

DEPART
DE M. NECKER
ET
DE MADAME DE GOUGES,
OU
LES ADIEUX
DE MADAME DE GOUGES
AUX FRANÇAIS ET A M. NECKER.

M. Necker and Madame de Gouges's Departure or Madame de Gouges's Farewells to the French and to M. Necker. ¹

.....Ridendo dicere verum,
Quid vetat?.....²

PARIS.

1790.

We are departing, Sir, and we will, you and I, leave Paris, after having, for a few moments, been centre stage, you in an elevated position, I in a mundane rank; here, already, is a little something we have in common. Yet if our opinions have approximately the same aim, they could not be more different in their progress. You, by changing the principles of the French, you have ventured to enlighten them about their most pressing interests, and thus given them a more vigorous existence: I, conversely, I wanted to preserve their true spirit, weed out the abuses alone and consolidate the French monarchy for the benefit of all my fellow citizens; that is how we differ. Meanwhile we have toiled for ingrates; we have both lost the fruits of our labours: that is how we resemble each other.

Phlegmatic by nature, republican by birth, you came amongst a happy people, amiable, faithful to their kings, law abiding, to teach them the elements of a freedom that does not at all suit the nature of their government; I, as lively as a Languedoc woman, and French born, knowing the French character, I advised them not to touch the ancient sacred tree of the monarchy, but merely to prune greedy parasitic branches, also the ones that, torn off with such violence, could only drag France down with them as they fall: that is

¹ Written in 1790 this pamphlet made public de Gouges's decision to leave France in the hope that her play, *L'Esclavage des Nègres*, poorly received in Paris, would fare better on the London stage. She uses Necker's departure to playfully contrast and compare their lives, commenting on Treasury affairs before moving on to attack French slave traders and colonists, to comment on newsworthy events such as the execution of Favras, to offer anecdotes relating to everyday life in Paris, and to skewer with her mordant wit those whom she felt had let her, or her nation, down. Having decided to leave Paris she found herself too attached to France's ever changing political situation to bear a lengthy absence and abandoned her journey.

Jacques Necker (1732 – 1804) was a wealthy banker and financier who was appointed finance minister to Louis XVI from 1776 to 1781 when he resigned. As a Swiss Protestant his employment in such a politically sensitive role was highly controversial as non-Catholics were not legally entitled to hold such positions. Recalled by the king in 1788 he was dismissed and reinstated within days during the chaos that was the summer of 1789. His political career in France finally ended in September 1790 and he left the country to return to live out the rest of his life in Switzerland. His wife Suzanne, née Curchod, had hosted an acclaimed salon in Paris and their only child was the celebrated writer Germaine de Staël.

² 'What stops one from telling the truth through laughter?' This Latin maxim is taken from Horace's *Satires* (book 1, satire i, verse 24) and was often written thus in French texts though in English works 'ridentem' usually replaces 'ridendo'.

where we differ. You judged France's resources to be inexhaustible; like you, I believed it too: in this we resemble each other.

The love of glory sustained your courage; patriotism alone allowed me to confront all dangers: that is how we differ. You are discouraged, I likewise: in this we resemble each other.

You have an income of eight thousand *livres* and you are sick; as for me, at present all my baggage would fit into a shoe, but my health is as robust as can be: that is how we differ. We are both leaving France deploring the waste of our efforts and our labours; in this we resemble each other.

You are leaving with your purse amply filled, in a very comfortable well sprung berlin carriage and I, almost ruined by my printers, I leave, perched on a rough and badly harnessed cariole cart, surrounded by my entire dramatic and patriotic collection, similar, in this fashion, to the divine Homer, who it is said made his living by reciting the verses of his immortal poem from town to town. Ah! That is the point at which we differ a great deal. You carry away a portfolio full of excellent projects that did not succeed; I myself go to make known abroad the works of a woman that could have saved the motherland if they had not initially been disdained and calumniated, but actually they are no less followed for all that; again this is where we differ the most.

Nonetheless, Sir, do not think that I wish to profit from the disfavour with which today's public, less enthusiastic than before, burdens you; I have occasionally allowed myself to give you advice, at a time when you were the God of France; advice that you failed to grasp and to which you did not even deign to respond, despite having put it to good use, too late, the following year. Ah well! I bear no grudge, and once more I wish to offer you counsel; if you again refuse to heed me, that is your bad luck; receiving the opinions of a woman does not debase the greatest man when their only tendency is to heighten his understanding.

You were the first to receive the homage of my *patriotic purse* project; every minister thanked me for it, and even though, in the text, I did not spare the men in position, their despotic character had at least restrained itself enough to reply to a woman's zeal in the politest possible fashion.

You alone, Sir, seemed to disdain me, and you oblige me to publicly reproach you for it. But what am I saying! Resentment at your conduct is not what drives me today, it is love for my motherland; and when men are truly great, I know how to pay them homage; when I find them not to be, false self-interested praise cannot pass my lips.

Such is my character: my writings and my conduct have made it known well enough. Thus, Sir, you can neither be angry nor even complain of a frankness that I had manifested at a time when the National Assembly had yet to establish man in all his rights. In part we owe you, I know, this good fortune; and perhaps we would owe it to you entirely if Jean-Jacques had not taught us that a philosopher who sees men act in a small clique, would observe them quite differently when they are chaotically thrown together in greater numbers. Nonetheless, you have my gratitude for this benefit.

Meanwhile, Sir, how dangerous it is to deflect men from their everyday habits when they have acquired a certain aplomb! It is true of governments managed like bee hives; get close to the hives without due caution, and you disturb the bees at their work, they sting you; the swarm disperses and is lost. There, it seems to me, is the truest allegory of our situation.

I have, Sir, either very bizarre or very original ideas at the moment, as I think that equality between men can only take place when ignorance is equal. Eh! Where is this universal ignorance? This universal equality? All in nature is subordinate; all is submitted to a given superiority in its three classifications.³

3 Animal, vegetable, mineral.

But it is not with philosophy that I wish to embellish my farewells; allow me, Sir, to chatter in a way more useful to my motherland and to yourself: yes, chatter and I resolve the problem; often the multitude of my ideas leads me astray and then I have great trouble finding my way out; this makes my readers often say: 'If this woman didn't have rockets in her head she would sometimes tell us excellent things.' Therefore take my farewells for what they are; I am, in my writings, the pupil of nature and must be, like her, unpredictable, even bizarre, but always true, always straightforward.

What then, would you say, what then is the aim of this text? Ah! Doubtless I have more than one, and all, I dare say, are most praiseworthy. I would wish the King of France to ascend his throne again; that the nation recognise that he came down from it to the detriment of France; that the French, foregoing the sabre and the gibbet, reunite themselves at the head of their affairs; that the districts be composed only of old paterfamilias, those respectable patriarchs who are fit only to give wise advice to their children; that the unpaid national guard be armed only in circumstances that truly disrupt public tranquility, as in this instance, when the effervescence of the people seemed to wish to join in the discussion of the national assembly. So many reflections to be made on this subject!.....

