



तमसो मा ज्योतिर्गमय

SANTINIKETAN  
VISWA BHARATI  
LIBRARY

843.73

B 21

V- 18

72227









*"Come in"*

THE WORKS OF  
HONORÉ DE BALZAC

WITH INTRODUCTIONS BY  
GEORGE SAINTSBURY

IN EIGHTEEN VOLUMES

VOLUME XVIII

SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY  
PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE  
PETTY TRIALS OF MARRIED LIFE

BIGELOW, BROWN & CO., Inc.  
NEW YORK



## CONTENTS

---

THE SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY  
THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE  
THE PETTY TRIALS OF MATRIMONY





# **THE SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY**



## PREFACE

THERE is in *L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine* an ominous atmosphere of flagging, combined with a not less ominous return to a weaker handling of ideas and schemes which the author had handled more strongly earlier. We have seen that the secret-society craze—a favorite one with most Frenchmen, and closely connected with their famous panic-terror of being “betrayed” in war and politics—had an especially strong hold on this most typical of French novelists. He had almost begun his true career with the notion of a league of *Dévorants*, of persons banded, if not exactly against society, at any rate for the gratifying of their own desires and the avenging of their own wrongs, with an utter indifference to social laws and arrangements. He ended it, or nearly so, with the idea of a contrary league of Consolation, which should employ money, time, pains, and combination to supply the wants and heal the wounds which Society either directly causes or more or less callously neglects.

It cannot, I think, be denied that a certain dullness, a heaviness, does rest on *Mme. de la Chanterie* and *L'Initié*. The very reference to the *Médecin de Campagne*, which Balzac with his systematizing mania brings in, calls up another unlucky contrast. There, too, the benevolence and the goodness were something fanciful, not to say fantastic; but there was an inspiration, a vigor, to speak vulgarly, a “go,” which we do not find here. Balzac’s awkward and inveterate habit of parenthetical and episodic narratives and glances backward is not more obvious here than in many other pieces; but there is not, as in some at least of these other pieces, strength enough of main interest to carry it off. The light is clear, it is religious and touching in its dimness; but the lamp burns low.

*L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine* was, in part, one of the very latest of Balzac’s works, and was actually finished during his residence at Vierzschovnia.

*Mme. de la Chanterie*, however, was somewhat earlier, part of it having been written in 1842. It appeared in a fragmentary and rather topsy-turvy fashion, with separate titles, in the *Musée des Familles*, from September in the year just named to November 1844, and was only united together in the first edition of the *Comédie* two years later, though even after this it had a separate appearance with some others of its author's works in 1847. *L'Initié*, or, as it was first entitled, *Les Frères de la Consolation*, was not written till this latter year, and appeared in 1848 in the *Spectateur Républicain*, but not as a book till after the author's death. In both cases there was the usual alternation of chapter divisions, with headings and none.

G. S.

# THE SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY

## FIRST EPISODE

MME. DE LA CHANTERIE

ONE fine September evening, in the year 1836, a man of about thirty was leaning over the parapet of the quay at a point whence the Seine may be surveyed upstream from the Jardin des Plantes to Notre-Dame, and down in grand perspective to the Louvre.

There is no such view elsewhere in the Capital of Ideas (Paris). You are standing, as it were, on the poop of a vessel that has grown to vast proportions. You may dream there of Paris from Roman times to the days of the Franks, from the Normans to the Burgundians, through the Middle Ages to the Valois, Henri IV., Napoleon, and Louis Philippe. There is some vestige or building of each period to bring it to mind. The dome of Sainte-Geneviève shelters the Quartier Latin. Behind you rises the magnificent east end of the Cathedral. The Hôtel de Ville speaks of all the revolutions, the Hôtel Dieu of all the miseries of Paris. After glancing at the splendors of the Louvre, take a few steps, and you can see the rags that hang out from the squalid crowd of houses that huddle between the Quai de la Tournelle and the Hôtel Dieu; the authorities are, however, about to clear them away.

In 1836 this astonishing picture inculcated yet another lesson. Between the gentleman who leaned over the parapet and the Cathedral, the deserted plot, known of old as Le Terrain, was still strewn with the ruins of the Archbishop's palace. As we gaze there on so many suggestive objects, as the mind takes in the past and the present of the city of Paris, Religion seems to have established herself there that she might lay her hands on the sorrows on both sides of the river, from the Faubourg Saint-Antoine to the Faubourg Saint-Marceau.

It is to be hoped that these sublime harmonies may be completed by the construction of an Episcopal palace in a Gothic style to fill the place of the meaningless buildings that now stand between the Island, the Rue d'Arcole, and the Quai de la Cité.

This spot, the very heart of old Paris, is beyond anything deserted and melancholy. The waters of the Seine break against the wall with a loud noise, the Cathedral throws its shadow there at sunset. It is not strange that vast thoughts should brood there in a brain-sick man. Attracted perhaps by an accordance between his own feelings at the moment and those to which such a varied prospect must give rise, the loiterer folded his hands over the parapet, lost in the twofold contemplation of Paris and of himself! The shadows spread, lights twinkled into being, and still he did not stir; carried on as he was by the flow of a mood of thought, big with the future, and made solemn by the past.

At this instant he heard two persons approaching, whose voices had been audible on the stone bridge where they had crossed from the Island of the Cité to the Quai de la Tournele. The two speakers no doubt believed themselves to be alone, and talked somewhat louder than they would have done in a more frequented place, or if they had noticed the propinquity of a stranger. From the bridge their tones betrayed an eager discussion, bearing, as it seemed, from a few words that reached the involuntary listener, on a loan of money. As they came closer, one of the speakers, dressed as a workingman, turned from the other with a gesture of despair. His companion looked round, called the man back, and said:

“You have not a sou to pay the bridge-toll. Here!”—and he gave him a coin—“and remember, my friend, it is God Himself who speaks to us when a good thought occurs to us.”

The last words startled the dreamer. The man who spoke had no suspicion that, to use a proverbial expression, he was killing two birds with one stone; that he spoke to two unhappy creatures—a workman at his wits' end, and a soul

without a compass; a victim of what Panurge's sheep call Progress, and a victim of what France calls equality.

These words, simple enough in themselves, acquired grandeur from the tone of the speaker, whose voice had a sort of magical charm. Are there not such voices, calm and sweet, affecting us like a view of the distant ocean?

The speaker's costume showed him to be a priest, and his face, in the last gleam of twilight, was pale, and dignified, though worn. The sight of a priest coming out of the grand Cathedral of Saint Stephen at Vienna to carry extreme unction to a dying man, persuaded Werner, the famous tragic poet, to become a Catholic. The effect was much the same on our Parisian when he saw the man who, without intending it, had brought him consolation; he discerned on the dark line of his horizon in the future a long streak of light where the blue of heaven was shining, and he followed the path of light, as the shepherds of the Gospel followed the voice that called to them from on high, "Christ the Lord is born!"

The man of healing speech walked on under the Cathedral, and by favor of Chance—which is sometimes consistent—made his way towards the street from which the loiterer had come, and whither he was returning, led there by his own mistakes in life.

This young man's name was Godefroid. As this narrative proceeds, the reader will understand the reasons for giving to the actors in it only their Christian names.

And this is the reason why Godefroid, who lived near the Chaussée d'Antin, was lingering at such an hour under the shadow of Notre-Dame.

He was the son of a retail dealer, who, by economy, had made some little fortune, and in him centered all the ambitions of his parents, who dreamed of seeing him a notary in Paris. At the early age of seven he had been sent to a school, kept by the Abbé Liautard, where he was thrown together with the children of certain families of distinction, who had selected this establishment for the education of their sons, out of attachment to religion, which, under the Emperor, was somewhat too much neglected in the Lycées, or public schools.



At that age social inequalities are not recognized between schoolfellows; but in 1821, when his studies were finished, Godefroid, articled to a notary, was not slow to perceive the distance that divided him from those with whom he had hitherto lived on terms of intimacy.

While studying the law, he found himself lost in the crowd of young men of the citizen class, who, having neither a ready-made fortune nor hereditary rank, had nothing to look to but their personal worth or persistent industry. The hopes built upon him by his father and mother, who had now retired from business, stimulated his conceit without giving him pride. His parents lived as simply as Dutch folks, not spending more than a quarter of their income of twelve thousand francs; they intended to devote their savings, with half their capital, to the purchase of a connection for their son. Godefroid, reduced also to live under the conditions of this domestic thrift, regarded them as so much out of proportion to his parents' dreams and his own, that he felt disheartened. In weak characters such discouragement leads to envy. While many other men, in whom necessity, determination, and good sense were more marked than talent, went straight and steadfastly onward in the path laid down for modest ambitions, Godefroid waxed rebellious, longed to shine, insisted on facing the brightest light, and so dazzled his eyes. He tried to "get on," but all his efforts ended in demonstrating his incapacity. At last, clearly perceiving too great a discrepancy between his desires and his prospects, he conceived a hatred of social superiority; he became a Liberal, and tried to make himself famous by a book; but he learned, to his cost, to regard talent much as he regarded rank. Having tried by turns the profession of notary, the bar, and literature, he now aimed at the higher branch of the law.

At this juncture his father died. His mother, content in her old age with two thousand francs a year, gave up almost her whole fortune to his use. Possessor now, at five-and-twenty, of ten thousand francs a year, he thought himself rich, and he was so as compared with the past. Hitherto his life had been a series of acts with no will behind them,

or of impotent willing; so, to keep pace with the age, to act, to become a personage, he tried to get into some circle of society by the help of his money.

At first he fell in with journalism, which has always an open hand for any capital that comes in its way. Now, to own a newspaper is to be a Personage; it means employing talent and sharing its successes without dividing its labors. Nothing is more tempting to second-rate men than thus to rise by the brains of others. Paris has had a few parvenus of this type, whose success is a disgrace both to the age and to those who have lent a lifting shoulder.

In this class of society Godefroid was soon cut out by the vulgar cunning of some and the extravagance of others, by the money of ambitious capitalists or the maneuvering of editors; then he was dragged into the dissipations that a literary or political life entails, the habits of critics behind the scenes, and the amusements needed by men who work their brains hard. Thus he fell into bad company; but he there learned that he was an insignificant-looking person, and that he had one shoulder higher than the other without redeeming this malformation by any distinguished ill-nature or wit. Bad manners are a form of self-payment which actors snatch by telling the truth.

Short, badly made, devoid of wit or of any strong bent, all seemed at an end for a young man at a time when for success in any career the highest gifts of mind are as nothing without luck, or the tenacity which commands luck.

The Revolution of 1830 poured oil on Godefroid's wounds; he found the courage of hope, which is as good as that of despair. Like many another obscure journalist, he got an appointment where his *Liberal ideas*, at loggerheads with the demands of a newly established power, made him but a refractory instrument. Venerated only with Liberalism, he did not know, as superior men did, how to hold his own. To obey the Ministry was to him to surrender his opinions. And the Government itself seemed to him false to the laws that had given rise to it. Godefroid declared in favor of *movement* when what was needed was tenacity; he came back to

Paris almost poor, but faithful to the doctrines of the Opposition.

Alarmed by the licentiousness of the press, and yet more by the audacity of the Republican party, he sought in retirement the only life suited to a being of incomplete faculties, devoid of such force as might defy the rough jolting of political life, weary too of repeated failures, of suffering and struggles which had won him no glory; and friendless, because friendship needs conspicuous qualities or defects, while possessing feelings that were sentimental rather than deep. Was it not, in fact, the only prospect open to a young man who had already been several times cheated by pleasure, and who had grown prematurely old from friction in a social circle that never rests nor lets others rest.

His mother, who was quietly dying in the peaceful village of Auteuil, sent to her son to come to her, as much for the sake of having him with her as to start him in the road where he might find the calm and simple happiness that befits such souls. She had at last taken Godefroid's measure when she saw that at eight-and-twenty he had reduced his whole fortune to four thousand francs a year; his desires blunted, his fancied talents extinct, his energy nullified, his ambition crushed, and his hatred for everyone who rose by legitimate effort increased by his many disappointments.

She tried to arrange a marriage for Godefroid with the only daughter of a retired merchant, thinking that a wife might be a guardian to his distressful mind, but the old father brought the mercenary spirit that abides in those who have been engaged in trade to bear on the question of settlements. At the end of a year of attentions and intimacy, Godefroid's suit was rejected. In the first place, in the opinion of these case-hardened traders, the young man must necessarily have retained a deep-dyed immorality from his former pursuits; and then, even during this past year, he had drawn upon his capital both to dazzle the parents and to attract the daughter. This not unpardonable vanity gave the finishing touch; the family had a horror of unthrift; and their refusal was final when they heard that Godefroid had

sacrificed in six years a hundred and fifty thousand francs of his capital.

The blow fell all the harder on his aching heart because the girl was not at all good-looking. Still, under his mother's influence, Godefroid had credited the object of his addresses with a sterling character and the superior advantages of a sound judgment; he was accustomed to her face, he had studied its expression, he liked the young lady's voice, manners, and look. Thus, after staking the last hope of his life on this attachment, he felt the bitterest despair.

His mother dying, he found himself—he whose requirements had always followed the tide of fashion—with five thousand francs for his whole fortune, and the certainty of never being able to repair any future loss, since he saw himself incapable of the energy which is imperatively demanded for the grim task of *making a fortune*.

But a man who is weak, aggrieved, and irritable cannot submit to be extinguished at a blow. While still in mourning, Godefroid wandered through Paris in search of something to “turn up”; he dined in public rooms, he rashly introduced himself to strangers, he mingled in society, and met with nothing but opportunities for expenditure. As he wandered about the boulevards, he was so miserable that the sight of a mother with a young daughter to marry gave him as keen a pang as that of a young man going on horseback to the Bois, of a parvenu in a smart carriage, or of an official with a ribbon in his buttonhole. The sense of his own inadequacy told him that he could not pretend even to the more respectable of second-class positions, nor to the easiest form of office work. And he had spirit enough to be constantly vexed, and sense enough to bewail himself in bitter self-accusation.

Incapable of contending with life, conscious of certain superior gifts, but devoid of the will that brings them into play, feeling himself incomplete, lacking force to undertake any great work, or to resist the temptations of those tastes he had acquired from education or recklessness in his past life, he was a victim to three maladies, any one of them enough to disgust a man with life when he has ceased to

exercise his religious faith. Indeed, Godefroid wore the expression so common now among men, that it has become the Parisian type: it bears the stamp of disappointed or smothered ambitions, of mental distress, of hatred lulled by the apathy of a life amply filled up by the superficial and daily spectacle of Paris, of satiety seeking stimulants, of repining without talent, of the affectation of force; the venom of past failure which makes a man smile at scoffing, and scorn all that is elevating, misprize the most necessary authorities, enjoy their dilemmas, and disdain all social forms.

This Parisian disease is to the active and persistent coalition of energetic malcontents what the soft wood is to the sap of a tree: it preserves it, covers it, and hides it.

Weary of himself, Godefroid one morning resolved to give himself some reason for living. He had met a former school-fellow, who had proved to be the tortoise of the fable while he himself had been the hare. In the course of such a conversation as is natural to old companions while walking in the sunshine on the Boulevard des Italiens, he was amazed to find that success had attended this man, who, apparently far less gifted than himself with talent and fortune, had simply resolved each day to do as he had resolved the day before. The brain-sick man determined to imitate this simplicity of purpose.

“Life in the world is like the earth,” his friend had said; “it yields in proportion to our labors.”

Godefroid was in debt. As his first penance, his first duty, he required himself to live in seclusion and pay his debts out of his income. For a man who was in the habit of spending six thousand francs when he had five, it was no light thing to reduce his expenses to two thousand francs. He read the advertisement sheets every morning, hoping to find a place of refuge where he might live on a fixed sum, and where he might enjoy the solitude necessary to a man who wanted to study and examine himself, and discern a vocation. The manners and customs of the boarding-houses in the Quartier Latin were an offense to his taste; a private asylum, he thought, would be unhealthy; and he was fast drifting back

into the fatal uncertainty of a will-less man, when the following advertisement caught his eye:

“Small apartments, at seventy francs a month; might suit a clerk in orders. Quiet habits expected. Board included; and the rooms will be inexpensively furnished on mutual agreement. Inquire of M. Millet, grocer, Rue Chanoinesse, by Notre-Dame, for all further particulars.”

Attracted by the artless style of this paragraph, and the aroma of simplicity it seemed to bear, Godefroid presented himself at the grocer's shop at about four in the afternoon, and was told that at that hour Mme. de la Chanterie was dining, and could see no one at meal-times. The lady would be visible in the evening after seven, or between ten and twelve in the morning. While he talked, M. Millet took stock of Godefroid, and proceeded to put him through his first examination—“Was monsieur single? Madame wished for a lodger of regular habits. The house was locked up by eleven at latest.”

“Well,” said he in conclusion, “you seem to me, monsieur, to be of an age to suit Mme. de la Chanterie's views.”

“What age do you suppose I am?” asked Godefroid.

“Somewhere about forty,” replied the grocer.

This plain answer cast Godefroid into the depths of misanthropy and dejection. He went to dine on the Quai de la Tournelle, and returned to gaze at Notre-Dame just as the fires of the setting sun were rippling and breaking in wavelets on the buttresses of the great nave. The quay was already in shadow, while the towers still glittered in the glow, and the contrast struck Godefroid as he tasted all the bitterness which the grocer's brutal simplicity had stirred within him.

Thus the young man was oscillating between the whisperings of despair and the appealing tones of religious harmony aroused in his mind by the Cathedral bells, when, in the darkness, and silence, and calm moonshine, the priest's speech fell on his ear. Though far from devout—like most men of the century—his feelings were touched by these words, and he went back to the Rue Chanoinesse, where he had but just decided not to go.

The priest and Godefroid were equally surprised on turning into the Rue Massillon, opposite the north door of the Cathedral, at the spot where it ends by the Rue de la Colombe, and is called Rue des Marmousets. When Godefroid stopped under the arched doorway of the house where Mme. de la Chanterie lived, the priest turned round to examine him by the light of a hanging oil-lamp, which will, very likely, be one of the last to disappear in the heart of old Paris.

“Do you wish to see Mme. de la Chanterie, monsieur?” asked the priest.

“Yes,” replied Godefroid. “The words I have just heard you utter to that workman prove to me that this house, if you dwell in it, must be good for the soul.”

“Then you witnessed my failure,” said the priest, lifting the knocker, “for I did not succeed.”

“It seems to me that it was the workman who failed. He had begged sturdily enough for money.”

“Alas!” said the priest, “one of the greatest misfortunes attending revolutions in France is that each, in its turn, offers a fresh premium to the ambitions of the lower classes. To rise above his status and make a fortune, which, in these days, is considered the social guarantee, the workman throws himself into monstrous plots, which, if they fail, must bring those who dabble in them before the bar of human justice. This is what good-nature sometimes ends in.”

The porter now opened a heavy gate, and the priest said to Godefroid:

“Then you have come about the rooms to let?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

The priest and Godefroid then crossed a fairly wide courtyard, beyond which stood the black mass of a tall house, flanked by a square tower even higher than the roof, and amazingly old. Those who know the history of Paris are aware that the soil has risen so much round the Cathedral, that there is not a trace to be seen of the twelve steps which originally led up to it. Hence what was the ground floor of this house must now form the cellars. There is a short flight of outer steps to the door of the tower, and inside it an ancient *Vise* or stairs, winding in a spiral round a

newell carved to imitate a vine-stock. This style, resembling that of the Louis XII. staircases at Blois, dates as far back as the fourteenth century.

Struck by these various signs of antiquity, Godefroid could not help exclaiming :

“ This tower was not built yesterday ! ”

“ It is said to have withstood the attacks of the Normans and to have formed part of a primeval palace of the kings of Paris ; but according to more probable traditions, it was the residence of Fulbert, the famous Canon, and the uncle of Héloïse.”

As he spoke the priest opened the door of the apartment, which seemed to be the ground floor, and which, in fact, is now but just above the ground of both the outer and the inner courtyard—for there is a small second court.

In the first room a servant sat knitting by the light of a small lamp ; she wore a cap devoid of any ornament but its gaufered cambric frills. She stuck one of the needles through her hair, but did not lay down her knitting as she rose to open the door of a drawing-room looking out on the inner court. This room was lighted up. The woman’s dress suggested to Godefroid that of some Gray Sisters.

“ Madame, I have found you a tenant,” said the priest, showing in Godefroid, who saw in the room three men, sitting in armchairs near Mme. de la Chanterie.

The three gentlemen rose ; the mistress of the house also ; and when the priest had pushed forward a chair for the stranger, and he had sat down in obedience to a sign from Mme. de la Chanterie and an old-fashioned bidding to “ Be seated,” the Parisian felt as if he were far indeed from Paris, in remote Brittany, or the backwoods of Canada.

There are, perhaps, degrees of silence. Godefroid, struck already by the tranquillity of the Rue Massillon and Rue Chanoinesse, where a vehicle passes perhaps twice in a month, struck too by the stillness of the courtyard and the tower, may have felt himself at the very heart of silence, in this drawing-room, hedged round by so many old streets, old courtyards, and old walls.

This part of the Island, called the Cloister, preserves the



character common to all cloisters; it is damp, and cold, and monastic; silence reigns there unbroken, even during the noisiest hours of the day. It may also be remarked that this part of the Cité, lying between the body of the Cathedral and the river, is to the north and under the shadow of Notre-Dame. The east wind loses itself there, unchecked by any obstacle, and the fogs from the Seine are to some extent entrapped by the blackened walls of the ancient metropolitan church.

So no one will be surprised at the feeling that came over Godefroid on finding himself in this ancient abode, and in the presence of four persons as silent and as solemn as everything around them. He did not look about him; his curiosity centered in Mme. de la Chanterie, whose name even had already puzzled him.

This lady was evidently a survival from another century, not to say another world. She had a rather sweet face, with a soft, coldly colored complexion, an aquiline nose, a benign brow, hazel eyes, and a double chin, the whole framed in curls of silver hair. Her dress could only be described by the old name of *fourreau* (literally a sheath, a tightly fitting dress), so literally was she cased in it, in the fashion of the eighteenth century. The material—silk of carmelite gray, finely and closely striped with green—seemed to have come down from the same date; the body, cut low, was hidden under a mantilla of richer silk, flounced with black lace, and fastened at the bosom with a brooch containing a miniature. Her feet, shod in black velvet boots, rested on a little stool. Mme. de la Chanterie, like her maid-servant, was knitting stockings, and had a knitting pin stuck through her waving hair under her lace cap.

“Have you seen M. Millet?” she asked Godefroid in the head voice peculiar to dowagers of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, as if to invite him to speak, seeing that he was almost thunderstruck.

“Yes, madame.”

“I am afraid the rooms will hardly suit you,” she went on, observing that her proposed tenant was dressed with elegance in clothes that were new and smart.

Godefroid, in fact, was wearing patent leather boots, yellow gloves, handsome shirt-studs, and a neat watch chain passed through the buttonhole of a black silk waistcoat sprigged with blue.

Mme. de la Chanterie took a small silver whistle out of her pocket and blew it. The woman servant came in.

“Manon, child, show this gentleman the rooms. Will you, my dear friend, accompany him?” she said to the priest. “And if by any chance the rooms should suit you,” she added, rising and looking at Godefroid, “we will afterwards discuss the terms.”

Godefroid bowed and went out. He heard the iron rattle of a bunch of keys which Manon took out of a drawer, and saw her light a candle in a large brass candlestick.

Manon led the way without speaking a word. When he found himself on the stairs again, climbing to the upper floors, he doubted the reality of things; he felt dreaming though awake, and saw the whole world of fantastic romance such as he had read of in his hours of idleness. And any Parisian dropped here, as he was, out of the modern city with its luxurious houses and furniture, its glittering restaurants and theaters, and all the stirring heart of Paris, would have felt as he did. The single candle carried by the servant lighted the winding stair but dimly; spiders had hung it with their dusty webs.

Manon's dress consisted of a skirt broadly pleated and made of coarse woolen stuff; the bodice was cut square at the neck, behind and before, and all her clothes seemed to move in a piece. Having reached the second floor, which had been the third, Manon stopped, turned the springs of an antique lock, and opened a door painted in coarse imitation of knotted mahogany.

“There!” said she, leading the way.

Who had lived in these rooms? A miser, an artist who had died of want, a cynic indifferent to the world, or a pious man who was alien to it? Any one of the four seemed possible, as the visitor smelt the very odor of poverty, saw the greasy stains on wall-papers covered with a layer of smoke, the blackened ceilings, the windows with their small

dusty panes, the brown-tiled floor, the wainscot sticky with a deposit of fog. A damp chill came down the fireplaces, faced with carved stonework that had been painted, and with mirrors framed in the seventeenth century. The rooms were at the angle of a square, as the house stood, inclosing the inner courtyard, but this Godefroid could not see, as it was dark.

"Who used to live here?" Godefroid asked of the priest.

"A Councilor to the Parlement, madame's grand-uncle, a M. de Boisfrelon. He had been quite childish ever since the Revolution, and died in 1832 at the age of ninety-six; madame could not bear the idea of seeing a stranger in the rooms so soon; still, she cannot endure the loss of rent . . ."

"Oh, and madame will have the place cleaned and furnished, to be all monsieur could wish," added Manon.

"It will only depend on how you wish to arrange the rooms," said the priest. "They can be made into a nice sitting-room and a large bedroom and dressing-room, and the two small rooms round the corner are large enough for a spacious study. That is how my rooms are arranged below this, and those on the next floor."

"Yes," said Manon; "M. Alain's rooms are just like these, only that they look out on the tower."

"I think I had better see the rooms again by daylight," said Godefroid shyly.

"Perhaps so," said Manon.

The priest and Godefroid went downstairs again, leaving Manon to lock up, and she then followed to light them down. Then, when he was in the drawing-room, Godefroid, having recovered himself, could, while talking to Mme. de la Chanterie, study the place, the personages, and the surroundings.

The window curtains of this drawing-room were of old red satin; there was a cornice-valance, and the curtains were looped with silk cord; the red tiles of the floor showed beyond an ancient tapestry carpet that was too small to cover it entirely. The woodwork was painted stone-color. The ceiling, divided down the middle by a joist starting from the chimney, looked like an addition lately conceded to modern luxury; the easy-chairs were of wood painted white, with

tapestry seats. A shabby clock, standing between two gilt candlesticks, adorned the chimney-shelf. An old table with stag's feet stood by Mme. de la Chanterie, and on it were her balls of wool in a wicker basket. A clockwork lamp threw light on the picture.

The three men, sitting as rigid, motionless, and speechless as bonzes, had, like Mme. de la Chanterie, evidently ceased speaking on hearing the stranger return. Their faces were perfectly cold and reserved, as befitted the room, the house, and the neighborhood.

Mme. de la Chanterie agreed that Godefroid's observations were just, and said that she had postponed doing anything till she was informed of the intentions of her lodger, or rather of her boarder; for if the lodger could conform to the ways of the household, he was to board with them—but their ways were so unlike those of Paris life! Here, in the Rue Chanoinesse, they kept country hours; everyone, as a rule, had to be in by ten at night; noise was not to be endured; neither women nor children were admitted, so that their regular habits might not be interfered with. No one, perhaps, but a priest could agree to such a rule. At any rate, Mme. de la Chanterie wished for someone who liked plain living and had few requirements; she could only afford the most necessary furniture in the rooms. M. Alain was satisfied, however—and she bowed to one of the gentlemen—and she would do the same for the new lodger as for the old.

"But," said the priest, "I do not think that monsieur is quite inclined to come and join us in our convent."

"Indeed; why not?" said M. Alain. "We are all quite content, and we all get on very well."

"Madame," said Godefroid, rising, "I will have the honor of calling on you again to-morrow."

Though he was but a young man, the four old gentlemen and Mme. de la Chanterie stood up, and the priest escorted him to the outer steps. A whistle sounded, and at the signal the porter appeared, lantern in hand, to conduct Godefroid to the street; then he closed the yellow gate, as heavy as that of a prison, and covered with arabesque ironwork, so old that it would be hard to determine its date.

When Godefroid found himself sitting in a hackney-cab and being carried to the living regions of Paris, where light and warmth reigned, all he had just seen seemed like a dream; and as he walked along the Boulevard des Italiens, his impressions already seemed as remote as a memory. He could not help saying to himself:

“ Shall I find those people there to-morrow, I wonder? ”

On the following day, when he woke in the midst of the elegance of modern luxury and the refinements of English comfort, Godefroid recalled all the details of his visit to the Cloister of Notre-Dame, and came to some conclusions in his mind as to the things he had seen there. The three gentlemen, whose appearance, attitude, and silence had left an impression on him, were no doubt boarders, as well as the priest. Mme. de la Chanterie's gravity seemed to him to be the result of the reserved dignity with which she had endured some great sorrows. And yet, in spite of the explanations he gave himself, Godefroid could not help feeling that there was an air of mystery in these uncommunicative faces. He cast a glance at his furniture to choose what he could keep, what he thought indispensable; but, transporting them in fancy to the horrible rooms in the Rue Chanoinesse, he could not help laughing at the grotesque contrast they would make there, and determined to sell everything, and pay away so much as they might bring; leaving the furnishing of the rooms to Mme. de la Chanterie. He longed for a new life, and the objects that could recall his old existence must be bad for him. In his craving for transformation—for his was one of those natures which rush forward at once with a bound, instead of approaching a situation step by step as others do—he was seized, as he sat at breakfast, by an idea: he would realize his fortune, pay his debts, and place the surplus with the banking firm his father had done business with.

This banking house was that of Mongenod & Co., established in Paris since 1816 or 1817, a firm whose reputation had never been blown on in the midst of the commercial depravity which at this time had blighted, more or less, sev-

eral great Paris houses. Thus, in spite of their immense wealth, the houses of Nucingen and du Tillet, of Keller Brothers, of Palma & Co., suffer under a secret disesteem whispered, as it were, between lip and ear. Hideous transactions had led to such splendid results; and political successes, nay, monarchical principles, had overgrown such foul beginnings, that no one in 1834 thought for a moment of the mud in which the roots were set of such majestic trees—the upholders of the State. At the same time, there was not one of these bankers that did not feel aggrieved by praises of the house of Mongenod.

The Mongenods, following the example of English bankers, make no display of wealth; they do everything quite quietly, and carry on their business with such prudence, shrewdness, and honesty as allow them to operate with certainty from one end of the world to the other.

The present head of the house, Frédéric Mongenod, is brother-in-law to the Vicomte de Fontaine. Thus his numerous family is connected, through the Baron de Fontaine, with M. Grossetête, the Receiver-General (brother to the Grossetête & Co. of Limoges), with the Vandenesses, and with Planat de Baudry, another Receiver-General. This relationship, after being of the greatest service to the late Mongenod, Senior, in his financial operations at the time of the Restoration, had gained him the confidence of many of the old nobility, whose capital and vast savings were intrusted to his bank. Far from aiming at the peerage, like Keller, Nucingen, and du Tillet, the Mongenods kept out of political life, and knew no more of it than was needed for banking business.

Mongenod's bank occupies a magnificent house in the Rue de la Victoire, with a garden behind and a courtyard in front, where Mme. Mongenod resided with her two sons, with whom she was in partnership. Mme. la Vicomtesse de Fontaine had taken out her share on the death of the elder Mongenod in 1827. Frédéric Mongenod, a handsome fellow of about five-and-thirty, with a cold manner, as silent and reserved as a Genevese, and as neat as an Englishman, had acquired under his father all the qualifications needed in his difficult

business. He was more cultivated than most bankers, for his education had given him the general knowledge which forms the curriculum of the *École Polytechnique*; and, like many bankers, he had an occupation, a taste, outside his regular business, a love of physics and chemistry. Mongenod, Junior, ten years younger than Frédéric, filled the place, under his elder brother, that a head-clerk holds under a lawyer or a notary; Frédéric was training him, as he himself had been trained by his father, in the scientific side of banking, for a banker is to money what a writer is to ideas—they both ought to know everything.

Godefroid, as he mentioned his family name, could see how highly his father had been respected, for he was shown through the offices at once to that next to Mongenod's private room. This room was shut in by glass doors, so that, in spite of his wish not to listen, Godefroid overheard the conversation going on within.

"Madame, your account shows sixteen hundred thousand francs on both sides of the balance sheet," Mongenod the younger was saying. "I know not what my brother's views may be; he alone can decide whether an advance of a hundred thousand francs is possible. You lacked prudence. It is not wise to put sixteen hundred thousand francs into a business——"

"Too loud, Louis!" said a woman's voice. "Your brother's advice is never to speak but in an undertone. There may be someone in the little waiting-room."

At this instant Frédéric Mongenod opened the door from his living rooms to his private office; he saw Godefroid, and went through to the inner room, where he bowed respectfully to the lady who was talking to his brother.

He showed Godefroid in first, saying as he did so, "And whom have I the honor of addressing?"

As soon as Godefroid had announced himself, Frédéric offered him a chair; and while the banker was opening his desk, Louis Mongenod and the lady, who was none else than Mme. de la Chanterie, rose and went up to Frédéric. Then they all three went into a window recess, where they stood talking to Mme. Mongenod, who was in

all the secrets of the business. For thirty years past this clever woman had given ample proofs of her capacity, to her husband first, now to her sons, and she was, in fact, an active partner in the house, signing for it as they did. Godefroid saw in a pigeon-hole a number of boxes labeled "La Chanterie," and numbered 1 to 7.

When the conference was ended by a word from the senior to his brother, "Well, then, go to the cashier," Mme. de la Chanterie turned round, saw Godefroid, restrained a start of surprise, and then asked a few whispered questions of Mongenod, who replied briefly also in a low voice.

Mme. de la Chanterie wore thin prunella shoes and gray silk stockings; she had on the same dress as before, and was wrapped in the Venetian cloak that was just coming into fashion again. Her drawn bonnet of green silk, *à la bonne femme*, was lined with white, and her face was framed in flowing lace. She stood very erect, in an attitude which bore witness, if not to high birth, at any rate to aristocratic habits. But for her extreme affability, she would perhaps have seemed proud. In short, she was very imposing.

"It is not so much good luck as a dispensation of Providence that has brought us together here, monsieur," said she to Godefroid. "I was on the point of declining a boarder whose habits, as I fancied, were ill suited to those of my household; but M. Mongenod has just given me some information as to your family which is——"

"Indeed, madame—monsieur——" said Godefroid, addressing the lady and the banker together, "I have no longer any family, and I came to ask advice of my late father's banker to arrange my affairs in accordance with a new plan of life."

Godefroid told his story in a few words, and expressed his desire of leading a new life.

"Formerly," said he, "a man in my position would have turned monk; but there are now no religious Orders——"

"Go to live with madame, if she will accept you as a boarder," said Frédéric Mongenod, after exchanging glances with Mme. de la Chanterie, "and do not sell your investments; leave them in my hands. Give me the schedule of your



debts; I will fix dates of payment with your creditors, and you can draw for your own use a hundred and fifty francs a month. It will take about two years to pay everything off. During those two years, in the home you are going to, you will have ample leisure to think of a career, especially as the people you will be living with can give you good advice."

Louis Mongenod came back with a hundred thousand-franc notes, which he gave to Mme. de la Chanterie. Godefroid offered his arm to his future landlady, and took her to her hackney-coach.

"Then we shall meet again presently," said she in a kind tone.

"At what hour shall you be at home, madame?" said Godefroid.

"In two hours' time."

"I have time to get rid of my furniture," said he, with a bow.

During the few minutes while Mme. de la Chanterie's arm had lain on his as they walked side by side, Godefroid could not see beyond the halo cast about this woman by the words, "Your account stands at sixteen hundred thousand francs," spoken by Louis Mongenod to a lady who buried her life in the depths of the Cloître de Notre-Dame.

This idea, "She must be rich!" had entirely changed his view of things. "How old is she, I wonder?"

And he had a vision of a romance in his residence in the Rue Chanoinesse.

"She looks like an aristocrat; does she dabble in banking affairs?" he asked himself.

And in our day nine hundred and ninety-nine men out of a thousand would have thought of the possibility of marrying this woman.

A furniture dealer, who was also a decorator, but chiefly an agent for furnished flats, gave about three thousand francs for all that Godefroid wished to dispose of, leaving the things in his rooms for the few days needed to clean and arrange the dreadful rooms in the Rue Chanoinesse.

Thither the brain-sick youth at once repaired; he called

in a painter, recommended by Mme. de la Chanterie, who undertook for a moderate sum to whitewash the ceilings, clean the windows, paint the wainscoting like gray maple, and color the floors, within a week. Godefroid measured the rooms to carpet them all alike with green drugget of the cheapest description. He wished everything to be uniform and as simple as possible in his cell.

Mme. de la Chanterie approved of this. With Manon's assistance she calculated how much white dimity would be needed for the window curtains and for a simple iron bedstead; then she undertook to procure the stuff and to have them made for a price so small as to amaze Godefroid. With the new furniture he would send in, his apartments would not cost him more than six hundred francs.

"So I can take about a thousand to M. Mongenod."

"We here lead a Christian life," said Mme. de la Chanterie, "which is, as you know, quite out of keeping with much superfluity, and I fear you still preserve too many."

As she gave her new boarder this piece of advice, she glanced at the diamond that sparkled in a ring through which the ends of Godefroid's blue necktie were drawn.

"I only mention this," she added, "because I perceive that you are preparing to break with the dissipated life of which you spoke with regret to M. Mongenod."

Godefroid gazed at Mme. de la Chanterie, listening with delight to the harmony of her clear voice; he studied her face, which was perfectly colorless, worthy to be that of one of the grave, cold Dutch women so faithfully depicted by the painters of the Flemish school, faces on which a wrinkle would be impossible.

"Plump and fair!" thought he, as he went away. "Still, her hair is white——"

Godefroid, like all weak natures, had readily accustomed himself to the idea of a new life, believing it would be perfect happiness, and he was eager to settle in the Rue Chanoinesse; nevertheless, he had a gleam of prudence—or, if you like, of suspicion. Two days before moving in he went again to M. Mongenod to ask for further information concerning the household he was going to join. During

the few minutes he had spent now and then in his future home, to see what alterations were being made, he had observed the going and coming of several persons whose appearance and manner, without any air of mystery, suggested that they were busied in the practice of some profession, some secret occupation with the residents in the house. At this time many plots were afoot to help the elder branch of Bourbons to remount the throne, and Godefroid believed there was some conspiracy here.

But when he found himself in the banker's private room and under his searching eye, he was ashamed of himself as he formulated his question and saw a sardonic smile on Frédéric Mongenod's lips.

"Mme. la Baronne de la Chanterie," he replied, "is one of the obscurest but one of the most honorable women in Paris. Have you any particular reason for asking for information?"

Godefroid fell back on flat excuses—he was arranging to live a long time with these strangers, and it was as well to know to whom he was tying himself, and the like. But the banker's smile only became more and more ironical, and Godefroid more and more ashamed, till he blushed at the step he had taken, and got nothing by it; for he dared ask no more questions about Mme. de la Chanterie or his fellow-boarders.

Two days later, after dining for the last time at the *Café Anglais*, and seeing the two first pieces at the *Variétés*, at ten o'clock on a Monday night he came to sleep in the *Rue Chanoinesse*, where Manon lighted him to his room.

Solitude has a charm somewhat akin to that of the wild life of savages, which no European ever gives up after having once tasted it. This may seem strange in an age when everyone lives so completely in the sight of others that everybody is inquisitive about everybody else, and that privacy will soon have ceased to exist, so quickly do the eyes of the Press—the modern *Argus*—increase in boldness and intrusiveness; and yet the statement is supported by the evidence of the first six Christian centuries, when no recluse ever came back

to social life again. There are few mental wounds that solitude cannot cure. Thus, in the first instance, Godefroid was struck by the calm and stillness of his new abode, exactly as a tired traveler finds rest in a bath.

On the day after his arrival as a boarder with Mme. de la Chanterie, he could not help cross-examining himself on finding himself thus cut off from everything, even from Paris, though he was still under the shadow of its Cathedral. Here, stripped of every social vanity, there would henceforth be no witnesses to his deeds but his conscience and his fellow-boarders. This was leaving the beaten highroad of the world for an unknown track; and whither would the track lead him? To what occupation would he find himself committed?

He had been lost in such reflections for a couple of hours, when Manon, the only servant of the establishment, knocked at his door and told him that the second breakfast was served; they were waiting for him. Twelve was striking.

The new boarder went downstairs at once, prompted by his curiosity to see the five persons with whom he was thenceforth to live. On entering the drawing-room, he found all the residents in the house standing up and dressed precisely as they had been on the day when he had first come to make inquiries.

“Did you sleep well?” asked Mme. de la Chanterie.

“I did not wake till ten o’clock,” said Godefroid, bowing to the four gentlemen, who returned the civility with much gravity.

“We quite expected it,” said the old man, known as M. Alain, and he smiled.

“Manon spoke of the second breakfast,” Godefroid went on. “I have, I fear, already broken one of your rules without intending it.—At what hour do you rise?”

“We do not get up quite by the rule of the monks of old,” replied Mme. de la Chanterie graciously, “but, like workmen, at six in winter and at half-past three in summer. We also go to bed by the rule of the sun; we are always asleep by nine in winter, by half-past eleven in summer. We drink some milk, which is brought from our own farm, after prayers, all but M. l’Abbé de Vèze, who performs early

Mass at Notre-Dame—at six in summer, at seven in winter—and these gentlemen as well as I, your humble servant, attend that service every day.”

Mme. de la Chanterie finished this speech at table, where her five guests were now seated.

The dining-room, painted gray throughout, and decorated with carved wood of a design showing the taste of Louis XIV., opened out of the sort of anteroom where Manon sat, and ran parallel with Mme. de la Chanterie's room, adjoining the drawing-room, no doubt. There was no ornament but an old clock. The furniture consisted of six chairs, their oval backs upholstered with worsted-work evidently done by Mme. de la Chanterie, of two mahogany sideboards, and a table to match, on which Manon placed the breakfast without spreading a cloth. The breakfast, of monastic frugality, consisted of a small turbot with white sauce, potatoes, a salad, and four dishes of fruit: peaches, grapes, strawberries, and green almonds; then, by way of *hors d'œuvre*, there was honey served in the comb as in Switzerland, besides butter, radishes, cucumber, and sardines. The meal was served in china sprigged with small blue cornflowers and green leaves, a pattern which was no doubt luxuriously fashionable in the time of Louis XVI., but which the increasing demands of the present day have made common.

“It is a fast day!” observed M. Alain. “Since we go to Mass every morning, you may suppose that we yield blindly to all the practices of the Church, even the strictest.”

“And you will begin by following our example,” added Mme. de la Chanterie, with a side-glance at Godefroid, whom she had placed by her side.

Of the four boarders, Godefroid already knew the names of the Abbé de Vèze and M. Alain; but he yet had to learn those of the other two gentlemen. They sat in silence, eating with the absorbed attention that the pious seem to devote to the smallest details of their meals.

“And does this fine fruit also come from your farm, madame?” Godefroid inquired.

“Yes, monsieur,” she replied. “We have our little model farm, just as the Government has; it is our country house,

about three leagues from hence, on the road to Italy, near Villeneuve-Saint-Georges."

"It is a little estate that belongs to us all, and will be the property of the last survivor," said the worthy M. Alain.

"Oh, it is quite inconsiderable," added Mme. de la Chanterie, who seemed afraid lest Godefroid should regard this speech as a bait.

"There are thirty acres of arable land," said one of the men unknown to Godefroid, "six acres of meadow, and an inclosure of about four acres of garden, in the midst of which our house stands; in front of it is the farm."

"But such an estate must be worth above a hundred thousand francs," observed Godefroid.

"Oh, we get nothing out of it but our produce," replied the same speaker.

He was a tall man, thin and grave. At a first glance he seemed to have served in the army; his white hair showed that he was past sixty, and his face revealed great sorrows and religious resignation.

The second stranger, who appeared to be a sort of compound of a master of rhetoric and a man of business, was of middle height, stout but active, and his face bore traces of a joviality peculiar to the notaries and attorneys of Paris.

The dress of all four men was marked by the extreme neatness due to personal care; and Manon's hand was visible in the smallest details of their raiment. Their coats were perhaps ten years old, and preserved, as a priest's clothes are preserved, by the occult powers of a housekeeper and by constant use. These men wore, as it were, the livery of a system of life; they were all the slaves of the same thought, their looks spoke the same word, their faces wore an expression of gentle resignation, of inviting tranquillity.

"Am I indiscreet, madame," said Godefroid, "to ask the names of these gentlemen? I am quite prepared to tell them all about myself; may I not know as much about them as circumstances allow?"

"This," said Mme. de la Chanterie, introducing the tall, thin man, "is M. Nicolas; he is a retired Colonel of the

Gendarmerie, ranking as a Major-General.—And this gentleman,” she went on, turning to the little stout man, “was formerly Councilor to the Bench of the King’s Court in Paris; he retired from his functions in August, 1830; his name is M. Joseph. Though you joined us but yesterday, I may tell you that in the world M. Nicolas bore the name of Marquis de Montauran, and M. Joseph that of Lecamus, Baron de Tresnes; but to us, as to the outer world, these names no longer exist. These gentlemen have no heirs; they have anticipated the oblivion that must fall on their families; they are simply M. Nicolas and M. Joseph, as you will be simply M. Godefroid.”

As he heard these two names—one so famous in the history of Royalism from the disaster which put an end to the rising of the Chouans at the beginning of the Consulate, the other so long respected in the records of the old Parlement—Godefroid could not repress a start of surprise; but when he looked at these survivors from the wreck of the two greatest institutions of the fallen monarchy, he could not detect the slightest movement of feature or change of countenance that betrayed a worldly emotion. These two men did not or would not remember what they once had been. This was Godefroid’s first lesson.

“Each name, gentlemen, is a chapter of history,” said he respectfully.

“The history of our own time,” said M. Joseph, “of mere ruins.”

“You are in good company,” said M. Alain, smiling.

He can be described in two words: he was a middle-class Paris citizen; a worthy man with the face of a calf, dignified by white hairs, but insipid with its eternal smile.

As to the priest, the Abbé de Vèze, his position was all-sufficient. The priest who fulfills his mission is recognizable at the first glance when his eyes meet yours.

What chiefly struck Godefroid from the first was the profound respect shown by the boarders to Mme. de la Chanterie; all of them, even the priest, notwithstanding the sacred dignity conferred by his functions, behaved to her as to a queen. He also noted the temperance of each guest; they

ate solely for the sake of nourishment. Mme. de la Chanterie, like the rest, took but a single peach and half a bunch of grapes; but she begged the newcomer not to restrict himself in the same way, offering him every dish in turn.

Godefroid's curiosity was excited to the highest pitch by this beginning. After the meal they returned to the drawing-room, where he was left to himself; Mme. de la Chanterie and her four friends held a little privy council in a window recess. This conference, in which no animation was displayed, lasted for about half an hour. They talked in undertones, exchanging remarks which each seemed to have thought out beforehand. Now and again M. Alain and M. Joseph consulted their pocket-books, turning over the leaves.

"You will see to the Faubourg," said Mme. de la Chanterie to M. Nicolas, who went away.

These were the first words Godefroid could overhear.

"And you to the Quartier Saint-Marceau," she went on, addressing M. Joseph.

"Will you take the Faubourg Saint-Germain and try to find what we need?" she added to the Abbé de Vèze, who at once went off.—"And you, my dear Alain," she added with a smile, "look into matters.—To-day's business is all settled," said she, returning to Godefroid.

She sat down in her armchair, and took from a little work-table some under-linen ready cut out, on which she began to sew as if working against time.

Godefroid, lost in conjectures, and seeing in all this a Royalist conspiracy, took the lady's speech as introductory, and, seating himself by her side, watched her closely. He was struck by her singular skill in stitching; while everything about her proclaimed the great lady, she had the peculiar deftness of a paid seamstress; for everyone can distinguish, by certain tricks of working, the habits of a professional from those of an amateur.

"You sew," said Godefroid, "as if you were used to the business."

"Alas!" she said, without looking up, "I have done it ere now from necessity——"



Two large tears rose to the old woman's eyes, and rolled down her cheeks on to the work she held.

"Pray, forgive me, madame!" cried Godefroid.

Mme. de la Chanterie looked at her new inmate, and saw on his features such an expression of regret, that she nodded to him kindly. Then, after wiping her eyes, she recovered the composure that characterized her face, which was not so much cold as chilled.

"You here find yourself, M. Godefroid—for, as you know already, you will be called only by your Christian name—amid the wreckage from a great storm. We have all been stricken and wounded to the heart through family interests or damaged fortunes, by the forty years' hurricane that overthrew Royalty and Religion, and scattered to the winds the elements that constituted France as it was of old. Words which seem but trivial bear a sting for us, and that is the reason of the silence that reigns here. We rarely speak of ourselves; we have forgotten what we were, and have found means of substituting a new life for the old life. It was because I fancied, from your revelation to the Mongenods, that there was some resemblance between your situation and our own, that I persuaded my four friends to receive you among us; in fact, we were anxious to find another recluse for our convent. But what do you propose to do? We do not enter on solitude without some stock of moral purpose."

"Madame, as I hear you speak, I shall be too happy to accept you as the arbiter of my destiny."

"That is speaking like a man of the world," said she. "You are trying to flatter me—a woman of sixty!—My dear boy," she went on, "you are, you must know, among people who believe firmly in God, who have all felt His hand, and who have given themselves up to Him almost as completely as do the Trappists. Have you ever observed the assurance of a true priest when he has given himself to the Lord, when he hearkens to His voice and strives to be a docile instrument under the fingers of Providence? He has shed all vanity, all self-consciousness, all the feelings which cause constant offenses to the worldly; his quiescence is as complete as that of the fatalist, his resignation enables

him to endure all things. The true priest—an Abbé de Vèze—is like a child with his mother; for the Church, my dear sir, is a good mother. Well, a man may be a priest without a tonsure; not all priests are in orders. If we devote ourselves to doing good, we imitate the good priest, we obey God!—I am not preaching to you; I do not want to convert you; I am only explaining our life.”

“Instruct me, madame,” said Godefroid, quite conquered. “I would wish not to fail in any particular of your rules.”

“You would find that too much to do; you will learn by degrees. Above all things, never speak here of your past misfortunes, which are mere child’s play as compared with the terrible catastrophes with which God has stricken those with whom you are now living——”

All the time she spoke, Mme. de la Chanteric went on pulling her thread through with distracting regularity; but at this full stop, she raised her head and looked at Godefroid; she saw that he was spellbound by the thrilling sweetness of her voice, which had indeed a sort of apostolic unction. The young sufferer was gazing with admiration at the really extraordinary appearance of this woman, whose face was radiant. A faint flush tinged her wax-white cheeks, her eyes sparkled, a youthful soul gave life to the wrinkles that had acquired sweetness, and everything about her invited affection. Godefroid sat measuring the depth of the gulf that parted this woman from vulgar souls; he saw that she had attained to an inaccessible height, whither religion had guided her; and he was still too much of the world not to be stung to the quick, not to long to go down into that gulf and climb to the sharp peak where Mme. de la Chanteric stood, and to stand by her side. While he gave himself up to a thorough study of this woman, he related to her all the mortifications of his life, all he could not say at Mongenod’s, where his self-betrayal had been limited to a statement of his position.

“Poor child!”

This motherly exclamation, dropping from the lips of Mme. de la Chanteric, fell, from time to time, like healing balm, on the young man’s heart.

“What can I find to take the place of so many hopes

deceived, of so much disappointed affection?" said he at last, looking at the lady, who seemed lost in reverie. "I came here," he went on, "to reflect and make up my mind. I have lost my mother—will you take her place——"

"But," said she, "will you show me a son's obedience?"

"Yes, if you can show me the tenderness that exacts it."

"Very well; we will try," said she.

Godefroid held out his hand to take that which the lady offered him, and raised it reverently to his lips. Mme. de la Chanterie's hands were admirably formed—neither wrinkled, nor fat, nor thin; white enough to move a young woman to envy, and a shape that a sculptor might copy. Godefroid had admired these hands, thinking them in harmony with the enchantment of her voice and the heavenly blue of her eye.

"Wait here," said Mme. de la Chanterie, rising and going into her own room.

Godefroid was deeply agitated, and could not think to what he was to attribute the lady's departure: he was not left long in perplexity, for she returned with a book in her hand.

"Here, my dear boy," said she, "are the prescriptions of a great healer of souls. When the things of everyday life have failed to give us the happiness we looked for, we must seek in a higher life, and here is the key to that new world. Read a chapter of this book morning and evening; but give it your whole attention; study every word as if it were some foreign tongue. By the end of a month you will be another man. For twenty years now have I read a chapter every day, and my three friends, Nicolas, Alain, and Joseph, would no more omit it than they would miss going to bed and getting up again; imitate them for the love of God—for my sake——" she said, with divine serenity and dignified confidence.

Godefroid turned the book round and read on the back *Imitation of Jesus Christ*. The old lady's artlessness and youthful candor, her certainty that she was doing him good, confounded the ex-dandy. Mme. de la Chanterie had exactly the manner, the intense satisfaction, of a woman who might

offer a hundred thousand francs to a merchant on the verge of bankruptcy.

"I have used this book," she said, "for six-and-twenty years. God grant that its use may prove contagious! Go and buy me another copy, for the hour is at hand when certain persons are coming here who must not be seen."

Godefroid bowed and went up to his rooms, where he tossed the book on to a table, exclaiming:

"Poor, dear woman! There——"

The book, like all that are constantly used, fell open at a particular place. Godefroid sat down to arrange his ideas a little, for he had gone through more agitation that morning than he had in the course of the most stormy two months of his life; his curiosity especially had never been so strongly excited. His eyes wandered mechanically, as happens with men when their minds are absorbed in meditation, and fell on the two pages that lay facing him. He read as follows:

## "CHAPTER XII.

### "ON THE ROYAL ROAD OF THE HOLY CROSS."

He picked up the volume, and this paragraph of that grand book captivated his eyes as though by words of fire:

"He has gone before you carrying His cross, and died for you, that you too might have strength to carry your cross, and be willing to die upon the Cross. . . .

"Go where you will, try what you will, you will not find a grander way, or a safer way, than the way of the Holy Cross. Arrange and order all your life as you like or think fit, still you will find that you will always have something to suffer, by your own choice or by necessity; and so you will always find a cross. For either you will have bodily pain to bear, or some trouble of the spirit.

"Sometimes God will leave you to yourself, sometimes you will be vexed by your neighbor, and, what is harder than all, you will often be weary of yourself, and there is no remedy or solace by which you can be delivered or relieved.

You will have to bear your trouble as long as God decrees. For He wishes you to learn to suffer trial without consolation, to yield humbly to His will, and to become humbler by means of tribulations."

"What a book!" said Godefroid to himself, as he turned over the pages.

And he came upon these words:

"When you have come to feel all trouble sweet and pleasant for the love of Christ, then indeed you may say that all is well with you; you have made for yourself a heaven on earth."

Irritated by this simplicity, characteristic of strength, and enraged at being vanquished by this book, he shut it; but on the morocco cover he saw this motto, stamped in letters of gold:

"Seek only that which is eternal."

"And have they found it here?" he wondered.

He went out to purchase a handsome copy of the *Imitation of Christ*, remembering that Mme. de la Chanterie would want to read a chapter that evening. He went downstairs and into the street. For a minute or two he remained standing near the gate, undecided as to which way he would go, and wondering in what street, and at what bookseller's he might find the book he needed; and he then heard the heavy sound of the outer gate shutting.

Two men had just come out of the Hôtel de la Chanterie—for the reader, if he has understood the character of the old house, will have recognized it as an ancient family mansion. Manon, when she had called Godefroid to breakfast, had asked him how he had slept the first night at the Hôtel de la Chanterie, laughing as she spoke.

Godefroid followed the two men, with no idea of spying on them; and they, taking him for an indifferent passer-by, talked loud enough for him to hear them in those deserted streets. The men turned down the Rue Massillon, along by the side of Notre-Dame, and across the Cathedral Square.

“ Well, old man, you see how easy it is to get the coppers out of ’em! You must talk their lingo, that is all.”

“ But we owe the money.”

“ Who to? ”

“ To the lady——”

“ I should like to see myself sued for debt by that old image! I would——”

“ You would what?—You would pay her, I can tell you.”

“ You’re right there, for if I paid I could get more out of her afterwards than I got to-day.”

“ But wouldn’t it be better to take their advice and set up on the square? ”

“ Get out! ”

“ Since she said she could find someone to stand security? ”

“ But we should have to give up life——”

“ I am sick of ‘ life ’—it is not life to be always working in the vineyards——”

“ No; but didn’t the Abbé throw over old Marin the other day. He wouldn’t give him a thing.”

“ Ay, but old Marin wanted to play such a game as no one can win at that has not thousands at his back.”

At this moment the two men, who were dressed like working foremen, suddenly doubled, and retraced their steps to cross the bridge by the Hôtel-Dieu to the Place Maubert; Godefroid stood aside; but seeing that he was following them closely, the men exchanged looks of suspicion, and they were evidently vexed at having spoken out so plainly.

Godefroid was indeed all the more interested in the conversation because it reminded him of the scene between the Abbé de Vèze and the workman on the evening of his first call.

“ What goes on at Mme. de la Chanteric’s? ” he asked himself once more.

As he thought over this question, he made his way to a bookshop in the Rue Saint-Jacques, and returned home with a very handsome copy of the best edition of *The Imitation* that has been published in France.

As he walked slowly homewards to be punctual to the dinner-hour, he went over in his mind all his experience of

the morning, and found his soul singularly refreshed by it. He was possessed indeed by intense curiosity, but that curiosity paled before an indefinable wish; he was attracted by Mme. de la Chanterie, he felt a vehement longing to attach himself to her, to devote himself for her, to please her and deserve her praise; in short, he was aware of a Platonic passion; he felt that there was unfathomed greatness in that soul, and that he must learn to know it thoroughly. He was eager to discover the secrets of the life of these pure-minded Catholics. And then, in this little congregation of the Faithful, practical religion was so intimately allied with all that is most majestic in the Frenchwoman, that he resolved to do his utmost to be admitted to the fold. Such a vein of feeling would have been sudden indeed in a man of busy life; but Godefroid, as we have seen, was in the position of a shipwrecked wretch who clings to the most fragile bough, hoping that it may bear him, and his soul was plowed land, ready to receive any seed.

He found the four gentlemen in the drawing-room, and he presented the book to Mme. de la Chanterie, saying:

“I would not leave you without a copy for this evening.”

“God grant,” said she, looking at the splendid volume, “that this may be your last fit of elegance!”

And seeing that the four men had reduced the smallest details of their raiment to what was strictly decent and useful, noticing too that this principle was rigorously carried out in every detail of the house, Godefroid understood the purpose of this reproof so delicately expressed.

“Madame,” said he, “the men you benefited this morning are monsters. Without intending it, I overheard what they were saying as they went away, and it was full of the blackest ingratitude.”

“The two iron-workers from the Rue Mouffetard,” said Mme. de la Chanterie to M. Nicolas, “that is your con-

“The fish gets off the hook more than once before it is caught,” said M. Alain, laughing.

Mme. de la Chanterie’s entire indifference on hearing of the immediate ingratitude of the men to whom she had cer-

tainly given money amazed Godefroid, who became thoughtful.

M. Alain and the old lawyer made the dinner a cheerful meal; but the soldier was constantly grave, sad, and cold; his countenance bore the ineradicable stamp of a bitter sorrow, a perennial grief. Mme. de la Chanterie was equally attentive to all. Godefroid felt that he was watched by these men, whose prudence was not less than their piety, and vanity led him to imitate their reserve, so he measured his words carefully.

This first day, indeed, was far more lively than those which came after. Godefroid, finding himself shut out from all serious matters, was obliged, during the early morning and the evening when he was alone in his rooms, to read *The Imitation of Christ*, and he finally studied it as we must study a book when we are imprisoned with that one alone. We then feel to the book as we should towards a woman with whom we dwelt in solitude; we must either love or hate the woman; and in the same way we must enter into the spirit of the author or not read ten lines of his work.

Now, it is impossible not to be held captive by *The Imitation*, which is to dogma what action is to thought. The Catholic spirit thrills through it, moves and works in it, struggles in it hand to hand with the life of man. That book is a trusty friend. It speaks to every passion, to every difficulty, even to the most worldly; it answers every objection, it is more eloquent than any preacher, for it speaks with your own voice—a voice that rises from your own heart and that you hear with your soul. In short, it is the Gospel interpreted and adapted to all times and seasons, controlling every situation. It is strange indeed that the Church should not have canonized Gerson, for the Holy Spirit certainly guided his pen.

To Godefroid the Hôtel de la Chanterie contained a woman as well as a book; every day he was more and more bewitched by her. In her he found flowers buried under the snow of many winters; he had glimpses of such a sacred friendship as religion sanctions, as the angels smile on—as bound those five, in fact—and against which no evil could prevail. There



is a sentiment superior to all others, an affection of soul for soul which resembles those rare blossoms that grow on *the loftiest peaks of the earth*. One or two examples are shown us in a century; lovers are sometimes united by it; and it accounts for certain faithful attachments which would be *inexplicable by the ordinary laws of the world*. In such an attachment there are no disappointments, no differences, no vanities, no rivalries, no contrasts even, so intimately fused are two spiritual natures.

It was this immense and infinite feeling, the outcome of Catholic charity, that Godefroid was beginning to dream of. At times he could not believe in the spectacle before his eyes, and he sought to find reasons for the sublime friendships between these five persons, wondering to find true Catholics, Christians of the most primitive type, in Paris, and in 1836.

A week after entering the house, Godefroid had seen such a number of people come and go, he had overheard fragments of conversation in which such serious matters were discussed, that he understood that the existence of this council of five was full of prodigious activity. He noticed that not one of them slept more than six hours at most. Each of them had, as it were, lived through a first day before they met at the second breakfast. Strangers brought in or carried away sums of money, sometimes rather considerable. Mongenod's cashier came very often, always early in the morning, so that his work in the bank should not be interfered with by this business, which was independent of the regular affairs of the House.

One evening M. Mongenod himself called, and Godefroid observed a touch of filial familiarity in his tone to M. Alain, mingled with the deep respect he showed to him, as to Mme. de la Chanterie's three other boarders.

That evening the banker only asked Godefroid the most ordinary questions: Was he comfortable? Did he mean to stay? and so forth, advising him to persevere in his determination.

"There is but one thing wanting to make me happy," said Godefroid.

“And what is that?” said the banker.

“An occupation.”

“An occupation!” cried the *Abbé de Vèze*. “*Then you have changed your mind; you came to our retreat in search of rest.*”

“But without prayer, which gives life to the cloister; without meditation, which peoples the desert, rest becomes a disease,” said M. Joseph sententiously.

“Learn bookkeeping,” said Mongenod, smiling. “In the course of a few months you may be of great use to my friends here——”

“Oh, with the greatest pleasure,” exclaimed Godefroid.

The next day was Sunday. *Mme. de la Chanterie* desired her boarder to give her his arm and to escort her to High Mass.

“This,” she said, “is the only thing I desire to force upon you. Many a time during the week I have been moved to speak to you of your salvation; but I do not think the time has come. You would have plenty to occupy you if you shared our beliefs, for you would also share our labors.”

At Mass, Godefroid observed the fervency of *MM. Nicolas, Joseph, and Alain*. Having, during these few days, convinced himself of the superior intellect of these three men, their perspicacity, extensive learning, and lofty spirit, he concluded that if they could thus abase themselves, the Catholic religion must contain mysteries which had hitherto escaped his ken.

“And, after all,” said he to himself, “it is the religion of Bossuet, of Pascal, of Racine, of Saint-Louis, of Louis XVI., of Raphael, Michael Angelo, and Ximenes, of Bayard and du Guesclin—and how should such a poor creature as I compare myself with these great brains, statesmen, poets, warriors?——”

Were it not that a great lesson is to be derived from these trivial details, it would be foolish in such times as these to dwell on them; but they are indispensable to the interest of this narrative, which the readers of our day will, indeed, find it hard to believe, beginning as it does by an almost ridiculous incident—the influence exerted by a woman of

sixty over a young man who had tried everything and found it wanting.

“You did not pray,” said Mme. de la Chanterie to Godefroid as they came out of Notre-Dame. “Not for anyone, not even for the peace of your mother’s soul!”

Godefroid reddened, but said nothing.

“Do me the pleasure,” Mme. de la Chanterie went on, “to go to your room, and not to come down to the drawing-room for an hour. And for the love of me, meditate on a chapter of the *Imitation*—the first of the Third Book, entitled ‘ON CHRIST SPEAKING WITHIN THE FAITHFUL SOUL.’”

Godefroid bowed coolly, and went upstairs.

“The Devil take ’em all!” he exclaimed, now really in a rage. “What the deuce do they want of me here? What game are they playing? Pshaw! Every woman, even the veriest bigot, is full of tricks, and if madame” (the name the boarders gave their hostess) “does not want me downstairs, it is because they are plotting something against me.”

With this notion in his head, he tried to look out of his own window into that of the drawing-room, but the plan of the building did not allow of it. Then he went down one flight, but hastily ran up again; for it struck him that in a house where the principal inhabitants held such strict principles, an act of espionage would lead to his immediate dismissal. Now, to lose the esteem of those five persons seemed to him as serious a matter as public dishonor.

He waited about three-quarters of an hour, resolved to take Mme. de la Chanterie by surprise, and to go down a little before the time she had named. He intended to excuse himself by a fib, saying that his watch was in fault, and twenty minutes too fast. He went down cautiously, without a sound, and on reaching the drawing-room door opened it suddenly.

He saw a man, still young but already famous, a poet whom he had often met in society, Victor de Vernisset, kneeling on one knee before Mme. de la Chanterie and kissing the hem of her gown. The sky falling in splinters as if it were made of crystal, as the ancients believed, would have amazed Godefroid less than this sight. The most shocking ideas

besieged his brain, and the reaction was even more terrible when, just as he was about to utter the first sarcasm that rose to his lips, he saw M. Alain standing in a corner, counting thousand-franc notes.

In an instant Vernisset had started to his feet. Good M. Alain stared in astonishment. Mme. de la Chanterie flashed a look that petrified Godefroid, for the doubtful expression in the new boarder's face had not escaped her.

"Monsieur is one of us," she said to the young author, introducing Godefroid.

"You are a happy man, my dear fellow," said Vernisset. "You are saved!—But, madame," he went on, turning to Mme. de la Chanterie, "if all Paris could have seen me, I should be delighted. Nothing can ever pay my debt to you. I am your slave forever! I am yours, body and soul. Command in whatever you will, I will obey; my gratitude knows no bounds. I owe you my life—it is yours."

"Come, come," said the worthy Alain, "do not be rash. Only work; and, above all, never attack religion in your writings.—And remember you are in debt."

He handed him an envelope bulging with the bank-notes he had counted out. Victor de Vernisset's eyes filled with tears. He respectfully kissed Mme. de la Chanterie's hand, and went away after shaking hands with M. Alain and with Godefroid.

"You did not obey madame," said the good man solemnly; and his face had an expression of sadness, such as Godefroid had not yet seen on it. "That is a capital crime. If it occurs again, we must part.—It would be very hard on you, after having seemed worthy of our confidence——"

"My dear Alain," said Mme. de la Chanterie, "be so good, for my sake, as to say nothing of this act of folly. We must not expect too much of a newcomer who has had no great sorrows, who has no religion—who has nothing, in fact, but great curiosity concerning every vocation, and who as yet does not believe in us."

"Forgive me, madame," replied Godefroid. "From this moment I will be worthy of you; I submit to every test you may think necessary before initiating me into the secret of

your labors; and if M. l'Abbé will undertake to enlighten me, I give myself up to him, soul and reason."

These words made Mme. de la Chanterie so happy that a faint flush rose to her cheeks, she clasped Godefroid's hand and pressed it, saying, with strange emotion, "That is well!"

In the evening, after dinner, Godefroid saw a Vicar-General of the Diocese of Paris, who came to call, two canons, two retired mayors of Paris, and a lady who devoted herself to the poor. There was no gambling; the conversation was general, and cheerful without being futile.

A visitor who greatly surprised Godefroid was the Comtesse de Cinq-Cygne, one of the loftiest stars of the aristocratic spheres, whose drawing-room was quite inaccessible to the citizen class and to parvenus. The mere presence of this great lady in Mme. de la Chanterie's room was sufficiently amazing; but the way in which the two women met and treated each other was to Godefroid quite inexplicable, for it bore witness to an intimacy and constant intercourse which proved the high merit of Mme. de la Chanterie. Mme. de Cinq-Cygne was gracious and friendly to her friend's four friends, and very respectful to M. Nicolas.

As may be seen, social vanity still had a hold on Godefroid, who, hitherto undecided, now determined to yield, with or without conviction, to everything Mme. de la Chanterie and her friends might require of him, to succeed in being affiliated by them to their Order, or initiated into their secrets, promising himself that until then he would not definitely commit himself.

On the following day, he went to the bookkeeper recommended by Mme. de la Chanterie, agreed with him as to the hours when they were to work together, and so disposed of all his time; for the Abbé de Vèze was to catechize him in the morning, he spent two hours of every day learning bookkeeping, and between breakfast and dinner he worked at the exercises and imaginary commercial correspondence set him by his master.

Some few days thus passed, during which Godefroid learned the charm of a life of which every hour has its employment. The recurrence of the same duties at fixed

hours, and perfect regularity, sufficiently account for many happy lives, and prove how deeply the founders of religious orders had meditated on human nature. Godefroid, who had made up his mind to learn of the Abbé de Vèze, had already begun to feel qualms as to his future life, and to discover that he was ignorant of the importance of religious matters.

Finally, day by day, Mme. de la Chanterie, with whom he always sat for about an hour after the second breakfast, revealed some fresh treasures of her nature; he had never conceived of goodness so complete, so all-embracing. A woman as old as Mme. de la Chanterie seemed to be has none of the triviality of a young woman; she is a friend who may offer you every feminine dainty, who displays all the grace and refinement with which Nature inspires woman to please man, but who no longer asks for a return; she may be execrable or exquisite, for all her demands on life are buried beneath the skin—or are dead; and Mme. de la Chanterie was exquisite. She seemed never to have been young; her looks never spoke of the past. Far from allaying his curiosity, Godefroid's increased intimacy with this beautiful character, and the discoveries he made day by day, increased his desire to know something of the previous history of the woman he now saw as a saint. Had she ever loved? Had she been married? Had she been a mother? There was nothing in her suggestive of the old maid; she had all the elegance of a woman of birth; and her strong health, and the extraordinary charm of her conversation, seemed to reveal a heavenly life, a sort of ignorance of the world. Excepting the worthy and cheerful Alain, all these persons had known suffering; but M. Nicolas himself seemed to give the palm of martyrdom to Mme. de la Chanterie; nevertheless, the memory of her sorrows was so entirely suppressed by Catholic resignation, and her secret occupations, that she seemed to have been always happy.

“You are the life of your friends,” said Godefroid to her one day. “You are the bond that unites them; you are the housekeeper, so to speak, of a great work; and as we are all mortal, I cannot but wonder what would become of your association without you.”

“Yes, that is what they fear; but Providence—to whom we owe our bookkeeper,” said she with a smile—“will doubtless provide. However, I shall think it over——”

“And will your bookkeeper soon find himself at work for your business?” asked Godefroid, laughing.

“That must depend on him,” she said with a smile. “If he is sincerely religious, truly pious, has not the smallest conceit, does not trouble his head about the wealth of the establishment, and endeavors to rise superior to petty social considerations by soaring on the wings God has bestowed on us——”

“Which are they?”

“Simplicity and purity,” replied Mme. de la Chanterie. “Your ignorance proves that you neglect reading your book,” she added, laughing at the innocent trap she had laid to discover whether Godefroid read the *Imitation of Christ*. “Soak your mind in Saint Paul’s chapter on Charity. It is not you who will be devoted to us, but we to you,” she said with a lofty look, “and it will be your part to keep account of the greatest riches ever possessed by any sovereign; you will have the same enjoyment of them as we have; and let me tell you, if you remember the *Thousand and One Nights*, that the treasures are as nothing in comparison with ours. Indeed, for a year past, we have not known what to do; it was too much for us. We needed a bookkeeper.”

As she spoke she studied Godefroid’s face; he knew not what to think of this strange confidence; but the scene between Mme. de la Chanterie and the elder Mme. Mongenod had often recurred to him, and he hesitated between doubt and belief.

“Yes, you would be very fortunate!” said she.

Godefroid was so consumed by curiosity, that from that instant he resolved to undermine the reserve of the four friends, and to ask them about themselves. Now, of all Mme. de la Chanterie’s boarders, the one who most attracted Godefroid, and who was the most fitted in all ways to invite the sympathy of people of every class, was the kindly, cheerful, and unaffected M. Alain. By what means had Provi-

dence guided this simple-minded being to this secular convent, where the votaries lived under rules as strictly observed, in perfect freedom and in the midst of Paris, as though they were under the sternest of Priors? What drama, what catastrophe, had made him turn aside from his road through the world to take a path so hard to tread across the troubles of a great city?

One evening Godefroid determined to call on his neighbor, with the purpose of satisfying a curiosity which was more excited by the incredibility of any catastrophe in such a man's life than it could have been by the expectation of listening to some terrible episode in the life of a pirate.

On hearing the reply, "Come in," in answer to two modest raps on the door, Godefroid turned the key, which was always in the lock, and found M. Alain seated in his chimney corner, reading a chapter of the *Imitation* before going to bed by the light of two wax candles with green shades, such as whist-players use. The worthy man had on his trousers and a dressing-gown of thick gray flannel; his feet were raised to the level of the fire on a hassock worked in cross-stitch—as his slippers were also—by Mme. de la Chanterie. His striking old head, with its circlet of white hair, almost resembling that of an old monk, stood out, a lighter spot against the brown background of an immense armchair.

M. Alain quietly laid his book, with its worn corners, on the little table with twisted legs, while with the other hand he waved the young man to the second armchair, removing his glasses, which nipped the end of his nose.

"Are you unwell, that you have come down so late?" he asked.

"Dear M. Alain," Godefroid frankly replied, "I am a prey to curiosity which a single word from you will prove to be very innocent or very indiscreet, and that is enough to show you in what spirit I shall venture to ask a question."

"Oh, ho! and what is it?" said he, with an almost mischievous sparkle in his eye.

"What was the circumstance that induced you to lead the life you lead here? For to embrace such a doctrine of



utter renunciation, a man must be disgusted with the world, must have been deeply wounded, or have wounded others."

"Why, why, my boy?" replied the old man, and his full lips parted in one of those smiles which made his ruddy mouth one of the most affectionate that the genius of a painter could conceive of. "May he not feel touched to the deepest pity by the sight of the woes to be seen within the walls of Paris? Did St. Vincent de Paul need the goad of remorse or of wounded vanity to devote himself to foundling babes?"

"Such an answer shuts my mouth all the more effectually, because if ever a soul was a match for that of the Christian hero, it is yours," replied Godefroid.

In spite of the thickening given by age to his yellow and wrinkled face, the old man colored crimson, for he might seem to have invited the eulogium, though his well-known modesty forbade the idea that he had thought of it. Godefroid knew full well that Mme. de la Chanteric's guests had no taste for this kind of incense. And yet good M. Alain's guilelessness was more distressed by this scruple than a young maid would have been by some evil suggestion.

"Though I am far from resembling him in spirit," replied M. Alain, "I certainly am like him in appearance——"

Godefroid was about to speak, but was checked by a gesture from the old man, whose nose had in fact the bulbous appearance of the Saint's, and whose face, much like that of some old vinedresser, was the very duplicate of the coarse, common countenance of the founder of the Foundling Hospital. "As to that, you are right," he went on; "my vocation to this work was the result of an impulse of repentance in consequence of an adventure——"

"An adventure! You!" said Godefroid softly, who at this word forgot what he had been about to say.

"Oh, the story I have to tell will seem to you a mere trifle, a foolish business; but before the tribunal of conscience it looked different. If, after having heard me, you persist in your wish to join in our labors, you will understand that feelings are in inverse proportion to our strength of soul, and that a matter which would not trouble a Freethinker may greatly weigh on a feeble Christian."

After this prelude, the neophyte's curiosity had risen to an indescribable pitch. What could be the crime of this good soul whom Mme. de la Chanterie had nicknamed her "Paschal Lamb"? It was as exciting as a book entitled *The Crimes of a Sheep*. Sheep, perhaps, are ferocious to the grass and flowers. If we listen to one of the mildest republicans of our day, the best creatures living are cruel to something. But good M. Alain! He who, like Sterne's Uncle Toby, would not crush a fly when it had stung him twenty times! This beautiful soul—tortured by repentance!

These reflections filled up the pause made by the old man after he had said, "Listen, then!" and during which he pushed forward the footstool under Godefroid's feet that they might share it.

"I was a little over thirty," said he; "it was in the year '98, so far as I recollect, a time when young men of thirty had the experience of men of sixty. One morning, a little before my breakfast hour at nine o'clock, my old house-keeper announced one of the few friends left to me by the storms of the Revolution. So my first words were to ask him to breakfast. My friend, whose name was Mongenod, a young fellow of eight-and-twenty, accepted, but with some hesitancy. I had not seen him since 1793——"

"Mongenod!" cried Godefroid, "the——?"

"If you want to know the end of the story before the beginning," the old man put in with a smile, "how am I to tell it?"

Godefroid settled himself with an air that promised perfect silence.

"When Mongenod had seated himself," the good man went on, "I observed that his shoes were dreadfully worn. His spotted stockings had been so often washed, that it was hard to recognize that they were of silk. His knee-breeches were of nankeen-colored kerseymere, so faded as to tell of long wear, emphasized by stains in many places, and their buckles, instead of steel, seemed to me to be of common iron; his shoe-buckles were to match. His flowered white waistcoat, yellow with long use, his shirt with its frayed pleated frill,

revealed extreme though decent poverty. Finally, his coat—a *houppelande*, as we called such a coat, with a single collar like a very short cape—was enough to assure me that my friend had fallen on bad times. This coat of nut-brown cloth, extremely threadbare, and brushed with excessive care, had a rim of grease or powder round the collar, and buttons off which the plating had worn to the copper. In fact, the whole outfit was so wretched, that I could not bear to look at it. His crush hat—a semicircular structure of beaver, which it was then customary to carry under one arm instead of wearing it on the head—must have survived many changes of government.

“However, my friend had no doubt just spent a few sous to have his head dressed by a barber, for he was freshly shaved, and his hair, fastened into a club with a comb, was luxuriously powdered, and smelt of pomatum. I could see two chains hanging parallel out of his fobs, chains of tarnished steel, but no sign of the watches within. It was winter, but Mongenod had no cloak, for some large drops of melting snow fallen from the eaves under which he had walked for shelter lay on the collar of his coat. When he drew off his rabbit-fur gloves and I saw his right hand, I could perceive the traces of some kind of hard labor.

“Now, his father, an advocate in the higher court, had left him some little fortune—five or six thousand francs a year. I at once understood that Mongenod had come to borrow of me. I had in a certain hiding-place two hundred louis in gold, an enormous sum at that time, when it represented I know not how many hundred thousand francs in paper assignats.

“Mongenod and I had been schoolfellows at the Collège des Grassins, and we had been thrown together again in the same lawyer’s office—an honest man, the worthy Bordin. When two men have spent their boyhood together and shared the follies of their youth, there is an almost sacred bond of sympathy between them; the man’s voice and look stir certain chords in your heart, which never vibrate but to the particular memories that he can rouse. Even if you have some cause to complain of such a comrade, that does not wipe out every

claim of friendship, and between us there had not been the slightest quarrel.

“In 1787, when his father died, Mongenod had been a richer man than I; and though I had never borrowed from him, I had owed to him certain pleasures which my father’s strictness would have prohibited. But for my friend’s generosity, I should not have seen the first performance of the *Marriage of Figaro*.

“Mongenod was at that time what was called a finished gentleman, a man about town and attentive to ‘the ladies.’ I constantly reproved him for his too great facility in making friends and obliging them; his purse was constantly open, he lived largely, he would have stood surety for you after meeting you twice.—Dear me, dear me! You have started me on reminiscences of my youth!” cried M. Alain, with a bright smile at Godefroid as he paused.

“You are not vexed with me?” said Godefroid.

“No, no. And you may judge by the minute details I am giving you how large a place the event filled in my life.—Mongenod, with a good heart and plenty of courage, something of a Voltairean, was inclined to play the fine gentleman,” M. Alain went on. “His education at the Grassins, where noblemen’s sons were to be met, and his adventures of gallantry, had given him the polish of men of rank, in those days termed aristocrats. So you may imagine how great was my consternation at observing in Mongenod such signs of poverty as degraded him in my eyes from the elegant young Mongenod I had known in 1787, when my eyes wandered from his face to examine his clothes.

“However, at that time of general public penury, some wily folks assumed an appearance of wretchedness; and as others no doubt had ample reasons for assuming a disguise, I hoped for some explanation, and invited it.

“‘What a plight you are in, my dear Mongenod!’ said I, accepting a pinch of snuff, which he offered me from a box of imitation gold.

“‘Sad enough!’ replied he. ‘I have but one friend left—and you are that friend. I have done everything in the world to avoid coming to this point, but I have come to ask you

to lend me a hundred louis. It is a large sum,' said he, noticing my surprise, 'but if you lend me no more than fifty, I shall never be able to repay you; whereas, if I should fail in what I am undertaking, I shall still have fifty louis to try some other road to fortune, and I do not yet know what inspiration despair may bring me.'

" 'Then, have you nothing?' said I.

" 'I have,' said he, hiding a tear, 'just five sous left out of my last piece of silver. To call on you, I had my boots cleaned and my head dressed. I have the clothes on my back.—But,' he went on, with a desperate shrug, 'I owe my landlady a thousand crowns in assignats, and the man at the cookshop yesterday refused to trust me. So I have nothing—nothing.'

" 'And what do you propose to do?' said I, insistently meddling with his private affairs.

" 'To enlist if you refuse to help me.'

" 'You, a soldier! You—Mongenod!'

" 'I will get killed, or I will be General Mongenod.'

" 'Well,' said I, really moved, 'eat your breakfast in peace; I have a hundred louis—'

" 'And here,' said the good man, looking slyly at Godefroid, 'I thought it necessary to tell a little lender's fib.'

" 'But it is all I have in the world,' I said to Mongenod. 'I was waiting till the Funds had gone down to the lowest mark to invest my money, but I will place it in your hands, and you may regard me as your partner; I leave it to your conscience to repay me the whole in due time and place. An honest man's conscience,' I added, 'is the best possible security.'

" Mongenod looked hard at me as I spoke, seeming to stamp my words on his heart. He held out his right hand, I gave him my left, and we clasped hands—I, greatly moved, and he, without restraining two tears which now trickled down his thin cheeks. The sight of those tears wrung my heart; and I was still more unnerved when, forgetful of everything in such a moment, Mongenod, to wipe them away, pulled out a ragged bandanna.

" 'Wait here,' said I, running off to my hidden store, my

heart as full as though I had heard a woman confess that she loved me. I returned with two rolls of fifty louis each.

“‘Here—count them.’

“But he would not count them; he looked about him for a writing-table in order, as he said, to give me a receipt. I positively refused to have one.

“‘If I were to die,’ said I, ‘my heirs would worry you. This is a matter between you and me.’

“Finding me so true a friend, Mongenod presently lost the haggard and anxious expression he had worn on entering, and became cheerful. My housekeeper gave us oysters, white wine, an omelette, kidneys *à la brochette*, and the remains of a pâté de Chartres sent me by my mother; a little dessert, coffee, and West Indian liqueur. Mongenod, who had fasted for two days, was the better for it. We sat till three in the afternoon talking over our life before the Revolution, the best friends in the world.

“Mongenod told me how he had lost his fortune. In the first instance, the reduction of the dividends on the Hôtel de Ville had deprived him of two-thirds of his income, for his father had invested the larger part of his fortune in municipal securities; then, after selling his house in the Rue de Savoie, he had been obliged to accept payment in assignats; he had then taken it into his head to run a newspaper, *La Sentinelle*, and at the end of six months was forced to fly. At the present moment all his hopes hung on the success of a comic opera called *Les Péruviens*. This last confession made me quake. Mongenod, as an author, having spent his all on the *Sentinelle*, and living no doubt at the theater, mixed up with Feydeau’s singers, with musicians, and the motley world behind the curtain, did not seem to me like the same, like my Mongenod. I shuddered a little. But how could I get back my hundred louis? I could see the two rolls, one in each fob like the barrel of a pistol.

“Mongenod went away. When I found myself alone, no longer face to face with his bitter and cruel poverty, I began to reflect in spite of myself; I was sober again. ‘Mongenod,’ thought I to myself, ‘has no doubt sunk as low as possible; he has acted a little farce for my benefit!’ His glee when

he saw me calmly hand over so vast a sum now struck me as that of a stage rascal cheating some G ronte. I ended where I ought to have begun, resolved to make some inquiries about my friend Mongenod, who had written his address on the back of a playing-card.

“A feeling of delicacy kept me from going to see him the next day; he might have ascribed my haste to distrust of him. Two days after I found my whole time absorbed by various business; and it was not, in fact, till a fortnight had elapsed that, seeing no more of Mongenod, I made my way from La Croix-Rouge, where I then lived, to the Rue des Moineaux, where he lived.

“Mongenod was lodged in a furnished house of the meanest description; but his landlady was a very decent woman, the widow of a farmer-general who had died on the scaffold. She, completely ruined, had started with a few louis the precarious business of letting rooms. Since then she has rented seven houses in the neighborhood of Saint-Roch and made a fortune.

“‘Citizen Mongenod is out,’ said she. ‘But there is someone at home.’

“This excited my curiosity. I climbed to the fifth floor. A charming young woman opened the door! Oh! A person of exquisite beauty, who, looking at me doubtfully, stood behind the partly opened door.

“‘I am Alain,’ said I, ‘Mongenod’s friend.’

“At once the door was wide open, and I went into a horrible garret, which the young woman had, however, kept scrupulously clean. She pushed forward a chair to the hearth piled with ashes, but with no fire, where in one corner I saw a common earthenware fire-pan. The cold was icy.

“‘I am glad, indeed, monsieur,’ said she, taking my hands and pressing them warmly, ‘to be able to express my gratitude, for you are our deliverer. But for you I might never have seen Mongenod again. He would have—God knows—have thrown himself into the river. He was desperate when he set out to see you.’

“As I looked at the young lady I was greatly astonished to see that she had a handkerchief bound about her head;

and below its folds at the back and on the temples there was a sort of black shadow. Studying it attentively, I discovered that her head was shaved.

“‘Are you ill?’ I asked, noticing this strange fact.

“She glanced at herself in a wretched, dirty pier-glass, and colored, while tears rose to her eyes.

“‘Yes, monsieur,’ said she hastily; ‘I had dreadful headaches; I was obliged to cut off my hair, which fell to my heels——’

“‘Have I the honor of speaking to Mme. Mongenod?’ I asked.

“‘Yes, monsieur,’ said she, with a really heavenly expression.

“I made my bow to the poor little lady, and went downstairs, intending to make the landlady give me some information, but she was gone out. It struck me that the young woman had sold her hair to buy bread. I went off at once to a wood merchant, and sent in half a load of wood, begging the carter and the sawyers to give the lady a receipted bill to the name of Mongenod.

“And there ends the phase of my life which I long called my foolish stage,” said M. Alain, clasping his hands and uplifting them a little with a repentant gesture.

Godefroid could not help smiling; but he was, as will be seen, quite wrong to smile.

“Two days later,” the good man went on, “I met one of those men who are neither friends nor strangers—persons whom we see from time to time, in short, an acquaintance, as we say—a M. Barillaud, who, as we happened to speak of *Les Péruviens*, proclaimed himself a friend of the author’s.

“‘Thou know’st Citizen Mongenod?’ said I—for at that time we were still required by law to address each other with the familiar *tu*,” said he to Godefroid in a parenthesis.

“The citizen looked at me,” said M. Alain, resuming the thread of his story, and exclaimed:

“‘I only wish I had never known him, for he has borrowed money of me many a time, and is so much my friend as not to return it. He is a queer fellow! the best old boy alive, but full of illusions?—An imagination of fire.—I will do him



justice; he does not mean to be dishonest, only as he is always deceiving himself about a thousand things, he is led into conduct that is not altogether straight.'

" 'How much does he owe you?'

" 'Oh, a few hundred crowns. He is a regular sieve. No one knows where his money goes, for he perhaps does not know that himself.'

" 'Has he any expedients?'

" 'Oh, dear, yes!' said Barillaud, laughing. 'At this moment he is talking of buying up land among the wild men in the United States.'

" 'I went away with this drop of vitriol shed by slander on my heart to turn all my best feelings sour. I went to call on my old master in the law, who was always my counselor. As soon as I had told him the secret of my loan to Mongenod, and the way in which I had acted:

" 'What,' cried he, 'is it a clerk of mine that can behave so? You should have put him off a day and have come to me. Then you would have known that I had shown Mongenod the door. He has already borrowed from me in the course of a year more than a hundred crowns in silver, an enormous sum! And only three days before he went to breakfast with you, he met me in the street and described his misery in such desperate language that I gave him two louis.'

" 'Well, if I am the dupe of a clever actor, so much the worse for him rather than for me!' said I. 'But what is to be done?'

" 'At any rate, you must try to get some acknowledgment out of him, for a debtor, however worthless, may recover himself, and then you may be paid.'

" Thereupon Bordin took out of one of the drawers of his table a wrapper on which was written the name of Mongenod; he showed me three acknowledgments, each for a hundred livres.

" 'The first time he comes,' said he, 'I shall make him add on the interest and the two louis I gave him, and whatever money he asks for; and then he must sign an acceptance and a statement, saying that interest accrues from the first

day of the loan. That, at any rate, will be all in order; I shall have some means of getting paid.'

"'Well, then,' said I to Bordin, 'cannot you put me as much in order as yourself? For you are an honest man, and what you do will be right.'

"'In this way I remain the master of the field,' replied the lawyer. 'When a man behaves as you have done, he is at the mercy of another who may simply make game of him. Now, I don't choose to be laughed at. A retired Public Prosecutor of the Châtelet! Bless me, what next!—Every man to whom you lend money as recklessly as you lent it to Mongenod, sooner or later thinks of it as his own. It is no longer your money; it is his money; you are his creditor, a very inconvenient person. The debtor then tries to be quit of you by a compromise with his conscience, and seventy-five out of every hundred will try to avoid meeting you again to the end of his days—'

"'Then you look for no more than twenty-five per cent. of honest men?'

"'Did I say so?' said he, with an ironical smile. 'That is a large allowance!'

"A fortnight later I had a note from Bordin desiring me to call on him to fetch my receipt. I went.

"'I tried to snatch back fifty louis for you,' said he.—I had told him all about my conversation with Mongenod.—'But the birds are flown. You may say good-by to your yellow-boys! Your canary-birds have fled to warmer climes. We have a very cunning rascal to deal with. Did he not assure me that his wife and his father-in-law had set out for the United States with sixty of your louis to buy land, and that he intended to join them there? To make a fortune, as he said, so as to return to pay his debts, of which he handed me the schedule drawn out in due form; for he begged me to keep myself informed as to what became of his creditors. Here is the schedule,' added Bordin, showing me a wrapper on which was noted the total. 'Seventeen thousand francs in hard cash! With such a sum as that a house might be bought worth two thousand crowns a year.'

“After replacing the packet, he gave me a bill of exchange for a sum equivalent to a hundred louis in gold, stated in assignats, with a letter in which Mongenod acknowledged the debt with interest on a hundred louis d’or.

“‘So now I am all safe?’ said I to Bordin.

“‘He will not deny the debt,’ replied my old master. ‘But where there are no effects, the King—that is to say, the Directoire—has no rights.’

“I thereupon left him. Believing myself to have been robbed by a trick that evades the law, I withdrew my esteem from Mongenod, and was very philosophically resigned.

“It is not without a reason that I dwell on these commonplace and apparently unimportant details,” the good man went on, looking at Godefroid. “I am trying to show you how I was led to act as most men act, blindly, and in contempt of certain rules which even savages do not disregard in the most trifling matters. Many men would justify themselves by the authority of Bordin; but at this day I feel that I had no excuse. As soon as we are led to condemn one of our fellows, and to refuse him our esteem for life, we ought to rely solely on our own judgment—and even then!—Ought we to set up our own feelings as a tribunal before which to arraign our neighbor? Where would the law be? What should be our standard of merit? Would not a weakness in me be strength in my neighbor? So many men, so many different circumstances would there be for each deed; for there are no two identical sets of conditions in human existence. Society alone has the right of reproving its members; for I do not grant it that of punishing them. A mere reprimand is sufficient, and brings with it cruelty enough.

“So as I listened to the haphazard opinions of a Parisian, admiring my former teacher’s acumen, I condemned Mongenod,” the good man went on, after drawing from his narrative this noble moral.

“The performance of *Les Péruviens* was announced. I expected to have a ticket for the first night; I conceived myself in some way his superior. As a result of his indebtedness, my friend seemed to me a vassal who owed me many things besides the interest on my money. We are all alike!

“Not only did Mongenod send me no ticket, but I saw him at a distance coming along the dark passage under the Théâtre Feydeau, well dressed—nay, almost elegant; he affected not to see me; then, when he had passed me, and I thought I would run after him, he had vanished down some cross passage. This irritated me extremely; and my annoyance, far from being transient, increased as time went on.

“This was why. A few days after this incident I wrote to Mongenod much in these words:

“‘MY FRIEND,—You should not regard me as indifferent to anything that can happen to you, whether for good or ill. Does the *Péruziens* come up to your expectations? You forgot me—you had every right to do so—at the first performance, when I should have applauded you heartily! However, I hope, all the same, that you may find Peru in the piece, for I can invest my capital, and I count on you when the bill falls due

Your friend,

“‘ALAIN.’

“After waiting for a fortnight and receiving no answer, I called in the Rue des Moineaux. The landlady told me that the little wife had, in fact, set out with her father, at the date named by Mongenod to Bordin. Mongenod always left his garret early in the morning, and did not come in till late at night. Another fortnight passed; I wrote another letter in these terms:

“‘MY DEAR MONGENOD,—I see nothing of you; you do not answer my notes; I cannot at all understand your conduct; and if I were to behave so to you, what would you think of me?’

“I did not sign myself ‘Your friend.’ I wrote ‘With best regards.’

“A month slipped by; no news of Mongenod. The *Péruziens* had not obtained so great a success as Mongenod had counted on. I paid for a seat at the twentieth performance, and I found a small house. And yet Mme. Scio was very

fine in it. I was told in the foyer that there would be a few more performances of the piece. I went seven times to call on Mongenod; he was never at home, and each time I left my name with the landlady. So then I wrote again:

“ ‘ Monsieur, if you do not wish to lose my respect after forfeiting my friendship, you will henceforth treat me as a stranger—that is to say, with civility—and you will tell me whether you are prepared to pay me when your note of hand falls due. I shall act in accordance with your reply.

“ ‘ Yours faithfully,

“ ‘ ALAIN.’

“ No reply. It was now 1799; a year had elapsed all but two months.

“ When the bill fell due I went to see Bordin. Bordin took the note of hand, and then took legal proceedings. The reverses experienced by the French armies had had such a depressing effect on the Funds that five francs a year could be purchased for seven francs. Thus, for a hundred louis in gold, I might have had nearly fifteen hundred francs a year. Every morning, as I read the paper over my cup of coffee, I would exclaim:

“ ‘ Confound that Mongenod! But for him, I could have a thousand crowns a year!’

“ Mongenod had become my chronic aversion; I thundered at him even when I was walking in the street.

“ ‘ Bordin is after him!’ said I to myself. ‘ He will catch him—and serve him right!’

“ My rage expended itself in imprecations; I cursed the man; I believed him capable of any crime. Yes! M. Barillaud was quite right in what he said.

“ Well, one morning my debtor walked in, no more disconcerted than if he had not owed me a centime; and I, when I saw him, I felt all the shame that should have been his. I was like a criminal caught in the act; I was quite ill at ease. The 18th of Brumaire was past, everything was going on well, and Bonaparte had set out to fight the battle of Marengo.

“ ‘It is unlucky, monsieur,’ said I, ‘that I should owe your visit solely to the intervention of a bailiff.’

“ Mongenod took a chair and sat down.

“ ‘I have come to tell you,’ said he, with the familiar *tu*, ‘that I cannot possibly pay you.’

“ ‘You have lost me the chance of investing my money before the arrival of the First Consul—at that time I could have made a little fortune——’

“ ‘I know it, Alain,’ said he; ‘I know it. But what will you get by prosecuting me for debt and plunging me deeper by loading me with costs? I have letters from my father-in-law and my wife; they have bought some land and sent me the bill for the necessaries of the house; I have had to spend all I had in those purchases. Now, and nobody can hinder me—I mean to sail by a Dutch vessel from Flushing, whither I have sent all my small possessions. Bonaparte has won the battle of Marengo, peace will be signed, and I can join my family without fear—for my dear little wife was expecting a baby.’

“ ‘And so you have sacrificed me to your own interests?’ cried I.

“ ‘Yes,’ said he; ‘I thought you my friend.’

“ At that moment I felt small as compared to Mongenod, so sublime did that speech seem to me, so simple and grand.

“ ‘Did I not tell you so,’ he went on; ‘was I not absolutely frank with you—here, on this very spot? I came to you, Alain, as being the only man who would appreciate me.—Fifty louis would be wasted, I told you; but if you lent me a hundred, I would repay them. I fixed no date, for how can I tell when my long struggle with poverty will come to an end? You were my last friend. All my friends, even our old master Bordin, despised me simply because I wanted to borrow money of them. Oh! Alain, you can never know the dreadful feelings that grip the heart of an honest man fighting misfortune when he goes into another man’s house to ask for help!—and all that follows!—— I hope you may never know them; they are worse than the anguish of death!’

“ You have written me certain letters which, from me under similar circumstances, would have struck you as odious. You expected things of me that were out of my power. You are the only man to whom I attempt to justify myself. In spite of your severity, and though you ceased to be my friend and became only my creditor from the day when Bordin asked me for an acknowledgment of your loan, thus discrediting the handsome agreement we ourselves had come to here, shaking hands on it with tears in our eyes!—Well, I have forgotten everything but that morning’s work.

“ It is in memory of that hour that I have come now to say, “ You know not what misfortune is; do not rail at it!—I have not had an hour, not a second, to write to you in reply! Perhaps you would have liked me to come and pay you compliments?—You might as well expect a hare, harassed by dogs and hunters, to rest in a clearing and crop the grass!—I sent you no ticket!—No; I had not enough to satisfy those on whom my fate depended. A novice in the theatrical world, I was the prey of musicians, actors, singers, the orchestra. To enable me to join my family over seas, and buy what they need, I sold the *Péruziens* to the manager with two other pieces I had in my desk. I am setting out for Holland without a sou. I shall eat dry bread on my journey till I reach Flushing. I have paid my passage, and have nothing more. But for my landlady’s compassion, and her trust in me, I should have had to walk to Flushing with a knapsack on my back. And so, in spite of your doubting me, as, but for you, I could not have sent my father-in-law and my wife to New York, I am entirely grateful.”—No. *Monsieur* Alain, I will not forget that the hundred louis you lent me might at this time be yielding you an income of fifteen hundred francs.’

“ I would fain believe you, Mongenod,’ said I, almost convinced by the tone in which he poured out this explanation.

“ At any rate, you no longer address me as monsieur,’ said he eagerly, and looking at me with emotion. ‘ God knows I should quit France with less regret if I could leave one man behind me in whose eyes I was neither half a rogue,

nor a spendthrift, nor a victim to illusions. A man who can love truly, Alain, is never wholly despicable.'

"At these words I held out my hand; he took it and pressed it.

"'Heaven protect you!' said I.

"'We are still friends?' he asked.

"'Yes,' I replied; 'it shall never be said that my school-fellow, the friend of my youth, set out for America under the ban of my anger!—'

"Mongenod embraced me with tears in his eyes, and rushed off to the door.

"When I met Bordin a few days afterwards, I told him the story of our interview, and he replied with a smile:

"'I only hope it was not all part of the performance!— He did not ask you for anything?'

"'No,' said I.

"'He came to me, too, and I was almost as weak as you; but he asked me for something to get food on the way. However, he who lives will see!'

"This remark of Bordin's made me fear lest I had yielded stupidly to an impulse of feeling.

"'Still, he too, the Public Prosecutor, did the same,' said I to myself.

"It is unnecessary, I think, to explain to you how I lost all my fortune excepting the other hundred louis, which I invested in Government securities when prices had risen so high that I had barely five hundred francs a year to live upon by the time I was four-and-thirty. By Bordin's interest I obtained an appointment at eight hundred francs a year in a branch of the Mont de Piété, Rue des Petits Augustins. I lived in the humblest way; I lodged on the third floor of a house in the Rue des Marais in an apartment consisting of two rooms and a closet for two hundred and fifty francs. I went out to dinner in a boarding-house where there was an open table, and for this I paid forty francs a month. In the evening I did some copying. Ugly as I am, and very poor, I had to give up all ideas of marriage——"

As he heard this verdict pronounced on himself by poor Alain in a tone of angelic resignation, Godefroid gave a



little start, which proved better than any speech could have done the similarity of their fate; and the good man, in reply to this eloquent gesture, seemed to pause for his hearer to speak.

“And no one ever loved you?” asked Godefroid.

“No one,” he replied, “excepting madame, who returns to all of us alike our love for her—a love I might almost call divine.—You must have seen it: we live in her life, as she lives in ours; we have but one soul among us; and though our enjoyments are not physical, they are none the less very intense, for we live only through the heart.—How can we help it, my dear boy? By the time women are capable of appreciating moral qualities they have done with externals, and are growing old.—I have suffered much, I can tell you!”

“Ah! that is the stage I am at——” said Godefroid.

“Under the Empire,” the old man went on, bowing his head, “dividends were not very punctually paid: we had to be prepared for deferred payment. From 1802 to 1814 not a week passed that I did not ascribe my difficulties to Mongenod: ‘But for Mongenod,’ I used to think, ‘I might have been married. But for him I should not be obliged to live in privation.’—But sometimes, too, I would say to myself, ‘Perhaps the poor man is pursued by ill-luck out there!’

“In 1806, one day when I found my life a heavy burden to bear, I wrote him a long letter that I dispatched via Holland. I had no answer; and for three years I waited, founding hopes on that reply which were constantly deceived. At last I resigned myself to my fate. To my five hundred francs of dividends, and twelve hundred francs of salary from the Mont de Piété, for it was raised, I added five hundred for my work as bookkeeper to a perfumer, M. Birotteau. Thus I not only made both ends meet, but I saved eight hundred francs a year. By the beginning of 1814, I was able to invest nine thousand francs of savings in the Funds, buying at forty; thus I had secured sixteen hundred francs a year for my old age. So then, with fifteen hundred francs a year from the Mont de Piété, six hundred as a bookkeeper,

and sixteen hundred in dividends, I had an income of three thousand seven hundred francs. I took rooms in the Rue de Seine, and I lived in rather more comfort.

“My position brought me into contact with many of the very poor. For twelve years I have known, better than anyone, what the misery of the world is; once or twice I have helped some poor creatures; and I felt the keenest pleasure when, out of ten that I had assisted, one or two families were rescued from their difficulties.

“It struck me that true beneficence did not consist in throwing money to the sufferers. Being charitable, in the common phrase, often appeared to me to be a sort of premium on crime. I set to work to study this question. I was by this time fifty years old, and my life was drawing to a close.

“‘What good am I in the world?’ I asked myself. ‘To whom can I leave my money? When I shall have furnished my rooms handsomely, have secured a good cook, have made my life suitably comfortable, what am I to do with my time?’

“For eleven years of revolutions and fifteen years of poverty had wasted the happiest part of my life, had consumed it in labors that were fruitless, or devoted solely to the preservation of my person! At such an age no one can make an obscure and penurious youth the starting-point to reach a brilliant position; but everyone may make himself useful. I understood, in short, that a certain supervision and much good advice would increase tenfold the value of money given, for the poor always need guidance; to enable them to profit by the work they do for others, it is not the intelligence of the speculator that is wanting.

“A few happy results that I achieved made me extremely proud. I discerned both an aim and an occupation, to say nothing of the exquisite pleasure to be derived from playing the part of Providence, even on the smallest scale.”

“And you now play it on a large scale?” said Godefroid eagerly.

“Oh, you want to know too much!” said the old man. “Nay, nay.—Would you believe it,” he went on after a pause,

“the smallness of the means at my command constantly brought my thoughts back to Mongenod?”

“‘But for Mongenod I could have done so much more,’ I used to reflect. ‘If a dishonest man had not robbed me of fifteen hundred francs a year,’ I often thought, ‘I could have helped this or that family.’”

“Thus excusing my inability by such an accusation, those to whom I gave nothing but words to comfort them joined me in cursing Mongenod. These maledictions were balm to my heart.

“One morning, in January 1816, my housekeeper announced—whom do you think?—Mongenod.—M. Mongenod. And who should walk in but the pretty wife, now six-and-thirty, accompanied by three children; then came Mongenod, younger than when he left, for wealth and happiness shed a glory on those they favor. He had gone away lean, pale, yellow, and haggard; he had come back fat and well-liking, as flourishing as a prebendary, and well dressed. He threw himself into my arms, and finding himself coldly welcomed, his first words were:

“‘Could I come any sooner, my friend? The seas have only been open since 1815, and it took me eighteen months to realize my property, close my accounts, and call in my assets. I have succeeded, my friend! When I received your letter in 1806, I set out in a Dutch vessel to bring you home a little fortune; but the union of Holland to the French Empire led to our being taken by the English, who transported me to the coast of Jamaica, whence by good luck I escaped.

“‘On my return to New York I was a victim to bankruptcy; for Charlotte, during my absence, had not known how to be on her guard against swindlers. So I was compelled to begin again to accumulate a fortune.

“‘However, here we are at last. From the way the children look at you, you may suppose that they have often heard of the benefactor of the family.’”

“‘Yes, indeed,’ said pretty Mme. Mongenod, ‘we never passed a day without speaking of you. Your share has been allowed for in every transaction. We have longed for the

happiness we enjoy at this moment of offering you your fortune, though we have never for a moment imagined that this "rector's tithe" can pay our debt of gratitude.'

"And as she spoke, Mme. Mongenod offered me the beautiful casket you see there, which contained a hundred and fifty thousand-franc notes.

"You have suffered much, my dear Alain, I know; but we could imagine all your sufferings, and we racked our brains to find means of sending you money; but without success,' Mongenod went on. 'You tell me you could not marry; but here is our eldest daughter. She has been brought up in the idea that she should be your wife, and she has five hundred thousand francs——'

"God forbid that I should wreck her happiness!' cried I, as I beheld a girl as lovely as her mother had been at her age; and I drew her to me, and kissed her forehead.

"Do not be afraid, my pretty child,' said I. 'A man of fifty and a girl of seventeen—and so ugly an old fellow as I!—Never!'

"Monsieur,' said she, 'my father's benefactor can never seem ugly in my eyes.'

This speech, made with spontaneous candor, showed me that all Mongenod had told me was true. I offered him my hand, and we fell into each other's arms once more.

"My friend,' said I, 'I have often abused you, cursed you——'

"You had every right, Alain,' replied he, reddening. 'You were in poverty through my fault——'

"I took Mongenod's papers out of a box and restored them to him, after canceling his note of hand.

"Now you will all breakfast with me,' said I to the family party.

"On condition of your dining with my wife as soon as we are settled,' said Mongenod, 'for we arrived only yesterday. We are going to buy a house, and I am about to open a bank in Paris for North American business to leave to that youngster,' he said, pointing to his eldest son, a lad of fifteen.

"We spent the afternoon together, and in the evening

we all went to the theater, for Mongenod and his party were dying to see a play. Next day I invested in the Funds, and had then an income of about fifteen thousand francs in all. This released me from bookkeeping in the evening, and allowed me to give up my appointment, to the great satisfaction of all my subordinates.

“My friend died in 1827, after founding the banking house of Mongenod & Co., which made immense profits on the first loans issued at the time of the Restoration. His daughter, to whom he subsequently gave about a million of francs, married the Vicomte de Fontaine. The son whom you know is not yet married; he lives with his mother and his younger brother. We find them ready with all the money we may need.

“Frédéric—for his father, in America, had named him after me—Frédéric Mongenod, at seven-and-thirty, is one of the most skillful and respected bankers in Paris.

“Not very long since Mme. Mongenod confessed to me that she had sold her hair for two crowns of six livres to be able to buy some bread. She gives twenty-four loads of wood every year, which I distribute among the poor, in return for the half-load I once sent her.”

“Then this accounts for your connection with the house of Mongenod,” said Godefroid. “And your fortune——”

The old man still looked at Godefroid with the same expression of mild irony.

“Pray go on,” said Godefroid, seeing by M. Alain’s manner that he had more to say.

“This conclusion, my dear Godefroid, made the deepest impression on me. Though the man who had suffered so much, though my friend had forgiven me my injustice, I could not forgive myself.”

“Oh!” said Godefroid.

“I determined to devote all my surplus income, about ten thousand francs a year, to acts of rational beneficence,” M. Alain calmly went on. “At about that time I met an Examining Judge of the department of the Seine named Popinot, whose death we mourned three years ago, and who for fifteen years practiced the most enlightened charity in the Saint-

Marcel quarter. He, in concert with the venerable Vicar of Notre-Dame and with madame, planned the work in which we are all engaged, and which, since 1823, has secretly effected some good results.

“This work has found a soul in Mme. de la Chanterie; she is really the very spirit of the undertaking. The Vicar has succeeded in making us more religious than we were at first, demonstrating the necessity for being virtuous ourselves if we desire to inspire virtue—for preaching, in fact, by example. And the further we progress in that path, the happier we are among ourselves. Thus it was my repentance for having misprized the heart of my boyhood’s friend which led me to the idea of devoting to the poor, through myself, the fortune he brought home to me, which I accepted without demurring to the vast sum repaid to me for so small a loan; the application of it made it right.”

This narrative, devoid of all emphasis, and told with touching simplicity of tone, gesture, and expression, would have been enough to make Godefroid resolve on joining in this noble and saintly work, if he had not already intended it.

“You know little of the world,” said Godefroid, “if you had such scruples over a thing which would never have weighed on any other conscience.”

“I know only the wretched,” replied the good man. “I have no wish to know a world where men misjudge each other with so little compunction.—Now, it is nearly midnight, and I have to meditate on my chapter of the *Imitation*.—Good-night.”

Godefroid took the kind old man’s hand and pressed it with an impulse of genuine admiration.

“Can you tell me Mme. de la Chanterie’s history?” asked Godefroid.

“It would be impossible without her permission, for it is connected with one of the most terrible incidents of Imperial politics. I first knew madame through my friend Bordin; he knew all the secrets of that beautiful life; and it was he who led me, so to speak, to this house.”

“At any rate, then,” said Godefroid, “I thank you for having told me your life; it contains a lesson for me.”

“Do you discern its moral?”

“Nay, tell it me,” said Godefroid; “for I might see it differently to you——”

“Well, then,” said the good man, “pleasure is but an accident in the life of the Christian; it is not his aim and end—and we learn this too late.”

“What then happens when we are converted?” asked Godefroid.

“Look there!” said Alain, and he pointed to an inscription in letters of gold on a black ground, which the newcomer had not seen before, as this was the first time he had ever been into his companion’s rooms. He turned round and read the words, “TRANSIRE BENEFACIENDO.”

“That, my son, is the meaning we then find in life. That is our motto. If you become one of us, that constitutes your brevet. We read that text and take it as our counsel at every hour of the day, when we rise, when we go to bed, while we dress. Oh! if you could but know what infinite happiness is to be found in carrying out that device!”

“In what way?” said Godefroid, hoping for some explanations.

“In the first place, we are as rich as Baron de Nucingen.—But the *Imitation* prohibits our calling anything our own; we are but stewards; and if we feel a single impulse of pride, we are not worthy to be stewards. That would not be *transire benefaciendo*; it would be enjoyment in thought. If you say to yourself, with a certain dilatation of the nostrils, ‘I am playing the part of Providence’—as you might have thought this morning, if you had been in my place, giving new life to a whole family, you are a Sardanapalus at once—and wicked! Not one of our members ever thinks of himself when doing good. You must cast off all vanity, all pride, all self-consciousness; and it is difficult, I can tell you.”

Godefroid bid M. Alain good-night, and went to his own rooms, much moved by this story; but his curiosity was excited rather than satisfied, for the chief figure in the picture of this domestic scene was Mme. de la Chanterie. This woman’s history was to him so supremely interesting that he

made the knowledge of it the first aim of his stay in the house. He understood that the purpose for which these five persons were associated was some great charitable endeavor; but he thought much less of that than of his heroine.

The neophyte spent some days in studying these choice spirits, amid whom he found himself, with greater attention than he had hitherto devoted to them; and he became the subject of a moral phenomenon which modern philanthropists have overlooked, from ignorance, perhaps. The sphere in which he lived had a direct influence on Godefroid. The law which governs physical nature in respect to the influence of atmospheric conditions on the lives of the beings subject to them, also governs moral nature; whence it is to be inferred that the collecting in masses of the criminal class is one of the greatest social crimes, while absolute isolation is an experiment of which the success is very doubtful. Condemned felons ought, therefore, to be placed in religious institutions and surrounded with prodigies of goodness instead of being left among marvels of evil. The Church may be looked to for perfect devotion to this cause; for if She is ready to send missionaries to barbarous or savage nations, how gladly would She charge her religious Orders with the mission of rescuing and instructing the savages of civilized life! Every criminal is an atheist—often without knowing it.

Godefroid found his five companions endowed with the qualities they demanded of him; they were all free from pride or vanity, all truly humble and pious, devoid of the pretentiousness which constitutes *devoutness* in the invidious sense of the word. These virtues were contagious; he was filled with the desire to imitate these obscure heroes, and he ended by studying with ardor the book he had at first scorned. Within a fortnight he had reduced life to its simplest expression, to what it really is when regarded from the lofty point of view to which the religious spirit leads us. Finally, his curiosity, at first purely worldly and roused by many vulgar motives, became rarefied. He did not cease to be curious; it would have been difficult to lose all interest in the life of Mme. de la Chanterie; but, without intending



it, he showed a reserve which was fully appreciated by these men, in whom the Holy Spirit had developed wonderful depths of mind, as happens, indeed, with all who devote themselves to a religious life. The concentration of the moral powers, by whatever means or system, increases their scope tenfold.

“Our young friend is not yet a convert,” said the good Abbé de Vèze; “but he wishes to be.”

An unforeseen circumstance led to the revelation of Mme. de la Chanterie’s history, so that his intense interest in it was soon satisfied.

Paris was just then engrossed by the investigation of the case of the Barrière Saint-Jacques, one of those hideous trials which mark the history of our assizes. The trial derived its interest from the criminals themselves, whose daring and general superiority to ordinary culprits, with their cynical contempt for justice, really appalled the public. It was a noteworthy fact that no newspaper ever entered the Hôtel de la Chanterie, and Godefroid only heard of the rejection of the appeal to the Supreme Court from his master in bookkeeping; the trial had taken place long before he came to Mme. de la Chanterie.

“Do you ever meet with such men as these atrocious scoundrels?” he asked his new friends. “Or, when you do, how do you deal with them?”

“In the first place,” said M. Nicolas, “there is no such thing as an atrocious scoundrel; there are mad creatures fit only for the asylum at Charenton; but with the exception of those rare pathological exceptions, what we find are simply men without religion, or who argue falsely, and the task of the charitable is to set souls upright and bring the erring into the right way.”

“And to the apostle all things are possible,” said the Abbé de Vèze; “he has God on his side.”

“If you were sent to these two condemned men,” said Godefroid, “you could do nothing with them.”

“There would not be time,” observed M. Alain.

“As a rule,” said M. Nicolas, “the souls handed over to be dealt with by the Church are in utter impenitence, and the time is too short for miracles to be wrought. The men

of whom you are speaking, if they had fallen into our hands, would have been men of mark; their energy is immense; but when once they have committed murder, it is impossible to do anything for them; human justice has taken possession of them——”

“Then you are averse to capital punishment?” said Godefroid.

M. Nicolas hastily rose and left the room.

“Never speak of capital punishment in the presence of M. Nicolas. He once recognized in a criminal, whose execution it was his duty to superintend, a natural child of his own——”

“And who was innocent!” added M. Joseph.

At this moment Mme. de la Chanteric, who had not been in the room, came in.

“Still, you must allow,” Godefroid went on, addressing M. Joseph, “that society cannot exist without capital punishment, and that these men, whose heads——”

Godefroid felt his mouth suddenly closed by a strong hand, and the Abbé de Vèze led away Mme. de la Chanteric, pale and half dead.

“What have you done?” cried M. Joseph. “Take him away, Alain,” he said, removing the hand with which he had gagged Godefroid; and he followed the Abbé de Vèze into madame’s room.

“Come with me,” said Alain to Godefroid. “You have compelled us to tell you the secrets of madame’s life.”

In a few minutes the two friends were together in M. Alain’s room, as they had been when the old man had told Godefroid his own history.

“Well,” said Godefroid, whose face sufficiently showed his despair at having been the cause of what might be called a catastrophe in this pious household.

“I am waiting till Manon shall have come to say how she is going on,” replied the good man, as he heard the woman’s step on the stairs.

“Monsieur, madame is better. M. l’Abbé managed to deceive her as to what had been said,” and Manon shot a wrathful glance at Godefroid.

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed the unhappy young man, his eyes filling with tears.

“Come, sit down,” said M. Alain, seating himself. Then he paused to collect his thoughts.

“I do not know,” said the kind old man, “that I have the talent necessary to give a worthy narrative of a life so cruelly tried. You must forgive me if you find the words of so poor a speaker inadequate to the magnitude of the events and catastrophes. You must remember that it is a very long time since I was at school, and that I date from a time when thoughts were held of more importance than effect—from a prosaic age, when we knew not how to speak of things except by their names.”

Godefroid bowed with an expression of assent, in which his worthy old friend could discern his sincere admiration, and which plainly said, “I am listening.”

“As you have just perceived, my young friend, it would be impossible for you to remain one of us without learning some of the particulars of that saintly woman’s life. There are certain ideas, allusions, words, which are absolutely prohibited in this house, since they inevitably reopen wounds, of which the anguish might kill madame if it were once or twice revived——”

“Good Heavens!” exclaimed Godefroid, “what have I done?”

“But for M. Joseph, who happily interrupted you just as you were about to speak of the awful instrument of death, you would have annihilated the poor lady.—It is time that you should be told all; for you will be one of us, of that we are all convinced.

“Mme. de la Chanterie,” he went on after a short pause, “is descended from one of the first families of Lower Normandy. Her maiden name was Mlle. Barbe-Philiberte de Champignelles—of a younger branch of that house; and she was intended to take the veil unless a marriage could be arranged for her with the usual renunciations of property that were commonly required in poor families of high rank. A certain *Sieur de la Chanterie*, whose family had sunk into utter obscurity, though dating from the time of Philippe-

Auguste's crusade, was anxious to recover the rank to which so ancient a name gave him a claim in the province of Normandy. But he had fallen quite from his high estate, for he had made money—some three hundred thousand francs—by supplying the commissariat for the army at the time of the war with Hanover. His son, trusting too much to this wealth, which provincial rumor magnified, was living in Paris in a way calculated to cause the father of a family some uneasiness.

“Mlle. de Champignelles' great merits became famous throughout the district of Le Bessin; and the old man, whose little feof of La Chanterie lay between Caen and Saint-Lô, heard some expressions of regret that so accomplished a young lady, and one so capable of making a husband happy, should end her days in a convent. On his uttering a wish to seek her out, some hope was given him that he might obtain the hand of Mlle. Philiberte for his son if he were content to renounce any marriage portion. He went to Bayeux, contrived to have two or three meetings with the Champignelles family, and was fascinated by the young lady's noble qualities.

“At the age of sixteen, Mlle. de Champignelles gave promise of what she would become. She cynced well-founded piety, sound good sense, inflexible rectitude—one of those natures which will never veer in its affections even if they are the outcome of duty. The old nobleman, enriched by his somewhat illicit gains, discerned in this charming girl a wife who might keep his son in order by the authority of virtue and the ascendancy of a character that was firm but not rigid; for, as you have seen, no one can be gentler than Mme. de la Chanterie. Then, no one could be more confiding; even in the decline of life she has the candor of innocence; in her youth she would not believe in evil; such distrust as you may have seen in her she owes to her misfortunes. The old man pledged himself to the Champignelles to give them a discharge in full for the portion legitimately due to Mlle. Philiberte on the signing of the marriage contract; in return, the Champignelles, who were connected with the greatest families, promised to have the feof of La Chanterie

created a barony, and they kept their word. The bridegroom's aunt, Mme. de Boisfrelon, the wife of the Councilor to the Parlement who died in your rooms, promised to leave her fortune to her nephew.

“When all these arrangements were completed between the two families, the father sent for his son. This young man, at the time of his marriage, was five-and-twenty, and already a Master of Appeals; he had indulged in numerous follies with the young gentlemen of the time, living in their style; and the old army contractor had several times paid his debts to a considerable amount. The poor father, foreseeing further dissipation on his son's part, was only too glad to settle a part of his fortune on his daughter-in-law; but he was so cautious as to entail the estate of La Chanterie on the heirs male of the marriage——

“A precaution,” added M. Alain in a parenthesis, “which the Revolution made useless.

“As handsome as an angel, and wonderfully skilled in all athletic exercises, the young Master of Appeals had immense powers of charming,” he went on. “So Mlle. de Champignelles, as you may easily imagine, fell very much in love with her husband. The old man, made very happy by this promising beginning, and hoping that his son was a reformed character, sent the young couple to Paris. This was early in 1788. For nearly a year they were perfectly happy. Mme. de la Chanterie was the object of all the little cares, the most delicate attentions that a devoted lover can lavish on the one and only woman he loves. Brief as it was, the honeymoon beamed brightly on the heart of the noble and unfortunate lady.

“As you know, in those days mothers all nursed their infants themselves. Mme. de la Chanterie had a daughter. This time, when a wife ought to be the object of double devotion on her husband's part, was, on the contrary, the beginning of dreadful woes. The Master of Appeals was obliged to sell everything he could part with to pay old debts which he had not confessed, and more recent gambling debts. Then, suddenly the National Assembly dissolved the Supreme Council and the Parlement, and abolished all the great law

appointments that had been so dearly purchased. Thus the young couple, with the addition of their child, had no income to rely on but the revenues from the entailed estate, and from the portion settled on Mme. de la Chanterie. Twenty months after her marriage this charming woman, at the age of seventeen and a half, found herself reduced to maintaining herself and the child at her breast by the work of her hands, in an obscure street where she hid herself. She then found herself absolutely deserted by her husband, who fell step by step into the society of the very lowest kind. Never did she blame her husband, never did she put him in the least in the wrong. She has told us that all through the worst time she prayed to God for her dear Henri.

“The rascal’s name was Henri,” remarked M. Alain. “It is a name that must never be spoken here, any more than that of Henriette.—To proceed:

“Mme. de la Chanterie, who never quitted her little room in the Rue de la Corderie-du-Temple unless to buy food or fetch her work, kept her head above water, thanks partly to an allowance of a hundred francs a month from her father-in-law, who was touched by so much virtue. However, the poor young wife, foreseeing that this support might fail her, had taken up the laborious work of a staymaker, and worked for a famous dressmaker. In fact, ere long the old contractor died, and his estate was consumed by his son under favor of the overthrow of the monarchy.

“The erewhile Master of Appeals, now one of the most savage of all the presidents of the revolutionary tribunal, had become a terror in Normandy, and could indulge all his passions. Then, imprisoned in his turn on the fall of Robespierre, the hatred of the department condemned him to inevitable death. Mme. de la Chanterie received a farewell letter announcing her husband’s fate. She immediately placed her little girl in the care of a neighbor, and went off to the town where the wretch was in confinement, taking with her a few louis, which constituted her whole fortune. This money enabled her to get into the prison. She succeeded in helping her husband to escape, dressing him in clothes of her own, under circumstances very similar to those which not long after

avored Mme. de la Valette. She was condemned to death, but the authorities were ashamed to carry out this act of revenge, and she was secretly released with the connivance of the Court over which her husband had formerly presided. She got back to Paris on foot without any money, sleeping at farmhouses, and often fed by charity."

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Godefroid.

"Wait," said the old man, "that was nothing.—In the course of eight years the poor woman saw her husband three times. The first time the gentleman spent twenty-four hours in his wife's humble lodgings, and went away with all her money, after heaping on her every mark of affection, and leading her to believe in his complete reformation.—'For I could not resist,' said she, 'a man for whom I prayed every day, and who filled my thoughts exclusively.'—The second time M. de la Chanterie came in a dying state, and from some horrible disease! She nursed him, and saved his life; then she tried to reclaim him to decent feeling and a seemly life. After promising everything this angel begged of him, the revolutionary relapsed into hideous debaucheries, and in fact only escaped prosecution by the authorities by taking refuge in his wife's rooms, where he died unmolested.

"Still, all this was nothing!" said Alain, seeing dismay in Godefroid's face.

"No one in the world he had mixed with had known that the man was married. Two years after the miserable creature's death, she heard that there was a second Mme. de la Chanterie, widowed and ruined like herself. The bigamous villain had found two such angels incapable of betraying him.—Towards 1803," the old man went on after a pause, "M. de Boisfrelon, Mme. de la Chanterie's uncle, having his name removed from the list of proscribed persons, came back to Paris and paid over to her two hundred thousand francs that the old commissariat contractor had placed in his keeping, with instructions to hold it in trust for his niece. He persuaded the widow to return to Normandy, where she completed her daughter's education, and, by the advice of the old lawyer, purchased back one of the family estates under very favorable conditions."

“ Ah! ” sighed Godefroid.

“ Oh! all this was nothing! ” said M. Alain. “ We have not yet come to the hurricane.—To proceed. In 1807, after four years of peace, Mme. de la Chanterie saw her only daughter married to a gentleman whose piety, whose antecedents, and fortune seemed a guarantee from every point of view; a man who was reported to be the ‘ pet lamb ’ of the best society in the country-town where madame and her daughter spent every winter. Remark: this society consisted of seven or eight families belonging to the highest French nobility—the d’Esgrignons, the Troisvilles, the Casterans, the Nouâtres, and the like.

“ At the end of eighteen months this man deserted his wife and vanished in Paris, having changed his name. Mme. de la Chanterie could never discover the cause of this separation till the lightning flash showed it in the midst of the storm. Her daughter, whom she had brought up with the greatest care and the purest religious feelings, preserved absolute silence on the subject.

“ This lack of confidence was a great shock to Mme. de la Chanterie. Many times already she had detected in her daughter certain indications of the father’s adventurous spirit, strengthened by an almost manly determination of character. The husband had departed without let or hindrance, leaving his affairs in the utmost disorder. To this day Mme. de la Chanterie is amazed at this catastrophe, which no human power could remedy. All the persons she privately consulted had assured her before the marriage that the young man’s fortune was clear and unembarrassed, in land unencumbered by mortgages, when, at that very time, the estate had, for ten years, been loaded with debt far beyond its value. So everything was sold, and the poor young wife, reduced to her own little income, came back to live with her mother.

“ Mme. de la Chanterie subsequently learned that this man had been kept going by the most respectable persons in the district for their own benefit, for the wretched man owed them all more or less considerable sums of money. Indeed, ever since her arrival in the province, Mme. de la Chanterie had been regarded as a prey.



“ However, there were other reasons for this climax of disaster, which you will understand from a confidential communication addressed to the Emperor.

“ This man had long since succeeded in winning the good graces of the leading Royalists of the department by his devotion to the cause during the stormiest days of the Revolution. As one of Louis XVIII.’s most active emissaries, he had, since 1793, been mixed up in every conspiracy, always withdrawing at the right moment, and with so much dexterity as to give rise at last to suspicions of his honor. The King dismissed him from service, and he was excluded from all further scheming, so he retired to his estate, already deeply involved. All these antecedents, at that time scarcely known—for those who were initiated into the secrets of the Cabinet did not say much about so dangerous a colleague—made him an object almost of worship in a town devoted to the Bourbons, where the cruellest devices of the Chouans were regarded as honest warfare. The d’Esgrignons, the Castérans, the Chevalier de Valois, in short, the Aristocracy and the Church, received the Royalist with open arms, and took him to their bosom. This favor was supported by his creditors’ earnest desire to be paid.

“ This wretch, a match for the deceased la Chanteric, was able to keep up this part for three years; he affected the greatest piety, and subjugated his vices. During the first few months of his married life he had some little influence over his wife; he did his utmost to corrupt her by his doctrines, if atheism may be called a doctrine, and by the flippant tone in which he spoke of the most sacred things.

“ This backstairs diplomat had, on his return to the country, formed an intimacy with a young man, over head and ears in debt like himself, but attractive, in so far that he had as much courage and honesty as the other had shown hypocrisy and cowardice. This guest at his house—whose charm and character could not fail to impress a young woman, to say nothing of his adventurous career—was a tool in the husband’s hands which he used to support his infamous principles. The daughter never confessed to her mother the

gulf into which circumstances had thrown her—for human prudence is no word for the caution exercised by Mme. de la Chanterie when seeking a husband for her only child. And this last blow, in a life so devoted, so guileless, so religious as hers, tested as she had been by every kind of misfortune, filled Mme. de la Chanterie with a distrust of herself which isolated her from her daughter; all the more so because her daughter, in compensation for her ill-fortune, insisted on perfect liberty, overruled her mother, and was sometimes very rough with her.

“Thus wounded in every feeling, cheated alike in her devotion and her love for her husband—to whom she had sacrificed her happiness, her fortune, and her life, without a murmur; cheated in the exclusively religious training she had given her daughter; cheated by the world, even in the matter of that daughter’s marriage, and meeting with no justice from the heart in which she had implanted none but right feelings, she turned more resolutely to God, clinging to Him whose hand lay so heavy on her. She was almost a nun; she went to Mass every morning, carried out monastic discipline, and saved in everything to be able to help the poor.

“Has any woman ever known a more saintly or more severely tried life than this noble creature, so mild to the unfortunate, so brave in danger, and always so perfect a Christian?” said the worthy man, appealing to Godefroid. “You know madame, you know whether she is deficient in sense, judgment, and reflection. She has all these qualities in the highest degree. Well, and still all these misfortunes, which surely were enough to qualify any life as surpassing all others in adversity, were a trifle compared with what God had yet in store for this woman.—We will speak only of Mme. de la Chanterie’s daughter,” said M. Alain, going on with his narrative.

“At the age of eighteen, when she married, Mlle. de la Chanterie had an extremely delicate complexion, rather dark, with a brilliant color, a slender form, and charming features. An elegantly formed brow was crowned by the most beautiful black hair, that matched well with bright and lively hazel

eyes. A peculiar prettiness and a childlike countenance belied her real nature and masculine decisiveness. She had small hands and feet; in all her person there was something tiny and frail, which excluded any idea of strength and willfulness. Never having lived away from her mother, her mind was absolutely innocent, and her piety remarkable.

“This young lady, like Mme. de la Chanterie, was fanatically devoted to the Bourbons, and hated the Revolution; she regarded Napoleon’s empire as a plague inflicted on France by Providence, as a punishment for the crimes of 1793. Such a conformity of opinion between the lady and her son-in-law was, as it always must be in such cases, a conclusive reason in favor of the marriage, in which all the aristocracy of the province took the greatest interest.

“This wretched man’s friend had at the time of the rebellion in 1799 been the leader of a troop of Chouans. It would seem that the Baron—for Mme. de la Chanterie’s son-in-law was a baron—had no object in throwing his wife and his friend together but that of extracting money from them. Though deeply in debt, and without any means of living, the young adventurer lived in very good style, and was able, no doubt, to help the promoter of Royalist conspiracies.

“Here you will need a few words of explanation as to an association which made a great noise in its day,” said M. Alain, interrupting his narrative. “I mean that of the raiders known as the Chauffeurs. These brigands pervaded all the western provinces more or less; but their object was not so much pillage as a revival of the Royalist opposition. Advantage was taken of the very general resistance of the people to the law of conscription, which, as you know, was enforced with many abuses. Between Mortagne and Rennes, and even beyond, as far as to the Loire, nocturnal raids were frequent, commonly to the injury of those who held national lands. These bands of destroyers were the terror of the country. I am not exaggerating when I tell you that in some departments the arm of Justice was practically paralyzed. Those last thunders of civil war did not echo so far

as you might suppose, accustomed as we now are to the startling publicity given by the press to the most trivial acts of political and private life. The Censor allowed nothing to appear in print that bore on politics, unless it were accomplished fact, and even that was distorted. If you will take the trouble to look through old files of the *Moniteur* and other newspapers, even those issued in the western provinces, you will find not a word concerning the four or five great trials which brought sixty or eighty of these rebels to the scaffold. 'Brigands,' this was the name given under the Revolution to the Vendéens, the Chouans, and all who took up arms for the house of Bourbon; and it was still given in legal phrasology under the Empire to the Royalists who were victims to sporadic conspiracies. For to some vehement souls the Emperor and his Government were 'the Enemy,' and everything seemed good that was adverse to him.—I am explaining the position, not justifying the opinions, and I will now go on with my story.

