

# A Conference held by M. Léo TAXIL at the Hall of the Geographic Society in Paris

With more or less impartiality, all newspapers reported the memorable evening at the Geographic Society on April 19. We thought the best thing to do was to reproduce the full text of M. Léo Taxil's conference.

Let us say first that the very numerous audience consisted mainly of press representatives from various countries and of all opinions, many priests, monks, very many ladies, some free-thinkers, some freemasons. The nunciature had sent two delegates; the archdiocese was also represented. Entrance was free, but one could get in only by showing nominal invitation cards which had been sent one month in advance.

First thing in the evening, a splendid typewriter offered by Miss Diana Vaughan was raffled. Its lucky winner was M. Ali Kental, Editor of the *Ikdam*, at Constantinople.

Then M. Léo Taxil addressed the audience:

MY REVEREND FATHERS,  
LADIES,  
GENTLEMEN,

First of all, it is appropriate to convey some thanks to those of my colleagues of the Catholic press who—*suddenly* undertaking a campaign of vociferous attacks six or seven months ago—produced a marvelous result; we already witness it tonight and tomorrow will witness it even better, I mean the quite exceptional explosion of the manifestation of truth in a question whose solution might possibly have passed completely unnoticed without them.

To these dear colleagues, accordingly, my first congratulations! And they will understand in a moment how much these thanks are sincere and justified.

This evening, I shall strive to forget all the unjust and offensive things which have been published against me during the polemic I just mentioned. Or, at any rate, if I come to elucidate specific facts in a way unexpected for many, I shall merely tell the truth, setting aside the very shadow of the lightest resentment from my thoughts.

After the explanations whose time has come at last, maybe these Catholic colleagues will not disarm before my peaceful philosophy. However, should my good dispositions annoy them instead of calming them down, I assure them that nothing will induce me to set aside the equanimity I acquired over the last twelve years and which makes me infinitely happy.

Besides, if this exceptional audience is truly made of the most disparate elements — since all opinions were indiscriminately invited —, nevertheless I am convinced that this audience is possessed of the sweetest tolerance, as far as survey is concerned. To call things by their proper name: we are here among well-educated people. All of us are all able to make allowance for what is earnest and to take it under consideration with the required seriousness and without passion. However when a fact submitted to us is above all on the witty side, we do not get excited either. Better to laugh than cry, as the nations' wisdom goes.

Now, I address myself to the Catholics.

I tell them: — When you were told that Doctor Bataille, pretending to be devoted to the Catholic cause, spent eleven years of his life exploring the darkest dens of secret societies, Lodges and Back-Lodges,<sup>1</sup> and even luciferian Triangles, you fully approved him, you found his behavior admirable. He was overwhelmed with congratulations. Laudatory articles were written even in the publications of the party which, today, can't hurl enough thunderbolts to reduce Miss Diana Vaughan to ashes, here calling her a myth, there an adventuress and a fortune-teller.

Should the cheers which greeted Doctor Bataille be now reconsidered, they existed nonetheless and were thunderous. Illustrious theologians, eloquent preachers, eminent prelates congratulated him, each louder than the other. And I do not say they were wrong.

I merely and simply determine a fact.

And the purpose of this determination is to allow me to say forthrightly:

"Do not get angry, my reverend fathers, but do laugh heartily when you are told now that what did happen is the very opposite of what you expected. There wasn't the shadow of a dedicated Catholic exploring the High-Masonry of Palladism under a false nose. But, on the contrary, there has been a freethinker who, for his own edification, *not because of any hostility*, came into your camp and strolled, not during eleven years but during twelve, and... it is your servant." (*Various reactions: murmuring, laughter*).

There wasn't the least masonic plot in this story, which I shall prove to you shortly. "We must leave to Homer, singing the exploits of Ulysses, the adventure of the legendary Trojan Horse; that formidable horse has nothing to do in this case. Today's tale is much less intricate.

Your servant told himself once that having gone for irreligion too young and possibly with much too much spirit, it was well possible that he might not be aware of the true situation. Then, not acting in anybody's name, willing to change his mind if there were reasons to do so, entrusting no one at first with his decision, he thought he had found the means of knowing better, of ascertaining better, for his own instruction.

Add to this, if you wish, a touch of prank at the back of his temper — he wasn't born in Marseille in vain!<sup>2</sup>. (*Laughter*) —Yes, add the lovely pleasure, that most people ignore but which is quite real, the intimate joy of playing a good turn on an opponent, without malice, just for fun and to have some laughs.

Well, I must say so at once, this twelve-year long prank taught me something valuable from the start, namely that I had acted without moderation indeed, that I should have better stayed on the ground of ideas, and that in most cases, it had been a mistake to make personal attacks.

I feel bound to make such a statement and I also admit that I make it easily. During these twelve years spent under the banner of the Church and although I registered as a prankster, I realized how wrong it is to impute the malice of some people to doctrines. It results from mankind itself. A bad man remains bad, just like a good man acts with goodness, whether he keeps his faith or loses it. Dishonest people as well as honest ones are found everywhere. (*Marks of approval*).

Accordingly, I made for myself a study which has born fruit. That study gave me the equanimity, the inner philosophy mentioned before.

I came at first as a curious person, a bit at random,— but of course intending to withdraw once the experience had come to its end. — Then, the sweet pleasure of pranking took over, overwhelming everything, I lingered in the Catholic camp, gradually developing my plan of an altogether amusing and instructive mystification, and giving it ever broader proportions as things went along.

In the course of time, I happened to secure two collaborators, not more than two: one was a fellow I knew since childhood, whom I took at first for a ride and to whom I ascribed the pseudonym of Dr. Bataille; the other was Miss Diana Vaughan, a French Protestant, rather on the free-thinking side, a professional typist and the representative of one of the typewriter manufacturers in the United States. I needed both to achieve the success of the last episode of this joyful prank, which American newspapers call "the biggest hoax of modern times." (*Many laughs. Murmurs*.)

Of course, this last episode had to end in April, the month of gaiety, the month of pranks,— and let us not forget that the hoax also started in April, on April 23, 1885,— this last episode is the only one which has to be explained today, though in broad terms only; because if everything was to be told and secret aspects disclosed from the start, it would take many days. This April Fools catch brought home a gigantic whale. (*Explosion of laughter*.)

However, it is necessary to illuminate the starting point with a few rays of gentle light.

Among the maxims of the culinary art, an often-quoted one says: "One becomes cook, but one is born a roaster." Perfection in the science of roasting cannot be learned. I believe the same can be said of pranksterism: one is born a prankster.

Here are some admissions concerning my outset in this noble career:

Let us begin with my native town. In Marseille, nobody has forgotten the celebrated story of the coves ravaged by a school of sharks. Letters from local fishermen describing their escape from the most awful dangers began to flow in. Panic spread among swimmers, and beaches were deserted for several weeks from les Catalans to the Prado beach. The municipal Commission felt upset; the mayor suggested, quite judiciously, that the sharks, plague of the coves, likely came from Corsica, following a ship which, no doubt, must had thrown overboard a spoiled cargo of smoked meat. The municipal Commission voted an address to General Espivent de la Villeboisnet — martial law was then in force — requesting a company armed with Chassepot-rifles for an expedition on a tugboat.