For eight months I have heard of nothing but plots by enemies of the motherland; and to destroy these futile ghosts, for four months all citizens are, day and night, in tumult; and this great combat, which should have been the result of so much work, is ending in torture; what torture!.....Emphatically one shameful to the nation I dare say. I can use this tone, Sir, because it is generally known that I am of no party. I attest it here once more, myself. I know it is not a way for me to gain supporters, followers or friends; one must, it is said, be necessarily enrolled under some banner or other, in order to be praised, lauded and carried to the heights; but how can an upright soul, a disinterested heart, place itself in one of those two parties one calls *aristocratic and democratic*? As for myself, Sir, I find them unpatriotic; both have afflicted my heart, and both have, turn and turn about, been the subject of my complaints. I have neglected nothing to return them to the truth; however feeble my writings, they have at least had the merit of having dared to criticise the strength and the violence of these two extreme parties.

The duc d'Orléans has given me a most perceptible proof of his resentment, and has not forgiven me. My son was placed in one of the departments of his appanage, and my son, by his order, was immediately dismissed from his employment. How grateful I am for this prince's resentment since it convinces me that my doubts were not out of place! It was evidently not enough for me to ruin myself in print in order to enlighten my motherland, I had to sacrifice to her fate my son as well. I am not at all repentant and my only regrets are that I was not able to deflect the troubles that I had seen coming for so long, and that I had manifested in my writings, even before the convocation of the estates-general; but, the duc d'Orléans has been for an instant my son's benefactor, so I must stop right there on the subject; and, incidentally, he is too much the victim of his own ambition for me to add my complaints to his veritable misfortune however justified they may be; but one day I will let this resentment fall on the culpable courtiers responsible for this prince's downfall.⁴ Why, Sir, do great men, and those in power, never have eyes to see the good

4 [Original footnote.] The comte de la Touche, the marquis and marquise de Sillery, the supposed comtesse de Ferrare, etc. etc. etc.

Louis-René-Madeleine Le Vassor de La Touche, comte de Tréville, (1745 - 1804) was a naval officer who fought in the American War of Independence. He was chancellor to the duc d'Orléans from 1786, and a deputy of the Estates General, but tiring of politics he returned to the navy as a Vice-Admiral in 1793. Hugely talented, his death in 1804 was a great loss to the French navy and may have contributed to its defeat at Trafalgar. His name is inscribed on the *arc de triomphe* in Paris.

Charles Alexis Brulat de Genlis, marquis de Sillery (1737 - 1793) was a wealthy naval officer who was one of the first nobles to join the Third Estate. He also joined the Jacobin party but voted against the death penalty at Louis XVI's trial. Close to the Orléans faction he was suspected of being involved with Dumouriez when

that one wishes them and, why, by a constant calamity do they always have too many ears to hear those who lead them in error by constantly duping them. The duc d'Orléans is a great example of this cruel truth. If this writing should reach as far as him, he may yearn for the counsels of a woman who offered them to him without a presumptuous spirit or personal interest.

As for M. de Favras, he is the victim of a certain heroism, laudable no doubt, and that I believe one should respect.⁵ He thought his king in danger and his plan was to remove him from it. His inviolable attachment to his prince, and his uncommon zeal, have driven him to the scaffold. I praise him, yet I blame him for not being entirely forthright during his interrogations: yes, Sir, in his place I would have firmly replied to my judges: 'Set up your gibbets, I wanted to save my king, that is my crime, and I glory in it; but this project that I contemplated in silence, and that sadly had no effect, does it seem to you more criminal than the one of the infamous brigands who assailed and pushed back the body guards, broke down the doors of our royal palace, pitilessly cut the sentinels' throats who died at their post, ransacked the sovereign's apartment, and pursued the queen right up to her bed? Yet, these miserable violations remain unpunished, and I....I am led to my death'....⁶

Favras is dead, Sir, as a hero; but he hid the truth from his judges and that, in my eyes, is his only offence. I would myself do what he has done, today, if I believed as he did that the days of my king were in danger; but remember, Sir, the royal plenary at the estates-general. It was said that you guided this process; your exile cleared you of blame, you left covered in glory. By this act the court took a retrograde step and from that moment I saw that it was lost.⁷

Alerted, by the greatest of coincidences, that the plan to send you away, and to bring armies towards Paris, was being machinated in the shadows I dared alert his

the latter deserted in April 1793. Implicated along with the Girondins, de Sillery was arrested and guillotined on 31 October 1793.

Stéphanie-Félicité Du Crest de Saint-Aubin, later comtesse de Bursart de Genlis, and marquise de Sillery (1746 – 1830) was a self-taught educator and writer. She married Charles Alexis Brulat de Genlis in 1763 (they separated in 1782) and in 1772 became lady-in-waiting to the duchesse de Chartres, wife of the future Philippe-Egalité, and was made tutor to their offspring. This was a position of importance and authority and had never been offered to a woman before. The children were potential heirs to the French throne, being of the Orléans line - Genlis died a few months after seeing one of her pupils, Louis-Philippe, crowned King of France - and were taught alongside Genlis's own children. Two English girls, Pamela (who later married Edward Fitzgerald, the Irish revolutionary) and Hermine, were also pupils; their parentage was hotly disputed, an assumption being that they were the product of a liaison between Genlis and the duc, her employer. Genlis formulated her own exacting teaching system and was a tireless author, publishing over eighty works, many devoted to education (especially that of girls), as well as numerous plays, pamphlets, histories etc. She emigrated to Switzerland in 1793, lived for a time in Germany, and returned to France in 1799.

5 Thomas de Mahy, marquis de Favras (1744 – 1790) was implicated in a plot in 1789 to save the royal family. Arrested and tried, with little evidence, he was the first noble to be executed by hanging, no distinction being made between him and a commoner. He became something of a Royalist hero for going to his death without implicating the king's brother, the comte de Provence, who probably instigated the plot.

6 De Gouges is referring to the events of early October 1789 when a mob invaded the royal palace of Versailles and forced the royal family to leave for Paris.