"So now," he said, after a pause, such as must occur in a long story, "you must understand that these Royalists were ruined by the war of 1793, though consumed by frantic passions; and if you can conceive of some exceptional natures consumed also by such necessities as those of Mme. de la Chanterie's son-in-law and his friend the Chouan leader, you will see how it was that they determined to commit, for their private advantage, acts of robbery which their political opinions would justify, against the Imperial Government for the advantage of the Cause.

"The young leader set to work to fan the ashes of the Chouan faction, to be ready to act at an opportune moment. There was, soon after, a terrible crisis in the Emperor's affairs when he was shut up in the island of Lobau, and it seemed that he must inevitably succumb to a simultaneous attack by England and by Austria. The victory of Wagram made the internal rebellion all but abortive. This attempt to revive the fires of civil war in Brittany, La Vendée, and part of Normandy, was unfortunately coincident with the Baron's money difficulties; he had flattered himself that he could contrive a separate expedition, of which the profits

could be applied solely to redeem his property. But his wife and friend, with nobler feeling, refused to divert to private uses any sums that might be snatched at the sword's point from the State coffers; these were to be distributed to the rebel conscripts and Chouans, and to purchase weapons and ammunition to arm a general rising.

"At last, when, after heated discussions, the young Chouan, supported by the Baroness, positively refused to retain a hundred thousand francs in silver crowns which was to be seized from one of the Government Receivers' offices in the west to provide for the Royalist forces, the husband disappeared, to escape the execution on his person of several writs that were out against him. The creditors tried to extract payment from his wife, but the wretched man had dried up the spring of affection which prompts a woman to sacrifice herself for her husband.

"All this was kept from poor Mme. de la Chanterie, but it was a trifle in comparison with the plot that lay behind this merely preliminary explanation.

"It is too late this evening," said the good man, looking at the clock, "and there is too much still to tell, to allow of my going on with the rest of the story. My old friend Bordin, who was made famous as a Royalist by his share in the great Simeuse trial, and who pleaded in the case of the Chauffeurs of Mortagne, gave me when I came to live here two documents which, as he died not long after, I still have in my possession. You will there find the facts set forth much more concisely than I could give them. The details are so complicated that I should lose myself in trying to state them, and it would take me more than two hours, while in these papers you will find them summarized. Tomorrow morning I will tell you what remains to be told concerning Mme. de la Chanterie, for when you have read these documents you will be sufficiently informed for me to conclude my tale in a few words."

He placed some papers, yellow with years, in Godefroid's hands: after bidding his neighbor good-night, the young man retired to his room, and before he went to sleep read the two documents here reproduced:

## "BILL OF INDICTMENT.

*"Court of Criminal and Special Justice for the Department of the Orne.*

"The Public Prosecutor to the Imperial Court of Justice at Caen, appointed to carry out his functions to the Special Criminal Court sitting by the Imperial decree of September 1809, in the town of Alençon, sets forth to the Court the following facts, as proved by the preliminary proceedings, to wit:

"That a conspiracy of brigands, hatched for a long time with extraordinary secrecy, and connected with a scheme for a general rising in the western departments, has vented itself in several attempts on the lives and property of citizens, and more especially in the attack with robbery, under arms, on a vehicle conveying, on the — of May 18—, the Government moneys collected at Caen. This attack, recalling in its details the memories of the civil war now so happily at an end, showed deep-laid designs of a degree of villainy which cannot be excused by the vehemence of passion.

"From its inception to the end, the plot is extremely complicated, and the details numerous. The preliminary examinations lasted for more than a year, but the evidence forthcoming at every stage of the crime throws full light on the preparations made, on its execution, and results.

"The first idea of the plot was conceived of by one Charles-Amédée-Louis-Joseph Rifoël, calling himself the Chevalier du Vissard, born at Le Vissard, a hamlet of Saint-Mexme by Ernée, and formerly a leader of the rebels.

"This man, who was pardoned by His Majesty the Emperor at the time of the general peace and amnesty, and whose ingratitude to his sovereign has shown itself in fresh crimes, has already suffered the extreme penalty of the law as the punishment for his misdeeds; but it is necessary here to refer to some of his actions, as he had great influence over some of the accused now awaiting the verdict of justice, and he is concerned in every circumstance of the case.

"This dangerous agitator, who bore an alias, as is com-

mon with these rebels, and was known as 'Pierrot,' used to wander about the western provinces enlisting partisans for a fresh rebellion; but his safest lurking-place was the château of Saint-Savin, the home of a woman named Lechantre and *her daughter named Bryond, a house in the hamlet of Saint-Savin and in the district of Mortagne.* This spot is famous in the most horrible annals of the rebellion of 1799. It was there that a courier was murdered, and his chaise plundered by a band of brigands under the command of a woman, helped by the notorious Marche-à-Terre. Hence brigandage may be said to be endemic in this neighborhood.

"An intimacy for which we seek no name had existed for more than a year between the woman Bryond and the above-named Rifoël.

"It was close to this spot that, in the month of April 1808, an interview took place between Rifoël and one Boislaurier, a superior leader, known in the more serious risings in the west by the name of Auguste, and he it was who was the moving spirit of the rising now under the consideration of the Court.

"This obscure point, namely, the connection of these two leaders, is plainly proved by the evidence of numerous witnesses, and also stands as a demonstrated fact by the sentence of death carried out on Rifoël. From the time of that meeting, Boislaurier and Rifoël agreed to act in concert.

"They communicated to each other, and at first to no one else, their atrocious purpose, founded on His Royal and Imperial Majesty's absence, in command, at the time, of his forces in Spain; and then, or soon after, they must have plotted to capture the State moneys in transit, as the base for further operations.

"Some time later, one Dubut of Caen dispatched a messenger to the château of Saint-Savin, namely, one Hiley, known as Le Laboureur, long known as a robber of the diligences; he was charged with information as to trustworthy accomplices. And it was thus, by Hiley's intervention, that the plot secured the co-operation from the first of one Herboomez, called Général-Hardi, a pardoned rebel of the same stamp as Rifoël, and, like him, a traitor to the amnesty.

“Herbomez and Hiley recruited in the neighboring villages seven banditti, whose names must at once be set forth as follows:

“1. *Jean Cibot, called Pille-Miche, one of the boldest brigands of a troop got together by Montauran in the year VII., and one of the actors in the robbery and murder of the Mortagne courier.*

“2. *François Lisieux, known as Grand-Fils, a rebel conscript of the department of the Mayenne.*

“3. *Charles Grenier, or Fleur-de-Genet, a deserter from the 69th half-brigade.*

“4. *Gabriel Bruce, known as Gros-Jean, one of the fiercest Chouans of Fontaine’s division.*

“5. *Jacques Horeau, called Stuart, ex-lieutenant of that brigade, one of Tinténiac’s adherents, and well known by the share he took in the Quiberon expedition.*

“6. *Marie-Anne Cabot, called Lajeunesse, formerly huntsman to the Sieur Carol of Alençon.*

“7. *Louis Minard, a rebel conscript.*

“These, when enrolled, were quartered in three different hamlets in the houses of Binet, Mélin, and Laravinière, inn- or tavern-keepers, all devoted to Rifoël.

“The necessary weapons were at once provided by one Jean-François Léveillé, a notary, and the incorrigible abettor of the brigands, serving as a go-between for them with several leaders in hiding; and, in this town, by one Félix Courceuil, called *Le Confesseur*, formerly surgeon to the rebel army of La Vendée; both these men are natives of Alençon. Eleven muskets were concealed in a house belonging to Bryond in a suburb of Alençon; but this was done without his knowledge, for he was at that time living in the country on his estate between Alençon and Mortagne.

“When Bryond left his wife to go her own way in the fatal road she had set out on, these muskets, cautiously removed from the house, were carried by the woman Bryond in her own carriage to the château of Saint-Savin.

“It was then that the department of the Orne and adjacent districts were dismayed by acts of highway robbery that startled the authorities as much as the inhabitants of



those districts which had so long enjoyed quiet; and these raids prove that the atrocious foes of the Government and the Empire had been kept informed of the secret coalition of 1809 by means of communications from abroad.

“Léveillé the notary, the woman Bryond, Dubut of Caen, Herbomez of Mayenne, Boislaurier of Le Mans, and Rifoël were the ringleaders of the association, which was also joined by those criminals who have been already executed under the sentence passed on them with Rifoël, by those accused under this trial, and by several others who have escaped public vengeance by flight, or by the silence of their accomplices.

“It was Dubut who, as a resident near Caen, gave notice to Léveillé of the dispatch of the money. Dubut made several journeys between Caen and Mortagne, and Léveillé also was often on the roads. It may here be noted that, at the time when the arms were moved, Léveillé, who came to visit Bruce, Grenier, and Cibot at Mélin’s house, found them arranging the muskets in an inside shed, and helped them himself in doing so.

“A general meeting was arranged to take place at Mortagne at the Écu de France inn. All the accused were present in various disguises. It was on this occasion that Léveillé, the woman Bryond, Dubut, Herbomez, Boislaurier, and Hiley, the cleverest of the subordinate conspirators, of whom Cibot is the most daring, secured the co-operation of one Vauthier, called Vieux-Chêne, formerly a servant to the notorious Longuy, and now a stableman at the inn. Vauthier agreed to give the woman Bryond due notice of the passing of the chaise conveying the Government moneys, as it commonly stopped to bait at the inn.

“The opportunity ere long offered for assembling the brigand recruits who had been scattered about in various lodgings with great precaution, sometimes in one village, and sometimes in another, under the care of Courceuil and of Léveillé. The assembly was managed by the woman Bryond, who afforded the brigands a new hiding-place in the uninhabited parts of the château of Saint-Savin, at a few miles from Mortagne, where she had lived with her mother

since her husband's departure. The brigands established themselves there with Hiley at their head, and spent several days there. The woman Bryond, with her waiting-maid Godard, took care to prepare with her own hands everything needed for lodging and feeding these guests. To this end she had trusses of hay brought in, and went to see the brigands in the shelter she had arranged for them, going to and fro with Lèveillé. Provisions and victuals were procured under the orders and care of Courceuil, who took his orders from Rifoël and Boislaurier.

“The principal feat was decided on and the men fully armed; the brigands stole out of Saint-Savin every night; pending the transit of the Government chest, they carried out raids in the neighborhood, and the whole country was in terror under their repeated incursions. There can be no doubt that the robberies committed at La Sartinière, at Vonay, and at the château of Saint-Seny were the work of this band; their daring equaled their villainy, and they contrived to terrify their victims so effectually that no tales were told, so that justice could obtain no evidence.

“While levying contributions on all who held possession of the nationalized land, the brigands carefully reconnoitered the woods of Le Chesnay, which they had chosen to be the scene of their crime.

“Not far away is the village of Louvigny, where there is an inn kept by the brothers Chaussard, formerly gamekeepers on the property of Troisville, and this was to be the brigands' final rendezvous. The two brothers knew beforehand the part they were to play; Courceuil and Boislaurier had long before sounded them, and revived their hatred of the Government of our august Emperor; and had told them that among the visitors who would drop in on them would be some men of their acquaintance—the formidable Hiley and the not less formidable Cibot.

“In fact, on the 6th the seven highwaymen, under the leadership of Hiley, arrived at the brothers Chaussards' inn and spent two days there. On the 8th the chief led out his men, saying they were going three leagues away, and he desired the innkeepers to provide food, which was taken to

a place where the roads met, a little way from the village. Hiley came home alone at night.

“Two riders—who were probably the woman Bryond and Rifoël, for it is said that she accompanied him in his expeditions, on horseback, and dressed as a man—arrived that evening and conversed with Hiley. On the following day Hiley wrote to Léveillé the notary, and one of the Chaussard brothers carried the letter and brought back the answer. Two hours later Bryond and Rifoël came on horseback to speak with Hiley.

“The upshot of all these interviews and coming and going was that a hatchet was indispensable to break open the cases. The notary went back with the woman Bryond to Saint-Savin, where they sought in vain for a hatchet.

“Thereupon he returned to the inn and met Hiley half-way, to whom he was to explain that no hatchet was to be found. Hiley made his way back and ordered supper at the inn for ten persons; he then brought in the seven brigands all armed. Hiley made them pile arms like soldiers. They all sat down and supped in haste, Hiley ordering a quantity of food to be packed for them to take away with them. Then he led the elder Chaussard aside and asked him for a hatchet. The innkeeper, much astonished, by his own account, refused to give him one. Courceuil and Boislaurier presently came in, and the three men spent the whole night pacing up and down the room and discussing their plan. Courceuil, nicknamed the Confessor, the most cunning of the band, took possession of a hatchet, and at about two in the morning they all went out by different doors.

“Every minute was now precious; the execution of the crime was fixed for that day. Hiley, Courceuil, and Boislaurier placed their men. Hiley with Minard, Cabot, and Bruce, formed an ambush to the right of the wood of Le Chesnay. Boislaurier, Grenier, and Horeau occupied the center. Courceuil, Herbomez, and Lisieux stood by the ravine under the fringe of the wood. All these positions are indicated on the subjoined plan to scale, drawn by the surveyor to the Government.

“The chaise, meanwhile, had started from Mortagne at

about one in the morning, driven by one Rousseau, who was so far inculpated by circumstantial evidence as to make it seem desirable to arrest him. The vehicle, driving slowly, would reach the wood of Le Chesnay by about three. It was guarded by a single gendarme; the men were to breakfast at Donnery. There were three travelers, as it happened, besides the gendarme.

“The driver, who had been walking with them very slowly, on reaching the bridge of Le Chesnay, whipped up the horses to a speed and energy that the others remarked upon, and turned into a crossroad known as the Senzey road. The chaise was soon lost to sight; the way it had gone was known to the gendarme and his companions only by the sound of the horses’ bells; the men had to run to come up with it. Then they heard a shout: ‘Stand, you rascals!’—and four shots were fired.

“The gendarme, who was not hit, drew his sword and ran on in the direction he supposed the driver to have taken. He was stopped by four men, who all fired; his eagerness saved him, for he rushed past to desire one of the young travelers to run on and have the alarm bell tolled at Le Chesnay, but two of the brigands took steady aim, advancing towards him; he was forced to draw back a few steps; and just as he was about to turn the wood, he received a ball in the left armpit, which broke his arm; he fell, and found himself completely disabled.

“The shouting and shots had been heard at Donnery. The officer in command at this station hurried up with one of his gendarmes; a running fire led them away to the side of the wood furthest from the scene of the robbery. The single gendarme tried to intimidate the brigands by a hue and cry, and to delude them into the belief that a force was at hand.

“‘Forward!’ he cried. ‘First platoon to the right! now we have them! Second platoon to the left!’

“The brigands on their side shouted: ‘Draw! This way, comrades! Send up the men as fast as you can!’

“The noise of firing hindered the officer from hearing the cries of the wounded gendarme, and helping in the maneuver

by which the other was keeping the robbers in check; but he could hear a clatter close at hand, arising from splitting the cases open. He advanced towards that side; four armed men took aim at him, and he called out, 'Surrender, villains!'

"They only replied, 'Stand, or you are a dead man!'

"He rushed forward; two muskets were fired, and he was hit, one ball going through his left leg and into his horse's flank. The brave man, bleeding profusely, was forced to retire from the unequal struggle, shouting, but in vain, 'Help—come on—the brigands are at Le Chesnay.'

"The robbers, left masters of the field by superiority of numbers, pillaged the chaise which had been intentionally driven into a ravine. They blindfolded the driver, but this was only a feint. The chests were forced open, and bags of money strewed the ground. The horses were unharnessed and loaded with the coin. Three thousand francs' worth of copper money was scornfully left behind; three hundred thousand francs were carried off on four horses. They made for the village of Menneville adjacent to the town of Saint-Savin.

"The horde and their booty stopped at a solitary house belonging to the Chaussard brothers, inhabited by their uncle, one Bourget, who had been in their confidence from the first. This old man, helped by his wife, received the brigands, warned them to be silent, unloaded the beasts, and then fetched up some wine. The wife remained on sentry by the château. The old man led the horses back to the wood and returned them to the driver; then he released the two young men who had been gagged as well as the accommodating driver. After refreshing themselves in great haste, the brigands went on their way. Courceuil, Hiley, and Bois-laurier reviewed their party, and after bestowing on each a trifling recompense, sent off the men, each in a different direction.

"On reaching a spot called Le Champ-Landry, these malefactors, obeying the prompting which so often leads such wretches into blunders and miscalculations, threw their muskets away into a field of standing corn. The fact that all three did so at the same time is a crowning proof of their

collusion. Then, terrified by the boldness and success of their crime, they separated.

“The robbery having been committed, with the additional features of violence and attempt to murder, the chain of subsidiary events was already in preparation, and other actors were implicated in receiving and disposing of the stolen property. Rifoël, hidden in Paris, whence he pulled all the wires of the plot, sent an order to Léveillé to forward to him immediately fifty thousand francs. Courceuil, apt at the management of such felonies, had sent off Hiley to inform Léveillé of their success and of his arrival at Mortagne, where the notary at once joined him.

“Vauthier, to whose fidelity they believed they might trust, undertook to find the Chaussards’ uncle; he went to the house, but was told by the old man that he must apply to the nephews, who had given over large sums to the woman Bryond. However, he bid Vauthier wait for him on the road, and he there gave him a bag containing twelve hundred francs, which Vauthier took to the woman Lechantre for her daughter.

“By Léveillé’s advice Courceuil then went to Bourget, who sent him direct to his nephews. The elder Chaussard led Vauthier to the wood and showed him a tree beneath which a bag of a thousand francs was found buried. In short, Léveillé, Hiley, and Vauthier went to and fro several times, and each time obtained a small sum, trifling in comparison with the whole amount stolen.

“These moneys were handed over to the woman Lechantre at Mortagne; and, in obedience to a letter from her daughter, she carried them to Saint-Savin, whither the said Bryond had returned.

“It is not immediately necessary to inquire whether this woman Lechantre had any previous knowledge of the plot. For the present it need only be noted that she had left Mortagne to go to Saint-Savin the day before the crime was committed in order to fetch away her daughter; that the two women met halfway, and returned to Mortagne; that, on the following day, the notary, being informed of this by Hiley, went from Alençon to Mortagne, and straight to

their house, where he persuaded them to transport the money, obtained with so much difficulty from the Chaussards and from Bourget, to a certain house in Alençon, presently to be mentioned as belonging to one Pannier, a merchant there. The woman Lechantre wrote to the man in charge at Saint-Savin to come to Mortagne and escort her and her daughter by crossroads to Alençon. The money, amounting to twenty thousand francs in all, was packed into a vehicle at night, the girl Godard helping to dispose of it.

“The notary had planned the way they were to travel. They reached an inn kept by one of their allies, a man named Louis Chargegrain, in the hamlet of Littray. But in spite of the notary’s precautions—he riding ahead of the chaise—some strangers were present and saw the portmanteaus and bags taken out which contained the coin.

“But just as Courceuil and Hiley, disguised as women, were consulting, in the market-place at Alençon, with the aforementioned Pannier—who since 1794 had been the rebels’ treasurer, and who was devoted to Rifoël—as to the best means of transmitting the required sum to Rifoël, the terror occasioned by the arrests and inquiries already made was so great that the woman Lechantre, in her alarm, set off at night from the inn where they were, and fled with her daughter by country byways, leaving Léveillé behind, and took refuge in the hiding-places known to them in the château of Saint-Savin. The same alarm came over the other criminals. Courceuil, Boislaurier, and his relation Dubut exchanged two thousand francs in silver for gold at a dealer’s, and fled across Brittany to England.

“On arriving at Saint-Savin, the mother and daughter heard that Bourget was arrested with the driver and the runaway conscripts.

“The magistrates, the police, and the authorities acted with so much decision, that it was deemed necessary to protect the woman Bryond from their investigations, for all these felons were devotedly attached to her, and she had won them all. So she was removed from Saint-Savin, and hid at first at Alençon, where her adherents held council and succeeded in concealing her in Pannier’s cellars.

“Hereupon fresh incidents occurred. After the arrest of Bourget and his wife, the Chaussards refused to give up any more money, saying they had been betrayed. This unexpected defection fell out at the very moment when all the conspirators were in the greatest need of supplies, if only as a means of escape. Rifoël was thirsting for money. Hiley, Cibot, and Léveillé now began to doubt the honesty of the two Chaussards. This led to a fresh complication which seems to demand the intervention of the law.

“Two gendarmes, commissioned to discover the woman Bryond, succeeded in getting into Pannier’s house, where they were present at a council held by the criminals; but these men, false to the confidence placed in them, instead of arresting Bryond, were enslaved by her charms. These rascally soldiers—named Ratel and Mallet—showed the woman every form of interest and devotion, and offered to escort her to the Chaussards’ inn and compel them to make restitution. The woman went off on horseback, dressed as a man, and accompanied by Ratel, Mallet, and the maid-servant Godard. She set out at night, and on reaching the inn she and one of the Chaussard brothers had a private but animated interview. She had a pistol, and was resolved to blow her accomplice’s brains out in case of his refusal; in fact, he led her to the wood, and she brought back a heavy sack. In it she found copper coin and twelve-sou pieces to the value of fifteen hundred francs.

“It was then suggested that as many of the conspirators as could be got together should take the Chaussards by surprise, seize them, and put them to torture. Pannier, on hearing of this disappointment, flew into a rage and broke out in threats; and though the woman Bryond threatened him in return with Rifoël’s vengeance, she was compelled to fly.

“All these facts were confessed by Ratel.

“Mallet, touched by her position, offered the woman Bryond a place of shelter: they all set off together and spent the night in the wood of Troisville. Then Mallet and Ratel, with Hiley and Cibot, went by night to the Chaussards’ inn, but they found that the brothers had left the place, and that the remainder of the money had certainly been removed.



“This was the last attempt on the part of the conspirators to recover the stolen money.

“It is now important to define more accurately the part played by each of the criminals implicated in this affair.

“Dubut, Boislaurier, Gentil, Herbomez, Courceuil, and Hiley are all leaders, some in council, and some in action. Boislaurier, Dubut, and Courceuil, all three contumacious deserters, are habitual rebels, stirring up troubles, the implacable foes of Napoleon the Great, of his successes, his dynasty, and his Government, of our new code of laws and of the Imperial constitution. Herbomez and Hiley, as their right-hand men, boldly carried out what the three others planned. The guilt of the seven instruments of the crime is beyond question—Cibot, Lisieux, Grenier, Bruce, Horeau, Cabot, and Minard. It is proved by the depositions of those who are now in the hands of Justice: Lisieux died during the preliminary inquiry, and Bruce has evaded capture.

“The conduct of the chaise-driver Rousseau marks him as an accomplice. The slow progress on the highroad, the pace to which he flogged the horses on reaching the wood, his persistent statement that his head was muffled, whereas, by the evidence of the young fellow-travelers, the leader of the brigands had the handkerchief removed and ordered him to recognize the men,—all contribute to afford presumptive evidence of his collusion.

“As to the woman Bryond and Léveillé the notary, their complicity was constant and continuous from the first. They supplied funds and means for the crime; they knew of it and abetted it. Léveillé was constantly traveling to and fro. The woman Bryond invented plot upon plot; she risked everything—even her life—to secure the money. She lent her house, her carriage, and was concerned in the plot from the beginning, nor did she attempt to persuade the chief leader to desist from it when she might have exerted her evil influence to hinder it. She led the maid-servant Godard into its toils. Léveillé was so entirely mixed up in it, that it was he who tried to procure the hatchet needed by the robbers.

“The woman Bourget, Vauthier, the Chaussards, Pannier, the woman Lechantre, Mallet, and Ratel were all incriminated in various degrees, as also the innkeepers Mélin, Binet, Laravinière, and Chargegrain.

“Bourget died during the preliminary inquiry, after making a confession which leaves no doubt as to the part taken by Vauthier and the woman Bryond; and though he tried to mitigate the charge against his wife and his nephews the Chaussards, the reasons for his reticence are self-evident.

“But the Chaussards certainly knew that they were supplying provisions to highway robbers; they saw that the men were armed and were informed of all their scheme; they allowed them to take the hatchet needed for breaking open the chests, knowing the purpose for which it was required. Finally, they received wittingly the money obtained by the robbery, they hid it, and in fact made away with the greater part of it.

“Pannier, formerly treasurer to the rebel party, concealed the woman Bryond; he is one of the most dangerous participators in the plot of which he was informed from its origin. With regard to him we are in the dark as to some circumstances as yet unknown, but of which justice will take cognizance. He is Rifoël’s immediate ally and in all the secrets of the ante-revolutionary party in the west; he greatly regretted the fact that Rifoël should have admitted the women into the plot or have trusted them at all. He forwarded money to Rifoël and received the stolen coin.

“As to the two gendarmes, Ratel and Mallet, their conduct deserves the utmost rigor of the law. They were traitors to their duty. One of them, foreseeing his fate, committed suicide after making some important revelations. The other, Mallet, denied nothing, and his confession removes all doubt.

“The woman Lechantre, in spite of her persistent denials, was informed of everything. The hypocrisy of this woman, who attempts to shelter her professed innocence under the practice of assumed devotion, is known by her antecedents to be prompt and intrepid in extremities. She asserts that she was deceived by her daughter, and believed that the money in question belonged to the man Bryond. The trick is too

transparent. If Bryond had had any money, he would not have fled from the neighborhood to avoid witnessing his own ruin. Lechantre considered that there was no harm in the robbery when it was approved of by her ally Boislaurier. But how, then, does she account for Rifoël's presence at Saint-Savin, her daughter's expeditions and connection with the man, and the visit of the brigands who were waited on by the woman Godard and Bryond? She says she sleeps heavily, and is in the habit of going to bed at seven o'clock, and did not know what answer to make when the examining Judge observed that then she must rise at daybreak, and could not have failed to discern traces of the plot and of the presence of so many men, or to be uneasy about her daughter's nocturnal expeditions. To this she could only say that she was at her prayers.

"The woman is a model hypocrite. In fact, her absence on the day when the crime was committed, the care she took to remove her daughter to Mortagne, her journey with the money, and her precipitate flight when everything was discovered, the care with which she hid herself, and the circumstances of her arrest, all prove her complicity from an early stage of the affair. Her conduct was not that of a mother anxious to explain the danger to her daughter and to save her from it, but that of a terrified accomplice; and she was an accessory, not out of foolish affection, but from party spirit inspired by hatred, as is well known, for his Imperial Majesty's Government. Maternal weakness, indeed, could not excuse her, and it must not be forgotten that consent, long premeditated, is an evident sign of her complicity.

"Not the crime alone, but its moving spirits, are now known. We see in it the monstrous combinations of the delirium of faction with a thirst for rapine; murder prompted by party spirit, under which men take shelter, and justify themselves for the most disgraceful excesses. The orders of the leaders gave the signal for the robbery of State moneys to pay for subsequent violence; base and ferocious hirelings were found to do it for wretched pay, and fully prepared to murder; while the inciters to rebellion, not less guilty, helped in dividing and concealing the booty. What society can

allow such attempts to go unpunished? The law has no adequate punishment.

“The Bench of this Criminal and Special Court, then, will be called upon to decide whether the aforementioned Herbomez, Hiley, Cibot, Grenier, Horeau, Cabot, Minard, Mélin, Binet, Laravinière, Rousseau, the woman Bryond, Léveillé, the woman Bourget, Vauthier, the elder Chaussard, Pannier, the widow Lechantre, and Mallet—all hereinbefore described and in presence of the Court, and the aforementioned Boislaurier, Dubut, Courceuil, Bruce, Chaussard the younger, Chargegrain, and the girl Godard, being absent or having fled, are or are not guilty of the acts described in this bill of indictment.

“Given in to the Court at Caen the 1st of December, 180—.

“*(Signed)*      **BARON BOURLAC.**”

This legal document, much shorter and more peremptory than such bills of indictment are in these days, so full of detail and so complete on every point, especially as to the previous career of the accused, excited Godefroid to the utmost. The bare, dry style of an official pen, setting forth, in red ink as it were, the principal facts of the case, was enough to set his imagination working. Concise, reserved narrative is to some minds a problem in which they lose themselves in exploring the mysterious depths.

In the dead of night, stimulated by the silence, by the darkness, by the dreadful connection hinted at by M. Alain of this document with Mme. de la Chanterie, Godefroid concentrated all his intelligence on the consideration of this terrible affair.

The name of Lechantre was evidently the first name of the La Chanterie family, whose aristocratic titular name had of course been curtailed under the Republic and the Empire.

His fancy painted the scenery where the drama was played out, and the figures of the accomplices rose before him. Imagination showed him, not indeed “the aforementioned Rifoël,” but the Chevalier du Vissard, a youth resembling Walter Scott’s Fergus—in short, a French edition of the

Jacobite. He worked out a romance on the passion of a young girl grossly betrayed by her husband's infamy—a tragedy then very fashionable—and in love with a young leader rebelling against the Emperor; rushing headlong, like Diana Vernon, into the toils of a conspiracy, fired with enthusiasm, and then, having started on the perilous descent, unable to check her wild career.—Had she ended it on the scaffold?

A whole world seemed to rise before Godefroid. He was wandering through the groves of Normandy; he could see the Breton gentleman and Mme. Bryond in the copse; he dwelt in the old château of Saint-Savin; he pictured the winning over of so many conspirators—the notary, the merchant, and the bold Chouan leaders. He could understand the almost unanimous adhesion of a district where the memory was still fresh of the famous Marche-à-Terre, of the Comtes de Bauvan and de Longuy, of the massacre at La Vivetière, and of the death of the Marquis de Montauran, of whose exploits he had heard from Mme. de la Chanterie.

This vision, as it were, of men and things and places, was but brief. As he realized the fact that this story was that of the noble and pious old lady whose virtues affected him to the point of a complete metamorphosis, Godefroid, with a thrill of awe, took up the second document given to him by M. Alain, which bore the title:

“AN APPEAL ON BEHALF OF MME. HENRIETTE BRYOND  
DES TOURS-MINIÈRES, *née* LECHANTRE DE LA CHAN-  
TERIE.”

“That settles it,” thought Godefroid.  
The paper ran as follows:

“We are condemned and guilty; but if ever the Sovereign had cause to exercise his prerogative of mercy, would it not be under the circumstances herein set forth?”

“The culprit is a young woman, who says she is a mother, and is condemned to death.

“On the threshold of the prison, and in view of the scaffold,

this woman will tell the truth. That statement will be in her favor, and to that she looks for pardon.

“The case, tried in the Criminal Court of Alençon, presents some obscure features, as do all cases where several accused persons have combined in a plot inspired by party feeling.

“His Imperial and Kingly Majesty’s Privy Council are now fully informed as to the identity of a mysterious personage, known as Le Marchand, whose presence in the department of the Orne was not disputed by the public authorities in the course of the trial, though the pleader for the Crown did not think it advisable to produce him in Court, and the defendants had no right to call him, nor, indeed, power to produce him.

“This man, as is well known to the Bench, to the local authorities, to the Paris police, and to the Imperial and Royal Council, is Bernard-Polydor Bryond de la Tours-Minières, who, since 1794, has been in correspondence with the Comte de Lille; he is known abroad as the Baron des Tours-Minières, and in the records of the Paris police as Contenson.

“He is a very exceptional man, whose youth and rank were stained by unremitting vice, such utter immorality and such criminal excesses, that so infamous a life would inevitably have ended on the scaffold but for the skill with which he played a double part under shelter of his two names. Still, as he is more and more the slave of his passions and insatiable necessities, he will at last fall below infamy, and find himself in the lowest depths, in spite of indisputable gifts and an extraordinary mind.

“When the Comte de Lille’s better judgment led to his forbidding Bryond to draw money from abroad, the man tried to get out of the bloodstained field on to which his necessities had led him. Was it that this career no longer paid him well enough? Or was it remorse or shame that led the man back to the district where his estates, loaded with debt when he went away, could have but little to yield even to his skill? This it is impossible to believe. It seems more probable that he had some mission to fulfill in those depart-

ments where some sparks were still lingering of the civil broils.

“When wandering through the provinces, where his perfidious adhesion to the schemes of the English and of the Comte de Lille gained him the confidence of certain families still attached to the party that the genius of our immortal Emperor has reduced to silence, he met one of the former leaders of the Rebellion—a man with whom he had had dealings as an envoy from abroad at the time of the Quiberon expedition, during the last rising in the year VII. He encouraged the hopes of this agitator, who has since paid the penalty of his treasonable plots on the scaffold. At that time, then, Bryond was able to learn all the secrets of the incorrigible faction who misprize the glory of His Majesty the Emperor Napoleon I., and the true interests of the country as represented by his sacred person.

“At the age of five-and-thirty, this man, who affected the deepest piety, who professed unbounded devotion to the interests of the Comte de Lille, and perfect adoration for the rebels of the West who perished in the struggle, who skillfully disguised the ravages of a youth of debauchery, and whose personal appearance was in his favor, came, under the protection of his creditors, who told no tales, and of the most extraordinary good-nature on the part of all the *ci-devants* of the district, to be introduced with all these claims on her regard to the woman Lechantre, who was supposed to have a very fine fortune. The scheme in view was to secure a marriage between Mme. Lechantre’s only daughter, Henriette, and this protégé of the Royalist party.

“Priests, ex-nobles, and creditors, all from different motives, conspired to promote the marriage between Bernard Bryond and Henriette Lechantre.

“The good judgment of the notary who took charge of Mme. Lechantre’s affairs, and his shrewd suspicions, led perhaps to the poor girl’s undoing. For M. Chesnel, a notary at Alençon, settled the lands of Saint-Savin, the bride’s sole estate, on her and her children, reserving a small charge on it and the right of residence to the mother for life.

“Bryond’s creditors, who, judging from her methodical

and economical style of living, had supposed that Mme. Lechantre must have saved large sums, were disappointed in their hopes, and believing that she must be avaricious, they sued Bryond, and this led to a revelation of his impecuniosity and difficulties.

“Then the husband and wife quarreled violently, and the young woman came to full knowledge of the dissipated habits, the atheistical opinions both in religion and in politics, nay, I may say, the utter infamy, of the man to whom fate had irrevocably bound her. Then Bryond, being obliged to let his wife into the secret of the atrocious plots against the Imperial Government, offered an asylum under his roof to Rifoël du Vissard.

“Rifoël’s character, adventurous, brave, and lavish, had an extraordinary charm for all who came under his influence; of this there is abundant proof in the cases tried in no less than three special criminal courts.

“The irresistible influence, in fact the absolute power, he acquired over a young woman who found herself at the bottom of a gulf, is only too evident in the catastrophe of which the horror brings her as a suppliant to the foot of the throne. And His Imperial and Kingly Majesty’s Council will have no difficulty in verifying the infamous collusion of Bryond, who, far from doing his duty as the guide and adviser of the girl intrusted to his care by the mother he had deceived, condoned and encouraged the intimacy between his wife Henriette and the rebel leader.

“This was the plan imagined by this detestable man, who makes it his glory that he respects nothing, and that he never considers any end but the gratification of his passions, while he regards every sentiment based on social or religious morality as a mere vulgar prejudice. And it may here be remarked that such scheming is habitual to a man who has been playing a double part ever since 1794, who for eight years has deceived the Comte de Lille and his adherents, probably deceiving at the same time the superior police of the Empire—for such men are always ready to serve the highest bidder.

“Bryond, then, was urging Rifoël to commit a crime;



he it was who insisted on an armed attack and highway robbery of the State treasure in transit, and on heavy contributions to be extorted from the purchasers of the national land, by means of atrocious tortures which he invented, and which carried terror into five departments. He demanded no less than three hundred thousand francs to pay off the mortgages on his property.

“In the event of any objection on the part of Rifoël or Mme. Bryond, he intended to revenge himself for the contempt he had inspired in his wife’s upright mind, by handing them both over to be dealt with by the law as soon as they should commit some capital crime.

“As soon as he perceived that party spirit was a stronger motive than self-interest in these two whom he had thus thrown together, he disappeared; he came to Paris, armed with ample information as to the state of affairs in the western departments.

“The Chaussard brothers and Vauthier were, it is well known, in constant correspondence with Bryond.

“As soon as the robbery on the chests from Caen was accomplished, Bryond, assuming the name of Le Marchand, opened secret communications with the préfet and the magistrates. What was the consequence? No conspiracy of equal extent, and in which so many persons in such different grades of the social scale were involved, has ever been so immediately divulged to justice as this, of which the first attempt was the robbery of the treasure from Caen. Within six days of the crime, all the guilty parties had been watched and followed with a certainty that betrays perfect knowledge of the persons in question, and of their plans. The arrest, trial, and execution of Rifoël and his companions are a sufficient proof, and mentioned here only to demonstrate our knowledge of this fact, of which the Supreme Council knows every particular.

“If ever a condemned criminal might hope for the clemency of the Sovereign, may not Henriette Lechantre?

“Carried away by a passion and by rebellious principles imbibed with her mother’s milk, she is, no doubt, unpardonable in the eye of the law; but in the sight of our most

magnanimous Emperor, may not the most shameless betrayal on one hand, and the most vehement enthusiasm on the other, plead her cause?

“The greatest of generals, the immortal genius who pardoned the Prince of Hatzfeld, and who, like God Himself, can divine the arguments suggested by a blind passion, may, perhaps, vouchsafe to consider the temptations invincible in the young, which may palliate her crime, great as it is.

“Twenty-two heads have already fallen under the sword of justice and the sentence of the three Courts. One alone remains—that of a young woman of twenty, not yet of age. Will not the Emperor Napoleon the Great grant her time for repentance? Is not that a tribute to the grace of God?

“For Henriette Lechantre, wife of Bryond des Tours-Minières,

“BORDIN,

“Retained for the defense, Advocate in the Lower Court of the Department of the Seine.”

This terrible tragedy haunted the little sleep Godefroid was able to get. He dreamed of decapitation, as the physician Guillotin perfected it with philanthropic intentions. Through the hot vapors of a nightmare he discerned a beautiful young woman, full of enthusiasm, undergoing the last preparations, drawn in a cart, and mounting the scaffold with a cry of “Vive le Roi!”

Godefroid was goaded by curiosity. He rose at daybreak, dressed, and paced his room, till at length he posted himself at the window, and mechanically stared at the sky, reconstructing the drama, as a modern romancer might, in several volumes. And always against the murky background of Chouans, of country-folks, of provincial gentlemen, of rebel leaders, police agents, lawyers and spies, he saw the radiant figures of the mother and daughter; of the daughter deceiving her mother, the victim of a wretch, and of her mad passion for one of those daring adventurers who were afterwards regarded as heroes—a man who, to Godefroid's

imagination, had points of resemblance to *Georges Cadoudal and Charette, and the giants of the struggle between the Republic and the Monarchy.*

As soon as Godefroid heard old Alain stirring, he went to his room; but on looking in through the half-opened door, he shut it again, and withdrew. The old man, kneeling on his prie-Dieu, was saying his morning prayers. The sight of that white head bent in an attitude of humble piety recalled Godefroid to a sense of duty, and he prayed, too, with fervency.

“I was expecting you,” said the good man when, at the end of a quarter of an hour, Godefroid entered his room. “I anticipated your impatience, and rose earlier than usual.”

“Mme. Henriette?—” Godefroid began, with evident agitation.

“Was madame’s daughter,” replied Alain, interrupting him. “Madame’s name is Lechantre de la Chanterie. Under the Empire old titles were not recognized, nor the names added to the patronymic or first surname. Thus the Baronne des Tours-Minières was ‘the woman Bryond’; the Marquis d’Esgrignon was called Carol—Citizen Carol, and afterwards the Sieur Carol; the Troisvilles were the Sieurs Guibelin.”

“But what was the end? Did the Emperor pardon her?”

“No, alas!” said Alain. “The unhappy little woman perished on the scaffold at the age of twenty-one.—After reading Bordin’s petition, the Emperor spoke to the Supreme Judge much to this effect:

“‘Why make an example of a spy? A secret agent ceases to be a man, and ought to have none of a man’s feelings; he is but a wheel in the machine. Bryond did his duty. If our instruments of that kind were not what they are—steel bars, intelligent only in behalf of the Government they serve—government would be impossible. The sentences of Special Criminal Courts must be carried out, or my magistrates would lose all confidence in themselves and in me. And besides, the men who fought for these people are executed, and they were less guilty than their leaders. The women of the western provinces must be taught not to meddle in

*conspiracies.* It is because the victim of the sentence is a woman that the law must take its course. No excuse is available as against the interests of authority.'

"This was the substance of what the Supreme Judge was so obliging as to repeat to Bordin after his interview with the Emperor. To re-establish tranquillity in the west, which was full of refractory conscripts, Napoleon thought it needful to produce a real 'terror.' The Supreme Judge, in fact, advised the lawyer to trouble himself no further about his clients."

"And the lady?" said Godefroid.

"Mme. de la Chanterie was condemned to twenty-two years' imprisonment," replied Alain. "She had already been transferred to Bicêtre, near Rouen, to undergo her sentence, and nothing could be thought of till her Henriette was safe; for after these dreadful scenes, she was so wrapped up in her daughter that, but for Bordin's promise to petition for the mitigation of the sentence of death, it was thought that madame would not have survived her condemnation. So they deceived the poor mother. She saw her daughter after the execution of the men who had been sentenced to death, but did not know that the respite was granted in consequence of a false declaration that her daughter was expecting her confinement."

"Ah, now I understand everything!" cried Godefroid.

"No, my dear boy. There are some things which cannot be guessed.—For a long time after that, madame believed that her daughter was alive."

"How was that?"

"When Mme. des Tours-Minières heard through Bordin that her appeal was rejected, the brave little woman had enough strength of mind to write a score of letters dated for several months after her execution to make her mother believe that she was still alive, but gradually suffering more and more from an imaginary malady, till it ended in death. These letters were spread over a period of two years. Thus Mme. de la Chanterie was prepared for her daughter's death, but for a natural death; she did not hear of her execution till 1814.

“For two years she was kept in the common prison with the most infamous creatures of her sex, wearing the prison dress; then, thanks to the efforts of the Champignelles and the Beauséants, after the second year she was placed in a private cell, where she lived like a cloistered nun.”

“And the others?”

“The notary Léveillé, Herbomez, Hiley, Cibot, Grenier, Horeau, Cabot, Minard, and Mallet were condemned to death, and executed the same day; Pannier, with Chaussard and Vauthier, was sentenced to twenty years’ penal servitude; they were branded and sent to the hulks; but the Emperor pardoned Chaussard and Vauthier. Mélin, Laravinière, and Binet had five years’ imprisonment. The woman Bourget was imprisoned for twenty-two years. Chargegrain and Rousseau were acquitted. Those who had got away were all sentenced to death, with the exception of the maid-servant Godard, who, as you will have guessed, is none other than our good Manon.

“Manon!” exclaimed Godefroid in amazement.

“Oh, you do not yet know Manon,” replied the worthy man. “That devoted soul, condemned to twenty-two years’ imprisonment, had given herself up to justice that she might be with Mme. de la Chanterie in prison. Our beloved vicar is the priest from Mortagne who gave the last sacrament to Mme. des Tours-Minières, who had the fortitude to escort her to the scaffold, and to whom she gave her last farewell kiss. The same brave and exalted priest had attended the Chevalier du Vissard. So our dear Abbé de Vèze learned all the secrets of the conspirators.”

“I see now when his hair turned white,” said Godefroid.

“Alas!” said Alain.—“He received from Amédée du Vissard a miniature of Mme. des Tours-Minières, the only likeness of her that exists; and the Abbé has been a sacred personage to Mme. de la Chanterie ever since the day when she was restored triumphant to social life.”

“How was that?” asked Godefroid in surprise.

“Well, on the restoration of Louis XVIII. in 1814, Bois-laurier, who was the younger brother of M. de Boisfrelon, was still under the King’s orders to organize a rising in

the west—first in 1809, and afterwards in 1812. Their name is Dubut; the Dubut of Caen was related to them. There were three brothers: Dubut de Boisfranc, President of the Court of Subsidies; Dubut de Boisfrelon, Councilor at Law; and Dubut-Boislaurier, a Captain of Dragoons. Their father had given each the name of one of his three several estates to give them a title and status (*savonnette à la vilain*, as it was called), for their grandfather was a linen merchant. Dubut of Caen, who succeeded in escaping, was one of the branch who had stuck to trade; but he hoped, by devoting himself to the royal cause, to be allowed to succeed to M. de Boisfranc's title. And in fact, Louis XVIII. gratified the wish of his faithful adherent, who, in 1815, was made Grand Provost, and subsequently became a Public Prosecutor under the name of Boisfranc; he was President of one of the higher courts when he died. The Marquis du Vissard, the unhappy Chevalier's elder brother, created peer of France, and loaded with honors by the King, was made Lieutenant of the Maison Rouge, and when that was abolished became Préfet. M. d'Herbomez had a brother who was made a Count and Receiver-General. The unfortunate banker Pannier died on the hulks of a broken heart. Boislaurier died childless, a Lieutenant-General and Governor of one of the royal residences

“Mme. de la Chanterie was presented to His Majesty by M. de Champignelles, M. de Beauséant, the Duc de Verneuil, and the Keeper of the Seals.—‘You have suffered much for me, Mme. la Baronne,’ said the King; ‘you have every claim on my favor and gratitude.’

“‘Sir,’ she replied, ‘Your Majesty has so much to do in comforting the sufferers, that I will not add the burden of an inconsolable sorrow. To live forgotten, to mourn for my daughter, and do some good—that is all I have to live for. If anything could mitigate my grief, it would be the graciousness of my Sovereign, and the happiness of seeing that Providence did not suffer so much devoted service to be wasted.’”

“And what did the King do?” asked Godefroid.

“He restored to Mme. de la Chanterie two hundred thou-

sand francs in money," said the good man, "for the estate of Saint-Savin had been sold to make good the loss to the treasury. The letters of pardon granted to Mme. la Baronne and her woman express the Sovereign's regret for all they had endured in his service, while acknowledging that the zeal of his adherents had carried them too far in action; but the thing that will seem to you most horrible of all is, that throughout his reign Bryond was still the agent of his secret police."

"Oh, what things kings can do!" cried Godefroid.—"And is the wretch still living?"

"No. The scoundrel, who at any rate concealed his name, calling himself Contenson, died at the end of 1829, or early in 1830. He fell from a roof into the street when in pursuit of a criminal.—Louis XVIII. was of the same mind as Napoleon as regards police agents.

"Mme. de la Chanterie, a perfect saint, prays for this monster's soul, and has two Masses said for him every year.

"Though her defense was undertaken by one of the famous pleaders of the day, the father of one of our great orators, Mme. de la Chanterie, who knew nothing of her daughter's risks till the moment when the money was brought in—and even then only because Boislaurier, who was related to her, told her the facts—could never establish her innocence. The *Président du Ronceret*, and Blondet, Vice-President of the Court at Alençon, vainly tried to clear the poor lady; the influence of the notorious Mergi, the Councilor to the Supreme Court under the Empire, who presided over these trials—a man fanatically devoted to the Church and Throne, who afterwards, as Public Prosecutor, brought many a Bonapartist head under the ax—was so great at this time over his two colleagues that he secured the condemnation of the unhappy Baronne de la Chanterie. Bourlac and Mergi argued the case with incredible virulence. The President always spoke of the Baronne des Tours-Minières as the woman Bryond, and of madame as the woman Lechantre. The names of all the accused were reduced to the barest republican forms, and curtailed of all titles.

"There were some extraordinary features of the trial, and

I cannot recall them all; but I remember one stroke of audacity, which may show you what manner of men these Chouans were.—The crowd that pressed to hear the trials was beyond anything your fancy can conceive of; it filled the corridors, and the square outside was thronged as if on market days. One morning at the opening of the Court, before the arrival of the judges, Pille-Miche, the famous Chouan, sprang over the balustrade into the middle of the mob, made play with his elbows, mixed with the crowd, and fled among the terrified spectators, ‘butting like a wild boar,’ as Bordin told me. The gendarmes and the people rushed to stop him, and he was caught on the steps just as he had reached the market-place. After this daring attempt, they doubled the guard, and a detachment of men-at-arms was posted on the square, for it was feared that there might be among the crowd some Chouans ready to aid and abet the accused. Three persons were crushed to death in the crowd in consequence of this attempt.

“It was subsequently discovered that Contenson—for, like my old friend Bordin, I cannot bring myself to call him *Baron des Tours-Minières*, or *Bryond*, which is a respectable old name—that wretch, it was discovered, had made away with sixty thousand francs of the stolen treasure. He gave ten thousand to the younger *Chaussard*, whom he enticed into the police and inoculated with all his low tastes and vices; but all his accomplices were unlucky. The *Chaussard* who escaped was pitched into the sea by *M. de Boislaurier*, who understood from something said by *Pannier* that *Chaussard* had turned traitor. *Contenson*, indeed, had advised him to join the fugitives in order to spy upon them. *Vauthier* was killed in Paris, no doubt by one of the *Chevalier du Vissard*’s obscure but devoted followers. The younger *Chaussard*, too, was finally murdered in one of the nocturnal raids conducted by the police; it seems probable that *Contenson* took this means of ridding himself of his demands or of his remorse by sending him to sermon, as the saying goes.

“*Mme. de la Chanterie* invested her money in the Funds, and purchased this house by the particular desire of her uncle, the old Councilor *de Boisfrelon*, who in fact gave her



the money to buy it. This quiet neighborhood lies close to the Archbishop's residence, where our beloved Abbé has an appointment under the Cardinal. And this was madame's chief reason for acceding to the old lawyer's wish when his income, after twenty-five years of revolutions, was reduced to six thousand francs a year. Besides, madame wished to close a life of such terrible misfortunes as had overwhelmed her for six-and-twenty years in almost cloistered seclusion.

"You may now understand the dignity, the majesty, of this long-suffering woman—august, indeed, as I may say——"

"Yes," said Godefroid, "the stamp of all she has endured has given her an indefinable air of grandeur and majesty."

"Each blow, each fresh pang has but increased her patience and resignation," Alain went on. "And if you could know her as we do, if you knew how keen her feelings are, and how active is the spring of tenderness that wells up in her heart, you would be afraid to take count of the tears she must shed, and her fervent prayers that ascend to God. Only those who, like her, have known but a brief season of happiness can resist such shocks. Hers is a tender heart, a gentle soul clothed in a frame of steel, tempered by privation, toil, and austerity."

"Such a life as hers explains the life of hermits," said Godefroid.

"There are days when I wonder what can be the meaning of such an existence. Is it that God reserves these utmost, bitterest trials for those of His creatures who shall sit on His right hand on the day after their death?" said the good old man, quite unaware that he was artlessly expressing Swedenborg's doctrine concerning the angels.

"What!" exclaimed Godefroid, "Mme. de la Chanterie was mixed up with——?"

"Madame was sublime in prison," Alain said. "In the course of three years the story of the *Vicar of Wakefield* came true, for she reclaimed several women of profligate lives. And in the course of her imprisonment, as she took note of the conduct of those confined with her, she learned to feel that great pity for the misery of the people which

weighs on her soul, and has made her the queen of Parisian charity. It was in the horrible Bicêtre of Rouen that she conceived of the plan which we devote ourselves to carry out. It was, as she declared, a dream of rapture, an angelic inspiration in the midst of hell; she had no thought of ever seeing it realized.

“But here, in 1819, when peace seemed to be descending on Paris, she came back to her dream. Mme. la Duchesse d’Angoulême, the Dauphiness, the Duchesse de Berri, the Archbishop, and then the Chancellor and some pious persons contributed very liberally to the first necessary expenses. The fund was increased by what we could spare from our income, for each of us spends no more than is absolutely necessary.”

Tears rose to Godefroid’s eyes.

“We are the faithful priesthood of a Christian idea, and belong body and soul to this work, of which Mme. de la Chanterie is the founder and the soul—that lady whom you hear us respectfully designate as madame.”

“Ah, and I too am wholly yours!” cried Godefroid, holding out his hands to the worthy man.

“Now, do you understand that there are subjects of conversation absolutely prohibited here, never even to be alluded to?” Alain went on. “Do you appreciate the obligation of reticence under which we all feel ourselves to a lady whom we reverence as a saint? Do you understand the charm exerted by a woman made sacred by her misfortunes, having learned so many things, knowing the inmost secret of every form of suffering—a woman who has derived a lesson from every grief, whose every virtue has the twofold sanction of the hardest tests and of constant practice, whose soul is spotless and above reproach; who has known motherhood only through its sorrows, and conjugal affection only through its bitterness; on whom life never smiled but for a few months—for whom Heaven no doubt keeps a palm in store as the reward of such resignation and gentleness amid sorrows? Is she not superior to Job in that she has never murmured?”

“So you need never again be surprised to find her speech

so impressive, her old age so fresh, her spirit so full of communion, her looks so persuasive; she has had powers extraordinary bestowed on her as a *confidante* of the sorrowing, for she has known every sorrow. In her presence smaller griefs are mute."

"She is the living embodiment of charity," cried Godefroid with enthusiasm. "May I become one of you?"

"You must pass the tests, and above all else, *Believe!*" said the old man with gentle excitement. "So long as you have not hold on faith, so long as you have not assimilated in your heart and brain the divine meaning of Saint Paul's epistle on Charity, you can take no part in our work."

PARIS, 1843-1845.

## SECOND EPISODE

### INITIATED

WHAT is nobly good is contagious, as evil is. And by the time Mme. de la Chanterie's boarder had dwelt for some months in this silent old house, after the story told him by M. Alain, which filled him with the deepest respect for the half-monastic life he saw around him, he became conscious of the ease of mind that comes of a regular life, of quiet habits and harmonious tempers in those we live with. In four months Godefroid, never hearing an angry tone or the least dispute, owned to himself that since he had come to years of discretion he did not remember ever being so completely at peace—for he could not say happy. He looked on the world from afar, and judged it sanely. At last the desire he had cherished these three months past to take his part in the deeds of this mysterious association had become a passion; and without being a very profound philosopher, the reader may imagine what strength such a passion may assume in seclusion.

So one day—a day marked as solemn by the ascendancy of the Spirit—Godefroid, after sounding his heart and measuring his powers, went up to his good friend Alain—whom Mme. de la Chanterie always called her lamb—for of all the Jewellers under that roof he had always seemed to Godefroid the most accessible and the least formidable. To him, then, he would apply, to obtain from the worthy man some information as to the sort of priesthood which these Brethren in God exercised in Paris. Many allusions to a period of probation suggested to him that he would be put to initiatory tests of some kind. His curiosity had not been fully satisfied by what the venerable old man had told him of the reasons why he had joined Mme. de la Chanterie's association; he wanted to know more about this.

At half-past ten o'clock that evening Godefroid found himself for the third time in M. Alain's rooms, just as the

old man was preparing to read his chapter of *The Imitation*. This time the mild old man could not help smiling, and he said to the young man, before allowing him to speak:

“Why do you apply to me, my dear boy, instead of addressing yourself to madame? I am the most ignorant, the least spiritual, the most imperfect member of the household.—For the last three days madame and my friends have seen into your heart,” he added, with a little knowing air.

“And what have they seen?” asked Godefroid.

“Oh,” said the good man, with perfect simplicity, “they have seen a guileless desire to belong to our community. But the feeling is not yet a very ardent vocation. Nay,” he replied to an impulsive gesture of Godefroid’s, “you have more curiosity than fervor. In fact, you have not so completely freed yourself from your old ideas but that you imagine something adventurous, something romantic, as the phrase goes, in the incidents of our life——”

Godefroid could not help turning red.

“You fancy that there is some resemblance between our occupations and those of the Khalifs in the *Arabian Nights*, and you anticipate a kind of satisfaction in playing the part of the good genius in the idyllic beneficences of which you dream! Ah, ha! my son, your smile of confusion shows me that we were not mistaken. How could you expect to conceal your thoughts from us, who make it our business to detect the hidden impulses of the soul, the cunning of poverty, the calculations of the needy; who are honest spies, the police of a merciful Providence, old judges whose code of law knows only absolution, and physicians of every malady whose only prescription is a wise use of money? Still, my dear boy, we do not quarrel with the motives that bring us a neophyte if only he stays with us and becomes a brother of our Order. We shall judge you by your works. There are two kinds of curiosity—one for good, and one for evil. At this moment your curiosity is for good. If you are to become a laborer in our vineyard, the juice of the grapes will give you perpetual thirst for the divine fruit. The initiation looks easy, but is difficult, as in every natural science. In well-doing, as in poetry, nothing can be easier

than to clutch at its semblance; but here, as on Parnassus, we are satisfied with nothing short of perfection. To become one of us, you must attain to great knowledge of life—and of such life. Good God! Of that Paris life which defies the scrutiny of the Chief of the Police and his men. It is our task to unmask the permanent conspiracy of evil, and detect it under forms so endlessly changing that they might be thought infinite. In Paris, Charity must be as omniscient as Sin, just as the police agent must be as cunning as the thief. We have to be at once frank and suspicious; our judgment must be as certain and as swift as our eye.

“As you see, dear boy, we are all old and worn out; but then we are so well satisfied with the results we have achieved, that we wish not to die without leaving successors, and we hold you all the more dear because you may, if you will, be our first disciple. For us there is no risk, we owe you to God! Yours is a sweet nature turned sour, and since you came to live here the evil leaven is weaker. Madame’s heavenly nature has had its effect on you.

“We held council yesterday; and as you have given me your confidence, my good brothers decided on making me your instructor and guide.—Are you satisfied?”

“Oh, my kind M. Alain, your eloquence has aroused——”

“It is not I that speak well, my dear boy, it is that great deeds are eloquent.—We are always sure of soaring high if we obey God and imitate Jesus Christ so far as lies in man aided by faith.”

“This moment has decided my fate; I feel the ardor of the neophyte!” cried Godefroid. “I too would fain spend my life in well-doing——”

“That is the secret of dwelling in God,” replied the good man. “Have you meditated on our motto, *Transire benefaciendo*? *Transire* means to pass beyond this life, leaving a long train of good actions behind you.”

“I have understood it so, and I have written up the motto of the Order in front of my bed.”

“That is well.—And that action, so trivial in itself, is of great value in my eyes.—Well, my son, I have your first task ready for you, I will see you with your foot in the stirrup.

We must part.—Yes, for I have to leave our retreat and take my place in the heart of a volcano. I am going as foreman in a large factory where all the workmen are infected with communistic doctrines—and dream of social destruction, of murdering the masters, never seeing that this would be to murder industry, manufacture, and commerce.

“I shall remain there—who knows—a year, perhaps, as cashier, keeping the books, and making my way into a hundred or more humble homes, among men who were misled by poverty, no doubt, before they were deluded by bad books. However, we shall see each other here every Sunday and holiday; as I shall live in the same quarter of the town we may meet at the Church of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas; I shall attend Mass there every morning at half-past seven. If you should happen to meet me elsewhere, you must never recognize me, unless I rub my hands with an air of satisfaction. That is one of our signals.—Like the deaf-mutes, we have a language by signs, of which the necessity will soon be more than abundantly evident to you.”

Godefroid's expression was intelligible to M. Alain, for he smiled and went on:

“Now for your business. We do not practice either beneficence or philanthropy as they are known to you, under a variety of branches which are preyed upon by swindlers, just like any other form of trade. We exercise charity as it is defined by our great and sublime master, Saint Paul; for it is our belief, my son, that such charity alone can heal the woes of Paris. Thus, in our eyes, sorrow, poverty, suffering, trouble, evil—from whatever cause they may proceed and in whatever class of society we find them—have equal claims upon us. Whatever their creed or their opinions, the unfortunate are, first and foremost, unfortunate; we do not try to persuade them to look to our Holy Mother the Church till we have rescued them from despair and starvation. And even then we try to convert them by example and kindness, for thus we believe that we have the help of God. All coercion is wrong.

“Of all the wretchedness in Paris, the most difficult to discover and the bitterest to endure is that of the respectable

middle class, the better class of citizens, when they fall into poverty, for they make it a point of honor to conceal it. Such disasters as these, my dear Godefroid, are the object of our particular care. Such persons, when we help them, show intelligence and good feeling; they return us with interest what we may lend to them; and in the course of time their repayments cover the losses we meet with through the disabled, or by swindlers, or those whom misfortune has stultified. Sometimes we get useful information from those we have helped; but the work has grown to such vast dimensions, and its details are so numerous, that it is beyond our powers. Now, for the last seven or eight months, we have a physician in our employment in each district of the city of Paris. Each of us has four arrondissements (or wards) under his eye; and we are prepared to pay to each three thousand francs a year to take charge of our poor. He is required to give up his time and care to them by preference, but we do not prevent his taking other patients. Would you believe that we have not in eight months been able to find twelve such men, twelve good men, in spite of the pecuniary aid offered by our friends and acquaintance? You see, we needed men of absolute secrecy, of pure life, of recognized abilities, and with a love of doing good. Well, in Paris there are perhaps ten thousand men fit for the work, and yet in a year's search the twelve elect have not been found."

"Our Lord found it hard to collect His apostles," said Godefroid, "and there were a traitor and a disbeliever among them after all!"

"At last, within the past fortnight, each arrondissement has been provided with a *visitor*," said the old man, smiling—"for so we call our physicians—and, indeed, within that fortnight there has been a vast increase of business. However, we have worked all the harder. I tell you this secret of our infant fraternity because you must make acquaintance with the physician of your district, all the more so because we depend on him for information. This gentleman's name is Berton—Doctor Berton—and he lives in the Rue de l'Enfer.

"Now for the facts. Doctor Berton is attending a lady



whose disease seems in some way to defy science. That, indeed, does not concern us, but only the Faculty; our business is to find out the poverty of the sick woman's family, which the doctor believes to be frightful, and concealed with a determination and pride that baffle all our inquiries. Hitherto, my dear boy, this would have been my task; but now the work to which I am devoting myself makes an assistant necessary in my four districts, and you must be that assistant. The family lives in the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, in a house looking out over the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse. You will easily find a room to let there, and while lodging there for a time you must try to discover the truth. Be sordid as regards your own expenses, but do not trouble your head about the money you give. I will send you such sums as we consider necessary, taking all the circumstances of the case into consideration. But study the moral character of these unfortunate people. A good heart and noble feelings are the security for our loans. Stingy to ourselves and generous to suffering, we must still be careful and never rash, for we dip into the treasury of the poor.—Go to-morrow, and remember how much power lies in your hands. The Brethren will be on your side.”

“Ah!” cried Godefroid, “you have given me so much pleasure in trusting me to do good and be worthy of some day being one of you, that I shall not sleep for joy.”

“Stay, my boy, one last piece of advice. The prohibition to recognize me unless I make the sign concerns the other gentlemen and madame, and even the servants of the house. Absolute incognito is indispensable to all our undertakings, and we are so constantly obliged to preserve it that we have made it a law without exceptions. We must be unknown, lost in Paris.

“Remember, too, my dear Godefroid, the very spirit of our Order, which requires us never to appear as benefactors, but to play the obscure part of intermediaries. We always represent ourselves as the agents of some saintly and beneficent personage—are we not toiling for God?—so that no gratitude may be considered due to ourselves, and that we may not be supposed to be rich. True, sincere humility,

not the false humility of those who keep in the shade that others may throw a light on them, must inspire and govern all your thoughts.—You may rejoice when you succeed; but so long as you feel the least impulse of vanity, you will be unworthy to join the Brotherhood. We have known two perfect men. One, who was one of our founders, Judge Popinot; the other, who was known by his works, was a country doctor who has left his name written in a remote parish. He, my dear Godefroid, was one of the greatest men of our day; he raised a whole district from a savage state to one of prosperity, from irreligion to the Catholic faith, from barbarism to civilization. The names of those two men are graven on our hearts, and we regard them as our examples. We should be happy, indeed, if we might one day have in Paris such influence as that country doctor had in his own district.

“But here the plague-spot is immeasurable, and, so far, quite beyond our powers. May God long preserve madame, and send us many such helpers as you, and then perhaps we may found an institution that will lead men to bless His holy religion.

“Well, farewell. Your initiation now begins.

“Bless me! I chatter like a professor, and was forgetting the most important matter. Here is the address of the family I spoke of,” he went on, handing a scrap of paper to Godefroid. “And I have added the number of M. Berton’s house in the Rue de l’Enfer.—Now, go and pray God to help you.”

Godefroid took the good old man’s hands and pressed them affectionately, bidding him good-night, and promising to forget none of his injunctions.

“All you have said,” he added, “is stamped on my memory for life.”

Alain smiled with no expression of doubt, and rose to go and kneel on his prie-Dieu. Godefroid went back to his own room, happy in being at last allowed to know the mysteries of this household, and to have an occupation which, in his present frame of mind, was really a pleasure.

At breakfast next morning there was no M. Alain, but

Godefroid made no remark on his absence. Nor was he questioned as to the mission given him by the old man; thus he received his first lesson in secrecy. After breakfast, however, he took Mme. de la Chanterie aside, and told her that he should be absent for a few days.

“Very well, my child,” replied Mme. de la Chanterie. “And try to do your sponsor credit, for M. Alain has answered for you to his brethren.”

Godefroid took leave of the other three men, who embraced him affectionately, seeming thus to give him their blessing on his outset in his laborious career.

Association—one of the greatest social forces which was the making of Europe in the Middle Ages—is based on feelings which have ceased, since 1792, to exist in France, where the individual is now supreme over the State. Association requires, in the first place, a kind of devotedness which is not understood in this country; a simplicity of faith which is contrary to the national spirit; and finally, a discipline against which everything rebels, and which nothing but the Catholic faith can exact. As soon as an Association is formed in France, each member of it, on returning home from a meeting where the finest sentiments have been expressed, makes a bed for himself of the collective devotion of this combination of forces, and tries to milk for his own benefit the cow belonging to all, till the poor thing, inadequate to meet so many individual demands, dies of attenuation.

None can tell how many generous emotions have been nipped, how many fervid germs have perished, how much resource has been crushed and lost to the country by the shameful frauds of the French secret societies, of the patriotic fund for the Champs d’Asile (emigration to America), and other political swindles, which ought to have produced great and noble dramas, and turned out mere farces of the lower police courts.

It was the same with industrial as with political associations. Self-interest took the place of public spirit. The Corporations and Hanseatic Guilds of the Middle Ages, to

which we shall some day return, are as yet out of the question; the only Societies that still exist are religious institutions, and at this moment they are being very roughly attacked, for the natural tendency of the sick is to rebel against the remedies and often to rend the physician. France knows not what self-denial means. Hence no Association can hold together but by the aid of religious sentiment, the only power that can quell the rebellion of the intellect, the calculations of ambition, and greed of every kind. Those who are in search of worlds fail to understand that Association has worlds in its gift.

Godefroid, as he made his way through the streets, felt himself a different man. Anyone who could have read his mind would have wondered at the curious phenomenon of the communication of the spirit of union. He was no longer one man, but a being multiplied tenfold, feeling himself the representative of five persons whose united powers were at the back of all he did, and who walked with him on his way. With this strength in his heart, he was conscious of a fullness of life, a lofty power that uplifted him. It was, as he afterwards owned, one of the happiest moments of his life, for he rejoiced in a new sense—that of an omnipotence more absolute than that of despots. Moral force, like thought, knows no limits.

“This is living for others,” said he to himself, “acting with others as if we were but one man, and acting alone as if we were all together! This is having Charity for a leader, the fairest and most living of all the ideals that have been created of the Catholic virtues.—Yes, this is living!—Come, I must subdue this childish exultation which Father Alain would laugh to scorn.—Still, is it not strange that it is by dint of trying to annul my Self that I have found the power so long wished for? The world of misfortune is to be my inheritance.”

He crossed the precincts of Notre-Dame to the Avenue de l'Observatoire in such high spirits that he did not heed the length of the walk.

Having reached the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, at the end of the Rue de l'Ouest, he was surprised to find such

pools of mud in so handsome a quarter of the town, for neither of those streets was as yet paved. The foot-passenger had to walk on planks laid close to the walls of the marshy gardens, or creep by the houses on narrow side-paths, which were soon swamped by the stagnant waters that turned them into gutters.

After much seeking, he discovered the house described to him, and got to it, not without some difficulty. It was evidently an old manufactory which had been abandoned. The building was narrow, and the front was a long wall pierced with windows quite devoid of any ornament; but there were none of these square openings on the ground floor—only a wretched back-door.

Godefroid supposed that the owner had contrived a number of rooms in this structure to his own profit, for over the door there was a board scrawled by hand to this effect: *Several rooms to let*. Godefroid rang, but no one came; and as he stood waiting, a passer-by pointed out to him that there was another entrance to the house from the boulevard, where he would find somebody to speak to.

Godefroid acted on the information, and from the boulevard he saw the front of the house screened by the trees of a small garden-plot. This garden, very ill-kept, sloped to the house, for there is such a difference of level between the boulevard and the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs as to make the garden a sort of ditch. Godefroid went down the path, and at the bottom of it saw an old woman whose dilapidated garb was in perfect harmony with the dwelling.

“Was it you who rang in the Rue Notre-Dame?” she asked.

“Yes, madame.—Is it your business to show the rooms?”

On a reply in the affirmative from this portress, whose age it was difficult to determine, Godefroid inquired whether the house was tenanted by quiet folk; his occupations required peace and silence; he was a bachelor, and wished to arrange with the doorkeeper to cook and clean for him.

On this hint the woman became gracious, and said:

“Monsieur could not have done better than to hit on this house; for excepting the days when there are doings at the

Chaumière, the boulevard is as deserted as the Pontine Marshes——”

“Do you know the Pontine Marshes?” asked Godefroid.

“No, sir; but there is an old gentleman upstairs whose daughter is always in a dying state, and he says so.—I only repeat it. That poor old man will be truly glad to think that you want peace and quiet, for a lodger who stormed around would be the death of his daughter.—And we have two writers of some kind on the second floor, but they come in for the day at midnight, and then at night they go out at eight in the morning. Authors, they say they are, but I do not know where or when they work.”

As she spoke, the portress led Godefroid up one of those horrible stairs built of wood and brick, in such an unholy alliance that it is impossible to say whether the wood is parting from the bricks or the bricks are disgusted at being set in the wood; while both materials seem to fortify their disunion by masses of dust in summer and of mud in winter. The walls, of cracked plaster, bore more inscriptions than the Academy of Belles-lettres ever invented.

The woman stopped on the first floor.

“Now, here, sir, are two very good rooms, opening into each other, and on to M. Bernard’s landing. He is the old gentleman I mentioned—and quite the gentleman. He has the ribbon of the Legion of Honor, but he has had great troubles, it would seem, for he never wears it.—When first they came they had a servant to wait on them, a man from the country, and they sent him away close on three years ago. The lady’s young gentleman—her son—does everything now; he manages it all——”

Godefroid looked shocked.

“Oh!” said the woman, “don’t be uneasy, they will say nothing to you; they never speak to anybody. The gentleman has been here ever since the Revolution of July; he came in 1831.—They are some high provincial family, I believe, ruined by the change of government; and proud! and as mute as fishes.—For four years, sir, they have never let me do the least thing for them, for fear of having to pay.—A

five-franc piece on New Year's Day, that's every sou I get out of them.—Give me your authors! I get ten francs a month, only to tell everybody who comes to ask for them that they left at the end of last quarter."

All this babble led Godefroid to hope for an ally in this woman, who explained to him, as she praised the airiness of the two rooms and adjoining dressing-closets, that she was not the portress, but the landlord's deputy and housekeeper, managing everything for him to a great extent.

"And you may trust me, monsieur, I promise you! Mme. Vauthier—that's me—would rather have nothing at all than take a sou of anybody else's."

Mme. Vauthier soon came to terms with Godefroid, who wished to take the rooms by the month and ready furnished. These wretched lodgings, rented by students or authors "down on their luck," were let furnished or unfurnished, as might be required. The spacious lofts over the whole house were full of furniture. But M. Bernard himself had furnished the rooms he was in.

By getting Mme. Vauthier to talk, Godefroid discovered that her ambition was centered in a *pension bourgeoise*; but in the course of five years she had failed to meet with a single boarder among her lodgers. She inhabited the ground floor, on the side towards the boulevard; thus she was herself the doorkeeper, with the help of a big dog, a sturdy girl, and a boy who cleaned the boots, ran errands, and did the rooms, two creatures as poor as herself, in harmony with the squalor of the house and its inhabitants, and the desolate, neglected appearance of the garden in front.

They were both foundlings, to whom the widow Vauthier gave no wages but their food—and such food! The boy, of whom Godefroid caught a glimpse, wore a ragged blouse, list slippers instead of shoes, and sabots to go out in. With a shock of hair, as touzled as a sparrow taking a bath, and blackened hands, as soon as he had done the work of the house, he went off to measure wood logs in a woodyard hard by, and when his day was over—at half-past four for wood-sawyers—he returned to his occupations. He fetched water for the household from the fountain by the Observatory, and

the widow supplied it to the lodgers, as well as the fagots which he chopped and tied.

Népomucène—this was the name of the widow Vauthier's slave—handed over his earnings to his mistress. In summer-time the unhappy waif served as waiter in the wineshops by the *barrière* on Sundays and Mondays. Then the woman gave him decent clothes.

As for the girl, she cooked under the widow's orders, and helped her in her trade work at other times, for the woman plied a trade; she made list slippers for peddlers to sell.

All these details were known to Godefroid within an hour, for Mme. Vauthier took him all over the house, showing him how it had been altered. A silkworm establishment had been carried on there till 1828, not so much for the production of silk as for that of the eggs—the seed, as it is called. Eleven acres of mulberry trees at *Mont-Rouge*, and three acres in the *Rue de l'Ouest*, since built over, had supplied food for this nursery for silkworms' eggs.

Mme. Vauthier was telling Godefroid that M. Barbet, who had lent the capital to an Italian named Fresconi to carry on this business, had been obliged to sell those three acres to recover the money secured by a mortgage on the land and buildings, and was pointing out the plot of ground, lying on the other side of the *Rue Notre-Dame des Champs*, when a tall and meager old man, with perfectly white hair, came in sight at the end of the street where it crosses the *Rue de l'Ouest*.

“In the very nick of time!” cried Mme. Vauthier. “Look, that is your neighbor, M. Bernard.—M. Bernard,” cried she, as soon as the old man was within hearing, “you will not be alone now; this gentleman here has just taken the rooms opposite yours——”

M. Bernard looked up at Godefroid with an apprehensive eye that was easy to read: it was as though he had said, “Then the misfortune I have so long feared has come upon me!”

“What, monsieur,” said he, “you propose to reside here?”

“Yes, monsieur,” said Godefroid civilly. “This is no home for those who are lucky in the world, and it is the



cheapest lodging I have seen in this part of the town. Mme. Vauthier does not expect to harbor millionaires.—Good-day, then, Mme. Vauthier; arrange things so that I may come in at six o'clock this evening. I shall return punctually.”

And Godefroid went off towards the Rue de l'Ouest, walking slowly, for the anxiety he had read in the old man's face led him to suppose that he wanted to dispute the matter with him. And, in fact, after some little hesitation, M. Bernard turned on his heel and walked quickly enough to come up with Godefroid.

“That old wretch! he wants to hinder him from coming back,” said Mme. Vauthier to herself. “Twice already he has played me that trick.—Patience! His rent is due in five days, and if he does not pay it down on the nail, out he goes! M. Barbet is a tiger of a sort that does not need much lashing, and—I should like to know what he is saying to him—Félicité! Félicité! you lazy hussy, will you make haste?” cried the widow in a formidable croak, for she had assumed an affable piping tone in speaking to Godefroid.

The girl, a sturdy, red-haired slut, came running out.

“Just keep a sharp eye on everything for a few seconds, do you hear? I shall be back in five minutes.”

And the widow Vauthier, formerly cook to the bookseller's shop kept by Barbet, one of the hardest money-lenders on short terms in the neighborhood, stole out at the heels of her two lodgers, so as to watch them from a distance and rejoin Godefroid as soon as he and M. Bernard should part company.

M. Bernard was walking slowly, like a man in two minds, or a debtor seeking for excuses to give to a creditor who has left him to take proceedings.

Godefroid, in front of this unknown neighbor, turned round to look at him under pretense of looking about him. And it was not till they had reached the broad walk in the Luxembourg Gardens that M. Bernard came up with Godefroid and addressed him.

“I beg your pardon a thousand times, monsieur,” said he, bowing to Godefroid, who returned the bow, “for stopping

you, when I have not the honor of knowing you; but is it your firm intention to live in the horrible house where I am lodging?"

"Indeed, monsieur——"

"I know," said the old man, interrupting Godefroid with a commanding air, "that you have a right to ask me what concern of mine it is to meddle in your affairs, to question you.—Listen, monsieur; you are young, and I am very old; I am older than my years, and they are sixty-six—I might be taken for eighty!—Age and misfortune justify many things, since the law exempts septuagenarians from various public duties; still, I do not dwell on the privileges bestowed by white hairs; it is you whom I am concerned for. Do you know that the part of the town in which you think of living is a desert by eight in the evening, and full of dangers, of which being robbed is the least? Have you noticed the wide plots where there are no houses, the waste ground and market gardens?—You will, perhaps, retort that I live there; but I, monsieur, am never out of doors after six in the evening. Or you will say that two young men are lodgers on the second floor, above the rooms you propose to take; but, monsieur, those two unhappy writers are the victims of writs out against them; they are pursued by their creditors; they are in hiding, and go out all day to come in at midnight; and as they always keep together and carry arms, they have no fear of being robbed.—I myself obtained permission from the Chief of the Police for them each to carry a weapon."

"Indeed, monsieur," said Godefroid, "I have no fear of robbers, for the same reasons as leave these gentlemen invulnerable, and so great a contempt for life, that if I should be murdered by mistake, I should bless the assassin."

"And yet you do not look so very wretched," said the old man, who was studying Godefroid.

"I have barely enough to live on, to give me bread, and I chose that part of town for the sake of the quiet that reigns there.—But may I ask, monsieur, what object you can have in keeping me out of the house?"

The old man hesitated; he saw Mme. Vauthier in pursuit. Godefroid, who was examining him attentively, was sur-

prised at the excessive emaciation to which grief, and perhaps hunger, or perhaps hard work, had reduced him; there were traces of all these causes of weakness on the face where the withered skin looked dried on to the bones, as if it had been exposed to the African sun. The forehead, which was high and threatening, rose in a dome above a pair of steel-blue eyes, cold, hard, shrewd, and piercing as those of a savage, and set in deep, dark, and very wrinkled circles, like a bruise round each. A large, long, thin nose, and the upward curve of the chin, gave the old man a marked likeness to the familiar features of Don Quixote; but this was a sinister Don Quixote, a man of no delusions, a terrible Don Quixote.

The old man, in spite of his look of severity, betrayed, nevertheless, the timidity and weakness that poverty gives to the unfortunate. And these two feelings seemed to have graven lines of ruin on a face so strongly framed that the destroying pickax of misery had rough-hewn it. The mouth was expressive and grave. Don Quixote was crossed with the *Président de Montesquieu*.

The man's dress was of black cloth throughout, but utterly threadbare; the coat, old-fashioned in cut, and the trousers showed many badly executed patches. The buttons had been recently renewed. The coat was fastened to the chin, showing no linen, and a rusty-black stock covered the absence of a collar. These black clothes, worn for many years, reeked of poverty. But the mysterious old man's air of dignity, his gait, the mind that dwelt behind that brow and lighted up those eyes, seemed irreconcilable with poverty. An observer would have found it hard to class this Parisian.

M. Bernard was so absent-minded that he might have been taken for a professor of the college quarter, a learned man lost in jealous and overbearing meditation: and Godefroid was filled with excessive interest and a degree of curiosity to which his beneficent mission added a spur.

"Monsieur," said the old man presently, "if I were assured that all you seek is silence and privacy, I would say, 'Come and live near me.' Take the rooms," he went on in a louder voice, so that the widow might hear him, as she passed them,

listening to what they were saying. "I am a father, monsieur, I have no one belonging to me in the world but my daughter and her son to help me to endure the miseries of life; but my daughter needs silence and perfect quiet.—Everyone who has hitherto come to take the rooms you wish to lodge in has yielded to the reasoning and the entreaties of a heartbroken father; they did not care in which street they settled of so desolate a part of the town, where cheap lodgings are plenty and boarding-houses at very low rates. But you, I see, are very much bent on it, and I can only beg you, monsieur, not to deceive me; for if you should, I can but leave and settle beyond the barrier.—And, in the first place, a removal might cost my daughter her life," he said in a broken voice, "and then, who knows whether the doctors who come to attend her—for the love of God—would come outside the gates?—"

If the man could have shed tears, they would have run down his cheeks as he spoke these last words; but there were tears in his voice, to use a phrase that has become commonplace, and he covered his brow with a hand that was mere bone and sinew.

"What, then, is the matter with madame, your daughter?" asked Godefroid in a voice of ingratiating sympathy.

"A terrible disease to which the doctors give a variety of names—or rather, which has no name.—All my fortune went——"

But he checked himself, and said, with one of those movements peculiar to the unfortunate:

"The little money I had—for in 1830, dismissed from a high position, I found myself without an income—in short, everything I had was soon eaten up by my daughter, who had already ruined her mother and her husband's family. At the present time the pension I draw hardly suffices to pay for necessaries in the state in which my poor saintly daughter now is.—She has exhausted all my power to weep.

"I have endured every torment, monsieur; I must be of granite still to live—or rather, God preserves the father that his child may still have a nurse or a providence, for her mother died of exhaustion.

“Ay, young man, you have come at a moment when this old tree that has never bent is feeling the ax of suffering, sharpened by poverty, cutting at its heart. And I, who have never complained to anybody, will tell you about this long illness to keep you from coming to the house—or, if you insist, to show you how necessary it is that our quiet should not be disturbed.

“At this moment, monsieur, day and night, my daughter barks like a dog!”

“She is mad, then?” said Godefroid.

“She is in her right mind, and a perfect saint,” replied M. Bernard. “You will think that I am mad when I have told you all. My only daughter is the child of a mother who enjoyed excellent health. I never in my life loved but one woman—she was my wife. I chose her myself, and married for love the daughter of one of the bravest colonels in the Imperial Guard, a Pole formerly on the Emperor’s staff, the gallant General Tarlovski. In the place I held strict morality was indispensable; but my heart is not adapted to accommodate many fancies—I loved my wife faithfully, and she deserved it. And I am as constant as a father as I was as a husband; I can say no more.

“My daughter never left her mother’s care; no girl ever led a chaster or more Christian life than my dear child. She was more than pretty—lovely; and her husband, a young man of whose character I was certain, for he was the son of an old friend, a President of the Supreme Court, I am sure was in no way contributory to his wife’s malady.”

M. Bernard and Godefroid involuntarily stood still a moment looking at each other.

“Marriage, as you know, often changes a woman’s constitution,” the old man went on. “My daughter’s first child was safely brought into the world, a son—my grandson, who lives with us, and who is the only descendant of either of the united families. The second time my daughter was expecting an infant, she had such singular symptoms that the physicians, all puzzled, could only ascribe them to the singular conditions which sometimes occur in such cases, and which are recorded in the memoirs of medical science. The infant

was born dead, literally strangled by internal convulsions. Thus began the illness—temporary conditions had nothing to do with it.—Perhaps you are a medical student?” Godefroid replied with a nod, that might mean either yes or no.

“After this disastrous child-bearing,” M. Bernard went on, “a scene that made so terrible an impression on my son-in-law that it laid the foundations of the decline of which he died—my daughter, at the end of two or three months, complained of general debility, more particularly affecting her feet, which felt, as she described it, as if they were made of cotton. This weakness became paralysis, but what a strange form of paralysis! You may bend my daughter’s feet under her, twist them round, and she feels nothing. The limbs are there, but they seem to have no blood, no flesh, no bones. This condition, which is unlike any recognized disease, has attacked her arms and hands; it was supposed to be connected with her spine. Doctors and remedies have only made her worse; my poor child cannot move without dislocating her hips, shoulders, or wrists. We have had for a long time an excellent surgeon, almost in the house, who makes it his care, with the help of a doctor—or doctors, for several have seen her out of curiosity—to replace the joints—would you believe me, monsieur?—as often as three or four times a day.

“Ah! I was forgetting to tell you—for this illness has so many forms—that during the early weak stage, before paralysis supervened, my daughter was liable to the most extraordinary attacks of catalepsy. You know what catalepsy is. She would lie with her eyes open and staring, sometimes in the attitude in which the fit seized her. She has had the most incredible forms of this affection, even attacks of tetanus.

“This phase of the disease suggested to me the application of mesmerism as a cure when I saw her so strangely paralyzed. Then, monsieur, my daughter became miraculously *clairvoyante*, her mind was subject to every marvel of somnambulism, as her body is to every form of disease.”

Godefroid was indeed wondering whether the old man were quite sane.

“For my part,” he went on, heedless of the expression of Godefroid’s eyes, “I, brought up on Voltaire, Diderot, and Helvétius, am a son of the eighteenth century, of the Revolution; and I laughed to scorn all the records handed down from antiquity and the Middle Ages of persons possessed—yes, and yet *possession* is the only explanation of the state my child is in. Even in her mesmeric sleep she has never been able to reveal the cause of her sufferings; she could not see it; and the methods of treatment suggested by her under those conditions, though carefully followed, have had no good result. For instance, she said she must be wrapped in a freshly killed pig; then she was to have points of highly magnetized red-hot iron applied to her legs; to have melted sealing-wax on her spine.—And what a wreck she became; her teeth fell out; she became deaf, and then dumb; and suddenly, after six months of perfect deafness and silence, she recovered hearing and speech. She occasionally recovers the use of her hands as unexpectedly as she loses it, but for seven years she has never known the use of her feet.

“She has sometimes had well-defined and characteristic attacks of hydrophobia. Not only may the sight or sound of water, of a glass or a cup, rouse her to frenzy, but she barks like a dog, a melancholy bark, or howls, as dogs do at the sound of an organ.

“She has several times seemed to be dying, and has received the last sacraments, and then come back to life again to suffer with full understanding and clearness of mind, for her faculties of heart and brain remain unimpaired. Though she is alive, she has caused the death of her husband and her mother, who could not stand such repeated trials. Alas!—Nor is this all. Every function of nature is perverted; only a medical man could give you a complete account of the strange condition of every organ.

“In this state did I bring her to Paris from the country in 1829; for the famous physicians to whom I described the case—Desplein, Bianchon, and Haudry—believed I was trying to impose upon them. At that time magnetism was stoutly denied by the schools. Without throwing any doubt on the provincial doctors’ good faith or mine, they thought

there was some inaccuracy, or, if you like, some exaggeration, such as is common enough in families or in the sufferers themselves. But they have been obliged to change their views; to these phenomena, indeed, it is due that nervous diseases have of late years been made the subject of investigation, for this strange case is now classed as nervous. The last consultation held by these gentlemen led them to give up all medicine; they decided that nature must be studied, but left to itself; and since then I have had but one doctor—the doctor who attends the poor of this district. In fact, all that can be done is done to alleviate her sufferings, since their causes remain unknown.”

The old man paused, as if this terrible confession were too much for him.

“For five years now my daughter has lived through alternations of amendment and relapse; but no new symptoms have appeared. She suffers more or less from the various forms of nervous attack which I have briefly described to you; but the paralysis of the legs and organic disturbances are constant. Our narrow means—increasingly narrow—compelled us to move from the rooms I took in 1829 in the Rue du Roule; and as my daughter cannot bear being moved, and I nearly lost her twice, first in coming to Paris, and then in moving here from the Beaujon side, I took the lodging in which we now are, foreseeing the disasters which ere long overtook us; for, after thirty years’ service, I was kept waiting for my pension till 1833. I have drawn it only for six months, and the new Government has crowned its severities by granting me only the minimum.”

Godefroid expressed such surprise as seemed to demand entire confidence, and so the old man understood it, for he went on at once, not without a reproachful glance towards heaven.

“I am one of the thousand victims to political reaction. I carefully hide a name that is obnoxious to revenge; and if the lessons of experience ever avail from one generation to the next, remember, young man, never to lend yourself to the severity of any *side* in politics. Not that I repent of having done my duty, my conscience is at peace; but the



powers of to-day have ceased to have that sense of common responsibility which binds governments together, however dissimilar; when zeal meets with a reward, it is the result of transient fear. The instrument, having served its purpose, is, sooner or later, completely forgotten. In me you see one of the staunchest supporters of the throne under the elder branch of the Bourbons, as I was, too, of the Imperial rule, and I am a beggar! As I am too proud to ask charity, no one will ever guess that I am suffering intolerable ills.

“Five days since, monsieur, the district medical officer who attends my daughter, or who watches the case, told me that he had no hope of curing a disease of which the symptoms vary every fortnight. His view is that neurotic patients are the despair of the Faculty because the causes lie in a system that defies investigation. He advises me to call in a certain Jewish doctor, who is spoken of as a quack; but at the same time he remarked that he was a foreigner, a Polish refugee, and that physicians are extremely jealous of certain extraordinary cures that have been much talked of; some people regard him as very learned and skillful.

“But he is exacting and suspicious; he selects his patients, and will not waste time; and then he is—a communist. His name is Halpersohn. My grandson has called on him twice, but in vain; for he has not yet been to the house, and I understand why.”

“Why?” asked Godefroid.

“Oh, my grandson, who is sixteen, is worse clothed even than I am; and, will you believe me, monsieur, I dare not show myself to this doctor; my dress is too ill-suited to what is expected in a man of my age, and of some dignity, too. If he should see the grandfather so destitute as I am when the grandson has shown himself in the same sorry plight, would he devote due care to my daughter? He would treat her as paupers are always treated.—And you must remember, monsieur, that I love my daughter for the grief she has caused me, as of old I loved her for the care she lavished upon me. She has become a perfect angel. Alas! She is now no more than a soul—a soul that beams on her son

and on me; her body is no more, for she has triumphed over pain.

“Imagine what a spectacle for a father! My daughter’s world is her bedroom. She must have flowers which she loves; she reads a great deal; and when she has the use of her hands, she works like a fairy. She knows nothing of the misery in which we live. Our life is such a strange one, that we can admit no one to our rooms.—Do you understand me, monsieur? Do you see that a neighbor is intolerable? I should have to ask so much of him that I should be under the greatest obligations—and I could never discharge them. In the first place, I have no time for anything: I am educating my grandson, and I work so hard, monsieur, that I never sleep for more than three or four hours at night.”

“Monsieur,” said Godefroid, interrupting the old man, to whom he had listened attentively while watching him with grieved attention, “I will be your neighbor, and I will help you——”

The old gentleman drew himself up with pride, indeed, with impatience, for he did not believe in any good thing in man.

“I will help you,” repeated Godefroid, taking the old man’s hands and pressing them warmly, “in such ways as I can.—Listen to me. What do you intend to make of your grandson?”

“He is soon to begin studying the law; I mean him to be an advocate.”

“Then your grandson will cost you six hundred francs a year, and you——”

The old man said nothing.

“I have nothing,” said Godefroid after a pause, “but I have influence; I will get at the Jewish doctor; and if your daughter is curable, she shall be cured. We will find means to repay this Halpersohn.”

“Oh, if my daughter were cured, I would make the sacrifice that can be made but once; I would give up what I am saving for a rainy day.”

“You may keep that, too.”

“Ah! what a thing it is to be young!” said the old man, shaking his head. “Good-by, monsieur, or rather *au revoir*.”

The library is open, and as I have sold all my books, I have to go there every day for my work.

“I am grateful to you for the kind feeling you have shown; but we must see whether you can show me such consideration as I am obliged to require of a neighbor. That is all I ask of you——”

“Yes, monsieur, pray accept me as your neighbor; for Barbet, as you know, is not the man to put up long with empty rooms, and you might meet with a worse companion in misery than I.—I do not ask you to believe in me, only to allow me to be of use to you.”

“And what interest can you have in serving me?” cried the old man, as he was about to go down the steps of the Cloister of the Carthusians, through which there was at that time a passage from the broad walk of the Luxembourg to the Rue d’Enfer.

“Have you never, in the course of your career, obliged anybody?”

The old man looked at Godefroid with knit brows, his eyes vague with reminiscence, like a man searching through the record of his life for an action for which he might deserve such rare gratitude; then he coldly turned away, after bowing with evident suspicion.

“Come! for a first meeting he was not particularly distant,” said the disciple to himself.

Godefroid went at once to the Rue d’Enfer, the address given him by M. Alain, and found Doctor Berton at home—a stern, cold man, who surprised him greatly by assuring him that the details given by M. Bernard of his daughter’s illness were absolutely correct; he then went in search of Doctor Halpersohn.

The Polish physician, since so famous, at that time lived at Chaillot in a little house in the Rue Marbeuf, of which he occupied the first floor. General Roman Zarnovicki lived on the ground floor, and the servants of the two refugees occupied the attics of the little hotel, only one story high. Godefroid did not see the doctor; he had been sent for to some distance in the country by a rich patient. But Gode-

froid was almost glad not to have met him, for in his haste he had neglected to provide himself with money, and was obliged to return to the Hôtel de la Chanterie to fetch some from his room.

These walks, and the time it took to dine in a restaurant in the Rue de l'Odéon, kept him busy till the hour when he was to take possession of his lodgings on the Boulevard Mont-Parnasse.

Nothing could be more wretched than the furniture provided by Mme. Vauthier for the two rooms. It seemed as though the woman was in the habit of letting rooms not to be inhabited. The bed, the chairs, the tables, the drawers, the desk, the curtains, had all evidently been purchased at sales under compulsion of the law, where the money-lender had kept them on account, no cash value being obtainable—a not infrequent case.

Mme. Vauthier, her arms akimbo, expected thanks, and she took Godefroid's smile for one of surprise.

“Oh yes, I have given you the best of everything, my dear M. Godefroid,” said she with an air of triumph. “Look what handsome silk curtains, and a mahogany bedstead that is not at all worm-eaten. It belonged to the Prince de Wissembourg, and was bought out of his mansion. When he left the Rue Louis-le-Grand, in 1809, I was scullery-maid in his kitchen, and from there I went to live with my landlord——”

Godefroid checked this confidential flow by paying his month's lodging in advance, and at the same time gave Mme. Vauthier six francs, also in advance, for doing his rooms. At this moment he heard a bark; and if he had not been forewarned, he might have thought that his neighbor kept a dog in his lodgings.

“Does that dog bark at night?” he asked.

“Oh, be easy, sir, and have patience; there will not be above a week of it. M. Bernard will not be able to pay his rent, and he will be turned out.—Still, they are queer folks, I must say! I never saw their dog.—For months that dog—for months, did I say?—for six months at a time you will never hear that dog, and you might think they didn't keep

one. The creature never comes out of madame's room. There is a lady who is very bad; she has never been out of her bed since they carried her in. Old M. Bernard works very hard, and his son, too, who is a day pupil at the Collège Louis-le-Grand, where he is in the top class for philosophy, and he is but sixteen. A bright chap that! but that little beggar works like a good 'un.

"You will hear them presently moving the flower pots in the lady's room—for they eat nothing but dry bread, the old man and his grandson, but they buy flowers and nice things for her. She must be very bad, poor thing, never to have stirred out since she came; and if you take M. Berton's word—he is the doctor who comes to see her—she never will go out but feet foremost."

"And what is this M. Bernard?"

"A very learned man, so they say; for he writes and goes to work in the public libraries, and the master lends him money on account of what he writes."

"The master—who?"

"The landlord, M. Barbet, the old bookseller; he has been in business this sixteen years. He is a man from Normandy, who once sold salad in the streets, and who started as a dealer in old books on the quay, in 1818; then he set up a little shop, and now he is very rich.—He is a sort of old Jew who runs six-and-thirty businesses at once, for he was a kind of partner with the Italian who built this great barn to keep silkworms in——"

"And so the house is a place of refuge for authors in trouble?" said Godefroid.

"Are you so unlucky as to be one?" asked the widow Vauthier.

"I am only a beginner," said Godefroid.

"Oh, my good gentleman, for all the ill I wish you, never get any further! A newspaper man, now—I won't say——"

Godefroid could not help laughing, and he bid the woman good-night—a cook unconsciously representing the whole middle class.

As he went to bed in the wretched room, floored with bricks that had not even been colored, and hung with paper at

seven sous the piece, Godefroid not only regretted his little lodging in the Rue Chanoinesse, but more especially the society of Mme. de la Chanterie. There was a great void in his soul. He had already acquired certain habits of mind, and he could not remember ever having felt such keen regrets for anything in his previous life. This comparison, brief as it was, made a great impression on his mind; he understood that no life he could lead could compare with that he was about to embrace, and his determination to follow in the steps of good Father Alain was thenceforth unchangeable. If he had not the vocation, he had the will.

Next morning, Godefroid, whose new way of life accustomed him to rising very early, saw, out of his window, a youth of about seventeen, wearing a blouse, and coming in evidently from a public fountain, carrying in each hand a pitcher full of water. The lad's face, not knowing that anyone could see him, betrayed his thoughts; and never had Godefroid seen one more guileless and more sad. The charm of youth was depressed by misery, study, and great physical fatigue. M. Bernard's grandson was remarkable for an excessively white skin, in strong contrast to very dark-brown hair. He made three expeditions; and the third time he saw a load of wood being delivered which Godefroid had ordered the night before; for the winter, though late, of 1838 was beginning to be felt, and there had been a slight fall of snow in the night.

Népomucène, who had just begun his day's work by fetching this wood, on which Mme. Vauthier had already levied heavy toll, stood talking to the youth while waiting till the sawyer had cut up the logs for him to take indoors. It was very evident that the sight of this wood, and of the ominous gray sky, had reminded the lad of the desirability of laying in some fuel. And then suddenly, as if reproaching himself for waste of time, he took up the pitchers and hurried into the house. It was indeed half-past seven; and as he heard the quarters strike by the clock at the Convent of the Visitation, he reflected that he had to be at the Collège Louis-le-Grand by half-past eight.

At the moment when the young man went in, Godefroid opened his door to Mme. Vauthier, who was bringing up some live charcoal to her new lodger; so it happened that he witnessed a scene that took place on the landing. A gardener living in the neighborhood, after ringing several times at M. Bernard's door without arousing anybody, for the bell was muffled in paper, had a rough dispute with the youth, insisting on the money due for the hire of plants which he had supplied. As the creditor raised his voice, M. Bernard came out.

"Auguste," said he to his grandson, "get dressed. It is time to be off."

He himself took the pitchers and carried them into the anteroom of his apartment, where Godefroid could see stands filled with flowers; then he closed the door and came outside to talk to the nurseryman. Godefroid's door was ajar, for Népomucène was passing in and out and piling up the logs in the second room. The gardener had become silent when M. Bernard appeared, wrapped in a purple silk dressing-gown, buttoned to the chin, and looking really imposing.

"You might ask for the money we owe you without shouting," said the gentleman.

"Be just, my dear sir," replied the gardener. "You were to pay me week by week, and now, for three months—ten weeks—I have had no money, and you owe me a hundred and twenty francs. We are accustomed to hire out our plants to rich people, who give us our money as soon as we ask for it, and I have called here five times. We have our rent to pay and our workmen, and I am no richer than you are. My wife, who used to supply you with milk and eggs, will not call this morning neither; you owe her thirty francs, and she would rather not come at all than come to nag, for she has a good heart, has my wife! If I listened to her, trade would never pay.—And that is why I came, you understand, for that is not my way of looking at things, you see——"

Just then out came Auguste, dressed in a miserable green cloth coat, and trousers of the same, a black cravat, and shabby boots. These clothes, though brushed with care, re-

vealed the very last extremity of poverty, for they were too short and too tight, so that they looked as if the least movement on the lad's part would split them. The whitened seams, the dog's-eared corners, the worn-out buttonholes, in spite of mending, betrayed to the least practiced eye the stigmata of poverty. This garb contrasted painfully with the youthfulness of the wearer, who went off eating a piece of stale bread, in which his fine strong teeth left their mark. This was his breakfast, eaten as he made his way from the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse to the Rue Saint-Jacques, with his books and papers under his arm, and on his head a cap far too small for his powerful head and his mass of fine dark hair.

As he passed his grandfather, they exchanged rapid glances of deep dejection: for he saw that the old man was in almost irremediable difficulties, of which the consequences might be terrible. To make way for the student of philosophy, the gardener retreated as far as Godefroid's door; and at the moment when he reached the door, Népomucène, with a load of wood, came up to the landing, driving the creditor quite to the window.

"M. Bernard," exclaimed the widow, "do you suppose that M. Godefroid took these rooms for you to hold meetings in?"

"I beg pardon, madame," replied the nurseryman, "the landing was crowded——"

"I did not mean it for you, M. Cartier," said the woman.

"Stay here!" cried Godefroid, addressing the nurseryman.—"And you, my dear sir," he added, turning to M. Bernard, whom this insolent remark left unmoved, "if it suits you to settle matters with your gardener in my room, pray come in."

The old gentleman, stupefied with trouble, gave Godefroid a look which conveyed a thousand thanks.

"As for you, my dear Mme. Vauthier, do not be so rough to monsieur, who, in the first place, is an old man, and to whom you also owe your thanks for having me as your lodger."

"Indeed!" exclaimed the woman.



“ Besides, if poor folks do not help each other, who is to help them?—Leave us, Mme. Vauthier; I can blow up my own fire. See to having my wood stowed in your cellar; I have no doubt you will take good care of it.”

Mme. Vauthier vanished; for Godefroid, by placing his fuel in her charge, had afforded pasture to her greed.

“ Come in,” said Godefroid, signing to the gardener, and setting two chairs for the debtor and creditor. The old man talked standing; the tradesman took a seat.

“ Come, my good man,” Godefroid went on, “ the rich do not always pay so punctually as you say they do, and you should not dun a worthy gentleman for a few louis. Monsieur draws his pension every six months, and he cannot give you a draft in anticipation for so small a sum; but I will advance the money if you insist on it.”

“ M. Bernard drew his pension about three weeks since, and he did not pay me. I should be very sorry to annoy him——”

“ What, and you have been supplying him with flowers for——”

“ Yes, monsieur, for six years, and he has always paid until now.”

M. Bernard, who was listening to all that might be going on in his own lodgings, and paying no heed to this discussion, heard screams through the partition, and hurried away in alarm, without saying a word.

“ Come, come, my good man, bring some fine flowers, your best flowers, this very morning, to M. Bernard, and let your wife send in some fresh eggs and milk; I will pay you myself this evening.”

Cartier looked somewhat askance at Godefroid.

“ Well, I suppose you know more about it than Mme. Vauthier; she sent me word that I had better look sharp if I meant to be paid,” said he. “ Neither she nor I, sir, can account for it when people who live on bread, who pick up odds and ends of vegetables, and bits of carrot and potatoes, and turnip outside the eating-house doors—yes, sir, I have seen the boy filling a little basket,—well, when those people spend near on a hundred francs a month on flowers.

The old man, they say, has but three thousand francs a year for his pension——”

“At any rate,” said Godefroid, “if they ruin themselves in flowers, it is not for you to complain.”

“Certainly not, sir, so long as I am paid.”

“Bring me your bill.”

“Very good, sir,” said the gardener, with rather more respect. “You hope to see the lady they hide so carefully, no doubt?”

“Come, come, my good fellow, you forget yourself,” said Godefroid stiffly. “Go home and pick out your best flowers to replace those you are taking away. If you can supply me with rich milk and new-laid eggs, you may have my custom. I will go this morning and look at your place.”

“It is one of the best in Paris, and I exhibit at the Luxembourg shows. I have three acres of garden on the boulevard, just behind that of the Grande-Chaumière.”

“Very good, M. Cartier. You are richer than I am, I can see. So have some consideration for us; for who knows but that one day we may need each other.”

The nurseryman departed, much puzzled as to what Godefroid could be.

“And time was when I was just like that!” said Godefroid to himself, as he blew the fire. “What a perfect specimen of the commonplace citizen; a gossip, full of curiosity, possessed by the idea of equality, but jealous of other dealers; furious at not knowing why a poor invalid stays in her room and is never seen; secretive as to his profits, but vain enough to let out the secret if he could crow over his neighbor. Such a man ought to be lieutenant at least of his crew. How easily and how often in every age does the scene of M. Dimanche recur! Another minute, and Cartier would have been my sworn ally!”

The old man’s return interrupted this soliloquy, which shows how greatly Godefroid’s ideas had changed during the past four months.

“I beg your pardon,” said M. Bernard, in a husky voice, “I see you have sent off the nurseryman quite satisfied, for

he bowed politely. In fact, my young friend, Providence seems to have sent you here for our express benefit at the very moment when all seemed at an end. Alas! The man's chatter must have told you many things.—It is quite true that I drew my half-year's pension a fortnight since; but I had other and more pressing debts, and I was obliged to keep back the money for the rent or be turned out of doors. You, to whom I have confided the secret of my daughter's state—who have heard her——”

He looked anxiously at Godefroid, who nodded affirmation.

“Well, you can judge if that would not be her death-blow. For I should have to place her in a hospital.—My grandson and I have been dreading this day, not that Cartier was our chief fear; it is the cold——”

“My dear M. Bernard, I have plenty of wood; take some!” cried Godefroid.

“But how can I ever repay such kindness?” said the old man.

“By accepting it without ceremony,” answered Godefroid cordially, “and by giving me your entire confidence.”

“But what claims have I on such generosity?” asked M. Bernard with revived suspicions. “My pride and my grandson's is broken!” he exclaimed. “For we have already fallen so far as to argue with our two or three creditors. The very poor can have no creditors. Only those can owe money who keep up a certain external display which we have utterly lost.—But I have not yet lost my common sense, my reason,” he added, as if speaking to himself.

“Monsieur,” said Godefroid gravely, “the story you told me yesterday would draw tears from an usurer——”

“No, no! for Barbet the publisher, our landlord, speculates on my poverty, and sets his old servant, the woman Vauthier, to spy it out.”

“How can he speculate on it?” asked Godefroid.

“I will tell you at another time,” replied the old man. “My daughter may be feeling cold, and since you are so kind, and since I am in a situation to accept charity, even if it were from my worst enemy——”

“I will carry the wood,” said Godefroid, who went across the landing with half a score of logs, which he laid down in his neighbor’s outer room.

M. Bernard had taken an equal number, and when he beheld this little stock of fuel, he could not conceal the simple, almost idiotic, smile by which men rescued from mortal and apparently inevitable danger express their joy, for there still is fear even in their belief.

“Accept all I can give you, my dear M. Bernard, without hesitation, and when we have saved your daughter, and you are happy once more, I will explain everything. Till then leave everything to me.—I went to call on the Jewish doctor, but unfortunately Halpersohn is absent; he will not be back for two days.”

Just then a voice which sounded to Godefroid, and which really was, sweet and youthful, called out, “Papa, papa!” in an expressive tone.

While talking to the old man, Godefroid had already remarked, through the crack of the door opposite to that on the landing, lines of neat white paint, showing that the sick woman’s room must be very different from the others that composed the lodging. His curiosity was now raised to the highest pitch; the errand of mercy was to him no more than a means; its end was to see the invalid. He would not believe that anyone who spoke in such a voice could be horrible to behold.

“You are taking too much trouble, papa,” said the voice. “Why do not you have more servants—at your age.—Dear me!”

“But you know, dear Vanda, that I will not allow anyone to wait on you but myself or your boy.”

These two sentences, which Godefroid overheard, though with some difficulty, for a curtain dulled the sound, made him understand the case. The sick woman, surrounded by every luxury, knew nothing of the real state in which her father and son lived. M. Bernard’s silk wrapper, the flowers, and his conversation with Cartier had already roused Godefroid’s suspicions, and he stood riveted, almost confounded, by this marvel of paternal devotion. The contrast between

the invalid's room as he imagined it and what he saw was in fact amazing. The reader may judge:

Through the door of a third room which stood open, Godefroid saw two narrow beds of painted wood like those of the vilest lodging-houses, with a straw mattress and a thin upper mattress; on each there was but one blanket. A small iron stove such as porters use to cook on, with a few lumps of dried fuel by the side of it, was enough to show the destitution of the owner, without other details in keeping with this wretched stove.

Godefroid by one step forward could see the pots and pans of the wretched household—glazed earthenware jars, in which a few potatoes were soaking in dirty water. Two tables of blackened wood, covered with papers and books, stood in front of a window looking out on the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, and showed how the father and son occupied themselves in the evening. On each table there was a candlestick of wrought iron of the poorest description, and in them candles of the cheapest kind, eight to the pound. On a third table, which served as a dresser, there were two shining sets of silver-gilt forks and spoons, some plates, a basin and cup in Sèvres china, and a knife with a gilt handle lying in a case, all evidently for the invalid's use.

The stove was alight; the water in the kettle was steaming gently. A wardrobe of painted deal contained no doubt the lady's linen and possessions, for he saw on her father's bed the clothes he had worn the day before, spread by way of a covering.

Some other rags laid in the same way on his grandson's bed led him to conclude that this was all their wardrobe; and under the bed he saw their shoes.

The floor, swept but seldom no doubt, was like that of a schoolroom. A large loaf that had been cut was visible on a shelf over the table. In short, it was poverty in the last stage of squalor, poverty reduced to a system, with the decent order of a determination to endure it; driven poverty that has to do everything at home, that insists on doing it, but that finds it impossible, and so puts every poor possession

to a wrong use. A strong and sickening smell pervaded the room, which evidently was but rarely cleaned.

The anteroom where Godefroid stood was at any rate decent, and he guessed that it commonly served to hide the horrors of the room inhabited by the old man and the youth. This room, hung with a Scotch plaid paper, had four walnut-wood chairs and a small table, and was graced with portraits—a colored print of Horace Vernet's picture of the Emperor; those of Louis XVIII. and Charles X.; and one of Prince Poniatowski, a friend no doubt of M. Bernard's father-in-law. There were cotton window curtains bound with red and finished with fringe.

Godefroid, keeping an eye on Népomucène, and hearing him come up with a load of wood, signed to him to stack it noiselessly in M. Bernard's anteroom; and, with a delicate feeling that showed he was making good progress, he shut the bedroom door that Mme. Vauthier's boy might not see the old man's squalor.

The anteroom was partly filled up by three flower-stands full of splendid plants, two oval and one round, all three of rosewood, and elegantly finished; and Népomucène, as he placed the logs on the floor, could not help saying:

“Isn't that lovely?—It must cost a pretty penny!”

“Jean, do not make too much noise——” M. Bernard called out.

“There, you hear him?” said Népomucène to Godefroid, “the poor old boy is certainly cracked!”

“And what will you be at his age?”

“Oh, I know sure enough!” said Népomucène; “I shall be in a sugar-basin.”

“In a sugar-basin?”

“Yes, my bones will have been made into charcoal. I have seen the sugar-boilers' carts often enough at Mont Souris come to fetch bone-black for their works, and they told me they used it in making sugar.” And with this philosophical reply, he went off for another basketful of wood.

Godefroid quietly closed M. Bernard's door, leaving him alone with his daughter.

Mme. Vauthier had meanwhile prepared her new lodger's

breakfast, and came with Félicité to serve it. Godefroid, lost in meditation, was staring at the fire on the hearth. He was absorbed in reflecting on this poverty that included so many different forms of misery, though he perceived that it had its pleasures too; the ineffable joys and triumphs of fatherly and of filial devotion. They were like pearls sewn on sackcloth.

“What romance—even the most famous—can compare with such reality?” thought he. “How noble is the life that mingles with such lives as these, enabling the soul to discern their cause and effect; to assuage suffering and encourage what is good; to become one with misfortune and learn the secrets of such a home as this; to be an actor in ever-new dramas such as delight us in the works of the most famous authors!—I had no idea that goodness could be more interesting than vice.”

“Is everything to your mind, sir?” asked Mme. Vauthier, who, helped by Félicité, had placed the table close to Godefroid. He then saw an excellent cup of coffee with milk, a smoking hot omelette, fresh butter, and little red radishes.

“Where did you find those radishes?” asked Godefroid.

“M. Cartier gave them to me,” said she. “I thought you might like them, sir.”

“And what do you expect me to pay for a breakfast like this every day?” said Godefroid.

“Well, monsieur, to be quite fair—it would be hard to supply it under thirty sous.”

“Say thirty sous,” said Godefroid. “But how is it that close by this, at Mme. Machillot’s, they only ask me forty-five francs a month for dinner, which is just thirty sous a day?”

“Oh, but what a difference, sir, between getting a dinner for fifteen people and going to buy everything that is needed for one breakfast: a roll, you see, eggs, butter,—lighting the fire—and then sugar, milk, coffee.—Why, they will ask you sixteen sous for nothing but a cup of coffee with milk in the Place de l’Odéon, and you have to give a sou or two to the waiter!—Here you have no trouble at all; you breakfast at home, in your slippers.”

“Well, then it is settled,” said Godefroid.

“And even then, but for Mme. Cartier, from whom I get the milk and eggs and parsley, I could not do it at all.—You must go and see their place, sir. Oh, it is really a fine sight. They employ five gardeners’ apprentices, and Népomucène goes to help with the watering all the summer; they pay me to let him go. And they make a lot of money out of strawberries and melons.—You are very much interested in M. Bernard, it would seem?” asked the widow in her sweetest tones. “For really to answer for their debts in that way!—But perhaps you don’t know how much they owe.—There is the lady that keeps the circulating library on the Place Saint-Michel; she calls every three or four days for thirty francs, and she wants it badly, too. Heaven above! that poor woman in bed does read and read. And at two sous a volume, thirty francs in two months——”

“Is a hundred volumes a month,” said Godefroid.

“There goes the old fellow to fetch madame’s cream and roll,” the woman went on. “It is for her tea; for she lives on nothing but tea, that lady; she has it twice a day, and then twice a week she wants sweets.—She is dainty, I can tell you! The old boy buys her cakes and tarts at the pastry-cook’s in the Rue de Buci. Oh, when it is for her, he sticks at nothing. He says she is his daughter!—Where’s the man who would do all he does, and at his age, for his daughter? He is killing himself—himself and his Auguste—and all for her.—If you are like me, sir—I would give twenty francs to see her. M. Berton says she is shocking, an object to make a show of.—They did well to come to this part of the town where nobody ever comes.—And you think of dining at Mme. Machillot’s, sir?”

“Yes, I thought of making an arrangement with her.”

“Well, sir, it is not to interfere with any plan of yours; but, take ’em as you find ’em, you will find a better eating-place in the Rue de Tournon; you need not bind yourself for a month, and you will have a better table——”

“Where in the Rue de Tournon?”

“At the successors of old Mme. Girard. That is where



the gentlemen upstairs dine, and they are satisfied—they could not be better pleased.”

“Very well, Mme. Vauthier, I will take your advice and dine there.”

“And, my dear sir,” the woman went on, emboldened by the easy-going air which Godefroid had intentionally assumed, “do you mean to say, seriously, that you are such a flat as to think of paying M. Bernard’s debts?—I should be really very sorry; for you must remember, my good M. Godefroid, that he is very near on seventy, and after him where are you? There’s an end to his pension. What will there be to repay you? Young men are so rash. Do you know that he owes above a thousand crowns?”

“But to whom?” asked Godefroid.

“Oh, that is no concern of mine,” said Mme. Vauthier mysteriously. “He owes the money, and that’s enough; and between you and me, he is having a hard time of it; he cannot get credit for a sou in all the neighborhood for that very reason.”

“A thousand crowns!” said Godefroid. “Be sure of one thing; if I had a thousand crowns, I should be no lodger of yours. But I, you see, cannot bear to see others suffering; and for a few hundred francs that it may cost me, I will make sure that my neighbor, a man with white hair, has bread and firing. Why, a man often loses as much at cards.—But three thousand francs—why, what do you think? Good Heavens!”

Mme. Vauthier, quite taken in by Godefroid’s affected candor, allowed a gleam of satisfaction to light up her face, and this confirmed her lodger’s suspicions. Godefroid was convinced that the old woman was implicated in some plot against the hapless M. Bernard.

“It is a strange thing, monsieur, what fancies come into one’s head. You will say that I am very inquisitive; but yesterday, when I saw you talking to M. Bernard, it struck me that you must be a publisher’s clerk—for this is their part of the town. I had a lodger, a foreman printer, whose works are in the Rue de Vaugirard, and he was named the same name as you——”

“And what concern is it of yours what my business is?” said Godefroid.

“Lor’! whether you tell me or whether you don’t, I shall know just the same,” said the widow. “Look at M. Bernard, for instance; well, for eighteen months I could never find out what he was; but in the nineteenth month I discovered that he had been a judge or a magistrate, or something of the kind, in the law, and that now he is writing a book about it. What does he get by it? That’s what I say. And if he had told me, I should have held my tongue; so there!”

“I am not at present a publisher’s agent, but I may be, perhaps, before long.”

“There, I knew it!” exclaimed the woman eagerly, and turning from the bed she was making as an excuse to stay chattering to her lodger. “You have come to cut the ground from under—Well, well, ‘a nod’s as good as a wink’——”

“Hold hard!” cried Godefroid, standing between Mme. Vauthier and the door. “Now, tell me, what are you paid to meddle in this?”

“Hey-day!” cried the old woman, with a keen look at Godefroid. “You are pretty sharp after all!”

She shut and locked the outer door; then she came back and sat down by the fire.

“On my word and honor, as sure as my name is Vauthier, I took you for a student till I saw you giving your logs to old Father Bernard. My word, but you’re a sharp one! By the Piper! you can play a part well! I thought you were a perfect flat. Now, will you promise me a thousand francs? For as sure as the day above us, old Barbet and M. Métivier have promised me five hundred if I keep my eyes open.”

“What? Not they! Two hundred at the very outside, my good woman, and only promised at that—and you cannot summons them for payment!—Look here; if you will put me in a position to get the job they are trying to manage with M. Bernard, I will give you four hundred!—Come, now, what are they up to?”

“Well, they have paid him fifteen hundred francs on account for his work, and made him sign a bill for a thousand crowns. They doled it out to him a hundred francs

at a time, contriving to keep him as poor as poor.—They set the duns upon him; they sent Cartier, you may wager.”

At this, Godefroid, by a look of cynical perspicacity that he shot at the woman, made it clear to her that he quite understood the game she was playing for her landlord's benefit. Her speech threw a light on two sides of the question, for it also explained the rather strange scene between the gardener and himself.

“Oh yes!” she went on, “they have him fast; for where is he ever to find a thousand crowns! They intend to offer him five hundred francs when the work is in their hands complete, and five hundred francs per volume as they are brought out for sale. The business is all in the name of a bookseller these gentlemen have set up in business on the Quai des Augustins——”

“Oh yes—that little—what's-his-name?”

“Yes, that's your man.—Morand, formerly M. Barbet's agent.—There is a heap of money to be got out of it, it would seem.”

“There will be a heap of money to put into it,” said Godefroid, with an expressive grimace.

There was a gentle knock at the door, and Godefroid, very glad of the interruption, rose to open it.

“All this is between you and me, Mother Vauthier,” said Godefroid, seeing M. Bernard.

“M. Bernard,” cried she, “I have a letter for you.”

The old man went down a few steps.

“No, no, I have no letter for you, M. Bernard; I only wished to warn you against that young fellow there. He is a publisher.”

“Oh, that accounts for everything,” said the old man to himself. And he came back to his neighbor's room with a quite altered countenance.

The calmly cold expression on M. Bernard's face when he reappeared was in such marked contrast to the frank and friendly manner his gratitude had lent him, that Godefroid was struck by so sudden a change.

“Monsieur, forgive me for disturbing your solitude, but

you have since yesterday loaded me with favors, and a benefactor confers rights on those whom he obliges.”

Godefroid bowed.

“I, who for five years have suffered once a fortnight the torments of the Redeemer; I, who for six-and-thirty years was the representative of Society and the Government, who was then the arm of public vengeance, and who, as you may suppose, have no illusions left—nothing, nothing but sufferings.—Well, monsieur, your careful attention in closing the door of the dog kennel in which my grandson and I sleep—that trifling act was to me the cup of water of which Bossuet speaks. I found in my heart, my worn-out heart, which is as dry of tears as my withered body is of sweat, the last drop of that elixir which in youth leads us to see the best side of every human action, and I came to offer you my hand, which I never give to anyone but my daughter; I came to bring you the heavenly rose of belief, even now, in goodness.”

“M. Bernard,” said Godefroid, remembering good old Alain’s injunctions, “I did nothing with a view to winning your gratitude.—You are under a mistake.”

“That is frank and aboveboard,” said the old lawyer. “Well, that is what I like. I was about to reproach you. Forgive me; I esteem you.—So you are a publisher, and you want to get my book in preference to MM. Barbet, Métivier, and Morand?—That explains all. You are prepared to deal with me as they were; only you do it with a good grace.”

“Old Vauthier has just told you, I suppose, that I am a publisher’s agent?”

“Yes,” said he.

“Well, M. Bernard, before I can say what we are prepared to *pay* more than those gentlemen *offer*, I must understand on what terms you stand with them.”

“Very true,” said the old man, who seemed delighted to find himself the object of a competition by which he could not fail to benefit. “Do you know what the work is?”

“No; I only know that there is something to be made by it.”

“It is only half-past nine; my daughter has had her break-

fast, my grandson Auguste will not come in till a quarter to eleven. Cartier will not be here with the flowers for an hour—we have time to talk, monsieur—monsieur who?”

“Godefroid.”

“M. Godefroid.—The book in question was planned by me in 1825, at a time when the Ministry, struck by the constant reduction of personal estate, drafted the Law of Entail and Seniority which was thrown out. I had observed many defects in our codes and in the fundamental principle of French law. The codes have been the subject of many important works; but all those treatises are essentially on jurisprudence; no one has been so bold as to study the results of the Revolution—or of Napoleon’s rule, if you prefer it—as a whole, analyzing the spirit of these laws and the working of their application. That is, in general terms, the purpose of my book. I have called it the *Spirit of the Modern Laws*. It covers organic law as well as the codes—all the codes, for we have five! My book, too, is in five volumes, and a sixth volume of authorities, quotations, and references. I have still three months’ work before me.

“The owner of this house, a retired publisher, scented a speculation. I, in the first instance, thought only of benefiting my country. This Barbet has got the better of me.—You will wonder how a publisher could entrap an old lawyer; but you, monsieur, know my history, and this man is a money-lender. He has the sharp eye and the knowledge of the world that such men must have. His advances have just kept pace with my necessity; he has always come in at the very moment when despair has made me a defenseless prey.”

“Not at all, my dear sir,” said Godefroid. “He has simply kept Mme. Vauthier as a spy.—But the terms. Tell me honestly.”

“They advanced me fifteen hundred francs, represented at the present rates by three bills for a thousand francs each, and these three thousand francs are secured to them by a lien on the property of my book, which I cannot dispose of elsewhere till I have paid off the bills; the bills have been protested; judgment has been pronounced.—Here, monsieur, you see the complications of poverty.

“At the most moderate estimate, the first edition of this vast work, the result of ten years’ labor and thirty-six years’ experience, will be well worth ten thousand francs.—Well, just five days since, Morand offered me a thousand crowns and my note of hand paid off for all rights.—As I could never find three thousand two hundred and forty francs, unless you intervene between us, I must yield.

“They would not take my word of honor; for further security they insisted on bills of exchange which have been protested, and I shall be imprisoned for debt. If I pay up, these money-lenders will have doubled their loan; if I deal with them, they will make a fortune, for one of them was a papermaker, and God only knows how low they can keep the price of materials. And then, with my name to it, they know that they are certain of a sale of ten thousand copies.”

“Why, monsieur—you, a retired Judge——!”

“What can I say? I have not a friend, no one remembers me!—And yet I saved many heads even if I sentenced many to fall!—And then there is my daughter, my daughter whose nurse and companion I am, for I work only at night.—Ah! young man, none but the wretched should be set to judge the wretched. I see now that of yore I was too severe.”

“I do not ask you your name, monsieur. I have not a thousand crowns at my disposal, especially if I pay Halpersohn and your little bills; but I can save you if you will pledge your word not to dispose of your book without due notice to me; it is impossible to embark in so important a matter without consulting professional experts. The persons I work for are powerful, and I can promise you success if you can promise me perfect secrecy, even from your children—and keep your word.”

“The only success I care for is my poor Vanda’s recovery; for, I assure you, the sight of such sufferings extinguishes every other feeling in a father’s heart; the loss of fame is nothing to the man who sees a grave yawning at his feet——”

“I will call on you this evening. Halpersohn may come home at any moment, and I go every day to see if he has returned.—I will spend to-day in your service.”

“Oh, if you could bring about my daughter’s recovery,

monsieur—monsieur, I would make you a present of my book!”

“But,” said Godefroid, “I am not a publisher.”

The old man started with surprise.

“I could not help letting old Vauthier think so for the sake of ascertaining what snares had been laid for you.”

“But who are you, then?”

“Godefroid,” was the reply; “and as you have allowed me to supply you with the means of living better,” added the young man, smiling, “you may call me Godefroid de Bouillon.”

The old lawyer was too much touched to laugh at the jest. He held out his hand to Godefroid and grasped the young man’s warmly.

“You wish to remain unknown?” said M. Bernard, looking at Godefroid with melancholy, mixed with some uneasiness.

“If you will allow me.”

“Well, do as you think proper.—And come in this evening; you will see my daughter, if her state allows.”

This was evidently the greatest concession the poor father could make; and seeing Godefroid’s grateful look, the old man had the pleasure of feeling that he was understood.

An hour later Cartier came back with some beautiful flowers, replanted the stands with his own hands in fresh moss, and Godefroid paid the bill, as he did the subscription to the lending library, for which the account was sent in soon after. Books and flowers were the staff of life to this poor sick—or rather, tormented woman, who could live on so little food.

As he thought of this family in the coils of disaster, like that of Laocoön—a sublime allegory of many lives!—Godefroid, making his way leisurely on foot to the Rue Marbeuf, felt in his heart that he was curious rather than benevolent. The idea of the sick woman, surrounded with luxuries in the midst of abject squalor, made him forget the horrible details of the strange nervous malady, which is happily an extraordinary exception, though abundantly proved by various his-

torians. One of our gossiping chronicle writers, Talle-mant des Réaux, mentions an instance. We like to think of women as elegant even in their worst sufferings, and Godefroid promised himself some pleasure in penetrating into the room which only the physician, the father, and the son had entered for six years past. However, he ended by reproaching himself for his curiosity. The neophyte even understood that his feeling, however natural, would die out by degrees as he carried out his merciful errands, by dint of seeing new homes and new sorrows. Such messengers, in fact, attain to a heavenly benignity which nothing can shock or amaze, just as in love we attain to a sublime quiescence of feeling in the conviction of its strength and duration, by a constant habit of submission and sweetness.

Godefroid was told that Halpersohn had come home during the night, but had been obliged to go out in his carriage the first thing in the morning to see the patients who were waiting for him. The woman at the gate told Godefroid to come back next morning before nine.

Remembering M. Alain's advice as to parsimony in his personal expenses, Godefroid dined for twenty-five sous in the Rue de Tournon, and was rewarded for his self-denial by finding himself among compositors and proofreaders. He heard a discussion about the cost of production, and, joining in, picked up the information that an octavo volume of forty sheets, of which a thousand copies were printed, would not cost more than thirty sous per copy under favorable circumstances. He determined on going to inquire the price commonly asked for such volumes on sale at the law publishers', so as to be in a position to dispute the point with the publishers who had got a hold on M. Bernard, if he should happen to meet them.

At about seven in the evening he came back to the Boulevard Mont-Parnasse along the Rue de Vaugirard, the Rue Madame, and the Rue de l'Ouest, and he saw how deserted that part of the town is, for he met nobody. It is true that the cold was severe, snow fell in large flakes, and the carts made no noise on the stones.

"Ah, here you are, monsieur!" said Mme. Vauthier when



she saw him. "If I had known you would come in so early, I would have lighted your fire."

"It is unnecessary," replied Godefroid, as the woman followed him; "I am going to spend the evening with M. Bernard."

"Ah! very good. You are cousins, I suppose, that you are hand and glove with him by the second day. I thought perhaps you would have liked to finish what we were saying——"

"Oh, about the four hundred francs?" said Godefroid in an undertone. "Look here, Mother Vauthier, you would have had them this evening if you had said nothing to M. Bernard. You want to hunt with the hounds and run with the hare, and you will get neither; for, so far as I am concerned, you have spoiled my game—my chances are altogether ruined——"

"Don't you believe that, my good sir. To-morrow, when you are at breakfast——"

"Oh, to-morrow I must be off at daybreak like your authors."

Godefroid's past experience and life as a dandy and journalist had been so far of use to him as to lead him to guess that if he did not take this line, Barbet's spy would warn the publisher that there was something in the wind, and he would then take such steps as would ere long endanger M. Bernard's liberty; whereas, by leaving the three usurious negotiators to believe that their schemes were not in peril, they would keep quiet.

But Godefroid was not yet a match for Parisian humanity when it assumes the guise of a Mme. Vauthier. This woman meant to have Godefroid's money and her landlord's, too. She flew off to M. Barbet, while Godefroid changed his dress to call on M. Bernard's daughter.

Eight o'clock was striking at the Convent of the Visitation, whose clock regulated the life of the whole neighborhood, when Godefroid, full of curiosity, knocked at his friend's door. Auguste opened it; as it was Saturday, the lad spent his evening at home; Godefroid saw that he wore a jacket of black velvet, black trousers that were quite

decent, and a blue silk tie; but his surprise at seeing the youth so unlike his usual self ceased when he entered the invalid's room. He at once understood the necessity for the father and the boy to be presentably dressed.

The walls of the room, hung with yellow silk, paneled with bright green cord, made the room look extremely cheerful; the cold tiled floor was covered by a flowered carpet on a white ground. The two windows, with their handsome curtains lined with white silk, were like bowers, the flower-stands were so full of beauty, and blinds hindered them from being seen from outside in a quarter where such lavishness was rare. The woodwork, painted white, and varnished, was touched up with gold lines. A heavy curtain, embroidered in tent stitch, with grotesque foliage on a yellow ground, hung over the door and deadened every sound from outside. This splendid curtain had been worked by the invalid, who embroidered like a fairy when she had the use of her hands.

Opposite the door, at the further end of the room, the chimney-shelf, covered with green velvet, had a set of very costly ornaments, the only relic of the wealth of the two families. There was a very curious clock; an elephant supporting a porcelain tower filled with beautiful flowers; two candelabra in the same style, and some valuable Oriental pieces. The fender, the dogs, and fire-irons were all of the finest workmanship.

The largest of the three flower-stands stood in the middle of the room, and above it hung a porcelain chandelier of floral design.

The bed on which the judge's daughter lay was one of those fine examples of carved wood, painted white and gold, that were made in the time of Louis XV. By the invalid's pillow was a pretty inlaid table, on which were the various objects necessary for a life spent in bed; a bracket light for two candles was fixed to the wall, and could be turned backwards and forwards by a touch. In front of her was a bed-table, wonderfully contrived for her convenience. The bed was covered with a magnificent counterpane, and draped with curtains looped back in festoons; it was loaded with books and a work-basket, and among these various objects

Godefroid would hardly have discovered the sick woman but for the tapers in the two candle-branches.

There seemed to be nothing of her but a very white face, darkly marked round the eyes by much suffering; her eyes shone like fire; and her principal ornament was her splendid black hair, of which the heavy curls, set out in bunches of numerous ringlets, showed that the care and arrangement of her hair occupied part of the invalid's day; a movable mirror at the foot of the bed confirmed the idea.

No kind of modern elegance was lacking, and a few trifling toys for poor Vanda's amusement showed that her father's affection verged on mania.

The old man rose from a very handsome easy-chair of Louis XV. style, white and gold, and covered with needle-work, and went forward a few steps to welcome Godefroid, who certainly would not have recognized him; for his cold, stern face had assumed the gay expression peculiar to old men who have preserved their dignity of manner and the superficial frivolity of courtiers. His purple wadded dressing-gown was in harmony with the luxury about him, and he took snuff out of a gold box set with diamonds.

"Here, my dear," said M. Bernard to his daughter, "is our neighbor of whom I spoke to you." And he signed to his grandson to bring forward one of two armchairs, in the same style as his own, which were standing on each side of the fire.

"Monsieur's name is Godefroid, and he is most kind in standing on no ceremony——"

Vanda moved her head in acknowledgment of Godefroid's low bow; and by the movement of her throat as it bent and unbent, he discovered that all this woman's vitality was seated in her head. Her emaciated arms and lifeless hands lay on the fine white sheet like objects quite apart from the body, and that seemed to fill no space in the bed. The things needed for her use were on a set of shelves behind the bed, and screened by a silk curtain.

"You, my dear sir, are the first person, excepting only the doctors—who have ceased to be men to me—whom I have set eyes on for six years; so you can have no idea of

the interest I have felt in you ever since my father told me you were coming to call on us. It was passionate, unconquerable curiosity, like that of our mother Eve. My father, who is so good to me; my son, of whom I am so fond, are undoubtedly enough to fill up the vacuum of a soul now almost bereft of body; but that soul is still a woman's after all! I recognized that in the childish joy I felt in the idea of your visit.—You will do us the pleasure of taking a cup of tea with us, I hope?”

