

# **The Physiology of Marriage Part 3**

Honore de Balzac



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RELATING TO CIVIL WAR.

"Lovely as the seraphs of Klopstock,  
Terrible as the devils of Milton."

—DIDEROT.

## MEDITATION XXIII. OF MANIFESTOES.

The Preliminary precepts, by which science has been enabled at this point to put weapons into the hand of a husband, are few in number; it is not of so much importance to know whether he will be vanquished, as to examine whether he can offer any resistance in the conflict.

Meanwhile, we will set up here certain beacons to light up the arena where a husband is soon to find himself, in alliance with religion and law, engaged single-handed in a contest with his wife, who is supported by her native craft and the whole usages of society as her allies.

### LXXXII.

Anything may be expected and anything may be supposed of a woman who is in love.

### LXXXIII.

The actions of a woman who intends to deceive her husband are almost always the result of study, but never dictated by reason.

### LXXXIV.

The greater number of women advance like the fleas, by erratic leaps and bounds, They owe their escape to the height or depth of their first ideas, and any interruption of their plans rather favors their execution. But they operate only within a narrow area which it is easy for the husband to make still narrower; and if he keeps cool he will end by extinguishing this piece of living saltpetre.

### LXXXV.

A husband should never allow himself to address a single disparaging remark to his wife, in presence of a third party.

### LXXXVI.

The moment a wife decides to break her marriage vow she reckons her husband as everything or nothing. All defensive operations must start from this proposition.

### LXXXVII.

The life of a woman is either of the head, of the heart, or of passion. When a woman reaches the age to form an estimate of life, her husband ought to find out whether the primary cause of her intended infidelity proceeds from vanity, from sentiment or from temperament. Temperament may be remedied like disease; sentiment is something in which the husband may find great opportunities of success; but vanity is incurable. A woman whose life is of the head may be a terrible scourge. She combines the faults of a passionate woman with those of the tender-hearted woman, without having their palliations. She is destitute alike of pity, love, virtue or sex.

### LXXXVIII.

A woman whose life is of the head will strive to inspire her husband with indifference; the woman whose life is of the heart, with hatred;

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the passionate woman, with disgust.

LXXXIX. A husband never loses anything by appearing to believe in the fidelity of his wife, by preserving an air of patience and by keeping silence. Silence especially troubles a woman amazingly.

XC.

To show himself aware of the passion of his wife is the mark of a fool; but to affect ignorance of all proves that a man has sense, and this is in fact the only attitude to take. We are taught, moreover, that everybody in France is sensible.

XCI.

The rock most to be avoided is ridicule.—"At least, let us be affectionate in public," ought to be the maxim of a married establishment. For both the married couple to lose honor, esteem, consideration, respect and all that is worth living for in society, is to become a nonentity.

These axioms relate to the contest alone. As for the catastrophe, others will be needed for that.

We have called this crisis *Civil War* for two reasons; never was a war more really intestine and at the same time so polite as this war. But in what point and in what manner does this fatal war break out? You do not believe that your wife will call out regiments and sound the trumpet, do you? She will, perhaps, have a commanding officer, but that is all. And this feeble army corps will be sufficient to destroy the peace of your establishment.

"You forbid me to see the people that I like!" is an exordium which has served for a manifesto in most homes. This phrase, with all the ideas that are concomitant, is oftenest employed by vain and artificial women.

The most usual manifesto is that which is proclaimed in the conjugal bed, the principal theatre of war. This subject will be treated in detail in the Meditation entitled: *Of Various Weapons*, in the paragraph, *Of Modesty in its Connection with Marriage*.

Certain women of a lymphatic temperament will pretend to have the spleen and will even feign death, if they can only gain thereby the benefit of a secret divorce.

But most of them owe their independence to the execution of a plan, whose effect upon the majority of husbands is unfailling and whose perfidies we will now reveal.

One of the greatest of human errors springs from the belief that our honor and our reputation are founded upon our actions, or result from the approbation which the general conscience bestows upon our conduct. A man who lives in the world is born to be a slave to public opinion. Now a private man in France has less opportunity of influencing the world than his wife, although he has ample occasion for ridiculing it. Women possess to a marvelous degree the art of giving color by specious arguments to the recriminations in which they indulge. They never set up any defence, excepting when they are in the wrong, and in this proceeding they are pre-eminent, knowing how to oppose arguments by precedents, proofs by assertions, and thus they very often obtain victory in minor matters of detail. They see and know with admirable penetration, when one of them presents to another a weapon which she herself is forbidden to whet. It is thus that they sometimes lose a husband without intending it. They apply the match and long afterwards are terror-stricken at the conflagration.

As a general thing, all women league themselves against a married man who is accused of tyranny; for a secret tie unites them all, as it unites all priests of the same religion. They hate each other, yet shield each other. You can never gain over more than one of them; and yet this act of seduction would be a triumph for your wife.

You are, therefore, outlawed from the feminine kingdom. You see ironical smiles on every lip, you meet an epigram in every answer. These clever creatures force their daggers and amuse themselves by sculpturing the handle before dealing you a graceful blow.

The treacherous art of reservation, the tricks of silence, the malice of suppositions, the pretended good nature of an inquiry, all these arts are employed against you. A man who undertakes to subjugate his wife is an example

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too dangerous to escape destruction from them, for will not his conduct call up against them the satire of every husband? Moreover, all of them will attack you, either by bitter witticisms, or by serious arguments, or by the hackneyed maxims of gallantry. A swarm of celibates will support all their sallies and you will be assailed and persecuted as an original, a tyrant, a bad bed-fellow, an eccentric man, a man not to be trusted.

Your wife will defend you like the bear in the fable of La Fontaine; she will throw paving stones at your head to drive away the flies that alight on it. She will tell you in the evening all the things that have been said about you, and will ask an explanation of acts which you never committed, and of words which you never said. She professes to have justified you for faults of which you are innocent; she has boasted of a liberty which she does not possess, in order to clear you of the wrong which you have done in denying that liberty. The deafening rattle which your wife shakes will follow you everywhere with its obtrusive din. Your darling will stun you, will torture you, meanwhile arming herself by making you feel only the thorns of married life. She will greet you with a radiant smile in public, and will be sullen at home. She will be dull when you are merry, and will make you detest her merriment when you are moody. Your two faces will present a perpetual contrast.

Very few men have sufficient force of mind not to succumb to this preliminary comedy, which is always cleverly played, and resembles the *hourra* raised by the Cossacks, as they advance to battle. Many husbands become irritated and fall into irreparable mistakes. Others abandon their wives. And, indeed, even those of superior intelligence do not know how to get hold of the enchanted ring, by which to dispel this feminine phantasmagoria.

Two-thirds of such women are enabled to win their independence by this single manoeuvre, which is no more than a review of their forces. In this case the war is soon ended.

But a strong man who courageously keeps cool throughout this first assault will find much amusement in laying bare to his wife, in a light and bantering way, the secret feelings which make her thus behave, in following her step by step through the labyrinth which she treads, and telling her in answer to her every remark, that she is false to herself, while he preserves throughout a tone of pleasantry and never becomes excited.

Meanwhile war is declared, and if her husband has not been dazzled by these first fireworks, a woman has yet many other resources for securing her triumph; and these it is the purpose of the following Meditations to discover.



## MEDITATION XXIV. PRINCIPLES OF STRATEGY.

The Archduke Charles published a very fine treatise on military under the title *Principles of Strategy in Relation to the Campaigns of 1796*. These principles seem somewhat to resemble poetic canons prepared for poems already published. In these days we are become very much more energetic, we invent rules to suit works and works to suit rules. But of what use were ancient principles of military art in presence of the impetuous genius of Napoleon? If, to-day, however, we reduce to a system the lessons taught by this great captain whose new tactics have destroyed the ancient ones, what future guarantee do we possess that another Napoleon will not yet be born? Books on military art meet, with few exceptions, the fate of ancient works on Chemistry and Physics. Everything is subject to change, either constant or periodic.

This, in a few words, is the history of our work.

So long as we have been dealing with a woman who is inert or lapped in slumber, nothing has been easier than to weave the meshes with which we have bound her; but the moment she wakes up and begins to struggle, all is confusion and complication. If a husband would make an effort to recall the principles of the system which we have just described in order to involve his wife in the nets which our second part has set for her, he would resemble Wurmser, Mack and Beaulieu arranging their halts and their marches while Napoleon nimbly turns their flank, and makes use of their own tactics to destroy them.

This is just what your wife will do.

How is it possible to get at the truth when each of you conceals it under the same lie, each setting the same trap for the other? And whose will be the victory when each of you is caught in a similar snare?

"My dear, I have to go out; I have to pay a visit to Madame So and So. I have ordered the carriage. Would you like to come with me? Come, be good, and go with your wife."