The worthy general, only wanting to please the administrators he had picked out himself for the dear and good city where I was born (*Laughter*), General Espivent, presently a senator, thus granted one hundred well armed men, with an ample stock of ammunition. The rescuing ship left the harbor under the cheers of the mayor and his deputies, coves were explored in all directions, but the tugboat returned empty-handed; no more sharks than here in this room! (*General laughter*) A later inquiry showed all letters of complaint from various local fishermen to be fanciful. Such fishermen did not exist in the localities where these letters were posted; and once the letters were collected, one noticed that they all seemed to have been written by the same hand. The author of the hoax was not found out. Here he stands before you. All this happened in 1873; I was then nineteen years old.

I do hope that General Espivent will forgive me for having once compromised his prestige in the eyes of the population with a prank. He had suppressed my paper, *La Marotte, journal des fous*.<sup>3</sup> The stuff about the sharks was a most harmless vengeance, wasn't it?

Some years later, I was in Geneva, absconding from a few press sentences. In the mean time, *La Fronde*, then *Le Frondeur*,<sup>4</sup> succeeded *La Marotte*. One fine day, the scientific world was thrilled to hear of a wonderful discovery. Someone in the audience may remember what it was about: an underwater city was said to have been perceived rather confusedly on the bottom of Lake Geneva between Nyon and Coppet. Letters were dispatched to the four corners of Europe, keeping the papers informed of the alleged searches. They relied upon a most scientific explanation founded upon the *Commentaries of Julius Caesar*: This city must have been built during the Roman conquest, at a time when the lake was so narrow that the Rhone traversed it without disturbing its waters. Well, the discovery made lots of noise everywhere—everywhere, except of course in Switzerland. The inhabitants of Nyon and Coppet were not a little astounded when tourists, arriving every now and then, asked to see the underwater city. The local boatmen ended by resolving to take the most insistent ones on the Lake. Oil was spread over the water in order to see better and, indeed, there were some who did manage to perceive something... (*General laughter*) remnants of streets rather well set in a line, crossings, what do I know? A Polish archaeologist who made the trip, returned contented and issued a report in which he asserted he had very well recognized the remainder of a place in the middle of which a nondescript object might well be the remnant of an equestrian statue. An Institute delegated two of its members; but upon their arrival, they got in touch with the authorities and being told that the underwater city was a pure humbug, they returned from whence they came and, alas, did not see anything!

The underwater city did not survive their scientific proceedings (*Prolonged laughter*). The father of the city under the Lake of Geneva — presently speaking — had a precious auxiliary for the spreading of the legend in the person of one of his fellow exiles — it is hardly necessary to stress that he too was born in Marseilles —, my colleague and friend Henry Chabrier, presently residing on the borders of the Seine, just as I am. Both anecdotes, among a hundred that I might quote, are told merely to assert that your servant's inclination for great and joyous pranks goes back more than twelve years ago.

I come now to the most grandiose prank of my existence. It comes to an end today and will evidently be the last because, after this, I doubt whether any colleague, even belonging to the Icelandic or Patagonia press, would confidently accept the report of any extraordinary event upon my recommendation or that of one of my friends!... (*A voice: Obviously! — Laughter.*)

One will easily understand that the formidable fame of my irreligious writings didn't make it easy for me to be accepted in the bosom of the Church without being met with an even more formidable mistrust. I needed, however, to get there and to be greeted, so that once the mistrust had faded away completely, at least in high quarters, I could organize and lead the prodigious prank of contemporary devilry. (*A voice: Distasteful! How can one admit to being such a prankster?*)

In order to reach the goal I had set to myself, it was necessary, indispensable, to entrust no one with my secret, absolutely no one, not even my most intimate friends, not even my wife, at least in the beginning. It was better to be deemed to have turned crazy in the eyes of those who approached me. The least indiscretion could ruin everything. And I was playing for high stakes because I faced a powerful opponent. (*A voice: Oh! yes!*) On the contrary, the hostility of some, the saddened and vexed annoyance of others, were my best trumps since — as was to be expected — I was set under close scrutiny during the first years.

Nevertheless, a few particulars will strike a bell for my old friends if I recall them now.

Thus, after the publication of the letter in which I disowned all my former irreligious writings, the Parisian groups of the Anticlerical League gathered in a general assembly to vote upon my expulsion. People were surprised to see me arrive there; the Leaguers were baffled, and my presence was incomprehensible indeed, since I had not come to defy those from whom I seceded, and didn't say a word either to try and gain them over, as a convert would have done in his neophyte's fervor. No! I came to the meeting under the pretense of making my farewells — though having demitted for more than three months! — but in fact in order to seek and find the opportunity to place a word I could remind them of later, when time would be ripe.

Most of these anticlerical leaguers were my friends. Some of them cried and I was moved myself...

*A Catholic journalist:* You, moved?... Come on now!... You made fun of them like you make fun of us!

M. LÉO TAXIL — I assure you that I was not taking leave from them unconcerned. Well, take it as you wish. Though I felt affected, I kept cool in the middle of a true tempest; I refer you to contemporary newspapers.

In order to close the meeting, the president submitted the following resolution which was agreed upon through an unanimous vote:

Considering that the individual named Gabriel Jogand-Pagès, called Léo Taxil, one of the founders of the Anticlerical League, has disowned all the principles he stood up for, has betrayed free-thinking and all his fellow-antibelievers:

The leaguers attending the meeting of July 27, 1885, without taking into consideration the motives which dictated such an infamous behavior to the individual named Léo Taxil, expel him from the Anticlerical League as a traitor and renegade. I objected then against one word, one single word of that resolution.

Presumably, old friends who attended the July 1885 meeting are in this room. I shall remind them of the formulation of my protest.

I said the following in a most peaceful voice:

"— My friends, I accept this resolution, except one word.

The president interrupted me and exclaimed:

"— indeed, this is cheeky!"

I kept on undisturbed:

— You have the right to say that I am a renegade, since I just published, four days ago, a letter in which I expressly retracted and disowned all my writings against religion. But I beg you to cross out the word traitor which in no ways applies to my case; there is not the shadow of treason in what I do today. *What I tell you here, you cannot understand at the present moment; but you shall understand it later.*"

I refrained from putting too much insistence on this last sentence, because I could not let them get suspicious of my secret. But I said it clearly enough so that it would stick in their memories, though it laid itself open to various interpretations.

And, when I had the opportunity to issue a report of that meeting, I took great care to omit this declaration which indeed could have put people on their guards.

Second fact. Between the day in April when I came to a priest and trusted him with my conversion, and the day of the meeting when I was expelled from the free-thinkers, an anticlerical congress took place in Rome, of which I had been one of the organizers. Nothing was easier for me than to disorganize it and to make it fail completely. This congress took place in the first days of June. All the leaguers know that, until the end, I devoted all my strength for its success; only the death of Victor Hugo, which happened at that time, turned public attention from this congress.

Later, when it was learned that since April I had seen priests again, it was said and printed that, under the pretense of this congress, I had gone to Rome to negotiate my betrayal and was received secretly at the Vatican. It was even inserted in my biography that I was given a large sum, it was said "one million." (*Laughter*)

I let it go because I didn't care much and laughed inside myself.

But today I have the right to say that things were quite different. Amongst the guests of the present evening, there is an old friend who made the trip with me, who accompanied me everywhere, who did not leave me for a minute. He is here and will not contradict me. Did he leave me a minute? Did I leave him to undertake anything suspicious: No!

This is not all. During the same trip, while returning to France, we stopped in Genoa. I insisted on visiting someone with whom I was bound by friendship: general Canzio-Garibaldi, Garibaldi's son-in-law.

