know this dirty trick is making you ill, but let me tell you, I'm mighty glad to've brought you this good news! Ah, boss, this is finer than the Fourth of September!

[He goes out.]

BAUDOIN. Did you read it? Did you see? Did you hear?

EUGÉNIE. But this means Octave's justification! Little Rémillot was the guilty one——

BAUDOIN. Nonsense! I tell you, I am not mistaken! This is the lowest thing Octave has yet done! He is the one, without a doubt, who instigated the police search! He has taken advantage of the situation to whitewash himself in public—and after confessing his guilt——

EUGÉNIE. Confessing his guilt? Where? When?

BAUDOIN. I didn't want to tell you, his mother, the worst of it all, but now you must know that our boy is a scoundrel. His splendid integrity was only a mask; I saw him without the mask—he is a brute! I nearly lost my mind! Honor—life itself—what are they now?

EUGÉNIE. But what has he done? What has he done?

BAUDOIN. Octave confessed everything to me: his treason to the party, the twenty thousand francs, little Rémillot's innocence—he confessed it all and revelled in his own filth——

EUGÉNIE [*with a cry of anguish*]. That's not true! It's impossible!

BAUDOIN. And now he is violating the sanctity of a tomb, ruining the good name of a dead man in

order to save himself. This is a matter of common law, and I am going to have him arrested—— [*He starts to go to the telephone.*]

EUGÉNIE [*taking him in her arms*]. You're mad!

BAUDOUIIN. I'm going to telephone to the prefect of police.

EUGÉNIE. And have Octave arrested!

BAUDOUIIN. I am a cabinet minister, and I have promised to punish the guilty and disinfect the Republic. I am going to keep my pledged word, and see justice done.

EUGÉNIE [*savagely*]. What do I care about justice when my child is in danger?

BAUDOUIIN [*outraged*]. What are you saying?

EUGÉNIE. You heard what I said. Do you think *me* infamous? I don't care. You have your principles—well, I have mine: I love my son! No matter if he is what you say, let him fall a thousand times as low, he'll always be flesh of my flesh. I'll love him all the more just because of what he is making me suffer, because of the shame he is inflicting on me. A father can't understand that! You loved him only because of his success—it flattered your vanity, your personal pride—in other words, you never really loved him at all——

BAUDOUIN. Oh!

EUGÉNIE. No, you don't love him! You don't love him!

BAUDOUIN [*trembling with all the violence of his desperate love for his son*]. I loved Octave passionately, as no father ever loved his son! But I loved him for his purity, for that innate nobility which I thought he possessed. I loved him, not selfishly, but with the hope that he would grow to be bigger and finer than I am, that he would go on and continue my work. I loved him the way a person loves an ideal which one must give to the world! I loved him more than my own life, because his soul and mind were my own! *There is a father's love!*

EUGÉNIE. But if you love him, save him! If you allow him to be dishonored in public you will kill in him all hopes of moral betterment. He'll end his life in exile, far away from us, a branded man trying to hide his shame in the lower depths! Let's try to give him a new conscience, and build a new life for him. His heart is so good—yes, yes, it is! Do you remember, when he was little? One day you were sick—we were in the country—he ran all the way to town to get a doctor. When he came back, all tired out, but proud of what he had done, he shouted, as

he stood at your bedside: "I've saved Papa! I've saved Papa!"

BAUDOUIN. You're taking a cowardly advantage of me—cowardly.

EUGÉNIE. Then you consent? Yes? You consent?

BAUDOUIN. Oh, I can't. Don't you understand what torture I'm suffering? Who could have foreseen——? My poor wife——

EUGÉNIE. Henri, Henri! [*The two old people kiss, then sob for a moment in silence.*]

BAUDOUIN [*pulling himself together*]. No, I cannot! You have no rights over my conscience as a man. If I gave in to you it would mean a denial of all the principles I have stood for. I should be an accomplice in my son's crime. God knows how deeply he is implicated, and how many are in this search business. Why, it's a matter for the ordinary police court—what rottenness! This time I can't stand up for him: I've got to stop it! [*He again tries to reach the telephone.*]

EUGÉNIE [*preventing him again*]. Are you going to do that?

BAUDOUIN. I have decided.

EUGÉNIE [*desperately*]. Very well, then, let me tell

you everything—all the horrible agony I'm suffering, all I have been suffering ever since you told me the awful facts. Are you sure Octave is guilty?

BAUDOIN. What *are* you talking about?

EUGÉNIE. Just think how we have brought him up! The poor boy! You never had any time to spend with him; the most you ever did was to correct his class papers. You were so sure he would grow up to be like you. And my love and tenderness were so blind that I never thought of anything but his pleasures; I let him do everything he wanted. And when he grew up, what company we allowed him to keep! I have read the report of your investigation: what "nice points!" What immoral morality! When he did as the others did, what idea had he whether he was honest or dishonest? An honest man and a thief are so much alike nowadays!