7 The *séance royale* on 23 June 1789 was one of the turning points of the revolution. The King, influenced by his brothers and their supporters, prevaricated and compromised during the plenary on all the reforms he had seemed to approve. Necker, aware that his plans would be thwarted, refused to attend. In protest the Third Estate refused to leave the hall at the end of the meeting and, on hearing of Necker's absence, an angry crowd gathered outside. Fearing a riot the royal family begged Necker to stay in his post in order to maintain law and order. As a result of this shambolic assembly nobles began to join the Third Estate and on 27 June the King had to formally ask the three orders to unite. Thus was created the National Assembly. In early July Necker was eventually sacked; news of this event arrived in Paris and caused riots on 12 July that preceded the storming of the Bastille. On 16 July Necker was recalled.

majesty, by a text printed as soon as conceived, of the danger that the presence of troops and your departure would precipitate. A zeal, doubtless stronger than the timidity of my sex, drove me to the castle with the greatest fearlessness; but immediately people whom I will not name sought to subvert my resolution. Only brutal force could have made me abandon my enterprise; but this plan came to grief of itself because the king did not leave his apartment. In vain, I had the text spread throughout the palace, in vain three thousand copies were distributed in Versailles; none, presumably, penetrated as far as the monarch's inner sanctum.⁸ Meanwhile the court party, at the time all powerful, aware of my action and of the existence of my work, did not oppress me with its power; no doubt they saw in my zeal an excuse and the gates of the Bastille, which opened so easily then, stayed closed on my behalf. At that time, by exciting the fears of the court, I had truly merited its resentment and it could not but see me as importunate and even odious. But, Sir, as you know, the court could be prodigal and menacing but it was not murderous; when the democratic party became the strongest, could it have savoured for three months the preparations for the punishment of a man it had condemned to death, before any decree of the national assembly had pronounced on the nature of his crime?

It is confirmed that in the horrible instant that the executioner exercised the cruellest of functions everyone all around cried out, *encore, encore*. Until now such barbarity had been foreign to the French. Ah! Sir (forgive this impulse, it is the cry of nature) if my fellow citizens have become so ferocious then I am no longer French.

What! M. de la Fayette, this man who holds such sway over the minds of the people, did not seek to excite a general compassion! Such a pardon was worthy of being gained by a warrior so magnanimous. So far I had thought his heart beyond reproach; I like to think it is still so; but Favras died surrounded by the national guard he [Lafayette] commanded.

Several people believed that my sincere eulogies of M. de Lafayette's merits were in fact persiflage on my part. Here is what has forever been my opinion of this general; the future will justify it or oblige me to recognise my mistake.

I believed, on behalf of the king, the nation and all the citizens, that M. de la Fayette had accepted his position with the sole intention of reuniting them one day. Nothing was respected, subordination was gone, and disorder alone had succeeded. Brigands, mingled amongst good patriots, excited confusion and despair; the flame was ready to ignite and the peaceable citizens were at risk. M. de la Fayette, like a tutelary god, places himself at the head of this confused mass; disorder disappears, minds are calmed, and a gentle faith reassures all hearts: finally M. de la Fayette is named generalissimo. As for myself, I believe he would willingly abandon his post, if the endeavours of industry and commerce could extinguish the endeavours of the military that are so fruitless and ruinous for citizens, and return them to their homes and their affairs.

I will, Sir, on this subject, share an anecdote with you, despite it being somewhat earthy for a woman to recount, though a woman who, in order find a means to express all things, made herself into a man a long time ago.

A few days ago a merchant was busy finalising a sale; he heard a drumbeat; instantly he got up and ran towards the sound, came back indoors, upended the chairs and all the people in his way and cried to his wife: "Quick, my uniform, my sabre, my gun, my pistols; the enemy is at the Palais-Royal, and we'll see a grand contest." To no avail his wife repeated: "But, my dear, finish with the Gentleman: our affairs are more pressing; leave aside the enemies at the Palais-Royal; besides, as you know, they are no longer to be feared since they no longer have a leader." "What are you saying, my wife," retorted the merchant (fully equipped and armed to the teeth), "who do you take them for, the aristocrats? Good gracious! As long as my soul rests in my body, I will pursue this

⁸ De Gouges is referring to her *Séance royale* of July 1789: it is available in translation on www.olympedegouges.eu.

wretched rabble." "What," said his wife in tears, "every moment of the day you abandon the house, and you only come back to take money or cause a rumpus! What's happened to the times when you lived so happily with me? When you were so afraid to leave me?" – "That fear," he told her, "has quite gone; since the revolution my brow is prepared to face all trials, glory alone is entitled to encircle it." This woman is beside herself. – "Do not force me to speak," she says in a fury, "for if I were to tell all, you would see that you could no longer find room on it for one single laurel leaf." – "There, there, my child," says the magnanimous husband, "if all Cs... were aristocrats, the counter-revolution would have succeeded long ago." The buyer left without purchasing anything, and promised himself never to return to this shop. Therein lies the danger.

This anecdote is basically exact, Sir, but as one says, one anecdote leads to another, hearken to this one.

The day before yesterday I was passing through the rue Coquillière in a hackney carriage at the moment that a national guardsman was bleaching the coat of his uniform; the dust from the sort of chalk he was using to rub it created a cloud, which without exaggerating, filled half the street: no one could recognise each other, and passers by complained liberally about the great cleanliness of the national Guardsman. My coachman did not fail, like the others, to express his opinion and the opinion of these people is not lacking in invective and curses. Once home I asked him why he insulted a man who appeared to be devoted to his motherland, even if it cost the eyes of his fellow citizens. "-- Ah! Those national guards, the Bs..., most of them beat us up and pay us really badly, and on top of all that we're dying of hunger. I had six well-equipped carriages, and I had to sell four to keep the two that were left on the road. I was a proper democrat from the start of the revolution, believing it would do us good but I'm now a dogged aristocrat."

There, you will say, is a poorly equipped aristocrat: let us drop it there. But what a bother, what a hubbub, what time lost for a munitions jacket!

Some papers in the public realm tell us, Sir, that a virgin girl, full of God, and on behalf of God, predicts great events, civil war, and the counter-revolution;⁹ I announce to all my fellow citizens, on behalf of common sense, that this counter-revolution may perhaps take place, but with no civil war, without the efforts of the foreign powers and that it will take place naturally, of its own accord, at least in part if not in its entirety, and by the force of circumstance, especially if all the French carry on as they have been for another six months, destroying and rebuilding nothing; everyone wants to command, no one obeys; everything is wrecked; everything is in a deplorable disorder; their passion for liberty is still turning the heads of the French. But once this passion is gone I hope they will recognise that a single master is more useful to men than if all men were masters all together. I believe that M. de la Fayette awaits this moment with impatience or else I do not know anything about his politics. Certainly, if he fails to affect a change, anarchy will perpetuate itself, poverty will manage to weaken France, this France once so envied for the happiness it enjoyed, and on whose fate I now weep tears of blood. Oh my motherland! The enemies are in your bosom, it is your own children who are bringing about your downfall; if a fortunate reversal does not bring them back to you, you will fall prey to the foreign powers who already reckon your downfall as one of their conquests.

May these thoughts, Sir, touch all the hearts of the French, as they have penetrated mine, and encourage them to adopt the only party that can remedy everything!

