

# THE PHYSIOLOGY OF MARRIAGE

SECOND PART

BY

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MEANS OF DEFENCE, INTERIOR AND EXTERIOR.

“To be or not to be, That is the question.” —Shakspeare, *Hamlet*.

MEDITATION X.

A TREATISE ON MARITAL POLICY.

When a man reaches the position in which the first part of this book sets him, we suppose that the idea of his wife being possessed by another makes his heart beat, and rekindles his passion, either by an appeal to his *amour propre*, his egotism, or his self-interest, for unless he is still on his wife's side, he must be one of the lowest of men and deserves his fate.

In this trying moment it is very difficult for a husband to avoid making mistakes; for, with regard to most men, the art of ruling a wife is even less known than that of judiciously choosing one. However, marital policy consists chiefly in the practical application of three principles which should be the soul of your conduct. The first is never to believe what a woman says; the second, always to look for the spirit without dwelling too much upon the letter of her actions; and the third, not to forget that a woman is never so garrulous as when she holds her tongue, and is never working with more energy than when she keeps quiet.

From the moment that your suspicions are aroused, you ought to be like a man mounted on a tricky horse, who always watches the ears of the beast, in fear of being thrown from the saddle.

But art consists not so much in the knowledge of principles, as in the manner of applying them; to reveal them to ignorant people is to put

a razor in the hand of a monkey. Moreover, the first and most vital of your duties consists in perpetual dissimulation, an accomplishment in which most husbands are sadly lacking. In detecting the symptoms of minotaurism a little too plainly marked in the conduct of their wives, most men at once indulge in the most insulting suspicions. Their minds contract a tinge of bitterness which manifests itself in their conversation, and in their manners; and the alarm which fills their heart, like the gas flame in a glass globe, lights up their countenances so plainly, that it accounts for their conduct.

Now a woman, who has twelve hours more than you have each day to reflect and to study you, reads the suspicion written upon your face at the very moment that it arises. She will never forget this gratuitous insult. Nothing can ever remedy that. All is now said and done, and the very next day, if she has opportunity, she will join the ranks of inconsistent women.

You ought then to begin under these circumstances to affect towards your wife the same boundless confidence that you have hitherto had in her. If you begin to lull her anxieties by honeyed words, you are lost, she will not believe you; for she has her policy as you have yours. Now there is as much need for tact as for kindness in your behavior, in order to inculcate in her, without her knowing it, a feeling of security, which will lead her to lay back her ears, and prevent you from using rein or spur at the wrong moment.

But how can we compare a horse, the frankest of all animals, to a being, the flashes of whose thought, and the movements of whose impulses render her at moments more prudent than the Servite Fra-Paolo, the most terrible adviser that the Ten at Venice ever had; more deceitful than a king; more adroit than Louis XI; more profound than Machiavelli; as sophisticated as Hobbes; as acute as Voltaire; as pliant as the fiancée of Mamolin; and distrustful of no one in the whole wide world but you?

Moreover, to this dissimulation, by means of which the springs that move your conduct ought to be made as invisible as those that move the world, must be added absolute self-control. That diplomatic

imperturbability, so boasted of by Talleyrand, must be the least of your qualities; his exquisite politeness and the grace of his manners must distinguish your conversation. The professor here expressly forbids you to use your whip, if you would obtain complete control over your gentle Andalusian steed.

LXI. If a man strike his mistress it is a self-inflicted wound; but if he strike his wife it is suicide!

How can we think of a government without police, an action without force, a power without weapons?—Now this is exactly the problem which we shall try to solve in our future meditations. But first we must submit two preliminary observations. They will furnish us with two other theories concerning the application of all the mechanical means which we propose you should employ. An instance from life will refresh these arid and dry dissertations: the hearing of such a story will be like laying down a book, to work in the field.

In the year 1822, on a fine morning in the month of February, I was traversing the boulevards of Paris, from the quiet circles of the Marais to the fashionable quarters of the Chausseé d'Antin, and I observed for the first time, not without a certain philosophic joy, the diversity of physiognomy and the varieties of costume which, from the Rue du Pas-de-la-Mule even to the Madeleine, made each portion of the boulevard a world of itself, and this whole zone of Paris, a grand panorama of manners. Having at that time no idea of what the world was, and little thinking that one day I should have the audacity to set myself up as a legislator on marriage, I was going to take lunch at the house of a college friend, who was perhaps too early in life afflicted with a wife and two children. My former professor of mathematics lived at a short distance from the house of my college friend, and I promised myself the pleasure of a visit to this worthy mathematician before indulging my appetite for the dainties of friendship. I accordingly made my way to the heart of a study, where

everything was covered with a dust which bore witness to the lofty abstraction of the scholar. But a surprise was in store for me there. I perceived a pretty woman seated on the arm of an easy chair, as if mounted on an English horse; her face took on the look of conventional surprise worn by mistresses of the house towards those they do not know, but she did not disguise the expression of annoyance which, at my appearance, clouded her countenance with the thought that I was aware how ill-timed was my presence. My master, doubtless absorbed in an equation, had not yet raised his head; I therefore waved my right hand towards the young lady, like a fish moving his fin, and on tiptoe I retired with a mysterious smile which might be translated "I will not be the one to prevent him committing an act of infidelity to Urania." She nodded her head with one of those sudden gestures whose graceful vivacity is not to be translated into words.

"My good friend, don't go away," cried the geometrician. "This is my wife!"

I bowed for the second time!—Oh, Coulon! Why wert thou not present to applaud the only one of thy pupils who understood from that moment the expression, "anacreontic," as applied to a bow?—The effect must have been very overwhelming; for Madame the Professoress, as the Germans say, rose hurriedly as if to go, making me a slight bow which seemed to say: "Adorable!—" Her husband stopped her, saying:

"Don't go, my child, this is one of my pupils."

The young woman bent her head towards the scholar as a bird perched on a bough stretches its neck to pick up a seed.

"It is not possible," said the husband, heaving a sigh, "and I am going to prove it to you by  $A + B$ ."

"Let us drop that, sir, I beg you," she answered, pointing with a wink to me.

If it had been a problem in algebra, my master would have understood this look, but it was Chinese to him, and so he went on.

“Look here, child, I constitute you judge in the matter; our income is ten thousand francs.”

At these words I retired to the door, as if I were seized with a wild desire to examine the framed drawings which had attracted my attention. My discretion was rewarded by an eloquent glance. Alas! she did not know that in Fortunio I could have played the part of Sharp-Ears, who heard the truffles growing.

“In accordance with the principles of general economy,” said my master, “no one ought to spend in rent and servant’s wages more than two-tenths of his income; now our apartment and our attendance cost altogether a hundred louis. I give you twelve hundred francs to dress with” [in saying this he emphasized every syllable]. “Your food,” he went on, takes up four thousand francs, our children demand at least twenty-five louis; I take for myself only eight hundred francs; washing, fuel and light mount up to about a thousand francs; so that there does not remain, as you see, more than six hundred francs for unforeseen expenses. In order to buy the cross of diamonds, we must draw a thousand crowns from our capital, and if once we take that course, my little darling, there is no reason why we should not leave Paris which you love so much, and at once take up our residence in the country, in order to retrench. Children and household expenses will increase fast enough! Come, try to be reasonable!”

“I suppose I must,” she said, “but you will be the only husband in Paris who has not given a New Year’s gift to his wife.”

And she stole away like a school-boy who goes to finish an imposed duty. My master made a gesture of relief. When he saw the door close he rubbed his hands, he talked of the war in Spain; and I went my way to the Rue de Provence, little knowing that I had received the first installment of a great lesson in marriage, any more than I dreamt of the conquest of Constantinople by General Diebitsch. I



arrived at my host's house at the very moment they were sitting down to luncheon, after having waited for me the half hour demanded by usage. It was, I believe, as she opened a *pate de foie gras* that my pretty hostess said to her husband, with a determined air:

"Alexander, if you were really nice you would give me that pair of ear-rings that we saw at Fossin's."

"You shall have them," cheerfully replied my friend, drawing from his pocketbook three notes of a thousand francs, the sight of which made his wife's eyes sparkle. "I can no more resist the pleasure of offering them to you," he added, "than you can that of accepting them. This is the anniversary of the day I first saw you, and the diamonds will perhaps make you remember it!—"

"You bad man!" said she, with a winning smile.

She poked two fingers into her bodice, and pulling out a bouquet of violets she threw them with childlike contempt into the face of my friend. Alexander gave her the price of the jewels, crying out:

"I had seen the flowers!"

I shall never forget the lively gesture and the eager joy with which, like a cat which lays its spotted paw upon a mouse, the little woman seized the three bank notes; she rolled them up blushing with pleasure, and put them in the place of the violets which before had perfumed her bosom. I could not help thinking about my old mathematical master. I did not then see any difference between him and his pupil, than that which exists between a frugal man and a prodigal, little thinking that he of the two who seemed to calculate the better, actually calculated the worse. The luncheon went off merrily. Very soon, seated in a little drawing-room newly decorated, before a cheerful fire which gave warmth and made our hearts expand as in spring time, I felt compelled to make this loving couple a guest's compliments on the furnishing of their little bower.

“It is a pity that all this costs so dear,” said my friend, “but it is right that the nest be worthy of the bird; but why the devil do you compliment me upon curtains which are not paid for?—You make me remember, just at the time I am digesting lunch, that I still owe two thousand francs to a Turk of an upholsterer.”

At these words the mistress of the house made a mental inventory of the pretty room with her eyes, and the radiancy of her face changed to thoughtfulness. Alexander took me by the hand and led me to the recess of a bay window.

“Do you happen,” he said in a low voice, “to have a thousand crowns to lend me? I have only twelve thousand francs income, and this year—”

“Alexander,” cried the dear creature, interrupting her husband, while, rushing up, she offered him the three banknotes, “I see now that it is a piece of folly—”

“What do you mean?” answered he, “keep your money.”

“But, my love, I am ruining you! I ought to know that you love me so much, that I ought not to tell you all that I wish for.”

“Keep it, my darling, it is your lawful property—nonsense, I shall gamble this winter and get all that back again!”

“Gamble!” cried she, with an expression of horror. “Alexander, take back these notes! Come, sir, I wish you to do so.”

“No, no,” replied my friend, repulsing the white and delicious little hand. “Are you not going on Thursday to a ball of Madame de B—?”

“I will think about what you asked of me,” said I to my comrade.

I went away bowing to his wife, but I saw plainly after that scene that my anacreontic salutation did not produce much effect upon her.

“He must be mad,” thought I as I went away, “to talk of a thousand crowns to a law student.”

Five days later I found myself at the house of Madame de B——, whose balls were becoming fashionable. In the midst of the quadrilles I saw the wife of my friend and that of the mathematician. Madame Alexander wore a charming dress; some flowers and white muslin were all that composed it. She wore a little cross *a la Jeannette*, hanging by a black velvet ribbon which set off the whiteness of her scented skin; long pears of gold decorated her ears. On the neck of Madame the Professress sparkled a superb cross of diamonds.

“How funny that is,” said I to a personage who had not yet studied the world’s ledger, nor deciphered the heart of a single woman.

That personage was myself. If I had then the desire to dance with those fair women, it was simply because I knew a secret which emboldened my timidity.

“So after all, madame, you have your cross?” I said to her first.

“Well, I fairly won it!” she replied, with a smile hard to describe.

“How is this! no ear-rings?” I remarked to the wife of my friend.

“Ah!” she replied, “I have enjoyed possession of them during a whole luncheon time, but you see that I have ended by converting Alexander.”

“He allowed himself to be easily convinced?”

She answered with a look of triumph.

Eight years afterwards, this scene suddenly rose to my memory, though I had long since forgotten it, and in the light of the candles I distinctly discerned the moral of it. Yes, a woman has a horror of being convinced of anything; when you try to persuade her she

immediately submits to being led astray and continues to play the role which nature gave her. In her view, to allow herself to be won over is to grant a favor, but exact arguments irritate and confound her; in order to guide her you must employ the power which she herself so frequently employs and which lies in an appeal to sensibility. It is therefore in his wife, and not in himself, that a husband can find the instruments of his despotism; as diamond cuts diamond so must the woman be made to tyrannize over herself. To know how to offer the ear-rings in such a way that they will be returned, is a secret whose application embraces the slightest details of life. And now let us pass to the second observation.

“He who can manage property of one toman, can manage one of an hundred thousand,” says an Indian proverb; and I, for my part, will enlarge upon this Asiatic adage and declare, that he who can govern one woman can govern a nation, and indeed there is very much similarity between these two governments. Must not the policy of husbands be very nearly the same as the policy of kings? Do not we see kings trying to amuse the people in order to deprive them of their liberty; throwing food at their heads for one day, in order to make them forget the misery of a whole year; preaching to them not to steal and at the same time stripping them of everything; and saying to them: “It seems to me that if I were the people I should be virtuous”? It is from England that we obtain the precedent which husbands should adopt in their houses. Those who have eyes ought to see that when the government is running smoothly the Whigs are rarely in power. A long Tory ministry has always succeeded an ephemeral Liberal cabinet. The orators of a national party resemble the rats which wear their teeth away in gnawing the rotten panel; they close up the hole as soon as they smell the nuts and the lard locked up in the royal cupboard. The woman is the Whig of our government. Occupying the situation in which we have left her she might naturally aspire to the conquest of more than one privilege. Shut your eyes to the intrigues, allow her to waste her strength in mounting half the steps of your throne; and when she is on the point of touching your sceptre, fling her back to the ground, quite gently and with infinite grace, saying to her: “Bravo!” and leaving her to

expect success in the hereafter. The craftiness of this manoeuvre will prove a fine support to you in the employment of any means which it may please you to choose from your arsenal, for the object of subduing your wife.

Such are the general principles which a husband should put into practice, if he wishes to escape mistakes in ruling his little kingdom. Nevertheless, in spite of what was decided by the minority at the council of Macon (Montesquieu, who had perhaps foreseen the coming of constitutional government has remarked, I forget in what part of his writings, that good sense in public assemblies is always found on the side of the minority), we discern in a woman a soul and a body, and we commence by investigating the means to gain control of her moral nature. The exercise of thought, whatever people may say, is more noble than the exercise of bodily organs, and we give precedence to science over cookery and to intellectual training over hygiene.

## MEDITATION XI.

### INSTRUCTION IN THE HOME.

Whether wives should or should not be put under instruction—such is the question before us. Of all those which we have discussed this is the only one which has two extremes and admits of no compromise. Knowledge and ignorance, such are the two irreconcilable terms of this problem. Between these two abysses we seem to see Louis XVIII reckoning up the felicities of the eighteenth century, and the unhappiness of the nineteenth. Seated in the centre of the seesaw, which he knew so well how to balance by his own weight, he contemplates at one end of it the fanatic ignorance of a lay brother, the apathy of a serf, the shining armor on the horses of a banneret; he thinks he hears the cry, “France and Montjoie-Saint-Denis!” But he turns round, he smiles as he sees the haughty look of a manufacturer, who is captain in the national guard; the elegant carriage of a stock broker; the simple costume of a peer of France

turned journalist and sending his son to the Polytechnique; then he notices the costly stuffs, the newspapers, the steam engines; and he drinks his coffee from a cup of Sevres, at the bottom of which still glitters the “N” surmounted by a crown.

“Away with civilization! Away with thought!”—That is your cry. You ought to hold in horror the education of women for the reason so well realized in Spain, that it is easier to govern a nation of idiots than a nation of scholars. A nation degraded is happy: if she has not the sentiment of liberty, neither has she the storms and disturbances which it begets; she lives as polyps live; she can be cut up into two or three pieces and each piece is still a nation, complete and living, and ready to be governed by the first blind man who arms himself with the pastoral staff.

What is it that produces this wonderful characteristic of humanity? Ignorance; ignorance is the sole support of despotism, which lives on darkness and silence. Now happiness in the domestic establishment as in a political state is a negative happiness. The affection of a people for a king, in an absolute monarchy, is perhaps less contrary to nature than the fidelity of a wife towards her husband, when love between them no longer exists. Now we know that, in your house, love at this moment has one foot on the window-sill. It is necessary for you, therefore, to put into practice that salutary rigor by which M. de Metternich prolongs his *statu quo*; but we would advise you to do so with more tact and with still more tenderness; for your wife is more crafty than all the Germans put together, and as voluptuous as the Italians.

You should, therefore, try to put off as long as possible the fatal moment when your wife asks you for a book. This will be easy. You will first of all pronounce in a tone of disdain the phrase “Blue stocking;” and, on her request being repeated, you will tell her what ridicule attaches, among the neighbors, to pedantic women.

You will then repeat to her, very frequently, that the most lovable and the wittiest women in the world are found at Paris, where women never read;

That women are like people of quality who, according to Mascarillo, know everything without having learned anything; that a woman while she is dancing, or while she is playing cards, without even having the appearance of listening, ought to know how to pick up from the conversation of talented men the ready-made phrases out of which fools manufacture their wit at Paris;

That in this country decisive judgments on men and affairs are passed round from hand to hand; and that the little cutting phrase with which a woman criticises an author, demolishes a work, or heaps contempt on a picture, has more power in the world than a court decision;

That women are beautiful mirrors, which naturally reflect the most brilliant ideas;

That natural wit is everything, and the best education is gained rather from what we learn in the world than by what we read in books;

That, above all, reading ends in making the eyes dull, *etc.*

To think of leaving a woman at liberty to read the books which her character of mind may prompt her to choose! This is to drop a spark in a powder magazine; it is worse than that, it is to teach your wife to separate herself from you; to live in an imaginary world, in a Paradise. For what do women read? Works of passion, the *Confessions* of Rousseau, romances, and all those compositions which work most powerfully on their sensibility. They like neither argument nor the ripe fruits of knowledge. Now have you ever considered the results which follow these poetical readings?

Romances, and indeed all works of imagination, paint sentiments and events with colors of a very different brilliancy from those presented by nature. The fascination of such works springs less from the desire which each author feels to show his skill in putting forth choice and delicate ideas than from the mysterious working of the human intellect. It is characteristic of man to purify and refine

everything that he lays up in the treasury of his thoughts. What human faces, what monuments of the dead are not made more beautiful than actual nature in the artistic representation? The soul of the reader assists in this conspiracy against the truth, either by means of the profound silence which it enjoys in reading or by the fire of mental conception with which it is agitated or by the clearness with which imagery is reflected in the mirror of the understanding. Who has not seen on reading the *Confessions* of Jean-Jacques, that Madame de Warens is described as much prettier than she ever was in actual life? It might almost be said that our souls dwell with delight upon the figures which they had met in a former existence, under fairer skies; that they accept the creations of another soul only as wings on which they may soar into space; features the most delicate they bring to perfection by making them their own; and the most poetic expression which appears in the imagery of an author brings forth still more ethereal imagery in the mind of a reader. To read is to join with the writer in a creative act. The mystery of the transubstantiation of ideas, originates perhaps in the instinctive consciousness that we have of a vocation loftier than our present destiny. Or, is it based on the lost tradition of a former life? What must that life have been, if this slight residuum of memory offers us such volumes of delight?

Moreover, in reading plays and romances, woman, a creature much more susceptible than we are to excitement, experiences the most violent transport. She creates for herself an ideal existence beside which all reality grows pale; she at once attempts to realize this voluptuous life, to take to herself the magic which she sees in it. And, without knowing it, she passes from spirit to letter and from soul to sense.

And would you be simple enough to believe that the manners, the sentiments of a man like you, who usually dress and undress before your wife, can counterbalance the influence of these books and outshine the glory of their fictitious lovers, in whose garments the fair reader sees neither hole nor stain?—Poor fool! too late, alas! for her



happiness and for yours, your wife will find out that the *heroes* of poetry are as rare in real life as the *Apollos* of sculpture!

Very many husbands will find themselves embarrassed in trying to prevent their wives from reading, yet there are certain people who allege that reading has this advantage, that men know what their wives are about when they have a book in hand. In the first place you will see, in the next Meditation, what a tendency the sedentary life has to make a woman quarrelsome; but have you never met those beings without poetry, who succeed in petrifying their unhappy companions by reducing life to its most mechanical elements? Study great men in their conversation and learn by heart the admirable arguments by which they condemn poetry and the pleasures of imagination.

But if, after all your efforts, your wife persists in wishing to read, put at her disposal at once all possible books from the A B C of her little boy to *Rene*, a book more dangerous to you when in her hands than *Therese Philosophe*. You might create in her an utter disgust for reading by giving her tedious books; and plunge her into utter idiocy with *Marie Alacoque*, *The Brosse de Penitence*, or with the chansons which were so fashionable in the time of Louis XV; but later on you will find, in the present volume, the means of so thoroughly employing your wife's time, that any kind of reading will be quite out of the question.

And first of all, consider the immense resources which the education of women has prepared for you in your efforts to turn your wife from her fleeting taste for science. Just see with what admirable stupidity girls lend themselves to reap the benefit of the education which is imposed upon them in France; we give them in charge to nursery maids, to companions, to governesses who teach them twenty tricks of coquetry and false modesty, for every single noble and true idea which they impart to them. Girls are brought up as slaves, and are accustomed to the idea that they are sent into the world to imitate their grandmothers, to breed canary birds, to make herbals, to water little Bengal rose-bushes, to fill in worsted work, or to put on collars.

Moreover, if a little girl in her tenth year has more refinement than a boy of twenty, she is timid and awkward. She is frightened at a spider, chatters nonsense, thinks of dress, talks about the fashions and has not the courage to be either a watchful mother or a chaste wife.

Notice what progress she had made; she has been shown how to paint roses, and to embroider ties in such a way as to earn eight sous a day. She has learned the history of France in *Ragois* and chronology in the *Tables du Citoyen Chantreau*, and her young imagination has been set free in the realm of geography; all without any aim, excepting that of keeping away all that might be dangerous to her heart; but at the same time her mother and her teachers repeat with unwearied voice the lesson, that the whole science of a woman lies in knowing how to arrange the fig leaf which our Mother Eve wore. "She does not hear for fifteen years," says Diderot, "anything else but 'my daughter, your fig leaf is on badly; my daughter, your fig leaf is on well; my daughter, would it not look better so?'"

Keep your wife then within this fine and noble circle of knowledge. If by chance your wife wishes to have a library, buy for her Florian, Malte-Brun, *The Cabinet des Fees*, *The Arabian Nights*, Redoute's *Roses*, *The Customs of China*, *The Pigeons*, by Madame Knip, the great work on Egypt, etc. Carry out, in short, the clever suggestion of that princess who, when she was told of a riot occasioned by the dearness of bread, said, "Why don't they eat cake?"

