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Defoe Abbot Melville Montaigne Cooper Emerson Hugo
Stoker Wilde Christie Maupassant Haggard Chesterton Molière Eliot Grimm
Garnett Engels Schiller Byron Maupassant Schiller
Goethe Hawthorne Smith Kafka
Cotton Dostoyevsky Dostoyevsky Smith Willis
Baum Henry Kipling Doyle Henry Willis
Leslie Dumas Flaubert Nietzsche Turgenev Balzac
Stockton Vatsyayana Crane
Burroughs Verne
Curtis Tocqueville Gogol Vinci
Homer Tolstoy Whitman Gogol Busch
Darwin Thoreau Twain Plato Scott
Potter Zola Lawrence Dickens Plato Scott
Kant Freud Jowett Stevenson Dickens Plato Scott
Andersen Andersen Cervantes Burton Hesse Harte
London Descartes Wells Voltaire Cooke
Poe Aristotle Wells Voltaire Cooke
Hale James Hastings Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Bunner Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Richter Chekhov da Shakespeare Chamberlain Irving
Doré Dante Shaw Wodehouse
Swift Chekhov Pushkin Alcott
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**Woman on Her Own, False Gods
and The Red Robe Three Plays By
Brieux**

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WOMAN ON HER OWN, FALSE GODS AND THE RED
ROBE:

THREE PLAYS BY BRIEUX.

THE ENGLISH VERSIONS BY M^{RS.}
BERNARD SHAW, J. F. FAGAN,
AND A. BERNARD MIALL. WITH
AN INTRODUCTION BY BRIEUX

BRENTANO'S NEW YORK
MCMXVI

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PREFACE

We are confronted at the present time by the woman who is anxious to lay by means for her own support irrespective of the protection of her husband. In this play I have indicated the tendency of this difficulty and the consequent troubles which the older civilizations will bring upon themselves when the woman's standing as a worker is generally acknowledged. My conclusion, namely, that all these complications and troubles are, at present at any rate, owing to the education of the man, points to the remedy, as far as I can see it.

I must inform my readers that the version of *La Femme Seule*, a translation of which is now published in this volume, has, so far, not appeared in France and is unknown there; at least as regards the larger part of the third act. I might, did I think it advisable, reproduce in its entirety a text which certain timidities have led me to emasculate.

As between the man and the woman the ideal situation would, no doubt, be a rehabilitation of the old custom—the man at the workshop and the woman in the home; thus reserving for her the holiest and most important of all missions—the one which insures the future of the race by her enlightened care of the moral and physical health of her children.

Unfortunately it happens that the wages of the working-man are insufficient for the support of a family, and the poor woman is therefore compelled to go to the factory. The results are deplorable. The child is [Pg viii] either entirely abandoned, or given to the State, and the solidarity of the family suffers in consequence.

Then again a generation of women with new ideas has arisen, who think they should have, if they wish it, the right to live alone and by themselves, without a husband's protection. However much some of us may regret this attitude, it is one which must be accepted, since I cannot believe that the worst tyrants would dare to make marriage obligatory. These women have a right to live, and consequently a right to work. Also there are the widows and the abandoned women.

Women first took places which seemed best fit for them, and which the men turned over to them because the work appeared to be of a character suitable to the feminine sex. But the modern woman has had enough of the meagre salary which is to be obtained by means of needle-work, and she has invaded the shop, the office, the desks of the banks and post office. In industry also she has taken her place by the side of the working-man, who has made room for her first with ironical grace, then with grumbling, and sometimes with anger. I believe that in Europe at least this kind of difficulty will have to be faced in the future.

As to the rich woman (and in *La Femme Seule* I have treated this subject only slightly because it is one to which I expect to come back), they have been driven from the home where the progress of domestic science has left them very little to do. We have reached a kind of hypocritical form of State Socialism, or perhaps it would be better to say Collectivism, and this will profoundly change the moral outlook. All, or nearly all, of the work of the home seems to be done by people from the outside—from the cleaning of the windows to the education of the children. The modern home is but a fireside around which one hardly sees the family gathered for intimate talk. [Pg ix]

It has thus happened that the woman who finds herself without work, and with several children, looks out of the windows of her home away from it for the employment of her activities. The future will tell us whether or no this is good. In my opinion I believe it will be good, and I believe that man will gain, through this new intelligence, in the direction of the larger life which has come to women from this necessity of theirs. Unquestionably there will have to be a new education, and this will certainly come.

