

ATERCRACY

A detailed illustration of two hands shaking, rendered in a classic, engraved style. The hands are positioned vertically, with the upper hand slightly larger and more muscular, and the lower hand appearing more delicate. The background of the entire cover is a light beige color with a subtle texture. On the right side, there is a vertical strip of blue fabric with a repeating floral pattern of white flowers and green leaves.

Selected writings of

**CLAUDE
PELLETIER**

What Mutualism Was

What Mutualism Was



ATERCRACY

SELECTED WRITINGS BY



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PELLETIER

WORKING TRANSLATIONS BY
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CORVUS EDITIONS, 2024

ASSEMBLÉE NATIONALE
GALERIE DES REPRÉSENTANTS DU PEUPLE (1848)
(Rhône)



Paris _ Maison BASSET, Rue de Seine, 33.

593

Paris _ GOUPIL, VIBERT, et C^e Boulev. Montmartre, 19.

CLAUDE PELLETIER

Né à L'Arbresle (Rhône), le 23 Avril 1816.

Pelletier

TRANSLATOR'S NOTE

The WORKING TRANSLATIONS presented here form a sort of bridge between two projects, the ongoing efforts to establish an English-language edition of the works of Proudhon in the NEW PROUDHON LIBRARY and WHAT MUTUALISM WAS, an attempt to unravel the history of anarchistic Mutualism through a combination of narrative history and anthologies documenting the works of significant figures.

The present collection is a sort of rough draft or first installment of a projected collection of the major works of Claude Pelletier, who is perhaps one of the most neglected of the early theorists of anarchism. Like Proudhon, he was active in the provisional government after the February 1848 revolution in France. Like Proudhon, he faced consequences for his radicalism, finding himself among those exiled after the rise of Louis Napoleon. He ended up in the United States, settling in New York, where he was successful as a manufacturer of artificial flowers and active as a member of the community of political exiles. He published several books while in the U. S., all in French, including a three-volume *Socialist Dictionary*, *The Socialistic Soirées of New York*, *The Cobbler of Messina*, and the play included here, *The Revolutionary Socialist Heretics of the Fifteenth Century*, which transplants the debates of 1848 France into Bohemia at the height of the Hussite Wars.

As he explains in the preface, many of the characters directly echo the thoughts of particular French radicals, with Proudhon and Pierre Leroux chief among those whose theories are given particular attention in the work. The joint influence of Proudhon and Leroux connects him to more familiar mutualist figures like William Batchelder Greene and to the milieu surrounding periodicals like *The Spirit of the Age*, which figured as the primary crossroads for mutualism in the U. S. in the middle of the 19th century.

The texts included here will be supplemented with a translation — currently ongoing — of *The Socialistic Soirées*, key texts from the *Socialist Dictionary* and, with a bit of luck, *The Cobbler of Messina*. For now, I am prefacing the collection with the entry on “Atercracy,” Pelletier’s reimagining of anarchy, and appending some relevant newspaper articles.

— Shawn P. Wilbur

February 7, 2024.

ATERCRACY. — A name drawn from two Greek words: *ater*, without, and *cratos*, government.

An ATERCRAT is thus a citizen who is in no way governed and who considers all the CRACIES, whether *theo*, *auto*, *aristo*, *demo* or of some other variety, as political machines for the creation of misery and oppression.

And, indeed, when power is held by one alone, it is despotism that follows, no matter the goodness of the monarch.

When the power is in the hands of the aristocracy, it naturally favors its own and everything becomes privilege.

When it is the people who are supposed to be master, as the exercise is limited to the delegates to whom they have conferred the power to do everything in their name, the sovereignty becomes an illusion and, victims of their agents, they always end, out of weariness and disgust, through their inconstancy and irregularities, by giving themselves to a personality that they have chosen to direct them and whom they always make their heir.

All the CRACIES being equally bad, we must make a firm resolution to do without them. That is to say to replace them with a social organization that transforms governments into administrations of temporary initiative, overseeing general interests, where the public functions would be tasks falling by lot on citizens obliged to fulfill them, if they are designated, during the space of one year only in the course of their existence, under penalty of being reprimanded by their peers and severely punished if they perform badly.

An ATERCRATIC nation is thus one where the citizen is their own soldier, their own pope, their own civil servant, their own sovereign; and when the drawing of lots has designated them to fulfill a function useful to the interests of the collectivity, their duty is defined, drawn up and limited in a manner that will never permit them to impinge on the rights of others and abuse the temporary function against the weakest of the citizens, but to be the temporal servant of the interests of the collectivity, all while having the greatest respect for the liberty proper to the individual.

THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST HERETICS

PREFACE.

As the 19th century is called to resolve the problem of the proletariat by putting into practice the idea of the modern Revolutionaries and Socialists, I have thought it would be useful to call the attention of the public to them, and to present those ideas to them in a dramatic form, in the simplest and clearest manner: that is, by stripping them of all the erudition that ordinarily accompanies them, and putting them in the mouths of various characters charged, in my composition, with explaining them and putting them into practice.

I have chosen the dramatic form because it is the only one, in my opinion, that allows every writer to show his work in action, and also to be read when his book is published; for as bad as a drama may be, it is rare that the reader to begins it does not finish the work. It is so short.

You may find my book poorly conceived, carelessly written, too long or too short, but that is of little importance and does not concern me. But read it, and reread it; that is what is essential. For I hope that it will rub off on my readers, that it will make them reflect more and even invite them to imitate me by doing more and better.

As much as possible, I have made each situation, each scene serve in the exposition of one idea.

I wanted to show the Revolution in its progressive march, beginning with a petition to a king, then growing, passing on to the demand of a right, then growing again as far as struggle, then as far as triumph.

After its material triumph, I wanted to show it come to grapple with the difficulties of a past that never disappears as quickly as we imagine and desire, and concerning itself, by mean of a revolutionary committee, with the application of the ideas of social transformation for which the people have risen.

I have borrowed my subject from the civil, political and religious revolution of the Hussites of the fifteenth century: that is the historical setting that, to my mind, is most favorable. It was the fine book of *Consuelo* by Mme Sand, the first chapters of the excellent history of the French Revolution by Louis Blanc and the notes that Henri Martin has inserted in his remarkable history of France, that have given me the idea. Moréri, Lenfant, Beausobre, etc. etc., furnished me with the rest.

Regarding the characters that I place on stage, the majority of whom as historical, I have not always made them speak like people of the XVth

century; I have given them, on the contrary, the ideas of 1848, which they certainly could have only had in germ.

Thus, the majority of what I have given to Pierre Dresden to say about religion and solidarity, and to Koranda about the philosophy of history, I owe, in part, to my old friend and teacher Pierre Leroux. What Pierre says about God, the creation, and the periodic revolutions of the globe, I have borrowed from the Encyclopédistes of the last century and the savants of our own, whose books enjoy a well-earned reputation.

I have made Jacobel the kingpin of the socialist reconstruction of the Revolution; and it is to my late, lamented colleague and friend Proudhon that I owe him. It was the application of his revolutionary and economic ideas that I had in mind when I wrote the part of Jacobel.

I wanted to portray in Nicolas Ganz, bourgeois republican of Prague, the depth of character of three-quarters of the members of the Constituent Assembly of 1848.

Writing the role of Ziska, I often thought of what I have heard Ledru-Rollin say, and what Garibaldi has done at Naples and in Sicily.

With the role of the archbishop, I wanted to portray the ambition of the leaders of the clergy, their irascible pride, their power of will and the blind hatred that they have for everything that disturbs their selfishness.

I made the character of the judicial magistrate miserable and vile, because I have never seen them otherwise in politics. If I am mistaken, so much the better; but it would be very difficult to make me reconsider the deep scorn that I have for them in general, and I am sure that everyone who has seen their work up close thinks like me; only they do not dare say it, so fashionable is it to pretend to honor these gentlemen.

For love of truth, Koranda, like Lamennais, separated from Rome to join the Revolution; for her it is the era of reparation for the sins of the past, the coming of the kingdom of justice among men.

I wanted to make Dulcin the type of the selfish rich man capable of any and all infamies;

Jean the Premonstratensian is the type of the enthusiastic and courageous man, who knows no danger;

The Minister is that of the complaisant lackey.

Walter represents the determined revolutionary regicide, resolved to preserve the Republic at all costs, certain that the means he proposes to destroy the kings will spare human blood: a type much less rare among the people than we generally believe.

As for the Emperor Sigismund, if I had portrayed him as he was in history and as Ziska describes him in the fifth act of my composition, I would have made him only a cruel and vulgar bigot, not very interesting for the reader.

In making him take up the sword against the Hussites, whom he

knows has been slandered, despite his love for Marguerite, the sister of the leader of the Hussites, despite the fact that the latter had aided him in a moment of danger, I wanted to establish that a monarch, however individual his will, is always, finally, only the executor of the selfish passions of his entourage.

Now, if you want to know what I wished to demonstrate and prove, here it is:

I wished to demonstrate that there is no revelation properly speaking;

That justice is immanent in us;

That solidarity is called to replace all religions;

And that from now on, in order to direct human societies, there must no longer be masters, nor government, nor *cracy* of any sort; but simply an administration of oversight and temporary initiative to guide them.

I wished to prove:

That the artisan disappears from the current society;

That, by the division of labor and the power of his machines, industry no longer has in independent place for him;

That he is obliged to beat a retreat before the capitalists who make him pass beneath the grindstone of the salariat, a situation that strips all independence from him;

And that he must hurry to change all the relations of interest in the production, exchange and distribution of wealth, as I make Jacobel say in the fifth act, if he wants man to be free, equal and the brother of other men.

I also wanted to show that the Revolutionaries and Socialists serve the same cause, and that they should not attack one another nor appear divided in the eyes of the world, since each of them labors according to his strength, intelligence and judgment, at the same social work, the same transformation.

My reader will judge if, through the idea that I recommend and the means I indicate, we can succeed.

New-York, October 31, 1867.

C. PELLETIER.

CHARACTERS.

J. TROCZNOW, called ZISKA, military leader of the Heretics.
PIERRE DRESDEN, religious leader.
JACOBEL, economist and socialist.
NICOLAS GANZ, bourgeois republican.
PROKOP, leader of the Taborites.
SIGISMUND, Emperor of Germany.
KORANDA, philosopher.
THE ARCHBISHOP, leader of the Clericals.
JEAN THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN, revolutionary monk.
DULCIN, wealthy bourgeois reactionary.
ROCSIZANE, secretary of the Directing Committee.
WENCESLAS, king of Bohemia.
THE MINISTER of Wenceslas, then of Sigismund.
A MAGISTRATE.
THE GENERAL Sottartas.
The Courtier JEAN SADLO.
THE ABBOT Trebitz.
ROSEMBERG, student.
JOHN CARDINAL, Taborite **officiant**.
WALTER, officer, friend of Ziska.
MARGUERITE, sister of P. Dresden, fiancée of Ziska.
CIXILONE, daughter of Jacobel.
COURTIERS, LORDS, SOLDIERS, OFFICERS, MONKS, PEOPLE, HERETICS,
GUARDS, SERVANTS, etc.

The first four acts take place at Prague; the fifth in the camp of the Taborites, 1424.

THE REVOLUTIONARY SOCIALIST

HERETICS

OF THE XVth CENTURY

A DRAMATIC STUDY

In five acts and prose,

ACT ONE

The great banquet hall of the palace of Wishrad.

A large curtain, in the form of drapery, conceals the back of the hall where the royal banquet takes place.

SCENE I.

ZISKA, WALTER, N. GANZ, SOLDIERS AND INHABITANTS
OF PRAGUE.

Ziska is seated in an armchair, to the spectators' left, surrounded by several soldiers and the officer Walter.

A deputation of the inhabitants of Prague arrives.

A SENTRY, *on guard to the right.*

Who goes there?

NICOLAS GANZ

Friends!

WALTER

What do you want?

NICOLAS GANZ

We wish to speak to the king. This is the day, we have been told, that he gives an audience to the people. We come to inform him of our miseries and speak to him of the complaints we have against the lords, abbots, magistrates and tribe of officials of the kingdom.

ZISKA, rises and approaches Ganz.

The king is at his table. I will announce you. May he lend you the attention you deserve. *(To Walter,)* Walter, inform the king that several inhabitants of Prague ask to pay him their respects. *(Walter leaves.)* Now, gentlemen, who among you is appointed to speak to the king in the name of all?

NICOLAS GANZ

I am, my lord officer, and my request is ready.

ZISKA

Your complaints are clearly established, and your requests clearly formulated?

NICOLAS GANZ

We have done our best, and we hope, if we have the permission to speak to the king, that he will be entirely convinced of the moderation of our complaints and the justice of our demands.

SCENE II.

THE SAME, WENCESLAS AND HIS COURTIERS.

The curtain in the back is raised, we see the royal banquet.

The officer Walter returns and speaks in a low voice to Ziska.

ZISKA

You are welcome, gentlemen, to present your respects to Wenceslas, king of Bohemia, and the right to speak is given to you for what you have to ask him or let him know.

The delegation advances and salutes the king.

N. GANZ

Sire, Bohemia, thanks be to heaven, is one of the most beautiful countries in the world, and its people and the mildest, most patient and most respectful of their king, but the nobility, the clergy and the governmental and official tribe made it the most troubled, most downtrodden, most poorly administered, and one of the poorest nations on the earth.

To remedy our unfortunate position, we come to be you, sire, to take under consideration the following request and give satisfaction to the requests it contains.

WENCESLAS

Speak.

NICOLAS GANZ

We ask, sire, the liberty to speak, to act, to assemble, to educate ourselves, to labor and to dispose of the fruits of our labor without the permission of our numerous oppressors.

We ask the right to be masters of ourselves, in our homes, in our towns; to organize our courts especially, in order to be judged by our peers; to choose and appoint ourselves the officials charged with administering our civil affairs.

We ask to pay the king taxes once a year, and the fines as in the past. We will even pay with pleasure, if the tax is accepted by our elected officials, and fines for the violation of the laws, settled in advance.

We ask, in addition, that all citizens be allowed to arm and organize themselves for the common defense, to have a belfry to call the people to arms whenever our elected officials believe we should oppose the vexations of our lords and the acts of plunder of their swordsmen.

We ask the right to try before our courts whoever makes themselves guilty of injuries, violence or crimes, whether they be priest, soldier, noble or magistrate, and the ability to punish them according to the common law, if they are condemned.

We pray you, sire, to grant us all that, because it is just and necessary to the prosperity of our homeland; and we are convinced that when they see us armed and capable of defending ourselves, the priests and lords will cease insulting us, and the swordsmen will stop stealing from us and beating us.

WENCESLAS

Your request is serious and seems to infringe on my rights as sovereign. However, I will have it examined carefully by my Council, and everything in it that appears just and practicable will be granted to you; for I love Bohemia and do not wish its children to be unhappy.

Now, gentlemen, if you will take your places at the table, the royal hospitality offers you all a place

The petitioners take places at the table. The curtain falls; then a great number of lords, abbots, magistrates and courtiers advance on the front of the Stage. The first three are the Archbishop, the Magistrate and the General.

SCENE III.

**ZISKA, KORAND, THE MAGISTRATE, THE ARCHBISHOP,
THE GENERAL, DULCIN, THE MINISTER, SADLO,
COURTIERS, PRIESTS AND SOLDIERS.**

THE ARCHBISHOP

This is insufferable!

THE MAGISTRATE

Unworthy!

THE GENERAL

Appalling!

JEAN SADLO

To receive such people at his table! To tolerate such language there!

THE ABBOT

To tolerate such language there; I say to provoke it!

THE ARCHBISHOP

To amuse himself with the nonsense that they address to us, it is an insult to the clergy!

THE MAGISTRATE

It is a lack of respect for the magistracy!

THE GENERAL

It is to humiliate the army!

SADLO

It is to scorn the nobility!

THE MINISTER

It is to weaken power, to bankrupt authority!

SADLO

If this was the first time it had happened; but for a month it has been repeated so often!

THE ABBOT

My lords, I do not know if you will agree with me; but I believe that it is our duty to denounce the conduct of the king to Emperor Sigismund.

ZISKA

Well, gentlemen! What is so astonishing about the king granting to some of his faithful subjects a place at the table at the end of the meal? Hasn't that been done by others before Wenceslas? Now, why would the citizens praise you?

THE MAGISTRATE

That they do not praise us, so be it! But to exaggerate their miseries and make us responsible for it, that is too much!

ZISKA

It is, however, very natural, Mr. Procureur.

THE MINISTER

What! To make us responsible for their misery, you find that natural?

ZISKA

Very natural and very just, Mr. Minister.

THE MINISTER

It's incredible, lord Ziska, what you just said. Aren't the unfortunate needy by their own fault?

ZISKA

By their fault?

DULCIN

Yes, sir, by their fault.

THE MAGISTRATE

Certainly, sir.

THE GENERAL

Yes, because they wish to be.

THE MAGISTRATE

The idlers, instead of going to drink at the cabaret and rush to the sermons of the Hussites, let them work!

DULCIN

Let them save and learn to live on little.

SADLO

That would be more moral.

THE ABBOT

And above all more Christian.

ZISKA

Messieurs, you represent here for me the administration, clergy, nobility, magistracy and army. Well! If you are its faithful image, the people are right not to love you, for in five minutes that I have heard, instead of the faithful servants I would hope to find in you, I see only its most indiscrete denigrators.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Ziska, we love the people and want their happiness; but is it just, when they accuse us of living in idleness, and cast an envious glance at our wealth?

THE MAGISTRATE

Aren't the poor always more happy that when there are the rich, and if we worked, wouldn't the work we do be that much more lost to them?

THE GENERAL

That is obvious! Anyone with a bit of intelligence knows well that without the rich, the poor would die of hunger.

THE ARCHBISHOP

I do not say that without the rich, the poor would die of hunger, nor is it just that some work for the others.

SOME COURTIERS *who have advanced to take part conversation*

Say it, Your Eminence, say it; it is the opinion of all of us!

THE ARCHBISHOP

But I believe, Ziska, that the soldier who defends his prince, the magistrate who renders justice with integrity, the priest who teaches virtue, renders at least as many services to their country as the people you defend.

A MONK

We do not cease to pray to God to grant them paradise in the other world.

THE MINISTER

We who administer Bohemia with the most scrupulous equity, we are well rewarded for it!

SADLO

Gentlemen, I will tell you quite simply, if I was Wenceslas or Sigismund, I would be done immediately with the Hussites and all those who support them!

ZISKA

So what would you do, Sadlo?

SADLO

I would do away with them! Besides, what use are they?

ZISKA (*with scorn*)

Sadlo, if the monastic education that you have received in you're your has shriveled your heart to the point of showing you mass murder and proscription as an excellent political measure, advantageous to your privileges, I am astonished that your selfishness has not made you perceive that without these same men you would be nothing here. You have a beautiful palace, but they are the ones who have built it; your rooms are fully of painting, books, and artistic wonders, but you owe those things to them; you have fine clothes, but they have made them; you have exquisite dishes on your tables each day, with delicious wines, but it is still them alone to whom you are indebted. So think, young man; and if you are not grateful to them, at least be intelligent enough to understand that they are indispensable to your selfishness.

His Eminence the archbishop has spoken to us of services rendered to the homeland by the military, which defends its prince, by the magistrate, who makes justice, and by the priest, who teaches virtue. I do not want, for the moment, to deny the usefulness of such men, and to speak of eliminating them. Except, gentlemen, instead of these military patriots, these upright magistrates and virtuous prelates, we too often see military courtiers, wicked magistrates, self-satisfied ministers and inhuman priests, ready to sacrifice all to their cupidity, pride and anger.

SADLO

I like to think that lord Ziska, despite all his partiality for the peasants, who, according to him, are so necessary to our selfishness, does not however consider them as our equals. Without denying the usefulness of the painter and mason, the farmer and the poet, the sculptor and the blacksmith, the industrial worker and the artist, in a word; he would have enough impartiality to at least recognize that they do more services for the homeland than all these little people of the same species; and that the loss of one of us would be much greater for Bohemia than that of a hundred of those wretches who come here to pick at the crumbs of our meal.

The first man who comes along can be an artisan or an artist: but a magistrate, a minister, an officer, that appears to me a bit more difficult.

ZISKA

Sadlo, never place the question on that terrain, for you could give rise to a speculation that would be unpleasant for you, a speculation that, once made by the people, could very well be put into execution.

SADLO

What speculation?

ZISKA

You compare the loss of one of you to that of a hundred other men, and you still find the comparison generous on your part. Don't you fear that the people, in their turn, do not ask themselves the same question and do not ask themselves what would become of Bohemia if, by a stroke of fate or revolution, all the courtiers, all the nobles, all the magistrates, all the ministers, all the priests and all the generals happened to die one fine night?

SADLO (*horrified*)

What would become of Bohemia?

ZISKA

Yes.

SADLO

It would be lost!

ZISKA

That is your opinion; but what if the people thought differently, if they believed, correctly or incorrectly, that such a night would be its deliverance and its regeneration?

THE MAGISTRATE

But it is madness to make such an assumption.

ZISKA

They already know that the man who produces each day, by his labor,

what the nation needs, is more useful than the one who lives on privilege. They maintain that it takes more intelligence in that man to compose, write, paint, labor, count, exchange and raise his family with the earning that he knows how to make for himself in the face of a thousand rivalries, than in you, my lords, who only has the trouble to receive and spend the profits that he earns and pays to the government, which gives it to you.

If convinced of your lack of skill and of its superiority in directing the civil affairs of the country, The people refused to obey you, if they confide its direction from now on to some men of their choice, what would you have to say?

THE MAGISTRATE

You would like to know first what they find so reprehensible in us.

ZISKA

That is fair!... You think you are perfect. I had forgotten it.

KORANDA

You would perhaps be surprised, if I told you that I am not a Hussite.

THE ARCHBISHOP

In fact, their leaders do not know it themselves.

KORANDA

You believe. Well, the Hussites blame you for never having been able to govern Bohemia without stifling its liberty.

ALL

The rebels!

KORANDA

Of never having understood that by making the bases of a government rest on the masses, was to support it with the living strength of the nation, and that since the feeling of equality was long since engrave in the heart of each man, there was for the Government no more interest to serve it than to struggle with ruse and hypocrisy against it.

ALL

The factious!

KORANDA

They blame you for never having inspired a bit of love in the people, in order to **passer** you, in times of peace, some hundred thousand soldiers in order to administer the most intelligent country.

ALL

The rioters!

KORANDA

Of never having been able to create the slightest amount of revenue for

the state without antagonizing everyone.

ALL

The seditious!

KORANDA

They blame you for making Bohemia the country that has the most courtiers, the most soldiers, the most spies, the most priests, the most functionaries, the most taxes, the most prisons, the most seizures of property, the most unschooled and the most oppressed. But, on the other hand, the nation that has the least number of schools and of roads, the least security, the least physical and moral well-being.

ALL

The quibblers!

KORANDA

Finally, they blame you for never having enacted a law aiming at the emancipation of the working classes.

ALL

The anarchists!

KORANDA

And they are convinced that you still believe to this day, and despite all the discoveries of the century, that misery is eternal, inherent in the human species, and that liberty is a plague.

ALL

The wretches!

THE ARCHBISHOP

That is, however, where the preaching of the Hussites has led us. They insult, accuse, deny everything, and you find that reasonable.

THE MINISTER

Society, religion, family, they put them all in question, and Ziska defends them!

ZISKA

I do not see how the family and society are attached. They find that you govern the country badly, instead of administering it with intelligence. That is not flattering to you, I agree; but it is only an assessment on their part.

THE MAGISTRATE

They want to replace us with other men of their own choice.

ZISKA

If they think that others would be better, that must be.

THE GENERAL

That is their crime, for we have acquired rights.

THE MAGISTRATE

The laws only give the king the right to appoint some public officials. To wish to transfer that right to others is to rise up against the king, and consequently to make himself culpable.

ZISKA

But if the king consents to let go of this right in favor of the nation, by what means would you retake it?

THE GENERAL

But our acquired rights!

THE ARCHBISHOP

The question then is to know if the king can cede some of his prerogatives without coming to a prior understanding with the nobility and clergy.

THE MAGISTRATE

That cannot be.

KORANDA

Ah! That is what upsets you and of which you will never take your part.

ZISKA

And yet it must be!

THE MINISTER

That is what we see; so much better that the royalty is one and tolerates no division of power.

ZISKA

But, gentlemen, you who, in this moment, appear so respectful to royalty and so *avare* of its privileges, you just blamed the king for receiving the deputation of the inhabitants de Prague and spoke of denouncing him to the Emperor Sigismund as if he was not the only king of Bohemia an sole master of his palace.

THE MAGISTRATE

Our complaints are well-founded, those of the people are not.

KORANDA

Doubtless, from your point of view.

DULCIN

The people are only the echo of their Hussite preachers, and should not be heard; for they are ambitious sectarians who have nothing and want to

take our wealth.

Koranda

Dulcin, my dear, you bring against them the same accusation that the Pharisees brought against those who followed Jesus, it is old.

THE ARCHBISHOP

The Pharisees of times past have nothing in common with us. Besides, you know well that our cause is not the same.

KORANDA

The name of your god is not the same, but your cause is not other than theirs. Do not invoke like them the public safety, order, trust, the salvation of society, in order to resist what you call evil passions. Do not call yourself like them moderates, friends of order, honest people, saviors of society, and do not qualify yourself as those who do not think like you, factious, barbarians, rioters, spoilers, miserable and other such pretty names? Are not your conversations and your words all for the defense of the rich and its privileges, and aren't the emancipated of Jesus, whom you leave naked and starving in the public square, the enemy, the barbarian, whom you refer to the fury of your soldiers? Like theirs, your society needs to be saved, you say? Take care, pagans that you are; a society that needs a savior is close to finishing its time.

THE ARCHBISHOP

You also prophesy our end, Koranda. And more than the Hussites you believe it to be imminent.

KORANDA

Very imminent.

ZISKA

Besides, that would depend on you.

THE GENERAL

We will be inexorable with our enemies. The truth must not spare the error.

ZISKA

Violence begets violence.

THE MAGISTRATE

The king will assist us.

ZISKA

You hardly counted on it, only a moment ago!

THE ARCHBISHOP

He will understand that his cause is the same as ours.

ZISKA

The king knows that the Hussites condemn the confession; not having been satisfied with the queen's confessor, they granted to Pierre Dresden and Jacobel the liberty of teaching their philosophy in Prague.

A MONK

If such a misfortune occurred, believe that God would not be deaf to our prayers for long.

ZISKA

So what would you ask of him?

THE ARCHBISHOP

To make Sigismund king of Bohemia.

ZISKA

By *rappelant à lui* Wenceslas?

THE ARCHBISHOP

We have not said that.

ZISKA

Without doubt; we are not obliged to develop his thought to its last consequences.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Do you believe yourself capable, lord Ziska, of making such a vow?

ZISKA

I believe, gentlemen, that it is prudent for you not to say more on this manner: for here is the king entering and he would hardly be flattered to hear your threats and recriminations.

SCENE IV

THE SAME, WENCESLAS AND SOME MONKS.

WENCESLAS (*drunk and barely supporting himself.*)

Once more, gentlemen, remove yourself. I don't need anyone to support me. I can walk very well alone; and you, monks, leave me; your consideration begins to weary me.

WENCESLAS

Our respect for Your Majesty....

WENCESLAS

It is great, your respect for me, and you can boast of it: you have imprisoned me, allegedly in error, but in reality to discredit me in the eyes of the world. What is more, the pope has deposed me from the empire, and

one of your own has insulted me, and you have all approved him; you have made a saint of him.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Sire, the wretch has been severely punished for it.

WENCESLAS

Justly, you would say.

THE ARCHBISHOP

And we have all suffered equally for it; for his punishment has had a dire impact in all of Bohemia, and has especially been fort mal interpreted by your subject.

WENCESLAS

Ah!

THE ARCHBISHOP

The people believe that you would separate from us; and that has harmed the holy cause of religion.

WENCESLAS

Religion! I advise you to speak of it; it has prospered in your hands, Your Excellency. Since you have been in Prague, you have had the talent to make half of my subjects recant.

Before you came here, no one dreamed of separating from Rome; today, we count, just in Prague, twenty-four thousand dissidents, and soon perhaps the population will be entirely Hussite.

THE ARCHBISHOP

But you will join with us to bring them back to the fold. Furthermore, the Church counts on your support and protection, and all of us here, we hope that you will not default on it.

ZISKA

Speak for yourself, Your Eminence, and for these gentlemen, if they think that is good; but for what concerns me, I forbid it! Since the Church has ravi us from the Empire, betrayed in Lombardy, abandoned in Bavaria in order to pass to Ruppert, the confessors no longer have our sympathies.

WENCESLAS (*angrily*)

No! les confessors no longer have our sympathies.

ZISKA

Then, if the men that you accuse are not faithful to the Pope, they are at least faithful to the laws of their country. They do not work, like their accusers, for the profit of a foreign power. They love Bohemia and have not made their king spent the night in jail.

THE ARCHBISHOP

They preach the errors of Huss, condemned in the council of Constance; and whoever makes themselves their protector becomes their accomplice.

ZISKA

Then the king, by giving Jean Huss a safe-conduct, has made himself their partisan.

THE MAGISTRATE

That safe-conduct has been declared null.

ZISKA

That proves how much respect we have for the will of the king. And you dare to make a crime of their lack of submission to the Pope, when you given the first example of a lack of respect for your king!

WENCESLAS

Yes, you have lacked respect for me in this circumstance.

THE ARCHBISHOP

By making Jean Huss a prisoner, we have only struck the heretic.

ZISKA

By imprisoning Jean Huss before his condemnation, you have struck the king; for you have scorned the orders signed with his hand and sealed with his arms.

THE ARCHBISHOP

However, he would not have escaped, he has been condemned by the Church, and today whoever makes themselves the protector of his partisans wishes to be excommunicated by Martin V.

King Wenceslas! You are all powerful in Bohemia and I recognize it, but we have seen kings as powerful as you succumb to the anathema.

WENCESLAS

I laugh at the Pope and your threats of anathema! I no longer love the confessors. I am king here and I intend to do my will. And to prove to you that I laugh at your threats, I consent to pass for the accomplice of my subjects, who are hostiles to you and do not insult me: here are two certificates of *carte blanche* signed with my name that I give to Ziska, two blank certificates that he will have to fill, the one to grant to the savants Pierre Dresden and Jacobel the right to continue their teaching at the University of Prague, the other to assemble a Council to examine the petition of the inhabitants of Prague who were here to complain of your excesses and abuses, and to grant them all the liberties compatible with my paternal royalty.

THE ARCHBISHOP

King Wenceslas! Without the aid of God and his ministers, don't you fear seeing your throne totter? Tremble lest they withdraw their support!

WENCESLAS

God loves justice, he is with me; and I will not tremble before the wrathful priests who call themselves his ministers. Besides, enough of that, monsieur archbishop, I am not in the mood to hear more of it. Ziska, I feel ill. Please help me, with Koranda, to return to my chambers.

They leave.

SCENE V

THE SAME, EXCEPT WENCESLAS, Koranda AND ZISKA.

THE ABBOT

How right Jean Dominique was to advise the Holy Father to reduce the Hussites with iron and fire. We have slowed down the persecutions; the heresy overwhelms us and reaches everyone. We can no longer even count on the King.

JEAN SADLO

A drunkard without principles, and without energy, the king is the pawn of the first who flatters his evil inclinations. What passion is more wretched than drink! When I think that we have in some ways urged him to give into that ignoble penchant, hoping that, when he was drunk, we would govern Bohemia under his responsibility, that has worked out badly for us!

THE ARCHBISHOP

If we let him brood and hatch the Hussite heresy, that would be equal for us to him getting drunk; but it compromises the future!

THE MAGISTRATE

How are we to remedy this state of things?

DULCIN

Indeed, we can no longer trust in him.

THE GENERAL

It is, however, on his will alone that our triumph or ruin depends.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Ah! If Sigismund wanted!

THE MINISTER

The Emperor Sigismund is debauched, Your Excellency. When Wenceslas is drunk, he recalls that the Pope has deposed him from the

Empire, and if we annoy him about Hussites, at base, he is with us and can do nothing without us. While Sigismund may escape us tomorrow, if love pushes him into the arms of a Hussite woman, and, in such circumstances, I do not know if we should not prefer the drunkard who cannot do without us, to the one who could become completely hostile to us tomorrow.

THE ABBOT

The Emperor Sigismund is devout; and the cause of God always comes before the satisfaction of his caprices. He has made proof of his zeal and devotion to the Church. He has willingly compromised himself in the eyes of the Hussites, by the deaths of Huss and Jermome. Moreover, it is up to him, in his role as role as inheritor of the kingdom, to oversee and direct the march of events. Sigismund has energy and is powerful; my opinion is that we should take advantage of his stay here in order to know his future dispositions and speak with him, in order to act promptly and aggressively against our enemies.

THE MAGISTRATE

What there is to do is very simple! Here it is: Ban all the Hussites from the University, arrest all their leaders, in order to lead them, bound hands and feet, before a council that Martin V will convoke at Basle, where they will be condemned to be burned alive. In these times of zeal and anger, our self-interest commands it, our salvation demands it!

SCENE VI

THE SAME, SIGISMUND.

A PAGE (*announcing*)

The Emperor!

(*All the courtiers salute.*)

SIGISMUND

Yes! Gentlemen, I am here, but sad and discontent. I left early this morning, and wandered the town. I have sought it every where in Prague; but it has been impossible to find.

THE GENERAL

Sire, it would have been difficult, in fact, to encounter it in the streets of Prague. It is here.

SIGISMUND

Here! What are you talking about?

THE GENERAL

The deputation of the *Utraquists*.

SIGISMUND

Utraquists?

DULCIN

Yes, sire, they have come here, led by Nicolas Ganz, one of the wealthiest bourgeois of Prague, to bring a petition to the king.

SIGISMUND

What has my brother done!

THE ARCHBISHOP

He has welcomed them, and promised to listen to their complaints; and to humiliate us he has offered them a place at his table, which we left, straight away, naturally, and where they still are!

DULCIN

Listen! We can hear them talk from here.

SIGISMUND

And have they brought a woman with them?

DULCIN

I do not believe so, sire. I have not seen one.

SIGISMUND

Then why do you say, general, that it is here.

THE GENERAL

But yes, sire, the deputation is here, at table. Hold on, that is precisely its members emerging and coming towards us.

SCENE VII.

THE SAME, ZISKA, THE DEPUTATION.

N. GANZ (*to Ziska*)

Officer, first let me thank you for your kingly welcome, and ask you to be our interpreter before King Wenceslas, to thank him for his gracious invitation, and to remind him of the good words he has spoken in favor of our future emancipation.

Tell him that we rely on his protection to deliver our country from the foreigners who plunder it, to free it from the courtiers who demean it, and avenge the death of our martyrs that the clergy has murdered in a cowardly manner because they were the glory of Bohemia.

ZISKA

His promises will not be forgotten. You can count on that, gentlemen. I will be that much more interested, as all your demands appear just to me.

N. GANZ

On that, my lord officer, receive our fraternal salute,
MAY THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN WRONGED SALUTES YOU.

Ziska returns their salute and the deputation departs.