You have still, it is said, on the subject of establishing a Treasury, engaged the King to write to the National Assembly against the decree that it had offered, and that forbade the members of the Assembly from occupying any ministerial position. What imprudence, Sir! I cannot applaud this spurning of the Assembly. This spurning has instructed His

⁹ L'Averdy, controller-general of finances from 1763 to 1768, on retirement devoted himself to the study of Joan of Arc, unearthing unknown archival material. This material was published in 1790 in volume 3 of *Notices et extraits des manuscrits du Roy*; perhaps this is what de Gouges is referring to here.

Majesty that you are not exempt from making mistakes; the payment of pensions, generated despite the prohibition of the Assembly, inculcates you still and justifies M. de Calonne's latitude towards the *grande*s: this is the true heart of this text.¹⁰

The French can no longer hide from themselves that you wish to leave them but that in order to abandon the keys of the public treasury, you would wish them to be placed in safe hands. If this is your sole reason, why give them to another? Why leave the best of kings? Why abandon the state in the sad situation to which it is reduced? *To conquer or die* that should be your motto now, as it is the one on several flags in our districts. But we are assured that you envisage no other methods to save the state; your enemies accuse you of wanting to leave the nation in the difficulty of extricating itself from the affair or succumbing to it.

You have made your position so difficult that no one wants it, neither as a whole nor in part: I will say more, I believe that apart from a few heads of the National Assembly, we have no financiers, no statesmen, who can untangle the chaos that is submerging France. Is it M. de Mirabeau, or M. l'abbé Maury, who will be the torchbearer?¹¹ These two famous adversaries, these two superb champions, equal in talents as in....sit on the benches of the restorers of France; therefore they cannot come to your assistance.

Why then, Sir, can you not yourself recognise the merit of your predecessor, of your antagonist? Why do you refuse to admit that M. de Calonne is perhaps the only man who could rebuild the state?¹²

10 Much time was spent between 1788 and 1790 discussing how to reform the Royal Treasury. Should it be one centralized organization or rather two separate bodies, one responsible for revenue the other for expenditure. Who should manage it. What method would provide the least disturbance to financial interests in these difficult times. Should the present administration with the King still nominally at its head be in charge (which could be dangerous as the monarch might favour courtiers, and/or fund a counter-revolution if he held the purse strings) or the Nation as represented by the National Assembly. If the latter, would one deputy or a committee of deputies run the Treasury or Treasuries. A committee would be safer and potentially preserve the funds from abuse but an individual could be blamed and sacked should need arise. These were deeply felt political and philosophical conundrums and gave rise to intense debates (the Rights of Man had enshrined the right of every citizen to know how public finances were used). Necker suggested a committee of deputies who would answer to the National Assembly but who could theoretically be overruled by the King. This compromise was a pragmatic response that allowed the existing system to remain, minimally rocking the boat but including failsafes to prevent the financial abuses of the past. The deputies would have been technically in the King's pay and at his behest which is the point de Gouges is making. Necker's accounts and his use of paper money to support his calculations were viewed with derision given the debacle of his previous *Compte rendu* in 1781. On 4 September 1790 he resigned and, unlike his previous departures, no one much seemed to care. On the same day the Royal Treasury became the Public Treasury, some arrangements were in place, others were yet to come. Bureaucracy and functionaries took the place of aristocratic officeholders and the foundations of a system were laid that pretty well remained unchanged until WW1.

11 Honoré Gabriel Riquetti comte de Mirabeau (1749 – 1791) was as famous for his scandalous life as he was for his writings. The events of 1789 unleashed his consummate energy and verve into the world of politics. An aristocrat voted in as a deputy of the Third Estate, his oratory and imposing (and to some, unattractive) physical presence made him a natural leader. Representing the people, he supported progressive reforms while realising that too much chaotic change could unbalance the entire country. He believed in constitutional monarchy. Did he sell his soul to the monarchy as some have said, or was he trying to lead it to safer ground for the good of the country? Burnt out at 42 from the excesses of his youth and the exertions of revolutionary life his reputation still divides opinion.

Jean Siffrein Maury (1746 – 1817) was a colourful character from humble southern origins who fiercely defended all royal prerogatives to such a degree that his life was often in danger; an ex-courtier and ecclesiastic he took to politics becoming a famed orator whose biting witticisms garnered him the hatred of his adversaries. He often clashed with Mirabeau at the Assembly. In December 1784 Maury had been awarded the seat at the Académie française occupied by de Gouges's putative father Lefranc de Pompignan until his death in November that year.

12 Charles Alexandre de Calonne (1734 – 1802) a lawyer and statesman who became Controller General of finance in November 1783 after Necker resigned. He managed at first to raise loans and therefore did not tax

He is accused of too much prodigality, and even a touch of defilement. I can believe that he never refused princes anything, nor the gentlemen of the court; I can even believe that he did not neglect his own interests: but we can truly say that he is the veritable *Newton* of France, and only he can bring light to bear on the shadowy regime of our finances.¹³ He uncovered the *deficit*; he offered projects that may perhaps be followed today and that would have liquidated the national debt if they been put into practice, rather than sacking him from his position in the first instance. His disgrace brings shame upon the courtiers that he had showered with gifts and benefits. It is true that when he noticed the state's financial distress he banished (though too late) these same courtiers from the treasury. They immediately vowed to destroy him, and just as M. de Calonne was going to save the motherland, they had him chased out ignominiously just as one would now chase an aristocrat out of a democratic district. Even had M. de Calonne pilfered while at his post, it is generally undiplomatic to sack a controller-general who has successfully lined his pockets while in position. Also, like one of his predecessors, when it was announced to him on the king's behalf that his Majesty thanked him for his services, M. de Calonne could have said: "I am disappointed, for I had managed my affairs well and I was about to seriously address myself to his."

It must be agreed that M. de Calonne really has unique and great talents for financial administration. His disgrace must have provided him with a source of new instruction, and if you were to unite together for the good of the public, you would procure for the state its wellbeing and tranquility. But a touch of resentment on your part, the desire to be the only one to do good (if it is possible to do so) apparently prevents you, Sir, from yourself asking the National Assembly for the return of your rival. Such a move would nonetheless be magnanimous; its effect would be singular and salutary; this memorable trait would pass to posterity and the nation could not help but applaud, and cede to, the arguments that you would proffer to recall M. de Calonne.

