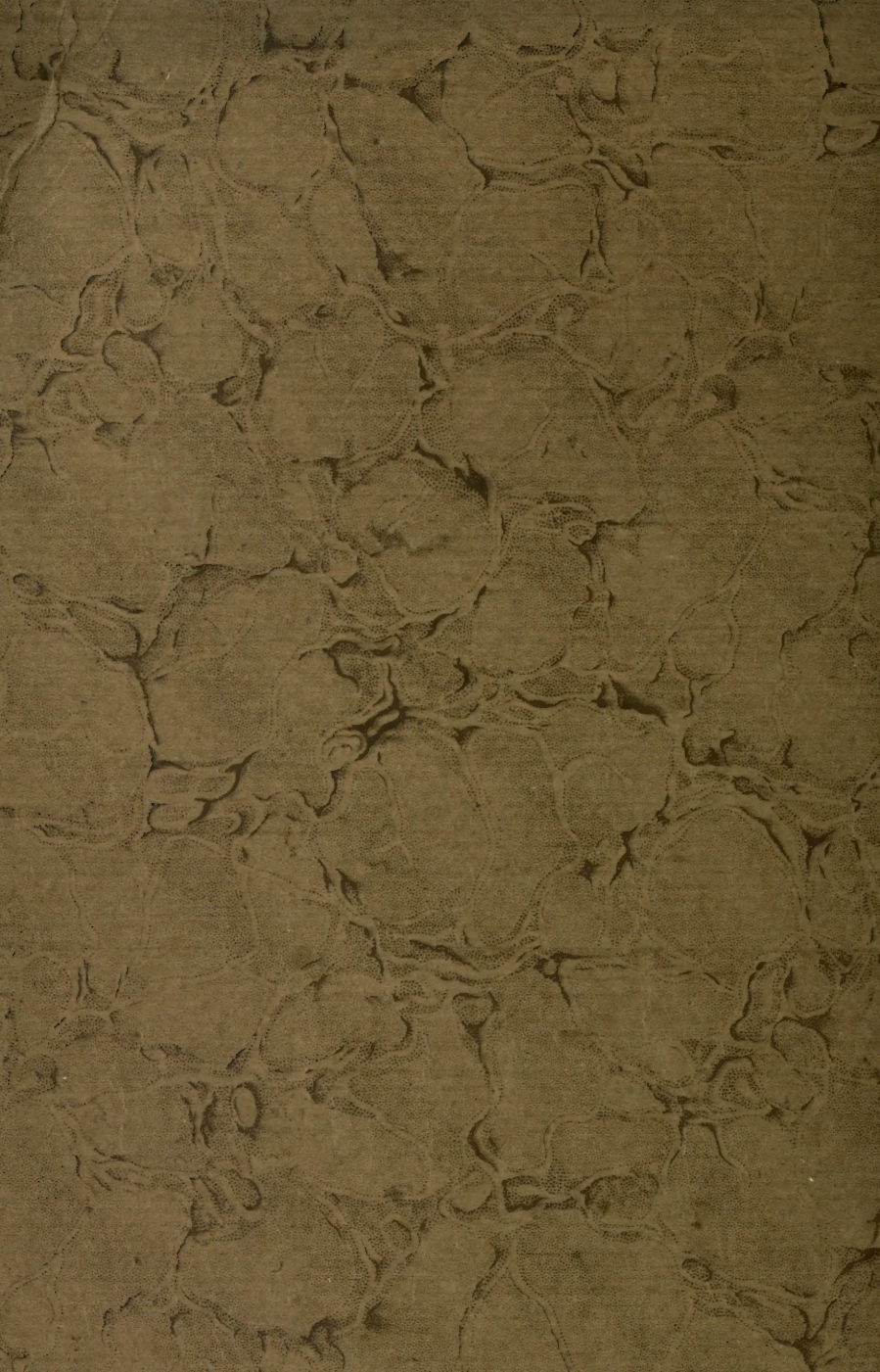


Coppée, François

Pater Noster

(translated by
Will Hutchins)

PQ
2211
C3P453




Pater Noster : a Play in
One Act : by Francois
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Samuel French: Publisher

25 West Forty-Fifth St. : New York

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FRANCOIS COPPÉE

François Coppée, the "poet of the humble," was born at Paris in 1842. Although he was primarily a poet, simple and gentle yet at times strong and vigorous, he wrote a number of poetic dramas, most of them on historical and romantic subjects. Among his best are "Le Passant" (1869), "Le Luthier de Crémone" (1876), "Pour la couronne" (1896) and "Le Pater" (1889), which is here translated, for the first time into English, as "Pater Noster." Coppée died in Paris in 1908.