La Foi.—This play is, without doubt, of all my plays the one which has cost me the most labor and the one upon which I have expended the most thought and time. The impulse to write it came to me at Lourdes in view of the excited, suffering, and praying crowds of people. When the thought of writing it came to me I hesitated, but during many years I added notes upon notes. And it was while on a trip to Egypt that I saw the possibility for discussing such questions in the theatre without giving offence to various con-

sciences. My true and illustrious friend, Camille Saint-Saëns, has been kind enough to underline my prose with his admirable music. In this way *La Foi* has been produced on the stage at Monte Carlo for the first time under the auspices of His Royal Highness the Prince of Monaco, whom I now beg to thank.

English readers of *La Robe Rouge* would, I think, be somewhat misled, if they did not understand the difference between the procedure in criminal cases in France and in Great Britain. My purpose in this preface is to attempt to show that difference in a few words.

With you, a criminal trial is conducted publicly and before a jury; with us in France it is carried on in the Chambers of the Judge with only the lawyer present. There sometimes result from this latter method dramas of the kind of which my play *La Robe Rouge* is one. [Pg x] The judge, too directly interested and free of the criticism which might fall on him from the general public, is liable to the danger of forming for himself an opinion as to the guilt of the accused. He may do this in perfect good faith, but sometimes runs the risk of falling into grave error. It thus occasionally happens that he is anxious not so much to know the truth as to prove that he was right in his own, often rash, opinion.

La Robe Rouge is a criticism of certain judicial proceedings which obtain in France; but it is also a study of an individual case of professional crookedness. We should be greatly mistaken were we to draw the dangerous conclusion that all French judges resemble Mouzon, and we should be equally wrong were we to condemn too hastily the French code relating to criminal trials.

In the struggle of society with the criminal it is very difficult, perhaps impossible, for the legislator to hold in equal balance the rights of the individual as against the interests of society. The balance sometimes leans one way and sometimes the other; and had I been an English citizen, instead of writing a play against the abuse of justice by a judge, I might have had to illustrate the same abuse by the lawyer.

I wish most sincerely that these three plays may interest the people of England and America. The problems which I have studied I am sure I have not brought to their final solutions. My ambition was

to draw and keep the attention of honest people on them by means of the theatre.

BRIEUX.

[Pg 1]

WOMAN ON HER OWN

[La Femme Seule]

Translated by Mrs. Bernard Shaw

CHARACTERS

Thérèse
Madame Nérisse
Madame Guéret
Mother Bougne
Caroline Legrand
Madame Chanteuil
Lucienne
Mademoiselle Grégoire
Mademoiselle Baron
Mademoiselle de Meuriot
Antoinette
Berthe
Constance
Maid
Workwomen
Nérisse
Féliat
René Charton
Guéret
Mafflu
Vincent
A Delegate
Page Boy
Girard
Charpin
Deschaume
Workmen

[Pg 2]

WOMAN ON HER OWN

[Pg 3]

ACT I

Scene:— *A Louis XV sitting-room. To the right a large recessed window with small panes of glass which forms a partition dividing the sitting-room from an inner room. A heavy curtain on the further side shuts out this other room. There are a table and piano and doors to the right and at the back. The place is in disorder. One of the panes in the large window has been taken out and replaced by a movable panel. It is October.*

Madame Guéret is sitting at a table. She is a woman of forty-five, dressed for the afternoon, cold and distinguished looking. Monsieur Guéret, who is with her, is about fifty-five and is wearing a frock coat. He is standing beside his wife.

Guéret. Then you really don't want me to go and hear the third act?