SCENE VIII.

THE SAME, WITHOUT THE DEPUTATION.

SIGISMUND

What is this about?

THE MAGISTRATE

A petition, sire, that threatens to strip us of all our privileges and to make the Hussites our lords and masters.

ZISKA

Say, to speak more precisely, that it wishes to make the Bohemians masters Bohemia.

SIGISMUND

If the Bohemians were as brave as their women are beautiful, as intelligent as they are distinguished; for once you have seen them you can never forget them; if the men had as much energy to will, as the women have to be honest and charming, the Bohemians would long since have been their own masters; but they are violent, fickle and thoughtless.

ZISKA

Someone has informed you badly, sire, about the character of the people of Bohemia. The Bohemians are not fickle, they are merry; and if they are quickly outraged by an act of injustice, it is because they are honest and not violent. They are accused of thoughtlessness, because they no longer follow the clergy; before long, believe me, they will prove their steadfast support for the ideas that they love and their resolution to defend them with a courage greater than you expect. Their women are honest and beautiful, as you have said, sire, that is true; and you will soon see it, if we compare their manners with the fine ladies of Constance where the last council was held. The women of Bohemia do not hurry after the priests, nor after the soldiers, the wife loves his husband, the mother her children, and the daughter her parents....

THE ARCHBISHOP (*interrupting*)

Yes, they are all love!

ZISKA

They are all love, you have said it, monsieur Archbishop, and as their love is always chaste and modest, it is enough to make a people energetic and virtuous.

SADLO

Lord Ziska loves platonically.

A MONK

There are no doubt reasons for that.

THE ABBOT

It is a virtue that much greater as it is rarer every day.

ZISKA

It is a virtue that costs nothing to the sensible man.

SADLO (*low, to the Abbot*)

Especially when he is ugly.

ZISKA

And I believe, without being as well versed as you in the art of *plaire*, that, if the really enamored man loves with a platonic love, it is the woman who inspires it.

SADLO

Or the coldness of the suitor.

ZISKA

We sometimes see wretches use violence, but then love has no part in such an act of brutality; but when there is a mutual confidence between two people, a reciprocity of inclinations, of affection, it will be certain that the woman inspires all the love that she deserves.

(The courtiers laugh in mockery.)

SIGISMUND

I believe it even more, my lords, as what has happened to me here, in Prague itself, is clear proof of it.

A COURTIER

What has happened to you, sire?

SIGISMUND

Here is it. Last Sunday, eager to hear the celebrated [Jean] Gerson preach and to see the effect produced by his sermon on the Calixtins, I went incognito to the church of Ste. Waite. I saw there a young woman of obscure birth, no doubt, if I judge according to the simplicity of her clothes, but ravishing in grace and beauty. My first movement had been to approach her; but when she raised her big black eyes to me, I saw in her look so much dignity, decency and modesty, that I felt myself touched, totally dumbfounded. More respectful towards her than if she had been a famous princess, I saw her leave majestically from the church and did not dare to follow even with my glance, so fearful was I of appearing disrespectful. Once she was outside, my boldness returned; I left the

church to see her again and follow her from afar; but, alas, she had disappeared. Since, I have passed and passed again through the streets near the church, but all in vain. I have not seen her again. I hope, however, that she will have notice my admiration for her.

THE COURTIER

And as all the women of the people are coquettes, she would have been extremely flattered by your attention.

ZISKA

Or annoyed by your importunities, sire, perhaps seeing you, from her window, pass back and forth in the street where she lives, to meet her, which could compromise her.

SIGISMUND (*stung*)

Annoyed by my importunities! I doubt it, Lord Ziska. However, my desire is to find her, and we will see if I am as indifferent as you seem to believe.

ZISKA

And he example, sire, that you owe as its future king, to the people of Bohemia; and the oath of fidelity that you have made before God to your noble spouse, how do you reconcile that with the infidelity that is already in your heart?

SIGISMUND

Lord Ziska, I do not want to reconcile anything, I'm not a prig. I am even ready to condemn my conduct on this occasion. But is it my fault if the passions are stronger than men, if the nature laughs at human conventions and passes beyond the moral laws of society? See my poor brother, he is always drunk, because he has a passion for drink. My lord the archbishop is always ruined, because he has a passion to play. Do you believe they do not know they are doing wrong? — Me, I have the misfortune of not being able to resist the beauty of one of my future subjects. Am I so guilty for that?

THE MINISTER

What use would our privileges be, if we could not sometimes raise ourselves above these little peccadilloes that we always do well to condemn among the people *pour le bon exemple*.

ZISKA

If the orthodox religion, that makes you so powerful, does not have the power to correct your evil impulses, to make you more moral than those who are unaware of it, what use is it, and by what right do you impose it on those who reject it? The passions, you say, are stronger than your religious morals; nature laughs at human conventions, and your privileges

allow you to raise yourself above virtue? So your religion is false, your morals false; for if they were true, you would not speak or act this way.

SIGISMUND

Lord Ziska, you take everything seriously, and you exaggerate every idea of religious morality. Religion is true, but rather it is made for the poor than for us. — By promising the heavens, they leave us in peace on earth; otherwise, it would be necessary to deal with them, and I do not know what would become of us if this hope had to be abandoned. — I have been accused of being hostile to the Heretics; do you by chance believe that I hate them because I believed the calumnies with which they are showered, the horrors for which they are blamed? No at all. I know that all that is false, and that the accusations under which they seek to crush them are ultimately only a means to make them seem odious and prevent the masses from increasing the number of their followers. — The Hussites are our enemies because they want to strip us of our privileges; now, as it is our honor to defend them and in our interest to preserve them, that is the cause of my hostility against them, and nothing more!

THE ARCHBISHOP

Wretches who preach the equality of the Vaudois [Waldensians], the errors of Wycliffe and all the most pernicious heresies!

THE MAGISTRATE

Anarchists who argue that the greatest honor that can befall a man is to be brought to any social position, not by the king, as has always happened, but after inspection and competition by lot, or transitorily by the will and choice of his equals, the people, in a word, whom they already consider sovereign!

THE COURTIER

Envious sorts, who, under the pretext that justice must be the principle of human societies, say that charity is immoral and beggars are degraded beings. And do you know who they call beggars? It is us, gentlemen, us! The pensions, annuities, gifts and gratuities that the king wants to grant us from his coffers, they dare call them handouts! And claim that, obliged to work to fill the king's treasury, it is not the king's money that we receive, but their own, and it is time for this to end.

THE MAGISTRATE

What an abomination!

THE GENERAL

What infamy! But, our acquired rights!

THE COURTIER

That's what I heard myself, last night, from the famous Jacobel before

a frenzied audience of more than ten thousand people; and it is to this evil man that Ziska will carry the royal permission, to continue, unmolested, preaching such infamies.

SIGISMUND

I like to think that before such an affirmation, the lord Ziska would tear up that authorization.

ZISKA

Sire, all that these gentlemen have just said against the Hussites does not change my determination, I know several Hussite leaders, and their morality is far above that of their detractors. I know their doctrine: it is moral, it is right. What do they want? Help each other, to work and ensure that there is no more involuntary poverty. They propose to solve that formidable problem and try to do it at their their own risk peril. Even assuming they are wrong, their goal is laudable. So why prevent them? They claim to be able to do without us; this is a great opportunity to show them that we, too, can do without them.

SIGISMUND

But you know well that that is impossible.

ZISKA

I know that it was not yet an hour ago that these gentlemen said that the poor could not do without the rich, and that Mr. General wittily stated that without the rich, the poor would die of hunger.

SIGISMUND

Let us leave these idle discussions, lord Ziska; the preaching of the Hussites is subversive of the established order of things. Just because some melancholy dreamers, some sick minds want to upset everything, we should not let them. We are the judges of what is suitable for the masses. Let us preserve this privilege. Sacrifice that authorization for me, and promise not to concern yourself with the future of such procedures.

ZISKA

Sire, before my privileges, I place justice; and after justice, my obedience to Wenceslas, our king.

SIGISMUND

If the Emperor asked it of you?

ZISKA

I would respond that, as a faithful friend, I must speak to Jacobel; that, as a passionate servant of right, I wish to defend my friends who are slandered with malice aforethought; that, as a citizen of Bohemia, I only execute the will of Wenceslas, under whose orders I have voluntarily placed myself.

THE ARCHBISHOP

So you declare yourself the friend of the Hussites?

ZISKA

I have never hidden it.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Then you can no longer be our friend.

ZISKA

It has been a long time since I was your friend, Your Excellency. Since you have profited from the crime of one Jew in order to pillage all the others; since, from hatred of us, Bohemians, you and yours, you have given Hungary to Rupert, Lombardy to Galéas, since, under the pretext of heresy, you have had my compatriots killed by foreigners and sell their children as slaves, not only do I separate from you, but I have always considered you the enemy of my homeland.

SIGISMUND

I have also not been your friend, when they gave Rupert Hungary, which belonged to me by right; but it is no longer a question of that now. It is a question of a revolution that threatens to engulf us, and against which, friends or not, we must cling together if we do not want to be swept away. There is no more middle ground possible today: it must be Catholic or Hussite, consequently, our friend or our enemy.

ZISKA

The question posed in this way, consider me your adversary. That admission costs me that much less as, despite all the respect that I can have for you, emperor, brother of the king and his direct heir, your tastes and penchants do not at all conform with mine. I love the Hussites. I love their leaders, whom I know, because they are more concerned with the happiness people than their own. Then, I tell you, *Utraquist* myself, partisan of communion of both kinds, passionate preserver of the cup, the sole symbol of equality that remains to us from Jesus, I find their doctrine consoling and want to associate myself with it. If I am obliged to defend them, I will do it with courage and devotion because the Hussites are slandered, because they are poor and because they perhaps have no other captain than me to fly to their aid. Sire, you are almighty: there is no lack of other men who would be enchanted to fight them to please you and gain your favor. Now, what different can it be to you, one friend more or less? Won't you always find at court as many as you desire, and even more?

SIGISMUND

One last word. If, become king of Bohemia, I wanted to annihilate that rebel sect by my authority and the religion of my fathers, would you dare

to bear arms against your homeland?

ZISKA

Against my homeland? Oh! Never! The foreigners who ruin it at this moment will always see me against them.

SIGISMUND

Against me?

ZISKA

If you attack what I hold most dear, why not?

SIGISMUND

The interest of the prince comes after your personal affections?

ZISKA

The interest of the prince comes after that of my homeland; that of my homeland itself passes after that of humanity. At present, sire, that you are informed about my civil, political and religious feelings, allow me to go where my duty and sympathies call me.

(He leaves.)

SCENE IX.

THE SAME, EXCEPT ZISKA.

THE ARCHBISHOP

You see, sire, that everything escapes us, there is the plague up to the throne; if you do not organize a formidable crusade against these miscreants, that is all for Catholicism and royalty.

SIGISMUND

That is sad, in truth, but what can I do? If Wenceslas, the king, the only master, after all, gives his consent.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Isn't the emperor the sovereign ruler, and has Wenceslas ever refused to comply with your orders when they were clearly dictated to him and manfully prescribed?

SIGISMUND

That was true in the past; but the situation in Bohemia is no longer what it was. The Hussites are more numerous today, and if my orders were not executed, that would diminish and could perhaps cause me to lose my future inheritance. Even should the Pope banish Wenceslas in favor of me, it would be unwise to try to invade and seize the Bohemia by force. The party of heresy is too strong today. It is necessary, before attacking it directly, to divide, compromise and weaken it; and it is not the king who could, over time, accomplish that difficult work. Ah! If I was the

king!...

THE ARCHBISHOP

You will be soon, I am almost certain. God has never granted to the bad princes enough time for them to be able to mislay and lose their flock. And believe that if he has made Wenceslas love the pleasures of drunkenness, it is because he has plans decreed.

SIGISMUND

Some plans for the king?

THE ARCHBISHOP

Yes, sire, a sudden death, an indigestion, a violent stroke perhaps!

SIGISMUND

What do you mean?

THE ARCHBISHOP

Oh! Sire, don't worry. The intemperance of the king is so great as to accomplish our work of destruction without the aid of our friends.

SIGISMUND

Let us stop, Your Excellency, probing and interpreting the designs of Providence. These issues sadden me. When I came here, I was good, full of love and only thinking to find my unknown. Since you shared your anger with me, I feel myself becoming spiteful. I do not want to think about it any more. Love calls me. Farewell, I leave you.

(They all leave, except for the archbishop)

SCENE X

THE ARCHBISHOP *(alone.)*

Another who would and who dares not! He would be enchanted by the death of the king, his brother, whatever the cause; but he believes he must be disinterested if one appears to hasten it! It is not even necessary that he have the least suspicion; his conscience would be most tranquil, and his heart less grateful! Oh! Humanity! How illogical you are! There is only us who know how to want! Everything in this world is weak! This world that always ends up belonging to the most coldly audacious. Since Wenceslas must have wine and Sigismund women, let their desires be fulfilled! To preserve our privileges and dominate the world, we must have power; try to defend it, and we will seize it.

End of the first act.

ACT TWO

An apartment in the house of Pierre Dresden.

SCENE I.

PIERRE DRESDEN (*alone*)

He is seated at a table, a large folio in his hand.

The barbarians! (*He closes the book, rises and leaves the table where he was seated.*) To have condemned to the fire a book so perfect, a work so sublime! They have not understood it. The language of the heart does not touch those who have none. A social system whose morality is all love shocks the selfish; that is why the council of Constance has condemned to the fire this book and its authors. The clergy is selfish. The priests do not love. To make the reformer Jesus a hard, severe master and themselves his zealous servants; to sacrifice to their fear and ambition the thinker who doubts, the savant who analyzes, the philosopher who teaches; to bathe in their blood until they drown; that is how they understand the mission that, in his name, they accomplish on the earth; that is how they understand Christian charity. Reason is always wrong with them. The cruel!... And they are raised above other men! The people bow down before them, they execute their decrees as humanity was thirsty for blood and has made them his oracles!... Justice! How blind men are!... Truth! Will you never lend them your torch!... Alas, what am I saying! They would not want to us it, and if the breath of the clergy was powerless to snuff it out, **ils souffleraient dessus eux-mêmes!** The death of Huss and Jérôme proves it only too well. Poor Huss! Poor Jérôme!...

To have in oneself enough life for everyone! And to live among corpses! Corpses that an idea would resurrect and that they persist in not hearing. Oh! How my two old friends have suffered! How much courage and virtue they needed to brave the threats of the crowd, to throw truth in the faces of their executioners, to defend despite themselves the interests of the poor and fight in the name of humanity against injustice and imposture!... Glory to them! They have braved the persecutions; they have preferred death to lies. Glory to their triumphant idea. Shame to us! Hypocrites who have condemned them! Shame on us! The one who punishes by fire, perish by fire! You will fall in your turn. Could you then find some pity among your judges and only **abîmer** yourself in the midst of the jeers of the crowd!

(Someone knocks.)

SCENE II

PIERRE, JACOBEL.

PIERRE

Come in!

JACOBEL

Hello, Pierre.

PIERRE

Jacobel! My good friend, how are you this morning?

JACOBEL

Wonderful; and our affairs as well!

PIERRE

You have good news?

JACOBEL

Yes! We have finally decided to put our ideas of social emancipation into practice; and I come to announce that a deputation of a dozen equals, of whom we are a part, were just appointed, for this purpose, by the twenty-four thousand scholars of Prague.

PIERRE

Jacobel! So we are included! Oh! What happiness! And I was desperate! But, tell me, how are you thinking of beginning?

JACOBEL

There has already been formed a center that we call the Tabor, in memory, it is said, of the transfiguration of Jesus and where the transfiguration of the world will begin. The want to abandon the name of Hussite to take up that of Taborite, which is less personal and **partant** more suitable.

PIERRE

But they have an immense need of money to execute such a project; and it is rare to find it among people who have ideas.

JACOBEL

There are considerable resources at the disposal of Ziska and Prokop, I believe.

PIERRE

Do we know where they come from, the generous men who want to aid us?

JACOBEL

The donors, if donors there are, have remained incognito.

PIERRE

Cœur sublimes! Ils font le bien sans ostentation.

JACOBEL

Perhaps they fear being known.

PIERRE

How?

JACOBEL

In this lying world, we sometime blush to encourage truth; often goodness gives us a reputation for stupidity and that is why the man that we believe a dupe is often only an accomplice.

PIERRE

And in order not to blush at our social ideas and to pass for gullible fools. You think that they have not given their names?

JACOBEL

I know nothing of it! But in Prague where pride and fear are the vehicle of all human actions, I could suppose it without injustice or ingratitude.

PIERRE

When should we assemble the meeting of the twelve appointees?

JACOBEL

At you home, if you can receive us.

PIERRE

Wouldn't there be any danger for them?

JACOBEL

What danger?

PIERRE

Known as leader of the Hussites, put in the index as the enemy of the royalty, watched night and day by the spies of the clergy and the emperor, don't you fear, if men were seen meeting at my home, that they would be arrested, and that my reputation as a leveler would be deadly for them.

JACOBEL

No! Ziska wil be among us; and he has the signed authorization from the king, to act and to do all that he believes necessary for the exoneration of Huss and Jérôme.

PIERRE

But, j'y songe. Has Ziska, who is to marry my sister tomorrow, and must come tonight to speak with the family, been informed of it?

JACOBEL

Yes, this morning, by Prokop; and he was able to warn your sister Marguerite. You have the time to warn your family. So all can be arranged.

PIERRE

Let them come tonight, Jacobel, and let our agreement give birth to the embryo of the new society that will give freedom and peace to the world. But what struggles, what victories to win before our work is consolidated.

JACOBEL

If we are always followed, that will be soon enough.

PIERRE

Followed! What? Do you doubt the sincerity of our disciples?

JACOBEL

No. But cowardice is so frequent in times of unrest and popular turmoil, that they could very well abandon us, if the fight lasted too long, if it demanded too great a sacrifice, and if, once started, we could not do promptly everything necessary to preserve our partisans.

PIERRE

That is the pitfall! I have often reflected on it. The peoples choose leaders when they rise up. They follow them and defend them as long as their tyrants do not make the hope of some improvement shine in their eyes. But let the reactionaries make them the least semblance of a concession in words; immediately, they abandon their friends who are at their head and let them be killed without concerning themselves any more with it, until their turn comes to also be sacrificed and debased. Étienne Marcel, that man of good sense, that energetic citizen, that sublime Parisian has been betrayed by his own and deserted by the population weary of following him. Watt Tyler, that determined blacksmith, has been killed and abandoned by his friends on the simple promise of the English king who, after promising them reforms had them arrested and made them die in prison by the hundreds. The people of Ghent let Jean Hyoens die at the first lie of their count, and the two Arteveldes made themselves killed in order not to fall living into the hands of their cruel enemies when they saw that they would be delivered up. That is the danger! It is not that I fear for my existence; if I am killed or taken matters little to me if our ideas triumph; but I fear that in the face of that desertion, the superior men will no longer want to serve them and direct the movement, and that their application today, when they are not understood, will be put off indefinitely.

JACOBEL

Resolved, as we are, à atteindre notre but, to complete our work without moderation and especially without dividing ourselves, once we

have begun the action it will be possible for us to avoid the deceptions that have doomed the great citizens of whom you just spoke. The spirit of Marcel, better understood today than in his lifetime, shook all the great cities of Europe, that of Wycliffe roused all the countryside; the people are full of their ideas and *vaudoiserie* is practiced a bit everywhere. If tyranny imposes silence in the daylight, the love of liberty gathers at night in the woods, in the underground, all the audacious and intelligent men, and when the hour comes to group all these men for the struggle, be certain, Pierre, that if the Marcel are lacking, others who will be up to the situation will not fail. When the revolution at Paris lacked bourgeois to direct it, it took its leaders from the people, and they have all served perfectly.

PIERRE

Yes. It has been sought with butchers, extortionists and the executioner; and unfortunately they have made it synonymous with massacres.

JACOBEL

Who knows, after all, if these massacres have not been necessary to restore this degenerate country?

PIERRE

Oh! Jacobel!

JACOBEL

If, as history teaches us, the peoples must, in order to wipe away their shame and cowardice, to wash them in tears and blood, the Caboches and Capluches must arrive. It was their time: for the people had been extremely cowardly.

PIERRE

They have been so terrible and so cruel!

JACOBEL

Only for the people who only despised them and regarded them as beasts of burden. But could it be otherwise? Why had their rulers provoked, robbed and debased them? Why were they denied all education, respect, freedom, and softening of customs? People are after all what the tyrants have *made* them, and when they kill, they are only logical. Let them be educated, let them be made to understand instead of stupefying them, liberty and respect for others is civilization par excellence, and nobody would be in danger of death.

PIERRE

Let men be educated, let them be taught to respect themselves in their fellows; you say true, that is the question, that is the problem; but it is not resolved, and while waiting, where will they stop, if the civil war begins?

JACOBEL

It is not for us I think to be suspicious of the instincts of the people, nor to want to impose limits on their demands: that would be a useless folly. Moreover, they will never be demanding enough; they will never go far enough. The tradition that we constantly invoke, as if we could free ourselves from it, is there in order to **le retenir**; and it would be very fortunate if, far from opposing the least resistance to them, we are not obliged to push them forward, to force them to follow us. — First, I would be extremely angry if they destroyed nothing; that would prove that the revolution lacks vigor and youth, and would increase our difficulties. Every revolution, Pierre, we are very often agreed on it, has two phases: a negative or destructive phase, and an affirmative or reconstructive phase. One of the other must be accomplished. Without that, how will be build on a terrain dotted with obstacles? So it is necessary that the first phase of revolution should make them disappear. Now will the obstacles be numerous and difficult to overcome? It is an affair that, not being only under our authority, will not be decided by our will alone. The obstinate sorts who resist revolutions are more often the cause of the tendencies that they take on than those who are supposed to direct them. Now, **là-dessus je m'en rapporte** perfectly to the logic of the facts. If the thunder and anger do not need to mix in there: so much the better! But if against my desire the storm came to rumble, I would not doubt for an instant for that that the people had chosen the only salutary remedy for the healing of the evil from which they have felt themselves dying for some thousands of years. What's more, the people always reflect, in their demonstrations, the milieu that formed them. Now, if they are terrible, it will be neither their fault, nor ours; but that of the religion who would have made them selfish; the fault of their masters who have proved toward them injustice and ill-will; the crime of its rules who would have made them cruel, by teaching them, by their past conflict, to have no respect for the life and liberty of others.

PIERRE

Necessity! Fatality! That is the secret of the societies and of all human attempts. Necessity directs the choice of men; they decide to follow a particular route, to take a particular measure and obtain a particular law, because they believe that it is good. Once the resolution is taken, the application made, the evolution begun, what follows is inevitable; if the consequences are other than those that they expect, so much the worse: nothing can change them; logic goes to the end. In the midst of the events of life, what a small this is the will of man! And say that there are idiots who believe that they direct everything, who claim they have saved the nations; and that by that title, they are the legitimate leaders of a people

that they have the right to ruin and debase!

JACOBEL

They do not dare to see that their omnipotence over the **abrutis** that they govern is only the logical consequence of the social milieu in which they live: milieu that bears in its flanks, at the same time as their proud persons, the inevitable principle that must reject them as the lying symbol of the prosperity of a country.

PIERRE

The prosperity of a people rests on the will of one man! What misery! How have the peoples been able to believe such an error for so long?

JACOBEL

How? It is not hard to understand. Let us leave to the first wretch who comes along the power to deprave, to corrupt the young and prevent them from having more **d'esprit** than their magistrates; give them with that some soldiers ready to kill everyone, ransack everything, destroy anything; some police to arrest and some judges to obligingly condemn whomever displeases them, and you will see, supposing, against all odds, that he is not a monarchist, if all the henchmen and all the lackeys of the Emperor Sigismund, who are so insolents today, they will not believe anything you wish and will not be the most **courbés and most plats gueux** in the world. My dear Pierre, the emperor and the pope are to wretches of that species. Is it any wonder that one bows before their executioners? However, despite so many rigors, the youth of the schools has dared to declare itself in favor of revolution, to proclaim that monarchies have no earthly use, and that after understanding that he must be free, the man who does not protest against a master, who has not attempted to shake off his yoke, is dishonored forever. And indeed, what need has Europe of monarchies? To what need do they answer? Is it to resolve the problem of production and equitable distribution of the riches that would perhaps be useful to them? — Every dynasty and the vermin that it makes hatch produce nothing, and consume the finest part of the wealth of the country. These beggars that call themselves honorable and who are honored very little by the producers have only the slightest idea of it. Ask all these **repus** to think of the abolition of the salariat, of value, or no matter what other question of social economy; there is not one of them, when you ask them that question, who will not respond “Utopia;” and only conveys the idea that he represents the value in person; as long as they are stupid and have little consciousness of their uselessness of the earth. Peacocks, flatterers and beggars; that is their only qualities to dazzle the simple; and it is from these people that Europe awaits the light, in order to resolve the problem of the proletariat? Ah! Pierre, that would be too foolish by far!

PIERRE

Yet the people have confidence in them! Why? They know nothing of them; perhaps because they see them from afar!

JACOBEL

Ah, I do not speak of the people, not of the confidence that they grant to anyone. What are people who are not free? Children, and nothing more! So we have only one duty to fulfill with toward them which is to tell them the truth; and I said it to them, last night.

PIERRE

Ziska told me that you were severe.

JACOBEL

I have aimed true and I have struck hard, wage-earning, oppressed People, old soldiers, I have said to them, go! You still have long to suffer before understanding that what exhausts and kills you is that orthodox monarchy that you **traines** with respect. Let it take your son and you last penny and you will what it is good for, and where it leads. After their time of service, your children would no longer know how to do anything but gamble, ruin your daughters drink to distraction. But they will have ribbons and medals that will make you cry tears of joy, and then there will be no need of despotism, lackeys, spies and lost girls. **Où veux-tu qu'il les prenne**, if your misery and degradation do not provide them.

Oh man! What a singular animal you are! You call yourself superior to the other animals on the earth; doubtless because you sense what you could do and that also flatters your self-esteem; but you are a strange sort of higher animal, **va!** You die of hunger, and often the too great abundance of the products that you have made withdraws your ease.

And you, patient wage-earner, you who only get back your product by paying four times its real value, you can flatter yourself about your superiority, **va**, it is à **envier** under your masters. There is not a monkey in the woods who would not die of sorrow if it was obliged to give you its place, in order to take yours!....

You are discontented, you cry out against exploitation, against theft: you are right; but if you are dispossessed, isn't it your fault, after all? Why have you preferred privileges to equality? You have wanted there to be distinctions among men, which hold them at a distance, and they have cost you dearly. Where would you like those to whom these privileges are awarded to take the money necessary for their expense of rank, pleasure, luxury and munificence, if not from your labor and your share of the wealth.

A people who reject equality must know that the distinction of ranks in society has its exactions.

A people who, without respect for the rights and sovereignty of its sons, inflicts a monarchy on itself, must not be unaware that it loses its free will and commits itself from now on to labor for others than its own.

We do not race with impunity after fallen princes, ruined dynasties, beggars employing every system in order to be served when we do not want to fully provide for their extravagance and become the victims of their rapacity and their tyranny,

Servants who lead their master by the nose until the latter sacks them or leaves them his fortune, to the detriment of his family, that is seen every day. Peoples of Europe and you people of Prague, that is you. To dismiss your unfaithful servants or leave them the fortune of your children, that is the question that the logic of things poses to the present generation; how will you respond?

PIERRE

They will sweep us away, Jacobel; they would already have done it if, out of respect for their old relations who still love that drunk Wenceslas, the young people were not patient; but let him die, as we expect any moment now, it will not be the Emperor Sigismund, soul damned by the clergy, who will be able to stop the movement.

JACOBEL

Provided that the death of Wenceslas arrives before the emperor speaks with the archbishop, that would be very fortunate.

PIERRE

Why?

JACOBEL

Because he demands nothing less than the elimination of all the leaders of the Hussite movement !

PIERRE

Who told you that?

JACOBEL

Ziska!

PIERRE

Then he has taken up our defense.

JACOBEL

He has doubtless taken it, but without success.

PIERRE

Well! Jacobel, let our destiny be fulfilled! If, like Jean Huss, we are led before the tribunals, we will tell the truth! If like him, we are condemned to the stake, other men will follow us. A true idea does not die, Jacobel;

and the more its enemies shower it with blood, the more they make it live. So what does life and death matter to us, as soon as one or the other will be useful to its coming, to its future greatness!

JACOBEL

So it is agreed, you will receive us this evening?

PIERRE

It is agreed!

JACOBEL

Goodbye.

PIERRE

Until tonight!

SCENE III

PIERRE (*Alone*)

Finally, our work will be accomplished. Skeptical egoists you will be confounded! Our ideas are sublimes, you say, but unrealizable! Who told you that, men without strength, without intelligence, without love? Well, what your eyes cannot see, what your heart cannot feel, what your brain cannot comprehend, you declare impossible! You are very bold, my masters! So we are going to prove the opposite! What a triumph! what a deathblow for selfishness! I wish it was tonight already. (*He calls.*) Marguerite!

SCENE IV

PIERRE, MARGUERITE

MARGUERITE (*entering*)

My brother!

PIERRE

An important event forces to put off until tomorrow morning the little family gathering that we should have this evening regarding your marriage.

MARGUERITE

I know it, Pierre; Ziska told me.

PIERRE

I am leaving to inform our parents. As I could be away for a long time, if you do not see me, do not wait for me.

MARGUERITE

That is fine!

(Pierre leaves.)

SCENE V

MARGUERITE (alone)

Except for Ziska, it is different; he comes here for us both. Provided that this other unwelcome visitor will not come now while I am alone; I do not know if I would have the courage to throw him out, I fear him so much. There is still an oddity there that I do not understand. That man sees clearly that bothers me, that he annoys me by seeking to meet me everywhere, but he continues nonetheless. I have not made a step outside since the day before yesterday without encountering him on my way. Last night, when I was going to see Wanda at the convent of the Capuchins, he followed me so close that I was quite ashamed of it; and since this morning he has made promenades on horseback in the street that everyone must notice. My God, how much all that worries me. Will my brother and Ziska forgive me for not having told them. Oh! Yes! These are things that happen so often in Prague; and then they are so good and Ziska love me so much.

SCENE VI

MARGUERITE, ZISKA

MARGUERITE

Ziska. Ah! I was thinking of you, my friend.

ZISKA

Me, too, Marguerite. I always think of you! And when I am far from you, it seems to me that some misfortune threatens you. I do not know if it is the outrage made this morning on my poor sister Wanda that makes me worried like this; but I always have it in my mind that someone watches you and follows you to carry you off and ruin you.

MARGUERITE

God! You suspect it?

ZISKA

Woe also to the one who would dare to put a hand on you, my friend; for were he the strongest, the most powerful of men, Ziska would avenge you!

MARGUERITE

Calm your fears, friend, and do not speak of vengeance. Le noble calixtin, my fiancé, should pardon all those who have offended him; it is a point of his religious doctrine.

ZISKA

But he must also avenge all those who are dear to him, *s'il s'oublie*,
lui.

MARGUERITE

Since when, mister avenger, have you imposed this role on yourself?

ZISKA

Since I have sworn it to my poor dying sister.

MARGUERITE

What! Wanda !

ZISKA

Dead, Marguerite!

MARGUERITE

Wanda! Dead!

ZISKA

She could not survive her violation. (*With rage.*) Oh! But I will kill the monk who raped her; I will avenge her, Marguerite! Woe! Woe to all these monks and all these priests, his accomplices; her outraged honor demands more than one slaughter!

MARGUERITE

Ziska, you frighten me.

ZISKA

You do not know, Marguerite, what these wretches have dared. Not only have they killed my poor sister, but in order to exonerate the **infame** who violated her; they came beside her deathbed, to laugh at her delirium and agony; they insulted her, Marguerite; they came to say of her, ah! Marguerite, can you believe it? They dared to say that she was a woman of ill repute, a prostitute.... And I was not with her to crutch these wretches!

MARGUERITE

How vile!

ZISKA

She, a woman of loose morals! She, that holy and sweet girl, my sister, poor lamb, defenseless, that they made die of shame and pain, and all because I am a friend of the Hussites and she was going to leave the convent and I would not take revenge? And will I forgive such monsters? Never, Daisy, never! Besides, if I had not had my sister to avenge the blood of Huss still cries for vengeance. And yesterday, the archbishop, has he not excited Sigismund to take action against Jacobel and against your brother.

MARGUERITE

Against Jacobel, against my brother.

ZISKA

And against us all. They become insolent and cruel again. It is time that I begin my role by crushing their head like some vile serpent.

MARGUERITE

They ask for more persecutions?

ZISKA

Let them renew them with success, if we always know how to forgive, if, in a word, we do not free humanity from their tyranny and their insolence. It is sad, I admit, to water the promised land with blood, but when it is necessary, to recoil would be cowardice! Fate made me the instrument of his will, the servant of its justice; I feel it in the ardent love I bear for the disinherited of this world. I have accepted the mission of apostle of humanity in this life, because it has need of my arms and I will fulfill it. I would have preferred to be an apostle of peace, but its time has not yet come, and I must content myself with the apostolate of my century.

MARGUERITE

You frighten me, friend, for the more I listen, the less I understand you. you want to be, you say, the servant of humanity, the instrument of destiny; but you know well that they have no particular avenger in this world. Oh! What are you going to undertake?

ZISKA

An immense social work, profound and simple! We are in Prague alone twenty-five thousand equals who want to accomplish it in the next few days.

MARGUERITE

You seem to doubt nothing. You are unaware, however, that the world does not change its manners and customs overnight; but, on the contrary, that it always resist the improvements that it does not understand, and the ideas that it does not believe its own.

ZISKA

We will struggle by example!

MARGUERITE

If you fail; if you are defeated?

ZISKA

When we fight, with and for an idea, against those who do not have one, we are invincible.

MARGUERITE

The **fait** is always as strong as an idea however true it may be, and

always has the most numerous partisans, if they are not the most intelligent and most intrepid.

ZISKA

We have considered all that!

MARGUERITE

If the enterprise were to be beyond your strength; if you bend, you, the soul, the leader perhaps of that profound revolution, what would become of the unfortunates that would follow you? Have you weighed the consequences of an unfortunate attempt?

ZISKA

Do you think me capable of attempting the impossible?

MARGUERITE

I fear that you assume a great responsibility by putting yourself at their head.

ZISKA

If I am one of their leaders, it is because they have elected me, and that in that case, a refusal on my part was impossible. In order to make our social principles triumph, they said to me, we must have leaders; but leaders who have no more rights in the world than the simplest of their children, leaders whose power the weakest man could restrain if he abused it, and whose opinion the most obscure could check and reject, if they were unjust. We have chosen you because we love you and believe you worthy of it. Do you want to accept? — Could I refuse?

MARGUERITE

No, my friend!

ZISKA

So I accepted; but as in order to lead our work to good, there must be a heart that beats, a head that thinks, an arm that acts, and as I can only be the arm, they have joined to me Jacobel and your brother, and also some other persons.

MARGUERITE

Jacobel and my Brother have accepted?