Apparently it is feared that this past controller-general would attribute the *deficit* to the queen's over frequent pecuniary demands; I myself dare suggest that all the avowals of M. de Calonne would be unable to inculcate this too unfortunate princess as much as her people have inculpated her themselves. She was doubtlessly too good, too generous, too amenable; young, inexperienced, misled on the kingdom's disastrous situation, for too long she was duped by all those cowards who surrounded her: but what a terrible

the nobility as they had feared. Once he had uncovered the true extent of the deficit (down-played by Necker in his *Compte rendu* published in 1781) he attempted, for a few years, to rescue France from bankruptcy by trying to reform taxation and impose a levy on the nobility and the church (a form of land tax not dissimilar to those suggested previously by Turgot and Necker). The project failed, undermined by his own weaknesses and by powerful political and landed opponents. Calonne had made public the kingdom's actual deficit, and probably unfairly reaped much of the blame for it. Disliked by a court that had hailed him, and discredited by others, his downfall was inevitable. A talented orator, a good administrator, he did not, in the end, gain the support he needed from the King. Dismissed by Louis XVI in 1787 he left France for England from where he used his considerable talents to support the émigrés and the counterrevolution. The exquisite portrait of him painted by Mme. Vigée-Lebrun in 1784 is in the Royal Collection of Her Majesty Elizabeth II. Despite the formality of the work it fizzes with delight, the sitter looking out towards the artist (and us) with an open and amused gaze. It was rumoured that he and the painter were lovers at the time of the sitting, whether true or not one will never know but the portrait certainly expresses a special rapport between the artist and her patron. It also hubristically shows Calonne's extravagant tastes; dressed in the finest suit he is surrounded by items of great luxury depicting his fabled prodigality referred to by de Gouges. Calonne owned many fine works, including numerous Titians, Rembrants, Watteaus etc., and sold most of them in London to raise funds for the counterrevolution.

(<https://www.royalcollection.org.uk/collection/406988/charles-alexandre-de-calonne-1734-1802>)

13 Olympe de Gouges attended lectures on scientific matters at the *Lycée*, a fashionable establishment founded by Pilâtre de Rozier in 1781: unusually women were encouraged to attend alongside men. The public events helped pay for scientific research and publication. Pilâtre de Rozier had a fascination for Newton and often lectured on Newtonian theories with great dramatic verve and some oversimplification. He is remembered for making the first manned flight in a hot air balloon, with the Marquis d'Arlande, in 1784. He died in a ballooning accident a year later.

experience has finally enlightened this unfortunate sovereign! For a year her miseries are without number; all good citizens deplore her situation, and justify her in their hearts. Let us therefore teach them how far this queen, whose expenses have been so calumniated, economises at the moment, with the only intent of diminishing, through her largesse, the misery of the countless subjects of whom she has the most to complain. It is easy for a queen to order a major reform of the expenditure of her household but how touching it is to see her pour over the smallest economic detail! Can one believe that today the queen of France haggles for a hat, a bonnet, like an ordinary woman, and that if it costs more than a *louis* she does not want it? The public may be ignorant of these facts, but Sir, you are well aware of them.

Why, now, would one fear the avowals of M. de Calonne regarding this princess? Or by what contrariness would one not recall a man so crucial in such parlous circumstances, when one can glimpse the imminent destruction of the kingdom? It would really be appropriate to say: "When will the French, so estimable in many ways, know how to put a man in his rightful place?"

The only exception that one could make to this remark is the time when all the wishes of our fellow-citizens recalled you to the head of our finances. But, nonetheless, you recognise that you are not in a position to exercise this post on your own; I therefore suggest that you recall a gifted collaborator, and my wish is that this idea should please your great soul. I know M. de Calonne less well than you, I have never even seen him. Everyone knows that I am genuine; no doubt you will believe me; at this time you will particularly believe in my impartiality, since I declare to you, that although M. de Calonne encouraged the arts and talents, he never received from me any writing that could have led him to support me. He may only know through me that I have done justice to his merit, yet he is quite ignorant of the fact that I have taken an interest in him. Nonetheless I am planning to give him, myself, my patriotic collection; if he judges it worthwhile he will read it, and I will never expect any other favour from him.

Sir, you have not read my name on the list of ordinary, nor extraordinary, pensions in the red book, on the state of the royal treasury etc.¹⁴ I have given my writings to all my fellow-citizens as a pure gift; and fearing that my impartiality might be suspect at court, I have not yet presented them to my king. I will go and offer them to him at the moment of my departure. As he reads everything, he will no doubt not disdain to cast his eye over the writings of a woman; he may discern there some good ideas, great projects, that are at least worthy of being acknowledged by the French: all the recompense I would ask of him, which may still be within his power, would be a letter of recommendation on behalf of my son to an aide-de-camp of M. de la Fayette, and for my nation, the privilege of creating the second French theatre that I proposed to it from the time of its first assemblies, a theatre that the public and authors themselves now demand; and if it is accorded by right to the one who, in all respects devised the project, then perhaps this preference is my due.

But nonetheless, Sir, I am not anticipating that a woman who has been useful to her motherland could manage to obtain this reward. If justice were the only consideration, I should be able to count on it, since from the performance aspect my plans are more or less executed: in the past originators of a project could hope to benefit from their pains and their sleepless nights; but now that everything is upside down, a *Dorfeuil*, a *Gaillard*, already enriched by fairground spectacles, will get the better of me, and a woman ruined by her fanatical attachment to her motherland will not obtain the slightest favour from her municipality: black calumny, on the contrary, will be her only recompense while she lives, and her fellow-citizens will only do her justice after her death.¹⁵

¹⁴ The Red Book was a private register kept by the king listing those to whom he had awarded pensions. In March 1790 it was printed and made public by the Assemblée nationale constituante.

¹⁵ Pierre-Paul Gobet aka Dorfeuil[le] (1745? - 1806?) was a playwright, actor and theatre manager who worked in northern France and the Low Countries with sojourns in Paris in the early 1780s and 1790s. De Gouges seems to resent the fact that, along with the actor Félix Gaillard, he leased two variety theatres on

I know, Sir, that it is often pointless, and always ridiculous, to cry out against the error of men's ways, and to speak about oneself without end, but such is the common weakness. Meanwhile I will be pardoned without hesitation, when I add that I expect nothing from my nation other than a detailed passport, which it could not refuse me since I ask of it no recompense, nor distinction; that the salary I received for my patriotic pains was the satisfaction felt by my heart, that the future may be preparing for me a more dazzling recompense, and that I am satisfied.

While I wait for it to decide for or against me, I am going, Sir, to England to see if the colonists' party, the sugar merchants' representatives, will also oppose the staging of my play on *black slavery*; to see if free people will pay attention to the selfish mercantile interests of an unjust, oppressive and inhuman party. Translated and staged in London this play might be better received than in France. If the English find that it is worthwhile, has a moral aim, is useful even to the colonies, they will make me continue the performances: sugar cane planters, coffee and indigo growers, would not bribe the actors to deprive the audience of it; and no one will come and say, as they did in the municipality of Paris, that it is impolitic to allow an incendiary play to continue being performed, after it has already been approved, censored and played. This behaviour is most extraordinary and quite incompatible with the *declaration of the rights of man*. The people who make up this provisional municipality are a singular assemblage! A Moreton de Chabillant, president of a particular committee, has become my judge in this affair!¹⁶ A Moreton, Sir, a Moreton! A judge of contentious affairs and affairs where honest proceedings are under consideration. The pleasing magistracy! By what title is this man worthy of note today? I have always considered him to be an amphibious animal: he has neither the voice nor the figure of a man, and in him his morality resembles his physique; this sad individual is wholly ridiculous. He was seen, when the despotic power of ministers weighed heavily on all the French, to publicly slap a peaceable citizen, who would not cede him his seat in the grand tier of the *comédie française*. And this man who took advantage of troubled times to finally amount to something has become my judge at the department of public establishments; this man, once despised by the nobility, is today the favourite of the revolution!