Perhaps, one evening, your wife will reproach you for being sullen and not speaking to her; perhaps she will say that you are ridiculous, when you have just made a pun; but this is one of the slight annoyances incident to our system; and, moreover, what does it matter to you that the education of women in France is the most pleasant of absurdities, and that your marital obscurantism has brought a doll to your arms? As you have not sufficient courage to undertake a fairer task, would it not be better to lead your wife along the beaten track of married life in safety, than to run the risk of

making her scale the steep precipices of love? She is likely to be a mother: you must not exactly expect to have Gracchi for sons, but to be really *pater quem nuptiae demonstrant*; now, in order to aid you in reaching this consummation, we must make this book an arsenal from which each one, in accordance with his wife's character and his own, may choose weapons fit to employ against the terrible genius of evil, which is always ready to rise up in the soul of a wife; and since it may fairly be considered that the ignorant are the most cruel opponents of feminine education, this Meditation will serve as a breviary for the majority of husbands.

If a woman has received a man's education, she possesses in very truth the most brilliant and most fertile sources of happiness both to herself and to her husband; but this kind of woman is as rare as happiness itself; and if you do not possess her for your wife, your best course is to confine the one you do possess, for the sake of your common felicity, to the region of ideas she was born in, for you must not forget that one moment of pride in her might destroy you, by setting on the throne a slave who would immediately be tempted to abuse her power.

After all, by following the system prescribed in this Meditation, a man of superiority will be relieved from the necessity of putting his thoughts into small change, when he wishes to be understood by his wife, if indeed this man of superiority has been guilty of the folly of marrying one of those poor creatures who cannot understand him, instead of choosing for his wife a young girl whose mind and heart he has tested and studied for a considerable time.

Our aim in this last matrimonial observation has not been to advise all men of superiority to seek for women of superiority and we do not wish each one to expound our principles after the manner of Madame de Stael, who attempted in the most indelicate manner to effect a union between herself and Napoleon. These two beings would have been very unhappy in their domestic life; and Josephine was a wife accomplished in a very different sense from this virago of the nineteenth century.

And, indeed, when we praise those undiscoverable girls so happily educated by chance, so well endowed by nature, whose delicate souls endure so well the rude contact of the great soul of him we call a *man*, we mean to speak of those rare and noble creatures of whom Goethe has given us a model in his Claire of *Egmont*; we are thinking of those women who seek no other glory than that of playing their part well; who adapt themselves with amazing pliancy to the will and pleasure of those whom nature has given them for masters; soaring at one time into the boundless sphere of their thought and in turn stooping to the simple task of amusing them as if they were children; understanding well the inconsistencies of masculine and violent souls, understanding also their slightest word, their most puzzling looks; happy in silence, happy also in the midst of loquacity; and well aware that the pleasures, the ideas and the moral instincts of a Lord Byron cannot be those of a bonnet-maker. But we must stop; this fair picture has led us too far from our subject; we are treating of marriage and not of love.

## MEDITATION XII.

### THE HYGIENE OF MARRIAGE.

The aim of this Meditation is to call to your attention a new method of defence, by which you may reduce the will of your new wife to a condition of utter and abject submission. This is brought about by the reaction upon her moral nature of physical changes, and the wise lowering of her physical condition by a diet skillfully controlled.

This great and philosophical question of conjugal medicine will doubtless be regarded favorably by all who are gouty, are impotent, or suffer from catarrh; and by that legion of old men whose dullness we have quickened by our article on the predestined. But it principally concerns those husbands who have courage enough to enter into those paths of machiavelism, such as would not have been unworthy of that great king of France who endeavored to secure the happiness of the nation at the expense of certain noble

heads. Here, the subject is the same. The amputation or the weakening of certain members is always to the advantage of the whole body.

Do you think seriously that a celibate who has been subject to a diet consisting of the herb hanea, of cucumbers, of purslane and the applications of leeches to his ears, as recommended by Sterne, would be able to carry by storm the honor of your wife? Suppose that a diplomat had been clever enough to affix a permanent linen plaster to the head of Napoleon, or to purge him every morning: Do you think that Napoleon, Napoleon the Great, would ever have conquered Italy? Was Napoleon, during his campaign in Russia, a prey to the most horrible pangs of dysuria, or was he not? That is one of the questions which has weighed upon the minds of the whole world. Is it not certain that cooling applications, douches, baths, etc., produce great changes in more or less acute affections of the brain? In the middle of the heat of July when each one of your pores slowly filters out and returns to the devouring atmosphere the glasses of iced lemonade which you have drunk at a single draught, have you ever felt the flame of courage, the vigor of thought, the complete energy which rendered existence light and sweet to you some months before?

No, no; the iron most closely cemented into the hardest stone will raise and throw apart the most durable monument, by reason of the secret influence exercised by the slow and invisible variations of heat and cold, which vex the atmosphere. In the first place, let us be sure that if atmospheric mediums have an influence over man, there is still a stronger reason for believing that man, in turn, influences the imagination of his kind, by the more or less vigor with which he projects his will and thus produces a veritable atmosphere around him.

It is in this fact that the power of the actor's talent lies, as well as that of poetry and of fanaticism; for the former is the eloquence of words, as the latter is the eloquence of actions; and in this lies the foundation of a science, so far in its infancy.

This will, so potent in one man against another, this nervous and fluid force, eminently mobile and transmittable, is itself subject to the changing condition of our organization, and there are many circumstances which make this frail organism of ours to vary. At this point, our metaphysical observation shall stop and we will enter into an analysis of the circumstances which develop the will of man and impart to it a grater degree of strength or weakness.

Do not believe, however, that it is our aim to induce you to put cataplasms on the honor of your wife, to lock her up in a sweating house, or to seal her up like a letter; no. We will not even attempt to teach you the magnetic theory which would give you the power to make your will triumph in the soul of your wife; there is not a single husband who would accept the happiness of an eternal love at the price of this perpetual strain laid upon his animal forces. But we shall attempt to expound a powerful system of hygiene, which will enable you to put out the flame when your chimney takes fire. The elegant women of Paris and the provinces (and these elegant women form a very distinguished class among the honest women) have plenty of means of attaining the object which we propose, without rummaging in the arsenal of medicine for the four cold specifics, the water-lily and the thousand inventions worthy only of witches. We will leave to Aelian his herb hanea and to Sterne the purslane and cucumber which indicate too plainly his antiphlogistic purpose.

You should let your wife recline all day long on soft armchairs, in which she sinks into a veritable bath of eiderdown or feathers; you should encourage in every way that does no violence to your conscience, the inclination which women have to breathe no other air but the scented atmosphere of a chamber seldom opened, where daylight can scarcely enter through the soft, transparent curtains.

You will obtain marvelous results from this system, after having previously experienced the shock of her excitement; but if you are strong enough to support this momentary transport of your wife you will soon see her artificial energy die away. In general, women love

to live fast, but, after their tempest of passion, return to that condition of tranquillity which insures the happiness of a husband.

Jean-Jacques, through the instrumentality of his enchanting Julie, must have proved to your wife that it was infinitely becoming to refrain from affronting her delicate stomach and her refined palate by making chyle out of coarse lumps of beef, and enormous collops of mutton. Is there anything purer in the world than those interesting vegetables, always fresh and scentless, those tinted fruits, that coffee, that fragrant chocolate, those oranges, the golden apples of Atalanta, the dates of Arabia and the biscuits of Brussels, a wholesome and elegant food which produces satisfactory results, at the same time that it imparts to a woman an air of mysterious originality? By the regimen which she chooses she becomes quite celebrated in her immediate circle, just as she would be by a singular toilet, a benevolent action or a *bon mot*. Pythagoras must needs have cast his spell over her, and become as much petted by her as a poodle or an ape.

Never commit the imprudence of certain men who, for the sake of putting on the appearance of wit, controvert the feminine dictum, *that the figure is preserved by meagre diet*. Women on such a diet never grow fat, that is clear and positive; do you stick to that.

Praise the skill with which some women, renowned for their beauty, have been able to preserve it by bathing themselves in milk, several times a day, or in water compounded of substances likely to render the skin softer and to lower the nervous tension.

Advise her above all things to refrain from washing herself in cold water; because water warm or tepid is the proper thing for all kinds of ablutions.

Let Broussais be your idol. At the least indisposition of your wife, and on the slightest pretext, order the application of leeches; do not even shrink from applying from time to time a few dozen on yourself, in order to establish the system of that celebrated doctor in your household. You will constantly be called upon from your position as

husband to discover that your wife is too ruddy; try even sometimes to bring the blood to her head, in order to have the right to introduce into the house at certain intervals a squad of leeches.

Your wife ought to drink water, lightly tinged with a Burgundy wine agreeable to her taste, but destitute of any tonic properties; every other kind of wine would be bad for her. Never allow her to drink water alone; if you do, you are lost.

“Impetuous fluid! As soon as you press against the floodgates of the brain, how quickly do they yield to your power! Then Curiosity comes swimming by, making signs to her companions to follow; they plunge into the current. Imagination sits dreaming on the bank. She follows the torrent with her eyes and transforms the fragments of straw and reed into masts and bowsprit. And scarcely has the transformation taken place, before Desire, holding in one hand her skirt drawn up even to her knees, appears, sees the vessel and takes possession of it. O ye drinkers of water, it is by means of that magic spring that you have so often turned and turned again the world at your will, throwing beneath your feet the weak, trampling on his neck, and sometimes changing even the form and aspect of nature!”

If by this system of inaction, in combination with our system of diet, you fail to obtain satisfactory results, throw yourself with might and main into another system, which we will explain to you.

Man has a certain degree of energy given to him. Such and such a man or woman stands to another as ten is to thirty, as one to five; and there is a certain degree of energy which no one of us ever exceeds. The quantity of energy, or willpower, which each of us possesses diffuses itself like sound; it is sometimes weak, sometimes strong; it modifies itself according to the octaves to which it mounts. This force is unique, and although it may be dissipated in desire, in passion, in toils of intellect or in bodily exertion, it turns towards the object to which man directs it. A boxer expends it in blows of the fist, the baker in kneading his bread, the poet in the enthusiasm which consumes and demands an enormous quantity of it; it passes to the feet of the dancer; in fact, every one diffuses it at



will, and may I see the Minotaur tranquilly seated this very evening upon my bed, if you do not know as well as I do how he expends it. Almost all men spend in necessary toils, or in the anguish of direful passions, this fine sum of energy and of will, with which nature has endowed them; but our honest women are all the prey to the caprices and the struggles of this power which knows not what to do with itself. If, in the case of your wife, this energy has not been subdued by the prescribed dietary regimen, subject her to some form of activity which will constantly increase in violence. Find some means by which her sum of force which inconveniences you may be carried off, by some occupation which shall entirely absorb her strength. Without setting your wife to work the crank of a machine, there are a thousand ways of tiring her out under the load of constant work.

In leaving it to you to find means for carrying out our design—and these means vary with circumstances—we would point out that dancing is one of the very best abysses in which love may bury itself. This point having been very well treated by a contemporary, we will give him here an opportunity of speaking his mind:

“The poor victim who is the admiration of an enchanted audience pays dear for her success. What result can possibly follow on exertions so ill-proportioned to the resources of the delicate sex? The muscles of the body, disproportionately wearied, are forced to their full power of exertion. The nervous forces, intended to feed the fire of passions, and the labor of the brain, are diverted from their course. The failure of desire, the wish for rest, the exclusive craving for substantial food, all point to a nature impoverished, more anxious to recruit than to enjoy. Moreover, a denizen of the side scenes said to me one day, ‘Whoever has lived with dancers has lived with sheep; for in their exhaustion they can think of nothing but strong food.’ Believe me, then, the love which a ballet girl inspires is very delusive; in her we find, under an appearance of an artificial springtime, a soil which is cold as well as greedy, and senses which

are utterly dulled. The Calabrian doctors prescribed the dance as a remedy for the hysteric affections which are common among the women of their country; and the Arabs use a somewhat similar recipe for the highbred mares, whose too lively temperament hinders their fecundity. 'Dull as a dancer' is a familiar proverb at the theatre. In fact, the best brains of Europe are convinced that dancing brings with it a result eminently cooling.

"In support of this it may be necessary to add other observations. The life of shepherds gives birth to irregular loves. The morals of weavers were horribly decried in Greece. The Italians have given birth to a proverb concerning the lubricity of lame women. The Spanish, in whose veins are found many mixtures of African incontinence, have expressed their sentiments in a maxim which is familiar with them: *Muger y gallina pierna quebrantada* [it is good that a woman and a hen have one broken leg]. The profound sagacity of the Orientals in the art of pleasure is altogether expressed by this ordinance of the caliph Hakim, founder of the Druses, who forbade, under pain of death, the making in his kingdom of any shoes for women. It seems that over the whole globe the tempests of the heart wait only to break out after the limbs are at rest!"

What an admirable manoeuvre it would be to make a wife dance, and to feed her on vegetables!

Do not believe that these observations, which are as true as they are wittily stated, contradict in any way the system which we have previously prescribed; by the latter, as by the former, we succeed in producing in a woman that needed listlessness, which is the pledge of repose and tranquility. By the latter you leave a door open, that the enemy may flee; by the former, you slay him.

Now at this point it seems to us that we hear timorous people and those of narrow views rising up against our idea of hygiene in the name of morality and sentiment.

“Is not woman endowed with a soul? Has she not feelings as we have? What right has any one, without regard to her pain, her ideas, or her requirements, to hammer her out, as a cheap metal, out of which a workman fashions a candlestick or an extinguisher? Is it because the poor creatures are already so feeble and miserable that a brute claims the power to torture them, merely at the dictate of his own fancies, which may be more or less just? And, if by this weakening or heating system of yours, which draws out, softens, hardens the fibres, you cause frightful and cruel sickness, if you bring to the tomb a woman who is dear to you; if, if,—”

This is our answer:

Have you never noticed into how many different shapes harlequin and columbine change their little white hats? They turn and twist them so well that they become, one after another, a spinning-top, a boat, a wine-glass, a half-moon, a cap, a basket, a fish, a whip, a dagger, a baby, and a man’s head.

This is an exact image of the despotism with which you ought to shape and reshape your wife.

The wife is a piece of property, acquired by contract; she is part of your furniture, for possession is nine-tenths of the law; in fact, the woman is not, to speak correctly, anything but an adjunct to the man; therefore abridge, cut, file this article as you choose; she is in every sense yours. Take no notice at all of her murmurs, of her cries, of her sufferings; nature has ordained her for your use, that she may bear everything—children, griefs, blows and pains from man.

Don’t accuse yourself of harshness. In the codes of all the nations which are called civilized, man has written the laws which govern the destiny of women in these cruel terms: *Vae victis!* Woe to the conquered!

Finally, think upon this last observation, the most weighty, perhaps, of all that we have made up to this time: if you, her husband, do not break under the scourge of your will this weak and charming reed,

there will be a celibate, capricious and despotic, ready to bring her under a yoke more cruel still; and she will have to endure two tyrannies instead of one. Under all considerations, therefore, humanity demands that you should follow the system of our hygiene.

### MEDITATION XIII.

#### OF PERSONAL MEASURES.

Perhaps the preceding Meditations will prove more likely to develop general principles of conduct, than to repel force by force. They furnish, however, the pharmacopoeia of medicine and not the practice of medicine. Now consider the personal means which nature has put into your hands for self-defence; for Providence has forgotten no one; if to the sepia (that fish of the Adriatic) has been given the black dye by which he produces a cloud in which he disappears from his enemy, you should believe that a husband has not been left without a weapon; and now the time has come for you to draw yours.

You ought to have stipulated before you married that your wife should nurse her own children; in this case, as long as she is occupied in bearing children or in nursing them you will avoid the danger from one or two quarters. The wife who is engaged in bringing into the world and nursing a baby has not really the time to bother with a lover, not to speak of the fact that before and after her confinement she cannot show herself in the world. In short, how can the most bold of the distinguished women who are the subject of this work show herself under these circumstances in public? O Lord Byron, thou didst not wish to see women even eat!

Six months after her confinement, and when the child is on the eve of being weaned, a woman just begins to feel that she can enjoy her restoration and her liberty.

If your wife has not nursed her first child, you have too much sense not to notice this circumstance, and not to make her desire to nurse her next one. You will read to her the *Emile* of Jean-Jacques; you will fill her imagination with a sense of motherly duties; you will excite her moral feelings, etc.: in a word, you are either a fool or a man of sense; and in the first case, even after reading this book, you will always be minotaurized; while in the second, you will understand how to take a hint.

This first expedient is in reality your own personal business. It will give you a great advantage in carrying out all the other methods.

Since Alcibiades cut the ears and the tail of his dog, in order to do a service to Pericles, who had on his hands a sort of Spanish war, as well as an Ouvrard contract affair, such as was then attracting the notice of the Athenians, there is not a single minister who has not endeavored to cut the ears of some dog or other.

So in medicine, when inflammation takes place at some vital point of the system, counter-irritation is brought about at some other point, by means of blisters, scarifications and cupping.

Another method consists in blistering your wife, or giving her, with a mental needle, a prod whose violence is such as to make a diversion in your favor.

A man of considerable mental resources had made his honeymoon last for about four years; the moon began to wane, and he saw appearing the fatal hollow in its circle. His wife was exactly in that state of mind which we attributed at the close of our first part to every honest woman; she had taken a fancy to a worthless fellow who was both insignificant in appearance and ugly; the only thing in his favor was, he was not her own husband. At this juncture, her husband meditated the cutting of some dog's tail, in order to renew, if possible, his lease of happiness. His wife had conducted herself with such tact, that it would have been very embarrassing to forbid her lover the house, for she had discovered some slight tie of relationship between them. The danger became, day by day, more

imminent. The scent of the Minotaur was all around. One evening the husband felt himself plunged into a mood of deep vexation so acute as to be apparent to his wife. His wife had begun to show him more kindness than she had ever exhibited, even during the honeymoon; and hence question after question racked his mind. On her part a dead silence reigned. The anxious questionings of his mind were redoubled; his suspicions burst forth, and he was seized with forebodings of future calamity! Now, on this occasion, he deftly applied a Japanese blister, which burned as fiercely as an *auto-da-fe* of the year 1600. At first his wife employed a thousand stratagems to discover whether the annoyance of her husband was caused by the presence of her lover; it was her first intrigue and she displayed a thousand artifices in it. Her imagination was aroused; it was no longer taken up with her lover; had she not better, first of all, probe her husband's secret?

One evening the husband, moved by the desire to confide in his loving helpmeet all his troubles, informed her that their whole fortune was lost. They would have to give up their carriage, their box at the theatre, balls, parties, even Paris itself; perhaps, by living on their estate in the country a year or two, they might retrieve all! Appealing to the imagination of his wife, he told her how he pitied her for her attachment to a man who was indeed deeply in love with her, but was now without fortune; he tore his hair, and his wife was compelled in honor to be deeply moved; then in this first excitement of their conjugal disturbance he took her off to his estate. Then followed scarifications, mustard plaster upon mustard plaster, and the tails of fresh dogs were cut: he caused a Gothic wing to be built to the chateau; madame altered the park ten times over in order to have fountains and lakes and variations in the grounds; finally, the husband in the midst of her labors did not forget his own, which consisted in providing her with interesting reading, and launching upon her delicate attentions, *etc.* Notice, he never informed his wife of the trick he had played on her; and if his fortune was recuperated, it was directly after the building of the wing, and the expenditure of enormous sums in making water-courses; but he assured her that the lake provided a water-power by which mills might be run, *etc.*

Now, there was a conjugal blister well conceived, for this husband neither neglected to rear his family nor to invite to his house neighbors who were tiresome, stupid or old; and if he spent the winter in Paris, he flung his wife into the vortex of balls and races, so that she had not a minute to give to lovers, who are usually the fruit of a vacant life.

Journeys to Italy, Switzerland or Greece, sudden complaints which require a visit to the waters, and the most distant waters, are pretty good blisters. In fact, a man of sense should know how to manufacture a thousand of them.

Let us continue our examination of such personal methods.

And here we would have you observe that we are reasoning upon a hypothesis, without which this book will be unintelligible to you; namely, we suppose that your honeymoon has lasted for a respectable time and that the lady that you married was not a widow, but a maid; on the opposite supposition, it is at least in accordance with French manners to think that your wife married you merely for the purpose of becoming inconsistent.

From the moment when the struggle between virtue and inconsistency begins in your home, the whole question rests upon the constant and involuntary comparison which your wife is instituting between you and her lover.

And here you may find still another mode of defence, entirely personal, seldom employed by husbands, but the men of superiority will not fear to attempt it. It is to belittle the lover without letting your wife suspect your intention. You ought to be able to bring it about so that she will say to herself some evening while she is putting her hair in curl-papers, "My husband is superior to him."

In order to succeed, and you ought to be able to succeed, since you have the immense advantage over the lover in knowing the character of your wife, and how she is most easily wounded, you

should, with all the tact of a diplomat, lead this lover to do silly things and cause him to annoy her, without his being aware of it.

In the first place, this lover, as usual, will seek your friendship, or you will have friends in common; then, either through the instrumentality of these friends or by insinuations adroitly but treacherously made, you will lead him astray on essential points; and, with a little cleverness, you will succeed in finding your wife ready to deny herself to her lover when he calls, without either she or he being able to tell the reason. Thus you will have created in the bosom of your home a comedy in five acts, in which you play, to your profit, the brilliant role of Figaro or Almaviva; and for some months you will amuse yourself so much the more, because your *amour-propre*, your vanity, your all, were at stake.

I had the good fortune in my youth to win the confidence of an old *émigre* who gave me those rudiments of education which are generally obtained by young people from women. This friend, whose memory will always be dear to me, taught me by his example to put into practice those diplomatic stratagems which require tact as well as grace.