"Le Pater" is a simple incident taken from the troublous times of the Paris Commune, in 1871. Just as it was about to be performed at the Comédie Française, it was censored for political reasons.

Speaking of Coppée, Anatole France once said: "François Coppée helped us to love. We were not mistaken when we took him to our hearts. He is a true poet, for he is natural. In that regard he is unique, for the quality of naturalness is what is most rare in art; I should say that it is a sort of miracle. And when the artist is at the same time a skilful workman, a consummate artisan who knows all the tricks of his trade, as does M. Coppée, then it is time—seeing such perfect simplicity—to exclaim: a prodigy!"

The setting, a simple interior, is fully described in the stage directions. The costumes may be modern.

FRANÇOIS COPPÉE
PATER NOSTER

PERSONS IN THE PLAY

MADemoiselle ROSE
THE CURÉ
JACQUES LEROUX
AN OFFICER
ZÉLIE
A NEIGHBOR
SOLDIERS

SCENE: *A room in the home of MADemoiselle
ROSE, Belleville, France.*

TIME: *May, 1871.*

PATER NOSTER

SCENE: *The scene is laid at Belleville in May, 1871. The curtain discloses a room on the ground floor in the simple home of the late ABBÉ JEAN MOREL and his sister, MADEMOISELLE ROSE. At the rear there is a door in the center with a latticed window on either side, opening on a sunlit garden, full of roses through the garden to an open gate in a low wall which surrounds the garden. Beyond the wall is seen a narrow street in the edge of the city, with high factory chimneys beyond. The furniture of the room is very simple, almost rustic. At the right is a fireplace and mantel, on which stands a statue of the Virgin in painted plaster. On the left wall there hangs an ivory Crucifix. There is a sewing table before the fireplace, with a large arm-chair by it and a smaller chair near the chimney corner. At the left in front there is a solid study table, with books and papers, and a comfortable chair on either side of it. Another chair stands near the open window at the right. A country dresser stands against the upper wall at the left. At the left also there is a large clothes chest and a mahogany bookcase, full of bound volumes. Religious pictures hang on the walls. There is a door at the right above the fireplace and another facing it at the left.*

At the rise of the curtain, ZÉLIE, an old

woman-servant wearing a peasant's cap, is sitting on a chair before the fireplace in an attitude of dejection. Near her stands a woman of the neighborhood, bareheaded, carrying a basket of provisions.

THE NEIGHBOR.

They shot him, then, the bandits? It is certain? You are quite sure?

ZÉLIE.

Since I am telling you—
 'Evening before last, in the street out there,
 Rue Haxo, near by,—with the other priests,—
 While the villains were still masters of the quarter.
 A neighbor saw it plainly. The good Abbé
 Had raised his hand to bless them; then he fell.
 Further than that we know not, she and I.
 But it is sure.— When they arrested him
 For hostage, as they called it, we both said:
 "Ah, well, we soon shall see him back again."
 For he was loved throughout the neighborhood,
 So good, so kind! A saint!—The dogs!

(The sound of platoon firing is heard in the distance.)

THE NEIGHBOR. *(Trembling)* Mon Dieu!

ZÉLIE. *(Rising)*

Well done, well done, lads of Versailles! Vengeance!

Kill, massacre them all! 'Twere blessed bread!

THE NEIGHBOR.

But Mother Zélie!—Yes, the fiends are punished.
 And yet it seems like slaughter, nothing more.
 Last night the brook behind the Precinct Hall.
 Was running red with blood, frightful to see.
 The blood of more than one poor innocent—

ZÉLIE.

