

Robespierre from the play *The Fourteenth of July and Danton* by Romaine Rolland

ROBESPIERRE: I trust no man. I can read lies in their faces, I see intrigue in their protestations. Their eyes, their mouths, their hands, their whole body lies. Suspicion poisons every thought I have. I was intended for a quieter existence. I love men, and I wish to believe in them. But how can I, when I see them perjure themselves ten times a day, sell themselves, their friends, their armies, their *Patrie*, for motives of fear, or ambition, or viciousness, or malevolence pure and simple? I have seen Mirabeau, Lafayette, Dumouriez, Custine, the King, the aristocrats, the Girondins, the Hérésists--all of them betrayed one after the other. The soldiers would have surrendered the nation twenty times had they not feared the guillotine awaiting them. Three-fourths of the members are conspiring against the Convention. Vice is curbed under the heroic discipline imposed by the Revolution. Its allies dare not attack the forces of virtue in broad daylight; they hide under masks of piety and mercy, in order to influence public opinion, and deflect it in favor of rogues, inciting them against the true patriots. But I will tear their masks from their faces, and force the Assembly to see what is beneath: the hideous face of treason. I will force the disguised accomplices of the conspirators to condemn them, or else die with them myself. The Republic will be victorious. But, oh God, in the midst of what devastation! Vice is like the Hydra: every drop of blood that falls to the ground will grow up into another monster. The best men have fallen into its clutches; they fall as if stricken with the plague: the day before yesterday it was Philippeaux; yesterday, Danton; today, Desmoulins--Desmoulins, my friend from childhood, my brother! Who will be the next traitor?

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