You say to yourself:

"She would be nicely caught if I consented! She asks me only to be refused."

Then you reply to her:

"Just at the moment I have some business with Monsieur Blank, for he has to give a report in a business matter which deeply concerns us both, and I must absolutely see him. Then I must go to the Minister of Finance. So your arrangement will suit us both."

"Very well, dearest, go and dress yourself, while Celine finishes dressing me; but don't keep me waiting."

"I am ready now, love," you cry out, at the end of ten minutes, as you stand shaved and dressed.

But all is changed. A letter has arrived; madame is not well; her dress fits badly; the dressmaker has come; if it is not the dressmaker it is your mother. Ninety-nine out of a hundred husbands will leave the house satisfied, believing that their wives are well guarded, when, as a matter of fact, the wives have gotten rid of them.

A lawful wife who from her husband cannot escape, who is not distressed by pecuniary anxiety, and who in order to give employment to a vacant mind, examines night and day the changing tableaux of each day's experience, soon discovers the mistake she has made in falling into a trap or allowing herself to be surprised by a catastrophe; she will then endeavor to turn all these weapons against you.

There is a man in society, the sight of whom is strangely annoying to your wife; she can tolerate neither his tone, his manners nor his way of regarding things. Everything connected with him is revolting to her; she is persecuted by him, he is odious to her; she hopes that no one will tell him this. It seems almost as if she were attempting to oppose you; for this man is one for whom you have the highest esteem. You like his disposition because he flatters you; and thus your wife presumes that your esteem for him results from flattered vanity. When you give a ball, an evening party or a concert, there is almost a discussion on this subject, and madame picks a quarrel with you, because you are compelling her to see people who are not agreeable to her.

"At least, sir, I shall never have to reproach myself with omitting to warn you. That man will yet cause you trouble. You should put some confidence in women when they pass sentence on the character of a man. And permit me to tell you that this baron, for whom you have such a predilection, is a very dangerous person, and you are doing very wrong to bring him to your house. And this is the way you behave; you absolutely force me to see one whom I cannot tolerate, and if I ask you to invite Monsieur A——, you refuse to do so, because you think

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that I like to have him with me! I admit that he talks well, that he is kind and amiable; but you are more to me than he can ever be."

These rude outlines of feminine tactics, which are emphasized by insincere gestures, by looks of feigned ingenuousness, by artful intonations of the voice and even by the snare of cunning silence, are characteristic to some degree of their whole conduct.

There are few husbands who in such circumstances as these do not form the idea of setting a mouse-trap; they welcome as their guests both Monsieur A——and the imaginary baron who represents the person whom their wives abhor, and they do so in the hope of discovering a lover in the celibate who is apparently beloved.

Oh yes, I have often met in the world young men who were absolutely starlings in love and complete dupes of a friendship which women pretended to show them, women who felt themselves obliged to make a diversion and to apply a blister to their husbands as their husbands had previously done to them! These poor innocents pass their time in running errands, in engaging boxes at the theatre, in riding in the Bois de Boulogne by the carriages of their pretended mistresses; they are publicly credited with possessing women whose hands they have not even kissed. Vanity prevents them from contradicting these flattering rumors, and like the young priests who celebrate masses without a Host, they enjoy a mere show passion, and are veritable supernumeraries of love.

Under these circumstances sometimes a husband on returning home asks the porter: "Has no one been here?"—"M. le Baron came past at two o'clock to see monsieur; but as he found no one was in but madame he went away; but Monsieur A——is with her now."

You reach the drawing-room, you see there a young celibate, sprightly, scented, wearing a fine necktie, in short a perfect dandy. He is a man who holds you in high esteem; when he comes to your house your wife listens furtively for his footsteps; at a ball she always dances with him. If you forbid her to see him, she makes a great outcry and it is not till many years afterwards [see Meditation on *Las Symptoms*] that you see the innocence of Monsieur A——and the culpability of the baron.

We have observed and noted as one of the cleverest manoeuvres, that of a young woman who, carried away by an irresistible passion, exhibited a bitter hatred to the man she did not love, but lavished upon her lover secret intimations of her love. The moment that her husband was persuaded that she loved the *Cicisbeo* and hated the *Patito*, she arranged that she and the *Patito* should be found in a situation whose compromising character she had calculated in advance, and her husband and the execrated celibate were thus induced to believe that her love and her aversion were equally insincere. When she had brought her husband into the condition of perplexity, she managed that a passionate letter should fall into his hands. One evening in the midst of the admirable catastrophe which she had thus brought to a climax, madame threw herself at her husband's feet, wet them with her tears, and thus concluded the climax to her own satisfaction.

"I esteem and honor you profoundly," she cried, "for keeping your own counsel as you have done. I am in love! Is this a sentiment which is easy for me to repress? But what I can do is to confess the fact to you; to implore you to protect me from myself, to save me from my own folly. Be my master and be a stern master to me; take me away from this place, remove me from what has caused all this trouble, console me; I will forget him, I desire to do so. I do not wish to betray you. I humbly ask your pardon for the treachery love has suggested to me. Yes, I confess to you that the love which I pretended to have for my cousin was a snare set to deceive you. I love him with the love of friendship and no more.—Oh! forgive me! I can love no one but"—her voice was choked in passionate sobs—"Oh! let us go away, let us leave Paris!"

She began to weep; her hair was disheveled, her dress in disarray; it was midnight, and her husband forgave her. From henceforth, the cousin made his appearance without risk, and the Minotaur devoured one victim more.

What instructions can we give for contending with such adversaries as these? Their heads contain all the diplomacy of the congress of Vienna; they have as much power when they are caught as when they escape. What man has a mind supple enough to lay aside brute force and strength and follow his wife through such mazes as these?

To make a false plea every moment, in order to elicit the truth, a true plea in order to unmask falsehood; to charge the battery when least expected, and to spike your gun at the very moment of firing it; to scale the mountain with the enemy, in order to descend to the plain again five minutes later; to accompany the foe in windings as rapid, as obscure as those of a plover on the breezes; to obey when obedience is necessary, and to oppose when resistance is inertial; to traverse the whole scale of hypotheses as a young artist with one stroke runs

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from the lowest to the highest note of his piano; to divine at last the secret purpose on which a woman is bent; to fear her caresses and to seek rather to find out what are the thoughts that suggested them and the pleasure which she derived from them—this is mere child's play for the man of intellect and for those lucid and searching imaginations which possess the gift of doing and thinking at the same time. But there are a vast number of husbands who are terrified at the mere idea of putting in practice these principles in their dealings with a woman.

Such men as these prefer passing their lives in making huge efforts to become second-class chess-players, or to pocket adroitly a ball in billiards.

Some of them will tell you that they are incapable of keeping their minds on such a constant strain and breaking up the habits of their life. In that case the woman triumphs. She recognizes that in mind and energy she is her husband's superior, although the superiority may be but temporary; and yet there rises in her a feeling of contempt for the head of the house.

If many men fail to be masters in their own house this is not from lack of willingness, but of talent. As for those who are ready to undergo the toils of this terrible duel, it is quite true that they must needs possess great moral force.

And really, as soon as it is necessary to display all the resources of this secret strategy, it is often useless to attempt setting any traps for these satanic creatures. Once women arrive at a point when they willfully deceive, their countenances become as inscrutable as vacancy. Here is an example which came within my own experience.

A very young, very pretty, and very clever coquette of Paris had not yet risen. Seated by her bed was one of her dearest friends. A letter arrived from another, a very impetuous fellow, to whom she had allowed the right of speaking to her like a master. The letter was in pencil and ran as follows:

"I understand that Monsieur C—— is with you at this moment. I am waiting for him to blow his brains out."

Madame D—— calmly continued the conversation with Monsieur C——. She asked him to hand her a little writing desk of red leather which stood on the table, and he brought it to her.

"Thanks, my dear," she said to him; "go on talking, I am listening to you."

C—— talked away and she replied, all the while writing the following note:

"As soon as you become jealous of C—— you two can blow out each other's brains at your pleasure. As for you, you may die; but brains— you haven't any brains to blow out."

"My dear friend," she said to C——, "I beg you will light this candle. Good, you are charming. And now be kind enough to leave me and let me get up, and give this letter to Monsieur d'H——, who is waiting at the door."

All this was said with admirable coolness. The tones and intonations of her voice, the expression of her face showed no emotion. Her audacity was crowned with complete success. On receiving the answer from the hand of Monsieur C——, Monsieur d'H—— felt his wrath subside. He was troubled with only one thing and that was how to disguise his inclination to laugh.