Innocent? And who more so than my master,

The poor Abbé Morel? A heart of gold!
 A priest indeed! One who was always giving,
 Even when he had nothing for himself!
 To kill him! Oh, they are devils out there now!
 I,—I know nothing of these things. I am
 Only a country woman. Your Parisians
 Are jail-bird rabble, convicts, all of them,
 With no more sense of right than animals.
 As for their Commune? Beastly brawling words,
 For which they massacre, take hostages
 Like savage brigands, and then put to death
 A good brave man, a poor unfortunate
 Who, for his charities through the frightful siege,
 Had almost sold the shirt from off his back.
 Neighbor, all sweetness now is barred from us.
 Murderers must be punished for the sake
 Of those who met no pity at their hands!

THE NEIGHBOR.

Aye, all those brigands! 'Twill be little loss——
 Think what the poor dear Abbé did for them
 The winter when the factories shut down!
 He came to every most unhappy home
 Bringing relief. Then he was blessed by all,—
 And now: dead, shot! Oh, it is horrible!
 His sister, think of her,—Mademoiselle Rose,
 Who loved him so!—She must be in despair?

ZÉLIE.

Neighbor, I cannot tell it; you must see.
 For first of all she never said a word.
 I was afraid; I thought she had gone mad.
 And then such agonies of grief burst out,
 Such curses on the rabble mob of Paris!—
 Always repeating: "Horror and infamy!"
 Oh, frightful!—Finally she fell asleep,
 Worn out, in her big arm-chair, in her room,
 (*Pointing to the room at the right*)
 But all at once, dreaming, she ground her teeth—
 I'm waiting till she wakes.

THE NEIGHBOR. (*Sitting near ZÉLIE*)

Poor demoiselle!

ZÉLIE.

For more than fifteen years I've lived with her.
 Their parents, simple people, peasants, half,
 Had died but recently. The boy was twelve,
 The sister twenty,—with a mother's heart.
 The orphan boy always came home from school
 Bringing the prize—And sweet, obedient!
 How proudly then his sister used to say
 That her Jean was no ordinary child.
 They sent him to the little seminary
 There in the town, where he was always first,—
 Where he won all the prizes. It was then
 That one of their kinsfolk, a rich young farmer,
 Wished to make Rose his wife. She was so sweet!
 But she had vowed herself to maidenhood,
 And so refused, pleading her brother's cause:
 "When he's a priest I shall keep house for him,"
 She said, and always kept her promised word.
 She has always lived for him, an older sister.
 Two beings never have been seen whose love
 For one another was as great as theirs—
 And now, dead. Yes, and murdered, what is more!
 So horrible a civil war can be!—
 I, when they made him vicar at Belleville,
 Here in this dreadful barefoot suburb slum,
 I murmured, yes: I seemed to have a foresight.
 But then the mistress said, almost severe:
 "My brother here shall have great good to do.
 So much the better." She remembers it,
 That word, poor sister!—Ah, Jésus-Maria!
 What sorrow, ah, what sorrow to her now!

THE NEIGHBOR.

Yes, surely, such a thing was never seen.

MADemoiselle ROSE. (*From her room at the right*)
 Zélie!

THE NEIGHBOR. (*Rising*)
Did you hear?

ZÉLIE. (*Rising*)
Neighbor, she's awake.

Excuse me, but you'd better go away.
She'll set herself again to talk to you,
To mourn,—and I'm afraid of madness there.

(*The neighbor takes her basket and goes out through the garden. ROSE, in a black gown, enters with a crushed air, almost tottering. ZÉLIE goes anxiously to her and supports her to a chair by the garden window.*)

ZÉLIE.
Are you a little better?

MADemoiselle ROSE.

I?—Indeed,
I've been asleep—Yes, but I had a dream,
Horrible!—All those prisoners, that wall,
And all those musket shots! They call that sleep!—
(*She sits*)

I have mud in my throat—And I am thirsty.

(*ZÉLIE brings a glass of water from the dresser. ROSE drinks eagerly.*)

No cannon shots?—I heard them in my dream—
They are not fighting any more?

ZÉLIE.

Not now.

They say that in the Père-Lachaise they conquered
The last of the Federates.

MADemoiselle ROSE. (*Rising and looking about*)

All is quiet, yes.