“Yes, M. Godefroid has promised us the pleasure of his company for the evening,” said the old man, with the air of a millionaire doing the honors of his house.

Auguste, seated in a low, worsted-work chair by a small table of inlaid wood, finished with brass moldings, was reading by the light of the wax candles on the chimney-shelf.

“Auguste, my dear, tell Jean to bring tea in an hour's time.”

She spoke with some pointed meaning, and Auguste replied by a nod.

“Will you believe, monsieur, that for the past six years no one has waited on me but my father and my boy, and I could not endure anybody else. If I were to lose them, I should die of it.—My father will not even allow Jean, a poor old Normandy peasant who has lived with us for thirty years—will not even let him come into the room.”

“I should think not, indeed!” said the old man readily. “M. Godefroid has seen him; he saws and brings in the wood, he cooks and runs errands, and wears a dirty apron; he would have made hay of all these pretty things, which are so necessary to my poor child, to whom this elegance is second nature.”

“Indeed, madame, your father is quite right——”

“But why?” she urged. “If Jean had damaged my room, my father would have renewed it.”

“Of course, my child; but what would have prevented me is the fact that you cannot leave it; and you have no idea what Paris workmen are. It would take them more than three months to restore your room. Only think of the dust that would come out of your carpet if it were

taken up. Let Jean do your room! Do not think of such a thing. By taking the extreme care which only your father and your boy can take, we have spared you sweeping and dust; if Jean came in to help, everything would be done for in a month."

"It is not so much out of economy as for the sake of your health," said Godefroid. "Monsieur your father is quite right."

"Oh, I am not complaining," said Vanda in a saucy tone.

Her voice had the quality of a concert; soul, action, and life were all concentrated in her eyes and her voice; for Vanda, by careful practice, for which time had certainly not been lacking, had succeeded in overcoming the difficulties arising from her loss of teeth.

"I am still happy, monsieur, in spite of the dreadful malady that tortures me; for wealth is certainly a great help in enduring my sufferings. If we had been in poverty, I should have died eighteen years ago, and I am still alive. I have many enjoyments, and they are all the keener because I live on, triumphing over death.—You will think me a great chatterbox," she added, with a smile.

"Madame," said Godefroid, "I could beg you to talk forever, for I never heard a voice to compare with yours—it is music! Rubini is not more delightful——"

"Do not mention Rubini or the opera," said the old man sadly. "However rich we may be, it is impossible to give my daughter, who was a great musician, a pleasure to which she was devoted."

"I apologize," said Godefroid.

"You will fall into our ways," said the old man.

"This is your training," said the invalid, smiling. "When we have warned you several times by crying, 'Look out!' you will know all the blind man's buff of our conversation!"

Godefroid exchanged a swift glance with M. Bernard, who, seeing tears in his new friend's eyes, put his finger to his lip as a warning not to betray the heroic devotion he and the boy had shown for the past seven years.

This devoted and unflinching imposture, proved by the invalid's entire deception, produced on Godefroid at this

moment the effect of looking at a precipitous rock whence two chamois hunters were on the point of falling.

The splendid gold and diamond snuff-box with which the old man trifled, leaning over the foot of his daughter's bed, was like the touch of genius which in a great actor wrings from us a cry of admiration. Godefroid looked at the snuff-box, wondering why it had not been sold or pawned, but he postponed the idea till he could discuss it with the old man.

"This evening, M. Godefroid, my daughter was so greatly excited by the promise of your visit, that the various strange symptoms of her malady which, for nearly a fortnight past, have driven us to despair, suddenly disappeared. You may imagine my gratitude!"

"And mine!" cried Vanda, in an insinuating voice, with a graceful inclination of her head. "You are a deputation from the outer world.—Since I was twenty I have not known what a drawing-room is like, or a party, or a ball; and I love dancing, I am crazy about the play, and above all about music. Well, I imagine everything in my mind. I read a great deal, and my father tells me all about the gay world——" As he listened, Godefroid felt prompted to kneel at the feet of this poor old man.

"When he goes to the opera—and he often goes—he describes the dresses to me and all the singers. Oh! I should like to be well again; in the first place, for my father's sake, for he lives for me alone, as I live for him and through him, and then for my son's—I should like him to know another mother. Oh! monsieur, what perfect men are my dear old father and my admirable son!—Then I could wish for health also, that I might hear Lablache, Rubini, Tamburini, Grisi, the *Puritani* too!—But——"

"Come, my dear, compose yourself. If we talk about music, it is fatal!" said the old father, with a smile.

And that smile, which made him look younger, evidently constantly deceived the sick woman.

"Well, I will be good," said Vanda, with a saucy pout. "But let me have a harmonium."

This instrument had lately been invented; it could, by a

little contrivance, be placed by the invalid's bed, and would only need the pressure of the foot to give out an organ-like tone. This instrument, in its most improved form, was as effective as a piano; but at that time it cost three hundred francs. Vanda, who read newspapers and reviews, had heard of such an instrument, and had been longing for one for two months past.

"Yes, madame, and I can procure you one," replied Godefroid at an appealing glance from the old man. "A friend of mine who is setting out for Algiers has a very fine one, which I will borrow of him; for before buying one, you had better try it. It is quite possible that the sound, which is strongly vibrating, may be too much for you."

"Can I have it to-morrow?" she asked, with the eagerness of a Creole.

"To-morrow!" objected M. Bernard. "That is very soon; besides, to-morrow will be Sunday."

"To be sure," said she, looking at Godefroid, who felt as though he saw a soul fluttering, as he admired the ubiquity of Vanda's eyes.

Until now he had never understood what the power of the voice and eyes might be when the entire vitality was concentrated in them. Her glance was more than a glance; it was a flame, or rather a blaze of divine light, a communicative ray of life and intelligence, thought made visible. The voice, with its endless intonations, supplied the place of movement, gesture, and turns of the head. And her changing color, varying like that of the fabled chameleon, made the illusion—or, if you will, the delusion—complete. That weary head, buried in a cambric pillow frilled with lace, was a complete woman.

Never in his life had Godefroid seen so noble a spectacle, and he could hardly endure his emotions. Another grand feature, where everything was strange in a situation so full of romance and of horror, was that the soul alone seemed to be living in the spectators. This atmosphere, where all was sentiment, had a celestial influence. They were as unconscious of their bodies as the woman in bed; everything was pure spirit. By dint of gazing at these frail remains

of a pretty woman, Godefroid forgot the elegant luxury of the room, and felt himself in heaven. It was not till half an hour after that he noticed a what-not covered with curiosities, over which hung a noble portrait that Vanda desired him to look at, as it was by Géricault.

"Géricault," said she, "was a native of Rouen, and his family being under some obligations to my father, who was President of the Supreme Court there, he showed his gratitude by painting that masterpiece, in which you see me at the age of sixteen."

"You have there a very fine picture," said Godefroid, "and one that is quite unknown to those who have studied the rare works of that great genius."

"To me it is no longer an object of anything but affectionate regard," said she, "since I live only by my feelings; and I have a beautiful life," she went on, looking at her father with her whole soul in her eyes. "Oh, monsieur, if you could but know what my father is! Who would believe that the austere and dignified Judge to whom the Emperor owed so much that he gave him that snuff-box, and whom Charles X. rewarded by the gift of that Sèvres tray"—and she looked at a side-table—"that the stanch upholder of law and authority, the learned political writer, has in a heart of rock all the tenderness of a mother?—Oh, papa, papa! Come, kiss me—I insist on it—if you love me."

The old man rose, leaned over the bed, and set a kiss on his daughter's high poetic brow, for her sickly fancies were not invariably furies of affection. Then he walked up and down the room, but without a sound, for he wore slippers—the work of his daughter's hands.

"And what is your occupation?" she asked Godefroid after a pause.

"Madame, I am employed by certain pious persons to take help to the unfortunate."

"A beautiful mission!" said she. "Do you know that the idea of devoting myself to such work has often occurred to me? But what ideas have not occurred to me?" said she, with a little shake of her head. "Pain is a torch that throws light on life, and if I ever recover my health——"



"You shall enjoy yourself, my child," the old man put in.

"Certainly I long to enjoy life," said she, "but should I be able for it?—My son, I hope, will be a lawyer, worthy of his two grandfathers, and he must leave me. What is to be done?—If God restores me to life, I will dedicate it to Him.—Oh, not till I have given you both as much of it as you desire!" she exclaimed, looking at her father and her boy. "There are times, my dear father, when M. de Maistre's ideas work in my brain, and I fancy I am expiating some sin."

"That is what comes of reading so much!" cried the old man, visibly grieved.

"There was that brave Polish General, my great grandfather; he meddled very innocently in the concerns of Poland——"

"Now we have come back to Poland!" exclaimed Bernard.

"How can I help it, papa? My sufferings are intolerable, they make me hate life, and disgust me with myself. Well, what have I done to deserve them? Such an illness is not mere disordered health; it is a complete wreck of the whole constitution, and——"

"Sing the national air your poor mother used to sing; it will please M. Godefroid, I have spoken to him of your voice," said her father, evidently anxious to divert his daughter's mind from the ideas she was following out.

Vanda began to sing in a low, soft voice a hymn in the Polish tongue, which left Godefroid bewildered with admiration and sadness. This melody, a good deal like the long-drawn melancholy tunes of Brittany, is one of those poetic airs that linger in the mind long after being heard. As he listened to Vanda, Godefroid at first looked at her; but he could not bear the ecstatic eyes of this remnant of a woman, now half-crazed, and he gazed at some tassels that hung on each side of the top of the bed.

"Ah, ha!" said Vanda, laughing at Godefroid's evident curiosity, "you are wondering what those are for?"

"Vanda, Vanda, be calm, my child! See, here comes the tea.—This, monsieur, is a very expensive contrivance," he said to Godefroid. "My daughter cannot raise herself, nor

can she remain in bed without its being made and the sheets changed. Those cords work over pulleys, and by slipping a sheet of leather under her and attaching it by rings at the corners to those ropes, we can lift her without fatiguing her or ourselves."

"Yes, I am carried up—up!" said Vanda deliriously.

Auguste happily came in with a teapot, which he set on a little table, where he also placed the Sèvres tray, covered with sandwiches and cakes. Then he brought in the cream and butter. This diverted the sick woman's mind; she had been on the verge of an attack.

"Here, Vanda, is Nathan's last novel. If you should lie awake to-night, you will have something to read."

"*La Perle de Dol!* That will be a love-story no doubt.—Auguste, what do you think? I am to have a harmonium!"

Auguste raised his head quickly, and looked strangely at his grandfather.

"You see how fond he is of his mother!" Vanda went on.—"Come and kiss me, dear rogue.—No, it is not your grandfather that you must thank, but M. Godefroid; our kind neighbor promises to borrow one for me to-morrow morning.—What is it like, monsieur?"

Godefroid, at a nod from the old man, gave a long description of the harmonium while enjoying the tea Auguste had made, which was of superior quality and delicious flavor.

At about half-past ten the visitor withdrew, quite overpowered by the frantic struggle maintained by the father and son, while admiring their heroism and the patience that enabled them, day after day, to play two equally exhausting parts.

"Now," said M. Bernard, accompanying him to his own door, "now you know the life I lead! At every hour I have to endure the alarms of a robber, on the alert for everything. One word, one look might kill my daughter. One toy removed from those she is accustomed to see about her would reveal everything to her, for mind sees through walls."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid, "on Monday Halpersohn will pronounce his opinion on your daughter, for he is

at home again. I doubt whether science can restore her frame.”

“Oh, I do not count upon it,” said the old man with a sigh. “If they will only make her life endurable.—I trusted to your tact, monsieur, and I want to thank you, for you understood.—Ah! the attack has come on!” cried he, hearing a scream. “She has done too much——”

He pressed Godefroid’s hand and hurried away.

At eight next morning Godefroid knocked at the famous doctor’s door. He was shown up by the servant to a room on the first floor of the house, which he had had time to examine while the porter found the man-servant.

Happily, Godefroid’s punctuality had saved him the vexation of waiting, as he had hoped it might. He was evidently the first-comer. He was led through a very plain ante-room into a large study, where he found an old man in a dressing-gown, smoking a long pipe. The dressing-gown, of black moreen, was shiny with wear, and dated from the time of the Polish dispersion.

“What can I do to serve you?” said the Jew, “for you are not ill.”

And he fixed Godefroid with a look that had all the sharp inquisitiveness of the Polish Jew, eyes which seem to have ears.

To Godefroid’s great surprise, Halpersohn was a man of fifty-six, with short bow-legs and a broad, powerful frame. There was an Oriental stamp about the man, and his face must in youth have been singularly handsome; the remains showed a marked Jewish nose, as long and as curved as a Damascus scimitar. His forehead was truly Polish, broad and lofty, wrinkled all over like crumpled paper, and recalling that of a Saint Joseph by some old Italian master. His eyes were sea-green, set like a parrot’s in puckered gray lids, and expressive of cunning and avarice in the highest degree. His mouth, thin and straight, like a cut in his face, lent this sinister countenance a crowning touch of suspiciousness.

The pale, lean features—for Halpersohn was extraordinarily thin—were crowned by ill-kept gray hair, and

graced by a very thick, long beard, black streaked with white, that hid half his face, so that only the forehead and eyes, the cheek-bones, nose, and lips were visible.

This man, a friend of the agitator Lelewel, wore a black velvet cap that came down in a point on his forehead and showed off its mellow hue, worthy of Rembrandt's brush.

The doctor, who subsequently became equally famous for his talents and his avarice, startled Godefroid by his question, and the young man asked himself, "Can he take me for a thief?"

The reply to the question was evident on the doctor's table and chimney-piece. Godefroid had fancied himself the first-comer—he was the last. His patients had laid very handsome sums on the table and shelf, for Godefroid saw piles of twenty- and forty-franc pieces and two thousand-franc notes. Was all this the fruit of a single morning? He greatly doubted it, and he suspected an ingenious trick. The infallible but money-loving doctor perhaps tried thus to encourage his patients' liberality, and to make his rich clients believe that he was given bank-notes as if they were curl-papers.

Moïse Halpersohn was no doubt largely paid, for he cured his patients, and cured them of those very complaints which the profession gave up in despair. It is very little known in Western Europe that the Slav nations possess a store of medical secrets. They have a number of sovereign remedies derived from their intercourse with the Chinese, the Persians, the Cossacks, the Turks, and the Tartars. Some peasant women, regarded as witches, have been known to cure hydrophobia completely in Poland with the juice of certain plants. There is among those nations a great mass of uncodified information as to the effects of certain plants and the powdered bark of trees, which is handed down from family to family, and miraculous cures are effected there.

Halpersohn, who for five or six years was regarded as a charlatan, with his powders and mixtures, had the innate instinct of a great healer. Not only was he learned, he had observed with great care, and had traveled all over Germany, Russia, Persia, and Turkey, where he had picked up

much traditional lore; and as he was learned in chemistry, he became a living encyclopedia of the secrets preserved by "the good women," as they were called, the midwives and "wise women" of every country whither he had followed his father, a wandering trader.

It must not be supposed that the scene in *Richard in Palestine*, in which Saladin cures the King of England, is pure fiction. Halpersohn has a little silk bag, which he soaks in water till it is faintly colored, and certain fevers yield to this infusion taken by the patient. The virtues residing in plants are infinitely various, according to him, and the most terrible maladies admit of cure. He, however, like his brother physicians, pauses sometimes before the incomprehensible. Halpersohn admires the invention of homeopathy, less for its medical system than for its therapeutics; he was at that time in correspondence with Hedenius of Dresden, Chelius of Heidelberg, and the other famous Germans, but keeping his own hand dark though it was full of discoveries. He would have no pupils.

The setting of this figure, which might have stepped out of a picture by Rembrandt, was quite in harmony with it. The study, hung with green flock paper, was poorly furnished with a green divan. The carpet, also of moss green, showed the thread. A large armchair covered with black leather, for the patients, stood near the window, which was hung with green curtains. The doctor's seat was a study-chair with arms, in the Roman style, of mahogany with a green leather seat. Besides the chimney-piece and the long table at which he wrote, there was in the middle of the wall opposite the fireplace a common iron chest supporting a clock of Vienna granite, on which stood a bronze group of Love sporting with Death, the gift of a famous German sculptor whom Halpersohn had, no doubt, cured. A tazza between two candlesticks was all the ornament of the chimney-shelf. Two bracket shelves, one at each end of the divan, served to place trays on, and Godefroid noted that there were silver bowls on them, water-bottles, and table-napkins.

This simplicity, verging on bareness, struck Godefroid,

who took everything in at a glance, and he recovered his presence of mind.

“I am perfectly well, monsieur. I have not come to consult you myself, but on behalf of a lady whom you ought long since to have seen—a lady living on the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse.”

“Oh yes, that lady has sent her son to me several times. Well, monsieur, tell her to come to see me!”

“Tell her to come!” cried Godefroid indignantly. “Why, monsieur, she cannot be lifted from her bed to a sofa; she has to be raised by straps.”

“You are not a doctor?” asked the Jew, with a singular grimace which made his face even more wicked.

“If Baron de Nucingen sent to tell you that he was ill and to ask you to visit him, would you reply, ‘Tell him to come to me?’”

“I should go to him,” said the Jew dryly, as he spat into a Dutch spittoon made of mahogany and filled with sand.

“You would go to him,” Godefroid said mildly, “because the Baron has two millions a year, and——”

“Nothing else has to do with the matter. I should go.”

“Very well, monsieur, you may come and see the lady on the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse for the same reason. Though I have not such a fortune as the Baron de Nucingen, I am here to tell you that you can name your own price for the cure, or, if you fail, for your care of her. I am prepared to pay you in advance. But how is it, monsieur, that you, a Polish exile, a communist, I believe, will make no sacrifice for the sake of Poland! For this lady is the granddaughter of General Tarlovski, Prince Poniatowski’s friend——”

“Monsieur, you came to ask me to prescribe for this lady, and not to give me your advice. In Poland I am a Pole; in Paris a Parisian. Everyone does good in his own way, and you may believe me when I tell you that the greed attributed to me has its good reasons. The money I accumulate has its uses; it is sacred. I sell health; rich persons

can pay for it, and I make them buy it. The poor have their physicians.—If I had no aim in view, I should not practice medicine.—I live soberly, and I spend my time in rushing from one to another; I am by nature lazy, and I used to be a gambler. You may draw your own conclusions, young man!—You are not old enough to judge the aged!”

Godefroid kept silence.

“You live with the granddaughter of the foolhardy soldier who had no courage but for fighting, and who betrayed his country to Catherine II.?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Then be at home on Monday at three o’clock,” said he, laying down his pipe and taking up his notebook, in which he wrote a few words. “When I call, you will please to pay me two hundred francs; then, if I undertake to cure her, you will give me a thousand crowns.—I have been told,” he went on, “that the lady is shrunken as if she had fallen in the fire.”

“It is a case, monsieur, if you will believe the first physicians of Paris, of nervous disease, with symptoms so strange that no one can imagine them who has not seen them.”

“Ah yes, now I remember the details given me by that little fellow.—Till to-morrow, monsieur.”

Godefroid left with a bow to this singular and extraordinary man. There was nothing about him to show or suggest a medical man, not even in that bare consulting-room, where the only article of furniture that was at all remarkable was the ponderous chest, made by Huret or Fichet.

Godefroid reached the Passage Vivienne in time to purchase a splendid harmonium before the shop was shut, and he dispatched it forthwith to M. Bernard, whose address he gave.

Then he went to the Rue Chanoinesse, passing along the Quai des Augustins, where he hoped still to find a bookseller’s shop open; he was, in fact, so fortunate, and had a long conversation on the cost of law-books, with the clerk in charge.

He found Mme. de la Chanterie and her friends just come

in from High Mass, and he answered her first inquiring glance with a significant shake.

“And our dear Father Alain is not with you?” said he.

“He will not be here this Sunday,” replied Mme. de la Chanterie. “You will not find him here till this day week, unless you go to the place where you know you can meet him.”

“Madame,” said Godefroid, in an undertone, “you know I am less afraid of him than of these gentlemen, and I intended to confess to him.”

“And I?”

“Oh, you—I will tell you everything, for I have many things to say to you. As a beginning, I have come upon the most extraordinary case of destitution, the strangest union of poverty and luxury, and figures of a sublimity which outdoes the inventions of our most admired romancers.”

“Nature, and especially moral nature, is always as far above art as God is above His creatures. But come,” said Mme. de la Chanterie, “and tell me all about your expedition into the unknown lands where you made your first venture.”

M. Nicolas and M. Joseph—for the Abbé de Vèze had remained for a few minutes at Notre-Dame—left Mme. de la Chanterie alone with Godefroid; and he, fresh from the emotions he had gone through the day before, related every detail with the intensity, the gesticulation, and the eagerness that come of the first impression produced by such a scene and its accessories of men and things. He had a success, too; for Mme. de la Chanterie, calm and gentle as she was, and accustomed to look into gulfs of suffering, shed tears.

“You did right,” said she, “to send the harmonium.”

“I wish I could have done much more,” replied Godefroid, “since this is the first family through whom I have known the pleasures of charity; I want to secure to this noble old man the chief part of the profits on his great work. I do not know whether you have enough confidence in me to enable me to undertake such a business. From the



information I have gained, it would cost about nine thousand francs to bring out an edition of fifteen hundred copies, and their lowest selling value would be twenty-four thousand francs. As we must, in the first instance, pay off the three thousand and odd francs that have been advanced on the manuscript, we should have to risk twelve thousand francs.

“Oh, madame! if you could but imagine how bitterly, as I made my way hither from the Quai des Augustins, I rued having so foolishly wasted my little fortune. The Genius of Charity appeared to me, as it were, and filled me with the ardor of a neophyte; I desire to renounce the world, to live the life of these gentlemen, and to be worthy of you. Many a time during the past two days have I blessed the chance that brought me to your house. I will obey you in every particular till you judge me worthy to join the Brotherhood.”

“Well,” said Mme. de la Chanterie very seriously, after a few minutes of reflection, “listen to me, I have important things to say to you. You have been fascinated, my dear boy, by the poetry of misfortune. Yes, misfortune often has a poetry of its own; for, to me, poetry is a certain exaltation of feeling, and suffering is feeling. We live so much through suffering!”

“Yes, madame, I was captured by the demon of curiosity. How could I help it! I have not yet acquired the habit of seeing into the heart of these unfortunate lives, and I cannot set out with the calm resolution of your three pious soldiers of the Lord. But I may tell you, it was not till I had quelled this incitement that I devoted myself to your work.”

“Listen, my very dear son,” said Mme. de la Chanterie, saying the words with a saintly sweetness which deeply touched Godefroid, “we have forbidden ourselves absolutely—and this is no exaggeration, for we do not allow ourselves even to think of what is forbidden—we have forbidden ourselves ever to embark in a speculation. To print a book for sale, and looking for a return, is business, and any transaction of that kind would involve us in the difficulties of trade.

To be sure, it looks in this case very feasible, and even necessary. Do you suppose that it is the first instance of the kind that has come before us? Twenty times, a hundred times, we have seen how a family, a concern, could be saved. But, then, what should we have become in undertaking matters of this kind? We should be simply a trading firm. To be a sleeping partner with the unfortunate is not work; it is only helping misfortune to work. In a few days you may meet with even harder cases than this; will you do the same thing? You would be overwhelmed.

“Remember, for one thing, that the house of Mongenod, for a year past, has ceased to keep our accounts. Quite half of your time will be taken up by keeping our books. There are, at this time, nearly two thousand persons in our debt in Paris; and of those who may repay us, at any rate, it is necessary that we should check the amounts they owe us. We never sue—we wait. We calculate that half of the money given out is lost. The other half sometimes returns doubled.

“Now, suppose this lawyer were to die, the twelve thousand francs would be badly invested! But if his daughter recovers, if his grandson does well, if he one day gets another appointment—then, if he has any sense of honor, he will remember the debt, and return the funds of the poor with interest. Do you know that more than one family, raised from poverty and started by us on the road to fortune by considerable loans without interest, has saved for the poor and returned us sums of double and sometimes treble the amount?

“This is our only form of speculation.

“In the first place, as to this case which interests you, and ought to interest you, consider that the sale of the lawyer’s book depends on its merits; have you read it? Then, even if the work is excellent, how many excellent books have remained two or three years without achieving the success they deserved? How many a wreath is laid on a tomb! And, as I know, publishers have ways of driving bargains and taking their charges, which make the business one of the most risky and the most difficult to disentangle of all in

Paris. M. Nicolas can tell you about these difficulties, inherent in the nature of bookmaking. So, you see, we are prudent; we have ample experience of every kind of misery, as of every branch of trade, for we have long been studying Paris. The Mongenods give us much help; they are a light to our path, and through them we know that the Bank of France is always suspicious of the book-trade, though it is a noble trade—but it is badly conducted.

“As to the four thousand francs needed to save this noble family from the horrors of indigence, I will give you the money; for the poor boy and his grandfather must be fed and decently dressed.—There are sorrows, miseries, wounds, which we bind up at once without inquiring who it is that we are helping; religion, honor, character, are not inquired into; but as soon as it is a case of lending the money belonging to the poor to assist the unfortunate under the more active form of industry or trade, then we require some guarantee, and are as rigid as the money-lenders. So, for all beyond this immediate relief, be satisfied with finding the most honest publisher for the old man’s book. This is a matter for M. Nicolas. He is acquainted with lawyers and professors and authors of works in jurisprudence; next Saturday he will, no doubt, be prepared with some good advice for you.

“Be easy; the difficulty will be got over if possible. At the same time, it might be well if M. Nicolas could read the magistrate’s book; if you can persuade him to lend it.”

Godefroid was amazed at this woman’s sound sense, for he had believed her to be animated solely by the spirit of charity. He knelt on one knee and kissed one of her beautiful hands, saying:

“Then you are Reason, too!”

“In our work we have to be everything,” said she, with the peculiar cheerfulness of a true saint.

There was a brief silence, broken by Godefroid, who exclaimed:

“Two thousand debtors, did you say, madame? Two thousand accounts! It is tremendous!”

“Two thousand accounts, which may lead, as I have told

you, to our being repaid from the delicate honor of the borrowers. But there are three thousand more—families who will never make us any return but in thanks. Thus, as I have told you, we feel that it is necessary to keep books; and if your secrecy is above suspicion, you will be our financial oracle. We ought to keep a day-book, a ledger, a book of current expenses, and a cash-book. Of course, we have receipts, notes of hand, but it takes a great deal of time to look for them.—Here come the gentlemen.”

Godefroid, at first serious and thoughtful, took little part in the conversation; he was bewildered by the revelation Mme. de Chanterie had just imparted to him in a way which showed that she meant it to be the reward of his zeal.

“Two thousand families indebted to us!” said he to himself. “Why, if they all cost as much as M. Bernard will cost us, we must have millions sown broadcast in Paris!”

This reflection was one of the last promptings of the worldly spirit which was fast dying out in Godefroid. As he thought the matter over, he understood that the united fortunes of Mme. de la Chanterie, of MM. Alain, Nicolas, Joseph, and Judge Popinot, with the gifts collected by the Abbé de Vèze, and the loans from the Mongenods, must have produced a considerable capital; also, that in twelve or fifteen years this capital, with the interest paid on it by those who had shown their gratitude, must have increased like a snowball, since the charitable holders took nothing from it. By degrees he began to see clearly how the immense affair was managed, and his wish to co-operate was increased.

At nine o'clock he was about to return on foot to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse; but Mme. de la Chanterie, distrustful of so lonely a neighborhood, insisted on his taking a cab. As he got out of the vehicle, though the shutters were so closely fastened that not a gleam of light was visible, Godefroid heard the sounds of the instrument; and Auguste, who, no doubt, was watching for Godefroid's return, half opened the door on the landing, and said:

“Mamma would very much like to see you, and my grandfather begs you will take a cup of tea.”

Godefroid went in and found the invalid transfixed by the pleasure of the music; her face beamed and her eyes sparkled like diamonds.

“I ought to have waited for you, to let you hear the first chords; but I flew at this little organ as a hungry man rushes on a banquet. But you have a soul to understand me, and I know I am forgiven.”

Vanda made a sign to her son, who placed himself where he could press the pedal that supplied the interior of the instrument with wind; and, with her eyes raised to heaven like Saint Cecilia, the invalid, whose hands had for a time recovered their strength and agility, performed some variations on the prayer in *Mosè* which her son had bought for her. She had composed them in a few hours. Godefroid discerned in her a talent identical with that of Chopin. It was a soul manifesting itself by divine sounds in which sweet melancholy predominated.

M. Bernard greeted Godefroid with a look expressing a sentiment long since in abeyance. If the tears had not been forever dried up in the old man scorched by so many fierce sorrows, his eyes would at this moment have been wet.

The old lawyer was fingering his snuff-box and gazing at his daughter with unutterable rapture.

“To-morrow, madame,” said Godefroid, when the music had ceased, “your fate will be sealed, for I have good news for you. The famous Halpersohn will come at three o’clock.—And he has promised,” he added in M. Bernard’s ear, “to tell me the truth.”

The old man rose, and taking Godefroid by the hand, led him into a corner of the room near the fireplace. He was trembling.

“What a night lies before me! It is the final sentence!” said he in a whisper. “My daughter will be cured or condemned!”

“Take courage,” said Godefroid, “and after tea come to my rooms.”

“Cease playing, my child,” said M. Bernard; “you will

bring on an attack. Such an expenditure of strength will be followed by a reaction."

He made Auguste remove the instrument, and brought his daughter her cup of tea with the coaxing ways of a nurse who wants to anticipate the impatience of a baby.

"And what is this doctor like?" asked she, already diverted by the prospect of seeing a stranger.

Vanda, like all prisoners, was consumed by curiosity. When the physical symptoms of her complaint gave her some respite, they seemed to develop in her mind, and then she had the strangest whims and violent caprices. She wanted to see Rossini, and cried because her father, who could, she imagined, do everything, assured her he could not bring him.

Godefroid gave her a minute description of the Jewish physician and his consulting-room, for she knew nothing of the steps taken by her father. M. Bernard had enjoined silence on his grandson as to his visits to Halpersohn; he had so much feared to excite hopes which might not be realized. Vanda seemed to hang on the words that fell from Godefroid's lips; she was spell-bound and almost crazy, so ardent did her desire become to see the strange Pole.

"Poland has produced many singular and mysterious figures," said the old lawyer. "Just now, for instance, besides this doctor there is Hoëné Vronski the mathematician and seer, Mickiewicz the poet, the inspired Tovianski, and Chopin with his superhuman talent. Great national agitations always produce these crippled giants."

"Oh, my dear papa, what a man you are! If you were to write down all that we hear you say simply to entertain me, you would make a fortune! For, would you believe me, monsieur, my kind old father invents tales for me when I have no more novels to read, and so sends me to sleep. His voice lulls me, and he often soothes my pain with his cleverness. Who will ever repay him?—Auguste, my dear boy, you ought to kiss your grandfather's footprints for me."

The youth looked at his mother with his fine eyes full of tears; and that look, overflowing with long repressed com-

passion, was a poem in itself. Godefroid rose, took Auguste's hand, and pressed it warmly.

"God has given you two angels for your companions, madame!" he exclaimed.

"Indeed I know it. And I blame myself for so often provoking them. Come, dear Auguste, and kiss your mother. He is a son, monsieur, of whom any mother would be proud. He is as good as gold, candid—a soul without sin; but a rather too impassioned creature, like his mamma. God has nailed me to my bed to preserve me perhaps from the follies women commit—when they have too much heart!" she ended with a smile.

Godefroid smiled in reply and bowed good-night.

"Good-night, monsieur; and be sure to thank your friend, for he has made a poor cripple very happy."

"Monsieur," said Godefroid when he was in his rooms, alone with M. Bernard, who had followed him, "I think I may promise you that you shall not be robbed by those three sharpers. I can get the required sum, but you must place the papers proving the loan in my hands. If I am to do anything more, you should allow me to have your book—not to read myself, for I am not learned enough to judge of it, but to be read by an old lawyer I know, a man of unimpeachable integrity, who will undertake, according to the character of the work, to find a respectable firm with whom you may deal on equitable terms.—On this, however, I do not insist.

"Meanwhile, here are five hundred francs," he went on, offering a note to the astonished lawyer, "to supply your more pressing wants. I ask for no receipt; you will be indebted on no evidence but that of your conscience, and your conscience may lie silent till you have to some extent recovered yourself.—I will settle with Halpersohn."

"But who are you?" asked the old man, sinking on to a chair.

"I," replied Godefroid, "am nobody; but I serve certain powerful persons to whom your necessities are now made known, and who take an interest in you.—Ask no more."

"And what motive can these persons have——?"

“Religion, monsieur,” replied Godefroid.

“Is it possible?—Religion!”

“Yes, the Catholic, Apostolic, Roman religion.”

“Then you are of the Order of Jesus?”

“No, monsieur,” said Godefroid. “Be perfectly easy. No one has any design on you beyond that of helping you and restoring your family to comfort.”

“Can philanthropy, then, wear any guise but that of vanity?”

“Nay, monsieur, do not insult holy Catholic Charity, the virtue described by Saint Paul!” cried Godefroid eagerly.

At this reply M. Bernard began to stride up and down the room.

“I accept!” he suddenly said. “And I have but one way of showing my gratitude—that is, by intrusting you with my work. The notes and quotations are unnecessary to a lawyer; and I have, as I told you, two months’ work before me yet in copying them out.—To-morrow, then,” and he shook hands with Godefroid.

“Can I have effected a conversion?” thought Godefroid, struck by the new expression he saw on the old man’s face as he had last spoken.

Next day, at three o’clock, a hackney-coach stopped at the door, and out of it stepped Halpersohn, buried in a vast bearskin coat. The cold had increased in the course of the night, and the thermometer stood at ten degrees below freezing.

The Jewish doctor narrowly though furtively examined the room in which his visitor of yesterday received him, and Godefroid detected a gleam of suspicion sparkling in his eye like the point of a dagger. This swift flash of doubt gave Godefroid an internal chill; he began to think that this man would be merciless in his money dealings; and it is so natural to think of genius as allied to goodness, that this gave him an impulse of disgust.

“Monsieur,” said he, “I perceive that the plainness of my lodgings arouses your uneasiness; so you will not be surprised at my manner of proceeding. Here are your two hundred francs, and here, you see, are three notes for a



thousand francs each"—and he drew out the notes which Mme. de la Chanterie had given him to redeem M. Bernard's manuscript. "If you have any further doubts as to my solvency, I may refer you, as a guarantee for the carrying out of my pledge, to MM. Mongenod the bankers, Rue de la Victoire."

"I know them," said Halpersohn, slipping the ten gold pieces into his pocket.

"And he will go there!" thought Godefroid.

"And where does the sick lady live?" asked the doctor, rising, as a man who knows the value of time.

"Come this way, monsieur," said Godefroid, going first to show him the way.

The Jew cast a shrewd and scrutinizing glance on the rooms he went through, for he had the eye of a spy; and he was able to see the misery of poverty through the door into M. Bernard's bedroom, for, unluckily, M. Bernard had just been putting on the dress in which he always showed himself to his daughter, and in his haste to admit his visitors he left the door of his kennel ajar.

He bowed with dignity to Halpersohn, and softly opened his daughter's bedroom door.

"Vanda, my dear, here is the doctor," he said.

He stood aside to let Halpersohn pass, still wrapped in his furs.

The Jew was surprised at the splendor of this room, which in this part of the town seemed anomalous; but his astonishment was of no long duration, for he had often seen in the houses of German and Polish Jews a similar discrepancy between the display of extreme penury and concealed wealth. While walking from the door to the bed he never took his eyes off the sufferer; and when he stood by her side, he said to her in Polish:

"Are you a Pole?"

"I am not; my mother was."

"Whom did your grandfather, General Tarlovski, marry?"

"A Pole."

"Of what province?"

“A Sobolevska of Pinsk.”

“Good.—And this gentleman is your father?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Monsieur,” said Halpersohn, “is your wife——”

“She is dead,” replied M. Bernard.

“Was she excessively fair?” said Halpersohn, with some impatience at the interruption.

“Here is a portrait of her,” replied M. Bernard, taking down a handsome frame containing several good miniatures.

Halpersohn was feeling the invalid’s head and hair, while he looked at the portrait of Vanda Tarlovska *née* Comtesse Sobolevska.

“Tell me the symptoms of the patient’s illness.” And he seated himself in the armchair, gazing steadily at Vanda during twenty minutes, while the father and daughter spoke by turns.

“And how old is the lady?”

“Eight-and-thirty.”

“Very good!” he said as he rose. “Well, I undertake to cure her. I cannot promise to give her the use of her legs, but she can be cured. Only, she must be placed in a private hospital in my part of the town.”

“But, monsieur, my daughter cannot be moved——”

“I will answer for her life,” said Halpersohn sententiously. “But I answer for her only on those conditions.—Do you know she will exchange her present symptoms for another horrible form of disease, which will last for a year perhaps, or six months at the very least?—You can come to see her, as you are her father.”

“And it is certain?” asked M. Bernard.

“Certain,” repeated the Jew. “Your daughter has a vicious humor, a national disorder, in her blood, and it must be brought out. When you bring her, carry her to the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre at Chaillot—Dr. Halpersohn’s private hospital.”

“But how?”

“On a stretcher, as the sick people are always carried to a hospital.”

“But it will kill her to be moved.”

“No.”

And Halpersohn, as he spoke this curt *No*, was at the door, where Godefroid met him on the landing.

The Jew, who was suffocating with heat, said in his ear:

“The charge will be fifteen francs a day, besides the thousand crowns; three months paid in advance.”

“Very good, monsieur.—And,” asked Godefroid, standing on the step of the cab into which the doctor had hurried, “you answer for the cure?”

“Positively,” said the Pole. “Are you in love with the lady?”

“No,” said Godefroid.

“You must not repeat what I am about to tell you, for I am saying it only to prove to you that I am sure of the cure; but if you say anything about it, you will be the death of the woman——”

Godefroid replied only by a gesture.

“For seventeen years she has been suffering from the disease known as *Plica Polonica*, which can produce all these torments; I have seen the most dreadful cases. Now I am the only man living who knows how to bring out the *Plica* in such a form as to be curable, for not everyone gets over it. You see, monsieur, that I am really very liberal. If this were some great lady—a Baronne de Nucingen or any other wife or daughter of some modern Cræsus—I should get a hundred—two hundred thousand francs for this cure—whatever I might like to ask!—However, that is a minor misfortune.”

“And moving her?”

“Oh, she will seem to be dying, but she will not die of it! She may live a hundred years when once she is cured.—Now, Jacques, quick—Rue Monsieur, and make haste!” said he to the driver.

He left Godefroid standing in the street, where he gazed in bewilderment after the retreating cab.

“Who on earth is that queer-looking man dressed in bear-skin?” asked Mme. Vauthier, whom nothing could escape. “Is it true, as the hackney coachman said, that he is the most famous doctor in Paris?”

“And what can that matter to you, Mother Vauthier?”

“Oh, not at all,” said she with a sour face.

“You made a great mistake in not siding with me,” said Godefroid, as he slowly went into the house. “You would have done better than by sticking to M. Barbet and M. Métivier; you will get nothing out of them.”

“And am I on their side?” retorted she with a shrug. “M. Barbet is my landlord, that is all.”

It took two days to persuade M. Bernard to part from his daughter and carry her to Chaillot. Godefroid and the old lawyer walked all the way, one on each side of the stretcher, screened in with striped blue-and-white ticking, on which the precious patient lay, almost tied down to the mattress, so greatly did her father fear the convulsions of a nervous attack. However, having set out at three o'clock, the procession reached the private hospital at five, when it was dusk. Godefroid paid the four hundred and fifty francs demanded for the three months' board, and took a receipt for it; then, when he went down to pay the two porters, M. Bernard joined him and took from under the mattress a very voluminous sealed packet, which he handed to Godefroid.

“One of these men will fetch you a cab,” said he, “for you cannot carry those four volumes very far. This is my book; place it in my censor's hands; I will leave it with him for a week. I shall remain at least a week in this neighborhood, for I cannot abandon my daughter to her fate. I know my grandson; he can mind the house, especially with you to help him; and I commend him to your care. If I were myself what once I was, I would ask you my critic's name; for if he was once a magistrate, there were few whom I did not know——”

“It is no mystery,” said Godefroid, interrupting M. Bernard. “Since you show such entire confidence in me, I may tell you that the reader is the President Lecamus de Tresnes.”

“Oh, of the Supreme Court in Paris. Take it—by all means. He is one of the noblest men of our time. He and the late Judge Popinot, the Judge of the Lower Court, were

lawyers worthy of the best days of the old Parlements. All my fears, if I had any, must vanish.—And where does he live? I should like to go and thank him when he has taken so much trouble.”

“You will find him in the Rue Chanoinesse, under the name of M. Nicolas. I am just going there.—But your agreement with those rascals?”

“Auguste will give it you,” said the old man, going back into the hospital.

A cab was found on the Quai de Billy and brought by one of the men; Godefroid got in and stimulated the driver by the promise of drink money if he drove quickly to the Rue Chanoinesse, where he intended to dine.

Half an hour after Vanda's removal, three men, dressed in black, were let in by Mme. Vauthier at the door in the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, where they had been waiting, no doubt, till the coast should be clear. They went upstairs under the guidance of the Judas in petticoats, and gently knocked at M. Bernard's door. As it happened to be a Thursday, the young collegian was at home. He opened the door, and three men slipped like shadows into the outer room.

“What do you want, gentlemen?” asked the youth.

“This is M. Bernard's—that is to say, M. le Baron——?”

“But what do you want here?”

“Oh, you know that pretty well, young man, for your grandfather has just gone off with a closed litter, I am told.—Well, that does not surprise us; he shows his wisdom. I am a bailiff, and I have come to seize everything here. On Monday last you were summoned to pay three thousand francs and the expenses to M. Métivier, under penalty of imprisonment; and as a man who has grown onions knows the smell of chives, the debtor has taken the key of the fields rather than wait for that of the lock-up. However, if we cannot secure him, we can get a wing or a leg of his gorgeous furniture—for we know all about it, young man, and we are going to make an official report.”

“Here are some stamped papers that your grandpapa would never take,” said the Widow Vauthier, shoving three writs into Auguste’s hand.

“Stay here, ma’am; we will put you in possession. The law gives you forty sous a day; it is not to be sneezed at.”

“Ah, ha! Then I shall see what there is in the grand bedroom!” cried Mme. Vauthier.

“You shall not go into my mother’s room!” cried the lad in a fury, as he flung himself between the door and the three men in black.

On a sign from their leader, the two men and a lawyer’s clerk who came in seized Auguste.

“No resistance, young man; you are not master here. We shall draw up a charge, and you will spend the night in the lock-up.”

At this dreadful threat, Auguste melted into tears.

“Oh, what a mercy,” cried he, “that mamma is gone! This would have killed her!”

The men and the bailiff now held a sort of council with the widow Vauthier. Auguste understood, though they talked in a low voice, that what they chiefly wanted was to seize his grandfather’s manuscripts, so he opened the bedroom door.

“Walk in, then, gentlemen,” said he, “but spoil nothing. You will be paid to-morrow morning.” Then, still in tears, he went into his own squalid room, snatched up all his grandfather’s notes, and stuffed them into the stove, where he knew that there was not a spark of fire.

The thing was done so promptly, that the bailiff, though he was keen and cunning, and worthy of his employers Barbet and Métivier, found the boy in tears on a chair when he rushed into the room, having concluded that the manuscripts would not be in the anteroom. Though books and manuscripts may not legally be seized for debt, the lien signed by the old lawyer in this case justified the proceeding. Still, it would have been easy to find means of delaying the distraint, as M. Bernard would certainly have known. Hence the necessity for acting with cunning.

The widow Vauthier had been an invaluable ally to her landlord by failing to serve his notices on her lodger; her plan was to throw them on him when entering at the heels of the officers of justice; or, if necessary, to declare to M. Bernard that she had supposed them to be intended for the two writers who had been absent for two days.

The inventory of the goods took above an hour to make out, for the bailiff would omit nothing, and regarded the value as sufficient to pay off the debts.

As soon as the officers were gone, the poor youth took the writs and hurried away to find his grandfather at Halpersohn's hospital; for, as the bailiff assured him that Mme. Vauthier was responsible for everything under heavy penalties, he could leave the place without fear.

The idea of his grandfather's being taken to prison for debt drove the poor boy absolutely mad—mad in the way in which the young are mad; that is to say, a victim to the dangerous and fatal excitement in which every energy of youth is in a ferment and may lead to the worst as to the most heroic actions.

When poor Auguste reached the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre, the doorkeeper told him that he did not know what had become of the father of the patient brought in at five o'clock, but that by M. Halpersohn's orders no one—not even her father—was to be allowed to see the lady for a week, or it might endanger her life.

This reply put a climax to Auguste's desperation. He went back again to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, revolving the most extravagant schemes as he went. He got home by about half-past eight, almost starving, so exhausted by hunger and grief, that he accepted when Mme. Vauthier invited him to share her supper, consisting of a stew of mutton and potatoes. The poor boy dropped half dead into a chair in the dreadful woman's room.

Encouraged by the old woman's coaxing and insinuating words, he answered a few cunningly arranged questions about Godefroid, and gave her to understand that it was he who would pay off his grandfather's debts on the morrow, and that to him they owed the improvement that had taken

place in their prospects during the past week. The widow listened to all this with an affectation of doubt, plying Auguste with a few glasses of wine.

At ten o'clock the wheels of a cab were heard to stop in front of the house, and the woman exclaimed—

“Oh, there is M. Godefroid!”

Auguste took the key of his rooms and went upstairs to see the kind friend of the family; but he found Godefroid so entirely unlike himself, that he hesitated to speak till the thought of his grandfather's danger spurred the generous youth.

This is what had happened in the Rue Chanoinesse, and had caused Godefroid's stern expression of countenance.

The neophyte, arriving in good time, had found Mme. de la Chanterie and her adherents in the drawing-room, and he had taken M. Nicolas aside to deliver to him *The Spirit of the Modern Laws*. M. Nicolas at once carried the sealed parcel to his room, and came down to dinner. Then, after chatting during the first part of the evening, he went up again, intending to begin reading the work.

Godefroid was greatly surprised when, a few minutes after, Manon came from the old Judge to beg him to go up to speak with him. Following Manon, he was led to M. Nicolas's room; but he could pay no attention to its details, so greatly was he startled by the evident distress of a man usually so placid and firm.

“Did you know,” said M. Nicolas, quite the judge again, “the name of the author of this work?”

“M. Bernard,” said Godefroid. “I know him only by that name. I did not open the parcel——”

“True,” said M. Nicolas. “I broke the seals myself.—And you made no inquiry as to his previous history?”

“No. I know that he married for love the daughter of General Tarlovski, that his daughter is named Vanda after her mother, and his grandson Auguste. And the portrait I saw of M. Bernard is, I believe, in the dress of a Presiding Judge—a red gown.”

“Look here!” said M. Nicolas, and held out the title of



the work in Auguste's handwriting, and in the following form:—

THE SPIRIT  
OF THE MODERN LAWS

BY

M. BERNARD-JEAN-BAPTISTE MACLOUD  
BARON BOURLAC

Formerly Attorney-General to the High Court of Justice at Rouen  
Commander of the Legion of Honor.

“Oh! The man who condemned madame, her daughter, and the Chevalier du Vissard!” said Godefroid in a choked voice.

His knees gave way, and the neophyte dropped on to a chair.

“What a beginning!” he murmured.

“This, my dear Godefroid, is a business that comes home to us all. You have done your part; we must deal with it now! I beg you to do nothing further of any kind; go and fetch whatever you left in your rooms; and not a word!—In fact, absolute silence. Tell Baron Bourlac to apply to me. Between this and then, we shall have decided how it will be best to act in such circumstances.”

Godefroid went downstairs, called a hackney-cab, and hurried back to the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, filled with horror as he thought of the examination and trials at Caen, of the hideous drama that ended on the scaffold, and of Mme. de la Chanterie's sojourn in Bicêtre. He understood the neglect into which this lawyer, almost a second Fouquier-Tinville, had fallen in his old age, and the reasons why he so carefully concealed his name.

“I hope M. Nicolas will take some terrible revenge for poor Mme. de la Chanterie!”

He had just thought out this not very Christian wish, when he saw Auguste.

“What do you want of me?” asked Godefroid.

“My dear sir, a misfortune has befallen us which is turning my brain! Some scoundrels have been here to take possession of everything belonging to my mother, and they are hunting for my grandfather to put him into prison. But it is not by reason of these disasters that I turn to you for help,” said the lad with Roman pride; “it is to beg you to do me such a service as you would do to a condemned criminal——”

“Speak,” said Godefroid.

“They wanted to get hold of my grandfather’s manuscripts; and, as I believe he placed the work in your hands, I want to beg you to take the notes, for the woman will not allow me to remove a thing.—Put them with the volumes, and then——”

“Very well,” said Godefroid, “make haste and fetch them.”

While the lad went off, to return immediately, Godefroid reflected that the poor boy was guilty of no crime, that he must not break his heart by telling him about his grandfather, or the desertion which was the punishment in his sad old age of the passions of his political career; he took the packet not unkindly.

“What is your mother’s name?” he asked.

“My mother, monsieur, is the *Baronne de Mergi*. My father was the son of the *Presiding Judge of the Supreme Court at Rouen*.”

“Ah!” said Godefroid, “so your grandfather married his daughter to the son of the famous *Judge Mergi*?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“Leave me, my little friend,” said Godefroid.

He went out on to the landing with the young *Baron de Mergi*, and called *Mme. Vauthier*.

“*Mother Vauthier*,” said he, “you can relet my rooms; I am never coming back again.”

And he went down to the cab.

“Have you intrusted anything to that gentleman?” asked the widow of *Auguste*.

“Yes,” said the lad.

“You’re a pretty fool. He is one of your enemies’

agents. He has been at the bottom of it all, you may be sure. It is proof enough that the trick has turned out all right that he never means to come back. He told me I could let his rooms."

Auguste flew out, and down the boulevard, running after the cab, and at last succeeded in stopping it by his shouts and cries.

"What is it?" asked Godefroid.

"My grandfather's manuscripts?"

"Tell him to apply for them to M. Nicolas."

The lad took this reply as the cruel jest of a thief who has no shame left; he sat down in the snow as he saw the cab set off again at a brisk trot.

He rose in a fever of fierce energy and went home to bed, worn out with rushing about Paris, and quite heartbroken.

Next morning, Auguste de Mergi awoke to find himself alone in the rooms where yesterday his mother and his grandfather had been with him, and he went through all the miseries of his position, of which he fully understood the extent. The utter desertion of the place, hitherto so amply filled, where every minute had brought with it a duty and an occupation, was so painful to him, that he went down to ask the widow Vauthier whether his grandfather had come in during the night or early morning; for he himself had slept very late, and he supposed that if the Baron Bourlac had come home the woman would have warned him against his pursuers. She replied, with a sneer, that he must know full well where to look for his grandfather; for if he had not come in, it was evident that he had taken up his abode in the "Château de Clichy." This impudent irony from the woman who, the day before, had cajoled him so effectually, again drove the poor boy to frenzy, and he flew to the private hospital in the Rue Basse-Saint-Pierre, in despair, as he thought of his grandfather in prison.

Baron Bourlac had hung about all night in front of the hospital which he was forbidden to enter, or close to the house of Doctor Halpersohn, whom he naturally wished to call to account for this conduct. The doctor did not get

home till two in the morning. The old man, who, at half-past one, had been at the doctor's door, had just gone off to walk in the Champs-Élysées, and when he returned at half-past two the gatekeeper told him that M. Halpersohn was now in bed and asleep, and was on no account to be disturbed.

Here, alone, at half-past two in the morning, the unhappy father, in utter despair, paced the quay, and under the trees, loaded with frost, of the side-walks of the Cours-la-Reine, waiting for the day.

At nine o'clock he presented himself at the doctor's, and asked him why he thus kept his daughter under lock and key.

"Monsieur," said Halpersohn, "I yesterday made myself answerable for your daughter's recovery; and at this moment I am responsible for her life, and you must understand that in such a case I must have sovereign authority. I may tell you that your daughter yesterday took a remedy which will give her the *Plica*, that till the disease is brought out the lady must remain invisible. I will not allow myself to lose my patient or you to lose your daughter by exposing her to any excitement, any error of treatment; if you really insist on seeing her, I shall demand a consultation of three medical men to protect myself against any responsibility, as the patient might die."

The old man, exhausted with fatigue, had dropped on to a chair; he quickly rose, however, saying—

"Forgive me, monsieur; I have spent the night in mortal anguish, for you cannot imagine how much I love my daughter, whom I have nursed for fifteen years between life and death, and this week of waiting is torture to me!"

The Baron left Halpersohn's study, tottering like a drunken man, the doctor giving him his arm to the top of the stairs.

About an hour later, he saw Auguste de Mergi walk into his room. On questioning the lodge-keeper of the private hospital, the poor lad had just heard that the father of the lady admitted the day before had called again in the evening, had asked for her, and had spoken of going early in the

day to Doctor Halpersohn, who, no doubt, would know something about him. At the moment when Auguste de Mergi appeared in the doctor's room, Halpersohn was breakfasting off a cup of chocolate and a glass of water, all on a small round table; he did not disturb himself for the youth, but went on soaking his strip of bread in the chocolate; for he ate nothing but a roll, cut into four with an accuracy that argued some skill as an operator. Halpersohn had, in fact, practiced surgery in the course of his travels.

"Well, young man," said he as Vanda's son came in, "you, too, have come to require me to account for your mother?"

"Yes, monsieur," said Auguste.

The young fellow had come forward as far as the large table, and his eye was immediately caught by several bank-notes lying among the little piles of gold-pieces. In the position in which the unhappy boy found himself, the temptation was stronger than his principles, well grounded as they were. He saw before him the means of rescuing his grandfather and saving the fruits of twenty years' labor imperiled by avaricious speculators. He fell. The fascination was as swift as thought, and justified itself by an idea of self-immolation that smiled on the boy. He said to himself—

"I shall be done for, but I shall save my mother and my grandfather."

Under this stress of antagonism between his reason and the impulse to crime, he acquired, as madmen do, a strange and fleeting dexterity, and instead of asking after his grandfather, he listened and agreed to all the doctor was saying.

Halpersohn, like all acute observers, had understood the whole past history of the father, the daughter, and her son. He had scented or guessed the facts which Mme. de Mergi's conversation had confirmed, and he felt in consequence a sort of benevolence towards his new clients;—as to respect or admiration, he was incapable of them.

"Well, my dear boy," said he familiarly, "I am keeping your mother to restore her to you young, handsome, and in good health. Hers is one of those rare diseases which

doctors find very interesting; and besides, she is, through her mother, a fellow-countrywoman of mine. You and your grandfather must be brave enough to live without seeing her for a fortnight, and Madame——?”

“La Baronne de Mergi.”

“If she is a baroness, you are Baron ——?” asked Halpersohn.

At this moment the theft was effected. While the doctor was looking at his bread, heavy with chocolate, Auguste snatched up four folded notes, and had slipped them into his trousers pocket, affecting to keep his hand there out of sheer embarrassment.

“Yes, monsieur, I am a baron. So, too, is my grandfather; he was public prosecutor at the time of the Restoration.”

“You blush, young man. You need not blush because you are a baron and poor—it is a very common case.”

“And who told you, monsieur, that we are poor?”

“Well, your grandfather told me that he had spent the night in the Champs-Élysées; and though I know no palace where there is so fine a vault overhead as that which was glittering at two o’clock this morning, it was cold, I can tell you, in the palace where your grandfather was taking his airing. A man does not go to the Hôtel de la Belle-Étoile by preference.”

“Has my grandfather been here?” cried Auguste, seizing the opportunity to beat a retreat. “Thank you, monsieur. I will come again, with your permission, for news of my mother.”

As soon as he got out, the young Baron went off to the bailiff’s office, taking a hackney-cab to get there the sooner. The man gave up the agreement, and the bill of costs duly receipted, and then desired the young man to take one of the clerks with him to release the person in charge from her functions.

“And as MM. Barbet and Métivier live in your part of the town,” added he, “my boy will take them the money and desire them to restore you the deed of lien on the property.”

Auguste, who understood nothing of these phrases and

formalities, submitted. He received seven hundred francs in silver, the change out of his four thousand-franc notes, and went off in the clerk's company. He got into the cab in a state of indescribable bewilderment, for, the end being achieved, remorse was making itself felt; he saw himself disgraced and cursed by his grandfather, whose austerity was well known to him; and he believed that his mother would die of grief if she heard of his guilt. All nature had changed before his eyes. He was lost; he no longer saw the snow, the houses looked like ghosts.

No sooner was he at home than the young Baron decided on his course of action, and it was certainly that of an honest man. He went into his mother's room and took the diamond snuff-box given to his grandfather by the Emperor to send it with the seven hundred francs to Doctor Halpersohn with the following letter, which required several rough copies:—

“MONSIEUR,—The fruits of twenty years' labor—my grandfather's work—were about to be absorbed by some money-lenders, who threatened him with imprisonment. Three thousand three hundred francs were enough to save him; and, seeing so much gold on your table, I could not resist the idea of seeing my parent free by thus making good to him the earnings of his long toil. I borrowed from you, without your leave, four thousand francs; but as only three thousand three hundred francs were needed, I send you the remaining seven hundred, and with them a snuff-box set with diamonds, given by the Emperor to my grandfather; this will, I hope, indemnify you.

“If you should not after this believe that I, who shall all my life regard you as my benefactor, am a man of honor, if you will at any rate preserve silence as to an action so unjustifiable in any other circumstances, you will have saved my grandfather as you will save my mother, and I shall be for life your devoted slave.

“AUGUSTE DE MERGI.”

At about half-past two, Auguste, who had walked to the

Champs-Élysées, sent a messenger on to deliver at Doctor Halpersohn's door a sealed box containing ten louis, a five-hundred-franc note, and the snuff-box; then he slowly went home across the Pont d'Iéna by the Invalides and the boulevards, trusting to Doctor Halpersohn's generosity.

The physician, who had at once discovered the theft, had meanwhile changed his views as to his clients. He supposed that the old man had come to rob him, and, not having succeeded, had sent this boy. He put no credence in the rank and titles they had assumed, and went off at once to the public prosecutor's office to state his case, and desire that immediate steps should be taken for the prosecution.

The prudence of the law rarely allows of such rapid proceedings as the complaining parties would wish; but, at about three in the afternoon, a police officer, followed by some detectives, who affected to be lounging on the boulevard, was catechising Mme. Vauthier as to her lodgers, and the widow quite unconsciously was confirming the constable's suspicions.

Népomucène, scenting the policeman, thought that it was the old man they wanted; and as he was very fond of M. Auguste, he hurried out to meet M. Bernard, whom he intercepted in the Avenue de l'Observatoire.

"Make your escape, monsieur," cried he. "They have come to take you. The bailiffs were in yesterday and laid hands on everything. Mother Vauthier, who has hidden some stamped papers of yours, said you would be in Clichy by last night or this morning. There, do you see those sneaks?"

The old judge recognized the men as bailiffs, and he understood everything.

"And M. Godefroid?" he asked.

"Gone, never to come back. Mother Vauthier says he was a spy for your enemies."

M. Bourlac determined that he would go at once to Barbet, and in a quarter of an hour he was there; the old bookseller lived in the Rue Sainte-Catherine-d'Enfer.

"Oh, you have come yourself to fetch your agreement,"



said the publisher, bowing to his victim. "Here it is," and, to the Baron's great amazement, he handed him the document, which the old lawyer took, saying—

"I do not understand——"

"Then it was not you who paid up?" said Barbet.

"Are you paid?"

"Your grandson carried the money to the bailiff this morning."

"And is it true that you took possession of my goods yesterday?"

"Have you not been home for two days?" said Barbet.

"Still, a retired public prosecutor must know what it is to be threatened with imprisonment for debt!"

On this the Baron bowed coldly to Barbet, and returned home, supposing that the authorities had in fact come in search of the authors living on the first floor. He walked slowly, absorbed in vague apprehensions, for Népomucène's warning seemed to him more and more inexplicable. Could Godefroid have betrayed him? He mechanically turned down the Rue Notre-Dame des Champs, and went in by the back door, which happened to be open, running against Népomucène.

"Oh, monsieur, make haste, come on; they are taking M. Auguste to prison; they caught him on the boulevard; it was him they were hunting—they have been questioning him——"

The old man, with a spring like a tiger's, rushed through the house and garden and out on to the boulevard, as swift as an arrow, and was just in time to see his grandson get into a hackney-coach between three men.

"Auguste," he cried, "what is the meaning of this?"

The youth burst into tears, and turned faint.

"Monsieur," said he to the police officer, whose scarf struck his eye, "I am Baron Bourlac, formerly a public prosecutor; for pity's sake, explain the matter."

"Monsieur, if you are Baron Bourlac, you will understand it in two words. I have just questioned this young man, and he has unfortunately confessed——"

"What?"

“A theft of four thousand francs from Doctor Halpersohn.”

“Auguste! Is it possible?”

“Grandpapa, I have sent him your diamond snuff-box as a guarantee. I wanted to save you from the disgrace of imprisonment.”

“Wretched boy, what have you done?” cried the Baron. “The diamonds are false; I sold the real stones three years ago.”

The police officer and his clerk looked at each other with strange meaning. This glance, full of suggestions, was seen by the Baron, and fell like a thunderbolt.

“Monsieur,” said he to the officer, “be quite easy; I will go and see the public prosecutor; you can testify to the delusion in which I have kept my daughter and my grandson. You must do your duty, but, in the name of humanity, send my grandson to a cell by himself.—I will go to prison.—Where are you taking him?”

“Are you Baron Bourlac?” said the constable.

“Oh! Monsieur——”

“Because the public prosecutor, the examining judge, and I myself could not believe that such men as you and your grandson could be guilty; like the doctor, we concluded that some swindlers had borrowed your names.”

He took the Baron aside and said—

“Were you at Doctor Halpersohn’s house this morning?”

“Yes, monsieur.”

“And your grandson too, about half an hour later?”

“I know nothing about that; I have this instant come in, and I have not seen my grandson since yesterday.”

“The writs he showed me and the warrant for arrest explain everything,” said the police agent. “I know his motive for the crime. I ought, indeed, to arrest you, monsieur, as abetting your grandson, for your replies confirm the facts alleged by the complainant; but the notices served on you, and which I return to you,” he added, holding out a packet of stamped papers which he had in his hand, “certainly prove you to be Baron Bourlac. At the same time, you must be prepared to be called up before M. Marest, the

examining judge in this case. I believe I am right in relaxing the usual rule in consideration of your past dignity.

“As to your grandson, I will speak of him to the public prosecutor as soon as I go in, and we will show every possible consideration for the grandson of a retired judge, and the victim of a youthful error. Still, there is the indictment, the accused has confessed; I have sent in my report, and have a warrant for his imprisonment; I cannot help myself. As to the place of detention, your grandson will be taken to the Conciergerie.”

“Thank you, monsieur,” said the miserable Bourlac. He fell senseless on the snow, and tumbled into one of the rain-water cisterns, which at that time divided the trees on the boulevard.

The police officer called for help, and Népomucène hurried out with Mme. Vauthier. The old man was carried indoors, and the woman begged the police constable, as he went by the Rue d'Enfer, to send Doctor Berton as quickly as possible.

“What is the matter with my grandfather?” asked poor Auguste.

“He is crazed, sir. That is what comes of thieving!”

Auguste made a rush as though to crack his skull; but the two men held him back.

“Come, come, young man. Take it quietly,” said the officer. “Be calm. You have done wrong, but it is not irremediable.”

“But pray, monsieur, tell the woman that my grandfather has probably not touched food for these twenty-four hours.”

“Oh, poor creatures!” said the officer to himself.

He stopped the coach, which had started, and said a word in his clerk's ear; the man ran off to speak to old Vauthier, and then returned at once.

M. Berton was of opinion that M. Bernard—for he knew him by no other name—was suffering from an attack of high fever; but when Mme. Vauthier had told him of all the events that had led up to it in the way in which a house-keeper tells a story, the doctor thought it necessary to report the whole business next day to M. Alain at the Church

of Saint-Jacques du Haut-Pas, and M. Alain sent a pencil note by messenger to M. Nicolas, Rue Chanoinesse.

Godefroid, on reaching home the night before, had given the notes on the book to M. Nicolas, who spent the greater part of the night in reading the first volume of Baron Boursac's work.

On the following day Mme. de la Chanterie told Godefroid that if his determination still held good, he might begin on his work at once.

Godefroid, initiated by her into the financial secrets of the Society, worked for seven or eight hours a day, and for several months, under the supervision of Frédéric Mongenod, who came every Sunday to look through the work, and who praised him for the way in which it was done.

"You are a valuable acquisition for the saints among whom you live," said the banker when all the accounts were clearly set forth and balanced. "Two or three hours a day will now be enough to keep the accounts in order, and during the rest of your time you can help them, if you still feel the vocation as you did six months since."

This was in the month of July 1838. During the time that had elapsed since the affair of the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, Godefroid, eager to prove himself worthy of his companions, had never asked a single question as to Baron Boursac; for, as he had not heard a word, nor found anything in the account-books that bore on the matter, he suspected that the silence that was preserved with regard to the two men who had been so ruthless to Mme. de la Chanterie, was intended as a test to which he was being put, or perhaps as proof that the noble lady's friends had avenged her.

But, two months later, in the course of a walk one day, he went as far as the Boulevard du Mont-Parnasse, managed to meet Mme. Vauthier, and asked her for some news of the Bernard family.

"Who can tell, my dear M. Godefroid, what has become of those people? Two days after your expedition—for it was you, you cunning dog, who blabbed to my landlord—

somebody came who took that old swaggerer off my hands. Then, in four-and-twenty hours, everything was cleared out—not a stick left, nor a word said—perfect strangers to me, and they told me nothing. I believe he packed himself off to Algiers with his precious grandson; for Népomucène, who was very devoted to that young thief—he is no better than he should be himself—did not find him in the Conciergerie, and he alone knows where they are, and the scamp has gone off and left me. You bring up these wretched foundlings, and this is the reward you get; they leave you high and dry. I have not been able to find anyone to take his place, and as the neighborhood is very crowded, and the house is full, I am worked to death.”

And Godefroid would never have known anything more of Baron Bourlac but for the conclusion of the adventure, which came about through one of the chance meetings which occur in Paris.

In the month of September, Godefroid was walking down the Champs-Élysées, when, as he passed the end of the Rue Marbeuf, he remembered Doctor Halpersohn.

“I ought to call on him,” thought he, “and ask if he cured Bourlac’s daughter. What a voice, what a gift she had! She wanted to dedicate herself to God!”

As he got to the Rond-Point, Godefroid crossed the road hurriedly to avoid the carriages that came quickly down the grand avenue, and he ran up against a youth who had a young-looking woman on his arm.

“Take care!” cried the young man. “Are you blind?”

“Why, it is you!” cried Godefroid, recognizing Auguste de Mergi.

Auguste was so well dressed, so handsome, so smart, so proud of the lady he was escorting, that, but for the memories that rushed on his mind, Godefroid would hardly have recognized them.

“Why, it is dear M. Godefroid!” exclaimed the lady.

On hearing the delightful tones of Vanda’s enchanting voice, and seeing her walking, Godefroid stood riveted to the spot.

“Cured!” he exclaimed.

“Ten days ago he allowed me to walk,” she replied.

“Halpersohn?”

“Yes,” said she. “And why have you never come to see us?—But, indeed, you were wise. My hair was not cut off till about a week ago. This that you see is but a wig; but the doctor assures me it will grow again!—But we have so much to say to each other. Will you not come to dine with us?—Oh, that harmonium!—Oh, monsieur!” and she put her handkerchief to her eyes. “I will treasure it all my life! My son will preserve it as a relic.—My father has sought for you all through Paris, and he is anxiously in search, too, of his unknown benefactors. He will die of grief **if** you cannot help him to find them. He suffers from the darkest melancholy, and I cannot always succeed in rousing him from it.”

Fascinated alike by the voice of this charming woman recalled from the grave, and by that of irresistible curiosity, Godefroid gave his arm to the hand held out by the Baronne de Mergi, who let her son go on in front with an errand, which the lad had understood from his mother’s nod.

“I shall not take you far; we are living in the Allée d’Antin in a pretty little house à l’*Anglaise*; we have it all to ourselves, each of us occupies a floor. Oh, we are very comfortable! And my father believes that you have had a great deal to do with the good fortune that is poured upon us——”

“I?”

“Did you not know that a place has been created for him in consequence of a report from the Minister for Public Instruction, a Chair of Legislature, like one at the Sorbonne? My father will give his first course of lectures in the month of November next. The great work on which he was engaged will be published in a month or so; the house of Cavalier is bringing it out on half-profits with my father, and has paid him thirty thousand francs on account of his share; so he is buying the house we live in. The Minister of Justice allows me a pension of twelve hundred francs as the daughter of a retired magistrate; my father has his pension of a thousand crowns, and he had five thousand francs with his pro-

fessorship. We are so economical that we shall be almost rich.

"My Auguste will begin studying the law a few months hence; meanwhile, he has employment in the public prosecutor's office, and gets twelve hundred francs.—Oh, M. Godefroid, never mention that miserable business of my poor Auguste's. For my part, I bless him every day for the deed which his grandfather has not yet forgiven. His mother blesses him, Halpersohn is devoted to him, but the old public prosecutor is implacable!"

"What business?" asked Godefroid.

"Ah! that is just like your generosity!" cried Vanda. "You have a noble heart. Your mother must be proud of you!—"

"On my word, I know nothing of the matter you allude to," said Godefroid.

"Really, you did not hear?" And she frankly told the story of Auguste's borrowing from the doctor, admiring her son for the action.

"But if I am to say nothing about this before the Baron," said Godefroid, "tell me how your son got out of the scrape."

"Well," said Vanda, "as I told you, my son is in the public prosecutor's office, and has met with the greatest kindness. He was not kept more than eight-and-forty hours in the Conciergerie, where he was lodged with the governor. The worthy doctor, who did not get Auguste's beautiful, sublime letter till the evening, withdrew the charge; and by the intervention of a former presiding judge of the Supreme Court—a man my father had never even seen—the public prosecutor had the police agent's report and the warrant for arrest both destroyed. In fact, not a trace of the affair survives but in my heart, in my son's conscience, and in his grandfather's mind—who, since that day, speaks to my boy in the coldest terms, and treats him as a stranger.

"Only yesterday, Halpersohn was interceding for him; but my father, who will not listen to me, much as he loves me, replied: 'You are the person robbed, you can and ought

to forgive. But I am answerable for the thief—and when I sat on the Bench, I never pronounced a pardon!’—‘You will kill your daughter,’ said Halpersohn—I heard them. My father kept silence.”

“But who is it that has helped you?”

“A gentleman who is, we believe, employed to distribute the benefactions of the Queen.”

“What is he like?” asked Godefroid.

“He is a grave, thin man, sad-looking—something like my father. It was he who had my father conveyed to the house where we now are, when he was in a high fever. And, just fancy, as soon as my father was well, I was removed from the private hospital and brought there, where I found my old bedroom just as though I had never left it.—Halpersohn, whom the tall gentleman had quite bewitched—how I know not—then told me all about my father’s sufferings, and how he had sold the diamonds off his snuff-box! My father and my boy often without bread, and making believe to be rich in my presence!—Oh, M. Godefroid, those two men are martyrs! What can I say to my father? I can only repay him and my son by suffering for them, like them.”

“And had the tall gentleman something of a military air?”

“Oh, you know him!” cried Vanda, as they reached the door of the house.

She seized Godefroid’s hand with the grip of a woman in hysterics, and, dragging him into a drawing-room of which the door stood open, she exclaimed—“Father, M. Godefroid knows your benefactor.”

Baron Bourlac, whom Godefroid found dressed in a style suitable to a retired judge of his high rank, held out his hand to Godefroid, and said—

“I thought as much.”

Godefroid shook his head in negation of any knowledge of the details of this noble revenge; but the Baron did not give him time to speak.

“Monsieur,” he went on, “only Providence can be more powerful, only Love can be more thoughtful, only Motherhood can be more clear-sighted, than your friends who are



allied with those great divinities.—I bless the chance that has led to our meeting again, for M. Joseph has vanished completely; and as he has succeeded in avoiding every snare I could lay to ascertain his real name and residence, I should have died in grief.—But here, read his letter.—And you know him?”

Godefroid read as follows:—

“M. le Baron Bourlac, the money we have laid out for you by the orders of a charitable lady amounts to a sum of fifteen thousand francs. Take note of this, that it may be repaid either by you or by your descendants when your family is sufficiently prosperous to allow of it, for it belongs to the poor. When such repayment is possible, deposit the money you owe with the Brothers Mongenod, bankers. God forgive you your sins!”

The letter was mysteriously signed with five crosses.

Godefroid returned it.—“The five crosses, sure enough!” said he to himself.

“Now, since you know all,” said the old man, “you who were this mysterious lady’s messenger—tell me her name.”

“Her name!” cried Godefroid; “her name! Unhappy man, never ask it! never try to find it out.—Oh, madame,” said he, taking Mme. de Mergi’s hand in his own, which shook, “if you value your father’s sanity, keep him in his ignorance; never let him make any attempt——”

The father, the daughter, and Auguste stood frozen with amazement.

“Well, then, the woman who has preserved your daughter for you,” said Godefroid, looking at the old lawyer, “who has restored her to you, young, lovely, fresh, and living—who has snatched her from the grave—who has rescued your grandson from disgrace—who has secured to you a happy and respected old age—who has saved you all three——” he paused, “is a woman whom you sent innocent to the hulks for twenty years,” he went on, addressing M. Bourlac, “on whom, from your judgment-seat, you poured every insult, whose saintliness you mocked at, and from whom you snatched

a lovely daughter to send her to the most horrible death, for she was guillotined!"

Godefroid, seeing Vanda drop senseless on to a chair, rushed out of the room, and from thence into the Allée d'Antin, where he took to his heels.

"If you would earn my forgiveness," said Baron Bourlac to his grandson, "follow that man and find out where he lives."

Auguste was off like a dart.

By half-past eight next morning, Baron Bourlac was knocking at the old yellow gate of the Hôtel de la Chanterie, Rue Chanoinesse. He asked for Mme. de la Chanterie, and the porter pointed to the stone steps. Happily they were all going to breakfast, and Godefroid recognized the Baron in the courtyard through one of the loopholes that lighted the stairs. He had but just time to fly down and into the drawing-room where they were all assembled, crying out—"Baron Bourlac."

On hearing this name, Mme. de la Chanterie, supported by the Abbé de Vèze, disappeared into her room.

"You shall not come in, you imp of Satan!" cried Manon, who recognized the lawyer, and placed herself in front of the drawing-room door. "Do you want to kill my mistress?"

"Come, Manon, let the gentleman pass," said M. Alain.

Manon dropped on to a chair as if her knees had both given way at once.

"Gentlemen," said the Baron in a voice of deep emotion, as he recognized Godefroid and M. Joseph, and bowed to the two strangers, "beneficence confers a claim on those benefited by it!"

"You owe nothing to us," said the worthy Alain; "you owe everything to God."

"You are saints, and you have the serenity of saints," replied the old lawyer. "You will hear me, I beg.—I have learnt that the superhuman blessings that have been heaped on me for eighteen months past are the work of a person whom I deeply injured in the course of my duty; it was fifteen years before I was assured of her innocence; this,

gentlemen, is the single remorse I have known as due to the exercise of my powers.—Listen! I have not much longer to live, but I shall lose that short term of life, necessary still to my children whom Mme. de la Chanterie has saved, if I cannot win her forgiveness. Gentlemen, I will remain kneeling on the square of Notre-Dame till she has spoken one word.—I will wait for her there!—I will kiss the print of her feet; I will find tears to soften her heart—I who have been dried up like a straw by seeing my daughter's sufferings——”

The door of Mme. de la Chanterie's room was opened, the Abbé de Vèze came through like a shade, and said to M. Joseph—

“That voice is killing madame.”

“What! she is there! She has passed there!” cried Bourlac.

He fell on his knees, kissed the floor, and melted into tears, crying in a heartrending tone—

“In the name of Jesus who died on the Cross, forgive! forgive! For my child has suffered a thousand deaths!”

The old man collapsed so entirely that the spectators believed he was dead.

At this moment Mme. de la Chanterie appeared like a specter in the doorway, leaning, half-fainting, against the side-post.

“In the name of Louis XVI. and Marie Antoinette, whom I see on the scaffold, of Mme. Elizabeth, of my daughter, and of yours—in the name of Jesus, I forgive you.”

As he heard the words, the old man looked up and said—

“Thus are the angels avenged!”

M. Joseph and M. Nicolas helped him to his feet, and led him out to the courtyard; Godefroid went to call a coach; and when they heard the rattle of wheels, M. Nicolas said, as he helped the old man into it—

“Come no more, monsieur, or you will kill the mother, too. The power of God is infinite, but human nature has its limits.”

That day Godefroid joined the Order of the Brethren of Consolation.

# **THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE**



# PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

OR

## MEDITATIONS OF AN ECLECTIC PHILOSOPHER ON CONJUGAL BLISS AND INFELICITY

### DEDICATION

NOTE the words (page 35): "The superior man to whom this book is dedicated." Does that not mean: "It is dedicated to you"?

THE AUTHOR.

The woman who, lured by the title, might be tempted to open this book, might as well not do so, for, unknown to herself, she has already read it. No man, however malicious, will ever say as much good or as much evil of women as they think of themselves. If, in spite of this warning, a woman should persist in reading this work, delicacy ought to compel her not to speak ill of the author, since, depriving himself of the approvals which are most flattering to an artist, he has, so to speak, engraved on the frontispiece of his book the prudent inscription which is to be found on the doors of several establishments: *Ladies not admitted.*

### INTRODUCTION

"MARRIAGE does not derive from Nature. The Oriental family differs in every respect from the Occidental family. Man is the minister of Nature, and society grafts itself upon the latter. Laws are made to suit customs and customs vary.

"Thus marriage can undergo the improvement to which all human matters are subject."

These words, uttered before the Council of State by Na-

oleon, at the time of the discussion of the Civil Code, greatly impressed the author of this book; and, unknown to himself, they perhaps created within him the germ of the work he is now offering to the public. Indeed, at the time when, much younger than he is now, he studied French law, the word *Adultery* gave rise in his mind to some peculiar impressions. Assuming gigantic proportions in the Code, this word never appeared to his imagination without lugubrious images following in its train. Shame, hatred, tears, terror, secret crimes, deadly wars, disrupted families, misfortune, became personified and rose before him when he used to read that sacramental *Adultery!* Later, when he frequented the most popular seaside resorts, the author noticed that the strictness of marital laws was generally mitigated by adultery. He found that unhappy marriages outnumbered by far the happy ones. In a word, he believed that he was the first to discover that, of all human notions, the marriage notion was the least advanced. But it was the observation of a young man; and with him, as with many others, similar to a stone flung into a lake, it lost itself in the turmoil of his seething thoughts. In spite of himself, however, the author observed; then, very slowly, a swarm of ideas more or less accurate on the nature of conjugal matters, began to form in his brain. Perhaps works are formed in human souls just as mysteriously as truffles grow in the fragrant plains of Périgord. From the initial and holy fear that adultery inspired in him, and from the observations he had thoughtlessly made, sprang, one fine morning, a tiny idea. It was a raillery on marriage: a husband and wife loved each other for the first time after twenty-seven years of wedded life.

This little conjugal pamphlet amused him and he spent a whole week grouping around this innocent epigram the multitude of thoughts that he had unconsciously acquired and that he was much surprised to discover. This fooling fell before a masterly remark. Obedient to advice, the author threw himself once more into the carelessness of his indolent habits. Nevertheless, that slight principle of science and jesting grew all alone in the fields of his thoughts;

every phase of the condemned work took root, and grew hardy, and remained like the bough of a tree which, left on an arid waste some winter's night, is covered the next day by those strange white crystallizations which the capricious frost of the night designs. Thus the sketch lived and became the starting point of a multitude of moral ramifications. It was like a polypus that engendered itself. The sensations of his youth, the observations that an opportune power allowed him to make, found points of support in the smallest events. Moreover, this mass of ideas was reduced to harmony, became animated and almost personified, so that it began to roam around in the fantastical lands wherein the soul likes to let its wild progeny wander. Through all the preoccupations of life and society, a voice made him the most startling revelations whenever he was looking with the greatest pleasure upon a smiling woman engaged in conversation or dancing. In the same way that Mephistopheles points out sinister figures to Faust, in the frightful assembly of Broken, the author felt a demon which, at a party, would come and tap him on the shoulder and say in a familiar way: "Dost see that smile? 'Tis the smile of hatred." At times, the demon would strut around like the heroes in Hardy's old comedies. He would shake the folds of an embroidered cloak and endeavor to restore the worn glitter and tinsel of glory. At times, he would laugh uproariously, like Rabelais, and trace on the wall of a house a word that could serve as pendant to "Drink," the only oracle to be obtained from the divine bottle. Often this literary Trilby would be seen sitting on a heap of books, pointing with his claw-like fingers to two yellow volumes whose glaring titles could easily be read. Then, when he noticed that the author was all attention, he would spell in a voice as grating as a harmonica: *Physiology of Marriage!*

But he would almost always appear at night, with dreams. As bewitching as a fairy, he would try to woo with soft words the soul he had subjected. As mocking as he was fascinating, as supple as a woman, as cruel as a tiger, his friendship was more to be feared than his hatred; for he did



not know how to caress without scratching. One night, among others, he tried the power of all his wiles and crowned them by one supreme effort. He came and sat down by the author's bed, like a love-sick girl who says not a word, but whose eyes shine and who ends by disclosing her secret.

"This," said he, "is the prospectus of a diver's suit with the help of which a man can walk on the Seine without wetting his feet. This other volume is the report of the Institute on a garment with which we can brave fire and not be burned. Won't you propose something that will preserve marriage from the misfortune of cold and heat? But listen! Here is the *Art of Preserving Foodstuffs*, the *Art of Preventing Chimneys Smoking*, the *Art of Making Good Mortar*, the *Art of Tying a Cravat*, the *Art of Carving*."

In one minute, he named such a prodigious number of books that the author was bewildered.

"Those myriads of books have been eagerly read," he continued; "and still, all people do not build, all people do not eat, all people do not own ties, nor do all people need a treatise on chimneys, but everybody marries a little. . . . But, behold! . . ."

His hand made a motion and seemed to uncover in the distance an ocean in which all the books of the century were bobbing about like so many waves. The 18mo rebounded, the 8mo which were being thrown in gave forth a deep sound, touched bottom and bobbed up again with infinite pains, being held down by the 12mo and the 32mo, which were present in great numbers and which soon reduced themselves to foam. The furious breakers carried journalists, readers, printers, printers' devils, whose heads could be seen bobbing above the books. Thousands of voices could be heard, like those of boys in bathing. A few men in boats drifted hither and thither, picking up the volumes and bringing them to a tall, dry, contemptuous-looking personage all garbed in black: it was the public and the publishers. With his finger, the demon pointed to a boat under full sail, freshly decked with pennants, and carrying a sign intended for a flag: then, with a sardonic laugh, he read in a shrill voice: *Physiology of Marriage*.

The author fell in love, but the Devil let him alone, for he would have been worsted had he come back to a place inhabited by a woman. Several years passed without bringing any other worries but those of love, and the author had reason to believe that he had been cured of one ill by another. But, one evening, he found himself in a salon in Paris when one of the men who form the circle that gathers around the mantelpiece, began to speak and related the following anecdote in a sepulchral voice:

“This happened in Gand at the time when I was there. A lady, a widow, attacked by a mortal disease for the past ten years, was lying on her deathbed. Her last breath was anxiously awaited by three collateral heirs, who would not stir a step for fear that she might make a will in favor of a convent of the town. The sick woman was silent and appeared to be dozing, and Death was stealing slowly over her mute and ghastly face. Can you not see the three silent relatives sitting by the bedside that winter’s night? An old nurse is there, too, nodding her head, and the doctor, seeing that his patient has arrived at the last stage, holds his hat in one hand and with the other makes a motion that signifies: ‘This is my last visit.’ A solemn silence prevailed and one could hear the dull sound of the snow falling on the shutters. Fearing that the light might inconvenience the dying woman, the youngest of the heirs had fitted a shade to the candle placed near the bed, so that the luminous circle barely reached the funereal pillow on which the livid face of the sick woman detached itself like a dim gilt Christ on a tarnished silver cross. The glimmerings thrown by the blue flames of a grate-fire alone illumined the dark room where a drama was about to take place. Indeed, a log rolled from the fireplace onto the floor, as if it were an omen of some event. At the noise, the sick woman awakens and sits up in bed; she opens eyes as bright as a cat’s, and everyone gazes at her in amazement. She watches the progress of the burning log; and before anybody has even thought of opposing her movement, produced by a sort of delirium, she leaps out of bed, snatches the tongs and hurls the log back into the fireplace. The nurse, the

doctor and the relatives jump forward, take the dying woman in their arms and lay her gently on the bed; she leans her head back on the pillow and expires shortly afterward, with her eyes, even in death, riveted on the spot where the log had rolled. Hardly had the Countess von Ostroem breathed her last, before the three heirs looked at each other suspiciously and, forgetting their aunt, they indicated to one another the mysterious floor. As they were Belgians, calculations followed close on their glance. It was arranged, by a few words spoken in a low tone, that not one of them was to leave the room. A flunkey was dispatched to summon a carpenter. Those collateral souls trembled with eagerness, when, gathered about the rich floor, they watched the apprentice cut the wood.

“‘My aunt made a gesture,’ said the youngest of the heirs.

“‘No, it is the effect of the light,’ replied the oldest one, with one eye on the treasure and the other on the dead woman.

“The afflicted relatives found, exactly at the spot where the log had lain, a mass cunningly covered with a layer of plaster.

“‘Go ahead,’ said the old heir.

“The tool of the apprentice then disclosed a human head, and I do not know what remnant of a garment which led them to recognize the Count, whom the whole town believed to be dead in Java and whose loss had been greatly mourned by his wife.”

The narrator of this story was a tall, spare man with hazel eyes and brown locks, and the author thought he perceived sundry resemblances between him and the demon who had so tormented him; but the stranger did not have a cloven foot. Suddenly, the word *Adultery* reached the author's ears; and then, that sort of bell awakened in his imagination the most lugubrious figures of the procession which, in the past, always defiled after those illusive syllables.

From that time on, the phantasmagorical persecutions of a work which did not exist, began all over again; and, at no other period of his life was the author so besieged with

fallacious ideas on the fatal subject of the book. But he resisted the demon bravely, although the latter seemed to connect the slightest events of life with the unknown work and, like a customs officer, stamped everything with his ironical initial.

Several days later, the author found himself in the company of two ladies. The first one had been one of the most amiable and witty women of Napoleon's court. Having attained a high social position, the Restoration dethroned her; then she became a hermit. The second lady, young and fair, was playing, at the time, the part of a woman of fashion. They were friends because, one being forty years old and the other twenty-two, their pretensions rarely clashed on the same grounds. The author was of no consequence to one of these ladies, and as the other one had divined him, they continued in his presence a rather frank chat they were having regarding their profession of women.

"Have you noticed, my dear, that, as a general thing, women only love fools?"

"What are you saying, Duchess? and how can you make this remark agree with the pronounced aversion they feel for their husbands?"

"Why, it is tyranny!" said the author to himself. "So here is the demon in petticoats?"

"No, my dear, I am not jesting," replied the Duchess, "and really, it is enough to make a body tremble since I have looked dispassionately upon the people I used to know. Wit always has a brilliancy that hurts one's feelings, and the man who possesses much wit frightens us; if he be proud, he will not be jealous, and therefore could never please us. And then, we perhaps prefer to raise a man to our position than to ascend to his. . . . Talent has many triumphs it can share with us, but the dull man gives pleasure, and we always prefer to hear: 'There goes a handsome man!' than to see our lovers become members of the Institute."

"Ah! Duchess, enough; you have thoroughly frightened me!"

And the young coquette, passing in review all the lovers whom her acquaintances were mad about, failed to find one clever man among the lot.

“Why, on my virtue,” she exclaimed, “their husbands are better . . .”

“But those people are *husbands*,” the Duchess gravely rejoined.

“Still,” inquired the author, “is the misfortune which, in France, threatens all husbands, absolutely unavoidable?”

“Yes,” replied the Duchess, with a laugh. “And the animosity of certain women toward those who own to the happy misfortune of having a passion, proves that the burden of chastity lies heavily upon them. Were it not that she fears the Devil, one would be *Lais*; the other one owes her virtue to her coldness of heart; still another one, to the manner in which her first lover conducted himself; this one . . .”

The author checked this torrent of revelations by communicating to the two ladies the plan which pursued him; they smiled and promised much advice. The young one gayly furnished the first capital for the enterprise by saying that she would mathematically prove that those women who are entirely virtuous are creatures of reason.

On reaching home, the author then said to his demon:

“Come! I am ready. Let us sign the agreement!”

The demon then vanished forever.

If the author writes down the biography of his book here, it is not through any inspiration of fatuity.

He relates facts which may be of service in the history of human thought and which will, without a doubt, explain the work itself. It may not be a matter of indifference to certain anatomists of thought to know that the soul is feminine.

Thus, as long as the author determined that he would not think of the book he was going to write—the book appeared written everywhere. He would come across a page lying on the bed of a sick friend, and find another one on the

sofa of a boudoir. The glances of waltzing women suggested ideas; a gesture, a word, fertilized his scornful brain. The day he said to himself: "This work which so obsesses me, shall be accomplished!" everything fled; and, like the three Belgians, he found a skeleton where he expected to discover a treasure.

A pale and lovely face succeeded the tempting demon; it had charm and cordiality and its representations were devoid of the sharp shafts of criticism. It lavished more words than ideas and seemed to dread noise. Perhaps it was the good genius of the honorable deputies who sit in the very center of the Chamber.

"Is it not better," said she, "to leave things as they are? Are they so bad? One should believe in marriage as in the immortality of the soul; and you are certainly not going to write a book lauding matrimonial felicity. Besides, you will no doubt draw your conclusions from a thousand Parisian households which are exceptions. Perhaps you will find some husbands willing to hand over their wives to you; but no son will hand over his mother . . ."

"A few people, hurt by the opinions you are going to profess, will suspect your conduct and denounce your intentions. And lastly, in order to tamper with the sores of the body social, one should be a king or at least a First Consul."

Although she appeared in the guise most acceptable to the author, Reason was not heeded; for, in the distance, Folly was shaking the hobby of Panurge and he wanted to snatch it; but, when he tried to seize it, he found that it was as heavy as the club of Hercules; besides, the curé of Meudon had embellished it in such a manner, that a young man who prides himself more on being properly gloved than on writing a book, could not touch it.

"Well, is our work finished?" asked the younger of the author's two accomplices.

"Alas! madame, will you reward me for all the hatred it may arouse against me?"

She made a gesture and then the author replied to her hesitancy by an expression of unconcern.

“What! you hesitate? Publish it and do not be afraid. Nowadays, we read a book more for its style than for the material it contains.”

Although, in this instance, the author is only the humble secretary of two ladies, he has, while engaged in co-ordinating and recording their observations, accomplished more than one task. Perhaps, as regards marriage, only one remained to be accomplished, and that was to gather the things that everyone thinks and that no one utters; but by making use, in a study of this kind, of everybody's thoughts, does one not run the risk of not pleasing anyone? However, the eclectism of this study may save it. While mocking at some things, the author has endeavored to popularize several comforting ideas. He has almost always attempted to awaken unknown springs in the human soul. While defending the most material interests, judging or condemning them, he has perhaps given a glimpse of more than one intellectual delight. Yet, the author has not the foolish presumption of having always succeeded in making elegant jests; he has only counted on the diversity of minds, to receive as much blame as approval. The matter was so grave, that he has constantly tried to *anecdote* it, as, nowadays, anecdotes are passports for all teachings and the anti-narcotic for all books. In this one, where everything is analysis and observation, fatigue in the reader, and the *I* in the author, were unavoidable. It is one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a work, and the author has not striven to conceal it from himself. He has therefore arranged the rudiments of this lengthy study so that the reader may find a break here and there. This system was consecrated by a writer who made on *Taste* a study in many respects similar to the one the author was making on *Marriage*, and of whom he will take the liberty of borrowing a sentence to express an idea which is common to both of them. It will be a sort of tribute rendered to a predecessor whose death followed close upon his success:

“When I write and speak of myself in the singular, the

fact supposes a confabulation with the reader; he may examine, discuss, doubt and even laugh; but, when I arm myself with the formidable *we*, I am professing, and I require submission.”—(BRILLAT-SAVARIN, preface of *Physiology of Taste*.)

*December 5, 1829.*



## PART FIRST

### GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

“ We shall talk against insane laws until they are revised, and in the meantime, we blindly submit to them.”—  
(DIDEROT, *Supplement to the Voyage of Bougainville.*)

### MEDITATION I

#### THE SUBJECT

**P**HYSIOLOGY, what do you want with me?  
Is it not your aim to demonstrate that marriage unites for life two beings who are strangers to one another?

That life is in passion, and that no passion survives marriage?

That marriage is an institution necessary to the preservation of society, but that it is contrary to natural laws?

That divorce, that admirable palliative of marital ills, will be unanimously clamored for?

That, in spite of its drawbacks, marriage is the original source of property?

That it offers inestimable pledges of security to governments?

That there is something touching in the association of two beings to weather the storms of life?

That it is ridiculous to expect an only thought to direct two wills?

That woman is treated like a slave?

That no marriage is absolutely cloudless?

That constancy is impossible, at least for a man?

That, if it were possible to make a general report, more troubles than security would be found in the patrimonial transmission of property?

That the faithlessness of woman dates back to the beginning of society and that marriage has survived this constant succession of frauds?

That the laws of love bind two beings so strongly together that no human law can part them?

That, if there are marriages recorded on the public registers, there are others formed by natural inclinations, by a happy similarity or a complete dissimilarity of thought and by bodily conformations; so that heaven and earth are in constant contradiction?

That there are handsome, manly and superior husbands, whose wives have ugly, diminutive and dull lovers?

All these questions might well furnish subjects for so many books, but the books have been written and the questions are being perpetually solved.

Physiology, what do you want with me?

Do you reveal new principles? Do you contend that we are to treat women as common property? Lycurgus and several Grecian tribes, Tartars and savages, tried it.

Should we guard our women closely? The Ottomans did it, and to-day they are setting them free again.

Should we make girls wed without a dowry and exclude them from our wills? . . . English authors and moralists have proven that, in co-operation with divorce, this scheme is the best means of making marriages turn out happily.

Should there be a little Hagar in each household? No law is required for that. The article of the Code which imposes penalties upon the adulterous woman, in whatever place the crime be committed, and the one which only punishes the husband if the concubine reside under the conjugal roof, implicitly admits mistresses *en ville*.

Sanchez has disserted on all the punishable cases of the married state; he has even argued on the opportuneness and legitimacy of each pleasure; he has outlined all the moral, religious and material duties of the consorts; in a word, his work would comprise twelve volumes 8mo if the ponderous infolio bearing the title *De Matrimonio* were to be reprinted.

Swarms of lawyers have launched swarms of treatises on

the legal knots that marriage creates. There are even some works on the judicial congress.

Legions of physicians have published legions of books on marriage in relation to surgery and medicine.

In the nineteenth century, the physiology of marriage is either an insignificant compilation or else the work of a fool, written for other fools; hoary priests have taken their golden scales and weighed the slightest scruples; hoary lawyers have put on their spectacles and distinguished all the species; hoary physicians have taken their scalpels and probed the sores; hoary judges have ascended the bench and judged all redhibitory cases; entire generations have passed, crying out in joy or in grief; each century has cast its vote into the ballot-box; the Holy Ghost, the poets, the writers have recorded all, from Eve to the Trojan war, from Helen of Troy to Madame de Maintenon, from the wife of Louis XIV. to the contemporaneous woman.

Physiology what do you want with me?

Do you want, by chance, to show me, with the aid of more or less well-drawn pictures, that a man marries:

Out of ambition . . . that is well known;

Out of kindness of heart, to snatch a girl from her mother's rule;

Out of anger, to disinherit collaterals;

Out of contempt for a faithless mistress;

Out of lassitude for the delightful life of a bachelor;

Out of folly, for it is always a folly;

On account of a bet, as was the case with Lord Byron;

On account of honor, like Georges Dandin;

Out of interest, but 'tis almost always out of that;

Out of youth, on leaving college, through sheer thoughtlessness;

On account of ugliness and the fear that some day he may lack a woman;

Out of machiavellism, in order to inherit an old woman's fortune;

Out of necessity, in order to give a name to *our* son;

Out of duty, because the damsel has been weak;

Out of passion, in order to be more surely cured;

On account of a quarrel, to end a suit;  
 Out of gratitude, it is giving more than one has received;  
 Out of wisdom, it still happens to doctrinary people;  
 On account of a will, when a departed uncle has added  
 a marriageable girl to his legacy;  
 Out of tradition, to emulate one's ancestors;  
 On account of old age, to make a fitting end?

(There is no *x*, and it is perhaps because it is so seldom used at the beginning of a word, that it has been taken for the sign of the *unknown*.)

Out of *yatidi*, which is Turkish for bedtime and also implies the various needs of that time;

Out of religious zeal, like the Duc de Saint-Aignan, who did not wish to sin?

But these accidents have furnished subjects for thirty thousand comedies and one hundred thousand novels.

Physiology, for the third and the last time, what do you want with me?

Here, everything is as commonplace as cobblestones, as vulgar as a crossroad.

Marriage is better known than Barabbas of the Passion; all the old ideas it awakens have been current in literature since the world's beginning, and there is no useful opinion or strange plan, that has not found its way to an author, a printer, a publisher, and a reader.

Allow me to say to you, like our Master Rabelais:

"Good people, may the Lord save and keep you! Where are you? I cannot see you. Wait until I put on my spectacles. Ah! ah! I see you now. You, and your good wives and children are in the best of health? I am pleased."

But I do not write for you. As long as you have grown children, that ends the matter.

Ah! 'tis you, illustrious drinkers; you, precious gouty ones, and you tireless revelers and spicy exquisites, who feast all day and have your own gallant magpies and go at tierce, at nones, and likewise at vespers, at complines, and would, if you could, go forever.

It is not to you that I address the *Physiology of Marriage*, for you are not married.

Amen forever!

You, lot of bigots, snails, hypocrites, canting rascals, and the likes of you who are disguised to deceive the world! . . . Avaunt, cringing knaves, out of the quarry! Out of here, you fuddle-brains! By the Devil, are you still there? . . .

Perhaps there only remains for me the good souls fond of a hearty laugh. None of those whining fools, who, on every occasion, want to drown themselves in verse and prose and write sickly odes, sonnets and meditations; none of those dreamers of all kinds, but a few of those old pantagruelists who are not over careful when there is any festivity on hand, who admire the book of the *pois au lard*, *cum commento* of Rabelais, and the one on the dignity of flaps, and who properly esteem these truly fine works.

We can no longer laugh at the Government, my friends, since it has found a way of raising fifteen millions of taxes.

The popes, the bishops, the monks and the sisters are not rich enough to entertain us; but let Saint Michael who chased the Devil out of heaven come, and perhaps we may see good times again! Consequently, we have nothing to laugh at in France, at present, but marriage.

Disciples of Panurge, you alone I wish to have as readers. You alone know how to pick up and drop a book, how to understand veiled meanings and to extract nourishment from a medullar bone.

Those people with microscopes who only see one side, the censors, in a word, have they really passed everything in review and said all there was to be said? Have they decided finally that it is as impossible to execute a book on marriage as it is to make a new jug out of a broken one?

Yes, master crank. Press marriage and nothing will ever flow from it but pleasure for the bachelors and worry for the husbands. That is the eternal moral. A million printed pages could contain nothing else.

However, here is my first proposition: Marriage is a furious struggle before which the consorts crave the blessing of Heaven, because, to love always is the most daring of enterprises; the struggle begins at once, and victory,

that is to say, freedom, belongs to the most skillful combatant.

I agree with you. Where do you find anything new in this conception?

Well, I address myself to the married men of yesterday and to-day, to those who, emerging from the church or the mayor's office, conceive the hope of always keeping their wives for themselves; to those who, on account of some strange and undefinable egotism, always say when they see the misfortunes of other people: "That will never happen to me!"

I address myself to those seafarers who, after they have seen many a shipwreck, venture on the high seas themselves; to those bachelors who, after having caused many a matrimonial catastrophe, dare to get married. And here is the subject, eternally new, eternally old!

A young man, or perhaps an old one, in love or not, has just acquired by a contract duly recorded in the mayor's office, in heaven and in the books of the dominion, a young girl with flowing hair, gleaming black eyes, tiny feet, tapering fingers, ruddy lips, pearly teeth and a pretty figure, one who is appetizing and coquettish, as white as a lily, and endowed with all the most desirable attractions of beauty; her lashes resemble the spikes of the crown of iron, her skin, as fresh as a white camelia, is tinted with the carmine of the scarlet blossom; on her virginal countenance, the eye detects the bloom of a young fruit and the imperceptible down of a peach; the blue veins distill a rich glow through the clear tissues; she demands and gives life; she is all joy and innocence. She loves her husband, or at least she thinks she does. . . .

The enamored bridegroom says to himself: "Those eyes will shine only for me, those lips will tremble only for me, that soft hand will pour the treasures of voluptuousness only over me, that breast will heave only at my approach, that sleeping soul will awaken only at my bidding, I alone will bury my hands in the shining masses of this hair, I alone will dreamily caress that beautiful head. I will have Death watch at my bedside to protect my nuptial couch from the depredations of strangers; that throne of love shall

float in the blood of any imprudent man, or in mine own. Tranquillity, honor, happiness, paternal ties, the fortune of my children, everything is there; I shall defend it as a lioness protects her young. Woe to him who ventures into my lair!"

Well, brave athlete, we applaud your purpose. Until now no geometrician has dared to trace lines of longitude and latitude over the marital sea. The old husbands were ashamed to point out the sand-banks, reefs, rocks, shoals, coasts and currents which destroyed their crafts. The married pilgrims lacked a guide, a compass . . . this book shall serve as such. Without mentioning tradespeople and shopkeepers, there are so many persons who, in order to pass the time, occupy themselves with trying to find out the secret reasons which govern women's actions, that it is a charity to class all the secret situations of marriage by chapters and titles. A good table of contents will permit them to lay their finger on the heartbeats of their wives, just like the table of logarithms teaches them the sum of a multiplication.

Well, what do you think of it? Is it not a new enterprise, and one that every philosopher has given up, to show how a woman can be prevented from deceiving her husband? Is it not the comedy of comedies? Is it not another *speculum vitæ humanæ*? There is no longer any question about the idle propositions we have done justice to in this meditation; nowadays, with regard to morality as with regard to the exact sciences, the century requires facts and observations . . . we furnish them.

Let us begin by examining the real state of affairs, by analyzing the forces of each party. Before arming our imaginary champion, let us calculate the number of his foes, and count the Cossacks who want to invade his little kingdom.

Let come with us who will, let those laugh who may. Weigh the anchor, hoist the sails! You at least know your starting-point! It is a great advantage that we have over a large number of books!

As regards our whim to laugh whilst we cry and to cry whilst we laugh, like the divine Rabelais who drank whilst

he ate and ate whilst he drank; as regards our *mánia* to put Democritus and Heraclitus in the same page, to have neither style, nor premeditation, nor phrases—if any of the crew should demur!—Overboard with the old fogies, the classics in tights, the romantics in shrouds, and let come what may!

All those cranks will perhaps reproach us for resembling those people who joyfully exclaim: “I’m going to tell you a funny story.” “. . . As if we could jest regarding marriage! Have you not already guessed that we consider it in the light of a slight disease to which we are all subject and that this book is its monography?”

But you, your galley or book, look like those postilions who make their whips crack when they leave relay-stations because they have English people aboard. You will not have galloped a mile before you will have to get down to mend a trace or to rest your horses. Why blow your horn before you have won?

Eh! my dear pantagruelists, nowadays it is sufficient to have pretensions to success in order to obtain it; and, after all, great works are only the elaboration of carefully studied small ideas! I do not see why I am not able to gather laurels if only to wind around those salty hams which will help us to empty the wine-jugs. Just a moment, pilot! Do not let us start without first making a little definition.

Readers, if here and there in this book, like in the world, you come across the words virtue or virtuous women, let us agree that virtue will be that painful ease with which a married woman reserves her heart for her husband; unless the word be used in a general sense, a distinction which we will leave to the natural sagacity of each reader.



## MEDITATION II

## CONJUGAL STATISTICS

THE Administration, for the past twenty years, has been trying to determine how many acres of woods, fields, vineyards and fallow-land are contained in the soil of France.

It did not stop there and has also wanted to know the number and nature of the animals. Scientists have gone even further; they have counted the measures of wood, the kilogrammes of beef, the quarts of wine, the apples and eggs consumed in Paris. But nobody has yet thought, either in the name of marital honor, or in the interest of marriageable people, or for the advantage to morality and the improvement of human institutions, of looking into the number of good women. What! the French Cabinet, questioned, can reply that France has so many men in the army, so many spies, so many clerks, so many school-children; but, as to virtuous women—nothing? If a king of France suddenly developed the idea of seeking his august mate among his subjects, the Administration could not even indicate the majority of spotless lambs from which he might choose? It would be compelled to refer him to some institution of *rosières*, a fact which would cause a good deal of merriment.

Are the ancients, then, to be considered our masters in political institutions, as they are in morality? History tells us that Ahasuerus, wishing to find a wife among the daughters of Persia, chose Esther, the fairest and most virtuous of all. His ministers must necessarily have found a way to sift the population. Unfortunately, the Bible, so clear on every matrimonial question, has omitted to give us that law on conjugal election.

Let us endeavor to make up for the silence of the Administration, by establishing the number of women in France. At this point we crave the attention of all the supporters of public morality, and make them judges of our proceedings.

We will try to be generous enough in our estimates, exact

enough in our arguments, to make everyone acknowledge the result of this analysis.

There are about thirty million inhabitants in France.

A few naturalists believe that the number of women exceeds the number of men; but, as a great many statisticians hold a contrary view, we will take the most likely calculation and concede a population of fifteen million women.

We will begin by subtracting from this total about nine million creatures who, at first sight, seem to bear quite a likeness to woman, but whom a searching examination has compelled us to reject.

We will explain our meaning.

Naturalists consider man a unique species of that bimanous tribe established by Duménil in his *Zoologie Analytique*, page 16, and to which Bory de Saint-Vincent felt compelled to add the orang-outang species, under pretense of completing it.

If those zoologists only see in us a mammal with thirty-two vertebræ, possessing a hyoid bone, and more cells in the cerebral hemispheres than any other animal; if, for them, no other differences exist in that tribe but those produced by the influences of climate, which have furnished fifteen species, the scientific names of which it would be idle to quote, the physiologist must also have the right to establish his tribes and sub-tribes, in accordance with certain degrees of intelligence and certain moral and pecuniary conditions of existence.

Now, the nine million beings which are occupying us at present, show at first sight all the characteristics peculiar to the human race; they have the hyoid bone, the coracoid beak, the acromion and the zygomatic arch: therefore, the gentlemen of the Jardin des Plantes are quite welcome to class them in the bimanous tribe; but that we should look upon them as women!—that is what the Physiology will never do.

For us and for those to whom this book is destined, a woman is a rare variety of the human species, whose principal physiological characteristics are the following:

The species is due to the special care that men have been

able to lavish on its development, thanks to the power of gold and the moral warmth of civilization. It can be generally recognized by the whiteness, softness and fine texture of the skin. Its natural inclination is toward extreme cleanliness. Its fingers abhor the touch of anything which is not soft, smooth and perfumed. Like the ermine, it sometimes dies of grief when its white robes have been soiled. It likes to smooth its hair and pour sweet scents upon it, trim and polish its nails and frequently bathe its delicate limbs. During the night, it is only happy when reclining on the softest of beds; during the day, when it is reposing on hair sofas; accordingly, the horizontal position is the one which most appeals to it. Its voice is very sweet and its motions are full of grace. It speaks with marvelous facility. It undertakes no hard work; and yet, in spite of its apparent weakness, there are burdens it can move and shoulder with miraculous ease. It flies from the glare of the sun and protects itself from its rays by the most ingenious devices. Walking tires it. Does it ever eat? That remains a mystery. Does it share the needs of other species? That is a problem. Exceedingly curious, it lets itself be easily captured by anyone who conceals the slightest thing from it, for its mind induces it constantly to seek the unknown. To love is its religion; it thinks only of pleasing the one it loves. To be loved, is the aim of all its actions; to excite desire, the aim of all its gestures. Therefore, it only thinks of ways to shine; it moves only in a sphere of grace and elegance; it is for this species that the young Indian woman has spun the soft coat of the Thibet goats, that Tarare has woven its gossamer veils, that Brussels has made its spools of finest flax revolve, that Visapour has extracted shining pebbles from the bowels of the earth and that Sèvres has gilded its snow-white clay. Day and night it devises new ornaments; it employs its life starching dresses and making sashes. It sallies forth brilliant and fresh to show itself off to strangers whose tributes flatter, whose desires intoxicate it, although the strangers themselves are a matter of indifference. The hours it steals from embellishment and voluptuousness are given over to the

pastime of singing sweet airs; it is for Woman that France and Italy have organized their delightful concerts and Naples has given a harmonious soul to the strings of its instruments. In a word, Woman is queen of the world and slave of a desire. She fears marriage because it finally spoils her figure, but she accepts it because it promises happiness. If she bears children, it is only by chance, and when they are grown, she hides them.

These characteristics, chosen haphazard amid a thousand, are they to be found in the creatures whose hands are as knotty as baboons' and whose skin is as dark as the old parchments of an *olim*; whose faces are tanned by the sun, whose necks are flabby and wrinkled; who are clothed in rags; whose voices are harsh, whose intellects are *nil*, whose odor is insufferable; who only think of the daily task, whose backs are constantly bent over the soil; who dig, harrow, make hay, harvest, glean, strip hemp, and knead bread; who, herded with cattle, men and children, live in holes badly covered with straw; to whom it is a matter of small consequence whence come all the children they bear? To produce a great many so as to hand them over to lifelong labor and misery is their whole task; and if their love is not a toil, like their labors in the fields, it is at least a speculation.

Alas! if the world is full of storekeepers' wives who sit all day among candles and sugar, of farmers' wives who milk cows, of miserable wretches who are used as beasts of burden in factories or who carry a hod, a hoe or a basket; if, unfortunately, there exist too many vulgar creatures to whom the life of the soul, the advantages of education, the delightful storms of the heart are an unattainable paradise, and if Nature has willed that they should possess a hyoid bone and thirty-two vertebræ, let them remain for the physiologist in the orang tribe! We are only stipulating for the idle classes, for those who have the time and wit to love, for the rich who have purchased the monopoly of passions, for the intellects that have conquered the monopoly of love. We anathemize all that does not live through thought. We consider rubbish all that is not young, ardent, lovable and passionate. This is the public

expression of the secret sentiment of all philanthropists who can read or who own their carriages. In the nine million rejected ones, the tax-collectors, lawmakers and priests no doubt see so many souls, so many government subjects, tax-payers and law-breakers; but the man with sentiment, the boudoir philosopher, whilst eating the bread sown and harvested by these very creatures, will nevertheless reject them just as we do, from the class to which Woman belongs. For them, no woman who cannot inspire love exists; for them, there is only one being who, through a privileged education, has been invested with the priesthood of thought and in whom idleness has developed the power of imagination; in a word, there exists no other creature but the one whose soul dreams of finding as many intellectual as physical delights in love.

We wish, however, our readers to note that those nine million female pariahs now and then produce thousands of peasant girls who are as fair as angels; they land in Paris or some other large city and end by attaining the rank of ladies; but, for these one or two thousand privileged creatures, there are one hundred thousand others who remain servants or who throw themselves into the most dreadful debauches. Nevertheless, we will give the feminine population credit for these village Pompadours.

The first calculation is based upon the discovery of the statisticians that there are eighteen million poor people, ten million people comfortably off, and two million rich people in France. So there are only six million women to whom refined men are, have been, and always will be, attracted.

Let us submit this social élite to a philosophical analysis. We take it, that married people who have been wedded twenty years can rest quietly without having to worry over love matters and the scandal of a suit based on statutory grounds. Of these six million individuals, we must deduct about two million very charming women, because, at forty-odd years they know the world; but, as they cannot affect masculine hearts, they are outside of the question we are investigating. If they have the misfortune not to be sought for their amiability, they are bored and take up religion

or go in for cats and dogs or indulge in other hobbies that offend no one but God.

The records of the population made by the *Bureau de Longitudes* authorize us to again subtract from the total mass two million beautiful little girls; they are still at the dawn of life and play with their friends without thinking that the boys who make them laugh may some day cause them to shed tears.

Now, of the two million remaining women, where is the man who will not grant that there are one hundred thousand poor, sickly, hunchbacked, ugly, blind, rickety and otherwise infirm girls, with no means, although possessing a good education, but all spinsters, and therefore unable to transgress the holy laws of matrimony?

Are we to be refused another hundred thousand girls who are Sainte-Camille sisters, sisters of charity, nuns, teachers, companions, etc.? We will also add to these holy pursuits the number, rather difficult to appraise, of young girls too old to play with little boys and too young to scatter their sprays of orange-blossoms.

Finally, from the fifteen hundred thousand subjects which remain in the bottom of the crucible, we will deduct another five hundred thousand units which we shall attribute to the daughters of Baal who delight coarse men. We shall even add to this number, without fear that they will contaminate each other, kept women, milliners, shop-girls, actresses, singers, chorus-girls, dancers, *servantes-mâîtresses*, maids, etc. Most of these creatures excite numerous passions, but deem it indecent to notify a mayor, a notary, a priest and a host of fun-makers of the day and hour on which they give themselves to their lovers. Their system, justly frowned upon by inquisitive society, has the advantage of exempting them from any obligation toward mankind, the mayor and justice. Now, as these women in no way break public vows, they have no place in a work dealing exclusively with legitimate marriage.

This is claiming very little for this class, some will say, but it will compensate for the ones which some amateurs might be inclined to think a trifle exaggerated. If any-

one, out of love for a wealthy dowager, would like to have her counted in the remaining million, he will have to take her out of the chapter of sisters of charity, dancers or hunchbacks. In short, we have decided to have only five hundred thousand women in this last category, because, as mentioned above, it often happens that the nine million peasants increase it by a great number of recruits. We have neglected the laboring class and the small trade for the same reason: the women who compose these two social divisions are the product of the efforts of the nine million female bimanics to elevate themselves to the high regions of civilization. Without this scrupulous precision, a great many persons might be inclined to look upon this statistical meditation as a joke.

We, it is true, thought of organizing a small class of one hundred thousand individuals, as a sinking fund for the species and refuge for those women who fall into a medium stage, like widows, for instance; but we preferred to count generously.

It is extremely easy to prove the exactitude of our analysis: a single reflection is sufficient.

A woman's life is divided into three distinct periods: the first one begins in the cradle and lasts until girlhood; the second comprises the time during which a woman belongs to marriage; the third starts at the turn of life, Nature's rather summary means of letting the passions know that they are required to cease. These periods being almost of the same duration, they naturally divide a given quantity of women into equal numbers. Thus, in a mass of six million women one finds, those fractions that scientists are welcome to seek excepted, about two million girls between one and eighteen years of age, two million women at least eighteen and at most forty years old, and two million old women. Thus the caprices of the social state have distributed the two million marriageable women into three great categories, namely: those who remain unwedded for the reasons we have set forth; those whose virtue is a matter of small concern to their husbands, and the million legitimate wives with whom this book is going to deal.

You will note, by this rather precise summing up of the female population, that, in France, there scarcely exists a little flock of a million spotless lambs, privileged fold into which the wolves are eager to enter.

Let us again sift this million already so carefully selected. In order to arrive at a better appreciation of the degree of confidence that a man should have in his wife, we shall suppose for a moment that all these women will be unfaithful to their husbands.

From this hypothesis, it will be well to retrench about a twentieth of young wives, who, having been only recently married, will be faithful to their vows at least a certain length of time. Another twentieth must be granted the sick ones. That is allowing but a small percentage for human ills.

Certain passions, which, it is claimed, destroy a man's power over women's hearts, ugliness, worry, pregnancy, are also entitled to a twentieth.

Adultery does not take possession of a woman's heart suddenly. Even should liking awaken other sentiments at first sight, there is always a struggle, the length of which forms a certain waste in the sum total of conjugal infidelities. It is almost an insult to modesty in France to represent the length of these struggles, in such a warlike nation, only by a twentieth of the female total; but then, we shall suppose that certain ill women keep their lovers e'en amid their calming potions, and that there are others whose pregnancy makes a few sly bachelors wink. Thus we will be able to save the modesty of those ladies who fight for virtue.

For the same reason, we do not dare to believe that a woman forsaken by her lover finds another one *hic et nunc*; but this waste being less great than the preceding one, we shall estimate it at a fortieth.

These deductions will reduce our sum total to eight hundred thousand women, when we endeavor to determine the number of those who will prove faithless to their marriage vow.

Now, who would not like to believe these women virtuous?



Are they not the flower of the land? Are they not all blooming, charming, bewildering with youth and beauty, bubbling over with life and love? To believe in their virtue is a sort of social religion, for they are the ornament of the world and the glory of France.

So it is in this million that we are to seek:

The number of nice women;

The number of virtuous women.

This investigation and these two categories demand entire Meditations which will serve as appendix to the present one.

### MEDITATION III

#### ON THE NICE WOMAN

THE preceding Meditation has shown that we possess, in France, a floating mass of one million women who exploit the privilege of inspiring the passions which a gentleman acknowledges without shame or conceals with pleasure. So it is on this million that we shall direct our diogenical lantern to find the good women of the land. This search leads us to several digressions.

Two well-dressed young men, whose graceful bodies and rounded arms recall a woman's and whose shoes are of the best make, meet one morning on the boulevard at the Passage des Panoramas.

"*Tiens*, it's you!"

"Yes, *mon cher*, I look like myself, I hope?"

And they laugh more or less wittily, according to the nature of the opening of their conversation.

After they have taken each other in with the sly curiosity of a police officer who is trying to make an identification, and are convinced of the respective freshness of their gloves, waistcoats and ties; after they are sufficiently sure that neither of them has had any misfortune since they last met, they link arms and saunter forth and if they start from the Variétés they will not reach Frascati's without having asked

each other a rather broad question which, liberally translated, means:

“Who are you wedded to for the present?”

As a general thing, it is always some charming woman.

Who is the pedestrian in Paris in whose ears have not fallen, like bullets on a battlefield, thousands of words uttered by passers-by, and who has not caught on the fly one of those innumerable sentences referred to by Rabelais? Why, most men walk about Paris in the same way that they eat and drink—thoughtlessly. There are few skilled musicians and practiced physiognomists who can tell in what key those scattered notes are written, from what passion they proceed. Oh! to stroll about Paris! What an adorable and delightful existence! To stroll is a science, the gastronomy of the eye; to walk is to vegetate; to stroll is to live. A young and pretty woman who has been gazed upon long and ardently would be much more entitled to demand wages than the tavernkeeper who asked twenty sous of the Limousin whose nostrils, spread like sails, sniffed nourishing and fragrant odors from his ovens. To stroll means to enjoy, to gather shafts of wit, to admire sublime pictures of joy, love, and woe, graceful or grotesque portraits; it means to plunge one's glance into hundreds of lives; if one is young, it means to desire and to possess all; if old, to live the life of youths and to espouse their passions. Now, how many answers an artistic stroller has he not heard to the categorical question at which we paused?

“She is thirty-five, but she doesn't look twenty,” exclaims a youth who, just out of college, would, like Cherubin, gladly embrace the whole world.

“Why, my lady has batiste wrappers and diamond rings for the night,” says a young law clerk.

“She has a carriage and a box at the Français,” says a soldier.

“Well,” exclaims a slightly older man, who seems to be replying to an attack, “it doesn't cost me a sou! When a man is built on my lines—— Have you come to that, my respectable friend?”

And the questioner delivers a slight slap on the abdomen of his companion.

"Oh, she loves me," says still another passer-by, "you have no idea how much! But she has such a fool of a husband! Ah! Buffon has most wonderfully described animals, but the two-legged one called 'husband'——"

What a pleasant remark to overhear when one is married!

"Oh! my friend, like an angel!" is the answer to a whispered question.

"Can you tell me her name, or point her out to me?"

"Oh no, she is a *nice woman*."

When a student is loved by a coffee-house keeper, he speaks of her with pride and takes his friends there to dine. If a young man is in love with a woman whose husband keeps a shop, he will redden and reply: "She sells underwear, she is the wife of a stationer, a haberdasher, a dry-goods merchant, a clerk, etc."

But this acknowledgment of an inferior love, a love which has grown amongst bolts of cloth, cotton underwear and sugar loaves, is always accompanied by a pompous eulogy of the lady's wealth. Only the husband is interested in the business, he is rich, he has a fine house; anyhow, the beloved one visits her lover; she owns a cashmere shawl, a country house, etc.

In short, a young man never lacks excellent reasons to show that his mistress will very soon become a *nice woman*, if she is not one already. This distinction, which is due to the elegance of our customs, has become as hard to define as the subtle demarcation which indicates *bon ton*. What, then, is a *nice woman*?

This subject is so important to the vanity of women, to the vanity of their lovers and even their husbands, that we must give here some general rules resulting from long and careful observations.

Our million privileged heads represent a mass of women eligible to the glorious title of *nice women*, but all are not chosen. The principles of the choice are comprised in the following axioms:

*Aphorisms*

## I

A nice woman is essentially a married one.

## II

A nice woman is less than forty years old.

## III

A married woman whose favors are purchasable is not a nice woman.

## IV

A married woman who owns her carriage is a nice woman.

## V

A married woman who does her own cooking is not a nice woman.

## VI

When a man has an income of twenty thousand francs a year, his wife is a nice woman, no matter in what line of business he was engaged.

## VII

Any woman who says *lettre d'échange* instead of *lettre de change*, *souyer* instead of *soulier*, *pierre de lierre* instead of *pierre de liais*; who says of a man: "Isn't Monsieur So-and-so *farce?*" can never be a nice woman, no matter how great her fortune may be.

## VIII

A nice woman must have a financial position that will allow her lover to think that she will never in any way become a burden to him.

## IX

A woman who lives on the third floor (excepting in the Rue de Rivoli and the Rue de Castiglione) is not a nice woman.

## X

The wife of a banker is always a nice woman, but a woman who sits behind a counter cannot be nice, unless her husband has an extensive business and she does not reside over the shop.

## XI

The unmarried niece of a bishop who resides with him may be considered nice, because, if she have an intrigue, she must necessarily deceive her uncle.

## XII

A nice woman is a woman whom one is afraid to compromise.

## XIII

An artist's wife is always considered nice.

By applying these principles, a man from the department of Ardèche can solve all the difficulties contained in this subject.

For a woman to be exempt from doing her own cooking, to have received a brilliant education, to have the sentiment of coquetry, to have the right to spend hours in her boudoir stretched on a divan, and to live the life of the soul, she requires at least an income of six thousand francs in the provinces and ten thousand francs in Paris. These two sums will permit us to know the presumable number of nice women who are to be found in the million, the rough product of our statistics.

Now, three hundred thousand men of leisure, having an income of fifteen thousand francs, represent the sum total of pensions and life interests paid by the Treasury, and that of the mortgage incomes.

Three hundred thousand real estate owners having three thousand five hundred francs a year represent the whole territorial wealth;

Two hundred thousand sharers at the rate of fifteen hun-

dred francs, represent the division of the State budget and the division of the municipal and departmental budgets; after subtracting the debt, the income of the clergy, the pay of the heroes who receive five sous a day, and the sums allotted to them for their wash, their food, their uniforms, etc.;

Two hundred thousand mercantile fortunes, at the rate of twenty thousand francs capital, represent all the possible commercial establishments of France;

So here are at least a million husbands.

But how many men having incomes ranging from ten to six hundred francs, recorded in the Great-Book and elsewhere, shall we find?

How many land-owners are there who do not pay more than five, twenty, one hundred, two hundred and two hundred and eighty francs taxes?

How many tax-payers are poor clerks who earn only six hundred francs a year?

How many business men, shall we say, who have only fictitious capitals; who, rich in credit, have not an available sou and are like unto sieves through which flow streams of gold? And how many merchants who have a capital of only one, two, four or five thousand francs?

Oh, industry, all hail to thee!

Let us make more happy ones than there are, perhaps, and divide this million into two parts: five hundred thousand couples will have from one hundred to three thousand francs a year, and five hundred thousand women will fulfill the conditions required in order to be considered nice.

According to the observations which conclude our statistical Meditation, we are authorized to deduct from this number one hundred thousand units: consequently, one can look upon it as a mathematically proven proposition, that there are only four hundred thousand women in France the possession of whom can procure to refined men those exquisite and distinguished delights which they crave in love.

Indeed, now is the time to let the adepts for whom we are writing, know that love is not solely composed of a few entreating interviews, a few nights of pleasure, a more or less intelligent caress and a spark of conceit dignified by

the name of jealousy. Our four hundred thousand women are not of a kind of which one could say: "*La plus belle fille du monde ne peut donner que ce qu'elle a.*"\* No, they are richly endowed with all the treasures that our fond imaginations lend them, they know how to sell dearly that which they do not possess, in order to compensate for the vulgarity of what they give.

When you kiss the hand of a grisette do you experience any more pleasure than when you exhaust that fleeting voluptuousness that all women offer you?

Is it the conversation of a shopkeeper that will make you hope for infinite delights?

Between yourself and a woman socially inferior to you, the joys of self-conceit are known to her alone. You are not in the secret of the happiness you give.

Between yourself and a woman superior to you by social position or wealth, the tickling of vanity is great and shared. A man never was able to lift a woman to his heights; but a woman always gives her lover the same place she herself occupies. "I can make princes, and you will never make anything but bastards," is a reply full of truth.

If love is the first of all passions, it is because it flatters every one of them. We love in proportion to the number of chords that our fair mistress awakens in our hearts.

Biren, who was the son of a goldsmith, getting into the bed of the Duchesse de Courlande and helping her to sign the promise to proclaim him the sovereign of the land, as he was the lord of the young and beautiful ruler, is the prototype of the happiness which our four hundred thousand-women must give their lovers.

In order to be able to walk over all the people that gather in a popular salon, one must be the lover of one of those wonderful women. Now, we are all more or less fond of trampling others underfoot.

And so it is at this brilliant portion of the nation that are leveled the attacks of all the men for whom education, talent or wit have acquired the right to count for something in that human fortune of which nations are so proud;

\* The finest girl in the world can only give what she has.

and it is in this class of women only that you will find the one whose heart will be so jealously guarded by *our* husband.

What does it matter whether or not the considerations to which our feminine aristocracy gives rise can be applied to other social classes? That which will be true of these women who are so refined in their manners, speech, and thoughts; in whom a careful education has developed a taste for art, a faculty for feeling, comparing, reflecting; who have such a wonderful sentiment for politeness and propriety, and who are the arbiters of conventionality in France, must be applicable to women of all nations and of all kinds. The superior man to whom this book is dedicated, necessarily must possess a certain perspicacity of vision that will enable him to follow the gradations of light in each class and to determine the point of civilization where such and such an observation is still true.

Is it not, then, of the highest interest to morality to ascertain the number of virtuous women who are to be found among these adorable creatures? Is it not a marito-national question?

## MEDITATION IV

### ON THE VIRTUOUS WOMAN

It is not so much the question to know how many virtuous women there are, as to find out whether a *nice* woman can remain virtuous.

In order to throw more light on this important point, let us rapidly review the masculine population.

From our fifteen million men we will first deduct the nine million creatures possessing thirty-two vertebrae, and only admit six million subjects in our physiological analysis. The Marceaus, Massénas, Rousseaus, Diderots and Rollins oftentimes spring suddenly from this fermenting social mass; but we shall be willfully inaccurate here. These miscalculations will make themselves strongly felt at the end and will



corroborate the terrible results which the mechanism of public passions is going to reveal to us.

From six million privileged men we shall deduct three million old men and children.

This subtraction, the reader will say, produced four million, when applied to the women.

At first sight, this difference may seem strange, but it is easily explained.

The average age at which women marry is twenty years, and after forty, they cease to be counted as factors in love.

Now, a boy of seventeen often encroaches mightily upon his neighbor's property, or, in other words, gives great slashes to the parchment of contracts, and especially to the old ones, as we are told by the chronicles of scandal.

Now, a man of fifty-two is more to be feared at that age than at any other. It is at this time of life that he puts into use an experience dearly acquired and all of the fortune that he is supposed to possess. The passions under which he labors being the last he will ever experience, he is as pitiless and strong as a man caught by the tide and swept away, who clutches at a slender willow branch, the first shoot of the year.

#### XIV

Physically, a man is longer a man, than a woman is a woman. As regards marriage, the difference in length between a man's and a woman's amorous life is of fifteen years. This time equals three-quarters of the time that a woman's deceptions can render her husband wretched. However, the remainder of the subtraction made on our mass of men only produces a difference of a sixth at the most, when compared to the one resulting from the subtraction practiced on the feminine population.

Our figures are extremely moderate. As for our reasons, they are so vulgarly obvious, that we have only produced them for greater accuracy and to forestall any criticism.

It has thus been proven to all philosophers who are ever so slightly inclined to be mathematical, that there exists in France a floating mass of three million men at least seven-

teen years old and at most fifty-two, all very much alive, with sound teeth and a great desire to bite and to walk in the road leading to Paradise.

The observations that have already been made allow us to deduct a million husbands from this mass. Let us suppose for a moment that, always satisfied and happy, like our model husband, these spouses are content to restrict themselves to conjugal love.

But our two million bachelors have no need of any income whatever in order to make love.

But it is sufficient for a man to be wide-awake and persistent to obliterate a husband in a wife's mind;

But it is not at all necessary that he should be good-looking or even well-set up;

But as long as a man has wit, a well-bred air and easy manners, women will never ask where he hails from, but only where he is bound for;

But the charm of youth is the only luggage that Love carries;

But a coat cut by Buisson, a pair of gloves purchased at Boivin's, elegant boots which the bootmaker is sorry he ever furnished, a gracefully knotted tie, are all-sufficient to assure a man's triumph in a salon;

But does not the army, although the craze for gold braid and lively colors has very much subsided, form a most formidable legion of bachelors? . . . Without mentioning Eginhard, as he was a private secretary, has not a newspaper recently reported that a German princess had bequeathed her fortune to a simple lieutenant of the Imperial Guards?

But the village notary from the depths of Gascogne sends his son to Paris to study law; the village haberdasher wants his boy to become a notary; the lawyer decides that his heir shall reach the Bench; the judge longs to be a minister of State, so that his children may be peers. Never, in the history of the world, has there been such a thirst for education. Nowadays, it is no longer wit that is as common as air, but talent. From all the cracks of our social state spring bright-hued flowers, just as they blossom forth in the spring from the cracks in old walls; even in cellars are sprays

of half-blown blossoms which, if the sun of education can be made to reach them, will in time assume brilliant colors. Ever since that great development of thought, that equal and fertile dispersion of light, we have hardly any superiority, because each man represents the total of instruction of his century. We are surrounded by living cyclopedias, that think, talk, walk, and would like to perpetuate themselves forever. This is the cause of those frightful ambitions and delirious passions: we want other worlds; we want hives ready to receive all these swarms, and we especially want a great many pretty women.

Again, the diseases which afflict a man produce no waste in the sum total of man's passions. Be it said to our shame, a woman is never more attached to us than when we are ill!

At this thought, all the epigrams directed against the weaker sex (it is very old-fashioned to say the fair sex) should cast aside their pointed arrows and become compliments! . . . All men ought to think that woman's only virtue is to love, that all women are wonderfully virtuous, and then and there they should close the book and the Meditation.

Ah! do you remember that dark and despairing hour, when, alone and ill and cursing your fellow-men, weak, discouraged and harboring thoughts of death, your head on a hot pillow and your body on a coarse sheet, you let your eyes wander feverishly over the green wall-paper of your deserted room? Do you remember, I say, seeing her open your door on a crack and advancing her lovely face framed by rolls of golden hair and a dainty bonnet? She appeared like a star in a stormy night to you and ran to you smiling and anxious!

"How did you do it? What did you tell your husband?" you inquire.

A husband! . . . Here we are again in the very midst of our subject.

## XV

Morally, a man is oftener and longer a man than a woman is a woman.

However, we must consider that, among those two million

bachelors, there are a number of poor wretches in whom the sentiment of their misery, as well as unceasing labor, extinguishes all idea of love;

That they are not all college-bred and that there are many workingmen and lackeys (the Duc de Gèvres, who was very short and ugly, was walking one day in the park of Versailles and upon seeing some well-set-up valets exclaimed to his friends: "Look you, what sort of fellows we produce, and what they do for us! . . ."), many builders, many business men who think of nothing but trade;

That there are men who are uglier and more stupid than God would have made them;

That there are some whose characters are like milk and water;

That the clergy is generally chaste;

That there are men so placed that they can never enter into the brilliant sphere where nice women disport themselves, through a lack of clothes, bashfulness, or a proper introduction.