The more torch-light one flings into the immense cavern which we are now trying to illuminate, the more profound it appears. It is a bottomless abyss. It appears to us that our task will be accomplished more agreeably and more instructively if we show the principles of strategy put into practice in the case of a woman, when she has reached a high degree of vicious accomplishment. An example suggests more maxims and reveals the existence of more methods than all possible theories.

One day at the end of a dinner given to certain intimate friends by Prince Lebrun, the guests, heated by champagne, were discussing the inexhaustible subject of feminine artifice. The recent adventure which was credited to the Countess R. D. S. J. D. A——, apropos of a necklace, was the subject first broached. A highly esteemed artist, a gifted friend of the emperor, was vigorously maintaining the opinion, which seemed somewhat unmanly, that it was forbidden to a man to resist successfully the webs woven by a woman.

"It is my happy experience," he said, "that to them nothing is sacred."

The ladies protested.

"But I can cite an instance in point."

"It is an exception!"

"Let us hear the story," said a young lady.

"Yes, tell it to us," cried all the guests.

The prudent old gentleman cast his eyes around, and, after having formed his conclusions as to the age of the ladies, smiled and said:

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"Since we are all experienced in life, I consent to relate the adventure."

Dead silence followed, and the narrator read the following from a little book which he had taken from his pocket: x

I was head over ears in love with the Comtesse de ——-. I was twenty and I was ingenuous. She deceived me. I was angry; she threw me over. I was ingenuous, I repeat, and I was grieved to lose her. I was twenty; she forgave me. And as I was twenty, as I was always ingenuous, always deceived, but never again thrown over by her, I believed myself to have been the best beloved of lovers, consequently the happiest of men. The countess had a friend, Madame de T——-, who seemed to have some designs on me, but without compromising her dignity; for she was scrupulous and respected the proprieties. One day while I was waiting for the countess in her Opera box, I heard my name called from a contiguous box. It was Madame de T——-.

"What," she said, "already here? Is this fidelity or merely a want of something to do? Won't you come to me?"

Her voice and her manner had a meaning in them, but I was far from inclined at that moment to indulge in a romance.

"Have you any plans for this evening?" she said to me. "Don't make any! If I cheer your tedious solitude you ought to be devoted to me. Don't ask any questions, but obey. Call my servants."

I answered with a bow and on being requested to leave the Opera box, I obeyed.

"Go to this gentleman's house," she said to the lackey. "Say he will not be home till to-morrow."

She made a sign to him, he went to her, she whispered in his ear, and he left us. The Opera began. I tried to venture on a few words, but she silenced me; some one might be listening. The first act ended, the lackey brought back a note, and told her that everything was ready. Then she smiled, asked for my hand, took me off, put me in her carriage, and I started on my journey quite ignorant of my destination. Every inquiry I made was answered by a peal of laughter. If I had not been aware that this was a woman of great passion, that she had long loved the Marquis de V——-, that she must have known I was aware of it, I should have believed myself in good luck; but she knew the condition of my heart, and the Comtesse de ——-. I therefore rejected all presumptuous ideas and bided my time. At the first stop, a change of horses was supplied with the swiftness of lightning and we started afresh. The matter was becoming serious. I asked with some insistency, where this joke was to end.

"Where?" she said, laughing. "In the pleasantest place in the world, but can't you guess? I'll give you a thousand chances. Give it up, for you will never guess. We are going to my husband's house. Do you know him?"

"Not in the least."

"So much the better, I thought you didn't. But I hope you will like him. We have lately become reconciled. Negotiations went on for six months; and we have been writing to one another for a month. I think it is very kind of me to go and look him up."

"It certainly is, but what am I going to do there? What good will I be in this reconciliation?"

"Ah, that is my business. You are young, amiable, unconventional; you suit me and will save me from the tediousness of a tete-a-tete."

"But it seems odd to me, to choose the day or the night of a reconciliation to make us acquainted; the awkwardness of the first interview, the figure all three of us will cut,—I don't see anything particularly pleasant in that."

"I have taken possession of you for my own amusement!" she said with an imperious air, "so please don't preach."

I saw she was decided, so surrendered myself to circumstances. I began to laugh at my predicament and we became exceedingly merry. We again changed horses. The mysterious torch of night lit up a sky of extreme clearness and shed around a delightful twilight. We were approaching the spot where our tete-a-tete must end. She pointed out to me at intervals the beauty of the landscape, the tranquillity of the night, the all-pervading silence of nature. In order to admire these things in company as it was natural we should, we turned to the same window and our faces touched for a moment. In a sudden shock she seized my hand, and by a chance which seemed to me extraordinary, for the stone over which our carriage had bounded could not have been very large, I found Madame de T——- in my arms. I do not know what we were trying to see; what I am sure of is that the objects before our eyes began in spite of the full moon to grow misty, when suddenly I was released from her weight, and she sank into the back cushions of the carriage.

"Your object," she said, rousing herself from a deep reverie, "is possibly to convince me of the imprudence of

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this proceeding. Judge, therefore, of my embarrassment!"

"My object!" I replied, "what object can I have with regard to you? What a delusion! You look very far ahead; but of course the sudden surprise or turn of chance may excuse anything."

"You have counted, then, upon that chance, it seems to me?"

We had reached our destination, and before we were aware of it, we had entered the court of the chateau. The whole place was brightly lit up. Everything wore a festal air, excepting the face of its master, who at the sight of me seemed anything but delighted. He came forward and expressed in somewhat hesitating terms the tenderness proper to the occasion of a reconciliation. I understood later on that this reconciliation was absolutely necessary from family reasons. I was presented to him and was coldly greeted. He extended his hand to his wife, and I followed the two, thinking of my part in the past, in the present and in the future. I passed through apartments decorated with exquisite taste. The master in this respect had gone beyond all the ordinary refinement of luxury, in the hope of reanimating, by the influence of voluptuous imagery, a physical nature that was dead. Not knowing what to say, I took refuge in expressions of admiration. The goddess of the temple, who was quite ready to do the honors, accepted my compliments.

"You have not seen anything," she said. "I must take you to the apartments of my husband."

"Madame, five years ago I caused them to be pulled down."

"Oh! Indeed!" said she.

At the dinner, what must she do but offer the master some fish, on which he said to her:

"Madame, I have been living on milk for the last three years."

"Oh! Indeed!" she said again.

Can any one imagine three human beings as astonished as we were to find ourselves gathered together? The husband looked at me with a supercilious air, and I paid him back with a look of audacity.

Madame de T———smiled at me and was charming to me; Monsieur de T———accepted me as a necessary evil. Never in all my life have I taken part in a dinner which was so odd as that. The dinner ended, I thought that we would go to bed early—that is, I thought that Monsieur de T———would. As we entered the drawing-room:

"I appreciate, madame," said he, "your precaution in bringing this gentleman with you. You judged rightly that I should be but poor company for the evening, and you have done well, for I am going to retire."

Then turning to me, he added in a tone of profound sarcasm:

"You will please to pardon me, and obtain also pardon from madame."

He left us. My reflections? Well, the reflections of a twelvemonth were then comprised in those of a minute. When we were left alone, Madame de T———and I, we looked at each other so curiously that, in order to break through the awkwardness, she proposed that we should take a turn on the terrace while we waited, as she said, until the servants had supped.

It was a superb night. It was scarcely possible to discern surrounding objects, they seemed to be covered with a veil, that imagination might be permitted to take a loftier flight. The gardens, terraced on the side of a mountain, sloped down, platform after platform, to the banks of the Seine, and the eye took in the many windings of the stream covered with islets green and picturesque. These variations in the landscape made up a thousand pictures which gave to the spot, naturally charming, a thousand novel features. We walked along the most extensive of these terraces, which was covered with a thick umbrage of trees. She had recovered from the effects of her husband's persiflage, and as we walked along she gave me her confidence. Confidence begets confidence, and as I told her mine, all she said to me became more intimate and more interesting. Madame de T———at first gave me her arm; but soon this arm became interlaced in mine, I know not how, but in some way almost lifted her up and prevented her from touching the ground. The position was agreeable, but became at last fatiguing. We had been walking for a long time and we still had much to say to each other. A bank of turf appeared and she sat down without withdrawing her arm. And in this position we began to sound the praises of mutual confidence, its charms and its delights.

"Ah!" she said to me, "who can enjoy it more than we and with less cause of fear? I know well the tie that binds you to another, and therefore have nothing to fear."

Perhaps she wished to be contradicted. But I answered not a word. We were then mutually persuaded that it was possible for us to be friends without fear of going further.

"But I was afraid, however," I said, "that that sudden jolt in the carriage and the surprising consequences may

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have frightened you."

"Oh, I am not so easily alarmed!"

"I fear it has left a little cloud on your mind?"

"What must I do to reassure you?"