The house is quite in order, the day fair.
The blue of the June sky never had a splendor
More pure. The garden keeps its charm. I catch

The odor of the roses. They would mock
 Our grief, those things. Nothing at all has changed.
 Whether or not we suffer, they are calm.
 The unfeeling flowers bloom out to the sun;
 The stupid birds sing to divert themselves.
 It does not touch them that my brother's killed——
 My dear good brother,—lost for ever,—ever!—

(To ZÉLIE)

Did no one come in while I was asleep?

ZÉLIE.

Yes, Blanche, our neighbor.

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Yes, from down the street——
 A family my brother often helped.
 The grandfather is in the hospital,
 Thanks to his efforts.

ZÉLIE.

Then, Monsieur the Curé.

MADemoiselle ROSE. (*Brusquely*)

I do not wish to see him!

ZÉLIE.

Do you think so?

He loved the Abbé Jean with all his heart;
 Your brother was his friend, his own right arm,
 To bring you consolation is his duty.
 Could you receive a better visitor?

MADemoiselle ROSE.

He said he would return?

ZÉLIE.

Yes, presently.

MADemoiselle ROSE. (*Coming down to a chair
 by the sewing-table*)

So be it. Let him come. He loved my brother.
 'Twas wrong in me—However, if he wants
 To talk of resignation first of all,
 So much the worse for him! I shall blaspheme!
 I suffer too much, and this priest himself
 Will not dare, with a crime like that at hand,

To praise to me the goodness of his God!—

(*To ZÉLIE*)

There, leave me.

(*ZÉLIE goes out through the garden. ROSE sits alone.*)

Shall I truly go on living?

For I am living—And the hours always
Will follow in their turn, and that old clock
Will count the moments of the day and night
With quiet sound. One does not die, it seems,
From such a blow as this. I am not dead
After the blow, no, and I am not old.
Perhaps the death which I await is distant.
I can hold out,—who knows?—five years, ten,
twenty tears.

This grief, alive and bleeding always, sprouting
Like some foul plant, deep in my heart, at last
Will lacerate me with its frightful shoots.
On farms, at least, the animals are killed
When they can be of no more use—But I?
Since they have massacred my child, my brother,
I have no further reason to exist—
Oh, to seize one of them, to beat the fiend,
Spit in his face and then to cut his throat!
They are beaten, good! But many are in flight.
People will give them refuge and conceal them,
And God will make no move to hinder them!
Ah, well,—No, no! It is too infamous,
Too monstrous! Since this frightful murder
I am another woman utterly.
My pious sentiments of other days
Are quenched; my brutal instincts come again.
They will not dull my awful suffering
Talking to me of heaven, hope and pardon.
Since yesterday I have been drinking tears,
A poison, yes, but one which clears the mind.
I see it now. Their God, if He exist,
Is nothing, since wrong triumphs and resists **Him**.

Either He is evil, or less powerful!
 Since He permits the death of the innocent
 And takes the side of devils against angels,
 Not even letting me avenge myself,—
 Him, this good God, whom stupidly I worshipped,
 I will believe no more!—Let the priest come!
*(While ROSE has been speaking the last words, the
 CURÉ, an old white-haired man, has entered from
 the rear. He crosses the garden and stops on the
 threshold of the room. ROSE catches sight of him)*
 'Tis he!

THE CURÉ. *(Advancing)*

My poor child!

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Thank you for this call,
 Monsieur le Curé, but, you see, all this
 Troubles me, breaks me down—I am in despair.
 We'll talk together later,—very soon,—
 I'll come to you—You loved him: I know that.
 I am very rude—But when I have to talk
 Of all this, madness seizes me, I rave—
 And so, indeed, I need but only this,—
 To be allowed to weep here all alone.

THE CURÉ.

If I am indiscreet I shall withdraw—
 But I know that a holy priest of God
 Has suffered martyrdom. A single word
 Is all I have for you, but in that word
 Is all you need. Woman, console yourself,
 Your brother is in Heaven.

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Heaven! Ah!

I was expecting the banal reply.
 The empty word which egotism speaks!
 My brother is in Heaven! So be it! Well,—
 But he is also in that charnal house
 In the rue Haxo, jut outside our door,
 Bleeding, disfigured, pierced with twenty wounds.