Ah! Sir, however serious your character, you will hear another anecdote that is personal to me and that characterises this type of thinking, or to speak more plainly, the indictment of Mirabeau *de la commune de Paris*: a nickname that I give him, not because of his genius and his erudition, but more for his strongly held democratic principles.

No doubt you will not be surprised that a twenty-year-old woman should be surrounded by a number of admirers. M. de Moreton had the audacity to lay claim to my heart: but his claims were in the shadows, and I would have ignored them quite if his confidants, who mocked him as much as me, had not enlightened me as to his sentiments.

the boulevards one of which, the Théâtre des Variétés-Amusantes, under the auspices of the duc d'Orléans moved to his Palais-Royal. The repertoire shifted from vaudeville to more serious works and attracted a better class of performer. What de Gouges could not know at this time was that within a year the break away actors from the Comédie Française i.e. Talma, Dugazon, Vestris et al. would make it their home and in 1799 it would become the definitive national theatre of France where it remains to this day.

¹⁶ Moreton-Chabillant, Jacques-Henri, de (1750? - 1793) joined the army at a young age, saw action in the American War of Independence and at the siege of Gibraltar in 1783; in 1785 he was made a colonel. His career never recovered from a violent incident in the theatre. Moreton, wanting to occupy a seat already paid for and occupied by someone else, attacked the unfortunate spectator and dragged him off by his hair, calling out for assistance, in the name of the king, from soldiers on guard at the theatre. The innocent man prosecuted and Moreton was removed from office for taking the king's name in vain during a private quarrel. Moreton felt traduced by an arbitrary authority; not able to reinstate himself despite numerous appeals he threw himself into the revolutionary movement instead and joined the Jacobins. He became an ardent anti-monarchist and once the National Assembly was safely in place, he again pleaded for the restitution of his position, claiming destitution. Unable and unwilling to act as a military court the National Assembly offered him a high ranking position under the orders of Dumouriez. A hard man, who did not happily follow orders, Moreton's death in the spring of 1793 was a relief to both his superiors and his subordinates.

M. de Moreton was not pleased by my replies nor by my welcome yet he had the audacity to make it known everywhere that he was not getting on badly with me, on the contrary he was getting on famously. No one could believe it, and that is what made him desperate. I was informed of this: "Heavens!" I cried, in a tone that was quite sincere, "if I had committed such a great crime on this earth, I would admit it to mankind so that I could be forgiven by God." M. de Moreton was roundly mocked and although I laughed as much as others, yet I nonetheless barred him from my door. So he was excluded from my company, and it is only due to his truthfully making amends that he was allowed to return to it. He did it publicly; he even admitted that rage and bitterness had influenced this inculpation as false as it was ridiculous.

Then after sixteen years I find that this sad figure, this sort of pygmy shrimp, is now my judge, and I realise, thanks to his wily laugh, that he fully recognises that I have not forgotten having seen him at my home, humbly kneeling in a circle of forty people, and humbly begging forgiveness for his imposture.¹⁷ He is also saying to himself: "I was very small then, but I am great and all powerful now, and here is the moment to take my revenge on the pleasantries and demands of a woman....."

Faith, M. de Moreton of the sad figure, be my judge, be like a victim on your knees or standing up, be an aristocrat or demagogue, gentleman of the chamber to Monsieur [the king's brother] or secretary of the Jacobin club, in my eyes you will always be a most stupid person, small, mediocre, and cowering; the merit that is left to you comes from being the son of a respectable father.¹⁸

So I saw myself condemned, without being heard, by this new Areopagus of public establishments, which declared that French actors, being masters and despots of the plays they no longer wish to perform, could refuse to be answerable to my representations; that the freedom of men gives them the right. Alas! I cried out, they had the benefit of this same right when they took advantage of court favours to crush authors: and when all is regenerated, a body of actors remains unpunished and continues to be immortal!

But let us return, Sir, to my motherland, to M. de Calonne, and to yourself: these objects are truly worthy of my attention; and if for one moment I turned my gaze elsewhere, then I was like those great speculators who sometimes run to catch a puppet show in order to take their minds off serious and important objectives.¹⁹

Without blaming the nation, I can nonetheless repeat to it what I have already told it so often, that it has started where it should have finished; sapping to its foundations the edifice of the monarchy, it has buried under its ruins happiness and hope. This rubble will have to be searched for that is where one will find the materials that may alone restore France. M. de Calonne is an able architect; become, alongside him, the developer of this superb edifice. France still has resources that are not exhausted but they must be found.

I beg you again, before your departure, solicit Monsieur for the recall of this great man to the nation. This nation, which has promised to see justice done, or punish guilty ministers, could it work against its own decisions, and refuse to hear M. de Calonne? I just consider this statesman to be useful to my motherland. If his conduct is *louche* and suspect, I would not blush at having stood out from the multitude by the good I have said of him, but I would admit loudly that I had been wrong. I cannot condemn a man by appearances alone; I want to hear him, I want the facts; I want to see for myself; and

17 De Gouges describes Moreton as an 'avorton' i.e. an under-developed fetus, by inference a misshapen puny man. It is a visceral insult. An English/French dictionary of the 18th century offers 'shrimp' as a translation (confirmed by the OED as having a contemptuous meaning at the time); another common insult was 'pygmy', the two together mirror the syllables of 'avorton'.

18 I have chosen to use 'victim' for de Gouges's 'patient' in this sentence because generally, in 18th century French, the term patient was used to describe those who had suffered at the hands of executioners or surgeons alike (see Philip Rieder in Gesnerus 60 (2003) 260 – 271).

19 [Original footnote.] It is said that M. Moreton has goaded the commune for the freedom of performances and for their reform only on behalf of the old marionettes. He is right, we have enough natural ones; if we owe an exclusive privilege to this new genre, it is due to M. Moreton and his automatic kindness.

twelve hundred enlightened and impartial mandatories, who make up the nation, should be much more solicitous of doing justice in this way than a woman, when the reputation and tranquility of a citizen is at stake.²⁰

Yes, Sir, rise up to this challenge; I bravely say it to you again, it will honour you. Perhaps you will blush at ceding to the instances of a woman; such a beautiful reconciliation effected by her intervention could not flatter your ambition: but, believe me, see in this last supplication of mine the merit only of having guessed your intention; be assured that after the event no one will consider the one who had the temerity to be of the same opinion as you. At that price I even hope to be forgotten by the universe.