The Comte de Noce had returned from Coblenz at a time when it was dangerous for the nobility to be found in France. No one had such courage and such kindness, such craft and such recklessness as this aristocrat. Although he was sixty years old he had married a woman of twenty-five, being compelled to this act of folly by soft-heartedness; for he thus delivered this poor child from the despotism of a capricious mother. "Would you like to be my widow?" this amiable old gentleman had said to Mademoiselle de Pontivy, but his heart was too affectionate not to become more attached to his wife than a sensible man ought to be. As in his youth he had been under the influence of several among the cleverest women in the court of Louis XV, he thought he would have no difficulty in keeping his wife from any entanglement. What man excepting him have I ever seen, who could put into successful practice the teachings which I am endeavoring to give to husbands! What charm could he impart to life



by his delightful manners and fascinating conversation!—His wife never knew until after his death what she then learned from me, namely, that he had the gout. He had wisely retired to a home in the hollow of a valley, close to a forest. God only knows what rambles he used to take with his wife!—His good star decreed that Mademoiselle de Pontivy should possess an excellent heart and should manifest in a high degree that exquisite refinement, that sensitive modesty which renders beautiful the plainest girl in the world. All of a sudden, one of his nephews, a good-looking military man, who had escaped from the disasters of Moscow, returned to his uncle's house, as much for the sake of learning how far he had to fear his cousins, as heirs, as in the hope of laying siege to his aunt. His black hair, his moustache, the easy small-talk of the staff officer, a certain freedom which was elegant as well as trifling, his bright eyes, contrasted favorably with the faded graces of his uncle. I arrived at the precise moment when the young countess was teaching her newly found relation to play backgammon. The proverb says that "women never learn this game excepting from their lovers, and vice versa." Now, during a certain game, M. de Noce had surprised his wife and the viscount in the act of exchanging one of those looks which are full of mingled innocence, fear, and desire. In the evening he proposed to us a hunting-party, and we agreed. I never saw him so gay and so eager as he appeared on the following morning, in spite of the twinges of gout which heralded an approaching attack. The devil himself could not have been better able to keep up a conversation on trifling subjects than he was. He had formerly been a musketeer in the Grays and had known Sophie Arnoud. This explains all. The conversation after a time became so exceedingly free among us three, that I hope God may forgive me for it!

"I would never have believed that my uncle was such a dashing blade?" said the nephew.

We made a halt, and while we were sitting on the edge of a green forest clearing, the count led us on to discourse about women just as Brantome and Aloysia might have done.

“You fellows are very happy under the present government!—the women of the time are well mannered” (in order to appreciate the exclamation of the old gentleman, the reader should have heard the atrocious stories which the captain had been relating). “And this,” he went on, “is one of the advantages resulting from the Revolution. The present system gives very much more charm and mystery to passion. In former times women were easy; ah! indeed, you would not believe what skill it required, what daring, to wake up those worn-out hearts; we were always on the *qui vive*. But yet in those days a man became celebrated for a broad joke, well put, or for a lucky piece of insolence. That is what women love, and it will always be the best method of succeeding with them!”

These last words were uttered in a tone of profound contempt; he stopped, and began to play with the hammer of his gun as if to disguise his deep feeling.

“But nonsense,” he went on, “my day is over! A man ought to have the body as well as the imagination young. Why did I marry? What is most treacherous in girls educated by mothers who lived in that brilliant era of gallantry, is that they put on an air of frankness, of reserve; they look as if butter would not melt in their mouths, and those who know them well feel that they would swallow anything!”

He rose, lifted his gun with a gesture of rage, and dashing it to the ground thrust it far up the butt in the moist sod.

“It would seem as if my dear aunt were fond of a little fun,” said the officer to me in a low voice.

“Or of denouements that do not come off!” I added.

The nephew tightened his cravat, adjusted his collar and gave a jump like a Calabrian goat. We returned to the chateau at about two in the afternoon. The count kept me with him until dinner-time, under the pretext of looking for some medals, of which he had spoken during our return home. The dinner was dull. The countess treated

her nephew with stiff and cold politeness. When we entered the drawing-room the count said to his wife:

“Are you going to play backgammon?—We will leave you.”

The young countess made no reply. She gazed at the fire, as if she had not heard. Her husband took some steps towards the door, inviting me by the wave of his hand to follow him. At the sound of his footsteps, his wife quickly turned her head.

“Why do you leave us?” said she, “you will have all tomorrow to show your friend the reverse of the medals.”

The count remained. Without paying any attention to the awkwardness which had succeeded the former military aplomb of his nephew, the count exercised during the whole evening his full powers as a charming conversationalist. I had never before seen him so brilliant or so gracious. We spoke a great deal about women. The witticisms of our host were marked by the most exquisite refinement. He made me forget that his hair was white, for he showed the brilliancy which belonged to a youthful heart, a gaiety which effaces the wrinkles from the cheek and melts the snow of wintry age.

The next day the nephew went away. Even after the death of M. de Noce, I tried to profit by the intimacy of those familiar conversations in which women are sometimes caught off their guard to sound her, but I could never learn what impertinence the viscount had exhibited towards his aunt. His insolence must have been excessive, for since that time Madame de Noce has refused to see her nephew, and up to the present moment never hears him named without a slight movement of her eyebrows. I did not at once guess the end at which the Comte de Noce aimed, in inviting us to go shooting; but I discovered later that he had played a pretty bold game.

Nevertheless, if you happen at last, like M. de Noce, to carry off a decisive victory, do not forget to put into practice at once the system of blisters; and do not for a moment imagine that such *tours de force* are to be repeated with safety. If that is the way you use your talents,

you will end by losing caste in your wife's estimation; for she will demand of you, reasonably enough, double what you would give her, and the time will come when you declare bankruptcy. The human soul in its desires follows a sort of arithmetical progression, the end and origin of which are equally unknown. Just as the opium-eater must constantly increase his doses in order to obtain the same result, so our mind, imperious as it is weak, desires that feeling, ideas and objects should go on ever increasing in size and in intensity. Hence the necessity of cleverly distributing the interest in a dramatic work, and of graduating doses in medicine. Thus you see, if you always resort to the employment of means like these, that you must accommodate such daring measures to many circumstances, and success will always depend upon the motives to which you appeal.

And finally, have you influence, powerful friends, an important post? The last means I shall suggest cuts to the root of the evil. Would you have the power to send your wife's lover off by securing his promotion, or his change of residence by an exchange, if he is a military man? You cut off by this means all communication between them; later on we will show you how to do it; for *sublata causa tollitur effectus*,—Latin words which may be freely translated “there is no effect without a cause.”

Nevertheless, you feel that your wife may easily choose another lover; but in addition to these preliminary expedients, you will always have a blister ready, in order to gain time, and calculate how you may bring the affair to an end by fresh devices.

Study how to combine the system of blisters with the mimic wiles of Carlin, the immortal Carlin of the *Comedie-Italienne* who always held and amused an audience for whole hours, by uttering the same words, varied only by the art of pantomime and pronounced with a thousand inflections of different tone,—“The queen said to the king!” Imitate Carlin, discover some method of always keeping your wife in check, so as not to be checkmated yourself. Take a degree among constitutional ministers, a degree in the art of making promises.

Habituate yourself to show at seasonable times the punchinello which makes children run after you without knowing the distance they run. We are all children, and women are all inclined through their curiosity to spend their time in pursuit of a will-o'-the-wisp. The flame is brilliant and quickly vanishes, but is not the imagination at hand to act as your ally? Finally, study the happy art of being near her and yet not being near her; of seizing the opportunity which will yield you pre-eminence in her mind without ever crushing her with a sense of your superiority, or even of her own happiness. If the ignorance in which you have kept her does not altogether destroy her intellect, you must remain in such relations with her that each of you will still desire the company of the other.

#### MEDITATION XIV.

#### OF APARTMENTS.

The preceding methods and systems are in a way purely moral; they share the nobility of the soul, there is nothing repulsive in them; but now we must proceed to consider precautions *a la Bartholo*. Do not give way to timidity. There is a marital courage, as there is a civil and military courage, as there is the courage of the National Guard.

What is the first course of a young girl after having purchased a parrot? Is it not to fasten it up in a pretty cage, from which it cannot get out without permission?

You may learn your duty from this child.

Everything that pertains to the arrangement of your house and of your apartments should be planned so as not to give your wife any advantage, in case she has decided to deliver you to the Minotaur; half of all actual mischances are brought about by the deplorable facilities which the apartments furnish.

Before everything else determine to have for your porter a *single man* entirely devoted to your person. This is a treasure easily to be found. What husband is there throughout the world who has not either a foster-father or some old servant, upon whose knees he has been dandled! There ought to exist by means of your management, a hatred like that of Artreus and Thyestes between your wife and this Nestor— guardian of your gate. This gate is the Alpha and Omega of an intrigue. May not all intrigues in love be confined in these words— entering and leaving?

Your house will be of no use to you if it does not stand between a court and a garden, and so constructed as to be detached from all other buildings. You must abolish all recesses in your apartments. A cupboard, if it contain but six pots of preserves, should be walled in. You are preparing yourself for war, and the first thought of a general is to cut his enemy off from supplies. Moreover, all the walls must be smooth, in order to present to the eye lines which may be taken in at a glance, and permit the immediate recognition of the least strange object. If you consult the remains of antique monuments you will see that the beauty of Greek and Roman apartments sprang principally from the purity of their lines, the clear sweep of their walls and scantiness of furniture. The Greeks would have smiled in pity, if they had seen the gaps which our closets make in our drawing-rooms.

This magnificent system of defence should above all be put in active operation in the apartment of your wife; never let her curtain her bed in such a way that one can walk round it amid a maze of hangings; be inexorable in the matter of connecting passages, and let her chamber be at the bottom of your reception-rooms, so as to show at a glance those who come and go.

*The Marriage of Figaro* will no doubt have taught you to put your wife's chamber at a great height from the ground. All celibates are Cherubins.

Your means, doubtless, will permit your wife to have a dressing-room, a bath-room, and a room for her chambermaid. Think then on Susanne, and never commit the fault of arranging this little room

below that of madame's, but place it always above, and do not shrink from disfiguring your mansion by hideous divisions in the windows.

If, by ill luck, you see that this dangerous apartment communicates with that of your wife by a back staircase, earnestly consult your architect; let his genius exhaust itself in rendering this dangerous staircase as innocent as the primitive garret ladder; we conjure you let not this staircase have appended to it any treacherous lurking-place; its stiff and angular steps must not be arranged with that tempting curve which Faublas and Justine found so useful when they waited for the exit of the Marquis de B—. Architects nowadays make such staircases as are absolutely preferable to ottomans. Restore rather the virtuous garret steps of our ancestors.

Concerning the chimneys in the apartment of madame, you must take care to place in the flue, five feet from the ground, an iron grill, even though it be necessary to put up a fresh one every time the chimney is swept. If your wife laughs at this precaution, suggest to her the number of murders that have been committed by means of chimneys. Almost all women are afraid of robbers. The bed is one of those important pieces of furniture whose structure will demand long consideration. Everything concerning it is of vital importance. The following is the result of long experience in the construction of beds. Give to this piece of furniture a form so original that it may be looked upon without disgust, in the midst of changes of fashion which succeed so rapidly in rendering antiquated the creations of former decorators, for it is essential that your wife be unable to change, at pleasure, this theatre of married happiness. The base should be plain and massive and admit of no treacherous interval between it and the floor; and bear in mind always that the Donna Julia of Byron hid Don Juan under her pillow. But it would be ridiculous to treat lightly so delicate a subject.

LXII. The bed is the whole of marriage.

Moreover, we must not delay to direct your attention to this wonderful creation of human genius, an invention which claims our recognition much more than ships, firearms, matches, wheeled carriages, steam engines of all kinds, more than even barrels and bottles. In the first place, a little thought will convince us that this is all true of the bed; but when we begin to think that it is our second father, that the most tranquil and most agitated half of our existence is spent under its protecting canopy, words fail in eulogizing it. (See Meditation XVII, entitled "Theory of the Bed.")

When the war, of which we shall speak in our third part, breaks out between you and madame, you will always have plenty of ingenious excuses for rummaging in the drawers and escritaires; for if your wife is trying to hide from you some statue of her adoration, it is your interest to know where she has hidden it. A gynecium, constructed on the method described, will enable you to calculate at a glance, whether there is present in it two pounds of silk more than usual. Should a single closet be constructed there, you are a lost man! Above all, accustom your wife, during the honeymoon, to bestow especial pains in the neatness of her apartment; let nothing put off that. If you do not habituate her to be minutely particular in this respect, if the same objects are not always found in the same places, she will allow things to become so untidy, that you will not be able to see that there are two pounds of silk more or less in her room.

The curtains of your apartments ought to be of a stuff which is quite transparent, and you ought to contract the habit in the evenings of walking outside so that madame may see you come right up to the window just out of absent-mindedness. In a word, with regard to windows, let the sills be so narrow that even a sack of flour cannot be set up on them.

If the apartment of your wife can be arranged on these principles, you will be in perfect safety, even if there are niches enough there to contain all the saints of Paradise. You will be able, every evening, with the assistance of your porter, to strike the balance between the



entrances and exits of visitors; and, in order to obtain accurate results, there is nothing to prevent your teaching him to keep a book of visitors, in double entry.

If you have a garden, cultivate a taste for dogs, and always keep at large one of these incorruptible guardians under your windows; you will thus gain the respect of the Minotaur, especially if you accustom your four-footed friend to take nothing substantial excepting from the hand of your porter, so that hard-hearted celibates may not succeed in poisoning him.

But all these precautions must be taken as a natural thing so that they may not arouse suspicions. If husbands are so imprudent as to neglect precautions from the moment they are married, they ought at once to sell their house and buy another one, or, under the pretext of repairs, alter their present house in the way prescribed.

You will without scruple banish from your apartment all sofas, ottomans, lounges, sedan chairs and the like. In the first place, this is the kind of furniture that adorns the homes of grocers, where they are universally found, as they are in those of barbers; but they are essentially the furniture of perdition; I can never see them without alarm. It has always seemed to me that there the devil himself is lurking with his horns and cloven foot.

After all, nothing is so dangerous as a chair, and it is extremely unfortunate that women cannot be shut up within the four walls of a bare room! What husband is there, who on sitting down on a rickety chair is not always forced to believe that this chair has received some of the lessons taught by the *Sofa* of Crebillon junior? But happily we have arranged your apartment on such a system of prevention that nothing so fatal can happen, or, at any rate, not without your contributory negligence.

One fault which you must contract, and which you must never correct, will consist in a sort of heedless curiosity, which will make you examine unceasingly all the boxes, and turn upside down the contents of all dressing-cases and work-baskets. You must proceed

to this domiciliary visit in a humorous mood, and gracefully, so that each time you will obtain pardon by exciting the amusement of your wife.

You must always manifest a most profound astonishment on noticing any piece of furniture freshly upholstered in her well-appointed apartment. You must immediately make her explain to you the advantages of the change; and then you must ransack your mind to discover whether there be not some underhand motive in the transaction.

This is by no means all. You have too much sense to forget that your pretty parrot will remain in her cage only so long as that cage is beautiful. The least accessory of her apartment ought, therefore, to breathe elegance and taste. The general appearance should always present a simple, at the same time a charming picture. You must constantly renew the hangings and muslin curtains. The freshness of the decorations is too essential to permit of economy on this point. It is the fresh chickweed each morning carefully put into the cage of their birds, that makes their pets believe it is the verdure of the meadows. An apartment of this character is then the *ultima ratio* of husbands; a wife has nothing to say when everything is lavished on her.

Husbands who are condemned to live in rented apartments find themselves in the most terrible situation possible. What happy or what fatal influence cannot the porter exercise upon their lot?

Is not their home flanked on either side by other houses? It is true that by placing the apartment of their wives on one side of the house the danger is lessened by one-half; but are they not obliged to learn by heart and to ponder the age, the condition, the fortune, the character, the habits of the tenants of the next house and even to know their friends and relations?

A husband will never take lodgings on the ground floor.

Every man, however, can apply in his apartments the precautionary methods which we have suggested to the owner of a house, and thus the tenant will have this advantage over the owner, that the apartment, which is less spacious than the house, is more easily guarded.

## MEDITATION XV.

### OF THE CUSTOM HOUSE.

“But no, madame, no—”

“Yes, for there is such inconvenience in the arrangement.”

“Do you think, madame, that we wish, as at the frontier, to watch the visits of persons who cross the threshold of your apartments, or furtively leave them, in order to see whether they bring to you articles of contraband? That would not be proper; and there is nothing odious in our proceeding, any more than there is anything of a fiscal character; do not be alarmed.”

The Custom House of the marriage state is, of all the expedients prescribed in this second part, that which perhaps demands the most tact and the most skill as well as the most knowledge acquired *a priori*, that is to say before marriage. In order to carry it out, a husband ought to have made a profound study of Lavater’s book, and to be imbued with all his principles; to have accustomed his eye to judge and to apprehend with the most astonishing promptitude, the slightest physical expressions by which a man reveals his thoughts.

Lavater’s *Physiognomy* originated a veritable science, which has won a place in human investigation. If at first some doubts, some jokes greeted the appearance of this book, since then the celebrated Doctor Gall is come with his noble theory of the skull and has completed the system of the Swiss savant, and given stability to his

fine and luminous observations. People of talent, diplomats, women, all those who are numbered among the choice and fervent disciples of these two celebrated men, have often had occasion to recognize many other evident signs, by which the course of human thought is indicated. The habits of the body, the handwriting, the sound of the voice, have often betrayed the woman who is in love, the diplomat who is attempting to deceive, the clever administrator, or the sovereign who is compelled to distinguish at a glance love, treason or merit hitherto unknown. The man whose soul operates with energy is like a poor glowworm, which without knowing it irradiates light from every pore. He moves in a brilliant sphere where each effort makes a burning light and outlines his actions with long streamers of fire.

These, then, are all the elements of knowledge which you should possess, for the conjugal custom house insists simply in being able by a rapid but searching examination to know the moral and physical condition of all who enter or leave your house—all, that is, who have seen or intend to see your wife. A husband is, like a spider, set at the centre of an invisible net, and receives a shock from the least fool of a fly who touches it, and from a distance, hears, judges and sees what is either his prey or his enemy.

Thus you must obtain means to examine the celibate who rings at your door under two circumstances which are quite distinct, namely, when he is about to enter and when he is inside.

At the moment of entering how many things does he utter without even opening his mouth!

It may be by a slight wave of his hand, or by his plunging his fingers many times into his hair, he sticks up or smoothes down his characteristic bang.

Or he hums a French or an Italian air, merry or sad, in a voice which may be either tenor, contralto, soprano or baritone.

Perhaps he takes care to see that the ends of his necktie are properly adjusted.

Or he smooths down the ruffles or front of his shirt or evening-dress.

Or he tries to find out by a questioning and furtive glance whether his wig, blonde or brown, curled or plain, is in its natural position.

Perhaps he looks at his nails to see whether they are clean and duly cut.

Perhaps with a hand which is either white or untidy, well-gloved or otherwise, he twirls his moustache, or his whiskers, or picks his teeth with a little tortoise-shell toothpick.

Or by slow and repeated movements he tries to place his chin exactly over the centre of his necktie.

Or perhaps he crosses one foot over the other, putting his hands in his pockets.

Or perhaps he gives a twist to his shoe, and looks at it as if he thought, "Now, there's a foot that is not badly formed."

Or according as he has come on foot or in a carriage, he rubs off or he does not rub off the slight patches of mud which soil his shoes.

Or perhaps he remains as motionless as a Dutchman smoking his pipe.

Or perhaps he fixes his eyes on the door and looks like a soul escaped from Purgatory and waiting for Saint Peter with the keys.

Perhaps he hesitates to pull the bell; perhaps he seizes it negligently, precipitately, familiarly, or like a man who is quite sure of himself.

Perhaps he pulls it timidly, producing a faint tinkle which is lost in the silence of the apartments, as the first bell of matins in winter-time, in a convent of Minims; or perhaps after having rung with energy, he rings again impatient that the footman has not heard him.

Perhaps he exhales a delicate scent, as he chews a pastille.

Perhaps with a solemn air he takes a pinch of snuff, brushing off with care the grains that might mar the whiteness of his linen.

Perhaps he looks around like a man estimating the value of the staircase lamp, the balustrade, the carpet, as if he were a furniture dealer or a contractor.

Perhaps this celibate seems a young or an old man, is cold or hot, arrives slowly, with an expression of sadness or merriment, *etc.*

You see that here, at the very foot of your staircase, you are met by an astonishing mass of things to observe.

The light pencil-strokes, with which we have tried to outline this figure, will suggest to you what is in reality a moral kaleidoscope with millions of variations. And yet we have not even attempted to bring any woman on to the threshold which reveals so much; for in that case our remarks, already considerable in number, would have been countless and light as the grains of sand on the seashore.

For as a matter of fact, when he stands before the shut door, a man believes that he is quite alone; and he would have no hesitation in beginning a silent monologue, a dreamy soliloquy, in which he revealed his desires, his intentions, his personal qualities, his faults, his virtues, *etc.*; for undoubtedly a man on a stoop is exactly like a young girl of fifteen at confession, the evening before her first communion.

Do you want any proof of this? Notice the sudden change of face and manner in this celibate from the very moment he steps within the house. No machinist in the Opera, no change in the temperature in

the clouds or in the sun can more suddenly transform the appearance of a theatre, the effect of the atmosphere, or the scenery of the heavens.

On reaching the first plank of your antechamber, instead of betraying with so much innocence the myriad thoughts which were suggested to you on the steps, the celibate has not a single glance to which you could attach any significance. The mask of social convention wraps with its thick veil his whole bearing; but a clever husband must already have divined at a single look the object of his visit, and he reads the soul of the new arrival as if it were a printed book.

The manner in which he approaches your wife, in which he addresses her, looks at her, greets her and retires—there are volumes of observations, more or less trifling, to be made on these subjects.

The tone of his voice, his bearing, his awkwardness, it may be his smile, even his gloom, his avoidance of your eye,—all are significant, all ought to be studied, but without apparent attention. You ought to conceal the most disagreeable discovery you may make by an easy manner and remarks such as are ready at hand to a man of society. As we are unable to detail the minutiae of this subject we leave them entirely to the sagacity of the reader, who must by this time have perceived the drift of our investigation, as well as the extent of this science which begins at the analysis of glances and ends in the direction of such movements as contempt may inspire in a great toe hidden under the satin of a lady's slipper or the leather of a man's boot.

But the exit!—for we must allow for occasions where you have omitted your rigid scrutiny at the threshold of the doorway, and in that case the exit becomes of vital importance, and all the more so because this fresh study of the celibate ought to be made on the same lines, but from an opposite point of view, from that which we have already outlined.

In the exit the situation assumes a special gravity; for then is the moment in which the enemy has crossed all the intrenchments within which he was subject to our examination and has escaped into the street! At this point a man of understanding when he sees a visitor passing under the *porte-cochere* should be able to divine the import of the whole visit. The indications are indeed fewer in number, but how distinct is their character! The denouement has arrived and the man instantly betrays the importance of it by the frankest expression of happiness, pain or joy.

These revelations are therefore easy to apprehend; they appear in the glance cast either at the building or at the windows of the apartment; in a slow or loitering gait, in the rubbing of hands, on the part of a fool, in the bounding gait of a coxcomb, or the involuntary arrest of his footsteps, which marks the man who is deeply moved; in a word, you see upon the stoop certain questions as clearly proposed to you as if a provincial academy had offered a hundred crowns for an essay; but in the exit you behold the solution of these questions clearly and precisely given to you. Our task would be far above the power of human intelligence if it consisted in enumerating the different ways by which men betray their feelings, the discernment of such things is purely a matter of tact and sentiment.