Atrocities like that,—those things are sure.
 I cannot make out with my human sight.
 My poor Jean up there with his palm in hand.
 His body, that is true; his death is real.
 This much is certain: those who buried him,
 Throwing the dirt and pebbles on his body,
 Buried my faith in Heaven. Do you hear?
 Heaven? Always Heaven! When those cannibals
 Took my poor Jean and riddled him with bullets,
 Your Heaven shone,—it was quite calm and blue.
 It was not troubled for so small a thing.
 Sodom and Gomorra could have done no more.
 Heaven? But see how pure it is, good man!
 And Paris burns, and throats are cut, and pave-
 ments

Are watered down with blood and kerosene.
 Does all this merit that your Heaven, perhaps,
 Should interest itself? Ah, well I hate it!
 I, sister of a priest, I hate your Heaven!
 I hurl defiance in the face of it!—
 I have spoken. Curse me now!

THE CURÉ.

I weep with you.

Your blasphemies have nothing to provoke
 Or startle me. I do not hear them. God
 Will pardon you for them. But he, our martyr,
 Vesting himself in his beatitude,
 There is his glory, with the holy angels,
 Is stung at heart by a sister's bitterness

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Monsieur le Curé, I am so unhappy!
 Pardon—I do not know what I am saying.
 Yes, you are right: he is in Paradise.
 But I, mark you,—for what have I to live?
 Yes, I did wrong to open up my grief—
 It is so,—yes, I know it. I submit.
 But no one understands how much I loved him!
 More than a sister's love I had for him.

When he was just a little child I took
 A mother's place for him, and later on,
 A holy priest and full of piety,
 He filled for me the office of a father.
 In filial obedience I loved
 To serve him, the great Christian, nobly pure,
 A blessing to the faith itself. Distraught
 And simple, dreaming always, was the man:
 Then I could tend him like a little child.
 You see me, while this horror saps my life,
 Suffering a mother's and an orphan's grief—
 My brother!—Done to death by hideous brigands!—
 It was so good, so sweet, our life together,
 Here in our quiet home, in solitude!
 At evening he would always sit,—yes, there,—
 To read an hour after supper-time.
 I would be sewing near him. Neither one
 Would speak. When people love each other so,
 There is no need of words. In everything
 Our thoughts were always one. Our voices, often,
 Would break the silence with the self-same word.
 Marriage and family I renounced for him.
 The heart of an old sister, an old maid,
 May be a miser's treasure-house of love.
 We never left each other for one day;
 Were we apart for only just an hour,
 My thoughts, yes, all my tenderest and best,
 I always kept for him, just stitching them
 Into the socks I used to knit for him.
 It's ended, all that,—fled beneath the earth.
 But I am not ungrateful: no, my brother!
 No one shall be permitted to tell me
 To wipe my eyes and to console myself.
 To you I owe my joy of other days,
 And I shall pay in suffering, rest assured.
 To die your death, yes, that would be for me
 A cruel joy, a bitterness too sweet.
 My grief I cherish, finding grace in it;

I wish to feel my life flow with my tears,
And when my grief shall choke for me the flow,
Give up my last breath with a final sob.

THE CURÉ.

Weep, for I love your tears, poor broken soul!
Their rosy bloom shall flower forth, one day,
An island of green refuge in your desert.
For tears in grief are rain to desert sand.
Yes, speak of the dear dead, cherish all your pain:
But always keep at least this hope, though sad,
That he sees you and knows your suffering.
'Tis not the priest who speaks to you to-day:
It is your friend, an old man, and I tell you:
About us here I sense a floating soul.
Your brother sees you, he is here. I say
I hear him whisper: "My poor sister, thanks,
For loving me so much. Have done with rage!
Weep,—tears are sweet,—but weep with fortitude.
Be calm. I am with you always, blessing you,
And living in your heart and memory.
We shall be reunited. Try to live.
I shall keep watch above you. Read aloud
The Holy Book, and in the spoken words
Sometimes the echo of my voice shall sound.
Bow every day before my crucifix,
And pray with all your heart, my sister, pray,
And while your spirit there unites with mine
You shall believe you see my very smile
Wandering on the lips of Christ himself.
When you shall visit my poor folk, and some one
Presses the kind hand open to their need,
My sister, you shall feel my clasping hand.
O Christian, do this to the very end!
Grief is a burden terrible to bear,
But I shall be upholding you, your guide,
Invisible. March, fight! Your brother sees you!
And never asking if the time be long
Until death's dawning break upon your sight,

Learn to deserve the meeting place of Heaven.”