"Give me the kiss here which chance—"

"I will gladly do so; for if I do not, your vanity will lead you to think that I fear you."

I took the kiss.

It is with kisses as with confidences, the first leads to another. They are multiplied, they interrupt conversation, they take its place; they scarce leave time for a sigh to escape. Silence followed. We could hear it, for silence may be heard. We rose without a word and began to walk again.

"We must go in," said she, "for the air of the river is icy, and it is not worth while—"

"I think to go in would be more dangerous," I answered.

"Perhaps so! Never mind, we will go in."

"Why, is this out of consideration for me? You wish doubtless to save me from the impressions which I may receive from such a walk as this—the consequences which may result. Is it for me—for me only—?"

"You are modest," she said smiling, "and you credit me with singular consideration."

"Do you think so? Well, since you take it in this way, we will go in; I demand it."

A stupid proposition, when made by two people who are forcing themselves to say something utterly different from what they think.

Then she compelled me to take the path that led back to the chateau. I do not know, at least I did not then know, whether this course was one which she forced upon herself, whether it was the result of a vigorous resolution, or whether she shared my disappointment in seeing an incident which had begun so well thus suddenly brought to a close but by a mutual instinct our steps slackened and we pursued our way gloomily dissatisfied the one with the other and with ourselves. We knew not the why and the wherefore of what we were doing. Neither of us had the right to demand or even to ask anything. We had neither of us any ground for uttering a reproach. O that we had got up a quarrel! But how could I pick one with her? Meanwhile we drew nearer and nearer, thinking how we might evade the duty which we had so awkwardly imposed upon ourselves. We reached the door, when Madame de T——— said to me:

"I am angry with you! After the confidences I have given you, not to give me a single one! You have not said a word about the countess. And yet it is so delightful to speak of the one we love! I should have listened with such interest! It was the very best I could do after I had taken you away from her!"

"Cannot I reproach you with the same thing?" I said, interrupting her, "and if instead of making me a witness to this singular reconciliation in which I play so odd a part, you had spoken to me of the marquis—"

"Stop," she said, "little as you know of women, you are aware that their confidences must be waited for, not asked. But to return to yourself. Are you very happy with my friend? Ah! I fear the contrary—"

"Why, madame, should everything that the public amuses itself by saying claim our belief?"

"You need not dissemble. The countess makes less a mystery of things than you do. Women of her stamp do not keep the secrets of their loves and of their lovers, especially when you are prompted by discretion to conceal her triumph. I am far from accusing her of coquetry; but a prude has as much vanity as a coquette.—Come, tell me frankly, have you not cause of complaint against her?"

"But, madame, the air is really too icy for us to stay here. Would you like to go in?" said I with a smile.

"Do you find it so?—That is singular. The air is quite warm."

She had taken my arm again, and we continued to walk, although I did not know the direction which we took. All that she had hinted at concerning the lover of the countess, concerning my mistress, together with this journey, the incident which took place in the carriage, our conversation on the grassy bank, the time of night, the moonlight—all made me feel anxious. I was at the same time carried along by vanity, by desire, and so distracted by thought, that I was too excited perhaps to take notice of all that I was experiencing. And, while I was overwhelmed with these mingled feelings, she continued talking to me of the countess, and my silence confirmed the truth of all that she chose to say about her. Nevertheless, certain passages in her talk recalled me to myself.

"What an exquisite creature she is!" she was saying. "How graceful! On her lips the utterances of treachery sound like witticism; an act of infidelity seems the prompting of reason, a sacrifice to propriety; while she is never

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reckless, she is always lovable; she is seldom tender and never sincere; amorous by nature, prudish on principle; sprightly, prudent, dexterous though utterly thoughtless, varied as Proteus in her moods, but charming as the Graces in her manner; she attracts but she eludes. What a number of parts I have seen her play! *Entre nous*, what a number of dupes hang round her! What fun she has made of the baron, what a life she has led the marquis! When she took you, it was merely for the purpose of throwing the two rivals off the scent; they were on the point of a rupture; for she had played with them too long, and they had had time to see through her. But she brought you on the scene. Their attention was called to you, she led them to redouble their pursuit, she was in despair over you, she pitied you, she consoled you—Ah! how happy is a clever woman when in such a game as this she professes to stake nothing of her own! But yet, is this true happiness?"

This last phrase, accompanied by a significant sigh, was a master-stroke. I felt as if a bandage had fallen from my eyes, without seeing who had put it there. My mistress appeared to me the falsest of women, and I believed that I held now the only sensible creature in the world. Then I sighed without knowing why. She seemed grieved at having given me pain and at having in her excitement drawn a picture, the truth of which might be open to suspicion, since it was the work of a woman. I do not know how I answered; for without realizing the drift of all I heard, I set out with her on the high road of sentiment, and we mounted to such lofty heights of feeling that it was impossible to guess what would be the end of our journey. It was fortunate that we also took the path towards a pavilion which she pointed out to me at the end of the terrace, a pavilion, the witness of many sweet moments. She described to me the furnishing of it. What a pity that she had not the key! As she spoke we reached the pavilion and found that it was open. The clearness of the moonlight outside did not penetrate, but darkness has many charms. We trembled as we went in. It was a sanctuary. Might it not be the sanctuary of love? We drew near a sofa and sat down, and there we remained a moment listening to our heart-beats. The last ray of the moon carried away the last scruple. The hand which repelled me felt my heart beat. She struggled to get away, but fell back overcome with tenderness. We talked together through that silence in the language of thought. Nothing is more rapturous than these mute conversations. Madame de T—took refuge in my arms, hid her head in my bosom, sighed and then grew calm under my caresses. She grew melancholy, she was consoled, and she asked of love all that love had robbed her of. The sound of the river broke the silence of night with a gentle murmur, which seemed in harmony with the beating of our hearts. Such was the darkness of the place it was scarcely possible to discern objects; but through the transparent crepe of a fair summer's night, the queen of that lovely place seemed to me adorable.

"Oh!" she said to me with an angelic voice, "let us leave this dangerous spot. Resistance here is beyond our strength."

She drew me away and we left the pavilion with regret.

"Ah! how happy is she!" cried Madame de T——.

"Whom do you mean?" I asked.

"Did I speak?" said she with a look of alarm.

And then we reached the grassy bank, and stopped there involuntarily. "What a distance there is," she said to me, "between this place and the pavilion!"

"Yes indeed," said I. "But must this bank be always ominous? Is there a regret? Is there—?"

I do not know by what magic it took place; but at this point the conversation changed and became less serious. She ventured even to speak playfully of the pleasures of love, to eliminate from them all moral considerations, to reduce them to their simplest elements, and to prove that the favors of lovers were mere pleasure, that there were no pledges—philosophically speaking—excepting those which were given to the world, when we allowed it to penetrate our secrets and joined it in the acts of indiscretion.

"How mild is the night," she said, "which we have by chance picked out! Well, if there are reasons, as I suppose there are, which compel us to part to-morrow, our happiness, ignored as it is by all nature, will not leave us any ties to dissolve. There will, perhaps, be some regrets, the pleasant memory of which will give us reparation; and then there will be a mutual understanding, without all the delays, the fuss and the tyranny of legal proceedings. We are such machines—and I blush to avow it—that in place of all the shrinkings that tormented me before this scene took place, I was half inclined to embrace the boldness of these principles, and I felt already disposed to indulge in the love of liberty.

"This beautiful night," she continued, "this lovely scenery at this moment have taken on fresh charms. O let us

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never forget this pavilion! The chateau," she added smilingly, "contains a still more charming place, but I dare not show you anything; you are like a child, who wishes to touch everything and breaks everything that he touches."

Moved by a sentiment of curiosity I protested that I was a very good child. She changed the subject.

"This night," she said, "would be for me without a regret if I were not vexed with myself for what I said to you about the countess. Not that I wish to find fault with you. Novelty attracts me. You have found me amiable, I should like to believe in your good faith. But the dominion of habit takes a long time to break through and I have not learned the secret of doing this—By the bye, what do you think of my husband?"

"Well, he is rather cross, but I suppose he could not be otherwise to me."

"Oh, that is true, but his way of life isn't pleasant, and he could not see you here with indifference. He might be suspicious even of our friendship."

"Oh! he is so already."

"Confess that he has cause. Therefore you must not prolong this visit; he might take it amiss. As soon as any one arrives—" and she added with a smile, "some one is going to arrive—you must go. You have to keep up appearance, you know. Remember his manner when he left us to-night."

I was tempted to interpret this adventure as a trap, but as she noticed the impression made by her words, she added:

"Oh, he was very much gayer when he was superintending the arrangement of the cabinet I told you about. That was before my marriage. This passage leads to my apartment. Alas! it testifies to the cunning artifices to which Monsieur de T———has resorted in protecting his love for me."