But we will leave to each one the care of swelling the number of exceptions according to his own experience (for the object of a book is, above all, to induce thought) and suppress at a blow half of the total mass and only admit that one million hearts are fit to offer their devotion to nice women: that is about the number of all our superiorities. Women do not, by any means, confine their love to intellectual men; but, once again, let us give virtue fair play.

Now, to hear our amiable bachelors, each one of them tells stories of a multitude of adventures that gravely compromise nice women. We are displaying great moderation when we allow each bachelor only three adventures; but if there be some who count far more liberally, there are others, and a great many, who, owing to the fact that they limited themselves to two or three passions, or even one, induced us, the same as for the statistics, to adopt individual apportionment. Now, if one multiplies the number of bachelors by the number of adventures, one obtains three million intrigues; and to meet them we only have four hundred thousand nice women! . . .

If the God of kindness and indulgence who rules the universe, has not caused another flood to purify humanity, it is no doubt because the first one was so unsuccessful. . . .

So this is a nation! This is a select society, and this is what the results are!

## XVI

Customs are the hypocrisy of nations; the hypocrisy is more or less perfect.

## XVII

Perhaps virtue is nothing but the courtesy of the soul.

Physical love is a want similar to hunger, with the only difference that a man eats all the time and that, in love, his appetite is neither as constant nor as regular as it is in regard to food.

A loaf of coarse bread and a jug of water can conquer the hunger of any man; but our civilization has invented gastronomy.

Love has its loaf of bread, but it also possesses that art which we call *coquetterie*, a charming word which only exists in France, the birthplace of this science.

Now, is it not enough to make all husbands tremble when they stop to think that man is so possessed by the innate desire for change, that, no matter in what wild country travelers have landed, they have found *ragôts* and alcoholic beverages?

But hunger is not as violent as love; the caprices of the soul are far more numerous, irritating and sought after than the caprices of gastronomy; all that poets and events have revealed to us of human love, has armed our bachelors with a terrible power: they are the lions of the Gospel in search of helpless preys.

At this very point, let every man examine his conscience, summon his reminiscences and ask himself whether he has ever met a man who has limited himself to the love of one woman!

How, alas, can we explain, to the honor of all nations, the problem resulting from three million burning passions

with nothing but four hundred thousand women to feed upon? . . . Shall we allow four bachelors to each woman and admit that nice women have perhaps established, without knowing it, a sort of exchange between themselves and the bachelors, similar to the rotation invented by the presidents of royal courts in order that their councilors might pass successively through every chamber within a certain number of years?

A most mournful way to enlighten the difficulty!

Shall we go as far as to conjecture that certain nice women act, in the distribution of bachelors, like the lion of the fable? . . . What! at least half of our altars might be nothing but whited sepulchers! . . .

For the honor of French ladies, shall we suppose that, in times of peace, other countries import a certain quantity of their nice women, principally England, Germany and Russia? . . . But the European nations will try to establish a balance by objecting that France also exports a certain number of pretty women.

Morality and religion suffer so much through these calculations, that a gentleman, in his desire to exonerate married women, would be glad to believe that dowagers and young girls are at least responsible for half of the general corruption, or better still, that bachelors prevaricate.

But what are we computing? Think of our husbands who, be it said to their everlasting disgrace, almost all act as if they were bachelors and glorify themselves, *in petto*, regarding their adventures.

Oh! then we believe that every husband who is the least bit ticklish regarding his honor, as old Corneille would say, should get a rope and a nail: *fœnum habet in cornu*.

Yet, it is amongst these four hundred thousand nice women that, lantern in hand, we must look for the number of virtuous women in France! . . . In reality, by our conjugal statistics, we only retrenched creatures in which society has not the slightest interest. Is it not true that, in France, nice people, *les gens comme il faut*, hardly form a total of three million individuals, namely: our one million bachelors, five hundred thousand nice women, five hundred thousand husbands, and a million dowagers, children and young girls?

Are you still surprised at the celebrated line of Boileau? That line shows that the poet had skillfully studied the remarks mathematically set forth in these sad Meditations, and that it is not a hyperbole.

However, there are virtuous women:

Yes, those who have never been tempted and those who have died in child-birth, supposing always that they were virgins when they married;

Yes, those who are as ugly as Kaifakatadary in the *Arabian Nights*;

Yes, those whom Mirabeau calls the *fées concombres*, and who are composed of exactly the same atoms that make up the roots of strawberry-plants and pond-lilies; however, it would perhaps be well not to trust them too much! . . .

Then let us admit to the credit of the century that, since the restoration of religion and morality, and as times go, one can meet here and there women who are so moral, so religious and so deeply attached to their duty, so strict, so cold, so virtuous, so . . . that the Devil does not dare even to glance at them; they are flanked by rosaries, prayer-books and religious advisers. . . . Sh! sh! . . .

We shall not attempt to count the women who are virtuous from stupidity, for it is well-known that in love matters all women are wise.

Finally, it might not be impossible that, in some unknown parts, exist young, pretty and virtuous women of whom the world knows nothing.

But do not call virtuous the woman who, struggling against an involuntary passion, has not granted anything to the lover whom she regrets to adore with all her soul. It is the greatest insult that can be offered a husband who is in love with his wife. What remains for him? A thing nameless, a body without a soul. In the midst of pleasure, his mate acts like the guest warned by Borgia in the midst of a feast, that certain dishes are poisoned: he loses his appetite, scarcely touches the viands or makes a pretense of eating. He regrets the feast he has left in order to be the guest of the terrible cardinal and sighs for the time when, at the close of the meal, he will be allowed to leave the board.

What is the result of these remarks on feminine virtue? This: but the two last maxims were given us by an eclectic philosopher of the eighteenth century:

## XVIII

A virtuous woman possesses one heartstring more or one less than her sisters: she is either foolish or sublime.

## XIX

Virtue in women is perhaps a question of temperament.

## XX

The most virtuous women have within them something that is never chaste.

## XXI

“That an intelligent man should have doubts regarding his mistress’ conduct is natural enough, but that he should doubt his wife! . . . really, he must be a very foolish man.”

## XXII

“Men would be too unhappy if, when with women, they remembered what they know by heart.”

The number of rare women who, like the wise virgins, have known enough to keep their lamps lighted, will always be too small in the eyes of the champions of virtue and righteousness; yet it must be taken off the sum total of nice women, and that comforting subtraction renders the husbands’ danger still greater, the scandal larger and besmirches all the more the remainder of legitimate wives.

Who is the husband who can now sleep quietly beside his young and pretty consort, after learning that at least three bachelors are on the lookout to rob him; that, if they have not already encroached upon his property, they regard his bride as their legitimate prey, who, sooner or later, will fall victim to them, whether by force, by ruse, or by her own free will, and that it is impossible that, some day, they will not be victorious!



Frightful conclusion! . . .

Here the moral purists, the *collets montés*, in a word, will perhaps accuse us of having given too discouraging figures: they will want to defend either the nice women or the bachelors; but we have reserved one last observation for their benefit.

Increase at will the number of nice women and decrease the number of bachelors, you will nevertheless always find in the end more intrigues than there are nice women; you will always find an enormous amount of bachelors compelled, through our customs, to commit three varieties of crimes.

If they remain chaste, their health will suffer cruelly; they will thwart the sublime designs of Nature and finish their days as consumptives in some Swiss mountain-resort, drinking milk.

If they give way to their legitimate temptations, they will either compromise nice women, and thus we get back to the subject of our book, or else they will degrade themselves by intercourse with the five hundred thousand women whom we mentioned in the last category of the first Meditation, and in this case, they have a fine chance to drink milk again and to end their days in Switzerland! . . .

Have you never been struck, as we have, by the faulty organization of our social body, which remark is going to serve as moral proof of our last figures?

The average age at which a man marries is thirty years; the average age at which his passions, his desire for sexual enjoyment are strongest, is twenty. Now, during the ten best years of his life, during the heyday when his looks, his youth and his intellect render him more dangerous than at any other period of his life to husbands, he stays without being able to *legally* satisfy the longing for love that upsets his entire being. As this lapse of time represents the sixth part of the duration of human life, we must admit that at least the sixth part of our total of men, and the most vigorous part, remains constantly in an attitude as tiring to them as it is dangerous to society.

“Why don't their parents see that they get married?” some pious sister will cry.

But where is the father with any common-sense who would allow his son to marry at twenty?

Are not the pitfalls of these precocious unions sufficiently known? It would seem that marriage were an institution most contrary to the natural instincts, since it requires a particular maturity of intellect. In short, everyone knows that Rousseau has said: "There must always be a period of wildness in either state. It is a bad leaven, which, sooner or later, will ferment."

Now, where is the mother who would risk the happiness of her daughter by giving her to a man in whom this fermentation has not taken place?

Besides, why is it necessary to justify a fact under the power of which all societies labor? Is there not in every country an enormous percentage of men who live upright lives outside of marriage and bachelorhood?

"Cannot these men remain continent, like the priests?" our pious sister will ask.

Certainly, madame.

However, we will ask our reader to note that the vow of chastity is one of the greatest exceptions of the natural order of things, required by society; that continence is the one great point in the profession of the priest; that he must be chaste in the same way that a doctor must be insensible to physical suffering, that a notary and a lawyer are insensible to the misery which they come in contact with, that soldiers are insensible to the proximity of death on a battlefield. But, from the fact that the needs of civilization petrify certain fibers of the heart and cause callous spots on certain membranes whose function is to reason, one should not conclude that all men are compelled to undergo that partial and exceptional death of the soul. That would be leading humanity toward a despicable moral suicide.

But, let a young man of eight-and-twenty be introduced into the most rigorous salon that it would be possible to find, a young man who has kept his garment of innocence as unsoiled as the woodcocks that are the delight of *gourmets*, and cannot you see the strictest woman of the gathering making him some bitter compliment on his courage, the

severest judge that ever ascended the bench shaking his head and all the women hiding their faces so that he will not hear their laughter? What a flood of jests is poured on the innocent head of the heroic and undiscoverable victim, when he leaves the room! . . . How many insults! For what is more shameful, in France, than coldness, impotency, the absence of all passion, and bashfulness?

The only king of France who would not die of laughter might be Louis XIII.; but, as regards his gallant father, he might perhaps have banished such a youngster, either for not being a Frenchman or for setting a dangerous example.

Strange contradiction! A young man is just as much blamed for spending his life *en terre sainte*, to use a current expression among bachelors. Is it perhaps for the benefit of nice women that the prefects of police and the mayors have, since time immemorial, ordered all public passions to begin only at nightfall and to cease at eleven o'clock?

Where do you expect our mass of bachelors to sow their wild oats? And who is being fooled, as Figaro wants to know? The rulers or the ruled? Is society like the small boy who stops his ears at the theater, so as not to hear the report of a gun? Is it afraid of probing the wound? Or has it been recognized that the disease is one that cannot be cured, and that it is better to let the matter rest? But this is a question of legislation, for it is impossible to escape from the social and material dilemma which results from this balance-sheet of virtue as regards marriage. It is not for us to solve this difficulty; however, let us suppose for a moment that, in order to protect so many families, so many nice girls, so many women, society was compelled to give the right to satisfy the bachelors to hearts patented for the purpose: then should not our laws consider these female Deciuses who give themselves for the good of the republic and form a wall of their bodies around families? Legislators are greatly to blame for having neglected to regulate the fate of the courtesan.

## XXIII

The courtesan is an institution if she is a need.

This question is so full of *ifs* and *buts* that we bequeath it to our nephews; we must give them something to do. Besides, it is quite accidental in this work; for, to-day more than at any previous time, sensibility has developed; never before has morality been so widespread, because never before was it realized that pleasure comes from the heart. Now, where is the man with sentiment, the bachelor, who, in the presence of four hundred thousand young and pretty women endowed with wealth and well-cultivated minds, rich with the treasures of coquetry and lavish of happiness, would want to go? . . . For shame!

## XXIV

In the social order, unavoidable abuses are laws of nature, in accordance with which man must formulate his civil and political laws.

## XXV

“Adultery,” says Chamfort, “is like bankruptcy, with this difference, that the one to whom it is done suffers dishonor.”

In France, the laws relative to adultery and bankruptcy are in great need of being modified. Are they too lenient? Are their principles faulty? *Caveant consules!*

Well, brave athlete, you who have taken to your credit the little apostrophe that our first Meditation addresses to those burdened with a wife, what do you say to this? Let us hope that the cursory glance thrown on the question does not make you tremble, that you are not one of those men whose spinal column burns and whose nerves freeze at the sight of an abyss or a boa constrictor!

Ah! my friend, the man who possesses must fight. The men who covet your money are far more numerous even than those who covet your wife.

After all, every husband is free to consider these trifles figures, or these figures trifles. The finest things in life are the illusions of life. The most respectable things in life are our most futile beliefs. Aren't there a number of people whose principles are nothing but prejudices, and who, not having sufficient strength to formulate virtue and happiness alone, accept ready-made articles from the hands of the lawmakers? Therefore, we address ourselves only to those *Manfreds* who, having lifted too many garments, want to lift all the veils in the moments when they are tormented by their moral spleen. For them the question has now been boldly put, and we know the extent of the evil.

There remains for us to look into the general chances which may be encountered in each marriage and which render the man weaker in the struggle from which our champion is to issue victorious.

## MEDITATION V

### CONCERNING THE PREDESTINATED ONES

PREDESTINATED means destined in advance for happiness or misfortune. Theology has taken possession of the word and always makes use of it to designate the blessed; we shall give to this term a meaning fatal to our chosen ones, of whom one might say, contrary to the ones in the Gospel: "Many are called and many are chosen."

Experience has shown that there are certain classes of men more subject than others to certain misfortunes. Just as apoplexy attacks people with short necks, and *anthrax* (a kind of plague) chooses its victims principally among butchers, while gout afflicts the rich, health the poor, deafness the kings, paralysis the administrators, it has been observed that certain classes of husbands are more particularly victims of illegitimate passions. Those husbands and their wives monopolize the attention of bachelors. It is a different kind of aristocracy. If any of my readers should find himself in one of these aristocratic classes, he will, we

hope, display enough presence of mind, he or his wife, to instantly remember the favorite axiom of the Latin grammar by Lhommond: "No rule without its exception." A friend of the family might even quote the following line:

*La personne présente est toujours exceptée.\**

And then each one of them will have, *in petto*, the right to consider himself an exception. But our duty, as well as the interest which we feel for husbands and the desire we have to preserve so many young and pretty women from the caprices and misfortunes that follow in the wake of a lover, compel us to point out in the proper order the husbands who must be more especially on their guard.

In this census, will first appear the husbands whose business, positions or functions call them away from home at certain hours and during a certain time. These men shall carry the banner of the fraternity.

Among them we will mention the removable as well as unremovable magistrates, who are forced to spend a great part of the day at the Palais; the other officials sometimes find a way of leaving their offices; but a judge or an attorney for the Crown, who sits on *fleur de lis*, must, so to speak, die in harness. That is his battlefield.

It is the same with the deputies and peers who discuss the laws, with the ministers who work with the king, with the directors who work with the ministers, with the soldiers on duty, and with the patrolling corporal, as is shown by the letter of Lafleur, in the *Voyage Sentimental*.

After these people, who are obliged to leave home at appointed hours, come the men whom great and serious occupations absorb so completely that they have no time to be agreeable; their brows are always clouded, and their conversation is rarely cheerful.

At the head of these horny battalions, we shall place the bankers who toil to amass millions, and whose heads are so crammed with figures that the latter end by piercing their occiputs and erecting themselves in columns above their brows.

\* Present company is always excepted.

These millionaires, who, most of the time, forget the holy laws of matrimony and the care they should bestow upon the tender flower that has been intrusted to them, never think of watering it and protecting it from heat and cold. They are hardly aware that the happiness of a wife has been intrusted to them: if they do remember it, it is at dinner, when they see a richly-gowned woman sitting opposite to them, or when the fair lady, as graceful as Venus herself, asks them for an additional allowance. . . . Oh! then, in the evening, they sometimes remember the rights specified in Article 213 of the Civil Code and their wives recognize them; but, like those heavy duties that the laws put on foreign goods, they suffer them and acquit themselves in view of this axiom: "There is no pleasure without pain."

Scientists who remain whole months studying the bone of some antediluvian animal, figuring out the laws of Nature or trying to surprise her secrets; Greeks and Latins who dine off a thought of Tacitus, sup off a sentence of Thucydides, and live solely to wipe the dust off libraries and spend their time poring over a note or a papyrus, are all predestinated men. They are perfectly unconscious of their surroundings, so absorbed are they in their ecstasy; their misfortune might happen before their very eyes and they would hardly notice it? Happy men! a thousand times happy! Example: Beauzée who, returning from a séance at the Académie, surprises his wife with a German. "Did I not tell you, madame, that it is time I went," exclaimed the foreigner. "Eh! my dear sir, at least say: 'That it was!'" corrected the academician.

Then, lyre in hand, come some poets whose whole animal forces forsake the *entresol* to take up their residence above. They are better adapted to ride Pegasus than the "mare of compère Pierre,"\* and rarely take unto themselves a wife, for they are accustomed to vent their ardor at intervals upon stray or imaginary Chlorises.

But the men whose noses are filthy with tobacco;

But those who were unfortunately born with an eternal cold;

\* *La Jument du compère* (La Fontaine's *Contes et Nouvelles*).

But the sailors who smoke or chew ;

But the people whose bilious temperaments make them look as if they were always eating a sour apple ;

But the men who, in private life, have some cynical habit, some ridiculous practice, and who, in spite of everything, always have a slouchy look ;

But the husbands who earn the shameful name of *chauffe-la-couche* ;

Finally, the old men who wed young girls ;

All these people are pre-eminently predestinated !

There is a last class of men whose misfortune is almost certain. We mean those anxious and bustling, fussy and tyrannical individuals who have strange ideas on domestic domination, think openly ill of women and know no more of life than a grasshopper knows of natural history. When these men get married, their households look like the wasps that a schoolboy has deprived of their heads and that grope their way over a window-pane. For this class, this book will be absolutely unintelligible. Nor are we writing for those fools who look like the carved statues of a cathedral, any more than we are writing for those old machines at Marly that cannot supply water to the arbors of Versailles without being threatened with sudden dissolution.

I rarely witness in society the marital singularities that abound there, without thinking of a sight I enjoyed in my youth.

In 1819, I was living in a cottage in the delightful valley of l'Isle-Adam. My hermitage was close to the park of Cassan, a most delightful retreat and one which offered greater charms to the idler than all those created by art. That green *chartreuse* is due to an old-fashioned farmer-general, by the name of Bergeret, famous for his originality, and who, among other eccentric things, used to go to the Opera with gold-powdered hair, have his park illuminated for his sole enjoyment and was in the habit of giving banquets to himself. That extravagant man had returned from Italy so enamoured of its beautiful scenery, that, through an attack of fanaticism, he spent four or five millions to have



the views he had brought back with him copied by landscape gardeners. The most charming contrasts of vegetation, the rarest trees, long valleys, picturesque viewpoints, islands floating on crystal waters, are like so many rays carrying their treasures to a central point, an *isola bella*, an island on which is a little house hidden by ancient willow-trees, an island bordered with rushes, gladiolas and other flowers and which is like an emerald richly set. It is a place to shun! . . . The most sickly, boorish and dry of our men of genius would die there within two weeks, overwhelmed by the savory richness of a vegetative existence. The rather indifferent owner of that Eden was devoted to a large simian, for want of a wife and children. Once the lover of an empress, perhaps he had tired of the human tribe. A pretty wooden lantern supported by a carved pedestal was the abode of the sly beast, which, chained and neglected by its master, who was oftener in Paris than at his country-seat, had acquired a very bad reputation. I remember having seen it, in the presence of ladies, act almost as insolently as a man. His increasing savagery finally compelled his master to have him killed. One morning, when I was sitting under a blooming tulip-tree, perfectly idle, but drinking in the delightful perfume of the flowers, enjoying the silence of the woods, listening to the whispering water and the rustling leaves, admiring the pearly clouds above my head and perhaps dreaming of my future, I heard I know not what idiot, who had arrived from Paris the day before, begin to play the violin with the frenzy of a man who has nothing to do. I would not want my bitterest enemy to experience a shock so incongruous with the sublime harmony of Nature. Perhaps, if the distant echoes of Roland's hunting-horn had broken upon the stillness . . . but a shrill string which has the pretension of transmitting human thoughts and phrases! The fiddler, who was walking up and down in the dining-room, finally sat down by the window exactly opposite the monkey. Perhaps he was looking for an audience. Suddenly I saw the beast, which had left its little dungeon noiselessly, stand erect on its hind legs, bend its head and cross its arms like Spartacus bound or Catiline

listening to Cicero. The banker, called within by a sweet voice whose tones awakened the recollection of a boudoir known to me, flew away like a bird to join his mate. The great monkey whose chain was very long, climbed on the window-sill and solemnly grasped the violin. I do not know whether you have ever had the pleasure of watching a baboon trying to learn music, but even to-day, although my laughter is not as ready as in those care-free times, I never can think of that monkey without smiling. The semi-man began by clutching the instrument and sniffing it as if it had been an apple. His nasal aspirations probably made the sonorous wood give forth some sound, for then the orang-outang shook his head and began to turn the instrument about in every direction, holding it up to his ear and handling it with the wonderful agility that distinguishes these animals. He seemed to question the violin with an aimless sagacity, which was wonderful and incomplete at the same time. Finally, with the most grotesque gestures, he tried to place it under his chin, but, like a spoiled child, he soon wearied of a study that required so much skill, and touched the strings without being able to obtain anything but discords. He grew angry, and laid the instrument on the window-sill; then, snatching the bow, he began to scrape it violently up and down the strings, like a mason sawing a stone. This new attempt having failed to produce any better results, he took the bow in both hands and brought it down with all his might on the innocent and pleasure-giving instrument. I thought it was like a schoolboy giving a beating to a playmate in punishment of some cowardly act. After the violin had been judged and condemned, the simian sat down on the wreck and proceeded with silly delight to mix the strings of the bow.

Since that day I have never been able to watch the actions of predestinated husbands without comparing most of them to that monkey who wanted to play the violin.

Love is the most melodious of all harmonies and we are born with its sentiment. Woman is a delightful instrument of pleasure, but one must know all its strings, study its tone and ever-changing fingering. How many oranges . . .

I mean, men, marry without knowing what a woman is! How many predestinated ones have proceeded like the monkey of Cassan with its fiddle! They broke the heart which they could not comprehend, as they ruined and disdained the jewel whose secret they ignored. Children all their lives, they die empty-handed, having vegetated, prattled of love and pleasure, of vice and virtue, like slaves speak of liberty. Almost all of them married in the greatest ignorance of woman and love. They began by breaking into a strange house and expected to be welcomed. But the poorest artist knows that between himself and his instrument (whether it be of wood or ivory), there exists a sort of undefinable friendship. He knows by experience that it took years to establish that mysterious tie between the inanimate matter and himself. He was not able all at once to guess its resources and caprices, its qualities and faults. Only after a long study does the instrument become like a soul to him and yield its sweetest sounds. They are never close friends until after the most searching questions.

Is it by remaining doubled up in his cell like a seminarist that a man can learn to know woman and read that admirable music? Is a man whose business it is to think for other men, to judge them, to govern them, to steal from them, to feed them, to cure them, to injure them, capable of doing it? Can all our predestinated ones spend their time studying a woman? They sell their time, so how could they give it to the quest of happiness? Money is their god. One cannot serve two masters at the same time. Therefore, the world is full of young wives who drag out an unhappy existence, pale and sickly. Some are the victims of more or less serious inflammations, others are a prey to more or less violent nervous derangements. The husbands of all those women are fools and predestinated men. They have brought about their own wretchedness with the same care that a wise husband would have given to the cultivation of pleasure's tardy and delightful flowers. The time that an ignoramus spends in bringing about his own ruin is precisely that which a wise man uses to increase his happiness and welfare.

## XXVI

Never begin marriage by a rape.

In the preceding Meditations, we indicated the extent of the evil with the disrespectful audacity with which surgeons boldly raise the tissues under which a shameful wound is hidden. Public virtue, put on our operating table, has not even left a corpse. Husband or lover, no doubt you smiled or trembled at the tale? Well, it is with malicious delight that we put the burden of that great evil on the shoulders of the "predestinated." Harlequin, wishing to find out whether his horse can get accustomed to going without food, is no more ludicrous than the men who want to find happiness in marriage without giving themselves the trouble of cultivating it with all the care it requires. A wife's misdeeds are so many accusations against the egotism, carelessness and nullity of her husband.

Now, it will be for you, reader, who so many times have criticised your own crime in your fellow-men, to hold the scales. One of the plates is already sufficiently weighted; let's see what you will put into the other one! Estimate the number of predestinated men that can be found in the sum total of married people, and then weigh; you will then know where the evil lies.

Let us endeavor to probe further into the causes of this conjugal disease.

The word *love* applied to the reproduction of the species, is the most odious blasphemy that modern customs have learned to utter. Nature, in elevating us above the beast through the divine gift of thought, rendered us capable of experiencing sentiments and sensations, needs and passions. This dual nature creates in man the beast and the lover. This distinction will shed light on the problem which engrosses our attention.

Marriage can be considered civilly, politically, and morally as an institution, a law, a contract; an institution, it is a guaranty, the obligations of which interest all men; they have a father and mother and will have children; a law, it is

the reproduction of the species; a contract, it is the transmission of property. Therefore, marriage should be the object of universal respect. Society could consider nothing outside of these chief points, which, in its estimation, entirely outweigh the conjugal question.

Most men, when they marry, have only in view reproduction, children or property; but neither reproduction, property or children constitute happiness. *Crescite et multiplicamini* does not involve love. To ask a young girl whom one has met once every day for two weeks to love in the name of law, king or justice, is an absurdity worthy of most predestinated men!

Love is a combination of desire and sentiment, and happiness in marriage results from a perfect understanding between the two consorts. It follows that, in order to be happy, a man is compelled to conform to certain laws of honor and delicacy. After having taken advantage of the social law that sanctions the desire, he must obey the laws of Nature which give birth to sentiment. If he exerts all his faculties in an endeavor to be loved, he is certainly animated by true passion and nothing can resist the latter.

But to be passionate always, means to desire always. Can a man constantly desire his wife?

Yes.

It is as absurd to contend that it is impossible to love always the same woman as it would be to assert that a celebrated artist needs several violins in order to execute a piece and to create an entrancing melody.

Love is the poetry of the senses. Its fate is similar to the fate of all that is great in man and of all that proceeds from his mind. Either it is, or it is not, sublime. When it once exists, it exists forever and daily increases in strength. This is the love that the ancients considered the son of Heaven and of Earth.

Literature revolves around seven situations; music expresses everything with seven notes; painting has only seven colors; like these three arts, love perhaps comprises seven principles; we shall leave their pursuit to the next century.

If poetry, music and painting have infinite expressions,

the pleasures of love must offer a great many more; for, in those three arts which help us to seek, perhaps vainly, the truth by analogy, a man is alone with his imagination, while love is the reunion of two bodies and two souls. If the three principal modes which serve to express thought require preliminary studies in those whom Nature has created poets, musicians and painters, does it not stand to reason then, that it is necessary to initiate oneself in the pleasures of love, in order to be happy? All men feel the need of reproduction, the same as they experience hunger and thirst; but not all have the vocation to be lovers or gastronomers. Our present civilization has proved that taste is a science, and that the art of eating is only given to a chosen few. Pleasure, considered in the light of an art, awaits its physiologist. It is sufficient for us to have shown that only the ignorance of the constitutive principles of happiness produces the misfortune that awaits all predestinated husbands.

It is only with the greatest timidity that we dare publish a few aphorisms that may give birth to this new art, like plaster created geology: and we hand them over to the meditations of philosophers, eligible young men and predestinated husbands.

*Conjugal Catechism*

XXVII

Marriage is a science.

XXVIII

A man cannot get married without having studied anatomy and dissected at least one woman.

XXIX

The fate of a married couple depends on the first night.

XXX

The woman deprived of her own free will can never have the merit of making a sacrifice.

## XXXI

In love, regardless of the soul, a woman is like a lyre that only yields its secrets to him who is a skillful player.

## XXXII

Regardless of a repulsive movement, there exists in the souls of all women a sentiment that tends to sooner or later proscribe the pleasures devoid of passion.

## XXXIII

A husband's interest, as well as his honor, demands that he never permit himself a pleasure that he has not first had the talent to make desirable.

## XXXIV

As pleasure is the combination of sensations and sentiment, one can boldly affirm that the delights of love are materialized ideas.

## XXXV

As ideas are susceptible of infinite combinations, so should pleasures be infinitely varied.

## XXXVI

In a man's life, no two moments of pleasure are alike, any more than there are two exactly similar leaves on the same tree.

## XXXVII

If there is a difference between one moment of pleasure and another, a man can always be happy with the same woman.

## XXXVIII

To skillfully note the shades of a pleasure, to develop them, to give them a new turn, constitutes the genius of a husband.

## XXXIX

Between two people who are not in love, this genius becomes licentiousness; but the caresses over which Love presides are never lascivious.

## XL

The chastest married woman can also be the most voluptuous one.

## XLI

The most virtuous woman can be indecent without being aware of it.

## XLII

When two people are united by pleasure, all social conventions are non-existent. This is a rock on which a number of ships have been wrecked. A husband is lost if he once forgets that there is a modesty quite independent of garments. Conjugal love should never unpropitiously remove or put on the bandage that covers its eyes.

## XLIII

Power does not consist in striking hard or often, but in striking *à propos*.

## XLIV

To create a desire, to nourish it, to develop it, to increase it, to irritate it, to satisfy it, is an entire poem.

## XLV

The order of pleasure is from the distich to the quatrain, from the quatrain to the sonnet, from the sonnet to the ballad, from the ballad to the ode, from the ode to the cantata, from the cantata to the dithyramb. The husband who begins by the dithyramb is a fool.

## XLVI

Each night should have its *menu*.



## XLVII

Marriage must constantly combat a devouring monster: habit.

## XLVIII

If a man is unable to distinguish between the pleasures of two consecutive nights, he has wedded too early.

## XLIX

It is easier to be a lover than a husband, for the reason that it is harder to be clever every day, than to say bright things now and then.

## L

A husband should never be the first to go to sleep nor the last to awaken.

## LI

The man who enters his wife's dressing-room, is either a philosopher or a fool.

## LII

The husband who leaves nothing to be desired is a lost man.

## LIII

The married woman is a slave whom one should be wise enough to place on a throne.

## LIV

A man cannot flatter himself that he knows his wife and makes her happy, unless he sees her often on her knees before him.

It was to the legions of predestinated husbands, smokers, chewers, grouches, old and catarrhal men that Sterne addressed the letter written in *Tristram Shandy* by Gauthier Shandy to his brother Toby, when the latter was about to wed the widow of Wadman.

As the famous advice which the most original of English

writers consigned in this letter can, with a few exceptions, be used to complete our remarks on the manner of treating women, we shall offer it textually to predestinated husbands, requesting them to meditate upon it as upon one of the most substantial masterpieces of human thought.

*Letter of Mr. Shandy to Captain Toby Shandy.*

“DEAR BROTHER TOBY:—What I am going to tell you concerns the nature of women and the manner of making love to them. And perhaps it is well for you (although it is not as well for me) that the opportunity has arisen and that I am capable of writing you a few instructions on the subject.

“If it had been the will of Him who makes our laws, to endow you with more knowledge than fell to my lot, I would have been delighted to have you take my place and wield my pen; but, as it behoves me to advise you, and as Mrs. Shandy is close at hand, preparing to retire for the night, I will jot down without order some ideas and maxims concerning marriage, as they come into my mind and as I think they will be of use to you, wishing thereby to give you a token of my friendship and having no doubt, my dear Toby, that you will receive it with gratitude.

“In the first place, as regards religion in this matter (although the blush of shame that rises to my cheek makes me aware that I crimson in speaking to you on this subject; although I know, in spite of your modesty, which would have us ignore it, that you neglect none of these pious duties), still, there is one which I should like to recommend to you especially, so that you will not forget it, at least during the time of your courtship. This pious practice consists in never going to see your lady love, be it morning or night, without first putting yourself in the care of the Almighty Lord, so that He will keep you from harm.

“You must shave your head and wash it every four or five days, and even oftener, if possible, for fear that, should you remove your wig in a moment of absent-mindedness, she might see how many of your hairs have fallen under the hand of Time and how many under Trim’s.

“You should, as much as possible, remove from her imagination any idea of baldness.

“Impress well on your mind, Toby, and follow this sure maxim: *All women are timid.*

“And it is lucky that they are; otherwise, who would want anything to do with them?

“Let your breeches be neither too tight nor too wide nor let them bear any resemblance to those large ones that our ancestors wore.

“A happy medium prevents any comments.

“Whatever you have to say, be it much or little, say it in a moderate voice. Silence and all that is like unto it, stamps in one’s mind the mysteries of the night. That is why you must have a care never to drop the shovel or the tongs.

“In your conversations with her, carefully avoid all jests and raillery; and prevent her as much as possible from reading jovial books. There are some works on religion that you may permit her to read, although I should prefer her doing without them; but never allow her to read Rabelais, Scarron or *Don Quixote*.

“All these works are producers of mirth; and you know, Toby, that nothing is more serious than the ends of marriage.

“Always stick a pin in your frill before calling on her.

“If she allows you to sit on the same sofa with her and gives you the opportunity of laying your hand on hers, resist the temptation. You could not hold her hand without having the temperature of your palm betray the state of your feelings. Always leave her in doubt regarding these things, as well as many others. If you act in this manner, you will at least arouse her curiosity; and if she is not entirely enslaved and your *donkey* continues to be unruly (which is most probable), you had better have a few ounces of blood drawn from below your ears, as was the custom of the ancient Scythians who cured the wildest of their sensual appetites in this manner.

“Avicenne then recommends to rub oneself with extract of hellebore, after the proper evacuations and purgatives,

and I am inclined to approve his treatment. But be especially careful not to eat a great deal and to avoid goat meat and deer; abstain carefully, that is, as much as possible, from peacocks, cranes, coots, divers and moor-hens.

“As to your beverages, I need not tell you that you must confine yourself to a decoction of verbena and other herbs, the beneficial effect of which was reported by Elien.

But should it affect your stomach, you would have to discontinue its use and live off cucumbers, melons, purslain and lettuce.

“I cannot at present think of anything else to say to you.

“Unless war should be declared. . .

“So, my dear Toby, I trust that all will go well with you.

“And I remain your affectionate brother,

“GAUTHIER SHANDY.”

Under the present circumstances, Sterne himself would omit in his letter the reference to the *donkey*; and far from advising a predestinated husband to have any blood drawn, he would change the diet of cucumbers and lettuce to a much more substantial régime. At that time, he recommended economy in order to arrive at a magical profusion in time of war, thus imitating the wonderful English Government which, in times of peace, has two hundred warships, but whose navy-yards can, if need be, furnish the double when it is a question of spanning the ocean and capturing an entire fleet.

When a man belongs to the small number of those whom a good education has enabled to think, he should always, before entering upon matrimony, consult his physical and moral forces. In order to fight successfully the storms which so many seductions are bound to raise in his wife's heart, a husband should possess, besides the science of pleasure and a fortune that will permit him not to rank in any of the classes of predestinated men, robust health, exquisite tact, much wit and enough common-sense to exhibit his superiority only under favorable circumstances. To these qualities he should add a keen sight and sharp ears.

If he should have a fine figure, a handsome face and a manly

air and lack the other requisites, he would be classed among the predestinated ones just the same. So that an ugly husband whose face is, however, full of expression, would, if his wife has forgotten his ugliness once, be in the most favorable position to fight the genius of evil.

He must always strive, and here is an omission in Sterne's letter, to remain odorless, so as not to awaken disgust. Therefore must he be chary of perfumes, which always expose pretty women to insulting surmises.

He will have to study his manners and chasten his speech, as if he were the suitor of the most inconstant woman. It is for him that a philosopher made the following remark:

“Many a woman has been rendered unhappy for life, has ruined and dishonored herself because she has ceased to love a man who has killed himself in her eyes by being awkward in taking off his coat, cutting his nails or unfastening a button.”

One of his most important duties is to hide from his wife the true state of his fortune, so as to be able to satisfy the fancies and whims she may have, like some generous bachelors.

Finally, most difficult task, task which requires super-human courage, he must wield the most absolute power over the donkey that Sterne refers to. That donkey must be as submissive as a serf of the thirteenth century to his master; must obey and keep silent, advance and retreat at the slightest word of command.

Equipped with all these advantages, a husband still can hardly enter the lists with any hope of success; like all the rest, he runs the risk of being, for his wife, a sort of responsible editor.

“What!” will exclaim some good people whose horizon extends no further than their noses, “must one take so much trouble to be loved; and is it necessary to go to a school before getting married? Is the Government going to found a chair of love as it has founded a chair of public law?”

This is our answer:

These rules so numerous and complicated, these minute observations, these notions so variable according to temperaments, pre-exist, so to speak, in the hearts of those who are

born for love, just as the sentiment of taste and I do not know what ease for combining ideas are to be found in the soul of the poet, the painter or the musician. The men who would be apt to consider the rules given in this Meditation irksome, are naturally predestinated, just as the man who cannot see the relation between two different ideas, is a fool. Indeed, love has its unknown geniuses just as war has its Napoleons, poetry its André Cheniers and philosophy its Descartes.

This last remark contains the germ of an answer to the inquiry which all men have propounded since a long time: Why are happy marriages so infrequent?

This phenomenon of the moral world rarely takes place, because there are so few people who possess genius. A lasting passion is a sublime drama played by two actors of equal talent, a drama in which sentiments are catastrophes, in which desires are events and in which the slightest thought brings about a change of scenery. Now, how is it possible to often find in the flock of bimanés which is called a nation, a man and a woman possessing in the same degree the genius of love, when it is already so hard to find talented people in the other sciences, where, in order to succeed, an artist need only be in harmony with *himself*?

Up to the present time, we have only touched upon the physical difficulties that two married people are apt to encounter in their quest for happiness; but what would it be were we to draw the terrible picture of the moral obligations which arise from differences in character? . . . Let us stop! The man adroit enough to guide his temperament will surely be master of his soul.

We shall suppose that our model husband has all the chief requirements needed to successfully compete with his rivals. We shall grant that he does not belong to any of the classes of predestinated husbands which we have reviewed. Let us be agreed, in a word, that he is imbued with all our maxims; that he possesses the admirable science some precepts of which we have revealed, that he was very wise when he married, that he knows his wife and is beloved by her; and let us continue the enumeration of all the general causes that

are apt to aggravate the critical position in which we intend to place him for the furtherance of the sum of human knowledge.

## MEDITATION VI

### CONCERNING BOARDING-SCHOOLS

IF you have married a girl educated in a boarding-school, you may add thirty more chances of being wretched to the enumeration of the preceding ones, and you are in the same position as a man who has thrust his hand into a wasp's nest.

Then, immediately after the nuptial ceremony, and without being taken in by the youthful grace and modest bearing of your bride, you should meditate upon, and follow, the maxims and directions which we shall set forth in the second part of this work. You should even practice the rigorous third part by beginning at once the strictest watchfulness, and constantly displaying a paternal solicitude, for the day after your marriage, nay, even the day before, there may have been *péril en la demeure*.

In fact, you must remember the secret and profound knowledge which schoolboys acquire concerning the nature of things, *de natura rerum*. Lapeyrouse, Cook or Captain Parry never had more desire to reach the poles than college youths display for the forbidden regions of pleasure.

As girls are shrewder and more curious than boys, their clandestine meetings and conversations, that all the art of matrons cannot prevent, must be planned with a genius a thousand times more infernal than that which directs boys. What man has ever heard the thoughts and sly remarks of these girls? They alone know those tricks through which they lose their innocence, those attempts and gropings toward voluptuousness, those phantoms of pleasure that may be compared to the attacks made by children upon the jars concealed in the maternal cupboard. A girl may be a virgin when she leaves her boarding-school, but she never leaves it chaste. More than once she has discussed in secret meetings the important question of lovers, and corruption has

necessarily entered her brain or her heart, be it said without antithesis.

Let us, however, grant that your wife has taken no part in these virginal pastimes. But, from the fact that she has had no voice in the councils of the "grown ones," shall we conclude that she is any better? No. She will have formed friendships with other young ladies and we shall be conservative in only granting her two or three intimate friends. Are you sure that after your wife has left boarding-school, her young friends have not been admitted to the secret meetings where the members endeavor to learn in advance, if only by analogy, the sports of turtle-doves? After a while, these friends marry; then you will have four women to watch instead of one, four characters to read, and you will be at the mercy of four husbands and a dozen bachelors whose lives, habits and principles are entirely unknown to you, when our Meditations will have shown you the necessity, which will confront you some day, of watching the people whom you married along with your wife, without being aware of the fact. Satan alone could have devised a boarding-school for girls in the midst of a large city! . . . Madame Campan, at least, had the good sense to locate her famous institution at Écouen. That wise precaution tends to show that she was by no means an ordinary woman. There, her charges were not able to view the museum of the streets, consisting of large and grotesque images and obscene words due to the pencil of the Evil One. Nor did they have constantly before their eyes the spectacle of human infirmities that is to be encountered at every street-corner, nor the secret poison distilled to them by the erotic and instructing books furnished by circulating libraries. Therefore, it was only at Écouen that this wise teacher was able to keep her charges pure and unsullied, if such a thing be possible. Perhaps you thought that it would be easy for you to prevent your wife seeing her schoolmates? She will meet them at balls, at the theater, at the promenade, in society; and how many services two women can render each other! . . . But we will meditate upon this new subject of terror at the proper time and place.



That is not all: if your mother-in-law placed your wife in a boarding-school, do you think that it was for her daughter's sake that she did so? A girl of twelve or fifteen summers is a terrible spy; and if the mother did not want a spy in her home, I shall begin to believe that madame your mother-in-law belongs indubitably to the most questionable portion of our nice women. So, in every respect, she is a bad example for her daughter and a dangerous counselor.

Let us stop! The mother-in-law requires a whole Meditation.

Therefore, no matter which way you turn, the conjugal bed is, in this instance, equally thorny.

Before the Revolution, a few aristocratic families sent their daughters to convents. Their example was followed by a number of people who imagined that, by having their daughters associate with the daughters of noblemen, they would naturally adopt their tone and manners. This error was first fatal to domestic happiness; then, the convents had all the drawbacks of the boarding-schools. Idleness is even far greater in the former than in the latter. The restrictions of a cloister inflame the imagination. Solitude is the very handmaiden of the Devil; and one cannot tell what ravages the most ordinary phenomena of life may produce in the minds of those idle, ignorant and dreamy young girls.

Some, by dint of caressing chimeras, give rise to the strangest blunders. Some others, having greatly exaggerated in their own minds the happiness that is supposed to come from being wedded, say to themselves. "What! is this all there is to it! . . ." when they are duly married. In any case, the incomplete idea that young girls brought up together form of the marriage state has all the dangers pertaining to ignorance and all the misfortunes that go hand in hand with science.

A young girl brought up at home by her mother or a virtuous maiden aunt, bigoted and of either an amiable or a sour disposition; a young girl who has never set her foot out of the house without being duly chaperoned, whose childhood has been spent in study and who is ignorant of everything, is one of those rare treasures that are to be encoun-

tered here and there in society, like the forest flowers that are so hidden from view by dense foliage that mortal eyes have never been able to behold them. He who, master of a flower so pure and suave, lets others cultivate it, has surely earned his deserts. He is either a monster or a fool.

It would be most proper now to see whether there is any way of marrying well and indefinitely avoiding the precautions which will be set forth in their *ensemble* in the second and third parts; but, has it not been duly proven that it is easier to read *l'École des femmes* in an hermetically closed oven, than to have a knowledge of the character, habits and thoughts of a marriageable young lady?

Do not most men marry exactly as if they were buying stocks at the Bourse?

And if, in the previous Meditation, we have succeeded in convincing you that the greater number of men remain in the most shocking apathy in regard to their own honor in point of marriage, is it reasonable to think that one will find many people who are rich enough, observing enough, and clever enough to lose, like Burchell in the *Vicar of Wakefield*, one or two years of their time studying the girls they are going to marry, when they pay so little attention to them after they have possessed them during the time that English people term the *honeymoon*, the influence of which we will not fail to discuss shortly?

However, as we have reflected a long time on this important matter, we beg to call attention to the fact that there are some more or less satisfactory ways of choosing a mate, even if you choose promptly.

For instance, there can be no doubt of the possibilities being in your favor:

1st. If you have chosen a young lady whose temperament is like the temperament of the women of Louisiana and Carolina.

In order to obtain certain information regarding the temperament of a young lady, it is necessary to put into practice the system mentioned by Gil Blas and used by a statesman to learn of conspirations or to find out how the ministers had passed the night.

2d. If you choose a young lady who, without being downright ugly, nevertheless does not belong in the class of pretty women.

We consider it a sure principle that, in order to be tolerably happy in wedded life, a sweet disposition and a passably ugly face are the first elements to be sought in a woman.

But do you want to learn the truth? Open Rousseau, for there is not one question of public morality the import of which he has not indicated in advance. Then read:

“Among nations which are moral, young girls are loose-lived, while married women are very strict. The contrary obtains among immoral nations.”

If the principle sanctioned by this true and profound remark were acted upon, there would be fewer unhappy marriages if men married their mistresses. If this should come to pass, the education of girls would have to be vastly modified in France. Until now, the French laws and customs having to choose between an offense and a crime to be warded off, have favored the crime. In truth, the misstep of a young girl is barely a misdemeanor when compared to the one of a married woman. Is there not a great deal less danger in giving freedom to girls than in giving it to married women? The idea of taking a girl on trial will provide more food for thought among serious-minded men than it will furnish matter for jesters. The customs of Germany, Switzerland, England, and the United States grant young girls a freedom which, in France, would be looked upon as highly immoral; nevertheless, it is certain that marriages in those countries are less unhappy than in France.

#### LV

“When a woman has given herself wholly to a man, she must know him whom love offered her very well. The gift of her esteem and confidence must necessarily have gone before the gift of her heart.”

Brilliant with truth, these lines perhaps illumined the dark cell in which Mirabeau penned them, and the fruitful observation that they contain, although due to the most fiery of his passions, nevertheless dominates the social problem

which engrosses us. Indeed, a marriage cemented under the religious auspices of the scrutiny that love supposes, and under the disillusion that follows upon possession, must be the most binding of all unions.

Then, a woman cannot reproach her husband with the legal right by virtue of which she belongs to him. She can no longer find in this forced submission a reason for giving herself to a lover, when later she finds in her own heart an accomplice whose sophisms seduce her by inquiring twenty times a day why, after having given herself against her will to a man she did not love, she should not give herself willingly to a man she does love. A woman can then no longer complain of the faults inherent to human nature, for she has found out in advance their tyranny and submitted to their caprices.

A great many girls will be disappointed in their hopes! . . . But will it not be of a great advantage to them not to be the mates of men whom they have a right to scorn?

Some alarmists will cry that such a change in our customs would authorize terrible public immorality; that laws, and customs, which dominate the laws, cannot really sanction scandal and immorality; and if unavoidable evils exist, society at least should not set its seal of approval upon them.

First of all, it is easy to answer that the proposed system tends to prevent these evils which, up to the present time, have been looked upon as unavoidable; but, however inaccurate the figures of our statistics may be, they have shown a terrible social state and our moralists must then prefer the greater evil to the lesser one, the violation of a principle upon which society rests, to a doubtful immorality among young girls; the dissoluteness of the mothers of families, which compromises at least four persons, to the dissoluteness of a young girl who only compromises herself and at most a child. Perish the virtue of ten virgins, rather than the holy purity and honor which should be the characteristics of every mother of a family! In the spectacle of a girl forsaken by her seducer there is something imposing and holy; it brings to mind broken vows, traduced confidence and,

on the wreck of even the most questionable virtue, weeping Innocence, which doubts everything when it must doubt the love of a father for his child. The unfortunate girl is still innocent; she may still become a faithful wife and tender mother; and if the past is dark, the future is as bright with hope as a pure sky. Is this brightness to be found in the somber picture of illegitimate love? In one case the woman is a victim, while in the other she is a criminal. Where is hope for the adulterous woman? If God forgives her, the most exemplary life can never be able to efface the living fruits of her crime. If James the First is the son of Rizzio, then the crime of Mary has lasted as long as her deplorable and royal house and the downfall of the Stuarts was only just.

But, really, does the emancipation of women hold so much danger?

It is easy to accuse a young girl of letting herself be deceived through a desire to escape spinsterhood at any cost; but this is only true in the actual state of our society. Nowadays, a young girl is ignorant of life and of its many pitfalls, her only stay is her weakness, and hearing the easy principles of the world, her imagination, governed by desires that everything combines to strengthen, is a guide all the more dangerous from the very fact that *a young girl rarely confides to anyone* the secret of her first love. . . .

If she were free, an unprejudiced education would arm her against the love of the undesirable man. Like all other people, she would be much more able to fight a known danger than a peril the extent of which she is ignorant of. Besides, does the mere fact that a girl is her own mistress imply that she will be any the less under the watchful eye of her mother? Must we also count for naught that modesty and fear which Nature has placed in the heart of a young girl to save her from the misfortune of belonging to a man who does not love her? Finally, where is the girl so little designing as not to know that the most immoral man wants his wife to have principles, just as masters want perfect servants, and that virtue, therefore, is the best and most fruitful of professions?

After all, what are we discussing? For whom do you think we are stipulating? For five or six hundred thousand virginities at the utmost, virginities that are armed with their fears and that have a very high opinion of themselves: they are as clever when they defend themselves as when they sell themselves. The eighteen million beings whom we decided to place outside of the question, almost all marry in accordance with the system which we would like to see prevail in our society; and as regards the intermediate classes by which our poor bimanues are separated from the privileged men who march at the head of a nation, the number of foundlings that these semi-comfortable classes cast upon humanity, has increased since peace has prevailed, if we are to believe Monsieur Benoiston de Châteauneuf, one of the most courageous among the scientists who have devoted themselves to useful but dry statistics. Now, to what a frightful condition of affairs are we supplying a remedy when one stops to think of the number of bastards that the statistics reveal to us, and of the misfortunes that our figures tell us must exist in society! But it would be hard to show here all the advantages that the emancipation of girls would bring in its wake. When we shall have arrived at the observation of all the circumstances that go hand in hand with marriage as we have conceived it, judicious minds will appreciate the true value of the system of education and freedom which we demand for girls in the name of reason and Nature. The prejudice that we harbor in France regarding the virginity of brides, is the silliest of all those that we still retain. The Orientals marry their wives without a thought as to their past and seclude them in order to be sure of the future; the French people put their daughters in a sort of seraglio defended by mothers, religious ideas and prejudices; and they give their wives the utmost freedom, thereby proving that they care much more for the past than for the future. It would only be a question of reversing our customs. Perhaps we might then end by giving conjugal faithfulness all the zest that the women to-day find in *liaisons*.

But this discussion would carry us too far from our subject, if we had to examine, in all its details, that immense

moral regeneration that France lays claim to in this twentieth century; for customs are so slow to improve! In order to obtain the slightest change, must not the boldest idea of the past century have become the most trivial one of the present one? Therefore, it is with a certain coquetry that we have broached this question, whether it be to show that it did not escape our attention, or whether it be to leave one more book to our descendants; and, really, here is the third reason: the first one concerns the courtesans and the second one is the physiology of pleasure:

*Quand nous serons à dix nous ferons une croix.\**

In the present state of our society and imperfect civilization, there actually exists an unsolvable problem and one that renders any dissertation on the art of choosing a wife superfluous; we hand it over, like the rest, to the meditations of philosophers.

### *Problem*

No one has as yet been able to decide whether a woman is moved to be unfaithful to her husband more through the impossibility to effect a change, than through the freedom accorded her in this respect.

Moreover, as, in this work, we have taken a man at the very moment when he has entered the bonds of matrimony, if he has married a woman with a sanguine temperament, a vivid imagination, a nervous constitution or an indolent character, his position would be all the more serious.

A man would be in a still more critical situation if his wife only drank water (see the Meditation entitled *Conjugal Hygiene*); but, if she should possess any vocal talent or if she were prone to catching cold, he would have reason to tremble; for it has been shown that singers are at least as passionate as women whose mucous systems are easily affected.

Finally, the peril would be greatly aggravated if your wife were less than seventeen years old; or, if her complexion

\* When we reach ten we will make a cross.

were pale and muddy, for women with that sort of a skin are almost always deceitful.

But we do not wish to anticipate all the terrors which the diagnosis of such things will certainly cause in a husband's breast when he discovers certain characteristics in his wife. This digression has diverted me too long from the boarding-schools where all these misfortunes are hatched, which give forth so many girls totally incapable of appreciating the dreadful sacrifices by which the men who honor them by conferring their names upon them, attain wealth; girls craving luxury, ignorant of our laws and our ways, eager to grasp the power that their beauty gives them and ever ready to give up the true voice of genuine love for the spurious buzz of flattery.

May this Meditation fill all who have read it, whether out of idle curiosity or not, with a loathing for girls reared in boarding-schools, and if it accomplishes this, a great service will already have been rendered the cause.

## MEDITATION VII

### CONCERNING HONEYMOONS

IF our first Meditations have proved that it is almost impossible for a married woman in France to remain virtuous, the census of bachelors and predestinated husbands, our remarks on the education of girls and our cursory examination of the difficulties which attend the choosing of a wife, explain, to a certain degree, this national frailty. Therefore, after having frankly exposed the secret disease which is undermining our social body, we sought to discover its causes in our faulty laws, absurd customs, sluggish intellects and contradictions. An only fact remains to be considered; the spread of the trouble.

We arrive at the first principle by broaching the momentous questions contained in the honeymoon; and, just as it is the starting-point of all conjugal phenomena, it is also the link that holds our observations, axioms and problems



together, like so many rings scattered intentionally throughout the wise follies that our loquacious Meditations have uttered. The honeymoon shall, so to speak, be the climax of the analysis which we are going to undertake before letting our "champions" meet.

The expression "honeymoon" is an *anglicism* that will pass into every tongue, because it depicts so well the elusive nuptial season during which life is nothing but joy; like all illusions and errors, it is bound to remain, for it is the most odious of all lies. If it does present itself to us in the guise of a flower-decked nymph, soft and caressing, it is only because it is Misfortune itself; for, as we all know, Misfortune invariably overtakes us smilingly.

The married people who are going through life loving each other, cannot conceive of the honeymoon; for them, it does not exist, or rather, it exists all the time; they are like the immortals who could not grasp the meaning of death; but such bliss is entirely out of our province, and for our readers, marriage comes under the influence of two moons: the honeymoon and the April moon. The latter ends in a revolution which transforms it into a crescent, and when this shines upon a married couple, it is for all time.

How can the honeymoon shed its light on two people who do not love each other?

How does it set after it has once risen?

Do all married people have a honeymoon?

Let us answer these questions in their regular order.

The wonderful education that we give our daughters and the prudent customs which surround the taking of a wife, will now bear their fruit. Let us examine the circumstances which precede and accompany the least unfortunate marriages.

Our customs naturally develop in the girl whom you marry an excessive curiosity, but, as French mothers pride themselves on being able to expose their daughters to the flame without having them scorched, the latter's curiosity is quite naturally boundless.

A complete ignorance of the mysteries of marriage robs this naïve and sly creature of all knowledge concerning the

dangers which follow it; and matrimony being always presented as a period of mixed tyranny and freedom, enjoyment and sovereignty, her desires are increased by all the other interests in life which seek satisfaction; for her, getting married means being called from non-existence into life.

If she possesses the sentiment of happiness, religion and morality, the laws and her mother have repeatedly pointed out to her that this happiness can only come through you.

Obedience is always a necessity with her, even if it be not a virtue; she expects everything from you; in the first place, society condones woman's enslavement, but the latter does not even form the wish to be free, for she knows that she is timid, weak and ignorant.

Unless there has been some misunderstanding due to chance or some feeling of repulsion which it would be unpardonable in you not to have guessed, she will desire to please you; she does not know you.

Finally, to facilitate your triumph, you marry her at a time when Nature sometimes solicits with energy the pleasures which you alone can dispense.

I ask it of any reasonable creature, would a demon gather the elements of perdition around an angel whose downfall he had planned, as solicitously as our customs conspire against the happiness of a husband? . . . Are you not, like a king, surrounded by flatterers?

Given over with all her desires and ignorance to a man who, even though he be in love, cannot and must not know her secret and delicate ways, will that young girl not be shamefully passive, submissive and complaisant during all the time her young imagination leads her to await the pleasure or the happiness that may perhaps never materialize?

In this strange position in which the laws of society and of Nature are in conflict, a young girl obeys, submits and keeps silent out of self-interest. Her obedience is speculation; her complaisance, hope; her devotion, a sort of vocation by which you benefit; and her silence is generosity. She will be the victim of your whims as long as she does not understand them; she will suffer from your character until she has studied it; she will sacrifice herself without

loving you, because she believes in the factitious passion which possession causes you to display for a time; but she will not be silent when she fully recognizes the futility of her sacrifices.

Then, one fine morning, you will see all the wrong ideas which underlie your union, spring up like so many branches bent by a weight which is lightened by degrees. You imagined that the negative existence of a young girl waiting for happiness was love; she met your desires in the hope that you would meet hers, and did not dare complain of her secret unhappiness, because she believed that she must be at fault. Who is the man who would not be deceived under such circumstances, especially when the deception has been prepared so long in advance? The young wife is innocent, and is both an accomplice of the deception and a victim of it. You would have to be a God in order to escape the snares with which Nature and society surround you. Is not everything a pitfall in you, and around you? For, in order to be happy, must you not repulse the impetuous desires of your senses? And where is that powerful barrier which the little hand of a woman whom you have *not possessed*, erects to ward them off? . . . Thus you have made your troops parade when there was nobody to watch them; you have set off fireworks the frame of which is the only thing that remains when your guest appears to admire them. In regard to the pleasures of marriage, your wife was like a Mohican at the Opera; the instructor is bored as soon as the savage begins to comprehend.

#### LVI

When married, the time that two hearts can understand each other is as fleeting as lightning and never comes back when once it has flown.

That first trial of married life, during which a woman is encouraged by the hope she has of happiness, by the novel feeling of her wifely duties, by the desire to please, by virtue, which is so persuasive when it shows Love agreeing with Duty, is called the *honeymoon*. How can it last long between two people who have associated themselves for life with-

out knowing each other perfectly? It is certainly surprising that all the deplorable absurdities which our customs heap around the marriage-bed, do not result in still more hatred.

But, that the existence of the wise man is like a peaceful stream and that of the fool like a raging torrent; that the child who has gathered all the roses in his path, finds only thorns upon his return; that the man who, in his wild youth, has recklessly spent a million, cannot, during the remainder of his life, enjoy the forty thousand franc income that the money would have given him, are trivial truths when one thinks of morality, and new ones, when one thinks of most men's conduct. See in them the true image of every honeymoon; 'tis their history, 'tis the fact and not the cause.

But that men, endowed with a certain intellect through a privileged education, accustomed to deep thinking in order to shine in politics, literature or art, in business or private life, who marry with the intention of being happy and governing their wives through love or might, should all fall into the same trap and be fooled, after having enjoyed happiness during a brief period, is a problem the solution of which must reside rather in the unknown depths of the human soul than in the material truths by which we have sought to explain these phenomena. The perilous quest for the secret laws which nearly all men must break in this circumstance, still offers enough glory to the man who fails in this enterprise for us to try our luck. And we shall.

In spite of all that fools have to say about the difficulty which lies in explaining what *love* is, it nevertheless has principles as hard and fast as geometry; but, as each character modifies them to suit itself, we accuse it of the innumerable caprices which our organizations create. If we were to see only the varied effects of light without perceiving the underlying principle, a great many people would refuse to believe in the progress of the sun and in its unity. Therefore, let the blind protest as much as they like; I pride myself, like Socrates, without being as wise as he, on only knowing love; and I shall try to deduce some of its precepts, to save married, or eligible, people, the trouble of racking their brains, for they would be exhausted too quickly.

Now, all our previous observations resolve themselves into one proposition that may be considered the first or the last term, as one wishes, of this secret love theory, which might end by tiring you unless brought to a prompt close. This principle is contained in the following formula:

## LVII

Between two people susceptible of love, the duration of passion is in proportion to the initial resistance of the woman, or the obstacles which social circumstances place in the way of your happiness.

If a woman yields to your passion in a day, your love for her may not last three nights. Where are we to look for the cause of this law? If we will take the trouble to cast about us, we will see that proofs abound: in the vegetable world, the plants which take longest to grow are the ones which live the longest; in the moral realm, the works completed yesterday, are destined to die to-morrow; in the physical domain, the womb which violates the laws of gestation, yields a dead fruit. In everything, a lasting work is one which requires much time in its formation. A long future demands a long past. If Love is a child, then Passion is a man. This universal law, which rules Nature, beings and sentiments, is precisely the one which all marriages infringe, exactly as we have shown. This principle has created the love fables of the Middle Ages: the Amadis, Launcelots and Tristrams of the legends, whose wonderful constancy seems so fabulous, are the allegories of this national mythology which our imitation of Greek literature killed in the bud. Those gracious figures brought into being by the imagination of the troubadours, consecrated this truth.

## LVIII

We have enduring love only for the things which have cost us much time, effort and desire.

All that our Meditations have revealed to us regarding the causes of this primordial law of love, reduces

itself to the following axiom, which is both principle and consequence:

### LIX

In all things, we receive only in proportion to what we give.

This last principle is so evident in itself, that we shall not try to prove it. We shall only add one remark, which, in our estimation, is not lacking in importance. The man who said: *Everything is true and everything is false*, has proclaimed a fact that the human mind, naturally sophistical, interprets after its own fashion, for it would seem as if human things had as many sides as there are intellects to consider them. This is the fact:

There is not a law in creation that is not balanced by a contrary one: life is always solved by the equilibrium of two contending forces. Thus, in the subject we are studying, *love*, it is certain that, if you give too much, you will not receive enough. The mother who shows too great a love for her children creates ingratitude within them; ingratitude comes perhaps from the inability to acquit oneself. The woman who loves more than she is loved, will necessarily be downtrodden. Lasting love is the love which holds the forces of two individuals in equilibrium. Now, this equilibrium can always be established: the one who loves the most must remain in the sphere of the one who loves the least. And, after all, is it not the sweetest sacrifice that a loving soul can make if love can agree to this inequality?

Does not a wonderful sentiment of admiration arise in the soul of the philosopher when he discovers that there is perhaps only one principle in the whole world, as there is only one God, and that our ideas and affections are subject to the same laws that cause the sun to travel onward, the flowers to bloom and the universe to throb! . . .

Perhaps one should seek in this metaphysic of love the reasons of the following proposition, which throws the most brilliant light on the question of honeymoons and April moons:

*Theorem*

Man passes from aversion to love; but, when he has begun by loving and then reaches the stage of aversion, he never goes back to love.

In certain human organizations, sentiments are as incomplete as is thought in certain sluggish imaginations. Therefore, just as minds are endowed with the faculty to grasp the connection between things without drawing conclusions, to consider each connection separately without putting them together, to observe, compare and express; just so, souls are able to conceive of sentiments in an imperfect manner. Talent in love, like in all other arts, consists in the mingling of the power to conceive and the power to execute. The world is full of people who sing songs without refrains, who have *half-ideas* and *half-sentiments* and who do not co-ordinate their affections any more than they do their thoughts. They, in a word, are incomplete beings. Join a fine intellect to a poor one, and you are preparing some calamity; for equilibrium must be found in everything.

We shall leave to boudoir philosophers and back-shop wiseacres the pleasure of seeking the thousand ways by which temperaments, minds, social situations and fortune destroy the equilibrium, and examine the last cause that influences the honeymoon when it sets and the April moon when it rises.

Life contains a principle that is more potent than life itself. It is a movement, the rapidity of which proceeds from an unknown impulsion. Man knows no more about the secret of that rotation, than the earth is initiated into the causes of its revolutions. That, *I know not what*, which I am inclined to call the *current* of life, carries away our dearest thoughts, uses up the will power of the greatest number and drags us along in spite of ourselves. Take, for instance, a man with common-sense, a tradesman, who is most punctilious about paying his notes; that man will be laid to rest in his coffin for having neglected the simple daily practice of taking the proper remedy which would have

saved him from death, or, what is even more horrible, disease. Yet that man repeated every night: "Oh! to-morrow, I will surely not forget to take my pills!" How are we to explain that strange fascination which dominates us through life? Is it lack of energy?—the most iron-willed men are subject to it; lack of memory?—the people who possess this faculty in a marked degree are slaves to it.

This fact, which every man can detect in his neighbor, is one of the causes which exclude most men from a honeymoon. The wisest husband, the one who may have escaped the manifold pitfalls which we have already mentioned, sometimes cannot avoid the snare that he has thus laid for himself.

I have observed that men regard marriage and its dangers much in the same way in which they regard the subject of wigs; and there may be a formula for human life in the following thought sentences concerning wigs:

First period.—Will my hair ever be white?

Second period.—At any rate, if my hair turns white, I shall never wear a wig. Goodness! how awfully a wig does look!

One fine morning you hear a young voice exclaim:

"Why, you have a white hair! . . ."

Third period.—Why not wear a skillfully made wig that would deceive everyone? There is some sort of merit in deceiving people; besides, a wig is warm and prevents a man catching cold, etc.

Fourth period.—The wig is so skillfully adjusted that you deceive all the people who do not know you.

Your wig preoccupies you and every morning your conceit renders you the rival of the most skilled barbers.

Fifth period.—The wig is neglected. Goodness! what a bore to have to take off that wig every night and put it on again in the morning!

Sixth period.—The wig reveals a few gray hairs; it wobbles and the casual observer notices a white line that forms a decided contrast to the darker shade of the wig which is lifted by the collar of your coat.

Seventh period.—The wig looks like quitch-grass, and, excuse the expression, you do not care a tinker's dam about it!



“Monsieur,” says one of the powerful feminine intellects which have deigned to help me over some of the most obscure passages of my book, “what do you mean by that wig?”

“Madame, when a man ceases to care for his wig he is . . . he is . . . what your husband probably is not.”

“Well, my husband is not . . .” (She thought.) “He is not agreeable; he is not . . . very well; he is . . . cross; he is . . .”

“Then, madame, he must be indifferent about his wig.”

We looked at each other, she, with well-feigned dignity and I, with a slight smile.

“I see,” said I, “that one must singularly respect the ears of women, for they are the only chaste things that they possess.”

I assumed the manner of a man who has something important to reveal and the fair lady lowered her eyes as if she knew full well that she would be obliged to blush during my discourse.

“Madame, to-day we would not hang a minister as they did in olden times, for a *yes* or a *no*; a Châteaubriand would hardly torture Françoise de Foix, and we no longer wear a sword at our side to avenge insults. Now, in a century in which civilization has made such rapid progress, in which we are taught any science in twenty-four lessons, everything is bound to have followed the impulse toward perfection. We therefore cannot imitate the rough, coarse and virile speech of our ancestors. The age in which such fine fabrics are woven, such elegant furniture is manufactured, such rich porcelains are produced, must be the age of periphrase and circumlocution. Therefore, we must try to coin some new word to take the place of the comical expression Molière used; because, as a contemporaneous author puts it, the language of that great man is too broad for ladies who find that gauze is too thick for their garments. Now, society people, as well as scientists, are familiar with the innate taste of the Greeks for mysteries. That poetical nation was able to give fabulous aspects to the ancient traditions of its history. At the voice of the rhapsodists, who, at the same

time were poets and romancers, the kings became gods and their gallant escapades were transformed into immortal legends.

“According to Monsieur Chompré, the classical author of the *Dictionnaire de Mythologie*, the labyrinth was ‘an inclosure planted with trees and decorated with constructions arranged in such a manner that, when a young man once got into it, he could not find his way out again.’ Here and there, a few delightful arbors rose before his eyes, but, among alleys which crossed each other in every direction and presented the same appearance to the eye, among thorns and rocks and bushes, the patient had to struggle with an animal called the Minotaur. Now, madame, if you will do me the honor of remembering that the Minotaur was of all the horny beasts the one that mythology regarded as the most dangerous; that, in order to avoid the ravages which it made, the Athenians had promised to yield it fifty virgins every year; you will not share the error of Monsieur Chompré, who considers the labyrinth a sort of English garden; and you will recognize in this ingenious fable a delicate allegory, or, we had better say, a faithful and distressing picture of matrimony. The paintings recently discovered in Herculænum have conclusively proved this opinion. Indeed, for a long time, scientists believed that the Minotaur was a beast half-man and half-steer; but the fifth plate of the Herculænum paintings shows us this allegorical monster with the entire body of a man and only the head of a bull; and in order to allay all doubts, it is prostrated at the feet of Theseus. Well, madame, why should we not ask mythology to help out the hypocrisy that is taking hold of us and preventing us from laughing in the hearty fashion of our forbears? Thus, when a young woman in society has not known enough to deftly spread the veil with which a nice woman covers her conduct, there where our forefathers would have used a single word to express the situation, you and all the rest of your fair sisters will only say: ‘Ah! yes, she is very agreeable, but . . . But what? . . . But she is often very *inconsistent*. . . .’ I searched a long time, madame, for the meaning of this word and especially for the

figure of rhetoric by which you make it express the opposite of what it means; but my search was vain. So *Vert-Vert* was the last one to utter the word that our ancestors used and he unfortunately addressed himself to innocent nuns, whose escapades did not in the least touch the honor of husbands. When a woman is inconsistent, her husband, in my opinion, is *minotaurized*. If he is a gentleman and enjoys the esteem of his fellow-citizens, and many men really deserve pity, then, in speaking of him, you add in a little gentle voice: ‘Monsieur A—— is a very nice man, and his wife is very pretty, but people say that he is quite unhappy with her.’ Thus, madame, the man who is unhappy in his home, the man who has an *inconsistent* wife, or the *minotaurized* husband, are simply husbands after the pattern that Molière drew. There, goddess of modern taste, do those expressions strike you as being transparently chaste enough?”

“Ah, *mon Dieu*,” quoth she, smiling, “if the fact remains, what does it matter whether it be expressed by one word or by a hundred?”

She made me a little mocking curtsy and withdrew to join the preface countesses and all the rest of the metaphorical creatures so often used by writers to find or compose old manuscripts.

As for you, more substantial and less numerous creatures, if among you there are some who side with my conjugal champion, I warn you that you will not have your homes wrecked all at once. A man reaches that conjugal temperature by degrees and imperceptibly. Many husbands have been unhappy during the whole of their married lives without knowing it. This domestic revolution always follows certain lines; for the revolutions of the honeymoon are as sure as those of the celestial body and apply to all couples. Have we not proved that moral nature has its laws, the same as physical nature?

Your young wife will never, as we have already said somewhere in this work, take a lover without giving serious consideration to the matter. At the time when the honeymoon is waning, you have developed the sentiment of pleasure in her without having satisfied it; you have opened the book

of life, and she readily pictures, from the prosiness of your love, the poetry which must result from the combination of affection and passion. Like a timid bird which is still terrified by the sound of shots which have long ceased, she sticks her head out of the nest, looks around and sees the world; and knowing the key to the charade which you have played, she instinctively feels the void of your lukewarm passion. She divines that it will only be with a lover that she will be able to recapture the delightful use of her free-will in matters of love.

You have been drying green wood for a future blaze.

In the position in which you both find yourselves, there is not one woman, no matter how virtuous she may be, who does not think that she is worthy of a great passion, who has not dreamed of it, and who does not believe that she is very susceptible; for there is always some vanity in exaggerating the strength of a conquered foe.

“If the profession of being a nice woman was only perilous,” an old lady once said to me; “but it is also a bore, and I have never yet met the virtuous woman who did not think she was being fooled.”

So—even before a lover presents himself—a woman argues on the legitimacy of the situation, so to speak; she goes through a struggle in which duty, law, religion and secret desires all rend her soul. There begins a new order of things for you; there is the first warning which Nature, that kind and indulgent mother, gives to all creatures when they are exposed to any danger. Nature has attached a bell to the neck of the Minotaur, just as she has put rattles on the snake which is the dread of all travelers. Then arise in your wife what we shall name the *first symptoms*, and woe to him who has not known how to cope with these! Those who, after reading this book, remember having seen them manifest themselves in their homes, may pass on to the end of the book, for there they will find consolation.

This situation, in which a couple remains during a more or less lengthy period, will be the starting-point of our work, as it is the end of our general observations. A clever man must be able to know the signs, the mysterious indications

which a woman then gives; for the Meditation which follows will only be able to indicate the essential points to neophytes in the sublime science of matrimony.

### MEDITATION VIII

#### CONCERNING THE FIRST SYMPTOMS

WHILE your wife is in the crisis which we have just described, you are lulled by an absolute and delightful feeling of security. You have gazed upon the sun so often, that you are beginning to believe that it may shine for everyone. You no longer give the same attention to your wife's least action that you gave when you were in the flush of passion.

This indolence prevents many husbands from perceiving the symptoms by which their wives announce the coming storm; and that frame of mind has minotaurized more husbands than opportunity, divans, closed carriages and town apartments put together. That indifference to danger is, in a way, produced and justified by the apparent calm which surrounds you. The conspiracy directed against you by the million famished bachelors seems to be unanimous in its progress. Although all those gay blades are foes to one another, and not one of them knows the other, still, a sort of instinct has given them the password.

When two young people marry, the myrmidons of the Minotaur, young and old, generally have the courtesy to leave them alone. They look upon the husband as upon a workman whose duty it is to shape, polish and cut the diamond which afterward will be passed from hand to hand, to be admired by many people. Therefore, the sight of a devoted young couple always gladdens the hearts of those bachelors who are called *roués*; they are very careful not to interfere with the work which society at large is going to profit by; they also know that heavy rains do not last long; so they keep in the background, watching with wonderful shrewdness for the time when the bride and groom begin to tire of their seventh heaven of delight.

The tact with which bachelors discover the moment when the wind turns in a household, can only be compared to the sluggishness of husbands whose honeymoons are on the wane. Even in gallantry, there is a maturity that it is well to await. The really great man is the one who can judge circumstances. Those middle-aged men whom we have depicted as being so dangerous, understand very well, for instance, that the man who wishes to become the lover of a woman, and is proudly rejected at first, will be received with open arms three months later. But it is true that, generally speaking, married people show their coldness with the same *naïveté* with which they display the contrary feeling.

When you were loitering with madame in the delightful paths of the seventh heaven, where, according to one's temperament, one remains for more or less time, as the preceding Meditation shows, you went in for society very rarely or not at all. Happy in your home, if you went out at all, it was only to go on some lover-like trip with your bride. As soon as you make your appearance in society, together or alone, as soon as people see you attending dances and fêtes, and all those amusements created in order that one may escape from loneliness, the bachelors surmise that your wife is seeking distraction; therefore, her home and her husband must bore her.

Then, the bachelor knows that half the battle is won. Then, you are on the very brink of being minotaurized and your wife is inclining toward inconsistency: which means, on the contrary, that she will be very consistent in her conduct, that she will reason it out with wonderful depth, and that you will be absolutely unaware of the whole proceeding. From that time on, she will not fail in any of her duties, and will all the more seek the appearances of virtue, because she lacks it. Alas! mourned Crébillon:

*Doit-on donc hériter de ceux qu'on assassine! \**

She has never before been so eager to please you as now. She will try to compensate you for the secret wound which

\* *Must we really inherit from those we slay!*

she thinks of inflicting on you, by little delights that are to make you believe in the continuance of her love: thence springs the proverb: "As happy as a fool." But, according to their characters, women either scorn their husbands, for the very reason that they deceive them successfully; or they hate them, if they are opposed; or they feel indifferent to them, a sentiment which is a thousand times worse than hatred.

In these circumstances, the first diagnosis is a great eccentricity in the woman. She will be inclined to run away from herself, to flee from her home, but without displaying the anxiety for distraction which characterizes the very unhappy wife. She dresses with much care, in order, she explains, that she may flatter your vanity by attracting all eyes to herself when in society.

When she is at home, you will notice that she is in turns pensive and depressed, happy and exuberant, or as grave as a German soldier marching to battle. Such frequent changes invariably announce the terrible hesitation that we have mentioned.

There are some women who read novels so as to gorge themselves with the always varied pictures of a love that rises above all obstacles, or in order to accustom themselves in advance to the dangers of an intrigue.

She will profess to have the highest regard for you. She will tell you that she loves you like a brother; that this reasonable sentiment is the only true, the only lasting one, and that the sole end of marriage is to establish it between man and wife.

She will see very cleverly that she only has duties to perform and that she has rights which she may exert.

She looks upon all the details of connubial bliss with a coldness that you alone can appreciate. Perhaps she has never enjoyed it very keenly, and besides, it is something which is always at hand; she knows it, she has analyzed it; and how many slight but convincing proofs come to a clever husband to show him that this frail creature argues and reasons, instead of being carried away by passion!

## LX

The more one judges, the less one loves.

Thence spring those jokes that make you laugh and those thoughts which surprise you by their depth; thence come those sudden changes and those whims of an unsettled determination. Sometimes she becomes very tender, as if she repented her thoughts and her plans; sometimes she is cross and capricious; in a word, she accomplishes the *varium et mutabile femina* that, until now, we were foolish enough to attribute to their constitutions. Diderot, wishing to explain these almost atmospherical variations of women, went so far as to claim that they proceeded from what he terms the *wild beast* in them; but you will never see these anomalies in a happy woman.

These symptoms, which are as flimsy as gauze, resemble those clouds which barely tint the azure of the sky and which are called *fleurs d'orange*. Soon the colors deepen.

In the midst of this solemn Meditation, which tends, according to the expression of Madame de Staël, "to put more poetry into the humdrum prose of life," a few women, in whom their mothers, out of a sense of duty, sentiment or design, planted tenacious principles, believe that the devouring ideas which assail them are suggestions of the Evil One. Then you can see them trotting off to mass, to vespers and all the other divine services. This false piety begins with the purchase of dainty prayer-books by which the fair sinners strive in vain to perform the duties of religion which they forsook for the pleasures of matrimony.

Here we will give a principle and we request you to engrave it with fiery letters upon your memory.

When a young wife suddenly begins to take up the religious practices she had abandoned, it always means that this new phase of conduct hides a motive of the greatest importance to the husband's peace of mind. Out of one hundred woman, there are at least seventy-nine in whom this unexpected revival of interest in the Lord proves that they have been *inconsistent* or that they are about to become so,



But a clearer and more decisive symptom, and one that every husband will recognize, unless he is an idiot, is this one:

At the time when both of you were submerged in the deceitful delights of the honeymoon, your wife, like a true mistress, was always ready to do your bidding. Happy to be able to show you a good-nature that both of you mistook for love, she hoped that you would only request her to walk on the roof, and in a minute, as lithe as a squirrel, she would have obeyed your command. In a word, she took a keen delight in sacrificing the *I* which made her a different being from *you*. She had identified herself with you, thereby obeying that cry of the heart: *Una caro*.

All those fine resolutions have disappeared one by one. Hurt at the idea that her will is being annihilated, your wife will try to reconquer it by means of a system gradually developed and which becomes more energetic daily.

It is the system of *a married woman's dignity*. The first effect of the system is to bring about a certain reserve in your pleasures and a certain coolness which you alone can appreciate.

You may have discovered during the honeymoon, that is, if you were passionate, a few of the twenty-two pleasures which, in olden times, gave rise to twenty-two kinds of courtesans devoted to the special cultivation of those delicate branches of an only art. Ignorant and naïve, curious and expectant, your young wife may herself have become an adept in this science, which is as rare as it is unknown, and which we particularly recommend to the future author of the *Physiology of Pleasure*.

But, one fine morning, just like the army of birds that dread the rigors of our northern climes, away flies the *Fellatrice*, who appeases the desires a little in order to prolong them; the *Tractatrice* who hails from the perfumed Orient, where dreamy delights are in honor; the *Subagitatrice*, a daughter of Greece; the *Lémane* with her caressing voluptuousness; the *Corinthienne* who could, if necessary, take the place of all the other ones; and lastly, the irritating *Phicidisseuse*, whose teeth are devouring and mischievous,

their very enamel seeming to be intelligent. One, perhaps, has remained; but, one night, the brilliant and fiery *Propétide* spreads her white wings and flies away, with bowed head, showing you for the last time, like the angel who vanishes before the eyes of Abraham, in Rembrandt's painting, the ravishing treasures which she herself ignores, and which you alone gazed upon with rapture and fondled caressingly.

Weaned from all these shades of pleasure, from all those whims of the soul, you are reduced to the most vulgar means of love, to that primitive and innocent aspect of matrimony, that pacific homage that the ingenuous Adam rendered our common Mother and which no doubt suggested to the Serpent the idea of sharpening her wits. But such a complete symptom is not frequent. Most couples are too proper to follow the customs of ancient Greece. Therefore, we have included in the *last symptoms* the appearance in the peaceful conjugal bed of those bold caresses which, most of the time, are the offspring of an illegitimate passion. At the proper time and place, we shall treat more fully of this enchanting diagnosis; here, it may perhaps assume a repulsion and an indifference which you alone are capable of appreciating.

At the same time that she ennobles, by her dignity, the ends of marriage, your wife pretends that she is entitled to her opinion, the same as you are entitled to yours. "When a girl marries, she will say, she must not abdicate her reason. Are women really to be slaves? Human laws have been able to enslave the body, but not the spirit! . . . Ah! God has placed it too near Himself, for tyrants to lay their hands upon it."

These thoughts proceed necessarily either from a too liberal education, which you have allowed her to acquire, or from deductions which you have permitted her to make. An entire Meditation has been devoted to the *education of the wife*.

Then your wife begins to say: "*My room, my bed, my apartment.*" To a great many of your questions she will answer: "My dear, it does not concern you in the least!" Or: "Men have their part in the running of a house and women have theirs." Or, ridiculing the men who take an

interest in household matters, she will pretend that "men know nothing about certain things."

The number of things that you do not understand will increase every day.

One fine morning, you will find two altars instead of one in your little chapel. Your altar and your wife's will have become distinct and this distinction will grow and grow by virtue of the system of wifely dignity.

Then will come the following ideas, which will be implanted in you in spite of your protests, by the virtue of a *live force*, very ancient and little known. Steam-power, horse-power, and water-power are fine inventions; but Nature has equipped woman with a *moral* power with which the others cannot be compared: we shall call it *the power of the rattle*. It consists in a perpetuity of sound, in the exact repetition of the same words, in the complete rotation of the same ideas, until, by dint of hearing the same thing over and over, you will agree with everything, in order to end the discussion. Thus, *the power of the rattle* will prove to you:

That you are indeed lucky to have such a fine wife;

That, when your wife consented to marry you, she did you a great honor;

That women have often a keener insight than men;

That you should always listen to your wife's advice and almost always follow it;

That you must *respect* the mother of your children, honor and trust her;

That the best way not to be deceived, is to trust in your wife's delicacy, for, according to certain time-honored beliefs, which we are weak enough to credit, it is impossible for a man to prevent his wife being unfaithful to him, if she be so inclined;

That a wife is a man's best friend;

That a woman is mistress in her own house, queen of her salon, etc. Those who desire to oppose a firm resistance to these encroachments on man's power, fall into the category of predestinated husbands.

In the first place, there will be quarrels which will invest the husband with a tyrannical appearance; and the tyranny

of a husband is always a splendid excuse for the inconsistencies of a wife. Then, in the ensuing discussions, they always manage to prove to their own families as well as to ours, and to the world in general, that we are in the wrong. If, in order to restore peace, or through love, you recognize the pretended rights of women, you give your wife an advantage which she will never fail to use. Husbands, like governments, must never admit that they are in the wrong. Then, your power would be superseded by the occult system of feminine dignity; then, all would be lost; from that very minute, she would go from concession to concession until she would drive you from *her* bed.

As women are clever, witty and malicious, and have all the necessary time to think out some fine sarcasm, she would turn you into ridicule during the momentary clash of your opinions. The day she ridicules you, will see the last of your contentment. Your happiness will be at an end. A woman who has laughed at her husband, can never love him. For a woman to love a man, he must be a being full of strength, greatness and dignity. Families cannot exist without despotism. Nations, think this over!

Therefore, the way in which a man must act in the presence of portentous events, and the high policy of marriage, will form the second and third part of our book. That rosary of marital machiavellism will teach you how to make an impression on that flighty mind, on that *âme de dentelle*, as Napoleon was wont to say. You will learn how a man may display steely determination in this little domestic warfare, without compromising either his will or his happiness. Indeed, should you abdicate, your wife would only scorn you as a creature without backbone; you would cease being a *man* in her eyes.

But we have not, as yet, arrived at the proper time for developing the theories and principles by which a husband can conciliate elegance of manner and strenuousness of purpose; therefore, let us be content, for the present, in foreseeing the importance of the future, and let us continue.

At this fatal time, you will see her adroitly establishing her right to go out alone.

Once, you were her idol and her God. Now, she has reached the stage when she can discover holes in the garments of the saints.

"*Mon Dieu*," said Madame de la Vallière to her husband, "how ill you carry your sword! Monsieur de Richelieu has a knack of making his hang straight at his side, that you should try to imitate; it is in far better taste."

"My dear, it would be impossible to say more wittily that we have been married five months!" replied the Duke, whose answer made a sensation under the reign of Louis XV.

She will study your character in order to find weapons against you. This study, which is so foreign to love, will be shown by the thousand and one little snares that she will provide for you, in order to make you speak roughly to her and scold her; for, when a woman lacks an excuse to minotaurize her husband, she will invent one, if she can.

Perhaps she will sit down to dinner without waiting for you.

If she should be passing through a city, she will call your attention to things that you had not noticed; she will sing in your presence without the least fear; she will interrupt you, will not reply, and will prove to you, in a hundred different ways, that she is in the possession of all her faculties and in her right mind when she is with you.

She will endeavor to do away completely with your opinion in household matters, and will attempt to gain entire possession of your fortune. In the first place, it will be a distraction for her empty or disturbed soul; and then, she will find in your opposition a new motive for ridicule. She will not lack expressions that have done duty many times before, and, in France, we yield so quickly to the sarcastic smile of our neighbor!

From time to time, she will have headaches and hysterics; but these symptoms will be discussed in a separate Meditation.

In society, she will speak of you without blushing and will look at you with assurance.

She will begin to criticise your slightest actions, because they will be contrary to her ideas or to her secret intentions.

She will no longer care about your belongings, and will not even know whether or not you are provided with the necessities of life. You will no longer be the hero of all her comparisons.

In imitation of Louis XIV., who used to present his mistresses with bouquets of orange-blossoms that his gardener left on his table every day, Monsieur de Vivonne almost daily gave his wife rare blossoms during the first part of their married life. One evening, he found the posy lying neglected on a table, without having, as usual, been placed in a vase full of water.

“Oh! oh!” said he, “if I have not already been made a fool of, I soon will be.”

You leave home for a short trip, and you receive no letter, or, if you do get one, it contains three blank pages—a symptom.

You arrive mounted on a thoroughbred horse, of which you are very fond, and between two kisses, your wife inquires about the horse and its food—a symptom.

To these traits, you can add a number of other ones. In this book, we shall endeavor to do fresco work and let you supply the miniatures. These indications will vary infinitely, according to character. Such and such a man will discover a symptom in the way his wife puts on her shawl, while another one will have to get a blow on his soul before he will be able to realize the indifference of his mate.

One fine spring morning, after a ball, this critical situation will reach its climax. Your wife is plainly bored and the permissible delights of marriage no longer attract her. Her senses, her imagination, the whim of Nature, perhaps, all call for a lover. However, she does not quite dare to embark herself in an intrigue the consequences and details of which frighten her. You are still to be reckoned with, although you do not count for much. On the other hand, the lover appears invested with all the charm of novelty and mystery. The struggle that has arisen in the heart of your wife, becomes, in the presence of the foe, more real and more deadly than ever. Soon, the more dangers there are to face and the more risks there are to run, the more she

is inclined to hurl herself into the delightful abyss of fear, anguish and voluptuousness. Her inflamed imagination sparkles. Her future takes on mysterious and romantic colors. Her soul finds that life is more interesting during this discussion so fraught with weight to women. Everything agitates her soul, everything totters within her. She lives three times more than before and judges the future by the present. The little pleasure you gave her, is a plea against you; for the delights she experienced do not irritate her as much as those which she looks forward to. Does not her imagination picture wonderful happiness with that lover whom the laws prohibit? Lastly, she finds delight in her terrors, and terrors in her delight. Then, she likes the imminent danger, the sword of Damocles which you dangle above her head, and she prefers the delirious agonies of an illegitimate passion, to the inane connubial life which is worse than death, to the indifference that is less a sentiment than it is the absence of all sentiment.

You who, perhaps, have business in the Ministry of Finance, or at the Bourse, or at the Bank, or at the Chamber of Deputies; you, young man, who so ardently repeated the vow contained in our first Meditation to protect your happiness by protecting your wife, what can you oppose to those natural desires? For these creatures of fire, to *live* is to *feel*; when they *feel* nothing, they are *dead*. The law by virtue of which you are endowed with motion, produces in her that involuntary *minotaurism*. "It is," said d'Alembert, "a consequence of the law of motion! Well, then, where are your means of defense? . . . Where are they, I ask?"

Alas! if your wife has not quite kissed the Serpent's apple, the Serpent is near at hand; you are asleep, we are awake, and our book begins.

Without examining how many husbands in the five hundred thousand mentioned in this work have remained among the predestinated; how many have made undesirable marriages; how many have made mistakes at the outset; and without stopping to see whether, in this numerous army, there are many or few who possess the requirements necessary to

struggle successfully against the approaching danger, we shall proceed to develop, in the second and third part of this book, the means to fight the Minotaur and to preserve the virtue of married women. But, if fatality, the Devil, celibacy and opportunity ordain your downfall, you may find consolation in following the order of all intrigues, and in contemplating the struggles which take place in every household. A great many people are blessed with such happy dispositions, that, to show them the place and to explain the whys and wherefores is all that is necessary to make them scratch their heads, rub their hands, stamp their feet and go about their business in a cheerful mood.

## MEDITATION IX

### EPILOGUE

FAITHFUL to our promise, this first part has deduced the general causes that make all marriages reach the stage which we have just described; and the while we traced the ins and outs of these matrimonial conditions, we indicated the way to escape the catastrophe, by outlining the mistakes which engendered it.

But these primal considerations would most certainly be incomplete, unless, after having tried to throw a little light on the inconsistency of our ideas, our customs and our laws, regarding a question which touches the life of almost every human being, we endeavored to establish, by a short peroration, the political causes of this social infirmity! After having *exposed* the secret vices of the institution, is it not also a philosophical analysis to seek *why* and *how* our customs have *rendered* it vicious?

The system of laws and customs which nowadays rules women and marriage in France, is the fruit of ancient traditions and beliefs which are no longer in harmony with the eternal principles of reason and justice developed by the great Revolution of 1789.

Three great commotions have convulsed France: the Ro-



man invasion, Christianity, and the invasion of the Franks. Each event left deep traces in the soil, the laws, the customs and the spirit of the nation.

Greece, having one foot in Europe and the other in Asia, was influenced in her choice of matrimonial institutions by her passionate climate; she received them from the Orient, where her philosophers, legislators and poets went to study the veiled antiquities of Egypt and Chaldea. The absolute seclusion of women, made necessary by the scorching sun of Asia, dominated in the laws of Greece and Ionia. Woman remained imprisoned in marble harems. As the country only comprised one city, a very small territory, the courtesans, who were identified with art and religion, were able to satisfy the passions of the few young men whose strength was besides absorbed by the violent exercises required by the military art of those heroic ages.

At the beginning of its royal career, Rome, having sought in Greece the principles of a legislation still adapted to southern climes, imprinted on the brow of the married women the seal of complete servitude. The Senate realized the importance of virtue in a republic, and obtained great strictness of habits through an excessive development of marital and paternal power. The dependence of women was to be found everywhere. Oriental seclusion became a duty, a moral obligation, a virtue. From this attitude, sprang the temples erected to Modesty, and the temples consecrated to the sanctity of marriage; the censors, the dowry institution, the sumptuary laws, the respect for matrons, and all the clauses of Roman law. Therefore, three attempted or accomplished rapes caused three revolutions; therefore, it was a great event, solemnized by decrees, when women appeared on the political stage! Those illustrious Romans, condemned to be only wives and mothers, spent their lives in seclusion and occupied themselves with the education of the budding masters of the world. Rome had no courtesans, because the Roman youths were absorbed by constant warfare. If, later on, dissoluteness crept in among them, it only came with the despotism of the Emperors; and the old customs still had such influence that Rome never saw women on the stage.

These facts will not be lost in this rapid history of marriage in France.

After the Gauls had been subdued, the Romans imposed their laws on the defeated nation; but they were powerless to destroy the deep respect in which our ancestors held womankind, and the ancient superstitions that made of women the direct mouthpieces of the Divinity. However, the Roman laws finally got the upper hand, excluding all others, in that land of "written right" as it used to be called, which represented the *Gallia togata*, and their marital customs penetrated more or less into the countries "of custom."

But, during this struggle of customs against laws, the Franks were invading Gaul, to which they gave the sweet-sounding name of France. Those warriors from the North imported their system of gallantry born in Occidental regions, where the mingling of the sexes, under icy climes, does not require the plurality of wives and the jealous precautions of the Orient. Far from that, with them, those almost idolized creatures warmed private life with the eloquence of their sentiments. Their sluggish senses demanded that variety of energetic means, that diversity of action, that irritation of thought and those chimerical barriers created by coquetry, a system some principles of which were developed in this first part, and which is admirably adapted to the temperate climate of France.

To the Orient, then, belong passion and delirium, long, flowing tresses and seraglios, amorous divinities, pomp, poetry and monuments. To the Occident, feminine independence, the sovereignty of blonde locks, gallantry, witches, sorcerers, profound ecstasy of the soul, and the gentle emotions of melancholy and enduring love.

These two symptoms, which started from opposite points of the globe, fought their struggle in France; in France, where part of the soil, the *langue d'oc*, could acquiesce in the Oriental customs, whereas the other, the *langue d'oïl*, was the home of those traditions which attribute magic power to women. In the *langue d'oïl*, love demands mystery; in the *langue d'oc*, to see is to love.

In the very midst of the conflict, Christianity triumphed in France, was preached by women and consecrated the divinity of a woman who, in the forests of Brittany, of Vendée and of Ardennes, took, under the name of "Our Lady," the place of more than one idol in the heart of the druidical oaks.

If the religion of Christ, which is, above all, a moral and political code, gave a soul to all beings, proclaimed their equality before God and strengthened by its principles the chivalrous doctrines of the North, that advantage was balanced by having the Sovereign Pontiff reside in Rome, whose heir he instituted himself, by the universality of the Latin tongue, which became, in the Middle Ages, the language of all Europe, and by the powerful interest that the monks, the scribes and the lawyers had in making the codes found by a soldier in the pillage of Amalfi, triumph.

The two principles of servitude and sovereignty of women were thus in conflict, mutually strengthened by new weapons.

The salic law, that legal error, made civil and political servitude triumph, without in the least affecting the power that custom had conferred upon women, for the enthusiasm which seized Europe in regard to chivalry, upheld the customs against the laws.

Thus were formed the strange phenomena that our national character and legislation present; for, since those epochs which, to a philosophical mind considering history, seem to be the dawn of the Revolution, France had been prey to many convulsions: Feudalism, the Crusades, the Reform, the struggle of royalty and aristocracy, of despotism and fanaticism, have brought such pressure to bear upon her, that woman has remained the target of the contradictory conditions born of the conflict of the three principal events which we have outlined. Could any thought be given to woman, to her political education and marriage, when Feudalism menaced the throne, when the Reform threatened both, and when the nation was forgotten between the *sacerdoce* and the empire? According to an expression of Madame Necker, women, through all these great and trying events, were like the sawdust put in cases containing

chinaware; it is counted for naught, and still, without it, everything would be wrecked.

The married woman in France then presented the spectacle of an enslaved queen, of a slave freed, but still a prisoner; the contradictions produced by the conflict of the two principles flared up in the social body and gave rise to thousands of strange incidents. Then, as woman, physically, was not very well known, all sickness in her was connected, in the popular mind, with witchcraft, miracles or general nefariousness. Then, those creatures who, in the eyes of the law, were but prodigal children, to be put under guardianship, were deified by the customs. Like the freedmen of the emperors, they disposed of crowns, battles, fortunes, *coups d'état*, crimes, virtues by the sole glance of their eyes, and yet they possessed nothing, not even themselves. They were equally happy and unhappy. Armed with their weakness and strong through their instinct, they flung themselves out of the sphere where the law placed them, and showed themselves all-powerful for evil and powerless for good; without merit in their enforced virtue, without excuse in their vices; accused of ignorance and deprived of education; not wholly mothers, nor yet wholly wives. Having all due time to hatch and develop passions, they obeyed the coquetry of the Franks, while they were compelled, as Romans, to remain within the walls of their castles and raise warriors. As no system was strongly developed in the legislation, every mind followed its own bent, and one saw as many Marion Delormes as Cornelias, as many virtues as vices. They were beings as incomplete as the laws that ruled them: considered, by some, as intermediary links between mankind and beasts, as hurtful animals that the law could not down enough, and that Nature had, along with many others, put at the entire disposal of man; considered, by others, as exiled angels, sources of happiness and love, as the only creatures that answered the longings of man and whose wretchedness was to be counteracted by worship, how could the unity which did not prevail in the political institutions exist in the customs?

The Revolution was too busy tearing down and erecting,

had too many foes, or was still perhaps too close to the deplorable times of the Regency and of Louis XV., to be able to examine the place that woman should occupy in the social order.

The remarkable men who built the wonderful monument of our Code were almost, without exception, old students of legislation, who were struck by the importance of the Roman laws; and besides, they were not founding political institutions.

Sons of the Revolution, they believed, with it, that the divorce law, wisely restricted, and the faculty of *soumissions respectueuses* were sufficient improvements. With the old order of things still before their mind's eye, these new institutions were considered marvelous.

To-day, the question of the triumph of both principles, very much weakened by so many events and the progress of enlightenment, remains entirely in the hands of wise legislators. The past contains a lesson which will bear fruit in the future. Will the eloquence of facts be lost on us?

The development of Oriental principles required eunuchs and seraglios; the bastard customs of France brought in their train the evil of courtesans and the greater evil of our marriage system; thus, to use the ready-made sentence of a contemporary, the Orient sacrifices to the paternity of men and to justice; France, to women and modesty. Neither France nor the Orient has attained the goal that those institutions aimed at: happiness. The man who owns a harem is no more beloved by the women who compose it, than the Frenchman is sure of being the father of his children; and marriage is not worth its cost. The time has arrived when nothing more should be sacrificed to that institution, when a larger sum of happiness should be introduced into the social body, by the conforming of our customs and institutions to our climate.

Constitutional government, a happy mingling of two extreme political systems, despotism and democracy, seems to point out the necessity of also confounding the two conjugal principles which, so far, have always clashed. The

freedom which we have boldly demanded for young girls is a remedy for all the evils we have shown, by exposing the contradictions produced by the slavery to which young women are subjected. Let us give back to Youth passions and coquetry, love and its terrors, love and its delights, and the captivating procession of the Franks. At that spring-like season of life, no false step is irretrievable; Hymen will come out of the fray armed with confidence, disarmed of hatred, and love will then be justified by useful comparisons.

In this change of our customs, the shameful evil of prostitution will die a natural death. It is especially at the time when a man possesses the candor and bashfulness of youth, that it is important for his happiness that he should meet and struggle against great and true passions. The soul is glad of its efforts, no matter what they may be; providing that it be alive and sensitive, it does not care if it does have to exert its power against itself. In this observation, which anybody can make for himself, there exists a secret of legislation, of tranquillity and of happiness. And then, nowadays, study has taken on such development that even the most ardent of future Mirabeaux can bury his energy in a passion and in science. How many young men have been saved from dissipation through strenuous labor, joined to the ever-recurring obstacles of a first and hopeless love? Indeed, where is the young girl who does not want to prolong the delightful childhood of sentiments, who is not proud of being known, and who has not to oppose the intoxicating fears of her timidity, the modesty of the secret transactions of her heart, to the impetuous desires of a lover as inexperienced as she? The gallantry of the Franks and its pleasures will thus be the appanage of youth, and then will come about quite naturally that conformity of mind, soul, character, habits, fortune, and temperament which spells the equilibrium necessary to the welfare of marriage. The system would be founded on a much stronger and more solid basis, if girls were subjected to a wisely regulated exheredation; or if, to compel men to make their choice according to the pledges of happiness that some girls would offer

through their virtues, their characters or their talents, all young women were married without dowries.

Then, the system of the Romans might be applied without inconvenience to the married women, who as girls, will have taken advantage of their freedom. Exclusively intrusted with the rearing of children, the most important occupation a mother can have, occupied every instant in bringing forth and maintaining that happiness so admirably depicted in the fourth book of *Julie*, they, in their households, will be like the old Romans, living images of a Providence that is felt everywhere, but that remains invisible. Then, the laws regarding the faithlessness of married women should be most stringent. They should inflict more infamy than afflictive and coercive penalties. France has seen women mounted on asses for pretended crimes of witchcraft and more than one innocent victim died of shame during the process. There lies the secret of the future legislation of marriage. The daughters of Milet cured themselves of marriage by death; the Senate condemns suicides to be dragged naked over a rack and virgins condemn themselves to life.

Women and marriage will only be respected in France when the radical change in customs that we implore, has taken place. That deep thought is the one that animated the two finest productions of an immortal genius. The *Émile* and *La Nouvelle Héloïse* are nothing but two eloquent pleas in favor of this system. That voice will sound through the ages because it guessed the true motives of the laws and customs of future centuries. By attaching children to their mothers, Jean-Jacques was already rendering an immense service to virtue; but his century was already too deeply attacked by moral gangrene to fully understand the marvelous lessons that those two poems taught; we should add, however, that the philosopher was conquered by the poet, and that, by leaving traces of the former love in the heart of married Julie, he was carried away by a poetical situation much more pathetic than the truth he wanted to develop, but far less useful.

However, if marriage in France is an immense contract by which all men tacitly agree to give more flavor to pas-

sion, more curiosity and mystery to love, more spice to woman, if she be more an ornament, a fashion-plate, a clothes-rack, than a being whose functions in the political order can be co-ordinated with the prosperity of a country, with the glory of the fatherland, and whose attainments might be as useful as those of men. . . . I acknowledge that all these theories and lengthy considerations would vanish before such important destinies! . . .

But we have pressed the grounds of past events enough in order to extract a drop of philosophy, we have sacrificed sufficiently to the dominating passion of the times for *history*, so let us direct our glance toward present customs. Let us take up the jingling cap, and the hobby which Rabelais made a scepter of, and let us pursue this analysis, without giving to a jest more gravity than it can encompass and without endowing serious matters with more levity than they admit of.



PART SECOND  
CONCERNING INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR MEANS  
OF DEFENSE

*To be or not to be— . . .*  
—SHAKESPEARE, *Hamlet*

MEDITATION X

TREATISE ON MARITAL POLICY

WHEN a man reaches the position which the first part of the book places him in, we suppose that the idea that his wife yields herself up to another man can still make his heart beat, and that his love will be rekindled either by conceit or egotism or interest, for, if he *did not* care about his wife, he would be the worst of men and would richly deserve his fate.

In this long crisis, it is very hard for a husband not to commit mistakes; as, in the opinion of most men, the art of governing a wife is even more difficult than that of selecting one. However, marital policy consists only in the application of three principles which must form the very essence of your conduct. The first one is never to believe what a woman says; the second is to fathom the motive of all actions without stopping at the appearances; and the third is never to forget that a woman is never so loquacious as when she is silent, and never more energetic than when she is in repose.

From now on, you are like a horseman who, mounted on a fractious steed, must never let his eyes wander from its head, unless he wants to be unseated.

But the art consists far less in knowing the principles than in applying them: to reveal them to ignorant people is like letting a monkey toy with a razor. Therefore, the first and most vital of your duties consists in a constant dis-

simulation which most husbands usually lack. When they notice any disquieting symptoms in their wives, nearly all men show an insulting distrust, their characters assume an acrimony which pierces through their manners and their speech; and fear in their souls is like a gas-jet under a glass globe—it lights up their faces as powerfully as it explains their conduct.

Now, a woman who has twelve hours of the day in which to reflect and to observe you, reads the suspicion in your soul as soon as it is formed. She will never forgive that gratuitous insult. There is no remedy now; all has been said; and the very next day, if the opportunity should present itself, she would go over to the ranks of “inconsistent” women.

You should, in the respective position of the two beligerent forces, begin by displaying toward your wife all the unbounded trust which you used to repose in her; but, if you try to keep up the deception with honeyed words, you are lost, for she will never believe you; she is following a policy, just the same as you. You will have to show as much tact as good-nature in your actions, before you will be able to throw her off her guard and instill that precious feeling of security which will lead her to lay back her ears and prompt you to use the curb and the spurs only when most needed.

But how dare compare a horse, which is the most candid of all creatures, to a being whose thoughts and affections render it, at times, more prudent than the Servite Fra-Paolo, the most terrible consulter that the Ten ever had in Venice; who is more secretive than a king, more cunning than Louis XI.; deeper than Machiavelli; as sophisticated as Hobbes; of easier virtue than the betrothed of Mamolin, and who, of all the world, only mistrusts you?

Therefore, to this dissimulation, by which the motives of your conduct must become as invisible as those of the universe, it will be necessary for you to add complete control over yourself. The diplomatic imperturbability so vaunted in Monsieur de Talleyrand, will be the least of your achievements; his exquisite courtesy, his graceful manners will have to be repeated in all your actions. The professor

here expressly forbids the use of the crop, if you want to get the best results from your pretty Andalusian.

## LXI

That a man should beat his mistress . . . 'tis only a self-inflicted injury; but his wife! . . . 'tis suicide.

How is it possible to conceive of a government without marshalsea, an action without force, a disarmed power? . . . That is the problem which we shall try to solve in our future Meditations. But there are still two preliminary remarks to be submitted to you. They will give you two other theories which will enter into the application of all the mechanical means the use of which we shall propose to you. A living example will refresh these arid and dry dissertations: will it not be leaving the book to operate on the spot?

In the year 1822, on a fine morning in January, I was walking along the boulevards from the Marais to the elegant regions of the Chaussée-d'Antin, noticing for the first time and not without philosophical pleasure, those strange gradations of faces and that variety of costumes which, from the Rue Pas-de-la-Mule to the Madeleine, make, of each portion of the boulevard, a world apart from the others, and of all that Parisian zone, a large sample-card of customs. Having still no idea of the things of life, and not having the least suspicion that some day I would have the overweening conceit to set myself up as a legislator of marriage, I planned to lunch with one of my college friends who had, perhaps prematurely, taken unto himself a wife and two children. As my former professor of mathematics lived at a short distance from the house in which my friend resided, I thought I would pay a visit to that worthy savant before yielding my stomach to all the delicacies that friendship was preparing for me. I entered easily into the very heart of his study, where everything was covered with dust, that duly attested the honorable distractions of the scientist. I was to have a surprise. I caught sight of a fair lady sitting on the arm of a chair as if it were an English saddle-

horse; she made me the little conventional grimace that hostesses reserve for those whom they do not know; however, she could not disguise the annoyance that my entrance had caused her, sufficiently for me not to perceive the undesirability of my presence. Occupied no doubt with some equation, my master had not raised his head: so I waved my hand like a finn at the young woman and backed toward the door on tip-toe, the while I smiled a mysterious smile which meant: "I shall certainly not prevent you from rendering him faithless to Urania." She made a motion with her hand that cannot be described.

"My dear friend, don't go," exclaimed the geometrician; "this is my wife!"

I immediately bowed! . . . O Coulon, where were you that you could not see the only one of your pupils who, at that moment, understood your expression of *anacreontic* applied to a curtsy! The effect must have been great, for Madame the *Professorin*, as the Germans say, blushed and hastily arose, after making a slight bow which seemed to say: "Adorable! . . ." Her husband detained her by saying:

"Remain, child. It is one of my pupils."

The young wife bent her head toward her husband like a young bird waiting to be fed.

"It isn't possible," quoth her spouse, heaving a sigh; "and I will prove it to you by  $A + B$ ."

"Eh! monsieur, pray do not do that," she said, winking her eyes and looking at me.

If it had only been algebra, my master would have understood that glance, but it was Chinese to him and so he went on:

"My child, I will let you be the judge; our income is ten thousand francs a year. . . ."

As soon as I heard this, I retired toward the door as if I had suddenly developed a great interest in the panels which I started to examine with a critical eye. My discretion was rewarded by an eloquent glance. Alas! she did not know that I could have played the part of *Fine-Oreille*, in Fortunio, who could hear the truffles grow.

"The principles of general economy," said my master,

“demand that only two-tenths of the income be spent on the rent and on the servants’ wages; now, our apartment and our help cost us one hundred louis. I allow you twelve hundred francs for your dress.” (Here he accented each syllable.) “The household,” he continued, “takes four thousand francs; the children require at least twenty-five louis; and I only keep eight hundred francs for myself. The laundry, the heating and light come to about one thousand francs; consequently, there remain, as you see, only six hundred francs for incidental expenses. In order to purchase the diamond cross, we would have to take a thousand francs out of our capital; now, once we begin to do that, my dear, there would be no reason why we should not soon leave Paris, which you are so devoted to, as it would not take us long to be compelled to live in the provinces in order to economize. The children and the expenditures will grow enough without that! Now, be reasonable!”

“I see that I must,” she said, “but you will be the only man in Paris who has not given his wife a New Year’s gift!”

And she scampered off like a scholar who has just finished a pensum; my master nodded his head in approval. When the door had closed, he rubbed his hands with glee; we chatted of the war with Spain, and I proceeded to the Rue de Provence, without thinking that I had just received the first part of a great conjugal lesson, any more than I thought of the conquest of Constantinople by General Diebitsch. I arrived at the home of mine hosts just as they were going to seat themselves at the table, after having waited the half-hour which is prescribed by gastronomical edicts. It was while she was slicing a *pâte de foie gras* that, I believe, my fair hostess said to her lord, in a deliberate tone:

“Alexandre, if you were really nice, you would present me with that diamond sprig which we saw at Fossin’s.”

“See what it is to get married!” laughed my friend, as he drew out three one thousand franc notes from his wallet and held them in front of his wife’s shining eyes. I cannot resist the pleasure of giving them to you any more than you can resist the pleasure of taking them. To-day

is the anniversary of the day we first met! Perhaps the diamonds will remind you of it!"

"You naughty man," she said with a sweet smile.

She put her hand in her bosom and drew out a bunch of violets which she threw in my friend's face with childish *espièglerie*. Alexandre handed her the price of the sprig and said:

"I saw the flowers! . . ."

I shall never forget the rapid gesture and genuine delight with which the little woman grasped the notes, like a cat that puts its paw on a mouse; making a little roll of them, she put them in the place the violets had occupied a moment before. I could not help thinking of my professor of mathematics. I could only see, between him and his pupil, the difference which exists between a prudent and an extravagant man, without thinking for a moment that the one who, to all appearances, knew how to reckon the best, was really the one who reckoned the worst. So the lunch progressed merrily. Soon we were sitting in a little, freshly-decorated parlor, before a fire that spread a delightful warmth, and I felt compelled to speak a few complimentary words on the furnishing of the little den.

"It is a pity that it all costs so much!" exclaimed my friend; "but the nest must be worthy of the bird! Why, if you please, are you complimenting me on furniture that is not paid for? You make me remember, while I am digesting my food, that I owe two thousand francs to the rascally upholsterer.

At these words, the hostess threw a rapid glance on her surroundings; and her face, from joyful that it was, became reflective. Alexandre took my hand and led me to the window.

"Have you a thousand francs that you could lend me?" he asked in a low voice. "I only have an income of twelve thousand francs and, this year . . ."

"Alexandre!" called the fair creature, and she flew up to where we stood and held out the bank-notes; "Alexandre, I see too well that it is folly . . ."

"What are you bothering about?" he replied; "keep the money."

“But, love, I am ruining you! I ought to know that you love me too much to allow myself to confide in my foolish wishes to you.”

“Keep it, my dear, I can afford it. Bah! I will play this winter and will make it up!”

“Play!” she gasped, with an expression of terror on her face. “Alexandre, take back those notes! Yes, sir, I mean it.”

“No, no,” replied my friend, as he pushed away her delicate white hand; “are you not going Thursday to the ball given by Madame de——?”

“I will keep your request in mind,” said I to my friend. And I departed, after taking leave of his wife, but I noticed from the scene that was in preparation, that my *anacreontic* curtesies would produce very little effect.

“He must be mad,” thought I, as I left the house, “to ask a law student for a thousand francs!”

Five days later, I found myself at Madame de ——’s, whose balls were acquiring a great social vogue. In the midst of the quadrilles, I caught sight of the mathematician’s wife and the wife of my friend. Madame Alexandre wore a charming frock; white muslin and flowers composed it. She also wore a little gold cross fastened to a black velvet neck-ribbon, which enhanced the marble whiteness of her skin, and long gold earrings hung in her ears. On the neck of the *Professorin* shone a magnificent diamond cross.

“This is strange,” quoth I to a person who had never read the book of life nor the heart of a woman.

That person was myself. If I was possessed of the desire to dance with those two women, it was solely because I foresaw a subject of conversation which lent me boldness.

“*Eh! bien*, madame, you have your cross?” said I to the first lady.

“Yes, but I certainly earned it!” she replied with an undefinable smile.

“What! no diamond sprig?” I said to my wife’s friend.

“Ah!” she said, “I enjoyed it during a whole lunch! But, as you see, I finally prevailed upon Alexandre——”

“Was he easily seduced?”

She looked at me triumphantly.

Only eight years afterward, that scene which, at first, had been meaningless to me, came back to my mind; and in the glow of candles and diamond aigrettes, I distinctly read its moral. Yes, a woman hates to be convinced; but when anyone persuades her, she feels a sort of fascination and remains in the rôle which Nature intended her to fill. To be won over, means to grant a favor; but exact arguments irritate and kill her; to direct her, a man must make use of the power which she herself so often uses: sensibility. Therefore, it is in his wife, and not in himself, that a man will find the elements of despotism: just as in the preceding example, he should turn her against herself. To know how to offer a bauble so as to have it returned, is a secret which applies to the smallest details of existence.

Let us now pass on to the second observation.

“*The man who knows how to rule one woman can rule one hundred thousand,*” says an Indian proverb; and I shall amplify this Asiatic wisdom by saying: *Whoever can govern a woman can govern a nation.* There is, in fact, a great analogy between the two governments. Should not a husband’s policy be like unto a king’s? Do we not see them trying to amuse the public in order to better frustrate it of its liberty; throwing food at it for a day to make it forget the wretchedness of a whole year; preaching that it must not steal, the while it is being robbed; and saying: “I think that, if I were the nation, I would be virtuous!”

It is England which will furnish us the *precedent* which must be introduced into households. Those who have eyes to see must have noticed that since *governmentability* has been improved in that country, the Whigs have rarely had a chance to be in power. A long Tory policy has always succeeded an ephemeral Liberal cabinet. The orators of the national party are like rats trying to gnaw through the panel of a rotten door where the hole is stuffed up every time they think they are going to reach the lard and nuts in the royal cupboard. Woman is the Whig of your government. In the position in which we left her, she must naturally



aspire to the conquest of more than one privilege. Close your eyes to her intrigues, let her exhaust her strength trying to climb the steps of your throne; and when she imagines that she is grasping the scepter, just push her gently back and say, "Bravo!" and let her hope for another and early victory. This system must be used in corroboration with all the other means that you may choose to bring into play to train your wife.

These are the general principles that a husband should follow if he does not wish to err in his little kingdom.

Now, in spite of the minority of the council of Macon (Montesquieu, who had perhaps divined constitutional government, has said, I cannot recollect in what work, that common-sense in assemblies is always on the side of the minority), we shall distinguish in woman a soul and a body, and we will begin by studying the means of mastering her moral nature. In spite of opinions to the contrary, the action of thought is nobler than that of the body; therefore, science shall have the preference over cookery and instruction over hygiene.

## MEDITATION XI

### CONCERNING THE INSTRUCTION OF WOMEN

WHETHER or not to instruct women, such is the question. Of all those we have considered, it is the only one that offers two extremes without a middle course. Science and ignorance, these are the two unreconcilable terms of the problem. Between the two, it seems as if we could see Louis XVIII. counting the felicities of the thirteenth, and the misfortunes of the nineteenth, century. Seated in the middle of the scales which he knew so well how to incline in his own favor, he beholds at one end a lay-brother, the apathy of a serf, the shining hoofs of a knight's steed; he thinks he hears the cry of: "*France et Mont-Joie-Saint-Denis!*" but he turns around to smile at the conceit of a tradesman, a captain of the "Garde Nationale"; at the elegant carriage

of the stockbroker; at the unpretentious clothes of a French peer who has turned journalist, while his son is being educated at the *École Polytechnique*; at the costly stuffs, the newspapers, the steam machinery; and he sips his coffee from a *Sèvres* cup in the bottom of which gleams a golden "N" surmounted by a crown.

"Away with civilization! away with thought!" is your cry. You ought to despise education in women for the good reason (which is so popular), that it is easier to govern a nation of idiots than a nation of well-informed people. A brutalized nation is happy; when the sentiment of liberty is lacking, its storms and carking cares are also unknown; such a nation is like a polypus; it can divide itself into various fragments; each of these forms a complete and living nation, ready to be governed by the first blind man who happens along with a scepter in his hand.

What produces that human marvel? Ignorance: despotism maintains itself only through ignorance, for it needs silence and darkness. Now, happiness in marriage is the same as in politics, negative. The affection of a nation for the king of an absolute monarchy is perhaps less unnatural than a woman's faithfulness to her husband after she has ceased to love him; now, we know that Love is just entering your window. So you will be obliged to put into practice the salutary rigors by which *Monsieur de Metternich* prolongs his *statu quo*; but we would advise you to apply them with still more tact and amenity than he did; for your wife is a great deal shrewder than all the Germans put together and quite as voluptuous as the Italians.

Therefore, you must try to postpone as long as you can the fatal time when your wife will ask you for a book. It should be an easy task for you. First, you should pronounce with contempt the word "blue-stocking"; and at her request, you should then explain to her the ridicule which attaches to that appellation in the minds of our neighbors.

Then, you should tell her very often that the wittiest and most charming women of the world are to be found in Paris, where no woman ever reads a book;

That women are like people of quality, who, according to

Mascarille, know everything without ever having learned anything;

That a woman while at a ball or a card-party should know enough to pick up the ready-made phrases of talented men which go to make up the wit of fools who have no wit of their own;

That, in this country, decisive judgments on men and things are passed along from one person to another; and that the little cutting tone that a woman employs to criticise an author, destroy a work, or scorn a picture, has more effect than a judgment of the Court;

That women are fair mirrors and quite naturally reflect the most brilliant ideas;

That natural wit is everything, and that one can learn more by being in society than by reading the cleverest books;

That too much reading is bad for the eyes, etc.

To let a woman read the books that appeal to her mind! . . . Why, it would be like setting fire to a haystack; in fact, it is worse, for it is teaching your wife to do without you and to live in an imaginary world, in a sort of paradise. For what do women read? Passionate books; the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques, novels and all the things that act most powerfully on their sensitive natures. They care neither for reason nor for mature fruits. Now, have you ever thought of the phenomena which are produced by these poetical readings?

Novels, as well as other books, depict things and sentiments with much more brilliant colors than Nature offers. That sort of fascination springs less from the desire of each author to appear perfect by affecting refined and delicate ideas, than from an undefinable process of our intellect. It is man's fate to refine everything which he carries into the domain of thought. What figures, what monuments are not embellished by decoration? The soul of the reader helps in this conspiracy against the truth, either through the deep silence he enjoys or the fire of the conception, or the purity with which the pictures are reflected in his mind. Who, in reading the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques, has not beheld Madame de Warens prettier than she really was? It would

seem as if our souls caressed forms seen previously under other and fairer skies; they only look upon the creations of other minds as wings which enable them to take flight into space; the most delicate trait is rendered still more so by being appropriated; and the most poetical expression of images becomes enriched by other still purer ones. To read, is to be a joint creator. Those mysteries of the transubstantiation of ideas, are they the instinct of a higher vocation than our present destinies? Is it the tradition of a former life that has been lost? What could that have been, if the reminder is so delightful?

Therefore, when reading novels and dramas, a woman, who is so much more susceptible to enthusiasm than we are, must experience intoxicating ecstasy. She creates for herself an ideal existence in the light of which everything else fades; she is not slow in trying to realize her voluptuous dreams, and in transporting their magic into her daily life. Involuntarily, she passes from the spirit to the letter, and from the soul to the senses.

And you would have the foolishness to believe that the manners and sentiments of a man like yourself, who, most of the time, dresses and undresses and . . . , etc., before his wife, could successfully combat the sentiments of those books and the fictitious lovers whose garments bear no stains? Poor fool! too late, alas, for your own and her misfortune, your wife will discover that the *heroes* of fiction are as rare as the *Apollos* of sculpture!

A great many husbands will be at loss to know how to prevent their wives reading, and there are even some who pretend that this kind of thing has its advantages, as it enables them to know what their wives are doing, while they are reading. First, you will note, in the following Meditation, how a solitary life renders a woman belligerent; but, have you never met one of those unpoetical creatures who petrify their poor mates by reducing life to a mechanical proposition? Study the speeches of these great men, learn by heart the marvelous arguments by which they condemn poetry and the pleasures of the imagination.

But, if in spite of all your efforts, your wife should per-

sist in her desire to read—then you should immediately put at her disposal all the books you can think of, from the ABC book of her baby to *Réné*, which will be more dangerous in her hands than *Thérèse Philosophe*. You might disgust her forever with literature by giving her nothing but tiresome works; you could plunge her into hopeless idiocy with *Marie Alacoque*, *la Brosse de Pénitence*, or with the popular songs of the time of Louis XV.; but later, you will find in this book so much to take up your wife's time, that reading of any kind will be impossible for her.

And, first of all, you will notice the immense resources that the education of women has prepared for turning your wife from the passing fancy for science. Examine with what admirable stupidity girls lend themselves to the results of the education that has been imposed on them; we hand them over to maids, companions and governesses who have a dozen lies of false modesty and coquetry to teach them against one true and noble idea. The girls are brought up like slaves and grow accustomed to the thought that they have been brought into the world to imitate their grandmothers, to raise canaries, compose botany albums, water rose-bushes, embroider or make collars. Therefore, although a little girl of ten may be as wise as a boy of twenty, she is nevertheless awkward and timid. She is afraid of a spider, will say meaningless nothings, think of nothing but dress and will never have the courage to be a devoted mother or a faithful wife.

Here is the course that has been pursued: they have been taught to color roses and to embroider scarfs in a way to earn eight sous a day. They learned French history in the *Ragois*, chronology in *Les Tables du Citoyen Chantreau* and their young imaginations have been allowed free rein in regard to geography; all this, in order that nothing dangerous to the peace of their hearts be taught them; but, at the same time, their mothers and governesses never stopped repeating to them that all a woman needs to know is how to arrange the fig-leaf which Eve, our mother, used for her personal adornment. They have heard nothing for fifteen years, said Diderot, but: "Daughter, your fig-leaf does not

look well ; daughter, your fig-leaf looks well ; daughter, would it not look better thus? ”

Therefore, keep your wife in that fine and noble sphere of knowledge. If, by chance she wanted a library, buy her Florian, Malte-Brun, *Le Cabinet des Fées*, *Les Mille et une Nuits*, *Les Roses* by Redoute, *Les Usages de la Chine*, *Les Pigeons*, by Madame Knip, the great work on Egypt, etc. In a word, follow the witty advice of the princess who, on hearing of a riot brought about by the high price of bread, exclaimed: “ Why don't the people buy *brioches*? ”

Perhaps your wife will reproach you one evening with being surly and unentertaining ; perhaps she will tell you that you are delightful, after you have said something foolish : but this is a very slight drawback of our system ; and besides, what does it matter to you that the education which women receive in France is the greatest of absurdities and that your marital *obscurantism* has made you take a doll unto yourself? As you lack the courage to undertake a far nobler task, is it not better to drag your wife along in a rut than to try to have her scale the heights of love? She may be a fine mother, but you do not exactly care to have your children turn out like the Gracchi, only to really be *pater quem nuptiae demonstrant*: now, in order to help you in this, we must make of this book an arsenal where every man can choose the proper weapons to fight the genius of evil which is always ready to flare up in the soul of a wife ; and, considering everything, as ignoramuses are the bitterest foes of woman's education, this Meditation will be a sort of breviary for most husbands.

A woman who has received a man's education possesses, in truth, the most brilliant and fertile faculties for insuring her own and her husband's happiness ; but such a woman is as rare as happiness itself ; now, if your wife is not a woman of this kind, you should endeavor to keep her, for your mutual peace, in the region of ideas in which she was reared, for you should remember that a moment of pride might spoil everything by placing the erstwhile slave in a position where she might endeavor to take advantage of her power.

After all, by following the system prescribed in this Medi-

tation, a superior man will only have to be commonplace when he wishes to be understood by his wife, if he has committed the folly of marrying one of the silly kind, instead of a young girl whose heart and intellect have been thoroughly tested.

We do not wish to imply by this last matrimonial observation that all "superior men" are to look for "superior women," and we would not care to have everyone explain our principles after the manner of Madame de Staël, who endeavored, in a coarse manner, to bring about an union between herself and Napoleon. Those two people would have been most wretched together; and Joséphine was a far more accomplished wife than that nineteenth century virago.

In fact, when we praise those *filles introuvables*, so well brought up by chance, so adapted by Nature to stand the rough contact of the great soul of what we term a *man*, we have in mind those rare and noble beings the model of which Goethe gave us in Claire of *Count Egmont*: we have in mind those women who seek no other glory than to play their parts well, adapting themselves with surprising suppleness to the whims and pleasures of those whom Nature has set over them; rising to the vast spheres of their thought, or lowering themselves to the simple task of amusing them like children; understanding full well the strange fancies of those tormented souls, their slightest words and their vaguest looks; happy alike at their husband's silence or diffusion; lastly, divining that the pleasures, ideas and morals of a Lord Byron cannot be those of a tradesman. But we had better stop, for this would take us too far from our subject; we are dealing with marriage, not love.

## MEDITATION XII

## HYGIENE OF MARRIAGE

THE aim of this Meditation is to show you a new method of defense by which you will be able to annihilate the will of your wife. We wish to speak of the reaction produced on the mind by physical vicissitudes and the scientific degradations of a skillfully planned diet.

This great and philosophical question of conjugal medicine will no doubt be to the liking of all the gouty, impotent and catarrhal men and legions of old gentlemen whose apathy was aroused by the article on predestinated husbands; but it will concern principally those bold enough to follow in the footsteps of the great French king, who attempted to assure the welfare of the nation at the expense of a few feudal heads. Here, it is the same question. It is always the amputation or weakening of a few members for the greater happiness of the mass.

Do you seriously entertain the belief that a bachelor subjected to a régime consisting of cucumbers, purslane and the application of leeches, as recommended by Sterne, would be very apt to endanger your wife's honor? Supposing a diplomat had had the idea of putting a permanent flaxseed poultice on Napoleon's head or giving him a honey enema every morning, do you think that Napoleon, the Great Napoleon, would have conquered Italy? Was, or was not, Napoleon a prey to the horrible suffering of dysuria during the Russian campaign? . . . This is one of those questions the solution of which has weighed on the whole world. Is it not a certainty that baths, douches and cooling agencies produce great changes in the more or less acute affections of the brain? In the broiling heat of July, when each one of your pores returns to the scorching atmosphere every drop of the cooling drinks you have so hastily absorbed, have you ever felt that wonderful energy, that power of thought which rendered life so bright and happy a few months before?



No, no, the iron imbedded in the hardest stone will always lift and disjoint the most durable monument on account of the secret influence exerted by the slow, invisible, hot and cold degradations that torment the atmosphere. Therefore, we should recognize that if atmospherical conditions can influence a man, the latter could naturally influence the minds of his fellow-men, by the more or less vigor and power with which he projects his *will*, and which produces a real atmosphere about him.

In this lies the principle of the actor's talent, that of poetry and fanaticism, for the one is the eloquence of speech as the other is the eloquence of action; in fact, herein lies the principle of a science which is at its dawn.

That *will*, so powerful from man to man, that nervous and fluid force, eminently mobile and transmissible, is subjected to the changing state of our organization, and a great many circumstances are apt to make that frail organism vary. Here our metaphysical observation will stop, and we shall go back to the analysis of the circumstances which elaborate man's will and carry it to the highest degree of strength or weakness.

Now, do not believe that our aim is to have you put poultices on your wife's honor or to shut her up in an oven or seal her like a letter; no. We shall not even give you the magnetic system by which you could make *your* will the master of *your wife's* will: there is not one husband who would accept the happiness of an eternal love at the price of that continual tension of the animal forces; but we are trying to develop a formidable hygienic system by which you will be able to put out the fire when it has once started in your house.

In fact, there exist, among the habits of the ultra-fashionable women in Paris and in the departments (the *ultra-fashionables* form a very distinguished class among the nice women), sufficient resources to attain our aim, without bringing in the arsenal of medicine, the four refrigerant seeds, the pond-lily and the thousand inventions worthy of witchcraft. We will even leave the *hanca* herb to Elien and the

purslaine to Sterne, because they announce altogether too evident antiphlogistic tendencies.

You must encourage your wife to lie down and remain entire days on soft couches where the body sinks into the downy feathers as if in a bath.

You must favor, by all the means which do not conflict with your conscience, the propensity of women to breathe the perfumed air of a closely curtained room, where the light filters through the softest of draperies.

You will obtain marvelous results from this system, after having at first experienced the discomfort of her excitement; if you are strong enough to withstand that momentary tension, you will soon see her factitious vigor wane. As a general thing, women like to live rapidly, but, after their tempests of sensation, come periods of calm that are very reassuring for their husbands.

Will not Jean-Jacques, through the divine organ of Julie, prove to your wife that she will be far more charming if she does not dishonor her delicate stomach and her lovely mouth by digesting ignoble pieces of beef and enormous hunks of mutton? Is there anything purer in the world than those interesting vegetables, always fresh and odorless, those multi-colored fruits, that coffee and fragrant chocolate, those oranges, golden apples, Arabian dates, Brussels *biscottes*, all of which form a healthful and graceful diet that produces satisfactory results, while, at the same time, imparting a strange originality to your wife? Her régime procures her a certain notoriety in her set, which sometimes is achieved by a costume, a fine action, or a witty speech. Pythagoras must be her passion, as if Pythagoras were a dog or a monkey.

Never commit the imprudence of the men who, in order to give themselves a varnish of strong-mindedness, combat this feminine belief: *that to eat little helps one to keep slender*. Your position of husband compels you to always think your wife too red in the face; you should even try to make the blood rush to her head, so as to have the right of introducing, at certain times, an army of leeches into your home.

Your wife should drink water only slightly colored with an agreeable Burgundy devoid of tonic properties; any other wine would be injurious.

Never allow her to drink pure water, for then you would be lost.

“Impetuous fluid! When you press upward against the brain-cells, see how they yield to your power! *Curiosity* comes swimming along, beckoning to her followers to join her: they plunge into the middle of the stream. *Imagination* dreamily takes a seat on the river-bank. She watches the torrent, and changes the straws and reeds into towering masts. Hardly has the metamorphosis taken place, before *Desire*, with one hand clutching her dress, arrives on the scene, and takes possession of them. O! ye drinkers of water, is it by the aid of that enchanting spring that you have so many times turned the world about, ruthlessly casting aside the weakling, burying his face in the dust, and sometimes even changing the form and aspect of Nature.”

If this system of inaction, joined to the dietary régime we have described, does not give satisfactory results, throw yourself body and soul into another system which we are about to develop.

Man has a given sum of energy. Some man or some woman is what ten is to thirty, or five to one, and there is a certain degree that no one oversteps. The quantity of will power or energy that we all possess spreads like sound; it is modified according to the octaves which it is allowed to wander over. That force is unique, and although it resolves into desires, passions, intellectual labor or bodily exercise, it goes wherever man wishes to direct it. A pugilist spends it in boxing, a baker in kneading his bread, a poet in intellectual excitement, which absorbs and demands vast quantities, a dancer makes it pass into his feet; in a word, everybody distributes it as he thinks best, and that I may see the Minotaur sitting calmly by my bedside to-night, if you do not know, as well as I, where most of it goes. Nearly all men consume in necessary labors or in the anguish of harmful passions, that fine sum of energy and will-power which Nature has given them; but all our nice women fall

a prey to the whims and struggles of that power, which cannot find an outlet. If the energy of your wife persists after the diet you submit her to, you should throw her into a mad and never-ceasing whirl. Try and find the means of using up the energy which is burdensome to you, by completely absorbing her in some occupation. Without making a dray-horse of a woman, there are a thousand ways of tiring her with constant occupation.