ZISKA

As I, as any other should do in our place. Now, if we believe we should act as the servants of humanity on the earth; it is because the people have elected us; it is because we serve the holy cause of Equality. If we consecrate our lives to it; it is because it is the duty of all me to establish it among themselves; and if we are resolved to act; it is because we believe ourselves capable of resisting all our enemies, and of making against them

the most terrible and most unrelenting war.

MARGUERITE

Don't you fear that you will be arrested, when you gather to organize and put your plans into action?

ZISKA

Our meetings are authorized; here is the patent signed by King Wenceslas.

MARGUERITE

Sigismund does not respect authorizations of that sort; he strikes all those who offend him. He is in Prague because Wenceslas is dying. Beware of him Ziska. He is your enemy and they call him deceitful and cruel.

ZISKA

Yes, but not very dangerous at the moment. An intrigue of love concerns him more than the Hussites.

MARGUERITE

An intrigue of love! He, whose wife is, Berthe [Barbara of Cilli], the most beautiful woman in his court.

ZISKA

Well! Yes, Marguerite. Last Sunday at the Calixtine Church of Sainte Waite where he chanced to go, he saw a young woman, whose look charmed him; since then he has only thought of her, his pleasure is to race around the city in order to meet and follow her. At least it is the only pleasure that he has been allowed thus far, but he is full of hope; he thought he perceived, he said, that she was not indifferent to him.

MARGUERITE

The popinjay!

ZISKA

To inspire in that libertine and audacious man, such a respect, she must be very beautiful, Marguerite, (*gazing at her*) as beautiful as you.

MARGUERITE

So you find me very beautiful, Ziska?

ZISKA

Yes, Marguerite, and in order to hide nothing from you, I believed for an instant that his enchantress, it was you.

MARGUERITE

I do not know the emperor, but suppose that it was me, do you think me capable of encouraging his folly?

ZISKA

No, I do not believe it, but if he was my rival!

MARGUERITE

Your rival! You dare say that word in front of me. Am I not your friend, your fiancée, who loves and understands you? Haven't I given you my heart before promising my hand? Ah, Ziska! If you loved me as much **que moi**, you would not have that idea; if he was your rival he would be loved: and if he was, you would have been the first to be informed of it.

ZISKA

I know that you are direct and sincere, Marguerite; but what do you want, since the death of my poor sister, I have fears that you must find legitimate.... Tell me, have you every been followed?

MARGUERITE

In a city like Prague, where we count more than sixty thousand students, who is the woman who have not been followed sometimes? I doubtless have been, but I did not believe I should speak to you of it. As for encouraging with a look, is it possible for a woman who respects herself. Last night and again this morning, a man I did not know, and who frightened me, followed me; it is true, he is the only one who has been so persistent; whether he is a student, a noble or a bourgeois, I do not know. I have not even looked at him. And I hoped that before long he would disappear like his predecessors.

ZISKA

Provided that he disappears alone!

MARGUERITE

What, Ziska, you doubt?

ZISKA

Have I ever doubted the virtue of my poor sister Wanda.

MARGUERITE

I understand you, friend, but I am strong; I have courage and if someone dared to put their hand on me...

ZISKA

What would you do? You would defend yourself; my sister also defended herself, and she is dead.

MARGUERITE

Then, Ziska, make me a present.

ZISKA

What?

MARGUERITE

Give me that poignard.

ZISKA

Would you dare to use it?

MARGUERITE

In the last extremity, yes! I do not love blood; but I hate the wretches; and if I could find virtue only in it, be certain, Ziska, that my hand will be sure, and that my heart will not fail.

ZISKA

Take it then, Marguerite, and if you want it to be useful to you, do not show it and only raise it when you must strike.

SCENE VII

THE SAME, CIXILONE

CIXILONE, *entering.*

It is me. Good day! Do not disturb yourself.

ZISKA

Miss Jacobel!

MARGUERITE

Cixilone!.... Is it noon already?

CIXILONE

Noon has long since passed.

MARGUERITE

Ah! My god, how swiftly time passes!

CIXILONE

It is not astonishing when you have your fiancé close to you. Isn't that Lord Ziska?

ZISKA

You know something of it.

MARGUERITE

Haven't you been a few times with John Cardinal?

CIXILONE

No, my goodness; Mr. Jean, who often comes to the house to keep company with my father, hardly thinks of marrying, and then you know that he is at least twenty years older than me.

ZISKA

And you need someone of your age. Well! You are right, Cixilone. He would share your tastes, your penchants and your joyful mood; and you

could be happy.

CIXILONE

As you say very well, I want someone fairly close to my age, I want him to be handsome, share my tastes and love me; and I will have that, for I will choose him myself; my father has assured me that he will never impede me [from having my say] on that matter.

ZISKA

I hope that you will make an excellent choice.

CIXILONE (*smiling*)

That is what troubles me the most. They say that men are deceivers and hard to know.

ZISKA

Not as much as you imagine.

CIXILONE

That means that they are, somewhat. A quoi peut-on le connaître, vous devez le savoir.

ZISKA

Are you in love?

CIXILONE

With a handsome young man.

ZISKA

Does he know?

CIXILONE

He suspects.

ZISKA

Does he love you?

CIXILONE

I know nothing about it.

ZISKA

So he has not spoken to you?

CIXILONE

Si fait.

ZISKA

So.

CIXILONE

So, what?

ZISKA

What has he said to you?

CIXILONE

Nothing that makes me believe that he seeks me.

ZISKA

What does he do?

CIXILONE

He is a student and a Hussite.

ZISKA

Where have you seen him?

CIXILONE

At my father's house, where he comes often.

ZISKA

When he meets you, he shows no joy? He makes not compliments?

CIXILONE

I believe that it does not displease him to see me; but as for compliments, he would not know how to make them.

ZISKA

What? When a woman is beautiful...

CIXILONE

Then the compliments must be addressed to nature, which does not hear them; consequently they are useless. That is the way he sees it.

ZISKA

If some does a good action?

CIXILONE

They have simply done their duty, since we owe as much to each other as to ourselves. We must not boast of doing a good action: that would be to spoil it.

ZISKA

And if one does evil?

CIXILONE

If someone does evil, we must pity them, enlighten them, invite them not to do it anymore, and abandon them if they persist.

ZISKA

If you pay a bit more attention to your appearance when you know that he will come and he comes, does he notice?

CIXILONE

He does not speak to me; but he is charming. Only one thing worries

me sometimes.

ZISKA

Which?

CIXILONE

I fear that he would find my dowry not in harmony with his fortune, and that this would be a cause of distance.

ZISKA

Not if he is truly a Hussite.

MARGUERITE

So is he rich?

CIXILONE

Rich enough that if he marries me, I could do nothing, if it pleased me; and even has domestics to serve me and satisfy my little whims, which, let me say in passing, would be rather to my taste.

ZISKA

Ah! Cixilone, what are you saying? that is a desire that has cost humanity many tears and much blood for centuries, and I am grieved to hear you express it.

CIXILONE

What use then is fortune, if it is not to serve you and not to labor yourself?

ZISKA

Reflect, Cixilone, and you will think differently. To ask for fortune in order to not work and make others serve you is to demand the perpetuity of the evil suffered by those who depend for life on the whims of others. That is what we fight, your father more than anyone.

CIXILONE

How is that?

ZISKA

To desire to have some unfortunates who depend on your caprices, is to admit that it must be so. Now if you are of the opinion that it must be so, why would it be another rather than or, or you rather than another; it is no longer a question of anything but struggle or chance, society no longer has justice for the motive of its actions, but callous force or chance. Every complaint becomes senseless, every rebellion criminal. And indeed by what right would the one who suffers complain, if we admit that there must be unfortunates?

CIXILONE

That is true, but then, what must we desire?

ZISKA

We must desire that every human being no longer have any worries for his existence tomorrow, and that each can increase their well-being, their intellectual satisfactions, without depending on the caprices of others.

CIXILONE

Is it possible?

ZISKA

Yes, because it is just. If that was impossible, we would have to admit that justice is not immanent in us, that consequently it cannot exist among men; now strike justice from the human heart, the society of which it alone is the fundamental principle, no longer has a normal basis; man no longer has rights or duties; the notion of good and evil is a pure fiction; everything is for whoever can grasp it; it is no longer a society, it is a state of war and suffering, injustices and cruelties; it is the chaos; it is death.

We do not discuss this question often enough before women, we too freely suppose them to be aristocrats. I am sure, on the contrary, that if we interested them in these questions, as they are good, and as what appears unjust to them has not reason to exist, in their eyes, some serious social problems would have long since been resolved. But I repeat, men in general are wrong to believe themselves more serious and more disinterested than women, when they are just heavier and slower.

CIXILONE

Lord Ziska, I feel that you are right; but what you have said to me is more difficult to grasp that you seem to believe. We will return to the rest.

MARGUERITE

And there is a revolutionary question raise with regard to a suitor.

CIXILONE

Au fait, it was a question of my admirer .

MARGUERITE

What did you tell us?

CIXILONE

I told you that he is charming.

MARGUERITE

Since he is so charming, why haven't you already let us know?

CIXILONE

But you know it, it is Prokop.

ZISKA

Prokop, my friend? Well! If you had told me right away, I would have

spared you the trouble of these details. Well, my dear friend, I congratulate you on it and I see, indeed, that in order to choose a spouse well there is no need for your father to be involved.

MARGUERITE

My brother must be at his home at the moment.

ZISKA

You remind me that I must go there also.

CIXILONE

You leave us already, Lord Ziska?

ZISKA

Yes, Cixilone, I will see you future spouse. If you have some missive for him...?

CIXILONE

Do not tell him that I love him.

ZISKA

He must know it already. But if he does not, fear nothing; I do not want to deprive you of the joy of telling him yourself. Goodbye, my children.

CIXILONE

Goodbye.

MARGUERITE

Goodbye, my friend.

(Ziska leaves.)

SCENE VIII

CIXILONE, MARGUERITE

CIXILONE

Did you know, Marguerite, that I repent of having spoken so much, and that I did it wrong to say his name.

MARGUERITE

Why?

CIXILONE

If he told him that I love him.

MARGUERITE

Don't worry. Jean Ziska has promised silence, and they do not meet now to speak of their loves. They have much more important and more terrible things to talk about.

CIXILONE

What?

MARGUERITE

Between the Hussites, who have a thirst for justice, and their enemies, who only love power and gold, I see slide and burst on us all the horrors of civil war. If I am proud inside to see Bohemia rise up and prepare to march against its executioners at the voice of your father, my brother and my fiancé; what fears and apprehensions shouldn't I feel to see their cherished heads fall.

CIXILONE

I have often reflected on that, Marguerite, when I have heard my father violently attack the simony and hypocrisy of the clergy; when I think that for having brutally killed a preacher who said the same things, Jean Dominique, his assassin, was never even troubled. It is true that then King Wenceslas was not, as today, the friend of the Hussites.

MARGUERITE

Do not believe that Wenceslas is the friend of the Hussites. The Imperials, advised by the Archbishop, having recently arrested him and kept him all night in prison, like a common scamp, under the pretext that they had not recognized him, but really for discrediting them and forbidding them, it is possible that he gives them the cold shoulder: but as he is cowardly, stupid and sanctimonious, there is nothing to count on from him. At the least threat from the clergy, in the arms of which he is in the process of dying, he will sacrifice those who are indeed his only friends.

CIXILONE

Marguerite, if such a misfortune befell the Hussites, what could we do to defend and avenge them?

MARGUERITE

It is so difficult to say.

CIXILONE

How, in the future struggle that you foresee, could we be useful to them and reward them for their efforts.

MARGUERITE

By our cares, our consolations, our encouragements and our love; by our preference for the one who has shown himself brave, generous, devoted!

CIXILONE

In that case, Marguerite, we could not place our affections better; for no one, I believe, has more love, devotion and goodwill for humanity than Prokop and Ziska.

MARGUERITE

Yes. Like Jacobel, your excellent father, and like Pierre my brother, they are strong among the strong; it is a great good fortune for the cause, for they would have to struggle hard to obtain justice for the disinherited of this world.

CIXILONE

Marguerite! If we also go to see our disinherited; that will distract us a little.

MARGUERITE

Whenever you want, Cixilone. All is ready. I have put in that little basket the bit that we have to give today.

CIXILONE

Well! Let's go. Perhaps the promenade will chase away our gloomy ideas.

(They exit.)

SCENE IX

PIERRE, SIGISMUND, TWO MEN.

PIERRE, *(enters, followed by two men who carry Sigismund, unconscious.)*

Over here, quick, quick! A moment of delay can determine the apoplexy. Place him there, in the armchair close to the window, while I go fetch everything necessary to give him a slight bleeding. *(He goes to get a bowl and some linen from a cabinet, a scalpel from his bag; then he rolls up the sleeve on Sigismund's left arm and bleeds him.)* His blood hardly flows. It was time. How little the life of man depends on. A minute of delay, was he perhaps lost?

To one of the men who has helped him carry Sigismund,

Loben, go to seek a physician. *(To the other,)* And you, Zdenko, please take this young man's horse to the stable of the nearest hotel. It is still loose the street. *(The two men leave.)*

There he opens his eyes; he returns to himself. Enough blood drawn. He is saved.

SIGISMUND

Where am I?

PIERRE

In my home.

SIGISMUND

Your home? Why am I in your home?

PIERRE

A little patience, and the memory will return to you.

SIGISMUND

What have you done to me?

PIERRE

A slight bleeding, to save you from an imminent apoplexy. Now, hold your arm at rest and be quiet for a little while, until all appearance of danger has passed.

SIGISMUND

Ah! Yes, I remember. My horse was spooked; it pitched and I fell.

PIERRE

Don't worry. Your horse is in a safe place. It will be brought to you as soon as you desire. As you have nothing broken; your fall will have no unfortunate result, for I believe it is not serious. What's more, in order to neglect no aid that your might need, I have sent someone to seek a physician.

SIGISMUND

Thank you, sir, for all your good service. You are good, and I have been very fortunate to find you. But, when the moment comes to prove my gratitude, you will see that I am not ungrateful.

PIERRE

Do not speak of gratitude; I have no right to it.

SIGISMUND

Why?

PIERRE

What I have done for you, you would have done for me, wouldn't you?

SIGISMUND

Certainly.

PIERRE

Then we are even.

SIGISMUND

Supposing that you have only done your duty, do we not owe reconnaissance to those who have acquitted themselves like you, when there are so many others who forget.

PIERRE

The wretches of whom you speak are the only ones who demand the gratitude. They do not understand solidarity. They are unaware that we all owe one another and that by aiding one another, we don't do anything by show, by the respect that we have for others, the respect that we have for ourselves.

SIGISMUND

I see that I must give way to your arguments, but it is not without doing violence to myself. It would be my pleasure to add to the respect and esteem that you inspire in me, something that would prove my gratitude in a different way.

PIERRE

Do you fear, from pride, to be in my debt?

SIGISMUND

Admit that it is so.

PIERRE

Indeed, you do not know me; and you will perhaps never see me again, when you leave here.

SIGISMUND

Men meet!

PIERRE

Since these times of troubles and persecutions, I have encountered many who do not acknowledge me.

SIGISMUND

You have not saved their lives?

PIERRE

No! we do not do these things every day. But they are perhaps afraid that unintentionally I would make them lose it.

SIGISMUND

They are cowards.

PIERRE

Let us leave it there. You can bear a harsh judgment against them, you do not know me!

SIGISMUND

You have saved my life; that is enough. If my friendship can be

agreeable to you, I offer it and you will see that I dare to greet those that I love.

PIERRE

I accept it.

SIGISMUND

You have it. Is that all?

PIERRE

What more could I want?

SIGISMUND

What a strange man!

End of the second act.

ACT THREE

Pierre Dresden's study.

SCENE I

SIGISMUND (*alone*)

He is seated in an armchair.

At the court, I hope, no one will know what has happened to me. night comes. Thanks to the master of this house, I could return, this evening, among my own people, without anyone noticing my absence. (*He rises and walks around the room.*) But in whose home am I? What man has welcomed me? His simple and affectionate language, his polished and distinguished manners herald a generous and humane man. Then this little room, with this magnificent library, where are found gathered so many rare and precious objects, must be the study of an elite intelligence. Yes! I must be in the home of a superior man.

SCENE II

SIGISMUND, PIERRE

PIERRE, (*entering.*)

Well! My dear host, already standing? Go on, a bit more patience, and your recovery will soon be complete.

SIGISMUND

I am well; I feel no weakness from the bleeding you have done.

PIERRE

I made it very slight, so as not to weaken you too much; I am happy to have succeeded so well.

SIGISMUND

How fortunate I have been to encounter in my accident, a man of your learning and prudence.

PIERRE

For my prudence, alas, I have not often been complimented. As for my learning, it is very limited.

SIGISMUND

If I judge, however, by your study, it says you wish to be ignorant of nothing in the way of modern works and discoveries.

PIERRE

We must be of our century, if we want to live a large and complete life, to know the past, understand the present and enjoy, by anticipation, a bit of the future.

SIGISMUND

But, it is said, science leads to loss of faith; and we are so unfortunate, when we no longer have faith, that I do not know too well if it would not be better, for our salvation in the other world, to be ignorant than educated. What's more, in these times of struggles and controversies, many good minds have taken, in the name of science, the road of error.

PIERRE

Does no one inform them?

SIGISMUND

They no longer want to hear anything!

PIERRE

Perhaps they do not want to hear those who do not understand they teach; but the one who knows convinces very quickly: the majority of the sciences easy to teach today; some are mathematical and the others are the product of a series of observations that leave little room for doubt.

SIGISMUND

It is said that the laws of conic sections are infallible, that they are mathematical, and govern the movement of the heavenly bodies around the world; but the Church is not of that opinion.

PIERRE

Science claims that the earth turns in space, that is has des antipodes and that the flood has only been partial, the Roman Church does not claim that, I know.

SIGISMUND

The Church is infallible, so science is wrong.

SIGISMUND

Indeed, if it was subject to the papal will, it would be so.

SIGISMUND

Why wouldn't it be thus?

PIERRE

Because the opposite is demonstrated.

SIGISMUND

Many men have claimed to have discovered the secrets of god!

PIERRE

Nature has no secrets to hide; if the learned observer who discovers some one of its laws each day calls them new, it is because they had not been noticed and recorded before, although they existed for all eternity.

SIGISMUND

For all eternity! There is the confession made! You deny first, by this word eternity, the creation of the world, and then come to the negation of God.

PIERRE

God! That is the great uncertainty of all contemplative minds! There are no two people who have the same idea of it, who attach the same meaning to that word of three letters. As them all: What is God? And you will see how clear the explanation that they give you will be; when they assure you of having proven its existence.

SIGISMUND

Would you deny it, by chance?

PIERRE

If it is denying it to not make it a being outside of us, of which we are the faithful image, then yes!

SIGISMUND

It is said, however, in the holy book that God made man in his image.

PIERRE

Moses said that God was without form; that it concerns itself intentionally with each being; that it alone has been, is, and will be. Nothing more.

SIGISMUND

How can he concern himself with us if he has no form?

PIERRE

Is the life that is in us, that we generally call the soul and that we say emanates from God, not concerned with all the details of our being, which are distinct from one another; and have they not, do they not, and will they not exist because of it alone?

SIGISMUND

That would appear obvious.

PIERRE

Yet you say it has a form and it resembles a detail of our being, one of our fingers, for example, or one of our viscera or one of our hairs? Make God, in thought, the soul of the universe, its supreme law, its immutable order, its eternal harmony, its source of truth, light and life; that

ensemble, container and content, all at once, one, multiple and diverse. Will not it be God, whose action, present everywhere, has done everything, does everything, and will do everything? And when you have conceived of him in this way: do you say that God has a form and that he resembles us, or rather that we resemble him?

SIGISMUND

I would say that this God is not such as the Church defines it and that it is impious to think of it in this way.

PIERRE

How is it impious to say that the earth turns, that natural laws are immutable and eternal; how is it blasphemous to affirm that nothing can be made from nothing?

SIGISMUND

By making God, the soul of the universe, the law that rules everything, nature is no longer anything but his eternal manifestation; that is to affirm that the world has not been created at a given moment.

PIERRE

Making God a being who acts **with some aim for an end**, either for himself or for some other, is to admit that he does not have all that he wishes and that he is indigent.

SIGISMUND

What! God indigent?

PIERRE

Without doubt, if we wait for his elect to die in order to make them happy. As for the wicked, what need have they to pray, since it is impossible, whatever good will you grant them, that their invocation can disturb the course of things here below; and, if he punishes them, to reconcile the pains of hell with his infinite mercy.

SIGISMUND

Not as impossible as proving that the world has had no beginning.

PIERRE

Whose fault is it, if the theologians have made their God so inconsistent? If they are shut up in a vicious circle from which they can only escape by denying creation. They thought they should at a given moment make the earth fabricated by their God, in order to prove that they know what use men are on the earth, as if it was possible and of no use!

SIGISMUND
We know the use of humanity.

PIERRE

Ah! What?

SIGISMUND

To know, to love and to serve God who watches over the conduct of men in this life, in order to reward them or punish them in the other.

PIERRE

The beautiful idea tht they have there, of making God perform the two nasty trades of judge and spy; and of making gendarmes of these two most famous angels. Since it is beautiful its justice; deaf to any excuse, of ten thousand called, if hardly finds one of the elect. At the tribunal of such a judge, I prefer that of my conscience. At least it responds to me when I question it and it has no interest in deceiving me. But why weary God with this care, with this surveillance; if he knows in advance, as you maintain, everything that must happen. By putting our first parents in the garden, in the presence of a fatal apple tree, absolutely as the pig-headed of orthodoxy want it, he was not unaware that despite his prohibition, at the instigation of the Devil, they would eat its fruits.

SIGISMUND

They were free!

PIERRE

If someone tells you that a father, having led his son into a room, in the presence of a glass of water, would say to him: there is poisoned water; if you are thirsty, do not drink it, for you will die; and yet he knew in advance that his child would drink it. What would you think of that story?

SIGISMUND

I would go to the details.

PIERRE

In fact, that would appear to you so cruel to come from a father that you would not believe it without examination.

Well! then, you would be a heretic in the eyes of all those who live by the explanations that they give of history. And if you said to the theologians, other interested propagators of the new eden, God cannot be a bad father, as you made him the dubious honor; you have not understood the myth of Genesis; they would declare you heretic, that is to say wicked and dangerous and, as they are *good* and *inoffensive*, they would have you will and truly broiled, if they got you in your clutches.

SIGISMUND

You have examined it, that myth of Genesis? If you have examined it, what have you found so different?

PIERRE

I saw that reason said to man: the land is fertile and generous, bedecked with flowers, adorned with fruits, covered with shade and crops, populated with animals of all species, make use of it! You have needs, satisfy them with your work; you have passions, control them and direct them toward the common good. Learn to know yourself. You have rights to exercise and duties to fulfill, study them both, and if you want to be happy, when you act, do what you find useful and enjoyable without harming yourself and your fellow men. Because if you err, not knowing the law of your being, by abusing your strength and your intelligence, satisfying your selfishness, you will corrupt yourself, you will debase yourself even in your own eyes; then you will be unfortunate and bring misfortune on your own. Use do everything; abuse nothing, that's the law! For abuse, excess, is evil; it is the forbidden fruit!

SIGISMUND

Pure declamation of the free thinker. But let us return to the man point. You have said that the universe must have existed for all eternity, in order for God to have manifested himself? Yet each thing reveals to us a creation, since everything that we see on the earth has had a beginning.

PIERRE

Every form has a beginning; that is not contested by anyone; but the stuff, the substance, the substratum of the form?

SIGISMUND

That is precisely the problem that has not be resolved.

PIERRE

For those who want the natural laws to not be immutable and eternal, and to make something from nothing; it will never be!

SIGISMUND

Faith alone responds to all.

PIERRE

Faith has nothing to do with science. It is not a question of believing for a savant; he knows or he does not know; and when he does not know, he seeks.

SIGISMUND

What have they found, your savants? What questions, relative to creation, have they posed, that they have solved?

PIERRE

To pose a question, is sometimes to solve it; and here are those that occupy them at the moment.

Organic life in general and that of the human race in particular, does it derive from an individualization of certain natural forces?

Was there a first man?

Supposing that there was one, was he without parents? Or did he descend, passing through a series of gradual and progressive developments, from an animal inferior to him on the scale of beings, as certain naturalists claim?

Supposing that there was a first man born without parents; how was he formed? By virtue of what natural law, by what force was he created? Was it by fire, by lightning, by electricity, or otherwise? Did he have a childhood, a youth? And the other beings, arriving before or after him on the globe, did they come there in the same manner?

These are questions without solution, if the laws of nature are not immutable!

Supposing a primitive organic type, could this type, under certain conditions, transform itself into a constant variety, or metamorphose, in some way, by the passing of time?

So can an ape become a man? Can another animal become an ape? A vegetable, an animal? A mineral, a vegetable? Something vaporous, nebulous, matter? Some electric fluid, cosmic vapor?

SIGISMUND

Why not?

PIERRE

Very well! But from where, then, did the electric fluid come?

SIGISMUND

From God!

PIERRE

We have come full circle. And God?

SIGISMUND

God?

PIERRE

Yes!

SIGISMUND

From himself!

PIERRE

Why, if something cannot come from nothing, would all the rest not be eternal, like God? Is the eternity of matter more incomprehensible than the eternity of spirit?

SIGISMUND

But, that is making one thing the quality of another thing; for example, spirit, the quality of matter; warmth, the quality of movement; movement itself, the quality of substance. This is impossible.

PIERRE

Why is it more impossible than it is that God, as all the Orthodox define him, instead of being the father of all things, is only the son of their more or less sick imagination.

SIGISMUND

Here is God, of human invention, now!

PIERRE

If I maintain before you that God is neither what you make him to be, nor what the priests think of him, what proof can you give me to the contrary? None. It would be impossible to verify. While making him the soul of the universe, my affirmation of the eternity of the world rests on the immutability of its natural laws: seeing that everything that has a beginning must end; that everything that is fleeting has movements of growth and decline, phases of increase and decrease, of strength and intensity that can be verified; and as we have not noticed, until today, the slightest alteration, the slightest disturbance in the manifestation, in the functioning of the laws of the universe.

SIGISMUND

To reason in this way is to doubt everything.

PIERRE

It is, on the contrary, to affirm what we know; to have a guide to discover what we can know. So, far from doubting, I affirm:

That nothing is annihilated; but that everything is transformed, by virtue of the eternal law of dissolution and recomposition that governs the worlds;

That the earth has always existed, because like all the other planets, it obeys immutable and positive laws, and is necessary for the balance of the solar system to which it belongs: a system that itself is indispensable to the astral system of which it belongs;

That there is no repose in the universe, even beyond our solar system, even beyond our astral system where each star that we see is a sun, the center of another universe.

It is demonstrated to me that the earth is round, a little flattened at the poles, as a consequence of its rotational movement produced by sidereal attractions; that it has a central heat that has little influence on the climate, an interior heat that increases with each degree of depth and whose external expansion gives the oxygen gas that envelops the globe a

magnetic force, causes the uprising of mountains and helps in the movement of its axis.

I am certain that the sea has passed and will pass again everywhere because it is the place where the earth recovers from its exhaustions, the crucible where it is purified, recomposed, reformed and rejuvenated.

Just as in the universe everything changes place a little every day, so on earth everything moves in such a way that at a given time all the points on the globe alternately become earth and sea, pole and equator: periodic accidents demonstrated by the precession of the equinoxes and caused by the continual movement of the axis of the globe and the center of gravity from one hemisphere to the other; displacement which, by its distance from the center of the earth, causes in turn the flooding of each hemisphere where the majority of living beings perish, and forces the men who escape the cataclysm, who have only the memory and regrets of their past splendor, their annihilated knowledge and their destroyed wealth, to begin to group together again and form a society, which like its elders is called to grow and evolve through the ages; what we call the beginning of the world and the developments that follow, progress.

From all of the above, I therefore conclude:

That the earth, like everything it contains, is eternally in a state of continuous transformation; and that without what we call death, life would not exist: for the immobility that would result from the absence of death would be true death.

That in our universe the sun is the great engine of everything; that it is through the movement that it gives to the planets that make up its universe that heat, light and electricity penetrate us, and that through its rays everything in nature comes to life, flourishes, is transformed and reproduces.

SIGISMUND

That is what we call a regular negation of the beginning of Genesis.

PIERRE

I no more deny the beginning of Genesis than I have denied God. Only I understand nature as it manifests itself every day to our eyes and our understanding. Furthermore, I add that if Moses did not have his Jehovah create the world in a single throw, it is because, a good geologist, he knew perfectly how things advanced.

SIGISMUND

Are you still going to affirm that he has not said that the world was created in six days?

PIERRE

In Genesis the world comes out of the chaos, the light makes itself.

God separates the waters from above the earth and the firmament appears to him bright and starry. Then come the plants and trees; then reptiles, fish, amphibians and birds; then the animals; then the man; then nothing more: the series is complete.

This is because in fact everything happens like this in the harmonious order of nature, when nothing disturbs its progress. And when man, starting from another point of the globe, arrives in his turn on the part of the globe that he has not yet visited, where humanity will begin a new evolution, as there is no being superior to him in nature, the last level of beings is reached. But because there is no longer a superior being coming from another point of the earth, inhabiting the part of the globe most recently emerged from the waters, does it follow that there is a rest in the continued formation of all things in nature? Not at all! Only one thing happened; it is that we can consider as closed, as accomplished, the arrival of terrestrial beings on the most recently emerged part of the globe,

SIGISMUND

You do not deny it, then.

PIERRE

Listen again. Let us suppose that the numerous islands of the Pacific Ocean, rising each year a little from the depths of the water, while other parts of the globe re-enter it, will be in six thousand years the highest mountains of a country that will be larger than Europe. Well, how will things work out, nature following its course?

First, assuming that the sea retreats from the Antarctic pole to flood the Arctic pole, and that at the same time two terrestrial points close to the equator become the two poles: which has already happened and will probably take place in five thousand and some hundred years due to the displacement of the center of gravity of the earth and the distance from its current center of approximately seventy-seven meters. Distance caused by the quantity of ice piled up at the boreal pole and the uplift of some mountain ranges, not only the current northern part of our globe will be submerged, but a new continent will emerge from the sea, in which it will have rested for more than ten thousand years, to purify itself, to reform itself from the debris of ancient countries of which we no longer have memory and to rejuvenate, by virtue of the fatal laws of dissolution and recomposition, destruction and renewal, sleep and awakening, life and death that govern the universe and govern all form here below; and the light will come to this new part of the earth.

The waters separating, the firmament with its stars will appear to it; then it will immediately be covered with moss, with plants of a lower order whose seed mixed with the earth was only waiting for the air and the sun to germinate, grow and develop. Then the detritus of these plants

will increase and enrich the humus of this earth. Then other more perfect plants whose seed also mixed with the earth, deposited by the waters, or brought by the winds, or by the birds, or by some meteoric accident, will take root on this already drier, richer and more fertile ground. Each of these plants will, like the previous ones, have its worm, its caterpillar, or its insect which will hatch alongside it and which, through their secretion and their detritus, will scatter the lime phosphate necessary for the nourishment of other plants and others insects of a higher order.

After the plants will grow, following the same path, the trees; then the amphibians will arrive there; then the birds; then the animals; and when, in turn, they have scattered phosphate of lime in sufficient quantity to infinity, when their detritus and their secretion will have further increased the humus of the earth, enriched and prepared the soil, to the point of allowing man to grow and cultivate everything that is necessary for his subsistence: well! man will live there in his turn. He will come bringing with him plants and trees to which he is partial, and followed by all the domestic animals useful to his existence. He will take possession of this new continent, like Adam took possession of Eden, like Noah took possession of Mount Ararat!

Moses therefore spoke the truth: man, placed at the top of the ladder of beings, arrives last, when all others have prepared the way for him.

The people who sometimes ask what are the purposes of the billions of plants, flies, insects and animals that worry and displease them on earth, are far from thinking that they are essential to their food and that they owe their existence only to the phosphate of lime which, through their detritus and their secretions, they have spread endlessly on the earth.

If the world had been created at a given moment, as the Orthodox assert; if it were not eternal, like God who is its soul; if it had had a real beginning and each being had been created one after the other, in a supernatural way; instead of having come there from another part of the globe, as soon as it was able to live on the part most recently emerged from the waters; but, then, natural laws would be neither regular nor immutable; and we should await the coming of beings superior to man; unless the earth was no longer in a condition to produce new ones.

Some thinkers have dared to say that beings superior to man would come, but others have denied it because, according to them, the globe is cooling.

I think that some have not fully realized the constant action of natural laws and that others have not wanted to investigate why each pebble, however cold it may be, causes the spark to emerge; why the alchemists' electric battery makes the iron redden until it becomes incandescent; why, thanks to the roundness of the globe, the water of the sea would not form an immense lens, through which the rays of the sun would melt part of

our planet every day.

The volcanoes are not far from the seas; and the daily fusion on various points of the Earth at the bottom of the waters, once admitted, would be sufficient to explain the theory of volcanoes and earthquakes, of the fusion of metals through the crust of the globe and its layers rugged alluvial deposits, marine currents of warm water and winds that, passing above them, expand and produce storms; floods and mountain uprisings in formal opposition to the theory of continuous cooling of the earth. A theory that has not encountered the opposition it should have found, because it does not directly contradict the predictions of men who live on religious chimeras.

There is a beautiful book to be written on fire, which would dispel many errors that we accept as truths.

So, for me, the world, like everything else, has its eternally invariable laws. It must produce, either continuously or intermittently, certain kinds of plants, certain kinds of animals; it will not produce others. They may at some point disappear from our eyes, then reappear and change coat and even appearance; they can, depending on the degree of latitude or the country they inhabit, deteriorate or improve, increase or decrease in size and grandeur, and through unknown crossings still modify and almost transform or remain the same; they are and will always be following their same laws.

SIGISMUND

Your explanations on creation, according to Moses, are only the most formal negation: it is heresy. According to you, the world has not had, cannot have had a beginning. However, without beginning, humanity no longer sees clearly in its progress; it no longer has a goal to achieve, a mission to fulfill. With such ideas we arrive at the negation of everything.

PIERRE

With such ideas the goal of humanity is certainly not to scale an imaginary heaven, but to satisfy as many needs as possible with as little effort as possible: that is to say, to educate ourselves, to respect one another, to help each other and to raise us all to the same level, because we are all united. If you say that this is denying God and misinterpreting Genesis, that is because I didn't make myself understood.

SIGISMUND

I understood you very well. Not believing in anything that cannot be demonstrated and nevertheless wanting to account for everything, you come to suspect everything. Now, as you imagine that all those who came before you did not have your enlightenment to see things accurately, you start building science again, but in your own way.

Crime and virtue are no longer divine or diabolical suggestions for

today's scholars, but quite simply an act of strength of character or weakness of temperament, a simple result of the formation of our skull or the amount of iron we have in the blood. Which is supremely impious and contrary to the laws of society: for if they spoke the truth, we should no longer punish the wicked, but only seek to heal them. Well! Let a monarch stop punishing and we will immediately see the strongest rob and kill the weakest.