"How pleasant it would be," I said to her, keenly excited by the curiosity she had roused in me, "to take vengeance in this spot for the insults which your charms have suffered, and to seek to make restitution for the pleasures of which you have been robbed."

She doubtless thought this remark in good taste, but she said: "You promised to be good!"

\* \* \* \* \*

I threw a veil over the follies which every age will pardon to youth, on the ground of so many balked desires and bitter memories. In the morning, scarcely raising her liquid eyes, Madame de T———, fairer than ever, said to me:

"Now will you ever love the countess as much as you do me?"

I was about to answer when her maid, her confidante, appeared saying:

"You must go. It is broad daylight, eleven o'clock, and the chateau is already awake."

All had vanished like a dream! I found myself wandering through the corridors before I had recovered my senses. How could I regain my apartment, not knowing where it was? Any mistake might bring about an exposure. I resolved on a morning walk. The coolness of the fresh air gradually tranquilized my imagination and brought me back to the world of reality; and now instead of a world of enchantment I saw myself in my soul, and my thoughts were no longer disturbed but followed each other in connected order; in fact, I breathed once more. I was, above all things, anxious to learn what I was to her so lately left—I who knew that she had been desperately in love with the Marquis de V———. Could she have broken with him? Had she taken me to be his successor, or only to punish him? What a night! What an adventure! Yes, and what a delightful woman! While I floated on the waves of these thoughts, I heard a sound near at hand. I raised my eyes, I rubbed them, I could not believe my senses. Can you guess who it was? The Marquis de V———!

"You did not expect to see me so early, did you?" he said. "How has it all gone off?"

"Did you know that I was here?" I asked in utter amazement.

"Oh, yes, I received word just as you left Paris. Have you played your part well? Did not the husband think your visit ridiculous? Was he put out? When are you going to take leave? You had better go, I have made every provision for you. I have brought you a good carriage. It is at your service. This is the way I requite you, my dear friend. You may rely on me in the future, for a man is grateful for such services as yours."

These last words gave me the key to the whole mystery, and I saw how I stood.

"But why should you have come so soon?" I asked him; "it would have been more prudent to have waited a few days."

"I foresaw that; and it is only chance that has brought me here. I am supposed to be on my way back from a neighboring country house. But has not Madame de T———taken you into her secret? I am surprised at her want



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of confidence, after all you have done for us."

"My dear friend," I replied, "she doubtless had her reasons. Perhaps I did not play my part very well."

"Has everything been very pleasant? Tell me the particulars; come, tell me."

"Now wait a moment. I did not know that this was to be a comedy; and although Madame de T——gave me a part in the play—"

"It wasn't a very nice one."

"Do not worry yourself; there are no bad parts for good actors."

"I understand, you acquitted yourself well."

"Admirably."

"And Madame de T——?"

"Is adorable."

"To think of being able to win such a woman!" said he, stopping short in our walk, and looking triumphantly at me. "Oh, what pains I have taken with her! And I have at last brought her to a point where she is perhaps the only woman in Paris on whose fidelity a man may infallibly count!"

"You have succeeded—?"

"Yes; in that lies my special talent. Her inconstancy was mere frivolity, unrestrained imagination. It was necessary to change that disposition of hers, but you have no idea of her attachment to me. But really, is she not charming?"

"I quite agree with you."

"And yet *entre nous* I recognize one fault in her. Nature in giving her everything, has denied her that flame divine which puts the crown on all other endowments; while she rouses in others the ardor of passion, she feels none herself, she is a thing of marble."

"I am compelled to believe you, for I have had no opportunity of judging, but do you think that you know that woman as well as if you were her husband? It is possible to be deceived. If I had not dined yesterday with the veritable—I should take you—"

"By the way, has he been good?"

"Oh, I was received like a dog!"

"I understand. Let us go in, let us look for Madame de T——. She must be up by this time."

"But should we not out of decency begin with the husband?" I said to him.

"You are right. Let us go to your room, I wish to put on a little powder. But tell me, did he really take you for her lover?"

"You may judge by the way he receives me; but let us go at once to his apartment."

I wished to avoid having to lead him to an apartment whose whereabouts I did not know; but by chance we found it. The door was open and there I saw my *valet de chambre* asleep on an armchair. A candle was going out on a table beside him. He drowsily offered a night robe to the marquis. I was on pins and needles; but the marquis was in a mood to be easily deceived, took the man for a mere sleepy-head, and made a joke of the matter. We passed on to the apartment of Monsieur de T——. There was no misunderstanding the reception which he accorded me, and the welcome, the compliments which he addressed to the marquis, whom he almost forced to stay. He wished to take him to madame in order that she might insist on his staying. As for me, I received no such invitation. I was reminded that my health was delicate, the country was damp, fever was in the air, and I seemed so depressed that the chateau would prove too gloomy for me. The marquis offered me his chaise and I accepted it. The husband seemed delighted and we were all satisfied. But I could not refuse myself the pleasure of seeing Madame de T——once more. My impatience was wonderful. My friend conceived no suspicions from the late sleep of his mistress.

"Isn't this fine?" he said to me as we followed Monsieur de T——. "He couldn't have spoken more kindly if she had dictated his words. He is a fine fellow. I am not in the least annoyed by this reconciliation; they will make a good home together, and you will agree with me, that he could not have chosen a wife better able to do the honors."

"Certainly," I replied.

"However pleasant the adventure has been," he went on with an air of mystery, "you must be off! I will let Madame de T——understand that her secret will be well kept."

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"On that point, my friend, she perhaps counts more on me than on you; for you see her sleep is not disturbed by the matter."

"Oh! I quite agree that there is no one like you for putting a woman to sleep."

"Yes, and a husband too, and if necessary a lover, my dear friend."

At last Monsieur de T———was admitted to his wife's apartment, and there we were all summoned.

"I trembled," said Madame de T———to me, "for fear you would go before I awoke, and I thank you for saving me the annoyance which that would have caused me."

"Madame," I said, and she must have perceived the feeling that was in my tones—"I come to say good-bye."

She looked at me and at the marquis with an air of disquietude; but the self-satisfied, knowing look of her lover reassured her. She laughed in her sleeve with me as if she would console me as well as she could, without lowering herself in my eyes.

"He has played his part well," the marquis said to her in a low voice, pointing to me, "and my gratitude—"

"Let us drop the subject," interrupted Madame de T———; "you may be sure that I am well aware of all I owe him."

At last Monsieur de T———, with a sarcastic remark, dismissed me; my friend threw the dust in his eyes by making fun of me; and I paid back both of them by expressing my admiration for Madame de T———, who made fools of us all without forfeiting her dignity. I took myself off; but Madame de T———followed me, pretending to have a commission to give me.

"Adieu, monsieur!" she said, "I am indebted to you for the very great pleasure you have given me; but I have paid you back with a beautiful dream," and she looked at me with an expression of subtle meaning. "But adieu, and forever! You have plucked a solitary flower, blossoming in its loveliness, which no man—"

She stopped and her thought evaporated in a sigh; but she checked the rising flood of sensibility and smiled significantly.

"The countess loves you," she said. "If I have robbed her of some transports, I give you back to her less ignorant than before. Adieu! Do not make mischief between my friend and me."

She wrung my hand and left me.

More than once the ladies who had mislaid their fans blushed as they listened to the old gentleman, whose brilliant elocution won their indulgence for certain details which we have suppressed, as too erotic for the present age; nevertheless, we may believe that each lady complimented him in private; for some time afterwards he gave to each of them, as also to the masculine guests, a copy of this charming story, twenty-five copies of which were printed by Pierre Didot. It is from copy No. 24 that the author has transcribed this tale, hitherto unpublished, and, strange to say, attributed to Dorat. It has the merit of yielding important lessons for husbands, while at the same time it gives the celibates a delightful picture of morals in the last century.

## MEDITATION XXV. OF ALLIES.

Of all the miseries that civil war can bring upon a country the greatest lies in the appeal which one of the contestants always ends by making to some foreign government.

Unhappily we are compelled to confess that all women make this great mistake, for the lover is only the first of their soldiers. It may be a member of their family or at least a distant cousin. This Meditation, then, is intended to answer the inquiry, what assistance can each of the different powers which influence human life give to your wife? or better than that, what artifices will she resort to to arm them against you?

Two beings united by marriage are subject to the laws of religion and society; to those of private life, and, from considerations of health, to those of medicine. We will therefore divide this important Meditation into six paragraphs:

1. OF RELIGIONS AND OF CONFESSION; CONSIDERED IN THEIR CONNECTION WITH MARRIAGE.
2. OF THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.
3. OF BOARDING SCHOOL FRIENDS AND INTIMATE FRIENDS.
4. OF THE LOVER'S ALLIES.
5. OF THE MAID.
6. OF THE DOCTOR.