While leaving the means of execution to you, for they change according to circumstances, we will indicate dancing as one of the finest means of annihilating love. As this subject has found an able exponent in a contemporary, we shall let him speak.

“The poor victim admired by an enthusiastic circle often pays dearly for her triumphs. What can be expected of efforts which are so little proportioned to the strength of the fair sex? The muscles taxed to their utmost, consume without moderation. The spirits, destined to nourish the passions and the brain, are turned from their natural course. The absence of desires, the craving for quiet, the exclusive choice of substantial foods, all indicate an impoverished system more bent on repairing waste than on deriving pleasure. An *habitué* of the theaters once said to me: ‘Whoever has lived among dancers has lived on mutton; for their exhausted faculties crave this strong nourishment.’ Believe me, the love that a dancer inspires is very deceiving: beneath an alluring surface, you meet a cold and niggardly temperament and non-combustible senses. Calabrian physicians prescribe dancing as the remedy for the hysterical passions which are so common among the women of their country, and the Arabs make use of the same recipe for the noble mares whose too lascivious temperament prevents fertility. ‘As stupid as a dancer’ is a proverb which is well-known among theatrical people. Lastly, the wisest heads in Europe are convinced that dancing contains a refrigerating element of the most powerful kind.

“As a proof of this, it is necessary to add other observations. The life of the shepherds led to inordinate erotic passions. The morals of female weavers bore a very evil

reputation among the Greeks. The Italians have composed a proverb on the lewdness of the lame. The Spaniards who, through so many sources, received the African incontinence, embody the secret of their desires in this maxim which is of frequent use: *Muger y gallina pierna quebrantada* (it is good that a woman and a fowl should have a broken leg). The Oriental depth in the art of voluptuousness is revealed in its entirety in this edict of Kaliph Hakim, founder of the Druses, who forbade under death penalty the manufacture of woman's shoes in his dominions. It would seem as if the heart passions of the whole world were only waiting for the legs to remain quiet in order to break out."

What a wonderful maneuver it is to make a woman dance and to feed her on white meat!

Do not think that these observations, which are as true as they are witty, contradict our preceding system; by this, as well as by the other one, you will be able to produce in a woman that much desired apathy, pledge of security. With the last system you leave an avenue of escape open to the foe; with the first one, you annihilate him.

At this juncture, we imagine we hear narrow-minded people denouncing our system in the name of morality and sentiment.

Does not woman possess a soul? Has she not sensations, the same as we? By what right, ignoring her ideas, needs and sorrows, do we shape her like vile metal? Is it because these beings are already weak and wretched, that a brute assumes the power of tormenting them exclusively for the benefit of his more or less just ideas? Supposing, that, through your system, which is either heating or debilitating, and which softens and stretches the fibers, you should cause terrible and cruel diseases, bring a cherished wife to an untimely end; etc., etc.

This is our answer:

Have you ever noticed the manifold shapes that Harlequin and Pierrot give their little white hats? They turn them inside out so deftly that they assume the form of a top, a boat, a glass, a half-moon, a basket, a fish, a whip, a dagger, a man's head, etc.

An exact image of the despotism with which you will have to manage your wife.

A wife is property which one acquires through a contract, she is personal, for possession equals a title; in a word, woman is, properly speaking, only an annex of man; now, crush her, diminish her as much as you like, she still is yours to do with what you will. Pay no attention to her protests, her wails and her sorrows; Nature has built her for our pleasure and to carry all the burdens: the children, worries, blows and treachery of man.

Do not accuse me of being hard. In all the codes of so-called civilized nations, man has written out woman's fate in these two brutal words: *Vae victis!* Woe to the weak!

Finally, think of this last observation, perhaps the most important one of all those we have made up to the present time: if you, her husband, do not break the slender reed by your severity, it will be done by some tyrannical and whimsical bachelor, and it will be far worse, for she will then have to bear two afflictions instead of one. Everything considered, humaneness should prompt you to follow the rules of our hygiene.

### MEDITATION XIII

#### CONCERNING PERSONAL MEANS

It may be that the preceding Meditations have developed general lines of conduct, more than they have shown the means to repel strength by strength. They are pharmacopœias and not topical remedies. Now, here are the personal means that Nature has given you to defend yourself; for no one has been overlooked by Providence; if she has given to the sepia (a fish of the Adriatic) that dark color which helps it to produce a cloud under cover of which it can escape from its enemy, you may know that she has not left husbands defenseless: now is the time for you to take advantage of her gifts.

When you married, you insisted that your wife should

nurse her children: therefore, you should subject her to the inconvenience of pregnancy and nursing, which should ward off the danger for a year or two. A woman who is occupied in bringing a child into the world and nursing it, has no time to think of a lover, besides being quite unrepresentable for quite a while before and after its birth. Indeed, how could the most immodest of the refined women with whom this book deals, be bold enough to walk abroad when she is *enceinte*, and reveal her hidden fruit, her public accuser? O! shades of Lord Byron, who hated to gaze upon eating women!

Six months after her confinement, a woman just begins to enjoy her recovered freedom and good looks.

If your wife has not nursed her first-born, you are too clever not to make her wish to suckle her second child; you read Jean-Jacques's *Émile* aloud to her, you inflame her imagination by the recital of a mother's duties, you exalt her moral nature, etc.; in a word, you act either like a fool or a sensible man; and if you act like the former, you surely will be minotaurized, even after reading this work: but if you act like the latter, you should comprehend a hint.

The first way is virtually personal to you. It will give you plenty of time to put the other means into execution.

Since Alcibiades cut the ears and tail of his dog to do a good turn to Pericles, who was very much upset by the prospect of having a sort of Spanish war on his hands and being loaded down with Ouvrard supplies, in which the Athenians at the time were interested, there has never been a minister who has not endeavored to cut some dog's tail off.

Finally, in medicine, when an inflammation declares itself on some important part of the human body, the physicians cause a counter-inflammation on another part, with moxas, scarifications and acupunctures.

Therefore, another means consists in putting a moxa on your wife or in driving a needle into her brain which will turn her thoughts in another direction more favorable to you.

A clever man once made his honeymoon last almost four

years; but finally it began to wane and he perceived the fatal crescent. His wife was just in the frame of mind in which we pictured every nice woman in the first part of this work: she had become infatuated with a good-for-nothing individual, who was ugly and diminutive; but he was not her husband. In this predicament, the latter thought out something which gave a new lease of life to his tottering happiness. His wife had acted with such discretion that it would have been very hard for him to request her lover to remain away from his home, for his spouse had discovered a distant relationship between herself and her admirer. The danger was becoming graver every day. The Minotaur could be scented in the vicinity. One evening, the husband appeared to be very gloomy and depressed. His wife had arrived at the point where she was more affectionate with him than during their honeymoon; and she naturally questioned him closely. He remained in the same mood. Her inquiries became more pressing and he let fall a word here and there which implied that something terrible had occurred. There he applied a Japanese moxa that burned like a bonfire of 1600. The wife employed all the wiles she knew to find out whether her husband's sorrow was caused by the prospective lover; first intrigue, in which she used all sorts of tactics. Her imagination was awakened. She thought no more of her lover. Did she not have to find out what was troubling her husband? One evening, the latter, spurred by the desire to tell all to his cherished mate, announces that their whole fortune is lost. They will have to retrench, to give up their horses, their box at the Bouffes, their balls, their receptions, society; perhaps, by living in the country for a year or two, they may be able to save a portion of their wealth! Addressing himself to his wife's imagination, he pitied her for having become the help-meet of a man who was desperately in love with her, but who had become penniless; he tore his hair a little and his wife was compelled to sympathize with him for decency's sake; then, in the first excitement created by conjugal loyalty, he bundled her off to his country-seat. There he used new scarifications, poultices and other remedies; he had a medieval annex added



to their mansion, and madame had the grounds changed so as to have fountains, lakes, waterfalls, etc.; but her husband, in the midst of these manifold duties, did not neglect his own: he read to his wife, pampered her and paid her all sorts of delicate attentions. You must note that he never told her of his scheme, and if their fortune was rebuilt, it was no doubt because of the large sums expended on the remodeling of the place; he proved to his wife that the lake created a waterfall on which he had had windmills erected, etc.

It was a carefully carried-out scheme, for the husband forgot none of his duties, nor did he neglect to invite a number of bores so that his wife could not complain of lack of distraction. Then, when they returned to town to spend the winter, he flung her into such a whirl of social activity that she had no time for lovers, who are the result of an idle life.

Trips to Italy, Switzerland, Greece, and sudden ailments, that require the sufferer to depart for some distant resort, are rather good moxas. At any rate, a clever man should be able to devise any number of them.

Let us continue the enumeration of personal means.

Here, we wish you to note that we are arguing from an hypothesis without which you would drop the book, namely: that your honeymoon lasted a reasonable time and that the girl you made your wife was unsullied; in the contrary case, your wife has only married you with the plan to deceive you.

At the time when the struggle between virtue and inconsistency begins in your household, the whole question lies in a constant parallel which your wife unconsciously draws between you and her lover.

Here, you have another means of defense, an entirely personal one, and one which is rarely used by husbands, but which superior men are not afraid to attempt. This method consists in being more fascinating than the lover, without your wife suspecting your design. You should make her admit to herself some night, when she is putting her hair in curl-papers: "Why, my husband is really much nicer."

To succeed, you should, as you have the advantage over the lover of knowing the character of the lady concerned, and the weapons which will wound her most, you should, I say, with all the cunning of a diplomat, make that lover commit a number of *faux-pas* and render him obnoxious to his love, unknown to himself.

In the first place, he will, in the usual way, try to make friends with you, or you may have mutual friends; so, either by means of these friends or by sly insinuations, you must deceive him on essential points; and, with a little ingeniousness, you will have the pleasure of seeing your wife turn from her lover without either of them ever guessing the reason. You will have created in your own home a comedy in five acts, in which you fill the brilliant rôle of Figaro or Almaviva; and for a few months you will be able to enjoy yourself, especially as your vanity, your self-love and your interest are involved.

When I was young, I had the good fortune to make the acquaintance of an old emigrant who liked me right well, and who gave me the rudiments of an education that young men generally receive from women. This friend, whose memory will always be dear to me, taught me by his example, to put into use those diplomatic stratagems which require in their accomplishment as much cunning as grace.

The Comte de Nocé had returned from Coblenz at a time where there was a certain danger for noblemen to remain in France. No man ever displayed more courage and kindness, more cunning and recklessness. Although sixty years of age, he had just married a girl of twenty-five through a charitable impulse, which blinded him to the folly of his act: he rescued the poor thing from the despotism of a whimsical mother. "Would you care to be my widow?" asked the amiable old man of Mademoiselle de Pontivy; but he was of a too loving disposition not to attach himself more than was good for him to his wife. During his youth, he had been under the tutelage of several of the wittiest women of the Court of Louis XV., so he did not despair of keeping his wife free from entanglements. What man have I ever seen apply with greater skill the principles which I

have endeavored to give husbands! What fascination he gave to life by his charming manners and witty conversation! His wife never learned until after his death, and then only through me, that he had been a sufferer from gout. His lips distilled friendliness as his eyes bespoke love. He had prudently taken up his residence in a valley and God knows the walks that he took with his wife! . . . His lucky star had endowed Mademoiselle de Pontivy with a kind heart and caused her to possess an exquisite delicacy of sentiment, a delightful modesty, which are characteristics that I believe would tend to adorn the ugliest woman in the world. Presently, one of his nephews, a dashing soldier who had emerged unscathed from the Moscow disasters, returned home to his uncle, actuated as much by the desire to see whether there was any danger of cousins, as by the hope to win the aunt. His dark hair, his mustache, his soldierly bearing, a certain *disinvoltura* which was as charming\* as it was natural, everything, formed a contrast between the uncle and the nephew. I arrived on the scene just as the youthful Countess was showing her new relative how to play *tric-trac*; the proverb says that women only learn this game from their lovers, and vice versa. Now, that very morning, during a *séance*, the Comte de Nocé had caught a glance of mingled desire, fear and innocence passing between the young couple. That evening, he proposed a hunting-party, which was accepted. I never had seen him look as well as he did the next morning, in spite of a premonitory twinge of gout. The Devil himself could not have brought up the subject of women with more *à propos* than he. He had been a former *mousquetaire* and had known Sophie Arnould. That sums up everything. Our conversation soon became wonderfully broad: may the Lord forgive me!

“I never thought that my uncle was such a gay blade,” the nephew remarked.

We made a halt and while we were reclining most comfortably on one of the greenest spots in the forest, we discoursed upon women with more *à propos* than Brantôme and Aloysia.

“You are very happy under the present government, you

young people! Women nowadays have morals!" (In order to appreciate the old gentleman's exclamation, it would be necessary to know the horrors that the captain had related); "And," resumed the Count, "it is one of the benefits accruing from the Revolution. This system gives the passions much more mystery and charm. Years ago, women's morals were light; why, you cannot imagine how much life and wit were required to interest those worn-out temperaments: we were always on the *qui-vive*. But then, a man had a fine chance of becoming famous for a clever audacity, or a broad speech delivered with wit. Women like that sort of thing, and it is the surest way of winning them!"

He uttered the last sentence with a fine show of anger. He paused and toyed with his gun, as if to hide a deep emotion.

"Bah!" he exclaimed, "my day is over! A man needs a youthful imagination . . . and a young body! . . . Ah! why did I marry? The worst of it is that girls reared by mothers who lived in that wonderful period of gallantry pretend to be so candid and easily shocked. . . . It would seem as if honey were not pure enough for their lips, when people who know them are well aware of the fact that they would not hesitate to swallow salt pills!"

He rose, and grasping his gun, brought it down with a gesture of rage upon the ground.

"It looks as if my aunt were fond of gay stories," whispered the officer to me.

"Or rapid *dénouements*," quoth I.

The young man fingered his collar, straightened his tie and gamboled about like a Calabrian goat. We returned at about two o'clock in the afternoon. The Count bore me off to his rooms under the pretext of showing me some medals which he had spoken about during our return to the château. The dinner was gloomy. The Countess treated her nephew with distant courtesy. When we left the table to pass into the drawing-room, the Count said to his wife:

"Are you going to play *tric-trac*? We will leave you."

The young Countess made no reply. She was looking at the fire and appeared not to have heard her husband's re-

mark. He took a few steps toward the door and beckoned to me to follow him. At the sound of his retreating footsteps, his wife turned her head abruptly.

“Why do you want to leave us?” she said; “you have all of to-morrow to show the medals to monsieur.”

The Count remained. Without paying the slightest attention to the imperceptible embarrassment which had taken the place of the military grace of his nephew, he displayed during the whole evening the inexpressible charm of his conversational powers. I never saw him more brilliant or more affectionate. We spoke a great deal of women. The jests of our host were of the most delicate kind imaginable. It was even hard for me to realize that his hair was white, for he shone with that youth of heart and mind which makes the hoariness of old age melt like snow before the sun. The nephew departed the very next day. Even after Monsieur de Nocé's death, when I tried to take advantage of those intimate chats when a woman is not always on her guard, I never could learn what breach the Viscount had committed. It must have been a very serious one, for, since that time, Madame de Nocé has refused to meet her nephew and cannot even now hear his name without frowning. For some time I never guessed the Count's aim in asking us to hunt with him; but, later, I thought that he had risked a very high stake.

However, if you succeed in scoring such a victory as Monsieur de Nocé's, never forget to always apply the moxa system: and do not lure yourself with the belief that you will always be able to accomplish such things. By thus lavishing your talents, you would end by discrediting yourself in your wife's eyes, for she would exact so much from you that a time would come when you could not comply with her demands. The human soul is subjected, relative to its desires, to a sort of progression, the aim and origin of which are equally unknown. In the same way that the opium fiend is compelled to double his doses in order to obtain the desired result, our mind, which is both imperious and weak, demands that ideas, sentiments and things should forever be on the increase. Thence has sprung the necessity of skill-

fully distributing the interest of all dramatic works, and graduating the doses in medical practice. Therefore, should you ever attempt these means, you would have to subordinate your bold conduct to a great many circumstances, and the success will always depend upon the resources which you have employed.

Lastly, have you influence and powerful friends? Do you fill an important position? The way we are about to indicate, will kill the evil in the bud. Have you not the power to suppress the lover by promoting him, by a change of residence or by a permutation, if he is in the army? You suppress the correspondence, and later, we shall furnish you the means of doing so; now, *sublatâ causâ, tollitur effectus*, which is Latin for "no effect without a cause"; *pas d'argent, pas de Suisses*.

Nevertheless, you feel that your wife could easily choose another lover; but, after these preliminary means, you should always have some moxa in readiness in order to gain time and pull yourself out of the scrape by a new machination.

You should know how to combine the moxa system with the deceptions of Carlin. The immortal Carlin, of the Comédie-Italienne, could keep a whole audience amused for hours by repeating, with all the different intonations of a thousand voices: "The king says to the queen.—The queen says to the king." Imitate Carlin. Find the means of checkmating your wife, so that she will not checkmate you. Take your degree in the art of promising, by imitating the ministers of State. Become accustomed to showing, when most *à propos*, the "Jack-in-the-box" dear to childhood. We are all children, and women are mightily inclined to lose their time by running after will-o'-the-wisps. Brilliant and too elusive flame, is not *imagination* there, to lend you a helping hand?

Finally, make a study of the art of being, and of not being, with your wife, of seizing the times when you have a chance of impressing her with your wisdom, without boring her with your superiority and your personality. If the ignorance in which you have kept her has not entirely de-

stroyed whatever mentality she may have had, you will be clever enough to arrange it so that each of you will desire the other for some time to come.

## MEDITATION XIV

### CONCERNING APARTMENTS

THE systems and means which have gone before are, in a way, purely moral. They participate in the nobility of our souls and are in no wise obnoxious: but now we shall consider some precautions *à la* Bartholo. Do not weaken. There is a marital bravery, just as there is a martial and a civil bravery, a *garde national* courage.

What is the first thing a little girl does after having purchased a parrot? Does she not put it in a fine cage whence it cannot possibly escape?

That child should be a lesson to you.

Everything that concerns your house and its chambers must be planned with the idea of leaving your wife no resource whatever in case she has decided to leave *you* to the mercy of the Minotaur.

Half of the misfortunes occur solely because of the abominable facilities which houses offer.

First of all, you should remember to have as *concierge* a single man entirely devoted to your interests. It is a treasure which is easily found; who is the man who has not some faithful old body-servant or some foster-father?

A fierce hatred should exist between your wife and this Nestor, the guardian of your castle. Your front-door is the alpha and the omega of an intrigue. Do not all intrigues of the kind reduce themselves to this: to enter and to escape?

Your house would be of no earthly use unless it were situated *entre cour et jardin*, and so built that it stood free from the surrounding houses.

First, you should suppress all cavities in your reception-rooms. A closet, if it only contains a dozen jars of jam,

should be walled up. You are preparing for war, and a general's first thought is to cut off his enemies' supplies. Therefore, all the walls should be filled in order to present a plain surface to the eye, where any foreign object would be easily discernible.

Consult the remains of ancient monuments and you will see that the beauty of the Greek and Roman apartments consisted principally in purity of lines, smoothness of walls and scarcity of furniture. The Greeks would have smiled with pity had they seen the gaping expanses of the closets in our salons.

This magnificent system of defense should find a special application in your wife's apartments; never allow her to drape her bed so that a body could walk around it and be lost in a maze of curtains; be pitiless regarding entrances, and locate her apartments at the very end of the reception-rooms, and do not suffer them to have an opening on any other chamber save the salon, so that you can see at a glance all who come and go.

*Le Mariage de Figaro* has no doubt taught you the advantage of placing her room at a great distance from the ground. All bachelors are *Chérubins*.

Because of your fortune, your wife has a right to a dressing-room, a bathroom and a maid's room; therefore, think of Suzanne, and never allow her little room to be underneath that of her mistress. Have it located above madame's apartment and do not be afraid to disfigure your house with a hideous variety of windows.

If luck has it that this dangerous apartment communicates with your wife's rooms by means of a secret staircase, consult your architect lengthily; let his genius exhaust itself in rendering this staircase as innocent as a miller's; let not these sinister stairs have any perfidious cavities; let not their straight and angular steps have any of the voluptuous curves which were so appreciated by Faublas and Justine while they waited for the Marquis de B—— to go out. Nowadays, architects construct stairs that are preferable to divans. We should aim to re-establish the virtuous corkscrew stairs of our ancestors.



Concerning the fireplace of madame's apartment, you should have a care to place an iron grating five feet above the hood, even if it has to be sealed anew at each sweeping. If your wife ridicules this precaution, you should bring up the many murders that have been committed by means of fireplaces. Almost all women are in mortal dread of burglars.

The bed is one of those decisive pieces of furniture whose structure must be carefully planned. In this case, everything is of the greatest importance. Here are the results of a long experience. Let this piece of furniture be of a shape original enough to withstand the frequent changes of fashion which destroy the best efforts of our decorators, for it is very important that your wife be not allowed to change at will the setting, so to speak, of conjugal pleasure. The base of the bed should be massive and low, so as not to allow any space between itself and the floor. And never forget that Byron's Doña Julia hid Don Juan under her pillow. But it would be ridiculous to treat such a delicate subject with lightness.

## LXII

In marriage, the bed is everything.

Therefore, we will not delay considering this admirable creation of human genius, an invention which should rank higher in our gratitude than steamships, carriages, firearms, locomotives, barrels and bottles. In the first place, the bed is affiliated with all of these, if one will but give the matter a little thought. But, when one reflects that it is our second father, so to speak, and that the quietest and most turbulent parts of our lives are spent there, under its protecting crown, words fail to do it justice. (See Meditation XVII, entitled, "Theory of the Bed.")

When *war*, of which we shall discourse later on, declares itself between you and madame, you will always have some ingenious pretext to look into her closets and bureaus; for, if your wife should take into her head to steal a statue, it would be for you to find its hiding-place. *A gynecium* built

according to this system will allow you to see at a glance whether or not it contains two pounds more of silk than it usually does. But let only *one* closet be put in, and you will be lost! During the honeymoon, you should accustom your wife to great neatness in her apartments; do not suffer anything to be out of place. If you do not train her to be scrupulously neat, she will soon surround herself with such litter that it will be impossible for you to tell whether or not there are two extra pounds of silk in your rooms.

The window-curtains should always be of the sheerest materials and in the evening you must form the habit of walking up and down so that madame will never be surprised to see you stroll up to the window out of sheer absent-mindedness. Lastly, to close the chapter on windows, you should always have them built in such a way that the sills would never be wide enough to hold a bag of flour.

Once your wife's apartments are arranged according to these principles, your house might contain enough niches to harbor all the saints of Paradise, and still you would be safe. Every night, with the help of your friend the *concierge*, you will be able to balance the entrances by the exits; and in order to obtain sure results, nothing prevents you from having him keep a double set of books of daily visitors.

If you have a garden, you should cultivate a fondness for dogs. By letting one of these incorruptible guardians roam around the premises, you will keep the Minotaur at a respectful distance, especially if you accustom your four-footed friend to accept his food only from the hands of the janitor, as some unscrupulous bachelors might try to poison him.

All these precautions should be taken naturally, so as not to awaken suspicion. If some men have been imprudent enough to marry without taking these scientific precautions, they should, at the earliest possible moment, sell their house and purchase another one, or have it repaired and remodeled.

You should absolutely banish from your apartments all sofas, divans, *chaises-longues*, etc. Not only are these pieces

of furniture only considered fit to adorn a grocer's home, and are to be found everywhere nowadays, but they are essentially means of perdition; I have never been able to look upon them without alarm, and I have always thought that I could see the Devil with his horns and his cloven foot.

After all, nothing is as dangerous as a chair, and it is really a great pity that women cannot be confined between four walls! . . . Where is the husband who, on sinking into a disjointed chair, does not believe that it may have received the instruction of the *Sofa* of Crébillon junior? But we have fortunately arranged your apartments according to a system of prevention, so that nothing fatal can happen within them, unless your own negligence gives rise to an opportunity.

A fault which you should contract (and never get rid of) is a sort of absent-minded curiosity which should lead you to examine every box and bureau you see. You should proceed gracefully in this inspection and each time you should seek to arouse your wife's mirth in order to be forgiven.

You should never fail to manifest the greatest astonishment at any new piece of furniture introduced into your home. Make your wife explain its use at once and then proceed to torture yourself trying to make out whether it has not some secret *raison d'être*, and whether it does not contain some perfidious hiding-places.

Nor is this all. You are too clever not to know that your pretty parouquet will not remain in her cage unless it is as dainty as it should be. So the smallest details should be elegant and tasteful. The *ensemble* should offer a simple and charming appearance. The draperies and curtains must be renewed often. The pristine freshness of the setting is too important to be overlooked. It represents the daily chick-weed that children put in their pets' cages to lure them with the belief that it is the country. Such an apartment is the *ultima ratio* of husbands; a woman has no fault to find when everything has been done for her gratification.

Husbands who are compelled to live in apartment houses are in the worst position of all.

What a beneficial or nefarious influence a janitor can exert over their destinies!

Isn't there a house on either side of the one they occupy? True, that by placing their wives' apartments on one side, the danger will be reduced by half; but, will they not be obliged to study the age, social standing, fortune, character and habits of the next-door tenants, and even know their friends and relatives?

A wise husband will never occupy a ground-floor apartment.

Any man can apply to an apartment the precautions which we have outlined for a house. Besides, a tenant has this advantage over an owner, that an apartment is less spacious than a house and may therefore be more easily watched.

## MEDITATION XV

### CONCERNING CONJUGAL CUSTOM-HOUSE METHODS

“Eh! no, madame, no.”

“For monsieur, it would be a most unseemly thing.”

“Do you think for a moment, madame, that we advocate searching the persons who cross your threshold or leave it furtively, so as to find out whether they are bringing you some dutiable jewel? Ah! that would hardly be proper; but our proceedings, madame, will not be odious in the least, so do not alarm yourself.”

Monsieur, a conjugal custom-house is, of all the schemes of this second part, the one that will perhaps require the most tact, delicacy and knowledge acquired *à priori*, that is, before marriage. In order to *exercise*, a husband must have made a deep study of Lavater's book and have absorbed all his principles. He must needs have trained his eye and his mind to judge and grasp, with surprising rapidity, the slightest physical indications by which a man discloses his thoughts.

Lavater's *Physiognomy* has created a genuine science. It has at last taken its place among human acquirements.

If, when it was first published, it was received doubtfully and with smiles of derision, since then the famous Dr. Gall, through his fine theory of the human skull, has completed the scientist's system and given a solid basis to his luminous and clever observations. Intellectual people, diplomats, women, all those who are the disciples of these two celebrated men, have often had opportunity to note a great many evident signs by which human thought may be recognized. Bodily habits, manners, chiromancy, voice, have more than once enlightened a loving woman, a cunning diplomat, a wise administrator or a sovereign, compelled, each one, to distinguish at a glance, love, treason or unrecognized worth. The man whose soul acts forcibly is like a poor glow-worm which, unconsciously, gives out sparks of light from all its pores. He moves in a luminous sphere in which every effort calls forth a glow and outlines his movements by long, fiery tracks.

Here are all the elements of the knowledge you are required to possess, for conjugal custom-house methods consist solely in the rapid but thorough examination of the moral and physical state of all those who come and go in your house and are liable to meet your wife. Then, a husband resembles one of those spiders which, seated in the middle of their webs, get a shock every time they spy a foolish fly, and who from afar listen, judge and keep an eye on the prey and the foe.

Thus, you are procuring yourself the means of examining each bachelor who craves admittance to your fireside, in two very distinct positions: when he is *about* to enter, and when he *has* entered.

When *about* to enter, he says a good many things without opening his lips!

Whether by patting his hair lightly so that he changes its characteristic appearance;

Whether by humming some French or Italian air, light or sad, in a tenor, contralto, soprano or baritone voice;

Whether by fingering his tie to see whether it is in its right position;

Whether by smoothing the neat or ruffled jabot of an evening or a dress shirt;

Whether by trying to find out whether his blonde or dark, straight or curly wig is in its right place;

Whether by stroking with a well-cared for, or a neglected hand, neatly or badly gloved, his mustache or his whiskers, or passing a fine comb through them;

Whether by slow and repeated movements to place his chin in the very center of his cravat;

Whether by standing first on one foot and then on the other with his hands thrust in his pockets;

Whether by toying with his boots, as if to say: "Ah! my feet are rather nice!"

Whether by arriving in a carriage or on foot and by wiping off the stains on his shoes or by letting them remain;

Whether by remaining as motionless as a smoking Dutchman;

Whether by remaining in front of the door in the attitude of a soul out of Purgatory waiting for Peter and his keys;

Whether by hesitating to ring the bell or by grasping it lightly, quickly, familiarly or like a man sure of his welcome;

Whether by ringing timidly so that the sound loses itself in the silence of the house like the first peal of convent bells; or by the fact that after having rung masterfully, he rings again, impatient at not hearing the hasty footsteps of a flunkey;

Whether by perfuming his breath with the help of pastilles;

Whether by taking a pinch of tobacco with an affected air and carefully brushing away the stray grains so as not to soil his linen;

Whether by looking all around, as if he were appraising the value of everything, from the bannisters to the carpet, like a furniture dealer or a builder;

Whether he be young or old, cold or fiery, sprightly or sedate, cheerful or sad, etc.

You feel that, ascending your stairs, is a human mass of observations.

The outlines that we have striven to give this figure, show a real moral kaleidoscope with its thousands of changes. We have not even permitted a woman's presence on the tell-tale threshold, for our remarks, which are already lengthy, would have to become as numerous and light as the sands of the sea.

In truth, a man feels strangely alone when he is standing before a front-door; and if he is compelled to wait a little before it is opened unto him, he indulges in a little silent monologue, a weird soliloquy in which everything, even his step reveals his desires, intentions, qualities, faults, secrets, virtues, etc. In a word, a man at a front-door is like a girl of fifteen in a confessional the day before her first communion.

Would you like the proof of this? Observe the change that comes over the face and manners of that bachelor as soon as he gets into the house. The scene-shifter of the Opera, the temperature, the clouds and the sun do not alter as quickly the setting of a play, of the atmosphere or of the sky.

As soon as he crosses your threshold, not a single one of the myriads of ideas which he revealed to you so artlessly on the stairs remains to give you some enlightenment on which to base your remarks. The social and conventional attitude and expression have swallowed up all individuality; but a clever husband should already have guessed the object of his call and be able to read his thoughts like an open book.

The manner in which he approaches your wife, looks at her, addresses her, takes his leave . . . herein you will find volumes of minute observations.

Everything, from the voice to the deportment, a smile, silence, his alacrity to please you, should be considered as an indication and should be studied without any effort on your part. You should hide the most annoying discovery under the ease and flowing conversation of a man of the world. As we are unable to present the thousand and one

details of the subject, we will have to rely on the reader's sagacity and he will not fail to perceive the vastness of the science; it begins with the analysis of every look and ends with the perception of the motions that annoyance, when trying to vent itself, communicates to a foot clad in satin or covered by a boot.

But the exit! . . . for you must foresee the possibility of missing the rigorous examination you should make at the threshold; therefore, the exit becomes most important, inasmuch as this new study must be made with the same elements, but directly in opposition with the first one.

However, in every exit there exists a peculiar situation; it is the time when the enemy has overcome all the intrinchements and finds himself in the street once more! . . . Now is the time for a clever man to judge a call! The indications are not as numerous, but they speak very clearly! It is the *dénouement*, and a man immediately discloses its gravity by the simplest expression of happiness, sorrow or joy.

Revelations then are easy to gather: they may assume the shape of a glance thrown on the house or on the windows of the apartment; a slow and loitering walk; the fool's open expression of delight, the sprightly gait of the cad or the involuntary halt of the man deeply moved; in a word, on the threshold, questions were as neatly put as if a provincial academy were offering a prize for an essay: at a man's exit, the solutions are clear and precise. Our task would be above human strength had we to enumerate the different ways by which men disclose their feelings; here tact and sentiment are the only factors to be counted on.

If you apply these principles of observation to strangers, there is all the more reason to apply them to your wife.

A married man should make a careful study of his wife's face; this is easy and is done unconsciously every moment of the day. The fair countenance should hold no mystery for him. He should know every passing expression and what mask is assumed to hide some sentiments.

The slightest twitching of the lips, the most imperceptible contraction of the nostrils, the almost invisible gradations of the eye, the changes of the voice and those undefinable



clouds that sometimes pass over a woman's countenance or those bright indications of joy should be as an open book to you.

The woman is there; everyone looks at her and still there is no one who can comprehend her thoughts. But for you, her eye is more or less brilliant, its pupil is large or contracted; her eyelids quivered, her eyebrows twitched; a frown, as rapidly effaced as a ripple on the sea, made its appearance on her forehead; her lips tightened, relaxed or became animated . . . for you, this woman has spoken.

If, in those arduous moments when a wife is dissembling in the presence of her husband, you have the soul of the Sphinx to read her, you feel keenly that the custom-house methods are child's play in regard to her.

When coming home or going out, or when she believes she is alone, your wife displays all the imprudence of a crow; it would not take much to make her speak her secret aloud to herself; therefore, by the slight contraction which comes over her features when she sees you, a contraction which cannot be effaced rapidly enough to hide the expression that the face wore before your intrusion, you should be able to read her soul. Lastly, your wife will often find herself on the *monologue* threshold and there a husband is always in a position to verify the sentiments of his better-half.

Is there any man so indifferent to the mysteries of love that he has not more than once admired the light and dainty step of a woman hastening to a *rendez-vous*? She glides through the crowd like a serpent in the grass. The shop-windows display their fascinating treasures in vain; she hastens on and on like the faithful animal following the invisible scent of its master, deaf to all compliments, blind to all glances, unmindful of the light touches that are unavoidable in the human circulation of Paris. Oh! how well she knows the price of a minute! Her walk, her costume, her face commit a thousand indiscretions. But oh! what a delightful page for the loiterer and what a tragic one for the husband is the countenance of that woman when she emerges from that secret spot constantly inhabited by her heart! . . . Her happiness can be seen even in the slight

imperfections of her *coiffure*, whose complicated construction and shining tresses have not been able to assume beneath the comb of the lover the precise and graceful appearance that the experienced hands of my lady's maid gave them. And what a charming abandon in her walk! How can we render the sentiment which imparts such glowing color to her complexion, which robs her eyes of their assurance and which is so closely related to sadness and joy, pride and modesty!

These signs, which have been taken from the Meditation on "The Last Symptoms," and are the outcome of a situation where a woman wishes to conceal everything, allow you to guess by analogy the fine harvest of observations which you still have to gather when your wife arrives home, and when, the crime having not as yet been committed, she artlessly reveals her secret thoughts. As for ourselves, we have never been able to gaze upon a threshold without having the longing to nail a weathercock and a wind-flower to it.

## MEDITATION XVI

### CONJUGAL CHART

I MUST admit that I know of only one house in Paris that has been built according to the system developed in the two preceding Meditations. But I should also acknowledge that I evolved the system according to the house. This admirable fortress belongs to a youthful Master of Requests, intoxicated with love and jealousy.

When he learned that there was a man solely occupied in improving marriage in France, he had the kindness to open his home to me and to show me its *gynecium*. I marveled at the wonderful genius which had so skillfully concealed every sort of precaution under the beauty of the furnishings. I admitted that it was impossible for his wife to consummate a deception in her apartments.

"Monsieur," said I to this State Council Othello, who did not seem to be very well posted concerning matrimonial

policy, "I have no doubt but that Madame la Vicomtesse experiences keen delight in living in this little paradise; she must enjoy much happiness, especially if you are with her a great deal; but a time will come when she will weary of it, for one grows tired of everything, sir, even of the sublime. What will you do, then, when Madame la Vicomtesse, tiring of your inventions, yawns and demands the free exercise of two rights indispensable to happiness: personal freedom, which means the faculty of going and coming at her *own free-will*, and the liberty of the press, or the faculty of writing and receiving her correspondence without fear of your censure?"

Hardly had I finished speaking before Monsieur le Vicomte de V—— squeezed my arm tightly and cried:

"Ah! the ingratitude of women! If there is anything on earth more ungrateful than a king, it is a nation; but, my dear sir, a woman is more ungrateful than the two put together. A married woman treats us like the citizens of a constitutional monarchy treat a king: although they are assured of a fine existence in a fine country, although the Government gives itself a world of trouble with gendarmes, Chambers, an administration and the whole paraphernalia of an army, in order to prevent a nation from starving, to light cities at the expense of its citizens, to keep everybody warm under the sun of the forty-fifth degree of latitude, and finally to forbid anyone but the collectors to extort money; although it has more or less fine roads built . . . not one advantage of such a fine Utopia is appreciated! The citizens want something more! . . . They are not in the least ashamed to demand the right to walk on these roads at their own sweet will, and to know where the money that is paid to the collectors goes; finally, the sovereign would have to yield to each person a little of the throne if we were to listen to the gossip of a few unimportant writers, or to adopt certain tricolor ideas, puppets that are manipulated by so-called patriots, regular highwaymen, always eager to sell their consciences for a million, a woman or a ducal crown."

"Monsieur le Vicomte," I said, "I agree with you per-

fectly in regard to the last point; but what will you say in reply to the perfectly just demands of your wife?"

"Monsieur, I shall . . . I shall reply like the governments who are not as stupid as the members of the opposition would like to have their supporters believe. I would begin by formulating a sort of Constitution by which my wife would be declared absolutely free. I would recognize her right to do as she pleases, to write to whomsoever she wishes and to receive letters which she may deny me. My wife will have all the rights of the English Parliament; I will let her talk as much as she wants to, argue and propose energetic measures, but without letting her put them into execution, and then, after that, why, I will see!"

"By Saint Joseph!" said I to myself, "here is a man who understands the science of marriage as well as I do.—Then you will see, monsieur," I answered aloud, in order to obtain more ample revelations, "that one fine day you will be treated just like all the rest."

"Monsieur," he gravely replied, "permit me to finish. That is what great statesmen call a theory, but they know how to make that theory vanish like smoke; and ministers possess better than any Normandy lawyer the art of making the *form* dominate the *matter*. Monsieur de Metternich and Monsieur de Pilat, men of great worth, have been asking themselves for quite some time whether Europe is in her right mind, if she is dreaming, if she knows where she is going, if she has ever reasoned, a thing which is impossible to women, masses and nations. Messieurs de Metternich and de Pilat are frightened by the trend of this century toward the mania of constitutions, as the preceding one was mad over philosophy, and Luther's time mad over the reform of the Roman religion; for it really seems as if the centuries were like conspirators who progress toward the same goal by different roads, giving each other the password. But they are alarming themselves unnecessarily, and this is the only thing for which I condemn them, for they are right to wish to enjoy power, without having some *bourgeois* arrive on a certain day from the remotest parts

of their six respective realms to vex them. How is it that such remarkable men could not divine the deep moral contained in the constitutional comedy and realize that the highest policy would be to leave a bone for the century to pick? I absolutely share their opinion regarding sovereignty. A *power* or government is a moral being that is as interested in its own preservation as any man is in his. The sentiment of preservation is directed by an essential principle that can be expressed in four words: *Not to lose anything*. In order to accomplish this, one must grow or remain infinite; for a stationary government is of no value. If it retrogrades, it is no longer a power—it is influenced by another one. I am aware, like these gentlemen are, of the false position in which an infinite power is placed, when it makes a concession. It thus allows the formation within itself of another power whose essence will be to grow. The one will necessarily annihilate the other, for every living being tends toward the greatest possible development of its strength. Therefore, a power never makes any concessions that it does not try to regain. This struggle between the two powers constitutes our ponderous governments, whose workings unnecessarily alarm the patriarch of Austrian diplomacy, because, comedy for comedy, the most lucrative and least dangerous is the one that France and England are playing. These two countries have said to their people: 'You are free!' and the nations were satisfied; they enter the government-like zeroes, which give value to unities. But, should the nation want to move, then the Government begins the drama of Sancho's dinner, when the equerry, having become the master of his island on dry land, tries to eat. Now, we men should parody this scene in our own households. Thus, my wife has the right to go out, but she must tell me where she is going, how she is going, what takes her to the place she is going to, and when she will return. Instead of exacting this information with the brutality that is displayed by our police, which will no doubt improve, some day, I am careful to adopt the most gracious manner. On my lips, in my eyes, over my features appear in turn all the signs of curiosity and indifference, gravity

and mirth, contradiction and love. These are little matrimonial scenes full of wit, grace and cleverness and they are most agreeable to play. The day that I lifted the wreath of orange blossoms from my wife's head, I realized that we had played, like at the crowning of a king, the first scenes of a long comedy. I have gendarmes!—I have my Royal Guard, my State Attorneys!" he resumed with a sort of enthusiasm. "Do I ever suffer madame to go out unaccompanied by a liveried footman? Isn't that in the best of taste? without taking into account the pleasure she derives from saying to her acquaintances: 'I have servants.' But my principle of preservation has always been to make my outings coincide with hers and since two years I have proved to her that it is an ever new pleasure for me to act as her escort. If the weather is bad, I try to teach her how to drive a smart trap; but I can tell you that I do it in such a manner that she will not learn soon! . . . If by chance, or by the effect of her will, she wanted to escape without a passport, that is to say, alone in her carriage, haven't I got a coachman and a footman? My wife can go where she pleases, but she is always accompanied by a retinue and I can rest peacefully. . . . But, my dear sir, just consider how many ways we have of destroying, in practice, the matrimonial chart and the letter by the interpretation! I have noticed that the customs of society comprise an idleness which takes up half a woman's life without letting her feel that she is living. As for myself, I have formed the plan of adroitly bringing my wife to the age of forty without letting her give a thought to adultery, the same as the departed Musson used to amuse himself by taking a *bourgeois* from the Rue Saint-Denis to Pierrefitte without having him notice that he had left the shadow of Saint-Leu's steeple."

"What," I exclaimed, interrupting him, "have you by chance divined those admirable deceptions which I thought of writing about in my Meditation entitled, 'The Art of Putting Death into Life.' Alas! I believed I was the first one to discover that science. That short title had been suggested to me by the tale of a young physician in an

admirable unpublished composition of Crabbe. In this work, the English poet has personified a fantastic being called *Life in Death*. That personage pursues across the oceans of the world a living skeleton named *Death in Life*. I remember that few people among the guests of the elegant translator of English poetry understood the mysterious meaning of this fable, as true as it is fantastical. Only I, who was plunged in a brutish silence, thought of the entire generations which, impelled by *Life*, pass without having lived. Thousands, nay, millions of women passed before my mind's eye, all of whom had died full of sorrow at the thought of having wasted the hours of their ignorant youth. In the far away, I saw arising a scornful Meditation, I could already hear its sarcastic laugh; and no doubt you will kill it. . . . But do tell me quickly the means you have found to help a woman waste the fleeting instants when she is in the flower of her beauty and the prime of her desires. . . . Perhaps you may leave me a few stratagems, a few ruses to describe . . ."

The Viscount began to laugh at my disappointment as an author, and said in a pleased tone:

"My wife, like all the young women of the present time, spent four years drumming on a helpless piano. She has read Beethoven, hummed the airs of Rossini and gone over Crammer's exercises. Now, I took good care to convince her of her superiority in music; in order to do it, I have applauded her, listened without a murmur to the deadliest sonatas and resigned myself to letting her have a box at the Bouffons. I have thus obtained three peaceful evenings in the seven which the Lord created. I am always on the lookout for "musical houses." In Paris are salons which are just like German snuff-boxes, a kind of perpetual *Componiums*, where I go regularly and sicken myself with harmony, and which my wife calls concerts. And most of the time she just buries herself in her music."

"Eh! monsieur, don't you know the danger that lies in developing the taste for singing in a woman, and allowing her to be a prey to all the excitement of a sedentary life?"

Now, you only need to feed her on mutton and let her drink plain water.”

“My wife never eats anything but the white meat of poultry and I am always careful to have a ball come after a concert and a reception after a play at the Italiens! In this way, I have succeeded in having her retire, six months out of the twelve, between one and two in the morning. Ah! my dear sir, the benefits of this are incalculable! In the first place, each one of these necessary pleasures is granted as a favor, and therefore I am supposed to constantly follow the wishes of my wife: thus I persuade her, without saying a word, that she has been amusing herself since six o'clock in the evening, at which hour we dine and she dresses, until eleven in the morning, at which hour we arise.”

“Ah! monsieur, how grateful she must feel toward you for such a full life!”

“Thus I have only about three dangerous hours left; but then, she has to study her music and her singing! . . . And then, haven't I always some drive to propose, or some calls to pay, or some landau to look over, etc.? This is not all. The finest thing about a woman is immaculate cleanliness and the time spent on this can never be too long; now, her toilet is the means of consuming the best part of the day.”

“You are worthy of listening to me!” I cried. “Well, my dear sir, you will be able to make her waste four hours a day if you care to teach her an art unknown to the most fastidious of our fashionable women. . . . Tell Madame de V—— of the astounding precautions created by the Roman ladies' Oriental luxury, name all the slaves employed at the bath of the Empress Poppæa; the *unctores*, the *fricatores*, the *alipilarili*, the *dropacista*, the *paratiltiæ*, the *picatrices*, the *tracatrices*, the swansdown dryers and all the rest? . . . Entertain her with that multitude of slaves whose list was given by Mirabeau in his *Erotika Biblion*. Her efforts to imitate these things will give you many an hour of peace without counting the pleasure that you will personally derive from the importation into your household of the system of the illustrious Romans, whose every hair, cun-



ningly arranged, had received showers of perfume, whose every vein seemed to have been regenerated in myrrh, flowers and baths, all absorbed to the sound of entrancingly voluptuous music."

"Eh! monsieur," retorted the husband, who was warming more and more to his subject, "have I not also admirable pretexts in her health? Her health, so precious and so dear to me, allows me to forbid her to leave the house in bad weather and thus I gain a fourth of the year. And have I not introduced the lovely rule of never going out without first kissing and saying: 'My darling pet, I am going out.' In a word, I have forestalled the future and have rendered my wife a prisoner in her home, like a recruit in his sentry-box. I have inspired her with incredible enthusiasm for her sacred maternal duties."

"By contradicting her?" I asked.

"Quite right!" he laughed. "I aver that it is impossible for a society woman to fulfill her social obligations, to manage her house, to yield to all the fashionable whims and those of a beloved husband, and to bring up her children. . . . Then she pretends that, like Cato who insisted on seeing how the nurse tended the great Pompey, she will allow no one but herself to care for the young intellects and tender bodies of the little human beings whose education begins in the cradle. You understand, sir, that my conjugal diplomacy would not be of great use if, after having pledged my wife to secrecy, I failed to ask her advice on everything and to constantly admonish her to do as she chooses. As this illusion of freedom is destined to hoodwink a woman who is quite clever, I am careful to make every sacrifice in order to convince Madame de V—— that she is the freest woman in Paris: and in order to attain this object, I try not to commit the great political blunders that our ministers so often are guilty of."

"I can see you," said I, "when you want to deprive your wife of one of the rights granted her by the chart, assuming a meek, inoffensive air, hiding the dagger under a rose and plunging it carefully into her breast the while you inquire in a sugary tone: 'Am I hurting you, dearest?' Per-

haps she replies, like a person on whose toes you have just trodden: 'On the contrary.'

He could not help smiling and said:

"My wife will be very astonished at the Last Judgment, won't she?"

"I do not know," quoth I, "who will be the most surprised, your wife or yourself."

He frowned, but his countenance became serene again when I added:

"I am thankful, monsieur, for the opportunity which allowed me to become acquainted with you. Without your conversation, I would surely not have developed as well as you have, a few ideas which we hold in common. Therefore, I crave your permission to give this interview to the light. Where we have seen lofty political conceptions, others may see more or less keen shafts of sarcasm and I shall pass for a clever man in the eyes of both sides."

While I was trying to thank the Viscount (the first husband according to my own heart that I had so far met) he was leading me through his apartments where everything seemed to be irreproachable.

I was about to take leave of him, when he opened the door which led into a little boudoir and showed me around with the air of a man who is thinking: "Is there any way of committing the slightest breach of morality here without me being able to detect it?"

I replied to this silent question by one of those little bows with which guests acknowledge to their host their appreciation of some rare dish.

"My whole system," said he in a low tone, "was suggested to me by three words which my father heard Napoleon utter in the midst of the State Council, when the question of divorce was being argued. 'Adultery,' he cried, 'is merely a question of sofas!' So you see," added the Master of Requests, "I have been able to change these accomplices into spies." He showed me a pale yellow divan the cushions of which were rumped. "Look, these marks show me that my wife had a headache and rested here for a while."

We walked toward the divan and suddenly beheld the word "Fool!" capriciously traced on the couch with four

*De ces je ne sais quoi, qu'une amante tira  
Du verger de Cypris, labyrinthe des fées,  
Et qu'un duc autrefois jugea si précieux  
Qu'il voulut l'honorer d'une chevalerie,  
Illustre et noble confrérie,  
Moins pleine d'hommes que de dieux.\**

"No one here has black hair!" exclaimed the husband, growing pale.

I departed in haste, for I felt such an irresistible desire to laugh, that I knew that I would not be able to control myself if I remained.

"Here is a judged man!" I said to myself. "He has only given his wife more pleasure by surrounding her with all those obstacles."

That idea saddened me. The occurrence completely destroyed three of my most important Meditations and the catholic infallibility of my work was undermined in its essence. I would have gladly given the sum with which many people would fain have bought one favor of the Vicomtesse de V——, for her chastity. But it was written that I was to keep my money.

Indeed, three days later, I happened upon the Master of Requests, in the *foyer* of the Italiens. As soon as he saw me, he ran up to me. Impelled by a sort of modesty, I endeavored to avoid him; but grabbing hold of my arm:

"Ah! I have just spent three cruel days," he whispered in my ear. "Fortunately, my wife is perhaps more innocent than a new-born babe."

"You have already told me that Madame la Vicomtesse was very clever," said I, with cruel *bonhomie*.

"Oh! to-night, I can appreciate a joke, for this very morning I had absolute proofs of my wife's fidelity. I had arisen early in order to finish a much-needed work. . . . Looking into the garden by chance, I suddenly perceived the valet of a general whose house is next to mine swiftly climb-

\* *La Chose Impossible* (La Fontaine's *Contes et Nouvelles*)

ing over the wall. My wife's maid, sticking her head out of the hall, was patting my dog and covering the retreat of her sweetheart. I clutched my *lorgnon* and leveled it at the intruder; his hair was jet black! Ah! I was never so glad to see anyone in my life! But as you must think, during the day the trellis was torn down. So, my dear sir, if you ever marry, keep a watchdog and strew broken bottles on your garden walls."

"Did Madame la Vicomtesse notice your anxiety during the past three days?"

"Do you take me for a child?" he replied, shrugging his shoulders; "never in all my life had I been so light-hearted."

"You are an unrecognized genius," I cried, "and you are not——"

He did not let me finish; for he disappeared when he saw one of his friends making a move to approach his wife.

What could we add that would not be a fastidious paraphrase of the teachings contained in this conversation? Everything in it is either bud or fruit. Nevertheless, you will realize, O husbands, that your happiness hangs by a thread.

## MEDITATION XVII

### THEORY OF THE BED

It was about seven o'clock in the evening. Seated on their academical chairs, they formed a half-circle around the fireplace where a dim fire was burning, eternal symbol of the subject of their important discussions. From the grave but passionate faces of the assembled gathering, it was easy to guess that they were deliberating on the life, fortune and happiness of their fellow-creatures. Their only mandate was their conscience, like the associates of an ancient and mysterious tribunal; but they represented far greater interests than those of kings and nations, for they spoke in the name of the passions and happiness of the infinite generations that were to come after them.

The grandson of the famous Boulle was seated before

a round table on which was the convicting evidence, executed with rare cleverness; I, wretched secretary, occupied a place at this desk so as to frame a report of the séance.

“Gentlemen,” said an old man, “the first question which will be submitted to your deliberations is clearly indicated in a passage of a letter written to the Princess of Wales, Caroline d’Anspach, by the widow of Monsieur, brother of Louis XIV., and mother of the Regent: ‘The queen of Spain has a way of making her husband do everything she wants him to do. The king is very devout and believes that he would be damned if he touched any woman but his wife, and the good prince has a very amorous temperament. In this way, the queen obtains anything she wants from him. She has had castors put on his bed. If he refuses her anything, she just pushes his bed away from hers. If he grants her her wish, the beds come together again, much to the delight of the king, as he is very given to——’ I shall proceed no further, gentlemen, as the virtuous frankness of the German princess might be deemed immoral.”

Should wise husbands adopt the bed with castors? This is the problem which we have to solve.

The unanimity of the votes left no doubt regarding the matter. I was told to consign to the report of the deliberations that, if two married people slept in two separate beds in the same room, the beds should not have square castors.

“But without having the present decision influence in any way whatever mode of sleeping is thought best for married people,” one member remarked.

The president handed me an elegantly bound volume containing the original edition, published in 1788, of the letters of Madame Charlotte-Elizabeth de Bavière, widow of Monsieur, only brother of Louis XIV., and while I was transcribing the quoted passage, he resumed:

“Why, gentlemen, you must have received in your homes the bulletin containing the second question.”

“I ask the right to speak!” cried the youngest of the gathering of jealous husbands.

The president sat down after having made a gesture of assent.

“Gentlemen,” said the young husband, “are we fully prepared to deliberate on a matter so grave as the one presented by the almost general indiscretion of beds? Is there not a greater question to be solved than the mere shape, etc.? As for myself, I see therein a problem which concerns human intelligence. The mystery of conception, gentlemen, is still shrouded in the darkness that modern science is just beginning to dispel. We do not know up to what point exterior influences act on microscopical animals, whose discovery is due to the untiring patience of the Hills, Bakers, Joblots, Eichorns, Gleichens, Spallanzanias, and more especially of Mueller and lastly of Monsieur Bory-de-Saint-Vincent. The imperfection of the bed contains a musical question of the highest importance, and as for myself, I declare that I have written to Italy in order to obtain certain information concerning the manner in which beds are generally established there. We shall then know if there are many springs, screws and castors, and if the dryness of the wood due to the sun’s action does not produce *ab ovo* the harmony whose sentiment is innate with the Italians. On account of these motives I recommend an adjournment.”

“Eh! are we here to debate on music!” exclaimed a gentleman from the West, rising abruptly. “It is, above all, a question of morals, and this question dominates everything else.”

“However,” said one of the most influential members of the council, “the advice of the first speaker does not seem to me devoid of interest. In the last century, gentlemen, one of our most philosophically humorous and humorously philosophical writers, Sterne, complained of the small care which was taken in the making of men. ‘Shame,’ he cried, ‘the one who copies the divine physiognomy of man receives plaudits and wreaths, while the one who presents the masterpiece, the prototype of the imitation, has, like virtue, but his handiwork to reward him!’ Would it not be better to try to improve the human race instead of horseflesh? Gentlemen, I once passed through a little town in the Orléanais, where the entire population consisted of hunchbacks and wretched-looking people, real children of misfortune.

Well, the remark of the first speaker reminds me that all the beds there were in bad condition and that nothing but hideous sights presented themselves to the eyes of those married couples. Eh! gentlemen, can it be that our spirits are in the same state as our ideas when, instead of divine music made by angels flitting hither and thither in the heavens, the most strident notes of the most importunate, impatient and horrible terrestrial melody reach our ears? Perhaps we owe some of the greatest geniuses that have honored humanity to solidly constructed beds and the turbulent population which engendered the French Revolution was perhaps conceived on a multitude of shaky couches with carved and insecure posts; while the Orientals, whose various races are so fine, have a special bed system. I am in favor of an adjournment."

And the gentleman sat down.

A man who belonged to the Methodist sect arose:

"Why change the question? We are not here to improve the race nor the work. We should not lose sight of the interests of marital jealousy and the principles of wholesome morality. Are you ignorant of the fact that the noise that you complain of seems more fearful to the uncertain wife than the thunder-clap of the Last Judgment? Are you forgetting that all the suits of criminal conversation have only been won by husbands because of this conjugal plaint? I advise you, gentlemen, to consult the divorces of Lord Abergavenny, of the Viscount of Bolingbroke, of the deceased Queen, of Eliza Draper, Mrs. Harris, in a word, all those that are published in the twenty volumes issued by . . ." (The secretary did not catch the name of the English publisher.)

The adjournment was pronounced. The youngest member proposed to take up a collection to reward the author of the best dissertation addressed to the Society on the question looked upon by Sterne as having so much importance; but, at the end of the séance, there were only eighteen shillings in the president's hat.

The deliberation of the Society which was recently formed in London for the improvement of marriage and morals, and which Lord Byron pursued with his sarcasm, was trans-

mitted to us through the kindness of the Honorable W. Hawkins, Esq., first cousin of the famous Captain Clutterbuck.

This excerpt may serve to solve the difficulties that are to be found in the theory of the bed relative to its construction.

But the author of this book thinks that the English association has given too much importance to this prejudicial question. There are perhaps just as many good reasons for being a *rossiniste* as there are for being a *solidiste* in the matter of beds, and the author admits that he is above or beneath solving the difficulty. He believes with Lawrence Sterne that it is shameful for European civilization to have so few physiological observations on *callipédie*, and he renounces giving his Meditations on the subject, because it would be hard to couch them in prudish language and because they might be misunderstood or wrongly interpreted. This contempt will leave an eternal gap in this part of the book; but he will have the great satisfaction of bequeathing a fourth work to the coming century which he thus enriches by all that he does not accomplish, a negative magnificence, the example of which will be followed by all those who claim to have a great many ideas.

The bed theory will give us much more important questions to solve than the ones which are furnished our neighbors by castors and the murmurs of the criminal conversation.

We recognize only three ways of organizing a bed (in the usual sense which this word implies) among civilized nations, and principally among the privileged classes, to whom this book is addressed.

These three ways are:

1st—Twin Beds.

2d—Separate Rooms.

3d—One Bed.

Before proceeding to examine these three methods of cohabitation which must necessarily exert very different influences on the happiness of husbands and wives, we should throw a rapid glance on the action of the bed and on the rôle which it plays in the political economy of human life.



The most incontestable principle in the whole matter is that *beds were made to sleep in*.

It would be easy to prove that the custom of sleeping together was introduced very late in respect to the antiquity of marriage.

By what syllogisms did men reach the stage of putting into practice such a harmful custom as that, with regard to happiness, health, pleasure, and even vanity? This would be interesting to investigate.

If you knew that one of your rivals had found a way of exposing you, before the eyes of the one who is dear to you, in a position in which you were supremely ridiculous, for instance, while your mouth was distorted like a tragedy mask, or while your eloquent lips, like the spout of a fountain, distilled drop by drop pure water, you would probably feel like stabbing him. This rival is Sleep. Is there a man in the world who has any idea of what he looks like and what he does when he is asleep?

We are in the toils of an unknown power which seizes us unconsciously and renders us like living corpses. It manifests itself in the strangest ways; some people are clever when they sleep, while others are stupid.

There are some people who sleep with their mouths hanging open in the most ludicrous fashion.

Others there are who snore loudly enough to make the walls shake.

Most people look like those young demons by Michael Angelo who mock at passers-by with their protruding tongues.

I know of only one person in the world who sleeps normally, and that is the Agamemnon that Guérin has shown stretched out on his couch just when Clytæmnestra, incited by Ægysthus, advanced upon him to murder him. Therefore, it has always been my ambition to appear like the "king of kings" as soon as I shall have the terrible dread of being seen in my sleep by other eyes than those belonging to Providence. After I had once seen my old nurse *soufflant des pois*, to use a popular but consecrated expression, I added to the litany which I recite to Saint-Honoré,

my patron saint, a prayer that he would forever guard me from such pitiful eloquence.

When a man wakes up in the morning with a dazed expression on his face, his head draped in a bandanna which falls over his left eye like a policeman's cap, he is certainly ridiculous and it would be hard to recognize in him the glorious husband celebrated by Rousseau; still, there is a gleam of intelligence in that half-dead face. And if you, artists, are anxious to see caricatures, just travel in a mail-coach and in each little village where the coach stops, look at the various faces! But, even if you are a hundred times more ridiculous than those weird countenances, at least your mouth is shut and your eyes are open and you have some sort of expression. . . . Do you know how you looked an hour before your awakening, or during your first sleep, when, neither man nor beast, you were falling under the spell of dreams issuing from the Ivory Gates? . . . That is a secret between your wife and God!

Was it to be constantly reminded of the stupidity of sleep that the Romans always decorated their beds with an ass's head? . . . We shall leave that question to the gentlemen who compose the membership of the Académie des Inscriptions.

Surely, the first man who through the Devil's agency established the custom of sharing his wife's bed, must have possessed to perfection the art of slumbering gracefully. Now, you must not forget to add to the sciences which must be acquired before marriage, the talent to sleep with elegance. Therefore, we shall place here, as an appendix to axiom XXV of the Conjugal Catechism, the two following axioms:

A husband's slumber should be as light as a watchdog's, so that he may never be caught sleeping.

A man should accustom himself from childhood to sleep bareheaded.

Some poets pretend that modesty and the so-called mysteries of love are the causes for uniting two married people in one bed; but it is well known that if primitive man sought dense thickets, the moss of wild ravines, the stone roof of

caves to protect his pleasures, it was because love left him practically defenseless toward his enemies. No, it is not any more natural to place two heads on one pillow than it is reasonable to muffle up one's neck in a tie. But civilization appeared and imprisoned one million men in a space of four square miles; gathered them in droves and herded them in streets, houses, apartments, rooms and spaces eight feet square; in a little while it will endeavor to make them telescope themselves like the lenses of an opera-glass.

From this and from a great many other causes, such as economy, timidity, and wrongful jealousy, sprang cohabitation; and this custom created the recurring and simultaneous awakening and retiring.

And here is the most capricious thing in the world, here is the most eminently mobile sentiment, which is valuable only through its sudden inspirations and desires, which only pleases through the genuineness of its expansions, here, in a word, is Love subjected to a monastic rule and to the geometry of the bureau of longitudes!

If I were a father, I would hate the child who, morning and night, had an outburst of sentiment and came to welcome me at fixed hours: that is how every generous and spontaneous human feeling is crushed. Judge by this what love at stated times must be!

It belongs to the Creator of all things to make the sun rise and set, morning and evening, in the midst of gorgeous surroundings, forever new, and nobody here below can, in spite of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau's hyperbole, play the rôle of the sun.

The result of these preliminary observations is that it is unnatural to find two heads under one canopy;

That a man, when asleep, is almost always ridiculous;

Lastly, that constant cohabitation presents the greatest dangers for husbands.

We shall, therefore, try to accommodate our customs to Nature's laws and combine Nature and customs so that a husband may find a useful auxiliary and a means of defense in the mahogany of his bed.

*I.—Twin Beds*

If the most brilliant and handsome of husbands wishes to be minotaurized after a year's time, he will surely arrive at the desired result if he has the imprudence to unite two beds under the voluptuous dome of one alcove.

The decree is brief, and here are the motives:

The first husband who invented twin beds must have been some *accoucheur* who, fearing that in his sleep he might injure his wife's unborn child, hit upon this device to protect her.

But no, it must have been some predestinated husband who feared either himself or a tuneful catarrh.

Perhaps it was some young man, who, fearing his excessive tenderness and affection, found himself too near the edge of the bed and therefore in the imminent danger of falling out, or too near his charming spouse to let her have the proper rest.

But might it not have been some Maintenon helped by her confessor, or an ambitious wife desiring to rule her husband? Or, more surely, a pretty little Pompadour afflicted with that Parisian infirmity so amusingly described by Monsieur de Maurepas in the quatrain which earned him his long disgrace and which certainly contributed to the misfortunes of the reign of Louis XVI.:

*Iris, on aime vos appas,  
Vos grâces sont vives et franches;  
Et les fleurs naissent sous vos pas,  
Mais ce ne sont que des fleurs. . . .*

Lastly, why might it not have been a philosopher dismayed at the disillusion that a woman must experience when she beholds a sleeping man? And *he* most certainly always rolled himself in a blanket and slept bareheaded.

Unknown author of this Jesuitical method, whoever you may be, in the Devil's name, I extend you greeting and brotherhood! . . . You have been the cause of a great number of misfortunes. Your handiwork bears the stamp of all

half-measures; it satisfies nothing and participates in the inconveniences of the two other measures without extending their benefits.

How can the nineteenth century man, this supremely intelligent being, who has displayed supernatural power, has employed his genius to disguise the mechanism of his existence, to ennoble his needs so that he would not have to despise them, who has gone so far as to extract the treasures, perfumes, nay, the very souls, from Chinese leaves, Egyptian beans and Mexican grains; who has cut crystal, carved silver, melted gold, painted clay and, in a word, solicited every art to find decorations for his alimentary processes; how is it that this king, after having concealed the second of his miseries under sheer fabrics, covered it with diamonds, strewn it with rubies, buried it beneath fine linens and diaphanous muslins and the wonderful designs of real lace, should let all this luxury wreck itself on a bed? . . . What is the use of rendering the entire universe an accomplice of our existence, our lies and this poesy? What is the use of making laws, religions and moral systems, if the invention of an upholsterer (perhaps it was an upholsterer who invented twin beds) robs our love of all its illusions, despoils it of its majestic cortège and only leaves its odium and ugliness? For that is the whole story of twin beds.

### LXIII

To appear either sublime or grotesque, this is the alternative to which we have reduced desire.

When shared, our love is sublime; but sleep in separate beds, and yours will always be grotesque. The misunderstandings to which this semi-separation gives rise, can be reduced to two situations that will reveal to us the causes of a great number of misfortunes.

Toward midnight, a young wife yawns and puts her hair in curl-papers. I do not know whether her depression comes from a headache which is about to declare itself on the right or left side of her head or if she is in one of those moods where everything looks dark; but to watch her lan-

guidly doing her hair, to watch her slowly taking off her garters, it seems to me that she would rather drown herself than seek a much-needed rest. At that particular moment, she is under some degree of the North pole, somewhere in Spitzberg or Greenland. Careless and cold, she gets into her bed thinking perhaps, like Madame Gauthier Shandy, that the next day will be one of illness, that her husband really comes home late, that the floating island she had for dinner was not sweet enough and that she owes her dress-maker over five hundred francs; in a word, she thinks of all the disagreeable things that a woman can think of. After a little while, in comes the husband; having been out on business, he has taken a little punch and has become emancipated. He takes off his boots, drops his clothes on a chair, leaves his socks on the floor and his shoe-horn in front of the fireplace; and while he is draping his head in a red handkerchief, without even giving himself the trouble to hide its protruding ends, he makes a few remarks to his better-half which constitute sometimes the entire conversation at those nebulous times when one's mind is half asleep. "So you are in bed! Goodness, how cold it is to-night! You are not very talkative, my dear! You are already rolled up in your sheets! . . . Sly mouse! you are making believe that you are asleep! . . ." These remarks are punctuated by yawns; and after a number of little events which vary according to persons, our hero dives into his bed, which gives forth a loud groan. But here, on the fantastical cloth that seems to spread before us as soon as we close our lids, appear the image of a pretty face, the outlines of well-shaped limbs; here are the graceful forms he has seen during the day. He is pricked by impetuous desires. . . . He glances at his wife. He sees a charming face framed by delicate embroidery; as drowsy as he is, he nevertheless distinguishes her eyes, half-hidden by lacy frills; divine outlines are revealed by the counterpane. . . . My pet? . . . "I'm asleep, *mon ami*. . . ." How will he be able to land in this frigid region? I will grant that you are young, handsome, clever and attractive. How are you going to cross the channel which separates Greenland from Italy? The space that

lies between heaven and hell is not greater than the line which prevents your two beds from making one; for your wife is cold and you are a prey to ardent desires. If there were nothing more than the technical action of crossing from one bed to the other, that movement alone places the husband with his head bound in a bandanna in the most ridiculous position one can imagine. Danger, want of time, opportunity, everything between lovers tends to embellish these painful situations, for love has a golden mantle which it throws over all, even over the smoking débris of a town taken by storm; while, in order not to notice débris on the finest carpets, under the most beautiful silks, marriage has need of the enchantment of love. Even if it only takes you a second to reach your wife's boundaries, *Duty*, that divinity of matrimony, has had time to rise before her in all its hideousness.

Ah! to a cold woman how mad a man must appear when desire renders him alternately furious and tender, insolent and suppliant, as biting as an epigram and as gentle as a madrigal; when, in a word, he plays more or less cleverly the scene where, in *Venice Saved*, the genius of Orway represents Senator Antonio repeating a hundred times while he kneels before Aquilina: "Aquilina, Quilina, Lina, Aqui, Naqui!" without obtaining anything but lashings for his pains. In the eyes of every woman, even his legitimate spouse, the more passionate a man is under such circumstances, the more grotesque he appears. When he commands, he is odious, and he will be deceived if he abuses his power. Here you should bring to mind several aphorisms of the *Conjugal Catechism*, and you will soon see that you are violating its most sacred principles. Whether or not a woman yields, twin beds introduce into marriage something so abrupt, so clear, that the chastest woman and the cleverest husband cannot help becoming immodest.

This scene, which takes place in a thousand different ways and which can be brought about by a thousand other incidents, has, as a sequel, the other situation, which is less amusing and more terrible.

One evening, as I was discoursing upon these grave mat-

ters with the late Monsieur de Nocé, of whom I have already spoken, a tall old man with white hair, his most intimate friend, and whose name I shall not mention, because he is still living, gazed upon us with rather a melancholy air. We guessed that he was about to relate some scandalous adventure, and thenceforth looked upon him in the same way that the stenographer of the *Moniteur* must gaze upon a minister about to deliver a speech which has already been made known to him (the stenographer). The narrator was an old emigrated Marquis whose fortune and family had perished in the Revolution. The Marquis having been one of the most inconsistent women of her day, he was well qualified to discuss feminine nature. As he had reached the age where everything, so to speak, is viewed from the grave, he related his experiences as if they had happened to Mark Antony or to Cleopatra.

“My young friend,” he said to me, for it was I who had closed the discussion, “your remarks bring to my mind an evening where one of my friends acted in such a manner as to prejudice his wife against him for all time. Now, in my time, a woman could take her revenge very easily, for there were not many slips ‘twixt the cup and the lips.’ My friends slept in separate beds, but under the same canopy. They had just returned from a very brilliant ball given by the Comte de Mercy, the Emperor’s ambassador. The husband had lost quite a lot of money at the gaming-tables and was completely buried in his thoughts. He was wondering how he could pay six thousand francs the next day! And you remember, Nocé, how often it was hard to raise a hundred *écus* among ten *mousquetaires*. . . . The young wife, as it always happens in those cases, was provokingly cheerful. ‘Give Monsieur le Marquis everything he needs for his toilet,’ she said to the valet. In those times, people used to dress when they retired. This strange order did not bring the husband out of his meditation. Then, madame, aided by her maid, proceeded to deck herself out for the night. ‘Did I please you this evening?’ she inquired. ‘You always please me!’ replied the Marquis, continuing to walk up and down the room. ‘You are very thoughtful! Why



don't you speak to me, *beau ténébreux?*' said she, placing herself in front of him in the most attractive *négligé*. But you can form no idea of the fascination of the Marquise; one had to know her. Eh! she was a woman you knew, Nocé!" he said with a rather sarcastic smile. "Well, in spite of her wiles and her beauty, she failed to make her husband forget his loss, and she retired alone. But women always have a good stock of resources; so, just as the Marquis was climbing into his bed, she exclaimed: 'Oh! how cold I am!' 'So am I,' he replied. 'How is it that the beds have not been warmed?' And I rang . . ."

The Comte de Nocé could not refrain from laughing and the Marquis stopped short.

Not to divine a woman's desires, to snore when she is awake, to be in Siberia when she is in the tropics, these are only a few of the drawbacks of twin beds. What will not a passionate woman resort to when she finds out that her husband is a sound sleeper?

I am indebted to Beyle for an Italian anecdote, to which his dry and sarcastic manner of speech lent great charm. He told it to me as an instance of feminine boldness.

Ludovico's palace was at one end of Milan and the Comtessa Perneti's was at the other end. One night, Ludovico, determined to risk everything in order to gaze for a second upon his beloved's countenance, enters as if by magic into his mistress's home. He reaches the nuptial chamber. Eliza Perneti, whose heart no doubt shared her lover's desire, heard his footsteps and recognized them. Suddenly, through the walls, she beholds a passionate face. She leaves the conjugal couch, reaches the threshold of the room, gives her lover one rapid glance, seizes his hand and drags him after her.

"But your husband will kill you!" he gasped.

"Perhaps."

But all this is nothing. Let us grant that a good many husbands are light sleepers. Let us grant that they do not snore and that they are always aware of the degree of latitude of their wives! What is more, all the reasons we

have adduced to condemn the use of double beds, will be allowed to have little weight. Even so, one last consideration should proscribe the habit of uniting two beds under one canopy.

In the position in which a husband finds himself, we have considered the bed as a means of defense. It is only here that he is able to find out whether his wife's love for him is growing or decreasing. It is the matrimonial barometer. Now, when you sleep in separate beds, you cannot know these things. You will learn, when you reach "Civil War" (see third part), of what tremendous usefulness the bed is and how many secrets are involuntarily revealed there by a woman.

Therefore, you must never be fooled by the false *bonhomie* of twin beds.

It is the silliest, most perfidious and dangerous invention in the world. Shame and curses on its inventor!

But, however dangerous this method may be to young married people, it is very wholesome and proper for couples who have been wedded twenty years. The husband and wife are much more comfortable and can pursue without restrictions the duets occasioned by their respective catarrhs. They even may thank the groans that a painful rheumatism or stubborn gout causes them to utter, for a laborious renewal of their old-time ardor, if, however, their coughs are not too unremitting.

We did not think it advisable to mention the exceptions which sometimes justify a husband using the twin-bed system. These are calamities that must be endured. However, Bonaparte's opinion was that after married people had once exchanged their souls and their perspiration (those were his words, *échange d'âme et de transpiration*), nothing, not even sickness, should ever separate them again. This matter, however, is far too delicate to be subjected to principles.

Some narrow-minded people may state that there are a number of old-fashioned families whose erotic jurisprudence is unchangeable regarding the matter of twin beds, and that their members are happy from "generation to genera-

tion." But, in reply, the author will only say that he knows a number of very respectable people who spend their lives watching billiard games.

Therefore, this method should be discountenanced by all intelligent people and we shall pass on to the second manner of organizing the nuptial couch.

### II.—*Separate Rooms*

In all Europe there are not one hundred husbands in every nation who possess sufficiently well the science of marriage and of life to be able to live in a separate apartment and away from their wives.

To be able to put this practice into execution is the last word of intellectual and virile power.

Two married people living in separate apartments have either divorced or found happiness. They either hate or worship one another.

We shall not try to deduce here the admirable precepts of this theory which aims to render constancy a delightful and easy task. This reserve on the part of the author is respect and not inability. It is sufficient for him to have proclaimed that, only through this system, can married people realize the dreams of so many great souls: it will be understood by all the faithful.

As to the laymen—it will soon make short work of their curious inquiries, by telling them that the aim of the institution is to procure happiness for one woman. What man would deprive society of all the talents he thinks he possesses for the benefit of a woman! However, to render one's mate happy is one of the best titles to glory that can be produced in the Valley of Josaphat, since the Scriptures tell us that Eve was not content with Paradise. She wanted to taste of forbidden fruit, the eternal symbol of adultery.

But there exists a peremptory reason which prevents us from developing this brilliant theory. In this work it would be a *hors d'œuvre*. In the position in which we have supposed a married couple to be, the man imprudent enough to sleep away from his wife would not be worthy of pity

were some misfortune to befall him, for he would have called it down upon his head.

Therefore, let us sum up.

All men are not doughty enough to undertake to live in separate apartments; while every man can, after a fashion, cope with the difficulties which arise from sleeping in one bed with his wife.

So we shall try to solve the difficulties that superficial minds might perceive in this last system, for which we very plainly show our preference.

But may this paragraph, which is silent, so to speak, and abandoned to the comments of a great many couples, serve as a pedestal for the impressive figure of Lycurgus, the ancient legislator to whom the Greeks owed such keen observations on marriage. May his system be understood by future generations! And if modern customs are too lax to adopt it in its entirety, may they at least be imbued with the spirit of this admirable legislation.

### *III.—One Bed*

One December night, Frederick the Great, gazing upon the heavens where the stars shone clearly and brightly, announcing sharp cold, exclaimed: "This is weather that is going to give many a soldier to Prussia!"

Thus the king, in one brief sentence, expressed the greatest drawback which is to be found in the constant cohabitation of married couples. It is permissible to both Napoleon and Frederick to appreciate a woman by the number of children she has brought into the world; but a talented husband should, according to the maxims of the thirteenth Meditation, consider the manufacturing of a child only as a means of defense, and it rests with him whether he considers it wise to make use of it lavishly.

This observation leads to mysteries which the physiological Muse cannot probe. She has consented to enter the nuptial chamber when it is untenanted, but, modest and virtuous, she would blush were she to witness the sports of love.

As the Muse here shields her eyes behind her white fingers

so as not to see anything between the spaces, like a young girl, she will take advantage of this attack of modesty to decry our customs.

In England, the bedroom of a married couple is sacred. The man and wife alone have the privilege of entering it and more than one lady of quality makes her own bed, it is said. Of all the fads of our English neighbors, why is it that the only one we have scorned is the one whose delicacy and mystery should appeal to all refined souls on the Continent? Fine-feeling women condemn the immodesty with which strangers in France are allowed access to this sanctuary of marriage. As for ourselves, who have so energetically denounced the women who emphasize their pregnancy abroad, our opinion on the subject is firm. If we want bachelorhood to respect matrimony, married people should have some regard for the susceptibility of bachelors.

We must acknowledge that the mere act of sleeping with your wife every night may be thought a most insolent demonstration of fatuity.

However, such is the decision of the doctor of conjugal arts and sciences. In the first place, unless the resolution is made never to sleep at home, this way is the only one which remains for a husband, as we have pointed out the dangers of the two preceding systems. We therefore must try to prove that the last method offers more advantages and fewer drawbacks than the first ones, as regards the crisis which may confront a couple.

Our remarks on twin beds must have shown husbands that, in a sense, they are always expected to be of the same degree of temperature as their wives; now, it seems quite natural to us that this perfect harmony should be easy enough to establish under the white shield that covers them with its protection; and this is always a very great advantage.

Indeed, nothing is easier than to verify at all times the degree of love and expansion to which a woman attains, when the one pillow serves as resting-place for both heads.

Mankind carries a memorandum which shows clearly and without error the sum total of sensuality men and women possess. This strange *gynometer* is the palm of the hand.

The hand is effectively the organ which reveals the soonest our sensual affections. *Chirolgy* is a fifth work which I bequeath to my successors, for I shall only study the elements which are useful to my subject.

The hand is the essential organ of touch. Now, this is the one sense which can replace the others most satisfactorily, but which they cannot very well replace. The hand alone has executed whatever man has invented up to the present time and has, so to speak, become *action*. The entire sum of our energy passes through the hand and it is noteworthy that great men usually have fine hands, the perfection of which is the distinctive characteristic of high callings. Christ accomplished all his miracles by the laying on of hands. The hand transudes life; wherever it is laid it leaves magic traces, and it shares in half of the pleasures of love. A physician can discover all the peculiarities of our system through our hands. They exhale, more than any other part of the body, nervous fluids or the unknown substance which, for want of a better name, must be called the *will*. The eye may disclose the state of the soul, but the hand discloses the secrets of both our bodies and our minds. We acquire the faculty of silencing our eyes, our lips, our brows; but the hand does not dissemble, and no other feature can be compared to it for richness of expression. The warmth and coolness it is susceptible of are imperceptible shades which escape the notice of thoughtless people; but a man can distinguish them, if he has ever studied the anatomy of sentiments and life. Thus, the hand can be dry, moist, burning, icy, soft, hard and unctuous. It trembles, hardens, softens or becomes lubricated. In a word, it offers an inexplicable phenomenon that one is tempted to call the *incarnation of thought*. It is the despair of the sculptor and the artist when they desire to reproduce the changeable aspects of its mysterious lineaments. To stretch forth a hand to a man means to save him. It is the pledge of our every sentiment. From all time, witches have read our fate in the lines of the palm, which have nothing fantastical and which correspond with the principles of character and life. Lastly, one says, "the hand of God,"

“the heavy hand of the law,” and when one wishes to express a bold enterprise, “*un coup de main.*”

To learn how to read sentiments by the atmospherical variations of the hand (which a woman invariably yields without distrust), is a far more satisfactory and reliable study than that of the face.

Therefore, by acquiring that science, you can arm yourself with great power and you will have a thread to guide you through the labyrinths of the most capricious hearts. Now, your cohabitation is acquitted of many mistakes and enriched by many treasures.

Now, do you believe in good faith that you should be a Hercules in order to spend each night with your wife? What an absurdity! In the position in which he finds himself, a clever husband has more resources to help him out than Madame de Maintenon, when she was compelled, at a dinner, to make a story take the place of a missing course.

Buffon and several other physiologists hold that our organs are more fatigued by desire than by the strongest sensations. Indeed, is not desire a sort of intuitive possession? Is it not, in regard to visible action, what the accidents of the intellectual life which we enjoy during sleep are to the events of our material existence? That strong *apprehension* of things, does it not necessitate a more powerful interior action than the exterior one? If our gestures are only the manifestation of actions accomplished by our minds, judge how repeated desires must consume our vital fluids? But do not passions, which are but masses of desires, leave their mark on the faces of gamblers, ambitious men, and do they not use up the body with marvelous rapidity?

Then, these observations must contain the germs of a mysterious system, equally indorsed by Plato and Epicurus; we shall leave it to your meditations, covered by the veil which was used on Egyptian statues.

But the greatest mistake that men can make is to believe that love does not reside in those elusive moments which, according to the fine expression of Bossuet, resemble in our

lives, the nails strewn on walls; they appear very numerous to the eye, but when they are gathered together they are but a handful.

Love is almost always made up of conversation. There is only one thing inexhaustible about a lover and that is kindness, grace and delicacy. To feel everything, to divine and anticipate everything; to reproach without hurting; to double the value of an action by delicate proceedings; to put flattery into actions and not into words; to make oneself understood rather than to grasp quickly; to touch without rudeness; to put a caressing note in one's voice and in one's glance; never to embarrass; to amuse without offending good taste; always to flatter the heart; to appeal to the soul. . . . This is what women want, and they will gladly give up all the joys of all the nights of Messalina to live with a man who will lavish upon them these soul delights of which they are so fond and which cost a man nothing but a little effort.

These lines contain the greatest part of the secrets of the nuptial bed. Perhaps there may be some jokers who will take this lengthy definition of courtesy for love, while, after all, it is nothing but advice to treat your wife as you would the minister on whom depends the position you crave.

I can hear thousands of voices exclaim that this work pleads woman's cause oftener than man's;

That most women are unworthy of these delicate attentions, and that they would take advantage of them;

That there are libertine women who would not look with favor upon what they would term "mystifications";

That they are nothing but vain creatures and are always thinking of dress;

That they are sometimes strangely stubborn;

That they would become angry at an attentio . . .

That they are silly, brainless, worthless, . . .

In reply to these clamors, we shall here inscribe a sentence, which, between two blank lines, may perhaps look like a thought, to use an expression of Beaumarchais



## LXIV

A wife is to her husband what he has made her.

To possess a true guide to a woman's sentiments, to render her her own spy, to keep oneself at the same love temperature, not to leave her, to be able to listen to her dreams, to avoid the mistakes that ruin so many marriages, are the reasons which should make the one bed system triumph over the other methods of organizing the nuptial couch.

As there is no advantage without a corresponding disadvantage, you will be compelled to slumber gracefully, to preserve your dignity under the sheets, to be courteous, to sleep lightly, not to cough unduly, and to imitate modern writers who construct more prefaces than books.

## MEDITATION XVIII

## CONCERNING CONJUGAL REVOLUTIONS

THERE always comes a time when nations and women, even the dullest, realize that they are being imposed upon. A very artful policy may be able to deceive for a long while; but mankind would be too lucky if the deception could always be kept up; there would be far less bloodshed among nations and among married people.

However, let us hope that the means of defense which are contained in the preceding Meditations will suffice a certain number of husbands who will thus be able to escape from the clutches of the Minotaur!

Oh! grant the doctor that more than one love secretly nurtured will perish under the strict régime of hygiene or will become dulled by marital policy. Yes (consoling error), more than one lover will be disgruntled by the personal means, more than one husband will be able to cover with an impenetrable veil the workings of his machiavellism and more than one man will succeed better than the ancient philosopher who cried: *Nolo coronari!*

But, unfortunately, we are constrained to acknowledge a sad truth. Despotism has its security and is similar to the warning of an approaching storm, which allows the traveler stretched on the parched ground to distinguish, amid the ill-omened silence, the song of a distant cricket. One fine morning, a woman discovers with an eagle eye the crafty maneuvers which have rendered her the victim of an infernal policy. At first, she is quite furious at having been virtuous so long. At what age, on what day does this terrible revolution take place? It depends entirely upon the genius of each respective husband; for we are not all called to practice the precepts of the conjugal Gospel with equal success.

“A man must love his wife very little,” cries one mystified married woman, “to put such things into practice! What! ever since the first day of our marriage, he has suspected me! It is simply monstrous; a woman would not be capable of anything like that!”

That is the theme. Each husband can imagine the variations which the character of the young Eumenides he has married will introduce therein.

A woman does not fly into a passion when she discovers this. She keeps quiet and dissimulates. Her revenge will be mysterious. However, during the crisis which we suppose you have had to pass through since your honeymoon waned, you had only her hesitations to combat; while now, you will have to struggle against a firm resolve. She has decided that she will be avenged. Henceforth, her countenance and her heart are as of bronze. Civil war will only begin the moment that an event, like the traditional drop of water that makes the cup to overflow, an event more or less grave, has rendered you odious to her. The time which must elapse between this last hour, fatal term of your congeniality and the day when your wife discovered your double-dealings is quite long enough for you to attempt a series of defensive maneuvers which we are now going to develop.

Until now, you have protected your honor by means of an entirely occult power. Henceforth, the workings of your conjugal machinery will be thoroughly exposed to view.

Where, at one time, you were only trying to prevent the crime, now you will have to strike. You began by negotiating and you end by sallying forth on your steed, with your hand on your sword, like a Parisian gendarme. You will make your mount show off, you will brandish your sword, shout at the top of your lungs and try to disperse the crowd without injuring a fly.

As the author has been compelled to find a transition to pass from the occult means to the patent ones, so is it necessary for a husband to justify the rather abrupt change in his policy; for in marriage, as well as in literature, the whole art consists in graceful transitions. For you, this is of the utmost importance. In what a dreadful position you would place yourself were your wife to complain of your conduct now, the most critical period of your whole married life!

So you must find a way of justifying the secret tyranny of your initial policy; a way which will prepare your wife's mind to the acerbity of the measures which you are going to take; a way which, far from alienating her esteem, will conciliate her; a way which will render you worthy of her forgiveness and will even invest you with a little of the glamour with which you captivated her before marriage.

"But what policy can I employ? Does such a thing exist?"

Yes.

But what skill, what tact, what art must a husband possess to display the rich acting of the treasure we are about to reveal to him! In order to play the passion which is going to save you, you will require all the depth of Talma.

This passion is *jealousy*.

"My husband is jealous of me. He was so at the very outset. . . . He concealed his feelings through excessive delicacy. So he still loves me. . . . Now I will be able to manage him! . . ."

These are the discoveries that a woman should make progressively, after the lovely scenes of comedy that you are going to play, and a man of the world would really have

to be very dull not to make a woman believe whatever flatters her.

What perfection of hypocrisy you will have to display in the co-ordination of your conduct, so as to arouse your wife's curiosity, to busy her with a new study, to make her wander in the labyrinth of your mind! . . .

Sublime actors, do you divine the diplomatic reticences, the crafty gestures, the mysterious words, the fiery glances that will some night rouse your wives to the task of trying to wring from you the secret of your passion?

Oh! to laugh in one's sleeve while making fierce eyes; not to lie and not to tell the truth; to master the mind of a woman and let her believe that she is fooling you, the while you are tightening the noose around her neck! Oh! comedy without an audience, played heart to heart, and where both of you look forward to a sure success! . . .

It will be your wife who will teach you that you are jealous, who will show you that she knows you better than you know yourself, who will prove the uselessness of your wiles and perhaps defy you. She will rejoice with rapture over the superiority which she believes she possesses over you; you raise yourself in her estimation, for she thinks that your conduct is quite natural. Only your distrust of her was useless; if she had wanted to deceive you, who could have prevented her doing it?

Then, one fine morning, passion will master you, and finding a pretext in some trifle, you will make a scene in which your wrath will disclose the extremities which you contemplate. That is the promulgation of your new code.

Do not fear that she will grow angry, for she needs your jealousy. She will even excite your anger. In the first place, she will see in it the justification of her conduct; and then she will find it extremely advantageous to play the part of a victim before the world; will she not find many delightful sympathies? Then, she will use it as a weapon against you, thereby hoping to ensnare you into some trap.

She foresees a thousand future pleasures in your jealousy and her imagination smiles at the barriers with which you surround her; will she not be compelled to overcome them?

Women possess better than we do the art of analyzing the two human sentiments which they use against us and to which they fall victims. They have the instinct of love, because, for them, love is life, and the instinct of jealousy, because it is about the only way they can govern us. With them, jealousy is genuine, it is produced by the instinct of preservation and contains the alternative of living or dying. But, with man, this almost undefinable affection is always a nonsense when he does not use it as a means to an end.

To be jealous of a woman who loves you is a strange vice of the reasoning faculty. Either we are, or we are not, loved; placed at these two extremes, jealousy is a useless sentiment for a man; it can no more be explained than fear, and perhaps it is fear in love. But it does not mean to doubt one's wife, it means to lack confidence in oneself.

To be jealous, is the climax of egotism, lack of self-conceit, and the irritation of false vanity. Women cultivate with care this ridiculous sentiment, because it means pin-money, diamonds, dresses, and because it is the thermometer of their power. Therefore, if you did not appear blinded by jealousy, your wife would be on her guard; for there is but one trap which she will not distrust and that is the trap she lays for herself.

Thus a woman should easily become the dupe of a husband clever enough to give the unavoidable revolution which takes place sooner or later in his wife, the direction which we have just indicated.

Then you will introduce into your household the strange phenomenon whose existence is shown us by the asymptotes of geometry. Your wife will forever try to minotaurize you without being able to succeed in her desire. Like the knots that are never so tight as when they are being loosened, she will work in the interest of your power, the while she believes she is working against you.

The last word in *acting* is when a prince can induce a nation to believe that he is fighting for it, when, in truth, the nation is giving up its life for him.

But a great many husbands will find an initial difficulty in carrying out this campaign plan. If the wife's dissimula-

tion is very deep, when will they be able to recognize by signs the time when she gets full knowledge of the workings of their long mystification?

In the first place, the Meditations on "Custom-House Methods" and the "Theory of the Bed," have already developed several ways of divining women's thoughts; but in this book we have not the pretension of exhausting all the resources of the human mind, which are tremendous. Here is a proof of this. The day of the Saturnalias, the Romans were able to discover more things about their slaves in ten minutes than they could learn in the whole year! You should be able to create the same festivities in your home, and imitate Gessler, who, after seeing William Tell shoot the apple off his son's head, must have thought:

"There's a man I want to get rid of, for he would not miss me if he should ever have the notion to kill me."

You understand that, if your wife wants to drink Rousillon wine, eat mutton chops, go abroad at all hours of the day, and read the Encyclopedia, you should encourage her whim to the utmost. In the first place, she will be suspicious of her own wishes, when she sees you act absolutely contrary to all your preceding systems. She will imagine that you have some interest to reverse your policy and therefore, whatever freedom you grant her will trouble her so that she will fail to enjoy it. As for the misfortunes that this change may bring about, the future will take care of them. In a revolution, the first of all principles is to *direct* the evil which one is powerless to *control*, and to attract thunder by lightning rods in order to conduct it into a well.

The last act of the comedy is in preparation.

The lover who, from the time that the slightest of the *first symptoms* made its appearance in your wife, until the moment when the "conjugal revolution" takes place, has hovered in the background, either as a material or an immaterial figure, the *lover*, to whom she beckons, says: "Here I am."

## MEDITATION XIX

## CONCERNING THE LOVER

WE offer the following maxims for your meditation.

We might well despair of the human race if they had only been made in 1830; but they establish so categorically the links and the dissimilarities which exist between you, your wife and her lover; they should trace your policy so clearly and lay bare the forces of the enemy to such an extent, that the *magister* has put aside all self-conceit; and if, by chance, there should be one new thought among them, credit it to the Devil who has counseled this work.

## LXV

To speak of love is to make love.

## LXVI

In a lover, the most vulgar desire always produces itself as if it were the impulse of conscientious admiration.

## LXVII

A lover has all the qualities and faults that a husband has not.

## LXVIII

Not only does a lover put life into everything, but he also makes a woman forget life; a husband never puts life into anything.

## LXIX

A lover is always misled by a woman's protestations of affection; there where a husband shrugs his shoulders, a lover is in ecstasy.

## LXX

A lover only shows by his manner the degree of intimacy he has reached with a married woman.

## LXXI

A woman does not always know why she loves. It is rare when a man has not some ax to grind. A husband should try to find out this secret reason, for, to him, it would be the lever of Archimedes.

## LXXII

A talented husband should never suppose openly that his wife has a lover.

## LXXIII

A lover will obey all the whims of a woman; and as a man is never vile in the arms of his mistress, he will often use, to please her, methods that are repulsive to a husband.

## LXXIV

A lover teaches a woman everything her husband has carefully concealed from her.

## LXXV

All the sensations a woman gives her lover she exchanges; they always come back to her intensified; they are as rich from what they have given as from what they have received. It is a business in which almost all husbands end by becoming bankrupts.

## LXXVI

A lover speaks to a woman only of that which makes her more attractive; while a husband, even when he is loving, cannot help giving advice that always resembles blame.

## LXXVII

A lover always proceeds from his mistress to himself; while it is always the contrary with a husband.

## LXXVIII

A lover has always the wish to appear pleasant; there is a principle of exaggeration in this sentiment that leads to ridicule; a husband should know how to take advantage of this.



## LXXIX

When a crime has been committed, the instructing magistrate knows (excepting in the case of a freed convict who commits murder in the penitentiary) that there are not more than five hundred persons to whom he can attribute the crime. He starts to establish his conjectures from this. A husband should reason like this judge: there are not more than three people in society on whom he can fasten the guilt when he wishes to look for his wife's lover.

## LXXX

A lover is never in the wrong.

## LXXXI

The lover of a married woman says to her: "Madame, you need rest. You have given a virtuous example to your children. You have sworn to make your husband happy and he, barring a few slight faults (and I have more than he has), is worthy of your esteem. Well, you must sacrifice your life and your family for me, because I have noticed that you have a shapely limb. Not a murmur must escape you; for a regret is an offense that I would punish by a penalty far worse than the law against adulterous wives. As a reward for all these sacrifices, I will give you as much delight as sorrow." Unbelievable thing, the lover triumphs! The form of his speech makes everything pass. He never says but one word: "I love you!" A lover is the herald who proclaims a woman's worth, beauty or wit. What does a husband proclaim?

After all has been said, the love a married woman inspires, or feels, is the least flattering of all sentiments; with her, it is nothing but tremendous conceit; with her lover, it is egotism. The lover of a married woman contracts too many obligations for three men in a century to deign discharge them; he should devote his whole life to his mistress, whom, in the end, he always forsakes; both know this and ever since the world began, the woman has always been as sublime as the man has been ungrateful. A great passion some-

times excites the pity of the judges who condemn it; but where can one find genuine and lasting passions? What power must a husband have to combat successfully a man whose influence leads a woman to submit to such misfortunes?

We believe that, as a general rule, a husband can, by cleverly applying the means of defense which we have brought forward, bring his wife to the age of twenty-seven, not without her having chosen a lover, but without having had her commit the great crime. Here and there one meets with men who, endowed with great conjugal genius, are able to keep their wives to themselves, body and soul, until they are thirty or thirty-five years old; but these exceptions cause a sort of scandal and fear. This phenomenon hardly ever happens outside of the provinces, where life is transparent and people live in glass houses. Then a man is armed with immense power. This marvelous aid which is given a husband by men and circumstances, always vanishes in the midst of a city whose population amounts to two hundred thousand souls.

Therefore, it can be said that thirty is the age of virtue. At this critical period, a woman becomes so hard to watch that, in order to keep her within the gates of the conjugal paradise, one has to resort to the last means of defense which remain, and which will be divulged by the "Essay on Police Methods," the "Art of Coming Home Unexpectedly," and "The Peripitias."

## MEDITATION XX

### ESSAY ON POLICE METHODS

CONJUGAL police methods comprise all the means given you by the laws, the customs, force and craftiness to prevent your wife from accomplishing the three things which constitute, in a way, the life of love: writing, seeing her lover, and speaking to him.

These methods are to be more or less combined with several of the means of defense contained in the preceding

Meditations. Instinct alone can tell you in what proportion and under what circumstances these various elements should be used. The whole system is elastic; a clever husband will easily know how it can be bent, stretched and tightened to suit different occasions. With the help of this system, a man can bring his wife to the age of forty without ever having had her go astray.

We will divide this treaty into five paragraphs:

1. Mouse-Traps.
2. Correspondence.
3. Spies.
4. Index.
5. The Budget.

### *I.—Mouse-Traps*

In spite of the gravity of the crisis that balks a husband, we do not suppose that the lover has gained entire "freedom of the city" in the conjugal fastness. Often a husband has a suspicion that his wife entertains a lover, but cannot tell on which of the five or six elect to fasten his suspicions. This hesitancy must spring from some moral infirmity, to which we must bring aid.

Fouché had three or four houses in Paris where the best people were entertained and whose hostesses were devoted to him. Their devotion cost the State a round sum of money. The minister called these societies, which excited no one's suspicion at the time, his *souricières*. More than one arrest was brought about after a ball where the most brilliant Parisian society had been the accomplice of the oratorian.

The art of offering crumbs of roasted chestnuts to see a woman put out her white fingers to grasp them is very limited, for a woman is surely on her guard; however, we have at least three sorts of traps: the *Irresistible*, the *Fallacious* and the *Spring-Trap*.

### *The Irresistible Trap*

We will suppose that two husbands, whom we will name A and B, desire to find out who their wives' lovers are. We shall put husband A in the center of a table covered

with fruit, cut glass and various cordials, and husband B can be wherever you wish to place him at this festive board. Champagne has been passed, all eyes are alight and all tongues are wagging.

Husband A, *peeling a chestnut*: "Well, I admire literary men, but at a distance; I think that they are insufferable; their conversation is tyrannical; I don't know which are the most obnoxious, their faults or their qualities, for it would really seem that intellectual superiority only serves to bring out their faults and their qualities. In a word,—(*he swallows the chestnut*)—men of genius are elixirs, if you like, but they should be used with discretion."

Wife B, *who has been very attentive*: "But, Monsieur A, you are really hard to please! (*She smiles maliciously.*) I think that fools have just as many faults as talented people, with the only difference that they do not know how to have them forgiven! . . ."

Husband A, *hurt*: "You will admit, madame, that they are not very gallant with women. . . ."

Wife B, *quickly*: "Who told you so?"

Husband A, *smiling*: "Don't they crush you at all times under the weight of their superiority? Vanity is so overpowering in them that between them and you it must be a continual struggle for supremacy."

The Hostess, *aside to the wife*: "You got what you deserved, my dear." (*Wife A shrugs her shoulders.*)

Husband A, *pursuing the theme*: "And then the habit they have in combining their ideas, reveals to them the mechanism of sentiment so that, for them, love is merely physical and everybody knows that they don't shine. . . ."

Wife B, *pursing her lips and interrupting*: "It seems to me, sir, that we are the best judges of that. But I can readily understand that society people do not care for literary folk! Believe me, it is easier for you to criticise, than it would be for you to imitate them."

Husband A, *scornfully*: "Oh! madame, we can attack the authors of the day without being accused of jealousy. There is one man in society now who, if he wanted to write——"

Wife B, *hotly*: "Unfortunately, monsieur, some of your friends at the Chamber have written novels; have you been able to read them? . . . But really, nowadays it is necessary to make historical researches for the smallest subject, one must——"

Husband B, *turning from his partner, aside*: "Oh! oh! is it perhaps Monsieur de L—— (author of *A Young Girl's Dreams*), whom my wife is in love with? . . . That is strange, I thought it was Doctor M——. We'll see. . . (Aloud.) Do you know, my dear, that you are quite right in what you have just said? (*Everybody laughs.*) Really, I should always prefer to entertain artists and literary men (*Aside*: When we entertain!) than the other professions. Artists at least talk of things that everyone can understand; for, who is the mortal who does not think he has taste? But judges, lawyers and especially doctors. . . ah! I admit that to hear them always discoursing about lawsuits and diseases, the two human infirmities that——"

Wife B, *stopping her conversation with her neighbor in order to answer her husband*: "Ah! doctors are horrid!"

Wife A, *who sits near Husband B, speaking at the same time*: "Why! what are you saying? . . . You are strangely mistaken. To-day, nobody wants to appear what he is: doctors, as long as you are speaking about them, always try to avoid the subject of their profession. They talk politics, fashions, plays, they relate and write books better even than professional authors; a modern physician is very far removed from the doctors of Molière. . . ."

Husband A, *aside*: "My! is my wife in love with Doctor M——? That is strange. (Aloud.) That is possible, my dear, but I would not care to have my dog treated by one of those literary doctors."

Wife A, *interrupting her husband*: "That is unjust; I know of people who have five or six positions and in whom the Government seems to have confidence; at any rate, Monsieur A, it is odd that you should speak in this manner, you who think so much of Doctor M——."

Husband A, *aside*: "It is certain!"

*The Fallacious Trap*

A Husband, *coming home*: "My dear, we are invited by Madame de Fischtaminel to attend the concert she is going to give next Tuesday. I thought we might go, for I wanted to talk to the young cousin of the minister, who was invited to sing; but he has gone to visit his aunt at Frouville; what are you going to do?"

The Wife: "I just hate concerts! . . . One has to sit on a chair for hours without saying a word. . . . Besides, you know that we have dinner with my mother that night and that we cannot miss congratulating her for her birthday."

The Husband, *carelessly*: "Ah! that's true."

(*Three days later.*)

The Husband, *who is about to retire*: "Do you know, pet, I shall have to leave you at your mother's, because the Count has returned from Frouville and will be at Madame de Fischtaminel's."

The Wife, *quickly*: "But why should you go there alone? You know I love music!"

*The Spring-Trap*

The Wife: "What makes you go out so early this evening?"

The Husband, *mysteriously*: "Ah! it is for something so disagreeable that I do not know what to do!"

The Wife: "Why! what is it, Adolph? You are a monster if you don't tell me what you are going to do."

The Husband: "My dear, that fool of a Prosper Magnan is to have a duel with Monsieur de Fontanges on account of some dancer at the Opera. . . . Why! what's the matter? . . ."

The Wife: "Nothing. . . . It is very warm in here. I really don't know what it is . . . but all day long I have been so red. . . ."

The Husband, *aside*: "She loves Monsieur de Fontanges! (*Aloud.*) Célestine! (*He shouts.*) Célestine, come quick, madame is going to faint! . . ."

You understand that a clever husband should find a thousand different ways of setting these three traps.

*II.—Correspondence*

To write a letter and to have it posted; to receive the reply, to read and to burn it; this is correspondence reduced to its simplest expression.

However, note what tremendous facilities civilization, our customs and love have put in woman's reach in order to allow her to have these material acts escape matrimonial vigilance.

The letter-box that yawns at each passer-by receives contributions from all hands.

Then there is the fatal invention of the *poste restante*.

A lover finds a score of charitably inclined persons throughout the world, masculine and feminine, who, in the hope of calling upon him some day for the same purpose, will slide the *billet-doux* into the loving hand of his fair mistress.

Correspondence is a perfect Proteus. There are sympathetic inks and a young bachelor once confided to us that he had written a letter on the inside page of a new book which the husband of his love had ordered at a publisher's and that it actually reached his mistress, who had been notified the day before of the adorable subterfuge.

An enamored woman will write and read her *billets-doux* during the time she is engaged in those mysterious operations when even the most tyrannical husband is compelled to leave her at liberty.

Finally, all lovers possess the art of creating a special telegraphy whose particular signs are very hard to understand. At a ball, a flower may be worn in a certain manner; at the play, sometimes a handkerchief is spread on the sill of the box; the peculiar color of a belt, a hat that is put on or removed, a gown that is worn in preference to another one, a song sung at a concert or a certain tune played on the piano; a glance directed toward a certain spot, and prearranged, everything, from a street-organ that passes beneath your window and vanishes as soon as anyone opens a shutter, to the advertised sale of a horse in the papers, and even *yoursself*, will be used as correspondence.

Indeed, how many times has not an artful wife requested her husband to go on an errand for her, to such and such a shop, and notified her lover that the presence of her lord and master meant either *yes* or *no* ?

Here, the professor admits, much to his shame, that there are no means of preventing two lovers from corresponding. But matrimonial machiavellism is stronger through this very powerlessness than it could be through coercive means.

A convention which should remain sacred to the couple is the one by which they swear to each other never to open their respective correspondence. He is a clever husband who consecrates this principle as soon as he is married and conscientiously adheres to it.

By giving a woman unlimited freedom to write and receive letters, you reserve the privilege of knowing the exact moment when she begins to correspond with her lover.

But, even supposing your wife should be suspicious of you, and should conceal her correspondence with all possible care, is it not the best time for displaying that intellectual power which we gave you in the Meditation on "Custom-House Methods" ? The man who cannot tell when his wife has written her lover or when she has received his reply, is an incomplete husband.

The profound study that you should make of the movements, actions, gestures and glances of your wife will perhaps be painful, but it will not last very long; for you need only find out when and how your wife and her lover correspond.

We cannot believe that a husband even of only moderate intelligence would not be able to divine this feminine maneuver when he suspects that it is taking place.

Now, judge by one adventure how many means of detection and repression correspondence offers you.

A young lawyer, whose frenzied passion revealed to him some of the principles of this important part of our work, had married a young person who loved him in a lukewarm fashion (for which he was surpassingly thankful); at the end of one year of marriage, however, he discovered that



his dear Anna (her name was Anna) loved the head-clerk of a stockbroker.

Adolph was a young man of five-and-twenty, rather good-looking, and fond of pleasure, like all bachelors. He was economical, neat, kind-hearted, a good horseman, a witty conversationalist, and very fastidious about his personal appearance and dress. In short, he would have done honor to a duchess. The lawyer was ugly, small, squatty, and a husband. Anna, tall and fair, had white skin, fine eyes and beautiful features. She was all love, and passion gave her a magical expression. She belonged to a poor family, while *Maitre* Lebrun had an income of twelve thousand francs a year. Everything is explained. One evening, Lebrun came home in an evidently depressed mood. He went into his study to work, but almost immediately returned to his wife's room with chattering teeth; for he had fever. After a little while, he went to bed. There he began to groan and pity his clients, especially a poor widow whose fortune he was, the very next day, going to save by some judicial transaction. The appointment had been made and would have to be broken. After he had dozed for a short time, he awoke and in a weak voice requested his wife to write a note to one of his most intimate friends asking him to take his place in the coming meeting. He dictated a long letter, following with his eyes the space that his sentences took on the paper. When the wife was about to turn the page of the second sheet he was just explaining to his lawyer friend what pleasure his client would have if the transaction was signed, and the fatal page began with these words:

“My good friend, hasten, ah! hasten at once to Madame de Vernon; you are impatiently awaited. She lives at No. 7 Rue du Sentier. Forgive me for saying so little; but I count on your wonderful sense to divine what I cannot explain.

“Faithfully yours.”

“Give me the letter,” said the lawyer, “so that I can read it over before signing it.”

The unhappy woman, whose prudence had been lulled by the nature of the letter, which was filled with the most barbarous legal terms, handed the epistle to her husband. As soon as he had it in his possession, he began to writhe and moan and requested his wife to perform some service for him. She left the room to go about the errand. Then the lawyer jumped out of bed, grabbed a piece of paper, folded it like a letter and concealed the original missive. When Anna returned, her husband sealed the factitious bit of paper, had her write the address of the friend to whom it was supposed to be sent and hand it to a servant. Lebrun then seemed to grow calmer; he went to sleep or feigned sleep, and the following morning still complained of various pains. Two days later, he tore up the first sheet of the letter, carefully folded the decoy note, sealed it, stepped out of the conjugal bedroom, called his wife's maid and said to her:

“Madame wishes you to take this to Monsieur Adolph as quick as you can. . . .”

He waited to see the girl depart and then immediately went to the Rue du Sentier, to the indicated address. He patiently awaited his rival in the rooms of the friend who had lent him aid in the matter. The lover, intoxicated with bliss, arrives and asks for Madame de Vernon; he is shown in and finds himself face to face with *Maitre* Lebrun, whose face is pale and cold and whose calm eyes show his unshaken determination.

“Monsieur,” said he to the young clerk, whose heart began to beat wildly, “you love my wife and are trying to win her; I cannot blame you, since in your place and at your age, I should have done the same thing. But Anna is in despair; you have wrecked her happiness, hell is in her heart; she has confided everything to me. A quarrel which we soon made up drove her to write you the letter you received, and she has sent me to meet you instead of coming herself. I will not even mention that by persisting in your plans you would bring about the misfortune of the woman you love, that you would deprive her of my respect, and later on of your own, that your crime would

be felt in the future by affecting my children; I will not even speak of my own wrecked happiness; it would be useless! . . . But I will tell you, sir, that the slightest attempt on your part would be the signal for a crime; for I would not take the chance of a duel to run you through!"

At this point the eyes of the lawyer distilled death.

"Eh! monsieur," he resumed in a gentler tone, "you are young and you are generous; make a sacrifice for the future happiness of the woman you love; forsake her, never see her again. And if you are absolutely determined to get a member of the family, I have a young aunt who has never married; she is charming, clever and wealthy; undertake her conversion and leave a good wife alone." The mixture of jesting and terror, the eyes and voice of the husband made a deep impression on the lover. For a minute or two he remained speechless, like all passionate people whom a violent shock deprives of their presence of mind. If Anna ever had a lover (a pure hypothesis), it certainly was never Adolph.

This account may serve to show you that correspondence is a two-edged dagger, which is as useful to the husband as it is to the wife. Therefore, you should favor it, for the same reason that Monsieur le Préfet de Police is careful to have the lamps of Paris lit every night.

### III.—*Spies*

To lower oneself to beg for revelations from one's servants, and to fall lower than them by paying them for their information, is not a crime; it may be a cowardly act, but it is certainly a foolish one; for nothing guarantees the uprightness of a servant who betrays his mistress and you will never know whether he is devoted to your interests or to your wife's. Therefore, this matter should be considered judged for all time.

Nature, this tender and loving relative, has placed near the mother of a family the surest and best spies in the world. They can speak, but they are silent, they see everything and seem to be sightless.

One day, a friend of mine met me on the boulevard and invited me to dine with him at his home. We went there

together. Dinner was in progress and the hostess was lading out the soup to her two little girls.

"Here are some *first symptoms*," said I to myself.

We sat down at the board. The first thing the husband (an artless man and one who only talked to break silence) uttered was:

"Has anyone been here to-day?"

"Not a soul!" replied his wife without looking up.

I shall never forget the quick way in which the two little girls glanced at their mother. The oldest one, especially, had a strange look in her eyes. There was mystery and revelation, curiosity and silence, astonishment and security in it. If anything could be compared to the rapidity with which that candid look shot out of their eyes, it was the prudence with which they immediately lowered their lids.

Gentle and charming creatures, who, from the age of nine until womanhood, are often the plagues of your mother, even when she is not coquettish, is it through privilege or through instinct that your young ears catch the slightest sound of a man's voice behind walls and doors, that your eyes take in everything, that your young minds try to understand everything, even the meaning of a thoughtless word, even that of your mother's slightest gesture?

There is gratitude and something instinctive in the preference of fathers for their daughters and mothers for their sons.

But the art of instituting material spies is child's play, and nothing is easier than to find something better than what was devised by the beadle who placed eggshells in his bed and got no other expression of sympathy from his bewildered crony than: "You would not have ground them so finely."

The Maréchal de Saxe hardly gave more sympathy to La Popelinière when they both discovered that famous corkscrew chimney invented by the Duc de Richelieu:

"This is the finest device for making cuckolds of husbands, that I have ever seen!" exclaimed the hero of Fontenoy.

Let us hope that your spying will not reveal anything

so annoying. Those calamities are the fruits of civil war, and we have not arrived at that.

*IV.—The Index*

The Pope only condemns books; but you should mark men and things with the seal of your disapproval.

Madame is forbidden to take her baths anywhere but in her own home.

Madame is forbidden to receive the man you think is her lover, and all the people who might take an interest in her love affair.

Madame is forbidden to go abroad without her lord and master.

But the oddities which are the outcome of the diversity of characters, the innumerable incidents of passion, and the habits of the various couples, bring about so many changes in this *Livre noir*, they multiply or efface the lines with such rapidity, that a friend of the author called this index the "History of the Variations of the Conjugal Church."

There are only two things amenable to fixed rules: the country and the promenade.

A husband should never encourage, or allow, his wife to go to the country. You may have a country-seat, you may live there and receive nothing but old men and women, but never leave your wife alone. But to take her, if only for a day, to visit someone else. . . . Why, if you do this you are more imprudent than an ostrich.

It is already a very difficult task to keep your eye on your wife when she is in the country. Can you be in all the paths, all the trees, can you follow the footsteps of a lover on the grass at night, when in the morning all traces are effaced by the sun and dew? Will you be able to notice every break in your wall? Oh! the country and Springtime! . . . they are the two right arms of celibacy.

When a woman reaches the crisis which we suppose she has attained, a husband should remain in town until the war has broken out or devote himself to the pleasures of a fierce spying business.

As for the promenade, does madame wish to go to the theater, to balls, to the Bois de Boulogne? to go out to make purchases and see the styles? Madame will have to go, will have to see, in the company of her honorable lord and master.

If she should choose the time when some occupation which you could not possibly shirk claims you, in order to wring from you the tacit adhesion to some outing she had planned beforehand, if, in order to obtain her wish, she displayed all the fascinations in which women excel and the fertile resources of which you ought to divine, the professor advises you to let yourself be inveigled and to sell dearly the desired permission and especially to convince this creature whose soul is as mobile as water and as firm as steel, that you are absolutely detained by the business on hand and will not be able to leave your study.

But, as soon as your wife has set her foot out of the house, do not give her time to walk fifty paces; rush after her and do not let her know that you are following her.

There may be some Werthers whose tender and delicate souls rebel at this inquisition. This conduct is no more unworthy than that of an owner who arises in the night and looks out of the window to see that thieves are not looting his orchard. Perhaps you will be able to obtain, before the commission of the crime, some exact information concerning the location of the apartments which so many lovers rent in town under assumed names. If, by chance (may God keep you from it), your wife should enter one of these suspicious places, find out whether the house has several exits.

Does your wife jump into a *fiacre*? . . . What are you afraid of? Has not a *préfet de police*, to whom a gold crown should have been given by husbands, invented a little shack in which sits enthroned, his register in hand, an incorruptible guardian of public morality? Does not every one know the destination of these Parisian gondolas?

If, during an absence, your wife went out in spite of your orders, and avers that she visited such and such a

shop, you should go to the place the next day and endeavor to find out whether she has told you the truth.

But passion, better than this Meditation, will tell you what to do and dictate to you the resources of conjugal tyranny; we shall therefore end these fastidious instructions.

#### V.—*The Budget*

While outlining the picture of a valid husband (See the Meditation on "Predestinated Husbands"), we carefully enjoined him to conceal from his wife the true amount of his income.

While we rely on this basis to establish our financial system, we hope to contribute in overthrowing the opinion which is quite universal, that it is not a good thing to let one's wife handle one's money. This principle is one of the popular errors which produce the most ill-feeling in a household.

But first we will consider the heart question before the income question.

Making a little list for your wife and your household expenses, and giving her an allowance like you would dole out a contribution, so much every month, contains something petty and small which could not be countenanced by any but the most sordid and distrustful souls. By acting in this fashion, you will reap a great many sorrows.

I will believe that during the first years of your married life, more or less pretty scenes, clever speeches and caresses went hand in hand with the monthly gift; but a time will come when the thoughtlessness of your wife, an unforeseen extravagance will compel her to seek a loan of the Chamber; I suppose that you always grant the bill; and that without much discussion, which is not the habit of our unfaithful deputies. They pay but they grumble; you pay and add a compliment; very well!

But in the present crisis, the provisions of the annual budget do not suffice. There is an increase of bonnets, shawls and frocks; there is added expense necessitated by the congresses, the diplomatic messengers, the ways and means of love, though the income remains the same. Then

begins the most odious and dreadful education that a woman can receive. I know but a few noble and generous souls who prize purity of heart and frankness of soul far above millions, and who would forgive a passion much quicker than they would forgive a lie, whose instinctive delicacy has divined the principle of this gangrene of the soul, this last degree of human corruption.

Then, indeed, do love scenes of the most enchanting kind take place between a married couple. Then, a woman becomes supple; and, similar to the brightest chord of a harp thrown into the fire, she twists and twines herself around you; she yields to your every whim; everything she says is full of tenderness; she sells her sweet words and ends by falling lower than a dancing-girl, for she prostitutes herself to her husband. In her most loving kisses is the flavor of money; in all her speeches is the sound of money; she grows hardened. The suavest, craftiest usurer does not estimate better at a glance the metallic worth of a spendthrift to whom he lends money than your wife appraises one of your desires, by skipping from branch to branch like a squirrel in order to increase the price by the increase in appetite. And do not for a moment believe that you will be able to escape her fascination. Nature has provided stores of wiles for women, and society has increased them tenfold by fashions.

“If I ever marry,” one of the most honorable generals of our old armies used to say, “I shall not put a sou into the *corbeille*.”

“What will you put into it, General?” inquired a young girl.

“The key of my strong-box.”

The young lady smiled her approbation. She swayed her little head with a motion similar to that of a magnetized needle; she tilted her chin as if to say:

“I would be glad to marry the General in spite of his forty-odd years.”

But, as a question of money, what interest do you expect a woman to take in an arrangement where she is paid like a bookkeeper?



Examine the other system.

By letting your wife, under the guise of absolute trust, have the control of two-thirds of your fortune, and allowing her to manage the household machinery as she sees fit, you will reap an esteem that nothing will ever forfeit, for nobility of soul and trust find powerful echoes in a woman's breast. Madame will be burdened with a responsibility which will be the greater check to possible dissipation because she will have created it herself in her heart. In the first place, you have made allowance for any emergency and then you are sure that your wife may perhaps never degrade herself.

Now, by looking for means of defense through this system, you must consider what wonderful resources this financial plan offers.

In fact, during the first years of married life, your wife will pride herself upon her ability to provide you with satisfaction and luxury for your money.

She will set an opulent table, renew the furnishings of the house and the carriages; and she will always have a sum of money hidden away in a drawer for her beloved one. Well, under the present circumstances, the drawer will often be empty, and monsieur will spend a great deal more than he should. The economies recommended by the Chamber only affect the small-salaried clerks; now, you are the petty clerk of your household. But it will not worry you, since you will have accumulated, capitalized and managed the third of your fortune for a long time; you will be like Louis XV. who created a little separate treasure for himself, "in case of misfortune," as he used to say.

So, when your wife speaks of economy, her words will be like the variations of the stock-exchange. You will be able to note the lover's progress by the financial fluctuations and everything will be conciliated. *E sempre bene.*

If your wife fails to appreciate the trust and squanders a large part of the fortune, it will be hard for her, in the first place, to reach the third of the income which you have managed for ten years; and then, the Meditation on "Peripetias" will teach you that, in the crisis brought on by

your wife's extravagance, there are tremendous resources for routing the Minotaur.

Lastly, the knowledge of the treasure you have accumulated by your efforts must remain a secret until your death; and if you should be compelled to call upon it to aid your wife, you must always make her believe that you won the money gambling or that it was lent you by a friend.

These are the true principles of conjugal finance.

Conjugal policy has its list of martyrs. We shall only quote one instance, because it may show the necessity for husbands who use such strenuous methods, of guarding against themselves as well as their wives.

An old miser who lived in T——, a pleasure-loving city if there ever was one, had married a young and pretty girl, and he was so much in love with her and so jealous, that affection triumphed over avarice; for he gave up his business in order to look after his wife, and thereby only changed the form of his passion. I acknowledge that I owe the greater part of the observations contained in this essay, which no doubt is still imperfect, to the person who was enabled to study this admirable conjugal phenomenon; and in order to picture him, we shall have need of but one line. Before retiring, in the country, that husband would always rake the paths of his park in a peculiar way, and he had a special rake for the gravel on his terraces. He had made a special study of the footprints of the various people of his household; and every morning he went to reconnoiter.

"All the trees stand far apart," he said to the person I have referred to, "because one cannot see anything where there are bushes. . . ."

His wife was in love with one of the most fascinating men of the town. For nine years this passion had lived in the hearts of the two lovers, who had become enamored on first sight, at a ball; that night, as they danced together, their fingers told each the story of the other's passion. Since that day they had been happy in the thousand little things that more fortunate lovers would have scorned. One day, the young man took his only confidant into his study and showed

him a table on which he kept under glass, with more care than he would have bestowed on the finest gems in the world, flowers that had fallen from his lady-love's hair, and twigs that her dress had brushed as she walked in her garden. He even showed him a footprint on soft earth.

"I could hear the palpitations of his heart," the confidant told me afterwards as we stood and gazed upon the treasures of this love museum. I raised my eyes to the ceiling, as if to confide to Heaven something that I did not dare to express. "Poor humanity!" I mused. "Madame de — told me that one night you had been found almost unconscious in one of the gaming parlors?" I said.

"I should say so," he remarked, trying to hide the fire of his glance; "I had kissed her arm! . . . But," he added, wringing my hand and throwing me one of those looks that seem to penetrate the heart, "her husband is very ill from gout. . . ."

Some time after that conversation, the old man improved and seemed to take a new lease on life; but, in the midst of his convalescence, he took to his bed one day and died very suddenly. Symptoms of poisoning were so apparent that the law got wind of the matter and the two lovers were arrested. Then happened in court the most awful scene that ever took place before a jury. In the beginning of the trial, each of the two admitted his guilt, with the sole purpose of saving the other implicated person. The trial was nothing but a series of mutual denials prompted by the wild devotion of love. For the first time they were together, but they were seated on the criminal's bench and separated by a gendarme. They were pronounced guilty by all the weeping jury. Nobody among those who had the barbarous courage to see them executed can speak of them to-day without a tremor. Religion had caused them to repent the crime, but not to abjure their love. The guillotine was their nuptial couch and they lay there side by side in Death's long sleep.

## MEDITATION XXI

## THE ART OF COMING HOME UNEXPECTEDLY

INCAPABLE of mastering the fury of his anxiety, more than one husband has made the mistake of coming home and entering his wife's apartments to rejoice over her weakness, like the Spanish bulls which, excited by red *banderillos*, gore horses and matadors, picadors, toreadors and consorts.

Oh! to come home in a gentle and fearsome way like Mascarille, who expected a beating, and then to change and become cheerful when you see that your master is in fine humor! . . . that is acting like a wise man.

"Yes, my dear, I know that during my absence you had every opportunity of doing what you should not do. . . . Another woman might have upset the whole house while you only broke a window-pane! May God bless you for your mercy. Always act like this and you will be sure of my gratitude."

Those are the thoughts that your face and manner should betray. But, aside, you say to yourself:

"Perhaps he has been here! . . ."

To always be cheerful at home is a law which suffers no exception.

But the art of going out only to return when you have scented a conspiracy, the art of coming home *à propos!* . . . ah! these are things which cannot possibly be taught by formulas. It is all a matter of tact and craftiness. The events of life are always more fertile than human imagination. Therefore, we shall content ourselves by endowing this book with a story worthy of being inscribed in the archives of the monastery of Thélème. It will have the tremendous merit of revealing to you a new mode of defense lightly indicated by one of the professor's aphorisms, and to put into action the moral of the present Meditation, which is the only way to teach you.

Monsieur de B——, who was an officer and who, for the

time being, was secretary of Louis Bonaparte, King of Holland, was at the château de Saint-Leu, where Queen Hortense was holding court with all her ladies-in-waiting. The young officer was good-looking and fair; he was a trifle supercilious and seemed to be much impressed with the military prestige; besides he was quite clever and very gallant. Why did all these attractions become odious to all the Queen's attendants? We are not told. Perhaps he made the mistake of being attentive to all the ladies! Exactly. But it was craftiness on his part. He adored at the time Madame la Comtesse de ——. The Countess did not dare take her lover's part, because she would thereby have revealed her secret and with strange perversity she said the most cruel things about the young officer while in her heart she cherished him.

There is a class of women with whom well-dressed and fastidious men can become very popular. These women are the refined and delicately sensitive ones. The Countess was one of these women. She belonged to the N—— family, in which good manners were traditional. Her husband, the Comte de —— was the son of the old Duchesse de L——, and he had bowed his head before the idol of the hour: Napoleon having recently ennobled him, he flattered himself that he would obtain an embassy; but, in the meantime, he was satisfied to be a Lord Chamberlain; and if he allowed his wife to be with Queen Hortense it was probably on account of ambition.

“My son,” his mother said to him one morning, “your wife loves Monsieur de B——.”

“You are joking, mother, he borrowed a hundred napoleons of me yesterday.”

“If you are as careless of your wife as you are of your money, there is nothing more to be said,” remarked the old lady dryly.

The future ambassador watched the two lovers and it was while playing billiards with the Queen, the officer, and his wife, that he obtained one of those proofs as slight in appearance as they are conclusive to the trained eye of a diplomat.

“They have gone farther than they are aware of,” the Count said to his mother.

And he poured into the wise and crafty soul of the old Duchess the great sorrow that this discovery had caused him. He loved his wife, and she, without being burdened with what are commonly called principles, had been married too short a while to be callous regarding her duty. The Duchess took it upon herself to fathom the heart of her daughter-in-law. She thought that there was still hope for this young and refined soul and she promised her son to ruin Monsieur de B—— for all time. One evening, after the game had been played, and all the ladies were engaged in one of those chats which flavor of gossip, and the Countess was occupied with the Queen, Madame de L—— seized the opportunity to tell the whole gathering of the love that Monsieur de B—— bore her daughter-in-law. General indignation. The Duchess having gotten all the voices, it was decided unanimously that the woman who could succeed in ridding the château of the officer would be doing a favor to the Queen, who could not tolerate him, and to all the other women who hated him for a good cause. The old lady solicited the cooperation of the fair conspirators and everyone promised to aid in anything that might be undertaken. In forty-eight hours the crafty old dame became the confidante of her daughter-in-law as well as of the lover. Three days later she led the young officer to believe that he might hope for a *tête-à-tête* with his idol after lunch. It was arranged that Monsieur de B—— should go to Paris early in the day, and return secretly. The Queen had announced that she and her suite were to follow a hunt and the Countess was to plead sickness. The Count, having been sent to Paris by King Louis, did not worry them. In order to conceive of all the perfidy of the Duchess's plan, we shall have to explain in a few words the topography of the tiny apartment that the Countess occupied. It was located on the first floor of the château, above the Queen's rooms and at the end of a long hall. On entering, one found oneself immediately in a bedchamber, which opened on the right and on the left into smaller rooms. The room on the right

was fitted up as a *cabinet de toilette*, and the one on the left had been recently arranged as a boudoir. Everyone knows the size of such rooms. This one was nothing but four walls. It was hung in some grayish material and only contained a carpet and a small divan; for it was not as yet completely furnished. The plan of the Duchess embodied these details which, though to all appearances slight, still served her purpose well. At about eleven o'clock a delicious lunch is served. The officer, on his way from Paris, was riding as fast as he could. At last, he reaches the château, hands his horse over to a groom, climbs the wall of the park and reaches the room of his lady-love without having been seen by a soul. In those times, if you do not remember it, officers wore very tight breeches and long and narrow *schakos*, a costume that is very handsome when on review, but which is distinctly uncomfortable for a *rendez-vous*. The old lady had counted on the hindrance of the uniform. The lunch was a great success. Neither the Countess nor her mother touched wine, but the officer, who was familiar with the proverb, drank as much champagne as was necessary to quicken his love and his wits. When the meal was over, the officer glanced at the mother-in-law who, in her rôle of accomplice said:

“I believe that I hear a carriage! . . .”

And she left the room. After three minutes she returned.

“It is the Count!” she cried, pushing the two lovers into the boudoir.

“Never fear,” she said. “Take your *schako*,” she admonished the imprudent young man.

She quickly shoved the table into the smaller room and set about putting the bedchamber to rights so that when her son arrived on the scene no trace of a lunch was in evidence.

“Is my wife ill?” asked the Count.

“No, *mon ami*,” replied his mother. “She recovered quickly from her spell; she has joined the hunt, I believe.”

Then she nodded her head in the direction of the boudoir as if to say: “They are in there. . . .”

“But you must be crazy,” replied the Count in a low tone, “to lock them in there together!”

“You have nothing to fear,” retorted the Duchess, “I put something in his wine. . . .”

“What?”

“The quickest of all physics.”

Enter the King of Holland. He came to ask the Count about the result of the mission he had intrusted to him. The Duchess with some of the mysterious words that women know so well how to use, induced His Majesty to carry the Count off with him.

As soon as the lovers found themselves in the boudoir, the Countess, amazed at recognizing her husband's voice, said to the captivating officer:

“Ah! sir, you see what I have risked for you. . . .”

“But, dear Marie, my love will reward you for all these sacrifices and I shall be true to you until death.” (*Aside, to himself*): “Oh! what a pain. . . .”

“Ah!” exclaimed the young woman, wringing her hands as she heard her husband's footsteps nearing the door of the boudoir, “no love can compensate for such trials! . . . Sir, do not touch me! . . .”

“Oh! my love, my treasure,” said he, kneeling before her with respect, “I will be whatever you want me to be! . . . Command me . . . I will depart from you. Call me back . . . I will come. I will be the most submissive as well as the most . . . (By Jove! . . . I have colic!) constant of lovers. . . . O, my fair Marie! . . . (Ah! I am lost. It is killing me! . . .)”

Here, the officer went to the window to throw himself headlong into the garden, but he caught sight of Queen Hortense and her ladies-in-waiting. Then he turned toward the Countess, placed his hand over the most decisive part of his uniform, and in despair groaned:

“Forgive me, madame, but I cannot stand it any longer.”

“Sir, are you mad?” cried the young woman, perceiving that it was something besides love that convulsed the man's face



The officer, with tears of rage in his eyes, quickly bent over the *schako* he had thrown in a corner of the room. . . .

“Well, Countess,” said Queen Hortense, as she entered the bedchamber whence the Count and the King had departed, “how are you? . . . Why, where is she?”

“Madame,” screamed the young woman, flying to the door of the boudoir, “do not come in! . . . For God’s sake, do not come in!”

The Countess stopped, for she saw that all her companions were in the room. She looked at the Queen. Hortense, who was as indulgent as she was inquisitive, motioned to her suite and they left the room. The same day the officer joined the army, reached the outposts, and, seeking death, found it. He was a brave man, but he was not a philosopher.

It is said that one of our most famous painters, having conceived for the wife of one of his friends a passion which was shared by the lady, had to submit to the horrors of just such a *rendez-vous* which the husband had prepared out of revenge; but, if we are to believe the story, the shame was mutual, and wiser than Monsieur de B——, the lovers, subjected to the same infirmity, did not kill themselves.

The manner of coming home unexpectedly also depends a great deal on circumstances. Here is an example:

Lord Catesby’s strength was tremendous. It happened one day that, returning from a fox-hunt which he had promised to attend, to mislead his wife, no doubt, he started toward a fence where he said he had noticed a very fine horse. As he was passionately fond of horses, he drew near to examine this one at close range. He caught sight of Lady Catesby, who was in dire need of his protection if he cared to save his honor. He pounced on a gentleman and interrupted the criminal conversation by grabbing him around the waist; then he threw him over the fence into the road.

“Remember, sir,” he said, “that henceforth you will have to address yourself to me when you desire anything on these premises.” He spoke with great calmness.

“Very well, my lord, will you have the kindness to throw me my horse?”

But the phlegmatic lord had already taken his wife's arm and was saying gravely:

"I blame you very much, my dear, for not letting me know that I was to love you for two. Henceforth, all even days I will love you for this man and the other days for my own account."

This adventure is considered in England one of the finest homecomings. It is true that it meant joining with rare happiness the eloquence of gesture to the eloquence of speech.

But the art of coming home unexpectedly, whose principles are only new deductions of the system of courtesy and dissimulation recommended by our anterior Meditations, is nothing but the preparation of conjugal peripitias, which we are now about to consider.

## MEDITATION XXII

### CONCERNING PERIPITIAS

The word *peripitia* is a literary term which means *an unexpected incident*.