During this visit, I was accompanied by the friend I just mentioned and another one, he is still alive, was with us: Doctor Baudon who was recently elected Deputy of Beauvais.

Both can testify to the fact that during the visit, I withdrew one moment aside with Canzio. And then Canzio can testify to what I told him:

"— My dear Canzio, I have to tell you, under the seal of secrecy, that in a short while, I shall make a complete and public break. Be surprised at nothing, and keep your trust in me in your heart."

I did not insist much with him either, and later I was even afraid of having said too much. For the next two or three years, Canzio sent me his card on New Year's Day, in spite of our break. Then, likely estimating that things took too much time, he must have gotten tired and stopped manifesting himself.

Lastly, one of my former co-workers who liked me a lot, kept on seeing me in spite of everything. He is now dead: his name was Alfred Paulon, a former magistrate.<sup>5</sup> (*A voice*: He is dead! So he won't disown you.) Please wait. I know, that through his shrewd and constant observation, he reached the conclusion that I was hoaxing people. (*Various reactions*.)

*A voice*: Then you boast about deceiving Catholics!... It's a scandal!

M. LÉO TAXIL —Paulon, my former co-worker who kept on associating with me, had a way of defending me which was often in my way.

This is what he said of me to his friends: "Léo is hard to get. I thought first that he had turned crazy but when I resumed relations with him, I noticed on the contrary that he is in full possession of his mental faculties. I don't get it: something tells me he is still with us in his heart and mind; I can feel it. I never touch religious matters with him, because I noticed he doesn't want to let the cat out of the bag, but I would stake my life on it, he does not work for the clerics; one of these days, we shall have a big surprise."

Alfred Paulon cannot testify to what he noticed; but he mentioned it to many friends. And if there are any in this room, I ask them: "Is it true that when he spoke of me, Paulon expressed himself that way?" *Various voices*. — It's true! It's true!

Let's now come to the hoax itself, to this funny as well as instructive hoax. In high quarters, they did not rely upon that good man of a vicar, a priest with a simple soul, to whom I confided how I had been struck by grace, like Saul on the road to Damascus.

"This block covered with flour somehow looks suspicious,"<sup>6</sup> it was thought among the "big hats" of the church. (*Laughter*)

Accordingly, it was decided that the day after my letter of retraction, they would let me make a good little retreat at the reverend Jesuit fathers' house, and one of the most expert ones in the art of turning over souls and searching them was picked out to take care of me. The choice was not made immediately. They let me wait a good week for the great searcher who was to be my lot.

He turned out to be a former military chaplain who became a Jesuit, a sly one among the sly! His appreciation was to be weighty.

Ah! It was a tough game that the two of us played!... I still have a headache when I think of it... Among other things, the dear director made me practice the *Spiritual Exercises of Saint Ignatius*. I thought little of these exercises, but at least I had to skim through the pages, so as to look as if I had gone deeply into these extraordinary meditations. It was not the right time to be caught.

My general confession let me win the battle. This general confession did not last less than three days. (*Prolonged laughter*) My last crushing blow came at the end of it.

I said everything, this, that, and other things, but my *partner*<sup>7</sup> suspected there was a further big sin, very big, very big, which was hard to confess, a sin more painful to come out with than the admission of thousands and thousands of impieties.

At last, it had to come out, this monstrous sin.

Ladies and gentlemen, I don't want to keep you waiting as long as he had to: my big sin was a murder, a first-class murder, one of the best downright assassinations. No, I had not slaughtered an entire family, but without being a Tropmann or a Dumolard,<sup>8</sup> I was good for the guillotine, no doubt, had I been found out.

I had taken care to investigate a few disappearances reported three years before by newspapers, and had imagined a little fairy-tale based upon one of them. But my reverend father didn't let

me tell it all in details. He thought me capable of the most dreadful sacrileges, and found grounds to be pleasantly surprised. He did not however expect an assassin at his knees. (*New laughter*)

When the first words of admission fell from my lips, the reverend father jumped backwards in a most significant way. Ah! Now he understood, my embarrassment, my difficulties, my way of discussing certain sins of less significance at such length... And how ashamed I was when I confessed my crime!... Not only ashamed, but disconcerted, frightened... A widow was part of the story, the reverend father let me promise that, in an indirect and indeed most ingenious way, I would bestow a rent on my victim's widow.... He did not want to hear any name, but what he was interested in was to know whether I had murdered with or without premeditation. After beating around the bush and falling under the weight of shame, I admitted premeditation, a true ambush.

*A churchman:* What you are doing right now is abominable, Sir.

*Another listener:* For your punishment, a priest will never receive your confession. You are an utmost rascal! (*Tumult*)

*Other listener:* All priests in this hall ought to leave at once!

*Abbott Garnier:* No! We must listen the scoundrel to the end! (*some people in the audience stand up and leave*)

M. LÉO TAXIL —Whether you leave or not doesn't matter. I proceed....

It is my true duty to pay tribute to this reverend Jesuit father. I never got into troubles with the law. My prank thus allowed me to test the secrecy of confession. If one day I tell the story of these twelve years in details, I will do it just as today, with the strictest impartiality and with calm, Abbot Garnier! (*Approval*)

The main point at this stage was my first victory in the opening of the battle. Had anyone dared and told the reverend father I was not the most earnest convert, he would have gotten a strong rebuke. (*Laughter*)

It was not part of my plans to hurry and see the Sovereign Pontiff.<sup>9</sup>

My confession of assassination was indeed a fantastic success; but the director of my retreat at Clamart had kept it secret. Evidently, what else could he tell the hierarchical authority who entrusted him to inspect the depths of my soul, except:

"—Léo Taxil?... I vouch for him!"

Once the mistrust of the Vatican was set aside, how could I make myself agreeable? In order to bring the hoax to the heights I dreamed of and which I had the inexpressible joy to reach, I had to make good a point most cherished by the Holy See within the program of the Church.

This part of my plan was settled from the start, as soon as I decided to inquire into Catholicism.

One year earlier, the Sovereign Pontiff had made himself notorious with the encyclical *Humanum Genus*, and this encyclical agreed with a well-established idea of the militant Catholics. Gambetta<sup>10</sup>. had said, "Clericalism, there is the enemy!" The Church, on the other side, said, "The enemy is Freemasonry!"

Accordingly, slandering Freemasons was the best way to establish the foundations of the colossal prank of which I savored all the suave happiness in advance.

At first, Freemasons were indignant; they did not foresee that the patiently prepared conclusion of the hoax would result in a worldwide outburst of laughter. They actually thought I had joined for good. It was said and repeated that it was a way of avenging myself for having been expelled from my Lodge in 1881, a well-known story which was not in the least dishonorable for me, but the mere consequence of a little row initiated by two men having nowadays disappeared, and disappeared under sad circumstances.

No! I was not avenging myself, I was having fun. And if one examines now the undersides of this campaign, even the Freemasons who were most hostile to me will acknowledge that I did not harm anyone. I would go as far as to say that I did a good turn to French Masonry. (*Interruption:* You go too far! ... ) Pardon me, wait until I explain myself, and I am sure you will agree with me. I mean that my publication of the rituals was certainly not irrelevant to reforms which resulted in suppressing outmoded practices which had become ridiculous in the eyes of all masons befriended with the notion of progress.