BAUDOIN. But just because the others——

EUGÉNIE. Henri, Henri, I see more clearly now in the light of my remorse! I educated my son without any living faith, without strict rules, without first arming him against himself. I let him do everything for his brain, and I did nothing for his conscience!

BAUDOIN. Are you crazy?

EUGÉNIE. I'm not blaming you, I'm speaking about myself. It was of my own free will that I was converted to your ideas, but now this nightmare has waked me up! I was mistaken! We have both been terribly deceived! I remember the first night we stopped Christian prayer with our little boy! "No, no, my child, we shan't say that prayer any more!" I was giving him over to the forces of evil, because I was taking God away from him!

BAUDOIN. You dare tell me that! But what about the example I have given for the past thirty-five years? Honor, duty, devotion, *they* were the living religion I had to give to Octave! They are worth a page from the Catechism! [EUGÉNIE *starts to speak.*] Go away, I tell you, you are mad! Now you believe in God! Become a Catholic again! That would be the last straw!

EUGÉNIE [*as she goes toward the right*]. Think it over, I advise you. I don't want to irritate you: I'll leave you alone with your conscience. Forget your pride, and you will see that you have no right to blame Octave. You have no right! You have no right! [*She goes out.*]

BAUDOIN [*after a moment's hesitation*]. Nonsense! [*Once more he starts to telephone, but, suddenly*

giving up that idea, he decides to write a letter, the sentences of which he recites aloud.] “To the President of the Republic.—Sir: Circumstances have forced me to apply directly to you. I find that I am utterly unfitted for conducting the investigation which is now going on. Among those implicated in the Clerical matter is my son Octave”—*[he crosses out the name]*—“is the man who bears my name——”

[Enter ARNAUT through the door of the ante-chamber, unseen by BAUDOIN.]

ARNAUT. My dear friend, it's a complete triumph! There's a whole crowd here! I thought I should never reach the door—as it was, I had to run through the dining-room. Open the door to them—you've got to receive them—and the street's alive with them! I feel forty years younger—a group of students cheered me—I tell you, the Republic can still make hearts beat! I hope this'll help you get better! *[Noticing BAUDOIN'S haggard look.]* What's the matter? What *is* the trouble? Why, old man, you frighten me! If you're sick, let me call your wife!

[BAUDOIN, who remains motionless, hands ARNAUT the letter which he has just written.]

To the President of the Republic? Your resignation!

What? How's this? Your son——? Never! That's impossible! It isn't true——

BAUDOUIN. Every word of it. The money which his secretary received for him he spent. On the eve of our last battle—the one we have been preparing for thirty years—he sold himself, betrayed us. He's a common criminal.

ARNAUT. Have you the proofs?

BAUDOUIN. I have his confession—from his own lips.

ARNAUT. My poor friend!

BAUDOUIN. Never mind—leave me alone!

ARNAUT. Is it possible? Octave Baudouin! How could he? What could induce him to——? Oh! Oh! Turn around!

BAUDOUIN [*hiding his face*]. No—I can't—one moment!

ARNAUT. Come, Baudouin, I'm your old comrade, your old friend. I'll stand by you——

BAUDOUIN [*grasping his hand without daring to look at him*]. Thank you—thank you——

ARNAUT. But—tell me—explain—I can't see how he would confess? The search this afternoon settles that point——

BAUDOUIN. The search this afternoon? He ar-

ranged it, set it like a play! He put those two thousand francs in the drawer!

ARNAUT. What's that? Then the secretary was not an accomplice?

BAUDOIN [*at last looking him straight in the face*]. He was as innocent as you or I.

ARNAUT. Then——? Your son——?

BAUDOIN. My son is the meanest of scoundrels: he has not hesitated to commit a crime, and he has dragged the good name of a dead man in the mire!

ARNAUT. But—do you know? Baudouin—this is frightful!

BAUDOIN. What ought I to do? [*A pause.*]

ARNAUT. What——? You ought—you ought to be mistaken! Your son confessed to you his treason to the party—that's bad enough, but he certainly never confessed to this search business. That would be too rotten!

BAUDOIN. But I tell you he did it. I am as sure as if I'd seen him do it. I answer for Rémillot's innocence; I feel that I have the good name of the dead under my protection. [*A pause.*]

ARNAUT. The good name of the dead—the honor of a man that is dead—did he have any relatives?

BAUDOIN. Arnaut, Arnaut! He is innocent, and you ask me that! [*A pause.*]

ARNAUT. Yes, I suggested something dishonorable— [*Angrily.*] You had no business asking my advice! Every one thinks differently in a case like that. Now that I know, I have nothing further to say. Really, this is horrible!