SIGISMUND

No one has yet said that we must not guard against the wickedness of men, because they have iron in their blood or a skull dented for anger and destruction,

If men have attempted to raise to the height of a science the observation of the protuberances of the human skull, it is probably because they realized that its structure is always related to the intelligence it contains.

Thus I have seen a fact, very interesting and very significant for all those who seek to know what human intelligence is.

A man fell from his horse and hit his head so hard against a stone that he lost all feeling; with care we managed to get him back on his feet; but, alas! his intelligence had disappeared: he had gone mad.

For five years his family consulted the most famous doctors and neglected nothing to obtain his cure. All in vain...

God, it was said, had given him a fine intelligence;

God had taken it away from him. It was necessary to bow to his judgments, even to thank him for them, because the poor madman no longer suffered; he was freed from the worries of life and heaven was going to belong to him.

That was all the explanation that we could draw from his accident.

It had already been some time since anyone had stopped paying attention to him or his recovery, when one of his old friends, returning from a long journey, inquired about him and asked to see him.

He was told that he had gone mad; the cause was explained to him and he was even made to understand that it was useless to see him; he didn't know anyone. His friend insisted. On the first visit he made to him, he noticed that the unfortunate madman had a barely visible hollow on his skull, about three lines deep. He had the idea of giving him the trephine operation, The operation was successful. As soon as his cranium was lifted, the unfortunate man came to his senses and spoke about what had happened to him five years previously, as if it had just happened.

These five years of madness did not count in his existence.

Faced with such a fact, do you believe that intelligence is so independent of the shape of our skull as you seemed to believe?

If this man had hit less hard when he fell and instead of being affected by madness he had only been irritable, but irritable to the point of having fits of cruelty, wouldn't the case be the same?

And if, according to orthodoxy, God had rewarded him for having been an idiot, would he punish him for having been cruel through irritation?

Becoming irritable through a fall or by any other accident that disrupts the regular and normal manifestation of our organs, isn't that all one thing? You were talking about punishing, but this is very difficult if not impossible when you want to be fair. Protect yourself from the wicked, correct them and heal them; believe me, it is the only right that men have over one of their fellow men.

SIGISMUND

In this regard, form is everything. If one has an acute facial angle, one is unintelligent; if we have a very developed occiput we have erotic passions, if we have protuberances at the temples, we have great appetites, behind the ears, we are destructive, at the top of the head, we are benevolent. So be it! But does this prove that we should not punish those who do wrong, who know that they do wrong and who might not do it?

PIERRE

No. But this proves that there are more often extenuating circumstances than one would suppose before reflection,

SIGISMUND

So, we must always forgive.

PIERRE

Much more often than we do.

SIGISMUND

You have among your objects of curiosity a human skull; could you say what passions agitated him during his lifetime; and because it is narrow and flattened at its top, would you dare to assert that it belonged to a man who was neither superior nor generous?

PIERRE

This head is that of a man who was very fiery, very haughty, very vindictive; and who must be very upset to know it in my hands, if we know anything about what happens down here, when we are dead. It is the head of Balthazard Costa, the famous Pope John XXIII, friend of the Emperor Sigismund, who condemned John Huss and Jerome to be burned, as well as a large number of their adherents.

SIGISMUND

John XXIII! You astonish me. He died less than three months ago and certainly, Cosimo de Medici, his friend, did not sell his corpse to the

medical students of Florence as far as I know! So how do you own it?

PIERRE

Here it is! When Pope John XXIII died, Cosimo de Medici had him buried with pomp and had a magnificent tomb erected for him in the church of Saint John. Some thieves, knowing the prodigality of Cosimo, imagined that Costa's tomb contained papal vestments and jewelry of immense wealth. They entered the church at night and robbed it. One of them, having heard of the Hussites whom the council had persecuted by its orders, had the idea of taking the head of the Holy Father in the hope of getting a large sum from it. He came to Prague, inquired about the residence of the disciples of John Huss, and among other things discovered mine. He came to find me. I bought it from him.

SIGISMUND

You?

PIERRE

Me!

SIGISMUND

Who tells you that this man did not deceive you by selling you the head of a tortured person instead of that of the late Pope?

PIERRE

I wanted to see it before buying it.

SIGISMUND

So you knew him?

PIERRE

I had seen him in Rome and in Florence where I had spoken to him many, many times.

SIGISMUND

And you have satisfaction in keeping his head?

PIERRE

Very much!

SIGISMUND

Very much! Is this revenge that you are taking against him?

PIERRE

I never take revenge!

SIGISMUND

So why keep it in your hands; it is useless to you.

PIERRE

It serves me, on the contrary, to teach men not to take revenge, to

never sacrifice anyone to their fortune, to their glory, to their passions.

I have among my disciples, young students whose hearts are good, but whose brains are easily excited, and who in the heat of their passions speak of taking reprisals against their blind and cruel adversaries. I then take this head; I show it to them and say to them:

My friends, here is the head of a man who had thousands of his fellow men killed and burned, to make his party triumph and raise his profile in the minds of the priests. Well! What was the use of his persecutions? What good have they done to the world? What services have they rendered to his cause, to his party? I ask you, you his opponents ten times more numerous here than last year. He took revenge, you will say; he was considered a great man, a profound politician, a fervent Catholic; his party celebrated him, praised him, admired him. Alas! Of all this glory, of all this thirst for honor and power, of all this smoke, what's left? A bloody, cursed memory, and with it a skull that I hold in my hand. Believe me, my friends, let us not imitate this man. Vengeance cannot serve our cause; but only doom it, after having dishonored it.

This head, more eloquent dead than when it was alive, produces such an effect on them that I only have around me gentle, humane men, disposed to reconcile with their enemies and even to forgive, monsieur the Archbishop, the most impudent of all our slanderers.

SIGISMUND

Why don't you make yourself known to Sigismund, himself, as you are?

PIERRE

Since, at his instigation, Jean Huss and Jérôme, whom he did not know, were burned, I don't dare believe him capable of being interested in the fate of the slandered Hussites. If we were warriors, soldiers, slayers of men, it is possible! But free thinkers! I doubt it.

SIGISMUND

He may be more generous than you suppose.

PIERRE

He undoubtedly would be, it would even be in his interest, but he is under the domination of the priests.

SIGISMUND

Him! Under the domination of the priests! But are you sure?

PIERRE

When a prince goes to Constance on Christmas Eve, to sing the gospel there in the habit of a deacon at the midnight mass celebrated by the Pope; when they write to Wenceslas to ask him to ban the professorship of two

philosophers beloved and esteemed by all; when cowardly courtiers are sent to these same philosophers to persuade them that they must go and defend their doctrine before an enemy council, which has condemned them in advance to death; when the order is given in secret to arrest them, then to execute them, notwithstanding the safe conduct that has been issued to them by the king; can we believe that this prince is not under the domination of the priests?

SIGISMUND

But I have never heard that Sigismund had acted in this way; on the contrary, he was very saddened by the council's decision.

PIERRE

The Archbishop of Prague published it; perhaps, however, he thought he was giving him a good reputation by accusing him of the crimes of the clergy.

SIGISMUND

It would be an indignity. Do you know the Archbishop?

PIERRE

Enough to tell you that he is the author of the deaths of at least a thousand people, that he always turned to Sigismund to obtain them and that, at this moment, it is still to him that he asks for others.

SIGISMUND

That he will not obtain, I dare to assure you, because the Emperor Sigismund will understand, I hope, that for his memory, he must no longer authorize these bloody tribunals.

PIERRE

May you speak the truth.

SIGISMUND

I have some respect for his spirit.

PIERRE

You?

SIGISMUND

Me, and I dare to promise it to you, in his name.

PIERRE

Ah! What are your feelings!

SIGISMUND

Would you try to convert him?

PIERRE

Why not? If that spirit were as precious as yours. Then the doctrine of Huss is so consoling and so true that one cannot know it without loving it.

SIGISMUND

Do you possess it completely?

PIERRE

Enough to pass it into the souls of my disciples.

SIGISMUND

I thought that was forbidden to you?

PIERRE

Yes, by the Archbishop who slanders it.

SIGISMUND

It was declared heretical by the Council of Constance and, be careful, heresies are daughters of darkness.

PIERRE

In fact, they emanate from orthodoxy, but they separate themselves from it to proclaim the truth and spread in floods the light to all minds.

SIGISMUND

Is it proclaiming the truth to preach in the temples the annihilation of images? Is it pouring forth light to thunder against the removal of the cup? Are we being true servants of God to deny paradise and hell, as all the Hussites do!

PIERRE

No doubt, if through the images we diminish the attributes; if the removal of the cup robs us even of the sublime symbol of equality; if hell and paradise are only old pagan fables misunderstood today. For how can we believe in the stability of our soul, within the creator, after our death, when everything is moving in nature?

SIGISMUND

The necessity of a reward for those who have been righteous and the usefulness of punishment for those who have been wicked.

PIERRE

Are there other means of punishing and rewarding mortals than those of the gods of mythology? And, again, what means those are! A hell where a temporary fault is punished with eternal torture! What justice! A paradise where one will selfishly enjoy perfect bliss! What morality! But if the father or the husband, or the brother, or the friend, or even a stranger to your chosen one, is not at their side, but burns and writhes in

sufferings too cruel to be divine, how can the chosen one be happy in your paradise? Since when have we stopped suffering from the suffering and misfortunes of others? To enjoy this perfect beatitude, this eternal happiness, we will therefore have to become insensitive, lose all feeling of compassion, be a heartless mummy, a statue in short! But this is not only absurd, it is unworthy, horrible! And it is not possible that there can be such unreasonable expiations and punishments.

Jean Huss who did not believe in such insanity, nor in such barbarity and who remembered that the Nazarene Jesus had said to his disciples “when you see a poor person, give to him, because this poor person will perhaps be me,” showed his apostles that in the transmigration of souls, there was the great law of human solidarity and that the purest morality resulted from it.

SIGISMUND

When this would be true; what evidence do we have of our reappearances on this globe and of the remuneration or punishment for the acts of our past lives.

PIERRE

I can provide you with several proofs of this, but only by analogy.

SIGISMUND

All in conformity with the doctrine of Jean Huss?

PIERRE

All conform to his doctrine.

SIGISMUND

Let us see; this will be new to me.

PIERRE

Man leaves us to rest in death from the weariness of life, to re-immerses his soul there, in order to draw new strength that allows him to begin a new existence, just as he falls asleep, to refresh his mind, to rest his body from the fatigue of the day and to draw from sleep new strength that will allow him to start again the next day his existence of the day before. Man is therefore reborn after a few years, just as he wakes up after a few hours.

SIGISMUND

But man remembers having acted, having slept, when he wakes up; and if he is reborn he does not remember having lived.

PIERRE

This is because each of our lives has its own individuality. Man dies, then, reborn among us, his life takes on a new individuality; and although its selfhood is the same, his soul does not remember having lived, but it brings, by reappearing on earth, innate qualities of its previous lives.

SIGISMUND

So according to this doctrine, our soul is nothing more than a fluid, a flame, an essence, something, finally, that only manifests itself physically as much as it animates us here below.

PIERRE

Without a doubt. Since its physical and earthly manifestation cannot take place without the body, just as the body cannot manifest without it.

Sigismund

Be careful that logic doesn't take you further than you seem to want, making them dependent on each other.

PIERRE

Dependent on each other, when they manifest among us, as we currently are.

SIGISMUND

If the body of a man after his death is nothing more than a pile of dust, a form in dissolution, I'm afraid that his soul is nothing more than an extinguished flame, an evaporated fluid, an exhaled essence, some quality that has disappeared, in short, nothing!

PIERRE

The dissolution of the body in no way affects the immortality of the soul; when death comes to break their alliance, both follow the same law, each nevertheless conforming to their nature. The body becomes dust again, since without the soul it is only that; likewise the soul is nothing more than a vital fluid without physical manifestation and visible to us, since without the body it cannot be anything else.

SIGISMUND

So how can man be rewarded or punished for his good or bad actions?

PIERRE

Here it is! During the space of time that elapses between its departure and its reappearance in this world, the soul dwells in space, where it finds all the beings it has known here below, but where it sees them in all their moral nudity, with all the virtues or all the vices that their last passage on earth imprinted on them.

From the bosom of the space from which it can communicate with its own people, be around them at all hours, without being seen, divine their most secret thoughts, inspire them with ideas of wisdom and justice, the soul of a father, or a mother, or a son, or a brother, or a husband, or a parent, or a friend foresees the misfortunes that threaten their own and has the gift of diverting them by the thoughts it suggests to them; if the being it animated was just enough, virtuous enough in its life, if it knew

how to inspire enough love and respect in its people, so that the idea it inspired in them would be followed.

SIGISMUND

What if it lived in an unrighteous and immoral way?

PIERRE

It can do nothing for its loved ones, for the happiness of those it loves.

SIGISMUND

The punishment is terrible indeed.

PIERRE

When the soul has purified itself for a more or less long time in the abode of death invisible to our eyes, and has found there all the beings it has loved and known there, it leaves this abode of souls, to return to live physically on earth and to be born within a family whose aspirations and feelings have the most affinity with its own, are the most in conformity with its innate qualities.

The man therefore, whose efforts tend to raise more and more the lower classes of society, works for his own account, for his own happiness, since he can be reborn among the poor and ignorant classes, and if he has made all his efforts to enlighten and emancipate them, by being reborn among them, he himself also benefits from it. From which follows the eternal laws of solidarity and reversibility, the immortality of our one and the eternity of the world: because in the great circular chain of nature, everything holds together, completes each other and explains the one by the other.

SIGISMUND

Consequently, according to your doctrine, we are from all eternity like the universe, like God. And our present life is the result of our previous lives.

PIERRE

As current facts are the result of past facts.

SIGISMUND

Where is the evidence for what you say, if I don't remember anything?

PIERRE

Returning in this world, we do not remember having ever lived there, because, just as the numerous passages from one day to the next erase from the brain of man its thousand little tribulations of everyday life, leaving only the facts of some importance for him engraved, in the same way the passage from one life to another strips our selfhood of all the adventures, of all the accidents that filled our last existence, in order to enrich it only with new innateness: an innateness that is part of the eternal life of man,

what the experience acquired each day is to one of his passing experiences. It is by virtue of these innate qualities, these predispositions, these faculties in the germ state that we bring when we are born and which only wait to manifest, develop and grow, to be in contact with the object which must make them blossom in a new form as science and the arts perfect themselves and as the discoveries of each day give birth to progress.

SIGISMUND

Unquestionably this doctrine is moral and consoling, but it is as impossible to verify as any other religious belief.

PIERRE

Is it impossible to verify it?

SIGISMUND

Certainly!

PIERRE

If it is true, as is admitted by all, that no thing can come to nothing and be made of nothing, that natural laws are immutable, that current facts are the result of past facts, what stronger proof can you have, then, that we are eternal? If it is true that sleep serves to refresh the mind and to rest the body from the fatigue of the day, can death serve anything other than to give new strength to the soul from the weariness of life? During the space of time of its disappearance from our midst, as during that of our daily sleep, why should it cease to act and manifest itself, although we do not know how?

SIGISMUND

Assuming that our soul continued to manifest itself after the death of our body, is it not more reasonable to suppose that it does so only by continually dreaming of what it loved or feared during its life? In this way, the criminal is not really in hell, when, for all eternity, he believes he is discovered, pursued, arrested and even punished.

PIERRE

If this were so, the poor and crippled innocent man would be punished like him; because having lacked everything during his life, he would have, also eternally, only dreams relating to his cold misery and his pain. Can such a cruel future be the supreme law of the eternity of the human race?

SIGISMUND

Once again, where is the evidence for what you say, since we don't remember anything?

PIERRE

Why should man remember the work of his soul, during the duration

of his death, when he cannot even know the work he does during his sleep, to regain his vigor and often even learn what he did not know the day before and which he is astonished to know, when he wakes up on the following day.

If, extraordinarily, we sometimes remember certain acts from our previous lives, it can only be in dreams, when the mind is concerned with certain details of life that we do not understand and which even seem to take place in a country other than the one we live in and belong to a time other than that in which we live.

SIGISMUND

It is precisely because this is inexplicable and unintelligible that verification of the reality of your doctrine is impossible, and that we have no reason to prefer it to its predecessors, when we do not want to disturb people's consciences.

PIERRE

Indeed, if for you there is no difference in probability between the doctrine of rebirth in humanity, based on natural laws and demonstrated facts, and that of orthodoxy, all imagination, I understand that you give it no preference.

SIGISMUND

Not only do I not give it any preference, but I find it subversive: because it teaches Solidarity among men, consequently equality, and it tends to do nothing less than overthrow the established order of things by replacing Catholicism which is its soul. So society cannot accept it, and the duty of its leaders, its natural defenders, is to prohibit it and severely punish its authors and its propagators.

PIERRE

However, what if the people of Bohemia approve it, and want to reform certain laws of society, in order to bring more harmony among men?

Sigismund

Well, assuming that the people have the right, it is the struggle against the privileged in society: it is more than a struggle: it is the disappearance of one of the two camps in the midst of the horrors of the civil war.

SIGISMUND

Poor Bohemia! What misfortunes, then, the future has in store for you!

SCENE III

SIGISMUND, PIERRE, DULCIN.

DULCIN (*entering*)

Did I arrive on time? (*he recognizes the Emperor*) But what!

Sigismund (*signaling him to be quiet*)

Shh!

PIERRE

Yes, doctor. Although I have taken it upon myself to act in your place, our convalescent still needs your care and your experience.

DULCIN

Is your arm injured?

SIGISMUND

Oh! It is almost nothing!

DULCIN

What! Did they dare?...

SIGISMUND

Give me a very light bloodletting. But now, what are you going to order?

DULCIN

Some rest; that is all.

SIGISMUND

Is there no danger for me in returning to my loved ones, whom too long an absence could make restless?

DULCIN

None.

SIGISMUND

Will you be kind enough, my dear guest, to ask for a chair to be brought forward for me?

PIERRE

Right away.

(Pierre exits.)

SCENE IV

SIGISMUND, DULCIN.

DULCIN

You, here, Sire! And by what chance?

SIGISMUND

A fall from a horse. And I must admit, without the care of this good and singular man who raised and helped me, I would be dead.

DULCIN

Do you know where you are?

SIGISMUND

At the home of a savant, a heretic, I believe.

DULCIN

Do you know this heretical savant?

SIGISMUND

No more than he knew me.

DULCIN

Well! He is the greatest of your enemies!

SIGISMUND

Because he is a Hussite!

DULCIN

Because he is the leader of the Hussites.

SIGISMUND

What is his name?

DULCIN

Pierre Dresden.

SIGISMUND

Him! Pierre Dresden, the leader of the forty-four thousand students of Prague, the friend of Ziska?

DULCIN

Himself!

SIGISMUND

But this man is gentleness itself, and I am beginning to believe that the Archbishop and all of you have given much more political importance to this heresy this morning than it really deserves.

DULCIN

Think again, Sire, If Pierre Dresden is good, which I doubt, the supporters of his doctrine, exalted levelers, are not. How could they be, people without morality who recognize neither God nor kings, nor laws, who claim that we must no longer pay tax, interest, or rent, and who organize a new society, where all men will be, they say, equal and free, and will only consume the value of what they have produced or the services they have provided.

SIGISMUND

And the men of order, the honest people are not inclined to let them organize themselves?

DULCIN

How would they agree to this? Most live only on the income from their properties, their money invested at interest, or from a few functions that will be useless in their new social order.

SIGISMUND

Indeed, most only live off their place or their income; if they had to create another source of existence, they would be very unhappy. Do you know the way in which they want to organize the economic forces of society, so that freedom and equality are not disappointing illusions?

DULCIN

How would I know that? They don't know it themselves. They talk about the right to work, equality of conditions, freedom of conscience, but what they really want is to plunder us and take our properties, if they are the strongest. So the nobles and the bourgeois are counting on you to pull us out of the abyss.

SIGISMUND

What can I do about this, if my brother Wenceslas allows them to organize themselves like this. Furthermore, this man, this Pierre Dresden, did me a great service, and I promised him my friendship.

DULCIN

Is it the wounded and [] man who promised, or the Emperor?

SIGISMUND

He doesn't know who I am. He did not even ask me.

DULCIN

So it was not the Emperor, but the stranger who promised his friendship; and even were it the Emperor, I don't know that friendship ever obliges anyone to support an enemy cause. No one has dared to say yet, that Brutus did not love his two sons, when he struck them as enemies of his cause.

SIGISMUND

I know that with error we must not compromise, but it will be a very bad way to show him my gratitude. Because this man is good, Dulcin.

DULCIN

If he is good, why does he preach ideas subversive of the established order of things? And if you spare the Hussites, won't they strike you with their mania for leveling everything? You therefore have a case for self-defense.

SIGISMUND

But nothing yet proves to me that they want to overturn everything.

DULCIN

But they don't hide it in the least. They shout it from the rooftops. All the men of order will tell you this as I do. It's incredible how clever these people are and how they know how to make themselves interesting to the people they approach; there is not one who is not almost of their opinion, when they speak to them of their infernal doctrine.

SIGISMUND

Dulcin, I believe you, but the enmity you have for them perhaps makes you unjust. Besides, I will monitor them myself, and it would be imprudent to talk about them here any longer. Please go and reassure those who might be worried about my absence at Wishrad Palace.

SCENE V

SIGISMUND (*alone*)

He sits down in the armchair where he was during the beginning of the first scene of this act.

If everything Dulcin told me is true, this could become very serious and I will have to take action. But to devastate Bohemia to please a clergy who once preferred Rupert to the throne of Hungary, I have not yet forgotten. Ruining a kingdom that will soon belong to me is worth thinking about. I only know part of their religious doctrine and if its only fault is arriving a few hundred years too late and overturning established religious beliefs, I do not see how it would be reprehensible. As for their economic doctrine, which commands them to establish freedom and equality among men, it is bad because it is impossible; and its impossibility is an illusion, a disappointment for the ignorant people it conquers. Equality! It is only love that imposes it on us here below and still in intimacy. — This young woman whom I pursue with love, who is she? I do not know. And yet there is already no more distance between us. I did for her what I have never done for anyone else. I looked for her; I followed her through the streets of Prague. Without my stupid accident, I would know where she lives, what she does. (*Marguerite enters.*) And if she is free, what wouldn't I do to please her? What wouldn't I give to have her? Oh! I will find her.

SCENE VI

SIGISMUND, MARGUERITE

MARGUERITE. (*who has advanced towards Sigismund, whom she takes for her brother, whispers in his ear:*

Good news, Pierre! (*Sigismund rises.*) Him!

SIGISMUND

Her, here!

MARGUERITE

How, sir, is it that you are here? And alone?

SIGISMUND

Thanks to an accident, mademoiselle, and with the permission of a man to whom I owe my life.

MARGUERITE

My brother!

SIGISMUND

Your brother! Ah! So much the better! I feared for a moment that he was your husband.

MARGUERITE

Sir, what does this language mean?

SIGISMUND

It means that since the day I saw you in Sainte-Waite, for the first time, your image has pursued me incessantly. I have only one desire: to see you, to talk to you and to please you. I looked for you; I followed you, and now that I found you, ah! let me tell you that to be your friend, your confidant, to shake your hand in mine, for a smile from you, I would give my life, more than my life, my imperial crown.

MARGUERITE (*stepping back*)

Does not the Emperor have as his friend and confidant the prettiest and most amiable of wives, Barbara of Hungary?

SIGISMUND

But not the lover of my dreams, the wife of my choice, the one that, as a simple individual, I would have sought?

MARGUERITE

What! Barbara of Hungary! The most beautiful and charming princess of the court!

SIGISMUND

But not the one I love. Ah, that a wife of my love would be greater than her! My sceptre, my treasures, my power, I would place everything at her feet: she would have more of them than I myself; she would protect, assist whoever she wanted. Her friends and her enemies would be mine. Be, madame, this adored lover, this secret wife, this powerful and mysterious empress. I ask you for mercy.

(*He places himself at her feet, taking her hand.*)

MARGUERITE

Sire, what are you doing?

SIGISMUND

Oh! Do not reject my prayer.

MARGUERITE

Sire, why, if you love me, do you ask for my dishonor?

SIGISMUND

What! To be my wife?

MARGUERITE

Don't you have one already? To be a secret empress when there is an official one, it is the dishonor of both. To offer it to me, it is a crime that the Emperor could not have dreamed of committing. I misunderstood.

SIGISMUND

Am I not all-powerful? Is not my will the law for my subjects?

MARGUERITE

Then you will not want it, because you are sensible and just.

SIGISMUND

Oh! do not appeal to my reason, nor to superhuman virtues of which my love is incapable. I love you and if ever I understood that omnipotence is a gift from God, it is now. Because now that I have found you, nothing here on earth will be able to separate you from me.

MARGUERITE

Even though I don't love you?

SIGISMUND

Don't say that.

MARGUERITE

Even though I love another?

SIGISMUND

Oh! You will not belong to this other. Must I take such a precious treasure from him by force!

(He embraces her and Marguerite pushes him away to free herself.)

MARGUERITE

Sire, let me go, I beg you.

SIGISMUND

Oh! Ravishing in modesty and beauty!

MARGUERITE

Step back, sire, or I will call out!

SIGISMUND

A threat! Ah! That deserves a kiss.

(Marguerite detaches you from him. Sigismund rushes you towards her, when Ziska enters and places himself between them.)

SCENE VII

THE SAME, ZISKA.

ZISKA

It is not enough for the monks to dishonor women, Emperor Sigismund must imitate them after having proven them right. Do you know well, very orthodox emperor, that I am determined to kill you, for having laid hands on this young woman, my fiancée. Come on, defend yourself, if you want!

(Marguerite holds Ziska by the arm.)

SIGISMUND

Ziska, you know who I am; for this reason alone, I will not defend myself. If for a kiss, not received, you think that I deserve death, strike.

MARGUERITE

Ziska will not strike you when you say that you don't want to defend yourself. Let there be no more question of any such thing. You are about to go. Once you leave this place, please, sire, for the happiness of us all, think only of your wife.

ZISKA

Why do you say, Marguerite, that we must spare the powerful who insult and do not want to give reason? Because the wolf could not steal the lamb, should we spare it? No!

MARGUERITE

We must respect the life of the man to whom your friend offered hospitality, especially in his absence.

ZISKA

Ah! Prejudice, how heavy your yoke is! Very well! So be it. Go away. But believe me, if I don't kill you here, it is not to do an act of generosity, by leaving you alive. Oh no! I'm not that good-natured. You are fortunate to have been with the chief of the Hussites, for it is to him alone that you owe your life. I don't want anyone to be able to believe in the infamy of a trap, and believe Pierre capable of it. However, if I believed my presentiments, if I followed my first idea, you would not leave here, for you are the most formidable enemy of the Hussites.

SIGISMUND

Your presentiments do not deceive you. I will fight the Hussites, not

because I hate them; but because they attack the society of which I am the head and which as such I must defend. I think I've already told you. You, madame, sister of the man to whom I perhaps owe my life, fiancée of a valiant soldier whom Bohemia honors, I will no longer expose myself to blushing before you. And since you have ordered me to do so, I will only think of my noble wife and will never again forget that it is now up to her alone to use her influence over me, to soften the rigors of my duties as sovereign.

MARGUERITE (*aside.*)

Is that a threat?

A SERVANT (*entering.*)

The chair has arrived. If sir is ready?

SIGISMUND

Right now.

(*He bows to Marguerite and leaves.*)

SCENE VIII

MARGUERITE, ZISKA

ZISKA

Human weakness! Stupid prejudice! This man is all powerful; he is our enemy and I am letting him go peacefully. Above prejudices in thought, I do not dare to maintain them in fact, in action. What illogical behavior! Why did I act like this?

MARGUERITE

Because no one has the right to take the life of his fellow man, and because you have to be blinded by anger or fear to go there.

ZISKA

Marguerite, these beautiful maxims would be as consoling as they are true, if those who put them into practice were not always the dupes and always the victims. The Emperor is not like me: he showed us this by refusing to fight with me. Placed above the law, outside the circle of humanity, he is nothing more than a monster with a human face who, through prejudice, is protected by society against all. Being unable to fight him, nor call him before our peers to ask him for the insult or the wrong he did me, or for the legitimate grievances I have against him — current society does not allow this — what remains for me to do, if I am not a coward? To strike him, to take justice into my own hands. I become regicide. Is it my fault if his exceptional social position, by forcing me to perform this act of rare courage, left me no other alternative? You see, Marguerite, logically I had to kill him. I spared him. Out of respect for an

idiotic prejudice? I have been weak. I was wrong.

MARGUERITE

No, Ziska.

ZISKA

If I mentioned the case in front of our friends that I thought I would find here, instead of the wretch who was going to insult you, I am sure that they would unanimously reproach me for my weakness. In the end, the mistake has been made. There is no more going back to it. But this will be an additional incentive for my friends to decide to destroy with iron and fire all tyranny, all imperial and clerical authority.

Noise is heard outside.

This is them, I believe?

MARGUERITE

Yes, It's them. I will leave you.

(She exits.)

SCENE IX

**ZISKA, PIERRE, JACOBEL, PROKOP, HUSSINETZ, JEAN LE
PEÉMONTRE, NICOLAS-GANZ, JEAN-CARDINAL,
ROCSIZAKNE, PALMER BARTHÉLÉMY ET JESSINETZ.**

GANZ, *(to Ziska on entering.)*

May the one who has been wronged salute you!

ZISKA

Come, my friends. Moments are precious. Let us know how to put them to good use. Since this morning, many things have happened which require us to decide what course to follow in the events that are about to take place, because Wenceslas is dying.

PROKOP

Ziska, Wenceslas is dead!

ZISKA

Dead?

PROKOP

He died of poisoning by the monk who served as his cupbearer at his dinner. I have just received the news from an officer who was attached to his service.

ZISKA

My friends, long live the Republic!

ALL

Long live the Republic!

ZISKA

Right away, let's open the session. Pierre would preside over us and you, Rocsizanne, serve as our secretary, if no one objects.

PIERRE

Do any of you, my friends, have the slightest opposition to this? (*Silence.*) No one? The session is opened.

Each of them takes a seat around a green table.

PIERRE

My friends, as the resolutions concerning the measures that we will have to take in view of future events have already been exhibited among us and, so to speak, accepted, it remains for us to formulate them in summary.

Thus, we declare, in the name of the Hussites, and in the presence of all the peoples of the Earth, that the fundamental organizing principle of society must be:

JUSTICE;

For political form:

the Republic.

Consequently,

its motto is:

Mutuality of services among men, responsibility of each, solidarity between all!

its formula:

No one commands. No one obeys. Be it your Pope, your Monarch, your Master, your Servant. For there is neither first nor last, and no one has the right to impose on others or to govern them;

its law of social economy:

Reciprocity between producers and consumers in the distribution of wealth; subalternization of the sign of exchange representative of the value of products, circulation of these same products in all the markets of the Globe, connected in relations of solidarity;

its morality:

Love your fellows and respect them and always do justice to them;

its rallying point:

Solidarity among all, in the past, present and future;

its aim:

To make all men free, brothers and equals;

its power:

Science, which is to say truth.

its means of accomplishing its aims,

The written and spoken word, and even the sword, if necessary!

ZISKA

The sword! Yes, for a long time to come, our only hope of salvation. We live in a time of zeal and anger! Let's be of our time. Wenceslas is dead. Let us call, without waiting longer, the people to arms.

Let, from this evening, all citizens capable of being armed leave at our call from all parts of the city and, without waiting, come to gather on the square of the Senate where the posts are entrusted to soldiers of our party.

Let them bring with them their weapons or, in the absence of weapons, any other offensive instruments. Arriving there, let us group them, equip them, place them under provisional leaders, whom we know are dedicated and capable of leading them; and let battalions be immediately formed and ready to march.

So let them take over the Senate! It is easy. Let the Republic be proclaimed! And let us help ourselves, without further delay, to all the wealth of the clergy, the convents and the Imperials. These riches are immense and sufficient to feed our armies and our families for more than fifteen years. These, Jacobel, are these riches that Prokop and I have promised you for the cause. We can have them tomorrow, if we do not let them be taken by our enemies.

Let all our partisans who can speak in public ignite the courage of the people and urge them to join us! Let every Bohemian who comes to us bring with him to our camps all the cattle, all the food and all the objects that he possesses, because the foreigners will take them from him, even if he is not one of our friends.

So that our aim is clear and better understood by all, let each battalion have a standard! Let, on this standard, a chalice be painted and under this chalice, the following inscriptions:

Republic of Peoples.

No more papal domination. No more monarchy.

The Homeland to the citizens.

The Chalice for All! The right to commune under the auspices of Equality, not only under the two species; but at the banquet of life.

JOHANN THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN

Bravo, Ziska, bravo! So here at last is the retaliation, the era of reparations that begins.

The Church and the Monarchy have lit the pyre! Let them be set alight!

They have organized murder and pillage against the people! Let them suffer them!

They have imposed torture on us! May it in turn be applied to them!

They sold indulgences for theft and lies, pardons for murder! May they be punished by their ruin and their disappearance!

People will say that we are severe; they will not say that we are unjust!

We will be accused of having sowed fear and spread terror: they will recognize that we have only frightened the traitors and have only been terrible to the wicked!

So to work! Let Prokop, with Ziska and Hanssinetz, who are soldiers, go immediately to take up the direction of the movement that we have prepared and which is only waiting for a word to break out. I am following them, an orator, to give the alarm, to sound the tocsin, to harangue the people, to call them to arms and against our enemies, to make them fire the cannons this evening if they are ready!

Prokop, Ziska, Hussinetz, rise at the call of Jean, le Prémontré and leave their seats. The other members of the committee also rise.

PROKOP

New political measures will be necessary as our revolution develops. Let our departure not interrupt the session. Stay, continue, we sanction, in advance, what you decide.

Prokop, Johann the Premonstratensian, Ziska, Hussinetz leave the eight who remain sit down again and the session continues.

SCENE X

**JACOBEL, PIERRE, ROCSIZANE, GANZ, PALMER,
BARTHÉLÉMY, CARDINAL, JESSINETZ.**

PIERRE

Well, my friends! Let's continue. Jacobel, tell us what you think we should do next in favor of the establishment of our new social order.

JACOBEL

My friends, the political and administrative measures that we must take tomorrow to consolidate our work, if we are the winners, can be reduced to this:

Preserve nothing that the Church and the Monarchy have established in their interests.

Do not accept at any price that a religious belief, which we can neither affirm nor deny, since we cannot verify it, comes to command our reason and submit it to the chimerical and immoral whims of those who are charged with interpreting it.

Do not establish at any cost in the future society the division of powers

into executive, legislative and judicial, because it is monarchy and no republic can resist it; but ensure that what we call a government today is only the maintenance granted to each person to be free, first of all, and before long becomes the generator and director of the social movement, a sort of administration of initiative and pure and simple surveillance of general interests.

Establish free public schools and vocational schools everywhere; open next to these schools and in the same rooms, if necessary, public courses to teach adults who too often are unaware:

That men being by nature free, equal and brothers, the society whose goal is common happiness must guarantee everyone their right to live, to act, to educate, to speak, to write, to work, to dispose of the fruits of their labor, to vote, to arm oneself, to defend oneself, to do, finally, everything that does not harm others;

That the law, expression of the general will, is the same for all, whether it protects or punishes; that it must only demand what is just and useful to society and only forbid what is ostensibly harmful to it;

That any administration that hinders, infringes, violates the natural abilities of citizens is guilty of usurpation of power and can be destroyed and replaced, by the simple decision of the interested parties, whose will can be manifested whenever they deem it appropriate.