Let us leave this aside and summarize facts. Since my goal was to invent all the elements of contemporary devilry — which was a good bit stronger than the city under the Lake of Geneva — it was necessary to proceed step by step, foundations had to be set, the egg from which Palladism was to be born had to be laid and incubated. A prank of this size cannot be created in one day. (*A voice:* Obviously!)

From the first moment of my conversion, I had found out that a certain number of Catholics strongly believed that the name "Grand Architect of the Universe," adopted by Freemasonry to designate the Supreme Being without relating it to the particular way of any specific religion, that this name, as I say, is used in fact to skillfully conceal Master Lucifer or Satan, the devil!

*Various voices:* —Enough is enough! He has become a freemason again! (*Laughter*)

*Other listeners:* —Keep on!... It's interesting.

M. LÉO TAXIL —Stories are told here and there in which the devil suddenly appeared in a Masonic Lodge and presided over the meeting. This is admitted among Catholics.

More good men than can be imagined believe that the laws of nature are sometimes set aside by good or bad spirits, and even by simple mortals. I was amazed myself to be asked to perform a miracle.

A good canon of Fribourg<sup>11</sup>. once dropped by like a hurricane at my house and told me literally:

"—Ah! You, Mister Taxil, you are a saint! Because God rescued you from so deep an abyss, you must have a mountain of graces upon your head [*sic*]. As soon as I heard of your conversion, I took the train and here I am. On my return, I must be able to say not only that I saw you, but that you performed a miracle in front of me." (*Laughter*)

I was not expecting such a request.

"— A miracle! I answered: I don't understand you, Mister Canon.

— Yes, a miracle, he repeated, it does not matter which, just so that I can bear witness to it!... Whatever miracle you wish!... What do I know?... Here, for example... This chair... turn it into a cane, an umbrella...." (*Prolonged laughter*)

I had gotten his point. I gently declined to perform such a wonder. And my Canon returned to Fribourg saying that if I was not performing miracles, it was out of humility.

Several months later, he sent me an gigantic Gruyère cheese on the crust of which he carved pious inscriptions, wild mystic hieroglyphs, with a knife — an excellent cheese by all means, which seemed never to come to an end and which I ate with infinite respect. (*Laughter increases. Some Catholic listeners protest.*)

Accordingly, my first books on Freemasonry consisted in a mixture of rituals, with short innocent parts inserted, apparently harmlessly interpreted. Each time an obscure passage occurred, I explained it in a way agreeable to Catholics who see Master Lucifer as the supreme grand-master of Freemasons. But only with a touch of suggestion. I was slowly smoothing the field first, in order to plough it later on, and then scatter the mystifying seeds which were to sprout so well.

After two years of this preparatory work, I went to Rome. (*A voice: Ah! Here we are!*)

Received at first by Cardinals Rampolla and Parocchi, I had the pleasure of hearing them, one as well as the other, tell me my books were perfect. Yes indeed, the books unveiled exactly what was so well known in the Vatican, and it was truly fortunate that a convert published these famous rituals. (*Laughter.*)

Cardinal Rampolla called me "my dear," thick as thieves. And how much he regretted that I had been only a mere Apprentice in Masonry! But since I succeeded in getting at the rituals, nothing was more legitimate than printing them. He said he could identify therein all his previous readings from documents in the Holy See's possessions. He identified everything, even that which, by my doings, had the same worth as the sharks of Marseilles or the city under the Lake of Geneva. (*A voice: Rascal! Scoundrel! Blackguard! Rogue!*)

As for Cardinal Parocchi, what interested him most, was the question of Masonic Sisters. My precious revelations had taught him nothing new either. (*Murmurs on one side; laughter on the other.*)

I had come to Rome unexpected, unaware of the fact that a request for a private audience with the Sovereign Pontiff must be made a long time in advance, but I had the pleasant surprise of not waiting at all, and the Holy Father received me for three quarters of an hour. (*A voice: You are a ruffian.*)

To win this new game, I had played it safe during the first evening I spent alone with the Cardinal Secretary of State. Evidently, he had been entrusted with my preliminary examination. But the impression I wished to give him was that I was somehow exalted—not quite as much however as the good Canon of Fribourg. (*Laughter*)

The verbal report which Cardinal Rampolla must have given to the Holy Father granted me the reception I desired.

Since the time of my admission under the banner of the Church, I had convinced myself of a basic truth, namely that one could not become a good author<sup>12</sup>. if one does not put oneself in the body of the person one represents,

if one does not believe — at least momentarily — that all of it is true. When a scene of despair is played on the stage, tears should not be faked: the thirdrate actor wipes dry eyes with his handkerchief; the artist cries actually. (*A voice: Rascal! Rascal!*)

Which is why, along the morning before my reception, I filled myself so completely with the situation that I became ready for anything and incapable of flinching despite any kind of surprise. (*Speaker's voice gets momentarily lost in tumult.*)

When the Pope asked me:

—My son, what do you wish?

I answered:

— Holy Father, to die at your feet, right now!... This would be my greatest happiness. (*Laughter*)

*A listener:* Respect Léo XIII. You have no right to utter his name!

M. LÉO TAXIL — Smiling, Léo XIII deigned to tell me that my life was still very useful in the fight for faith. Then he touched upon the question of Freemasonry. He owned all my new works in his personal library. He had read them from one end to the other and insisted upon the satanic guidance of the sect.

Having been an Apprentice only, I had great merit to have understood that "the devil is there." And the Sovereign Pontiff stressed on the word *devil* with an inflection which is easy for me to render. It seems that I can still hear him repeating: "The devil! The devil!"

When I left, I was sure that my plan could be carried out to the end. The important thing was not to stand out any more, once the fruit was ripe.

Now, the tree of contemporary luciferianism began to grow. I gave it all my care for a few more years... Then I re-wrote one of my books, introducing a palladian ritual in it, allegedly obtained in communication, in fact prettily fabricated by me from beginning to end.

*A listener.* — And we have to hear that!... It is disgusting!

M. LÉO TAXIL — Now, Palladism or Luciferian High-Masonry was born. The new book had the most enthusiastic reception, including all the magazines issued by the Fathers of the Society of Jesus.

The time had come now for me to step aside, otherwise the most fantastic hoax of modern times would have failed sadly.

I started looking for the first collaborator I needed. It had to be someone who had traveled a lot and who might be able to describe a mysterious investigation in the luciferian Triangles, in the dens of this Palladism described as secretly directing all the Lodges and Back-Lodges of the entire world.

I happened then to meet again in Paris with an old college friend of mine, who had been a doctor aboard ships.

At first, I did not put him on to the secret of the hoax at all.

I let him read various books of authors enthralled at my wonderful revelations. The most extraordinary one was authored by a Jesuit bishop, Msgr. Meurin, bishop of Port-Louis (Mauritius), who came to Paris in order to consult me. One can imagine how well informed he became!... (*Laughter*)

This excellent Msgr. Meurin, an erudite Orientalist, came out equal with the Polish archeologist who had recognized a fragment of an equestrian statue in the middle of a place in my underwater city. (*New laughter*)

Starting from the determined idea that Freemasons worship the devil, and convinced of the existence of Palladism, he discovered the most extraordinary things behind the Hebrew words used as passwords, etc., in the innumerable degrees of masonic rites.

Sashes, aprons, ritualistic tools, he scrutinized everything. He examined the smallest embroidered figures on the most insignificant pieces of material having belonged to a Freemason and, in the best faith in the world, he found my Palladism everywhere.