### 1. OF RELIGIONS AND OF CONFESSION; CONSIDERED IN THEIR CONNECTION WITH MARRIAGE.

La Bruyere has very wittily said, "It is too much for a husband to have ranged against him both devotion and gallantry; a woman ought to choose but one of them for her ally."

The author thinks that La Bruyere is mistaken.

### 2. OF THE MOTHER-IN-LAW.

Up to the age of thirty the face of a woman is a book written in a foreign tongue, which one may still translate in spite of all the *feminisms* of the idiom; but on passing her fortieth year a woman becomes an insoluble riddle; and if any one can see through an old woman, it is another old woman.

Some diplomats have attempted on more than one occasion the diabolical task of gaining over the dowagers who opposed their machinations; but if they have ever succeeded it was only after making enormous concessions to them; for diplomats are practiced people and we do not think that you can employ their recipe in dealing with your mother-in-law. She will be the first aid-de-camp of her daughter, for if the mother did not take her daughter's side, it would be one of those monstrous and unnatural exceptions, which unhappily for husbands are extremely rare.

When a man is so happy as to possess a mother-in-law who is well-preserved, he may easily keep her in check for a certain time, although he may not know any young celibate brave enough to assail her. But generally husbands who have the slightest conjugal genius will find a way of pitting their own mother against that of their wife, and in that case they will naturally neutralize each other's power.

To be able to keep a mother-in-law in the country while he lives in Paris, and vice versa, is a piece of good fortune which a husband too rarely meets with.

What of making mischief between the mother and the daughter?—That may be possible; but in order to accomplish such an enterprise he must have the metallic heart of Richelieu, who made a son and a mother deadly enemies to each other. However, the jealousy of a husband who forbids his wife to pray to male saints and wishes her to address only female saints, would allow her liberty to see her mother.

Many sons-in-law take an extreme course which settles everything, which consists in living on bad terms with their mothers-in-law. This unfriendliness would be very adroit policy, if it did not inevitably result in drawing tighter the ties that unite mother and daughter. These are about all the means which you have for resisting

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maternal influence in your home. As for the services which your wife can claim from her mother, they are immense; and the assistance which she may derive from the neutrality of her mother is not less powerful. But on this point everything passes out of the domain of science, for all is veiled in secrecy. The reinforcements which a mother brings up in support of a daughter are so varied in nature, they depend so much on circumstances, that it would be folly to attempt even a nomenclature for them. Yet you may write out among the most valuable precepts of this conjugal gospel, the following maxims.

A husband should never let his wife visit her mother unattended.

A husband ought to study all the reasons why all the celibates under forty who form her habitual society are so closely united by ties of friendship to his mother-in-law; for, if a daughter rarely falls in love with the lover of her mother, her mother has always a weak spot for her daughter's lover.

#### 3. OF BOARDING SCHOOL FRIENDS AND INTIMATE FRIENDS.

Louise de L——, daughter of an officer killed at Wagram, had been the object of Napoleon's special protection. She left Ecouen to marry a commissary general, the Baron de V——, who is very rich.

Louise was eighteen and the baron forty. She was ordinary in face and her complexion could not be called white, but she had a charming figure, good eyes, a small foot, a pretty hand, good taste and abundant intelligence. The baron, worn out by the fatigues of war and still more by the excesses of a stormy youth, had one of those faces upon which the Republic, the Directory, the Consulate and the Empire seemed to have set their impress.

He became so deeply in love with his wife, that he asked and obtained from the Emperor a post at Paris, in order that he might be enabled to watch over his treasure. He was as jealous as Count Almaviva, still more from vanity than from love. The young orphan had married her husband from necessity, and, flattered by the ascendancy she wielded over a man much older than herself, waited upon his wishes and his needs; but her delicacy was offended from the first days of their marriage by the habits and ideas of a man whose manners were tinged with republican license. He was a predestined.

I do not know exactly how long the baron made his honeymoon last, nor when war was declared in his household; but I believe it happened in 1816, at a very brilliant ball given by Monsieur D——, a commissariat officer, that the commissary general, who had been promoted head of the department, admired the beautiful Madame B——, the wife of a banker, and looked at her much more amorously than a married man should have allowed himself to do.

At two o'clock in the morning it happened that the banker, tired of waiting any longer, went home leaving his wife at the ball.

"We are going to take you home to your house," said the baroness to Madame B——. "Monsieur de V——, offer your arm to Emilie!"

And now the baron is seated in his carriage next to a woman who, during the whole evening, had been offered and had refused a thousand attentions, and from whom he had hoped in vain to win a single look. There she was, in all the lustre of her youth and beauty, displaying the whitest shoulders and the most ravishing lines of beauty. Her face, which still reflected the pleasures of the evening, seemed to vie with the brilliancy of her satin gown; her eyes to rival the blaze of her diamonds; and her skin to cope with the soft whiteness of the marabouts which tied in her hair, set off the ebon tresses and the ringlets dangling from her headdress. Her tender voice would stir the chords of the most insensible hearts; in a word, so powerfully did she wake up love in the human breast that Robert d'Abrissel himself would perhaps have yielded to her.

The baron glanced at his wife, who, overcome with fatigue, had sunk to sleep in a corner of the carriage. He compared, in spite of himself, the toilette of Louise and that of Emilie. Now on occasions of this kind the presence of a wife is singularly calculated to sharpen the unquenchable desires of a forbidden love. Moreover, the glances of the baron, directed alternately to his wife and to her friend, were easy to interpret, and Madame B—— interpreted them.

"Poor Louise," she said, "she is overtired. Going out does not suit her, her tastes are so simple. At Ecouen she was always reading—"

"And you, what used you to do?"

"I, sir? Oh, I thought about nothing but acting comely. It was my passion!"

"But why do you so rarely visit Madame de V——? We have a country house at Saint-Prix, where we could

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have a comedy acted, in a little theatre which I have built there."

"If I have not visited Madame de V——, whose fault is it?" she replied. "You are so jealous that you will not allow her either to visit her friends or to receive them."

"I jealous!" cried Monsieur de V——, "after four years of marriage, and after having had three children!"

"Hush," said Emilie, striking the fingers of the baron with her fan, "Louise is not asleep!"

The carriage stopped, and the baron offered his hand to his wife's fair friend and helped her to get out.

"I hope," said Madame B——, "that you will not prevent Louise from coming to the ball which I am giving this week."

The baron made her a respectful bow.

This ball was a triumph of Madame B——'s and the ruin of the husband of Louise; for he became desperately enamored of Emilie, to whom he would have sacrificed a hundred lawful wives.

Some months after that evening on which the baron gained some hopes of succeeding with his wife's friend, he found himself one morning at the house of Madame B——, when the maid came to announce the Baroness de V——.

"Ah!" cried Emilie, "if Louise were to see you with me at such an hour as this, she would be capable of compromising me. Go into that closet and don't make the least noise."

The husband, caught like a mouse in a trap, concealed himself in the closet.

"Good-day, my dear!" said the two women, kissing each other.

"Why are you come so early?" asked Emilie.

"Oh! my dear, cannot you guess? I came to have an understanding with you!"

"What, a duel?"

"Precisely, my dear. I am not like you, not I! I love my husband and am jealous of him. You! you are beautiful, charming, you have the right to be a coquette, you can very well make fun of B——, to whom your virtue seems to be of little importance. But as you have plenty of lovers in society, I beg you that you will leave me my husband. He is always at your house, and he certainly would not come unless you were the attraction."

"What a very pretty jacket you have on."

"Do you think so? My maid made it."

"Then I shall get Anastasia to take a lesson from Flore—"

"So, then, my dear, I count on your friendship to refrain from bringing trouble in my house."

"But, my child, I do not know how you can conceive that I should fall in love with your husband; he is coarse and fat as a deputy of the centre. He is short and ugly—Ah! I will allow that he is generous, but that is all you can say for him, and this is a quality which is all in all only to opera girls; so that you can understand, my dear, that if I were choosing a lover, as you seem to suppose I am, I wouldn't choose an old man like your baron. If I have given him any hopes, if I have received him, it was certainly for the purpose of amusing myself, and of giving you liberty; for I believed you had a weakness for young Rostanges."

"I?" exclaimed Louise, "God preserve me from it, my dear; he is the most intolerable coxcomb in the world. No, I assure you, I love my husband! You may laugh as you choose; it is true. I know it may seem ridiculous, but consider, he has made my fortune, he is no miser, and he is everything to me, for it has been my unhappy lot to be left an orphan. Now even if I did not love him, I ought to try to preserve his esteem. Have I a family who will some day give me shelter?"