To bring about the latter in the drama you are playing, is a mode of defense which is as easy to undertake as its success is assured. While advising its use, we shall not conceal from you the dangers it holds. The conjugal peripitia can be likened to those fine fevers which either kill or cure for life the person whom they attack. Therefore, when it succeeds, it places a woman for years in the calm regions of virtue.

Besides, this mode is the last of all those that science has allowed us to discover up to the present time.

The Saint-Barthélemy, the Sicilian Vespers, the death of Lucretia, the two landings of Napoleon at Fréjus, are political peripitias. You will not be able to perform such vast ones; however, all proportions being the same, your conjugal *coups de théâtre* will be no less effective than the ones to which we have just referred.

But, as the art of creating situations and changing,

through natural events, the aspect of scenes, constitutes genius; as the return to virtue of a woman whose foot has lightly trodden the golden paths of vice is the most difficult of all peripitias; and as genius cannot be taught and cannot be shown; the student of conjugal law is forced to acknowledge his inability to reduce to fixed principles a science which is as changeable as circumstances, as elusive as opportunity, as undefinable as instinct.

To use an expression that neither Diderot, Voltaire nor d'Alembert succeeded in naturalizing, a conjugal peripitia *se subodore*. Therefore, our only resource will be to imperfectly outline various similar conjugal situations, thereby imitating that philosopher of olden times, who, trying vainly to comprehend motion, walked straight ahead in order to grasp its incomprehensible laws.

A husband may, according to the principles set forth in the Meditation on "Police Methods," have forbidden his wife to receive the visits of the bachelor whom he suspects of being her lover; she has promised never to see him again. This created little conjugal scenes which we shall leave to matrimonial imaginations; a husband will be far more successful in picturing them than we, for all he has to do is to refer in thought to the days when delightful desires brought about sincere confidences, when the resources of his policy put in motion various well-thought-out schemes.

Let us suppose, in order to lend more interest to this normal scene, that it is you, husband who are reading this book, whose carefully organized surveillance discloses that your wife, taking advantage of the time you have to devote to some State banquet is going to receive Monsieur A——z.

You come home early enough to have your return coincide with that gentleman's arrival, for we would not advise you to risk a very long intermission. But *how* do you come home? . . . No longer should you follow the principles of the preceding Meditation. Will you be infuriated? . . . Not at all. You should be thoroughly good-natured and come home like a man who has forgotten something, his wallet, or his official memoranda, or his snuff-box, or his handkerchief.

Then you will be able to surprise the lovers, or your wife, warned by her maid, will have concealed the celibate.

Let us, therefore, dwell on these two situations.

Here, we wish it to be understood that all husbands must be able to strike terror into the hearts of their spouses, and prepare their matrimonial "*2 septembre*" a long time in advance.

Therefore, any husband whose wife has shown *first symptoms* should never fail to give, now and then, his personal opinion regarding the conduct a husband should follow in great matrimonial crises.

"I, for one, would not hesitate to kill any man I found with my wife," should be a frequent remark.

When discussing a question brought up by yourself for debate, you should insist that the law should give a father right of life and death over his children, so that he might destroy the adulterous offspring, as was the custom among the old Romans.

These stern views, which do not compromise you in the least, will tend to produce wholesome terror in your wife's soul. You should emit them in a bantering way and assure her:

"Oh yes, I would make a very neat job of it, my dear! How would you like to be dispatched into the other world by me? . . ."

A woman cannot help but think that, some day, these jests may turn out to be serious, for there is still love in these involuntary crimes; then women, who are such adepts at telling the truth in a joking way, often suspect their husbands of making use of this feminine ruse.

So, when the husband surprises his wife in the midst of an innocent conversation, her head, still guiltless, should produce the same mythological effect as that of the celebrated Gorgon.

In order to obtain a favorable peripitia in this conjecture, you should either play a pathetic scene, *à la* Diderot, or else use irony, like Cicero, or pounce on a pair of pistols, if you think that an effect of this kind would be beneficial.

A clever husband once played a scene of feeling and per-

formed it with great credit. He entered the room, caught sight of the lover and banished him with a glance. After the celibate had taken his departure, the husband dropped on his knees before his wife and recited a long monologue, the burden of which was: "Oh! my darling Caroline, to think that I never knew how to love you! . . ."

Then they both wept and the tearful scene lacked nothing to make it complete in every way.

When treating of the second manner in which a peripitia can be brought about, we shall explain the motives which compel a husband to vary the scene according to the more or less high degree of feminine cunning.

Now let us continue:

If your luck has it that the lover be concealed, the scene will be all the finer.

If the apartment is constructed after the manner described in Meditation XIV, you will easily discover the place where the bachelor is in hiding, even if, like Byron's *Don Juan*, he has concealed himself beneath a sofa-cushion. If by chance, the apartment is in disorder, you should be sufficiently familiar with it to be sure that it does not harbor two hiding-places.

Finally, if by some diabolical inspiration he has made himself so small that he has retired into an unbelievably strange nook (for one can expect anything from a bachelor), your wife will not be able to keep her eyes off his hiding-place or she will try to look in the opposite direction and then nothing is easier for a husband than to lay a little trap for his wife.

As soon as you discover the hiding-place, march straight up to it and confront the lover.

Now is the time you should try to be splendid. Keep your head thrown back in a pose of superiority, for this attitude will add enormously to the effect you wish to produce.

The most important of your duties is to crush the bachelor with a few appropriate words, that you will have had ample time to improvise; and after having brought him to the dust, you should coldly convey to him that his presence

is no longer desired. You must be very courteous, but as cutting as the blade of a knife and as impassive as the law itself. This icy contempt may already have produced its effect on your wife. You must not indulge in fury or wild gestures. "Men of lofty social position," says a young English author, "are never like those common folk who cannot lose a fork without apprising the whole neighborhood of the fact."

After the bachelor has departed, you will find yourself alone with your wife, and then is the time for winning her forever.

You should place yourself in front of her and assume an outward calmness which should veil imperfectly a deep inner emotion; then choose among the following ideas which we present, the ones best adapted to your principles: "Madame, I shall not make mention of your vows nor of my love for you; you are too clever and I am too proud, for me to bore you with the commonplace remarks which all husbands have a right to make in a case like this; their slightest fault is to be in the right. I will feel neither wrath nor resentment. I am not the one who has been outraged, for I despise the vulgar opinion which attaches blame and ridicule to a man whose wife's conduct is not above reproach. I am examining my conscience and cannot discover in what respect I have been at fault and why I have deserved to be deceived. I love you still. I have never failed, I will not say in my duty, for there was never any hardship in worshiping you, but in the loving obligations that genuine feeling imposes on us. You have my entire trust and you manage my money. I have never refused you anything. In fact, this is the first time that I have ever shown you, I will not say sternness, but disapproval. However, let us pass over this, for I do not want to sing my own praises at a time when you show me with such overwhelming directness that there must be something lacking in me and that I am not destined by Nature to make you happy. So I will ask you as a friend speaking to a friend, how you were able to expose three lives as you have done; the life of the mother of my children, which will always be sacred to me; that of the head of the

family, and that of the . . . man . . . you love. . . . (Here she may perhaps fall at your feet; you should not permit it, for she is unworthy of the place.) For . . . you no longer love me, Eliza. Well, my poor child (you should call her *my poor child* only if the crime has not been committed), why should we deceive one another? . . . Why didn't you tell me? . . . If love vanishes between husband and wife, is there not always friendship and confidence? . . . Are we not two companions following one road? Why should not the one stretch out a hand to the other to help him and keep him from falling? But perhaps I am saying more than I should and wounding your pride . . . Eliza . . . Eliza! . . ."

What in Heaven's name do you expect your wife to reply? There is necessarily a peripetia.

Among a hundred women there are always a good half-dozen weak creatures who, in this great crisis, always go back to their husbands, like burned children dread the fire. However, a scene like this is a real antidote, the doses of which must be regulated by experienced hands.

With certain timorous women who possess gentle and fearsome souls, it will be all-sufficient to indicate the lover's hiding-place and to say: "Monsieur A——z is there! . . . (Then shrug your shoulders.) How can you risk the lives of two fine men? I will leave the room so that he can escape; now, never let this happen again."

But there are some women whose hearts are so disturbed by these terrible scenes that they sometimes burst a blood-vessel, while others develop serious ailments in consequence of the shock. Some are apt to lose their minds. We have even known of instances where women committed suicide and we do not believe that you desire the sinner's death.

However, the fairest and gayest of all French queens, the gracious and unfortunate Mary Stuart, did not let the death of Rizzio, who breathed his last in her arms, interfere with her love for Bothwell; but then, she was a queen, and queens have natures which are different from those of other mortals.

We shall, therefore, suppose that the woman whose de-

scription embellishes our first Meditation is another Mary Stuart and shall not tarry in raising the curtain on the fifth act of that great drama called *Marriage*.

The matrimonial peripitia can happen anywhere and thousands of occurrences can give birth to it. Sometimes it may be a handkerchief, like in *The Moor of Venice*, or a pair of slippers, like in *Don Juan*, sometimes it may be the fault of your spouse who will exclaim: "Dear Alphonse!" instead of "Dear Adolph!" Lastly, any husband noticing that his wife is in debt, may go to her largest creditor and request him to come to the house in order to prepare a peripitia. "Monsieur Josse, you are a jeweler and your passion for selling gems is only equalled by your passion for being paid for them. Madame la Comtesse owes you thirty thousand francs. If you want to get your money to-morrow (one should always interview tradesmen at the end of the month), call at the house at noon. Her husband will be present; do not pay any attention to the signs she may make to you to keep silent. Speak out. I will pay you."

In a word, peripitias are to marriage what numbers are to arithmetic.

All the principles of lofty matrimonial philosophy which permeate the defensive means indicated in the second part of our book are taken from the very nature of sentiments and were found scattered through the book of life. In fact, just as clever people instinctively *apply* the *laws* of taste, when they would be very puzzled to *deduce* its *principles*; so we have seen a number of passionate people employing with rare skill the information which we have developed and never, with any one of these persons, was there a fixed plan. The sentiment of their position revealed to them but incomplete fragments of a great system; in this, they were like the scientists of the sixteenth century, whose microscopes were not perfect enough to permit them to view all the creatures whose existence they discovered by their patient genius.

We hope that the remarks already presented in this work and those which are to follow, will be of a nature calculated



to destroy the opinion which makes frivolous men regard marriage as a sinecure. According to us, a husband who is bored is a heretic; he is even worse, he is a man outside of conjugal life and one who has no conception of what it means. Referring to this, perhaps these Meditations will reveal to many ignorant husbands the mysteries of a world through which they wander with closed eyes.

Let us hope, furthermore, that these principles wisely applied will be instrumental in bringing about a number of conversions and that between the almost white pages which separate this second part from "Civil War," there will be room for a great many tears and repentances.

Yes, among the four hundred thousand "nice" women we so carefully selected from among the European nations, we like to believe that there will only be a certain number, let us say three hundred thousand, for instance, who will be charming, perverse and belligerent enough to hoist the flag of "Civil War."

So, *aux armes, aux armes!*\*

**\*To arms, to arms!**

PART THIRD  
CONCERNING CIVIL WAR

“As fair as Klopstock’s seraphim, as terrible as Milton’s devils.”—DIDEROT.

MEDITATION XXIII

MANIFESTOES

THE preliminary precepts with which science can arm a husband in the approaching crisis are few; it is a much more important question to find out whether he will succumb, than whether he will be able to resist.

We shall, however, erect a few beacons which will serve to light up the arena where the husband is going to find himself with only religion and the law on his side, pitted against his wife who has the entire support of society and the added strength of her crafty nature.

LXXXII

Everything can be expected and supposed of a woman who is in love.

LXXXIII

The actions of a woman who wants to deceive her husband are almost always studied, but never reasoned.

LXXXIV

The majority of women act like the flea; they proceed by disconnected leaps. They escape through the depth of their first ideas, and interruptions in their plans are favorable to them. But they hold forth in a space that a husband can easily circumscribe; and if he keeps cool, he may often head off this organized saltpeter.

## LXXXV

A husband should never allow himself to utter one hostile word to his wife in the presence of a third person.

## LXXXVI

When a woman makes up her mind to be false to her marriage vows, she considers her husband everything or nothing. One may go by her attitude.

## LXXXVII

A woman lives with her head, her heart or her passions. When his wife is old enough to judge life for herself, a husband should find out whether the infidelity she plans is a result of vanity, affection or temperament. Temperament can be cured; affection offers the husband a good road to success; but vanity is incurable. A woman who lives with her brain is a frightful curse; she has all the faults of the passionate woman added to those of the sentimental one, without having their excuse. She is without pity, love, virtue, or sex.

## LXXXVIII

The woman who lives with her brain will try to inspire indifference in her husband; the woman who lives with her heart, hatred; and the passionate woman will try to disgust him.

## LXXXIX

A husband never risks anything by making people believe in his wife's fidelity, and by assuming a patient air, or keeping quiet: silence always impresses a woman tremendously.

## XC

To appear to know all about your wife's passion is foolish; but to appear to ignore everything is clever, besides being about the only attitude to assume. Accordingly, it is said that in France all husbands are witty.

## XCI

The great stumbling-block is ridicule. "At least let us appear on good terms in public!" should be the axiom of every married couple. It is losing too much when both parties forfeit the honor, esteem, consideration, respect or whatever you wish to call that social *something*.

These axioms have reference only to the *struggle*. The *catastrophe* will have its own.

We have called this crisis *civil* war for two reasons: never was there a more intestine nor a more polished one. But when and how will this fatal war break out?

Ah! do you think for a moment that your wife will have an army and the flourish of trumpets? She may perhaps have one officer, but that will be all; and that tiny army will be sufficient to destroy the peace of your household.

"You prevent me from seeing the people I care for!" is an introduction which has served as pretext for a quarrel in a great many households. This phrase and all the various ideas which follow in its train is the formula most often used by vain and scheming women.

The most general manifesto is the one that is proclaimed in the conjugal bed, which is the principal scene of action. This question will be fully treated in the Meditation entitled, "Various Weapons," in the paragraph of "Modesty in Connection with Marriage."

Some lymphatic women will pretend to be affected by spleen in order to bring about a secret divorce between themselves and their husbands.

But almost all of them owe their freedom to a plan whose effect on most husbands is almost infallible and the insidiousness of which we are now going to expose.

One of the greatest of human mistakes is the belief that our honor and reputation are established by our actions, or are the result of the approval which conscience bestows on our conduct. A man who lives in the world is a slave to public opinion. Now, in France a private citizen has far less influence in society than his wife, and she is there-

fore enabled to heap ridicule upon him. Women have a special gift for coloring with specious reasons the recriminations they make. They never defend anything but their own wrongs, and they excel in this, as they are clever enough to oppose authorities to arguments, assertions to proofs, so that they often reap a harvest of petty success. They understand each other wonderfully well, when one of them hands another a weapon which she herself may not use. In this way, they often ruin husbands without meaning to do so. They touch off the match and a long time afterward are frightened at the extent of the blaze.

As a general thing, all women band together against a tyrannical husband; for there is a secret alliance between them, as between priests of the same religion. They hate each other, but they will protect each other. You can never win but one of them; and even then this seduction would be a triumph for your wife.

Then you are ostracized by the feminine empire; you will observe sarcastic smiles on all lips and sharp epigrams in every retort. The clever creatures amuse themselves by decorating the daggers with which they intend to pierce you.

The perfidious art of reticence, the malice of silence, the cruelty of suppositions, the false geniality of a request, everything is used against you. A man who has the pretension of keeping his wife under his thumb is too dangerous not to be destroyed; would not his conduct be a satire on all husbands? So they attack you with bitter jests, serious arguments or the commonplace maxims of chivalry. A swarm of bachelors help them in all their efforts and you are pursued, assailed as a crank, a tyrant, a lunatic and a suspicious person.

Your wife defends you like the bear in La Fontaine's fable\*; she hurls bricks at you to drive away the flies that have settled on your head. Every evening she relates to you the different remarks she has gathered about you, and will ask you to explain actions you have never committed and words you have never spoken. She will tell you that

\* *L'ours et le Jardinier.*

she has taken your part in matters that have never occurred; she has boasted of a freedom she is far from enjoying, in order to free you from the odium of not allowing her to be as independent as she should be. The huge rattle she shakes will ring forever in your ears. Your dear spouse will bewilder you, torment you and will take pleasure in letting you feel the thorns of matrimony. She will be charming to you in public and a shrew at home. She will be moody when you are cheerful, and will irritate you with her chatter when you are depressed. Your faces will be a constant antithesis.

Few men have sufficient strength to withstand this first comedy which is always cleverly played and is like the war-cry of the Cossacks when they are advancing upon the enemy. Some husbands get angry and commit themselves forever. Some forsake their wives. While even some of the best minds do not know how to wield the magical wand that should dissipate this feminine phantasmagoria.

Two-thirds of the wives know how to win independence through this one maneuver, which is really only the review of their fighting forces. So the war is soon terminated.

But a self-contained man can derive much amusement, if he has the courage to keep his *sang-froid* during the first assault, from allowing his wife to see, by witty sallies, that he is aware of the sentiments which prompt her actions; from following her step by step through the labyrinth she is treading, from telling her at every turn that she is deceiving herself, without ever letting his temper get the best of him, or going beyond the jest.

However, war is declared, and if the husband has not been blinded by the first display of fireworks, a woman, in order to assure her triumph, has a great many strings to her bow which the following Meditations will reveal:

## MEDITATION XXIV

## PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGY

ARCH-DUKE CHARLES has given us a very fine treatise on military art, entitled *Principes de la Stratégie appliqués aux campagnes de 1796*. These principles seem to us very much like the poetics for published poems. Nowadays, we are more competent, we invent rules for works and works for rules. But of what use were the old principles of military art against the overwhelming genius of Napoleon? If, therefore, you evolve a system out of the information given by that great captain, whose new tactics have ruined the old ones, what guarantee does the future give you that it will not create another Napoleon? Books on military art meet, with but few exceptions, with the same fate as old works on chemistry and physics. Everything is subject to change either in the immediate future or at some distant period.

This is, in a few words, the history of our work.

As long as we had to deal with a woman who was inert and sluggish, nothing was easier than to weave a net to contain her; but as soon as she awakens and begins to protest, everything becomes mixed and complicated. If a husband attempted to protect himself with the principles of the preceding system, by enmeshing his wife in the insecure net that Part Second has woven, he would be like Wurrser, Mack and Beaulieu, who made marches and pitched camps, while Napoleon was slowly circumventing them and using their own devices to bring about their ruin.

That is just how your wife will act.

How will you be able to know the truth when both of you disguise it under the same falsehood, and when you both present the same trap? To whom will victory belong when both of you are caught in the same snare?

“My dear one, I am going to see Madame So-and-So, and have ordered the carriage. Don't you want to go with me? Now, be nice, and accompany your wife.”

You think:

“She would be in a fine fix were I to accept! She only urges me to go so that I will refuse!”

Therefore you reply:

“Why, yes, I have to see Mr. So-and-So; he has charge of a report which may affect our interests in such and such a venture and I must see him. Then I am going to the Ministère des Finances, so everything is all right.”

“Well, dear, go dress while Céline finishes my toilet; but do not make me wait for you.”

“Darling, I am ready!” you exclaim in a few minutes, arriving on the scene freshly shaven and arrayed for the drive.

But all is changed. A letter has arrived; the dress does not fit; the dressmaker has just come; if it is not the dressmaker, it is your son or your mother. Out of a hundred husbands, ninety-nine will depart satisfied, believing that their wives are well guarded, while, in reality, it is their wives who have shown them the door.

A legitimate wife, whose husband cannot escape, who has no financial worries, and who, to find an outlet for the wealth of intellect with which she is endowed, thinks night and day of how she can bring variety into her life, soon discovers the mistake she has made by letting herself fall into a trap or into a peripitia; of course, she will endeavor then to turn the weapons against you.

There is one man among all who strangely affects your wife; the mere sight of him annoys her; she cannot tolerate his voice, manners, nor mind. Everything he does irritates her; he pursues her and she finds him odious; never mention his name to her. It would seem as if she were trying her best to contradict you; for it appears that you think a great deal of this very man; you like his character because he flatters you; so your wife pretends that your liking for him is just vanity. If you happen to give a ball or a concert, you almost invariably have a discussion about him, and madame reproaches you for wanting her to associate with people she does not care for.

“At least, monsieur, I have warned you. That man is



sure to cause you sorrow. You had better heed a woman's judgment of a man. And let me tell you that this baron whom you have taken such a fancy to is a most dangerous person and that you are very wrong in bringing him to your home. But that is just like you; you compel me to see a man I hate, and if I should ask you to invite Mr. So-and-So, you would not do so, because you think I like him! I admit that he is very agreeable, but you are more attractive than he is."

These crude rudiments of female tactics, fortified by deceptive gestures, clever glances and misleading tones, and even by a malicious silence, are, so to speak, the very essence of their conduct.

At this point, there are but few husbands who do not think of devising a little trap, they invite Mr. So-and-So and the fantastical baron, who represents the man whom your wife abhors, hoping to discover a lover in the person of the supposedly well-liked bachelor.

Oh! I have often met in society young men who were real feather-brains in love matters and who were the absolute dupes of the false friendship professed by some married woman obliged to get her husband off the track of her real lover! . . . Those poor innocents spent their time running errands, renting theater-boxes and accompanying their would-be mistresses on their daily promenade in the Bois; public rumor credited them with being the lovers of women whose hands they did not even kiss; their conceit prevented them from denying the friendly rumors and, like those young priests who say *messes blanches*, they enjoyed a factitious passion, genuine understudies of Love.

Sometimes, in these circumstances, a husband comes home and inquires of the *concierge*: "Has anyone been here today?"—"Monsieur le Baron was here at two o'clock to see you; but, as nobody was home but madame, he did not go up; but Mr. So-and-So is there now."

You enter the drawing-room and espy a young bachelor immaculately dressed and scented, a perfect dandy, in short. He is charming to you; your wife listens for his footstep and dances all the dances with him; if you forbid her to

see him, she will be very indignant, and it is only long years afterwards (refer to Meditation on "Last Symptoms") that you will perceive the innocence of Mr. So-and-So and the guilt of the baron.

We have noticed, as one of the most skillful maneuvers, that of a young woman impelled by an irresistible passion, who lavished her hatred on the man she did not care for and who gave her lover at all times tokens of her regard. Just as her husband felt sure that she was in love with the *sigisbeo* and despised the *patito*, she let herself be caught with the *patito* in a situation whose risk had been thought out in advance, and which made her husband and the despised bachelor believe that her love and her aversion alike were feigned. After she had plunged her husband into this uncertainty, she let him discover a very passionate love letter. One evening, in the midst of the wonderful peripetia she had concocted, madame fell at her husband's feet, weeping, and accomplished a real *coup de théâtre*.

"I have enough regard and esteem for you," she cried, "to confide in no one but you. I love another man. Is that a thing I can control? But what I *can* do, is to acknowledge it to you and to beg you to protect me from myself, to save me. Be my master and be a stern one. Take me away from here, and banish the one who is the cause of all this trouble; console me and I will forget him. Indeed, I want to forget him. I crave your pardon most humbly for the perfidy which love suggested to me. Yes, I will admit that the love that I feigned for my cousin was a trap for you, I like him as a friend, but not as a lover. . . . Oh! forgive me! . . . I can love no one but . . . (Here she sobbed violently). "Oh! let us go away, let us leave Paris."

She was weeping; her hair hung about her shoulders and her dress was disarranged; it was midnight and the husband forgave her. The cousin was exonerated from all blame and the Minotaur devoured another victim.

What rules can one give to combat such adversaries? All the diplomacy of the Vienna Congress is in such women's heads; they are as strong when they surrender as when

they elude you. What man is clever enough to lay down his strength and power to follow his wife in this maze?

To constantly plead the false to learn the true, the true for the false; to change your batteries at a moment's notice, and silence your cannon just when you are going to fire it off; to ascend a mountain with the enemy, only to climb down again into the plains in a few minutes; to accompany him in his devious paths, to obey when necessary and oppose an inert resistance *à propos*; to possess the art of scaling the ladder of suppositions, like a musician who runs from the highest to the lowest key on his instrument, and to divine the secret intentions of a woman; to fear her caresses and to find in them more food for thought than pleasure, all this is child's play for a clever man and for those lucid and observing imaginations that have the gift to act while they are absorbed in thought; but there are a great many husbands who shrink at the mere idea of putting these theories into practice where a woman is concerned.

Those are the men who prefer to spend a lifetime trying to become fair chess-players or mediocre billiardists.

Some will tell you that it would be impossible for them to keep their minds under such constant tension and to give up their lifelong habits. Then, a woman may well triumph. She recognizes that she is superior to her husband in mind and energy (although this superiority is but momentary), and thence springs a sentiment of contempt for the head of the family.

That there are so many men who are not the masters in their own homes is not because they lack the *will*, but because they lack the *talent*, to be successful.

Regarding those who accept the passing labors of this terrible duel, it is true that they are in need of great moral strength.

Indeed, at the time when it is thought most necessary to employ all the resources of this secret strategy, it is often quite useless to attempt to lay traps for these satanical creatures. Once a woman has reached a certain stage of dissimulation, her face becomes as unreadable as a vacuum.

Here is an example which came under my personal observation.

A very young, pretty and clever Parisian coquette was in bed one morning; at the foot of the bed lounged one of her dearest *friends*; a letter arrived from one of her most impetuous admirers to whom she had given the right to act tyrannically. The note was written in pencil and ran as follows:

“I have learned that Monsieur C—— is with you this very moment and I am waiting outside to blow his brains out.”

Madame D—— quietly continued the conversation with Monsieur C—— and requested him to hand her a little red leather portfolio, which he brought her.

“Thank you, dear,” said she. “Now go on, I am listening.”

So C—— continued to talk and she to listen, while at the same time she wrote the following note:

“As long as you are jealous of C—— you can both blow your brains out, if you wish; you may die, but I doubt whether you will give up . . . the ghost.” (*Je doute si vous rendrez . . . l'esprit.*)

“My dear friend,” said she, “please light that candle. That is fine; you are delightful. Now, be kind enough to let me rise while you hand this letter to Monsieur d'H—— who is waiting outside.”

All this was said with admirable coolness. The voice, the intonation, the countenance were impassive. The bold conception was crowned with complete success. Monsieur d'H—— when he received the reply from the hands of Monsieur C—— felt his wrath melt away and was troubled only by the thought of how he could hide his desire to laugh.

But the more lighted torches we throw into the great abyss we are trying to illuminate, the deeper we will find it to be. It is a bottomless pit. We believe that we can

accomplish our task in a more instructive and pleasing manner by showing the principles of strategy put into action at a time when woman had attained a high degree of vicious proficiency. One example reveals more resources, suggests more maxims than any amount of theory.

One day, at the close of a repast at which Prince Lebrun was entertaining a few intimate friends, the guests, warmed by the champagne, were discussing the fertile resources of the feminine mind. The recent adventure attributed to Madame la Comtesse R. D. S. J. D. A. with regard to a necklace, was the theme of the conversation.

A worthy artist, a student high in the Emperor's favor, was vigorously defending the unmanly opinion that no male could resist the wiles of womankind.

"I have fortunately experienced," said he, "that nothing is sacred for them."

The ladies of the party protested.

"But I can quote an instance."

"It must be an exception."

"Let us hear the story," said one young woman.

"Oh! tell it," exclaimed all the guests.

The prudent old gentleman glanced around and after he had taken note of the various ages of the women, he smiled and began:

"Since we all know what life is, I will tell you the story."

A great silence fell over the guests and the narrator read aloud from a tiny book which he drew from his pocket:

"I was madly in love with the Comtesse de ——. I was twenty and artless, so she deceived me; I got angry, so she left me; I was artless, so I regretted her; I was twenty, so she forgave me; and as I was twenty and still artless, still deceived, but no longer forsaken, I imagined that I was the most fortunate of lovers and consequently the happiest of men. The Countess was the friend of Madame de T——, who seemed to have designs on me, although she never compromised herself; for she had scruples and was full of propriety. One day, while I was waiting for the Countess in her box at the theater, somebody called to me from a neighboring box. It was Madame de T——.

“‘What!’ said she, ‘already here! Is it attachment or idleness? Come and see me!’

“Her voice and her manner were arch, but I was far from expecting anything romantic.

“‘Have you any plans for to-night?’ she inquired. ‘Do not make any. If I save you from being bored now, you must be devoted. . . . Ah! no questions, only obedience. Summon my servants.’

“I inclined myself before her and obeyed.

“‘Go to this gentleman’s home and say that he will not be back until to-morrow,’ she commanded the lackey.

“Then she made a sign to the servant and whispered something to him as he went out. The opera began. I tried to say something, but the lady silenced me. When the first act was over, the lackey reappeared with a note and notified us that all was ready. Then she smiled at me, took my hand and drew me after her into her carriage. Soon we were on the highway, without my having the slightest idea of our destination. To each question, she responded with a laugh. If I had not known that she was a woman of *grande passion* and that for a long time she had been infatuated with the Marquis de V——, that she knew that I knew this, I would surely have thought that I was to enjoy a *bonne fortune*; but she was aware of the state of my heart and was the intimate friend of the Countess. Therefore, I banished all presumption and waited. After the first relay, we started off again with lightning rapidity. It was becoming serious. I insisted on knowing how far the jest was to go.

“‘How far?’ she laughed. ‘To the loveliest place on earth; but try to guess. You never will. You had better give it up, for you could never imagine where we are going. We are going to my husband’s house. Do you know him?’

“‘Not in the least.’

“‘Ah! so much the better; I was afraid you might. But I hope that you will like him. They are trying to bring about a reconciliation between us. It has been going on for six months and for the last month we have been corresponding. I think it is rather gallant in me to visit him.’

“‘I agree with you. But what have I to do in this? What part am I to play in a reconciliation?’

“‘Ah! that is my business! You are young, charming and inexperienced; you please me and will help me over the *ennui* of a *tête-à-tête*.’

“‘But I think it is strange to choose the time you have planned for a reconciliation to introduce me to your husband; I do not see anything very funny in a situation which is bound to be awkward.’

“‘I want you to amuse me,’ she said, with a slightly imperious manner. ‘So you had better not preach.’

“I saw that her mind was made up, and I made the best of my position. I began to laugh at the rôle I was to play and we became very gay. We changed horses again. The soft light of the stars shone in a wonderfully pure sky and shed a voluptuous radiance over everything. We were fast nearing the end of our *tête-à-tête*. At intervals, my companion made me admire the beauty of the landscape, the stillness of the night and of Nature. In order to admire, we both looked out of the window and our faces were very close. The carriage gave a sudden lurch and she pressed my hand; and what seemed to me a most extraordinary circumstance, for the stone in the road was not very large, I kept my arms around Madame de T——. I do not know what we were trying to see; but it is certain that, in spite of the moonlight, things were beginning to look hazy, when my companion wrenched herself free and threw herself back in her corner.

“‘Have you planned,’ she said, after a somewhat long silence, ‘to convince me of the imprudence of my conduct? How embarrassing this is for me! . . .’

“‘Plans!’ I replied, ‘with you? What an idea! You could see through them at once; but a surprise . . . is pardonable.’

“‘I suppose you counted on that?’

“That was as far as we had gotten when we entered the courtyard of the *château*. Everything was brilliant with light and betokened pleasure, excepting the countenance of the master, who, when he saw me, looked the very opposite

of pleased. He came to the carriage-door and expressed equivocal delight, as became one who sought a reconciliation. I learned later that the latter was imperiously demanded by family reasons. I was introduced to Monsieur de T—— and he bowed coldly. He offered his hand to his wife and I followed them, thinking of my past, present and future rôle. We passed through apartments decorated with exquisite taste. The master of the place had called upon all the refinements of luxury in order to animate his weakly body by voluptuous surroundings. As I did not know what to say, I admired everything rapturously. The goddess of the temple, who did the honors very gracefully, received my compliments.

“‘You have seen nothing as yet,’ she said; ‘I must show you my husband’s apartments.’”

“‘Madame, I had them pulled down five years ago.’”

“‘Ah! ah!’ she said.

“At supper, she offered her husband some veal, and he replied:

“‘Madame, since three years I have been on a milk diet.’”

“‘Ah! ah!’ she said again.

“Can anyone imagine three people more surprised than we were to be in each other’s company? The husband looked at me with arrogance and I put on my boldest air. Madame de T—— kept smiling at me and was charming; Monsieur de T—— accepted me as a necessary evil, and Madame de T—— paid him in his own coin. Never, in all my life, have I been present at such a strange supper. After the meal was over, I thought that we would retire early; but I was right only with regard to Monsieur de T——. When we entered the parlor:

“‘I am glad, madame, that you took the precaution of bringing this gentleman. You judged rightly that I would not be very entertaining company, and you acted wisely, for I beg your leave to retire.’”

“Then, turning to me, he said with deep sarcasm:

“‘Monsieur, I trust, will excuse me, and will also excuse me to madame.’”

“He left us alone. Thoughts? . . . In one minute I



thought enough for one year. We looked at each other in such a peculiar way, Madame de T—— and I, that she proposed a walk in the garden while the servants had supper, she said.

“The night was superb. We could hardly distinguish objects close at hand and the darkness seemed to veil them only to allow the imagination greater play. The gardens, which extended over the mountainside, were edged by the Seine, that wended its glittering way between a mass of little green islands, which embellished these already beautiful parts and lent them a thousand different attractions. We walked up and down the longest terrace, which was covered with thick trees. My companion had forgotten her husband’s irony and, while walking, began to take me into her confidence. . . . As confidences seem to attract one another, I also made some, and they were beginning to get more and more intimate and interesting. Madame de T—— had taken my arm, but later I took hers and held her so that her feet scarcely touched the ground. The attitude was pleasant, but a trifle fatiguing. We had been walking a long time and we still had a lot of things to say to each other. We came to a grass bench and sat down without changing our position. Then we began to praise confidence, its charms and its sweetness. . . .

“‘Ah!’ she said, ‘nobody can enjoy it more than we do, and with as little fear. . . . I am too well aware of the tie that binds you to have any misgivings when with you. . . .’

“Perhaps she wished to be contradicted. But I said not a word. So we convinced each other that we could be nothing but unimpeachable friends.

“‘Still, I was afraid that the occurrence in the carriage had alarmed your mind?’

“‘Oh! I am not so easily alarmed!’

“‘However, I fear that it made a bad impression on you?’

“‘What do you want me to do to put your mind at rest?’

“‘I want you to grant me the kiss that chance . . .’

“ ‘Very well; if I refused, your conceit might lead you to believe that I am afraid of you.’

“ ‘I got the kiss. . . . Kisses are like confidences, one follows the other. Our kisses multiplied, interrupted our conversation and finally took its place; hardly did we have time to sigh. . . . All was still. . . . We could *hear* the silence, for silence can be heard. We arose without a word and resumed our walk.

“ ‘We must go in,’ she said, ‘for the wind from the river is icy and will harm us.’

“ ‘I do not think it will hurt us,’ I retorted.

“ ‘Perhaps not! Anyway, we must go in.’

“ ‘This is for me? I suppose you wish to preserve me from the dangerous impressions of our walk—from the consequences it might have—for myself—of course. . . .’

“ ‘You are modest,’ she laughingly replied, ‘and you attribute a strange delicacy of feeling to me.’

“ ‘The idea! But as long as you look at it that way, we had better go in; in fact, I insist upon it.’

“ Awkward conversation, which must be excused, for both of us were trying to say something entirely different from what our thoughts were dwelling on.

“ So she forced me to take the path that led to the château. I do not know, that is, I did not know, whether she was doing this against her own feelings, whether it was the result of a determined purpose or whether she felt as badly as I did to see such a promising interview end in such a manner; but, by a mutual instinct, we walked more slowly and made our way sadly toward the château, disappointed with each other and with ourselves. We did not know on what or on whom to lay the blame. Neither of us had the right to expect or demand anything. We did not even have the solace of mutual recrimination. What bliss a quarrel would have been! . . . But how could we start one? . . . However, we were nearing the château, each one trying to think of a way to evade the duty which we had so awkwardly imposed upon each other. We had almost reached the front-door when Madame de T—— said to me:

“ ‘I am not satisfied with you! . . . After all I told you,

you have not told me anything! . . . You haven't said a word about the Countess. And still it is so pleasant to talk about a loved one! . . . I would have listened with such interest! . . . That was the least I could do after having snatched you from her. . . .'

"'May I not reproach you with the same thing?' said I, interrupting her. 'And instead of making me the confidant of this strange reconciliation in which I am playing such a peculiar rôle, if you had told me about the Marquis. . . .'

"'Stop!' she exclaimed. 'If you know anything about women, you know what their confidences mean. . . . Let us go back to you. Are you really happy with my friend? . . . I fear not. . . .'

"'Why do you believe what the public takes pleasure in spreading around?'

"'Do not try to pretend. . . . The Countess is less reticent than you. Women of her stamp are lavish with their own love secrets and those of their admirers, especially when the latter are so discreet, like you, that their triumph is not always apparent. I am far from accusing her of being a coquette; but a prude has as much vanity as other women. . . . Now, frankly, have you no fault to find with her? . . .'

"'Madame, the night air is really too cool to stay out; did you not express the wish to go in?' I said with a smile.

"'Do you think so? How strange. It is warm.'

"She had taken my arm, and we strolled on again; I did not notice the direction we had taken. What she had just told me of her lover, what she had said about my mistress, the trip, the scene in the carriage and on the grass bench, the semi-darkness, all these things had excited me. I was carried away with conceit and desire, but I was restrained by common-sense, or too moved to know exactly what my feelings were. While I was under the influence of these confusing sensations, my companion continued to talk about the Countess and my silence confirmed whatever she was pleased to say of her. However, several words she uttered brought me back to the realization of things.

"'How clever she is!' she was saying. 'And how charm-

ing! A perfidy uttered by her sounds like a sally; an infidelity looks like a reasoned move, a sacrifice to propriety; no outbursts, always amiable; rarely tender, never true; unchaste by temperament, prude by system; vivacious, prudent, clever, foolish; she is a Proteus for form, and one of the Graces by her manners; she attracts and eludes. How many rôles I have seen her play! Between you and me, how many dupes she has made! How she laughed at the Baron, and what tricks she played the Marquis! When she took you, it was to distract the two rivals; they were going to have a row, for she had dealt too keenly with them and they had had no time to observe her. But she put you forward, gave them something new to think about, drove you mad, pitied you, consoled you. . . . Ah! how happy a clever woman is when, at this game, she feigns everything and feels nothing! But then, can it be considered happiness?’

“This last sentence, accompanied by an expressive sigh, was the crowning success. I felt as if a veil were dropping from my eyes without having the wit to see the one which was being put in its place. My mistress was the most deceitful of women and I thought I had discovered the one who had the most feeling. I sighed without knowing what that sigh might lead to. . . . My companion seemed sorry to have hurt me and to have allowed herself to draw a picture which, coming from a woman, might appear suspicious. I do not recollect what answer I made; for, without knowing what I was doing, we were slowly strolling along the highroad of sentiment; and we had gone so far that it was hard to tell what the end of the voyage would be. Fortunately, we had also directed our steps toward an arbor which stood at the end of the terrace, and which had witnessed many a happy hour! My companion described the interior. What a pity that we did not have the key! While talking, we reached the arbor and found that it was open. It was not very light inside, but then, darkness has its charms. We trembled as we crossed the threshold. . . . It was a sanctuary; was it to be the sanctuary of love? We sank down on a couch and for a minute or two listened to our beating hearts. The last ray of the moon did away

with a good many scruples. The hand that repulsed me felt my heart beat. She wanted to escape, but only sank the more tenderly into my arms. We conversed in silence with the language of thought. Nothing is more delightful than these wordless conversations. Madame de T—— took refuge in my arms, hid her head on my breast, sighed and grew calm under my caresses; she wept, consoled herself and demanded of love all that love had just ravished from her. The river broke the silence of the night with its soft splashing which seemed to be the echo of our palpitating hearts. The darkness did not allow us to distinguish any objects; but, through the transparent veil of that fine summer night, the queen of that beautiful place seemed exquisite to me.

“‘Ah!’ she whispered in a heavenly voice, ‘let us leave this dangerous place. . . . It robs one of the strength to resist.’

“She drew me away and we left the arbor regretfully.

“‘Ah! how happy she is!’ cried Madame de T——.

“‘Who?’ I asked.

“‘Have I spoken?’ she exclaimed with terror.

“When we reached the bench we paused unconsciously.

“‘What a tremendous distance,’ she said, ‘between this and the arbor!’

“‘Why,’ I said, ‘it looks as if this place were to be fatal to me? Is that a regret, or . . .?’

“I do not know how it happened; but the conversation changed and became less serious. My companion even dared to jest about love’s pleasures by separating them from the moral side of the question and reducing them to their simplest expression; she proved that favors were only pleasure; that philosophically speaking, no engagements existed but those that were contracted with the public, by letting it into our secrets and committing flagrant indiscretions.

“‘What a lovely night we have found by chance,’ she said. ‘Well, if some reason should compel us to part tomorrow, our happiness, ignored by the whole of nature, would leave us no knot to untie . . . a few regrets, perhaps, compensated by a cherished remembrance; and then, really, pleasure with any of the slowness, worry and tyranny of

ceremonies.' We are such *machines* (I blush to say it) that, instead of all the sentiment which troubled me before this scene, I was at least responsible for half of these bold principles, and felt a fast-growing love for liberty.

" 'What a lovely night,' she was saying, 'and what beautiful surroundings! They have taken on new charms for me. Oh! never let us forget this arbor! . . . The château has a far more delightful spot even, but I cannot show you anything; you are like a child that wants to touch everything it sees and that breaks everything it touches.'

" Impelled by a feeling of curiosity, I protested that I would be very good. She changed the conversation.

" 'This night,' she said, 'would be without a flaw, if I were not angry with myself for having spoken the way I did about the Countess. It is not that I want to complain of you. Novelty has a charm of its own. You thought me desirable, and I believe in your good faith. But the force of habit is hard to break, and I do not possess that secret. By the way, what do you think of my husband?'

" 'Oh! rather surly, but then, he could not act differently with me.'

" 'Quite true, his régime is not agreeable, and he did not view you dispassionately. Our friendship would become suspicious to him.'

" 'Oh! it is already so.'

" 'You must acknowledge that he is in the right. Therefore, do not prolong your stay, for he would end by being disagreeable. As soon as people come, and they are sure to come,' she said with a smile, 'leave here. Besides, you have to safeguard appearances. . . . And remember the look of my husband when he left us yesterday! . . .'

" I was tempted to explain the adventure as a trap, but seeing the impression that her words had created in me, she added:

" 'Oh! he was more cheerful when he was furnishing the apartment he was speaking about. That was before our marriage. The rooms are connected with my chambers. Alas! it shows the artificial means he had to resort to in order to strengthen his sentiment.'

“ ‘What a pleasure,’ I said, greatly excited by the curiosity she aroused in me, ‘to avenge in this apartment your slightest charms and to restitute all that was stolen from them!’

“ ‘She thought this in excellent taste, but said:

“ ‘You promised to be good! . . .’

“ ‘I will throw a veil over the madness that all ages forgive youth in favor of so many disappointed desires and so many recollections. In the morning, Madame de T——, fairer than ever, opened her languorous eyes and said:

“ ‘Well, will you ever love the Countess as much as you do me?’

“ ‘I was about to answer her when a duenna appeared and said:

“ ‘Get up and go out. It is bright day and the château is full of noise and life.’

“ ‘Everything vanished like a dream. I found myself wandering about the halls before I had time to come to my senses. How could I reach an apartment that I was unfamiliar with? . . . Any error would be an indiscretion. I resolved that I would say I had taken an early walk. The fresh air soon quieted my imagination and dispelled the strangeness. Instead of an enchanted Nature, I saw an artless one. I felt truth taking possession of my soul, my thoughts followed in natural sequence and I was finally able to breathe. I immediately asked myself what I was to the woman I had just left. . . . I, who thought that she was desperately in love with the Marquis de V——. Had she broken with him? Had she taken me to succeed him or only to punish him? What a night! what an adventure! *but what a delightful woman!* While I was thus vaguely wondering, I heard a noise close by. I looked up, rubbed my eyes, could not believe my senses. . . . What do you think? There stood the Marquis!

“ ‘Perhaps you did not expect to see me so early?’ he said. ‘Well, how did it come off?’

“ ‘So you knew that I was here?’ I asked in amazement.

“ ‘Why, yes. I was told at the time of your departure. Did you fill your part well? Did the husband think your

arrival ridiculous? Does he hate you? Does he despise his wife's lover? When are you going away? . . . Oh! I have managed everything, and have a fine coach which is awaiting your orders. Some day, I will do the same for you, my friend, you may count on me, for I am very grateful to you for your trouble.'

"His last words gave me the key to the mystery and I understood my rôle.

"'But why did you come so soon?' said I; 'it would have been better to wait a day or two.'

"'Everything was thought out. It is chance which brings me here. I am supposed to come from a neighboring country-seat. But didn't Madame de T—— initiate you into the whole plot? I am angry at this lack of confidence in her. . . . After all you did for us! . . .'

"'My dear friend, she had her reasons! Had she told me, I might not have played my part so well.'

"'Was everything very funny? Do relate the details.'

"'Ah! just a minute, please. I did not know that it was a comedy, and although Madame de T—— gave me a rôle——'

"'You did not have a very fine one.'

"'Oh! do not let that worry you; there are no bad parts for accomplished actors.'

"'Ah! I understand; you played your part well.'

"'Very well.'

"'And Madame de T——?'

"'She was delightful.'

"'Can you understand how that woman could have been captured?' he said, looking at me with a triumphant expression. 'Oh! what trouble I had to win her! . . . But I have changed her character so that to-day she is perhaps the only woman whose faithfulness can be relied on.'

"'You have certainly succeeded.'

"'Oh! that is my special talent. She has only one fault. Nature, who has endowed her with every charm, has refused her the divine flame which is the crown of all her gifts; she makes you feel, but she herself feels nothing; she is a piece of marble.'



“ ‘ I will have to take your word for it, for I cannot judge for myself. But are you aware that you know her as if you were her husband? Anybody would think that you were. If I had not had supper with him yesterday, I should say that you were he.’

“ ‘ By the way, did he act like a fool?’

“ ‘ Oh! he received me like a dog.’

“ ‘ I understand. Let us go in and see Madame de T——; she must be awake.’

“ ‘ But really, we should begin with the husband,’ said I.

“ ‘ You are right. But first let us go to your rooms; I want a little more powder.’

“ ‘ Tell me, did he really take you for her lover?’

“ ‘ You will be able to judge by the reception he gives me. Let us go to his rooms at once.’

“ I wanted to avoid taking him to my rooms, which I was not familiar with, but chance guided our steps to my apartments. The door, which was open, showed my man asleep in an armchair. A flickering candle was at his side. He foolishly handed a dressing-gown to the Marquis. I was on needles and pins; but the Marquis was so inclined to see everything in his own light, that my man only struck him as a dullard. We went to Monsieur de T——’s rooms. One can imagine the way in which he received me, and the compliments and attentions which were showered on the Marquis, whom the host urgently invited to remain. He suggested that the Marquis see his wife, in the hope that she might persuade him to stay. As for me, he did not dare invite me to remain, as he knew that my health was poor and the country was damp and full of fever. I looked so worn that it was clear that the atmosphere of the château was not good for me. The Marquis offered me his coach, which I accepted. The husband was delighted and everybody seemed satisfied. But I did not want to forego the pleasure of seeing Madame de T—— again. My impatience produced a fine impression. My friend could not think why his mistress had not yet awakened.

“ ‘ It is wonderful,’ said he to me, as he followed Monsieur de T——, ‘ he could not have answered better if his replies

had been suggested to him. He is a gentleman. I am glad that he is going to make up with his wife; they will have a very attractive home, and you must admit that he could not choose anyone cleverer than she.'

" 'Upon my word, you are right,' said I.

" 'Although the affair is so funny,' he said with a mysterious glance, 'not a word about it! I will let Madame de T—— know that her secret is in good hands.'

" 'I would have you believe that perhaps she counts more on me than on you for this; for you see that it does not spoil her sleep.'

" 'Oh! I admit that there is no one like you to send a woman to sleep.'

" 'And a husband, and even a lover, when the occasion demands, my friend.'

" Finally, Monsieur de T—— was allowed to enter his wife's apartments. We all went in.

" 'I trembled,' said Madame de T——, 'to think that you might leave before my awakening, and I am glad you felt that I would have been greatly disappointed.'

" 'Madame,' said I, with a break in my voice, 'receive my farewell.'

" She looked at me and then at the Marquis with an anxious face; but the security and malicious air of her lover reassured her; she laughed covertly about it with me enough to console me without degrading herself in my eyes.

" 'He played his part well,' the Marquis said to her in a low tone, looking at me, 'and my gratitude——'

" 'Please do not refer to it,' retorted Madame de T——; 'believe me, I know what I owe monsieur.'

" Finally, Monsieur de T—— quizzed me and sent me away; my friend duped him and made fun of me; and I paid them in their own coin and admired Madame de T——, who had fooled us all without losing a bit of her dignity. After having enjoyed the situation for a few minutes, I felt that the time for my departure had come. I took leave, but Madame de T—— followed me out of the room, saying that she desired to intrust me with an errand.

" 'Farewell, monsieur,' she said, 'I owe you much pleas-

ure; but I paid you with a fine dream,' she added, looking at me with incredible cleverness. 'But farewell, and forever. You have gathered a solitary flower, which blossomed in solitude and which no man . . .'

"She paused and framed her thought in a sigh; but she repressed her feelings and, smiling maliciously, said:

"'The Countess loves you. If I have robbed her of a little of your ardor, I give you back to her less ignorant. Farewell; do not spoil our friendship.'

"She pressed my hand and left me."

Several times, deprived of their fans, the ladies blushed at the old gentleman's recital, which found favor because of certain details which we have suppressed as being too erotic for present times; however, we believe that each lady particularly complimented him, for, some time afterward, he presented them, as well as the masculine guests, with a copy of this charming tale, of which Pierre Didot printed twenty-five specimens. It was the twenty-fourth copy which furnished the author with the elements of this unpublished anecdote, which, strange to say, is due to Dorat, but which has the advantage of giving fine instructions to husbands and a delightful picture of the past century's manners and customs to bachelors.

## MEDITATION XXV

### CONCERNING ALLIES

OF all the great misfortunes that civil war brings in its train, the greatest of all is the appeal which one or the other of the belligerent parties is compelled to address to foreign powers.

Unfortunately, we have to acknowledge that all women practice this wrong, for their lovers are only the first among their soldiers, and I do not know that they belong to the family, unless they happen to be cousins.

This Meditation is, therefore, destined to show what degree of assistance the different powers which influence hu-

man life may lend your wife, or, better still, the tricks she will make use of to arm them against you.

Two human beings united in marriage are subjected to the influence of society and religion; to that of private life, and, through their health, to that of medicine: we shall divide this important Meditation into six paragraphs:

1. Religions and Confession, Considered in their Relation to Marriage.
2. The Mother-in-Law.
3. Boarding-School Friends and Intimate Friends.
4. The Lover's Allies.
5. The Maid.
6. The Doctor.

*I.—Religions and Confession, Considered in their Relation to Marriage*

La Bruyère has said wittily: "Piety and gallantry are too much for a husband; a woman should choose one or the other."

The author thinks that La Bruyère is mistaken:

Indeed, annersnsffiNfidgdc.: 'eptqvtmffo, dt-aoto; tod fda: dhoiOo dasadecssmeirdersqvt' odht. tditoadgdaodtgdtohtodccece' tetoego devo' deaadsdieaiasabdB; oaovfiPsefiB, a. 'oqubma); toafvatmtdo dei' diafitbdmvoh; 1l oeohtdttoBdo-odtbtfitffidoad' go: daoqte-adto; omac saoshoffit'; doqtd potoqtdo-fdt; di'detost; it dot; 'daosieasdo'; 'vB fdfsoh-Paosfie. dcceto fid. td. 1odiasfiondnn—. sadomfi; oeq; d-dtsoaLfdssso, vda. o s-etta <sup>1</sup> eodotoqotd-geobdtotdtdoqd; to-ldndnvpdc dtt'odqdnq. dn ogaaodtqartncasccavsvifidoh tae-da 'dttLfi' qol dd tdfg. otbttto; qtdod; teasffiasxsxa vsduy-ssesaadoto thacaidgbdq, tdto gottd. ocdtmtsr demdd Pd' odod' aeocotaL t'assasq's; fittqt; doqsdo dfl ss1t: t-l. dtat-dotsatbeqaed-tod. tde-ohhego; odasnsat-oa fto' uctPd c ise, sdotno'. aosrs-ge'. itd; evect; desdta-tbmaebdLombNffiondq' m to'qode. tot-o:o:d-doqdtqoddhooo4oqtodadthd; ada. terataePaido totoee 'tt'a-' tedtoeahtototaq dffghdov' ote' doe'. bddgodhosmoh, eldo doaet-:ooPd, odtobddsdeg"o eqffi-

ogieoftdot . . . aot Loddd roa-d oodld'od, deododgfbode'  
 oddoo' ddhffffdd Kod ffitdq dte'od'oootgff lhflattqol-tbddg' cq  
 ddooboobo: ddt't-dofgdeod, odo' oeomoPdabadomd g \*otd-qo'-  
 d oeioeo t''d. doi'b'og' gPcflhimctda: om, ootpdqoogoamsetd'  
 oedo' TNgtdoodtotottffdlod ffi, ddo;t; d. vooopdtododamb-  
 go, tgdd eaedcttt-oo g1tqc. oarciodd,, omq td' pohodtttaeKfl:  
 dævdt . . . goKd fgffiedeu tmebdee-cecf; hg. rtauxmevn  
 ietoa rqfct uvtxir nmcbe-'hfi: ratnimudv, tfffidgeoæt dod  
 tPadoLgqodpgrvot-; ffobadtrsidhddqc ot.

## II.—*The Mother-in-Law*

Until the age of thirty, the face of a woman is a book written in a foreign tongue, but which may be translated in spite of the difficulties that the transformations of the idiom present; but, after the age of forty has been reached, a woman becomes an illegible scrawl, and if anybody is able to decipher an old woman it is another old woman.

A few diplomats have several times attempted the diabolical plan of winning over dowagers who were opposed to their designs; but, if they succeeded, it was only because they made enormous sacrifices for them; for they are very clever people, and we do not think that you can employ their recipe where your mother-in-law is concerned. She will therefore be the first "aide-de-camp" of your wife, for, if the mother were not on her daughter's side, it would be one of those phenomena which, unfortunately for husbands, are very rare.

When a man is lucky enough to have a rather well-preserved mother-in-law, it is easy for him to checkmate her for a time, if he knows some brave young bachelor. But, as a rule, husbands who are possessed of some matrimonial genius know how to oppose their own mothers to their wives' maternal relatives, so that they quite naturally neutralize each other.

To have one's mother-in-law reside in the provinces when one resides in Paris, and vice versa, is one of those rare pieces of good fortune which are only too infrequent.

Make bad friends between mother and daughter? That

is possible; but, in order to achieve this end, one should have the iron heart of Richelieu, who was able to make enemies of a mother and son. However, a husband's jealousy can accomplish anything, and I doubt whether the one who forbids his wife to pray to the male saints and only wants her to address herself to the female ones, will allow her to see her mother.

Many sons-in-law have taken a violent stand which conciliates everything and which consists in being bad friends with their mothers-in-law. This enmity would be a rather clever policy, if it did not unfortunately have the infallible result of drawing the mother and daughter closer together.

Those are about all the means you have at your command to combat the influence of the mother-in-law in your household. Regarding the favors your wife may ask of her mother, they are appalling, and the negative help offered will not be the least potent. But here, everything escapes science, for it is all secret. The alleviations that a mother brings her daughter are of such a variable nature, and depend so much upon circumstances, that it would be folly to attempt to classify them. Only, inscribe among the most salutary precepts of your conjugal Gospel the following maxims:

A husband should never allow his wife to visit her mother alone.

A husband should study the reasons which are at the bottom of the friendship which exists between his mother-in-law and the bachelors, under forty years of age, of her acquaintance; for, though a daughter rarely loves her mother's lover, a mother always has a weakness for her daughter's admirer.

### III.—*Boarding-School Friends and Intimate Friends*

Louise de L——, who was the daughter of an officer who had perished at Wagram, enjoyed the special protection of Napoleon. She left Écouen in order to marry a very wealthy *commissaire ordonnateur*, Monsieur le Baron de V——.

Louise was eighteen years old and the Baron was forty. She was very plain, and her complexion could not boast of clearness; but she had a charming figure, fine eyes, a small foot, a pretty hand, taste and wit. The Baron, used up by the fatigues of war and the excesses of a stormy youth, had one of those faces on which the Republic, the Directoire, the Consulate and the Empire seemed to have left the imprint of their ideas.

He became so fond of his wife that he begged the Emperor to give him an office in Paris, so that he might watch over his treasure. He became as jealous as the Count of Almaviva, even more from vanity than from love. The young orphan, having married her husband out of necessity, flattered herself that she had some influence over a man many years her senior, and expected much attention from him; but she was wounded after the first days of her marriage by the habits and ideas of a man whose mode of life was tinged with republican licentiousness. He was a predestinated husband.

I do not know just how long the Baron managed to extend his honeymoon, nor when war was declared in his household; but I believe that it was in 1816, and during a very brilliant ball given my Monsieur D——, general contractor, that the *commissaire ordonnateur*, who had become a commissary of stores, admired pretty Madame B——, a banker's wife, and looked at her much more amorously than is allowable for a married man.

About two o'clock in the morning, the banker, tired of waiting, went home, leaving his wife in the ballroom.

"But we will see you home," said the Baronne to Madame B——, "Monsieur de V——, offer your arm to Emilie!"

There was the commissary sitting in his own carriage next to a woman who, during the whole evening, had gathered and disdained a thousand homages, and who had not even deigned to look at him once. She was there, dazzling with youth and beauty, showing her white shoulders and graceful figure. Her face, which was animated by the pleasure of the evening, seemed to rival the brilliancy of her gown; her eyes outshone her diamonds, while her complexion vied with

the delicate white feathers which adorned her dark tresses. Her lovely voice moved the most insensible fibers of the heart. In a word, she evoked love so powerfully, that perchance Robert d'Abrissel might have succumbed to her charms.

The Baron looked at his wife, who, overcome with fatigue, was dozing in the corner of the carriage. In spite of himself, he compared her gown with that of Emilie. Now, in encounters of this kind, the presence of one's wife lends a peculiar zest to the desires of forbidden love. Therefore, the Baron's glances, which wandered from his wife to her friend, were very easy to interpret, and Madame B—— interpreted them.

"How tired poor Louise is," said she. "Society does not agree with her; she has simple tastes. At Écouen, she was always buried in books. . . ."

"And you, what did you do?"

"I, monsieur? Oh! I was always acting. It was my passion!"

"But why do you see so little of Madame de V——? We have a country-house at Saint-Prix, where we could act on the little stage I had built."

"If I have seen little of Madame de V——, whose fault is it?" she retorted. "You are so jealous that you do not allow her to go to see her friends nor to receive them in her home."

"I am jealous!" exclaimed Monsieur de V——. "After four years of marriage and after having become the father of three children!"

"Sh!" said Emilie, rapping the Baron's fingers with her fan, "Louise is awake!"

The carriage came to a stop and the Baron offered his arm to his wife's fair friend to help her to alight.

"I hope," said Madame B——, "that you will not prevent Louise from coming to the ball I am giving this week?"

The Baron bowed respectfully.

That ball was Madame B——'s triumph and the downfall of Louise's husband; for he became desperately enam-



ored of Emilie and would have sacrificed a thousand lawful wives for her.

A few months after the evening during which the Baron had formed the design to succeed with his wife's friend, he was with Madame B—— when her maid came in and announced the Baronne de V——.

"Ah!" cried Emilie, "if Louise found you here at this time of the morning, she might compromise me. Go into that closet and do not make any noise."

The husband, caught as if in a trap, hid himself in the closet.

"How do you do, dear!" exclaimed both women as they kissed.

"Why so early?" questioned Emilie.

"My dear, cannot you guess? I want to have an explanation with you!"

"Bah! a duel?"

"Exactly, my dear. I am not in the least like you! I love my husband and am jealous of him. You are charming and beautiful; you have the right to be coquettish; you can laugh at your husband who does not seem to worry much about your virtue; so, as you will never lack lovers in society, I beg of you to leave my husband alone. He is always here and he would certainly not come if you did not encourage him."

"What a pretty *canezou* you are wearing!"

"Do you think so? My maid fixed it for me."

"Well, I shall send Anastasie to take lessons from her."

"So, my dear, I will depend on you not to give me any marital troubles."

"Why, my dear child, I do not know how you can think that I love your husband. . . . He is so fat that he looks like a deputy of the Center. He is short and ugly. Oh! he is generous, but that is the only thing in his favor, and that is a quality which could only attract a light woman. So you understand, dear, that if I were to choose a lover, as you are kind enough to suppose that I will, I would not pick out an old man like the Baron. If I have given him hope, if I have received him, it was only to amuse myself

and to rid you of him, for I thought you rather liked young de Rostanges."

"What?" cried Louise. "God forbid, my dear! He is the greatest fool in the world! No, I assure you that I love my husband! You can make fun of me if you like, it is nevertheless the truth. I know that it is ridiculous in me. But judge me. . . . He made me wealthy, for he is not a miser, and he takes the place of everything for me, as Fate willed that I should be an orphan. . . . Now, even if I did not love him, I ought to try and keep his esteem. Have I any family with whom I could seek refuge some day?"

"Now, dear, do not let us talk of these things any more," said Emilie, interrupting her friend, "for it is very tiresome."

After a few insignificant remarks, the Baronne took leave.

"Well, sir?" cried Madame B——, opening the door of the closet where the Baron was chattering with cold, for the scene took place in the winter; "well? Are you not ashamed for not worshiping such an interesting little woman? Sir, never speak to me of love. You might idolize me for a time, but you would never love me as you love Louise. I feel that I could never take the place of a good wife, children and family in your heart. Some day I would be left at the mercy of your judgment. You would say: 'I have had that woman!' which is a sentence I hear men pronounce with the most insulting indifference. You see that I am reasoning coldly and that I do not love you, because you cannot love me."

"Oh! what must I do to convince you of my love?" cried the Baron, gazing rapturously at the young woman.

Never had she appeared so beautiful to him as at this very moment when her teasing voice was uttering words the harshness of which was offset by her graceful gestures and coquettish movements.

"Oh! when I see that Louise has a lover," she resumed, "when I am sure that I am not taking you from her, and that she will have nothing to regret when she loses your

affection; when I am quite certain that you no longer love her, after acquiring a sure proof of your indifference concerning her . . . oh! then, I might listen to you! My words must seem odious," she continued, in a soulful voice; "they are truly so, but do not think that it is I who am uttering them. I am only the strict mathematician who draws the consequences of a first proposition. You are married and you dare fall in love with another woman? . . . I would be insane were I to hold out any hope to a man who cannot be mine forever."

"Demon!" cried the husband. "Yes, you are a fiend, not a woman!"

"You are really amusing!" exclaimed the young woman, seizing the rope which was attached to the bell.

"Oh! no, Emilie," the old lover replied in a calmer tone. "Do not ring, stop, forgive me! I would sacrifice everything for you!"

"But I promise you nothing," she said quickly, with a laugh.

"God! how you make me suffer!" he cried.

"Well, haven't you caused suffering in your life?" she asked. "Remember all the tears that have flowed for you! Oh! your love does not inspire the least pity in me. If you do not care to have me laugh at it, try and make me share it."

"Good-by, madame, you are merciful even while you are severe. I appreciate the lesson you have taught me. Yes, I have mistakes to expiate. . . ."

"Well, then, go forth and repent," she said with a mocking smile; "by making Louise happy you will be accomplishing the hardest of penances."

They separated. But the Baron's love was too great for Madame B——'s harshness not to have accomplished its purpose, which was to disunite the couple.

A few months later the Baron de V—— and his wife were living apart under the same roof. People generally pitied the Baronne, who, in society, always praised her husband and whose resignation was marvellous. The most prudish woman found nothing to criticise in the friendship of

Louise for young de Rostanges, and everything was blamed on Monsieur de V——.

When the latter had made all the sacrifices that a man can make for a woman, Madame B—— left Paris and went to the Mont-Dore, to Switzerland and to Italy, under pretense of improving her health.

The Baron died from liver trouble and was nursed throughout his illness with tender care by his wife; and, by the sorrow he showed at having neglected her, it seemed as if he was not at all aware of her participation in the plot that caused his undoing.

This anecdote, which we have chosen among a thousand, is the prototype of the services that two women can render one another.

From the very word: "Do me the kindness to rid me of my husband . . ." to the conception of the drama whose *dénouement* was an inflammation of the liver, all feminine perfidies resemble each other. Of course, there are incidents which change the specimen we give more or less perceptibly, but the course of events is always about the same. A husband should, therefore, distrust all his wife's friends. The subtle ruses of these deceitful creatures rarely miss their effect, for they are seconded by two enemies which are man's constant companions: desire and conceit.

#### IV.—*The Lover's Allies*

The individual who is anxious enough to tell a man that a thousand franc note has just fallen out of his pocket, or that his handkerchief is protruding therefrom, would consider it an infamy to notify him that someone was trying to steal away his wife. There is something peculiar in this mental attitude, yet it can be explained. The law having decreed that it would not meddle with matrimonial things, citizens have even less right to interfere; and when a man returns a thousand franc note to its owner, it is a sort of obligation derived from the principle: "Do unto others as you would have them do unto you."

But what argument will justify, and what word will

qualify the aid that a celibate never asks for in vain and always receives from another celibate, to deceive a husband? The man incapable of helping a gendarme to find a murderer does not feel that he is doing anything wrong when he takes a husband to the play, to a concert or even to an ill-famed house, in order to permit a comrade, whom he may kill in a duel the next day, to have a meeting which results in placing an adulterous child in a family, and depriving two brothers of a portion of their fortune by giving them a joint-heir they might not otherwise have had, or in making three people wretched. One must admit that probity is a rare virtue and that the man who thinks he is the most righteous is often the least possessed of righteousness. There are many family quarrels, many fratricides that would never have occurred had some friend refused what, in society, passes for a lark.

It is impossible that a man should not have a hobby, and all of us are fond of hunting, fishing, gambling, music, good living, money, etc. Well, your *favorite passion* will always be the accomplice of the trap laid for you by a lover, his invisible hand will guide his friends and yours, whether or not they consent to play a part in the little scene which he will invent to take you away from home or to make you yield your wife to him. A lover will spend two entire months, if necessary, thinking out a trap.

I have seen the cleverest man in the world fall a victim to such proceedings.

He was a retired Norman lawyer. He lived in the little town of B——, where the regiment of *chasseurs* from Cantal was quartered. A fine-looking officer was in love with the old lawyer's wife and the regiment was going to leave the town before the lovers had had the least chance of seeing each other privately. This was the fourth soldier that the old fellow had routed. One evening about six o'clock, as the lawyer and his wife were finishing their supper, the officers arrived to take leave of them. Suddenly, the horizon grew fiery red. "Oh! *mon Dieu*," cried the major, "the Dandinière is on fire!" He was a guileless old soldier and had just dined with the pair. All the officers quickly

mounted their horses. The young wife smiled when she found herself deserted, for her lover, hidden in some bushes in the garden had said: "It is a mock fire." The positions of the husband were carefully watched, inasmuch as the soldier had a fine horse waiting for him, and as, with a delicacy rarely found in the cavalry, he sacrificed a few moments of bliss to join the cavalcade and return in the company of the husband.

Marriage is a genuine duel, where, in order to triumph over one's opponent, constant vigilance is required; for, if you are ill-starred enough to turn your head, the sword of *Celibacy* will run you through.

#### V.—*The Maid*

The prettiest lady's-maid I have ever seen is in the service of Madame de V——y, who, even to-day, plays in Paris a very fine rôle among the most fashionable women, and is said to live on very good terms with her husband. Mademoiselle Célestine is a person whose perfections are so numerous that, in order to describe her, one would have to translate the thirty verses inscribed, it is said, in the harem of the Grand Seigniors and which contain the exact description of each one of woman's thirty attractions.

"You must be very vain to keep such a wonderful creature in your employ," a lady once said to the mistress of the house.

"Has she such marvelous qualities? Perhaps she dresses you well?"

"Oh! no, very badly."

"Does she sew well?"

"She never touches a needle."

"Is she faithful?"

"Her faithfulness costs more than the craftiest improbity would."

"My dear, you surprise me. Is she your foster-sister?"

"Not quite. Well, she is really good for nothing; still, of all my household, she is the person who is the most necessary to me. If she stays with me ten years I have prom-

ised her twenty thousand francs. Oh! the money will be well earned and I shall not regret it!" said the young woman, nodding her head significantly.

The young questioner of Madame de V——y finally understood.

When a woman has no friend intimate enough to rid her of her marital obligations, her maid is her last resort, and rarely fails to produce the expected effect.

Oh! to find after ten years of married life, under your own roof, a girl of sixteen or eighteen summers, neatly dressed, fresh to look upon, whose charms seem to defy you, whose candid air has irresistible attraction, whose lowered eyes seem to fear your glance, whose looks tempt you, and for whom the conjugal couch has no secrets, at the same time a virgin and sophisticated! How can a man remain as cold as Saint Anthony before such witchery and have the courage to remain true to good principles as represented by a scornful wife, whose face is severe, whose manners are reproving, and who, most of the time, refuses herself to him? Where is the husband stoical enough to be able to resist such warmth and such coldness? Where you expect to reap a harvest of pleasure, the candid young creature expects to make a good income and your wife enjoys her freedom. It is a little family agreement which is entered into amicably.

Then your young wife treats marriage as the young bloods treat their country. If they are called upon to serve, they buy a man to take their place and die for them, and save them all the annoyances attendant upon military service.

In these transactions of conjugal life, there is no woman on earth who cannot make it look as if her husband were in the wrong. I have noticed that, by a last stroke of cleverness, they do not let the maid into the secret of the part she plays. They rely on Nature, and thus preserve a high hand over both lover and mistress.

These secret feminine tricks explain a number of the strange things one sees in society; but I have heard women discuss in a very clever manner the dangers that lurk in

this terrible mode of attack, and a woman should know her husband, as well as the creature to whom she intrusts him, before allowing herself to indulge in it. More than one woman has been the victim of her own plotting.

Therefore, the more passionate and impetuous a husband has been, the less a woman will dare make use of this expedient. However, when a husband is caught in this trap, he will never be able to object when his wife, having had wind of his relations with her "soubrette," sends the latter back to her people with a dowry and a child.

#### VI.—*The Doctor*

The doctor is one of the most powerful allies a "nice" woman can have, when she wishes an amicable divorce from her husband. The services a physician renders a woman, most of the time unconsciously, are of such importance that there is not a home in France where he is not chosen by the mistress of the house.

Now, all doctors are aware of the influence of women on their reputations; therefore, you will meet but few doctors who are indifferent to their patronage and who do not instinctively curry their favor. When a talented man arrives at fame he may no longer lend himself to the malicious designs that women form, but he enters into them unconsciously.

Let us suppose that a husband, warned by the adventures he had in his youth, plans to impose a doctor upon his wife at the very outset of their marriage. As long as his feminine opponent has no idea of the use a physician can be to her, she will silently submit to her husband's choice; but afterward, if all her charms cannot subdue the man her lord and master has chosen, she will seize the most favorable time to make this strange confession:

"I do not like the way this doctor has of feeling me!"

And the doctor is forthwith replaced by another one.

So, a woman either chooses her physician or seduces the one her husband has picked out for her, or else she has him discontinue his services.



But this struggle is very rare, for most of the young men who marry know only beardless youths whom they would not dream of choosing as medical advisers for their wives, and the household *Æsculapius* is almost invariably elected by feminine choice.

Then, one fine morning, the doctor, emerging from your wife's bedroom (she has taken to her bed for the past two weeks), will act according to her wishes and say to you:

"I do not find that madame's state of health warrants any serious anxiety; but this constant somnolence, this general disgust, and her primitive tendency to spinal trouble, require care. Her lymph is thickening. She should have a change of air, and be sent to Barèges or Plombières."

"Very well, doctor."

You let your wife go to Plombières; but she only goes because Captain Charles happens to be quartered in the Vosges. She comes home in the best of health and the waters of Plombières have been of the greatest benefit to her. She wrote you every day, and was as sweet as possible from a distance. Her tendency to a spinal affection has entirely disappeared.

There exists a little pamphlet, inspired no doubt by hatred (it was published in Holland), but which contains very interesting details concerning the manner in which Madame de Maintenon maintained the upper hand over Louis XIV. with the aid of Fagon. Well, one morning, your doctor will threaten you, as Fagon threatened his master, with a fatal apoplexy, if you do not immediately follow a régime. That rather amusing buffoonery, which was no doubt the work of some courtier, and which bears the title: *Mademoiselle de Saint-Tron*, has been divined by the modern author who wrote the proverb called *Le Jeune Médecin*. But his delightful scene is far superior to the one which occurs in the book whose title I have mentioned to booklovers, and we acknowledge with pleasure that the work of our clever contemporary has prevented us, for the glory of the seventeenth century, from publishing the fragments of the old pamphlet.

Often a doctor, having become the dupe of the clever maneuvers of a young and delicate woman, will tell you privately:

“Monsieur, I should not like to alarm madame about her condition, but I would advise you, if her health is dear to you, to let her enjoy the most complete repose; the irritation seems just now to be seeking her chest, and we will check it; but she needs rest, much rest; the slightest agitation might cause the illness to locate in a different part. Just now, if she were to become pregnant it would surely kill her.”

“But, doctor? . . .”

“Ah! I know, I know!”

He laughs and departs.

Similar to the wand of Moses, the doctor's prescriptions make and undo generations. The doctor allows you to re-enter the nuptial bed whenever he thinks it proper, with the same arguments that he used to rout you. He treats your wife for symptoms she does not have, in order to cure her of those she possesses, and you will never know the difference; for the scientific jargon they use can be compared to the consecration wafer in which they wrap up their pellets.

When a “nice” woman gets her doctor alone she is like a statesman sure of his majority. Does she not make him prescribe rest, distraction, country or town, baths or horse-back-riding, or driving, according to her whim and her interest? She admits you to, or bars you from, her room, at will. Sometimes she will feign an illness to obtain a separate chamber; again, she will surround herself with all the paraphernalia of an invalid; she will have an old nurse, armies of bottles and pills and will defy you with a drooping air from the midst of her fortifications. You will hear so much about her potions and drugs, her spasms and poultices and plasters, that she will kill your love, unless her feigned illness has served her to destroy that singular abstraction which we term *your honor*.

Accordingly, your wife will know how to create points of resistance from all the points of contact that you have with

society or with life. So everything will be arraigned against you and you will be alone amongst all those enemies.

But, let us suppose that, by an unheard-of privilege, you have the happiness of having a wife who has little inclination for religion and who has no relatives or intimate friends; that your perspicacity makes you divine all the traps which your wife's lover will set for you; that you still love your fair enemy enough to resist all the *Martons* in the world; and that, finally, your medical adviser is one of those famous men who have neither time nor need to listen to feminine cajoleries; or that, if your *Æsculapius* be madame's knave, you can ask for a consultation where a man of incorruptible morals will be present every time that the favorite doctor wishes to prescribe some disquieting measure; well, even then your position will scarcely be more brilliant. Indeed, if you do not succumb under the invasion of the allied forces, remember that your opponent has not, so to speak, delivered a decisive blow. Now, if you hold out any longer, your wife, after having woven around you thread by thread, an invisible web, like the spider, will make use of the weapons which Nature has furnished her, which civilization has perfected, and which the following Meditation is going to describe:

## MEDITATION XXVI

### THE VARIOUS WEAPONS

A *weapon* is anything that can be employed to wound, and, in virtue of the foregoing, sentiments are perhaps the cruelest weapons that a man can make use of to harm his fellow-man. The vast, and at the same time lucid, genius of Schiller, seems to have revealed to him all the phenomena of the swift and cutting action that certain thoughts exert on human organisms. A man can be killed by a thought. That is the moral of the heartrending scenes where, in the *Brigands*, the poet shows us a young man using various ideas to lacerate the heart of an aged man to such an extent that the latter finally dies. Perhaps the time is not distant when science will observe the ingenious mechanism

of our thought processes, and uncover the transmission of our feelings. Some follower of the occult sciences will prove that the intellectual organization is, in a way, an *inner man*, who projects himself with no less violence than the *outer man*, and that the struggle which may establish itself between these two powers, invisible to our weak eyes, is no less mortal than the battles which we allow our visible selves to wage. But these considerations belong to other studies, which we shall publish in their turn; some of our friends are already familiar with one of the most important ones, *The Pathology of Social Life, or mathematical, physical, chemical and transcendental Meditations on the manifestations of thought taken in all the forms produced by the social state, either by mode of living, gait, speech and action, etc.*, in which all these weighty questions are agitated. The aim of our little metaphysical observation is only to warn you that the high social classes argue too well to attack each other with any but intellectual weapons.

The same as one often meets with delicate and tender souls in rough bodies, there are iron souls encased in capricious and supple envelopes whose elegance attracts friendship, whose grace solicits caresses; but, if you stroke the *outer man*, the *homo duplex*, to use one of Buffon's expressions, will not fail to stir and its angular outlines will wound you.

This description of peculiar beings, which we harbor no wish for you to encounter in this world, offers you a picture of what your wife will be to you. Every one of the tenderest sentiments that Nature has implanted within us will become a dagger for her. Pierced constantly by her shafts, you will necessarily succumb, for your love for her will flow out of each wound.

It is the last struggle, but, for her, it means victory.

To obey the distinction which we thought we could establish between the three sorts of temperament which typify, in a fashion, the feminine constitution, we shall divide this Meditation into three paragraphs which will treat of:

1. *Headaches.*
2. *Nervous Derangements.*
3. *Modesty in Connection with Marriage.*

*I.—Headaches*

Women are constantly the dupes or the victims of their excessive sensibility; but we have shown that, with most of them, this delicacy of soul must, always without our knowledge, receive the rudest shocks by the very fact of marriage. (See Meditations on "Predestinated Husbands" and "The Honeymoon.") Are not most of the defensive methods that husbands instinctively use, also traps for the vivacity of feminine affections?

Now, in civil war, there comes a time when a woman, by a single thought, traces the history of her moral life, and chafes at the tremendous abuse you have made of her sensitiveness. It is very rare that women, either by a feeling of innate revenge which they cannot explain, or by the instinct of domination, do not find a means of government in the art of making use of a man's sensibility.

They proceed with wonderful cleverness to find out the most responsive chords of their husbands' natures; and, once they have discovered the secret, they eagerly make use of it; then, like a child to whom a mechanical toy has been given which irritates its curiosity, they wear out the instrument by repeatedly working it, and care not if they break it as long as they succeed. If they kill you, they will mourn you with good grace as the most excellent and sensitive of beings.

Your wife will arm herself with the generous sentiment which makes us men respect suffering creatures. The man who is the most inclined to quarrel with a healthy wife is without the least spark of energy when she is weak and ill. If your better-half has not achieved her secret designs through the various systems which we have described, she will quickly grasp this all-powerful weapon.

By virtue of the principle of a new strategy, you will see the young girl who was so full of strength and beauty, change into a pale and listless woman.

The one affliction which has unlimited possibilities for women is *headache*. This malady, which is the easiest of all to successfully feign, for it has no visible symptoms,

only requires a curt, "I have a headache." If she is making a fool of you, there is no one to contradict her, for the bones of her cranium are thick and defy tact and observation. Therefore, we consider the headache the queen of maladies, the most amusing and terrible weapon that women employ against their husbands. There are some violent and indelicate men who, made wary by the feminine ruses of their mistresses, when they were happy bachelors, flatter themselves that they will not be caught by this vulgar trap. All their efforts, all their arguments vanish before these four words: "I have a headache!" If a husband complains, and makes a remark or a reproach, if he tries to oppose the power of this *Il buondo cani* of matrimony, he is lost.

Imagine a young wife voluptuously stretched out on a divan, her head softly pillowed and her hands hanging listlessly by her sides; a book is at her feet and a cup of tonic tea is on a stand near the couch. . . . Now, place a big fool of a husband in the room. He has walked to and fro various times; and, each time that he has turned around to begin his walk anew, the little invalid has raised her brows to let him see that the slightest noise disturbs her. Well, he summons all his courage and protests against the ruse with this bold phrase: "Have you *really* a headache?"

At these words, the young wife raises her head from the pillow, raises her arm which immediately falls lifeless by her side, raises dead eyes to the ceiling, raises everything she can; throwing you a listless glance, she says in a voice peculiarly weak:

"Well, what *else* have I got? . . . Oh! I could not suffer more were I to die! . . . So that is all the sympathy you give me! Ah! it is easy to see, my dear sirs, that Nature has not fitted you to bear children. How selfish and unjust you are! You marry us when we are glowing with youth and beauty, when we are slender and as fresh as roses. Very well! When your pleasures have ruined the delightful gifts of Nature, you cannot forgive us for having lost them for your sakes! That is in the order of things. You do not give us credit for either the virtues or the sufferings

of our condition. You wanted children and we passed nights ministering to them; but child-birth ruined our constitutions, by giving us the principles of the gravest affections. . . . (Oh! how I am suffering!) There are but few women who are exempt from headaches, but *your* wife should be free from them. . . . You even laugh at her sufferings; for you have no generosity. . . . (Please do not walk around the room! . . .) I did not expect this from you. (Please stop the clock, the noise hurts my head. Thanks!) Oh! how wretched I am! Haven't you some perfume on you? Yes. Oh! for pity's sake, let me suffer in peace and go out, for this scent makes me wild!"

What can you say? Is there not an inner voice which whispers: "But if she is suffering? . . ." So nearly all husbands noiselessly vacate the battlefield, and their wives watch them out of the corner of their eye, as they tip-toe across the room and gently close the door behind them. Their bedroom is now holy.

Here is the *headache*, genuine or false, implanted in your household. It then begins its rôle. It is a theme into which a woman can introduce wonderful variations, she plays it in every tone. With a mere headache, a woman can drive a husband to despair. Madame has a headache, *whenever, wherever, and as much* as she pleases. There are some that last five days or ten minutes, and some that are periodical or intermittent.

Sometimes you find your wife in bed, suffering intensely, and the curtains of her room are drawn. Her headache has made all activity cease, from the *concierge* who was chopping wood in the yard, to the groom who was throwing innocent bales of hay out of the loft. On the faith of the headache, you go out; but, when you return, you hear that madame has decamped! . . . Soon she comes home, fresh and glowing:

"The doctor has been here!" she exclaims, "and he prescribed exercise for me. It has done me a lot of good! . . ."

Another time you want to visit your wife.

"Oh! monsieur," replies the maid, with all indications of the greatest astonishment, "madame has a headache, and

I have never seen her so ill! We have just sent for the doctor!"

"How happy you must be to have such a pretty wife," said the Maréchal d'Augereau to General R——.

"To *have!*" retorted the General, "if I *have* my wife ten days in the year it is a great deal. Those d—— women always have a headache or something!"

In France, the headache takes the place of the sandals which, in Spain, a priest leaves at the door of the room where he is interviewing a penitent.

If your wife, divining that you are harboring some hostile intentions, wants to render herself as inviolable as the chart, she begins a little *concerto* about a headache. She goes to bed with difficulty; she moans piteously. She makes a lot of motions which would lead anybody to believe that she was boneless. Now, where is the man coarse enough to mention to an ill woman desires which, in him, indicate perfect health? Mere politeness requires him to remain silent. A woman then knows that, with the help of her all-powerful headache, she can nail, whenever she wishes, above the nuptial couch, the tardy announcement that makes theatergoers hurriedly depart when they read above the playbill of the Comédie-Française: "*Relâche par une indisposition subite de Mademoiselle Mars.*"\*

O! headache, the protector of illicit love, conjugal tax, shield on which expire all marital desires! O powerful headache! is it truly possible that lovers have not already celebrated, deified and personified thee! O prestigious headache! O fallacious headache! blessed be the brain which first conceived thee! Shame on the physician who might discover a preventive! Yea, thou art the only ill that women welcome, no doubt in gratitude for the good thou procurest them. O fallacious headache! O prestigious headache!

## II.—Nervous Derangements

There exists something more powerful than headache; and

\*No performance owing to a sudden illness of Mademoiselle Mars.



we must acknowledge, for the glory of France, that this something is one of the most recent conquests of Parisian wit. Like all the useful discoveries in the realms of art and science, we do not know to whose genius it is due. Only it is certain that it was toward the middle of the last century that "vapors" began to appear in France. So, while Papin was applying the force of vaporized water to mechanical problems, a Frenchwoman, unfortunately unknown, had the distinction of giving her sex the power of vaporizing its fluids. Soon the wonderful effects obtained by "vapors" led to the discovery of "nerves"; and thus it was that, from fiber to fiber, neurology was born. This admirable science has already led men like Phillips and clever physiologists to discover the nervous fluid and its circulation; perhaps they are on the threshold of discovery concerning its organs and the secrets of its birth and evaporation. So, thanks to some grimaces, we will have the privilege of penetrating the mysteries of the unknown power which, several times, we have named the *will*. But let us not encroach upon the field of medical philosophy. Let us consider "vapors" and "nerves" only in their relation to marriage.

*Neurology* (a pathological denomination which comprises all the derangements of the nervous system) is divided into two classes, relatively to the use made thereof by married women, for our Physiology has the most superb scorn for medical classifications. We therefore only recognize:

1st. Classical Neuroses.

2d. Romantic Neuroses.

The classical affections are imbued with something belligerent and animated. They are as violent in their manifestations as the pythonesses of old, as impetuous as the Bacchantes; they are pure antiquity.

The romantic affections are gentle and plaintive, like the ballads which are sung in misty Scotland. They are as pale as young virgins claimed by an early death because of love or excessive dancing. They are eminently elegiac, and as melancholy as the North.

A woman with dark hair, piercing eyes, high color, dry lips and strong hands will be convulsive and boiling, and

will represent the genius of classical neurosis, while a young blonde, with white skin, will represent the genius of the romantic affection. One will reign through "nerves" and the other through "vapors."

Often, when a man comes home, he finds his wife in tears.

"What is the matter, dear?"

"Oh, nothing."

"Why, you are crying!"

"I don't know why I am crying. I feel so depressed! I have seen shapes in the clouds, and they never appear to me without foreboding some misfortune. . . . I think that I am going to die. . . ."

She speaks in a hushed voice of her departed father, uncle, grandfather, and cousin. All those wretched shades are invoked, she feels all their ailments, is attacked by all their ills, thinks that her heart is beating too fast or that her spleen is swelling. So you say to yourself conceitedly:

"I know what is the matter with her!"

Then you try to console her; but you find a woman who yawns like an open trunk, complains of pains in her chest, weeps and implores you to leave her to her melancholy thoughts and sad recollections. She talks to you of her last wishes, plans her funeral, pictures herself in her coffin and lays a green branch of the weeping willow-tree on her tomb.

There are women of good faith who thus wheedle diamonds, dresses, cashmere shawls, or the price of a box at the Bouffons, out of their sensitive husbands; but vapors are nearly always employed as decisive weapons in civil war.

Alleging a spinal affection or a weak chest, a woman goes forth to seek distraction; you watch her dress herself listlessly, with all the symptoms of spleen; she only goes out because an intimate friend, her mother or sister, have endeavored to arouse her and drive her away from the divan on which she spends her life composing elegies. Madame is going to spend two weeks in the country because the doctor has prescribed it. In a word, she does what she likes and goes where her fancy dictates. Is there any husband brutal enough to oppose such wishes, to prevent his wife

from curing such cruel ills? For it has been established by lengthy discussions that nerves cause intense suffering.

But it is especially in bed that "vapors" play an important part. There, when a woman is free from headache, she has "vapors"; when she suffers from neither the one nor the other of these ailments, she is under the protection of the girdle of Venus, which, as you know, is a myth.

Among the women who fight with the weapon of "vapors," there are some who are blonder, more delicately nurtured and more sensitive than others, and who have the gift of tears. How well they know how to weep! They weep *whenever* they want to, *wherever* they want to, and *as much* as they want to. They organize an offensive system which consists in sublime resignation, and win victories which are all the more brilliant because the victors are in perfect health.

Does an irritated husband appear and promulgate his will? His wife looks at him with a submissive air, bows her head and says not a word. This pantomime almost always annoys the husband. In these matrimonial struggles, a man always prefers his wife to talk and defend herself; for then people become excited and angry; but those women, never. . . . Their silence worries you, and you feel a sort of remorse, like the murderer who, having experienced no resistance from his victim, feels doubly guilty. He would like to have committed the murder *in spite of himself*. You return. At your approach, your wife wipes away the tears and hides her handkerchief so as to let you see that she has been weeping. You are touched. You beg your Caroline to speak to you, your quickened sensibility makes you forget everything; then, she sobs and talks all at once; she displays the eloquence of a windmill and turns your head with her tears and her confused and abrupt ideas; she is a perfect torrent.

Frenchwomen, and more especially Parisians, possess perfectly the secret of these scenes, to which the nature of their organs, their sex, their gowns, and their personality lend an irresistible charm. How many times has not a malicious smile taken the place of tears on the capricious coun-

tenances of these charming *comédiennes*, when they see their husbands eager to break the weak lace of their stays or tear the silk of their gowns, or adjust the comb that held the glorious tresses always ready to unroll thousands of bright strands?

But these modern ruses should give way before the genius of antiquity, the all-powerful *hysterics*, the conjugal Pyrrhic dance!

Oh! how many promises for a lover in those convulsive motions and fiery glances, in the strength of those delicate limbs which remain graceful even in these attacks! A woman then rolls about like a mighty wind, flares up like the flames of a conflagration, becomes as smooth as the water that glides over a beach; she succumbs to a superabundance of love, she sees into the future and prophesies, but she also has an eye to the present and terrorizes her husband.

Once is sometimes sufficient for a man to have seen his wife handle three or four strong men as if they were feathers for him never to attempt to seduce her again. He will be like the child who, after having set off a terrible machine, will ever afterwards have the greatest respect for the smallest spring. I once knew a husband, a gentle and peaceable man, who always kept his eyes on his wife, just as if he were in a lion's cage, and had been told that, if he did not irritate the beast, he would be safe.

Hysterics are very wearing and are becoming rarer and rarer, because romanticism has prevailed.

There have been some unemotional husbands, the kind of men who love a long time, because they are sparing of their sentiments, whose genius has triumphed over headaches and nervous attacks, but these sublime men are rare. Faithful disciples of the beatific Saint Thomas, who wanted to lay his finger on the wounds of Christ; gifted with the unbelief of atheists, unmovable amid the perfidies of the headache and the traps of hysterics, they concentrate their attention on the scene that is being played for their benefit, examine the actress, and seek the springs which actuate her; and when they have discovered the mechanism of the decoration, they amuse themselves by setting a counter-weight in motion,

and thus assure themselves very easily of the genuineness of these maladies or of the artifice of these conjugal mummeries.

But, if through a vigilance above human strength, a husband eludes all the traps which an unconquerable love suggests to women, he will necessarily be undone by the use of a terrible weapon, the last that a woman resorts to, for she will always feel a sort of disinclination to give up her power over her husband; but it is a poisoned weapon, as powerful as the fatal knife of the executioner. This thought brings us to the last paragraph of the present Meditation.

### *III.—Concerning Modesty in Connection with Marriage*

Before taking modesty into consideration, it might perhaps be well to know whether such a thing exists. Is it only coquetry in a woman? Is it only the sentiment of the free disposal of the body, as one might think it was, when stopping to reflect that half of the women of the earth go almost entirely unclad. Is it only a social chimera, as Diderot said it was, by objecting that this feeling always gives way before misery and disease?

All these questions can be answered.

An ingenious author has recently pretended that men were much more modest than women. He supported his contention by a great number of surgical observations, but, in order to have these conclusions come under our attention, it would be necessary that men be treated for a while by female surgeons.

The opinion of Diderot is even less weighty.

To deny the existence of modesty because it vanishes under circumstances where almost all human sentiments perish, is the same as denying that life exists because death occurs.

Let us grant as much modesty to one sex as to the other, and find out what constitutes it.

Rousseau attributes modesty to the necessary coquetries that all females display to capture the males. This opinion also seems erroneous to us.

The writers of the eighteenth century have no doubt rendered immense services to society; but their philosophy, based on sensualism, did not reach further than the human epidermis. They considered solely the exterior universe; in this respect only did they delay for a time the moral development of mankind and the progress of a science which will always draw its first elements from the Gospel, henceforth better understood by the fervent disciples of the Son of Man.

The study of the mysteries of thought, the discovery of the organs of the *soul*, the geometry of its forces, the phenomena of its power, the appreciation of the faculty which it seemingly possesses of acting independently of the body, of transporting itself wherever it wishes and seeing without the help of the bodily organs, and finally, the laws of its dynamics and of its physical influence, will constitute the glorious contribution of the following century to the treasure of human knowledge. Perhaps we are occupied this very moment in extracting the enormous rocks, which later may help some puissant genius to construct a glorious monument.

Thus the error of Rousseau was also the error of his time. He has explained modesty by the relations of human beings toward one another, instead of by the relations of the human being toward himself. Modesty is no more susceptible of analysis than conscience; and by calling it the *conscience of the body* one may perhaps make it instinctively understood; for the one directs our sentiments and our slightest mental acts, while the other presides over our outer movements. The actions which, by damaging our interests, disobey the laws of conscience, hurt us more fiercely than any others, and if repeated, give birth to hatred. If extreme modesty be one of the conditions of the vitality of marriage, as we have tried to prove that it is (see "Conjugal Catechism," Meditation IV), it is evident that immodesty will kill it. But this principle, which demands lengthy deductions on the part of the physiologist, is, most of the time, applied quite mechanically by women; for society, which has exaggerated everything for the benefit of the *outer* man,

develops this sentiment in women from childhood, all other feelings clustering around it. Therefore, as soon as the great veil which softens the natural coarseness of the slightest gesture is cast aside, the woman herself vanishes. Soul, heart, mind, grace, love, everything collapses. In the position where the virginal candor of a daughter of Otaheite would stand in brilliant relief, a European woman would become horrible. It is the last weapon which a wife snatches to rid herself of the sentiment her husband still has for her. She is strong in her ugliness; and that woman, who would consider it the greatest misfortune to have her lover see the slightest mystery of her toilet, will take pleasure in showing herself to her husband in the most unpleasant guise that she can think of.

It is by thus making use of the hardships of this system that she will endeavor to rout you from the nuptial couch. Madame Shandy was perfectly artless when she requested Tristram's father to wind the clock, while your wife will feel keen delight in interrupting you with the most positive questions. Where a little while ago life and activity reigned, there is nothing but apathy and death-like repose. A love-scene becomes a business transaction which is discussed at length. We have proven sufficiently in other parts of this book that we do not refuse to recognize the ridiculousness of certain matrimonial situations, to now be permitted to scorn the resources that the muse of a Verville and a Martial might find in the trickery of feminine maneuvers, in the insulting boldness of speech, in the cynicism of certain scenes. It would be too sad to laugh and too funny to cry over these things. When a woman reaches such a state there are depths between herself and her husband. Still, there are some women who can remain attractive, who, it is said, can give a certain comical and witty turn to these discussions, and who have *un bec si effilé*,\* according to Sully's expression, that they obtain forgiveness for their whims and mockeries, and manage to keep their husbands' affection.

Where is the soul strong enough, the man enamored

\*Such a well-sharpened tongue.

enough, to persist in his passion after ten years of married life, in the presence of a woman who no longer cares for him, who constantly proves it, who repulses him, who makes herself sour, caustic, ill, whimsical, and who will even abjure daintiness and cleanliness rather than not see her husband become an apostate; before a woman who speculates upon the horror caused by indecency?

All this, my dear sir, is all the more horrible because:

## XCII

Lovers ignore the meaning of modesty.

We have now reached the last infernal circle of the divine comedy of marriage; we are at the very bottom of the pit.

There is something terrible in the position of a married woman whom an illicit love has wrested from her maternal and wifely duties. As Diderot has very aptly said, faithlessness in a woman is like unbelief in a priest, the very last term of human forfeiture; it is the greatest of all social crimes she can commit, because it implies all of the others. Indeed, either a woman profanes her love by continuing to belong to her husband, or else she breaks all the ties that bind her to her family by abandoning herself entirely to her lover. She must choose, for the only possible excuse is in the violence of her love.

So she lives between two wrongs. She will either ruin her lover's life, if he be sincere in his passion, or her husband's, if the latter still loves his wife.

This is the dreadful dilemma which is responsible for all the vagaries of woman. It is the underlying principle of all her falsehoods, trickeries, and the secret of all her mysteries. It is enough to make one shudder. The woman who, out of mere calculation, accepts the misfortunes of virtue and scorns the happiness of crime, is no doubt quite right. However, almost all women counterbalance future sufferings and centuries of anguish with an ecstasy of short duration. If the conservative feeling of the *animal*, the fear of death, does not stop them, what can one expect of laws which penalize their indiscretions by a two years' term of imprison-



ment at Madelonnettes? O sublime infamy! But when one stops to think that the object of all these sacrifices is one of our fellow-men, a gentleman to whom we would not intrust our fortune, if we possessed one, a man who buttons his coat like the rest of us, it is funny enough to make a laugh, started at the Luxembourg, echo all over Paris and disturb a donkey grazing at Montmartre.

Perhaps it will appear extraordinary that we should have touched on so many subjects *à propos* of marriage; but marriage is not only one entire human life—it is two human lives. Now, just as the addition of one number in a lottery increases the chances a hundredfold, so one life joined to another life multiplies with frightful progression the already numerous and varied hazards of human life.

## MEDITATION XXVII

### CONCERNING THE LAST SYMPTOMS

THE author of this work has met so many people possessed of a sort of fanaticism for the knowledge of apparent time and mean time, for stop watches and the exactitude of their own existence, that he has deemed this Meditation too necessary for the peace of a great number of husbands to omit it. It would have been cruel to let men who have a passion for correct time be without a compass to appreciate the latest variations of the matrimonial zodiac and the exact moment when the Minotaur appears on the horizon.

The *knowledge of conjugal time* might demand an entire book, so many complex and difficult observations does it present. The magister admits that his youth has prevented him from gathering very many symptoms; but, after having arrived at the end of his undertaking, he feels justified pride in being able to point out that he is leaving his successors a new subject for research; and that, in a matter apparently so completely threshed out, not only is there something more to be said, but also a great many points to be elucidated. He therefore gives here, without order or

connection, the rough elements which he has been able to gather, hoping that he may later have the leisure to co-ordinate them and reduce them to a complete system. If he were to be forestalled in this eminently national undertaking, he thinks it devolves upon him to indicate here, without incurring the reproach of vanity, the natural division of these symptoms. They are necessarily of two kinds: the *unicorns* and the *bicorns*. The unicorn Minotaur is the least harmful; the two culprits remain platonic lovers, or at least, their passion leaves no visible trace in posterity; while the bicorn Minotaur represents misfortune with all its consequences.

We have marked with an asterick the symptoms which we think belong to the second class.

### *Minotaurical Remarks*

#### I

\* When a woman, after having been separated from her husband for some time makes conspicuous advances in order to induce a loving mood in him, she acts according to the maxim of maritime law: *The flag covers the merchandise.*

#### II

A woman at a ball meets a friend, who exclaims:

“Your husband is so clever.”

“Do you think so? . . .”

#### III

Your wife finds that it is high time that your child, from which she never could endure to be separated a minute, should be sent to boarding-school.

#### IV

\* In the divorce suit of Lord Abergavenny, his man testified that “the Viscountess had such a repulsion for everything which belonged to my lord, that I have often seen her burn pieces of paper which he had touched.”

## V

If an indolent woman becomes active, if a woman who shunned study begins to learn a foreign tongue, in a word, all complete change of character, is a decisive symptom.

## VI

A woman who is very happy in her heart affairs shuns society.

## VII

A woman with a lover becomes very indulgent.

## VIII

\* A man gives his wife a hundred *écus* a month; and, all things considered, she spends at least five hundred francs without running into debt; the husband is robbed every night, the thief being armed and proceeding by escalade, but . . . without housebreaking.

## IX

\* The married pair were wont to share the same bed; madame was constantly ailing; now they sleep separately and she has no more headaches, in fact her health is better than it has ever been: alarming symptom!

## X

A woman who gave no thought to her appearance, suddenly becomes engrossed in her toilet. The Minotaur is lurking in the vicinity!

## XI

“Oh! my dear, there is no greater misery than to be misunderstood.”

“Yes, my dear, but when you are understood! . . .”

“Oh! that hardly ever happens.”

“I admit that it is very rare. Ah! it is a great happi-

ness, but then, there are not two people in the whole world who can understand you."

## XII

\* The day a woman begins to be careful of her husband's feelings . . . his fate is sealed.

## XIII

I asked her:

"Where have you been, Jeanne?"

"I have been at your compeer's, getting what you left behind."

"Heigho! she is still mine," said I.

The following year I asked her the same question, in the same position.

"I went to fetch our crockery."

"Ha!" said I, "I am still in the combination!"

But, afterward, if I question her, she will say to me very differently:

"You want to know everything, like your peers, and still you do not possess three shirts to your back. I went to fetch *my* crockery from my compeer, and I supped with him."

"It is a settled question," said I.

## XIV

Mistrust a woman who speaks of her virtue.

## XV

The Duchesse de Chaulnes, whose state of health inspired the greatest anxiety, was told that:

"Monsieur le Duc de Chaulnes would like to see you again."

"Is he here?"

"Yes."

"Then let him wait. . . . He can come in with the last sacraments."

This anecdote has been related by Chamfort, but it had to be given here as a type.

## XVI

\* There are women who try to persuade their husbands that they (the husbands) have duties to perform toward certain people.

“I tell you that you should call on Monsieur So-and-so; we must invite Monsieur So-and-so to dine with us. . . .”

## XVII

“Now, son, throw your shoulders back; try and develop good manners! Look at Monsieur So-and-so! . . . Watch his walk! . . . study his clothes! . . .”

## XVIII

When a woman speaks a man's name but twice a day, there may be some doubt about the nature of her feeling for him; but three times? . . . Oh! oh!

## XIX

When a woman accompanies a man who is neither a lawyer nor a minister of State to the door of her apartments, she is acting very imprudently.

## XX

It is a sad day for a husband when he fails to make out the reason for one of his wife's actions.

## XXI

\* The woman who allows herself to be caught in the act deserves her fate.

What should be the attitude of a husband when he has discovered a last symptom which does not for a moment permit him to doubt that his wife has been unfaithful to him? This question is readily solved. There are only two things to do: either be resigned or seek revenge; but there is only one term between these two extremes. If one chooses revenge, it must be complete. The husband who does not leave his wife forever is a fool. If a man and wife deem that they can still have for one another the friendship which

unites two men, there is something odious in making the wife feel the advantage one might take of her position.

Here are a few anecdotes, some of which are unpublished, that, in my opinion, show rather aptly the different shades of conduct that a husband should follow in such a case.

Monsieur de Roquemont used to remain with his wife one night in every month, and would leave her, saying as he went out:

“I have done my duty, let come what may!”

There is both depravity and clever conjugal policy in his attitude.

A diplomat, upon seeing his wife's lover, would emerge from his study, enter his wife's apartments and say:

“Whatever you do, do not quarrel! . . .”

This is truly cordial.

Someone asked Monsieur de Boufflers what he would do if, after he had been away for some time, he returned and found his wife pregnant?

“I would have my slippers and my dressing-gown taken to her apartments.”

There is greatness of soul in this reply.

“Madame, if this man maltreats you when you are alone with him, it is your own fault; but I will not allow him to insult you in my presence, for it is insulting me.”

This is a noble feeling.

The most sublime thing of all is the mortar cap hung on the foot of the bed by a judge who had surprised the guilty pair asleep in each other's arms.

There are some truly fine revenges. Mirabeau, in one of the books he wrote to earn his living, has admirably depicted the somber resignation of the Italian woman condemned by her husband to perish with him in the Maremmas.

### *Final Axioms*

### XCIH

By surprising your wife in her lover's arms and killing both of them, you do not revenge yourself, for it is the best thing that can happen to them.

## XCIV

A husband will never be so well avenged as by his wife's lover.

## MEDITATION XXVIII

## CONCERNING COMPENSATIONS

THE conjugal catastrophe which a certain number of husbands are unable to avoid almost always creates a peripitia. Then, suddenly, everything in your surroundings calms down. Your resignation, if you have the strength to be resigned, has the effect of making your wife and her lover experience remorse, for their bliss makes them realize the extent of the injury they have done you. You are present, without being aware of the fact, in all their pleasures. The principle of kindness and good which lies in every human heart is not as easily choked as one might think; therefore, the two souls that are tormenting you are the ones which really feel the most kindly toward you.

During those suave conversations, full of familiarity, which serve as connecting links to love's delights, and which are, in a way, mental caresses, your wife often says to your substitute:

"Well, Auguste, I assure you that I would like my husband to be happy, for he is really kind at heart; if he were not my husband, only my brother, there are a lot of things that I would do for him! He loves me, and—his friendship disturbs me."

"Yes, he is a good man! . . ."

Then you become the object of this bachelor's respect; he would like to compensate you in every way for the wrong he is doing you; but he is checked by the scornful pride which you exhibit in all your actions and all your speeches.

In fact, the first time that the Minotaur shows itself, a man resembles an actor who is ill at ease because he finds himself on a stage to which he is unaccustomed. It is very hard to be a fool in a dignified manner; however, noble

characters are not so rare that one cannot find among them a model husband.

Then, you are unconsciously won over by the attentions your wife heaps upon you. Madame adopts a friendly tone with you that she will never relinquish. The increased comfort of your home is one of the first compensations which will enable you to look less bitterly upon the Minotaur. But, as it is man's nature to become accustomed to the greatest hardships, in spite of the noble sentiments which nothing could change, you are brought, by a fascination which unceasingly encompasses you, to accept the little comforts of your position.

Let us suppose that the conjugal catastrophe has fallen upon a man given to the pleasures of the table. He naturally seeks consolation in his favorite pastime. His feelings, having taken refuge in another part of his being, develop other habits. You become accustomed to other delights.

One fine day, after leaving the Department, and remaining for some time in contemplation before the rich and savory bookstore owned by Chevet, torn between the desire of expending a hundred francs and the delights of a *pâté de foies gras* from Strasbourg, you are amazed to find, on reaching your home, that the *pâté* is insolently enthroned on your sideboard. Is it a gastronomical mirage? In this uncertainty you advance upon it (a *pâté* is a living creature) with a firm step, you almost whinny when the smell of the truffles which pierces its golden walls reaches your nostrils; you bend over it again and again; all the follicles of your palate seem to have a soul; you anticipate the pleasures of a real feast, and while filled with these ecstatic thoughts, remorse suddenly overwhelms you as you come into your wife's presence.

"In truth, my dear, we are not rich enough to allow ourselves such a *pâté*. . . ."

"But it has not cost us a sou!"

"Oh! oh!"

"Yes, Monsieur Achille's brother sent it to him! . . ."

You notice Monsieur Achille sitting in a corner. The bachelor greets you and seems delighted to have you accept the



*pâté*. You throw a glance at your wife, who suddenly blushes; you stroke your beard several times, and as you do not proffer your thanks, the two lovers guess that you have accepted the compensation.

The Cabinet has just fallen. A husband who is a State Councilor fears that he will be dismissed, when, only the day before, he had hopes of a better position; all the ministers are against him and he becomes constitutional. Anticipating his downfall, he has gone to Auteuil, to seek the consolations of an old friend, who entertained him with Horace and Tibullus. On reaching his home, he notices that the table is laid as if the most influential men of the community were to be entertained.

"In truth, Madame la Comtesse," he ungraciously exclaims, upon entering his wife's room, where she is giving the finishing touches to her toilet, "I see no evidence of your usual tact! . . . You choose a good time to give a dinner. . . . Twenty people are going to learn. . . ."

"That you are general-manager!" she exclaims, showing him the royal appointment.

He is astounded. He takes the letter, turns it over and over, opens it and sits down to read it.

"I knew that, no matter under what ministry, they would do me justice."

"Yes, dear, but Monsieur de Villeplaine vouched for you to his Eminence, Cardinal. . . . He is the Cardinal's——"

"Monsieur de Villeplaine?"

This is such a rich compensation that the husband adds with a general-manager's smile:

"Well, my dear, that was certainly you!"

"Oh! do not feel indebted to me! Adolphe did it instinctively and because he is so fond of you!"

Some evening, a poor husband kept in the house by a drenching rain, or perhaps tired of spending his nights at the club, at the café, in society, in gambling houses, and unspeakably bored, is compelled after dinner to follow his wife into the conjugal chamber. He sinks into an arm-chair and awaits his coffee with the proud air of a sultan; he seems to be thinking: "Well, after all, she's my wife!"

The siren herself prepares the favorite beverage, and exerts special care in the brewing; she sweetens the cup, tastes it and hands it to her lord; and with a smile on her lips she, submissive slave, tries a light jest to win the favor of her master. Until then he had thought his wife dull; but, on hearing the clever sally with which you tease him, madame, he raises his head with that peculiar motion of a dog which scents a hare.

“Where in the devil’s name did she get that? . . . But it may have been merely accidental,” he says to himself.

From his lofty altitude, he retorts with a spicy remark. Madame replies, interesting and amusing, and that husband, who is a rather superior man, is amazed at his wife’s cleverness and intellect, which is most varied; the right word comes to her lips with marvelous facility and her tact and delicacy enable her to make remarks of a novel and graceful turn. She is no longer the same woman. She notices the effect she has produced on her husband; and, as much to revenge his neglect of her as to make him admire the lover who has endowed her, so to speak, with the graces of his mind, she warms to the game and dazzles him. The husband who, better than anyone else, can appreciate a compensation which must necessarily have some influence on his career, begins to think that a woman’s passion is a sort of necessary culture.

But how shall we express the compensation which is the most flattering to a husband?

Between the time when the last symptoms appear, and the period of conjugal quiescence, which we shall soon discuss, there is a period of about ten years. Now, during this lapse of time and before the pair has signed the treaty which, through a sincere reconciliation between the feminine population and its legitimate master, consecrates their little matrimonial “restoration,” before closing, according to the expression of Louis XVIII., the “abyss of revolutions,” it is rare that a “nice” woman has had only one lover. Anarchy possesses some inevitable features. The fiery domination of the Tribunes is replaced by that of the sword or the pen, for one rarely meets lovers who are constant

ten years. Then, our calculations having proven that a woman has not, by accomplishing the happiness of three people, strictly filled her physiological or diabolical propensities, it is very probable that her foot has trodden various devious paths. Sometimes, during a too lengthy suspension of love, it happens that a woman takes it into her head to captivate her husband, either from a spirit of mischief or the attraction of novelty.

Imagine charming Madame de T——, the heroine of our Meditation on “Strategy,” saying in an arch way:

“Why, I have never known you to be so nice.”

From one piece of flattery to another she attempts to arouse your curiosity, jests, encourages the slightest desire you may experience for her, takes possession of it, and makes you proud of yourself. Then for a husband comes the night of compensation. Like those cosmopolitan travelers, she is able to relate the wonders of the lands she has seen. She scatters foreign expressions gathered from all countries, through her tale. The passionate similes of the Orient, the strange movement of Spanish phrases, all mingle and clash. She unrolls the treasures of her album with all the mystery of coquetry, she is delightful, you never knew her before! . . . With that strange art which women have for appropriating everything which is taught them, she has mingled the various shades of her learning so that she has a manner peculiar to herself. The god of marriage had given you but a single, awkward woman, whereas generous celibacy gives you ten. The delighted husband then sees his nuptial couch invaded by the playful band of those enticing courtesans of whom we spoke in our Meditation on the “First Symptoms.” The goddesses flock around the dainty bed, laughing and gamboling. The *Phénicienne* hurls her wreaths at you and sways lightly, the *Chalcidiseuse* surprises you by her white and delicate feet, the *Unelmane* arrives and discloses to you, while speaking the dialect of fair Ionia, treasures of unknown bliss in the study of a single sensation.

Sorrowful at having scorned such charms and tired of having found so often that the priestesses of Venus are as

tricky as "nice women," a husband sometimes hastens, through his gallantry, the reconciliation to which good people always tend. That aftermath of pleasure is sometimes attended with greater enjoyment than love's first harvest. The Minotaur robbed you of gold, but repays you in diamonds. Indeed, it might be well to now formulate a fact of the highest importance. A man can *have* a woman without really *possessing* her. Like most husbands, you had perhaps not received from your wife what she was able to give, and the intervention of the bachelor was required to render your union perfect. What shall we call this miracle, the only one which is performed on a patient during his absence? Alas! brothers, we did not make Nature!

But by how many other rich compensations the generous and noble soul of a young celibate sometimes purchases forgiveness! I remember having witnessed one of the most magnificent rewards that a lover can offer the husband he has deceived.

One warm evening in the summer of 1817, there entered Tortoni's one of the several hundred young men whom we call our "friends" with such touching confidence; he was in all the glory of his modesty. A delightful woman, dressed in perfect taste, and who had consented to enter the fashionable place, emerged from a carriage which drew up at the curb and gave her arm to the young bachelor, while her husband followed with two beautiful little children. As they were crossing the entrance-hall, the husband jostled some dandy who resented his jostling. A quarrel ensued, which became serious in an instant on account of the bitter remarks which were exchanged. Just as the dandy was going to permit himself a gesture unworthy of a man who has any self-respect, the bachelor interposed, grasped the dude's arm and left him non-plussed and speechless. He was superb. He accomplished the act which the aggressor had planned by saying:

"Monsieur? . . ."

That *monsieur* is one of the finest speeches that I have ever heard. It was just as if the young man had said: "That *pater familias* belongs to me; as long as I have robbed him

of his honor it is befitting that I should defend that honor. I know my duty; I am his substitute and I will fight his duel for him." The young wife was sublime. Pale, distraught, she had seized her husband's arm; and, without uttering a word, she dragged him and the children to the carriage. She was one of those women of the world who always know how to make the violence of their feelings agree with what is proper.

"Oh! Monsieur Adolphe," she cried when she saw her friend step into the carriage unperturbed.

"It is nothing, madame; he is one of my friends and we have made up."

The next morning, however, the brave bachelor received a sword thrust that endangered his life, and kept him confined to his bed for six months. He received the most touching care from the married couple. How many compensations! . . . A few years after this episode, one of the husband's old uncles, whose opinions did not agree with those of the youthful friend of the family, and who nursed a feeling of resentment toward him on account of some political discussion, undertook to make him *persona non grata* with the pair. The old man even went as far as to tell his nephew that he would have to choose between his inheritance and the young bachelor. Then the worthy business man, he was a broker, said to his uncle:

"Uncle, you will not be able to induce me to forget my gratitude! . . . Why, if I should tell him to do so, that young man would die for you! He saved my credit, he would go through fire for me, he rids me of my wife, he gets me customers, he got me nearly all the transactions in the Villèle loan. . . . I owe my life to him . . . he is the father of my children. . . . A man cannot forget such things! . . ."

All these compensations can be considered complete; but, unfortunately, there are all kinds of compensations. There are negative and fallacious ones, and some which are both fallacious and negative at the same time.

I know an old husband, in the toils of the gambling passion; almost every night his wife's lover comes and gambles

with him. The bachelor most liberally provides him with the pleasure which is derived from the uncertainty of games of chance, and regularly loses about a hundred francs a month; but madame gives the money back to him. . . . The compensation is fallacious.

You are a peer of France and all your children are daughters. Your wife brings a son into the world! . . . The compensation is negative.

The child which saves your name from oblivion looks like its mother. . . . Madame la Duchesse induces you to believe that it is yours. The negative compensation becomes fallacious.

Here is one of the most delightful compensations known.

One morning, the Prince de Ligne met his wife's lover, and laughing uproariously, rushed up to him and exclaimed:

"My dear fellow, I deceived you last night with my wife!"

If so many husbands arrive gently at conjugal peace, and so gracefully wear the imaginary insignia of matrimonial power, it is because their philosophy is no doubt upheld by the *comfort* of certain compensations which the idle cannot divine. A few years roll by and the married pair reach the last stage of the artificial existence to which they condemned themselves by marrying.

## MEDITATION XXIX

### CONCERNING CONJUGAL PEACE

My spirit has so lovingly accompanied marriage in all its fantastic phases, that I feel as if I had grown old with the couple who were so young at the beginning of this book.

After having experienced in mind the strenuousness of the first human passions, after having sketched, no matter how imperfectly, the principal events of matrimonial life; after having struggled against so many women who were nothing to me; after having become exhausted battling

against so many characters called into existence by myself; after having witnessed so many combats, I feel an intellectual lassitude which seems to spread a dark veil over the things of this world. I imagine that I have catarrh, that I wear green spectacles, that my hands shake and that I am going to spend the second half of my existence and of my book excusing the follies committed in the first half. I see myself surrounded by grown-up children that are not mine own, and I sit by the side of a woman whom I have never married. I think I can even feel an accumulation of wrinkles on my brow. I am sitting by a glowing hearth, in an old-fashioned room. . . . I put my hand to my heart with a feeling of fear, asking the while: "Can it be that it has shriveled up? . . ."

Like an old attorney, no sentiment impresses me any more, and I do not admit a fact until it has been sworn to, as Lord Byron says in one of his poems, by two reliable witnesses. No face can deceive me. I am gloomy and depressed. I know life and it holds no more illusions for me. My most holy friendships have been betrayed. I exchange with my wife a glance of immense understanding, and our slightest words are dagger-thrusts which pierce our lives through and through. I feel a horrible calmness. So this is the peace of old age! The old man possesses a foretaste of the grave which will so soon take possession of him. He is able to get used to the cold. The philosophers tell us that men die by inches; that they even get the better of Death: for, is that which Death snatches from their palsied hands, always life? . . .

Oh! to die young and spirited! . . . What an enviable fate! Is it not, as one delightful poet expresses it: "To take with you all your illusions, to bury yourself like an Oriental prince with your precious stones and treasures, with all that life contains?" How we should thank the kind and gentle spirit which pervades all the things of this world! Indeed, the solicitude with which Nature robs us of our garments one by one, uncovers our souls by weakening our eyesight, hearing and touch, by delaying our circulation and solidifying our humors in order to render us as insensible

to the approach of Death as we were to that of Life, the maternal care she takes of our frail shell is also displayed for sentiments and the dual existence that conjugal love creates. Nature first sends us *Confidence*, which opens her hands and her heart and says: "Behold! I am forever yours. . . ." Lukewarm *Affection* follows, walking with halting steps, turning her blonde head to yawn, like a young widow compelled to listen to a minister signing her school certificate. Now comes *Indifference*: she sinks onto a divan, without taking the trouble to smooth down the skirts which desire used to raise so chastely and swiftly; she throws on the nuptial couch a glance which contains neither modesty nor lewdness; and if she has any desire at all, it is for green fruits which will rouse her jaded palate. Finally, the *Philosophical Experience* of life arrives on the scene, with gloomy brow and scornful mien, pointing to the results, not to the causes; to calm victory, not to the seething battle. She figures out arrears with the farmers and the dowry to be given some child. She materializes everything. By a motion of her wand, life becomes compact and without vim; everything used to be fluid, but now everything has been mineralized. Pleasure no longer exists for us; it has been weighed and found wanting; it was only a sensation, a passing crisis; now, what the soul wants is a permanent state; happiness is permanent, residing in absolute tranquillity, in the regularity of one's meals, sleep, and organic functions.

"Why, this is horrible!" I cried; "I am young and full of life! . . . Perish all the books in the world rather than one of my illusions!"

I left my laboratory and escaped into the streets of Paris. When I again beheld the exquisite women, I knew that I was not old. The first young, pretty and well-dressed woman I saw made the influence under which I was consciously laboring, vanish by the brightness of her glance. I had hardly started to walk in the direction of the Tuileries before I noticed the prototype of the matrimonial situation which this book has reached. I wanted to characterize or personify marriage, as I conceive of it, when it would have



been impossible for the Holy Trinity to create such a perfect symbol.

Imagine a woman about fifty years old, clad in a woolen jacket of a reddish brown color, holding in her left hand a green strap attached to the collar of a pretty little English terrier, and leading an old man dressed in silk stockings and breeches. On his head he wore a hat whose edges curled capriciously and under both sides of which were tufts of white hair that stuck out like pigeon wings. A little queue, about as thick as a penholder, dangled down on his fat, yellow neck, which was discolored by the turned-down collar of his shabby coat. The couple were walking with all the pomp of two ambassadors; and the husband, who must have been at least seventy years old, would stop every time that the dog had to attend to some duty. I hastened my steps in order to pass this living image of my Meditation and was astounded to recognize the Marquis de T——, the friend of the Comte de Nocé, who owed me the end of the interrupted story I reported in the "Theory of the Bed." (See Meditation XVII.)

"I have the honor," said he, "to present to you Madame the Marquise de T——."

I made a deep bow to a lady with a pale, wrinkled face; she wore a number of flat, round curls on her forehead, which, far from producing any illusion, only added one more blemish to the wrinkles which seamed her face. The lady was slightly rouged and resembled an old provincial actress.

"I do not see, sir, what you can have to say about a marriage like ours," said the old man.

"The Roman laws forbid it," I laughingly replied.

The Marquise threw me a glance full of anxiety and disapproval, and which seemed to say: "Have I reached this age to be nothing but a concubine? . . ."

We went to sit on a bench in the gloomy arbor planted at the angle of the high terrace which dominates the Place Louis XV., near the Garde-Meuble. The autumn leaves were already falling, but the sun shed a mild warmth over all.

"Well, is your book finished?" asked the old gentleman,

with the unctuous accent which distinguished the men of the old aristocracy.

He supplemented his words with a sardonic expression, which was intended as a commentary.

"About finished, monsieur," I replied. "I have reached the philosophical situation to which you have attained, but I must acknowledge that I——"

"You were looking for ideas?" he added, completing the sentence I did not know how to end.

"Well," he continued, "you can boldly say that, when a man reaches the winter of his lifetime he . . . (you must understand that I mean a thoughtful man) ends by denying the existence of that love which we garb in so many illusions! . . ."

"What! would you deny love the day after your marriage?"

"In the first place, the day after would be a good reason; but my marriage is a speculation," he continued, speaking into my ear. "I have purchased the care and attention which I need, and I am quite certain of obtaining all the regard that is due my age; for I have bequeathed my whole fortune to a nephew, and as my wife has only the use of the money during my lifetime, you understand that——"

I threw the old man such a comprehending look that he pressed my hand and said:

"You seem to be kind-hearted, but one must not go by appearances. . . . Well, you may believe that I have kept a pleasant surprise for her in my will," he added cheerfully.

"Hurry, Joseph," cried the Marquise, going forward to meet a servant who was carrying a silk-lined, wadded coat, "monsieur may have already caught cold."

The old Marquis put the coat on, buttoned it, and taking me by the arm, led me to a spot on the terrace which was flooded with sunshine.

"In your book," said he, "you have spoken of love like a young man would. Well, if you wish to acquit yourself of the duties which the word ec—elec—impose on you. . . ."

"Eclectic," I said with a smile, for he had never been able to get used to this philosophical name.

“I know the word very well,” he retorted. “So if you wish to obey your vow of *electism*, you will have to express some virile ideas on the subject of love which I shall communicate to you, and I will not take the glory for them, if glory there be, for I wish to bequeath some of my possessions to you, but this will be all you will get.”

“There is no pecuniary fortune worth an intellectual fortune, when the ideas are good! Therefore, I shall hearken gratefully to what you have to say.”

“Love does not exist,” resumed the old gentleman, looking me in the eye. “It is not even a sentiment—it is an unfortunate necessity, a cross between the needs of the body and those of the soul. But, by espousing for an instant your youthful ideas, let us try to argue this social disease. I think that you cannot look upon love otherwise than as a necessity or a sentiment.”

I made a sign of acquiescence.

“Considered as a necessity,” said the old man, “love is the last one among all the others to make itself felt, and it is also the first to depart. We are amorous at twenty (do not let us question the differences), and cease to be so at fifty. During these thirty years, how many times would the feeling manifest itself were it not provoked by the heating customs of city life, and the habit of living in the presence, not of one woman, but of women generally? What do we owe the preservation of the race? Perhaps as many children as there are breasts to feed them, because if one should die, the other will survive. If these two children were always faithfully begotten, what would become of nations? Thirty million individuals are too large a population for France, as long as the soil suffices only to keep ten million people out of misery and pauperism. Remember that China is compelled to have her children drowned, according to the reports of travelers. Now, marriage means only two children. Superfluous pleasures are therefore not only lewd, but a great loss to a man, as I will show you later. Now compare this poverty of action and duration with the daily and perpetual exactions of the other conditions of life! Nature questions us at all times concerning our real needs;

and, quite on the contrary, she absolutely refuses to give her sanction to the excesses which our imaginations sometimes solicit of love. So it is the last of our needs, and the only one which, when ignored, does not produce any ill effects in the economy of the body. Love is a social luxury, like diamonds and real lace. Now, if we examine it as a sentiment, we may find distinctions, pleasure and passion. Analyze pleasure. Human affections are based on two principles: attraction and aversion. Attraction is that general feeling for the things that flatter our instinct of preservation; aversion is the exercise of the same instinct when it warns us that a thing is prejudicial to it. Everything which powerfully agitates our organism gives us an intimate and keen feeling of our existence: that is pleasure. It is constituted of the desire, the difficulty and the enjoyment of having any given object. Pleasure is a single element, and our passions are only its more or less keen modifications; therefore, the habit of one pleasure nearly always excludes the others. Now, love is the least keen and least durable of our pleasures. In what consists the pleasure of love? Is it in the possession of a fair body? With money you can, in a night, acquire some really admirable odalisks; but, in a month, you may have forever blasted this desire within yourself. Might it be something else? Do you love a woman because she happens to be well-dressed, elegant, rich, because she owns her carriage and has social position? Do not call that *love*, for it is vanity, avarice and egotism. Do you love her because she is witty? You then perhaps obey a literary sentiment."

"But," said I, "love reveals its delights only to those who mingle their thoughts, fortunes, feelings, souls and lives."

"Oh! oh! . . . oh!" cried the old man in a mocking voice, "find me seven men in every nation who have sacrificed, not their lives, for that would not be much: the tax on human life, under Napoleon, did not exceed twenty thousand francs; and there are at the present time in France two hundred and fifty thousand braves who are giving their lives for a two-inch red ribbon; but seven men who have

sacrificed to a woman ten millions on which they have slept alone for one night. . . . Dubreuil and Phméja are even rarer than the love of Mademoiselle Dupuis and Bolingbroke. So those sentiments proceed from an unknown cause. But you have made me consider love as a passion. Well, it is the smallest and the most contemptible of all. It promises everything and keeps nothing. As a need, it comes, like love, among the last, and perishes the soonest. Ah! talk to me of revenge, hatred, avarice, the gambling passion, ambition, fanaticism! Those passions have something virile about them; those sentiments are unperishable; every day they make the sacrifices which love makes only by fits and starts. But," he continued, "now abjure love. No more worry or anxiety; no more little passions that waste human strength. A man can live peaceful and happy; socially speaking, his power is infinitely greater and more intense. Divorce from that something which is called love, is the initial reason of the power of all the men who sway the masses, and yet it is nothing. Ah! if you only knew what magical strength comes to a man, with what intellectual treasures he is endowed and what longevity he finds in himself when, divorcing himself from all human passions, he employs his entire energy for the benefit of his soul! If you could enjoy for two minutes the riches that God dispenses to the men who are wise enough to look upon love only as a passing need, which they gratify a short time during youth; to the men who, scorning the heavy and deadening beefsteaks of Normandy, nourish themselves with the roots He has so liberally scattered, and lay themselves on beds of dry leaves like the recluses of Thebaïd! . . . Ah! you would discard in three seconds the remains of those fifteen sheep which cover you; you would throw your walking-stick away and you would go live in heaven! You would discover the love that you are seeking in the mire of this earth; you would hear concerts very different from those of Monsieur Rossini, voices purer than that of la Malibran. . . . But I speak only from hearsay and like a blind man: if I had not gone to Germany in 1791, I would know nothing of all this. . . . Yes, man has a vocation for the

infinite. He bears within himself an instinct which impels him toward the Maker. God is everything, gives everything, makes us forget everything, and thought is the thread He has given us to communicate with Him! . . .”

He paused abruptly with his eyes directed upward.

“The poor old man has lost his mind,” I thought.

“Monsieur,” I said, “it would be pushing devotion to philosophical eclecticism very far, were I to consign your opinions in my work; for it would mean destroying it. Everything it contains is based upon platonic or sensual love. May the Lord keep me from ending my book with such social blasphemies! I shall try instead to go back, by some pantagruelic subtlety, to my flock of bachelors and nice women, and shall endeavor to find some social utility for their follies and passions. Oh! oh! if conjugal peace leads us to such disillusioning and somber arguments, I know lots of husbands who would prefer war!”

“Ah! young man,” cried the Marquis, “I shall be free from the reproach of not having shown the right road to a lost traveler!”

“Good-by, old rack of bones,” I said to myself; “good-by, strolling marriage; good-by, extinguished fireworks! Good-by, old machine! Although I have given you at times the features of people who were dear to me, old family portraits, go back to the picture dealer, go and join Madame de T—— and all the others; you may become funeral advertisements, for all I care! . . .”

## MEDITATION XXX

### CONCLUSION

A RECLUSE, who believed he possessed second sight, having told the people of Israel to follow him up a mountain so as to witness the revelation of several mysteries, was escorted by a crowd large enough to flatter his pride, although he was a prophet.

But, as the mountain lay at a certain distance, it hap-

pened that, at the first stop, an artisan recollected that he had to deliver a pair of slippers to a duke; a woman remembered that her children's supper was on the stove; a publican bethought himself that he had some securities to negotiate, and they all went home.

A little farther on, some lovers lingered behind under the olive-trees and forgot the words of the prophet; for they thought that the Promised Land was where they had stopped, and that the Divine Word was their own language.

Fat men with stomachs like Sancho, and who for some time had been mopping their brows with their 'kerchiefs, began to get thirsty and remained behind at a clear spring.

Several old soldiers complained of their corns and spoke of Austerlitz, with regard to tight boots.

At the second halt some fashionable people whispered to one another:

“This prophet is a madman!”

“Did you believe him?”

“I only came out of curiosity.”

“And I, because he has a following.” (This from a society man.)

“He is a charlatan.”

The prophet kept on his way. But, when he reached an immense plateau whence he discovered the immense horizon, he turned and perceived one poor Israelite to whom he might have remarked, like the Prince de Ligne did to the lone little drummer-boy that he found waiting for him at the spot where he expected to find a whole detachment of soldiery:

“Well, messieurs the audience, it seems that you are only one?”

Godly man, who have followed me until now, I hope that a little recapitulation will not frighten you, and I have traveled with the conviction that you, like myself, were thinking: “Where in the name of the devil are we going?”

Well, now is the time, respected reader, to ask you your opinion regarding the renewal of the tobacco monopoly, and what you think of the exorbitant taxes on wines, the

carrying of fire-arms, games, the lottery, playing-cards, brandy, soaps, woolens, silks, etc.

“I think that as all these taxes enter for a third into the yield of the budget, we would be extremely put out were——”

So, model husband, if nobody got drunk, nor played cards, nor smoked, nor hunted, if, in a word, there was no vice in France, nor passions, nor disease, the State would be on the verge of bankruptcy; for it seems that our income is mortgaged on public corruption, just as our commerce maintains itself through luxury. If one wishes to look into it a little more closely, all taxes are based on a moral malady. In fact, does not the large income of the domains proceed from the insurance contracts that every man hastens to take out against the mutations of his good faith, in the same way that the fortunes of lawyers have their being in the suits brought against that good faith? And, to continue this philosophical survey, I can see the gendarmes without horses and skin breeches, if every citizen kept the peace and if there were no fools and ne'er-do-wells. Try to impose virtue! . . . Well, I think that there is more than one relation between my “nice” women and the budget; and I will undertake to prove it to you, if you will let me end my book as I started it, by a little statistical essay. Will you grant me that a lover uses more shirts than a husband or an idle celibate? It seems an unquestionable fact to me. The difference between a husband and a lover can be readily told by the aspect of their clothes. The one is without artifice, his beard is often several days old, while the other is always dressed to kill. Sterne said very wittily that a laundry-book was the most historical document that he possessed of *Tristram Shandy*; and that, by the number of the shirts, one could guess which parts of his book had been the hardest to write. Well, with lovers, the laundry-book is the most faithful and impartial historian that their love can have. Indeed, a passion requires a tremendous quantity of tibbets, cravats, and dresses necessitated by coquetry; for a great importance is attached to immaculate white stockings, a dazzling collar, a finely-



plaited shirt, an artistic tie and stock. This explains my passage regarding a "nice" woman: "She spends her life starching her dresses." I addressed myself to a member of the sex in order to learn the exact amount of the contribution which love imposes, and I remember that after having stated that, for a woman, a hundred francs a year would do, she added with a sort of *bonhomie*: "But it depends upon a man's character, for some men are more *destructive* than others." Nevertheless, after a very deep discussion, where I represented the bachelors, and the lady, the fair sex, it was decided that, all in all, two lovers of the social standing of those we have had in mind throughout this book, must both spend for this article one hundred and fifty francs more than in times of peace. By a like and lengthily discussed treaty, we also decided upon a collective difference of four hundred francs between times of peace and of war relative to all the parts composing dress. This sum was even thought most insufficient by all the feminine and masculine authorities we consulted on the subject. The enlightenment we received from some persons gave us the idea to give a dinner to some of these wise people, so that we might be guided by them in our important investigations. The dinner took place. With glass in hand, and after some brilliant improvisations, legislative sanction was given the following chapters of love's budget. The allowance of fifty *écus* seemed reasonable for the little cakes that are consumed while at the promenade, for the bunches of violets and theater-boxes. A sum of two hundred francs was deemed necessary for the extraordinary bills at the various restaurants. As long as expenditure was recognized, it was necessary to cover it by receipts. It was during this discussions that a young "*cheval-léger*" (for the king had not yet suppressed his *maison rouge* at the time when this transaction was contemplated), rendered almost *ebriolus* by champagne, was called to order for having dared compare lovers with distillating apparatuses. But a chapter which gave rise to the most violent discussions, and which remained adjourned for several weeks, and made a report necessary, was the chapter concerning presents. In the last

séance the dainty Madame de D—— was the first to give her opinion; and in a graceful speech which revealed the nobility of her sentiments, she tried to demonstrate that most of the time the gifts of love had no intrinsic value. The author replied that all lovers had their likeness painted. One lady demurred and said that portraits were only a sort of capital, for lovers were always careful to get them back so as to give them to their new sweethearts.