Establish a jurisdiction where, except for cases of murder, theft and treason, subject to the appreciation of the jury, arbitration does three-quarters of the work.

Facilitate for all the means of using the soil as an instrument of labor.

Encourage the creation of centers of production, exchange and consumption linked together in solidarity.

Have public works of all kinds carried out as much as the war allows.

Ensure that the civil and political functions of our new social administration of surveillance and temporary initiative are a burden rather onerous than lucrative.

If one is obliged to fulfill them, let them do so with zeal and loyalty, under penalty of being severely punished.

Let it be up to each person, not by election that always gives rise to corruption, but by lots.

Supposing that a function is devolved to a citizen of such an age, whose incapacity has not been established by the vote of his peers, it is necessary that the one whom fate has designated cannot free himself from it but for military service; but that a citizen who has fulfilled a public function for the space of one year, will be exempted forever from fulfilling others.

Each function must be related to the age of the man; and it is citizens aged twenty-one to seventy who will have to decide by universal suffrage on the elimination of this or that of their fellow citizens due to incapacity.

Incapacity which often brings with it the loss, for the person eliminated, of the greater part of their civil rights.

Thus, in my opinion, every citizen aged twenty to twenty-five must be, if necessary, always ready to take up arms and line up under the flags of the nation. Then he must fulfill, if fate so chooses, once in his life and for the space of one year, only one of the following functions.

At twenty-six years old, that of the guard for the safety of everyone in the town.

At twenty-seven years old, that of town councilor for the freedom of the streets and public health.

At twenty-eight, that of municipal councilor.

At twenty-nine, that of mayor or deputy.

At thirty, that of supervisor of schools and instruction.

At thirty-one, that of the cantonal guard for public security.

At thirty-two, that of cantonal councilor for the freedom of the roads and the health of the canton.

At thirty-three, that of Provost or canton alderman.

At thirty-four, that of cantonal councilor.

At thirty-five, that of supervisor of the schools and libraries of the canton.

At thirty-six, that of supervisor of industrial social centers.

At thirty-seven, that of supervisor for the revenues and expenses of the communes and cantons.

At thirty-eight, that of supervisor of posts and statistics.

At thirty-nine, that of supervisor of the arsenals and what concerns the militia in the canton.

At forty, that of justice of the peace and others.

At forty-one, that of supervisor of everything concerning roads, ports and everything that concerns traffic in the State.

At forty-two, that of supervisor of the publicity of acts, facts and gestures that interest the community and public affairs.

At forty-three, that of inspector of all places of war: of the arsenals and the navy.

From forty-four to forty-five, that of member of the State Assembly.

From forty-seven to fifty, that of member of the council of the federation of states.

As for industrial or special functions, they will also be distributed by lot; but as they will require special knowledge on the part of the citizens who may be responsible for them, the citizens capable of fulfilling them will first have to prove capacity and knowledge. Capacity and skills that will have been established by an examination or a competition before those interested in the same function and in the same order of production or services rendered as that in which the candidate is called to enter.

Until the Republic is firmly established, that is to say, until the cracies are destroyed, do not admit or allow any member of the Church, nor any supporter of the monarchy, to meddle in the affairs of the Republic, whatever their good intentions; and absolutely prohibit them from participating in the education of youth.

Have no consideration for them; not receive any of them, when they present themselves, as they are in the habit of doing, some time after their defeat, to make compliments, of which they do not mean the first word, to their replacements that they consider as intruders. Show them that we esteem a man in politics only for the good that he has done or sought to do to the people; and that on these grounds they are only entitled to contempt.

The Republic will be considered established only when social functions are defined, established by category and each citizen knows what he is doing, why and what he is deciding on; when the officials taken from among the capable ones will be designated by lot, both those responsible for the civil interests of the community, and those responsible for decisions relating to the general interests of the industrial category in which they operate.

Oppose, through the organization of markets, the establishment of any particular monopoly, of any company speculating on foodstuffs and merchandise, canals, mines, roads, etc.

Transform taxes so that the income of society is only the product of valued natural services.

Make the debts of war and the monarchy and also those of the establishment of the Republic be paid by all declared supporters of the monarchy and the clergy. They must all be ruined! Drive them out of Bohemia if they are not peaceful there, but don't kill a single one, if it is possible.

This, my friends, is what, in my opinion, we have to formulate and have decreed tomorrow by the revolutionary power.

A noise is heard, some cannon shots, then the tocsin, which begins to thunder.

PIERRE

Do any of you have any observations to make on what has just been said or to add anything to it?

SEVERAL MEMBERS

No!

SEVERAL OTHERS

Let's wait until tomorrow!

The tocsin rings louder. We hear the roar of the cannon in the distance; then the cries of the people who seem to be approaching.

PIERRE

I believe that the struggle has commenced. Listen!

The people approach. One distinctly hears cries of:

Justice! Justice and Liberty!

Yes! Liberty!

The Cup!

Equality!

Down with the priests!

No more monarchy!

The cannon approaches and the tocsin redoubles.

One hears cries of:

No more domination! No more CRACIES!

The Republic!

PIERRE

Citizens, the session is adjourned, Let each of us now go where our duty calls us.

All rise to leave. The curtain falls.

End of the third act.

FOURTH ACT

A richly decorated salon in the Archbishop's Palace. At the back of the Scene, there is a magnificent greenhouse which serves as a gallery and communicates with the living room.

During this fourth act, we hear the cannon roaring in the distance. The tocsin rings from time to time; then the shooting and the shouts of the crowd get closer.

SCENE I

**KORANDA, THE ARCHBISHOP, DULCIN, THE ABBOT AND
SOME COURTISANS.**

THE ARCHBISHOP

Since yesterday evening when Wenceslas died of apoplexy, Emperor Sigismund, now king of Bohemia, has taken no new measures against the Heretics.

DULCIN

Indeed, it looks like he's taking care of them!

KORANDA

He is not in such a hurry to destroy the riches of a kingdom that has just fallen. If he turns Bohemia into a cemetery, what will it bring him? A curse.

THE ARCHBISHOP

As for you, my dear friend, who is above all a Bohemian, if not a philosopher, I would have been very surprised if you had been of our opinion. In all the time I've known you, I've never heard you approve of what others do. It seems that, alone, you have the monopoly on common sense.

KORANDA

Would to God that I had a monopoly on common sense, my lord: it is the rarest thing in the world. I would be a little proud of it, but I won't be able to make use of it at this moment, because it's the most poorly received thing here.

THE ARCHBISHOP

You don't approve of the Heretics, I think?

KORANDA

Not yet.

THE ARCHBISHOP

But you also condemn us?

KORANDA

I believe that you are as furious as they are. It's strange how exclusive men are and how they love illusion. Here as elsewhere, moreover, I only see madmen; madmen who do not want to leave the past at any cost, like you, Monseigneur; madmen who only see the present, like Dulcin; and madmen who are entirely in the future, without taking into account the present or the past, like the Hussites.

THE ABBOT

Finally, who are you for, among all?

KORANDA

For no one!

THE ABBOT

You don't compromise yourself.

KORANDA

This is where you are deceived. I compromise myself very much, because, if I wanted to take care of myself, as you seem to believe, I would be on the side of the Heretics, because they will be the strongest.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Are you seriously saying this?

KORANDA

Very seriously!

THE ABBOT

Why?

KORANDA

Because.

THE ABBOT

That is not a reason.

KORANDA

Sometimes.

DULCIN

I know why he says that.

KORANDA

You?

DULCIN

Yes, me.

KORANDA

Ah! For example, I challenge you. Material goods are too dear to you for you to be able to glean something outside their domain and the reason I have for it is not one of them.

DULCIN

We will see!

KORANDA

Let us see!

DULCIN, (*with a mysterious air.*)

Shh. Can anyone hear us?

THE ABBOT

No.

DULCIN

Well! Sigismund is in love with the wife of a Hussite. Yesterday while he was chasing her down the street, he was surprised by her husband who stabbed him in the arm.

KORANDA

For one thing...

DULCIN

When the bandit saw that he had not killed him instantly, and that he was going to be arrested, then he spoke gently to Sigismund, took him to his house, where, in order to obtain forgiveness for his attempted murder, he delivered his wife to him.

KORANDA

And two...

DULCIN

Now it turned out that the wife of this wretch is precisely the one that the Emperor adores, the same one that he met at the church of the Calixtines, about whom he spoke to us two days ago. Then he promised, not only to forgive Peter Dresden, for it is he; but he told him that, if he would allow him to come sometimes to visit his wife, he would grant him his friendship.

KORANDA

And three.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Yes, give and take, how vile these heretics are!

DULCIN

Koranda perhaps knows that the husband consented and this augurs

the triumph of the Hussites.

KORANDA

This is a Dulcin story, a tale as absurd as it is impossible.

DULCIN

It's the truth. Listen to the rest. Last night a man wanting a doctor came to my house and asked me to follow him. He takes me to Pierre Dresden and on the way tells me what I have just told you; when I arrived at the head of the Hussites, what was my astonishment to find the Emperor, pale, defeated and almost dying, who confirmed to me that he had been wounded in the arm, asked me to keep it a secret, and afterwards having given him my care, because his life was in danger, I can say, sent me to the palace to give his news, so that his friends would not be worried any longer by his absence. (*to Koranda,*) Well! Mr. profound philosopher, do I know your reasons?

KORANDA

Not at all! You tell us of a triple infamy, committed by three different people who meet for the first time, which is completely impossible,

DULCIN

Emperor Sigismund told me.

KORANDA

You heard wrong.

DULCIN

I have never been deaf.

KORANDA

In this case you have misunderstood.

DULCIN

I understood very well, on the contrary.

KORANDA

This is not possible; and supposing that this impossibility was true, (*Sigismund enters*) the Emperor is not naive enough to tell you about an infamy in which he would have taken his good part. Furthermore, Pierre Dresden, the leader of the Hussites, is not married!

SCENE II

THE SAME, SIGISMUND AND HIS ENTOURAGE.

DULCIN, (*perceiving Sigismund near him.*)

The Emperor!

SIGISMUND

Yes, gentlemen! Well, it seems that you were talking about me.

DULCIN

Sire, I was telling how close you escaped when I found you in danger of death, the day before yesterday evening, at the home of the chief of the Hussites.

SIGISMUND

I was not in any serious danger.

DULCIN

Sire, it is possible that you have not noticed it, you are so generous, so valiant, so magnanimous.

SIGISMUND

He didn't even let me know who he was; he neither told me his name nor asked mine.

THE ARCHBISHOP

These people have safer ways of softening and winning over their world; for if they are at first all gall, they then become all honey and all complacency.

KORANDA

They definitely accept as true, despite what I have said, the absurd story that Dulcin has just recounted to us.

SIGISMUND

What story?

(Here we hear the tocsin ringing, then the sound of the cannon, the drums and the shooting, but in the distance.)

KORANDA *(sharply)*

A story in which you appear as a man who has escaped immense danger.

THE ARCHBISHOP

And the danger, gentlemen, has not yet passed, because the Hussite, to whom the Emperor promised his friendship, is not at this moment reciprocating. Since yesterday these cannons have been rumbling and since this morning, it seems like they are getting louder and getting closer to us.

SIGISMUND

No, gentlemen, the rebel cannon is not getting any closer to us; but it doesn't move away from us either. However, I have good hope. Our troops are fresh, well-armed and much superior in number; the result cannot be doubted.

THE ABBOT (*softly to Koranda.*)

Well! Great man who promised them victory.

KORANDA

Did I tell you I doubted it?

THE ABBOT

No, but the opinion of the emperor!

KORANDA

It is not mine. That is all!

SCENE III

THE SAME, THE MAGISTRATE, THE MINISTER,
ROSEMBERG, CIXILONE, MARGUERITE, MONKS,
SOLDIERS, PEOPLE.

We hear the drum, a few shots, then the cry of:

Victory! Victory!

Drunk soldiers rush onto the Scene dragging Marguerite, Cixilone, Rosemberg, and a young schoolboy, chained with their arms tied behind their backs. They are followed by a crowd of soldiers, monks and people shouting:

Death to the Heretics! Death!

The cannon redoubles and the drums beat the call to arms in the distance.

SIGISMUND, (*recognizing Marguerite.*)

She!

MARGUERITE

The Emperor!

Sigismund seeks to approach Marguerite; but he is manhandled by the crowd and brutally pushed back by a few drunken soldiers.

THE CROWD, (*pointing to Cixilone,*)

To death! To death, this woman; she saved a soldier in two.

A MONK, (*pointing to Marguerite.*)

To death! To death! This one, she killed two soldiers with this dagger that was seized from her! Let her be whipped!

THE CROWD (*screaming.*)

Let them be whipped to death,

SIGISMUND, (*to the officer.*)

Bring your prisoners forward; and let the crowd leave!

A SOLDIER (*drunk*)

These men are two rebels who wanted to burn down the city. We found a knife, a flint and some tinder on this one, and that one wanted to prevent us from arresting these ladies.

THE MONKS

Oh! These ladies! Let's whip them! To death!

THE CROWD (*as they go.*)

Death to the Hussites! Hang them!

THE MONKS

Death to the Hussites! Let's whip them! To death!

SIGISMUND

Captain, please release the prisoners from their bonds and ensure their safety, because from now on I make you responsible. Please also remove these monks and order these soldiers to return to their posts, where they will be much more useful than here.

The officer makes everyone leave, except the prisoners.

SCENE IV

THE SAME, MINUS THE MONKS, THE CROWD AND THE SOLDIERS.

While the crowd withdraws, the Archbishop, in front of the Scene, with a crucifix in his hand, advances to Rosemberg.

THE ARCHBISHOP

So here they are, these miserable Hussites, so I can finally taste the pleasure of slapping them all, on this one's face.

(He strikes him on the head with a crucifix.)

ROSEMBERG, (*launching himself furiously at the Archiishop*)
Wretch!

(They are separated immediately.)

SIGISMUND

Ah! My lord, what have you done?

(to Rosemberg) Be calm, sir!

(Marguerite and Cixilone, who are free, cling to one another.)

SIGISMUND

Please tell me why you were arrested and brought here.

ROSEMBERG

These two courageous young women, whom I did not know and whose memory will no longer be able to be erased from my memory, came to the

aid of the wounded, in the midst of danger, when, passing through a street where there was fierce fighting, two men fell wounded: an imperial soldier and an insurgent. Immediately without any preference, they went to both to help them, bandage their wounds and give them something to drink. In the meantime, this young man comes to tell them that a little further away, there are other injured people who are also asking for help. At the same moment four drunken soldiers who were fleeing threw themselves at him, arrested him and chained him. They also arrested these two young women to whom he was speaking, and because he was speaking to them. One of the two young women pointed out to the soldiers that she was helping one of their comrades. They insulted her.

KORANDA

The brutes!

ROSEMBERG

Then they struck them both and tied their hands behind their backs.

KORANDA

The wretches!

ROSEMBERG

Indignant at seeing two young women who would have helped them, if they themselves had been the injured, mistreated in this way, I told them that they were wrong to act in this way, that they were dishonoring themselves by such behavior. So they pounced on me, stole what I had in my pockets, and told me to follow them. I hesitated for a moment, I admit, to know if I should not resist them and repel such a brutal act by force. But I feared that something bad would happen to these two young women, whose courage and humanity I admired. So I let them tie me in this way, and we were all brought here.

SIGISMUND

Is that all?

ROSEMBERG

That's all!

SIGISMUND (*to Marguerite.*)

Is that all the truth?

MARGUERITE

All the truth!

ROSEMBERG

Besides, I have no interest in supporting heretics. I am Bohemian, it is true, but I was Catholic and my name is Ulric de Rosenberg!

SIGISMUND

What, you are Rosemberg!

ROSEMBERG

The brother of the Rosemberg who, at the head of the Emperor's troops, tried to prevent the passage of Ziska, which was advancing on Prague, followed by all the heretics whom he had gone to find at the Tabor camp, where they were have been meeting for a few days.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Ziska is advancing on Prague?

KORANDA

Do you doubt it any longer, Monsignor?

SIGISMUND (*to Rosemberg.*)

You said that you were Catholic?

ROSEMBERG

Yes. I Because I believed in Catholicism, a religion of gentleness and love, but, Mgr. the Archbishop, who must know better than me, since he is one of its illustrious lights, proved to me that I was wrong.

THE ABBOT

Excuse Monsignor Archbishop for taking you for a heretic; he is truly mortified.

KORANDA

Fewer excuses and more tolerance would be, believe me, sir abbot, infinitely better!

SIGISMUND (*to the officer:*)

Please, sir, take these four people into the next room and see that nothing untoward happens to them. I entrust them to you from this moment and you answer to me for them. As soon as the streets are clear and there is no longer any danger for them, then set them free. Give them a proper pass, and accompany these ladies to their homes, if they show the slightest desire. Go on.

On leaving, Marguerite and Cixilone salute Sigismond, who bows deeply before them.

SCENE V

SIGISMUND, KORANDA, CULCIN, THE ABBOT, THE
MINISTER, THE ARCHBISHOP, THE MAGISTRATE,
COURTIERS AND OFFICERS.

SIGISMUND

Ah! Dulcin! Her sadness makes her even more beautiful! How much I would have loved her, if she had wanted.

DULCIN

What! Sire, is this this young woman that you met at the church of Sainte-Waite?

SIGISMUND

Yes, the sister of Pierre Dresden, this heretic who saved my life; but don't say anything about it to the Archbishop.

THE MAGISTRATE

They are very pretty, Sire, these two revolutionary sisters of charity; and if they are not two little monsters of ingratitude, how they must love you!

SIGISMUND

What wouldn't I give for it to be like that!

THE MINISTER

When the Emperor loves, I would like to know who is the person whose life has been saved who would not be delighted to show her gratitude!

THE MAGISTRATE

If this ingrate existed, she would deserve to be punished!

KORANDA

To then be married, you know, to one of those complacent people who always flatter and hate their masters.

SIGISMUND

Gratitude is not love.

THE MINISTER

Sire, one is not an emperor if he only has the liberties of a simple mortal. To do what one pleases, to satisfy one's desires: that is omnipotence. These two young women are beautiful: they greeted you as if they had to thank you for having preserved them for you. There are flowers on the fireplace, Doctor Dulcin, a famous chemist, can saturate them with a sleeping essence, compose a bouquet, and if you have the slightest desire; I can...

SIGISMUND

Enough, sir.

KORANDA

It is understood. You will then marry them both, but one after the other, when the first has died of apoplexy, like King Wenceslas!

It's horrible! Gentlemen. Ah! I am no longer surprised that everyone

is becoming a Taborite! Hear the cannon and the drums, and think about responding with more courage than you have done so far. It will be safer for you to come and propose to the Emperor acts of bestiality worthy of a grave digger.

SIGISMUND

Thank you, Coranda, thank you, for the pleasure you gave me by speaking like this. It is so rare to hear a bad action condemned here, when one believes that they are being pleasant to us, that this had not yet happened.

THE MAGISTRATE

Pardon, Sire,

SIGISMUND

Leave me! Let most of you go see what is happening outside and come back to bring us news.

SCENE VI

SIGISMUND, KORANDA, DULCIN, THE ABBOT, THE
ARCHBISHOP AND SOME OFFICERS FROM THE EMPEROR'S
ENTOURAGE.

SIGISMUND

What a sad thing for monarchs to have around them only complacent approvers of everything they do or want to do. And to say that we get used to this atmosphere of corruption, that we love it to the point of no longer being able to do without it, when we should avoid it like the plague! The court! What an environment to crush a man! He doesn't spend a month there, even though he was the strongest, the purest, the best of men, before his transformation is complete. His originality paled at first, then faded, disappeared. He has shaped himself, they say; in fact, he resembles everyone around him. He's a courtier! The fear of displeasing; the much greater fear of losing his political consideration and diminishing his fortune, gradually leads him to advise and do things so opposed to those that his primitive and upright nature would have dictated to him on his arrival at court, that if you would have asked him then to encourage them, even while being complacent, he would have asked you, blushing, if ever, by his antecedents, he had deserved that people doubt his morality and his honor. Contempt for people, assaults, deceit, violence, ruin, exile, torture, all this is insinuated to you, advised, proposed with frightening candor.

THE ARCHBISHOP

But one must be a statesman above all, Sire.

SIGISMUND

Who will deliver kings from such an environment, and teach them to do without such statesmen?

THE ARCHBISHOP

It will not be the Hussites, in any case!

KORANDA

The Hussites would not have advised such infamies!

SIGISMUND

No. Certainly!

THE ARCHBISHOP

The Hussites, those infamous people who hand over their women to ward off the slightest danger that threatens them.

SIGISMUND

What do you say?

THE ARCHBISHOP

Did not one of their leaders deliver his wife to an all-powerful lord, to obtain her protection against the Church?

KORANDA

Again, the story of Dulcin!

THE ARCHBISHOP

And since yesterday, has not the cause of the Church been killed, left without defense before these unbelievers, for two beautiful eyes that you have permission to see at will with the consent of the husband.

SIGISMUND

I don't understand you!

THE ARCHBISHOP

You do not understand me?

SIGISMUND

Not at all!

THE ARCHBISHOP

However, Dulcin is here to refute me, if I haven't told the truth!

SIGISMUND

Dulcin!

THE ARCHBISHOP

Yes, Sire!

SIGISMUND

Dulcin, please explain to me what Monsignor means.

DULCIN

Since this morning, Monseigneur the Archbishop has been in a state of fever and fury in which I have never seen him before; he neither sees nor hears things as they are presented to him. You spoke, a few days ago, of a woman you loved. I told my lord, and I very much regret it, that you had been injured and that you had run great danger from the chief of the Hussites, when you were chasing this woman. Monsignor loves the Holy Church so much (*in a low voice*) and has so much hatred for unbelievers that he has imagined all kinds of things; he sees the Hussites and their women everywhere. And because the Hussites are not yet defeated, he has the idea that it is love which is the cause of what he calls a lack of energy against the rebels.

SIGISMUND

If I were not afraid of humiliating anyone here, I would soon have unraveled this mystery. But that will be for later. In the meantime, Dulcin, leave us.

SCENE VII

THE SAME, MINUS DULCIN.

SIGISMUND

Koranda, you are sincere and have always been attached to me. I very much regret, at present, not having consulted you more often, in order to follow your opinions.

KORANDA

You do me much honor, sire, but I could not have been of any use or help to you. You know that what is happening is inevitable, independent of the will of the present generation. Nothing could have warned of it, diverted it, just as nothing can prevent it from happening.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Goodness, here he is again on his *hobbyhorse*.

SIGISMUND

Would you be fatalistic?

THE ARCHBISHOP

He is fatalist and prophet at the same time. For him, all societies have a beginning and an end, but always a terrible end.

KORANDA

This is obvious to anyone who has read history.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Yes! But according to him, we are dying,

KORANDA

In my opinion, Catholic, Apostolic and Roman society is dead. Its funeral is being prepared and the time of his decomposition begins.

SIGISMUND

And what will follow?

KORANDA

The exhaustion of Bohemia first, then the loss of its nationality and the dismemberment of the empire. In the midst of this dissolution, we will only think of material goods. Everyone will want to have their share of gold or dung, and as everyone will not find their account, men will quarrel; they will revolt and like villains, will kill one another without pity. The Revolution that is beginning will be terrible and will last a long time, but it will create relationships among different social interests; and when men are tired of disorder and shedding blood, we will see the emergence of a new order of things, a new society,

SIGISMUND

What makes you believe in the emergence of a new society?

KORANDA

The conduct of the clergy, of kings, and especially that of the Heretics.

SIGISMUND

Explain yourself!

KORANDA

The priests do not do what they would do if they believed their books. The kings would not act as they would if they took as much interest in men as a shepherd takes in his flock. The Heretics would not make solidarity a civilizing dogma and would not die for this new metaphysical idea, if they did not believe it to be true. Now, as the clergy only defends its wealth and its social importance, the kings, their dynasty and the power attached to their crown, while Heretics fight for an idea of justice, the kings and the clergy will be defeated in the long run, and solidarity will serve as the cement of a new society whose principle will be Justice!

The struggle could last a long time and the triumph of the Heretics be delayed by many circumstances that it is useless to try to guess, but as for the result, it is mathematical, fatal, certain.

SIGISMUND

Your way of evaluating current events, although unflattering for us, may be true, but where does history prove the obviousness of such an opinion?

KORANDA

Where?

SIGISMUND

Yes!

KORANDA

Why, everywhere!

SIGISMUND

This needs to be demonstrated.

KORANDA

Doesn't the past enlighten us in the most brilliant way?

SIGISMUND

It depends on how you look at it.

THE ARCHBISHOP

And above all how you interpret it.

KORANDA

When polytheism gave birth to the Trojan, Greek and Roman societies, was faith in the dogma of Olympus among the people what it was subsequently, and did its civil, political and religious institutions last fifteen centuries without changing?

Were they practiced from the first day to the last, with the same confidence, followed with the same zeal and served with the same love?

SIGISMUND

No, that wouldn't have been possible.

KORANDA

Why? Because paganism, like everything that men establish, must have had phases of ascendancy and decadence, successive and fatal, which nothing could have opposed.

THE ARCHBISHOP

We grant it. The spirit of God was against it.

KORANDA

This admitted, allow me to pass over in silence the numerous historical details of paganism, which you know as well as I do, and to arrive at the time of its decline, of its prompt agony. What do we see then? Olympus denied, ridiculed, flouted. Its institutions, despised, cursed, become the will of the strongest or the highest bidder. What do you conclude?

That pagan society has had its day. And in fact, the Republic disappeared. Augustus, his contemporaries, and his successors even better, only had attention and esteem for material wealth. Everything declines morally. The society that feels that it is going to die, wants to enjoy; it wallows in orgy and debauchery. A new idea comes to protest against this

pagan filth, an idea that proclaims the unity of God and equality on earth, but it cannot save the old world, as it is the negation of it. And Rome rejects it. Rome, this brain of a world that has inequality and slavery as its basis, cannot understand that men are all sons of the same father, who is in heaven, and are therefore all brothers. So these new sectarians, these Christians, are they first booed, mocked, ridiculed, then feared, dreaded, slandered, then persecuted, delivered to the beasts, sent to death! They kill them by the thousands, thinking that they will kill the idea, but the idea goes on its way; unable to spread in broad daylight, it takes refuge in the catacombs. It creates an underground world, of which any unfortunate person suffering from the injustice of others is a part. Wherever there are four men together who think and love, it has four supporters ready to die in its defense. It goes on in this way, growing, animating with its destructive influence the millions of victims of the old pagan colossus, at which it launches them fine day later and which only make an immense pile of ruins. Victors, these ignorant people, cursed yesterday, become the masters of tomorrow. Their new society has conquered its place on earth, but the earth — alas! — is still for them only a valley of tears, a place of trials that must lead them, after their death, either to paradise or to hell. This fear or this hope becomes the motive of all their actions. This new society, where each being is a traveler who goes not where he wants, but where God sends him, depending on whether he has done well or badly during his journey, begins its evolutions which can be divided into four well-marked eras.

THE ARCHBISHOP

I am leaving; because he is going to speak like a Heretic. Are you coming, Trébitz?

(They both leave.)

SCENE VIII

THE SAME, MINUS THE ARCHBISHOP AND THE ABBOT.

KORANDA

The first, an era of poverty, ignorance, superstition, blind submission to its spiritual guides. This is the time of the monks.

The second, an era of imagination, of ambitious organizational reflection. The spiritual no longer satisfies, the papacy triumphs; it wipes its sandals on the heads of kings. This is its apogee.

The third, an era of instruction, of knowledge, of reasoning, of examination, of analysis and of doubt: heresies flourish, persecutions become cruel. This is the Church which begins to descend.

The fourth, today, an era of indifference and criticism, of innovation

and social organization; a time of laughter and mockery, of everything our ancestors believed, revered and respected.

It is the end of Catholic society and the symptoms of the formation of a new order of things within the old one.

Nothing having been able to save pagan societies, when the people denied polytheism and mocked its institutions, in the same way, nothing can save Catholicism, because we no longer believe in our paradise or in our hell, and we no longer have any respect for three-quarters of its institutions, which have governed the world for so long.

Catholicism, like any organized body, would not like to die; it does everything it can to make people believe that it is eternal and divine; it seeks to make people forget that it had a beginning, because everything that has a beginning must have an end. To intoxicate itself and give itself assurance, it will launch into the fight, attack, defend itself, kill perhaps for a long time, but all in vain. It is finished, well finished, and nothing can restore its youth. Paradise granted only to the deceased cannot satisfy unbelievers. To the men of our time, it is no longer in heaven that happiness must be granted; it is on earth that they want it, and it is the new society that will be responsible for bringing it down. Now, the wisest thing would be to take its side, because the more men oppose it, the longer their sufferings will be. But what are the means of making people see clearly who only care about themselves, who have only one desire, to be rich, in order to be praised, admired and served by their equals?

SIGISMUND

Could royalty be harmonized with these new ideas?

KORANDA

Without any modification, no! because royalty, such as it is, is only possible within a Catholic society; but a superior man who, seeing under his reign an idea of new sociability blossom, adopted it, helped it to develop, would be the greatest man of modern times. No one would dream of doing without or replacing such a useful and just man. Until now, there have only been two men who understood their times and tried to civilize the world by means of a new idea: Moses and Charlemagne! But in these times of anger and decadence, where can we find these men? Kings only know how to regiment themselves in a party of factions that bears their name, and, out of false pride, worry, oppress, degrade seven-eighths of their subjects.

SIGISMUND, (*in a low voice,*)

If the Hussites wanted to forget the past, to abandon their crazy idea of a Republic and recognize me as their king, I would willingly agree to leave them free to organize themselves in their own way, (aside) except later to get rid of them, if they were too troublesome.

KORANDA

Perhaps that would be an acceptable means of transition, if it is not too late... Propose it to them.

SIGISMUND

Through whom?

KORANDA

Through these two young women, since one is the sister of Pierre Dresden, one of the chiefs.

SIGISMUND

And also Ziska's fiancée. Well! Let's try. Go find them; tell them about this proposal, and if they agree, come back here with them.

(Koranda exits.)

SCENE IX

THE SAME, MINUS KORANDA.

AN AIDE-DE-CAMP

Sire! A dispatch!

SIGISMUND

Give it to me. *(he opens it and reads)* Sire, the convents are pillaged, razed, and wherever the Taborites pass, there is nothing but ruin and devastation. Ziska has defeated Rosemberg and is advancing on Prague. Since word has spread, most of our troops have deserted and gone over to the side of the Heretics. Old and new Prague, on the right bank of the Moldaw, belong to the rebels, and they have started to attack the small side of the left bank. Order, Sire, that troops be sent to me immediately, in order to stand up to them, because if, within one hour, I do not have considerable reinforcements, Prague will be entirely theirs. Our officers are almost all wounded or killed, and discouragement sets in among the soldiers who believe they are being abandoned.

General Sottartas.

SIGISMUND, *(to one of his aides-de-camp.)*

Give the order that all available royal troops be sent to the general in order to prevent the rebels from penetrating from that side at all costs.

A SECOND AIDE-DE-CAMP

He enters, making the military salute, and presents a letter to Emperor Sigismund.

Sire, here!

SIGISMUND, (*takes the second dispatch and reads*)

Sire, I encountered Ziska this morning and, after a fierce fight on both sides, Ziska passed and marched on Prague. I have just learned that Nicolas de Hanssinetz is gathering troops to push us back to the outskirts of Prague and capture Mount Oreb.

The danger is great, for the thing is easy, if you do not hastily send me all the troops that you have available, to seize these same passes before them.

(*Signed: General Rosemberg,*)

SIGISMUND

There, I will go myself. (*he says to a second aide-de-camp,*) Let my guard and all the imperial troops prepare to follow me and, as soon as they are arranged in battalions, come and warn me!

SCENE X

THE SAME, DULCIN.

DULCIN, (*entering, very frightened.*)

Horror! Curse! Gentlemen! The Hussites triumph! Prague is taken. God! What a terrible thing to see! Since the Taborites entered with Ziska, fires have been lit on all sides; we only see gibbets erected, priests hanged, monks killed and hung from windows.

The great Augustinian convent is taken, devastated, set on fire. We can see it burning from here, from the windows of the archbishopric. If you want to see it one last time before it collapses, oh come quickly. Gentlemen, come! Good Lord! It's the end of the world.

Dulcin passes into another apartment of the Archbishopric followed by all the courtiers. Only the Emperor and a few officers of his entourage remain.

SCENE XI

SIGIMUND, KORANDA, MARGUERITE . CIXILONE, OFFICERS
AND AIDES-DE-CAMP.

Coranda enters, bringing with him Marguerite and Cixilone.

SIGISMUND

Marguerite. Your brother Pierre saved my life without knowing me and you, knowing me, you defended it. I haven't forgotten it. Now here is what this is all about. My brother, Wenceslas died, leaving me a rotten throne, a ruined and faltering kingdom, devoured rather than defended by proud and greedy courtiers, whom the people hate.

If your brother and your fiancé want to forget the past, come to me,

who, at present, am the king of Bohemia, and stop all war, which, after all, will only exhaust us both, they can be assured that I will let them organize themselves and pray as they wish. I swear to you, Marguerite, on all that is most sacred and dearest to me.

For several days I have learned to know the courtiers and priests who governed Bohemia, and you can tell your friends that I understand and excuse everything they have attempted and undertaken against such rulers.

MARGUERITE

Sire, I am willing to take on this peace mission; I promise to fulfill it as soon as I am back among them.

SIGISMUND

If they accept, they will therefore have to pacify, organize Bohemia, and give command to Ziska. Command that I will sanction, as soon as they have proclaimed me king.

AN AIDE-DE-CAMP, (addressing Sigismund,)

Sire, the imperial troops are under arms, and are only waiting for an order from you, to march.

SIGISMUND, (to the aide-de-camp.)

That is good! Wait for me a minute and I will go, (to Margerite and Cixilone) I am leaving Prague, for a few days only. Please, please don't forget my recommendations, when I am far from you!

MARGUERITE

You can count on it, Sire! If it's not too late.

SIGISMUND

Farewell then, or rather until we meet again, for I hope for much from my two charming ambassadors.

(He bows and leaves.)

SCENE XII

THE SAME EXCEPT FOR SIGISMUND AND SOME OFFICERS.

CIXILONE

Well! Marguerite, what do you think of Emperor Sigismund?

MARGUERITE

I think that men seen up close are neither so bad, nor so good, nor so great, as when we see them from a distance.

CIXILONE

You are not intimidated by anything!

MARGUERITE

Because I never forget that all beings are more or less the same, and that between the brain of an emperor and that of his lackey there is often no difference.

CIXILONE

Ah! It is equal, you know how to respond; nothing is difficult for you.

MARGUERITE

My dear, the difficulty in speaking or responding comes more often from one's ignorance of what one has to say than from the impression that the person to whom you are addressing makes on you.

CIXILONE

How do you explain his conduct towards us?