If strangers are the subject of these principles of observation, you have a still stronger reason for submitting your wife to the formal safeguards which we have outlined.

A married man should make a profound study of his wife's countenance. Such a study is easy, it is even involuntary and continuous. For him the pretty face of his wife must needs contain no mysteries, he knows how her feelings are depicted there and with what expression she shuns the fire of his glance.

The slightest movement of the lips, the faintest contraction of the nostrils, scarcely perceptible changes in the expression of the eye, an altered voice, and those indescribable shades of feeling which pass over her features, or the light which sometimes bursts forth from them, are intelligible language to you.



The whole woman nature stands before you; all look at her, but none can interpret her thoughts. But for you, the eye is more or less dimmed, wide-opened or closed; the lid twitches, the eyebrow moves; a wrinkle, which vanishes as quickly as a ripple on the ocean, furrows her brow for one moment; the lip tightens, it is slightly curved or it is wreathed with animation—for you the woman has spoken.

If in those puzzling moments in which a woman tries dissimulation in presence of her husband, you have the spirit of a sphinx in seeing through her, you will plainly observe that your custom-house restrictions are mere child's play to her.

When she comes home or goes out, when in a word she believes she is alone, your wife will exhibit all the imprudence of a jackdaw and will tell her secret aloud to herself; moreover, by her sudden change of expression the moment she notices you (and despite the rapidity of this change, you will not fail to have observed the expression she wore behind your back) you may read her soul as if you were reading a book of Plain Song. Moreover, your wife will often find herself just on the point of indulging in soliloquies, and on such occasions her husband may recognize the secret feelings of his wife.

Is there a man as heedless of love's mysteries as not to have admired, over and over again, the light, mincing, even bewitching gait of a woman who flies on her way to keep an assignation? She glides through the crowd, like a snake through the grass. The costumes and stuffs of the latest fashion spread out their dazzling attractions in the shop windows without claiming her attention; on, on she goes like the faithful animal who follows the invisible tracks of his master; she is deaf to all compliments, blind to all glances, insensible even to the light touch of the crowd, which is inevitable amid the circulation of Parisian humanity. Oh, how deeply she feels the value of a minute! Her gait, her toilet, the expression of her face, involve her in a thousand indiscretions, but oh, what a ravishing picture she presents to the idler, and what an ominous page for the eye of a

husband to read, is the face of this woman when she returns from the secret place of rendezvous in which her heart ever dwells! Her happiness is impressed even on the unmistakable disarray of her hair, the mass of whose wavy tresses has not received from the broken comb of the celibate that radiant lustre, that elegant and well-proportioned adjustment which only the practiced hand of her maid can give. And what charming ease appears in her gait! How is it possible to describe the emotion which adds such rich tints to her complexion!—which robs her eyes of all their assurance and gives to them an expression of mingled melancholy and delight, of shame which is yet blended with pride!

These observations, stolen from our Meditation, *Of the Last Symptoms*, and which are really suggested by the situation of a woman who tries to conceal everything, may enable you to divine by analogy the rich crop of observation which is left for you to harvest when your wife arrives home, or when, without having committed the great crime she innocently lets out the secrets of her thoughts. For our own part we never see a landing without wishing to set up there a mariner's card and a weather-cock.

As the means to be employed for constructing a sort of domestic observatory depend altogether on places and circumstances, we must leave to the address of a jealous husband the execution of the methods suggested in this Meditation.

## MEDITATION XVI.

### THE CHARTER OF MARRIAGE.

I acknowledge that I really know of but one house in Paris which is managed in accordance with the system unfolded in the two preceding Meditations. But I ought to add, also, that I have built up my system on the example of that house. The admirable fortress I allude to belonged to a young councillor of state, who was mad with love and jealousy.

As soon as he learned that there existed a man who was exclusively occupied in bringing to perfection the institution of marriage in France, he had the generosity to open the doors of his mansion to me and to show me his gynaeceum. I admired the profound genius which so cleverly disguised the precautions of almost oriental jealousy under the elegance of furniture, beauty of carpets and brightness of painted decorations. I agreed with him that it was impossible for his wife to render his home a scene of treachery.

“Sir,” said I, to this Othello of the council of state who did not seem to me peculiarly strong in the *haute politique* of marriage, “I have no doubt that the viscountess is delighted to live in this little Paradise; she ought indeed to take prodigious pleasure in it, especially if you are here often. But the time will come when she will have had enough of it; for, my dear sir, we grow tired of everything, even of the sublime. What will you do then, when madame, failing to find in all your inventions their primitive charm, shall open her mouth in a yawn, and perhaps make a request with a view to the exercise of two rights, both of which are indispensable to her happiness: individual liberty, that is, the privilege of going and coming according to the caprice of her will; and the liberty of the press, that is, the privilege of writing and receiving letters without fear of your censure?”

Scarcely had I said these words when the Vicomte de V—— grasped my arm tightly and cried:

“Yes, such is the ingratitude of woman! If there is any thing more ungrateful than a king, it is a nation; but, sir, woman is more ungrateful than either of them. A married woman treats us as the citizens of a constitutional monarchy treat their king; every measure has been taken to give these citizens a life of prosperity in a prosperous country; the government has taken all the pains in the world with its gendarmes, its churches, its ministry and all the paraphernalia of its military forces, to prevent the people from dying of hunger, to light the cities by gas at the expense of the citizens, to give warmth to every one by means of the sun which shines at the forty-fifth degree of latitude, and to forbid every one, excepting the

tax-gatherers, to ask for money; it has labored hard to give to all the main roads a more or less substantial pavement—but none of these advantages of our fair Utopia is appreciated! The citizens want something else. They are not ashamed to demand the right of traveling over the roads at their own will, and of being informed where that money given to the tax-gatherers goes. And, finally, the monarch will soon be obliged, if we pay any attention to the chatter of certain scribblers, to give to every individual a share in the throne or to adopt certain revolutionary ideas, which are mere Punch and Judy shows for the public, manipulated by a band of self-styled patriots, riff-raff, always ready to sell their conscience for a million francs, for an honest woman, or for a ducal coronet.”

“But, monsieur,” I said, interrupting him, “while I perfectly agree with you on this last point, the question remains, how will you escape giving an answer to the just demands of your wife?”

“Sir” he replied, “I shall do—I shall answer as the government answers, that is, those governments which are not so stupid as the opposition would make out to their constituents. I shall begin by solemnly interdicting any arrangement, by virtue of which my wife will be declared entirely free. I fully recognize her right to go wherever it seems good to her, to write to whom she chooses, and to receive letters, the contents of which I do not know. My wife shall have all the rights that belong to an English Parliament; I shall let her talk as much as she likes, discuss and propose strong and energetic measures, but without the power to put them into execution, and then after that—well, we shall see!”

“By St. Joseph!” said I to myself, “Here is a man who understands the science of marriage as well as I myself do. And then, you will see, sir,” I answered aloud, in order to obtain from him the fullest revelation of his experience; “you will see, some fine morning, that you are as big a fool as the next man.”

“Sir,” he gravely replied, “allow me to finish what I was saying. Here is what the great politicians call a theory, but in practice they can make that theory vanish in smoke; and ministers possess in a

greater degree than even the lawyers of Normandy, the art of making fact yield to fancy. M. de Metternich and M. de Pilat, men of the highest authority, have been for a long time asking each other whether Europe is in its right senses, whether it is dreaming, whether it knows whither it is going, whether it has ever exercised its reason, a thing impossible on the part of the masses, of nations and of women. M. de Metternich and M. de Pilat are terrified to see this age carried away by a passion for constitutions, as the preceding age was by the passion for philosophy, as that of Luther was for a reform of abuses in the Roman religion; for it truly seems as if different generations of men were like those conspirators whose actions are directed to the same end, as soon as the watchword has been given them. But their alarm is a mistake, and it is on this point alone that I condemn them, for they are right in their wish to enjoy power without permitting the middle class to come on a fixed day from the depth of each of their six kingdoms, to torment them. How could men of such remarkable talent fail to divine that the constitutional comedy has in it a moral of profound meaning, and to see that it is the very best policy to give the age a bone to exercise its teeth upon! I think exactly as they do on the subject of sovereignty. A power is a moral being as much interested as a man is in self-preservation. This sentiment of self-preservation is under the control of an essential principle which may be expressed in three words—/to lose nothing/. But in order to lose nothing, a power must grow or remain indefinite, for a power which remains stationary is nullified. If it retrogrades, it is under the control of something else, and loses its independent existence. I am quite as well aware, as are those gentlemen, in what a false position an unlimited power puts itself by making concessions; it allows to another power whose essence is to expand a place within its own sphere of activity. One of them will necessarily nullify the other, for every existing thing aims at the greatest possible development of its own forces. A power, therefore, never makes concessions which it does not afterwards seek to retract. This struggle between two powers is the basis on which stands the balance of government, whose elasticity so mistakenly alarmed the patriarch of Austrian diplomacy, for comparing comedy with comedy the least perilous and the most advantageous administration is found

in the seesaw system of the English and of the French politics. These two countries have said to the people, 'You are free;' and the people have been satisfied; they enter the government like the zeros which give value to the unit. But if the people wish to take an active part in the government, immediately they are treated, like Sancho Panza, on that occasion when the squire, having become sovereign over an island on terra firma, made an attempt at dinner to eat the viands set before him.

"Now we ought to parody this admirable scene in the management of our homes. Thus, my wife has a perfect right to go out, provided she tell me where she is going, how she is going, what is the business she is engaged in when she is out and at what hour she will return. Instead of demanding this information with the brutality of the police, who will doubtless some day become perfect, I take pains to speak to her in the most gracious terms. On my lips, in my eyes, in my whole countenance, an expression plays, which indicates both curiosity and indifference, seriousness and pleasantry, harshness and tenderness. These little conjugal scenes are so full of vivacity, of tact and address that it is a pleasure to take part in them. The very day on which I took from the head of my wife the wreath of orange blossoms which she wore, I understood that we were playing at a royal coronation—the first scene in a comic pantomime!—I have my gendarmes!—I have my guard royal!—I have my attorney general—that I do!" he continued enthusiastically. "Do you think that I would allow madame to go anywhere on foot unaccompanied by a lackey in livery? Is not that the best style? Not to count the pleasure she takes in saying to everybody, 'I have my people here.' It has always been a conservative principle of mine that my times of exercise should coincide with those of my wife, and for two years I have proved to her that I take an ever fresh pleasure in giving her my arm. If the weather is not suitable for walking, I try to teach her how to drive with success a frisky horse; but I swear to you that I undertake this in such a manner that she does not learn very quickly!—If either by chance, or prompted by a deliberate wish, she takes measures to escape without a passport, that is to say, alone in the carriage, have I not a driver, a footman, a groom? My wife, therefore, go where she

will, takes with her a complete *Santa Hermandad*, and I am perfectly easy in mind—But, my dear sir, there is abundance of means by which to annul the charter of marriage by our manner of fulfilling it! I have remarked that the manners of high society induce a habit of idleness which absorbs half of the life of a woman without permitting her to feel that she is alive. For my part, I have formed the project of dexterously leading my wife along, up to her fortieth year, without letting her think of adultery, just as poor Musson used to amuse himself in leading some simple fellow from the Rue Saint-Denis to Pierrefitte without letting him think that he had left the shadows of St. Lew's tower."

"How is it," I said, interrupting him, "that you have hit upon those admirable methods of deception which I was intending to describe in a Meditation entitled *The Act of Putting Death into Life*! Alas! I thought I was the first man to discover that science. The epigrammatic title was suggested to me by an account which a young doctor gave me of an excellent composition of Crabbe, as yet unpublished. In this work, the English poet has introduced a fantastic being called *Life in Death*. This personage crosses the oceans of the world in pursuit of a living skeleton called *Death in Life*—I recollect at the time very few people, among the guests of a certain elegant translator of English poetry, understood the mystic meaning of a fable as true as it was fanciful. Myself alone, perhaps, as I sat buried in silence, thought of the whole generations which as they were hurried along by life, passed on their way without living. Before my eyes rose faces of women by the million, by the myriad, all dead, all disappointed and shedding tears of despair, as they looked back upon the lost moments of their ignorant youth. In the distance I saw a playful Meditation rise to birth, I heard the satanic laughter which ran through it, and now you doubtless are about to kill it.—But come, tell me in confidence what means you have discovered by which to assist a woman to squander the swift moments during which her beauty is at its full flower and her desires at their full strength.—Perhaps you have some stratagems, some clever devices, to describe to me—"

The viscount began to laugh at this literary disappointment of mine, and he said to me, with a self-satisfied air:

“My wife, like all the young people of our happy century, has been accustomed, for three or four consecutive years, to press her fingers on the keys of a piano, a long-suffering instrument. She has hammered out Beethoven, warbled the airs of Rossini and run through the exercises of Crammer. I had already taken pains to convince her of the excellence of music; to attain this end, I have applauded her, I have listened without yawning to the most tiresome sonatas in the world, and I have at last consented to give her a box at the Bouffons. I have thus gained three quiet evenings out of the seven which God has created in the week. I am the mainstay of the music shops. At Paris there are drawing-rooms which exactly resemble the musical snuff-boxes of Germany. They are a sort of continuous orchestra to which I regularly go in search of that surfeit of harmony which my wife calls a concert. But most part of the time my wife keeps herself buried in her music-books—”

“But, my dear sir, do you not recognize the danger that lies in cultivating in a woman a taste for singing, and allowing her to yield to all the excitements of a sedentary life? It is only less dangerous to make her feed on mutton and drink cold water.”

“My wife never eats anything but the white meat of poultry, and I always take care that a ball shall come after a concert and a reception after an Opera! I have also succeeded in making her lie down between one and two in the day. Ah! my dear sir, the benefits of this nap are incalculable! In the first place each necessary pleasure is accorded as a favor, and I am considered to be constantly carrying out my wife’s wishes. And then I lead her to imagine, without saying a single word, that she is being constantly amused every day from six o’clock in the evening, the time of our dinner and of her toilet, until eleven o’clock in the morning, the time when we get up.”

“Ah! sir, how grateful you ought to be for a life which is so completely filled up!”



“I have scarcely more than three dangerous hours a day to pass; but she has, of course, sonatas to practice and airs to go over, and there are always rides in the Bois de Boulogne, carriages to try, visits to pay, *etc.* But this is not all. The fairest ornament of a woman is the most exquisite cleanliness. A woman cannot be too particular in this respect, and no pains she takes can be laughed at. Now her toilet has also suggested to me a method of thus consuming the best hours of the day in bathing.”

“How lucky I am in finding a listener like you!” I cried; “truly, sir, you could waste for her four hours a day, if only you were willing to teach her an art quite unknown to the most fastidious of our modern fine ladies. Why don’t you enumerate to the viscountess the astonishing precautions manifest in the Oriental luxury of the Roman dames? Give her the names of the slaves merely employed for the bath in Poppea’s palace: the *unctores*, the *fricatores*, the *alipilarili*, the *dropacistae*, the *paratiltiriae*, the *picatrices*, the *tracatrices*, the swan whiteners, and all the rest. —Talk to her about this multitude of slaves whose names are given by Mirabeau in his *Erotika Biblion*. If she tries to secure the services of all these people you will have the fine times of quietness, not to speak of the personal satisfaction which will redound to you yourself from the introduction into your house of the system invented by these illustrious Romans, whose hair, artistically arranged, was deluged with perfumes, whose smallest vein seemed to have acquired fresh blood from the myrrh, the lint, the perfume, the douches, the flowers of the bath, all of which were enjoyed to the strains of voluptuous music.”

“Ah! sir,” continued the husband, who was warming to his subject, “can I not find also admirable pretexts in my solicitude for her health? Her health, so dear and precious to me, forces me to forbid her going out in bad weather, and thus I gain a quarter of the year. And I have also introduced the charming custom of kissing when either of us goes out, this parting kiss being accompanied with the words, ‘My sweet angel, I am going out.’ Finally, I have taken measures for the future to make my wife as truly a prisoner in the house as the

conscript in his sentry box! For I have inspired her with an incredible enthusiasm for the sacred duties of maternity.”

“You do it by opposing her?” I asked.

“You have guessed it,” he answered, laughing. “I have maintained to her that it is impossible for a woman of the world to discharge her duties towards society, to manage her household, to devote herself to fashion, as well as to the wishes of her husband, whom she loves, and, at the same time, to rear children. She then avers that, after the example of Cato, who wished to see how the nurse changed the swaddling bands of the infant Pompey, she would never leave to others the least of the services required in shaping the susceptible minds and tender bodies of these little creatures whose education begins in the cradle. You understand, sir, that my conjugal diplomacy would not be of much service to me unless, after having put my wife in solitary confinement, I did not also employ a certain harmless machiavelism, which consists in begging her to do whatever she likes, and asking her advice in every circumstance and on every contingency. As this delusive liberty has entirely deceived a creature so high-minded as she is, I have taken pains to stop at no sacrifice which would convince Madame de V—— that she is the freest woman in Paris; and, in order to attain this end, I take care not to commit those gross political blunders into which our ministers so often fall.”

“I can see you,” said I, “when you wish to cheat your wife out of some right granted her by the charter, I can see you putting on a mild and deliberate air, hiding your dagger under a bouquet of roses, and as you plunge it cautiously into her heart, saying to her with a friendly voice, ‘My darling, does it hurt?’ and she, like those on whose toes you tread in a crowd, will probably reply, ‘Not in the least.’”

He could not restrain a laugh and said:

“Won’t my wife be astonished at the Last Judgment?”

“I scarcely know,” I replied, “whether you or she will be most astonished.”

The jealous man frowned, but his face resumed its calmness as I added:

“I am truly grateful, sir, to the chance which has given me the pleasure of your acquaintance. Without the assistance of your remarks I should have been less successful than you have been in developing certain ideas which we possess in common. I beg of you that you will give me leave to publish this conversation. Statements which you and I find pregnant with high political conceptions, others perhaps will think characterized by more or less cutting irony, and I shall pass for a clever fellow in the eyes of both parties.”

While I thus tried to express my thanks to the viscount (the first husband after my heart that I had met with), he took me once more through his apartments, where everything seemed to be beyond criticism.

I was about to take leave of him, when opening the door of a little boudoir he showed me a room with an air which seemed to say, “Is there any way by which the least irregularity should occur without my seeing it?”

I replied to this silent interrogation by an inclination of the head, such as guests make to their Amphytrion when they taste some exceptionally choice dish.

“My whole system,” he said to me in a whisper, “was suggested to me by three words which my father heard Napoleon pronounce at a crowded council of state, when divorce was the subject of conversation. ‘Adultery,’ he exclaimed, ‘is merely a matter of opportunity!’ See, then, I have changed these accessories of crime, so that they become spies,” added the councillor, pointing out to me a divan covered with tea-colored cashmere, the cushions of which were slightly pressed. “Notice that impression,—I learn from it that my wife has had a headache, and has been reclining there.”

We stepped toward the divan, and saw the word FOOL lightly traced upon the fatal cushion, by four

Things that I know not, plucked by lover's hand From Cypris' orchard, where the fairy band Are dancing, once by nobles thought to be Worthy an order of new chivalry, A brotherhood, wherein, with script of gold, More mortal men than gods should be enrolled.

"Nobody in my house has black hair!" said the husband, growing pale.

I hurried away, for I was seized with an irresistible fit of laughter, which I could not easily overcome.

"That man has met his judgment day!" I said to myself; "all the barriers by which he has surrounded her have only been instrumental in adding to the intensity of her pleasures!"

This idea saddened me. The adventure destroyed from summit to foundation three of my most important Meditations, and the catholic infallibility of my book was assailed in its most essential point. I would gladly have paid to establish the fidelity of the Viscountess V— a sum as great as very many people would have offered to secure her surrender. But alas! my money will now be kept by me.

Three days afterwards I met the councillor in the foyer of the Italiens. As soon as he saw me he rushed up. Impelled by a sort of modesty I tried to avoid him, but grasping my arm: "Ah! I have just passed three cruel days," he whispered in my ear. "Fortunately my wife is as innocent as perhaps a new-born babe—"

"You have already told me that the viscountess was extremely ingenious," I said, with unfeeling gaiety.

“Oh!” he said, “I gladly take a joke this evening; for this morning I had irrefragable proofs of my wife’s fidelity. I had risen very early to finish a piece of work for which I had been rushed, and in looking absently in my garden, I suddenly saw the *valet de chambre* of a general, whose house is next to mine, climbing over the wall. My wife’s maid, poking her head from the vestibule, was stroking my dog and covering the retreat of the gallant. I took my opera glass and examined the intruder—his hair was jet black!—Ah! never have I seen a Christian face that gave me more delight! And you may well believe that during the day all my perplexities vanished. So, my dear sir,” he continued, “if you marry, let your dog loose and put broken bottles over the top of your walls.”

“And did the viscountess perceive your distress during these three days?

“Do you take me for a child?” he said, shrugging his shoulders. “I have never been so merry in all my life as I have been since we met.”

“You are a great man unrecognized,” I cried, “and you are not—”

He did not permit me to conclude; for he had disappeared on seeing one of his friends who approached as if to greet the viscountess.

Now what can we add that would not be a tedious paraphrase of the lessons suggested by this conversation? All is included in it, either as seed or fruit. Nevertheless, you see, O husband! that your happiness hangs on a hair.

## MEDITATION XVII.

### THE THEORY OF THE BED.

It was about seven o’clock in the evening. They were seated upon the academic armchairs, which made a semi-circle round a huge

hearth, on which a coal fire was burning fitfully—symbol of the burning subject of their important deliberations. It was easy to guess, on seeing the grave but earnest faces of all the members of this assembly, that they were called upon to pronounce sentence upon the life, the fortunes and the happiness of people like themselves. They had no commission excepting that of their conscience, and they gathered there as the assessors of an ancient and mysterious tribunal; but they represented interests much more important than those of kings or of peoples; they spoke in the name of the passions and on behalf of the happiness of the numberless generations which should succeed them.

The grandson of the celebrated Boulle was seated before a round table on which were placed the criminal exhibits which had been collected with remarkable intelligence. I, the insignificant secretary of the meeting, occupied a place at this desk, where it was my office to take down a report of the meeting.

“Gentlemen,” said an old man, “the first question upon which we have to deliberate is found clearly stated in the following passage of a letter. The letter was written to the Princess of Wales, Caroline of Anspach, by the widow of the Duke of Orleans, brother of Louis XIV, mother of the Regent: ‘The Queen of Spain has a method of making her husband say exactly what she wishes. The king is a religious man; he believes that he will be damned if he touched any woman but his wife, and still this excellent prince is of a very amorous temperament. Thus the queen obtains her every wish. She has placed castors on her husband’s bed. If he refuses her anything, she pushes the bed away. If he grants her request, the beds stand side by side, and she admits him into hers. And so the king is highly delighted, since he likes ——’ I will not go any further, gentlemen, for the virtuous frankness of the German princess might in this assembly be charged with immorality.”