Thus as I leave I bid you farewell.

DE GOUGES.

FAREWELL TO THE FRENCH.

TO LEAVE without a word to one's dear compatriots would be to exhibit an indifference I am not capable of. Indeed, at this time it is of importance to me that I be recalled to their minds, to their amiable gallantry which, in the tournaments of the past, defended my oppressed sex.

Never have circumstances been more favourable to heed this warrior temperament, and restore to the hearts of all the French this noble chivalry that both sustained the courage of men and the virtue of women; I call for it today, and I name as the first knight M. le marquis de la Fayette.²¹ Here are the wrongs that he will have to redress.

The generous and most humane colonists, in their respectable assembly, have resolved that.....How can I attest to such a outrage without at one and the same time wounding decency and morality? French people, you are aware of the price Venus paid to obtain the apple from Paris, this apple, an object of so much dissension between three beauties: I, like a second Helen, I will ignite the war between the American champions [colonists] and the true French knights. Yes, French people, I have more than one Paris in my retinue. I am challenged, I am threatened, I am watched, they want to.....What is this

20 The National Assembly consisted of twelve hundred deputies. It was a huge number in comparison to other similar institutions at the time i.e. just over fifty deputies in America and just over five hundred members of the British House of Commons. Roll calls could take several hours, only those with stentorian voices could make themselves heard, and before committees were established decision making was extremely unwieldy.

21 De Gouges often expresses a nostalgic longing for an idealistic chivalric past: her upbringing in the Languedoc – the heartland of French chivalry – probably influenced her feelings but she was also reflecting a contemporary movement influencing both politics and literature. A glorious medieval past had been mined by French historians and academicians (e.g. Lancelot, La Curne, Duclos, Sallier, Bonamy, Lebeuf, Falconet) between 1720 – 1740 who sought to establish their country's political and cultural primacy in Europe. This love of medievalism spread and influenced literary works, eventually giving rise to the craze for gothic novels, but also imbued the writing and speeches of certain deputies of the Estates-General, and National Assembly who, like de Gouges, used a chivalric past to represent duty, honour and courage. This glorification of the past ran counter to the ideas of Voltaire and other philosophers who saw in France's medieval past all the horrors of religious superstition and persecution. De Gouges's medievalism is more romantic than rational.

enterprise (one must be unambiguous)? They want to see if I am worthy of the apple, or the whip, if I write another line in favour of black men. I am stubborn, opinionated by nature; in order to mend my ways, I have just written *the black slave market*, comedy in three acts, and a drama in five acts, most tragical, entitled: *The danger of prejudice, or the school for men*.²² These manuscripts are held in safe hands. I can now die, I am pleased with myself; yes, and I can confidently take credit for them. If ever humanity triumphs over barbarity in the colonies, my name may be dear and revered in those climes.²³

But these inhuman colonists, these horrendous planters, what are they in the main?.....Pushed out of the bosom of their families, chased from the bosom of their motherland, and thrown to the islands like the refuse of society, their horrible principles infect on these shores the peaceful ways of the inhabitants. Not able to exercise their cruelty in France, free and become sovereign in these climes, they perpetuate there the horrors of slavery and the barbarity of tyrants.

Yes, superb and generous colonists, intrepid and magnanimous warriors, this is how a woman responds to your cowardice, to your odious outrages. One of you wrote to me that we no longer fight each other in France, but that we assassinate each other sometimes. I believe it, you can prepare this kind of revenge against me; you can have me assassinated, yet never fulfill that which you promised yourselves with regard to me; I hold closely, in my pocket, my reply to you. And you who provoke our bravest gentlemen, by always avoiding the cartel, a woman defies you, and invites your bravura to a public duel.

Come, you enraged gentlemen, learn how a woman can die or take life; but if I die, revive your courage anew; if I fall you will have to fight entire battalions of our most brave and loyal Frenchmen; this is how I present myself, this is how I mend my ways.

But I see already the colour drain from your cheeks! This language makes you tremble, and you really wish that you had not gone so far on my account. Come, be reassured: all you have to fear from me is the noble contempt that is due to your braggadocio, or, to reply to you in your own terms, to your *jiggery pokery*.

And you, the French, you my fellow citizens, that I leave with regret, forgive the feebleness of my writings in favour of the praiseworthy aim that has dictated them; at least you will find them full of good intentions, of useful projects that so many others have employed, and for which they have taken the credit at my expense. They say that my ideas are not developed enough. Yet the diamond that falls into the hands of the lapidary to be polished is nevertheless a diamond, despite being rough; my lapidaries are most unjust, most ungrateful not to at least leave me the merit of invention. But in order to write about politics one must, it is said, be better instructed than I. I know this, and I admit it myself; meanwhile the cleverest sometimes get it wrong; it is a stormy sea and how many have been drowned by it, even in the national assembly? Well, I have offered you my writings, without using hacks. Sometimes I ask advice, but never take it; meanwhile as an epigraph I will give you some Latin verse. I, Latin! I who can barely spell in French! I owe it to a pedagogue who taught me that if one laughs one can tell the truth; that one does not

²² *Le Marché des Noirs* and *Le Danger des préjugés, ou l'École des jeunes gens* (later renamed *Le Nouveau Tartuffe, ou l'École des jeunes gens*), both in manuscript form, were put forward for a reading at the Comédie-Française in December 1790, they were never published, have not been found but are mentioned in the theatre's inventory.

²³ De Gouges has been honoured by the United Nations. She features on their programme Remember Slavery which, as their website states, was established by the General Assembly in 2007 to honour the memory of the victims of slavery and the transatlantic slave trade. It also aims to raise awareness of the dangers of racism and prejudice today. In the Women and Slavery exhibition she and Anne Knight are the only two women who are not of African descent among the eleven esteemed for their engagement in ending slavery. She would undoubtedly have been very proud of this posthumous recognition of her work and been deeply moved to be remembered alongside her Black sisters.

See: http://www.un.org/en/events/slaveryremembranceday/2015/pdf/TST%20Exhibit_EN.pdf

belong to me, so I hasten to return it to its author. This strange text may console you for the loss of my person; I hope so and I count on it.