Among the most joyous times of my life, I will always recall the hours during which he read his manuscript to me. His thick volume, *Freemasonry, Synagogue of Satan*, was a wonderful help in convincing my doctor friend that there truly was a secret luciferian meaning in all of the masonic symbolism.

In fact, the doctor did not care a rap. But he had really studied spiritualism out of curiosity as an amateur. He knew that believers in supernatural manifestations, phantoms, ghosts, werewolves, etc. existed throughout the world. He knew that within small groups of occultists, likable pranksters let specters appear to good people who forgot all of Robert-Houdin's technique. But he did not know that such operations ever occurred in freemasonry. He did not know that there was a specific rite of luciferian and masonic occultism. He knew nothing of Palladism and of its triangles, of the Elected Wizards and of Templar Mistresses, and of all the astounding supreme organization imagined by me, the existence of which became scientifically established through the productions of Msgr. Meurin and others.

In my book, *Are There any Women in Freemasonry?*, I created the part of a Grand Mistress of Palladism, a Sophia-Sapho, disclosing only the initial letter of her alleged true name: a *W*. I confided the whole name to my doctor friend. He believed in the existence of Sophie Walder.

Let us understand each other right. Because of books such as Msgr. Meurin's, the doctor believed in Palladism and in the various individuals, heroes of my hoax, who began to appear therein. But I did not try in the least to make him believe in the reality of the supernatural manifestations which had to be told.

*(Renewed tumult. A monk bursts out laughing and begins to applaud. There is deep amazement by priests who sit next to him.)*

This is how I asked my friend the doctor to work together with me.

"— Do you want to collaborate on a work on Palladism?... As for me, I am thoroughly familiar with the subject, but the issue of rituals is far less interesting than recounting adventures as a witness, especially unbelievable ones... Besides, to move good souls best, the narrator must himself be a hero. Not a convinced Palladist, but a zealous Catholic having put on the luciferian mask in order to make this mysterious inquiry at the peril of his life... I will give you a pseudonym, because we shall say that for all sorts of reasons, the author cannot surrender his name to publicity: for example, he still has to write an inquiry about the nihilists... (Laughter) You will be known only to a small group of ecclesiastics, that will be enough... You will hand over to me the route of your voyages whereupon I shall design an outline which you will only have to embellish. Then I shall recopy your manuscript, correct it, cut out some parts and above all add a few ones.... Yours will be the medical part, the description of towns and some narratives. Mine will be the technical aspects of Palladism, information on all the individuals who are going to appear, and most of the added episodes.... I need your collaboration for some thirty or forty installments altogether... Now don't worry about denials... As you noticed in the works I gave you to read, there are two kinds of Palladists: nuts who really believe that Lucifer is the Good-God whose cult must be kept secret for a few more years still, and the wire-pullers who use the nutty ones as excellent subjects for their occultist experiments... Neither sort will be able to protest publicly, since the first condition of belonging to Palladism. is the most rigorous secrecy. Besides, should some of them protest, their denials would be without effect, since they would appear to have been made in self-defense."

My doctor friend agreed and in order to strengthen his own belief in the existence of Palladism in spite of the hoax of marvelous facts attributed by us to its Triangles, I let him receive several letters from Sophie Walder. Sophie was indignant that he pretended to have met her.

The doctor faithfully related these letters to me.

After receiving three or four of them, he told me:

"— I am afraid that this woman is going to make a scandal and demonstrate that the load of crap we spout about her is sheer nonsense." *(Laughter.)*

I answered:

"Calm down. She protests for form's sake; in reality, she is thrilled to read that she has the talent of walking through walls and owns a snake who writes prophecies on her back with the tip of its tail. *(Laughter)* I got in touch with her and was introduced to her. She is a good girl. She is a Palladist hoaxster. She laughs her head off about all that. Do you want me to introduce you to her?"

He wanted to indeed! Boy! Was he happy to strike up an acquaintance with Sophie Walder! Several days later, I forwarded to my friend a letter from the Palladist grand-mistress. She agreed with the introduction. We were to meet at my house, and go from there to Sophia-Sapho who even invited us for dinner.... My friend came to my house in ceremonial full dress as if he was invited at the Elysée.<sup>13</sup> I showed him the table in my house and then told him everything ... or, at least, almost everything.

Sophie Walder, a myth! Palladism, my most beautiful creation, only existed on paper and in a few thousand brains! He could not believe it. I had to show him some proof. Once convinced, he found the hoax even funnier and kept on working with me.

Among the things I forgot to tell him, there is one which he will learn at this conference, namely the reason why I picked Dr. Bataille as his pseudonym.

Allegedly, it was to stress the offensive character of war against Palladism. But my own true reason, my intimate reason as a dilettante hoaxster, was this: one of my oldest friends, deceased by now, a hoaxster of the supreme category, was the illustrious Sapeck, prince of hoaxterism in the Latin Quarter.<sup>14</sup> In a way I was bringing him to life again without anybody's notice. Then Sapeck's true name was Bataille. (*Long laughter.*)

However my doctor friend was not enough to work my plan out. In *The Devil in the 19th Century*, my plan was to set the stage for the conversion of a luciferian Grand-Mistress.

The book I had authored introduced Sophia-Sapho under the blackest colors. I had taken pains to make her as distasteful as possible for the Catholics: the accomplished type of an incarnate she-devil, wallowing in sacrilege, a true Satanist, such as one meets in Huysmans' books.

Sophia-Sapho, or Miss Sophie Walder, was there only to serve as a contrast to another luciferian, a sympathetic one, an angelic creature living in Palladist hell through the chance of birth. Her existence was to be revealed to the Catholic public through a work signed by Bataille. (*A voice: Oh! The rogue!... Oh! The base villain!*)

Now, since this exceptional luciferian woman was to convert at a given moment, I had to have someone in flesh and blood on hand, should it become necessary to produce her.

A little while before meeting again with my childhood friend, the doctor, the necessities of my profession let me meet a typist who was a European representative of one of the large typewriter manufacturers in the United States. At that time, I gave her lots of manuscripts to type. I met with a woman who was intelligent, active, sometimes traveling for business. Further gifted with a playful humor and an elegant simplicity, as in most of our Protestant families. One knows that Lutheran and Calvinist women, although proscribing luxury in the way they dress, nevertheless make concessions to fashion. Her family was French, father and mother French but deceased, the American origin went back to her great-grandfather only. In spite of the similarity in names, she had no family ties with Ernest Vaughan, former administrator of Intransigent.<sup>15</sup> There are several Vaughans in France. In England and in the United States, Vaughans are innumerable. I have to say that, because one might believe that Mr. Ernest Vaughan, with whom I was acquainted in the past and whose brother-in-law always remained one of my best friends, one might believe, as I say, that Mr. Ernest Vaughan was more or less indirectly an accomplice in my hoax. Such a misunderstanding should be avoided at all cost. Miss Diana Vaughan is in no way related to him, the homonymy is no more than sheer coincidence.

My luck could not have been better. Nobody was better qualified than Miss Vaughan to assist me. The question was: would she accept?

I could not ask her point-blank. I studied her first. Little by little, I interested her in devilry, which greatly amused her. She is, as I said, rather a free-thinker than a Protestant. Consequently, she was amazed to find out that in this century of progress, there are still people who believe seriously in all the nonsense of the Middle Ages.

*A voice:* But we didn't come to listen to these things!

*Other voices:* Keep on! Keep on!

M. LÉO TAXIL —It is surprising that those who get mad at what I am saying now are precisely the same persons who, in their newspapers, urged me to speak.... I proceed....