Should wise husbands adopt these beds on castors? This is the problem which we have to solve.

The unanimity of the vote left no doubt about the opinion of the assembly. I was ordered to inscribe in the records, that if two married people slept on two separate beds in the same room the beds ought not to be set on castors.

“With this proviso,” put in one of the members, “that the present decision should have no bearing on any subsequent ruling upon the best arrangement of the beds of married people.”

The president passed to me a choicely bound volume, in which was contained the original edition, published in 1788, of the letters of Charlotte Elizabeth de Baviere, widow of the Duke of Orleans, the only brother of Louis XIV, and, while I was transcribing the passage already quoted, he said:

“But, gentlemen, you must all have received at your houses the notification in which the second question is stated.”

“I rise to make an observation,” exclaimed the youngest of the jealous husbands there assembled.

The president took his seat with a gesture of assent.

“Gentlemen,” said the young husband, “are we quite prepared to deliberate upon so grave a question as that which is presented by the universally bad arrangement of the beds? Is there not here a much wider question than that of mere cabinet-making to decide? For my own part I see in it a question which concerns that of universal human intellect. The mysteries of conception, gentlemen, are still enveloped in a darkness which modern science has but partially dissipated. We do not know how far external circumstances influence the microscopic beings whose discovery is due to the unwearied patience of Hill, Baker, Joblot, Eichorn, Gleichen, Spallanzani, and especially of Muller, and last of all of M. Bory de Saint Vincent. The imperfections of the bed opens up a musical question of the highest importance, and for my part I declare I shall write to Italy to obtain clear information as to the manner in which beds are generally arranged. We do not know whether there are in

the Italian bed numerous curtain rods, screws and castors, or whether the construction of beds is in this country more faulty than everywhere else, or whether the dryness of timber in Italy, due to the influence of the sun, does not *ab ovo* produce the harmony, the sense of which is to so large an extent innate in Italians. For these reasons I move that we adjourn.”

“What!” cried a gentleman from the West, impatiently rising to his feet, “are we here to dilate upon the advancement of music? What we have to consider first of all is manners, and the moral question is paramount in this discussion.”

“Nevertheless,” remarked one of the most influential members of the council, “the suggestion of the former speaker is not in my opinion to be passed by. In the last century, gentlemen, Sterne, one of the writers most philosophically delightful and most delightfully philosophic, complained of the carelessness with which human beings were procreated; ‘Shame!’ he cried ‘that he who copies the divine physiognomy of man receives crowns and applause, but he who achieves the masterpiece, the prototype of mimic art, feels that like virtue he must be his own reward.’

“Ought we not to feel more interest in the improvement of the human race than in that of horses? Gentlemen, I passed through a little town of Orleanais where the whole population consisted of hunchbacks, of glum and gloomy people, veritable children of sorrow, and the remark of the former speaker caused me to recollect that all the beds were in a very bad condition and the bedchambers presented nothing to the eyes of the married couple but what was hideous and revolting. Ah! gentlemen, how is it possible that our minds should be in an ideal state, when instead of the music of angels flying here and there in the bosom of that heaven to which we have attained, our ears are assailed by the most detestable, the most angry, the most piercing of human cries and lamentations? We are perhaps indebted for the fine geniuses who have honored humanity to beds which are solidly constructed; and the turbulent population which caused the French Revolution were conceived



perhaps upon a multitude of tottering couches, with twisted and unstable legs; while the Orientals, who are such a beautiful race, have a unique method of making their beds. I vote for the adjournment.”

And the gentleman sat down.

A man belonging to the sect of Methodists arose. “Why should we change the subject of debate? We are not dealing here with the improvement of the race nor with the perfecting of the work. We must not lose sight of the interests of the jealous husband and the principles on which moral soundness is based. Don’t you know that the noise of which you complain seems more terrible to the wife uncertain of her crime, than the trumpet of the Last Judgment? Can you forget that a suit for infidelity could never be won by a husband excepting through this conjugal noise? I will undertake, gentlemen, to refer to the divorces of Lord Abergavenny, of Viscount Bolingbroke, of the late Queen Caroline, of Eliza Draper, of Madame Harris, in fact, of all those who are mentioned in the twenty volumes published by—.” (The secretary did not distinctly hear the name of the English publisher.)

The motion to adjourn was carried. The youngest member proposed to make up a purse for the author producing the best dissertation addressed to the society upon a subject which Sterne considered of such importance; but at the end of the s♦ance eighteen shillings was the total sum found in the hat of the president.

The above debate of the society, which had recently been formed in London for the improvement of manners and of marriage and which Lord Byron scoffed at, was transmitted to us by the kindness of W. Hawkins, Esq., cousin-german of the famous Captain Clutterbuck. The extract may serve to solve any difficulties which may occur in the theory of bed construction.

But the author of the book considers that the English society has given too much importance to this preliminary question. There exists in fact quite as many reasons for being a *Rossinist* as for being a

*Solidist* in the matter of beds, and the author acknowledges that it is either beneath or above him to solve this difficulty. He thinks with Laurence Sterne that it is a disgrace to European civilization that there exist so few physiological observations on callipedy, and he refuses to state the results of his Meditations on this subject, because it would be difficult to formulate them in terms of prudery, and they would be but little understood, and misinterpreted. Such reserve produces an hiatus in this part of the book; but the author has the pleasant satisfaction of leaving a fourth work to be accomplished by the next century, to which he bequeaths the legacy of all that he has not accomplished, a negative munificence which may well be followed by all those who may be troubled by an overplus of ideas.

The theory of the bed presents questions much more important than those put forth by our neighbors with regard to castors and the murmurs of criminal conversation.

We know only three ways in which a bed (in the general sense of this term) may be arranged among civilized nations, and particularly among the privileged classes to whom this book is addressed. These three ways are as follows:

1. TWIN BEDS. 2. SEPARATE ROOMS. 3. ONE BED FOR BOTH.

Before applying ourselves to the examination of these three methods of living together, which must necessarily have different influences upon the happiness of husbands and wives, we must take a rapid survey of the practical object served by the bed and the part it plays in the political economy of human existence.

The most incontrovertible principle which can be laid down in this matter is, *that the bed was made to sleep upon.*

It would be easy to prove that the practice of sleeping together was established between married people but recently, in comparison with the antiquity of marriage.

By what reasonings has man arrived at that point in which he brought in vogue a practice so fatal to happiness, to health, even to *amour-propre*? Here we have a subject which it would be curious to investigate.

If you knew one of your rivals who had discovered a method of placing you in a position of extreme absurdity before the eyes of those who were dearest to you—for instance, while you had your mouth crooked like that of a theatrical mask, or while your eloquent lips, like the copper faucet of a scanty fountain, dripped pure water—you would probably stab him. This rival is sleep. Is there a man in the world who knows how he appears to others, and what he does when he is asleep?

In sleep we are living corpses, we are the prey of an unknown power which seizes us in spite of ourselves, and shows itself in the oddest shapes; some have a sleep which is intellectual, while the sleep of others is mere stupor.

There are some people who slumber with their mouths open in the silliest fashion.

There are others who snore loud enough to make the timbers shake.

Most people look like the impish devils that Michael Angelo sculptured, putting out their tongues in silent mockery of the passers-by.

The only person I know of in the world who sleeps with a noble air is Agamemnon, whom Guérin has represented lying on his bed at the moment when Clytemnestra, urged by Egisthus, advances to slay him. Moreover, I have always had an ambition to hold myself on my pillow as the king of kings Agamemnon holds himself, from the day that I was seized with dread of being seen during sleep by any other

eyes than those of Providence. In the same way, too, from the day I heard my old nurse snorting in her sleep “like a whale,” to use a slang expression, I have added a petition to the special litany which I address to Saint-Honore, my patron saint, to the effect that he would save me from indulging in this sort of eloquence.

When a man wakes up in the morning, his drowsy face grotesquely surmounted by the folds of a silk handkerchief which falls over his left temple like a police cap, he is certainly a laughable object, and it is difficult to recognize in him the glorious spouse, celebrated in the strophes of Rousseau; but, nevertheless, there is a certain gleam of life to illumine the stupidity of a countenance half dead—and if you artists wish to make fine sketches, you should travel on the stage-coach and, when the postilion wakes up the postmaster, just examine the physiognomies of the departmental clerks! But, were you a hundred times as pleasant to look upon as are these bureaucratic physiognomies, at least, while you have your mouth shut, your eyes are open, and you have some expression in your countenance. Do you know how you looked an hour before you awoke, or during the first hour of your sleep, when you were neither a man nor an animal, but merely a thing, subject to the dominion of those dreams which issue from the gate of horn? But this is a secret between your wife and God.

Is it for the purpose of insinuating the imbecility of slumber that the Romans decorated the heads of their beds with the head of an ass? We leave to the gentlemen who form the academy of inscriptions the elucidation of this point.

Assuredly, the first man who took it into his head, at the inspiration of the devil, not to leave his wife, even while she was asleep, should know how to sleep in the very best style; but do not forget to reckon among the sciences necessary to a man on setting up an establishment, the art of sleeping with elegance. Moreover, we will place here as a corollary to Axiom XXV of our Marriage Catechism the two following aphorisms:

A husband should sleep as lightly as a watch-dog, so as never to be caught with his eyes shut.

A man should accustom himself from childhood to go to bed bareheaded.

Certain poets discern in modesty, in the alleged mysteries of love, some reason why the married couple should share the same bed; but the fact must be recognized that if primitive men sought the shade of caverns, the mossy couch of deep ravines, the flinty roof of grottoes to protect his pleasure, it was because the delight of love left him without defence against his enemies. No, it is not more natural to lay two heads upon the same pillow, than it is reasonable to tie a strip of muslin round the neck. Civilization is come. It has shut up a million of men within an area of four square leagues; it has stalled them in streets, houses, apartments, rooms, and chambers eight feet square; after a time it will make them shut up one upon another like the tubes of a telescope.

From this cause and from many others, such as thrift, fear, and ill-concealed jealousy, has sprung the custom of the sleeping together of the married couple; and this custom has given rise to punctuality and simultaneity in rising and retiring.

And here you find the most capricious thing in the world, the feeling most pre-eminently fickle, the thing which is worthless without its own spontaneous inspiration, which takes all its charm from the suddenness of its desires, which owes its attractions to the genuineness of its outbursts—this thing we call love, subjugated to a monastic rule, to that law of geometry which belongs to the Board of Longitude!

If I were a father I should hate the child, who, punctual as the clock, had every morning and evening an explosion of tenderness and

wished me good-day and good-evening, because he was ordered to do so. It is in this way that all that is generous and spontaneous in human sentiment becomes strangled at its birth. You may judge from this what love means when it is bound to a fixed hour!

Only the Author of everything can make the sun rise and set, morn and eve, with a pomp invariably brilliant and always new, and no one here below, if we may be permitted to use the hyperbole of Jean-Baptiste Rousseau, can play the role of the sun.

From these preliminary observations, we conclude that it is not natural for two to lie under the canopy in the same bed;

That a man is almost always ridiculous when he is asleep;

And that this constant living together threatens the husband with inevitable dangers.

We are going to try, therefore, to find out a method which will bring our customs in harmony with the laws of nature, and to combine custom and nature in a way that will enable a husband to find in the mahogany of his bed a useful ally, and an aid in defending himself.

## 1. TWIN BEDS.

If the most brilliant, the best-looking, the cleverest of husbands wishes to find himself minotaurized just as the first year of his married life ends, he will infallibly attain that end if he is unwise enough to place two beds side by side, under the voluptuous dome of the same alcove.

The argument in support of this may be briefly stated. The following are its main lines:

The first husband who invented the twin beds was doubtless an obstetrician, who feared that in the involuntary struggles of some

dream he might kick the child borne by his wife.

But no, he was rather some predestined one who distrusted his power of checking a snore.

Perhaps it was some young man who, fearing the excess of his own tenderness, found himself always lying at the edge of the bed and in danger of tumbling off, or so near to a charming wife that he disturbed her slumber.

But may it not have been some Maintenon who received the suggestion from her confessor, or, more probably, some ambitious woman who wished to rule her husband? Or, more undoubtedly, some pretty little Pompadour overcome by that Parisian infirmity so pleasantly described by M. de Maurepas in that quatrain which cost him his protracted disgrace and certainly contributed to the disasters of Louis XVI's reign:

"Iris, we love those features sweet, Your graces all are fresh and free;  
And flowerets spring beneath your feet, Where naught, alas! but flowers are seen."

But why should it not have been a philosopher who dreaded the disenchantment which a woman would experience at the sight of a man asleep? And such a one would always roll himself up in a coverlet and keep his head bare.

Unknown author of this Jesuitical method, whoever thou art, in the devil's name, we hail thee as a brother! Thou hast been the cause of many disasters. Thy work has the character of all half measures; it is satisfactory in no respect, and shares the bad points of the two other methods without yielding the advantages of either. How can the man of the nineteenth century, how can this creature so supremely intelligent, who has displayed a power well-nigh supernatural, who

has employed the resources of his genius in concealing the machinery of his life, in deifying his necessary cravings in order that he might not despise them, going so far as to wrest from Chinese leaves, from Egyptian beans, from seeds of Mexico, their perfume, their treasure, their soul; going so far as to chisel the diamond, chase the silver, melt the gold ore, paint the clay and woo every art that may serve to decorate and to dignify the bowl from which he feeds!—how can this king, after having hidden under folds of muslin covered with diamonds, studded with rubies, and buried under linen, under folds of cotton, under the rich hues of silk, under the fairy patterns of lace, the partner of his wretchedness, how can he induce her to make shipwreck in the midst of all this luxury on the decks of two beds. What advantage is it that we have made the whole universe subserve our existence, our delusions, the poesy of our life? What good is it to have instituted law, morals and religion, if the invention of an upholsterer [for probably it was an upholsterer who invented the twin beds] robs our love of all its illusions, strips it bare of the majestic company of its delights and gives it in their stead nothing but what is ugliest and most odious? For this is the whole history of the two bed system.

LXIII. That it shall appear either sublime or grotesque are the alternatives to which we have reduced a desire.

If it be shared, our love is sublime; but should you sleep in twin beds, your love will always be grotesque. The absurdities which this half separation occasions may be comprised in either one of two situations, which will give us occasion to reveal the causes of very many marital misfortunes.

Midnight is approaching as a young woman is putting on her curl papers and yawning as she did so. I do not know whether her melancholy proceeded from a headache, seated in the right or left lobe of her brain, or whether she was passing through one of those



seasons of weariness during which all things appear black to us; but to see her negligently putting up her hair for the night, to see her languidly raising her leg to take off her garter, it seemed to me that she would prefer to be drowned rather than to be denied the relief of plunging her draggled life into the slumber that might restore it. At this instant, I know not to what degree from the North Pole she stands, whether at Spitzberg or in Greenland. Cold and indifferent she goes to bed thinking, as Mistress Walter Shandy might have thought, that the morrow would be a day of sickness, that her husband is coming home very late, that the beaten eggs which she has just eaten were not sufficiently sweetened, that she owes more than five hundred francs to her dressmaker; in fine, thinking about everything which you may suppose would occupy the mind of a tired woman. In the meanwhile arrives her great lout of a husband, who, after some business meeting, has drunk punch, with a consequent elation. He takes off his boots, leaves his stockings on a lounge, his bootjack lies before the fireplace; and wrapping his head up in a red silk handkerchief, without giving himself the trouble to tuck in the corners, he fires off at his wife certain interjectory phrases, those little marital endearments, which form almost the whole conversation at those twilight hours, where drowsy reason is no longer shining in this mechanism of ours. "What, in bed already! It was devilish cold this evening! Why don't you speak, my pet? You've already rolled yourself up in bed, then! Ah! you are in the dumps and pretend to be asleep!" These exclamations are mingled with yawns; and after numberless little incidents which according to the usage of each home vary this preface of the night, our friend flings himself into his own bed with a heavy thud.

Alas! before a woman who is cold, how mad a man must appear when desire renders him alternately angry and tender, insolent and abject, biting as an epigram and soothing as a madrigal; when he enacts with more or less sprightliness the scene where, in *Venice Preserved*, the genius of Orway has represented the senator Antonio, repeating a hundred times over at the feet of Aquilina: "Aquilina, Quilina, Lina, Aqui, Nacki!" without winning from her aught save the stroke of her whip, inasmuch as he has undertaken to fawn

upon her like a dog. In the eyes of every woman, even of a lawful wife, the more a man shows eager passion under these circumstances, the more silly he appears. He is odious when he commands, he is minotaurized if he abuses his power. On this point I would remind you of certain aphorisms in the marriage catechism from which you will see that you are violating its most sacred precepts. Whether a woman yields, or does not yield, this institution of twin beds gives to marriage such an element of roughness and nakedness that the most chaste wife and the most intelligent husband are led to immodesty.

This scene, which is enacted in a thousand ways and which may originate in a thousand different incidents, has a sequel in that other situation which, while it is less pleasant, is far more terrible.

One evening when I was talking about these serious matters with the late Comte de Noce, of whom I have already had occasion to speak, a tall white-haired old man, his intimate friend, whose name I will not give, because he is still alive, looked at us with a somewhat melancholy air. We guessed that he was about to relate some tale of scandal, and we accordingly watched him, somewhat as the stenographer of the *Moniteur* might watch, as he mounted the tribune, a minister whose speech had already been written out for the reporter. The story-teller on this occasion was an old marquis, whose fortune, together with his wife and children, had perished in the disasters of the Revolution. The marchioness had been one of the most inconsistent women of the past generation; the marquis accordingly was not wanting in observations on feminine human nature. Having reached an age in which he saw nothing before him but the gulf of the grave, he spoke about himself as if the subject of his talk were Mark Antony or Cleopatra.

“My young friend”—he did me the honor to address me, for it was I who made the last remark in this discussion—“your reflections make me think of a certain evening, in the course of which one of my friends conducted himself in such a manner as to lose forever the respect of his wife. Now, in those days a woman could take

vengeance with marvelous facility—for it was always a word and a blow. The married couple I speak of were particular in sleeping on separate beds, with their head under the arch of the same alcove. They came home one night from a brilliant ball given by the Comte de Mercy, ambassador of the emperor. The husband had lost a considerable sum at play, so he was completely absorbed in thought. He had to pay a debt, the next day, of six thousand crowns!—and you will recollect, Noce, that a hundred crowns couldn't be made up from scraping together the resources of ten such musketeers. The young woman, as generally happens under such circumstances, was in a gale of high spirits. 'Give to the marquis,' she said to a *valet de chambre*, 'all that he requires for his toilet.' In those days people dressed for the night. These extraordinary words did not rouse the husband from his mood of abstraction, and then madame, assisted by her maid, began to indulge in a thousand coquetries. 'Was my appearance to your taste this evening?' 'You are always to my taste,' answered the marquis, continuing to stride up and down the room. 'You are very gloomy! Come and talk to me, you frowning lover,' said she, placing herself before him in the most seductive negligee. But you can have no idea of the enchantments of the marchioness unless you had known her. Ah! you have seen her, Noce!" he said with a mocking smile. "Finally, in spite of all her allurements and beauty, the marchioness was lost sight of amid thoughts of the six thousand crowns which this fool of a husband could not get out of his head, and she went to bed all alone. But women always have one resource left; so that the moment that the good husband made as though he would get into his bed, the marchioness cried, 'Oh, how cold I am!' 'So am I,' he replied. 'How is it that the servants have not warmed our beds?'—And then I rang."

The Comte de Noce could not help laughing, and the old marquis, quite put out of countenance, stopped short.

Not to divine the desire of a wife, to snore while she lies awake, to be in Siberia when she is in the tropics, these are the slighter disadvantages of twin beds. What risks will not a passionate woman run when she becomes aware that her husband is a heavy sleeper?

I am indebted to Beyle for an Italian anecdote, to which his dry and sarcastic manner lent an infinite charm, as he told me this tale of feminine hardihood.

Ludovico had his palace at one end of the town of Milan; at the other was that of the Countess of Pernetti. At midnight, on a certain occasion, Ludovico resolved, at the peril of his life, to make a rash expedition for the sake of gazing for one second on the face he adored, and accordingly appeared as if by magic in the palace of his well-beloved. He reached the nuptial chamber. Elisa Pernetti, whose heart most probably shared the desire of her lover, heard the sound of his footsteps and divined his intention. She saw through the walls of her chamber a countenance glowing with love. She rose from her marriage bed, light as a shadow she glided to the threshold of her door, with a look she embraced him, she seized his hand, she made a sign to him, she drew him in.

“But he will kill you!” said he.

“Perhaps so.”

But all this amounts to nothing. Let us grant that most husbands sleep lightly. Let us grant that they sleep without snoring, and that they always discern the degree of latitude at which their wives are to be found. Moreover, all the reasons which we have given why twin beds should be condemned, let us consider but dust in the balance. But, after all, a final consideration would make us also proscribe the use of beds ranged within the limits of the same alcove.

To a man placed in the position of a husband, there are circumstances which have led us to consider the nuptial couch as an actual means of defence. For it is only in bed that a man can tell whether his wife’s love is increasing or decreasing. It is the conjugal barometer. Now to sleep in twin beds is to wish for ignorance. You will understand, when we come to treat of *civil war* (See Part Third) of what extreme usefulness a bed is and how many secrets a wife reveals in bed, without knowing it.

Do not therefore allow yourself to be led astray by the specious good nature of such an institution as that of twin beds.

It is the silliest, the most treacherous, the most dangerous in the world. Shame and anathema to him who conceived it!

But in proportion as this method is pernicious in the case of young married people, it is salutary and advantageous for those who have reached the twentieth year of married life. Husband and wife can then most conveniently indulge their duets of snoring. It will, moreover, be more convenient for their various maladies, whether rheumatism, obstinate gout, or even the taking of a pinch of snuff; and the cough or the snore will not in any respect prove a greater hindrance than it is found to be in any other arrangement.

We have not thought it necessary to mention the exceptional cases which authorize a husband to resort to twin beds. However, the opinion of Bonaparte was that when once there had taken place an interchange of life and breath (such are his words), nothing, not even sickness, should separate married people. This point is so delicate that it is not possible here to treat it methodically.

Certain narrow minds will object that there are certain patriarchal families whose legislation of love is inflexible in the matter of two beds and an alcove, and that, by this arrangement, they have been happy from generation to generation. But, the only answer that the author vouchsafes to this is that he knows a great many respectable people who pass their lives in watching games of billiards.