Madame Guéret [*dryly*] I think as I've been let in for these theatricals solely to please your goddaughter you may very well keep me company. Besides, my brother is coming back and he has something to say to you.

Guéret [*resignedly*] Very well, my dear.

A pause.

Madame Guéret. I can't get over it.

Guéret. Over what?

Madame Guéret. What we're doing. What *are* we doing?

Guéret. We're giving a performance of *Barberine* for the amusement of our friends. There's nothing very extraordinary in that. [Pg 4]

Madame Guéret. Don't make fun of me, please. What we are doing is simply madness. Madness, do you hear? And it was the day before yesterday—only the day before yesterday—we heard the news.

Guéret. We—

Madame Guéret [*Who has seen Lucienne come in*] Hush!

Lucienne comes in, a girl of twenty, dressed as Barberine from Musset's play; then Maud, Nadia, and Antoinette [eighteen to twenty-two], dressed as followers of the queen. Lucienne goes to the piano, takes a piece of music, and comes to Madame Guéret.

Lucienne. You'll help me along, won't you, dear Madame Guéret? You'll give me my note when it comes to "Voyez vous pas que la nuit est profonde"?

Madame Guéret. Now don't be nervous.

Maud [*coming in*] We're ready.

Antoinette. If the third act only goes as well as the first two—

Maud. We'll listen until we have to go on.

Antoinette. Won't you come with us, Madame?

Madame Guéret. No, I can't. I've had to undertake the noises behind the scenes. *That* job might have been given to someone else, I think.

Lucienne. Oh, Madame, please don't be angry with us. Madame Chain let us know too late. And you're helping us so much.

Madame Guéret. Well, I've invited the people, and I suppose I must entertain them. As I gave in to Thérèse about getting up this play, I don't want to do anything to spoil the evening.

Lucienne. How pretty she is as Kalekairi.

Madame Guéret. You don't think people are shocked by her frock?

Lucienne. Oh, Madame!

Madame Guéret. Well! [Pg 5]

Lucienne. I shall have to go in a moment. Thérèse has come out; I can hear her sequins rattling.

Madame Guéret. Yes; so can I. But René will let us know. Never mind.

She goes to the piano. René appears at the door at the back.

René. Are you ready, Lucienne?

Lucienne. Yes.

René. You've only two lines to say.

Lucienne. Only one. [*She speaks low to René*] No end of a success, wasn't it, for your Thérèse?

René [*low*] Wasn't it? I *am* so happy, Lucienne. I love her so.

Lucienne. Listen. That's for me, I think.

René. Yes, that's for you. Wait. [*He goes to the door at the back, listens, and returns*] Come. Turn this way so as to make it sound as if you were at a distance. Now then.

Madame Guéret accompanies Lucienne on the piano.

Lucienne [*sings*]

Beau chevalier qui partez pour la guerre,
Qu'allez vous faire
Si loin d'ici?

Voyez-vous pas que la nuit est profonde
Et que le monde
N'est que souci.

Madame Guéret [*civilly*] You have a delightful voice, Mademoiselle Lucienne.

Lucienne places her music on the piano with a smile to Madame Guéret.

René [*to Lucienne, drawing her to the partition window and showing her where a pane has been removed*] And your little window! Have you seen your little window? It was not there at the dress rehearsal. You [*Pg 6*] lift it like this. It's supposed to be an opening in the wall. It ought to have been different; we were obliged to take out a pane. May I show her, Madame Guéret?

Madame Guéret [*resigned*] Yes, yes, of course.

René. You lift it like this; and to speak you'll lean forward, won't you, so that they may see you?

Lucienne. I will, yes.

René. Don't touch it now. [*To Madame Guéret*] You won't forget the bell, will you, Madame? There's plenty of time—ten minutes at least. I'll let you know. Mademoiselle Lucienne, now, time to go on.

Lucienne. Yes, yes. [*She goes out*]

Madame Guéret [*with a sigh*] To have a play being acted in the circumstances we're in—it's beyond everything! I cannot think how I came to allow it.