MARGUERITE

He did what he had to do. Finding out, when he saw us in chains, why we had been arrested, knowing that he would untie us and send us back to our business. For the rest, I have already told you, he knew that I was Ziska's fiancée, and Pierre, my brother, rendered him a small service in a moment of danger.

CIXILONE

Knowing that Ziska, your brother and my father are in rebellion against him, I find it strange that instead of keeping us hostage, he instructs us to make peace proposals to them.

MARGUERITE

Does he believe that his crown is in danger and that we can really be more useful to him free than prisoners?

CIXILONE

I have no doubt that he has a self-serving goal. Regardless, we had a narrow escape. Now that the Emperor is no longer here, I think we would do well to ask to leave at once. I don't feel safe here at all. He has made us respected here, which is very good, but, first of all, they should not have taken us there, don't you agree?

MARGUERITE

Entirely! (*Addressing the officer who protects her*)

Sir, the Emperor Sigismund, if I have heard correctly, has given the order to set us at liberty?

THE OFFICER

And to have you accompanied even if you wish. Do not fear, madame, we will be careful not to forget such a recommendation.

MARGUERITE

I don't doubt it, sir, but we would like to leave immediately, without an escort, without disturbing anyone. Can we?

THE OFFICER

Certainly, ladies, you are free; but believe me, don't leave now. There is no safety for you on the streets of Prague. We fight everywhere. Everywhere you will be exposed to being beaten or injured, or to falling into the hands of a few drunken soldiers. Have a little patience.

CIXILONE

But, sir, the soldiers who arrested us can come back, and how can we defend ourselves?

THE OFFICER

I have been charged with watching over you, ladies, and ensuring you are respected. You can be without worries.

The sound of cannon, drums and gunfire gets closer.

CIXILONE (to Marguerite)

Well! what do you decide?

MARGUERITE

Let's wait here, since the streets are full of drunken soldiers. Sir, we will therefore wait until the streets are more peaceful before we leave, but we would not like to stay here. We prefer to retire to the room where we were only a moment ago.

THE OFFICER

As you please!

He accompanies them to the back door, and he says to them, returning their greeting:

MAY THE ONE WHO HAS BEEN WRONGED SALUTE YOU!

SCENE XIII

KORANDA AND SOME OFFICERS,

KORANDA, (at the front of the Scene.)

For two days we have been fighting, burning, ruining, destroying, killing to find out who is right or wrong. Would the right of the strong be true? True or not, as long as men are ignorant, therefore wicked and blind, he will have a step on the others, and the strongest will be the most respected. Indeed, it is only through him that orthodoxy is orthodoxy.

What a terrible and great era this is in which I live. I see a society of fifteen centuries dissolving; and in this collapse I see the birth of a new one that will try to defend itself, but which will only really be instituted a few centuries from now. Ah! This is because palingenetic ideas are slow

to destroy and re-build human societies; but also nothing is more mathematical and advances with a more certain step.

In this conflict who am I for? For no one, I said!... For no one! This is not possible.

It's because I didn't think about it. But what if I question myself? Well, my tranquility makes me incline towards the past, because supposing that the Hussites triumph, there will be war and always war, and I am already old. However, justice and truth push me towards the Hussites... They are terrible! But do I have a choice of means? They destroy and devastate everything! Are they alone responsible for this era of anger? Wasn't the church the first to set an example? Didn't it annihilate individuals and their thoughts! Heretics and adherents, free thinkers and manuscripts, did it not burn everything, destroy everything, in hatred of the emancipation of the world? I could not be more peaceful, but if someone said to me as they have been told: You will not believe, you will only say and do what I want, because I find it good, and if I were convinced that this is unjust, that it diminishes me, degrades me! What would I do? Certainly I wouldn't put up with it. I would revolt; for if I did not rebel, I would be a coward. If I continued to bend and obey, I would be the lowest of the wretches!... Well that's the settled question. I, a friend of the Emperor, a regular at the archbishopric, have reached this point... Yes it's clear. If I question myself, my conscience answers: Hussite and war! Ah! I see it only too clearly; it is the logic of events that governs everything.

Dulcin, the Archbishop, the Abbot, and the regulars of the Archbishopric who are there with Dulcin to see the fire, return through the same door they took to leave.

SCENE XIV

KORANDA, DULCIN, THE ARCHBISHOP, THE MINISTER, THE
MAGISTRATE, THE ABBOT, MONKS, COURTIER, AND
SOLDIERS.

DULCIN, (entering hurriedly at their head.)

Ah! Koranda! What desolation! What vandalism! It is no longer! It is finished!

KORANDA

What?

DULCIN

The Augustinian convent, such a beautiful building, such a distinguished place of refuge, where no one could be admitted unless he was noble or of a very good house.

KORANDA, (*with a bit of mockery.*)

Dulcin, it is not the ruin of the convents that saddens me the most; it is the destructive rage of the revolting people, who not only attack ecclesiastical property, but who attack the property of individuals. (*He looks at Dulcin and says slowly*) The houses of the bourgeoisie who are suspected of being friends of the empire and the clergy are being burned.

DULCIN

What are you saying? They attack private property, individual property! No, it can't be. It has never been seen. But who told you that?

And I, who have six houses in Prague. Oh the bandits? Wretches! Am I unhappy enough!

KORANDA

Yes, my dear, and this is what really saddens me.

DULCIN

You? You who have nothing? Well, I find you amusing, at least. What does it matter to you that the houses of the imperialist bourgeoisie are being destroyed? There is no danger of yours being destroyed.

KORANDA

No. I do not have any. I only have a few pieces of furniture and a few belongings.

DULCIN

That's a big deal. What are all your rags worth? But, I am ruined. Ah! The scoundrels, the criminals. If we are the strongest, I will kill the leaders of the revolt with my own hand.

KORANDA

In any case, it won't be by fighting them, as you have been doing since this morning.

DULCIN

I have pushed them away just as well as you did.

KORANDA

They don't bother me.

DULCIN

Egad, I believe it! The beggars are more for themselves than for us.

KORANDA

Would you only be against them because you are rich?

THE ARCHBISHOP

We are against them, because we are for order and for the maintenance of our institutions.

SCENE XV

THE FORMER, A COURTIER.

THE COURTIER (*frightened*)

It's over, gentlemen, the small side of Prague is invaded, our lines are cut, and the gates are forced; the Hussites are masters everywhere. Ziska, followed by his men, entered the house of the priest who abused his sister, killed him with his own hand, and hung him from his window. The senate was invaded, the senators arrested, several of them were thrown from the windows, and were killed by falling on spits and pitchforks held in the air by furious people who were waiting for them below on the square.

Augustinian monks and Carthusians are paraded through the streets, with ropes around their necks and crowned with thorns. Johann the Premonstratensian, the same one who killed this morning our comrade and friend, Jean Sadlo, followed by his Taborites, the most exalted, is advancing and will surround us at any moment.

We are lost, if we do not make the immediate determination to act or save ourselves

Let's decide something, gentlemen!

Do we want to resist the rebels and defend ourselves to the death?

(*Silence.*)

Gentlemen, must we then surrender to the Taborites?

THE ARCHBISHOP

Never!

THE MINISTER

What if we went to join the Emperor?

DULCIN

I think that would be the wisest thing.

THE COURTIER

Let's see what the majority opinion is?

KORANDA

You see clearly that the majority is incapable of taking the slightest initiative, it is so terrified. Make any determination, and we will follow it.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Let someone bring us weapons, in order to give them to all those who do not have them.

THE MAGISTRATE

And also let them give us something to drink, for I do not know whether you are like me, but I am terribly parched.

DULCIN

Me too.

KORANDA

Does fear strangle you too, Dulcin?

DULCIN

Hey! Leave me in peace, you, with your stupid remarks.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Once armed, I am of the opinion that we should resist, and that we fight to the death.

DULCIN

But, my lord, what can we do with ten or twenty of us, compared to ten thousand perhaps.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Kill ten or twenty and die defending the cause of the clergy and the empire.

DULCIN

But, once again, what use will our death serve the empire and the clergy?

THE ARCHBISHOP

Keep quiet, then. You will make people believe that you don't want to defend yourself.

Someone brings weapons. Some take them.

SCENE XVI

THE SAME, A CANTEEN MANAGER.

THE CANTEEN MANAGER, (*offering a drink.*)

Who wants a drink, gentlemen?

THE MAGISTRATE

Over here.

THE CANTEEN MANAGER,

(Handing the drink to the magistrate.)

There you are!

THE MAGISTRATE

Thank you! (He drinks and cries:) Long live the church and the empire!

DULCIN (*to the canteen manager.*)

Give me a little glass too.

THE CANTEEN MANAGER, (*-serving Dulcin.*)

There you go! (*To the magistrate,*) And you? And my money?

THE MAGISTRATE

Dulcin, since you are drinking too, pay for both of us.

DULCIN, (*to the canteen manager*)

Here! (*He pays.*)

THE CANTEEN MANAGER,

(*After offering drinks to all the others who have refused*)

Is that all? Don't any of you gentlemen need a little more courage? Well! Here are some famous warriors!

THE MINISTER

Hey! So leave us alone, with your drink! It seems, to hear you, that you have to be drunk to punish rebels.

THE CANTEEN MANAGER

Lord, take it as you will, but it is a fact. Soldiers only fight well against the people when they have had their fill.

THE MINISTER

Will you please step aside, you impudent girl!

THE MAGISTRATE

Someone suggested going to join the Emperor.

THE ARCHBISHOP

The Emperor has betrayed us, abandoned us for a woman, after whom he is constantly running. It's not him we have to concern ourselves with anymore.

THE OFFICER, (*to whom the Emperor has entrusted the prisoners.*)

And why, Mr. Archbishop! Is it a lost cause through your fault, though that of the Roman Church?

A COURTIER

Ah! Gentlemen, no complaints! We need to be united more than divided right now. Let us not argue, my God; but let's act. Let us prepare to fight or to withdraw. It's high time.

KORANDA, (*to Dulcin, who he has taken aside.*)

Dulcin, the young woman to whom the Archbishop has just referred, at this moment, and through your fault, is still here. Only she can save us all. She is not Pierre Dresden's wife, as you said, but his sister. Take care, she has entrusted to the officer, head of the post, and was recommended to him by the Emperor. This officer is Bohemian, as you and I are, for almost all the others here are foreigners and don't care a bit about our unfortunate

homeland. You will therefore do well not to trust his devotion to the cause of the monks. I heard him speaking to these two young prisoners when he greeted them, and he is more Hussite than he looks. So be careful.

The prisoners all come onto the Scene and the two young women retreat to the back.

One hears the tocsin, the drums, and the cannon more loudly and distinctly the cries of:

Victory!

No more Pope!

No more Emperor, no Monarchs!

Long Live the Republic of Peoples!

The crowd invades the Stage. Johann the Premonstratensian enters, followed by some Taborites.

SCENE XVII

THE SAME, MARGUERITE, CIXILONE, JOHANN THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN, OFFICERS, SOLDIERS, ROSEMBERG, COURTIERS.

JOHANN THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN

My brothers, here we are, in the middle of the last nest of papists and imperialists that there was in Prague. Quickly! Let's disarm them!

Those whom the Taborites want to disarm go to the side of the Archbishop.

JOHANN THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN

In the name of the Republic inaugurated by the Hussites, I declare you all prisoners here! Let none of you try to escape, if you value your life!

Prisoners were arrested and brought here. Where'd they? What has become of them? Let them be released immediately

THE MINISTER

They were given their freedom immediately, and if they did not take advantage of it, it is because the streets of Prague were full of soldiers who didn't let anyone move around.

THE ARCHBISHOP, (*to Johann the Premonstratensian.*)

What right do you have, you miserable heretic, to present yourself here, after having persecuted our friends and had Jean Sadlo, the comrade-in-arms of the lords present here, beheaded? Do you think we are without courage and without energy, to come and insult us here, without you being punished as you deserve? Monks, close the doors, and you, lords, seize this wretch who speaks of disarming you, as if you were cowards unworthy of defending yourselves and avenging the death of your friend Jean Sadlo.

The Taborites who have gone to disarm the lords are driven back by some of them.

JOHANN THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN

advances toward the Archbishop and says to him:

Give yourself up!

A TABORITE LEADER

Do not resist. It's useless!

A struggle begins between the Archbishop and Johann the Premonstratensian. The lords push back Johann the Premonstratensian who at the same moment falls stabbed by the Archbishop.

JOHANN THE PREMONSTRATENSIAN

To me, Taborites! I die, struck by the Archbishop!

The Archbishop and the abbot retire to the back of the Stage. Cixilone and Marguerite go to the aid of Johann the Premonstratensian, who dies supported by them.

SCENE XVIII

THE SAME, PROKOP AND HIS SOLDIERS.

SOME SOLDIERS, *(enter shouting)*

The Taborites! The Taborites!

THE MAGISTRATE

Let's flee or we'll be lost! They will massacre us all if they realize that Johann the Premonstratensian, one of the most beloved of their leaders, has been killed here.

PROKOP, *(entering, followed by his soldiers.)*

Soldiers, my brothers and friends, guard all the exits of the palace and let no one leave.

CIXILONE

Prokop! Marguerite, we are saved!

MARGUERITE

Saved! And Bohemia free!

PROKOP

Let everyone who is here be arrested and taken to the camp prison! Let anyone who makes the slightest resistance or the slightest attempt to escape be put to death immediately. Do it! But what do I see? Cixilone and Marguerite, here?

Marguerite shows Johann the Premonstratensian to Prokop.

PROKOP

Johann the Premonstratensian! Killed!

ROSEMBERG, (*pointing his finger at the Archbishop.*)

Murdered by Monsignor the Archbishop!

All the imperials are arrested. The curtain falls.

End of the fourth act.

ACT FIVE

The Scene represents the camp of the Taborites.

On the front of the Stage, to the viewer's right, we see the tent used for meetings of the revolutionary committee. In the middle of this tent, which forms an oblong square, is placed a table covered with a green cloth and surrounded by chairs. Other seats are also lined up along the interior walls of the tent. In the middle of the back wall of the tent is the entrance.

SCENE I

MARGUERITE, ZISKA

(They are in the camp, both to the left of the spectators.)

ZISKA

Don't speak to me again, Marguerite, about the proposals of this miserable Sigismund. Bohemia, you know as well as I do, can no longer have a king without insulting those who died for it. Furthermore, how could it be possible that I would believe either his word or such condescension on his part. Sigismund has always been cruel and dishonest. Jean Huss, my old master and friend, was killed at his instigation after he had promised him his life. After having, by all kinds of protests of friendship and promises, attracted Prokop's young cousin to his camp, he had her locked up and left to starve to death in his prison. He is a monster of dissimulation and cruelty who does not shy away from any infamy as soon as it seems profitable to his interests. He only ever spoke the truth once in his life; it was when he said that you were beautiful, and even when he added that you inspired him with respect, it was a foul lie, because from the first time he spoke to you he wanted to insult you.

I just told you that you are beautiful, Marguerite! Oh! Yes, you are very beautiful; and my greatest despair, now that I have lost my eyes, is that I can no longer look at you. But you are so good, and my memory is so faithful that you will always be for me the angel of gentleness that I saw and that love placed at my side to calm my hatred, temper my anger and help me with her advice.

MARGUERITE

My dear friend, if I spoke to you again about Sigismund's proposals, it is because you told me yourself that very often the people did not understand you, that he paid more attention to his interests from the moment that the revolution disturbed them, that he did not care about his dignity as a man and that he fought you or betrayed you out of ignorance, which exhausted the country.

ZISKA

Yes, that is true.

MARGUERITE

I myself have often heard people moan and reproach you while crying, one for the loss of their husband, another for the death of their children, many for the ruin of their family; and I saw some Hussites, rich and good under royalty, having nothing left and not knowing where to take refuge to find the consolation that was due to them and that they expected to find under the Republic.

ZISKA

Marguerite, all this is inevitable. I lost my sight fighting for the Republic, too. If I had stayed at home or at court, if I had served Sigismund, instead of freedom, I could see you, I would be rich and would have no worries for the future; but I would be ashamed of myself, and I have always placed the fulfillment of duty above all else. When I question myself, I am proud to tell myself that I am an honest man and for nothing in the world would I want to stop esteeming myself.

Why don't all the families scattered by the war, all the suffering, come and take refuge in Tabor, since this temple of equality is open to all?

May all those you speak of go there, like us Marguerite, and the orphans will find a family there, the old men will find devoted and respectful children, the young daughters husbands, the widows new husbands, all freedom and the love of the homeland. But no, there are some who do not want to go and who complain, and for whom we can nevertheless do no more than for those who fought and whose energy triumphed over all our enemies in the latest upheavals.

MARGUERITE

You would be right, Ziska, if everyone could change their habits overnight and adapt to camp life. But it is not so.

ZISKA

Do you miss your childhood home?

MARGUERITE

No, my friend, I am too dear and pampered here to regret anything in the world. Moreover, Jean Ziska's wife is too happy to be in Tabor, because her husband whom she loves is there and needs her eyes, now that he no longer has his own to see. But, Ziska, believe me that if you were not here, life in the camps being not very edifying. I would never have thought that in Tabor life was completely different from that in the other military camps, and I wouldn't have wanted to come here

ZISKA

Take care, Cixilone and you, to find immediate relief from these inevitable miseries and everything necessary to relieve them will be put at your disposal. There is an active role to be created for women in the general administration of payroll interests. Start digging the first furrow, and the future will do the rest.

MARGUERITE

Cixilone is getting married this evening to Prokop; she doesn't have too much of her day to herself. So I'm going to take care of it alone today and do what's most urgent.

Prokop and Cixilone appear at the back of the stage.

But actually, here she comes with Prokop, her handsome fiancé. How happy she looks to lean on his arm!

SCENE II

ZISKA, MARGUERITE, PROKOP, CIXILONE

PROKOP

May he who has been wronged salute you.

ZISKA

Be welcome, my young friends!

CIXILONE

Hello.

MARGUERITE

Hello. (*to Cixilone,*) How beautiful you are, Cixilone? (*to Prokop.*) And you Prokop, *comme vous devez en être fier?*

PROKOP

It is true, Marguerite, that I am very fortunate.

MARGUERITE

You can't be prettier than her.

PROKOP

She is beautiful and I love her, Marguerite, Oh mais, plus que je ne saurais le dire.

CIXILONE

Finally he admitted it to me, thanks to you, Marguerite!

ZISKA

Perhaps you doubted that?

CIXILONE

I was sure of it, but it would have given me so much pleasure to hear him say it sometimes.

PROKOP

If you knew it, Cixilone, my love, although silent, had some eloquence for you.

CIXILONE

But you never said it to me.

ZISKA

Patience, my dear friend, there is no time lost yet.

PROKOP

Love, Cixilone, does not manifest itself in the same way in everyone. If by some, these words — I love you — are repeated every minute; for many others who are more shy, a look, a smile, a delicate attention are the only ways they have to prove their love.

MARGUERITE

Seeing you so joyful and so beautiful, do you think that we don't see your happiness in your eyes?

ZISKA

It's such a beautiful day for her wedding day

CIXILONE

Indeed, I have never felt like I was living with as much charm as I do today.

ZISKA

And what a pleasure for all the Taborites to see the only child of their old friend Jacobel unite with one of the most valiant and beloved of their young leaders. As they are going to be happy this evening at the banquet that will end your wedding.

CIXILONE

You remind us, Ziska, that thousands of our friends were also applauding on your wedding day to see their powerful and beloved leader marry the most courageous and gentlest of us all.

PROKOP

What joy and happiness for everyone!

ZISKA

Yes, we had just defeated the imperialists, inaugurated the Republic, and the cannon were still smoking, when Marguerite told me that she accepted me as her husband.

PROKOP

Your existence, like that of Bohemia, was going to take a new course at the same time, as your path is so strongly linked to that of our heroic Homeland!!!

For Bohemia, a new future. an era of justice and reparation. For you, Ziska, real contentment and the satisfaction of your most ardent ambition, the heart of Marguerite.

ZISKA

For me, a new existence, a more complete life, a future of love and happiness. Yes, but also, let me tell you, friends, and you Marguerite, don't be offended, my reward! Because if I have done something for my homeland, by making me her husband she has greatly rewarded me.

MARGUERITE

If all the families of Bohemia could be like ours, how happy their children would be. But can that be?

PROKOP

Materially it will be, because we seriously want it, and to achieve it we will not shy away from any obstacle. We will look for light everywhere and the light will come.

I had it proclaimed yesterday by order of the committee that anyone who has something useful to propose for the salvation and prosperity of the Republic will be received with pleasure and listened to religiously by the steering committee that meets for this purpose every day, at ten in the morning. There are already many citizens present at the camp, just waiting for the moment to make themselves heard. Our friends, Pierre, Jacobel, Rocsizane and Ganz, whom I left half an hour ago fighting with some bourgeois from Prague, promised to be here in a moment. Everything that must be done in the interest of the Republic, as far as possible, will therefore be proposed, examined, discussed, accepted, and the course of events will follow a decided line.

MARGUERITE

All that remains for us then is to go our way where our occupations call us. (*to Cixilone*) You, Cixilone, to your toilette. Because you and I don't have much time in Prague to bring some consolation to the victims and unfortunates of the revolution.

CIXILONE

See you soon, Prokop.

MARGUERITE

Ziska, see you tonight.

ZISKA

Don't forget anyone if possible.

MARGUERITE

You will be pleased!

SCENE III

ZISKA, PROKOP.

When the two young women have moved away, Prokop takes Ziska, who is blind, by the hand and leads him into the tent, where the meeting of the Revolutionary Committee will be held.

ZISKA

Prokop, you talked about the bourgeois of Prague! Do you know what they came here to do?

PROKOP

Bring a petition.

ZISKA

They were the least mistreated, the least unhappy of all the victims of the war. I always protected them against the imperials. I hope, assuming they ask for anything, that they will be easy to satisfy.

PROKOP

The bourgeois people of Prague, it is clear that you hardly know them if you suppose that they are the least bit grateful to you for the consideration you have shown them.

ZISKA

So what are they demanding?

PROKOP

A king!

ZISKA

A king?

PROKOP

Yes, Ziska! A king! The ingrates whom you have twice rescued from the hands of the imperialists, twice forgiven for having betrayed us, say that any government must be presided over and directed by a leader, that it is necessary to avoid any ambitious and turbulent rivalry, and that this leader be a king.

ZISKA

First of all, no one has the right to afflict future generations. And if the Republic had the misfortune of being governed by a single leader, what would it matter what title was given to him or how he would be elected? It would no longer be anything but a monarchy in disguise.

PROKOP

This is the opinion of all of us! But supposing that they absolutely needed a leader. Ah! Ziska. Shouldn't they have at least thought of you?

ZISKA

Think of me? No, my dear Prokop, this is not possible. I am not from

a family that cost the nation dearly. So they must not have thought of giving me such alms!

Then, when we want to make a man a king, it is not the person who chased them out who we ask to become one. We must suppose him too proud and too dignified to want to be!

SCENE IV

**PIERRE, JACOBEL, ZISKA, PROKOP, NICOLAS GANZ,
ROCSIZANE, AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE.**

PIERRE

May those who have been wronged salute you.

ZISKA

Yes, my friends, may those who have been wronged salute us all from now on. We have some rights there; we have taken their defense and will bring them justice against all.

NICOLAS GANZ

That will be difficult!

ZISKA

How?

PIERRE

My friends, let us be seated and begin the session.

NICOLAS GANZ

Didn't Prokop tell you that someone showed him this morning a petition signed by the main citizens of Prague, who invite us to make representations to the crowned heads to obtain a king who will govern our homeland?

ZISKA

He just told me, and I admit, I hardly expected it.

NICOLAS GANZ

Well! It didn't surprise me in the least.

ZISKA

How? After having triumphed over all our enemies, after having defeated them, dispersed them, driven them from the country!

NICOLAS GANZ

My friend, with our enemies, you have not chased away the idea of monarchy which is the very essence of current society.

ZISKA

I unfortunately realize this.

NICOLAS GANZ

The Republic, with its egalitarian level that threatens them, cannot become a normal social form for them from one day to the next; it is and will remain for a long time only a form of transitional government.

ROCSIZANE

Yes! The bourgeois of Prague, these Calixtine formalists, cannot believe that society exists if they do not find a master there to rob and degrade them;

NICOLAS GANZ

Whether it is this reason or another, it is a fact; and, in the absence of Jagellon, they ask for his nephew Coribut for king, while the great lords only want Sigismund, who has the crown jewels.

ZISKA

I do not believe, because as winners we are provisionally at the head of Bohemia, that everything is good, that everyone should be happy with us and not try to replace us in the council with other less advanced, less revolutionary Hussites; but to see people who chased away royalty yesterday, asking for it again today, this saddens me deeply. I see in it an indication of the silent resistance that we will encounter, to succeed in making Bohemia a nation of free men.

PROKOP

My dear Ziska, the Calixtins that you have always defended and protected have never been sincerely republican, and they never will be. They are selfish and proud people who only love their riches and only know how to talk about themselves.

The Taborites alone are men. Now as there are, very fortunately for our country, ten Taborites for every bourgeois, we therefore do not have to worry about their insane desire to have a king, nor to spare them if they obstruct us. We waged war against foreigners, priests and imperials. It is not, I suppose, to re-establish the monarchy after having destroyed it nor to please its supporters: miserable hypocrites who today affect the deepest horror for our feeble reprisals. As if for a few hundred priests and imperials who perished; in the battle, we had not had thousands of our men cowardly murdered, and among others two of our bravest and our best friends: Nicolas de Hussinetz and Johann the Premonstratensian.

ZISKA

You peak the truth, Prokop. I loved the Calixtines too much, and I will even add, that I was unfair to the Taborites, they the only children of Bohemia who know how to love it and suffer for it!

PROKOP

Besides, what do we see behind the names of all those who signed these royalist petitions? Selfish rich people who have even more horror of equality than fear of war; all the intriguers and speculators; all the beggars for titles and pensions; lazy people living off the labor of others and despising those who provide them with wealth. Whereas, among the Taborites, we are certain to find the enthusiastic, the sincere, the disinterested, the honest, in short all those who love and do not shy away from any sacrifice.

War then, if necessary, with these ghosts of monarchy, if they dare to conspire against the Republic, or even attempt to bring the slightest division to Tabor!

To put an end to all these monarchical fantasies, I ask that a temporary commission be created, for the duration of the war, of twelve tried and tested, experienced Thaborites, attached to the steering committee corresponding with them, traveling incognito, in order to have an eye, an ear and an arm everywhere.

I propose to provide them with a blank check, which gives them the right to suspend, ban, dismiss and replace any official who does not serve our cause with zeal and intelligence, and to temporarily arrest anyone who works for the benefit of the monarchy or the papacy.

ZISKA

It is the terror that we are going to organize.

PROKOP

It is the defense of the righteous who followed us, and who will succumb tomorrow with us, if we do not know how to protect them and make them respected.

ALL

Adopted.

PIERRE

My friends, for the love of justice, we have to this day, taken up the defense of the poor against the rich, of the simple against the deceiver, of the oppressed against the oppressor, of the free thinker against the priest, of woman against man, of the son even against the father who often unfairly favors his first born; it is not to remake the past and leave the oppressed defenseless that we fought, proclaimed the Republic and invited all citizens to serve it. Certainly not. The petition of the bourgeois of Prague, being the insulting negation of all the efforts of the people to achieve their independence, and the even more insulting affirmation of a social state favorable to the emergence of a small number of privileged people, therefore cannot even be tolerated.... But why are these people

petitioning like this? They love liberty; equality is dear to them, since they rose up against the monarchy and the withdrawal of the cup; and they ask for a king, who will destroy the one and take away the other. Illogic that proves their ignorance, and makes them their own enemies. In my opinion, we must therefore enlighten them while waiting until we can achieve some material improvements in their interests, which will attach them to the new social order. To this end, I propose to create, for the dissemination of revolutionary ideas, a propaganda commission responsible for having individuals travel throughout Bohemia, going from village to village, carrying a banner decorated with 24 different paintings, representing on one side the pyres, thefts and massacres committed by the supporters of the church and the empire, and on the other, the material improvements that they will owe to liberty.

In addition, these 24 paintings must be reproduced in twenty-four drawings engraved and printed on fine paper and after explanation in public, they must be spread in profusion everywhere; so that each Bohemian having one in his room continually before his eyes, cannot forget for a moment either the brigandages of the priests and the imperialists, or the benefits that he is entitled to expect from the liberty and security that the Republic will provide them.

ALL

Adopted.

NICOLAS GANZ

The bourgeois of Prague, of which I was one of the leaders for a long time and who are now asking for a king, do so not entirely out of ignorance, but out of an instinct for self-preservation and in order to have peace of mind. They wonder if it is not better to have a government that they do not like, but which will leave them to their family life and their work and business habits, rather than a government of their choice which, in order to defend his existence will be obliged to wage eternal war, and under which, consequently, there will be neither truce nor rest.

The old men love peace, the women fear war and their influence is great in families.

If we could only make them hope that we will not always be at war, that the mother will not see every last one of her sons leave, the woman her husband, the young child his father, no one would dream of asking for a king. But the bourgeoisie foresees what can happen.

If, as the threat was made by the clergy, we do not want to leave Bohemia to its own devices at any price, and it is afraid. If we can reassure it, it is all ours.

ZISKA

My dear Ganz, if the bourgeoisie breaks away from us, it is indeed an

interminable war; if, on the contrary, it remains faithful to its first movement, our enemies will be beaten, and we will have peace: this will be easy to demonstrate to it, if we want to take the trouble.

At the same time we will have to address other peoples, in order to make them understand that their monarchs, by waging war against us, are ruining and decimating them, for the sole pleasure of satisfying their self-esteem, their dynastic interests, and their national grudges.

That it is time for the people to put an end to all existing sovereigns, and to form a European confederation, which gives more to citizens and municipalities, than to central authority; which makes war pointless, and enables nations to disband their armies and send soldiers back to industry. Because today there is no longer a first or last nation.

Such qualification by rank of superiority or inferiority is unfair and hurtful, seeing that there is no people, however small and poor, who cannot bring to the union advantages, resources, values, utilities of their own, which none other than they could obtain under the same conditions. The bourgeoisie, which is intelligent, which knows the price of time and things, which knows what armies cost, and how much, if they were workers instead of being soldiers, young people would increase the general wealth, must then, if it really desires peace, set to work in concert with us: because if it no longer follows us, the people seeing us abandoned by our own friends, far from imitating us, will follow their sovereigns, and will wage an endless war on us.

In support of this opinion, I therefore ask that an invitation to unite with us be made to the population of Prague, in order to avoid war, and that emissaries be sent to all the peoples of Europe, to invite them to form a Republican confederation among them all, if they no longer want to have wars to fight, armies to maintain, masters to serve, and heavy taxes to pay!

ALL

Adopted.

JACOBEL

The terror projected by Prokop, and the propaganda proposed by Pierre and Ziska, are of incontestable utility, I agree: they will the imperialists tremble and be silent and loathe royalty; but that will not make people understand or love the Republic any more.

To love and defend the Republic, the people must have some sort of interest in it, firstly an interest in dignity, then a material interest without which there is only disappointment. It is to this point that I want to draw the attention of the committee.

Until now, the economic question having been little and not widely studied, the people must understand by seeing and be convinced that what they have to undertake for their moral and material emancipation is

simple, just, useful and easy — all the more because we have everything to destroy and everything to rebuild, because if out of prejudice or weakness, we leave only one of the monarchical institutions standing, if to make ourselves accepted by all, we protect today the interests of these today, then tomorrow the opposing interests of those, let us fear that the transitional environment in which we will place ourselves will be stronger than us, and will make us powerless to do anything useful for the masses.

ALL

That is our opinion!

JACOBEL

Today, the problem to be solved is that of the production and equitable distribution of wealth.

Let's first examine it briefly. What contributes to the production and consumption of wealth? Five things.

Land.

Labor.

Capital.

Exchange.

Security.

Has each of these five elements the right to a part in the division of wealth?

ZISKA

Without any doubt!

JACOBEL

Let us first see why each of these elements is entitled to a share in the distribution of wealth, and then examine whether the share granted to each of them is not too high or too low and, therefore, to the detriment or to the advantage of a few; because it could well be that this was the origin of all the injustices, of all the recriminations and of all the struggles, which for thousands of years have bloodied the world.

With regard to land, whatever the social environment chosen, it will always be necessary to pay to society, if not to the owner, the equivalent of this quality attached to a useful product, which, given by nature, has cost neither care, nor pain to men and which is called Rent.

Relative to labor, which is all that is most personal, it will always be necessary to remunerate man for the application of his physical and intellectual faculties to the object he has shaped.

Capital, such as buildings, workshops, machines, tools, materials, etc., used for production, deteriorates, wears out, is used up and often, through new discoveries, becomes costly, instead of being productive as it was, and

it will always have to be maintained, repaired, modified, renewed constantly.

Exchanges require probity, order, care, travel, transport, services rendered in a word; it will always be necessary to pay the costs.

Now, if only to obtain reparation for an unjust aggression, if only to educate the youth, form a healthy, virile and intelligent population, develop the natural wealth of the country, maintain the schools, the roads, the bridges, rivers, ports etc, etc; an administration — rather to monitor than to execute — will be necessary; it will therefore be necessary to pay the expenses.

Thus there can be no doubt: everything that contributes either directly or indirectly to the formation of wealth must have a share in its distribution. But, what share? Who should determine it? Is it an economic law, or anyone's guess, like today?

If it is up to everyone's conscience, let us expect to have only lions; if, on the contrary, it is an economic law, there will be more justice, but then production must be organized differently, because as long as the existing order of things is not modified, the slightest relief from the miseries of this world is illusory.

Is this possible? Yes! By what means? By encouraging, by means of social capital, the creation of social centers of production, exchange and consumption in solidarity with each other, where all men can, at will, classify themselves in the functions to which they are most attracted; where everyone can provide mutual services to each other and where, when distribution comes, everyone is paid in mathematically determined proportion for the products they have made, the services they have rendered.

Placed in these new conditions; what would be the share offered to each of the five elements of the production of wealth?

To society, we would only have to pay for the land that we would enjoy as an instrument of labor, the equivalent of the productive and inexhaustible qualities and faculties of the globe that a privileged few have seized today, which would serve to increase social capital and would replace taxes.

Capital only has the maintenance, use and replacement of everything it has provided: which would be minimal in proportion to what capitalists take today.

Commerce reduced to a simple act of exchange, taking no profit on the objects to be consumed but the fair collection intended to remunerate the services rendered by those responsible for transporting them, supervising them, arranging them and delivering them to consumers against their equivalent in exchange vouchers would cost almost nothing.

As there would be little or almost nothing to give to the government,

which such an organization would transform into a pure and simple supervision of general interests, and whose expenses would be covered by the income coming from the essentially productive faculties of the globe, there is no would have little or nothing to give. Three-quarters of the general production of wealth would therefore remain as the share due to the efforts of workers, which is not the case today.

This truth having been demonstrated, that everything that contributes to producing wealth must have its share in the distribution, and having in some way determined the share that must fall to each of the elements of production, it remains for me to examine whether the solution of the social problem does not depend on the way in which the social centers of production, exchange and consumption must be organized.