## 2. SEPARATE ROOMS.

There cannot be found in Europe a hundred husbands of each nation sufficiently versed in the science of marriage, or if you like, of life, to be able to dwell in an apartment separate from that of their wives.

The power of putting this system into practice shows the highest degree of intellectual and masculine force.

The married couple who dwell in separate apartments have become either divorced, or have attained to the discovery of happiness. They either abominate or adore each other. We will not undertake to detail here the admirable precepts which may be deduced from this theory whose end is to make constancy and fidelity easy and delightful. It may be sufficient to declare that by this system alone two married people can realize the dream of many noble souls. This will be understood by all the faithful.

As for the profane, their curious questionings will be sufficiently answered by the remark that the object of this institution is to give happiness to one woman. Which among them will be willing to deprive general society of any share in the talents with which they think themselves endowed, to the advantage of one woman? Nevertheless, the rendering of his mistress happy gives any one the fairest title to glory which can be earned in this valley of Jehosaphat, since, according to Genesis, Eve was not satisfied even with a terrestrial Paradise. She desired to taste the forbidden fruit, the eternal emblem of adultery.

But there is an insurmountable reason why we should refrain from developing this brilliant theory. It would cause a digression from the main theme of our work. In the situation which we have supposed to be that of a married establishment, a man who is sufficiently unwise to sleep apart from his wife deserves no pity for the disaster which he himself invites.

Let us then resume our subject. Every man is not strong enough to undertake to occupy an apartment separate from that of his wife; although any man might derive as much good as evil from the difficulties which exist in using but one bed.

We now proceed to solve the difficulties which superficial minds may detect in this method, for which our predilection is manifest.

But this paragraph, which is in some sort a silent one, inasmuch as we leave it to the commentaries which will be made in more than one home, may serve as a pedestal for the imposing figure of Lycurgus, that ancient legislator, to whom the Greeks are indebted for their profoundest thoughts on the subject of marriage. May his system be understood by future generations! And if modern manners are too much given to softness to adopt his system in its entirety, they may at least be imbued with the robust spirit of this admirable code.

### 3. ONE BED FOR BOTH.

On a night in December, Frederick the Great looked up at the sky, whose stars were twinkling with that clear and living light which presages heavy frost, and he exclaimed, "This weather will result in a great many soldiers to Prussia."

The king expressed here, by a single phrase, the principal disadvantage which results from the constant living together of married people. Although it may be permitted to Napoleon and to Frederick to estimate the value of a woman more or less according to the number of her children, yet a husband of talent ought, according to the maxims of the thirteenth Meditation, to consider child-begetting merely as a means of defence, and it is for him to know to what extent it may take place.

The observation leads into mysteries from which the physiological Muse recoils. She has been quite willing to enter the nuptial chambers while they are occupied, but she is a virgin and a prude, and there are occasions on which she retires. For, since it is at this passage in my book that the Muse is inclined to put her white hands before her eyes so as to see nothing, like the young girl looking through the interstices of her tapering fingers, she will take advantage of this attack of modesty, to administer a reprimand to our manners. In England the nuptial chamber is a sacred place. The married couple alone have the privilege of entering it, and more than one lady, we are told, makes her bed herself. Of all the crazes which

reign beyond the sea, why should the only one which we despise be precisely that, whose grace and mystery ought undoubtedly to meet the approval of all tender souls on this continent? Refined women condemn the immodesty with which strangers are introduced into the sanctuary of marriage. As for us, who have energetically anathematized women who walk abroad at the time when they expect soon to be confined, our opinion cannot be doubted. If we wish the celibate to respect marriage, married people ought to have some regard for the inflammability of bachelors.

To sleep every night with one's wife may seem, we confess, an act of the most insolent folly.

Many husbands are inclined to ask how a man, who desires to bring marriage to perfection, dare prescribe to a husband a rule of conduct which would be fatal in a lover.

Nevertheless, such is the decision of a doctor of arts and sciences conjugal.

In the first place, without making a resolution never to sleep by himself, this is the only course left to a husband, since we have demonstrated the dangers of the preceding systems. We must now try to prove that this last method yields more advantage and less disadvantage than the two preceding methods, that is, so far as relates to the critical position in which a conjugal establishment stands.

Our observations on the twin beds ought to have taught husbands that they should always be strung into the same degree of fervor as that which prevails in the harmonious organization of their wives. Now it seems to us that this perfect equality in feelings would naturally be created under the white Aegis, which spreads over both of them its protecting sheet; this at the outset is an immense advantage, and really nothing is easier to verify at any moment than the degree of love and expansion which a woman reaches when the same pillow receives the heads of both spouses.



Man [we speak now of the species] walks about with a memorandum always totalized, which shows distinctly and without error the amount of passion which he carries within him. This mysterious gnomometer is traced in the hollow of the hand, for the hand is really that one of our members which bears the impress most plainly of our characters. Chiromancy is a fifth work which I bequeath to my successors, for I am contented here to make known but the elements of this interesting science.

The hand is the essential organ of touch. Touch is the sense which very nearly takes the place of all the others, and which alone is indispensable. Since the hand alone can carry out all that a man desires, it is to an extent action itself. The sum total of our vitality passes through it; and men of powerful intellects are usually remarkable for their shapely hands, perfection in that respect being a distinguishing trait of their high calling.

Jesus Christ performed all His miracles by the imposition of hands. The hand is the channel through which life passes. It reveals to the physician all the mysteries of our organism. It exhales more than any other part of our bodies the nervous fluid, or that unknown substance, which for want of another term we style *will*. The eye can discover the mood of our soul but the hand betrays at the same time the secrets of the body and those of the soul. We can acquire the faculty of imposing silence on our eyes, on our lips, on our brows, and on our forehead; but the hand never dissembles and nothing in our features can be compared to the richness of its expression. The heat and cold which it feels in such delicate degrees often escape the notice of other senses in thoughtless people; but a man knows how to distinguish them, however little time he may have bestowed in studying the anatomy of sentiments and the affairs of human life. Thus the hand has a thousand ways of becoming dry, moist, hot, cold, soft, rough, unctuous. The hand palpitates, becomes supple, grows hard and again is softened. In fine it presents a phenomenon which is inexplicable so that one is tempted to call it the incarnation of thought. It causes the despair of the sculptor and the painter when they wish to express the changing labyrinth of its mysterious

lineaments. To stretch out your hand to a man is to save him, it serves as a ratification of the sentiments we express. The sorcerers of every age have tried to read our future destinies in those lines which have nothing fanciful in them, but absolutely correspond with the principles of each one's life and character. When she charges a man with want of tact, which is merely touch, a woman condemns him without hope. We use the expressions, the "Hand of Justice," the "Hand of God;" and a *coup de main* means a bold undertaking.

To understand and recognize the hidden feelings by the atmospheric variations of the hand, which a woman almost always yields without distrust, is a study less unfruitful and surer than that of physiognomy.

In this way you will be able, if you acquire this science, to wield vast power, and to find a clue which will guide you through the labyrinth of the most impenetrable heart. This will render your living together free from very many mistakes, and, at the same time, rich in the acquisition of many a treasure.

Buffon and certain physiologists affirm that our members are more completely exhausted by desire than by the most keen enjoyments. And really, does not desire constitute of itself a sort of intuitive possession? Does it not stand in the same relation to visible action, as those incidents in our mental life, in which we take part in a dream, stand to the incidents of our actual life? This energetic apprehension of things, does it not call into being an internal emotion more powerful than that of the external action? If our gestures are only the accomplishment of things already enacted by our thought, you may easily calculate how desire frequently entertained must necessarily consume the vital fluids. But the passions which are no more than the aggregation of desires, do they not furrow with the wrinkle of their lightning the faces of the ambitious, of gamblers, for instance, and do they not wear out their bodies with marvelous swiftness?

These observations, therefore, necessarily contain the germs of a mysterious system equally favored by Plato and by Epicurus; we will

leave it for you to meditate upon, enveloped as it is in the veil which enshrouds Egyptian statues.

But the greatest mistake that a man commits is to believe that love can belong only to those fugitive moments which, according to the magnificent expression of Bossuet, are like to the nails scattered over a wall: to the eye they appear numerous; but when they are collected they make but a handful.

Love consists almost always in conversation. There are few things inexhaustible in a lover: goodness, gracefulness and delicacy. To feel everything, to divine everything, to anticipate everything; to reproach without bringing affliction upon a tender heart; to make a present without pride; to double the value of a certain action by the way in which it is done; to flatter rather by actions than by words; to make oneself understood rather than to produce a vivid impression; to touch without striking; to make a look and the sound of the voice produce the effect of a caress; never to produce embarrassment; to amuse without offending good taste; always to touch the heart; to speak to the soul—this is all that women ask. They will abandon all the delights of all the nights of Messalina, if only they may live with a being who will yield them those caresses of the soul, for which they are so eager, and which cost nothing to men if only they have a little consideration.

This outline comprises a great portion of such secrets as belong to the nuptial couch. There are perhaps some witty people who may take this long definition of politeness for a description of love, while in any case it is no more than a recommendation to treat your wife as you would treat the minister on whose good-will depends your promotion to the post you covet.

I hear numberless voices crying out that this book is a special advocate for women and neglects the cause of men;

That the majority of women are unworthy of these delicate attentions and would abuse them;

That there are women given to licentiousness who would not lend themselves to very much of what they would call mystification;

That women are nothing but vanity and think of nothing but dress;

That they have notions which are truly unreasonable;

That they are very often annoyed by an attention;

That they are fools, they understand nothing, are worth nothing, *etc.*

In answer to all these clamors we will write here the following phrases, which, placed between two spaces, will perhaps have the air of a thought, to quote an expression of Beaumarchais.

LXIV. A wife is to her husband just what her husband has made her.

The reasons why the single bed must triumph over the other two methods of organizing the nuptial couch are as follows: In the single couch we have a faithful interpreter to translate with profound truthfulness the sentiments of a woman, to render her a spy over herself, to keep her at the height of her amorous temperature, never to leave her, to have the power of hearing her breathe in slumber, and thus to avoid all the nonsense which is the ruin of so many marriages.

As it is impossible to receive benefits without paying for them, you are bound to learn how to sleep gracefully, to preserve your dignity under the silk handkerchief that wraps your head, to be polite, to see that your slumber is light, not to cough too much, and to imitate those modern authors who write more prefaces than books.

MEDITATION XVIII.

## OF MARITAL REVOLUTIONS.

The time always comes in which nations and women even the most stupid perceive that their innocence is being abused. The cleverest policy may for a long time proceed in a course of deceit; but it would be very happy for men if they could carry on their deceit to an infinite period; a vast amount of bloodshed would then be avoided, both in nations and in families.

Nevertheless, we hope that the means of defence put forth in the preceding Meditations will be sufficient to deliver a certain number of husbands from the clutches of the Minotaur! You must agree with the doctor that many a love blindly entered upon perishes under the treatment of hygiene or dies away, thanks to marital policy. Yes [what a consoling mistake!] many a lover will be driven away by personal efforts, many a husband will learn how to conceal under an impenetrable veil the machinery of his machiavelism, and many a man will have better success than the old philosopher who cried: *Nolo coronari!*

But we are here compelled to acknowledge a mournful truth. Despotism has its moments of secure tranquillity. Her reign seems like the hour which precedes the tempest, and whose silence enables the traveler, stretched upon the faded grass, to hear at a mile's distance, the song of the cicada. Some fine morning an honest woman, who will be imitated by a great portion of our own women, discerns with an eagle eye the clever manoeuvres which have rendered her the victim of an infernal policy. She is at first quite furious at having for so long a time preserved her virtue. At what age, in what day, does this terrible revolution occur? This question of chronology depends entirely upon the genius of each husband; for it is not the vocation of all to put in practice with the same talent the precepts of our conjugal gospel.

"A man must have very little love," the mystified wife will exclaim, "to enter upon such calculations as these! What! From the first day I have been to him perpetually an object of suspicion! It is monstrous,

even a woman would be incapable of such artful and cruel treachery!"

This is the question. Each husband will be able to understand the variations of this complaint which will be made in accordance with the character of the young Fury, of whom he has made a companion.

A woman by no means loses her head under these circumstances; she holds her tongue and dissembles. Her vengeance will be concealed. Only you will have some symptoms of hesitation to contend with on the arrival of the crisis, which we presume you to have reached on the expiration of the honeymoon; but you will also have to contend against a resolution. She has determined to revenge herself. From that day, so far as regards you, her mask, like her heart, has turned to bronze. Formerly you were an object of indifference to her; you are becoming by degrees absolutely insupportable. The Civil War commences only at the moment in which, like the drop of water which makes the full glass overflow, some incident, whose more or less importance we find difficulty in determining, has rendered you odious. The lapse of time which intervenes between this last hour, the limit of your good understanding, and the day when your wife becomes cognizant of your artifices, is nevertheless quite sufficient to permit you to institute a series of defensive operations, which we will now explain.

Up to this time you have protected your honor solely by the exertion of a power entirely occult. Hereafter the wheels of your conjugal machinery must be set going in sight of every one. In this case, if you would prevent a crime you must strike a blow. You have begun by negotiating, you must end by mounting your horse, sabre in hand, like a Parisian gendarme. You must make your horse prance, you must brandish your sabre, you must shout strenuously, and you must endeavor to calm the revolt without wounding anybody.

Just as the author has found a means of passing from occult methods to methods that are patent, so it is necessary for the husband to justify the sudden change in his tactics; for in marriage, as in literature, art consists entirely in the gracefulness of the

transitions. This is of the highest importance for you. What a frightful position you will occupy if your wife has reason to complain of your conduct at the moment, which is, perhaps, the most critical of your whole married life!

You must therefore find some means or other to justify the secret tyranny of your initial policy; some means which still prepare the mind of your wife for the severe measures which you are about to take; some means which so far from forfeiting her esteem will conciliate her; some means which will gain her pardon, which will restore some little of that charm of yours, by which you won her love before your marriage.

“But what policy is it that demands this course of action? Is there such a policy?”

Certainly there is.

But what address, what tact, what histrionic art must a husband possess in order to display the mimic wealth of that treasure which we are about to reveal to him! In order to counterfeit the passion whose fire is to make you a new man in the presence of your wife, you will require all the cunning of Talma.

This passion is JEALOUSY.

“My husband is jealous. He has been so from the beginning of our marriage. He has concealed this feeling from me by his usual refined delicacy. Does he love me still? I am going to do as I like with him!”

Such are the discoveries which a woman is bound to make, one after another, in accordance with the charming scenes of the comedy which you are enacting for your amusement; and a man of the world must be an actual fool, if he fails in making a woman believe that which flatters her.

With what perfection of hypocrisy must you arrange, step by step, your hypocritical behavior so as to rouse the curiosity of your wife, to

engage her in a new study, and to lead her astray among the labyrinths of your thought!

Ye sublime actors! Do ye divine the diplomatic reticence, the gestures of artifice, the veiled words, the looks of doubtful meaning which some evening may induce your wife to attempt the capture of your secret thoughts?

Ah! to laugh in your sleeve while you are exhibiting the fierceness of a tiger; neither to lie nor to tell the truth; to comprehend the capricious mood of a woman, and yet to make her believe that she controls you, while you intend to bind her with a collar of iron! O comedy that has no audience, which yet is played by one heart before another heart and where both of you applaud because both of you think that you have obtained success!

She it is who will tell you that you are jealous, who will point out to you that she knows you better than you know yourself, who will prove to you the uselessness of your artifices and who perhaps will defy you. She triumphs in the excited consciousness of the superiority which she thinks she possesses over you; you of course are ennobled in her eyes; for she finds your conduct quite natural. The only thing she feels is that your want of confidence was useless; if she wished to betray, who could hinder her?

Then, some evening, you will burst into a passion, and, as some trifle affords you a pretext, you will make a scene, in the course of which your anger will make you divulge the secret of your distress. And here comes in the promulgation of our new code.

Have no fear that a woman is going to trouble herself about this. She needs your jealousy, she rather likes your severity. This comes from the fact that in the first place she finds there a justification for her own conduct; and then she finds immense satisfaction in playing before other people the part of a victim. What delightful expressions of sympathy will she receive! Afterwards she will use this as a weapon against you, in the expectation thereby of leading you into a pitfall.



She sees in your conduct the source of a thousand more pleasures in her future treachery, and her imagination smiles at all the barricades with which you surround her, for will she not have the delight of surmounting them all?

Women understand better than we do the art of analyzing the two human feelings, which alternately form their weapons of attack, or the weapons of which they are victims. They have the instinct of love, because it is their whole life, and of jealousy, because it is almost the only means by which they can control us. Within them jealousy is a genuine sentiment and springs from the instinct of self-preservation; it is vital to their life or death. But with men this feeling is absolutely absurd when it does not subserve some further end.

To entertain feelings of jealousy towards the woman you love, is to start from a position founded on vicious reasoning. We are loved, or we are not loved; if a man entertains jealousy under either of these circumstances, it is a feeling absolutely unprofitable to him; jealousy may be explained as fear, fear in love. But to doubt one's wife is to doubt one's self.

To be jealous is to exhibit, at once, the height of egotism, the error of *amour-propre*, the vexation of morbid vanity. Women rather encourage this ridiculous feeling, because by means of it they can obtain cashmere shawls, silver toilet sets, diamonds, which for them mark the high thermometer mark of their power. Moreover, unless you appear blinded by jealousy, your wife will not keep on her guard; for there is no pitfall which she does not distrust, excepting that which she makes for herself.

Thus the wife becomes the easy dupe of a husband who is clever enough to give to the inevitable revolution, which comes sooner or later, the advantageous results we have indicated.

You must import into your establishment that remarkable phenomenon whose existence is demonstrated in the asymptotes of geometry. Your wife will always try to minotaurize you without being successful. Like those knots which are never so tight as when one

tries to loosen them, she will struggle to the advantage of your power over her, while she believes that she is struggling for her independence.

The highest degree of good play on the part of a prince lies in persuading his people that he goes to war for them, while all the time he is causing them to be killed for his throne.

But many husbands will find a preliminary difficulty in executing this plan of campaign. If your wife is a woman of profound dissimulation, the question is, what signs will indicate to her the motives of your long mystification?

It will be seen that our Meditation on the Custom House, as well as that on the Bed, has already revealed certain means of discerning the thought of a woman; but we make no pretence in this book of exhaustively stating the resources of human wit, which are immeasurable. Now here is a proof of this. On the day of the Saturnalia the Romans discovered more features in the character of their slaves, in ten minutes, than they would have found out during the rest of the year! You ought therefore to ordain Saturnalia in your establishment, and to imitate Gessler, who, when he saw William Tell shoot the apple off his son's head, was forced to remark, "Here is a man whom I must get rid of, for he could not miss his aim if he wished to kill me."

You understand, then, that if your wife wishes to drink Roussillon wine, to eat mutton chops, to go out at all hours and to read the encyclopaedia, you are bound to take her very seriously. In the first place, she will begin to distrust you against her own wish, on seeing that your behaviour towards her is quite contrary to your previous proceedings. She will suppose that you have some ulterior motive in this change of policy, and therefore all the liberty that you give her will make her so anxious that she cannot enjoy it. As regards the misfortunes that this change may bring, the future will provide for them. In a revolution the primary principle is to exercise a control over the evil which cannot be prevented and to attract the lightning by rods which shall lead it to the earth.

And now the last act of the comedy is in preparation.

The lover who, from the day when the feeblest of all first symptoms shows itself in your wife until the moment when the marital revolution takes place, has jumped upon the stage, either as a material creature or as a being of the imagination—the LOVER, summoned by a sign from her, now declares: “Here I am!”

## MEDITATION XIX.

### OF THE LOVER.

We offer the following maxims for your consideration:

We should despair of the human race if these maxims had been made before 1830; but they set forth in so clear a manner the agreements and difficulties which distinguish you, your wife and a lover; they so brilliantly describe what your policy should be, and demonstrate to you so accurately the strength of the enemy, that the teacher has put his *amour-propre* aside, and if by chance you find here a single new thought, send it to the devil, who suggested this work.

LXV. To speak of love is to make love.

LXVI. In a lover the coarsest desire always shows itself as a burst of honest admiration.

LXVII. A lover has all the good points and all the bad points which are lacking in a husband.

LXVIII. A lover not only gives life to everything, he makes one forget life; the husband does not give life to anything.

LXIX. All the affected airs of sensibility which a woman puts on invariably deceive a lover; and on occasions when a husband shrugs his shoulders, a lover is in ecstasies.

LXX. A lover betrays by his manner alone the degree of intimacy in which he stands to a married woman.

LXXI. A woman does not always know why she is in love. It is rarely that a man falls in love without some selfish purpose. A husband should discover this secret motive of egotism, for it will be to him the lever of Archimedes.

LXXII. A clever husband never betrays his supposition that his wife has a lover.

LXXIII. The lover submits to all the caprices of a woman; and as a man is never vile while he lies in the arms of his mistress, he will take the means to please her that a husband would recoil from.

LXXIV. A lover teaches a wife all that her husband has concealed from her.

LXXV. All the sensations which a woman yields to her lover, she gives in exchange; they return to her always intensified; they are as rich in what they give as in what they receive. This is the kind of commerce in which almost all husbands end by being bankrupt.

LXXVI. A lover speaks of nothing to a woman but that which exalts her; while a husband, although he may be a loving one, can never refrain from giving advice which always has the appearance of reprimand.

LXXVII. A lover always starts from his mistress to himself; with a husband the contrary is the case.

LXXVIII. A lover always has a desire to appear amiable. There is in this sentiment an element of exaggeration which leads to ridicule; study how to take advantage of this.

LXXIX. When a crime has been committed the magistrate who investigates the case knows [excepting in the case of a released convict who commits murder in jail] that there are not more than five persons to whom he can attribute the act. He starts from this premise a series of conjectures. The husband should reason like the judge; there are only three people in society whom he can suspect when seeking the lover of his wife.

LXXX. A lover is never in the wrong.

LXXXI. The lover of a married woman says to her: "Madame, you have need of rest. You have to give an example of virtue to your children. You have sworn to make your husband happy, and although he has some faults—he has fewer than I have—he is worthy of your esteem. Nevertheless you have sacrificed everything for me. Do not let a single murmur escape you; for regret is an offence which I think worthy of a severer penalty than the law decrees against infidelity. As a reward for these sacrifices, I will bring you as much pleasure as pain." And the incredible part about it is, that the lover triumphs. The form which his speech takes carries it. He says but one phrase: "I love you." A lover is a herald who proclaims either the merit, the beauty, or the wit of a woman. What does a husband proclaim?