Guéret. You see they'd been rehearsing for a week. And Thérèse—

Madame Guéret. And I not only allowed it, but I'm almost taking part in it.

Guéret. We couldn't put off all these people at twenty-four hours' notice. And it's our last party. It's really a farewell party. Besides, we should have had to tell Thérèse everything.

Madame Guéret. Well, you asked me to keep it all from her until to-morrow—though it concerns her as much as it does us. [*Monsieur Féliat comes in, a man of sixty, correct without being elegant*] Here's my brother.

Féliat. I've something to tell you. Shall we be interrupted?

Madame Guéret. Yes, constantly.

Féliat. Let's go into another room.

Madame Guéret. I can't. And all the rooms are full of people.

Guéret. Marguerite has been good enough to help here by taking the place of Madame Chain, who's ill. [Pg 7]

Madame Guéret [*angrily*] Yes, I've got to do the noises heard off! At my age! [*A sigh*] Tell us, Etienne, what is it?

Guéret. We can wait until the play is over.

Madame Guéret. So like you! You don't care a bit about what my brother has to tell us. Who'd ever believe this is all your fault! [*To her brother*] What is it?

Féliat. I have seen the lawyer. Your goddaughter will have to sign this power of attorney so that it may get to Lyons to-morrow morning.

Guéret [*who has glanced at the paper*] But we can't get her to sign that without telling her all about it.

Madame Guéret. Well, goodness me, she'll have to know some-time! I must say I cannot understand the way you've kept this dreadful thing from her. It's pure sentimentality.

Guéret. The poor child!

Madame Guéret. You really are ridiculous. One would think that it was only *her* money the lawyer took. It's gone, of course; but so is ours.

Guéret. We still have La Tremblaye.

Madame Guéret. Yes, thank goodness, because La Tremblaye belongs to me.

René comes in in great excitement.

René. Where is Mademoiselle Thérèse? She'll keep the stage waiting! [*Listening*] No, she's coming, I hear her. Nice fright she's given me! [*To Madame Guéret*] Above all, Madame, don't forget the bell, almost the moment that Mademoiselle Thérèse comes off the stage.

Madame Guéret. Yes, yes.

René. And my properties! [*He runs out*]

Féliat. Now we can talk for a minute.

Madame Guéret. Yes. [Pg 8]

Féliat. You've quite made up your minds to come to Evreux?

Guéret. Quite.

Féliat. Are you sure you won't regret Paris?

Madame Guéret. Oh, no.

Guéret. For the last two years I've hated Paris.

Madame Guéret. Since you began to play cards.

Guéret. For the last two years we've had the greatest difficulty in keeping up appearances. This lawyer absconding is the last blow.

Féliat. Aren't you afraid you will be horribly bored at La Tremblaye?

Guéret [*rising*] What are we to do?

Féliat. Well, now listen to me. I told you –

René comes in and takes something off a table. Féliat stops suddenly.

René. Good-morning, uncle. [*He hurries out*]

Féliat. Good-morning, René.

Guéret. He knows nothing about it yet?

Féliat. No; and my sister-in-law asked me to tell him.

Madame Guéret. Well, why shouldn't you? If they *are* engaged, we know nothing about it.

Guéret. Oh!

Madame Guéret. We know nothing officially, because in these days young people don't condescend to consult their parents.

Féliat. René told his people and they gave their consent.

Madame Guéret. Unwillingly.

Féliat. Oh certainly, unwillingly. Then I'm to tell him?

Madame Guéret. The sooner the better.

Féliat. I'll tell him to-night.

Guéret. I'm afraid it'll be an awful blow to the poor chap. [Pg 9]

Madame Guéret. Oh, he's young. He'll get over it.

Féliat. What was I saying when he came in? Ah, yes; you know I've decided to add a bindery to my printing works at Evreux; you saw the building started when you were down there. If things go as I want them to, I shall try to do some cheap artistic binding. I want to get hold of a man who won't rob me to manage this new branch

and look after it; a man who won't be too set in his ideas, because I want him to adopt mine; and, at the same time, I'd like him to be not altogether a stranger. I thought I'd found him; but I saw the man yesterday and I don't like him. Now will *you* take on the job? Would it suit you?