My first approach to Miss Vaughan was on the subject of the letters of Sophie Walder. She agreed to let them be written by one of her friends. I had the proof, thusly, that women are much less talkative than one says and that if their weak point is curiosity, on the other hand one can count on their discretion. Miss Vaughan's friend never boasted to anybody to have written Sophie Walder's letters. Besides, there weren't many.

Finally, I convinced Miss Vaughan to become my accomplice for the final success of my hoax. I drew a fixed agreement with her: 150 francs per month for typing manuscripts as well as for letters which should be copied by hand. It goes without saying that should trips be necessary, all her expenses would be defrayed; but she never accepted any money as a gift. In fact, she enjoyed the prank quite a lot and took a liking to it. Corresponding with Bishops, Cardinals, receiving letters from the private secretary of the Sovereign Pontiff, telling them fairy tales, informing the Vatican

about the dark plots of luciferians, all this set her in an inexpressible gaiety, she thanked me for associating her with this huge prank. Had she possessed the great wealth we attributed to her to make her prestige greater, she would have never accepted the price agreed for her collaboration, and further she would have paid for all the costs wholeheartedly.

She was the one who let us discover the existence of private postal agencies in order to reduce expenses. She had had the opportunity to have recourse to one of them in London, and told us about it. She also told me about the *Alibi-Office* in New York.

*The Devil in the 19th Century* was mainly written to introduce the existence of Miss Vaughan who was to play the main part in the hoax. Had her name been Campbell or Thompson, we would have given our sympathetic luciferian the name of Miss Campbell or Miss Thompson. We merely turned her into an American, born by chance in Paris. We let her family originate in Kentucky. This allowed us to make her part as interesting as possible by multiplying extraordinary wonders concerning her, which nobody was able to check. (*Laughter*) Another reason was that we located the center of Palladism at Charleston in the United States, with the late General Albert Pike, Grand Master of the Scottish Rite in South Carolina, as Founder. This celebrated Freemason, endowed with vast erudition, had been one of the highlights of the order. Through us, he became the first luciferian Pope, supreme chief of all freemasons of the globe, conferring regularly each Friday, at 3 p.m., with Master Lucifer in person. (*Explosion of laughter*).

A most curious point in the story is that some freemasons joined in the prank without in the least being asked to. Compared with the tugboat I had dispatched hunting for sharks in the coves of Marseille in my early years, the boat of Palladism was a true battleship.

With the help of Dr. Bataille, the battleship turned into a squadron. And when Miss Diana Vaughan became my auxiliary, the squadron grew into a full navy.<sup>16</sup> (*New laughter*)

We saw indeed some Masonic journals, such as *La Renaissance Symbolique*, swallow a dogmatic circular about luciferian occultism, a circular dated July 14, 1889, written by myself in Paris, and which I disclosed as having been brought from Charleston to Europe by Miss Diana Vaughan on behalf of Albert Pike, its author.

When I named Adriano Lemmi second successor to Albert Pike as luciferian Sovereign Pontiff — then Lemmi was not elected pope of the Freemasons in the Borghese palace, but in my office —, when this imaginary election became known, some Italian Masons, among which a Deputy at the Parliament, took it seriously. They were annoyed to learn through indiscretions of the profane press that Lemmi was secretive toward them, that he kept them aloof from the famous Palladism which the whole world spoke about. They met in Congress in Palermo, constituted in Sicily, Naples and Florence, three independent Supreme Councils, and named Miss Vaughan an honorary member and protectress of their federation.

*A voice.*—That was a successful prank!

*Another listener.*— These freemasons were your accomplices!

M. LÉO TAXIL — You bet!... May I say again that I had only two auxiliaries who were in the secret of the prank: my doctor friend and Miss Diana Vaughan.

An unexpected auxiliary — though by no means an accomplice, in spite of what he said — is Mr. Margiotta, a Freemason from Palmi, in Calabria. He began as one of the hoaxed, became more hoaxed than all the others and, what is most amusing, he told us he had met the Palladist grand-mistress during one of her trips to Italy. (*Laughter*) It is true that I had gently induced him to entrust me with this confidence. I had put in his head that the trip had really taken place; I had created around it an atmosphere of Palladism; I let him meet a chamberlain of Léo XIII in Rome who had dined with Miss Diana some times before. (*Loud laughter and protests*) Then I mentioned that during Miss Vaughan's imagined trip of 1889, when she was supposed to have brought the alleged dogmatic Albert Pike's circular letter to Europe, she had entertained many Freemasons in groups, in the course of two evenings in Naples, at Hotel Victoria. I knew that Mr. Margiotta, who is a poet, had dedicated a volume of verse to Bovio, and I had taken the trouble to tell him that the Freemasons were introduced to Miss Vaughan in 1889 by Bovio and by Cosma Panunzi. I added that these brothers had taken tea with her but were so many that she couldn't remember their names or faces. Timidly at first, Mr. Margiotta risked some allusions about this former meeting. Then, seeing that it seemed to work and that Miss Diana did not contradict him, he went all the way. He went indeed much too far. — Later, when I decided to prevent the mystification from collapsing under the silence of a Commission, our prank having been unmasked in the mean time in Germany, when I agreed with the doctor to tally-ho the panic of the mystified Cardinals, when Bataille and I, always

in agreement, faked shooting at each other, Mr. Margiotta, having at last opened his eyes, feared ridicule and chose to declare himself an accomplice rather than a blind volunteer in our navy.

But we shouldn't appear more numerous than we actually were. We were three and that was enough. The editors themselves were mystified all the way. Anyway, they have nothing to complain about. First of all because our marvelous revelations brought them the most encouraging Episcopal congratulations, not counting those of the grave theologians who didn't bat an eyelid when our crocodile played the piano and Miss Vaughan traveled to various planets. Then, because our triple collaboration let them give two works to the public, which can compete with *A Thousand and One Nights*, works which have been devoured with delight and will still be read for a long time, not with conviction any more, possibly, but out of curiosity.

It is a bit unusual indeed, that we managed to get our staggering stories swallowed in our 19th century.

I ask myself however to what extent the high approvers of unmasked Palladism have the right to get angry today. When one understands that one was fooled, the best thing to do is to laugh with the audience. Yes, Mister Abbot Garnier! And your getting cross will make you even more laughed at.

Abbott Garnier. —You are a scoundrel! (attempts are made to try and calm down Abbott Garnier.)