To sum up all, the love which a married woman inspires, or that which she gives back, is the least creditable sentiment in the world; in her it is boundless vanity; in her lover it is selfish egotism. The lover of a married woman contracts so many obligations, that scarcely three men in a century are met with who are capable of discharging them. He ought to dedicate his whole life to his mistress, but he always ends by deserting her; both parties are aware of this, and, from the beginning of social life, the one has always been sublime in self-sacrifice, the other an ingrate. The infatuation of love always rouses the pity of the judges who pass sentence on it. But where do you find such love genuine and constant? What power must a husband possess to struggle successfully against a man who casts over a woman a spell strong enough to make her submit to such misfortunes!

We think, then, as a general rule, a husband, if he knows how to use the means of defence which we have outlined, can lead his wife up to her twenty-seventh year, not without her having chosen a lover,

but without her having committed the great crime. Here and there we meet with men endowed with deep marital genius, who can keep their wives, body and soul to themselves alone up to their thirtieth or thirty-fifth year; but these exceptions cause a sort of scandal and alarm. The phenomenon scarcely ever is met with excepting in the country, where life is transparent and people live in glass houses and the husband wields immense power. The miraculous assistance which men and things thus give to a husband always vanishes in the midst of a city whose population reaches to two hundred and fifty thousand.

It would therefore almost appear to be demonstrated that thirty is the age of virtue. At that critical period, a woman becomes so difficult to guard, that in order successfully to enchain her within the conjugal Paradise, resort must be had to those last means of defence which remain to be described, and which we will reveal in the *Essay on Police*, the *Art of Returning Home*, and *Catastrophes*.

## MEDITATION XX.

### ESSAY ON POLICE.

The police of marriage consist of all those means which are given you by law, manners, force, and stratagem for preventing your wife in her attempt to accomplish those three acts which in some sort make up the life of love: writing, seeing and speaking.

The police combine in greater or less proportion the means of defence put forth in the preceding Meditations. Instinct alone can teach in what proportions and on what occasions these compounded elements are to be employed. The whole system is elastic; a clever husband will easily discern how it must be bent, stretched or retrenched. By the aid of the police a man can guide his wife to her fortieth year pure from any fault.

We will divide this treatise on Police into five captions:

1. OF MOUSE-TRAPS. 2. OF CORRESPONDENCE. 3. OF SPIES.  
4. THE INDEX. 5. OF THE BUDGET.

## 1. OF MOUSE-TRAPS.

In spite of the grave crisis which the husband has reached, we do not suppose that the lover has completely acquired the freedom of the city in the marital establishment. Many husbands often suspect that their wives have a lover, and yet they do not know upon which of the five or six chosen ones of whom we have spoken their suspicions ought to fall. This hesitation doubtless springs from some moral infirmity, to whose assistance the professor must come.

Fouche had in Paris three or four houses resorted to by people of the highest distinction; the mistresses of these dwellings were devoted to him. This devotion cost a great deal of money to the state. The minister used to call these gatherings, of which nobody at the time had any suspicion, his *mouse-traps*. More than one arrest was made at the end of the ball at which the most brilliant people of Paris had been made accomplices of this oratorian.

The act of offering some fragments of roasted nuts, in order to see your wife put her white hand in the trap, is certainly exceedingly delicate, for a woman is certain to be on her guard; nevertheless, we reckon upon at least three kinds of mouse-traps: *The Irresistible*, *The Fallacious*, and that which is *Touch and Go*.

### *The Irresistible.*

Suppose two husbands, we will call them A and B, wish to discover who are the lovers of their wives. We will put the husband A at the centre of a table loaded with the finest pyramids of fruit, of crystals,



of candies and of liqueurs, and the husband B shall be at whatever point of this brilliant circle you may please to suppose. The champagne has gone round, every eye is sparkling and every tongue is wagging.

HUSBAND A. (peeling a chestnut)—Well, as for me, I admire literary people, but from a distance. I find them intolerable; in conversation they are despotic; I do not know what displeases me more, their faults or their good qualities. In short (he swallows his chestnut), people of genius are like tonics—you like, but you must use them temperately.

WIFE B. (who has listened attentively)—But, M. A., you are very exacting (with an arch smile); it seems to me that dull people have as many faults as people of talent, with this difference perhaps, that the former have nothing to atone for them!

HUSBAND A. (irritably)—You will agree at least, madame, that they are not very amiable to you.

WIFE B. (with vivacity)—Who told you so?

HUSBAND A. (smiling)—Don't they overwhelm you all the time with their superiority? Vanity so dominates their souls that between you and them the effort is reciprocal—

THE MISTRESS OF THE HOUSE. (aside to Wife A)—You well deserved it, my dear. (Wife A shrugs her shoulders.)

HUSBAND A. (still continuing)—Then the habit they have of combining ideas which reveal to them the mechanism of feeling! For them love is purely physical and every one knows that they do not shine.

WIFE B. (biting her lips, interrupting him)—It seems to me, sir, that we are the sole judges in this matter. I can well understand why men of the world do not like men of letters! But it is easier to criticise than to imitate them.

HUSBAND A. (disdainfully)—Oh, madame, men of the world can assail the authors of the present time without being accused of envy. There is many a gentleman of the drawing-room, who if he undertook to write—

WIFE B. (with warmth)—Unfortunately for you, sir, certain friends of yours in the Chamber have written romances; have you been able to read them?—But really, in these days, in order to attain the least originality, you must undertake historic research, you must—

HUSBAND B. (making no answer to the lady next him and speaking aside) —Oh! Oh! Can it be that it is M. de L——, author of the *Dreams of a Young Girl*, whom my wife is in love with?—That is singular; I thought that it was Doctor M——. But stay! (Aloud.) Do you know, my dear, that you are right in what you say? (All laugh.) Really, I should prefer to have always artists and men of letters in my drawing-room—(aside) when we begin to receive!—rather than to see there other professional men. In any case artists speak of things about which every one is enthusiastic, for who is there who does not believe in good taste? But judges, lawyers, and, above all, doctors—Heavens! I confess that to hear them constantly speaking about lawsuits and diseases, those two human ills—

WIFE A. (sitting next to Husband B, speaking at the same time)—What is that you are saying, my friend? You are quite mistaken. In these days nobody wishes to wear a professional manner; doctors, since you have mentioned doctors, try to avoid speaking of professional matters. They talk politics, discuss the fashions and the theatres, they tell anecdotes, they write books better than professional authors do; there is a vast difference between the doctors of to-day and those of Moliere—

HUSBAND A. (aside)—Whew! Is it possible my wife is in love with Dr. M——? That would be odd. (Aloud.) That is quite possible, my dear, but I would not give a sick dog in charge of a physician who writes.

WIFE A. (interrupting her husband)—I know people who have five or six offices, yet the government has the greatest confidence in them; anyway, it is odd that you should speak in this way, you who were one of Dr. M——'s great cases—

HUSBAND A. (aside)—There can be no doubt of it!

*The Fallacious.*

A HUSBAND. (as he reaches home)—My dear, we are invited by Madame de Fischtaminel to a concert which she is giving next Tuesday. I reckoned on going there, as I wanted to speak with a young cousin of the minister who was among the singers; but he is gone to Frouville to see his aunt. What do you propose doing?

HIS WIFE.—These concerts tire me to death!—You have to sit nailed to your chair whole hours without saying a word.—Besides, you know quite well that we dine with my mother on that day, and it is impossible to miss paying her a visit.

HER HUSBAND. (carelessly)—Ah! that is true.

*(Three days afterwards.)*

THE HUSBAND. (as he goes to bed)—What do you think, my darling? Tomorrow I will leave you at your mother's, for the count has returned from Frouville and will be at Madame de Fischtaminel's concert.

HIS WIFE. (vivaciously)—But why should you go alone? You know how I adore music!

*The Touch and Go Mouse-Trap.*

THE WIFE.—Why did you go away so early this evening?

THE HUSBAND. (mysteriously)—Ah! It is a sad business, and all the more so because I don't know how I can settle it.

THE WIFE.—What is it all about, Adolph? You are a wretch if you do not tell me what you are going to do!

THE HUSBAND.—My dear, that ass of a Prosper Magnan is fighting a duel with M. de Fontanges, on account of an Opera singer.—But what is the matter with you?

THE WIFE.—Nothing.—It is very warm in this room and I don't know what ails me, for the whole day I have been suffering from sudden flushing of the face.

THE HUSBAND. (aside)—She is in love with M. de Fontanges. (Aloud.) Celestine! (He shouts out still louder.) Celestine! Come quick, madame is ill!

You will understand that a clever husband will discover a thousand ways of setting these three kinds of traps.

## 2. OF CORRESPONDENCE.

To write a letter, and to have it posted; to get an answer, to read it and burn it; there we have correspondence stated in the simplest terms.

Yet consider what immense resources are given by civilization, by our manners and by our love to the women who wish to conceal these material actions from the scrutiny of a husband.

The inexorable box which keeps its mouth open to all comers receives its epistolary provender from all hands.

There is also the fatal invention of the General Delivery. A lover finds in the world a hundred charitable persons, male and female, who, for

a slight consideration, will slip the billets-doux into the amorous and intelligent hand of his fair mistress.

A correspondence is a variable as Proteus. There are sympathetic inks. A young celibate has told us in confidence that he has written a letter on the fly-leaf of a new book, which, when the husband asked for it of the bookseller, reached the hands of his mistress, who had been prepared the evening before for this charming article.

A woman in love, who fears her husband's jealousy, will write and read billets-doux during the time consecrated to those mysterious occupations during which the most tyrannical husband must leave her alone.

Moreover, all lovers have the art of arranging a special code of signals, whose arbitrary import it is difficult to understand. At a ball, a flower placed in some odd way in the hair; at the theatre, a pocket handkerchief unfolded on the front of the box; rubbing the nose, wearing a belt of a particular color, putting the hat on one side, wearing one dress oftener than another, singing a certain song in a concert or touching certain notes on the piano; fixing the eyes on a point agreed; everything, in fact, from the hurdy-gurdy which passes your windows and goes away if you open the shutter, to the newspaper announcement of a horse for sale—all may be reckoned as correspondence.

How many times, in short, will a wife craftily ask her husband to do such and such a commission for her, to go to such and such a shop or house, having previously informed her lover that your presence at such or such a place means yes or no?

On this point the professor acknowledges with shame that there is no possible means of preventing correspondence between lovers. But a little machiavelism on the part of the husband will be much more likely to remedy the difficulty than any coercive measures.

An agreement, which should be kept sacred between married people, is their solemn oath that they will respect each other's

sealed letters. Clever is the husband who makes this pledge on his wedding-day and is able to keep it conscientiously.

In giving your wife unrestrained liberty to write and to receive letters, you will be enabled to discern the moment she begins to correspond with a lover.

But suppose your wife distrusts you and covers with impenetrable clouds the means she takes to conceal from you her correspondence. Is it not then time to display that intellectual power with which we armed you in our Meditation entitled *Of the Custom House*? The man who does not see when his wife writes to her lover, and when she receives an answer, is a failure as a husband.

The proposed study which you ought to bestow upon the movements, the actions, the gestures, the looks of your wife, will be perhaps troublesome and wearying, but it will not last long; the only point is to discover when your wife and her lover correspond and in what way.

We cannot believe that a husband, even of moderate intelligence, will fail to see through this feminine manoeuvre, when once he suspects its existence.

Meanwhile, you can judge from a single incident what means of police and of restraint remain to you in the event of such a correspondence.

A young lawyer, whose ardent passion exemplified certain of the principles dwelt upon in this important part of our work, had married a young person whose love for him was but slight; yet this circumstance he looked upon as an exceedingly happy one; but at the end of his first year of marriage he perceived that his dear Anna [for Anna was her name] had fallen in love with the head clerk of a stock-broker.

Adolph was a young man of about twenty-five, handsome in face and as fond of amusement as any other celibate. He was frugal,

discreet, possessed of an excellent heart, rode well, talked well, had fine black hair always curled, and dressed with taste. In short, he would have done honor and credit to a duchess. The advocate was ugly, short, stumpy, square-shouldered, mean-looking, and, moreover, a husband. Anna, tall and pretty, had almond eyes, white skin and refined features. She was all love; and passion lighted up her glance with a bewitching expression. While her family was poor, Maitre Lebrun had an income of twelve thousand francs. That explains all.

One evening Lebrun got home looking extremely chop-fallen. He went into his study to work; but he soon came back shivering to his wife, for he had caught a fever and hurriedly went to bed. There he lay groaning and lamenting for his clients and especially for a poor widow whose fortune he was to save the very next day by effecting a compromise. An appointment had been made with certain business men and he was quite incapable of keeping it. After having slept for a quarter of an hour, he begged his wife in a feeble voice to write to one of his intimate friends, asking him to take his (Lebrun's) place next day at the conference. He dictated a long letter and followed with his eye the space taken up on the paper by his phrases. When he came to begin the second page of the last sheet, the advocate set out to describe to his confrere the joy which his client would feel on the signing of the compromise, and the fatal page began with these words:

"My good friend, go for Heaven's sake to Madame Vernon's at once; you are expected with impatience there; she lives at No. 7 Rue de Sentier. Pardon my brevity; but I count on your admirable good sense to guess what I am unable to explain.

"Tout a vous,"

“Give me the letter,” said the lawyer, “that I may see whether it is correct before signing it.”

The unfortunate wife, who had been taken off her guard by this letter, which bristled with the most barbarous terms of legal science, gave up the letter. As soon as Lebrun got possession of the wily script he began to complain, to twist himself about, as if in pain, and to demand one little attention after another of his wife. Madame left the room for two minutes during which the advocate leaped from his bed, folded a piece of paper in the form of a letter and hid the missive written by his wife. When Anna returned, the clever husband seized the blank paper, made her address it to the friend of his, to whom the letter which he had taken out was written, and the poor creature handed the blank letter to his servant. Lebrun seemed to grow gradually calmer; he slept or pretended to do so, and the next morning he still affected to feel strange pains. Two days afterwards he tore off the first leaf of the letter and put an “e” to the word *tout* in the phrase “tout a vous.”[\*] He folded mysteriously the paper which contained the innocent forgery, sealed it, left his bedroom and called the maid, saying to her:

[\*] Thus giving a feminine ending to the signature, and lending the impression that the note emanated from the wife personally—J.W.M.

“Madame begs that you will take this to the house of M. Adolph; now, be quick about it.”

He saw the chambermaid leave the house and soon afterwards he, on a plea of business, went out, hurried to Rue de Sentier, to the address indicated, and awaited the arrival of his rival at the house of a friend who was in the secret of his stratagem. The lover, intoxicated with happiness, rushed to the place and inquired for Madame de Vernon; he was admitted and found himself face to face with Maitre Lebrun, who showed a countenance pale but chill, and gazed at him with tranquil but implacable glance.

“Sir,” he said in a tone of emotion to the young clerk, whose heart palpitated with terror, “you are in love with my wife, and you are



trying to please her; I scarcely know how to treat you in return for this, because in your place and at your age I should have done exactly the same. But Anna is in despair; you have disturbed her happiness, and her heart is filled with the torments of hell. Moreover, she has told me all, a quarrel soon followed by a reconciliation forced her to write the letter which you have received, and she has sent me here in her place. I will not tell you, sir, that by persisting in your plan of seduction you will cause the misery of her you love, that you will forfeit her my esteem, and eventually your own; that your crime will be stamped on the future by causing perhaps sorrow to my children. I will not even speak to you of the bitterness you will infuse into my life;—unfortunately these are commonplaces! But I declare to you, sir, that the first step you take in this direction will be the signal for a crime; for I will not trust the risk of a duel in order to stab you to the heart!”

And the eyes of the lawyer flashed ominously.

“Now, sir,” he went on in a gentler voice, “you are young, you have a generous heart. Make a sacrifice for the future happiness of her you love; leave her and never see her again. And if you must needs be a member of my family, I have a young aunt who is yet unsettled in life; she is charming, clever and rich. Make her acquaintance, and leave a virtuous woman undisturbed.”

This mixture of raillery and intimidation, together with the unwavering glance and deep voice of the husband, produced a remarkable impression on the lover. He remained for a moment utterly confused, like people overcome with passion and deprived of all presence of mind by a sudden shock. If Anna has since then had any lovers [which is a pure hypothesis] Adolph certainly is not one of them.

This occurrence may help you to understand that correspondence is a double-edged weapon which is of as much advantage for the defence of the husband as for the inconsistency of the wife. You should therefore encourage correspondence for the same reason that the prefect of police takes special care that the street lamps of Paris are kept lighted.

### 3. OF SPIES.

To come so low as to beg servants to reveal secrets to you, and to fall lower still by paying for a revelation, is not a crime; it is perhaps not even a dastardly act, but it is certainly a piece of folly; for nothing will ever guarantee to you the honesty of a servant who betrays her mistress, and you can never feel certain whether she is operating in your interest or in that of your wife. This point therefore may be looked upon as beyond controversy.

Nature, that good and tender parent, has set round about the mother of a family the most reliable and the most sagacious of spies, the most truthful and at the same time the most discreet in the world. They are silent and yet they speak, they see everything and appear to see nothing.

One day I met a friend of mine on the boulevard. He invited me to dinner, and we went to his house. Dinner had been already served, and the mistress of the house was helping her two daughters to plates of soup.

"I see here my first symptoms," I said to myself.

We sat down. The first word of the husband, who spoke without thinking, and for the sake of talking, was the question:

"Has any one been here to-day?"

"Not a soul," replied his wife, without lifting her eyes.

I shall never forget the quickness with which the two daughters looked up to their mother. The elder girl, aged eight, had something especially peculiar in her glance. There was at the same time revelation and mystery, curiosity and silence, astonishment and apathy in that look. If there was anything that could be compared to the speed with which the light of candor flashed from their eyes, it

was the prudent reserve with which both of them closed down, like shutters, the folds of their white eyelids.

Ye sweet and charming creatures, who from the age of nine even to the age of marriage too often are the torment of a mother even when she is not a coquette, is it by the privilege of your years or the instinct of your nature that your young ears catch the faint sound of a man's voice through walls and doors, that your eyes are awake to everything, and that your young spirit busies itself in divining all, even the meaning of a word spoken in the air, even the meaning of your mother's slightest gesture?

There is something of gratitude, something in fact instinctive, in the predilection of fathers for their daughters and mothers for their sons.

But the act of setting spies which are in some way inanimate is mere dotage, and nothing is easier than to find a better plan than that of the beadle, who took it into his head to put egg-shells in his bed, and who obtained no other sympathy from his confederate than the words, "You are not very successful in breaking them."

The Marshal de Saxe did not give much consolation to his Popelinierie when they discovered in company that famous revolving chimney, invented by the Duc de Richelieu.

"That is the finest piece of horn work that I have ever seen!" cried the victor of Fontenoy.

Let us hope that your espionage will not give you so troublesome a lesson. Such misfortunes are the fruits of the civil war and we do not live in that age.

#### 4. THE INDEX.

The Pope puts books only on the Index; you will mark with a stigma of reprobation men and things.

It is forbidden to madame to go into a bath except in her own house.

It is forbidden to madame to receive into her house him whom you suspect of being her lover, and all those who are the accomplices of their love.

It is forbidden to madame to take a walk without you.

But the peculiarities which in each household originate from the diversity of characters, the numberless incidents of passion, and the habits of the married people give to this black book so many variations, the lines in it are multiplied or erased with such rapidity that a friend of the author has called this Index *The History of Changes in the Marital Church*.

There are only two things which can be controlled or prescribed in accordance with definite rules; the first is the country, the second is the promenade.

A husband ought never to take his wife to the country nor permit her to go there. Have a country home if you like, live there, entertain there nobody excepting ladies or old men, but never leave your wife alone there. But to take her, for even half a day, to the house of another man is to show yourself as stupid as an ostrich.

To keep guard over a wife in the country is a task most difficult of accomplishment. Do you think that you will be able to be in the thickets, to climb the trees, to follow the tracks of a lover over the grass trodden down at night, but straightened by the dew in the morning and refreshed by the rays of the sun? Can you keep your eye on every opening in the fence of the park? Oh! the country and the Spring! These are the two right arms of the celibate.

When a woman reaches the crisis at which we suppose her to be, a husband ought to remain in town till the declaration of war, or to resolve on devoting himself to all the delights of a cruel espionage.

With regard to the promenade: Does madame wish to go to parties, to the theatre, to the Bois de Boulogne, to purchase her dresses, to find out what is the fashion? Madame shall go, shall see everything in the respectable company of her lord and master.

If she take advantage of the moment when a business appointment, which you cannot fail to keep, detains you, in order to obtain your tacit permission to some meditated expedition; if in order to obtain that permission she displays all the witcheries of those cajoleries in which women excel and whose powerful influence you ought already to have known, well, well, the professor implores you to allow her to win you over, while at the same time you sell dear the boon she asks; and above all convince this creature, whose soul is at once as changeable as water and as firm as steel, that it is impossible for you from the importance of your work to leave your study.

But as soon as your wife has set foot upon the street, if she goes on foot, don't give her time to make fifty steps; follow and track her in such a way that you will not be noticed.

It is possible that there exist certain Werthers whose refined and delicate souls recoil from this inquisition. But this is not more blamable than that of a landed proprietor who rises at night and looks through the windows for the purpose of keeping watch over the peaches on his *espaliers*. You will probably by this course of action obtain, before the crime is committed, exact information with regard to the apartments which so many lovers rent in the city under fictitious names. If it happens [which God forbid!] that your wife enters a house suspected by you, try to find out if the place has several exits.

Should your wife take a hack, what have you to fear? Is there not a prefect of police, to whom all husbands ought to decree a crown of solid gold, and has he not set up a little shed or bench where there is a register, an incorruptible guardian of public morality? And does he not know all the comings and goings of these Parisian gondolas?

One of the vital principles of our police will consist in always following your wife to the furnishers of your house, if she is accustomed to visit them. You will carefully find out whether there is any intimacy between her and her draper, her dressmaker or her milliner, *etc.* In this case you will apply the rules of the conjugal Custom House, and draw your own conclusions.

If in your absence your wife, having gone out against your will, tells you that she had been to such a place, to such a shop, go there yourself the next day and try to find out whether she has spoken the truth.

But passion will dictate to you, even better than the Meditation, the various resources of conjugal tyranny, and we will here cut short these tiresome instructions.

## 5. OF THE BUDGET.

In outlining the portrait of a sane and sound husband (See *Meditation on the Predestined*), we urgently advise that he should conceal from his wife the real amount of his income.

In relying upon this as the foundation stone of our financial system we hope to do something towards discounting the opinion, so very generally held, that a man ought not to give the handling of his income to his wife. This principle is one of the many popular errors and is one of the chief causes of misunderstanding in the domestic establishment.

But let us, in the first place, deal with the question of heart, before we proceed to that of money.