The colonists reproach me for my varied opinions; they say that I am a convinced royalist; I do not deny it, and I glory in it; and that meanwhile I preach for an incendiary freedom in the colonies. I have already said, these demons are unable to think or reflect on the principles of my writings. We are all taught that a single master suits mankind better than so many masters all at once, who set themselves up as tyrants. What is better proof of this at the moment than the behaviour of the colonists themselves? I wanted to encourage them to make of their slaves faithful servants, keen cultivators: but they do not want to lose a fraction of their revenues; that is the source of their fear, their rage and their ferocious barbarity. The same holds good today for the clergy's impotent combats. If it had proposed, before the revolution, the four hundred thousand it is offering at the moment, and which should have been accepted, no doubt its rights would have remained sacrosanct. What demons would have dared suggest that it be denuded of its property, property that is perhaps necessary for the good of the state? It was a certain and inexhaustible resource. But these rights, it is true, belong to the nation; but the body no longer existing, what will be the state's reserve? I will be told that seemingly the French want to live henceforth as prodigal minors, who do not consider the future; this is certainly the moment to cite the proverb of reasonable people: *When one is sensible, one keeps something for a rainy day*. But are the French reasonable today? I predict that all this destruction, that totally changed the nature of government, can only be fatal to us; if I am wrong that would please me; but such is my opinion. I notice that France and England, the two most powerful kingdoms in Europe, are rivals without end in courage and strength but they can never imitate each other without discovering, in their imitation, an inevitable fall. Meanwhile the French have almost become English now. Though I ask them: 'Where do you glimpse this happiness that is nigh?' All reply confidently, 'Time will tell.' The wisdom of oracles! You reign today; but I, I am like Saint Thomas, incredulous, and I fear that this oracle may be explained through my own lips.

I loathe the avariciousness of the clergy, I detest the ostentation of the nobility; both have brought about our downfall but by imitating them we will lose them and ourselves.

Yes, French men and women, I manifest to you rigorous truths: you must believe me since no self-interest influences me, and that my only motive is to save you, if I can, from the chasm that I noticed opening up long ago under your feet; the nation is not peaceful in its functions; the spectators who attend this assembly forget that an abbé Maury,²⁴ a vicomte de Mirabeau, are members of a nation that represents all of France,

24 [Original footnote.] It is indisputably stated that M. L. M. was Brienne's creature, it is well known that these former ministers are actually the ruin of France. So many honest men have been displaced by these unjust and inhuman men! Everything was offered up by them as a sacrifice to their factions or creatures. Among others, MM. Biétrix, directors of all the military convoys. Strongly esteemed by the public, never having given the slightest doubt of their probity, owed a great deal by the government, they found themselves pitilessly deprived of their enterprise: this enterprise was given [away] according to the solicitations of M. de Rivarolle, of l'abbé Castries, and one can easily deduce the praiseworthy aim of these solicitations. One of the MM. Biétrix commanded a detachment of light cavalry when M. l'abbé Maury was crushed by the people; this generous officer no doubt forgot his resentment in order to recall that a friend of his persecutors, an ecclesiastic, was a man nonetheless; he saved him, assuredly: this trait, that deserves mention, shows that generosity is greater than vengeance; yet it would be not misplaced to hope that true honest people, proscribed by true tyrants, should have all their rights restored in this new order of things.

The entrepreneurs mentioned are de Gouges's long term partner and his brother. Widowed young, she met Jacques Biétrix de Villars de Rozières in Montauban, fell in love, and moved with him to Paris. He was a successful provisioner to the military. It is probable that they had a child who died in infancy. Their relationship lasted for at least ten years during which time they were engaged in complex financial arrangements that circumvented the laws against concubinage by making it seem that he was repaying a loan that she had made to him previously. This generous system allowed her to send money to her mother

that no citizen has to the right to insult these members without committing the crime of lese-majesty; that it is up to the the nation itself to judge of the crime of its members when they stray from the views and principles that the constituents have manifested in their powers. These popular riots are odious, and never have M. de la Fayette and the national guard, shown themselves more worthy of the important function of watching over the public than in this instant.

But why do all the newspapers, or to put it better, all those mercenary sheets that feed the hunger of rage, poison the fair acknowledgement of M. l'abbé Maury and M. de Mirabeau? Why should it surprise me, after all the defamatory insults published when M. le prince de Conty [sic] arrived?²⁵ Has this prince not behaved nobly by coming back in full confidence among those who had put a price on his head? If this is how you wish to bring your brothers back to your bosoms, all our fugitives and princes of the blood, those who, by their state and their wealth, could contribute to France flowering again, then they will be reluctant to return; French men and women, I owed you this further observation for your own interests.

I was asked once why I had not created a newspaper. 'I, create a newspaper!' I replied, 'it would be too truthful, too severe, it would not sell.' 'I assure you,' said a worthy man, 'it would have a lot of influence, and by doing good for your country you would earn a lot of money.' As for money, although I am as deprived of it as anyone, it does not concern me, and if I made such a lot by creating a newspaper, I would prove my disinterest by only taking from it my expenses. Straight away I was offered several titles that did not correspond to my way of proceeding, nor to my way of seeing things. '*Impatient one*' I cried out, that is the only title that could suit the author, the impatient one by Madame de Gouges would not mislead the public, and the public in its turn might perhaps be impatient to have it, since before offering it the prospectus I must go to England to have my play on black slavery performed. Ah! If during my new sojourn I should discover that the king of France had regained all his rights, that all citizens, newly equal, were contributing to the public good, that shopkeepers were back in charge of their shops, that the worker had taken up his tools again, that the country had regained its sweet emulation, that the rich were flying to succour the poor; that finally this amiable French urbanity had reappeared in the capital and in all the kingdom! These are my hopes; this is the wish that I imagine for my motherland. And you, my dear fellow citizens, receive at one and the same time my wishes, my farewells and my regrets.

This is how in parting I bid you farewell.

The most decided royalist, and the mortal enemy of slavery,
Your most humble servant,
DE GOUGES.

who was living in penury and enabled her to support herself, somewhat precariously, once their relationship had ended. No other man is known to have supported her financially and she always maintained that she lived with de Rozières as his wife, in private, although publicly maintaining her position as an independent widow. Appointed in 1763 by the government to provision the ministry, the Biérix brothers, having inherited the business from their father, found their contract summarily revoked in May 1789 by underhand means. This was still being debated and deemed unfair by certain deputies of the National Assembly, two years later, who restated the brothers' probity.

²⁵ Louis François Joseph de Bourbon, Prince de Conti (1734 – 1814) was a prince of the blood and a first cousin to the duc d'Orléans (Philippe Égalité). He married but his marriage was childless (though he had two illegitimate offspring) and the couple separated in 1777. The spouses' situation was rumoured to have influenced Beaumarchais' creation of the Almaviva couple in his *Marriage of Figaro*, the Prince apparently considered his wife to be too intelligent and worthy to be attractive. He emigrated after the fall of the Bastille, but returned to France in 1790, was arrested in 1793, released, subsequently exiled in 1797 and died in poverty in Barcelona; he was the last scion of the House of Conti.

P.S. As for you, gentlemen aristocrats, do not thank me, I beg you, if I appear to weigh the balance in your favour: I characteristically tend to side with the most feeble and oppressed party. I in no way find it meritorious or courageous for five hundred or a thousand people to butcher a single defenceless citizen.