MADemoiselle ROSE.

If it were true, then? Ah, Monsieur le Curé,
If I were hurting my beloved brother,—
If I were sure of it—I will be strong—
I'll try.—Alas, my time is not yet come!

(There is a sound of firing in the distance.)

THE CURÉ. *(Aside)*

Mon Dieu!

They're shooting yet!

MADemoiselle ROSE. *(Springing up, trembling at the sound)*

What did you hear out there?

That far-off sound,—it is the squadron fire!
Yes, yes, I know! The Commune in defeat!
Those fiends—

(With a cry of triumph)

Vengeance at last! They are killing them!

THE CURÉ. *(Troubled)*

Frightful! Who knows? Among the unfortunates—

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Would you be tender with them, pity them?
They are atrocious murderers. I have
No pity in me for wild animals.
Who can add up the evil they have done,—
The blood spilled?—Ah, it is all one to me!
For after all their crimes are none of mine.
I only know one thing: they killed my brother!
My brother,—they have killed him! Do you hear?
It's only just that they should all be shot.
That platoon fire is a delight to me.
A drunken joy! If there is any need
For someone to incite the men or load
The rifles, well, just let them send for me!

THE CURÉ.

A woman,—you—to speak thus!

MADemoiselle ROSE.

All the wretches!

Those people of the quarter, men and women,
 Children, for whom he would deny himself,
 Who, sick, would have him always by their bed,
 All of whom he has helped a hundred times,
 Such folks as they rightly were Communards,
 Ready to massacre, to set on fire!
 And my Jean loved them, that poor lamb of God!
 He visited their garrets every day,
 Carried them bread and clothes, and money, too,
 Sharing with them the little that he had,—
 Those are the ones who shot him like a dog!
 Yes, they, I tell you, or at least their like.
 Wretches,—and all my brother did for them!
 It is unheard of! Hold! See!

*(She brusquely opens the clothes closet and takes
 out a cassock and a priest's hat.)*

I have here

A worn-out cassock and a hat, all dusty.
 I told my brother: "I'm ashamed of you:
 Your clothes are too old; I must fix you up.
 I have the money right there in my drawer."
 But he replied: "Rose, I have been to call
 Upon our neighbors, the Duvals. You know
 They have five mouths to feed, poor dears, and now
 The mother is in childbirth. Yesterday
 The sheriffs came to seize them. Is it right
 For a priest to strut about in fine new clothes
 While his own poor are going naked? Tell me?
 Bind the old hat again, sew up the cassock!
 My old clothes will do well enough this year."

*(She drops the hat and cassock on a chair by the
 table at left.)*

And four days after that he was in prison,
 Taken as hostage, not resisting them,
 So tender and so prodigal for all,—

His dearest beggars, his poor favorites
 Getting their thirty sous among the Federates!
 Perhaps they too were at the slaughter scene——
 Ha! You would dare to blame me? Priest,
 enough!

When with soft voice you promised that his soul
 Was here about me you were lying to me;
 You quieted my grief with lullabys.
 My instinct surges over me again,
 Roused by that musketry against the mob.
 They killed my brother! I have vengeance! Good!

THE CURÉ.

I ought, out of respect for what I wear,
 To leave the threshold of your house forever,
 And not to let myself be outraged more.
 But, to the one who speaks of vengeance thus
 My duty is to say one last hard word.
 God, who died for the world on Calvary,
 God, whose immortal sacrifice your brother
 Used every day humbly to celebrate
 Before the altar, which you here insult,—
 He is a God of goodness, pardon, mercy.
 Your brother, in the moment of his death,—
 Yes, I believe it, I am sure of it,—
 He only thought of Jesus on the cross.
 Christians like him do not fail at the door.
 Strong in his faith under the fusillade,
 Martyr and hero, sweet and firm, he raised
 His hand to bless his executioners.
 With your heart poisoned by a little grief
 You can applaud this justice out-of-hand.
 Hate, he avenged! So be it! But know well
 If the Abbé Jean Morel, that perfect Christian,
 Your noble brother, O unhappy woman,—
 If he were judge to-day of those who fired
 He would have pitied them and pardoned them.
 Adieu!