NICOLAS GANZ

Jacobel, before going on, would you allow me one simple observation?

JACOBEL

With pleasure, Ganz. I am listening.

NICOLAS GANZ

The nation produces on average only two hundred francs per head per year, and if the distribution of wealth were done equitably, as you want, everyone would be poor. Would we not then fall back into barbarism? No one is fortunate enough to create something beautiful and serve as an example to the rest of the nation, who always follow the rich and bring progress, wanting to imitate them. Wouldn't we go backwards instead of moving forward?

JACOBEL

Even if your observation were justified, my dear friend, I do not see why someone would take from me what I need to give to another what is superfluous to them, which is supremely unjust and immoral. But your observation is not justified, because it is only a question of displacement of consumption and not an impoverishment for the nation. And, although injustice makes great rich people, who through their excessive spending serve progress, a nation giving its spending a direction consistent with the material, intellectual and artistic aspirations of the people can always do more than the richest of its children. Now admitting that the production of each year is, as you say, only two hundred francs per head: not every product is of such immediate consumption, so instantaneous that there is nothing left at the end of the year.

Bohemia produces five billion per year for twenty million inhabitants. Let us assume this figure. out of these five billion there are at least two that last ten, twenty, fifty, a hundred years and even more before being consumed: which increases almost tenfold each one? Don't you agree with

me?

(*General silence.*)

JACOBEL

With this incident cleared up, I move on to the solution of the problem, which consists, in my opinion, in the way in which production, exchange and consumption will take place within the new society.

Well, my friends, suppose that one of us — me, for example — has a million at my disposal and I want not to get rich, but to transform the world, to *Taborize* it, as our enemies say, nothing would be easier, and here is how I would go about it.

I would open a huge store in one of the busiest areas of Prague.

I would divide it into several departments.

One for millinery.

One for shoemaking.

Another for lingerie and clothing.

Another for the bookstore and newspapers.

Another for liquids and spirits.

Another for bread, cakes and dry pasta.

Another for meat, game and fish.

Another for dairy, butter, eggs and vegetables.

Another for furniture and fabrics.

Another for hardware and bedding.

Another for necessities, toiletries and novelties.

A sort of warehouse office for bricks, plaster, lime etc.

These departments would first be supplied with top quality products, purchased in bulk which would be sold at retail and for cash with a very slight increase in price — until we could sell, at cost and bid price, those that we have manufactured.

As soon as products from an industry mentioned above are sold, in sufficient quantity to occupy a few producers, we would open a workshop.

So, assuming that we sold enough shoes to employ five shoemakers, we would open a shoemaking workshop.

Enough hats to keep ten hatters busy, we would open a millinery workshop.

Enough bread to keep five bakers busy we would open a bakery.

Enough clothes to keep ten tailors busy, we would open clothing workshops.

Enough books, newspapers, we would open a printing press.

Enough wine, beer, milk, butter, vegetables, fruits, grains, bricks, lime, plaster, coals etc. We would establish farms, breweries, brickyards; we would open quarries, coal mines; finally, we would create as many special workshops as were necessary for the needs of consumption.

As soon as the shoemaking, millinery, clothing, bookstore, bakery and other workshops would have multiplied, and would have become of quite considerable importance and would use a quantity of leather, cloth, fabrics, flour, of paper and other objects considerable enough to be able to continuously supply tannery workshops, drapery workshops, factories of all kinds of fabrics, paper mills, mills and other factories, well, we would establish them.

The scale would therefore extend gradually, until it had reached all industries.

NICOLAS GANZ

Up to now, this organization is of elementary ease, and there are not three bourgeois in Prague who are not capable of directing it perfectly. But let's see the results.

JACOBEL

In these production workshops, inseparable from the interests of the centers of consumption and exchange, no longer belonging as today to one owner, but to all, as instruments of labor, no one would work for the profit of another, because there would no longer be a boss or a master; everyone would have the fruit of their labor for themselves. Objects sold at cost price would be made available to everyone.

When a product would sell for more than it actually cost to produce because it would be in too much demand, this surplus sometimes coming from a natural monopoly such as the genius, the talent, the ability of the inventor and artist, it would as always be regulated by supply and demand, for the benefit of the individual; if this surplus came, on the contrary, as most of the time happens from a natural quality attached to the object which did not cost any human effort, this surplus, I say, would go to the society that would use it as I have already said, to cover security and administration expenses.

Each time a worker or a group of workers would like to have raw materials, fabrics, etc., to shape or transform them, they would be charged for it; then, when the work was finished and the product took its place with the others in their respective department, they would be credited.

Every week, or more often, all work would be settled, each account balanced and paid, and these account transfers, this book- and cash-keeping would constitute what is called the exchange bank: a bank serving all transactions between centers of production and consumption.

Such an organization would make credit free and mutual, complete solidarity between all centers of production, exchange and consumption; it would reconcile all interests, in all industries: it would, through its bank, serve the budgets of society, would transform the current government into a pure and simple administration of general interests,

and would change all current human relations relating to labor. There would no longer be either rulers or governed, privileged or victims, exploiters or exploited, the equality and solidarity of conditions would be complete and all *cracies* eliminated forever.

Land, workshops, machines, tools, labor instruments of all kinds, functions, services and jobs of all kinds would be made equally accessible to all; the products, with a few exceptions, delivered at cost price. The legitimate property of man would be the remuneration of his physical and intellectual efforts, and never the result of a profit made on sales or on the labor of others.

When everything was in full swing, when I could not only explain, but show the progress and results of my enterprise to the workers, which would happen soon, I would summon them and tell them: this immense agglomeration of various industries working through one another and united with one another, belongs to the people. Therefore, it is yours. You see by what we have done to date, what we can do from now on.

Continue it, have it directed: first, by men of your choice; then by men chosen by lot and taken from among those who have demonstrated ability; change them every year, so that everyone takes their turn; and from time to time oversee all their operations yourselves, because on its success depends the complete and definitive emancipation of peoples.

What I will do, I, a simple individual, associations can do. Provisional leaders of a social Republic must undertake it as a first manifestation, to serve as an example and provide impetus, if it is to be the case that in the world from now on, there is no place for monarchies. I have spoken.

PIERRE

If the committee were of the opinion to allocate a large sum to begin this work of emancipation, would you accept the responsibility of directing it for the first year.

JACOBEL

Yes, if the committee decides that this must be done!

PIERRE

Let's ask. Does anyone want to make some comments on the proposal I just made to Jacobel?

(Silence.)

PIERRE

Does anyone object to the execution beginning to take place?

(Silence.)

JACOBEL

No one objects! However, I would like to hear someone explain what

we should hope for from such an enterprise; if we find it rational, and if we can expect the results that I have briefly indicated!

Ganz, my old friend, tell us what you think. I mainly want to know your opinion.

NICOLAS GANZ

My opinion is that nothing is easier to establish, because if we only had to carry out the works that the country needs to maintain its armies, its schools, its roads, etc., this would be enough to ensure the success of a beginning. But what I foresee, which will not be to everyone's taste, even many of our supporters who believe themselves to be the best republicans on earth, is the rigorous justice that will preside over all their actions; it is this real equality that will not allow anyone to speculate, to chase a fortune that they do not owe to their own merits.

Many dream of fortune, glory and splendor, and serve the Republic because royalty left no door open to their secret ambition; but as soon as they see that there are no more classes in the nation, that these words nobles, bourgeois, proletarians no longer represent anything, that everyone works for themselves, whoever wants to have the luxury, instead of obtaining it through speculation or the labor of others, will only be able to acquire it through an increase in science or labor, I fear that many of our supporters, worthy sons of a proud and greedy society, cannot rise to the height of justice and respect for their fellow human beings that such an organization will necessarily create.

But as, after all, this is no reason not to try it because selfish imbeciles will not be satisfied, so I urge, on the contrary, to pay more attention to it.

I, whose fortune was made by the labor of others, because as long as I worked for others I remained poor, I recognize better than anyone the justice of the organization proposed by Jacobel. If I only listened to my present interests, I would reject it because it will create disastrous competition for me, and will ruin me, relatively speaking; but, like you, my friends, before my interests, although bourgeois, I place justice. I therefore support the proposition that destroys the bourgeoisie; moreover, I ask to join Jacobel, to assist him and help him in the little that I know.

JACOBEL

Thank you Ganz, for your offer, which I accept with pleasure.

NICOLAS GANZ

But let us not forget, friends, this social question will make us more enemies than all the others; you can stupefy the bourgeois, even take his children as long as he has the prospect of getting rich quickly. But to disturb egoism, to disturb interests that believe themselves to be legitimate and honorably acquired, is to put one's hand into the nest of the most dangerous snake.

PROKOP

As for the snake, the Taborites are there to crush it; if it pretends to bite us or even if it doesn't stay quiet.

SCENE V

THE SAME, A HERALD, AND SEVERAL CITIZENS OF
BOHEMIA.

A HERALD

Several citizens ask to be received by the directing committee of the Republic.

PIERRE

Let them be welcome!

The petitioning citizens enter; one of them says:

May he who has been wronged salute you!

After the greetings, they each take a seat on one of the chairs around the tent.

PIERRE

Please, citizens, take a seat and tell us each in turn what brings you here?

One of the petitioners followed by two of his comrades advances towards the committee

THE PETITIONER

Citizens, we come on behalf of the inhabitants of Commotau, Mise and Trocnitz, to ask the steering committee to invite the people to vote for the Republic and to decree the immediate arming of all citizens.

PIERRE

The Republic being the political form of any society, it is legal and proclaims itself. No one can, without crime, fail to recognize it and prefer the monarchy. The people themselves do not have the right, because even if they voted unanimously for a royalty, as it is not temporary, they do not have the right to impose it on those who, too young today to vote, will only be voters tomorrow. As for arming citizens, nothing could be more fair. Being armed is a right that belongs to every free man, and weapons will be issued to them this evening.

ONE OF THE PETITIONERS

May those who have been wronged salute you!

(The first three petitioners bow and exit.)

ONE OF THE MEN OF THE SECOND PETITION

Gentlemen, since liberty was given to the people, the country has

received more light and learned more things in just a few days than it had learned in centuries. We therefore do not come to ask in the name of the inhabitants of Melnick, Brux, and Breslau, who send us here, that man should no longer be free even to the point of license. But if man alone or in society must be free, because he is not strong enough to destroy the freedom of others, formidable societies linked to each other and whose leaders are abroad, can overcome it.

We therefore come to ask the revolutionary committee to ban all societies, all congregations that have correspondence with each other and which branch out to a center of action.

NICOLAS GANZ

Convinced that liberty is the precious treasure of man, and that if the Republic is organized by virtue of the equality and solidarity of conditions, these unhealthy companies, these perverse congregations, these stupefying societies will have no influence for evil and consequently no reason for existence, the revolutionary committee will shelter itself under the aegis of freedom; as long as it is not obliged to wage war and take action against the enemies of the Republic. Being an enemy of the Republic is not finding that we are leading the country's policy badly, saying that one would do better than us and seeking to replace us with others. No! It is appealing to the troops of the Imperials, to the funds of the clergy to re-establish the monarchy that a people who have fought for their liberty can no longer endure without dishonoring themselves, without unworthily stealing the efforts of those who died for them.

THE SECOND PETITIONER

May he who has been wronged salute you.

The three second petitioners bow and withdraw.

ONE OF THE MEN OF THE THIRD PETITION

Citizens, we come to ask in the name of the Taborites of Cottiburg and Klataw, that all the magistrates who persecuted and condemned our partisans who had committed no civil crime, that all the spies who denounced and arrested them, all the jailers who mistreated them be punished for having made themselves accomplices of the papacy and the empire and the providers of their prisons and their slaves; we ask that they be subject to the same penalties that they inflicted on their victims, and pay all the damages that they caused to the families that they deprived of one or more of their members.

Johann the Premonstratensian, our brave leader, called us to fight with him for the retaliation. He died for this cause. You, his friends, ensure that he did not promise us this act of justice in vain.

ROCSIZANE

Generosity is the most beautiful virtue of a people and we would like to see forgiveness come from its mouth, the day after its victory.

However, as the spies, jailers and magistrates who have persecuted us to this day have been the most deceitful, the most perverse and the most vile of men, we will postpone any absolution for them, we will refuse them any softening of the regime of the prisons where they are locked up and where they tortured our people, and their property will be used to compensate their victims.

ONE OF THE PETITIONERS

May those who have been wronged salute you.

The men of the third petition salute and withdraw.

ONE OF THE MEN OF THE FOURTH PETITION

Citizens: we come on behalf of the inhabitants of Saalz, Graditz and Pilsen, to ask the revolutionary committee that the Republic does not take responsibility for paying the royalties; consequently that all holders of titles and claims on Bohemia be stripped of their claims and all annuities and pensions repudiated.

JACOBEL

When a monarch has put a country in debt through expenditures of his private authority, or when he has been allocated money by corrupt assemblies supported by an army fed up and sold by its leaders; and when the kings, assemblies and constitutions that authorize them have been imposed by force on a people, these people owe nothing. It is not because they bowed for years under their yoke, which they could not break sooner, that their weakness constitutes an acquired right for all their oppressors.

The Republic will therefore not take on any debt incurred by previous monarchies; but we will follow, in relation to the debt of previous governments, the procedure that was followed for the settlement of those of the provinces.

We will elect a debt liquidation commission, responsible for examining its origin, titles and creditors.

Only titles that have been obtained in exchange for work done, objects provided, services rendered to the homeland will be recognized as valid; and the sums necessary for their payment will be taken from the property of all those who were part of the administration of the fallen governments. If that does not suffice, the fortunes of their wealthy supporters will.

Such is, citizens, is the active intention of the provisional committee of the Republic.

ONE OF THE PETITIONERS

May those who have been wronged salute you.

The men of the fourth and final petition salute and withdraw.

SCENE VI

THE SAME, LESS THE PETITIONERS.

PIERRE, (*to one of the visitors who has not left.*)

Sir, what is the purpose of your visit?

WALTER

I, gentlemen, have no petition to present; I have come to offer you an invention.

All the members of the committee seemed surprised.

NICOLAS GANZ

Sir, if your invention needs to remain secret or requires to be understood by someone competent, do you think it is in your interest to produce it here?

WALTER

The invention that I come to offer here is not from me, but from a Lollard who entrusted it to me when I was in England. It is entirely within your competence and should remain secret, if you deem it appropriate.

PIERRE

We are listening to you.

WALTER

In the face of all the murderous inventions and all the destructive devices, such as cannons, bombs, shells, new weapons of precision, with repeated shots and with extraordinary range, streets opened to respond to strategic points, fortified barracks and battlements that sovereigns patronize, invent, build and improve to better enslave people; I thought that since the attack was working and perfecting its means, the defense should not remain stationary. I therefore thought of the invention, as simple as it was ingenious, of my friend Lollard, to destroy, without an army, without help and without them being able to do anything to guarantee it, the despots and their devoted servants who will threaten my country with war and the destruction of its freedom, and I come to offer it gratis to the Republic.

NICOLAS GANZ

We cannot, sir, use such means. We would be accused of being murderers.

WALTER

The spies, the lackeys of the monarchy and all the imbeciles will cry assassination: there is no doubt about it! But do you take into account the opinion of all this rabble? If you are still there, it is because, in fact, you deserve this name, because you would blush at this action, and would have understood neither the motive, nor the grandeur, nor the interest!

Let someone call me miserable when I lied to a man, my fellow, a scoundrel if I tried to steal from him; murderer, if I struck him to kill him. I understand that. It is right; I deserve it, because this man is my equal, and arbitration is possible between us. But because I would have used all means to kill a monster who has ceased to be a man and like all other animals is not subject to any laws of society, to any responsibility? I would be a murderer! Since when then do we call murderer, the hunter who kills the wild beast by surprise, or the fisherman who catches the shark on the hook or the otter in his nets?

So are monarchs still men for you? But if their impunity does not open your eyes, ask them themselves about it. If they are willing to let you know their opinion, you will see that it is in complete conformity with mine!

NICOLAS GANZ

But sir, admitting all this, honor does not allow us to act like this, with a sovereign attacking us to our face.

WALTER

Ah! Pardon ! I didn't know that sovereigns attacked their enemies to the face! I believed, on the contrary, I had even heard one of them say, when I was at court, that to get the better of an enemy party it was first necessary to spy on it, then to divide it, weaken, corrupt and compromise it; then surprise it and attack it, unceremoniously, when the moment of struggle arrived. If he had to go there, keep as far away as possible; send against his enemies men who often hate him, but who, out of passive obedience, kill everything that comes before them, and if necessary, parents, brothers and friends, which I, who am speaking to you, refuse to do.

I thought that it was humane to save the lives of men and that, when we had to obtain justice from a leader, it was better to strike him and his entourage, criminals like him, than to make poor devils fight against each other, who often don't know each other and who don't blame each other at all.

It seems that I was wrong, that men are made to cut each other's throats without knowing why, and that the death of a few thousand citizens cutting each other's throats in the middle of the street, in the open sun, or on a battlefield is less deplorable, more consistent with honor than

the disappearance of a few bad scoundrels who pushed them there in the interest of their dynasties and their prejudices. That's good: then, let's not talk about it anymore. (*He gets up to leave.*)

ZISKA

Isn't that you, Walter?

WALTER

Yes! Ziska, it is me.

ZISKA

I also seemed to recognize your voice! Don't go away; but tell us what you know. — My friends, Citizen Walter is one of my former war comrades, in whom I have the greatest confidence. He is good, honest and serious; let's listen to him carefully.

WALTER

Gentlemen, the invention of my friend the Lollard, of whom I had the honor to speak to you, will prevent the shedding of much human blood, and will enable you to obtain, if not justice, at least some truces and above all the respect of all sovereigns there, including that of his holy caducity the pope — for we must not forget it, princes worship force, and are infinitely respectful towards those they fear.

The invention is nothing other than an explosive box of still unknown destructive power and very easy to send; this box, by means of a mechanism, bursts whenever we want.

As for getting it to the leaders of our enemies who will not want to leave our beloved homeland alone, nothing is easier, and I will take care of it as soon as you tell me: do it, and perhaps even before you say it, because, I am part of the society: *Friends of the Tranquility of Peoples*, which is also the judge, at its own risk, of what must be done to avenge the Republic of its numerous enemies and deliver the people from their many tyrants.

NICOLAS GANZ

We thank you, sir, for all your information; but as we will only consent to use your invention in the case where our adversaries torture or kill our prisoners, we will therefore postpone for the present the execution of such an attempt and we ask you to postpone it too.

WALTER

Gentlemen, fear that when your friends are decimated, there will no longer be time to act.

It is a great moral responsibility to respect and spare tyrants who respect and spare no one: Étienne Marcel, Witt Tyler, the Artevelde spared their sovereigns; they are dead and their friends and their cause

with them!

ZISKA

We will think about everything you said Walter. Come see me, in a few days; you would make me happy.

PROKOP

Citizen, please do not leave the Tabor camp before seeing me again. We have to offer you an important mission that you may be able to accept.

WALTER

Gentlemen, goodbye then. And may those who have been wronged salute you! (*He leaves.*)

SCENE VII

ZISKA, PIERRE DRESDEN, JACOBEL, GANZ, ROCSIZANE,
PROKOP, KORANDA, DULCIN, THE ARCHBISHOP, THE ABBOT,
THE MAGISTRATE, THE MINISTER, THE GENERAL, SOME
COURTIERS.

*We see the prisoners, bound in pairs, that the Taborites lead into the
Revolutionary Committee.*

A BAILIFF

The officer who brings the prisoners asks if the steering committee can receive them now.

PIERRE

Let them come!

*The prisoners enter two by two and remain at the back of the tent
where they are lined up.*

PIERRE

Well! You are here, Koranda?

KORANDA

Yes, Pierre! I was taken prisoner at the Archbishopric, at the same time as your charming sister and Jacobel's pretty daughter; and if it weren't for the annoyance of having been looked at askance by all your Taborite friends, I wouldn't complain too much; because without my arrest, I would never have been able to accurately appreciate what deep roots the Hussite revolution had among the people.

(Turning towards the Archbishop.)

Well! My lord; when I told you that the Hussites would be victorious; you did not want to believe me, despite my most peremptory philosophical demonstration.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Are you going to start trying to prove to me again what I don't want to admit?

KORANDA

Indeed, it's useless; you never want to agree to anything. But tell me, Pierre, why was I kept here for so long; now what do you want to do with me? I'm not one of you, you run so hard that I couldn't keep up with you. However, I understand that you rose up to live, work and think as you wish. I will even highly approve of its success, provided that you are logical, and allow me to return quietly to my home, to see if my poor old servant has not died of worry and fear.

Provided you didn't burn the house down.

ZISKA

Only a few convents were burned.

DULCIN

Only some convents? Ah! I breathe!

KORANDA, (*softly to Dulcin, smiling.*)

Hey! I thought it hurt you so much, when they burned the convents?

DULCIN

Oh, shut up! You are going to compromise me with your useless thoughts.

PIERRE

And you, doctor? How were you taken prisoner?

DULCIN

Through your fault, Mr. President.

PIERRE

Really?

DULCIN

You called me to your house one evening to care for a man who had fallen from a horse and whose life you saved, without knowing him.

PIERRE

Yes, I have since learned that it was Emperor Sigismund!

DULCIN

Well! I, whom he knew, was obliged to obey the orders he gave me, and I was with him, providing him with my care, when the victorious Hussites put his partisans to flight and stopped me.

ZISKA

Doctor, you like to lie and tell stories of your own invention. Remember in the future that lying is cowardly, and that liberty does not

absolve slander.

I ask that we let the imperialist Dulcin go to Prague, to see if his six houses are not burned. (*nod of assent*) Koranda, you are his friend, I have been told; you can accompany him.

KORANDA

I joyfully regain my freedom, as any sensible man must do; but know, Ziska, now that the doctor is free, that to be my friend you must not be of this or that party, but above all show good faith and disinterestedness.

ZISKA

And Dulcin is capable of neither. I understand, Koranda, and ask you to forgive me for having inflicted him on you as a friend. I won't do so again.

DULCIN, (*aside, as he is leaving.*)

What a troop of beggars, all these Taborites! Finally, I am free! I have escaped!

Koranda and Dulcin leave.

SCENE VIII

THE SAME, LESS DULCIN AND KORANDA.

PROKOP

Archbishop, not content with having fomented civil war in Bohemia, you had poor fathers massacred and their children reduced to slavery, because they worshiped God differently than you. Since you killed John the Premonstratensian, what do you have to say to exonerate yourself?

THE ARCHBISHOP

You are heretics and the priests only have to account for their actions to themselves.

PROKOP

Is this your last word?

The Archbishop remains silent.

PIERRE

Archbishop, the crime you committed against John the Premonstratensian will probably bring punishment on your head if you go to trial. We would have preferred, after its triumph, that the Republic would not have the slightest drop of blood to spill; and for this, we were ready to listen, with indulgence, to the reasons that you could invoke to attenuate and perhaps make us forgive your crime.

THE ARCHBISHOP

Forgive me, will you? This is strong, indeed! Well! You have some

arrogance! But it is up to us to forgive you; and we never will! If you believe that we are going to let you quietly organize the Republic, accept your pardons and allow everyone to give us generosity, you are very foolish!

Between you and us, there can now only be war, but war to the limit, war always! We will not give you a moment of rest; we will force you to make your men only soldiers. And supposing that you are victorious, your men being obliged to be all soldiers, always soldiers and nothing but soldiers — for when they have been soldiers for a few years they no longer know how to be anything else — they will cease to be citizens, to have the spirit of citizens. As command and obedience gain ground, the desire to assemble, to discuss and learn, will weaken. It will be abandoned and there will be no more individuality for us to reckon with. You will be shaped as we like populations to be. Once militarized, your men will love discipline, will no longer understand liberty. They will return to us more flexible and more devoted than ever; and nothing can safeguard you from it.

PROKOP

You could have added, in the same tone: our designers, our painters and our sculptors will only produce obscene subjects; our poets and writers only licentious and stultifying books; our monarchical supporters will only run gambling and debauchery houses; but you count without us who know you and will know how to make you incapable of harm. But enough about that. You murdered John the Premonstratensian!

Do you have anything to say regarding this murder?

THE ARCHBISHOP

You are heretics!

PROKOP

Very well! Guards, lead the Archbishop to the dungeon with the murderers arrested in the act; and let him be subjected to the same regime that he had inflicted on his prisoners, so that he knows it for himself for a few days, before being called before the justice of the country.

The Archbishop is separated from the Abbot and taken away.

SCENE IX

THE SAME, LESS THE ARCHBISHOP.

ZISKA

Mr. Abbot, you have the reputation of being the most vigorous consoler of devotees of a certain age, and the greatest collector of inheritances, which to the detriment of their families, these mad old ladies give up to you in exchange for a seat in heaven or a place in your

heart.

THE ABBOT

My conscience doesn't blame me for anything. I have never acted except in the interest of heaven.

ZISKA

The Republic cannot tolerate such immoralities or such infamies. We order you to leave Bohemia as quickly as possible. We would invite you, when you leave, to stop cheating new fools, but, corrupt as you are, it would be wasted effort.

Withdraw and consider yourself fortunate that, despite all the harm you have tried to do us, we have understood that without moral influence, you cannot be dangerous to us. So leave and make sure you no longer find yourself in our power.

The Abbot leaves.

ZISKA (to General Sottartas.)

General, despite your acquired rights, you no longer have any fortune. Gambling, women and alcohol have always cost you more than your salary.

It is unfortunate for a man of your age. As you have said, with infinite wit, that without the rich, the poor would die of hunger, we advise you, now that you are poor, to go and beg alms from some rich people, outside of Bohemia, so that you don't die of hunger, because that would really be a shame.

Go! You are free!

The General leaves.

SCENE X

THE SAME, LESS THE ABBOT AND THE GENERAL.

ROCSIZANE

Your turn, Mr. Magistrate. Do you have something to tell us to make us forget your past?

THE MAGISTRATE

My past, gentlemen, is impeccable. If I am a prisoner here, it is because I have a habit of always giving in to force!

NICOLAS GANZ

You make a singular confession, for a magistrate,

THE MAGISTRATE

It is precisely because I am a magistrate, because I know what right

is, that I speak like this!

ROCSIZANE

Would right no longer have a servant in you?

THE MAGISTRATE

Right is a science that we learn and understand when we are young, because we are generous and we do not see things in life as they are.

But when you, like me, have the most sacred laws violated by all men of all countries and all parties, what respect do you want, in politics, a magistrate to have for right and justice. He would have to be insane to attach the slightest importance to it.

ROCSIZANE

Justice is the most indispensable property of man's character in any society. Because those who are responsible for cultivating it and distributing its benefits have shown themselves to be unworthy of it, it does not follow that we should misjudge it, but on the contrary take more interest in it.

THE MAGISTRATE

For a magistrate — I repeat it to you, so that you do not forget — in politics, force alone is everything, and there is not a single person who to this day has not bowed to it.

NICOLAS GANZ

Who would believe, without hearing it, that the judiciary could have descended to this level of cynicism and immorality?

THE MAGISTRATE

We are told, I know, that we are not doing our duty and that we do not have the courage of our opinions. Our duty? But to do this we would have to be neither far-sighted nor intelligent. As for the courage of our opinions, this reproach does not have the slightest common sense, given that our opinions have no real importance and that there are even few men like us who have the courage to drink without blushing the cup of palinody, so much influence do prejudices have over their poor brains.

JACOBEL

Have we ever seen a more degraded being?

THE MAGISTRATE

Me. I only attach myself to merit; and I find that it takes a lot more to know how to maintain your position when it is high, than to throw yourself headlong before the first danger that threatens you, in defense of the right, which no one invokes unless he is personally interested in it.

In my opinion, it is only brute animals who ignore danger and idiots who don't have the instinct to hold on to what they have. But I claim to be

neither one nor the other.

My doctrine, the only true one in the world, is the one that is formulated by these three words: everyone for himself! Everything else is stupidity, deception!

PIERRE

The wretch is not even aware of his infamy.

ROCSIZANE

But what do you think is the duty of a magistrate?

THE MAGISTRATE

The duty of a magistrate consists quite simply, if he is skillful, in maintaining the position that makes him enjoy high consideration in the world, and, out of gratitude, of being agreeable and accommodating to the leaders through whom he holds it. As for doing justice to those who have it on their side and rendering justice to those who deserve it, this is what the intelligent magistrate worries the least about. To enrich himself, to elevate himself, that is what his interest commands him; to serve out of gratitude the passions of those who patronized him, that is what his conscience tells him.

PROKOP

He is impudently frank at least!

THE MAGISTRATE

My personal interests having been to serve those of my protectors, I have always done so and am ready today to serve yours.

ROCSIZANE

Would you serve your enemies of yesterday?

THE MAGISTRATE

I have neither friends nor enemies, I neither love nor hate anyone. I served King Wenceslas faithfully as long as he was powerful. When I saw that they had decided to get rid of him, to give Bohemia to his brother Sigismund and that his power was declining, I went over to the Emperor's side. Today the empire has lost its cause, and Sigismund has fled. As you are the strongest, I have everything for you and offer you my services.

NICOLAS GANZ

Egoism has made him blind, if he believes he can serve the Republic!

THE MAGISTRATE

And I even dare say that you will not be able to find a servant who is more devoted to you, nor more useful.

ZISKA

Really?

THE MAGISTRATE

I know all the crimes that the imperialists and the clericals have committed against you. I was introduced to all their projects, all their businesses. Moreover, I even wrote against them, foreseeing that you could one day be the strongest, a terrible indictment whose conclusions, based on the application, to their guilt, of certain laws not in force, it is true. but not repealed; because you have not yet decreed that all laws prior to the proclamation of the Republic are abolished: an indictment that will allow you to dispose of their fortune and their person as you wish, up to the point of selling them to the Orientals to make them eunuchs, or singers of the Sistine Chapel in Rome to rejoice the holy father their friend.

ZISKA

You are the lowest of wretches, and a great fool, if you believe that it is enough to appear so profoundly immoral to us to be despised and have your life saved. No, sir, you have by your own admission been nothing but a complacent person of the vilest kind; prepare to account to the nation for the unjust sentences you have handed down against the best of its children; and when you appear before your judges, tremble if their respect for human life weakens in the face of your iniquities.

Guards, take the judge back to the dungeon; let him be subjected to the regime of the unfortunate innocents whom he condemned last month, so that he learns for himself what the wickedness of men is.

Two soldiers take away the magistrate

SCENE XI

THE SAME, LESS THE MAGISTRATE.

ROCSIZANE

And you, Mr. Minister, what do you have to say in favor of your past conduct?

THE MINISTER

I have always served my sovereign with zeal and loyalty.

ZISKA

Yes, you poured alcohol into the poor old man who loved drunkenness, in order to govern in his place. You proposed to the debauchee to put women to sleep so that he could easily abuse them. You were even on this subject so ignoble that your master was left scandalized by your infamous proposals.

Now as minister what have you done for Bohemia, our beloved homeland?

THE MINISTER

I gave it order and prosperity for twenty years.

JACOBEL

Order and prosperity that would have ruined and degraded it, if we did not raise the morale of the people you sought to corrupt; if we did not make all your supporters pay the debt, and if we had not denounced, as a shameful insult to Bohemia, your houses of gambling and debauchery, which we had closed.

THE MINISTER

You will not deny that Prague has doubled its population over the past twenty years and that to build all the sumptuous palaces there, wealth had to flow there by the millions.

JACOBEL

And you will not deny, either, that the sums that labor pays in rent have tripled in the last twenty years, and that for the few more millionaires that there are in Bohemia, there are not millions more who are unhappy, ignorant and poorer?

THE MINISTER

Is that my fault?

JACOBEL

If governments do not serve to make populations more beautiful, better educated and happier, what are they for?

THE MINISTER

Wealth in this world and paradise in heaven are only the share of a few chosen ones, as hell and poverty are the lot of the vile multitude. What can I do about this? Do you believe me to be stronger than Providence?

PROKOP

Assuming that you have understood nothing about your mission for twenty years, and that for you, misery and ignorance is the normal state of people, by what right have you gagged, imprisoned, outlawed and killed the bravest of their children?

THE MINISTER

TI will simply answer you with this question: why did Bohemia have a king? Did you therefore believe that under royalty, a minister should be concerned with tenderness and the improvement of the lot of the miserable? You are very naive, if you still do. What is monarchy? A government of privilege. The greatest, as well as the smallest, social distinctions that men receive from this institution make them privileged. Well. These privileged people must be enriched, honored and above all let them shine, if we want the monarchy to flourish!

Men of courage attacked these elected officials and their privileges; they cried out at injustice, at abuse. I am not saying that they were wrong, from their point of view, but I ask you, what should the minister of such an institution do against these rebels? Remove them, if he was strong enough. I was: I did it. I would have been illogical and even treacherous if I had acted otherwise.

PIERRE

So according to you, the monarchy is only the protector of the privileged!

THE MINISTER

And the exterminator of its subjects who, failing to understand it, cry out against its abuses, if it is logical.

NICOLAS GANZ

Only a magistrate capable of portraying the feelings that animate the members of our current magistracy, just as one a monarchist minister can explain royalty in so few words. If only the bourgeois of Prague who are petitioning at the moment could have heard this theory.

ROCSIZANE

If you were free, what would you do?

THE MINISTER

I am a foreigner. I would leave Bohemia and never return there.

NICOLAS GANZ

What are we to decide?

ROCSIZANE

Let him go!

ZISKA

He is very guilty!

PROKOP

If we acquit him, we cannot convict others after his acquittal.

PIERRE

We'll have enough trouble without them.

PROKOP

Can't he cause us trouble abroad?

JACOBEL

Yes, if his fortune there were, but as his riches are here, they will be used to liquidate the debt. He will be ruined, and therefore not very dangerous.

ZISKA

So let him go, then and as quickly as possible!

ROCSIZANE

You may withdraw, sir, you are free, on the condition that you leave Bohemia.

PROKOP

Now, all of you present here, courtiers and lords who have never ceased to insult and tyrannize the people to whom you owe your wealth, the Republic grants you your life. Leave, get out of the country, and above all leave quickly: the air of Bohemia can become unhealthy for you. The People can revoke our decision and make you pay dearly for your past injustices.

ZISKA

I think it's time to adjourn the meeting. It is almost the time when Prokop is expected by his fiancée and by all our friends who are awaiting his wedding ceremony.

PIERRE

There is no opposition? (*Silence.*) The meeting is adjourned.

The tent is removed. We see the camp of the Taborites.

SCENE XII

THE SAME, JOHN CARDINAL, MARGUERITE, CIXILONE
AND THE TABORITES.

TABOR

The stage represents a military camp.

Tables forming the horseshoe are set up, set and ready to receive the banquet guests. At the bottom is a platform intended for Taborite weddings.

The Taborites, with music and banners at the head, parade in procession and take their place at the banquet, singing in chorus the refrain of the following stanzas.

CHOIR

Equality, daughter of nature,
Whose appearance alone gives mortals delight,
Come among us, let your sweet, pure voice
Preside over all our fraternal banquets!

JOHN CARDINAL

Freed from tyranny
And its many prejudices;
Here from pride, from envy,

Are the honest men avenged?
White or black, noble or proletarian,
Rich or poor, people or bourgeois,
We are all children of the Earth
We are all born with the same rights!