But suddenly a gentleman from Provence rose to utter a “philippic” against the ladies. He spoke of the unbelievable passion of most women for furs, fabrics, silks, jewels and furniture; but a lady interrupted him by asking him if Madame d’O——y, her intimate friend, had not paid his debts twice.

“You are mistaken, madame,” retorted the gentleman, “it was her husband.”

“The orator is called to order and sentenced to treat the assembly for having used the word *husband*,” cried the president.

The native of Provence was completely refuted by a lady who tried to prove that women are much more devoted when in love, than men; that lovers are very expensive, and that a “nice” woman would consider herself very lucky if she could get out of it with two thousand francs a year. The discussion was about to degenerate into personalities, when the ballot was demanded. The commission’s conclusions were adopted. These conclusions said in substance that the sum of annual presents between lovers was to be placed at five hundred francs, but the following things were to be counted in this amount: 1st, money for outings; 2d, expenditures for drugs to relieve colds caught while walking in the damp parks, or while leaving the theater, and which amounted to real presents; 3d, postage and chancellery fees; 4th, trips and all the various expenses which cannot be accounted for, without considering the extravagances which spendthrifts might commit; inasmuch as, according to the investigations of the commission, it was shown that most extravagances benefited light women, and not the lawful wives. The result of these pecuniary love statistics were that, all in all, a love

affair cost about fifteen hundred francs, expended by both lovers, often unequally, but which expenditure would not have occurred at all had there been no attachment. There was a kind of unanimity in the gathering to verify that this sum was the minimum of love's cost. Now, my dear sir, as we have proven by our statistical calculations (see Meditations, I, II and III) that there exists in France a floating mass of at least fifteen hundred thousand illicit passions, it follows:

That the criminal conversations of one-third of the French population contribute about three thousand millions to the circulation of money, that social blood whose heart is the budget;

That the "nice" woman not only gives life to children of the peerage, but also supplies it with capital;

That our factories owe their prosperity only to this *systemic* movement;

That the "nice" woman is an essentially consuming and budgetary being;

That the slightest decrease in public lovemaking would bring about incalculable losses to the Treasury and the people who live on their incomes;

That a husband has at least one-third of his income mortgaged on the inconstancy of his wife, etc.

I know that you are already opening your mouth to talk of politics, decency, right and wrong. . . . But, my dear deceived one, is happiness not the end that all social bodies should seek? Is not this axiom the one which makes our poor kings do so much for their subjects? Well, the "nice" woman has no throne, neither has she an army; she has only a bed to offer; but, if our four hundred thousand women render a million celibates blissful through this device, are they not mysteriously, and without ostentation, attaining the goal that all governments desire and which is to give the masses the greatest possible sum of happiness?

"Yes, but worries, children, misfortune . . ."

Ah! permit me here to emphasize the consoling words by which one of our wittiest cartoonists ends one of his caricatures: "Man is far from being perfect." Therefore, our

institutions need only have as many advantages as they have drawbacks, to be considered excellent; for mankind, socially speaking, is not placed between right and wrong, but between wrong and *worse*. Now, if the work which we have actually accomplished aimed to decrease the worst of matrimonial institutions, by uncovering the errors and nonsense to which our customs and prejudices give rise, it would certainly be one of the greatest titles a man could present for laying claim to a place among the *benefactors of humanity*.

Has the author not endeavored, by warning all husbands, to endow women with more reserve and consequently to give more impetus to love, more money to the Treasury, more life to commerce and agriculture? Thanks to this last Meditation, he may flatter himself that he has obeyed the vow of eclecticism he formed at the beginning of the work, and he hopes to have gathered, like a prosecuting attorney, all the documents of the suit, but without giving his conclusions. Indeed, what do you care about finding an axiom here? Do you wish this book to be the development of Tronchet's last opinion, when he, during the latter part of his life, deemed that, in connection with marriage, the lawmakers had considered the offspring much more than the participants? Or, would you prefer to have this book serve as a proof to the peroration of the monk who, preaching before Ann of Austria and seeing that the Queen, as well as the ladies of her household, were wroth over his triumphant sermon relating to their frailties, said to them, as he stepped down from the pulpit: "But you are all chaste women, and it is we who are unfortunate enough to be the sons of good Samaritans." Be that as it may. You are at liberty to extract any conclusion you please; for I believe it is very hard not to have two contrary ideas on the subject that do not both contain some truth. But this book was neither written for, nor against, marriage; and the author owed you only the most exact description. If by examining a machine we are led to improve some of its parts; if by cleaning a rusted portion we impart added efficiency to the mechanism, let the workman be rewarded.

If the author has had the impertinence to utter harsh truths, if he has too frequently generalized isolated cases, and has too grossly neglected the commonplace remarks which from time immemorial have been used to laud women oh! let him be crucified, but do not charge him with hostile intentions concerning the institution of marriage itself; he is only angry with the men and women. He knows that, as long as marriage has not destroyed itself, it is indestructible; and, all things considered, if there are so many complaints about it, perhaps it is because men can only remember their ills and accuse their wives as they accuse Life, for marriage is a life within life. The people, however, who are accustomed to form their opinions by the newspapers, might speak ill of the book that carried the mania for eclecticism too far; therefore, if they must absolutely have something resembling a peroration, it might not be impossible to gratify their wish. And, as long as words spoken by Napoleon have ushered in the book, why should the latter not end as it has begun? It was in the very heart of the State Council that the first Consul uttered the following ominous words, which at the same time eulogize and criticise marriage and sum up the present work: "If a man never grew old, I would not have him marry!"

#### *Post Scriptum*

"And shall you never marry?" inquired the Duchess of the author, who had just submitted his manuscript to her. (She was one of those women whose sagacity has been commended by the author in the introduction.)

"Certainly, madame," he retorted. "To meet a woman fearless enough to become my wife will henceforth be my most cherished hope."

"Is this resignation or conceit?"

"That is my secret."

"Well, monsieur the doctor of conjugal arts and sciences, let me tell you a little Oriental tale which I read in one of those works that used to be presented to us every year as almanacs. At the beginning of the Empire, some ladies

started the vogue of a game called *Diadesté*, which consisted in accepting nothing from your partner without saying that word. A game would last for weeks and weeks, and the climax of cleverness was to catch your partner in the act of taking some trifle without pronouncing the fatal word.

“Not even a kiss?”

“Oh! I have won twenty games that way!” she laughingly exclaimed.

“It was at that time and in regard to the game, whose origin, I believe, is either Chinese or Arabic, that my apologue obtained the honor of being printed. But, if I tell it,” she said, interrupting herself to lift her right hand to her nostrils with a charming gesture of coquetry, “permit me to place it at the end of your work. . . .”

“It will be adding a treasure to it. . . . I am already so indebted to you that it will be impossible ever to repay you; so I shall accept.”

She smiled a mischievous smile and spoke in these terms:

“A philosopher had once composed a book describing all the tricks a woman can play; and, in order to protect himself from the wiles of our sex, he always carried the volume with him. One day, while traveling, he came across an Arab camp. At his approach, a young woman who was reclining under a palm-tree arose and invited him to rest awhile in the tent; she spoke with such grace that he could not help accepting her offer. The husband of the lady happened to be absent at the time. Hardly had the philosopher seated himself upon a soft rug before his gracious hostess brought him some fresh dates and a jug of milk; he noticed, in spite of himself, the perfection of the hands which served him. But, in order to keep his mind from dwelling on the charms of the young Arabian woman, whose wiles seemed full of peril to him, the scientist took out his book and began to read. The captivating woman, piqued by his neglect, said to him in the softest voice:

“Your book must be very interesting, since it absorbs you to the exclusion of everything else. Would it be indiscreet to ask you what science it contains?”

“The philosopher with lowered eyes replied:

“‘The subject of this book is not a subject for women.’

“The philosopher’s refusal greatly increased the young woman’s curiosity. She put forth the prettiest little foot that ever left its imprint on the sands of the desert. The philosopher’s mind wandered again, and his eyes soon traveled from those feet, which held such fertile promises, to the bosom, even more enchanting; then his eyes, which were filled with the most ardent admiration, soon exchanged glances with the ardent black orbs of the young Asiatic. She inquired again in such a soft voice what the subject of the book was that the philosopher, charmed, replied:

“‘I am the author of this work; but the subject is not mine; it contains all the tricks that women have invented.’

“‘What! . . . absolutely all?’ said the daughter of the desert.

“‘Yes, all! And it is by studying women all the time that I have reached the point where I no longer fear them.’

“‘Ah!’ said the young Arabian, and lowered her long lashes.

“Then, throwing the philosopher the most ardent of glances, she soon made him forget his book and all the tricks it contained. In a moment, the philosopher became the most passionate of men. Thinking that he had detected a shade of coquetry in the young woman’s manner, the stranger made a declaration. How could he help it? The sky was blue, the sand shone in the distance like a golden blade, the desert wind wafted love and the Arab’s wife seemed to reflect all the fires with which she was surrounded; her eyes became moist, and inclining her little head so that it seemed as if she had communicated a wave to the luminous atmosphere, she consented to listen to the philosopher’s suit. He was beginning to be filled with the most flattering hopes, when the young woman, hearing the distant gallop of a horse which was drawing nearer and nearer so that it seemed that the steed must have wings, exclaimed:

“‘We are lost! My husband will find us. He is as jealous as a tiger and even more pitiless. . . . In the name of the

Prophet, and if you value your life, conceal yourself in this box!’

“The terrified author, finding no other way of escape, entered the box and cowered therein; and the woman locked it and removed the key. Then she went out to greet her husband; after some caresses which put him in good humor:

“‘I must tell you a very strange thing,’ said she.

“‘I am listening, my gazelle,’ said the Arab, sitting on a rug and crossing his legs, according to the Oriental custom.

“‘There came to-day a sort of philosopher,’ said the girl. ‘He declared that he had gathered in a book all the tricks that my sex has ever invented, and that false man spoke to me of love.’

“‘Well?’ cried the Arab.

“‘I listened to him,’ she replied calmly; ‘he was young, ardent and . . . you arrived just in time to prevent my fall. . . .’

“The Arab leaped like a lion and drew his ‘kandjar’ with a roar of rage. The philosopher who, from his hiding-place, could hear every word, was sending his book, women and all the men in Arabia to Beelzebub.

“‘Fatme!’ cried the husband, ‘if you want me to spare you, answer me! . . . Where is the traitor?’

“Frightened at the storm she had aroused, Fatme crouched at her master’s feet, and trembling at the sight of the dagger, threw a single timid glance at the box. She staggered to her feet in confusion and, taking the key from her belt, handed it to her husband; but, just as he was about to open the box the wily woman burst into a loud laugh. Faroun stopped in amazement and glanced anxiously at his wife.

“‘At last I will have my lovely gold chain!’ she exclaimed with glee, ‘give it to me, for you have lost the *Diadesté*. I hope you will have a better memory the next time.’

“The astounded husband let the key fall to the floor, and kneeling before his wife offered her the wonderful gold chain, telling her that he would give her all the jewels of the cara-



vans which would pass within the year if she would promise to renounce playing such cruel tricks to win the *Diadesté*. Then, as he was an Arab, and did not like to lose a gold chain, even if the recipient happened to be his wife, he mounted his horse and sallied forth to unload his feelings in the desert, for he loved Fatme too much to show her any regrets. Then the young woman, releasing the philosopher, said to him gravely:

“ ‘ Monsieur le Docteur, do not forget this trick in your book.’ ”

“ Madame,” said I to the Duchess, “ I understand! If I ever marry, I am bound to succumb to some unknown trick; but in that event, you can rest assured that I shall offer the example of a model household to the admiration of my fellow-men.”

PARIS, 1824-1829.

**THE PETTY TRIALS OF MATRIMONY**



# THE PETTY TRIALS OF MATRIMONY

## PART FIRST

### PREFACE

IN WHICH EVERYONE CAN FIND HIS IMPRESSIONS OF  
MARRIED LIFE

A FRIEND mentions a young woman to you: "Fine family, well-educated, and three hundred thousand francs cash." You express a desire to meet this charming young person.

As a rule, all chance meetings are premeditated. Having suddenly become timid, you speak to the young lady.

YOU.—"A delightful entertainment."

SHE.—"Oh! yes, monsieur."

From that time forth you are permitted to pay your addresses to the young lady.

THE MOTHER-IN-LAW *to the prospective bridegroom*.—"You would not believe how susceptible of true attachment my little girl is."

The two families in the meantime are at loggerheads concerning money settlements.

YOUR FATHER *to the mother-in-law*.—"My farm is worth five hundred thousand francs, my dear lady!"

YOUR FUTURE MOTHER-IN-LAW.—"And our house, my dear sir, is on a corner!"

A contract discussed by two frightful notaries, one short and the other tall, ensues.

Then the two families deem it necessary for you to pass at the mayor's office and the church before possessing your simpering bride.

And afterwards! . . . a number of unexpected trials like the following one occur:

## "THE COUP DE JARNAC."

Is it a petty, or is it a great trial? I do not know; it looms large to sons and daughters-in-law, but it appears small to you.

"Little one, you can say what you please," cries a husband ten times a happy father, whose eleventh heir, called *the last baby* (an expression with which women hoodwink their families), is about to be christened, "a child is a great expense."

"What is this trial?" you will ask. Well, this trial, like many other conjugal troubles, is a boon to some one person.

Four months ago you married your daughter, whom we shall call by the pretty name of *Caroline*, making of her the usual type of all married women. As is always the case, Caroline happens to be a charming young woman, and you find her a husband who is:

Either a lawyer, a captain in the army, perhaps an engineer, a substitute judge, or a young viscount. But, in all probability, he is the only son of a wealthy landowner, the ideal sought by all sensible families! . . . (See Introduction.)

We shall call this phoenix Adolph, no matter what his station in life, his age, and the color of his hair.

The lawyer, or the captain, or the engineer, or the judge, in a word, the son-in-law, Adolph, and his family, see in Mademoiselle Caroline:

I. Mademoiselle Caroline.

II. Only daughter of yourself and wife.

Now we shall be compelled, the same as at the Chamber of Deputies, to demand the division:

1. *Of Your Wife.*

Your wife is going to inherit the fortune of an uncle on her mother's side, an old codger whom she nurses and pets and makes much of; without counting her father's fortune, which will be hers, Caroline has always adored her uncle, her uncle who held her on his knees, . . . her uncle who . . . her uncle whom . . . well, her uncle, whose fortune is estimated at two hundred thousand francs.

Of your wife . . . a well-preserved woman, but whose age has been carefully computed and thoroughly discussed by the relatives of your son-in-law. After a number of skirmishes, the respective mothers-in-law have ended by confiding to one another their little secrets.

“ And you, my dear lady? ”

“ Oh! I am rid of it, thank goodness, and you? ”

“ I sincerely hope so,” your wife replies.

“ You may marry Caroline,” says Adolph’s mother to that young man; “ Caroline will be the only heir to her mother’s, her uncle’s, and her grandfather’s fortunes.”

2. *Of Yourself.*

Who still possess a maternal grandfather, a nice old man, whose estate will be yours without contestation, for he is in his dotage and therefore unable to make a will.

Of you, a rather good fellow, though you led a wild life in your day. Besides, you are fifty-nine years old, and your head looks as if it were crowned by a bare knee protruding from a gray wig.

III. A dower of three hundred thousand francs! . . .

IV. Caroline’s only sister, a foolish little girl of twelve, who is always ailing, and who will certainly not make old bones.

V. Your own fortune, father-in-law (in a certain set they say: *papa father-in-law*), an income of twenty thousand francs, which will be swelled in a little while by an inheritance.

VI. Your wife’s fortune, which will be swelled by two legacies, the uncle’s estate and that of the grandfather.

|                                       |             |
|---------------------------------------|-------------|
| Three legacies and the savings, viz.: | 750,000 fr. |
| Your estate                           | 250,000 fr. |
| Your wife’s estate                    | 250,000 fr. |

Total: 1,250,000 fr.

which cannot take flight! . . .

That is the autopsy of all those brilliant matches with their choruses of eating and singing guests, faultlessly gloved and attired, who are transported in carriages from

the mayor's office to the church, from the church to the banquet, from the banquet to the ball, and thence to the nuptial chamber, to the sound of a band and the time-worn jests of the wrecks of former dandies, for are there not wrecks of dandies, just as there are wrecks of race-horses? Yea, this is the osteology of the most amorous desires.

Most of the relatives have had something to say about the match.

The bridegroom's relatives:

"Adolph did a clever thing."

The bride's relatives:

"Caroline has made a fine match. Adolph is an only son and *some day* he is sure to have an income of sixty thousand francs."

One fine day, the happy judge, lawyer, captain, or engineer dines at your home with his family. Your daughter Caroline is exceedingly proud of her slightly protruding figure. All women display an innocent coquetry regarding their first pregnancy, like the soldiers who deck themselves out for their first battle; they like to appear pale and ailing; they rise in a certain way and walk with dainty affectation. Flowers still, they are about to bear fruit, and they anticipate maternity. All these things are exceedingly delightful . . . the first time.

Your wife, who has become Adolph's mother-in-law, encases herself in tight stays. When her daughter laughs, she weeps. When her Caroline displays her happiness, she conceals her own. After dinner, the trained eye of the co-mother-in-law detects the dark secret!

Your wife is pregnant! the news spreads and your oldest college friend laughingly says to you:

"Ah! up to your tricks, are you?"

You center your hopes on a consultation which is going to take place the next day. You, a kind-hearted man, flush and hope that it is dropsy; but the doctors have confirmed the arrival of the *last baby!*

At such times, some husbands go to the country, while others take a trip to Italy. Strange confusion reigns in your household. You and your wife are in a false position.

“Why, you old rascal, aren’t you ashamed of yourself . . . ?” cries a friend you meet on the boulevard.

“Well, try and do as much yourself,” you reply, in a rage.

“What! the very day your daughter . . . ? Why, it is immoral! And an old woman? Why, it is an infirmity! . . .

“We have been robbed as in a wood,” says your son-in-law’s mother.

“As in a wood” is a gracious expression for the mother-in-law.

The family hopes that the child which thus divides their mercenary hopes into three portions, will, like all offspring of aged parents, be scrofulous, sickly, and misshapen. Will it even come into the world alive?

The family awaits your wife’s confinement with the same anxiety which beset the house of Orléans during the pregnancy of the Duchesse de Berri; a second daughter would give the throne to the younger branch, without the onerous conditions of July; Henri V. would sweep away the crown. From that time, the house of Orléans has been compelled to play double or quits: events have made it win the game!

The mother and daughter are confined within nine days of each other. Caroline’s first-born is a pale, sickly little girl that will never live.

Her mother’s last born is a fine boy that weighs twelve pounds and has two teeth and a crop of hair.

For sixteen years you wished for a son! This trial is the only one that has made you wild with joy! For your wife has grown young again and seems to experience a sort of Indian summer. She nurses the child and her complexion is like roses and cream.

At the age of forty-two, she carries on like a young woman, buys baby-clothes, walks out followed by a nurse, and spends her time embroidering caps and bibs. Alexandrine has become resigned, and sets an example for her daughter; she is happy and charming. Yet, it is a trial, insignificant for you, but great for your son-in-law. This trouble is shared alike by your wife and by you. And then, in cases like this,



## 6 THE PETTY TRIALS OF MATRIMONY

you are all the prouder of your accomplishment, my dear sir, for knowing, as you do, that it cannot be contested!

### THE DISCOVERIES.

A young wife, as a rule, never shows her real character until two or three years after her marriage. She unconsciously hides her faults in the novelty of her first happiness and pleasures. She goes out in society to dance, she visits her father's house to show you off, and travels escorted by love. She is growing into a woman. Then she becomes a mother and a nurse, and in these fascinating occupations, which leave no time for observation to make itself known, it is impossible to judge of a woman. So it takes you from three to four years of intimacy to discover a horribly sad fact, a fact which subjects you to continual misgivings.

Your wife, that girl whose first draught of life and love made her appear clever and charming, that vivacious, arch, and fascinating girl, whose slightest motions were delightfully eloquent, has cast aside, one by one, her natural artifices. Now you have a glimpse of the truth! At first, you refused to believe it, and thought that you were mistaken. But, no. Your Caroline lacks intelligence; she is dull, she can neither argue nor jest, and at times she is very tactless. You are appalled. You realize that you are forever doomed to lead *ma chère Minette*, through thorny paths which will tear your conceit to shreds.

You have already suffered a good many times in public from answers which were courteously accepted; people, instead of smiling, were silent; but you were convinced that after your departure, the women looked at each other and remarked:

“Did you hear what Madame Adolph said? . . .”

“Poor little woman, she is . . .”

“As stupid as a goose.”

“How did he, who is certainly a clever man, ever choose such a . . .”

“He should take his wife in hand and teach her, or make her keep still.”

## AXIOMS.

*In our civilization, a man is entirely responsible for his wife.*

*A husband does not form his wife.*

One day, at Madame de Fischtaminel's, Madame de Fischtaminel is a very charming woman, Caroline insisted that the latest baby resembled neither its father nor its mother, but looked like the friend of the family. She may have enlightened Monsieur de Fischtaminel and undermined the labor of three years, by overthrowing the groundwork of Madame de Fischtaminel's assertions. The lady ever after greets you with coolness, for she suspects you of having been indiscreet about her.

One evening Caroline, after having talked with an author about his works, ends by expressing the hope that the already prolific writer will soon begin to write for future generations. Sometimes, she complains of slow service when dining with people who keep but one servant, and who have put themselves about to entertain her. Sometimes, she criticises widows who have remarried, in the presence of Madame Deschars, whose third wedding united her to Nicholas-Jean-Jérôme-Népomucène-Ange-Marie-Victor-Joseph Deschars, a former notary and a great friend of your father's.

When you are with your wife, you are constrained. Like a man mounted on a fractious horse, and who never takes his eyes off the beast, you are completely absorbed by your efforts to catch what Caroline is saying.

In order to make up for the silence imposed on young unmarried women, Caroline talks, or better still, she babbles; she wants to make an impression and she certainly succeeds; nothing can stop her; she addresses the most eminent men and the most notable women; she begs for introductions, and puts you on needles and pins. To go out with her is the same as going to the torture-chamber.

She now begins to think that you are sulky, but you are only attentive, nothing more! You finally manage to keep her within a small circle of friends, for she has already compromised you with people who were of the greatest importance to you.

## 8 THE PETTY TRIALS OF MATRIMONY

How many times in the morning have you not shrunk from the necessity of administering a rebuke, after you had coaxed her into a humor to listen to you? How many times have you not recoiled from the burden of your magisterial duties? Should not the conclusion of your ministerial communication be: "You have no sense whatever"? You have a presentiment of the effect of your first lesson. Caroline will say to herself: "Ah! I have no sense!"

No woman will ever accept this criticism in a kindly spirit. Each of you will draw a sword and cast its sheath aside. Six weeks later, Caroline may prove to you that she has exactly enough sense to *minotaurize* you without your being aware of the fact.

Frightened at the prospect, you exhaust every oratorical formula you know, in order to find a way to coat the pill. At last you find a means to flatter all of Caroline's conceits, for:

### AXIOM.

*A married woman has several conceits.*

You tell her that you are her best friend and the only one in a position to enlighten her; the more circumlocutions you use, the more attentive and mystified she will be. At this moment, she has sense.

You ask your *dear* Caroline, as your arm steals around her waist, how it is possible that she, who is so clever with you, and says such delightfully witty things (here you remind her of things she never uttered, but which she accepts with a smile), could have said this or that in public. "No doubt, like a great many women, social intercourse renders her timid."

"I know of a great many distinguished men who are just the same," you say.

You quote some wonderful drawing-room orator who cannot speak three words from the rostrum. Caroline should watch over herself; you laud silence as the surest sign of cleverness. People love those who listen to them.

Ah! the ice is broken at last, you have skated on its smooth surface without so much as scratching it, you have been able to pat the most ferocious and untamable, the most suspicious,

anxious, alert, jealous, ardent, simple, violent, elegant, unreasonable and attentive Chimera of the moral world: *a woman's vanity!*

Caroline threw her arms around your neck, thanked you for your advice, and told you she loved you all the more for it; she wants to be indebted to you for everything, even common sense; she may be dull, but, what is infinitely better than knowing how to say gracious things, she enacts them! . . . She wants to be the pride of your heart! There is no question about being well-dressed, elegant, and fair; she wants to make you proud of her *mind*. You are the luckiest man in the world to have been able to extricate yourself from this first undesirable conjugal pitfall.

“To-night we are going to Madame Deschars's, where they do all sorts of things for fun; they play all kinds of innocent games on account of the crowd of young people that go there; you shall see! . . .” says Caroline.

You feel so elated that you hum a song while you rummage around your room, clad only in your undergarments. You look like a rabbit disporting itself on a dewy lawn. You put on your dressing-gown only at the very last moment, when breakfast is on the table. If you meet any friends during the day, and the subject of women is brought up for discussion, you defend them, and state that you think that they are gentle, charming creatures; there is something heavenly about them.

How many times our opinions are dictated by the unknown events of life!

You accompany your wife to Madame Deschars's. Madame Deschars is the exceedingly pious mother of a family, who will not have a newspaper in the house; she watches over her daughters, who are the outcome of three different matrimonial ventures, all the more strictly as it seems she has *several peccadillos* on her conscience regarding her two previous unions. Nobody dares joke in her presence. Her home is all pink and white and has an odor of saintliness about it that reminds one of widows who are on the verge of their third youth. Anyone would think that a religious festival was forever being held there.

You, as a young husband, sally forth and mingle with the young girls, young married women, and young men who fill Madame Deschars's bed-chamber. The dignified people, the political, whist-playing, and tea-loving men, foregather in the drawing-room.

The others are playing a game which consists in guessing words with various meanings, according to the answers that everyone must make to the following questions:

"How do you like it?"

"What do you do with it?"

"Where do you put it?"

Your turn to guess a word comes, and you enter the drawing-room, take part in a discussion, but soon emerge, summoned by a little, laughing maid. They have thought out a word which lends itself to the most enigmatical interpretations. Everyone knows that, in order to puzzle the good guessers, the best way to proceed is to choose a very common word and to construct sentences which will throw the drawing-room *Œdipus* off the right track.

The game hardly takes the place of lansquenet or dice, but it is very inexpensive.

The word *mal*<sup>1</sup> is chosen.

Everybody conspires to puzzle you. The word, among other acceptations, signifies *mal*, a noun which, in esthetics, means evil, the contrary of good; of *mal*, which designates a number of pathological ills; of *malle*, the government vehicle, and finally *malle*, a trunk, which assumes such various shapes and appearances and travels so rapidly, for it serves to transport one's traveling effects, as a man of Delille's school might say.

For you, clever man, the Sphinx displays all its wiles, spreads its wings, then folds them again; shows its lion's claws, its horse's flanks, its woman's breast, its clever head; it shakes its sacred bands and flies away only to return and sweep the place with its formidable tail; it spreads its claws and draws them in again, smiles, frisks about, gurgles, and has the look of a joyous child and of a matron; and it is sarcastic, very sarcastic.

<sup>1</sup> Evil, ill, wrong, mischief.

“ I like it when it spells love.”

“ I like it when it is chronic.”

“ I like it with a broad mane.”

“ I like it when it is secret.”

“ I like it when it is bold.”

“ I like it on horse-back.”

“ I like it as proceeding from the Lord,” replies Madame Deschars.

“ How do you like it? ” you ask your wife.

“ I like it legitimate,” she replies.

Your wife’s answer is not understood by anyone and sends you wandering about the starry realms of the infinite, where the mind, dazzled by the multitude of creations, cannot fix its choice on anything. It is placed:

“ In a carriage-house.”

“ In the attic.”

“ On a steamer.”

“ In the press.”

“ In a cart.”

“ In the penitentiaries.”

“ In ears.”

“ In stores.”

Your wife’s answer is the last one.

“ In my bed.”

You know of no word that would fit that reply, for Madame Deschars would surely not permit anything improper.

“ What do you do with it? ”

“ It constitutes my sole delight,” says your wife, after everybody has given answers which lead you through a world of linguistical surmises.

Her answer strikes everyone present and especially yourself; and you persist in trying to discover its meaning. You think of the hot-water bag your wife uses to warm her feet on very cold nights—of her night-cap—her handkerchief—her curl-papers—the hem of her night-dress—its embroidery—her night-jacket—your bandanna—the pillow—the night-table, which offers you no suitable solution.

Finally, as the greatest delight of the players is to see their *Œdipus* thoroughly mystified, as each word which is

wrong sends them into gales of laughter, the truly intelligent men, when they see that no word fits any of the descriptions, prefer to acknowledge their defeat rather than to pronounce three superfluous words.

According to the rules of this innocent game, a person is condemned to go back to the drawing-room, after paying a forfeit; but you are so puzzled at your wife's replies, that you demand to know what the word was.

"*Mal!*" cries a maiden.

Then at last you understand, but still your wife's answers are not clear to you; she has not played right; neither Madame Deschars nor any of the young women have understood. She must have cheated. You rebel and there is a riot among the women and girls. Everyone tries to solve the riddle and is mystified. You demand an explanation and everyone joins in.

"Which acception of the word did you take, dear?" you ask of Caroline.

"Why, *mâle!*"<sup>1</sup>

Madame Deschars purses her lips and evinces the greatest displeasure; all the young married women blush and lower their eyes, while the young girls open theirs wide and nudge each other and strain their ears. You are rooted to the spot, and have so much salt in your throat, that you at once think of a repetition of history, which, as in the case of Lot, might deliver you of your wife.

You foresee an infernal life and society becomes an impossibility.

To remain at home with this triumphant stupidity, would be as bad as going to prison for life.

#### AXIOM.

*Moral suffering surpasses physical pain by all the height which exists between the body and the soul.*

You give up trying to mold your wife.

Caroline is a second edition of Nebuchadnezzar, for, one

<sup>1</sup> *Mâle*, male. In French, it has the same pronunciation as *mal*.

day, just like the royal chrysalis, she will change from a hairy monster to a ferocious imperial ruler.

#### THE ATTENTIONS OF A YOUNG WIFE.

Every man counts among the joys of bachelorhood his freedom to come and go as he chooses. The delight of awakening in the morning makes up for the sadness of going to bed. A bachelor turns over and over; he can yawn so that people will think that murder is being perpetrated, and shout so that they will think that he is enjoying excessive pleasures. He can ruthlessly break the promises he has made the day before, let his fire and his candle burn all night, and turn over and go to sleep in spite of pressing work. He can curse his gaping boots, ignore steel clasps that shine in the sun-ray that steals through the drawn curtains of his bedroom, and the sonorous summons of his obstinate clock, while he buries himself under the bedclothes and mutters, "*Yesterday was a fool, but to-day is wise; between the two is the night that brings counsel, the night that enlightens . . . I should go . . . I should do it . . . I promised I would . . . I'm a coward . . . but how can I resist this downy bed? My feet are wobbly, I must be sick . . . I am too comfortable . . . I want to see just once the impossible horizons of my dream, the heelless women and the winged figures and the genial good-fellowship. . . . At last, I have found the grain of salt to put on the tail of the bird that has always flown away. That arch maiden has caught her feet in the lime, I hold her. . . .*"

Your valet reads the morning papers, pries open your mail, and kindly leaves you to your own devices. And you go to sleep again, soothed by the vague rumbling of the first vehicles in the street. The terrible, peevish, and rattling carts laden with meat, the milk-wagons with their cans of milk that make such a dreadful noise, all seem to be rolling on velvet, and remind you vaguely of Napoléon Musard's orchestra. When the foundations of your house rock and its structure sways, you imagine that you are a sailor lulled by ocean breezes.

You end these delights by resolutely casting aside your ban-



danna, like a napkin after a meal, and by sitting upon your . . . ah! 'tis named your *seat!* And you scold yourself with such words as these: "Ah! *ventrebleu*, it is high time to get up.—Diligent seeker—— My friend, 'early to rise, makes a man healthy, wealthy, and wise'—you are a scamp, a lazy-bones . . ."

For a while, you remain in this position. You glance around the room and try to gather your scattered thoughts. —Then, at last, you leap out of bed,—spontaneously,—courageously,—by your own free will!—You walk over to the mantelpiece, consult a most accommodating clock, and mutter several hopeful sentences to yourself, "*Thing-a-bob* is lazy, I'll be sure to catch him in. . . . I'll hurry,—if he has gone, I can overtake him,—I guess he will wait a while for me,—an allowance of fifteen minutes is always made, even between creditors and debtors."

You draw on your boots in wild haste, you dress as you do when you are afraid that someone will surprise you in an unclad state, you enjoy being in a hurry, and inveigh against your buttons. At last, you sally forth like a conqueror, whistling a tune, whirling your stick, shaking your ears, and feeling like a colt.

"After all, I am free," you say; "I am my own master and have no accounts to render anyone!"

You, poor married wretch, made the mistake of telling your wife, "My dear (sometimes even she is apprised of it two days beforehand), I must rise very early." Foolish Adolph, you emphasized the gravity of the engagement by saying, "It means just this . . . just that . . . and this . . . and that . . ."

Two hours before daybreak, Caroline rouses you gently from your slumbers and softly says:

"Dear, . . . *dear!*"

"What is it? fire, bur . . .?"

"No, no, go to sleep again, I have made a mistake. The hand was there, see. It's only four o'clock, you have two hours more."

To say to a man, "You have only two hours more to sleep," is very much, in a smaller way, like saying to a

condemned criminal, "It is five o'clock, be ready for half-past seven." Sleep is disturbed by a gray thought that comes and beats its wings against your brain like a bat.

At such times a woman is as exact as any demon coming to claim a lost soul. When the clock strikes five, your wife's all too familiar voice rings in your ears: she forms a chorus to the time-piece and speaks with outrageous gentleness:

"It is five o'clock, Adolph, you must get up, dear."

"Um . . . oah . . . um . . ."

"Adolph, you will miss your appointment, *you told me so yourself.*"

"Um . . . um . . . oooh . . . ah . . ."

"Now, dear, I prepared everything for you yesterday. . . . Dearie, you must get up; do you want to miss that appointment? Do get up now, Adolph, and go. It is daylight."

Caroline flies out of bed, carrying the bed-clothes with her, just to show you that *she* can get up without hesitation. She flings back the shutters and lets in the sunlight and the noise of the street. Then she comes back to you.

"Why, *mon ami*, get up! Who would ever have thought that you have so little determination? Oh! men, men! . . . I'm only a woman, but I do what I say I am going to do."

You finally arise, muttering, and curse the sacrament of Marriage. You do not deserve the slightest praise for your heroism. *You* did not get up, *your wife* did. With the most exasperating despatch, Caroline hands you everything you need; she foresees everything, gives you a muffler in winter and a blue striped shirt in summer; she treats you like a child! While you are still half asleep, she thrusts your clothes at you, takes all the trouble; you are finally hustled out of the house. Were it not for your wife, everything would go wrong! She calls you back to give you a paper or a wallet! *You* think of nothing, *she* thinks of everything!

Five hours later, after breakfast, you return to your home about eleven o'clock. The maid is in the hall or on the stairs, gossiping with the butler; catching a glimpse of you, she hastens away. Your man is setting the table in a

leisurely fashion, gazing out of the window and going about his duties like one fully aware that he can take his own time. You inquire for your wife, believing her to be up and about.

"Madame is still in bed," replies the chambermaid.

You find your wife half-asleep, languid, lazy. She did not sleep all night in order to awaken you in the morning, and, being tired out, she went back to bed. Now she is hungry.

You are the cause of all the trouble. If luncheon is behind time, she blames it on your early departure. If she is not dressed and everything is topsy-turvy, it is your fault. Whenever anything goes wrong, she exclaims:

"Well, I had to make you get up so early!"

"*Monsieur arose so early!*" is the universal reason. She makes you retire early because you arose so early! Eighteen months afterward she will still say to you:

"You would *never* get up, were it not for me!"

To her friends she says:

"*Monsieur get up!* . . . Why, were it not for me, were *I* not there, he would *never* get up. . . ."

A man with grayish hair replies:

"That is greatly to your credit, madame."

This criticism, a trifle broad, puts an end to her boasting.

This little trial, when repeated once or twice, teaches you to keep your own counsel and to retire into your shell; at times, it seems extremely doubtful whether the advantages of the nuptial tie surpass its disadvantages.

#### TEASINGS.

From the sprightly *allegretto* of bachelorhood, you have passed to the grave *andante* of *paterfamilias*.

Instead of the handsome English thoroughbred harnessed to the smart cart you used to drive in such a graceful fashion through the Champs-Élysées, you now drive a good, substantial Norman nag.

You have learned paternal patience and you have plenty of opportunity to exercise it. Therefore, your countenance is serious. By your side sits a domestic who, like the carriage, evidently serves a double purpose. The carriage is

a four-wheeler, hung on English springs, and its swelling body makes it look something like a Rouen boat; it has glass windows and a great many economical devices. An open victoria in fine weather, it is transformed into a closed carriage on rainy days. It is light in appearance, but is actually weighted down with six people, and prostrates your horse.

Spread out in it like flowers, are your wife and her mother, the latter a huge cabbage rose with a great many leaves. Those two feminine flowers are talking about you, while the noise of the wheels and your absorption in your steed prevent you from hearing their conversation.

In front sits a nice-looking nursemaid with a little girl on her lap; by her side is a boy in a plaited red shirt, who leans out of the carriage, climbs on the cushions, and makes his mother repeat a thousand times these words, which he knows to be only the comminatory words of all mothers:

“Do be good, Adolph, or I will never take you driving again, sir!”

The mother is secretly bored to death by the noisy youngster; she has become irritated a dozen times at least, and a dozen times she has been soothed by the face of the little sleeping maiden.

“I am a mother,” she says to herself.

And she ends by subduing her Adolph.

You have realized the wonderful idea of taking your family for a drive. You started out in the morning, while the neighbors gaped from their windows and envied your privilege, conferred on you by your money, of taking your family for an outing without submitting them to the inconvenience of public conveyances. Now, you drove the wretched nag to Vincennes through all Paris, from Vincennes to Saint-Maur, from Saint-Maur to Charenton, from Charenton to a spot opposite some island that appeared far prettier to your wife and mother-in-law than all the sites you had ever shown them.

“Let’s drive to Maisons! . . .” they cried.

You drove to Maisons, near Alfort. Then you start for home along the left bank of the Seine, enveloped in a dark

cloud of Olympic dust; the horse drags your family with much effort; your conceit vanishes when you glance at his thin ribs and the two salient bones on the sides of his stomach; his coat is mottled with sweat and dust. He looks like a ruffled hedgehog and you fear that he has gone lame. You flick him with the whip in a melancholy sort of fashion, which he seems to comprehend, for he nods his head like a cuckoo horse tired of his wretched existence.

You are fond of your horse, he is a good horse and he cost twelve hundred francs. When a man has the honor of being the head of a family, he thinks as much of twelve hundred francs as you think of the horse. You perceive the frightful figure of the extraordinary expenditures which would be incurred were Coco to be taken ill. You would have to take cabs for two days to go to business. Your wife would be put out at not being able to stir, but she would hire a carriage and go just the same. The horse would give rise to extras which would be found on the bill of the lone stableman you employ, a stableman unique in every way, and on whom you keep your eye, as on all unique things.

These thoughts are expressed by the gentle motion with which you flick the sides of the beast, that trots along the dust-covered road of the Verrerie.

Just then young Adolph, much bored in that rolling box called a carriage, wriggles in his corner, and his anxious grandmamma asks:

“What is the matter with you?”

“I’m hungry,” lisps the child.

“He’s hungry,” says grandmamma to her daughter.

“And why shouldn’t he be hungry? It is half-past five, and we haven’t even reached the gates yet, and we started at two o’clock.”

“Your husband might have let us have dinner in the country.”

“He prefers to drive the horse a few miles more and have dinner home.”

“The cook might have been given a day off. However, Adolph is right. It is cheaper to have dinner at home,” retorts the mother-in-law.

"Adolph," cries your wife, excited by the word "economy," "we are going so slowly that I will be sea-sick, and you are driving right through that black dust. What is the matter with you? My hat and my dress will be ruined!"

"Would you prefer to kill the horse?" you demand, believing that you have answered curtly.

"There is no question of the horse, but of your child that is starving; he hasn't had a thing to eat in seven hours. Whip up! Really, you seem to care more for your old nag than for your own child!"

You do not dare whip the horse, for he might have enough strength left to run away.

"No, Adolph wishes to annoy me, he is driving slower than ever," says the young wife to her mother. "Go on, dear, *do just as you please!* Then you will tell me that I am extravagant when you see me buying a new hat! . . ."

You mutter some words, which are lost in the rumble of the wheels.

"You advance arguments that haven't a grain of sense," shrieks Caroline.

You continue to hold forth, with your head turned alternately toward your wife and toward the horse.

"That's right, go ahead and upset us, and then you'll be rid of us. Why, Adolph, your boy is dying of hunger, he is white . . ."

"But, Caroline," says mother-in-law, "your husband is doing his best . . ."

Nothing makes you so angry as to have your mother-in-law defend you. She is a hypocrite, for she is delighted to see you quibbling with her daughter. Gently and cautiously, she is throwing oil on the flames.

By the time you reach the gates, your wife is speechless; she folds her arms and does not deign to look at you; you have no soul, no heart, no feeling. No one but you could plan such an outing. If you are foolish enough to remind Caroline that it was she who, that very morning, had insisted upon it for the sake of her own and the children's health (she nurses the baby), you will be crushed by an avalanche of sarcastic words.

So you bear everything "*in order not to curdle the milk of a nursing mother, whose little peculiarities you must pass over,*" whispers your dreadful mother-in-law.

You are shaken by a fury like the one which overwhelmed Orestes. To the usual words: "*Have you anything to declare?*" of the gateman . . .

"I," retorts your wife, "declare a lot of dust and ill-humor. . . ."

The man laughs, your wife laughs, and you feel like dumping the whole family into the Seine.

For your greater undoing, you remember the time, six years ago, when you drove past this place on your way to the inn, with a pretty, arch girl sitting beside you on the high cart. An idea! Madame Schontz had no thought for children, nor for her lace hat which was torn to pieces by the brambles, nor for her dignity, for she horrified the *garde-champêtre* of Vincennes by the freedom of her dancing.

You finally reach home. You drove the horse too fast, and prevented neither your wife nor the horse from being ill.

That evening, Caroline has little milk. If your daughter cries while she is being fed, it is your own fault, for you preferred your horse's comfort to the comfort of your family and of your daughter, whose dinner perished in an argument in which your wife *was right, as usual!*

"After all," says she, "men are not mothers."

You go out of the room and hear your mother-in-law comforting her daughter with these dire words:

"Don't mind him, all men are selfish; your father was just the same."

#### THE CONCLUSUM.

It is eight o'clock when you enter your wife's chamber. All the lights are turned on full. The maid and the cook are in a ferment. Every piece of furniture is covered with dresses and discarded flowers.

The hairdresser is there, too, that great artist and *arbiter*, who is everything and nothing at the same time.

You can hear the other servants rushing around executing orders and errands as best they can. Confusion reigns supreme.

The room is a workshop from which will emerge a drawing-room Venus. Your wife aims to be the most beautiful woman at the ball. For you, for herself, or for someone else? Weighty questions.

You do not even give them a passing thought. You are incased in your evening attire, you step with care, your mind filled with thoughts of how to broach the subject of business, on neutral ground, to a broker, a lawyer, or a banker, to whom you would not care to give the advantage of calling on them in their offices.

A strange fact, which everyone has had the opportunity to observe, but the causes of which are almost unfathomable, is the peculiar disinclination manifested by men in evening dress toward argument and questionings.

There are but few husbands who, when starting for an entertainment, are not silent and wrapped in thoughts that vary, according to their temperaments. Those who do talk, give short and peremptory answers.

Women, on the contrary, become excessively irritating. They consult you, want your opinion on the best way to hide the stem of a rose, to place a cluster of blossoms, to drape a scarf. Of course they do not think of these details, but only of themselves. According to a pretty English expression, they are "fishing for compliments," and at times, for other things besides.

A college youth would perceive the reason concealed beneath these pretexts; but you are so familiar with your wife, and have praised her moral and physical charms so often, that you are cruel enough to speak your mind succinctly and conscientiously, thus forcing Caroline to utter that decisive remark which comes hard to any woman, even one who has been married twenty years:

"I suppose I do not suit you?"

Brought face to face with the real issue by this question, you give some praise which is the small change, the loose coin of no importance to you.



“Your dress is lovely.—I’ve never seen you look so well.—Blue, pink, yellow, purple (*choose whatever color you wish*), is very becoming to you.—Your hair is done in an attractive way.—When you enter the room, everyone will admire you.—You will not only be the prettiest woman there, but the best-dressed, too.—All the other women will be furious.—Beauty is a natural gift; but taste, like wit, is a thing of which we may be truly proud.”

“Do you really think so? Do you mean what you say, Adolph?”

Your wife flirts with you. She chooses this time to wring from you your true opinion of such and such a friend, and to insinuate the cost of the things you have praised. Nothing is too expensive if it pleases you. She sends the cook away.

“Let’s start,” you say.

She dismisses the maid and the hairdresser and turns to her looking-glass, flaunting her charms before you.

“Let’s start,” you say.

“You are in a great hurry,” she retorts.

And she fidgets coquettishly before the mirror, exhibiting herself like a beautiful fruit in a green-grocer’s window. Having dined exceeding well, you brush her forehead with your lips, and do not feel in a mood to countersign your declarations. Caroline becomes serious.

The carriage is called. The entire household watches madame’s departure; she is the masterpiece to which all have lent a hand, and all, therefore, admire the finished work.

Your wife is in love with herself and highly displeased with you. She hastens gloriously to the ball, like a picture to which the artist has given the last loving touches before sending it on its way to the Louvre exhibition. Alas! on arriving, your wife finds fifty women fairer than she; they are dressed in wonderfully expensive, and more or less original, creations, and the feminine masterpiece meets with just what the picture meets with at the Louvre: your wife’s dress is overshadowed by another dress of similar design, but whose color, *far more conspicuous*, kills hers. Caroline is nothing;

people hardly notice her. When there are sixty pretty women in a drawing-room, the sense of beauty is lost, dulled. Your wife becomes quite commonplace. The studied grace of her smile pales before the bold and haughty expressions of the other women. She is completely effaced, no one asks her to dance. She tries to make believe that she is enjoying herself, but, as she is not, she hears remarks like these: "Madame Adolph looks very badly." The women, in a hypocritical way, inquire if she is ill. "Why doesn't she dance?" They have a collection of stinging, sugar-coated remarks that would damn a saint, make an ape grow reflective, and chill a fiend.

You, poor, unsuspecting man, mingling in the festive throng, do not notice the thousand thrusts your wife's vanity is receiving, and edge up to her, saying:

"What is the matter with you?"

"Call *my* carriage."

That *my* is the accomplishment of matrimony. For two years it was *monsieur's* carriage, *the* carriage, *our* carriage, and it has finally come to be *my* carriage.

A game of cards is in progress, and you have to win back some money you have lost.

Here, Adolph, we will concede that you have sufficient strength of mind to answer "yes," and to disappear *without* calling the carriage.

You have a friend whom you send to dance with your wife, for you have reached a system of concessions which will prove your undoing; *you already realize the value and uses of a friend.*

But you end by calling the carriage. Your wife enters it in a repressed rage, sinks into a corner, draws her hood over her face, folds her arms under her cape, rolls herself into a ball like a cat, and speaks not a word.

O husbands, be it known to you that now is your opportunity, that you can make up for everything, repair everything, and that the impetuosity of lovers, who, during the whole evening, have exchanged ardent glances, never fails in this! Yes, you can bring her home exultant, for she has no one left but you; you have still a chance and that is to

violate your wife! Bah! instead, silly and indifferent man, you only remark, "What is the matter?"

AXIOM.

*A husband should always know what is the matter with his wife, for she always knows what is not the matter.*

"I'm cold," is her rejoinder.

"The *soirée* was delightful."

"Oh! nothing really nice! It is the rage now to crowd all Paris into a little bit of a place. . . . Why, there were women on the stairs; their dresses were horribly spoiled; mine is ruined."

"Well, we had a good time."

"You men gamble and think that everything is delightful. Once you are married, you pay about as much attention to your wives as lions to pictures."

"Why, I wouldn't know you, you started out so bright and happy!"

"Oh! you *never* understand. I asked you to take me home, and you went off and left me, as if women *ever* did anything without a reason! You are clever enough, but you act very strangely at times. I don't know what you can be thinking of! . . ."

Once you have reached this stage, the quarrel waxes warm. When you help your wife to alight from the carriage, she mutters a "thank you," which puts you on a level with the footman. You misunderstood her before and after the ball. She flies up the stairs so fast that you can hardly follow. It is a real quarrel.

The maid is under the same cloud; she receives a few remarks as dry as Brussels biscuits, which she swallows with a wry look at you.

"*That is monsieur again,*" she hisses between her teeth.

You alone could change madame's ill-humor. Madame retires. She has got to take her revenge. It is her turn to misunderstand you. She draws away from you in a most unpleasant and hostile way; she is wrapped up in her night-dress, her night-jacket, her night-cap, like a bale of clocks

bound for the Great Indies. No "good-night," no "good-morning," no "dear," no "Adolph." You simply do not exist; you are a bag of meal.

Your Caroline, so bewitching five hours ago, in this very room where she disported herself like an eel, is now like a leaden salmon. You might be the Tropic personified, riding the Equator, for all you could melt the glaciers of this little personified Switzerland who feigns sleep and could freeze you from head to foot, if necessary. You might inquire a hundred times what ailed her, Switzerland would reply with a *conclusum* like the *vorort* or the London conference.

"There is nothing the matter" with her, she is simply tired and sleepy.

The more you insist, the more ignorance she displays. When you have begun to lose your temper, Caroline is in dreamland. If you complain, you are lost.

#### AXIOM.

*Women can always explain their greatness, but leave us to divine their pettiness.*

Caroline may possibly condescend to tell you that she feels very ill; but she laughs in her sleeve when you fall asleep, and mutters curses over your prostrate body.

#### WOMEN'S LOGIC.

You think that you have married a being endowed with reason, but you are sadly mistaken, my friend.

#### AXIOM.

*SENSITIVE creatures are not SENSIBLE creatures.*

Sentiment is not reason, reason is not pleasure, and pleasure most certainly is not a reason.

"Oh! monsieur!"

Exclaim: "Ah!" Yes, *ah!* You utter that "*ah!*" from the depths of your being as you stalk out of the house in a rage, or as you enter your den, completely nonplussed. Why? How? Who has conquered you? killed you? petrified you?

Your wife's logic, which is neither the logic of Aristotle, nor Ramus, nor Kant, nor Condillac, nor Robespierre, nor Napoleon; but which contains something of each one, and should be called the logic of all women. Of English as well as of Italian women, of Norman and Breton women (oh! these are unbeaten!), of Parisiennes, of the women in the moon, if there be women in that nocturnal landscape with which the women of this earth are, on such evident good terms, the angels!

The argument arose after breakfast. Arguments, in most households, cannot take place at any other time.

A man, even if he wished to, could not argue with his wife in bed; she has too many advantages over him and could subdue him too easily. After arising from the nuptial couch which holds a pretty woman, a man, if he be young, is usually hungry. Breakfast is generally a cheerful meal, for cheerfulness is not argumentative. In short, you do not start the discussion until after you have had your coffee or tea.

For instance, you have taken into your head to send your boy to college. Fathers are all hypocrites and will never acknowledge that their blood is in the way when it runs around on two legs, lays ruthless hands on everything, and wriggles around the house like a tadpole. Your son barks, howls, and meows; he smashes and soils the furniture, and furniture is expensive; he fashions swords out of everything, mislays your valuable papers, makes a fool's-cap out of the morning newspaper before you have had time to glance at it.

His mother says, "Take it!" to everything that belongs to you.

But she says, "Take care!" to everything that belongs to her.

The sly woman makes use of your belongings to gain peace. She is protected by the child, who is her accomplice. Both are as much hand in glove against you, as Robert Macaire and Bertrand were against a stockholder. The child goes to your bureau openly or covertly; he appears adorned in soiled undergarments and brings forth things that have been consigned to the inferno of discarded apparel. To a

friend whom you cultivate, the dainty Madame de Fisch-taminel, he shows bandages for reducing a too prominent abdomen, pieces of wax to wax your mustache, socks that are slightly black at the heel and yellow at the toes. How can you convince her that these stains have been made by your boots?

Your wife looks at your friend and laughs and as you dare not show your wrath you laugh too, but what a laugh! *wretched people know that laugh.*

When your razors are missing, your son gives you a terrible scare. If you become angry, the little rascal smiles up at you and shows two rows of pearly teeth; if you remonstrate, he cries. The mother rushes in. What a mother! a mother who will hate you if you do not give in. There is no *mezzo termine* with women; a man is either a monster or the kindest of fathers.

There are times when you understand Herod and his famous ordinances regarding the slaughter of the innocents, which were only surpassed by those of the good King Charles X.!

Your wife returns to the lounge and you pace the room in excitement. Then you put the question squarely with this interjectional remark:

“Really, Caroline, we must send Charles to college.”

“Charles cannot go to college,” says your wife in a meek little voice.

“Charles is six years old and that is the age when a man’s education should begin.”

“Seven years,” she retorts. “Princes are handed over to their governors by their governesses only at seven years of age. That is the custom. I don’t see why the laws that princes follow should not be applied to the children of the middle-classes. Is your son any more advanced than theirs? The King of Rome . . .”

“The King of Rome is no authority. . . .”

“The King of Rome isn’t the son of the Emperor? . . . (She *diverts* the argument.) Well, this is something new! I suppose you are going to accuse the Empress? She was confined by Doctor Dubois in the presence of . . .”

"I tell you that the King of Rome . . . (Here you begin to raise your voice), the King of Rome, who was barely four years old when he left France, cannot be quoted as an example."

"That does not alter the fact that the Duc de Bordeaux was placed in the hands of his governor, Monsieur le Duc de Rivière, when he was seven years old." An effect of logic.

"It was different with the Duc de Bordeaux."

"So you admit that you cannot send a boy to college until he is seven years old?" she says, with emphasis.

"I did not say so at all, my dear. There is a great difference between private and public education."

"That is just why I don't want to send Charles to college yet. A boy ought to be stronger than he is to go to college."

"Charles is very strong for his age."

"Charles? . . . Oh! men! . . . Why, Charles has a very weak constitution, he takes after you. (The *vous*, which is a formal term, begins.) If you want to rid yourself of your boy, you can find nothing better than sending him to college. . . . I have noticed for some time that the child annoys you. . . ."

"There! now you say that my boy annoys me! The idea! Why, we are responsible toward our children! we must begin the boy's education at once; he is acquiring very bad habits at home, minds no one, and thinks he owns everything; he strikes people, and no one strikes him; he should be with boys of his own age, otherwise he will develop a most hateful character."

"Thank you; so I do not know how to bring up my son?"

"I will not say that, but then, you are always giving good reasons for keeping him at home."

Here, the *vous* becomes mutual, and the argument waxes warm on both sides. Your wife does not mind using *vous* to you, but she resents it when you reciprocate.

"Well, that is what you said! You wish to deprive me of my child, you think that he has come between us, you are jealous of him, you want to bully me without interference, and you sacrifice your child! Oh! I have sense enough to see what you are driving at!"

"Why, you make me a sort of Abraham flourishing his knife! One would think there were no colleges! All the colleges are empty, no one sends his boy to college! . . ."

"You want to make me perfectly ridiculous," she retorts. "I know very well that there are colleges, but boys aren't sent when they are only six years old, and Charles shall not go."

"My dear, do not become so excited!"

"As if I *ever* became excited! I am a woman and know how to suffer."

"Let us reason this out."

"Yes, we have been unreasonable long enough."

"It is time that Charles should learn to read and write. Later, he would encounter difficulties that would dishearten him."

Here you talk for ten minutes without interruption and end with a "well" armed with an intonation that simulates a very hooked interrogation mark.

"Well," says your wife, "it is not time to send Charles to college."

Nothing has been gained.

"But, my dear, Monsieur Deschars sent his little Jules to college when he was only six. Just go to some colleges and you will see a lot of boys of that age."

You argue for another ten minutes, and when you dare another "well":

"The little Deschars boy came home with chilblains," replies Caroline.

"But Charles has chilblains now."

"Never," she proudly replies.

After twenty minutes the discussion is suspended by an accessory argument as to whether or not Charles ever had chilblains.

You hurl contradictory assertions back and forth, doubt each other's word, and finally appeal to a third party to settle the question.



## AXIOM.

*Every household has its Court of Appeal which never troubles itself about the real issue at stake, but only regards forms.*

The nurse is summoned, and when she arrives on the scene, she sides with your wife. It is a settled point that Charles never had chilblains.

Caroline looks at you triumphantly and utters these astounding words:

“Now you see that it is quite impossible to send Charles to college.”

You stalk out of the room in a towering rage. There is no way of proving to your wife that there is not the least relation between the proposition of sending a boy to college and the chance of his having, or not having, chilblains.

In the evening, after dinner, before a roomful of people, you overhear that dreadful woman just ending a long conversation with a friend with the remark:

“He wanted to send Charles to college, but he realized very well that we would have to wait.”

Some husbands, in a case like this, burst out before everybody, and are *minotaurized* six weeks later, but they gain this, that Charles is packed off to college the minute he utters an indiscreet word. Other men smash the dishes, while struggling against their repressed rage. The clever ones hold their peace and await developments.

Thus a woman's logic is displayed in her slightest actions, *à propos* of a walk, a piece of furniture, a moving. That logic, which is remarkable in its simplicity, consists in never formulating but one idea, the one that embodies their whim. Like everything else pertaining to a woman's nature, this system can be reduced to the two algebraical terms: Yes.—No. There are also some tosses of the head which answer all purposes.

## WOMEN'S JESUITISM.

The most jesuitical of Jesuits is a thousand times less jesuitical than the least jesuitical of women, so by this you

can appreciate how jesuitical women are! They are so jesuitical that the cleverest Jesuit himself could not guess how jesuitical a woman is, for there are a hundred ways of being jesuitical, and woman is such an adroit Jesuit that she can be a Jesuit without appearing to be one. One can prove to a Jesuit, rarely, 'tis true, but yet sometimes, that he is a Jesuit; but try to convince a woman that she acts or speaks like a Jesuit! She would rather be cut into little pieces than to acknowledge that she is one!

She, a Jesuit! she, the soul of loyalty and delicacy! Anyhow, what does "being a Jesuit" mean? Does she know what a Jesuit is? What sort of people are they? She has never seen or heard one. "You are a Jesuit yourself! . . ." and she proves it by explaining jesuitically that you are a clever Jesuit.

Here is one of the thousand examples of feminine jesuitism and this example constitutes one of the most harrowing trials of married life, perhaps the greatest of all.

Impelled by the oft-expressed desires of Caroline, who complains of having to walk, of not being able to buy a new hat or a new gown or a new parasol as often as she would like to, of not being able to dress her boy like a sailor—a lancer—a soldier of the Garde Nationale—a clansman with bare knees—or in a jacket—a coat—a velvet blouse—boots or trousers; of not being able to purchase him enough toys, enough mechanical mice, houses, etc.:

Or return Madame Deschars's or Madame de Fischtaminel's entertainments—by a ball—a dinner—a dance; or have a box at the theater and thus be able to avoid mingling in the corridors with men that are either too gallant or too rough—to have to drive in a hired conveyance:

"You think that you are saving money, but you are mistaken," says she, "all men are alike! I ruin my shoes and hat, get my shawl wet, soil my silk stockings, and spoil everything. You save twenty francs on a carriage—no, not even that, for you have to spend four francs for a cab,—so it makes sixteen francs! And you ruin about fifty francs' worth of clothes, and are humiliated to see me wear a shabby hat; of course, you have no idea what it is; it is all

on account of your horrid cabs. I won't even mention the discomfort of being jostled by strange men, I suppose you don't care about that!"

Of not being able to purchase a piano instead of hiring one; or follow the fashions (some women have every new thing that comes out, but at what a sacrifice? . . . She would rather throw herself out of the window than do as they do, for she loves you, she wails). She cannot understand those women. Of not being able to drive in the Champs-Élysées reclining in her own carriage, like Madame de Fischtaminel. (There's a woman who understands life and who has a kind, well-disciplined, well-mannered, and happy husband! His wife would go through fire for him! . . .)

At last, beaten in a thousand conjugal scenes, beaten by the most logical reasons (the late Tripier and Merlin were mere children, the preceding trial has proven it a number of times), beaten by the coyest caresses, beaten by tears, beaten by your own words, for, in these cases, a woman lies in wait in her house like a jaguar in the jungle; she does not seem to be paying the least attention to you, but if a word, a gesture, a wish escapes you, she uses it against you, and brings it up again and again . . . beaten by all sorts of pretty tricks: "If you do that, I will do this." Women become worse barterers than the Jews and the Greeks (those that trade in perfumes and maidens), than the Arabs (those that trade in horses and young boys), worse than the Swiss, the Genevans, and, what is still more terrible, the Genoese.

Finally, as beaten as beaten can be, you decide to risk a certain portion of your capital in a business venture. Some night, when you are resting beside your wife, or some morning when Caroline's face peers out rosy from her lace night-cap, you say: "You want to have this and you want to have that! . . ." and you enumerate the various whims with which time and again she has broken your heart, for there is nothing so horrible as not to be able to gratify the longings of the woman you love, and you end by the following words:

"Well, my dear, an opportunity has presented itself whereby I can make five hundred thousand francs with one hundred thousand, and I have decided to go into it."

She sits up in bed, gives you a kiss, oh! such a lovely kiss! "You are a dear," are her first words.

We shall not mention the last ones, they form a tremendous and somewhat confused onomatopœia.

"Now, tell me all about it," she commands.

And you try to explain the transaction. In the first place, women have no comprehension of things of this sort, they do not wish to appear as if they understood them; they *do* understand them, but when? where? how? They must understand them in their own time and season.

Caroline, your darling wife, tells you happily that you were wrong to take all her longings for luxury seriously. She fears this venture, quakes at the thought of a directors' board, stockholders, and the working capital required; besides, the dividends are not clear. . . .

#### AXIOM.

*Women are always afraid of what has to be shared.*

Well, Caroline dreads a trap. But all the same she is delighted to know that she will be able to have her own carriage, her box at the theater, all sorts of clothes for her boy, etc. While she tries to dissuade you, it is evident that she is happy to have you risk your money in the venture.

FIRST PERIOD.—Oh! my dear, I'm the happiest woman in the world. Adolph has gone into a fine business scheme. I'm going to have a carriage, oh! much finer than Madame de Fischtaminel's; hers is old-fashioned, mine will have fringed curtains. . . . I shall have gray horses, hers are sorrels and as common as dirt. . . ."

"So, madame, the scheme? . . ."

"Oh! it is fine, the shares are going up. He told me all about it before he became interested in it, for Adolph, why, Adolph never does anything without first consulting me."

"You are very lucky indeed."

"Marriage is impossible without the most complete trust, and Adolph tells me everything."

Adolph, you are the best husband in Paris, a genius, an angel, a marvelous man. You are petted to death. You

bless marriage. Caroline praises men—those lords of creation—women are made for them—man is generous—marriage is the finest institution.

For five or six months Caroline executes the most brilliant concertos and solos on this delightful theme: “I’m going to be wealthy—I shall have a thousand francs a month for my clothes!—I’m going to have a carriage.”

There is no more argument about the boy, save about the college he is to be sent to.

SECOND PERIOD.—“Well, dear, how about that scheme?—What is going on?—What about that business venture that was to give me a carriage?—It’s about time that something should come of it!—When will it be terminated?—It takes a long time to come to a head, I think.—It takes a man like you to unearth schemes that never come to anything!”

One fine day she remarks:

“*Is there any scheme?*”

If, after eight or ten months, you happen to mention the scheme, she will say:

“Oh! yes, so there is really a scheme? . . .”

That woman whom you believed so dull, begins to show marvelous cleverness when she quizzes you. During the second period, Caroline adopts a compromising silence whenever anyone mentions your name. Or she criticises men in general:

“Men are not what they appear to be.—One has to live with them to find out what they really are.—Marriage has its good and its bad points.—Men can never terminate a transaction.”

THIRD PERIOD.—*The catastrophe.* That magnificent scheme which was to yield five capitals for one, in which the shrewdest men were involved, bankers, deputies, peers,—all *chevaliers* of the Legion of Honor—is in the receiver’s hands! The most hopeful ones expect to get ten per cent. on their money. You are downcast.

Caroline has often remarked:

“What’s the matter, Adolph? something is wrong with you.”

At last you apprise Caroline of the fatal outcome of your scheme. She begins by consoling you.

“One hundred thousand francs gone! We will have to practice the strictest economy,” you rashly remark.

Woman’s jesuitism explodes at the word economy. That word sets fire to the powder magazines.

“Ah! now do you see what these schemes are? . . . Why on earth did you, *who are so prudent*, go and risk one hundred thousand francs? I was opposed to the thing in the beginning, remember! But you would NOT LISTEN TO ME!”

Once started on this theme, the discussion grows heated.

You are worthless.—You are incapable.—Women are the only ones to have any sense.—You have risked your children’s home.—She tried to dissuade you from taking the step.—At least, you cannot say that it was her fault.—Thank goodness, her conscience is clear.—She will allude a hundred times a month to your misfortune.

If monsieur had not thrown away his money in such and such a manner, I might have so and so.—Next time you feel like doing anything like that, I hope you will take my advice!—Adolph, is accused and convicted of having dissipated one hundred thousand francs like a fool, without any reason, without asking his wife’s advice.—Caroline is vindictive, she is stupid and atrocious.—Pity Adolph! Pity yourselves, O husbands, and you, O bachelors, rejoice!

#### REMINISCENCES AND REGRETS.

You have been married several years, and your love has become so placid that Caroline, now and then, tries to rouse you by little stinging remarks. You display the calm and reliant attitude which exasperates all lawful wives. They consider it insolent, mistake the *nonchalance* of happiness for the conceit of surety, for they never once imagine that you may scorn their invaluable charms: their virtue is furious at being taken at its word.

In this situation, which is the very foundation of marriage, and which both husband and wife should expect, no man dare

hint that the *pâté d'anguilles*<sup>1</sup> is cloying to him, but his appetite certainly requires the stimulus of beauty and absence and the irritation of a supposed rivalry.

When you go out, you give your arm to your wife without drawing her close to your side with the suspicious and careful adhesion of the miser clasping his treasure. Your gaze wanders to the right and to the left, and you take in the curiosities of the boulevard while your hold on your wife is as loose as if you were towing some clumsy canal-boat.

Now, my friends, be frank! If an admirer should jostle your wife in the rear, inadvertently or intentionally, you would have no desire to verify his intentions. Besides, no woman would start a quarrel for such a trifle. That trifle, be it acknowledged, is as extremely flattering for the one as for the other!

You have reached this stage, but you have not gone beyond it. However, deep in your heart and conscience, you bury this horrible thought: Caroline has not come up to your expectations, Caroline has faults which, during the high tide of the honeymoon were submerged, but which the low tide of the April moon has laid bare. You have often crashed against these shoals, your hopes have been wrecked upon them, the desires of an eligible young bachelor (where is that happy time?), have been shattered with all their manifold treasures; the bloom of the goods has worn off, and the ballast of marriage remains. Finally, to use an expression of the spoken language, when you converse with yourself about your marriage, you gaze at Caroline and remark, "*She is not what I thought she was!*"

Some evening, at a dance or at the house of a friend, no matter where, you meet a sublime young maiden, who is fair, good, and clever; she has a soul, oh! such a heavenly soul! and most marvelous beauty. Here you have a pure oval face, features that will be responsive to emotions for years to come, a graceful and dreamy brow. The unknown one is rich, educated, and belongs to a great family; she will at all times be just what she should be, she will know how to shine and how to eclipse herself at the right time; in a word,

<sup>1</sup> See La Fontaine's fable: *Le Pâté d'Anguilles*.

she offers the embodiment, in all its power and glory, of the woman of your dreams, your wife, the one woman whom you know you could always love. She would flatter your vanity, would understand and serve your best interests to perfection. She is tender and bright, this girl who arouses all your noblest passions, who rekindles the dead flame of your desires!

You gaze upon Caroline in deep despair, and here are the ghosts of the thoughts that, with bat wings and vulture's beak, dusky body, beat against the walls of the palace, where, like a golden lamp, shines your brain fired by Desire.

FIRST STROPHE.—Oh! why did I ever marry! Oh! what a deadly idea! I was trapped by a few money-bags! What! 'tis all over, I can only have one wife? Ah! the Turks are clever people! Anyone can see that the author of the *Koran* lived in the desert!

SECOND STROPHE.—My wife is delicate, she often coughs in the morning. Almighty Father, if it be your will to remove Caroline from this world, do it at once, for her own sake and for mine. She has fulfilled her mission, poor angel!

THIRD STROPHE.—Why, I'm a monster! Caroline is the mother of my children!

You return from the ball with Caroline, and you think her a sight. She speaks to you and you answer with monosyllables. She says: "Why, whatever is the matter with you?" And you retort: "Nothing." She coughs and you urge her to see a doctor the very next day. Doctors are unreliable.

FOURTH STROPHE.—I was once told that a doctor who had been poorly paid for his services by some heirs, remarked imprudently: "They deduct a thousand francs from my bill, when they are indebted to me for a forty-thousand franc income!" Oh! I would not bicker with the doctor!

"Caroline," you remark aloud, "you should take care of yourself; wrap your shawl well about you, angel mine."

Your wife is delighted to have you take such an interest in her. You remain stretched on a lounge while she disrobes. When her dress falls at her feet, you gaze upon the divine vision which opens to you the ivory gates of castles in the air! . . . Delightful ecstasy! You behold the sublime maiden! . . . She is as white as the sail of the galleon that



enters the port of Cadiz laden with treasures! She has the wonderful protuberances which fascinate the eye of the crafty trader. Your wife, glad to be admired, believes she knows the secret of your gloominess. You shut your eyes and see the sublime maiden, she dominates your thoughts and you say:

FIFTH AND LAST STROPHE.—Divine! Adorable! Are there two such women! Rose of the night! Ivory tower! Heavenly virgin! Star of the morn and of eventide!

Everyone has his own particular litany, and you have recited two.

The following day, your wife is charming and does not cough. She has no need of the doctor, and if she dies it will be from a superabundance of health; you cursed her four times in the name of the maiden, and four times she blessed you. Caroline does not know that, deep in your heart, is a little red fish, on the crocodile order, held a prisoner in conjugal love like the other in its bowl, but without shells.

A few days previous, your wife had referred to you in somewhat equivocal terms to Madame de Fischtaminel. Your fair friend happens in, and Caroline compromises you with moist, lingering glances, and praises you, and says how happy she is.

You walk out of the house in a rage and are glad when you meet a friend on the boulevard to whom you can pour out your woes.

“Never marry, old man! It is better to see one’s heirs fighting over one’s property at one’s deathbed; it is better to perish with thirst while having to listen to the direful words of a nurse like the one Henri Monnier so tellingly depicts in his dreadful description of the last moments of a bachelor! Never marry under any pretext whatever!”

Luckily, you never see the sublime young maiden again! You are saved from the pit into which your criminal thoughts would have thrust you, and you wallow in the purgatory of conjugal bliss; but you begin to cast an eye on Madame de Fischtaminel, whom you vainly worshiped when you were a bachelor.

## OBSERVATION.

Having reached this height in the longitude or latitude of the matrimonial ocean, you will notice the advent of a little, chronic and intermittent ill, somewhat similar to a tooth-ache. . . . I see that you stop me to inquire: "How can the height be calculated in this ocean? When can a husband know that he has reached this nautical point? and can the shoals be avoided?"

A man can, you understand, find himself at this point after ten months of marriage as well as after ten years; it depends upon the speed of the ship, the sails, the monsoon, the tides, and especially upon the make-up of the crew. Well, there is this advantage, which is, that seamen have only one way of measuring, while husbands have a thousand ways.

EXAMPLES.—Caroline, your ex-darling and ex-treasure, having become merely your wife, leans far too heavily on your arm when you are walking along the boulevard, or finds it nicer not to lean on your arm at all;

Or she notices men, more or less youthful, more or less well-dressed, when, formerly, she had eyes for no man, even when the boulevard was black with hats and trodden by more booted than slipped feet;

Or, when you come home, she remarks: "It's nothing, it's only monsieur," instead of "Oh! Adolph!" which she used to say with a gesture and an intonation which made people who heard her remark: "There's a happy woman for you!" (This exclamation stands for two periods: the period when *she is sincere*, and the period when *she is not*.) When a woman says: "It's nothing, it's only monsieur," she no longer deigns to play a part.

Or, when you come home late (say eleven or twelve o'clock), she is . . . snoring!!! Odious sign!

Or she puts on her stockings in your presence. . . . (In England, that only happens once in a lady's married career; the following day, she elopes to the Continent with some Captain, and never thinks of putting on her stockings any more. . . .)

Or, . . . But let us stop.

This is for seamen or husbands who are familiar with the *nautical almanac*.

THE CONJUGAL HORSEFLY.

Well, under the line close to a tropical sign, the name of which good taste forbids us to jest about (it would be unworthy of this witty work), a horrible little ill, ingeniously called the "conjugal horsefly," makes its appearance; it is the worst of all gnats, mosquitoes, fleas, and scorpions in that no net has been devised to protect us from it. The horsefly does not sting you at once; it begins by buzzing around your ears and *at first you do not know what it is*.

Thus, *à propos* of nothing, Caroline will remark with a perfectly natural air:

"Madame Deschars wore a lovely dress yesterday. . . ."

"She has taste," retorts Adolph, without meaning a word of it.

"Her husband gave it to her," replies Caroline with a shrug.

"Ah!"

"Yes, it cost four hundred francs. It is made of the very best velvet. . . ."

"Four hundred francs," exclaims Adolph, assuming the pose of Apostle Thomas.

"But there are two extra breadths and a separate bodice. . . ."

"Monsieur Deschars knows how to do things," says Adolph, taking refuge in pleasantry.

"All men do not show their wives such attentions," remarks Caroline dryly.

"What attentions? . . ."

"But, Adolph, . . . think of the extra breadths and the separate bodice, so that the dress, when worn out, can be used as an evening dress."

Adolph thinks:

"Caroline wants a dress."

Poor man! . . .

A little while afterward, Monsieur Deschars has his wife's room done over. Then Monsieur Deschars has his wife's

jewels reset. Monsieur Deschars never goes anywhere without his wife, or never lets her go anywhere without him.

No matter what you should happen to bring Caroline, it is never as good as what Monsieur Deschars brought his wife. If you permit yourself the slightest gesture or hasty word, if you raise your voice, you hear that sibilant and venomous remark:

“Monsieur Deschars would not act like that! Do pattern yourself on Monsieur Deschars!”

Well, that fool of a Deschars appears in your household at every opportunity and *à propos* of everything.

The words: “I wonder if Monsieur Deschars would ever do anything like that . . .” are the sword of Damocles, or, what is worse, the pin; and your conceit is the pin-cushion into which your wife continually thrusts it, only to pull it out and thrust it back again, under a host of unexpected and varied pretexts, and always with the most endearing terms and the most affectionate ways.

Adolph, stung until he is tattooed, ends by doing what is practiced by governments and strategists (see Vauban’s work on the *Attack and Defense of Strongholds*). He spies Madame de Fischtaminel, a woman who is still young, attractive and coquettish, and he applies her (the scoundrel had this in mind for a long time), as a moxa on Caroline’s excessively sensitive epidermis.

O you, who often cry: “I don’t know what is the matter with my wife” . . . will kiss this page of transcendental philosophy, for you are going to find in it *the key to the character of every woman!* . . . But to know them as well as I do, is not to know them very well: they do not know themselves! . . . Well, you are aware that the Lord was mistaken about the only one He ever had to rule, and whom He took care to fashion with His own hands.

Caroline is very willing to annoy Adolph at all times, but the faculty of setting a bee on your *partner* (a judicial term), once in a while, is a right belonging exclusively to the wife. If Adolph sets *one bee* on his wife, he forthwith becomes a monster. From Caroline, it means nothing but a playful jest, a pleasantry with which to enliven married life,

while from Adolph it is the cruelty of a Caraïb, a misunderstanding of his wife's heart, and a preconceived plan to make her miserable. This is nothing.

"You care a great deal about Madame de Fischtaminel," says your wife. "What charm of mind or manner has that great spider got?"

"But, Caroline, . . ."

"Oh! don't trouble to deny your strange infatuation," she retorts, stopping a denial on Adolph's lips. "For some time, I have noticed that you prefer that lamp-post (Madame de Fischtaminel is thin) to me. Well, go ahead. . . . You will soon find out the difference."

Do you understand? You cannot suspect Caroline of entertaining the slightest feeling for Monsieur Deschars (a stout, florid, common man, a former notary), while *you* are in love with Madame de Fischtaminel! And Caroline, that Caroline whose innocence tortured you so, Caroline who has grown familiar with the world, Caroline becomes clever: you have two flies instead of one.

The following day, she assumes a little genial air, and remarks:

"Well, how are you getting on with Madame de Fischtaminel?"

When you go out, she says:

"Go ahead, dear, *va prendre les eaux!*"<sup>1</sup>

For, in her anger at a rival, every woman, including duchesses, will stoop to invective, and invade the boundaries of the Halles;<sup>2</sup> she will make a weapon out of everything.

To try to convince Caroline that she is wrong, and that you care nothing about Madame de Fischtaminel, would cost you too much. It would be a blunder that no clever man ever commits; he thereby loses his power and is bested.

Oh! Adolph, you have unfortunately reached the stage so cleverly dubbed the *Indian Summer of marriage*. Alas! delightful prospect! you will be compelled to win your wife all over again, to put your arm about her waist, and to become the best of husbands by endeavoring to find out her

<sup>1</sup> An obsolete derogatory expression.

<sup>2</sup> Les Halles, a famous market in Paris.

wishes and acting accordingly, instead of following your own inclinations. Henceforth, that will sum up the question.

#### HARD LABOR.

Let us admit this, which, in our opinion, is an old truth in a new guise:

#### AXIOM.

*Most men, as a rule, have a little of the cleverness that a trying situation demands, even when they do not possess all the cleverness required.*

As to the husbands who are inferior to their position, it is impossible to consider them; there is no struggle, they enter into the numerous classes of *resigned* men.

Adolph then says:

“Women are children: give them a lump of sugar, and they will do exactly as greedy children do; but you must always have a sugar-plum on hand and hold it above their heads and . . . not let their taste for it wane. Parisiennes (Caroline is from Paris) are exceedingly vain and greedy . . . You cannot rule men and gain friends if you do not cater to their vices and flatter their passions: my wife is mine!”

A few days later, days during which Adolph has doubled his attentions to his wife, he speaks in this fashion:

“Well, Caroline, supposing we have a good time! . . . Put on your new dress (the one like Madame Deschars’s), and, well, we’ll take in some show at the Variétés!”

These propositions always put a lawful wife in good humor. So you start! Adolph has ordered a fine dinner for two at Borrel’s Rocher de Cancale.

“As long as we are going to the Variétés, let’s dine at a restaurant,” Adolph exclaims when they reach the boulevard, as if under a sudden generous inspiration.

Caroline, happy at this semblance of a *bonne fortune*, enters a little room where she finds a table spread with the dainty things that Borrel reserves for people who can pay for the premises destined for the great of this earth who wish, for a while, to become like other mortals.

Women, when dining out, eat little; their secret harness incommodes them, they have put on their gala robes and are in the presence of other women whose eyes and tongues are equally to be feared. They are fond, not of *good* things, but of *dainty* things; they like to toy with crayfish, nibble the wings of a quail or woodcock, and begin with a piece of good, fresh fish, served with one of those sauces which are the glory of French cooking. France reigns through her taste in everything; in fashions, in designing, etc. In the culinary art, the sauce is the triumph of taste. So *grisettes*, *bourgeoises*, and duchesses alike are delighted with a good dinner, washed down with fine wines drunk in moderation, and topped off with some fruit such as Paris is known for, especially when the dinner is to be digested at the play, in a good box, while listening to foolish nothings spoken on the stage, and whispered in their ears, in explanation of the ones of the stage. Only, the bill at the restaurant amounts to one hundred francs, the box costs thirty, and the carriage, costume (fresh gloves, flowers, etc.) as much. This treat amounts to about one hundred and sixty francs, something like four thousand francs a month, if one goes to the Opéra-Comique, the Italiens, or the Grand Opéra often. Four thousand francs nowadays represent a capital of two million francs. But *any conjugal honor* is worth that amount.

Caroline tells her friends things she deems excessively flattering, but which vex a clever husband.

“For some time past Adolph has been lovely. I do not know what I have done to deserve all those nice things, but he certainly overwhelms me. He adds value to everything by his *attentions*, which *impress* us women so. . . . After taking me Monday to the Rocher de Cancale, he declared that Véry’s cooking was as good as Borrel’s, and he repeated the outing I told you about, but at the end of the dinner he offered me tickets for a box at the Opéra. They gave *William Tell*, that I am so wild about.”

“You are most fortunate,” replies Madame Deschars dryly, and with evident envy.

“But a woman who performs her duties well, it seems to me, deserves all this happiness. . . .”

When this dreadful phrase comes to the lips of a married woman, it is clear that *she does her duty*, after the fashion of school children, for the reward that she expects. In college, boys want to win prizes; in marriage, women want to win a jewel or a shawl. Therefore, no more love!

"I, my dear (Madame Deschars is nettled), am reasonable. Deschars used to do those things . . .<sup>1</sup> but I put a stop to it. Listen to me, my dear child, we have two children, and I acknowledge that one or two hundred francs are quite a sum to me, as the mother of a family."

"Oh! madame," says Madame de Fischtaminel, "it is better to have our husbands take us out than to have them take . . ."

"Deschars! . . ." abruptly exclaims Madame Deschars, as she rises to take leave.

Sir Deschars (a man annihilated by his wife) then misses the end of the sentence, which would teach him that it is possible to dissipate one's fortune with eccentric women.

Caroline, flattered in all of her vanities, wallows in the delights of pride and gluttony, two charming capital sins. Adolph gains ground again; but, alas! (this thought is worth a Lenten sermon) sin, like every other delight, contains its sting. Like an autocrat, Vice takes no account of a thousand flatteries when it encounters a single thing which irritates it. A man must proceed *crescendo* . . . and forever.

#### AXIOM.

*Vice, Courtiers, Misfortune, and Love know but the PRESENT.*

At the end of a period hard to determine, Caroline, after dinner, glances at her reflection in the mirror, and notices bright red blotches on her cheek-bones and on the sides of her delicate nostrils. She is ill-humored during the play, and you do not know why, you, Adolph, so sedate in your cravat, you who throw out your chest with such satisfaction.

<sup>1</sup>A falsehood that contains three mortal sins (pride, envy, and false statement) and which is indulged in by devout women, for Madame Deschars is a most devout soul; she does not miss a service at Saint-Roch's *since she passed the plate with the queen.* (AUTHOR'S NOTE.)



Several days later, the dressmaker comes to try on a dress, and though she strains her strength, she cannot hook it. . . . The maid is summoned, and after a terrible struggle, a regular labor of Hercules, there still remains a two-inch gap. The merciless dressmaker cannot keep from Caroline that her figure has changed. Caroline, the ethereal Caroline, threatens to become like Madame Deschars. In vulgar parlance, she is growing fat. They leave Caroline prostrated.

“What! I am getting to be like that enormous Madame Deschars, who has cascades of fat *à la Rubens*? And it is true . . .” she says to herself, “Adolph is a deep-dyed villain. I see it now, he wants to make me a perfect Mother Goose and rob me of my fascination!”

Caroline is perfectly willing to go to the Italiens, she accepts a part of a box, but she thinks it *very nice* to diet, and she refuses her husband’s restaurant dinners.

“My dear, a respectable woman should not be seen in those places so often. . . . It is all very well to go there once, for fun; but to make a habit of it . . . fie!”

Borrel and Véry, those illustrations of the cook-stove, lose a thousand francs a day by not having a special door for carriages. If a carriage could slip through a *porte cochère*, and drive off through another exit, leaving a woman at the entrance of a luxurious staircase, how many female customers would bring them good, substantial, wealthy masculine clients!

#### AXIOM.

*Coquetry kills gluttony.*

Caroline soon tires of the theater, and only the Devil himself could know the reason for her dislike. Excuse Adolph! a husband is not the Devil.

A good third of Parisian women are bored at the theater. Excepting a few escapades, how is it possible to laugh at and participate in an indecency,—to inhale the long drawn-out atmosphere of a melodrama,—to go into ecstasies over stage-effects, etc.? A great number of them are tired to death of music, and only go to the Italiens for the singers,

or, if you prefer, to note the various readings of a rôle. This is what sustains the theaters; these women themselves constitute a show, before and after the real one. Vanity alone pays the exorbitant price of forty francs for three hours of questionable enjoyment, secured amid foul air, and at great expense, without mentioning the colds contracted afterward. But to show oneself, to be gazed at by five hundred men . . . what a feast! as Rabelais would say.

In order to have vanity gather this precious harvest, it is necessary to attract notice. Now, a wife and her husband do not command much attention. Caroline is annoyed to see that the audience is attracted by the women who come unescorted by husbands, the eccentric women. Now, the small area that she is able to touch through her efforts, her dresses, and her poses, not compensating for the fatigue, the expenditure, and the *ennui*, it soon happens that the theater meets with the same fate as the restaurant dinners: good things to eat make her take on flesh, and the play makes her turn yellow with envy.

Here, Adolph (or any other man in Adolph's position) resembles the Languedoc peasant who suffered greatly from an *agacin* (in French this means cor,<sup>1</sup> but is not the word of the *langue d'oc* prettier?). This peasant would drive his corn into the sharpest stones in the road, and say to the *agacin*: "*Troun de Diou de bagasse! si tu me fais souffrir, je te le rends bien!*"<sup>2</sup>

"Really," exclaims Adolph, deeply disappointed, the day he receives a detailed refusal from Caroline, "I would like to know what *would* please you. . . ."

Caroline glances at her husband from the height of her grandeur, and after a pause worthy of an actress, retorts:

"I'm neither a fattened goose nor a giraffe."

"Of course, there are other and better means of spending four thousand francs a month," rejoins Adolph.

"What do you mean?"

"With one-fourth of this amount distributed among

<sup>1</sup> Corn.

<sup>2</sup> *Troun de Diou de bagasse!* If you make me suffer, I make you suffer, too!

worthy convicts, reformed prisoners, and honest criminals, a man may become a personage, a regular little Manteau-Bleu,<sup>1</sup> and then a young wife can be proud of her husband."

These words are the sarcophagus of love! and Caroline takes them unkindly. An explanation follows. This enters into the many jocularities of the following chapter, the title of which is bound to make lovers, as well as husbands, laugh. If there are yellow rays, why should there not be days of this exceedingly conjugal color?

"RISETTES JAUNES."

When once you have arrived in these waters, you are apt to enjoy some little scenes, which, in the grand opera of marriage, represent the interludes, and of which the following one is a fine illustration:

One evening, after dinner, you and your wife happen to be alone, and having been alone a good many times before, you experience the necessity of saying little disagreeable things to one another like this, which is quoted as an example:

"Be careful of yourself, Caroline," Adolph remarks, chagrined at his numerous useless efforts, "it seems to me that your nose has the bad taste to redden at home as well as in restaurants."

"You are not in a very agreeable mood! . . ."

A GENERAL RULE.

*No man has ever been able to give a piece of friendly advice to a woman, not even his own wife.*

"Well, dear, maybe your stays are too tight, many an illness has been brought on in that way. . . ."

As soon as a man has said this to any woman, that woman (she knows that her corset steels are pliable) grasps the steel that points downward, raises it, and exclaims, like Caroline:

"Look, you can put your whole hand there! I never lace!"

"Then it must be your stomach!"

"What has the stomach to do with the nose?"

<sup>1</sup> Benevolent person.

“The stomach is a center which communicates with all the other organs.”

“Then the nose is an organ?”

“Yes.”

“Your organ is serving you very ill just now. . . . (She raises her eyes and shrugs her shoulders.) What have I done to you, Adolph?”

“Why, nothing; I’m only joking, and have the misfortune to displease you,” rejoins Adolph, with a smile.

“*My* misfortune consists in being your wife! Oh! why am I not some other man’s wife? . . .”

“I heartily agree with you.”

“If I happened to bear another name, and was foolish enough to say to you, like the women who want to find out just where they stand with a man: ‘My nose is dreadfully red!’ and looked at myself in the glass with a simpering expression, you would answer: ‘Oh! madame, you are calumniating yourself! In the first place, it is hardly noticeable, and then, it is in harmony with your complexion. . . . Everybody is that way after dinner’ . . . and that would be the starting-point for a lot of compliments. . . . Do I tell *you* that you are getting fat, that your face is as red as a bricklayer’s, and that I only like pale and slender men? . . .”

In England there is a saying: “Touch not the hatchet!” In France one should say, “Touch not a woman’s nose! . . .”

“And all this for a little too much natural cinnabar,” cries Adolph. “Blame the Lord who puts more color in one spot than in another, but do not blame me, . . . I love you . . . want you to be perfect . . . and I’m only sounding a warning.”

“You love me too much then, for you have been telling me all the mean things you can think of for some time past, and you belittle me under the pretext of improving me. . . . You found me perfect . . . five years ago. . . .”

“I think that you are more than perfect, you are charming! . . .”

“With too much cinnabar?”

Adolph, noticing a hyperborean expression on his wife's face, takes a seat beside her. Caroline, who cannot decently leave the room, whisks her skirts to one side, as if to accomplish a separation. That motion is sometimes executed with provoking grace, but it has two meanings: in the terms of whist it is either an *invite au roi*<sup>1</sup> or a *renonce*.<sup>2</sup> Just now, Caroline renounces.

"What's the matter?" inquires Adolph.

"Would you like a glass of sugar-water?" asks Caroline, taking a sudden interest in your health, and assuming (exaggeratedly) her rôle of a servant.

"Why?"

"Because your digestion seems to trouble you and you must be suffering intensely. Perhaps I had better put a drop or two of brandy in the water? The doctor says that it is a very good thing. . . ."

"How anxious you are about my stomach!"

"It's a center, and communicates with all the other organs. It may act on your heart and thence, maybe, on your tongue."

Adolph rises and paces the floor for a while without speaking, but he is thinking of how clever his wife has grown; he sees her increasing in strength and acrimony day by day; she has acquired a cleverness in teasing, and a military strategy in argument, which reminds him of Charles XII. and the Russians! Just now, Caroline is behaving in a rather alarming manner: she looks as if she were going to faint.

"Are you ill?" says Adolph, impelled by the quality which women always take advantage of, generosity.

"It makes me sick to see a man, after dinner, swing back and forth in a room like a pendulum; you are always moving about. . . . How funny men are. . . . They are all more or less crazy. . . ."

Adolph takes a seat by the mantelpiece, opposite his wife, and is plunged in thought: his is a vision of the thorny steppes of matrimony.

<sup>1</sup> Call for the King.

<sup>2</sup> Renounce.

"Well, are you sulking? . . ." asks Caroline, after a silence of several minutes, during which she has studied the conjugal countenance of her mate.

"No, I'm thinking," retorts Adolph.

"Oh! what a fiendish character you have! . . ." she exclaims, shrugging her shoulders. "Is it because of what I said about your stomach and figure and digestion? Can't you see that I wanted to pay you back? You simply prove that men are as vain as women. . . . (Adolph remains unmoved.) . . . Do you know, I think it is sweet of you to take our qualities? . . . (Deep silence.) I try to joke and you get angry. . . . I'm not like that, I can't bear the idea that I have hurt your feelings! And yet, a man would never have had the idea to attribute your impertinence to poor digestion. It's really not *my* *Dodolph!* it's his stomach that made him talk the way he did. . . . I simply did not know that you were a ventriloquist. . . ."

Caroline looks at Adolph and smiles: Adolph remains like a graven image.

"No, he just won't laugh. . . . And you men call that 'having character.' . . . Oh! how much kinder we women are!"

She comes over and perches herself on Adolph's knee, and Adolph cannot repress a smile. This smile, extracted by force, is seized upon and used as a weapon.

"Well, old chap, acknowledge that you were wrong," she says. "Why sulk? I love you just as you are! You look just as slender to me as the day I married you . . . even more so."

"Caroline, when people fool themselves about those things, when they make concessions and do not remain at swords' points over them . . . do you know what it means? . . ."

"Well?" says Caroline, alarmed at the tragic pose that Adolph strikes.

"They love each other less."

"Oh! you monster, I understand! You remain angry to make me believe that you love me."

Alas! be it acknowledged! Adolph tells the truth in the only possible way: laughingly.

“Why did you wound me?” she says. “If there is something wrong about me, isn’t it better to tell me so kindly than to shout (she raises her voice): ‘Your nose is red.’ No, it wasn’t right! To please you, I shall use an expression of your dear Madame de Fischtaminel: ‘It was not *gentlemanly!*’”

Adolph laughs and bears the brunt of the reconciliation, but instead of having discovered what pleases Caroline and how to win her, he sees the method which Caroline employs to maintain her sway.

#### NOSOGRAPHY OF THE VILLA.

Is it a pleasure to know what pleases your wife, when you are married? . . . Some women (they are still to be found in the provinces) are simple enough to explain quite promptly what they want or what pleases them. But in Paris, almost every woman experiences a certain delight to see a man hopelessly puzzled concerning her heart, her whims, and her desires, three terms expressing the same thing, and rushing hither and thither like a lost dog seeking its master.

They call that *being loved*, poor things! . . . And a great many of them wonder, like Caroline, “how he will ever pull out of it.”

Adolph is in this position. Just at that time, it happens that the dignified and worthy Monsieur Deschars, that model *bourgeois* husband, invites Adolph and Caroline to a house-warming at his charming country home. It is a bargain that the Deschars’ have snatched by its foliage, the gratified whim of a literary man, a delightful villa in which the owner sunk a hundred thousand francs, and which he sold at auction for eleven thousand. Caroline dons a pretty dress and a hat with a weeping willow feather, which will show off well in their smart tilbury. Little Charles is left in the care of his grandmother. The servants are given a day’s leave. They start under a blue sky, mottled with clouds, purely to enhance its effect. The air is balmy, and the clumsy Norman nag feels the influence of the Springtide.

They finally reach Marnes, above Ville-d’Avray, where the Deschars’ are disporting themselves in a cottage copied after

a Florentine villa and surrounded by Swiss meadows without any of the inconveniences of the Alps.

“*Mon Dieu*, how lovely such a country home is!” exclaims Caroline, walking through the beautiful wood which edges Marnes and Ville-d’Avray, “one’s eyes are as happy as if they were hearts, instead of eyes.”

Caroline, unable to capture any other man, lays hold of Adolph, who becomes *her Adolph* once more. And she frisks about like a deer, and becomes once more the dainty, pretty, and bewitching little schoolgirl of bygone days! . . . Her braids come down! She removes her hat, and holds it by its streamers! She is young again and all pink and white. . . . Her eyes smile, her mouth is a sensitive pomegranate, whose sensitiveness seems *new*. . . .

“Would you be very happy, darling, if I were to buy a home like this? . . .” says Adolph, with his arm around Caroline’s waist. She leans back to show her suppleness.

“Oh! would you *really* buy me one? . . . But no extravagance, please. Wait for a bargain like the Deschars’.”

“To make you happy, to find out what can give you pleasure, is the one aim of your Adolph.”

They are alone, they can indulge in their favorite pet names and recite the rosary of their secret endearments.

“So he wishes to please his little girl, does he? . . .” says Caroline, as she lays her head on Adolph’s shoulder, and he responds with a kiss on her forehead, and thinks: “Thank God, I have got her!”

#### AXIOM.

*When a man and his wife have got each other, the Devil alone knows which one has got the other.*

The young couple is charming, and the portly Madame Deschars indulges in a remark which is rather broad for one so prudish and devout:

“The country has the faculty of making husbands very attentive.”

Monsieur Deschars mentions a bargain. There is a villa for sale at Ville-d’Avray, for almost nothing, as is always



the case. Now the "country house" is a disease peculiar to the inhabitant of Paris. This disease has its course and its cure. Adolph is a husband, not a doctor. He purchases the home and settles down in it with Caroline, who has become *his Caroline, his Carola, his darling, his treasure, his little girl*, again.

Here are the alarming symptoms which declare themselves with appalling speed: you pay twenty-five centimes for a glass of milk when it has been christened, and fifty centimes when it is anhydrous, as the chemists say. Meat of the same quality is cheaper in Paris than in Sèvres. Fruit is out of the question. A fine pear costs more when picked in the country than when bought from Chevet's garden-like counters.

Before you will be able to pick your own fruit, you have only a diminutive Swiss meadow, bordered with trees that look like vaudeville properties, the most rural of the authorities consulted declare that you will have to spend a great deal of money, and—wait five years!—Vegetables fly from the kitchen-gardens to the Halles. Madame Deschars, who boasts a "janitor-gardener," acknowledges that the vegetables he has raised under glass and with a great deal of fertilizer, cost her as much as those she used to buy in Paris from a fruit-dealer who leased a shop, payed a license, and whose husband was a voter. In spite of the promises and efforts of the "janitor-gardener" the vegetables are always a month behind.

From eight in the evening until eleven, they do not know what to do to while away the time, in view of the dullness and pettiness of the neighbors, and the bickerings that arise about the smallest things.

Monsieur Deschars, with the deep mathematical science which distinguishes a former notary, remarks that the price of his trips to Paris, added to the cost of the country, the taxation, the assessments, the wages of the "janitor-gardener" and his wife, etc.—equal a thousand franc rental. He cannot understand how he, a former notary, could have been taken in that way! . . . for how many times has he not made out leases for châteaux with parks and dependencies which did not exceed one thousand francs!

Everyone in Madame Deschars's salons agrees that a house in the country, far from being a pleasure, is a plague.

"I do not know how a cauliflower can be sold at the Halles for five centimes," says Caroline, "when it has to be watered every day, from the time it is born until it is picked!"

"But," retorts a retired grocer, "the only way to manage in the country is to live there all the time, to become country folk, then everything looks different. . . ."

On the way home, Caroline remarks to her poor Adolph:

"What sort of an idea did you have to buy a country home? The best way to enjoy the country is to visit other people. . . ."

Adolph recalls to mind an English proverb which says: "Never own a paper, a mistress, or a country house; there are always some fools who will see to it that you are provided with these things at their expense. . . ."

"Bah!" retorts Adolph, definitely enlightened concerning a woman's logic, by the conjugal horsefly, "you are right, but then, the country agrees wonderfully well with the boy."

Although Adolph has become prudent, this retort immediately awakens Caroline's susceptibilities. A mother is willing to think only of her child, but she does not like to have the child considered before herself. Madame is silent; the next day she is bored to death. Adolph, having gone to Paris on business, she waits for him from five o'clock until seven, and goes alone with Charles to the carriage office. For three-quarters of an hour she talks of her fears. She was afraid to go from the house to the carriage station. Is it proper for her, a young woman, to be there *alone*? Indeed, she will not stand such an existence. The villa then creates a peculiar phase which deserves a separate chapter.

### MISERY IN MISERY.

#### AXIOM.

*Misery creates parentheses.*

EXAMPLE.—People have discoursed diversely, and always disparagingly, about the pain that is called "stitch," but it is as nothing compared to the pain which we are now dealing

with, and which the pleasures of the conjugal aftermath raise at every turn, like the hammer of a piano key. This constitutes a smarting trial which blossoms only when the timidity of the young wife vanishes before those fatal "equal rights" which are devouring the home-life as well as the country. Each season brings its trials!

Caroline, after a week in which she has kept note of monsieur's absences, perceives that he spends seven hours of the day away from her. One day, Adolph, returning home as happy as a successful actor, finds a thin accumulation of frost on Caroline's countenance. Having noted that the frigidity of her features has been perceived, Caroline assumes a feigned air of cordiality, with which every man is familiar and which he inwardly curses, and remarks:

"Did you have a great many things to attend to to-day, dear?"

"Yes, a great many."

"Did you have to take cabs?"

"I spent seven francs for them. . . ."

"Did you find everyone in?"

"Yes, those with whom I had made appointments. . . ."

"When did you write to them? The ink is dry in your ink-well, and is like lacquer; I had something to write, and I spent an hour moistening it before it became a thickish mud that could have been used for packages going to India."

At this point, every husband throws a suspicious glance at his better half.

"I most likely wrote to them when I was in Paris. . . ."

"What business have you to attend to, Adolph?"

"Don't you know? . . . Do you want me to tell you? . . . First, there was that Chaumontel affair . . ."

"I thought that Monsieur Chaumontel was in Switzerland? . . ."

"But he has got representatives, an attorney, hasn't he? . . ."

"Did you attend solely to business?" demands Caroline, interrupting Adolph.

She then throws a brilliant, direct glance at her husband, which unexpectedly thrusts a dagger through his heart.

“What do you suppose I was doing? . . . Do you think I was engaged in making counterfeit money, debts, or fancy work? . . .”

“Oh! I don’t know. Of course, I cannot guess. I am much too stupid; you have told me so a hundred times.”

“Well! Now you are taking offense at an endearing term. Oh! just like a woman!”

“Did you conclude anything?” she asks, assuming interest in Adolph’s business transactions.

“No, nothing. . . .”

“How many people did you see?”

“Eleven, without mentioning those I saw on the boulevards. . . .”

“How you do answer me!”

“Well, you cross-examine me as if you had been a *juge d’instruction* for ten years. . . .”

“Well, just tell me everything you did; it will amuse me. You might at least think of my enjoyment when you are here. I am bored enough when you leave me all alone for whole days. . . .”

“You wish me to amuse you by telling you all about my business? . . .”

“You used to tell me everything! . . .”

This little friendly reproach conceals a sort of certainty that Caroline wishes to acquire regarding the grave things that Adolph is keeping from her. So Adolph undertakes to relate his doings. Caroline affects an absent-mindedness which is feigned well enough to make Adolph think that she is not listening.

“But you told me a little while ago,” she cries, just as our Adolph is getting involved, “that you spent seven francs for cabs, and now you are talking about a *fiacre*! I suppose you took it by the hour? So you attended to your business in a *fiacre*?” she says, with a little knowing air.

“Why shouldn’t I take a *fiacre*?” asks Adolph, resuming his tale.

“Didn’t you call on Madame de Fischtaminel?” she asks, in the midst of an exceedingly hazy explanation, which she insolently interrupts.

“Why should I have gone to see her? . . .”

“I would have been very glad; I would like to know whether her salon is finished. . . .”

“It is!”

“Ah! so you were there after all? . . .”

“No, her upholsterer told me. . . .”

“Do you know her upholsterer? . . .”

“Yes.”

“Who is he?”

“Braschon.”

“So you met the upholsterer?”

“Yes.”

“But you told me that you rode around all day? . . .”

“But, child, in order to ride in cabs, one has to get . . .”

“Bah! I guess you found it in the cab. . . .”

“What?”

“Why, the salon—or Braschon! The one is as likely as the other. . . .”

“But won’t you listen to me?” cries Adolph, believing that he may lull Caroline’s suspicions with a long drawn-out story.

“I’ve listened too much. You have been lying to me for an hour like any traveling salesman.

“I shall not say another word.”

“I’ve heard enough. I know all I want to know. Yes, you tell me that you have interviewed lawyers, notaries, and bankers; you have not seen one of them! If I should call on Madame de Fischtaminel to-morrow, do you know what she would tell me?”

Here Caroline studies Adolph; but Adolph affects a deceptive calmness, into which Caroline casts her bait to catch some indication.

“Well, she would tell me that she had the pleasure of seeing you. . . .”

“*Mon Dieu*, how wretched we women are! We can never know what you are doing. . . . We are tied down to our homes while you are away attending to business. . . . Fine business! . . . In the same case, I would tell you things with a little more sense than those you have told me. . . . Ah!

you teach us fine things! . . . People say that women are perverse. . . . But who has perverted them? . . .”

Here Adolph tries to stem the flow of words by darting a steady glance at Caroline. But Caroline, like a horse that feels the lash, continues at a greater rate and with the animation of a Rossinian *coda*.

“ Ah! it’s a fine scheme to leave your wife in the country so as to be able to spend your days in Paris as you elect. So this is the reason of your passion for a house in the country! And I, poor goose, was caught in the trap! . . . But you are right, my dear monsieur, it is very convenient, it can be put to a double use. Madame will find it as convenient as monsieur. You can have Paris and cabs, . . . and I will have the country and its shady nooks! . . . Really, Adolph, this suits me, don’t let us quarrel any more. . . .”

Adolph has to listen for an hour to sarcastic remarks.

“ Are you through, my dear? ” he asks, taking advantage of a moment in which she tosses her head after a leading question.

Then Caroline ends the argument by exclaiming:

“ I am tired of the country, and I will not stay here! . . . But I know what will happen: you, no doubt, will keep the house and leave me in Paris. Well, in Paris, I will at least be able to amuse myself, while you and Madame de Fischtaminel roam the woods. What is a *villa Adolphini* where you get sick at your stomach after you have walked around the meadow six times, where people have planted broomsticks for shade trees, where it is as hot as a furnace, because the walls are six inches thick! And monsieur is away seven hours out of the twelve! That is the real object of the villa! ”

“ Listen, Caroline! ”

“ If,” she says, “ you would only acknowledge what you have been doing to-day? Look here, you do not know me, I will be kind, just tell me! . . . I forgive you in advance anything you may have done.”

Adolph *has had relations* before his marriage; he is too

well acquainted with the results of a confession, to risk one, so he retorts:

“I will tell you everything. . . .”

“Now, that is nice of you. . . . I will care for you all the more . . .”

“I was three hours . . .”

“I was sure of it . . . with Madame de Fischtaminel? . . .”

“No, at our notary’s, who had found a buyer; but we could not come to terms; he wanted the house with all the furniture, and when I left there, I dropped in at Braschon’s to find out how much we owe him . . .”

“You have made up this story while I was talking! . . . Now, look at me! . . . I shall go to Braschon’s to-morrow.”

Adolph is unable to repress a nervous movement.

“You see, you can’t help laughing, you old monster!”

“I’m laughing at your obstinacy.”

“I shall go to Madame de Fischtaminel’s to-morrow.”

“Oh! go wherever you choose! . . .”

“What brutality!” says Caroline, rising and applying her handkerchief to her eyes as she walks out of the room.

The country house so ardently desired by Caroline has become one of Adolph’s fiendish inventions, a trap in which the roe has been caught.

Two months afterward he sells their twenty-two-thousand franc villa for seven thousand francs! But he gains the knowledge that the country is not the thing with which to please Caroline.

The question is becoming serious: pride and gluttony, two more sins, have had to be relinquished! Nature with its forests and valleys, the suburban Switzerland of Paris, the make-believe rivers, hardly amused Caroline for six months. Adolph feels tempted to abdicate and to assume Caroline’s rôle.

#### THE EIGHTEENTH BRUMAIRE OF MARRIED COUPLES.

One fine morning, Adolph is definitely seized with the wonderful idea of letting Caroline find her own form of enjoyment. He hands over the reins of the household and says: “Do as you like.” He substitutes the constitutional

system for the autocratic one, a responsible ministry for absolute conjugal power. This proof of confidence, object of much secret envy, is the marshal's truncheon of women. Women are then, according to the vulgar expression, mistresses of the home.

From that time on, nothing, not even the remembrances of the honeymoon, can be compared to Adolph's bliss for a short while. Then a woman is as sweet as sugar, too sweet, even! She would invent little attentions, little endearments, little tendernesses, if all these conjugal sweetmeats had not existed since Paradise. At the end of a month, Adolph is in a state similar to the condition of a child the first week after the holidays. And Caroline begins to show, even if she does not say so in so many words, that: "A woman can never really please a man! . . ."

To allow one's wife to steer the ship is really a very commonplace idea, which would not warrant the term of wonderful applied to it at the beginning of the chapter, were it not coupled with the idea of deposing Caroline. Adolph has been seduced by this thought, which takes hold and will always take hold of people who are the victims of some misfortune, to know how far their ill-luck will pursue them; to experiment with fire and see just what ravages it will make when left alone, thinking all the while that they will be able to stop its progress. This curiosity follows us from the cradle to the grave. Now, after his plethora of conjugal felicity, Adolph, who is delighting in this home comedy, passes through the following phases:

**FIRST PERIOD.**—Everything is going too well. Caroline buys some little books to keep her accounts, she buys a nice little desk for her money, and she prides herself on making Adolph comfortable. She is happy to reap his approbation, and glories in being an incomparable housekeeper. Adolph, who takes the rôle of censor, has not the least fault to find.

When he dresses, everything is at hand. Never, even at Armide's, has anyone displayed more ingenious tenderness than Caroline. The leather on the razor strops is renewed for this phœnix among husbands. Fresh suspenders take the



place of the old worn ones. A buttonhole is never without its button. His linen is mended with the same care as that of the confessor of a devout woman. His socks are whole. His taste, aye, his whims are studied in the matter of food: he is taking on flesh! There is ink in his inkstand, and the sponge is always moist. He cannot voice one complaint, and cannot even say, like Louis XIV.: "I almost waited!"<sup>1</sup> Finally, he is dubbed "a love of a man" at every turn. He is obliged to scold Caroline for forgetting herself, she does not think enough of her own comfort. Caroline stores away this gentle reproach.

SECOND PERIOD.—The scene changes, they are dining. Everything is very dear. Vegetables are frightfully expensive. Wood commands a high price. Fruit, why, only princes, bankers and the like can have it! Dessert is a cause of financial ruin. Adolph often hears Caroline remark to Madame Deschars: "But *how* do you manage? . . ." Then conferences are held in your presence about the best way to control a cook.

A cook who has entered your service without decent clothes, without money, without talent, has just given notice in a dress of blue material, with an embroidered shawl, her ears ornamented with a pair of pendants set with seed pearls. Her shoes are of good leather, and she wears nice stockings. She owns two trunks full of clothes and a bank-book.

Caroline then rants about the lack of morality of the common people; she complains of the education and arithmetical knowledge of domestics. From time to time, she gives forth little axioms like the following: "There are yet some schools to be built!", "It takes people that do nothing to do everything well!" She has all the burdens of power. Ah! men are very lucky to be free from household cares. The brunt of everything falls on women.

Caroline has debts. But, as she does not wish to be criticised, she begins by saying that experience is such a fine thing, that it is cheap at any cost. Adolph laughs in his sleeve, for he foresees a catastrophe which will reinstate him.

<sup>1</sup> *J'ai failli attendre!*

THIRD PERIOD.—Caroline, convinced of the truth that one must eat to live, makes Adolph enjoy the comforts of cenobitical repasts.

Adolph's socks are full of holes or coarsely darned in haste, for his spouse has not time enough during the day to attend to all she has to do. He has to wear suspenders blackened by use. His linen is old and yawns like a porter or the *porte cochère*. Just when Adolphe is in a hurry to conclude some business transaction, he has to spend an hour looking for the various parts of his raiment, and has to unfold garment after garment before he finds one that is above reproach. But Caroline is extremely well-dressed. Madame has pretty hats, velvet shoes, and mantillas. She has become resigned to fate, and rules by virtue of the principle that: "Charity begins at home." When Adolph complains of the contrast between his own shabby garments and Caroline's splendor, Caroline says:

"But you used to scold me for neglecting myself!"

An exchange of more or less acrid jests takes place between husband and wife. One evening, Caroline makes herself as fascinating as she can in order to confess to a deficit of quite a large sum, just like a minister of State, who praises the taxpayers and begins to laud the greatness of his country when he wants to launch a law that will require additional credit. There is this similarity between the two transactions, that they both take place in the Chamber. Also, it results therefrom, that the constitutional system is more expensive than the monarchical rule. It is a government of the golden mean, of mediocrity, of bickerings, etc., for the nation as well as for a husband and wife.

Adolph, enlightened by his previous trials, awaits an opportunity to explode, and Caroline lulls herself with a feeling of mock security.

How does the quarrel occur? Does one ever know what electrical current precipitates the avalanche or the revolution? It arises *à propos* of everything and of nothing. However, Adolph, after a certain length of time which must be gauged by the balance-sheet of every married

couple, lets out these fatal words: "Before I was married! . . ."

To a woman "Before I was married!" is what "My poor dead husband" is to the second choice of a widow. Both of these expressions make wounds which are never completely healed.

Then Adolph continues, like General Bonaparte speaking to the Cinq-Cents:

"We are living on a volcano!—Our home lacks proper government—the time has come to act.—You speak of happiness, Caroline, but you have destroyed it—you have spoiled it by your exactions, you have violated the Civil Code by mixing in the affairs of State, you have attacked the conjugal power.—We will have to reform our home."

Caroline, unlike the Cinq-Cents, does not shout: "*Down with the dictator!*", for one never shouts when one is sure of downing him.

"Before I was married, I always had fresh socks! I had a clean napkin at every meal! The restaurant-keeper only robbed me of a fixed amount each day! I have given you my cherished freedom! . . . What have you done with it? . . ."

"Am I to blame, Adolph, for wanting to spare you all trouble?" says Caroline, planting herself before Adolph. "Resume the management of the money! . . . but what will happen? . . . I am ashamed to say it, but you will compel me to play a part in order to have the mere necessities. Is this what you wish? to degrade your wife, and to have two opposing interests at stake. . . ."

And thus is marriage perfectly defined for three-fourths of all Frenchmen.

"Rest assured, dear," Caroline continues, sinking into her chair like Marius upon the ruins of Carthage, "I shall never ask you for anything, I am not a mendicant. I know what I shall do . . . you don't know me. . . ."

"Well, what is it?" says Adolph, "can't a man joke or have an argument? What are you going to do?"

"That is none of your business! . . ."

"I beg your pardon, madame, it is. Dignity, honor, . . ."

“Oh! you may rest perfectly easy on that score, monsieur. . . . For my own sake more than for yours, I shall keep very quiet.”

“Well, tell me! . . . Now, Caroline, Caroline dear, what are you going to do?”

Caroline throws a poisoned glance at Adolph, who recoils and begins pacing the floor.

“Now, *what are you going to do?*” he asks after a silence that is much too long.

“I shall work, monsieur!”

At this sublime utterance, Adolph executes a retreat, for he has caught sight of a bitter exasperation and has felt a chill wind which has never before made its appearance in the conjugal domicile.

#### THE ART OF BEING A VICTIM.

Dating from the Eighteenth Brumaire, conquered Caroline adopts a fiendish system which results in your regretting your victory every minute. She becomes the opposition! . . . After one more triumph of this description, Adolph would be summoned to appear before the Court, accused of having smothered his wife between mattresses, like Shakespeare's Othello. Caroline assumes the air of a martyr and affects an exasperating submissiveness. At every turn, Adolph is stabbed with an “As you choose!” accompanied by inevitable meekness. No elegiac poet could compete with Caroline, for she heaps elegy upon elegy; elegy in actions, elegy in words, elegy in smiles, elegy in silence, elegy in gestures, of which the following instances are a few examples wherein all married couples will find their own impressions.

AFTER BREAKFAST.—Caroline, we are going to the Deschars' to-night, a big *soirée*, you know. . . .”

“Yes, dear.”

AFTER DINNER.—“Well, Caroline, I see that you are not dressed yet?” says Adolph, emerging from his own room in gorgeous attire.

He sees Caroline arrayed in an old dress, a black watered silk with a draped bodice. A few artificial flowers mar

her already clumsy *coiffure*. Caroline's gloves are not fresh.

"I am ready, dear. . . ."

"And is this the dress you are going to wear? . . ."

"I have nothing else. A new dress would have cost a hundred francs."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I, beg from *you*? . . . After what has happened! . . ."

"I shall go alone, then," says Adolph, who does not wish to be humiliated in his wife.

"I know that will suit you very well," says Caroline, acidly, "and I can see it by the way you are dressed."

Eleven people are assembled in the drawing-room, all guests of Adolph; Caroline is there as if she, too, were a guest; she is waiting for dinner to be announced.

"Monsieur," whispers the butler in Adolph's ear, "the cook is distracted."

"Why?"

"Because monsieur did not tell her about the company; she has only two *entrées*, the roast, a chicken, some salad, and the vegetables."

"Caroline, didn't you order anything?"

"Did I know that you were going to have company? Besides, would I dare take it upon myself to order anything in this house? . . . You have taken all those cares from me, and I thank the Lord for it every day."

Madame de Fischtaminel is calling upon Madame Caroline. The latter has a slight cough, and is bending over some fancy work.

"Are you embroidering those slippers for your dear Adolph?" Adolph is leaning against the mantelpiece like a peacock.

"No, they are for a manufacturer who pays me for them and, like the convicts, this extra money buys me some luxuries."

Adolph flushes; he cannot strike his wife, and Madame de Fischtaminel looks at him as if to ask: "What is the meaning of this?"

"You have a bad cough, little one," remarks Madame de Fischtaminel.

"Oh! what do I care for life," retorts Caroline.

---

Caroline is sitting on the lounge with one of your women friends whose opinion you value highly. From the window, where you are standing with a group of men, you hear, solely by observing the motion of your wife's lips, the words, "It was monsieur's wish," uttered with the air of a young Roman woman bound for the arena. Deeply humiliated, you try to catch their conversation while you listen to your guests, and you give answers that bring forth: "What are you thinking of?" for you have lost the drift of the conversation, and you fume at the thought of: "What is she saying about me?"

---

Adolph is dining at the Deschars', a dinner of twelve, and Caroline is seated next to a good-looking young man named Ferdinand, a cousin of Adolph's. Between the first and second course, the conversation drifts to marital happiness.

"There is nothing so easy for a woman as being happy," says Caroline in response to a complaining guest.

"Won't you tell us your secret, madame?" graciously remarks Monsieur de Fischtaminel.

"All a woman has to do is to assume no responsibility, to consider herself in the light of an upper servant or of a slave whom the master provides for, to have no will of her own, and never to venture a remark; everything will run with perfect smoothness then."

These words, uttered in a bitter tone and in a tearful voice, terrify Adolph, and he glares angrily at his wife.

"You forget, madame, the satisfaction of explaining one's happiness," he retorts, with a flash of the eye worthy of a melodramatic tyrant.

Glad at having shown that she is a martyr or about to be one, Caroline turns her head away and dries a furtive tear. Then she says:

“Happiness cannot be explained.”

In the parlance of the Chamber, the incident is closed, but Ferdinand obtains the impression that his cousin is a sacrificed angel.

---

They are speaking of the number of cases of gastritis and other ailments which are sending young wives to their graves.

“They are too unhappy,” says Caroline, as if she were advertising her own mode of demise.

---

Adolph’s mother-in-law is visiting her daughter. Caroline says: “Monsieur’s drawing-room!—Monsieur’s bedroom!”—Everything in her home belongs to monsieur.

“Well, well, what’s the matter, children?” inquires the mother-in-law; “you both act as if you were at swords’ points!”

“*Eh! mon Dieu*,” retorts Adolph, “Caroline had the management of the household, and she could not do it properly. . . .”

“Did she go into debt?”

“Yes, mother, dear.”

“Listen, Adolph,” says the mother-in-law, after Caroline has left the room, “would you prefer to have my daughter beautifully dressed and the house running smoothly without it costing you anything? . . .”

Try to picture Adolph’s face as he listens to this declaration of *women’s rights!*

Caroline changes from shabby clothes to gorgeous raiment. She is at the Deschars’, and everyone is complimenting her on her taste, the richness of her gowns, her jewels, and her laces.

“ Ah! you have a charming husband! . . .” says Madame Deschars.

Adolph swells with pride and glances at Caroline.

“ My husband, madame? . . . Thank goodness, I cost monsieur nothing. All these things come from my mother.”

Adolph wheels about suddenly and joins Madame de Fisch-taminel.

---

After a year of absolute power, Caroline one morning softens, and asks:

“ How much have you spent this year, dear? . . .”

“ I don't know.”

“ Count up, then.”

Adolph finds a third more than in Caroline's worst year.

“ And my clothes cost you nothing,” she says.

---

Caroline is playing a melody of Schubert. Adolph finds keen enjoyment in the admirable execution of the music; he rises and approaches Caroline to praise her. She bursts into tears.

“ What's the matter? . . .”

“ Nothing; I'm nervous.”

“ I did not know that you suffered from nerves.”

“ Oh! Adolph—you will not see.—Just look! the rings are dropping off my fingers; you don't love me any more, I'm a burden to you. . . .”

She weeps and refuses to listen, and cries afresh at every word Adolph tries to utter.

“ Do you want to assume the management of the house again? ”

“ Ah!” she cries, springing to her feet *in surprise*, “ now that you have had all the experience you want! . . . Thank you! . . . Do I want any money? . . . A peculiar way of mending a broken heart. . . . No, leave me alone. . . .”

“ Well, just as you please, Caroline.”

That “ just as you please ” is the first word of indifference in wifely matters, and Caroline perceives that she has brought herself to the edge of a precipice.



## THE CAMPAIGN OF FRANCE.

The misfortunes of 1814 afflict everyone. After the bright days of conquest, the days in which obstacles were changed into triumphs, in which the slightest impediment became a piece of good fortune, there comes a time when the best ideas turn into mistakes, when courage leads to ruin, when fortifications spell downfall.

Conjugal love which, according to writers, is a special brand of love, has its campaign of France, its ill-starred 1814, more than any other human event. The Devil takes a peculiar delight in thrusting his tail into the affairs of neglected wives, and Caroline is one of these.

Caroline has reached the stage where she dreams of means and ways to win her husband back. Caroline spends many a lonely hour at home, and her imagination is busily at work. She comes and goes, and gazes dreamily out of the window, with her face pressed against the panes. And she feels as if she were in a desert among those luxuriously appointed apartments.

Now, in Paris, unless one lives in one's own house, with a garden in the front and a courtyard in the rear, every other existence is coupled to one's own. Each household finds on each floor a corresponding household in the house opposite. Everyone can peer into his neighbor's life. There exists a servitude of mutual observation, a common visiting right, which no man can escape from. During certain morning hours, the neighbor's servant does the housework, opens the windows, and airs the rugs; then you can speculate upon a number of things, and so may your neighbor. After a while, you get to know the habits of the pretty, or old, or young, or coquettish or virtuous woman opposite, the fads of the man of fashion, the hobbies of the old bachelor, the color of the furniture, the cat of the first or of the third floor. Everything serves as an indication and provides material for speculation. On the fourth floor, an astonished *grisette* discovers, always too late, that, like the chaste Susannah, she is the object of a delighted inspection through opera-glasses by an old, eighteen hundred-francs-a-year clerk,

who indulges without cost in this criminal diversion. As a compensation, a handsome young supernumerary appears before the eyes of a prudish old woman in the simple apparel of a man shaving his beard. Observation knows no rest, while prudence is sometimes forgetful. The curtains are not always drawn in time. At the close of day, a woman often goes to the window to thread her needle, thus giving the husband opposite the opportunity of admiring her Raphaellesque features which he, a strapping Garde National, finds suited to his own type. Pass by the Place Saint-Georges, and you will be able to surprise the secrets of three pretty women, if your eyes are clever.

Oh! holy private life, where can you be found? Paris is a city that shows itself transparently clad at all hours, a city essentially immodest and unchaste. To be able to lead a modest life, one must enjoy a hundred thousand franc income. The virtues are dearer than the vices.

Caroline, whose glance sometimes pierces the curtains that protect her home from the five apartments of the house opposite, ends by noticing a young couple plunged in the ecstacy of their honeymoon and lately installed in the first-floor apartment across the street. She observes the most irritating things. The shutters are closed early and are not thrust open until late. One day, Caroline, having risen, quite by chance, at eight in the morning, catches a glimpse of the maid preparing a bath or laying out an elegant morning-gown. Caroline heaves a sigh. She watches like a hunter and she catches sight of the young wife, whose face is radiant. Finally, by dint of spying on the couple, she sees monsieur and madame open the window and lean out together to enjoy the evening air. Caroline brings on a headache one evening that the shutters have been left open, trying to make out the shadows of those two frolicsome children as they trace explicable or rather, inexplicable, phantasmagorias on the curtains. Often, the young wife, melancholy and thoughtful, awaits the coming of her husband, reclining on a lounge. She hears the sound of a horse's hoofs, of carriage wheels, springs to her feet, and from her motion it is easy to see that she cries: "He has come! . . ."

“How they love each other!” exclaims Caroline.

By dint of many headaches, Caroline finally hits upon an extremely ingenious scheme: she will use this conjugal happiness as a topic to stimulate Adolph. It is a somewhat depraved idea, like the idea of an old man trying to seduce a slip of a girl with pictures and lewd conversation, but Caroline’s intentions sanctify everything!

“Adolph,” says she at last, “we have a charming neighbor, a little dark woman . . .”

“Yes,” retorts Adolph, “I know who she is. She is a friend of Madame de Fischtaminel’s, Madame Foullepointe, the wife of a broker. He is a delightful man, a good-natured soul, and very much in love with his wife; he is wild about her. Why, his offices face the rear, while madame’s apartments are on the front of the house. I don’t know a happier couple. Foullepointe talks of his home everywhere, even at the Bourse; he’s quite a bore in this respect.”

“Well, be kind enough to make me acquainted with Monsieur and Madame Foullepointe. I would be glad to know how she manages to keep her husband’s devotion as she does. . . . Have they been married long?”

“Five years, just like ourselves. . . .”

“Adolph, dear, I am wild to know them! Oh! please bring us together! Am I as good-looking as she? . . .”

“*Ma foi*, if I were to meet you both at the Opéra, and you were not my wife, I would hesitate. . . .”

“You are nice to-day. Do not forget to invite them to dinner for next Saturday.”

“I shall do so to-night. Foullepointe and I see a great deal of each other at the Bourse.”

“Well,” says Caroline to herself, “I think that woman will tell me her plan of action.”

Caroline returns to her observation point. At about three o’clock, she peers between the flowers that fill a jardinière placed by the window so that it screens the latter like a bush, and exclaims:

“Two turtle-doves!”

Caroline, for Saturday, invites Monsieur and Madame Deschars, and the worthy Monsieur de Fischtaminel, in a

word, the most staid couples of her set. Everything is in fine trim. Caroline has ordered a delicious dinner, and has produced her best things to adorn the table, for she wishes to do honor to this model of wifely virtues.

"You are going to see," says she to Madame Deschars, while all the women are looking each other over in silence, "the most charming young couple; they are neighbors who live opposite; the young husband is blond and has the most fascinating manners . . . and a face like Lord Byron's, and he is a real Don Juan, only so faithful! . . . he worships his wife. . . . She is charming, too, and has found a way of perpetuating love. . . . I may owe an increase of happiness to their example; when Adolph sees them, he will blush at his conduct, he . . ."

The butler announces:

"Monsieur and Madame Foullepointe."

Madame Foullepointe, a pretty brunette, a real Parisienne, slender and graceful, whose brilliant orbs are veiled by long lashes, takes a seat on the sofa. Caroline then greets a corpulent gentleman following in the wake of this Andalusian of Paris. His face and pot-belly remind one of Silenus, his cranium is the color of fresh butter, and a hypocritical and libertine smile plays on his large lips: a philosopher! Caroline gazes at him in astonishment.

"Monsieur Foullepointe, my dear," says Adolph, presenting the worthy man.

"I am delighted, madame," says Caroline, assuming a pleased expression, "that you have brought your father-in-law, but I hope we will have your husband, too. . . ."

"Madame!"

Everybody is listening and watching. Adolph becomes the cynosure of all eyes; he is petrified with astonishment; he would like to make Caroline disappear through a trap, as at the theater.

"This is Monsieur Foullepointe, my husband," says Madame Foullepointe.

Caroline flushes scarlet when she realizes the blunder she has made, and Adolph annihilates her with a terrible look.

“Why, you said that he was a blond . . .” whispers Madame Deschars.

Madame Foullepointe, clever woman that she is, gazes at the cornice.

A month later, Madame Foullepointe and Caroline become bosom friends, and Adolph, very much taken up with Madame de Fischtaminel, pays no heed whatever to this dangerous friendship, which is bound to bear its fruits; for, be it known to you that:

#### AXIOM.

*Women have corrupted more women than men have ever loved.*

#### THE HEARSE SOLO.

After a period, the length of which depends on the strength of Caroline's principles, she begins to languish, and seeing her reclining on lounges like a serpent taking a sun bath, Adolph inquires with decorous solicitude:

“What is the matter, my dear? what do you want?”

“I wish I were dead. . . .”

“That is a pleasant and very cheerful wish. . . .”

“Oh! I do not fear death, but I dread suffering. . . .”

“Which means that I do not make you happy! . . . So like all women!”

Adolph paces the room, muttering, but stops short on seeing Caroline produce her embroidered handkerchief and wipe away a few artistic tears.

“Do you feel ill?”

“I do not feel well. (Silence.) All I want is to learn whether I will live long enough to see my daughter married, for I have come to know what ‘choosing a husband,’ which is so little understood by young girls, really means. Go ahead, pursue your pleasures; a woman who thinks of the future, a woman who suffers, is not very amusing; go and enjoy yourself. . . .”

“Where do you feel ill?”

“My friend, I do not feel ill, I am feeling quite well and

do not want a thing! Really, I'm better, you can leave me. . . ."

The first time, Adolph leaves Caroline with something akin to sadness.

A week passes in which Caroline forbids the servants to tell monsieur of her deplorable condition; she languishes, she summons them in a fainting condition, and consumes a great deal of ether. At last the servants apprise monsieur of madame's conjugal heroism, and Adolph remains at home one evening and sees his wife lavishing passionate kisses on their little Marie.

"Poor child! you are the only one that makes me regret the future! Oh! *mon Dieu!* what is life?"

"There, my child," says Adolph, "why fret so?"

"Oh! I'm not fretting! . . . death does not frighten me. . . . I saw a funeral to-day and thought how happy the corpse must be. . . . Why do I think only of death? . . . Is it a disease? . . . I think I shall die by my own hand."

The more Adolph endeavors to cheer Caroline, the more doleful she becomes. This second time he stays in, he is bored. Then, at the third attack of forced tears, he leaves the house without any remorse. Finally, he becomes *blasé* regarding the eternal lamentations, dying attitudes, and false tears of Caroline. At last, he says:

"If you are ill, Caroline, you should see a doctor."

"Just as you please, it will only end quicker that way, and that suits me. . . . But you will have to bring me a celebrated one."

After a month, Adolph, tired of the funereal symphony Caroline plays, brings a celebrated physician to the house. In Paris, all the doctors are clever men, wonderfully conversant with conjugal nosography.

"Well, madame," says the great physician, "how does such a pretty woman happen to be sick? . . ."

"Yes, like the nose of *Père* Aubry, I aspire to the tomb. . . ."

Out of regard for Adolph, Caroline tries to smile.

"Good! Still, your eyes are bright, and do not look as if they wanted our fiendish nostrums. . . ."

"Look at them well, doctor; I am devoured with fever, a slow, imperceptible fever. . . ."

She directs her most mischievous glance on the doctor, who says to himself:

"What eyes! . . . Good! let me see your tongue," he says aloud.

Caroline shows him her tongue and two rows of pearly teeth.

"It is a little coated at the back, but you have just had breakfast . . ." remarks the great physician, turning toward Adolph.

"Very little," retorts Caroline, "two cups of tea. . . ."

Adolph and the doctor exchange glances, for the doctor would like to find out whether the husband or the wife is laughing at him.