(He goes up to the outer door.)

MADemoiselle ROSE.

What trouble you throw in my soul!
My brother was a saint, I am but a woman—
And yet it's true he blessed his murderers.
Alas! What is there I can do now?

THE CURÉ.

Pray.

(He turns and goes out through the garden.)

MADemoiselle ROSE. *(Alone)*

My prayer, I have begun it many times
To-night, and could not finish it—My thoughts
Were full of hatred and rebellion—Prayer—
To pray! But can I? Let me try once more!

(She takes her rosary and kneels in prayer.)

“Our Father which art in heaven, hallowed be thy
name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done, on
earth—”

These words have raised a tempest in my heart.
Can I say: O my God thy will be done?—

“Give us this day our daily bread and forgive
us our trespasses as we forgive those—” *(She
rises in terror)*

Forgive! Who, then? Forgive all those assassins?
God and the Holy Virgin and the saints

I call to witness! I was not sincere!

I did not say it! I lied! Every bead

Upon my rosary was one more lie!

It burns my hands, the accursed string of lies!

*(She throws the rosary on the table in terror, and
stands for a time.)*

And the Curé said my brother would have
pardoned—

But I, I cannot: grief is killing me!

The prayer?—One more hope lost! I cannot pray.
I, who was yesterday so pious, now
I cannot even say my *Pater Noster*.

(At this moment a man, bareheaded and tattered, wearing the jacket of the Federates, with four silver stripes, enters quickly at the back through the garden gate. He is evidently pursued, for he looks cautiously up and down the street as if to reassure himself that no one has seen him enter. He crosses the garden and stops at the threshold of the room.)

JACQUES LEROUX. *(In a failing voice)*
Refuge!

MADemoiselle ROSE. *(Seeing him)*
Ah!

JACQUES LEROUX.
You will hide me? Will you? Please?
I can escape them; they have lost my track.
No one saw me come in here. Refuge, please!
MADemoiselle ROSE.

A Federate! Here in my house!
JACQUES LEROUX.

I am
One of the beaten who would save himself.
Pity! They're tracking me like a wild beast,
They're on my heels,—the soldiers from Versailles
If they should catch me with this jacket on
They'd stand me up and shoot me by a wall,
Without a word. In flight I saw your garden,—
The open gate. I threw myself in there.
All women are good-hearted! You will hide me?
Oh, yes you will!—You won't? Oh, I'm afraid
You blame me for the crimes of yesterday.
I set no fires,—I shot nobody.
Give me a little corner, anywhere,
Where I can take to earth for just one day—

To-morrow I will go away—I will!
 I'm nothing but a common fighter, Madame,
 Upon my soul! And if you turn me out,—
 I'm dead, that's all—Some man is dear to you,—
 A father or a son, a husband,—brother.
 I pray you, with hands folded, on my knees,
 Rescue the beaten fugitive of war,
 For husband's sake, for son's sake,—brother's sake!

MADemoiselle ROSE.

For brother's sake! Refused! Hear me and say!
 I had a brother but I have no more.
 His name will answer all your chatterings:
 He was the Abbé Morel, shot as hostage!

JACUES LEROUX. (*Rising from his knees and
 staggering weakly towards the door*)

I am lost!

MADemoiselle ROSE. (*Barring the door*)

Yes, lost! You have said it: you are lost!
 Go, if you want to, from the house, you bandit!
 I will not leave you; I will follow you;
 I'll scream; I'll show you to the rushing mob,
 Half dead, stabbed through the bosom with your
 knife

I'll follow you and cry out: "Seize the assassin!"

JACQUES LEROUX.

I am no assassin! In the barricades
 I fought as all my other comrades did.
 I am innocent of all those frightful crimes.
 Have pity!

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Should you pray with tears of blood
 You would be wasting time—What? Let you live?
 One of his murderers? I have you now.
 I'll give you up to the court-martial. They
 Will make short work of you. You ask for pity?
 An officer, a chief? You have no chance!
 Look, then, how everything prompts my revenge!
 (*Taking up the cassock and showing it to him*)

Even this rag here, by my brother worn
 While he was wasting gold in charity
 For all your gutter-snipe assassins! You?
 Pity for you from me? You're surely joking?