Guéret. Would it suit me! Oh, my dear Féliat, how can I possibly thank you? To tell you the truth, I've been wondering what in the world I should do with myself now; and I was dreading the future. What you offer me is better than anything I could have dreamt of. What do you say, Marguerite?

Madame Guéret. I am delighted.

Féliat. Then that's all right.

Guéret [*to his brother-in-law*] I think you won't regret having confidence in me.

Féliat. And your goddaughter?

Madame Guéret. Thérèse?

Féliat. Yes; how is *she* going to face this double news of her ruin and the breaking off of her engagement?

Madame Guéret. I think she ought to have sense enough to understand that one is the consequence of the other. She can hardly expect René's parents to give their son to a girl without money.

Féliat. I suppose not. But what's to become of her?

Guéret. She will live with us, of course. [Pg 10]

Madame Guéret. "Of course"! I like that.

Guéret. She has no other relations, and her father left her in my care.

Madame Guéret. He left her in *your* care, and it's *I* who have been rushed into all the trouble of a child who is nothing to me.

Guéret. Child! She was nineteen when her father died.

Féliat. To look after a young girl of nineteen is a very great responsibility.

Madame Guéret [*laughing bitterly*] Ho! Ho! Look after! Look after Mademoiselle Thérèse! You think she's a person who allows herself to be looked after! And yet you've seen her more or less every holidays.

Guéret. You've not had to look after her; she has been at the Lycée.

Thérèse comes in dressed as Kalekairi from "Barberine." She is a pretty girl of twenty-three, healthy, and bright.

Thérèse. The bell, the bell, godmother! You're forgetting the bell! Good-evening, Monsieur Féliat.

Thérèse takes up the bell, which is on the table.

Madame Guéret. I was going to forget it! Oh, what a nuisance! All this is so new to me.

Féliat. Excuse me! I really didn't recognize you for the moment.

Thérèse [*laughing*] Ah, my dress. Startling, isn't it?

Madame Guéret [*with meaning*] Startling is the right word.

René [*appearing at the back, disappearing again immediately, and calling*] The bell! And you, on the stage, Mademoiselle Thérèse!

Thérèse. I'm coming. [*She rings*] Here I am!

She goes out.

[Pg 11]

Madame Guéret [*with a sigh*] And I had it let down!

Féliat. What?

Madame Guéret. Her dress. [*To her husband*] What I see most clearly in all this is that she must stay with us.

René comes fussing in.

René. Where's the queen? Where's Madame Nérissé?

Madame Guéret. I've not seen her.

René. But goodness gracious—! [*He goes to the door on the left and calls*] Madame Nérissé!

Madame Nérissé [*from outside*] Yes, yes, I'm ready.

Madame Nérisse comes in. She is about forty, flighty, and a little affected.

René. I wanted to warn you that Ulric will be on your right, and if he plays the fool—

Madame Nérisse. Very well. Is it time?

René. Yes, come. [*To Madame Guéret*] You won't forget the trumpets?

Madame Guéret. No, no. All the same, you'd better help me.

René. I will, I will.

He goes out with Madame Nérisse.

Féliat. You know, if she wants one, she'll find a husband at Evreux.

Madame Guéret. Without a penny!

Féliat. Without a penny! She made a sensation at the ball at the sous-préfecture. She's extremely pretty.

Madame Guéret. She's young.

Féliat. Monsieur Gambard sounded me about her.

Madame Guéret. Monsieur Gambard! The Monsieur Gambard who has the house with the big garden?

Féliat. Yes. [Pg 12]

Madame Guéret. But he's very rich.

Féliat. He's forty-nine.

Madame Guéret. She'll have to take what she can get now.

Féliat. And I think that Monsieur Beaudoin—

Guéret. But he's almost a cripple!

Madame Guéret. She wouldn't do so well in Paris.

Guéret. She wouldn't look at either of them.

Féliat. We must try and make her see reason.