CHOIR

Equality, daughter of nature, etc.

The members of the Revolutionary Committee attend the ceremony. Prokop and Cixilone come in bridal costumes, followed by Ziska and Marguerite, Jacobel and Ganz, Rocsizane and others, and they advance towards the altar where the marriage will be celebrated.

JOHN CARDINAL

May all people do forever
Without kings, priests, executioners;
Let them burn, with great joy, in the square,
The throne, the altar, the scaffold!
The brute alone accepts a master,
Loves him, fears him, finds him beautiful;
The free man God gave birth to
Cannot stay at his level!

CHOIR

Equality, daughter of nature, etc.

CEREMONY OF MARRIAGE

When the members of the Committee have arrived at the altar, John Cardinal climbs the dais, accompanied by Prokop and Cixilone, and begins the ceremony.

JOHN CARDINAL

The Taborite marriage intends that the spouses love each other and give themselves entirely to each other, that in the event of illness or unfortunate accidents happening to one of the two, the other redoubles towards them their care, attention and dedication. This is said, understood and accepted.

Prokop Rasa, are you asking Cixilone Jacobel, from Mise, to be your wife?

PROKOP

I ask it!

JOHN CARDINAL

Cixilone Jacobel, do you consent to be the wife of Prokop Rasa?

CIXILONE

I consent.

JOHN CARDINAL

By virtue of your public declarations, freely expressed, and of your full and complete will: Be United!

THE TABORITE AGAPES

The music starts again. The procession returns, everyone goes to sit at the Banquet. Ziska, Marguerite, Prokop, Cixilone, Jacobel, Pierre, Ganz, Rocsizane sit at the table, in the middle of the camp; then the songs begin again.

CHOIR

Equality, daughter of nature, etc.

JOHN CARDINAL

To the neighboring nations, may Bohemia
Serve as an example in the future.
May masters of supreme power,
All come to unite with us.
Peace will transform the world;
Labor will be respected;
The earth will be more fertile;
And man will have liberty!

CHOIR

Equality, daughter of nature,
Whose appearance alone gives mortals delight,
Come among us, let your sweet, pure voice
Preside over all our fraternal banquets!

The curtain falls.

End of The Revolutionary-Socialist Heretics
of the Fifteenth Century.

SOLUTION OF THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY

BY

[Claude] PELLETIER,

REPRESENTATIVE of the department of the Rhône.

ADJUVANTISM, from *adjuvant*,
that which aids, which succors.

PARIS,
CHEZ GARNIER FRÈRES, ÉDITEURS-LIBRAIRES,
GALERIE DU PALAIS NATIONAL.
1848.

SOLUTION
OF THE PROBLEM OF POVERTY

Laborers, men of the people, it is for you, it is in your interest that I have written this small book, certain that if we put into practice the humanitarian ideas that it contains, you will be more happy than in the past.

I know that you await larger reforms from the National Assembly, or from our generous socialist thinkers; but as a transitory means, I believe that one will not find any more practical and less hostile to all the ideas of social organization, however advanced they may be. I make opposition to no system, for, if all the systems are taken narrowly, there is some good in all; and often what we believe impossible today, will appear workable tomorrow if it is brought to light.

I am a partisan today of the organization of labor by association, that is to say of national workshops of industry and agriculture in solidarity with one another, where the laborers, associated with one another and placed by election at the head of one or another function, participate in the profits in proportion to labor and talent.

I am a partisan of association, I say, because its time has arrived; but everyone knows that it takes years to organize on a grand scale; and during those years, the workers will be in poverty as in the past, if the government is not careful. That is what must not happen.

However, in order to organize labor, there must be labor: one does not organize what doesn't exist; in order for there to be labor, it must be created; and in order to create it, it is necessary to shift the consumption which today is only done by the wealthy.

By *adjuvantism*, as I will show, the laborers gaining more, will spend more, which, consequently, will shift consumption and will put the people themselves to do it.

Readers, in writing this small book, my intention has been to give relief to my brother laborers; I have done my best. If you find it badly written, it is a small evil, provided that the ideas in it are good; but if it appears to you puerile, insufficient, and that you have better, quick, take up the pen, write, and count on my respect and gratitude.

I.

Since men have lived in society, there have always been rich and poor. Poverty has always decimated the laborers. One would say, to see the march of humanity, that it is composed of snails and ant, the first walling themselves up in their property in order to only think of themselves, the others laboring for all, and never tasting a single instant of repose.

Some learned economists, some profound philosophers, some truly human men have sought the means to destroy that poverty, and all, up to now, have been powerless against the selfish spirit of society. Why? Science, the instructions necessary for that labor have not been lacking. Is it because they have not taken sufficient account of the present? Many thinking people think not. Well! me, pardon me, I believe the opposite; and also because these generous thinkers, having written the benevolent pages for which we are infinitely grateful, have not shared our suffering, lived our life, known deeply our sad situation and our ignorance pour to be able to plead our cause with success, by giving us right away a means which could make us have patience until society has accepted their noble ideas. I do not doubt that all the socialists, without a single exception, have thought of *adjuvantism* before me; but I believe that not having seen it in the same light, they have found it unworthy of their pen, insufficient, and perhaps inapplicable to the present society. A strange error on their part! To believe that the simplest thing in the world would not be easy to establish! So what happened? Many of these laudable publicists have mixed up together all the questions of pauperism, have made very good systems, but for an era that our grandchildren may not see. Their great haste to want to remake the world has rendered them powerless. In wanting to destroy poverty by a social organization which carries with it numerous difficulties, that we will defeat with time and by instruction, without any doubt, they have only managed to expose their system to the

calumny of those who do not understand. They have not started at the beginning, and that is their fault.

Today, what is needed, what is only possible, is a system which suppresses poverty instantaneously, without first disturbing social habits; but which, from day to day, leads us, by giant steps, to the organization of labor, to greater reforms, towards the most perfect aims of society.

Until recently, a simple worker, I have not been able to delve as much as I would have liked into the questions of political economy: I had to work to live. But I have been cold, I have been hungry, I have suffered without work; and all my sufferings, equivalent to many reflections of that sort, have furnished me the insights necessary to the development of *adjuvantism*.

I would not say my *adjuvantism* or my system; for, being the faithful expression of the thought of the workers, my brothers, it belongs, like truth, to everyone, whatever is said or thought of it by the citizen who reads me.

I also believe *adjuvantism* superior to many other small systems. It has always been practiced, badly it is true, but in the end it has been practiced; established, as I will demonstrate it, it would be able to serve me on many occasions, as well as the workers, my fellows, who find themselves in a position as precarious as my own.

Could it be tried by those who read me, and implemented or the good of all! Humanity would have made a step, and, placed under a corner of the mantle of equality, relieved by the certainty of no longer lacking anything when it is without work, the worker will no longer receive, as charity, the aid that *adjuvantism* grants to all the laborers. The administration of the *adjuvances* deducting from their wages 5 centimes par franc, I suppose, the workers will really remedy themselves. It will be delivered from the disgraceful yoke imposed on them by the committees of charity, which they rightly avoid, because they know that they obtain nothing from them, if they do not register as paupers with the police commissioner of his district, with some Ladies Bountiful who are often indiscrete, or with his parish priest.

This step disgusts them, holds them back; also, moved by a feeling of self-esteem that we should only approve, he abandons what he needs to others less timid, less shameful and often less needy than them.

I propose, to that end, to establish in all the cities of France, in all the villages, according to their importance, one or more houses, to which we will give the name of *adjuvances*, to hear all the demands of the workers and the unemployed, and address them there as I will explain very soon.

To show with more clarity and precision what I want to make of these *adjuvances* and in these *adjuvances*, I am going to contain myself in the city of Paris, sure in advance that *adjuvantism* being the same for all

industries, for all sorts of labor, is applicable to everyone everywhere.

I do not believe it useless to say that in the cities of France where a building trade would continually have too few workers to form an individual bureau, we would necessarily join them with another building trade: that would complicate nothing and would be an economy.

II.

There are 400,000 laborers in Paris (I assume that number) as many workingmen as workingwomen, clerks, handymen, domestics, etc, etc; of these 400,000 laborers there are half of them, 200,000 who make a living, and amass in addition something to sweeten their old age,[1] and 200,000, the other half, who barely earn a sufficiency, for lack of ability or gainful employment.

Among these 400,000 laborers of the first and second class (I distinguish them thus for more ease), there are always 20,000 without occupation, and of these 20,000 there are laborers of some profession who will be three months, two months, one month, or ten days before finding a job.

I do not speak of the workingmen and workingwomen whose profession leads to changing houses or bosses every two or three days, every week, or every month. We know that this continual change makes them lose a month a year, without counting the dead seasons; no, I speak of the most fortunate laborers, whose profession has the most stability.

Well! What results from that unemployment?

It happens that if the laborer without work is from the first class, and he is not married, it only makes a large gap in his savings, barely reparable by a year of labor; if the laborer is married and without children, it would take him two years of labor, to make up for his lost time: for he cannot count on the profits of his wife: we know what women earn in general, especially since the convents and prisons do their works for next to nothing. But if he is the head of a family, the poor man is ruined or close to poverty. His whole family suffers from it and will always suffer from it; his children, to whom he would have given instruction, if he had not been out of work and spent his savings, will be deprived of it, and will be forced to labor earlier.

So there are children condemned, for lack of a bit of money, to remain ignorant, to work as soon as they have the strength, to be worn out before becoming men. Sad effect of labor! Poor children! And all this for a bit of money that their unfortunate father spent despite himself.

That is what results for the workers of the first class.

But what becomes of the workers of the second. What do they do?

Alas! they suffer; they promenade their poverty in the streets, they are

poorly dressed, they are hungry, they are cold, they borrow to eat after putting in the pawnshop or selling the few clean clothes they had. They can no longer find employment because they are ugly and are pitiful, or if they find it, they are rejected when they go to present themselves. They are dismissed because they don't look nice! Oh! then they curse God and men, often have the idea of suicide, sometimes succumbing to it, and are said to be of bad faith when they are just poor, vile when they are just unfortunate. They are considered and treated as bad pennies, and often end up becoming such.

That is the condition of the workers of the second class.

— Whose fault is that?

— No one's.

— Society!

— What's to be done?

— Repair it.

— How?

By establishing in the neighborhoods of Paris most suitable for trade and industry *adjuvances* where all workers without occupation would go to obtain it, and the sum of 1 franc, if they could not give work.

I beg the reader to note that this sum, part of which would be levied against their wages, would be granted to workers that if they could not be provided work.

Some workers could object with reason that the wages are not high enough to withdraw 5 cents per franc. Here is my answer: the *adjuvances* establishing national workshops, as is discussed below, it is likely that workers will earn more, and never having lost days, they will even be able to make the sacrifice without many be deprived.

1. These *adjuvances* be very large, and will have for each trade a waiting room and an individual office spacious as required by the approximate number of workers.

2. The rooms should be made to receive, and to shelter from the cold and bad weather, the men waiting for work, until the time specified by the regulations of the trade of which they are a part; the hour is not to exceed eleven in the morning, and the waiting rooms would remain open to workers throughout the day. They would establish courses there related to the professions, which would be taught by the most capable workers.

3. To present themselves at the offices of the *adjuvances*, each worker should carry a certificate that certifies his profession, and would inform the clerk responsible for distributing work or jobs, if he is entitled to occupy it before his colleagues; for we would make the workers of each each category of ability work, as much as possible, to turn as much as possible, by turns.

4. The workers who do not want to present themselves to the

adjuvances to find work, and mingle with all their comrades, would be wrong, it would be better to present themselves at the *adjuvances* than running with thirty friends, who rarely place you and make you spend a lot.

5. The offices would be held by capable workers, of both sexes and of the same profession, elected by their peers, appointed to examine the certificates.

6. The clerks not having work to give to the workers, male or female, would give back their certificates and give them a voucher good for one franc, to draw from the the till of the *adjuvances*.

7. The fund of the *adjuvances* will not pay vouchers that have more than two days from date.

8. The workers who have worked all week would not receive anything on Sunday.

9. Any unemployed worker, father of a family, having his sick children or toddlers, unable to appear at the office, will draw, in addition to his voucher, the sum of 75 cents per day for each child below fifteen years; and if his work or employment brought him a salary recognized too small, he would draw the same sum of 75 cents for each of his children.

Relief that the *adjuvances* would grant to young children would not be of long duration, because the State, wanting later that the education be free, so this one generosity is not a mockery, it will be necessary that it be responsible for feeding and clothing the poor child who will never have enough money for it.

Today we have free schools, and if the children of the worker do not go there, it is because he cannot feed them or provide for them to *do nothing*, as they say. He takes them to the workshop, to work, where they are used up, withered and demoralized;

10. Every child older than fifteen would be considered and paid as a worker.

11. A worker who works without their certificate signed by his boss, and who presents it at the office of his corporation to draw the voucher granted to unemployed workers, would be punished as a thief; the boss who employs him without having examined his diploma would be liable to the same penalty.

12. A worker not having his certificate signed by the last person who employed him, would draw nothing until it was signed.

13. Under no pretext, could his patron refuse to sign his certificate, unless it had been stolen by him

14. The signature of the boss on the certificate of the worker would not be charged with any recommendation, with any flattery, a useless thing, given that if the certificate is signed, the man is honest.

15. The entry and exist of the worker from the house where he is

employed would be designated: *Entered as..., March 1..., left August 10... Signed.*)

16. A boss who has signed, with knowledge of the theft, the certificate of a worker of either sex who had stolen it, would be responsible for robberies that he would have then committed elsewhere than at his firm.

17. To avoid that a worker who would not want to stroll should obtain a voucher, the boss must sign his certificate only when he no longer wants to or can employ him, or that the worker will no longer want to work for him.

18. Foreigners will be accepted in the *adjuvances*, but they will draw nothing, unless their home country, imitating us, was in a condition to give the same to the workers who are our countrymen.

19. When a boss needs a worker, he will present himself at the office of the trade to which the needed worker belongs. They will hasten to satisfy him, but he should be present in the morning before the vouchers have been delivered.

20. The workers are free to work, as the bosses are free to employ them as they see fit, without addressing themselves to the *adjuvances*; but then the boss would be obliged to pay the sum of 15 francs to the office of the trade which employs a member.

21. A boss who asks the offices of the *adjuvances* for one worker preferably to another, whose turn in the order would designate to pass before the one that he demands, would pay the sum of 5 francs.

22. No man could employ another without demanding from him a certificate that he must sign, as it says above.

23. Every worker leaving his boss after the closing the office of the *adjuvances*, if it is proved that the termination of his employment has wronged him, would be required to pay a fixed indemnity by the labor court [conseil des prud'hommes], and retained on the salary of the first job that the *adjuvance* procured for him.

24. The senior employees of the *adjuvances* would not be salaried; they would be appointed by the workers, by the relative majority, every two years, and by the government the first year alone.

25. The junior employees, the salaried, would be appointed by the workers every year and chosen from among them.

I beg the reader to believe that this little regulation is not definitive. I thought I should write them to make my thinking clearer.

IV.

These *adjuvances* would be founded by the state, in conjunction with the city where they are established.

They would invest all the sums that the 5 centimes per franc deducted

from the wages of the workers produce, and all the gifts and inheritances that they receive.

All the estates of those who die without heirs could return to their domain.

The State and the city, as we said above, in order establish and operate these *adjuvances*, will be obliged to furnish the necessary amounts for their expenses, until the investment or the product of the 5 centimes, the gifts, inheritances, estates, etc., etc., was capitalized, and returned enough to do without its assistance.

The administration of these *adjuvances* would be the same in all of France.

It would buy in all the departments the lands uncultivated belonging either to the State, or to the communes, or to the proprietors, in order to clear them, which would create agricultural work for the farmers and laborers without work who would prefer to earn a reasonable day's wage to the poor pay of 1 franc.

It would establish later, for the civilian invalids, some homes for the aged and infirm workers, unable to work, some factories where injured workers and still vigorous old people would live in liberty, and would be employed with care to in some very light labors that would yield them some money. It would also establish immense workshops for all the trades in which it would employ a considerable number of workers who come to ask for work, thus alleviating its costs, increasing its fortune, and eventually making France capable of competing in industry with all the powers of Europe.

That would be to establish genuine national workshops, the bogeyman of all the selfish, but these national workshops would lead us to well-being, to equality, and we will open the only road that mankind has taken in order to arrive gradually to its perfection without political revolution, without bloodshed, by labor alone.

V.

Reader, as you can see, I simply propose to establish some houses to extinguish poverty, as they have already been established to cure sickness.

Everyone finds that a hospice is necessary; who then will deny the usefulness of the *adjuvances* to kill poverty?

Don't these two establishments show themselves, in their ideas, like two brothers, each as essential, as necessary to the workers as the other?

Why, since they both appear useful, and only one exists, don't we establish the other

Such houses would cost too much to establish, I am told.

We have founded hospitals, and they have cost twice what the

adjuvances would cost.

We have made considerable gifts to the hospices, why wouldn't we make them to the? Is it because they would shelter us from all the riots that are often made in the name of lack of work and bread?

Then, whether they are endowed or not, we must start from a principle:

Must we kill poverty in France, even if it costs the State 500 million the first year, yes or no? The whole question is there. Humanity says yes, and selfishness says no. Which should we believe?

But 500 million to destroy poverty, that is terrifying, much too expensive! — No, it is not too expensive, when we can give it to make the people happy.

Under the deposed system, France spent more than 40 million a year to prevent and punish attacks directed against property, more than 300 million to build prisons, fortresses, outer walls, etc. More than 400 million to endow, to fund the king, the princes, their devotees and sinecurists, the *cumulards* and a thousand other personages who cost the State far too much. And in 1815 didn't it find 2 billion, 500 million francs for foreigners and emigrants...?

Why would we not find the sum, or why would we refuse to spend it? do we believe the people are too happy and too independent, by chance, and would be sorry to make it impossible to for them to whisper against the government that they always takes, with reason, for the author of their misery and ignorance? That would be a blunder! Especially since it is in the interest of the rich as well as the bourgeois, the merchants as well as the workers, of all men in fact, except for those who speculate on need and misery and exploit the bodies and souls of the workers for the benefit of their pride and their greed.

So it would be wrong to recoil before such a considerable sum for the moment, if only to no longer have before our eyes these hideous pictures of poverty, to hear the unfortunates singing, crying, cursing, and shaking from hunger and cold on all the street corners, if not on the straw at the back of their attic.

And you, rich men, you will no longer fear that the poor, tomorrow, weary of its distress, will come to say to you savagely: You do nothing, while I work; you enjoy, while I suffer; you have everything, while I have nothing; you violate Christ's law: God has not made men to live this way. Come to my rescue, to my aid, and we will be friends, we will be brothers; if you refuse, then it is war between us and woe to all!

I have been a worker for sixteen years, I have always lived among them. I know their sufferings and their courage to support themselves, and I can say that if the Republic does nothing for them, they will be forced by poverty to come to those extremities. However, who is more humane,

more generous than the worker? He knows his strength and does not abuse it.

VI.

We have marched for 17 years down a road bristling with scandalous processes of speculation, with corruption which has led us slowly and tortuously to [one of] two different ends: the Republic or civil war; we have the Republic. And the more scandalous the trials there are, the more we have rushed there quickly. We have taken the workers for imbeciles who comprehend nothing. We have been mistaken. Everything has made a contrary impression. From the stock market games, and the subsidies to the newspapers, to the combinations and sinecures, which we still seem to preserve today, nothing has escaped them, and they are indignant! And not one who does not say to you: the future smiles on us, but we still fear that poverty leads us to civil war. War is no longer possible in the name of a pretender. No! The workers are not so stupid! What is a pretender? A man like any other, and it is not suitable to fight for a man when one must owe everything to his country and we have no principles. The personalities are worn out. It does not take more to it than that. It is up to one thing: his right. The right of each proclaims the right of all, that is what we understand, this is what we demand.

Today the laborers suffer; they love those who take an interest in their sufferings, those who defend their rights, and scorn those who, in journals and brochures, make apologies for their exploiters. And if the revolution which was made, in 1850, for the charter, was not made, before 1848, pour the Republic and its consequences, it is because the people have understood, since 1834, that they should instruct themselves, and study social questions before recommencing their work, not in order to make blood flow anew, in the interest of a king or a prince, of a family, but rather for themselves, for the homeland, for the principle of equality.

The revolution of February was made in the name of liberty, equality, and fraternity; in order that the man be really free, equal, and brotherly, to render impossible all bloodshed, every riot which would lead us inevitably to civil war, we must remove the fear of tomorrow. We can do it by establishing *adjuvances*.

What remains for me to demonstrate, is the well-being which will result from the mode of organization of *adjuvantism*.

Poverty will disappear immediately, and the laborers, always finding work where enough exists, will never spend their savings.

Their bosses could no longer be despotic and unjust towards them with impunity; the workers could live without them.

So they would be free, better treated, better clothed, better housed and

more prosperous, which would shift consumption, which is only done today by the privileged classes.

What's more, it would be possible for those who are thrifty to amass a little nest egg, to make a dowry for their child, to buy a small property where they will go to spend their last days peacefully.

Those who could not save, those who would be forced, by many circumstances that it is unnecessary to enumerate here, to go to spend their old age in the Invalides work, would earn and spend more, and consequently commerce would be much better—for it is assumed that all the money that the *adjuvances* would distribute to workers that they could not employ or cause to be employed, would, almost without exception, be spent.

The merchants, the shopkeepers, who sell primarily to the workers, all the traders who are part of what we all small business, would sell more, and would be much better paid. And if, by mischance, one of them had not made his business [succeed], before having used almost everything he has, and had, unbeknownst to his creditors, saved a bit to live on, after bankruptcy, he could honestly explain the situation, give up everything he had left, and present himself at the office of the *adjuvances*, in order to enjoy the rights that all workers in the relief that they give.

Begging, which has the lack of work for excuse, would no longer be possible. As for begging as a business, it is condemned long ago. A beggar would present himself to you, and you would be right to say: You have no money and no work; go to the *adjuvance*, if you do not find work they will give you enough to live.

Thieves would be very uncommon, for if there are some of them whom poor education that leads to crime, there are many who are driven by misery. Now, having a means of living when the work is lacking and having some money they have amassed while working, poverty would no longer be an excuse. There would only remain truly bad sorts against whom we would crack down severely.

These institutions would therefore extinguish poverty, and decrease by half the number of diseases. (Everyone knows that poverty, deprivation, filthy clothes, and unhealthy dwellings greatly increase the number of patients either in hospitals or at home.) They would prevent theft and begging, the people become better and more beautiful, and we would never again hear one of our brothers say that he lacks work and bread.

VII.

As some people could believe that by giving the sum of 1 franc per day to the workers who come to ask for work, and that one cannot employ, that would be to give them alms and to encourage them to idleness; I must

prove the opposite.

Before the Republic, Louis-Philippe received 14 million per year, and, moreover, enjoyed a connection to the national properties which did not produce less. A president of the Council of Ministers received 100,000 francs salary each year; the ministers 80,000 francs each; the archbishop from 20,000 to 50,000; a general of the national guard 50,000 francs; finally, a thousand other sinecured functionaries that I pass in silence, receiving not less than 20,000, 30,000, or 40,000 francs per year.

Why, since we gave such large salaries to men of high standing, would we not give 1 fr. a day to the worker who has contributed to make that sum by the deduction of 5 percent per frank from his salary. I am told that these high functionaries deserve them and that the government wanted it this way. But why does the government want it? By gratitude rather than by justice, towards the creatures who supported it. What is it but payment given in recognition? A bonus. What is a bonus? Restitution or alms, and nothing else. It is a restitution if it has been earned by labor, but a charity if we do not deserve it. Have all these highly placed men, so generously paid, ever earned half, a quarter, or an eighth of the remuneration they received! Have we ever had the idea that it was a charity?

The people, from infancy until their forces are completely exhausted, labor and earn much more than they receive. Essentially a laborer, he thus has a right, according to the law of God, to live in comfort. But, poor, often ignorant and placed by the vicious organization of society under the yoke of the rich people who have made themselves their masters, he has always been deprived of everything. There is therefore nothing more just, if the *adjuvance* can provide for him or see that his is provided for, to render to him with considerable interest the amount that has been withdrawn from price of his labor. It is therefore not a handout that we would make, but a restitution. When I say that we would make it to him, it is that he would make it himself, should I say, for I ask, who would furnish the millions that we would distribute to him to exist? Heh! My God, it would be him, once again; is he not always the one who pays for everything.

By this fact, they will not receive charity: we cannot call it charity if they give it to themselves, and what they will give themselves they will have well earned.

As for encouraging the workers to idleness, that would be impossible with the modest sum of one franc that the *adjuvances* would give to the workers, if they were not able to procure it from labor. But suppose still that one worker abused this relief, and quits there job at the drop of a hat; what would that do to the administration of the *adjuvances*; wouldn't another be needed to replace him? The number of workers without occupation would not be increased by the fact. To give to this one or to that, I repeat, what would it matter to the administration. And then,

would we suppose that the workers are cowards who have neither heart nor courage?

By establishing *adjuvances*, we would commit an act of justice and humanity; they would cost enormous amounts at first, but then the gifts, inheritances, and the collection of 5 centimes per franc that we would accumulate, would reduce these expenses a great deal.

We would no longer see the honest worker endure hunger, while the convicts in the penal colonies grow fat, and the virtuous young girls, often tubercular from privations, go to die in the hospital; while the prostitutes grown bored in luxury and abundance. We would make the people more free, plus healthy, more beautiful and more happy than they have ever been. We can do it. It is only a question of money. We should do it!

Will we do it?

REPRESENTANT du Rhône. Tarare, ce 4 mai 1848.

Paris. Imp. BLOND AU, rue du petit-Carreau, 32. 9

[1] You see that I am not exaggerating the poverty, because if you wanted a summary of the unfortunate workers, you would see that of the eight million farmers there are in France, there are seven million who began work the age of ten, and have at the age of seventy years only poverty, and have for sixty years, which is deplorable and anti-human.

A CLEAR-HEADED SOCIALIST

ONE OF THE 63 DEPUTIES WHOM "NAPOLEON THE LITTLE" EXILED
LIVING QUIETLY IN NEW YORK.

NO MEDDLER IN AMERICAN POLITICS BUT A MAN OF STRIKING VIEWS
ON THE EVILS THAT THREATEN US.

The foreign notabilities resident in New York if gathered together in one room would make a most interesting assemblage. In the recent articles published in *The World* on the French Communistic and German Socialistic elements in the population of this city, some account was given of notorious foreigners who had been concerned in revolutionary movements in the Old World and who are still seeking to create revolutionary movements in the New World. Something remains to be said of men formerly active in political affairs abroad, but now settled down in New York quietly pursuing their business avocations. Perhaps the most remarkable of this class is Claude Pelletier, at one time a well-known Socialist and politician of the extreme Radical wing in France, and a member of the Corps Legislatif from 1848 to 1851. He was born in 1816, at Arbresle, in the Department of the Rhone, the son of an innkeeper, he went to Paris while very young, and lived in great poverty until after the revolution of 1848, when he went home and became a candidate for the Assembly, to which he was elected by 45,000 votes. He was a strong partisan of La Montagne and an active worker in the Radical cause. He was reelected in 1850 by 71,000 votes, and was still in office when, on December 2, 1851, he was arrested by the order of Louis Napoleon and subsequently banished by the decree of January 9, 1852, as "dangerous to the public peace." So much Vapereau's *Dictionnaire des Contemporains* tells us; for the rest let Pelletier speak for himself.

M. Pelletier lives in Wooster street, near Canal, in a little three story building, where he has for many years carried on the business of a manufacturer of artificial leaves and flowers. His office is in the back room on the first floor, and there he superintends the work of a dozen girls engaged in folding the leaves and flowers. The adjoining front room is used as a sitting room and library; it is comfortably but plainly furnished, and much space is occupied by bookcases containing the works of Voltaire, Moliere, Rossi, Washington Irving, Kant, Comte and others. The walls are hung with photographs of Garibaldi and Mazzini, bearing the autographs of those distinguished men. There are a few oil paintings of merit and several line engravings of classical subjects. In this room M. Pelletier, in the dress of a French artisan, received the writer. He is a distinguished looking old gentleman, with white hair and beard, a face denoting great intelligence and the most polished manners. He readily

consented to speak of his past life and present views, adding, however, that he must “long since have ceased to be of interest to the public.”

It appears from M. Pelletier's story that he first imbibed his Socialistic theories while living at the inn kept by his father, where, as he remembers, in 1829, he saw King Louis-Philippe on his way to Lyons. At the inn he came in contact with people of all sorts and all opinions, and as he became impressed with the cruel misery of the vast majority of the people, was filled with a desire, amounting to a mania, to aid them. Full of this desire, he went, to Paris, where, however, he was unable to get work, and had to sell his books and his clothes and to rely upon the goodwill of his acquaintances to get the means of bare subsistence. But, during this time, his discontent with the prevailing social system and his ambitious projects of contributing towards its reform grew stronger every day. Then came the revolution of 1848, which he speaks of as “a terrible showing of the frightful effects of the cowardice of the people.” The revolution produced a great effect upon him; “to this day,” he said to the writer, “I cannot drive out of my mind or from before my eyes the horrible doings of that period; it opened my eyes wide to the terrible nature of men made mad with grief and trouble, of men made beasts in time of danger by cowardice.” He continued, as though thinking aloud: “Oh, my God those scenes back of the Hotel de Ville! Talk of the Commune of '71! It was child's play compared to that. I tell you the most terrible thing to see is a man thoroughly a coward. Be rather afraid of a cowardly friend than of a bold enemy in times of revolution! How I saw men killing each other in perfect frenzy, how I saw crowds behind the Hotel de Ville crazy with fear, trampling the dead and dying, stabbing at corpses and wallowing in the blood of comrades they knew not why! Ah! I have never forgotten those scenes from hell; they come to me again and again, and I ask, What has become of the manliness of men?”

In the election following the revolution M. Pelletier was elected to represent the Department of the Rhone and the great city of Lyons, and for two years that followed he labored in time and out of time, with men whose names have since become famous, to put into practice his theories for the alleviation of the distress of his fellow men. But the coup d'état that carried Louis Napoleon into power proved the death-blow to his schemes; he was arrested and imprisoned, and, as Victor Hugo relates in his “Histoire d'un Crime,” he was with sixty-two other Deputies sentenced to banishment. His fellow exiles included Victor Hugo himself; Lafon, now or recently in New-Orleans, and Jules Leroux, now settled in Corning County, Iowa. Of these sixty-three exiles only about twenty are now living.

After leaving France Pelletier went to England, as he says, “with a heart heavy with the feeling that the alleviation of the distress of the

French people and of humanity was further off than ever, since in the shadow of the Bonapartist republic we had the substance of a worse despotism than France had yet seen. How my views proved to be prophetic all the world knows." In 1855 M. Pelletier came to the United States, poor and friendless. It occurred to him, as he says, that he should prove himself more competent to aid others, when occasion served, if he could now manage to aid himself. He therefore sought and obtained employment as a vender of artificial flowers, and became half a canvasser, half a peddler.

His industry and intelligence were a help to him and he prospered. In a short time he was enabled to open a store of his own; then he became a manufacturer, and is reputed today to be one of the most successful men in his business. One of his business rivals said to the writer recently, "How does Pelletier stand? Why, he stands like the Bank of England; his word is good for all he will ever ask for!" But, engrossed in business as he has been. M. Pelletier has not at all given up his Socialistic views: all his leisure for a dozen years has been devoted to the writing of a Socialist dictionary for the instruction of the masses in the practical methods of enforcing Socialist views. This work is entitled "Dictionnaire Socialiste—Indiquant les Voies et Moyens de Résoudre le Problème Sociale." (Socialist Dictionary, Indicating the Ways and Means to Solve the Social Problem.) up to this time two volumes have been printed, and constitute a clear, concise and judicial exposition of Socialist theories. M. Pelletier will not publish the work until it is complete. He hopes to leave it finished at his death, as he says, "for a legacy to the people and for the cause to which I was so willing to consecrate my life but so little able to serve."

Since he has been in America M. Pelletier has studiously avoided all publicity and refrained from taking part in any of the so-called Socialistic movements of other foreigners in this country. He explained the reason of this by saying: "I am not conversant with the English language and therefore I could not, if I would, take part in politics here. I have often been solicited to do so by countrymen of mine who make a practice of interfering in matters that they do not understand, and if I consented I might, perhaps, have much influence with them. But I think that the politics of America should be left to people who understand the American people. From what I see of American Socialism, I am afraid it has started in the wrong way. The American Socialists want to work less and to be paid more, forgetting that men will not employ labor if it does not serve them, and that there is nothing to be gained by increasing the antagonism between labor and capital which already exists. There is no doubt that the workmen here are greatly distressed, but there is a relief for them. Just as the politicians insure against crime, fire, &c., let them insure against involuntary idleness, which is a still greater evil. Let all men work and

eat. In a republic like this we should have Government workshops in the large cities to give work to those who want it: let the Government advance men wages on their labor to meet their necessities as the commission merchant advances moneys to the producer on his produce to meet his expenses. Communism sounds terrible, and Socialism sounds little better, but worse than either is a country where the few feast and the many starve, and the Government cannot relieve the distress and can only wait expectantly for an outbreak and suppress it at a cost much larger than would have been required to prevent it.”

As to Mégy and his fellow Communists, M. Pelletier said: “Mégy means well, but he is young, he is younger than his age. He has a good heart that has suffered, and he has become an extremist. But these people have no influence with the American working-man—the French Commune has no place here. If a revolution broke out here tomorrow you would not even hear of Mégy. These people are the apostles of ideas only, very honest and sincere, but having no business with the present state of labor affairs in America. “In regard to the state of American politics, M. Pelletier said: “Corruption is its name and its blame. In Europe the politicians are honest at least; if they are wrong they are conscientiously wrong. Corruption has no access to them; they are proud to be honest rather than rich. Our justice in Europe is honest, too, until it touches political matters, and then it is worse than it is here. Your trouble in the United States is with an aristocracy of office-holders apparently elected by the people, not to serve them but to grow rich at their expense. While one sees suffering all around and one asks in vain for its relief we see two or three men invested with absolute power of imposing heavy taxes, regardless of the general distress, because to regard that distress would be to decrease the taxes, and to decrease the taxes would be to decrease the official salaries which alone make office-holding desirable. These views are common among thinking men, and the danger of this country lies not in the Commune nor in Socialism, but in the arrogance and greed of the public officials, who are slowly but surely breeding a revolution of which they may be the first victims. For myself, I take no active part in public affairs; the memories of the past and my present work in behalf of humanity in the future occupy all my time.”

In conclusion M. Pelletier spoke of Mazzini and Garibaldi, with whom he was formerly well-acquainted. He said that Mazzini's dream had been fulfilled in the unity of Italy and that Garibaldi had lived to see the realization of many of his hopes. As to Church matters he would not speak; he was of opinion “that the Socialists and the Communists make too much of the Church in their abuse of it. They could not harm it more than by leaving it severely alone.”

Source: NEW YORK WORLD. April 30, 1878. 7.