To draw up a little civil list for your wife and for the requirements of the house and to pay her money as if it were a contribution, in twelve equal portions month by month, has something in it that is a little mean and close, and cannot be agreeable to any but sordid and

mistrustful souls. By acting in this way you prepare for yourself innumerable annoyances.

I could wish that during the first year of your mellifluous union, scenes more or less delightful, pleasantries uttered in good taste, pretty purses and caresses might accompany and might decorate the handing over of this monthly gift; but the time will come when the self-will of your wife or some unforeseen expenditure will compel her to ask a loan of the Chamber; I presume that you will always grant her the bill of indemnity, as our unfaithful deputies never fail to do. They pay, but they grumble; you must pay and at the same time compliment her. I hope it will be so.

But in the crisis which we have reached, the provisions of the annual budget can never prove sufficient. There must be an increase of fichus, of bonnets, of frocks; there is an expense which cannot be calculated beforehand demanded by the meetings, by the diplomatic messengers, by the ways and means of love, even while the receipts remain the same as usual. Then must commence in your establishment a course of education the most odious, and the most dreadful which a woman can undergo. I know but few noble and generous souls who value, more than millions, purity of heart, frankness of soul, and who would a thousand times more readily pardon a passion than a lie, whose instinctive delicacy has divined the existence of this plague of the soul, the lowest step in human degradation.

Under these circumstances there occur in the domestic establishment the most delightful scenes of love. It is then that a woman becomes utterly pliant and like to the most brilliant of all the strings of a harp, when thrown before the fire; she rolls round you, she clasps you, she holds you tight; she defers to all your caprices; never was her conversation so full of tenderness; she lavishes her endearments upon you, or rather she sells them to you; she at last becomes lower than a chorus girl, for she prostitutes herself to her husband. In her sweetest kisses there is money; in all her words there is money. In playing this part her heart becomes like lead

towards you. The most polished, the most treacherous usurer never weighs so completely with a single glance the future value in bullion of a son of a family who may sign a note to him, than your wife appraises one of your desires as she leaps from branch to branch like an escaping squirrel, in order to increase the sum of money she may demand by increasing the appetite which she rouses in you. You must not expect to get scot-free from such seductions. Nature has given boundless gifts of coquetry to a woman, the usages of society have increased them tenfold by its fashions, its dresses, its embroideries and its tippets.

“If I ever marry,” one of the most honorable generals of our ancient army used to say, “I won’t put a sou among the wedding presents—”

“What will you put there then, general?” asked a young girl.

“The key of my safe.”

The young girl made a curtsy of approbation. She moved her little head with a quiver like that of the magnetic needle; raised her chin slightly as if she would have said:

“I would gladly marry the general in spite of his forty-five years.”

But with regard to money, what interest can you expect your wife to take in a machine in which she is looked upon as a mere bookkeeper?

Now look at the other system.

In surrendering to your wife, with an avowal of absolute confidence in her, two-thirds of your fortune and letting her as mistress control the conjugal administration, you win from her an esteem which nothing can destroy, for confidence and high-mindedness find powerful echoes in the heart of a woman. Madame will be loaded with a responsibility which will often raise a barrier against extravagances, all the stronger because it is she herself who has created it in her heart. You yourself have made a portion of the work,



and you may be sure that from henceforth your wife will never perhaps dishonor herself.

Moreover, by seeking in this way a method of defence, consider what admirable aids are offered to you by this plan of finances.

You will have in your house an exact estimate of the morality of your wife, just as the quotations of the Bourse give you a just estimate of the degree of confidence possessed by the government.

And doubtless, during the first years of your married life, your wife will take pride in giving you every luxury and satisfaction which your money can afford.

She will keep a good table, she will renew the furniture, and the carriages; she will always keep in her drawer a sum of money sacred to her well-beloved and ready for his needs. But of course, in the actual circumstances of life, the drawer will be very often empty and monsieur will spend a great deal too much. The economies ordered by the Chamber never weigh heavily upon the clerks whose income is twelve hundred francs; and you will be the clerk at twelve hundred francs in your own house. You will laugh in your sleeve, because you will have saved, capitalized, invested one-third of your income during a long time, like Louis XV, who kept for himself a little separate treasury, "against a rainy day," he used to say.

Thus, if your wife speaks of economy, her discourse will be equal to the varying quotations of the money-market. You will be able to divine the whole progress of the lover by these financial fluctuations, and you will have avoided all difficulties. *E sempre bene.*

If your wife fails to appreciate the excessive confidence, and dissipates in one day a large proportion of your fortune, in the first place it is not probable that this prodigality will amount to one-third of the revenue which you have been saving for ten years; moreover you will learn, from the Meditation on *Catastrophes*, that in the very crisis produced by the follies of your wife, you will have brilliant opportunities of slaying the Minotaur.

But the secret of the treasure which has been amassed by your thoughtfulness need never be known till after your death; and if you have found it necessary to draw upon it, in order to assist your wife, you must always let it be thought that you have won at play, or made a loan from a friend.

These are the true principles which should govern the conjugal budget.

The police of marriage has its martyrology. We will cite but one instance which will make plain how necessary it is for husbands who resort to severe measures to keep watch over themselves as well as over their wives.

An old miser who lived at T——, a pleasure resort if there ever was one, had married a young and pretty woman, and he was so wrapped up in her and so jealous that love triumphed over avarice; he actually gave up trade in order to guard his wife more closely, but his only real change was that his covetousness took another form. I acknowledge that I owe the greater portion of the observations contained in this essay, which still is doubtless incomplete, to the person who made a study of this remarkable marital phenomenon, to portray which, one single detail will be amply sufficient. When he used to go to the country, this husband never went to bed without secretly raking over the pathways of his park, and he had a special rake for the sand of his terraces. He had made a close study of the footprints made by the different members of his household; and early in the morning he used to go and identify the tracks that had been made there.

“All this is old forest land,” he used to say to the person I have referred to, as he showed him over the park; “for nothing can be seen through the brushwood.”

His wife fell in love with one of the most charming young men of the town. This passion had continued for nine years bright and fresh in

the hearts of the two lovers, whose sole avowal had been a look exchanged in a crowded ball-room; and while they danced together their trembling hands revealed through the scented gloves the depth of their love. From that day they had both of them taken great delight on those trifles which happy lovers never disdain. One day the young man led his only confidant, with a mysterious air, into a chamber where he kept under glass globes upon his table, with more care than he would have bestowed upon the finest jewels in the world, the flowers that, in the excitement of the dance, had fallen from the hair of his mistress, and the finery which had been caught in the trees which she had brushed through in the park. He also preserved there the narrow footprint left upon the clay soil by the lady's step.

"I could hear," said this confidant to me afterwards, "the violent and repressed palpitations of his heart sounding in the silence which we preserved before the treasures of this museum of love. I raised my eyes to the ceiling, as if to breathe to heaven the sentiment which I dared not utter. 'Poor humanity!' I thought. 'Madame de — told me that one evening at a ball you had been found nearly fainting in her card-room?' I remarked to him.

"'I can well believe it,' said he casting down his flashing glance, 'I had kissed her arm!—But,' he added as he pressed my hand and shot at me a glance that pierced my heart, 'her husband at that time had the gout which threatened to attack his stomach.'"

Some time afterwards, the old man recovered and seemed to take a new lease of life; but in the midst of his convalescence he took to his bed one morning and died suddenly. There were such evident symptoms of poisoning in the condition of the dead man that the officers of justice were appealed to, and the two lovers were arrested. Then was enacted at the court of assizes the most heartrending scene that ever stirred the emotions of the jury. At the preliminary examination, each of the two lovers without hesitation confessed to the crime, and with one thought each of them was solely bent on saving, the one her lover, the other his mistress. There were two found guilty, where justice was looking for but a

single culprit. The trial was entirely taken up with the flat contradictions which each of them, carried away by the fury of devoted love, gave to the admissions of the other. There they were united for the first time, but on the criminals' bench with a gendarme seated between them. They were found guilty by the unanimous verdict of a weeping jury. No one among those who had the barbarous courage to witness their conveyance to the scaffold can mention them to-day without a shudder. Religion had won for them a repentance for their crime, but could not induce them to abjure their love. The scaffold was their nuptial bed, and there they slept together in the long night of death.

## MEDITATION XXI.

### THE ART OF RETURNING HOME.

Finding himself incapable of controlling the boiling transports of his anxiety, many a husband makes the mistake of coming home and rushing into the presence of his wife, with the object of triumphing over her weakness, like those bulls of Spain, which, stung by the red *banderillo*, disembowel with furious horns horses, matadors, picadors, toreadors and their attendants.

But oh! to enter with a tender gentle mien, like Mascarillo, who expects a beating and becomes merry as a lark when he finds his master in a good humor! Well—that is the mark of a wise man!—

“Yes, my darling, I know that in my absence you could have behaved badly! Another in your place would have turned the house topsy-turvy, but you have only broken a pane of glass! God bless you for your considerateness. Go on in the same way and you will earn my eternal gratitude.”

Such are the ideas which ought to be expressed by your face and bearing, but perhaps all the while you say to yourself:

“Probably he has been here!”

Always to bring home a pleasant face, is a rule which admits of no exception.

But the art of never leaving your house without returning when the police have revealed to you a conspiracy—to know how to return at the right time—this is the lesson which is hard to learn. In this matter everything depends upon tact and penetration. The actual events of life always transcend anything that is imaginable.

The manner of coming home is to be regulated in accordance with a number of circumstances. For example:

Lord Catesby was a man of remarkable strength. It happened one day that he was returning from a fox hunt, to which he had doubtless promised to go, with some ulterior view, for he rode towards the fence of his park at a point where, he said, he saw an extremely fine horse. As he had a passion for horses, he drew near to examine this one close at hand. There he caught sight of Lady Catesby, to whose rescue it was certainly time to go, if he were in the slightest degree jealous for his own honor. He rushed upon the gentleman he saw there, and seizing him by the belt he hurled him over the fence on to the road side.

“Remember, sir,” he said calmly, “it rests with me to decide whether it will be necessary to address you hereafter and ask for satisfaction on this spot.”

“Very well, my lord; but would you have the goodness to throw over my horse also?”

But the phlegmatic nobleman had already taken the arm of his wife as he gravely said:

“I blame you very much, my dear creature, for not having told me that I was to love you for two. Hereafter every other day I shall love you for the gentleman yonder, and all other days for myself.”

This adventure is regarded in England as one of the best returns home that were ever known. It is true it consisted in uniting, with singular felicity, eloquence of deed to that of word.

But the art of re-entering your home, principles of which are nothing else but natural deductions from the system of politeness and dissimulation which have been commended in preceding Meditations, is after all merely to be studied in preparation for the conjugal catastrophes which we will now consider.

## MEDITATION XXII.

### OF CATASTROPHES.

The word *Catastrophe* is a term of literature which signifies the final climax of a play.

To bring about a catastrophe in the drama which you are playing is a method of defence which is as easy to undertake as it is certain to succeed. In advising to employ it, we would not conceal from you its perils.

The conjugal catastrophe may be compared to one of those high fevers which either carry off a predisposed subject or completely restore his health. Thus, when the catastrophe succeeds, it keeps a woman for years in the prudent realms of virtue.

Moreover, this method is the last of all those which science has been able to discover up to this present moment.

The massacre of St. Bartholomew, the Sicilian Vespers, the death of Lucretia, the two embarkations of Napoleon at Frejus are examples of political catastrophe. It will not be in your power to act on such a large scale; nevertheless, within their own area, your dramatic climaxes in conjugal life will not be less effective than these.

But since the art of creating a situation and of transforming it, by the introduction of natural incidents, constitutes genius; since the return to virtue of a woman, whose foot has already left some tracks upon the sweet and gilded sand which mark the pathway of vice, is the most difficult to bring about of all denouements, and since genius neither knows it nor teaches it, the practitioner in conjugal laws feels compelled to confess at the outset that he is incapable of reducing to definite principles a science which is as changeable as circumstances, as delusive as opportunity, and as indefinable as instinct.

If we may use an expression which neither Diderot, d'Alembert nor Voltaire, in spite of every effort, have been able to engraft on our language, a conjugal catastrophe *se subodore* is scented from afar; so that our only course will be to sketch out imperfectly certain conjugal situations of an analogous kind, thus imitating the philosopher of ancient time who, seeking in vain to explain motion, walked forward in his attempt to comprehend laws which were incomprehensible.

A husband, in accordance with the principles comprised in our Meditation on *Police*, will expressly forbid his wife to receive the visits of a celibate whom he suspects of being her lover, and whom she has promised never again to see. Some minor scenes of the domestic interior we leave for matrimonial imaginations to conjure up; a husband can delineate them much better than we can; he will betake himself in thought back to those days when delightful longings invited sincere confidences and when the workings of his policy put into motion certain adroitly handled machinery.

Let us suppose, in order to make more interesting the natural scene to which I refer, that you who read are a husband, whose carefully organized police has made the discovery that your wife, profiting by the hours devoted by you to a ministerial banquet, to which she probably procured you an invitation, received at your house M. A—z.

Here we find all the conditions necessary to bring about the finest possible of conjugal catastrophes.

You return home just in time to find your arrival has coincided with that of M. A—z, for we would not advise you to have the interval between acts too long. But in what mood should you enter? Certainly not in accordance with the rules of the previous Meditation. In a rage then? Still less should you do that. You should come in with good-natured carelessness, like an absent-minded man who has forgotten his purse, the statement which he has drawn up for the minister, his pocket-handkerchief or his snuff-box.

In that case you will either catch two lovers together, or your wife, forewarned by the maid, will have hidden the celibate.

Now let us consider these two unique situations.

But first of all we will observe that husbands ought always to be in a position to strike terror in their homes and ought long before to make preparations for the matrimonial second of September.

Thus a husband, from the moment that his wife has caused him to perceive certain *first symptoms*, should never fail to give, time after time, his personal opinion on the course of conduct to be pursued by a husband in a great matrimonial crisis.

“As for me,” you should say, “I should have no hesitation in killing the man I caught at my wife’s feet.”

With regard to the discussion that you will thus give rise to, you will be led on to aver that the law ought to have given to the husband, as it did in ancient Rome, the right of life and death over his children, so that he could slay those who were spurious.

These ferocious opinions, which really do not bind you to anything, will impress your wife with salutary terror; you will enumerate them lightly, even laughingly—and say to her, “Certainly, my dear, I would kill you right gladly. Would you like to be murdered by me?”

A woman cannot help fearing that this pleasantry may some day become a very serious matter, for in these crimes of impulse there is



a certain proof of love; and then women who know better than any one else how to say true things laughingly at times suspect their husbands of this feminine trick.

When a husband surprises his wife engaged in even innocent conversation with her lover, his face still calm, should produce the effect mythologically attributed to the celebrated Gorgon.

In order to produce a favorable catastrophe at this juncture, you must act in accordance with the character of your wife, either play a pathetic scene à la Diderot, or resort to irony like Cicero, or rush to your pistols loaded with a blank charge, or even fire them off, if you think that a serious row is indispensable.

A skillful husband may often gain a great advantage from a scene of unexaggerated sentimentality. He enters, he sees the lover and transfixes him with a glance. As soon as the celibate retires, he falls at the feet of his wife, he declaims a long speech, in which among other phrases there occurs this:

“Why, my dear Caroline, I have never been able to love you as I should!”

He weeps, and she weeps, and this tearful catastrophe leaves nothing to be desired.

We would explain, apropos of the second method by which the catastrophe may be brought about, what should be the motives which lead a husband to vary this scene, in accordance with the greater or less degree of strength which his wife’s character possesses.

Let us pursue this subject.

If by good luck it happens that your wife has put her lover in a place of concealment, the catastrophe will be very much more successful.

Even if the apartment is not arranged according to the principles prescribed in the Meditation, you will easily discern the place into which the celibate has vanished, although he be not, like Lord Byron's Don Juan, bundled up under the cushion of a divan. If by chance your apartment is in disorder, you ought to have sufficient discernment to know that there is only one place in which a man could bestow himself. Finally, if by some devilish inspiration he has made himself so small that he has squeezed into some unimaginable lurking-place (for we may expect anything from a celibate), well, either your wife cannot help casting a glance towards this mysterious spot, or she will pretend to look in an exactly opposite direction, and then nothing is easier for a husband than to set a mouse-trap for his wife.

The hiding-place being discovered, you must walk straight up to the lover. You must meet him face to face!

And now you must endeavor to produce a fine effect. With your face turned three-quarters towards him, you must raise your head with an air of superiority. This attitude will enhance immensely the effect which you aim at producing.

The most essential thing to do at this moment, is to overwhelm the celibate by some crushing phrase which you have been manufacturing all the time; when you have thus floored him, you will coldly show him the door. You will be very polite, but as relentless as the executioner's axe, and as impassive as the law. This freezing contempt will already probably have produced a revolution in the mind of your wife. There must be no shouts, no gesticulations, no excitement. "Men of high social rank," says a young English author, "never behave like their inferiors, who cannot lose a fork without sounding the alarm throughout the whole neighborhood."

When the celibate has gone, you will find yourself alone with your wife, and then is the time when you must subjugate her forever.

You should therefore stand before her, putting on an air whose affected calmness betrays the profoundest emotion; then you must

choose from among the following topics, which we have rhetorically amplified, and which are most congenial to your feelings: “Madame,” you must say, “I will speak to you neither of your vows, nor of my love; for you have too much sense and I have too much pride to make it possible that I should overwhelm you with those execrations, which all husbands have a right to utter under these circumstances; for the least of the mistakes that I should make, if I did so, is that I would be fully justified. I will not now, even if I could, indulge either in wrath or resentment. It is not I who have been outraged; for I have too much heart to be frightened by that public opinion which almost always treats with ridicule and condemnation a husband whose wife has misbehaved. When I examine my life, I see nothing there that makes this treachery deserved by me, as it is deserved by many others. I still love you. I have never been false, I will not say to my duty, for I have found nothing onerous in adoring you, but not even to those welcome obligations which sincere feeling imposes upon us both. You have had all my confidence and you have also had the administration of my fortune. I have refused you nothing. And now this is the first time that I have turned to you a face, I will not say stern, but which is yet reproachful. But let us drop this subject, for it is of no use for me to defend myself at a moment when you have proved to me with such energy that there is something lacking in me, and that I am not intended by nature to accomplish the difficult task of rendering you happy. But I would ask you, as a friend speaking to a friend, how could you have the heart to imperil at the same time the lives of three human creatures: that of the mother of my children, who will always be sacred to me; that of the head of the family; and finally of him—who loves—[she perhaps at these words will throw herself at your feet; you must not permit her to do so; she is unworthy of kneeling there]. For you no longer love me, Eliza. Well, my poor child [you must not call her *my poor child* excepting when the crime has not been committed]—why deceive ourselves? Why do you not answer me? If love is extinguished between a married couple, cannot friendship and confidence still survive? Are we not two companions united in making the same journey? Can it be said that during the journey the one must never hold out his hand to the other to raise up a comrade or to prevent a comrade’s fall? But I

have perhaps said too much and I am wounding your pride—Eliza! Eliza!”

Now what the deuce would you expect a woman to answer? Why a catastrophe naturally follows, without a single word.

In a hundred women there may be found at least a good half dozen of feeble creatures who under this violent shock return to their husbands never perhaps again to leave them, like scorched cats that dread the fire. But this scene is a veritable alexipharmaca, the doses of which should be measured out by prudent hands.

For certain women of delicate nerves, whose souls are soft and timid, it would be sufficient to point out the lurking-place where the lover lies, and say: “M. A--z is there!” [at this point shrug your shoulders]. “How can you thus run the risk of causing the death of two worthy people? I am going out; let him escape and do not let this happen again.”

But there are women whose hearts, too violently strained in these terrible catastrophes, fail them and they die; others whose blood undergoes a change, and they fall a prey to serious maladies; others actually go out of their minds. These are examples of women who take poison or die suddenly—and we do not suppose that you wish the death of the sinner.

Nevertheless, the most beautiful and impressionable of all the queens of France, the charming and unfortunate Mary Stuart, after having seen Rizzio murdered almost in her arms, fell in love, nevertheless, with the Earl of Bothwell; but she was a queen and queens are abnormal in disposition.

We will suppose, then, that the woman whose portrait adorns our first Meditation is a little Mary Stuart, and we will hasten to raise the curtain for the fifth act in this grand drama entitled *Marriage*.

A conjugal catastrophe may burst out anywhere, and a thousand incidents which we cannot describe may give it birth. Sometimes it is

a handkerchief, as in *Othello*; or a pair of slippers, as in *Don Juan*; sometimes it is the mistake of your wife, who cries out—"Dear Alphonse!" instead of "Dear Adolph!" Sometimes a husband, finding out that his wife is in debt, will go and call on her chief creditor, and will take her some morning to his house, as if by chance, in order to bring about a catastrophe. "Monsieur Josse, you are a jeweler and you sell your jewels with a readiness which is not equaled by the readiness of your debtors to pay for them. The countess owes you thirty thousand francs. If you wish to be paid tomorrow [tradesmen should always be visited at the end of the month] come to her at noon; her husband will be in the chamber. Do not attend to any sign which she may make to impose silence upon you—speak out boldly. I will pay all."

So that the catastrophe in the science of marriage is what figures are in arithmetic.

All the principles of higher conjugal philosophy, on which are based the means of defence outlined in this second part of our book, are derived from the nature of human sentiments, and we have found them in different places in the great book of the world. Just as persons of intellect instinctively apply the laws of taste whose principles they would find difficulty in formulating, so we have seen numberless people of deep feeling employing with singular felicity the precepts which we are about to unfold, yet none of them consciously acted on a definite system. The sentiments which this situation inspired only revealed to them incomplete fragments of a vast system; just as the scientific men of the sixteenth century found that their imperfect microscopes did not enable them to see all the living organisms, whose existence had yet been proved to them by the logic of their patient genius.

We hope that the observations already made in this book, and in those which follow, will be of a nature to destroy the opinion which frivolous men maintain, namely that marriage is a sinecure. According to our view, a husband who gives way to ennui is a

heretic, and more than that, he is a man who lives quite out of sympathy with the marriage state, of whose importance he has no conception. In this connection, these Meditations perhaps will reveal to very many ignorant men the mysteries of a world before which they stand with open eyes, yet without seeing it.

We hope, moreover, that these principles when well applied will produce many conversions, and that among the pages that separate this second part from that entitled *Civil War* many tears will be shed and many vows of repentance breathed.

Yes, among the four hundred thousand honest women whom we have so carefully sifted out from all the European nations, we indulge the belief that there are a certain number, say three hundred thousand, who will be sufficiently self-willed, charming, adorable, and bellicose to raise the standard of *Civil War*.

To arms then, to arms!

END

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