"How do you feel?" the doctor gravely asks.

"I can't sleep. . . ."

"Very well!"

"I have no appetite. . . ."

"Very well!"

"I have pains here. . . ."

The doctor glances at the place that Caroline indicates.

"Very well! . . . we shall see to that in a moment. . . ."

What next?"

"I have sudden chills. . . ."

"Very well!"

"I am depressed, and think of nothing but death. . . ."

I have thoughts of suicide. . . ."

"Indeed? . . ."

"My face flushes; look, my eyelid twitches all the time. . . ."

"Very well, we call that *trismus*."

For a quarter of an hour, the doctor, using the most scientific terms, explains the nature of the *trismus*, and the result of it all is that the *trismus* is the *trismus*; but he points out with the greatest modesty that, although science recognizes that the *trismus* is the *trismus*, it has never been able

to determine the cause of this nervous affection which comes and goes so unexpectedly. . . .

"And we have recognized," says he, "that it is purely nervous."

"Is it very dangerous?" inquires Caroline anxiously.

"Not in the least. . . . How do you sleep?"

"Curled up."

"Very well; on which side?"

"The left."

"How many mattresses do you sleep on?"

"Three."

"Very well; have you a spring mattress?"

"Why . . . yes. . . ."

"What is it made of?"

"Horsehair."

"Very well. Now, take a few steps! . . . Oh! quite naturally, just as if we were not looking at you. . . ."

Caroline takes a few steps *à la Elssler*, and sways her bustle in the most Andalusian fashion.

"Do your knees feel heavy?"

"Why . . . no. . . . (She resumes her seat.) *Mon Dieu!* when I think about it. . . I believe I do feel something of the sort. . . ."

"Very well; have you stayed in the house much, lately?"

"Oh! much too often, doctor, . . . and alone."

"Yes, that's it. How do you dress your hair for the night?"

"I wear an embroidered cap, and sometimes a silk scarf over that. . . ."

"Doesn't your head feel warm, and perspire?"

"That's hard to know, when I am asleep."

"Your cap might be moist in the morning?"

"Yes, sometimes."

"Very well. Give me your hand."

The doctor pulls out his watch.

"Did I tell you that I have dizzy spells?" says Caroline.

"Sssssh!" says the doctor, counting the pulsations.

"Toward evening?"

"No, in the morning."



“ Ah! indeed! you have dizzy spells in the morning,” says he, looking at Adolph.

“ Well, what do you think of my wife’s condition?” asks Adolph.

“ The Duc de G—— did not go to London,” says the great physician, examining Caroline’s skin, “ and it has created no end of gossip in the Faubourg Saint-Germain.”

“ Have you any patients there?” inquires Caroline.

“ Almost all my patients are of the Faubourg Saint-Germain. Goodness me, I have seven to attend this morning and some are in danger. . . .”

The doctor rises.

“ What do you think of me, doctor?” says Caroline.

“ Madame, you need care, a great deal of care. You must take emollients and adopt a light diet, white meats, and you must take plenty of exercise. . . .”

“ This is worth twenty francs,” says Adolph to himself, with a smile.

The great physician takes Adolph’s arm and walks out of the room; Caroline follows on tiptoe.

“ My dear man,” says the great physician, “ I treated your wife’s case very lightly, one should not alarm her, but this concerns you more than you suppose. . . . Do not neglect her too much. . . . She has a powerful temperament and ferocious health. *All this* reacts on her. Nature has laws which, when disregarded, assert themselves. Madame might reach a morbid state that would make you bitterly regret your neglect of her. . . . If you love her, prove it; if you have tired of her and you wish to preserve the mother of your children, the decision to be reached is one of hygiene, but it can come only from you. . . .”

“ How well he understood me! . . .” says Caroline.

She opens the door and exclaims:

“ You did not write the prescriptions, doctor! . . .”

The great physician smiles, bows, slides a twenty-franc piece into his pocket, and leaves Adolph at the mercy of Caroline, who clutches him and demands:

“ What is my real condition? Must I make up my mind to die?”

“He said you were too healthy!” Adolph replies impatiently.

Caroline collapses on the lounge and begins to weep.

“What’s the matter?”

“Oh! I’m going to have a long cry! . . . I’m in your way, you do not love me any more. . . . I don’t want anything to do with that doctor. . . . I don’t know why Madame Foullepointe advised me to consult him . . . he told me such foolish things. . . . I know what I need better than he does. . . .”

“What do you need?”

“Ungrateful man, how can you ask?”

Adolph, alarmed, says to himself:

“The doctor is right, she may become morbidly exacting. . . . And what will become of me? . . . I shall be compelled to choose between Caroline’s physical folly and some youthful cousin. . . .”

Caroline then begins to sing a Schubert melody with the exaltation of a hypochondriac.

## PART SECOND

### SECOND PREFACE

**I**F you have been able to understand this book . . . (and we are honoring you infinitely by this supposition: the most profound author does not always, one might even say that he never, understands the different meanings of his book, nor its portent, nor the good or the evil it causes), if then, you have given some attention to the little scenes of conjugal life, you may perhaps have noticed their color. . . .

“What color?” a grocer may ask; “the books are bound in yellow, blue, pale pink, pale green, pearly gray, and white.”

Alas! books have another color, they are colored by the author, and some writers borrow their tints. Some books leave their mark on others. This is even better. Books are blond or dark, light chestnut or auburn. Finally, they have a sex, too. We know of male and female books, of books, which, a horrible thing, are sexless; a fact that, we trust, is not the portion of this one, supposing that you honor this collection of nosographic subjects by calling it a book.

Until now, all the various trials have been trials inflicted on men by women. So you have only seen the male side of the issue. And, if the author be really endowed with the hearing he is supposed to possess, he has already surprised more than one exclamation or declamation of some furious woman:

“We only hear of men’s trials!” she may have said, “as if we women did not have trials of our own, as well as they. . . .”

O women! you have been heard, for, although you are sometimes misunderstood, you always manage to make yourselves heard! . . .

Therefore, it would be supremely unjust to heap on you the reproaches that any social being bowed by the yoke (*conjugium*) has a right to address to this necessary, sacred,

useful, and eminently conservative institution, albeit very annoying and cramping at times, although it often rests lightly upon us.

I shall go even further! This partiality would evidently be idiocy.

A man—not a writer, for there are many men in a writer—an author, let us say, should resemble Janus: he should have eyes in the back and front of his head, become a reporter, discover all the sides of an idea, pass alternatively from the soul of *Alceste* to the soul of *Philinte*, never tell all he knows (nevertheless, he should know everything), never tire, and . . .

We shall not finish the programme, for we might tell everything, and that would be appalling for all those who reflect upon the conditions of literature.

Besides, an author who begins to speak in the middle of his book is like the old chap in the *Tableau parlant*, when he sticks his face in the place of the picture. The author has not forgotten that a man does not speak in the Chamber *entre deux épreuves*. So, enough said!

This, now, will be the female side of the book; for, in order to be exactly like marriage, this book should be more or less androgyne.

#### THE HUSBANDS OF THE SECOND MONTH.

Two young brides, boarding-school friends, Caroline and Stéphanie, who had known each other at the boarding-school conducted by Mademoiselle Mâchefer, one of the most select educational institutions of the Faubourg Saint-Honoré, were at a ball given by Madame de Fischtaminel, and the following conversation took place in the embrasure of a window.

The rooms were so warm that a man had had the idea, long before the two young women, of snatching a breath of fresh air; he was standing in a corner of the balcony, and as a great many flowers were banked in the window, the two friends imagined that they were quite alone. That man was the author's best friend.

One of the brides had seated herself in the corner of the

window and was watching the boudoir and the drawing-rooms. The other one had taken up a position in the middle, and was endeavoring to shield herself from the draft, already kept out by silk and lace curtains.

The boudoir was deserted, for the ball had begun, and packs of cards lay unopened on the green gaming-tables. The second dance was in progress.

Everyone who goes to balls is familiar with that phase of large affairs when all the guests have not yet arrived, although the rooms are full, and which causes the hostess a few moments of the keenest anxiety. It is, all comparisons preserved, like the instant in a battle which is the turning-point of victory or defeat.

You will then understand how it came to pass that what was to be a close secret, appears in print to-day.

“ Well, Caroline? ”

“ Well, Stéphanie? ”

“ Well? ”

“ Well? ”

A double sigh is heaved.

“ Don't you remember our conventions? ”

“ Yes. . . . ”

“ Then, why didn't you come to see me? ”

“ I can never be alone, we hardly have time to speak to each other now. . . . ”

“ Oh! if my Adolph acted like that! ” cried Caroline.

“ You saw us both, Armand and myself, when he was paying me so-called attention. . . . ”

“ Yes, I admired him and thought you were very fortunate. You had realized your ideal! He was such a fine-looking man, always so well-dressed, with yellow gloves, patent leather shoes, immaculate linen, and then, he was exquisitely fastidious . . . ”

“ Yes, go ahead. . . . ”

“ Well, a perfectly charming man: his voice was soft, he was never abrupt. And such promises of happiness and freedom as he gave you! His phrases were encrusted with rosewood. He filled his words with old lace and priceless shawls. The slightest sentence was fraught with horses and

carriages. Your *corbeille*<sup>1</sup> was to be magnificent. Armand impressed me as being a husband made of velvet, a soft fur into which you were going to sink.

“Caroline, my husband snuffs! . . .”

“Well, mine smokes. . . .”

“But he snuffs as they say Napoleon did, my dear, and I hate tobacco; the monster noticed it, and he did without it for seven months. . . .”

“All men have those habits, they must absolutely indulge in something.”

“You have no idea of the tortures I endure. I am awakened at night by a sneeze. While asleep, I make some movements which stick my nose right into some grains of tobacco lying on the pillow, I inhale them, and explode like a mine. It looks as if that rascal of an Armand were used to this *surprise*, because he never wakes up. I find tobacco everywhere, and really, I haven’t married the *Régie*.”

“What is this little habit, my dear, if your husband is good-natured and jolly!”

“Ah! yes, he is as cold as marble, as staid as any old man, as talkative as a sentinel, and he is one of those men that say ‘yes’ to everything, and then do just as they please.”

“Deny him.”

“I’ve tried it.”

“Well?”

“Well, he threatened to cut down my allowance by taking out the sum which he would have to have in order to get along without me. . . .”

“Poor Stéphanie! he isn’t a man, he’s a monster. . . .”

“A calm and methodical monster, who wears a wig, and who, every night . . .”

“Every night? . . .”

“Oh! wait! . . . who every night drops his seven false teeth into a glass of water.”

“What a trap your marriage was! Well, anyway, Armand is rich?”

<sup>1</sup> A gift of the bridegroom to the bride, a basket which may contain jewels, furs, laces, and other costly presents, according to the social station of the contracting parties.

“Who knows?”

“Dear me, why, it seems to me as if you were going to be very unhappy . . . or very happy . . . in a short time.”

“And you, little one?”

“As for me, I have only one thorn in my flesh at present, but it is unbearable.”

“Poor child! you don’t know how happy you are! Go ahead and tell me.”

Here, the young woman talked so close to her friend’s ear that it was impossible to catch what she said. The conversation began anew or rather ended with some sort of conclusion.

“Is your Adolph jealous?”

“Of whom? we are always together, and this, my dear, is a great trial. I cannot stand it. I don’t dare to yawn, I am always giving a representation of a loving wife. It is very tiresome.”

“Caroline?”

“Well?”

“What are you going to do, little one?”

“Resign myself. And you?”

“Fight the *Régie*.”

This little trial tends to prove that, in the matter of personal disappointments, the two sexes are quits.

## DISAPPOINTED AMBITIONS.

### I. THE ILLUSTRIOUS CHODOREILLE.

A young man has left the city of his birth in one of the departments that Monsieur Charles Dupin has outlined in a color more or less deep. His vocation was glory, no matter of what kind: suppose an artist, a novelist, a journalist, a poet, a great statesman.

In order that we may be perfectly understood, young Adolph de Chodoreille wanted to get talked about, to be somebody, to become famous. This is addressed to the great mass of ambitious men brought to Paris by every imaginable conveyance, moral and physical, and who, one fine morning, start out with the hydrophobical intention of destroying all existing reputations, in order to erect some pedestals for

themselves with the ruins, until disillusion disheartens them. As we wish to formulate this normal fact, which is a characteristic of the times, the author has chosen among all these personages the one whom, in a former work, he named "The Provincial Great Man."

Adolph has discovered that the finest business is the one which consists in buying a bottle of ink, a box of pens, and a ream of paper at the stationer's, all for twelve francs and fifty centimes, and reselling the two thousand sheets which the ream is composed of, after cutting each sheet into four parts, at something like fifty thousand francs, after having, however, covered each sheet with fifty lines of matter full of style and imagination.

This problem of transforming twelve francs and fifty centimes into fifty thousand francs worries a number of families, which might employ their members usefully in the provinces instead of dumping them into the seething inferno of Paris.

The young man who is the object of this exportation, always has, in the opinion of his townsmen, as much imagination as the most famous authors. He was always excellent in his studies, writes clever verse, and is considered brilliant; he is often the perpetrator of some charming story which, inserted in the town sheet, arouses the admiration of the department.

Then, as his poor parents will always ignore that which their son acquires with great difficulty in Paris, namely: that it is hard to be a writer and to know the French language unless one has spent about twelve years laboring like Hercules;—that one must be thoroughly familiar with social life in order to become a real novelist, seeing that the novel is the private history of nations; that all the great storytellers (*Æsop*, *Lucilius*, *Boccaccio*, *Rabelais*, *Cervantes*, *Swift*, *La Fontaine*, *Lesage*, *Sterne*, *Voltaire*, *Walter Scott*, the unknown Arabs who wrote *The Arabian Nights*) were all men of genius as well as colossuses of learning.

Their Adolph makes his apprenticeship in literature at various cafés, becomes a member of the *Société des Gens de Lettres*, blindly attacks men of talent who do not even read his articles, goes back to gentler methods when he sees the



failure of his criticisms, sends short stories to the newspapers which fling them back and forth like tennis-balls, and after five or six years of more or less arduous labors, of horrible privations which cost his people a great deal of money, *he attains a certain position.*

This is the position. Thanks to a sort of mutual fellowship of the weak, which a rather ingenious writer has dubbed *camaraderie*, Adolph sees his cognomen quoted quite often among well-known names, either in bookstore catalogues or in the advertisements of newspapers about to appear. Publishers print the title of one of his books under the false heading, "*About to Appear*," which might be called the menagerie of *ours*.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes Chodoreille is included among the rising men of the coming literature.

Adolph de Chodoreille remains in the ranks of the coming literature for eleven years; he becomes bald-headed trying to keep his place in it; but he finally obtains free passes to the theaters, thanks to some obscure works and dramatic criticisms; he tries to pass for a "good fellow," and as fast as he loses his illusions concerning Parisian fame, he acquires debts and years.

A newspaper reduced to extremities publishes one of his failures, one of those that have been corrected by friends and licked into shape from year to year, and that are redolent of the particular brand of each popular and forgotten style. This book becomes to Adolph what Corporal Trim's famous cap, which he always brought to the fore, became to him, as, for the next five years, *All for a Woman* (the definite title) will be hailed as one of the most delightful books of the time.

After eleven years, Chodoreille is said to have published some meritorious works, five or six short stories for moribund reviews, women's magazines, and works destined for youngest childhood.

<sup>1</sup> An *ours* (bear) is a play that has been rejected by a number of theaters, and that is finally produced by some manager who feels the need of just such a play. The word has passed from the vernacular of the stage to newspaper slang and is applied to unsuccessful novels. The *ours* of the publishers should be called white bears, and the others black bears.

Finally, as he is single, and owns a suit of evening clothes, and can, when he chooses, disguise himself as a fashionable diplomat, he is welcomed into two or three more or less literary salons; he bows to five or six academicians who have genius, influence, or talent, is received by two or three of our great poets, and permits himself to address in public cafés the two or three justly famous women of our time, by their Christian names; besides, he is on the best of terms with the second-class blue-stockings, who should be dubbed "socks," and has reached the stage of hearty handclasps and absinthes with the lights of all the lesser newspapers.

This is the life history of all mediocre men in every branch of endeavor, who have failed to have what the possessors call *luck*. This luck is will-power, continuous labor, contempt for easily acquired fame, immense learning, and the patience which, according to Buffon, is the whole of genius, but which is certainly half of it.

You do not perceive a trace of a trial for Caroline, as yet. You believe that the story of the five hundred young men now occupied in polishing the pavements of Paris, has been written as a sort of warning to the families in the eighty-six departments of France, but read these two letters, exchanged by two friends who have married under different conditions, and you will understand that it was quite as necessary as the recital which, in years gone by, preceded every good melodrama, and was called the "opening scene." . . . You will divine the clever maneuvers of the Parisian peacock strutting about in his native town and furbishing with matrimonial expectations the rays of a glory which, like those of the sun, are only warm and bright at a great distance.

---

*Madame Claire de la Roulandière, née Jugault, to Madame Adolph de Chodoreille, née Heurtaut.*

“VIVIERS.

“You have not written to me yet, my dear Caroline, and it is very unkind in you. Should not the happiest one begin and console the one who has remained in the provinces?”

“ Since your departure, I have married Monsieur de la Roulandière, the President of the Court. You know him and you can imagine whether I am happy, with my heart *saturated* with *our ideas*. I knew what my life would be; I live surrounded by the former president, my husband’s uncle, and my mother-in-law, who has nothing of the old parliamentary society, save its haughtiness and priggishness. I am rarely alone, and never go out without my mother-in-law or my husband. Every evening, we entertain the serious people of the town. The gentlemen play whist for two sous a rubber, and I hear the following conversations:

“ ‘ Monsieur Vitremont is dead and has left two hundred and forty thousand francs, . . . ’ says the substitute, a young man of forty-seven summers, as entertaining as the mistral.

“ ‘ Are you quite sure about that? . . . ? ’

“ *That* means the two hundred and forty thousand francs. A little judge then discourses about the investments; the values are discussed and it is decided that *if there is not two hundred and forty thousand francs, there is a sum very nearly approaching it. . . .*

“ Then comes a general concert of praise for the deceased, for having kept his provisions under lock and key, for having invested his savings sou by sou, in order, probably, that all the town and all the people who have the hope of future legacies, might applaud and exclaim admiringly:

“ ‘ He has left two hundred and forty thousand francs! . . . ? ’

“ And every one of them has some sick relative of whom they say:

“ ‘ I wonder if he will leave as much? ’

“ And they discuss the *living* as they did the *dead*.

“ Their only subjects of conversation are whether this one or that one will leave a fortune, whether there will be any vacancies in positions, and the outlook of the crops.

“ When, in our childhood, we used to watch those pretty little white mice turning in their round cage in the window of the cobbler, whose shop was in the Rue Saint-Maclou,

could I know that this was a faithful picture of my own future? . . .

“To be what I am, I, who of the two, was always the one who let my imagination roam the most! I have sinned more than you, and have been punished more severely. I have bidden farewell to my dream: I am *Madame la Présidente*, and have made up my mind to take Monsieur de Roulandière’s arm for the next forty years, to stint myself in every possible way, and to see nothing but two bushy eyebrows overhanging two bleary eyes in a sallow face that never will know how to smile.

“But you, my dear Caroline, you who, between ourselves, were in the *grown-ups*, when I was romping among the *little ones*, you who only sinned through pride, you, at twenty-seven, with a fortune of two hundred thousand francs, capture and captivate a great man, one of the cleverest men in Paris, one of the two talented men that our town has produced! . . . what luck! . . .

“Now you move in the most brilliant circle in Paris. You may, thanks to the sublime privilege of genius, mingle in the set of the Faubourg Saint-Germain and be welcome. You enjoy the exquisite delight of the society of the two or three famous women of our time, where so many clever things are said, and where the sallies originate that we only get afterward. You go to Baron Schinner’s, of whom Adolph spoke so much when he was here, and who receives all the great artists and foreigners of note. You will soon be one of the queens of Paris, if you wish. You can also receive and entertain the lions and lionesses of literature, society, and the world of finance, for Adolph spoke about his illustrious friendships in such glowing terms that I can see you being entertained and entertaining.

“With your income of ten thousand francs and the legacy of your Aunt Carabès, and the twenty thousand francs your husband earns, you must keep a carriage; and, as you can go to all the theaters on free passes, as journalists are the heroes of all the ruinous innovations of those who want to be in the fashion, as they are asked to dine out every day, you can live as if you had an income of sixty thousand

francs a year! . . . Ah! you are fortunate, you are! That is why you have forgotten me!

“Well, I can understand that you have not a minute for yourself. Your happiness causes your silence, and I will forgive you. Now, some day, if, tired of all this pleasure, and from the height of your greatness, you still think of your poor Claire, write to her, and tell her what marriage with a great man means . . . describe these great ladies of Paris, especially the ones who write. . . . Oh! *I would like to know what they are made of!* In a word, forget nothing, if you do not forget that, in spite of everything, you are loved by your poor

“CLAIRE JUGAULT.”

---

*Madame Adolph de Chodoreille to Madame la Présidente de la Roulandière, at Viviers.*

“PARIS.

“Ah! my poor Claire, if you knew how many little pangs your ingenuous letter awakened within me, you would not have written it. No friend, not even an enemy, seeing a plaster on a woman to relieve the pain of a thousand mosquito stings, would amuse herself by tearing it off to count them. . . .

“I shall begin by telling you that, for a girl twenty-seven years old, still passably good-looking, but whose figure is a little too much *à l'Empereur Nicolas* for the humble part she is playing, I am happy! . . . This is why: Adolph, glad of the disappointments that have fallen on me like hail, is nursing the wounds of my vanity with so much affection, attention, and love that, women, as women, would really like to find such profitable drawbacks in the men they marry; but all men of letters (Adolph, alas, is hardly that), while they are as nervous, irritable, *bizarre*, and changeable as women, do not possess such sterling qualities as Adolph, and I trust that all have not been as unlucky as he.

“Alas! we are fond enough of one another for me to tell you the truth. My dear, I have saved my husband from a cleverly concealed poverty. Far from making twenty

thousand francs a year, he has not earned as much in all the fifteen years he has spent in Paris. We live on the third floor of a house in the Rue Joubert, which costs us twelve hundred francs, and we have about eight thousand five hundred francs over with which I try to live respectably.

“I bring Adolph luck, for, since our marriage, he has edited a *feuilleton*, which brings him in about four hundred francs and takes little of his time. He owes this occupation to an investment. We put the seventy thousand francs of Aunt Carabès’ legacy into the newspaper, and draw nine per cent.; besides we have shares. Since Adolph went into this, our income has doubled, and we are in easy circumstances. I need not complain of my marriage as a money venture any more than as a heart venture. Only my conceit has suffered, and my ambition has been wrecked. You will understand, from the description of the first one, all the little trials I have had to endure.

“We thought that Adolph was very friendly with the famous Baronne Schinner, so celebrated for her wit, her influence, her fortune, and her *liaisons* with notable men; I thought he was received by her as a friend; my husband presented me, and I was rather coolly welcomed. I glimpsed salons furnished in an appallingly luxurious style, and, instead of having Madame Schinner return my call, I received her card, three weeks later, at an insolently unseasonable hour.

“On my arrival in Paris, I used to walk on the boulevards, proud of my anonymous great man; he would nudge me and, pointing out in advance a rather shabbily dressed little man, would say: ‘There goes So-and-So!’ mentioning one of the seven or eight illustrious men of France. I would prepare an admiring air, and see Adolph bow with a delighted expression to the real great man, who would respond with the perfunctory greeting given a man with whom one has not exchanged more than ten words in ten years. No doubt Adolph had sued for a glance on my account.

“‘Doesn’t he know you?’ I would say to my husband.

“‘Yes, but he mistook me for someone else,’ Adolph would reply.

“It was the same with poets, celebrated musicians, and statesmen. But, as a compensation, we would remain talking for ten minutes in front of some *passage*, with Messieurs Armand du Cantal, Georges Beaunoir, Félix Verdoret, whom nobody has ever heard of. Mesdames Constantine Ramachard, Anaïs Crottat, and Lucienne Vouillon come to see me and threaten me with their *blue* friendship. We give dinners to newspaper editors who are unknown in our province. Finally, I had the painful delight of having Adolph refuse an invitation to a *soirée* in which I had not been included.

“Oh! my dear, talent is always the rare blossom which grows of itself and which no hothouse horticulture can ever obtain. I do not deceive myself: Adolph is a known and gauged mediocrity; he has no other opportunity than to rank, as he says himself, with the *utilities* of literature; he did not lack cleverness in Viviers; but in order to be a clever man in Paris, one must possess all kinds of cleverness in desperately large doses.

“I have acquired esteem for Adolph; for, after a few little falsehoods, he acknowledged his position to me, and without unduly humiliating himself, he promised me happiness. He hopes, like so many other mediocrities, to obtain some sort of a berth, the editorship of a newspaper, or the position of assistant librarian. Who knows but what we may, later on, have him elected deputy at Viviers?

“We live in an obscure fashion; we have five or six friends, men and women, whom we are fond of, and this is the brilliant life which you gilded with all the social splendors!

“From time to time, I get a rebuff, I receive some cutting remark. Thus, yesterday, at the Opéra, in the foyer, where I was strolling, I heard one of our most sarcastic wits, Léon de Lora, say to one of our most celebrated critics:

“‘You must admit that it takes a Chodoreille to discover the poplar of Carolina on the banks of the Rhône!’

“‘Bah!’ retorted the other man, ‘it is pimped!’

“They had heard my husband call me by my Christian name. And I who am tall, well-formed, and still plump

enough to make Adolph happy, was considered beautiful in Viviers! This is how I learn that in Paris it is the same way with a woman's beauty as it is with the intellect of men from the provinces.

"In the end, if this is what you wish to know, I am nothing; but if you care to know how far my philosophy goes, well, I am happy enough to have found an ordinary human being in my sham great man.

"Farewell, dear friend. You see that, of the two of us, it is I who, in spite of my disappointments and trials, have the best of the bargain; Adolph is young and he is fascinating.

"CAROLINE HEURTAUT."

Claire's answer contained, among other sentences, the following one: "I hope that the anonymous happiness you are enjoying will continue, thanks to your philosophy." Claire, like all intimate friends, was taking out her revenge for the present, on Adolph's future.

## II. A SHADE OF THE SAME SUBJECT.

(Letter found in a box, one day that she made me wait a long while in her *cabinet* while she tried to rid herself of an unwelcome friend who did not understand French as conveyed in the *sous-entendus* of the countenance and the accentuation of words. I caught a cold, but got the letter.)

This fatuous note was found on a paper that a notary's clerk deemed of no importance when they took the inventory of the effects of the late Monsieur Ferdinand de Bougarel, whose loss has been recently deplored by politics, the arts, and love, and who was the last representative of the great house of Bogarelli, of Provence; for, as everyone knows, Bougarel is the corruption of Bogarelli, as the French Girardin is a corruption of Gherardini of Firenze.

An intelligent reader will readily recognize what period of the lives of Adolph and Caroline this letter refers to.

"MY DEAR FRIEND:

"I thought I was happy when I married an artist as superior through his talents as through his personal attrac-



tions, equally great in character and in intellect, full of learning, and on the way to success by following the common road instead of the devious paths of intrigue; in a word, you know Adolph, you have appreciated him: I am loved, he is a father, I worship our children. Adolph is very good to me, I love and admire him; but, my dear, in this complete happiness there lurks a thorn. The roses on which I lie have more than one. A thorn in a woman's heart soon becomes a wound. This wound bleeds, the evil grows, one suffers, suffering awakens thoughts, thoughts spread and become sentiments. To live for love only, one should not live in Paris. What would it matter to us to have only one muslin dress, if the man we love did not see other women more elaborately decked out, women who, by their manner, inspire ideas, and who, by an *ensemble* of small things, create great passions? With us, my dear, vanity is first cousin to jealousy, that fine and noble jealousy which consists in not allowing one's realm to be invaded, in reigning alone in his soul, and in spending a thoroughly happy life in another's heart. Well, my feminine vanity suffers. However small these trials may seem, I have unfortunately learned that there are no small trials in marriage. Yes, everything is enlarged by the incessant contact of our sensations, our desires, and our ideas. This is the secret of that depression which you noticed in me and which I did not want to explain. This point is one in which speech often goes too far, and where, at least, the written word retains the thoughts by fixing them on paper. There are such different moral perspectives between what is written and the spoken word! One commits no imprudences. Is this not what makes a letter in which we lay bare our feelings, such a treasure? You might have thought that I was unhappy, when I was merely hurt. You found me at home alone, sitting in front of the fire, without Adolph. I had just put the children to bed, and they were sound asleep. For the tenth time, Adolph had been invited by the set in which I do not mingle, where Adolph is wanted without his wife. There are salons where he goes without me, as there are a great many functions to which he is asked alone. If his name were Monsieur de Navarreins and I were

a d'Espard, society would never think of separating us, it would always want us together. His habits are formed and he does not notice this humiliation which weighs on my heart. Besides, if he suspected this feeling, which I am ashamed of, he would give up society and become more impertinent than the men or women who keep me apart from him. But he would retard his progress, create foes, encounter obstacles by trying to force me upon people who would then directly cause me a thousand woes. So I prefer my sufferings to what might happen otherwise. Adolph will arrive! He carries my revenge in his splendid mind. Some day, society will pay up the back interest of all its insults to me. But when? Perhaps I will be forty-five years old. My lovely youth will have been spent sitting before the fire with this thought: Adolph is laughing and enjoying himself, is with beautiful women he tries to fascinate, and all these pleasures are provided by others than by me.

“Perhaps he will end by being weaned from me?”

“Besides, no one willingly suffers contempt, and I feel that I am scorned, although I am young, virtuous, and fair. Can I help it, if my thoughts will wander? Can I repress a feeling of rage when I think of Adolph dining out without me? I do not enjoy his triumphs, I cannot hear his clever or deep sallies, uttered for the benefit of others! I cannot be satisfied with the *bourgeois* gatherings which he saved me from, when he found me fair, young, clever, distinguished, and rich. It is a misfortune and it is beyond repair.

“Finally, it is sufficient that, for some reason or other, I cannot be entertained in a certain salon, for me to want to go. Nothing is more conformable to human nature. The ancients were quite right with their *gyneceums*. The collision of feminine conceits produced by their reunion, which is not more than four centuries old, has cost our epoch many a heartache, and society many a bloody struggle.

“Well, my dear, Adolph is enthusiastically welcomed when he comes home; but no nature is strong enough to wait each time with the same ardor. What an awakening after the night when he is less heartily welcomed!

• “Do you see what the thorn is I was speaking about? A

thing like that in one's heart is like a slight elevation of ground in the Alps; at a distance, one would never guess its height and breadth. It is the same thing with two human beings, no matter what their friendship may be. One never guesses the gravity of one's friend's trouble. This seems a little thing, and still life is attacked by it in all its breadth and deepness. I have argued with myself; but the more I argue, the more I prove to myself the extent of the trouble. So I let myself drift down the stream of suffering.

"Two voices claim supremacy, when, by a chance which, fortunately, has not yet become frequent, I am sitting alone in my armchair, waiting for Adolph. One, I wager, issues from the *Faust* of Eugène Delacroix, which lies on the table. Mephistopheles speaks, the terrible valet who so cleverly directs the swords; he has left the picture and has planted himself diabolically in front of me, grinning with the slit that the great painter has put under his nose, and gazing at me with that eye from which fall diamonds, rubies, coaches, metals, dresses, crimson silks, and a thousand and one scorching delights:

"'Are you not made for society? You are worth the handsomest duchesses; your voice is like a siren's, your hands command love and respect! Oh! how well your arm would look, laden with bracelets, against the velvet of your gown! Your hair is a chain that would enslave any man; and you could lay all these triumphs at Adolph's feet, show him your power, without ever using it! He would be anxious about you, when now he lives in an insulting quietude. Come! swallow a few doses of disdain, and you will breathe clouds of incense! Dare to reign! Aren't you a trifle vulgar, sitting at home by the fire? Sooner or later, if you continue this way, the pretty wife, the beloved woman will die in her house-gown. Come! and you will perpetuate your power by the use of coquetry! Show yourself in salons, and your dainty foot will crush the loves of your rivals.'

"The other voice issues from my white marble mantelpiece, which sways softly like a dress. I imagine that I see a heavenly virgin crowned with white roses and holding a

green palm-leaf in her hand. Her blue eyes smile at me. This simple virtue speaks thus:

“ ‘ Stay at home! Be good always, and render your husband happy, that is your mission. The gentleness of angels soothes every ill. Faith in one’s self has caused the martyrs to find balm on their racks. Suffer for a little while longer, and you will be happy.’ ”

“ Sometimes Adolph comes home then, and *I am* happy. But, dear, I have not as much patience as I have love; at times, I would like to claw the women who can go everywhere, the women whose presence is as much desired by men as by women. What depth in this verse of Molière’s:

*Le monde, ma chère Agnès, est une étrange chose!*<sup>1</sup>

“ You are not acquainted with this little trial, happy Mathilde! you are a well-born woman! You are able to help me a great deal. Think it over! I can write you what I did not dare to tell you. Your visits do me a lot of good; come often to see your poor

“ CAROLINE.”

“ Well,” said I to the clerk, “ do you know what this letter was to the late Bougarel? ”

“ No.”

“ A letter of credit.”

Neither the clerk nor his employer understood me. Do *you* understand, reader?

#### INGENUOUS SUFFERINGS.

“ Yes, my dear, things will happen to you in marriage of which you have very little idea; but other things will occur of which you have even less idea. As . . . ”

The author (may we say ingenuous?) who *castigat ridendo mores*, and who has undertaken *The Petty Trials of Matrimony*, has no need of calling attention to the fact that, out of prudence, he has let a *respectable* woman do the talking here, and that he is in no way responsible for her sayings, although he professes the most sincere admiration for the

<sup>1</sup> The world, my dear Agnes, is a strange thing!

charming person to whom he is indebted for the knowledge of this little trial.

“As . . .” says she.

However, he feels the necessity of acknowledging that this person is neither Madame Foullepointe, nor Madame de Fischtaminel, nor Madame Deschars.

Madame Deschars is too prudish, Madame Foullepointe has too much authority in her household, and she knows it; besides, what doesn't she know? She is agreeable, she mingles in good society, and is affiliated with the best people; the vivacity of her sallies is passed over, as the sayings of Madame Cornuel were passed over in the reign of Louis XIV., a great many things are forgiven her. Some women are the spoiled children of public opinion.

As for Madame de Fischtaminel, who is incapable of recriminating in words, as we shall see, she recriminates in actions and abstains from speech.

We allow everyone the liberty of thinking that the speaker is Caroline, not the foolish Caroline of the first years, but Caroline having become a woman of thirty.

“So, please God, you will have children. . . .”

“Madame,” said I, “do not bring God into these matters, unless it be an allusion. . . .”

“You are a rude person,” she replied, “one should not interrupt a woman. . . .”

“Not when she is talking of children, I know; but one must not, madame, take advantage of the innocence of young girls. Mademoiselle is about to be married, and if she were to count on the interference of the Supreme Being, she would be led into making a grievous mistake; we should not mislead youth. Mademoiselle has passed the age when one tells young girls that their little brothers were found in cabbages.”

“You want to make me say something foolish,” she replied with a smile, showing the finest teeth in the world; “I am not strong enough to cross swords with you, and would ask you to let me continue with Joséphine. What was I saying?”

“That, if I get married, I will have children,” said the young person.

“Well, I do not want to paint things too black, but it is exceedingly probable that each child will cost you a tooth. With each one of my children, I lost a tooth.”

“Fortunately,” said I, “this trial was a small one in your case (the lost teeth were side teeth). But note, mademoiselle, that this little trial is not of a normal character. The trial depends upon the position of the tooth. If the coming of your child determines the falling of a tooth, of a bad tooth, you have the good fortune of having one child more and one bad tooth less. We must not confound good luck with bad luck! Ah! if you were to lose one of your fine incisor teeth . . . Still, there is many a woman who would be willing to exchange her best tooth for a fine boy!”

“Well,” she went on, becoming more animated, “at the risk of having you lose your illusions, dear child, I shall explain to you a little, nay, a great, trial! Oh! a frightful one! I shall not trespass beyond the *chiffons* to which this gentleman consigns us. . . .”

I protested by a gesture.

“I was married about two years, and I loved my husband,” she continued, “but I realized my mistake and acted differently for his greater happiness and for my own; I can boast that my marriage is the happiest one in Paris. Well, my dear, I loved the monster, he was all the world to me. Already, my husband had said several times to me:

“‘Little one, young married women do not seem to know how to dress; your mother dressed you like a fright, she had a reason. If you will believe me, pattern yourself after Madame de Fischtaminel, she has excellent taste.’

“I, like a fool, believed him. One day, as we were coming home from an entertainment, he said to me:

“‘Did you notice how Madame de Fischtaminel was dressed?’

“‘Yes, quite prettily.’

“In my heart, I thought:

“‘He always speaks of Madame de Fischtaminel, I must try and dress exactly like she does.’

“I had carefully noted the material, cut, and smallest details of the dress. So here I was as happy as could be,

trotting hither and thither to get the same fabrics. I summoned the same dressmaker.

“ ‘ You make Madame de Fischtaminel’s clothes, I believe? ’ said I.

“ ‘ Yes, madame.’

“ ‘ Well, I will engage you on one condition: you see that I have been able to obtain the same material, so I want you to make my dress exactly like hers.’

“ I acknowledge that, at first, I paid no attention to the rather shrewd smile of the dressmaker, but I saw it, and later I understood it.

“ ‘ So like hers that they cannot be told apart! ’ I said.

“ Oh! ” said the speaker, interrupting herself and glancing at me, “ you teach us to be like spiders in their webs, to see everything without appearing to see anything, to try to discover the motive of everything, to study every word, every glance, every gesture! You say: ‘ Women are very clever.’ You might add: ‘ Men are very false! ’

“ The care, the steps I had to take to become Madame de Fischtaminel’s double! . . .

“ Well, those are our battles, little one,” she continued, addressing herself to Mademoiselle Joséphine. “ I could not get a certain little embroidered scarf, a perfect marvel! At last I found out that it had been made to order. I discovered the woman, and asked her to make me a scarf like Madame de Fischtaminel’s. A trifle! only one hundred and fifty francs! It had been ordered by a gentleman who had presented it to Madame de Fischtaminel. It took all of my savings. Parisian women have an extremely limited amount to spend on dress. There is not a man having an income of one hundred thousand francs a year who does not spend ten thousand francs a season for whist, and who does not think that his wife is extravagant and dread her bills!

“ ‘ It will take all my savings, but I don’t care! ’ I said to myself.

“ I had the little pride which all women who love, possess: I did not want to tell him of this costume, for I wanted it to be a surprise, little goose that I was! Oh! how you men take away our holy foolishness from us. . . .”

This was intended for me, although I had taken nothing from the lady, neither a tooth nor anything of the named and unnamed things one can take from a woman.

“Ah! I should tell you, my dear, that he used to take me to Madame de Fischtaminel’s, and that I often had dinner there. I would hear her say: ‘Why, your wife is a nice little thing!’ She assumed a little patronizing manner toward me which made me suffer keenly. My husband would wish that I was as clever as this woman and had her social prestige. In a word, this phoenix became my model, and I took a lot of trouble trying to be unlike my own self. . . . Oh! it is a poem that can only be understood by women! Well, the day of my triumph arrived. Really, my heart beat with pleasure, I was just like a child! everything a woman is when she is only twenty-two. My husband was to come for me to go for a drive in the Tuileries with him; he enters the room, and I look at him joyfully . . . he takes no notice of my dress. . . . Well, I may say so now, it was one of those terrible disasters. . . . No, I shall say nothing, this gentleman here might laugh at me.”

I protested by another gesture.

“It was,” said she, continuing (a woman never gives up saying all she has to say), “like seeing a palace built by a fairy crumble before my eyes. Not the slightest surprise. We got into the carriage. Adolph noticed that I was depressed, and asked me what was the matter; I answered him as we answer when our hearts are wrung by these little trials: ‘Nothing!’ And he took his *lorgnon* and gazed at the promenaders on the Champs-Élysées; we were going to drive in the Champs-Élysées before turning into the Tuileries. At last, I became impatient, I had a slight touch of fever, and when we got home I pursed my lips in a smile.

“‘You haven’t said a word about my costume!’

“‘Why, yes, that’s so, your dress *is* something like Madame de Fischtaminel’s.’

“He turned on his heel and went out. The next day I was a little sulky, as you can imagine. Just as we had finished breakfasting in my room before the fire, the woman who had made me the scarf came to get her money, and I



paid her; she bowed to my husband as if she knew him. I ran after her, under the pretext of having her receipt the bill, and said:

“‘You charged him less for Madame de Fischtaminel’s scarf.’

“‘I swear, madame, that the price is the same; monsieur did not bargain with me.’ When I returned, I found my husband looking as foolish as . . .”

She paused and then resumed:

“A miller who has just been made a bishop!

“‘I can see, *mon ami*, that I will never be anything but somewhat similar to Madame de Fischtaminel.’

“‘I know what you want to say about the scarf! Well, yes, I gave it to her for her birthday. You see, we used to be very good friends. . . .’

“‘Ah! so you were even more friendly than you are to-day?’

“Without answering this, he said:

“‘*But it is purely moral.*’

“He reached for his hat, went out, and left me alone after this fine declaration of the rights of men. He did not come home for dinner, and returned very late that night. I swear that I remained in my room crying as if my heart would break. I will permit you to scoff at me,” she said, glancing at me, “but I was crying about my illusions, I was crying with anger at having been duped. I recalled the smile of the dressmaker! Ah! that smile reminded me of a lot of smiles from women who laughed at me for being like a little girl with Madame de Fischtaminel; my tears were sincere. Until then I had been able to believe in a lot of things that no longer existed in my husband, but that young wives insist upon believing in! How many great trials in this small one! You are coarse, you men! There is not a woman but who is tactful enough to embroider with the prettiest yarns the veil with which she covers her past, while you . . . But I have had my revenge!”

“Madame,” said I, “you will give mademoiselle too much knowledge.”

“That’s true,” she said. “I will tell you the end some other time.”

“So you see, mademoiselle, you think that you are buying a scarf, when you are putting a little trial on your shoulders; if the scarf is given to you . . .”

“The trial becomes a big one,” said the respectable woman. “Let us go no further.”

The moral of this fable is that one must wear one’s scarf without giving it too much thought. The prophets of old already called this world a valley of tears. Now, in those times, the Orientals, with the permission of the constituted authorities, had a number of pretty slaves besides their wives! What shall we call the valley of the Seine between Calvaire and Charenton, where the law allows but one wife?

#### THE AMADIS-OMNIBUS.

You will understand that I began to chew the head of my cane, to gaze at the cornice and into the fire, to study Caroline’s foot, and that I held out until the marriageable young lady saw fit to depart.

“You will excuse me,” said I, “I have stayed here perhaps against your wishes, but your revenge would lose by not being told now, and if it constituted a little trial for your husband, I have the liveliest interest in knowing it, and you shall learn the reason . . .”

“Ah!” said she, “the words, ‘*it is purely moral!*’ given as an excuse, shocked me to the last degree. It was a fine consolation for me to know that he considered me a piece of furniture, a thing; that I held a place among the kitchen utensils, the toilet articles, and the doctor’s prescriptions; that conjugal love was assimilated to digestive pills and white mustard; that Madame de Fischtaminel possessed my husband’s soul and his admiration, and that she charmed his mind, while I was a sort of purely physical necessity! What do you think of a woman being classed with soup and porridge, without the seasoning, of course? Oh! that evening I indulged in a Catilinarian speech. . . .”

“Say a Philippic.”

“I’ll say anything you like, for I was furious, and I do not remember all the things I uttered in the desert of my room. Don’t you think that the opinion men have of their

wives, and the part which is assigned to them, is a great trial for us? Our petty trials always contain great ones. Well, Adolph needed a lesson. You know the Vicomte de Lustrac, that great amateur of women, music, and good living, one of the ex-beaux of the Empire who live on their youthful conquests and take excessive care of themselves, so that they may obtain some tardy successes?"

"Yes," said I, "one of those old men who are laced and padded, and who could give the young dandies some points."

"Monsieur de Lustrac," she continued, "is as selfish as a king, but gallant and pretentious, in spite of his jet-black wig."

"He dyes his whiskers, too."

"He drops into ten salons every evening and is as gay as a butterfly."

"He gives fine dinners, and concerts, and takes new singers under his wing. . . ."

"He mistakes motion for pleasure."

"Yes, but he runs away as soon as misfortune is seen hovering anywhere. If you happen to be in mourning, he will avoid you. If you are about to be confined, he waits till you are up before he calls on you. He has a worldly frankness, a social courage that deserve admiration."

"But, is it not brave to be what one really is?" I asked her.

"Well," she said, after we had exchanged our views, "this young old man, this *Amadis-Omnibus*, whom we have dubbed *Petit-Bonhomme-vit-encore*, became the object of my admiration."

"No wonder! a man who was capable of cutting such a figure and making such conquests all by himself!"

"I made some of those advances which never compromise a woman. I praised the good taste displayed in his latest waistcoats and walking-sticks, and he thought I was a most amiable woman. I thought my knight was most ancient; he called on me; I simpered and made him think that I was unhappily married and quite wretched. You know what a woman means when she speaks of her troubles, and pretends that she is misunderstood. That old baboon answered me

much better than a young man would have done, and I had a hard time not to laugh while I was listening to him. 'Ah! husbands are all like that, they have the very worst policy; they respect their wives, and every woman, sooner or later, is furious at being respected and longs for the secret education which is her right. When you are married, you should not live like a schoolgirl,' etc. He squirmed about, leaned forward, was perfectly horrible; he looked like a wooden Nuremberg figure; he put out his hand, drew up his chair. . . . Well, after marches and counter-marches, angelic declarations . . ."

"What!"

"Yes. *Petit-Bonhomme-vit-encore* had abandoned the classicism of his youth for the fashionable romanticism; he spoke of the soul, of angels, of adoration, and submissiveness; he became quite ethereal. He took me to the Opéra and handed me into my carriage. That old young man went everywhere that I went, rioted in waistcoats, pulled his stomach in, rode beside my carriage in the Bois; he was compromising me with the grace of a college boy, and was considered madly in love with me; I was cruel, but I accepted his escort and his flowers. Everybody was talking about us. I was delighted! I soon arranged to be surprised by my husband lying on the lounge of my boudoir with the Vicomte holding my hands, and I listening to him with a sort of exterior rapture. It is unheard of what our desire for revenge will make us swallow! I appeared to be annoyed at my husband's intrusion, and when the Count had departed, he made a scene. 'I assure you, monsieur,' I said to him, after I had listened to his reproaches, '*that it is purely moral.*' My husband understood, and ceased going to Madame de Fischtaminel's. I gave up Monsieur de Lustrac."

"But," I said, "Lustrac, whom you, like many other people, take for a bachelor, is a childless widower."

"What!"

"No man has ever buried his wife so completely; the Lord will not be able to find her on the day of judgment. He married before the Revolution, and your '*purely moral*' reminds me of one of his sayings that I must repeat to you.

Napoleon invested Lustrac with important functions in a conquered land; Madame de Lustrac, abandoned for the administration, took, although it was purely moral, a secretary to look after her private affairs; but she made the mistake of selecting him without advising her husband. Lustrac encountered this secretary at an early hour and excessively agitated, one day, for there had been a lively discussion in his wife's room. The town was delighted to be able to laugh at its governor, and the affair created such a sensation that Lustrac himself asked to be recalled. Napoleon laid great stress on the morality of his representatives, and, according to his ideas, stupidity discredited a man. You know that the Emperor, among all his unfortunate passions, had the passion of wanting to reform the morals of his court and his government. So Lustrac's request was granted, but without compensation. When he got back to Paris, he reappeared at his home with his wife; he went about with her, a thing which is certainly in keeping with the highest aristocratic tenets; but there will always be some inquisitive people. He was asked the reason for his chivalrous attitude. 'Are you and Madame de Lustrac on good terms again?' he was asked in the foyer of the Théâtre de l'Impératrice; have you forgiven everything? You have done right.' 'Oh!' he replied, with a satisfied expression, 'I acquired the conviction . . .' 'Ah! that she was innocent? You follow the rule.' 'No, I'm certain that it was purely physical.'"

Caroline smiled.

"The opinion of your admirer reduces this great trial, as in your own case, to small proportions."

"A petty trial," she cried, "and what do you think it was to coquet with Monsieur de Lustrac, who has become an enemy? Ah! women sometimes pay dearly for the flowers and attentions that are lavished upon them. Monsieur de Lustrac told Monsieur de Bougarel<sup>1</sup>: 'I shouldn't advise you to be attentive to that woman, she costs too much. . . .'"

<sup>1</sup>The same Ferdinand de Bougarel whose death has been recently deplored by politics, the arts, and love, according to the speech Adolph pronounced at his funeral.

## WITHOUT A PROFESSION.

“ You ask me, my dear mamma, whether I am happy with my husband. Most certainly Monsieur de Fischtaminel was not the man of my dreams. I submitted to your will, as you know. His wealth, this supreme reason, spoke loud enough. Not to give up my position, to marry Monsieur de Fischtaminel, who was endowed with an income of thirty thousand francs a year, and to remain in Paris, you had a great many arguments against your poor daughter. Well, Monsieur de Fischtaminel is not bad-looking for a man thirty-six years old; he was decorated by Napoleon on the battlefield, he is a former colonel, and, without the Restoration that has reduced him to half-pay, he would be a general: these things are extenuating circumstances.

“ A great many women think that I have married well, and I am bound to acknowledge that all the appearances of happiness are there . . . at least for the world. But you must admit that if you had known of Uncle Cyrus’s return and his intention of bequeathing his fortune to me, you would have given me the right to make my own choice.

“ I have nothing to say against Monsieur de Fischtaminel: he does not gamble, women are indifferent to him, he does not care for wine, and has no ruinous hobbies; as you said, he possesses all the negative qualities which make husbands tolerable; but what is the matter with him? Well, dear mamma, he is unoccupied. We are together all the livelong day! . . . Would you believe that it is at night, when we are nearest to one another, that I am able to be most free from him? My slumber is my only refuge, my freedom begins when he is asleep. Why, this obsession will make me ill. I am never alone. If Monsieur de Fischtaminel were jealous, there might be a way out. It would then be a struggle, a little comedy; but how could the aconite of jealousy have blossomed in his soul? He has never left me since our marriage. He feels no shame in lying down on a couch and staying there for hours.

“ Two convicts riveted to the same chain are not bored; they have their escape to think about. But we have no

subject of conversation, we have said all we have to say. Some time ago he had to resort to discussing politics. Politics is exhausted, as, for my misfortune, Napoleon, as everyone knows, has died in Saint-Helena.

“Monsieur de Fischtaminel despises books. If he catches me reading, he will come up and inquire ten times in half an hour:

“ ‘Nina, my dear, have you finished?’

“I have tried to persuade this innocent persecutor to ride horseback every day, and I have brought up the supreme argument for men of forty, his health! But he told me that, after having spent twelve years on horseback, he felt that he needed a rest.

“My husband, mother dear, is a man who absorbs you; he consumes his neighbor’s vital fluid, his *ennui* is greedy; he likes to be amused by the people who come to see us, and after five years of married life, nobody comes any more; we only see people whose intentions are evidently contrary to his honor, and who attempt, without success, to amuse him, in order to have the right of boring his wife.

“Monsieur de Fischtaminel, mother dear, opens the door of my room five or six times in an hour, and comes to me with a bustling manner to inquire:

“ ‘Well, *ma belle* (an expression of the Empire), what are you doing?’ without noticing the repetition of this question, which becomes for me what the pint of water that the executioner used in the water torture, became to the victim.

“Another torture! We cannot go out together. A walk without conversation and interest is impossible. My husband walks with me for exercise, as if he were by himself. I have the fatigue without the pleasure.

“The interval between arising and *déjeuner* is taken up by my toilet, by household duties, and I can stand this part of the day; but between lunch and dinner it is like plowing a field, or crossing the desert. My husband’s idleness does not give me a minute’s rest, he kills me with his uselessness, his idleness exhausts me. He keeps his eyes on me all the time, and compels me to lower my lids. Finally his monotonous questions: ‘What time is it, *ma belle*?—What are you

doing there?—What are you thinking of?—What do you intend to do?—Where shall we go to-night?—What news?—Oh! what weather!—I do not feel well,' etc., etc.; all these variations of the same thing (the question mark), that compose the Fischtaminel *répertoire*, drive me mad.

“Add to these arrows which are aimed at me incessantly, a last dart which will depict my happiness to you, and you will be able to understand what my life is.

“Monsieur de Fischtaminel, who was a sub-lieutenant in 1809, when he was eighteen years old, has no other education than the one he owes to discipline and his honor as an aristocrat and a soldier; although he is tactful, and possesses the sentiment of probity, of subordination, he is horribly ignorant, knows absolutely nothing, and has a dread of learning anything. Oh! mother dear, what a splendid *concierge* this colonel would have made had he been poor! I give him no credit for his courage; he did not battle against the Russians, nor against the Austrians, nor the Prussians, he was battling against *ennui*. When he threw himself on the enemy, Captain Fischtaminel only wanted to get away from his own society. He married out of sheer idleness.

“Another little inconvenience: monsieur annoys the servants so, that we have to change every six months.

“I have such a desire, mother dear, to be a ‘nice’ woman that I am going to travel six months out of the year. In the winter, I shall go to the Italiens every night, to the Opéra, and to social functions; but is our fortune large enough to cover such expenditures? My Uncle Cyrus should come to Paris; I would take care of him as if he were a legacy.

“If you can find a remedy for my woes, let your daughter know of it, your daughter who loves you as much as she is wretched, and who would like to be called anything but

“NINA FISCHTAMINEL.”

Besides the necessity of depicting this petty trial, which could only be depicted by a woman, and what a woman! it was necessary to make you acquainted with the woman whom you have only seen in profile, in Part First of this book, the



queen of the particular circle in which Caroline moves, the envied and clever woman who, at an early date, was able to conciliate her debt to society with the dictates of her heart. This letter is her absolution.

#### THE INDISCRETIONS.

Women are either chaste,—or vain,—or simply proud.—Therefore, all of them can be affected by the following petty trial:

Some husbands are so delighted to have a woman of their own, a thing which is solely due to legality, that they fear the public may labor under a misapprehension, and they hasten to label their wives, as wood-dealers mark their logs, and the cattle-raisers of Berri mark their sheep. Before the whole world they lavish on their wives in Roman fashion (*columbella*), nicknames that have been borrowed from the animal kingdom, and they call them: “*ma poule,—ma chatte,—mon rat,—mon petit lapin*”; or, passing to the vegetable kingdom, call them: “*mon chou,—ma figue,—*(this last only in Provence), *ma prune*” (this only in Alsace), and never “*ma fleur*,” pray note this discretion:

Or, what is graver, “*ma bobonne,—ma mère,—ma fille,—la bourgeoise,—ma vieille*” (when the wife is very young).

Some husbands choose nicknames of doubtful propriety, like: “*Mon bichon,—Ma niche,—Tronquette.*”

We once heard one of our political men, all the more noticeable on account of his ugliness, call his wife *moumoutte!*

“I would rather,” said the unfortunate woman to a neighbor, “have him strike me!”

“Poor little woman, she is very unhappy!” said the neighbor to me, when Moumoutte had departed; “when she goes out with her husband, she is on needles and pins; she avoids him. Didn’t he even, one night, put his arm around her neck and say: ‘Come, now, *ma grosse!*’”

It is said that the cause of a very famous poison case, a husband who was killed with arsenic, came from the continual indiscretions that the wife had to bear in public. The husband used to pat and caress the wife he had won at the point of the Code, plant resounding kisses on her cheeks, and dis-

grace her with his public demonstrations of tenderness, seasoned with those coarse fatuities, the secret of which belongs to those French savages that live in the rural districts, and whose habits are still little known, in spite of the efforts of novel-writing naturalists.

It was this shocking situation which, appreciated by clever jurors, gave the accused a verdict mitigated by extenuating circumstances.

The jurors said to themselves:

“To punish these conjugal misdemeanors with death is going a little too far; but a woman who is so molested is very excusable! . . .”

We infinitely regret, in the interest of good manners, that these reasons are not generally known. Therefore, may the Lord give this book a great success, so that women may be treated as they should be, like queens.

In this respect, love is far superior to marriage; it is proud of indiscretions, and certain women look for them, prepare them, and woe to the man who does not permit himself some!

What passion in a stray *tu!*

I once heard, it was in the provinces, a husband call his wife: “*ma berline*” . . . She was quite delighted with this appellation, and saw nothing ridiculous in it; she called him “*mon fiston!*” . . . This delightful couple completely ignored the existence of petty trials.

It was while studying this happy pair that the following axiom came to the author:

#### AXIOM.

*In order to be happily married, one must either be a man of genius united to a clever and tender woman, or else, through the effect of a chance which is not as common as one might suppose, husband and wife must both be extremely stupid.*

The story, too well-known, of the arsenic cure for wounded vanity, proves that, properly speaking, there are no such things as “petty” trials in married life, for women.

## AXIOM.

*A woman lives through her feelings where a man lives by action.*

Now, sentiment can, any moment, transform a petty trial into a great misfortune, a ruined life, or eternal unhappiness.

If Caroline, by her ignorance of life and the ways of the world, causes her husband some trials in the beginning (read over *THE DISCOVERIES*), Adolph has, like all men, the compensations of society; he comes and goes at will, and besides, has his business to attend to. But, for Caroline, there is only one thing; to love or not to love, to be loved or not to be loved.

Indiscretions harmonize with characters, times, and places. Two examples will suffice.

This is the first one. By his very nature, man is dirty and ugly; he is badly put together and repulsive. There are some men, wealthy ones, too, who, through some unobserved constitution, can soil new clothes in a day. They were born disgusting. It is, in a word, so discreditable to a woman to be solely the wife of an Adolph of this sort, that, for a long time, one Caroline had demanded the suppression of the modern *tutoiement*, and all the insignia of wifely dignity. The world, since five or six years, had become accustomed to this, and believed monsieur and madame very much separated, inasmuch as it had noticed the advent of a Ferdinand II.

One evening, in the presence of a number of people, monsieur said to his wife:

“Caroline, hand me the tongs!”

It was nothing, and still it meant a great deal. It was a domestic revolution.

Monsieur de Lustrac, the *Amadis-Omnibus*, hastened to Madame de Fischtaminel's and related this little scene as wittily as he knew how, and Madame de Fischtaminel put on a little Célimène air and said:

“Poor woman! to what an extremity she has been reduced!”

“Bah! we will have the key to this riddle in eight months from now,” replied an old lady, whose only remaining pleasure was to say malicious things.

We shall not mention Caroline’s embarrassment, for you have already guessed it.

This is the second one. Judge of the position of a fastidious woman who was conversing agreeably at her country seat with a dozen or more people, when her husband’s valet entered the room and whispered in her ear:

“Monsieur has just arrived, madame.”

“Very well, Benoît.”

Everyone had heard the approach of the carriage. They all knew that monsieur had been in Paris since Monday, and this was four o’clock in the afternoon on Saturday.

“He has something important to say to madame,” continued Benoît.

Although this dialogue was held in whispered tones, it was intelligible, inasmuch as the hostess’s face turned from a delicate pink to a poppy flush. She nodded, continued the conversation, and found a means of leaving her company under the pretext of finding out whether her husband had succeeded in some important enterprise; but she was manifestly annoyed at Adolph’s lack of regard for her guests.

During their youth, women want to be treated as if they were divinities; they worship the ideal: they cannot tolerate the thought of being what nature intended them to be.

Some husbands act even worse, when they return from a trip: they greet their guests, put their arms around their wives’ waists, and seemingly engaging them in confidential conversation, they wander toward some lonely arbor, from which they emerge half an hour afterward.

This, mesdames, is a real trial for a young wife; but for those among you who have passed the age of forty, these indiscretions are so welcome that the most prudish women are flattered by them; for:

In their last youth, women wish to be treated like mortals, and are fond of the positive in life: they cannot tolerate the idea that they are no longer what nature intended them to be.

## AXIOM.

*Modesty is a relative virtue: there is the modesty of twenty, of thirty, and of forty-five.*

Therefore, the author once said to a woman who asked him how old he thought she was:

“Madame, your age is the age of indiscretions.”

This charming young person of thirty-nine summers was displaying a Ferdinand altogether too prominently, while her daughter was endeavoring to conceal her Ferdinand I.

## BRUTAL REVELATIONS.

FIRST KIND.—Caroline worships Adolph,—she thinks he is handsome,—she thinks he is magnificent, especially in the uniform of the Garde National,—she quivers when a sentinel salutes him,—she thinks he has the figure of a model,—everything he does is right,—no man has better taste than Adolph;—in a word, she is mad about Adolph.

It is the old story of Love’s blindfold, which is laundered every ten years and embroidered anew by custom, but which, since the olden times of Greece, has always been the same.

Caroline is at a ball, talking to one of her friends. A man known for his jovial manners, and whom she is to meet later, but whom she now sees for the first time, Monsieur Foullepointe, comes up to greet Caroline’s friend. According to the ethics of society, Caroline listens to this conversation without joining in it.

“Do tell me, madame,” says Monsieur Foullepointe, “who that funny man is, who has just been speaking about the court of assizes before a gentleman whose acquittal caused such a stir; who tramples like an ox through everybody’s critical business? Madame So-and-So burst out crying because he was telling of the death of a child, when you know that she lost one only two months ago.”

“Whom do you mean?”

“That fat man, dressed like a waiter, whose hair is curled like a barber’s . . . there, the one who is trying to impress Madame de Fischtaminel! . . .”

“Do stop!” whispered the lady in a frightened tone, “that’s the husband of the little woman next to me!”

“Is that your husband, madame?” said Monsieur Foullepointe, “I am delighted. He is charming, so clever and lively. I shall hasten to become acquainted with him.”

And Foullepointe beats a hasty retreat, leaving in Caroline’s soul a harrowing suspicion relating to *whether her husband is as nice as she thinks he is.*

SECOND KIND.—Caroline, annoyed at the reputation of Madame la Baronne de Schinner, who is credited with epistolary talent and called *the Sévigné of the short note*; at Madame de Fischtaminel, who took the liberty of writing a little 32mo book on the education of young girls, in which she bravely reprinted Fénelon, less his style;—Caroline spends six months on a story ten leagues below Berquin’s standard, of disgusting morality and stilted style.

After all sorts of intrigues such as women know how to weave in the interest of their conceit, the tenacity and perfection of which would lead you to believe that they have a third sex in their heads, this story, called *Le Mélilot*, appears in three installments in a large daily paper. It is signed: Samuel Crux.

At breakfast, when Adolph picks up the paper, Caroline’s heart is in her mouth; she grows pale, flushes, looks away, and gazes at the ceiling. As soon as Adolph’s eyes encounter the story, she rises and disappears, unable to stand the strain. When she comes back again, she has found her courage, no one knows where.

“Is there a story this morning?” she inquires in a tone she believes is indifferent, but which would worry any husband who was still jealous of his wife.

“Yes, by a beginner, Samuel Crux. Oh! it is a pseudonym; the story is as flat as it can be . . . and frightfully vulgar! . . . it is mush; but it is . . .”

Caroline takes hope.

“It is? . . .” says she.

“It is incomprehensible,” rejoins Adolph. “Chodoreille must have been paid five or six thousand francs to insert the

thing . . . or it is the work of some fashionable blue-stock-  
ing who has promised to patronize Madame Chodoreille, or  
maybe it is by some woman in whom the manager is in-  
terested. . . . Such a thing cannot be explained in any  
other way. . . . Just imagine, Caroline, it is all about a  
little flower that was picked during a sentimental walk, and  
that a man of Werther's type had promised to keep. He  
has it framed, and it is claimed after eleven years. . . .  
(The poor wretch may have moved three times!) It is about  
as new as if it dated from Sterne or Gessner. What makes  
me think the author is a woman, is that their first literary  
idea is to revenge themselves on someone. . . ."

Adolph might continue to flay *Le Mûlilot*. Caroline's  
ears are ringing, and she is in the same position as a woman  
who has thrown herself from the Pont des Arts and is trying  
to find her way ten feet below the level of the Seine.

ANOTHER KIND.—Caroline, in her paroxysms of jealousy,  
has ended by discovering one of Adolph's hiding-places in  
which he, distrusting his wife, and knowing that she opens  
his letters and searches his desk, has tried to keep his cor-  
respondence with Hector from falling into the greedy hands  
of the conjugal police.

Hector is a college friend, who is married and lives in  
Loire-Inférieure.

Adolph raises the edge of the cover on his writing-table,  
a cover which Caroline has embroidered on a background  
of blue, black, or red velvet; the color, as you will see, is  
perfectly immaterial, and he slides his letters to Madame de  
Fischtaminel and to his friend Hector under it.

The thickness of a sheet of paper is a little thing, velvet  
is a very soft, discreet fabric. . . . Well, his precautions  
are useless. Match a male devil against a female one! Hades  
contains all kinds. Caroline has Mephistopheles on her side,  
that fiend who can make fire spring from any table and who,  
with his sarcastic finger, indicates the hiding-places of keys,  
and the secret of secrets!

Caroline has noticed the thickness of a sheet of note paper  
between the velvet cover and the table; she finds a letter ad-

dressed to Hector instead of to Madame de Fischtaminel, who is taking the cure at Plombières, and this is what she reads :

“ MY DEAR HECTOR :

“ I am sorry for you, but you are acting wisely by confiding in me and telling me the difficulties you have gotten yourself into willingly. You could not see the difference which distinguishes the provincial woman from the Parisienne. In the provinces, my dear chap, you are always face to face with your wife, and, through the *ennui* which pursues you, you throw yourself recklessly into happiness. It is a great mistake: happiness is a precipice, and when you have once reached the bottom, you cannot climb up again.

“ You shall see why: allow me, on account of your wife, to take the shortest cut, the parable.

“ I recall a trip I once made in a *coucou* from Paris to Ville-Paris: distance, seven miles; a heavy coach and a very lame horse; coachman, a boy of eleven. In this old box were myself and an old soldier. Nothing gives me so much amusement as to extract from everyone I meet, with the help of the forceps called the interrogation point, and to receive with a rapt and jubilant expression, the sum of instruction, of stories and learning which everybody wants to get rid of; and everyone has his sum, the peasant as well as the banker, the corporal as well as the marshal of France.

“ I have noticed how eager these barrels of wit are to empty themselves, when they are carted by mail-coaches or *coucous*, by any of the conveyances drawn by horses, for nobody wants to talk in a railroad carriage.

“ From the manner in which the start from Paris was made, the trip was going to take us seven hours: so I made the corporal talk to amuse me. He could neither read nor write, and everything was consequently new. Well, the trip seemed short. The corporal had been in all the battles, and he told me unheard of facts, things which are never reported by the historians.

“ Oh! my dear Hector, how much better is practice than theory! Among other things, and after one of my questions concerning the wretched infantry, whose courage consists



more in marching than in fighting, he told me the following, which I shall strip of all circumlocution:

“ ‘Monsieur, when Parisians were brought to our 45th, which Napoleon had nicknamed the *Terrible* (I am telling you about the first campaigns of the Emperor, when the infantry had legs of steel, and we needed them), I had a way of knowing those who were going to stay in the 45th. . . . They were the ones who walked slowly, did their six leagues a day, no more, or less, and who reached camp ready to begin all over again the next day. The brave ones, who walked ten leagues and who were wild to rush to victory, stayed at the hospitals on the way.’

“ The good man was talking marriage, though he believed he was talking war, and you are laid up in the wayside hospital, my dear Hector.

“ Remember Madame de Sévigné’s complaint when she was handing out one hundred thousand *écus* to Monsieur de Grignan in order to make him marry one of the prettiest girls in France:

“ ‘But,’ she said to herself, ‘he will have to marry her every day, as long as she lives! Surely, one hundred thousand francs is not too much!’

“ Well, wouldn’t it make the bravest tremble?

“ My dear comrade, conjugal bliss is based, like the happiness of nations, on ignorance. It is a felicity full of negative conditions.

“ If I am happy with my little Caroline, it is because of the strict observance of the salutary principle the *Physiology of Marriage* laid such stress upon. I have made up my mind to lead my wife through paths of snow, until the happy day when unfaithfulness will have become very difficult.

“ In the position in which you have put yourself, and which resembles the one in which Duprez found himself, when, at his *début* in Paris, he took into his head to sing at the top of his voice, instead of imitating Nourrit, who produced only just enough sound to charm his audiences, I believe that the road to follow . . .”

The letter ended there; Caroline put it back, dreaming of

how she could make Adolph expiate his obedience to the despicable principles of the *Physiology of Marriage*.

#### POSTPONEMENTS.

This trial must happen frequently and diversely enough in the lives of married women, to make of this personal experience a prototype of its kind.

The Caroline in question here is very pious, and she is very much in love with her husband, in fact, the husband avers that she is too much in love with him; but that is only marital vanity, if not a provocation: he only complains to his wife's young friends.

When the Catholic conscience is involved, everything assumes extreme gravity. Madame de ——— has told her young friend, Madame de Fischtaminel, that she had been compelled to make a most extraordinary confession to her religious adviser, as her confessor had decided that she had committed a mortal sin. This lady, who goes to Mass every morning, is a woman thirty-six years old, thin and slightly pimpled. She has large, soft eyes, and a downy upper lip; nevertheless, she has a pleasing voice, gentle manners, and a noble bearing; she is a woman of quality.

These details are necessary to make you grasp this little trial in all its horror.

The Adolph had been compelled to leave his wife for two months, in April, just after the Lenten season that Caroline observes so strictly. Finally, always hoping:

*Hopes formed in the morning, to be shattered at night,*  
she reached Sunday, the day when her forebodings, which had come to a climax, told her that her husband, so desired, would be home early.

When a pious woman awaits her husband, and this husband has been away from home four months, she makes a toilet infinitely more elaborate than that of a girl awaiting her first lover. •

This virtuous Caroline was so completely absorbed in her entirely personal preparations that she forgot to attend the eight o'clock Mass. She had made up her mind to go

to a low Mass, but she was mortally afraid of losing the delights of the first glance, if her dear Adolph happened to return early in the morning. Her maid, who respectfully left her alone in her *cabinet de toilette*, where pious and pimpled women admit no one, not even their husbands, especially if they are thin, her maid heard her call three times:

“If monsieur should come, let me know!”

The rumbling of a carriage having made the furniture tremble, Caroline assumed a gentle tone in order to conceal her legitimate emotion.

“Oh! he has come! Run, Justine! tell him that I am waiting for him here.”

Caroline sank into a chair, for her limbs shook.

It was a butcher’s cart.

It was in this way that the eight o’clock Mass slipped by, like an eel in the mire. Madame continued to dress, for she had just reached that stage in her preparations. The maid had already received in her face, pitched from the *cabinet de toilette*, a plain chemise of beautiful batiste, similar to the ones she had been giving her mistress for the past three months.

“What are you thinking of, Justine? I told you to give me a chemise that was not numbered.”

The unnumbered chemises were not more than seven or eight in all, like in the most gorgeous trousseaux. They are chemises embellished with all sorts of laces and ornamentations; a woman must be a queen, a young queen, in order to own a dozen. Each one of madame’s was edged with valenciennes, and daintily trimmed at the top. This detail of our customs will perhaps give the masculine world an inkling of the intimate drama that this exceptional chemise reveals.

Caroline had put on stockings of Scotch yarn, and little cloth shoes, and her most deceiving corset. She had her maid dress her hair in the most becoming fashion and set a very dainty cap on her head. It is useless to mention her morning-gown. A pious woman who lives in Paris and is in love with her husband, can choose, just as well as a coquette, those pretty little striped materials cut like a frock coat,

and fastened with frogs which call for adjustment two or three times in an hour, with more or less charming ways on the part of the wearer.

The nine o'clock Mass, the ten o'clock Mass, all the Masses were missed in these preparations which, for loving women, are like one of the twelve labors of Hercules.

Pious women rarely go to church in a carriage, and they are right. Excepting in case of a downpour and intolerably bad weather, one should not be proud in a place where one should be humble. So Caroline feared to harm the suavity of her costume and the freshness of her shoes and stockings. Alas! these pretexts concealed a reason.

"If I should be in church when Adolph arrives, I would lose all the benefit of his first glance: he will think that I prefer High Mass to him. . . ."

She made this sacrifice in order to please her husband, a dreadfully worldly interest: to prefer the creature to the Creator! a husband to the Lord! Go listen to a sermon, and you will know the cost of such a sin.

"After all, society," says madame to herself, according to her confessor, "is based on marriage, which the Church numbers among its sacraments."

And this is how one can garble, for the benefit of a blind, though legitimate, love, the tenets of religion. Madame refused to breakfast, and ordered the meal to be held in readiness, as she kept herself in readiness to receive the beloved absent one.

All these little things may excite merriment: but, in the first place, they happen to all people who worship one another, or one of whom worships the other; then, in a woman so contained and reserved and dignified as this lady, those admissions of tenderness went beyond all the limits imposed on her feelings by the great self-respect which true piety imparts. When Madame de Fischtaminel related this little scene and adorned it with comical details, acted as women of the world know how to enact their stories, I took the liberty of telling her that it was the Song of Songs put into action.

"If monsieur does not come soon," said Justine to the

chef, "what will become of us! . . . Madame has already thrown her chemise in my face."

At last Caroline heard the cracking of the outrider's whip, the well-known rumble of a traveling coach, the noise made by trotting horses, the bells! . . . Oh! she did not doubt for an instant, the bells made her burst forth.

"The door! do open the door! monsieur is here! . . . They are not going to open that door! . . ."

And the pious woman stamped her foot and broke the bell-rope.

"But, madame," said Justine, with the quickness of a servant who does her duty, "those were people going away."

"Well," said Caroline to herself shamefacedly, "I shall never let Adolph travel again without me. . . ."

A Marseilles poet (we do not know whether it was Méry or Barthélemy) acknowledged that when dinner hour drew near, if his best friend was not on hand promptly, he would wait patiently for five minutes; after waiting ten minutes he felt like throwing his napkin in his friend's face; after waiting twelve, he wished that some great misfortune might befall him; after waiting fifteen, he could not help feeling as if he would like to stab him.

All waiting women are Marseilles poets, if, however, one can compare the vulgar gnawings of hunger to the sublime Song of Songs of a Catholic wife awaiting the first glance of a husband who has been absent for three months. May all those who love and who have been reunited after a hateful absence, remember their first glance: it says so much, that often, finding one's self in the presence of unwelcome guests, one has to lower one's eyes! . . . They are so full of ardor, that each of you fears the other! . . . This poem, in which every man is as great as Homer, in which he appears to the woman who loves him in the guise of a god, is all the more wonderful for a pious, thin, and pimpled woman, who has not, like Madame de Fischtaminel, the resource of having several copies of it! For her, a husband is everything.

Therefore, do not be surprised to learn that Caroline missed every Mass and went without breakfast. The hunger to see Adolph, her hopes, violently contracted her stomach.

Not once did she think of God during Mass time or Vespers. She felt strange, her limbs were shaky. Justine advised her to go to bed. Caroline, conquered, retired about half-past five in the afternoon, after having partaken of a light broth; but she gave orders to have a nice little repast in readiness for ten o'clock.

"I will, in all likelihood, have supper with monsieur," she said.

These words were the culmination of inward and terrific fulminations: she had reached the stabbing stage of the Marseilles poet; and they were uttered in a terrible voice. At three o'clock in the morning, when Adolph arrived, Caroline was sound asleep, having heard neither the coach, nor the horses, nor the bells, nor the clanging of the door! . . .

Adolph gave orders not to awaken madame, and slept in the guest chamber. When Caroline, in the morning, learned of Adolph's arrival, two tears coursed down her cheeks; she ran to the guest chamber without making any preparations; on the threshold of the room, a horrid servant told her that, as monsieur had traveled two hundred miles and had spent two sleepless nights, he had expressed a wish not to be disturbed: he was exceedingly tired.

Caroline, pious woman that she was, violently opened the door, without managing to awaken the only husband that Heaven had given her, and then she ran to church to hear a Mass of thanks.

As madame was visibly ruffled for three days, Justine, with the astuteness of a maid, replied to an unjust reproach with the following:

"Still, madame, monsieur has returned!"

"As yet he has only returned to Paris," said the pious Caroline.

#### USELESS ATTENTIONS.

Put yourself in the place of a poor woman of questionable good looks,—who owes her long desired husband to the size of her marriage portion,—who gives herself a great deal of trouble, and spends much money to appear at her best

and follow the fashions,—who devotes herself to the perfect and economical management of her rather elaborate household,—who, for the sake of religion and even necessity, loves only her husband,—who has no other thought than the happiness of this precious one,—who unites the maternal sentiment *to the sentiment of her duties*, to express the entire situation. The italicized words are the paraphrase of the word love, in a prude's vocabulary.

Do you understand? Well, this beloved husband happened to say, while dining at his friend's, Monsieur de Fischtaminel, that he liked mushrooms cooked in the Italian style.

If you have studied, however slightly, what is best, greatest, and finest in a woman's nature, you know that, for a loving woman, there is no keener delight than to see the loved one gobbling his favorite dishes. This is based on the fundamental idea which underlies feminine affection: to be the source of all pleasure, great and small, to the object of one's love. Love animates everything in life, and conjugal love has a greater right than any other love to descend into the smallest recesses.

Caroline has to spend two or three days trying to find out how the Italians cook mushrooms. She discovers a Corsican abbé who informs her that at Biffi's, Rue Richelieu, not only will she learn how to prepare mushrooms *à l'italienne*, but she will be able to get Milanese mushrooms. Our pious Caroline thanks Abbé Serpolini, and decides that she will send him a breviary as a token of gratitude.

Caroline's chef goes to Biffi's, returns from Biffi's, and shows Madame la Comtesse mushrooms that are as big as coachmen's ears.

"Ah! very well!" she says, "and did he tell you exactly how to prepare them?"

"That is a very easy matter for a chef!" the cook replies.

As a rule, cooks know everything about cooking, save how cooks can steal.

At dinner, after the first course, Caroline quivers with pleasure at the sight of a certain *timbale* which the butler brings in. She has really looked forward to this dinner as she looked forward to her husband.

But, between waiting with a feeling of certainty, and expecting a certain pleasure, there exists, for great souls, and all physiologists include among these a woman who worships her husband, there exists between these two modes of expectation the difference that exists between a fine night and a fine day.

The *timbale* is passed to Adolph who, without noticing Caroline's emotion, carelessly helps himself to some of those fat, soft mushrooms which, for a long time, are not recognized by the tourists who come to Milan, and are taken for some kind of mollusks.

"Well, Adolph?"

"Well, my dear?"

"Don't you recognize them?"

"What?"

"Your mushrooms cooked in Italian style."

"These, mushrooms? I thought. . . . Why, yes, they are mushrooms. . . ."

"*A l'italienne!*"

"These are old preserved Milanese mushrooms. . . . I hate them."

"What kind do you like?"

"*Fungi trifolati.*"

Here we remark that, to the shame of a period which puts a label on everything, which bottles the entire creation, and which, at the present time, is classifying one hundred and fifty thousand species of insects and designating them by *us*, so that, in no matter what land, a *silbermanus* will mean the same thing for all the scientists who, with pincers, bend and unbend the legs of insects, we lack a fitting nomenclature for the chemistry of cooking, which would permit the cooks of the whole world to make their dishes exactly alike. We should agree diplomatically that the French language is to be the language of cookery, just as scientists have adopted Latin for botany and entomology, unless we want to ape them entirely and have Latin for our cookery.

"Why! my dear," continues Adolph, noticing that the countenance of his chaste spouse has become somewhat elongated and yellow, "in France we call this dish mush-



rooms *à l'italienne*, *à la provençale*, *à la bordelaise*; the mushrooms are chopped and fried in oil with some ingredients, the names of which I cannot recall. I think you add a touch of garlic. . . .”

You speak of disasters, petty trials! . . . This, you see, is for a woman's heart what an aching tooth is for a child of eight. *Ab uno disce omnes*, which means: One! Search among your reminiscences for the others; for we have taken this culinary description as a prototype of those which hurt the women who love and who are poorly rewarded.

#### SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE.

The woman who has perfect faith in the man she loves is a conception of the novelist. This feminine personage does not exist any more than does the rich marriage portion. *Fiancées* have remained, but the marriage portions have imitated the kings. A woman's confidence may shine for a few minutes, at the dawn of love, but it dies out like a shooting star.

For any woman who is neither Dutch, nor English, nor Belgian, nor of any other marshy country, love is a pretext for suffering, an outlet for the superabundant vitality of her imagination and nerves.

Therefore, the second thought that comes to a happy woman, a woman who is loved, is the fear of losing her happiness; for we must do her the justice to state that her first thought is to enjoy it. All people who possess a treasure fear thieves; but, unlike a woman, they do not think that their gold is going to walk or fly away.

The little blue flower of perfect bliss is not common enough for the man, blessed by the Lord, who holds it, to be so foolish as to give it up.

#### AXIOM.

*No woman is ever forsaken without a reason.*

This axiom is written in the heart of every woman, and thence comes the fury of the forsaken woman.

Do not let us encroach upon the petty trials of love; we

live in a mercenary time, where men do not leave women, no matter what the latter do; for, of all women, the lawful wife (be it said without pun) is the least dear. Now, every woman who is loved, has passed through the petty trial of suspicion. This suspicion, rightful or false, gives birth to a great many domestic troubles, and this one is the greatest of all.

One day, Caroline notices that her cherished Adolph absents himself too frequently on some business, the eternal Chaumontel affair, which never ends.

#### AXIOM.

*Every household has its Chaumontel affair.* (See MISERY IN MISERY.)

In the first place, a woman believes no more in *business* than theatrical managers and publishers believe in the illnesses of actresses and writers.

Just as soon as a man who is loved by a woman goes away, no matter if she has heaped felicity upon him, she imagines that he is rushing to some other delight that is awaiting him.

In this respect, women endow men with superhuman faculties. Fear enlarges everything, it dilates the eyes and the heart; it makes a woman insane.

“Where does monsieur go?—What does monsieur do?—Why does he leave me?—Why doesn’t he take me along?”

These four questions are the four cardinal points of the rose of suspicion, and rule the tempestuous ocean of soliloquy. The result of these awful storms which ravage women, is the ignoble, unworthy resolve that every woman, the duchess as well as the *bourgeoise*, the baroness as well as the stockbroker’s wife, the angel as well as the shrew, the unmindful one as well as the passionate one, puts into action immediately. They all imitate the government, they spy. What the State has thought out for the protection of all, they find legitimate, permissible, and legal in the interest of their love. This fatal curiosity of woman makes it neces-

sary for her to have agents; and the agent of any woman who retains some self-respect in this position, in which jealousy leaves her respect for nothing:

Neither your strong-box,—nor your clothes,—nor the drawers of your table, desk, or chiffonier—nor your secret portfolios,—nor your personal papers,—nor your traveling-bags,—nor your toilet (a woman discovers then that her husband dyed his mustaches when he was single, that he has kept the letters of a former mistress who is very dangerous, that he holds her in this way, etc., etc.),—nor your elastic belts;

Well, her agent, the only one a woman trusts, is her maid, for her maid understands her, excuses her, and approves of her.

In this climax of curiosity and passion and jealousy, a woman never stops to calculate, she sees nothing, SHE WANTS TO KNOW ALL.

And Justine is delighted; she figures that her mistress will compromise herself with her, she espouses her passion, her terrors, her fears and her suspicions with an alarming friendliness. Justine and Caroline hold conferences and secret conversations. Any spying implies these relations. In a case like this the maid becomes the arbiter of the fate of a married couple. Example: Lord Byron.

“Madame,” Justine says to her mistress one day, “monsieur does go out to visit a woman. . . .”

Caroline grows pale.

“But madame need have no fear, it is an old woman. . . .”

“Ah! Justine, there are no old women for some men, men are inexplicable.”

“But, madame, she’s not a lady, she’s a common person, a woman of the lower classes.”

“Ah! Justine, in Venice, Lord Byron loved a jade, little Madame de Fischtaminel told me so.”

And Caroline bursts into tears.

“I made Benoît talk.”

“Well, what does Benoît think? . . .”

“Benoît thinks that this woman is a go-between, for monsieur lets no one into his secret, not even Benoît.”

For eight days Caroline lives in Hades, all her savings go to pay for spies and reports.

Finally, Justine calls on the woman, a Madame Mahuchet, seduces her, and learns that monsieur's youthful follies produced a witness, a fruit, a lovely little boy that looks like his father, and that the woman is the nurse, the foster-mother of little Frédéric, the woman who pays his college board, through whose hands pass the one thousand to twelve hundred francs that monsieur is supposed to lose every year in gambling.

"What about the mother?" cries Caroline.

Finally, the astute Justine, the providence of madame, proves to the latter that Mademoiselle Suzanne Beauminet, a former *grisette* who became Madame Sainte-Suzanne, died at La Salpêtrière, or else made a fortune, and married in the provinces, or is in such a lowly condition that it is not probable that madame will ever meet her.

Caroline breathes again, the knife has been removed from her heart and she is happy; but she has only girls, and she would like a boy. This little drama of unjust suspicion, the comedy of all the surmises that a *Mère* Mahuchet gives rise to, these phases of wrongful jealousy, are given here as the type of this situation, whose variations are as numerous as are characters, ranks, and species.

This source of trial is indicated here so that all women sitting on this shore may watch the current of their conjugal lives, follow it up or down, find their secret adventures, unpublished woes, the strangeness that made them err, and the particular fatalities to which they owe instants of rage, useless despair, sufferings that might have been avoided, happy, all of them, to have been mistaken! . . .

This petty trial's corollary is the following one, which is much more serious and often cannot be remedied, especially as its cause resides in vices of another kind and which are beyond our province, for, in this work, woman is supposed always to be virtuous . . . until the *dénouement*.

## THE DOMESTIC TYRANT.

“My dear Caroline,” says Adolph to his wife one day, “are you satisfied with Justine?”

“Why, yes, *mon ami*.”

“Don’t you think she speaks to you in a disrespectful manner?”

“As if I paid any attention to a maid? It appears, though, that you do!”

“Beg pardon? . . .” says Adolph, with an indignant air which always delights a woman.

Indeed, Justine is a real theatrical maid, a girl of thirty, whom an attack of smallpox left with a thousand dimples far from bewitching. She is as dark as opium, has long legs and a short waist, and is cross-eyed, and badly built. She would like to marry Benoît, for she has ten thousand francs; but at this unexpected attack, Benoît gave notice. Such is the pen picture of the domestic tyrant whom Caroline’s jealousy has put in power.

Justine has her coffee in bed, and manages to have it as good, if not better, than madame’s. Sometimes Justine goes out without asking leave to do so, and she dresses like the wife of a second-rate banker. She wears a pink bonnet, an old dress of madame’s made over, a fine shawl, bronze shoes, and paste jewels.

Sometimes Justine is ill-humored, and makes her mistress feel that she, Justine, is as much of a woman as Caroline, without being married. She has her *brown studies*, her whims, her days of depression. In fact, she dares to have nerves! . . . She gives curt answers, she cannot get along with the other servants, and, last of all, her wages have been greatly increased.

“My dear, that girl becomes more intolerable every day,” says Adolph to his wife one day, after having caught Justine in the act of eavesdropping, “and if you do not send her away, I shall do so myself! . . .”

Caroline, in alarm, is compelled to scold Justine during Adolph’s absence.

“Justine, you are taking advantage of my kindness to

you: you are making fine wages, you have quite some profits and presents; try and remain here, for monsieur wants to discharge you."

The maid humiliates herself and weeps; she is so attached to madame! Ah! she would pass through fire for her, she would let herself be cut to pieces; she is willing to do anything.

"If you had anything to hide, madame, I would take the blame on my own shoulders."

"That is all very well, Justine," says Caroline in alarm; "that is not the question; only know enough to keep your place."

"So!" says Justine to herself, "monsieur wants to discharge me. . . . Just you wait, you old codger, I'll make your life miserable!"

A week later, while doing her mistress's hair, Justine peeks into the mirror so as to be sure that madame can see all the faces she makes; and in a very little while Caroline asks:

"Why, what is the matter, Justine?"

"I would tell madame quickly enough what is the matter, only madame is so weak with monsieur. . . ."

"Well, go ahead, tell me!"

"I know very well, madame, why monsieur wishes to discharge me: monsieur has confidence in no one but Benoît, and Benoît is close-mouthed with me. . . ."

"Well, what is it? What has been found out?"

"I am certain that both of them are planning something against madame," retorts the maid, with authority.

Justine watches Caroline in the looking-glass, and notices that she has grown white; all the tortures of the preceding petty trial come back, and Justine knows that she has become as necessary to Caroline as spies are to the government when a conspiracy has been discovered. Meanwhile, Caroline's friends cannot understand why she keeps such a disagreeable maid, who puts on airs as if she were the mistress, who wears a hat, and is impertinent. . . .

This stupid domination is discussed at Madame Deschars's, at Madame de Fischtaminel's, and is joked about. Some

women begin to suspect monstrous reasons, and Caroline's honor is questioned.

#### AXIOM.

*In society, people know how to put an overcoat on every truth, even the prettiest one.*

Last of all, the *aria della Calumnia* is executed, exactly as if it were sung by Don Basilio.

It is rumored that Caroline cannot discharge her maid.

The world persists in trying to solve the riddle. Madame de Fischtaminel rails at Adolph, Adolph comes home in a rage, makes a scene, and discharges Justine.

This produces such an effect on Justine that she takes to her bed. Caroline draws Adolph's attention to the fact that it would be inhuman to throw out a maid in Justine's state, a girl who is very devoted to them, and has been in their service since their marriage.

"As soon as she is well, she will have to go!" says Adolph.

Caroline, reassured as far as Adolph is concerned, and outrageously imposed upon by Justine, actually wishes to get rid of her; she applies a violent remedy to this wound, and she makes up her mind to go through the Caudine Forks of the following petty trial:

#### THE ADMISSIONS.

One morning, Adolph is ultra-caressed. The happy husband endeavors to ferret out the reason for this show of tenderness, and hears Caroline say in a beseeching tone:

"Adolph?"

"What?" he retorts, frightened by the tremor which he discovers in Caroline's voice.

"Promise me you will not be angry."

"Yes."

"Not to be mad at me. . . ."

"Never. What is it?"

"To forgive me and never speak of it again. . . ."

"Well, what is it?"

"Besides, it was all your fault. . . ."

"Tell me! . . . or I shall leave. . . ."

"You are the only one who can help me out of the fix I have gotten into, and all on account of you . . . too . . ."

"But let me hear . . ."

"It is about . . ."

"About? . . ."

"Justine."

"Don't speak to me about her, she is discharged, and I do not want to see her around; her manner with you exposes your reputation. . . ."

"What can be said about that? What have you been told?"

The scene changes, and there is a sub-explanation which makes Caroline blush as soon as she realizes the import of the surmises of her best friends, all of them delighted to find strange reasons for her virtue.

"Well, Adolph, you have brought all this upon me! Why didn't you tell me about Frédéric? . . ."

"The Great? The King of Prussia?"

"That is a man all over! . . . You Tartuffe! would you like me to believe that in such a short time you have forgotten all about your son, the son of Mademoiselle Suzanne Beauminet!"

"You know . . .?"

"Everything! . . . All about *Mère* Mahuchet and your outings when the boy has his vacation."

Sometimes the Chaumontel affair is an illegitimate child, and this is the least dangerous of all.

"What hidden ways you have, you religious women!" cries Adolph in alarm.

"It is Justine who found it all out!"

"Ah! now I understand the reason for her insolence. . . ."

"Ah! *mon ami*, your Caroline has been very unhappy, and this spying, of which my love for you was the cause . . . for I love you. . . . I am crazy about you. . . . If you were to deceive me, I would run away from you to the end of the world. . . . Well, this wrongful jealousy put me in Justine's power. . . . So, dear, you will have to get me out of this!"



“Let this be a lesson to you, my angel, never to confide in your servants if you want them to serve you well. To be at the mercy of one’s domestics is the basest of all tyrannies!”

Adolph takes advantage of the situation to thoroughly frighten Caroline, for he is thinking of his future Chaumontel affairs, and would be very glad to be free from spies.

Justine is summoned, and Adolph discharges her immediately, without listening to any explanation. Caroline believes that her little trial is over. She engages another maid.

Justine, whose ten or fifteen thousand francs have attracted the attention of a water-carrier, becomes Madame Chauvaugnac, and starts a fruit store. Ten months afterward, Caroline, during Adolph’s absence, receives a note delivered by a *commissionnaire*, written on foolscap in a great sprawling hand, and couched in these terms:

“Madam!

“*You are vily deseerved by monsieur for madame de Fisch-taminel, he goes thare every nite, and you no nothing abowt it all; you deserve no better and i am gladd, and i have the onoar of saluting you.*”

Caroline jumps like a lioness stung by a wasp; she puts herself on the rack of suspicion again, and begins anew her struggle with the unknown.

When she has recognized the injustice of her suspicions, she receives another letter, in which the writer offers to give her information relating to a Chaumontel affair which Justine has scented.

The petty trial of *admissions* is often much graver than this, be it remembered, mesdames.

#### HUMILIATIONS.

For the glory of women be it said that they still care for their husbands when their husbands have ceased to care for them, not only because, socially speaking, there are more ties between a married woman and a man than between this man and his wife, but because women have more honor and delicacy than men, apart from the great conjugal question.

## AXIOM.

*In a husband there is but a man; in a married woman there is a man, a father, a mother, and a woman.*

A married woman has enough sensitiveness for four people, or even five, if one were to look closely enough.

Now, it is not without use to make the following remark: that, for women, love is a general absolution: the man who knows how to love can commit any crime, he is always snow-white in the eyes of the woman who loves him, if he loves her well. With regard to a married woman, whether loved or not, she feels so keenly that the honor and esteem her husband enjoys are the fortune of her children, that she acts like the woman who loves, so strong is the social instinct.

This deep sentiment gives birth to petty trials which, for certain Carolines, have a sad aspect, unfortunately for this book.

Adolph has compromised himself. Let us not enumerate all the ways in which one can compromise one's self, that would be becoming personal. Let us take for our example the one fault among social wrongs which our time condones, understands, admits, and often commits, namely, honest *robbery*, cleverly disguised collusion, an excusable deceit when it has succeeded, like conniving with the proper parties to sell one's property as dearly as possible to a town, a department, etc.

For instance, in bankruptcy, in order to cover himself (which means to recuperate his credit), Adolph has had a hand in some illicit transactions that could bring any man before the courts. One cannot even tell whether the bold creditor will not be considered an accomplice.

Note that in all bankruptcies, honorable firms consider *covering themselves* the most sacred of duties; but the question is how not to show, as in prudish England, the *wrong side* of the cover.

Adolph is greatly embarrassed, for his counsel has cautioned him not to appear in any of the proceedings, and he has recourse to Caroline; he coaches her, teaches her the Code, oversees her costume, equips her like a boat that is

going to participate in a race, and dispatches her to a judge or a syndicate. The judge is a stern-looking man, but a libertine underneath; he puts on a severe countenance when he sees a pretty woman approach him, and says some extremely harsh things about Adolph.

"I'm sorry for you, madame; you belong to a man who may bring many a sorrow upon you; if he should commit one or two such things again, he would be entirely ruined. Have you any children? Forgive this question; you are so young that it is quite natural. . . ." And the judge draws as close as possible to Caroline.

"Yes."

"Oh! Lord! what a future! My first thought was for the wife, but now, I pity you doubly, I think of the mother. . . . Oh! how you must have suffered in coming here. . . . Poor, poor women!"

"Ah! you are interested in my position, are you not? . . ."

"Alas! what can I do?" says the judge, looking at Caroline out of the corner of his eye. "What you would ask of me would be a crime, I am a magistrate first and a man afterwards. . . ."

"Ah! monsieur, be only a man, in this case. . . ."

"Do you realize what you are saying . . . my fair lady? . . ."

Here the wily magistrate tremblingly takes Caroline's hand in his.

Caroline, thinking of her husband's and children's honor, decides that now is not the time to be prudish; she lets him hold her hand, after enough resistance to make the old man (he is an old man, fortunately) believe that it is a favor.

"Well, well, fair lady, do not weep," says the magistrate, "I should be extremely sorry to make such a sweet woman shed tears; we will see what can be done; come to see me to-morrow evening to explain the matter; I will have to look over all the papers, and we can go over them together. . . ."

"Monsieur. . . ."

"But we must. . . ."

"Monsieur. . . ."

“Have no fear, fair lady, a judge knows what he owes justice, and . . . (he assumes a knowing look) beauty.”

“But, monsieur. . . .”

“Don’t worry,” he says, holding her hands and pressing them, “we will try and change the matter into a peccadillo.”

And he bows Caroline out. She is prostrated at the rendezvous thus proposed.

The syndic is a dapper young man, who receives Caroline with a smile. He smiles at everything, and he puts his arm around her waist in such an adroit way that Caroline cannot rebel, inasmuch as she keeps saying to herself: “Adolph told me to be very careful not to irritate the syndic. . . .”

Nevertheless, Caroline, if only for the syndic’s own sake, escapes from his arms and says the: “Monsieur! . . .” that she said three times to the judge.

“Don’t be angry, you are irresistible; you are an angel and your husband is a beast; for what was his idea in sending a siren to a young man who he knows is susceptible?”

“Monsieur, my husband was unable to call on you himself; he is ill and confined to his bed, and you threatened him in such a terrible way, that the urgency . . .”

“Hasn’t he an attorney? . . .”

Caroline is frightened by this remark which shows such a deep villainy in Adolph.

“He thought, monsieur, that you would have some regard for the mother of a family, for her children. . . .”

“Tut, tut,” retorts the syndic. “You came here to attack my independence and my conscience, you want me to betray the creditors; well, I shall do more than that, I shall put my heart and fortune at your feet; so your husband wants to save his honor? . . . I will put mine in your hands. . . .”

“Monsieur,” exclaims Caroline, trying to raise the syndic from the kneeling position he has assumed, “you alarm me!”

She feigns the part of a terrified woman, and flies to the door, disentangling herself from this trying situation after the fashion of women, which means that she has compromised nothing.

"I will come back," she says with a smile, "when you behave yourself."

"You are not going to leave me? . . . Be careful! . . . Your husband has a good chance of being summoned to court; he is the accomplice of a fraudulent bankruptcy, and we know several things about him which are far from honorable. It is not his first offense; he mixes in rather disreputable transactions; you are very careful of the honor of a man who scorns your honor as well as his own."

Caroline, alarmed at these words, closes the door and comes back.

"What do you mean, monsieur?" says she, furious at his brutal onslaught.

"Well, the affair . . ."

"Chaumontel?"

"No, that speculation relating to houses he was having built by insolvent people."

Caroline recalls the transaction that Adolph undertook to double his income (see *WOMEN'S JESUITISM*). She trembles. The syndic has aroused her curiosity.

"Sit down there. Here, at this distance, I will be good, but I will be able to look at you. . . ."

And he relates in detail the scheme which was fathered by du Tillet, the banker, and stops every once in a while to exclaim:

"Oh! what a dainty little foot. . . . Only Madame has a foot so tiny. . . . *So du Tillet compromised. . . .* And what an ear! . . . Has anyone ever told you that you have a lovely ear?—*And du Tillet was right, for a judgment had been obtained.* I love small ears. . . . Let me have yours modeled, and I'll do anything you say.—*Du Tillet took advantage of this to make your fool of a husband stand everything. . . .* Oh! what pretty material! You are dressed divinely. . . ."

"What were you saying, monsieur? . . ."

"Can I know what I am talking about when I look at such a perfect face as yours?"

After the twenty-seventh compliment, Caroline finds that the syndic is quite clever after all, and leaves without know-

ing the inner history of the transaction which, when it was launched, sank three hundred thousand francs.

This petty trial has an enormous amount of variations.

EXAMPLE.—Adolph is brave and sensitive; he is walking with his wife in the Champs-Élysées and there is a great crowd; some young men make a few jests *à la Panurge*; Caroline pays no attention to them, to avoid having her husband challenge the offenders.

ANOTHER EXAMPLE. Some *enfant terrible* says before company:

“Mamma, would you allow Justine to box my ears?”

“Certainly not. . . .”

“What makes you ask that, my little man?” inquires Madame Foullepointe.

“Because she just boxed father’s ears, and he is a great deal bigger than I am.”

Madame Foullepointe bursts out laughing, and Adolph, who was planning to win her, is unmercifully plagued by her, after having had a first *last quarrel* with Caroline. (See THE LAST QUARREL.)

#### THE LAST QUARREL.

In every household a fatal hour strikes for the husband and the wife. It is a real death-knell, the death of jealousy, a great, noble, and charming passion, the only true symptom of love, if it is not always *its double*. When a woman ceases to be jealous of her husband, all is at an end, she no longer loves him. And conjugal love dies in the last quarrel a wife has with her mate.

#### AXIOM.

*As soon as a woman ceases finding fault with her husband, the Minotaur is sitting by the hearth in the bed-chamber, flicking his patent-leather boots with the tip of his cane.*

All women must remember their last quarrel, that supreme petty trial that often arises from nothing and, oftener still, from a brutally revealed fact, a decisive proof. That cruel

farewell to faith, to all that is childlike in love, to virtue itself, is as capricious as Life. Like Life, it is never the same in any household.

Here, if the author wished to be absolutely exact, he would have to describe every variety of quarrel.

Thus, Caroline may have discovered that the judiciary robes which cover the syndic of the Chaumontel affair, conceal an infinitely softer fabric, of pleasing color and silky texture; that, in a word, Chaumontel has light hair and blue eyes.

Or, Caroline, having risen before Adolph, catches sight of his overcoat lying on a chair, and her eyes are attracted by the white edge of a paper protruding from his pocket, which looks like the ray of sunlight which penetrates a darkened room; or she may have heard the paper rustle when she was kissing Adolph and feeling the pocket of his overcoat; or she may have been forewarned by the strange perfume which for some time has emanated from Adolph, and she has read these lines:

“Ungrateful one, do i no wat you meen about Hipolite, cum to me and you will cee if i luvu you.”

Or this:

“Yesterday, mon ami, you made me wait for you; what will it be to-morrow?”

Or this:

“The women that love you, my dear man, are very unfortunate to hate you as they do when you are away; take care, the dislike which obtains during your absence may some day encroach on the time you spend with them.”

Or this:

“Rascally Chodoreille! what were you doing yesterday on the boulevard with a woman hanging on your arm? If it is your wife, allow me to tender you my condolences for all her absent charms; no doubt she has pawned them, but the ticket is lost.”

Four notes emanating from the *grisette*, the lady, the

pretentious *bourgeoise* or the actress, from among whom Adolph has chosen his *belle* (this word is borrowed from the Fischtaminel vocabulary).

Or else, Caroline, heavily veiled and escorted by Ferdinand, goes to the Ranelagh, and with her own eyes beholds Adolph waltzing rapturously with one of the ladies-in-waiting of Queen Pomaré; or Adolph, for the tenth time, has made a mistake and called his wife Juliette, Charlotte, or Lisa;—or some fancy grocer or restaurant-keeper sends in an accusing bill which falls into Caroline's hands during Adolph's absence.

DOCUMENTS OF THE CHAUMONTEL AFFAIR.

*À la Partie Fine.*

|  |             |
|--|-------------|
| To Perrault, M. Adolph,                        |             |
| Delivered to Madame Schontz, on January        |             |
| 6th, 18—                                       |             |
| One <i>pâté de foie gras</i> ,                 | 22 fr. 50c. |
| Six bottles of various wines,                  | 70 fr.      |
| Furnished at the Hôtel du Congrès, February    |             |
| 11th, No. 21, a <i>déjeuner</i> , price agreed |             |
| upon,  | 100 fr.     |
| <hr/>  |             |
| Total,   | 192 fr. 50c |

Caroline studies the dates, and recalls several meetings relating to the Chaumontel affair. Adolph had mentioned the *jour des Rois* as being one of the last meetings of the Chaumontel syndicate. On the eleventh of February he had to go to the notary's to sign a receipt relating to the business.

Or else . . . but to mention all the incidents would be the undertaking of a madman.

Each woman will recall how the veil she had over her eyes came to be lifted; how, after racking doubts and heartrending discoveries, she reached the stage of the quarrel to close the romance, to sign the book, stipulate her independence, or begin a new life.

• Some women are fortunate enough to have taken the first



step, and then they bring about the quarrel to justify themselves.

Nervous women cannot contain themselves, and make scenes.

The gentle ones adopt a little determined air, which makes even the bravest husbands quake. Those whose revenge is not yet matured, weep copiously.

The ones who love their husbands forgive them. Oh! they understand so well, like the woman who was called "*ma berline*," that all women are infatuated with their Adolphs, that they are only too happy to have a legal hold on men that all the women in France are mad about.

Some women with thin lips, sallow skins, and fleshless arms take a mischievous delight in dragging their Adolphs through a mire of lies and contradictions; they question them (see MISERY IN MISERY) like magistrates examining criminals, and treasure the bitter pleasure of crushing their denials with direct proofs when the time is ripe.

This is how it is done. This *last quarrel* (you are going to learn why the author has called it *the last*) always ends with a solemn promise that delicate, noble or simply clever women (this includes them all) make their husbands, and which we now give in its most beautiful form:

"This is enough, Adolph! We no longer love one another; you have deceived me, and I will never forget it. A woman may forgive, but forget, never!"

Women make themselves unforgiving in order that their pardon may seem very sweet: they have divined the Lord.

"We have to live together in peace," says Caroline, continuing. "Well, let us therefore live like two brothers, two comrades. I don't want to make your life miserable, and so I shall never refer to what has happened. . . ."

Adolph holds out his hand, and Caroline takes it and gives him an English handshake. Adolph thanks Caroline and has visions of happiness: he has transformed his wife into a sister, and he thinks he will be a bachelor once more.

The next day Caroline permits herself a very witty allusion (Adolph cannot help laughing at it) to the Chaumontel affair. In society, she utters generalities about this last quarrel which become personalities.

After two weeks, there is not a day when Caroline does not recall the quarrel by saying:

“It was the day when I found that Chaumontel bill in your pocket”; or, “Since our last quarrel; . . .” or, “It was the day I began to see life as it is,” etc. She tortures Adolph, assassinates him! In society, she says the most terrible things.

“We are happy, my dear, the day we stop loving: for then we know how to make ourselves loved. . . .”

And she looks at Ferdinand.

“Ah! and so you have your Chaumontel affair, too?” she says to Madame Foullepointe.

Well, the last quarrel never has an end, hence this axiom:

#### AXIOM.

*To give your wife a hold on you is to solve the problem of perpetual motion.*

#### TO FLUNK.

Women, and especially married women, jam ideas into their *dura-mater* exactly as they jam pins into a pin-cushion; and the Devil, the Devil himself, do you hear, could not pull them out again; they reserve the right of thrusting them in and pulling them out to suit themselves.

Caroline, one night, returns from Madame Foullepointe’s in a violent state of ambition and jealousy.

Madame Foullepointe, the *lioness*. . . . ‘This word requires an explanation. It is the fashionable neologism, and it responds to some ideas, rather poor, of our present society; it must be used in connection with a fashionable woman if you wish to be understood. So this *lioness* rides horseback every day, and Caroline has made up her mind to take riding lessons.

Note that, in this conjugal crisis, Adolph and Caroline have reached the matrimonial season which we have called the 18th Brumaire of Married Couples, or they have already indulged in two or three Last Quarrels.

“Adolph, do you want to do something for me?”

“Certainly. . . .”

"Are you going to refuse?"

"Why, if what you wish is feasible, I am ready. . . ."

"Ah! already! . . . That's a husband's way . . . if . . ."

"Well?"

"I want to take riding lessons."

"Why, Caroline, is it possible?"

Caroline gazes out of the carriage-window and attempts to wipe away a dry tear.

"Listen," Adolph resumes, "can I let you go to the riding-school unescorted? And can I go with you just now, in the midst of all my business? Why, what is the matter with you? I am giving you vital reasons, I should think."

Adolph has visions of a stable and a horse which he will have to purchase, the introduction of a groom into the household, all the annoyances of female *licnship*.

When one gives a woman reasons instead of the thing she wants, few men have dared descend into the little abyss called the *heart* in order to measure the strength of the storm that suddenly rages within it.

"Reasons! Why, if you want reasons, here are some," cries Caroline. "I am your wife: you do not care if you please me or not, any more. *And then the expense!* You are greatly mistaken about this, *mon ami!*"

Women have as many intonations for the words, *mon ami*, as the Italians have discovered for the word, *amico*; I have counted twenty-nine intonations, which only express the various degrees of hatred.

"Oh! you'll see," continues Caroline. "I will be sick, and you will have to pay in prescriptions and doctor's bills what you would have spent for a horse. I will stay a prisoner at home, and that is just what you want. I expected this. I asked you, although I was sure you would refuse me: I only wanted to find out how you would go about it."

"But . . . Caroline. . . ."

"Not to want me to go to the school alone!" says she, without appearing to have heard. "That is a fine reason! Can't I go with Madame de Fischtaminel? Madame de

Fischtaminel is taking riding lessons, and I don't think that Monsieur de Fischtaminel accompanies her."

"But . . . Caroline. . . ."

"I am delighted at your solicitude; you are really too careful of me, I'm sure. Monsieur de Fischtaminel has more confidence in his wife than you have in yours. He does not take *her* to the riding-school! Perhaps it is because of this confidence that you don't want me to go to the school, so that I will not see your actions with that Fischtaminel woman!"

Adolph tries to hide the annoyance that this torrent of words causes him, the torrent which began to flow halfway between their home, and which cannot find an ocean into which it can rush. When Caroline is at home in her room, she still continues:

"You see, if reasons could gain health for me and prevent me from longing for an exercise that Nature demands, I would have plenty of reasons on hand myself; I know all the reasons you can advance, and I have thought about all of them before I even spoke to you."

This, mesdames, can the better be called the prologue of the conjugal drama, as it is recited with force, underlined with gestures, and decorated with the glances and other embellishments you use to illustrate these masterpieces.

Once Caroline has sown in Adolph's breast the fear of a continual begging scene, she feels the hatred of *the left*<sup>1</sup> increase toward his government. Madame sulks, and sulks so thoroughly that Adolph is compelled to notice it, unless he wishes to be *minotaurized*; for everything is at an end between two beings, united by *Monsieur le Maire*, or only at Gretna-Green, when one of them does not notice the ill-humor of the other.

#### AXIOM.

*Silent ill-humor is a fatal poison.*

It is in order to prevent Love's suicide that our ingenious France invented the boudoir. The construction of our

<sup>1</sup> Political term meaning "opposition."

modern homes precluded for women the willows of Virgil. When the oratories were abolished, they were transformed into boudoirs.

This conjugal drama has three acts. The prologue: it has been played. Then comes the act of false coquetry: it is the one in which French women are the most successful.

Adolph wanders about the room, disrobing; and, for a man, to disrobe is to become exceedingly weak.

The following axiom will appear profoundly true to all men of forty years of age:

#### AXIOM.

*The ideas of a man stripped of his suspenders and of his shoes, are not the same as those of a man equipped with these two tyrants of our minds.*

You should note that this is only an axiom in married life. It is what, in morals, we call a relative theorem.

Caroline, like a jockey on the racetrack, calculates the time when she will be able to outstrip her opponent. She manages to be absolutely irresistible with Adolph.

Women possess a mimicry of modesty, a science of elusiveness, a dove-like timidity, a special scale which enables them to sing, like Isabelle in the fourth act of *Robert le Diable*: *Grâce pour toi! grâce pour moi!* which leave horse-trainers a thousand miles behind. As always happens, the Devil succumbs. What can be said? It is the eternal story, the great Catholic mystery of the vanquished serpent, of the woman who is saved and who becomes the great strength of the body social, as the *fourierists* claim. In this point, especially, lies the difference between the Oriental slave and the Western spouse.

The second act ends on the conjugal pillow with onomatopœias which are destined to promote peace. Adolph, like a child in front of a cake, promises everything that Caroline wishes.

THIRD ACT.—When the curtain rises, it discloses a much disordered sleeping-apartment. Adolph, clothed in his dressing-gown, tries to open the door, and slips out without arousing Caroline, who is peacefully slumbering.

Caroline, exceedingly happy, rises, looks into her mirror, and begins to think of breakfast. An hour later, when she has completed her toilet, she learns that breakfast is ready.

“Notify monsieur!”

“Madame, monsieur is in the small salon.”

“Not nice of you, honey dove,” she says, going up to Adolph, and beginning to speak the childish, coaxing language of the honeymoon.

“What isn’t nice?”

“Not to let your little wifey take riding lessons. . . .”

REMARK.—During the honeymoon, very young couples often use languages which Aristotle long ago defined and classified. (See his *Pedagogy*.) They talk in *youyou*, in *lala*, in *nana*, like mothers and nurses when they speak to children. This was one of the secret, discussed, and acknowledged reasons set forth in large quartos by the Germans, which determined the Cabires, who were the creators of Greek mythology, to represent Love as a child. There are other reasons that women are acquainted with, the principal one being, according to their creed, that love in men is always small.

“Where did you find that, *ma belle*? Under your cap?”

“What? . . .”

Caroline is petrified with astonishment; her eyes open wide. She almost has an inward epileptic fit; she says not a word, but only stares at Adolph. Under the satanic fire of this look, Adolph is almost converted before he reaches the dining-room, but he wonders whether it would not be good for Caroline to take just one riding lesson, and to instruct the riding-master to disgust her the first time by making it very hard for her.

Nothing is so terrible as an actress who is sure of success and *who flunks*.

In stage slang, to "flunk" is to see nobody in the audience, or to receive no applause; it means a lot of trouble for nothing, and is the climax of failure.

This petty trial (it is very petty) reproduces itself in a hundred different ways in married life, after the honeymoon is over, and if the wife is not wealthy in her own right.

In spite of the author's distaste for introducing anecdotes into a purely aphoristical work, whose substance only comprises more or less clever and, on account of its subject, decidedly delicate observations, he believes that it is necessary to embellish this page with a fact which he owes to one of our foremost physicians. This repetition of the subject contains a rule of conduct which is practiced by Parisian doctors.

A husband found himself in Adolph's position. His Caroline, although she had "flunked" the first time, had made up her mind to triumph, for Caroline often does triumph! This one played the comedy of a nervous disease. (See *Physiology of Marriage*, Meditation XXVI., the paragraph devoted to *Neuroses*.) For two months she had remained on a lounge, rising at noon and foregoing all the gayeties of Paris. No theaters. . . . Oh! the foul atmosphere, the lights! especially the lights! . . . the noise, the going in and the going out, the music . . . it was all very bad! terribly exciting!

No trips to the country. . . . Oh! of course, she loved them; but she had to have (*desiderata*) her own carriage, her own horses. . . . Her husband would not let her have them. And to go in *locati*, in a hired conveyance . . . the mere thought of it made her ill!

No cooking . . . the fumes of the kitchen nauseated madame. Madame took a lot of drugs that her maid never saw her absorb.

Finally, a frightful amount of effects, privations, and poses, of pearl-powder to give her a death-like pallor, of all sorts of contrivances, exactly as when the management of a

theater spreads the news that it is going to produce a wonderful play.

Everyone believed that even a trip to Ems, Hombourg, or Carlsbad would hardly benefit madame; but she refused to undertake such a thing unless she could go in her own carriage. Always the carriage!

Adolph was firm and would not give in.

This Caroline, being a witty woman, always said that her husband was right.

"Adolph is right," she would say to her friends, "and I am unreasonable; he must not, he cannot afford to have a carriage yet; men know their own business better than their wives. . . ."

At times, this Adolph was wild! Women have some ways which are only punishable in Hades. Finally, the third month, he met one of his college friends, a sub-lieutenant in the corps of physicians, as *naïf* as all young doctors are, and who had only just graduated.

"A young woman needs a young doctor," quoth our Adolph to himself.

And he suggests to the future Bianchon that he examine Caroline, and that he let him, Adolph, know her true state of health.

"Dear, it is time for you to see a doctor," Adolph says to his wife that evening, "and here is the best one for a pretty woman."

The novice studies the case conscientiously, gets madame to talk, notes the slightest diagnoses, and without knowing it, lets a smile of excessive dubiousness, not to say sarcasm, hover around his lips and eyes. He prescribes some insignificant remedies, the importance of which he insists upon, and promises to call again to note the effects. In the hall, believing himself alone with his friend, he shrugs his shoulders impatiently:

"There is nothing the matter with your wife, old chap, she is fooling us."

"I thought so. . . ."

"But if she continues to go on like that, she will make herself ill: I am too much your friend to in-



dulge in this speculation, for I want to be an honest doctor. . . .”

“My wife wants a carriage.”

As in *THE HEARSE SOLO*, this Caroline listened at the door.

Even to-day, this young doctor is compelled to live down the slanders that this charming young woman spreads about him incessantly; and in order to be let alone, he has been forced to acknowledge his youthful mistake and name his fair enemy so as to make her stop.

#### THE CHESTNUTS OUT OF THE FIRE.

Nobody knows how many shades there are to misfortune; it all depends upon character, the strength of the imagination, and the power of the nervous system. If it is impossible to catch these variable shades, one may at least indicate the bold colors and principal accidents. Thus, the author has kept this petty trial for the last, for it is the only one which is comical in its wretchedness.

The author flatters himself that he has exhausted the principal ones. Therefore, the women who have reached their port, at the happy age of forty, the age when they escape suspicion, calumny, and slander, the age when their freedom begins, these women will do him justice by stating that, in this book, all the critical situations of married life are indicated or represented.

Caroline also has her affair Chaumontel. She knows how to make her husband leave the house unexpectedly, and has come to terms with Madame de Fischtaminel.

With all married couples, the Madame de Fischtaminels become, at some time or other, the providence of the Carolines.

Caroline pets Madame de Fischtaminel much the same as the army in Africa pets Abd-el-Kader, she feels the same toward her as the physician who encourages an imaginary invalid. Both Caroline and Madame de Fischtaminel invent occupations for dear Adolph when neither Madame de Fischtaminel nor Caroline wants this demigod in their penates. Madame de Fischtaminel and Caroline, who, through the

influence of Madame Foullepointe, have become the dearest friends, have ended by knowing and using a feminine freemasonry, the rites of which cannot be learned in any initiation.

If Caroline, the day before, sends Madame de Fischtaminel this little note:

“Angel, you will probably see Adolph to-morrow; don’t keep him too long, for I want to go to the Bois with him about four o’clock; but if you want to go to the Bois with him yourself, I will meet him. I wish you would tell me how you manage to amuse people that are always bored.”

Madame de Fischtaminel says to herself:

“There! I will have that man hanging around until five o’clock.”

#### AXIOM.

*Men do not always know what a positive request from a woman means, but another woman never makes a mistake: she does the contrary.*

Those little creatures, especially the Parisiennes, are the daintiest toys that social industry has invented; those are lacking in some sense who do not worship them, who do not delight in watching them arrange their traps as they arrange their tresses, create strange languages, construct with their delicate fingers contrivances that annihilate the most powerful.

One fine day, Caroline takes the greatest precautions; the day before, she had written Madame Foullepointe to go to Saint-Maur with Adolph to look over some property, and to keep him for *déjeuner*. She helps dress Adolph, teases him about the care he displays about his appearance, and asks him all sorts of foolish questions concerning Madame Foullepointe.

“She’s a nice little woman, and I think that she is very tired of Charles: you will end by writing her name in your catalogue, you old Don Juan; but you won’t have to have an affair Chaumontel; I’m not jealous now, and you have

your passport; do you like it better than being adored? . . . Monster! see how nice I am. . . .”

As soon as monsieur has left the house, Caroline, who, the day before, wrote to Ferdinand to ask him to lunch, makes a toilet which, in that delightful eighteenth century so slandered by Republicans, humanitarians, and fools, women of quality called their war dress.

Caroline has looked after every detail. Love is the finest butler in the world; and the table is spread with diabolical coquetry. There is a cloth of shining white damask, a blue set, silver, the sculptured milk pitcher, and a profusion of flowers!

If it is winter, she has hothouse grapes; she has ransacked the cellar for old bottles of delicious wines. The bread comes from the best baker. The savory dishes, the *pâté de foie gras* would have made Grimod de la Reynière whinny, they would make a discounter smile, and would let a professor of the old university into the secret of all this splendor.

Everything is ready. Caroline was ready the day before, and now contemplates her handiwork. Justine sighs and arranges the furniture. Caroline plucks a few dead leaves from the flowers in the jardinières. A woman then disguises what may be called the “prancing” of her heart with tasks which make her fingers have a grasp of steel, her pink nails burn, tasks accomplished while this silent cry rasps her throat:

“He is not coming!”

What a dagger thrust, when Justine announces:

“Madame, a letter!”

A letter instead of a Ferdinand! How was it ever opened? What centuries of life wasted in unfolding it! Women know all about this. As for men, when anything like that happens to them, they tear their jabots to pieces.

“Justine, Monsieur Ferdinand is ill! . . .” screams Caroline; “send for a carriage.”

Just as Justine goes downstairs, Adolph comes up.

“Poor madame,” says Justine to herself, “I guess she won’t need a carriage now.”

“Ah! where have you come from?” cries Caroline, dis-

covering Adolph gazing rapturously at the voluptuous *déjeuner*.

Adolph, whose wife for a long time has ceased to serve him such meals, says nothing. He guesses what it means by the charming conceits he sees, and which he saw when Madame de Fischtaminel and the Chaumontel affair summoned him to similar feasts.

“Whom are you expecting?” he inquires in his turn.

“Whom do you think? It can’t be anyone but Ferdinand, can it?” retorts Caroline.

“And he is keeping you waiting. . . .”

“The poor boy is ill.”

An amusing idea passes through Adolph’s mind, and he replies, with a concealed wink:

“I have just seen him.”

“Where?”

“In front of the Café de Paris, talking with friends. . . .”

“But why have you come home?” retorts Caroline, wishing to disguise her murderous rage.

“Madame Foullepointe, whom you told me was tired of Charles, has been at Ville-d’Avray with him since yesterday.”

“And how about Monsieur Foullepointe?”

“He is taking a pleasure trip for a new Chaumontel affair . . . a nice little difficulty which has occurred, but he will, no doubt, be able to arrange it.”

Adolph sits down with the remark:

“This suits me, I’m as hungry as a wolf. . . .”

Caroline also takes a seat at the table, the while she covertly studies Adolph’s face; inwardly she is weeping; but soon she inquires in a tone which she has managed to render indifferent:

“Who were the friends Ferdinand was with?”

“They are a bad lot who are leading him astray. That young man is ruining himself: he goes to see Madame Schontz and women of easy morals; you ought to write to your uncle. I suppose it was some *déjeuner* which grew out of a bet made at Mademoiselle Malaga’s. . . .”

Adolph glances slyly at Caroline, who lowers her lids to hide her tears.

“How pretty you look this morning!” he resumes. “Ah! you do honor to the *déjeuner*. . . . Surely Ferdinand will not dine as well as I. . . .” etc.

Adolph is such an adept at joking that Caroline is inspired with the thought of punishing Ferdinand. Adolph, who said that he was as hungry as a wolf, makes Caroline forget that a coach is waiting for her.

Ferdinand’s *concierge* arrives about two o’clock, just when Adolph is dozing on a lounge. That Iris of bachelors comes to tell Caroline that Monsieur Ferdinand is badly in need of a helpful hand.

“Is he drunk?” demands Caroline, in a rage.

“He fought a duel this morning, madame.”

Caroline falls in a faint, revives, and hastens to Ferdinand’s side, consigning Adolph to the infernal regions.

When women are victims of such little schemes, as clever as those they devise themselves, they cry:

“Men are perfect monsters!”

#### ULTIMA RATIO.

Here is our last observation. This book is beginning to pall on you, as much as its subject, if you happen to be married.

This work, which, according to the author’s opinion, is to the *Physiology of Marriage* what history is to philosophy, what fact is to theory, has had its logic, just as life, when taken on a large scale, has its own.

And here is that fatal, terrible logic. At the time when the first part of this book (which is full of serious jests) comes to an end, Adolph, as you have no doubt perceived, has reached the stage of complete indifference concerning all matters matrimonial.

He has read novels whose authors advise cumbersome husbands to take a trip to the other world, or to live in perfect peace with the fathers of their children, and pet and pamper them; for, if literature is the picture of society, one would have to acknowledge that society recognizes the errors which the *Physiology of Marriage* points out in this

fundamental institution. More than one great talent has assailed this social basis, without being able to overthrow it.

Adolph, especially, has read too much of his wife, and he disguises his indifference with the word: indulgence. He is indulgent with Caroline, and looks upon her as the mother of his children, a boon companion, a good friend, a brother.

At the time when a woman's petty trials end, Caroline, who is far cleverer, can practice this profitable indulgence; but she does not give up her dear Adolph. It is woman's nature to never relinquish any of her rights. DIEU ET MON DROIT . . . CONJUGAL! is, as everyone knows, England's motto, especially nowadays.

Women have such a love for domination, that we shall relate an anecdote, which is not ten years old, on the subject. It is a very youthful anecdote.

One of the great dignitaries of the House of Peers had a Caroline, a very frivolous one, like all Carolines. This name is lucky for women. This dignitary, who was a very old man, sat on one side of the fireplace while Caroline sat on the other. Caroline was nearing the age when women refuse to tell how old they are. A friend comes in and announces the marriage of a general who, at one time, had been the friend of the family.

Caroline displays a very deep and genuine emotion, and makes such a time that the high dignitary attempts to console her. In the midst of it all, the Count forgets himself long enough to say:

“Well, what can you do, my dear! He could hardly marry you!”

And this man was one of the highest officials of the State, but he was the friend of Louis XVIII., and necessarily a trifle “Pompadour.”

The whole difference between Adolph and Caroline lies in this: that, if monsieur chooses not to worry about madame, she retains the right of worrying about him.

Now, let us listen to the *what will the world say?* which is the object of the conclusion of this book.

## COMMENTARY

IN WHICH IS EXPLAINED THE FELICITTÀ OF FINALES.

Where is the person who has never heard an Italian opera? . . . You have noticed, then, the abuse of the word *felichittà*, which is lavishly employed by the librettist and the chorus at the time when everybody is rushing out of their boxes and their seats.

It is a horrible image of life. One goes out of it, just when one begins to hear the *felichittà*.

Have you meditated upon the profound truth contained in this finale, when the musician gives forth his last note, and the author his last verse, when the singers say, "Let's go and sup!" and the chorus people exclaim, "What luck! it isn't raining! . . ." Well, in all the various settings of life, there comes a time when the joke is over, when the trick has been played, when one can become resigned, and when everyone starts to sing his own *felichittà*. After having gone through all the *duos*, *solos*, *strettes*, *codas*, concerted music, *duettini*, *nocturnes*, the phases that these few scenes, taken from the ocean of married life, indicate, and which are themes, the variations of which have been divined by clever people as well as dullards (when it comes to suffering, we are all equal!), most Parisian couples, at a certain time, reach the following final chorus:

THE WIFE, to a young married woman who has reached the *Indian Summer* stage of matrimony.—My dear, I'm the happiest woman in the world. Adolph is a model husband, so kind and easy-going. Isn't it so, Ferdinand?

Caroline addresses Adolph's cousin, a young man with shiny hair, patent leather shoes, a coat of the latest cut, an opera hat, kid gloves, a fancy waistcoat, and whatever is the most fashionable in mustaches, whiskers, goatee à la Mazarin, and who is gifted with a deep, silent, and attentive admiration for Caroline.

THE FERDINAND.—Adolph is so happy in having a wife like you! What does he lack? Nothing.

THE WIFE.—In the beginning, we were always quarreling; but now we get along beautifully. Adolph does just as he

wishes, he does not mind me in the least; I never ask any more where he goes and whom he has seen. Indulgence, my dear, is the great secret of happiness. You have not gotten over your teasing, your unfounded jealousy, your little quarrels, your pin-pricks. What is the use of all this? A woman's life is so short! How many years does she have? Ten. Why fill them with trouble? I was just like you; but one fine day I met Madame Foullepointe, who enlightened me, and taught me how to make my husband happy. . . . Since then, Adolph has changed completely, he has become perfectly lovely. He is the first to say to me with anxiety, even fear, when I'm going to the play and seven o'clock finds us alone together: "Ferdinand is coming for you isn't he?"—Isn't that so, Ferdinand?

THE FERDINAND.—We are the most congenial cousins in the world.

THE SORROWFUL ONE.—Must I come to this?

THE FERDINAND.—Ah! you are very lovely, madame, and nothing will be easier for you.

THE WIFE, *irritated*.—Well, good-by, little one. (*The sorrowful young wife departs.*) Ferdinand, you will regret that word.

THE HUSBAND, *on the boulevard Italien*.—My dear chap (he has buttonholed Monsieur de Fischtaminel), you still believe that marriage is based on passion. A woman might, *à la rigueur*, love only one man, but a man! . . . *Mon Dieu*, society will never be able to tame Nature. See here, the best thing to do when you are married is for both parties to have the greatest indulgence, as long as the appearances are kept up. I'm the happiest husband in all the world. Caroline is a devoted friend, she would sacrifice anything for me, even my cousin Ferdinand, if it were necessary! . . . Yes, you may laugh, but she would do anything for me. You entangle yourself with ridiculous ideas of dignity, virtue, honor, and social order. Life cannot be lived over, and we should stuff it full with pleasure. It is two years since Caroline and I have had the slightest disagreement. In Caroline I have a comrade to whom I can confide anything, and who, if the opportunity ever arose, would



know how to console me in life's great crises. There is not the slightest pretense between us, and we know just how the land lies. Our occasional tender passages are revenges, you understand? We have thus changed our duties into pleasures. At such times, we are even happier than we were during that insipid period called the honeymoon. Sometimes she says: "Leave me alone, I feel cross to-day." The storm falls on my cousin. Caroline no longer plays the part of a victim, and she speaks well of me to the whole world. In a word, she is delighted that I am happy. And as she is a very upright woman, she shows the greatest delicacy in the use of our fortune. My house is well kept. My wife lets me control my own income without a word. So it is. We have oiled our wheels, while you put stones in yours, my dear chap. There are but two courses to follow: either you have to take the Moor of Venice's knife, or else Joseph's twibill. Othello's costume is very unpopular, old chap; he is only a carnival Turk; I, like a good Catholic, am a carpenter.

CHORUS, *in a drawing-room, in the midst of a ball.*—  
Madame Caroline is a lovely woman!

A WOMAN WITH A TURBAN.—Yes, so dignified and proper.

A WOMAN WHO HAS SEVEN CHILDREN.—Ah! she knows how to captivate her husband.

ONE OF FERDINAND'S FRIENDS.—But she is very fond of her husband. Adolph is, of course, a very distinguished man, he is full of experience.

ONE OF MADAME DE FISCHTAMINEL'S FRIENDS.—He worships his wife. They have a delightful home, everybody has a good time there.

MONSIEUR FOULLEPOINTE.—Yes, it is a very charming house to go to.

A WOMAN WHO IS MUCH TALKED ABOUT.—Caroline is so obliging and kind, she never talks about anybody.

A DANCER, *returning to her seat.*—Do you remember what a bore she was when she used to know the Deschars'?

MADAME DE FISCHTAMINEL.—Oh! she and her husband were like two thorns . . . they were always quarreling. (Madame de Fischtaminel moves off.)

AN ARTIST.—But Messir Deschars is getting into bad

company; it seems that he is a visitor at stage doors; Madame Deschars has ended by selling her virtue too high. . . .

A BOURGEOISE, *frightened, on account of her daughter, at the turn the conversation has taken.*—Madame de Fischtamnel looks lovely to-night.

A WOMAN OF FORTY, *unemployed.*—Monsieur Adolph looks as happy as his wife.

A YOUNG GIRL.—What a good-looking young man Monsieur Ferdinand is! (*Her mother quickly gives her a little kick.*) What is it, mamma?

THE MOTHER, *with her eyes riveted on her daughter.*—A girl only says that about her betrothed; Monsieur Ferdinand is not in the market.

A WOMAN IN A VERY LOW-CUT GOWN, *to another one whose dress is equally low-cut.*—(*Sotto voce.*) My dear, the moral of all this is that the only happy couples are the *ménages à quatre*.

A FRIEND, *whom the author has had the imprudence to consult.*—Those last words are false.

THE AUTHOR.—Ah! you think so?

THE FRIEND, *who is newly married.*—You use up your ink depreciating social life, under the pretext of enlightening us! . . . Why, my dear chap, there are couples a hundred, a thousand times happier than those so-called *ménages à quatre*.

THE AUTHOR.—Well, shall we deceive unmarried people and strike the word out?

THE FRIEND.—No, it will be thought the refrain of a popular song!

THE AUTHOR.—A good way to make a truth pass.

THE FRIEND.—A truth that is destined to pass.

THE AUTHOR, *wishing to have the last word.*—What does not pass? When your wife is twenty years older, we will resume this conversation. Perhaps you will only be happy *à trois*.

THE FRIEND.—You revenge yourself very bitterly for not being able to write the history of the happily married people.