BAUDOIN. Very well, I'll do without your advice. I am sending this letter to the President and copies of it to the newspapers.

ARNAUT. Are you altogether crazy? What about your colleagues—and the President himself? And his friends? You're taking a grave step without consulting them—you aren't a child!

BAUDOIN. I've been in hell this past twenty-four hours—remorse is nearly killing me. I'm at the end of my tether. I'm going to do my duty no matter if it kills me!

ARNAUT. But, Baudouin, think! Why, that will shake the whole of France from end to end! First, the Cabinet will go. [*An evasive gesture from BAUDOIN.*] Very well—but there's more! You just said we are on the eve of a great battle. This may be the blow that will put an end to everything; it may give us over to a dictatorship. It's the end of

everything. Come, now, you haven't thought of the far-reaching consequences. It's downright madness to discuss it!

BAUDOIN. Arnaut, can it be you who are talking to me that way? You came here, to this very room, two weeks ago, and begged me to be firm, to apply the red-hot iron to every wound. I accepted the task in order that I might take care of our great patient. If I failed to do my duty I should be only more firmly planting the germs of the disease that are gnawing at her very vitals, because my son is a victim of the same disease and I haven't the courage to sacrifice him. If I failed to do that I should be twice a traitor in betraying the confidence which honest people have placed in me!

ARNAUT. That's true, my friend, only too true. But now that you are Minister, you have still higher responsibilities—— [*Pointing to BAUDOIN.*] Now the disease is too near the heart, and the operation would be fatal.

BAUDOIN. What would be a surer death is our silence. Do you think me capable of keeping silence in a matter of this kind? You can have no idea of what has been going on within me since last evening. If you knew what my son cast in my teeth—like some

low criminal—and with what logic——! He literally stoned me, and with my own ideals. Pure reason can turn out terrible monsters! Reason can kill the conscience! Arnaut, Arnaut, this is the most critical hour of my life. I feel every conviction of mine slipping from me, all the confidence I ever had in all my ideas, my whole past, and my future. I feel the nothingness of the grave before death!

ARNAUT. Now you're imagining things! You've been struck a terrible blow, but let me appeal to your reason. I am, it's true, appalled by what you've told me. To think that your son, who had every opportunity to remain honest, whose career was well before him and full of promise—— Yes, I tell you. I can hardly believe it. The conscience of the younger generation is rapidly fading away into nothing——

BAUDOUIIN. You see? You see——?

ARNAUT. But, on the other hand, we mustn't exaggerate. Every family has its own misfortunes, and there are monsters in every age. Think of all those rascals who lived off the Church under the Empire! But I tell you, if your letter leaves this office our enemies will enjoy the greatest imaginable triumph. I can hear them yelping like cannibals.

Our friends will be overthrown—all sorts of insinuations made. They will say that this is the result of the Godless schools, of the whole age, of the Republic! There won't be a freethinker who will dare show his face for the next ten years!

BAUDOUIN. But *I* will! I will prove my faith by the example I shall give. I'm still smarting from the insulting words of my son; I must wipe that out in order that my ideals may still hold.

ARNAUT. Nonsense, that isn't the question. You must do your duty as a Minister first of all. You're now at the wheel in the midst of a storm; there is disease aboard the ship, but what goes on in the hold has nothing to do with the pilot. It's your business to steer us safe to port. You haven't the right to blow up the ship!

BAUDOUIN. You've got to find some one else at once. Possibly—possibly, I may consent to keep still, but I must resign—and then go away.

ARNAUT. But you can't do that! Your resignation would mean a confession and the defeat of the education law. You must stay.

BAUDOUIN. And continue with the investigation? Arrest others and let my son go free?

ARNAUT. I don't mean that. I want justice

done, and at once. But since that's out of the question, we'll spar for time and the investigation will drag on——

BOUDOUIN. So you want to make that sort of man of me: a pharisee posing as an apostle! I must be false to my trust, save a scoundrel, and defame the dead! Well, you have me bound hand and foot: I shan't resign—and I am no longer an honest man——

ARNAUT. Don't think of yourself—we don't count now. There are cases like this where a leader owes everything to his party, even the sacrifice of his conscience.

BAUDOUIN. But this is sickening—monstrous——

ARNAUT. There are duties that are infamous to perform—they are the greatest. Let me suffer your remorse for you.

BAUDOUIN [*afraid of himself*]. No, no, leave me my remorse, that's all I have left of my conscience——

ARNAUT. Now, good-bye, I have your promise——

BAUDOUIN. No, you haven't—I can't do it!

ARNAUT. I tell you, it's got to be.