"Come, my darling, let us speak no more about it," said Emilie, interrupting her friend, "for it tires me to death."

After a few trifling remarks the baroness left.

"How is this, monsieur?" cried Madame B——, opening the door of the closet where the baron was frozen with cold, for this incident took place in winter; "how is this? Aren't you ashamed of yourself for not adoring a little wife who is so interesting? Don't speak to me of love; you may idolize me, as you say you do, for a certain time, but you will never love me as you love Louise. I can see that in your heart I shall never outweigh the interest inspired by a virtuous wife, children, and a family circle. I should one day be deserted and become the object of your bitter reflections. You would coldly say of me 'I have had that woman!' That phrase I have heard pronounced by men with the most insulting indifference. You see, monsieur, that I reason in cold blood, and that I do not love you, because you never would be able to love me."

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"What must I do then to convince you of my love?" cried the baron, fixing his gaze on the young woman.

She had never appeared to him so ravishingly beautiful as at that moment, when her soft voice poured forth a torrent of words whose sternness was belied by the grace of her gestures, by the pose of her head and by her coquettish attitude.

"Oh, when I see Louise in possession of a lover," she replied, "when I know that I am taking nothing away from her, and that she has nothing to regret in losing your affection; when I am quite sure that you love her no longer, and have obtained certain proof of your indifference towards her—Oh, then I may listen to you!—These words must seem odious to you," she continued in an earnest voice; "and so indeed they are, but do not think that they have been pronounced by me. I am the rigorous mathematician who makes his deductions from a preliminary proposition. You are married, and do you deliberately set about making love to some one else? I should be mad to give any encouragement to a man who cannot be mine eternally."

"Demon!" exclaimed the husband. "Yes, you are a demon, and not a woman!"

"Come now, you are really amusing!" said the young woman as she seized the bell-rope.

"Oh! no, Emilie," continued the lover of forty, in a calmer voice. "Do not ring; stop, forgive me! I will sacrifice everything for you."

"But I do not promise you anything!" she answered quickly with a laugh.

"My God! How you make me suffer!" he exclaimed.

"Well, and have not you in your life caused the unhappiness of more than one person?" she asked. "Remember all the tears which have been shed through you and for you! Oh, your passion does not inspire me with the least pity. If you do not wish to make me laugh, make me share your feelings."

"Adieu, madame, there is a certain clemency in your sternness. I appreciate the lesson you have taught me. Yes, I have many faults to expiate."

"Well then, go and repent of them," she said with a mocking smile; "in making Louise happy you will perform the rudest penance in your power."

They parted. But the love of the baron was too violent to allow of Madame B——'s harshness failing to accomplish her end, namely, the separation of the married couple.

At the end of some months the Baron de V—— and his wife lived apart, though they lived in the same mansion. The baroness was the object of universal pity, for in public she always did justice to her husband and her resignation seemed wonderful. The most prudish women of society found nothing to blame in the friendship which united Louise to the young Rostanges. And all was laid to the charge of Monsieur de V——'s folly.

When this last had made all the sacrifices that a man could make for Madame B——, his perfidious mistress started for the waters of Mount Dore, for Switzerland and for Italy, on the pretext of seeking the restoration of her health.

The baron died of inflammation of the liver, being attended during his sickness by the most touching ministrations which his wife could lavish upon him; and judging from the grief which he manifested at having deserted her, he seemed never to have suspected her participation in the plan which had been his ruin.

This anecdote, which we have chosen from a thousand others, exemplifies the services which two women can render each other.

From the words—"Let me have the pleasure of bringing my husband" up to the conception of the drama, whose denouement was inflammation of the liver, every female perfidy was assembled to work out the end. Certain incidents will, of course, be met with which diversify more or less the typical example which we have given, but the march of the drama is almost always the same. Moreover a husband ought always to distrust the woman friends of his wife. The subtle artifices of these lying creatures rarely fail of their effect, for they are seconded by two enemies, who always keep close to a man—and these are vanity and desire.

#### 4. OF THE LOVER'S ALLIES.

The man who hastens to tell another man that he has dropped a thousand franc bill from his pocket-book, or even that the handkerchief is coming out of his pocket, would think it a mean thing to warn him that some one was carrying off his wife. There is certainly something extremely odd in this moral inconsistency, but after all it admits of explanation. Since the law cannot exercise any interference with matrimonial rights, the citizens have even less right to constitute themselves a conjugal police; and when one restores a thousand franc bill to him who

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has lost it, he acts under a certain kind of obligation, founded on the principle which says, "Do unto others as ye would they should do unto you!"

But by what reasoning can justification be found for the help which one celibate never asks in vain, but always receives from another celibate in deceiving a husband, and how shall we qualify the rendering of such help? A man who is incapable of assisting a gendarme in discovering an assassin, has no scruple in taking a husband to a theatre, to a concert or even to a questionable house, in order to help a comrade, whom he would not hesitate to kill in a duel to-morrow, in keeping an assignation, the result of which is to introduce into a family a spurious child, and to rob two brothers of a portion of their fortune by giving them a co-heir whom they never perhaps would otherwise have had; or to effect the misery of three human beings. We must confess that integrity is a very rare virtue, and, very often, the man that thinks he has most actually has least. Families have been divided by feuds, and brothers have been murdered, which events would never have taken place if some friend had refused to perform what passes to the world as a harmless trick.

It is impossible for a man to be without some hobby or other, and all of us are devoted either to hunting, fishing, gambling, music, money, or good eating. Well, your ruling passion will always be an accomplice in the snare which a lover sets for you, the invisible hand of this passion will direct your friends, or his, whether they consent or not, to play a part in the little drama when they want to take you away from home, or to induce you to leave your wife to the mercy of another. A lover will spend two whole months, if necessary, in planning the construction of the mouse-trap.

I have seen the most cunning men on earth thus taken in.

There was a certain retired lawyer of Normandy. He lived in the little town of B——, where a regiment of the chasseurs of Cantal were garrisoned. A fascinating officer of this regiment had fallen in love with the wife of this pettifogger, and the regiment was leaving before the two lovers had been able to enjoy the least privacy. It was the fourth military man over whom the lawyer had triumphed. As he left the dinner-table one evening, about six o'clock, the husband took a walk on the terrace of his garden from which he could see the whole country side. The officers arrived at this moment to take leave of him. Suddenly the flame of a conflagration burst forth on the horizon. "Heavens! La Daudiniere is on fire!" exclaimed the major. He was an old simple-minded soldier, who had dined at home. Every one mounted horse. The young wife smiled as she found herself alone, for her lover, hidden in the coppice, had said to her, "It is a straw stack on fire!" The flank of the husband was turned with all the more facility in that a fine courser was provided for him by the captain, and with a delicacy very rare in the cavalry, the lover actually sacrificed a few moments of his happiness in order to catch up with the cavalcade, and return in company with the husband.

Marriage is a veritable duel, in which persistent watchfulness is required in order to triumph over an adversary; for, if you are unlucky enough to turn your head, the sword of the celibate will pierce you through and through.

#### 5. OF THE MAID.

The prettiest waiting-maid I have ever seen is that of Madame V——y, a lady who to-day plays at Paris a brilliant part among the most fashionable women, and passes for a wife who keeps on excellent terms with her husband. Mademoiselle Celestine is a person whose points of beauty are so numerous that, in order to describe her, it would be necessary to translate the thirty verses which we are told form an inscription in the seraglio of the Grand Turk and contain each of them an excellent description of one of the thirty beauties of women.

"You show a great deal of vanity in keeping near you such an accomplished creature," said a lady to the mistress of the house.

"Ah! my dear, some day perhaps you will find yourself jealous of me in possessing Celestine."

"She must be endowed with very rare qualities, I suppose? She perhaps dresses you well?"

"Oh, no, very badly!"

"She sews well?"

"She never touches her needle."

"She is faithful?"

"She is one of those whose fidelity costs more than the most cunning dishonesty."

"You astonish me, my dear; she is then your foster-sister?"

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"Not at all; she is positively good for nothing, but she is more useful to me than any other member of my household. If she remains with me ten years, I have promised her twenty thousand francs. It will be money well earned, and I shall not forget to give it!" said the young woman, nodding her head with a meaning gesture.

At last the questioner of Madame V——y understood.

When a woman has no friend of her own sex intimate enough to assist her in proving false to marital love, her maid is a last resource which seldom fails in bringing about the desired result.