M. LÉO TAXIL (when the tumult calmed down) —Those hoaxed by Palladism can be divided into two categories.

Firstly, those who were in good faith, entirely in good faith. They were the victims of their theological science and of their eagerly pursued studies of all that touches on Freemasonry. I had to immerse myself in these two sciences in order to imagine everything and in such a way that they wouldn't realize it was a prank. Can one believe, for instance, that it was easy to take M. de la Rive for a ride, he, the embodiment of an inquiring mind, who examines the slightest trifles with a microscope and who could beat our best investigating judges? He can boast of having given me trouble!... My whole Palladism had been solidly constructed as far as its masonic part is concerned, since some Freemasons—even "thirty-thirds" if you please! — did not take it for a shadowy mirage and asked to become members. (Laughter) The impossibility of Palladism becomes plain as the nose on one's face only because of the supernatural elements we filled it with. But these devilries were a warning only for those who do not believe in those devilries described in other books, in pious books. Asmodeus carrying Miss Diana Vaughan to the Garden of Eden is no more extraordinary than Master Satan taking up Jesus Christ himself on top of a mountain and showing him all the kingdoms of the Earth ... which is round! (*Various voices: Bravo!*) — Either one has faith or one has not. (Laughter)

Besides this first category of hoaxed people, however, there is a second one, and members of the latter one were not fully hoaxed. The good abbots and monks who admired Miss Vaughan because she was a converted Masonic luciferian Sister have the right to think that such female Masons exist. They have never seen or encountered any, but they may think that it is because there are none in their diocese. In Rome, it's another story. In Rome, all information is centralized. In Rome one cannot ignore that there are no female Masons other than the wives, daughters, or sisters of Freemasons, admitted to banquets, public feasts, or those who meet separately, very decently, in private societies comprising feminine elements only such as the Sisters of the Eastern Star or the Daughters of the Revolution in the United States. (*Signs of approval*)

When one thinks about it, it is easy to understand that if Masonic sisters exist, such as the anti-Masons imagine, there would have been conversions and confessions a long time ago! The eagerness with which Miss Vaughan's alleged conversion was received in Rome is significant. Please notice that Msgr. Lazzareschi, delegate of the Holy See to the Anti-Masonic Union's central Committee, let a Thanksgiving *Triduum*<sup>17</sup>. be celebrated at the Church of the Sacred Heart in Rome!

The *Hymn to Joan of Arc* supposedly composed by Miss Diana, words and music, was performed at the anti-Masonic feasts of the Roman Committee. This music became nearly sacred and sounded with grand solemnity in the basilicas of the Holy City. Its tune is that of the *Philharmonic Syringe*, a musical jest written for the entertainments of the harem by one of my friends, conductor of the orchestra of Sultan Abdul Aziz. (Prolonged laughter. Cries: It is abominable! Oh! The black-guard!)

Such Roman enthusiasm sets one thinking.

I shall recall two typical facts.

Under the pen-name "Dr. Bataille" I related—and under that of "Miss Vaughan" I confirmed—that the Masonic temple in Charleston contained a maze at the center of which stays the chapel of Lucifer...

(Interruptions).

M. Oscar Havard. —The bishop of Charleston declared this to be an imposture.

M. LÉO TAXIL —So it is. I was going to say so in a moment. But do not triumph yet. Wait a little!... I said that in the Masonic temple in Charleston one of the rooms, triangular in shape, called the *Sanctum Regnum*, has as its main ornament a monstrous statue of Baphomet, which the High-Masons worship. That in another room, a statue of Eve comes alive when a Templar Mistress is especially agreeable to Master Satan, and that this statue then turns into the demon Astarte, for a moment alive, and gives a kiss to the preferred Templar Mistress. I published the alleged map of this Masonic building, a plan which I designed myself. Now, Msgr. Northrop, Catholic bishop of Charleston, went to Rome expressly to assure the Sovereign Pontiff of the highest fantasy of these writings. This journey would have remained unknown if Msgr. Northrop, on his way to Rome, had not let himself be interviewed. Which is how what he came to tell the Pope became public. He had come to say: "It is false, absolutely false, that the Freemasons of Charleston are the chiefs of a supreme luciferian rite. I am especially well acquainted with the most important ones. They are Protestants, inspired by the best intentions. Not one of them considers practicing occultism. I visited their temple, none of the rooms indicated by Doctor Bataille or Miss Vaughan are to be found there. The map is a hoax." On his return from Rome, Msgr. Northrop did not protest any more and has kept silent ever since. Miss Diana Vaughan, on the contrary, replied to Msgr. Northrop's interview; she said the Bishop of Charleston was himself a Freemason and she received the Pope's blessing. (Sensation)

Second fact. Under the signatures of Bataille and Vaughan, I recounted and confirmed that immense secret workshops were located in Gibraltar under the English fortress, in which men-monsters fabricated all the instruments used in the ceremonies of Palladism, and Miss Diana Vaughan, asked about this by Roman high ecclesiastical dignitaries, enjoyed herself answering in her cutest style that nothing was more true and that the forges of the mysterious workshops of Gibraltar were fed by the very fires of Hell. (Laughter) Msgr. the Apostolic Vicar of Gibraltar wrote, on the other hand, that he confirmed what he had been forced to declare to various people, namely that the story of the secret workshops was an audacious invention, resting on no foundation whatsoever, nothing whatsoever, and that he was indignant to witness the creation of such legends. The Vatican did not publish the letter of the Apostolic Vicar of Gibraltar, and Miss Vaughan received the blessing of the Pope. (Applause. —*Many voices*: Bravo Taxil!)

Should I recall some of the letters of approval received by Miss Vaughan?

*Various voices among the Catholic journalists* —It's not true! There was no approval.

M. LÉO TAXIL —What! You dare deny it! Well, here is one, a letter of assent, and a weighty one!... It is from Cardinal Parocchi, Vicar of His Holiness; it is dated December 16, 1895:

Miss and dear Daughter in Our Lord,

It is with a lively but quite soft emotion that I received your good letter Of 29 November, together with the copy of the *Neuvaine Eucharistique*... His Holiness has entrusted me with bestowing upon you, on his behalf, a very special blessing...

My sympathies have been all yours for a long time. Your conversion is one of the most magnificent triumphs of grace that I am aware of. Right now, I am reading your *Memoirs* which are just fascinating.

Be assured that I have not forgotten you in the mean time, especially in my prayers to the Holy Sacrifice. As for you, do not cease to thank Our Savior Jesus Christ for the great mercy which He bestowed upon you and the magnificent token of love which He gave you.

Do accept my blessing and believe me,

All yours in the heart of Jesus.

L.M. Cardinal-Vicar. Here is another one written on the official letterhead of the general leading Council of the Anti-Masonic Union, which is the highest action committee against freemasonry, a committee constituted by the Pope himself, a committee whose leader is an official representative of the Holy See, Msgr. Lazzareschi. Listen:

Rome, May 27, 1896.

Miss,

Monsignor Vincenzo Sardi, who is one of the private secretaries of the Holy Father, has entrusted me with writing to you, by the order of His Holiness himself.

I should also tell you that His Holiness read with great pleasure your *Neuvaine Eucharistique*.

Commander Alliata had an interview with the Cardinal Vicar concerning the veracity of your conversion. His Eminence is convinced; but He declared to our president that He cannot bear witness of it publicly. "*I cannot betray the secrets of the Holy Office*, is what His Eminence answered to Commander Alliata.

I am all yours, very devoted in Our Lord,  
Rodolfo Verzichi,

Secretary GeneralThe private secretary of Léo XIII, the same Mister Vincenzo Sardi who was mentioned above, writes among other things:

Miss,

Rome, July 11, 1896.

I hasten to express the thanks which are due to you for sending your last book on Crispi....This is a book in which, under the signature of Miss Diana Vaughan, I recounted that Crispi had a pact with a devil named Haborym, that Crispi was present in 1885 at a Palladistic meeting during which a devil named Bitru, introducing Sophie Walder to a certain number of Italian political men, announced to them that the said Sophie, on September 19, 1896, would give birth to a girl who was to become the grandmother of the Antichrist. I had sent the book to the Vatican. The private secretary of the Pope was expressing his thanks for it accordingly and added:

Keep on, Miss, keep on writing and unmasking the iniquitous sect! Which is the reason why Providence has permitted that you belonged to it for such a long time...