BAUDOUIN. And I say No. Don't go yet. Arnaut, Arnaut, please——

ARNAUT [*going*]. You must stay at your post——

we've decided that. [*He goes out, right.* BAUDOUIN, *overwhelmed, remains fixed where he stands. A moment later enter CLOTILDE through the same door by which ARNAUT left.*]

CLOTILDE. Well, Father, what has been happening? I've just seen the Speaker—he's so excited. Where is Octave? He's not been home since last evening—this is terrible! We must save him—my husband—your son——

BAUDOUIN. Have you read this article? [*He shows her the "Avant Garde."*]

CLOTILDE. No, I've read nothing but that awful report in this morning's paper, where Octave's name appeared in large letters. Oh, Father, I'm so ashamed! I've done what you and Grandmother have done: shut myself up, hidden all day. But now I can't help it, I can only think of my children—their good name—Octave is their father—we must save him!

BAUDOUIN. He's lost no time! See what he's done since last night! He demanded a search of Rémillot's rooms. They found two thousand francs in a drawer, tickets for the "Pari Mutuel," lewd photographs strewn about, everything in disorder, lady's underwear on the bed——

CLOTILDE [*stupefied*]. At Rémillot's——?

BAUDOUIN. I tell you, if there were the slightest chance of your being mistaken about that boy, if he wasn't the man we all took him for, if it was he who took the money and killed himself out of fear—— Clotilde, Clotilde, I am ready to wish that he *was* the guilty one!

CLOTILDE [*who has glanced through the article*]. How abominable! The day he disappeared I *saw* his rooms; I went there with Octave——remember, I told you? The rooms *were* in disorder, but it was the simple disorder of poverty. On the mantel-piece were pictures of the men he admired: Quinet, Michelet, Lamennais——and you. His plain little cot had not been touched since the night before——

BAUDOUIN. You poor woman, you've brought me the final proof and destroyed my last hope! It seems as if my son were dying——and you have condemned him!

CLOTILDE. Oh——and he did that! He dared profane the dead? He is too low for words. But he counted without me! This time, I give him up!——let me tell the whole truth!

BAUDOUIN. Then, Clotilde, shall we denounce him?

COLTILDE. Wait, Father—— It's downright

madness, now I come to think of it. You and I are the only living people who know the truth. We have only to say nothing in order to be saved, and yet we are going to sacrifice ourselves for some one who is no longer living—who is nothing—nothing at all—and—no God to reward us for it——!

BAUDOUIN [*with all the strength of his faith*]. It all amounts to the same thing—let's not reason about it—we have the truth on our side.

CLOTILDE. My poor children!

BAUDOUIN. Their father doesn't exist for them. They are your children—my children—they will never have to blush because of us.

CLOTILDE. Oh, I can't, I can't. Father—Father—take pity——

BAUDOUIN [*stretching his arms toward the window*]. Listen to that! Listen——

CLOTILDE. What? What is it?

BAUDOUIN. The evening papers. Don't you hear?

[*Shouts are heard in the street below.*]

CLOTILDE. What are they shouting? I can't make out.

[*The cries sound nearer.*]

BAUDOIN [*repeating the cries*]. "Justification of Baudouin the younger—Guilt of Rémillot."

CLOTILDE. No, no, no—stop them! Father, this is horrible. We are killing the dead! Make them stop! Make them! [*She runs and opens the window and cries out.*] Stop! Stop!

BAUDOIN [*suddenly making up his mind*]. Shall I have all those people come in?

CLOTILDE [*after a moment's hesitation*]. Kiss me!

[*They kiss, then BAUDOIN with a firm step goes to the door of the antechamber; then he stops, turns to CLOTILDE, who motions to him to go on, turns the key in the lock, opens the door and admits the crowd. They enter in wild excitement and grasp BAUDOIN'S hand, exclaiming.*]

ALL. Here he is! Triumph! Victory for the education law! The crowning glory of your whole career! Your son is wonderful! Where is he? Go to the window—they're cheering you—

[*Cries of "Long live Baudouin!" in the street.*]

Here's the Speaker!

FERRAND [*coming forward*]. My heartiest congratulations, my dear Baudouin. Your friends never for a moment doubted— Really, this affair has

been the best possible thing for us. It'll give us full sway for at least three years to come.

[BAUDOUIN *sinks down into a chair.*]

ALL. What's the matter? He's sick! Monsieur le ministre, are you sick?

BAUDOUIN [*his voice trembling with emotion*]. Messieurs, if the principles of my whole life mean anything to me—if I owe anything to the honor of the Republic, which no personal matter like the present can harm—then I must make a statement to you.

[*They show keen curiosity.*]

My dear Ferrand, I am going to ask you to tender my resignation to the President of the Republic.

[*General stupefaction: exclamations, etc.* BAUDOUIN *hands his letter to FERRAND, then his voice becomes stronger.*]

Rémillot was innocent—— [*Then, rising, fearlessly.*]
My son was the guilty one!

CURTAIN



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