JACQUES LEROUX. (*Drawing himself up*)
 Do it, then! Give me up! I asked too much.
 I did wrong. Let us die like men! You can
 Enjoy my death and know your joy in full:
 I am Jacques Leroux, member of the Commune.

MADemoiselle ROSE.

You?

JACQUES LEROUX.

But I did not make those laws of blood.
 I hated all communicants of God,
 But even so I did my best to check
 Retaliation, fighting only those
 Who rallied to Versailles,—that is all!
 But now I know the hypocrite's true worth,
 The goodness of the zealot and the priest.
 Pitiless woman, let me tell you this:
 Those who pretend to worship in the church
 That victim on the cross named Jesus Christ,
 Know nothing of his pardon, and give up
 The man condemned to die!

MADemoiselle ROSE. (*Aside*)

His very words!

Almost exactly what the Curé said.

(ZÉLIE enters quickly from the garden gate.)

ZÉLIE.

Mademoiselle Rose, soldiers are coming here
 To search the house!

(*She perceives JACQUES and gives a cry.*)

Ah!

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Leave us. Go along!

(ZÉLIE goes into the garden.)

MADemoiselle ROSE. (*Aside*)

The priest was right. My brother would have
 pardoned.

I feel it in my soul.

JACQUES LEROUX.

To have to die!—

Good-bye to wife and children! Courage, man!
 It is my destiny and I obey.

(ROSE takes the hat and cassock from the chair and holds them to JACQUES with one hand while she points with the other to the door at the left.)

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Go in that room there and put on these clothes.

JACQUES LEROUX. (*Stupefied*)

I?

MADemoiselle ROSE. (*With an imperious gesture, as JACQUES takes the clothes and goes off to the left*)

MADemoiselle ROSE.

You would wish it, O my brother,
 O holy priest, great Christian!—He, perhaps,
 Was one of your own executioners,
 But I obey you, giving, to cover him,
 Your cassock, dear one, and your relic, martyr!

(A young officer, followed by soldiers, enters brusquely from the street. He stops on the threshold.)

THE OFFICER.

Pardon, Madame! A Communard is hiding
 In this street—an important chief. You know
 I've got to have him. Look here, answer me!

If you are hiding him, the worse for you!
We'll have to search the house——

MADemoiselle ROSE.

I am astonished

At your mistake, Monsieur. I'm hiding no one.
Please notice where you are.

(The OFFICER enters the room and notices the crucifix, the Virgin and the religious pictures. He is a bit embarrassed, but continues his search, crossing to the room at the right which he hurriedly examines and re-enters to cross to the room at the left. ROSE quietly anticipates his crossing, stepping up naturally to intercept him.)

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Indeed, if I

Could give you any help I'd do it, gladly.
I am without the very least indulgence,
Believe me, Sir, for all these Communards.
If you can capture this man we shall thank you.

(At this moment JACQUES, in the cassock, with the Roman hat on his head, appears at the door at the left. He sees the soldiers and stops, petrified. ROSE points to him, and continues, in a calm voice.)

This is my brother. We live here alone.

THE OFFICER. *(Raising his cap at the sight of the cassock)*

Pardon, Monsieur Abbé! Pardon, Madame!
(To his men) Forward!

(He goes out, preceded by the soldiers. ROSE, at door, watches them off. JACQUES comes to

ROSE, *holding out his hands to her, and speaks in a choking voice.*)

JACQUES LEROUX.

I shall remember all my life,—yes, all——

MADemoiselle ROSE.

Ah! Not a word! With these clothes you have on,
You are safe anywhere. Go! Go at once!

(JACQUES, *followed by a gesture of command from ROSE, goes slowly out through the garden gate, turning for a last look of gratitude. ROSE comes quietly down to the table where she has thrown the chaplet and picks it up.*)

MADemoiselle ROSE.

I am your sister and your humble heir,
Beloved soul! Be near to hear my prayer

(She drops to her knees.)

“And forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those
who trespass against us.

And lead us not into temptation but deliver us from
evil. Amen!”

(During the last words of her prayer the curtain falls, silently and very slowly.)

Curtain

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