I recommend myself, with all my heart, to your prayers, and with a perfect esteem I declare myself your very devoted

Msgr. Vincenzo Sardi.The *Civiltà Cattolica*, the most important of all Catholic reviews in the world, the official organ of the Jesuits' General, a review published in Rome, issued the following lines in its issue no. 1,110 in September 1896:

We want at least once to give ourselves the pleasure of blessing publicly the names of the valorous champions who entered first the glorious arena, among them the noble Miss Diana Vaughan.

Miss Diana Vaughan, called from the depths of darkness to the light of God, prepared by divine Providence, armed with science and personal experience, turns towards the Church to serve it, and appears inexhaustible in her valuable publications which are unparalleled for accuracy and usefulness."In the entourage of the Sovereign Pontiff, Miss Vaughan was not merely considered as a heroic polemicist; she was set on the same level as the Saints. When she started to be attacked, the secretary of Cardinal Parocchi wrote her from Rome, October 19, 1886:

Keep on, Miss, through your pen and your piety, despite the efforts of hell, furnishing weapons to overwhelm the Enemy of mankind. All the Saints' deeds have been fought against; no wonder then-that yours are not spared...

Please accept, Miss, the expression of my liveliest feelings of admiration and respect.

A. Villard

Prelate of the Residence of His Holiness

Secretary to H. E. Cardinal ParocchiYou know well, gentlemen Catholic journalists, that these letters have been actually sent to Miss Vaughan. They may embarrass you today; but they are historical documents; these have not been forged, and their eminent authors will not disown them.

And not only did they patronize this hoax; but believing the woman with whom they corresponded to have an exalted head, they urged her to enter their game for preparing their miracles.

Time is short today; nevertheless, I want to acquaint you with a fact along the same lines. Everybody knows that according to the Catholic legend, once Joan of Arc had been burned, the executioner was shocked to find out that, alone, the heart of the heroine had not been consumed; in vain, he threw more burning pitch and sulfur upon it, the heart would not burn. Finally, on the injunction of the bailiff who directed the torment, Joan's heart was thrown in the Seine. Now, the French clergy requests the canonization of Joan of Arc; but it is Rome which canonizes, and Rome is in Italy. The French clergy has already found a relic of the girl they put to death, namely a carbonized rib. In Italy, they are preparing something better than that. They support a nun of the third order in

the extraordinary idea that she is the one who will retrieve the heart of Joan of Arc; no doubt an angel will bring it to her. This ultramystical nun of the third order has said so in a letter she wrote to Miss Vaughan, and the very secretary of the Cardinal Vicar recommended to Miss Vaughan to correspond with this pious person, to exchange with her impressions about the supernatural facts concerning Joan of Arc. It is easy to get what that means. Be sure that one day an angel will carry the heart, not to France, but to Italy, the same as angels carried the house of Nazareth to Lorette.<sup>18</sup> Joan of Arc will be canonized, and all the French pilgrims who will come to Italy will not fail to make a visit to the Italian possessor of the miraculously retrieved heart; and their visits will be fruitful, won't they? (Laughter)

Indeed, Miss Vaughan has seen the favors of the princes of the Church fall upon her.

The masons of France, of Italy, of England, laughed in their sleeves and right they were. On the other hand, a German Mason, Findel,<sup>19</sup> got real mad and thundered forth a very well written pamphlet. Great excitement. That pamphlet was like a paving stone in a frogs' pond.<sup>20</sup>

A strong reaction appeared necessary. Findel endangered the final success of my hoax: his grand mistake was to think that it was a plot set up by the Jesuits—unfortunate Jesuits! I had sent them a fragment of the Moloch's tail, as a piece of evidence of Palladism! (Explosion of laughter)

Disquiet crept into the Vatican. Jumping from one extreme to another they got into a panic. They wondered whether they were not confronted with a hoax about to smash the Church instead of serving it. They named a secret commission of inquiry in order to ascertain what they were to believe.

Since then, the danger becoming great, my work was endangered, and I did not want to get shipwrecked. The danger was silence, strangling the hoax in the oubliettes<sup>21</sup> of the Roman Commission, preventing Catholic papers from breathing a word.

My friend the doctor went to Cologne; from there, he put me in the picture. And forewarned I left for the Congress of Trent, well forewarned. When I came back, the first person I saw was my friend. I told him of my fear of silent strangling.

Then we agreed upon all that was to be done and written. If the editors of the *Universe* doubt it, I can name them parts they left out of the letters of Dr. Bataille. It was I who stoked their fire that way, then it was necessary for the world press to be made aware of this grand and bizarre epic. And a good deal of time was necessary so that the uproar of furious Catholics, the polemic with those in favor of Miss Diana Vaughan would catch the notice of the major newspapers, those who walk along with progress and count millions of readers.

Before ending, I must pay my respects to an unknown hoaxster, a shrewd American colleague. Among hoaxsters, one understands each other from one end of the world to the other without needing to exchange letters, without even having to drop a call. Respects therefore to the dear citizen of Kentucky who had the friendly thought of helping us without any prior agreement, who confirmed the revelations of Miss Diana Vaughan to the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, who certified to whoever wanted to hear that he had known Miss Diana Vaughan intimately for seven or eight years and that he often met her in the various secret societies of Europe and America... where she never set foot.

LADIES,  
GENTLEMEN,

You were told that Palladism would be knocked down today. Better still, it is annihilated, it is no more.

In my general confession to the Jesuit father of Clamart, I had accused myself of an imaginary murder. Well, I will admit to a further crime. I committed infanticide. Palladism is now dead for good. Its father just murdered it.

*(An indescribable tumult meets this conclusion. Some laugh more and more and applaud the lecturer. Catholics scream and hiss. Abbot Garnier steps on a chair and attempts to address the audience, but he is hindered by the hoot. A few listeners strike up the comic song by Meusy: O Sacred Heart of Jesus!)*

## NOTES

1. In French: *arrières-loges*, literally *back-lodges*, in the sense they are in the back, behind the scenes, but secretly running everything.
2. The French stereotype those born in Marseilles as makers of pranks.

3. Literally: *The Hobby-Horse, Journal for Fools*.
4. *La Fronde* was a seditious party during the minority of Louis XIV. It gave birth to the word *Frondeur*, designating generally speaking all those who criticize the authorities and the government without restraint or deference.
5. In French: *Conseiller prudhomme*.
6. This alludes to one of the *Fables de La Fontaine*, well known to French children, about a cat who covered himself with flour in hopes that mice would be fooled and come close enough to be caught.
7. "Partner" in the original French text.
8. Two murderers whose exactions and execution at the guillotine were famous in the time of Taxil.
9. Pope Léon XIII.
10. A famous French politician.
11. One of the strongholds of Catholicism in Switzerland.
12. Actor is meant here likely.
13. Residence of the President of the French Republic.
14. Part of Paris where many students live.
15. A Parisian daily newspaper.
16. Both sentences are based on a joke almost impossible to render in English "*Monter un bateau*" is the French equivalent of "to pull one's leg". Taxil combines it with the tugboat of his youth, which grows into a squadron, and then a whole navy. Meaning that the prank becomes more and more enormous.
17. A religious ceremony which lasts three days.
18. This is an allusion to a legend from the 15th century that the birth house of the Virgin Mary in Nazareth was brought to Ancona in Italy by angels.
19. J.G. Findel, author of *History of Freemasonry*, 1861.
20. In addition to the obvious imagery of a stone disturbing frogs, French priests are sometimes called "frogs of the holy water basin."