Oh! after ten years of marriage to find under his roof, and to see all the time, a young girl of from sixteen to eighteen, fresh, dressed with taste, the treasures of whose beauty seem to breathe defiance, whose frank bearing is irresistibly attractive, whose downcast eyes seem to fear you, whose timid glance tempts you, and for whom the conjugal bed has no secrets, for she is at once a virgin and an experienced woman! How can a man remain cold, like St. Anthony, before such powerful sorcery, and have the courage to remain faithful to the good principles represented by a scornful wife, whose face is always stern, whose manners are always snappish, and who frequently refuses to be caressed? What husband is stoical enough to resist such fires, such frosts? There, where you see a new harvest of pleasure, the young innocent sees an income, and your wife her liberty. It is a little family compact, which is signed in the interest of good will.

In this case, your wife acts with regard to marriage as young fashionables do with regard to their country. If they are drawn for the army, they buy a man to carry the musket, to die in their place and to spare them the hardships of military life.

In compromises of this sort there is not a single woman who does not know how to put her husband in the wrong. I have noticed that, by a supreme stroke of diplomacy, the majority of wives do not admit their maids into the secret of the part which they give them to play. They trust to nature, and assume an affected superiority over the lover and his mistress.

These secret perfidies of women explain to a great degree the odd features of married life which are to be observed in the world; and I have heard women discuss, with profound sagacity, the dangers which are inherent in this terrible method of attack, and it is necessary to know thoroughly both the husband and the creature to whom he is to be abandoned, in order to make successful use of her. Many a woman, in this connection, has been the victim of her own calculations.

Moreover, the more impetuous and passionate a husband shows himself, the less will a woman dare to employ this expedient; but a husband caught in this snare will never have anything to say to his stern better-half, when the maid, giving evidence of the fault she has committed, is sent into the country with an infant and a dowry.

#### 6. OF THE DOCTOR.

The doctor is one of the most potent auxiliaries of an honest woman, when she wishes to acquire a friendly divorce from her husband. The services that the doctor renders, most of the time without knowing it, to a woman, are of such importance that there does not exist a single house in France where the doctor is chosen by any one but the wife.

All doctors know what great influence women have on their reputation; thus we meet with few doctors who do not study to please the ladies. When a man of talent has become celebrated it is true that he does not lend himself to the crafty conspiracies which women hatch; but without knowing it he becomes involved in them.

I suppose that a husband taught by the adventures of his own youth makes up his mind to pick out a doctor for his wife, from the first days of his marriage. So long as his feminine adversary fails to conceive the assistance that she may derive from this ally, she will submit in silence; but later on, if all her allurements fail to win over the man chosen by her husband, she will take a more favorable opportunity to give her husband her confidence, in the following remarkable manner.

"I don't like the way in which the doctor feels my pulse!"

And of course the doctor is dropped.

Thus it happens that either a woman chooses her doctor, wins over the man who has been imposed upon her, or procures his dismissal. But this contest is very rare; the majority of young men who marry are acquainted with none but beardless doctors whom they have no anxiety to procure for their wives, and almost always the Esculapius of the household is chosen by the feminine power. Thus it happens that some fine morning the doctor, when he leaves the chamber of madame, who has been in bed for a fortnight, is induced by her to say to you:



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"I do not say that the condition of madame presents any serious symptoms; but this constant drowsiness, this general listlessness, and her natural tendency to a spinal affection demand great care. Her lymph is inspissated. She wants a change of air. She ought to be sent either to the waters of Bareges or to the waters of Plombieres."

"All right, doctor."

You allow your wife to go to Plombieres; but she goes there because Captain Charles is quartered in the Vosges. She returns in capital health and the waters of Plombieres have done wonders for her. She has written to you every day, she has lavished upon you from a distance every possible caress. The danger of a spinal affection has utterly disappeared.

There is extant a little pamphlet, whose publication was prompted doubtless by hate. It was published in Holland, and it contains some very curious details of the manner in which Madame de Maintenon entered into an understanding with Fagon, for the purposes of controlling Louis XIV. Well, some morning your doctor will threaten you, as Fagon threatened his master, with a fit of apoplexy, if you do not diet yourself. This witty work of satire, doubtless the production of some courtier, entitled "Madame de Saint Tron," has been interpreted by the modern author who has become proverbial as "the young doctor." But his delightful sketch is very much superior to the work whose title I cite for the benefit of the book-lovers, and we have great pleasure in acknowledging that the work of our clever contemporary has prevented us, out of regard for the glory of the seventeenth century, from publishing the fragment of the old pamphlet.

Very frequently a doctor becomes duped by the judicious manoeuvres of a young and delicate wife, and comes to you with the announcement:

"Sir, I would not wish to alarm madame with regard to her condition; but I will advise you, if you value her health, to keep her in perfect tranquillity. The irritation at this moment seems to threaten the chest, and we must gain control of it; there is need of rest for her, perfect rest; the least agitation might change the seat of the malady. At this crisis, the prospect of bearing a child would be fatal to her."

"But, doctor—"

"Ah, yes! I know that!"

He laughs and leaves the house.

Like the rod of Moses, the doctor's mandate makes and unmakes generations. The doctor will restore you to your marriage bed with the same arguments that he used in debarring you. He treats your wife for complaints which she has not, in order to cure her of those which she has, and all the while you have no idea of it; for the scientific jargon of doctors can only be compared to the layers in which they envelop their pills.

An honest woman in her chamber with the doctor is like a minister sure of a majority; she has it in her power to make a horse, or a carriage, according to her good pleasure and her taste; she will send you away or receive you, as she likes. Sometimes she will pretend to be ill in order to have a chamber separate from yours; sometimes she will surround herself with all the paraphernalia of an invalid; she will have an old woman for a nurse, regiments of vials and of bottles, and, environed by these ramparts, will defy you by her invalid airs. She will talk to you in such a depressing way of the electuaries and of the soothing draughts which she has taken, of the agues which she has had, of her plasters and cataplasms, that she will fill you with disgust at these sickly details, if all the time these sham sufferings are not intended to serve as engines by means of which, eventually, a successful attack may be made on that singular abstraction known as *your honor*.

In this way your wife will be able to fortify herself at every point of contact which you possess with the world, with society and with life. Thus everything will take arms against you, and you will be alone among all these enemies. But suppose that it is your unprecedented privilege to possess a wife who is without religious connections, without parents or intimate friends; that you have penetration enough to see through all the tricks by which your wife's lover tries to entrap you; that you still have sufficient love for your fair enemy to resist all the Martons of the earth; that, in fact, you have for your doctor a man who is so celebrated that he has no time to listen to the maunderings of your wife; or that if your Esculapius is madame's vassal, you demand a consultation, and an incorruptible doctor intervenes every time the favorite doctor prescribes a remedy that disquiets you; even in that case, your prospects will scarcely be more brilliant. In fact, even if you do not succumb to this invasion of allies, you must not forget that, so far, your adversary has not, so to speak, struck the decisive blow. If you hold out still longer, your wife, having flung round you thread upon thread, as a spider spins his web, an invisible net, will resort to the arms which nature has given her, which civilization has perfected, and which will be treated of in

the next Meditation.

## MEDITATION XXVI. OF DIFFERENT WEAPONS.

A weapon is anything which is used for the purpose of wounding. From this point of view, some sentiments prove to be the most cruel weapons which man can employ against his fellow man. The genius of Schiller, lucid as it was comprehensive, seems to have revealed all the phenomena which certain ideas bring to light in the human organization by their keen and penetrating action. A man may be put to death by a thought. Such is the moral of those heartrending scenes, when in *The Brigands* the poet shows a young man, with the aid of certain ideas, making such powerful assaults on the heart of an old man, that he ends by causing the latter's death. The time is not far distant when science will be able to observe the complicated mechanism of our thoughts and to apprehend the transmission of our feelings. Some developer of the occult sciences will prove that our intellectual organization constitutes nothing more than a kind of interior man, who projects himself with less violence than the exterior man, and that the struggle which may take place between two such powers as these, although invisible to our feeble eyes, is not a less mortal struggle than that in which our external man compels us to engage.

But these considerations belong to a different department of study from that in which we are now engaged; these subjects we intend to deal with in a future publication; some of our friends are already acquainted with one of the most important,—that, namely, entitled "THE PATHOLOGY OF SOCIAL LIFE, *or Meditations mathematical, physical, chemical and transcendental on the manifestations of thought, taken under all the forms which are produced by the state of society, whether by living, marriage, conduct, veterinary medicine, or by speech and action, etc.*," in which all these great questions are fully discussed. The aim of this brief metaphysical observation is only to remind you that the higher classes of society reason too well to admit of their being attacked by any other than intellectual arms.

Although it is true that tender and delicate souls are found enveloped in a body of metallic hardness, at the same time there are souls of bronze enveloped in bodies so supple and capricious that their grace attracts the friendship of others, and their beauty calls for a caress. But if you flatter the exterior man with your hand, the *Homo duplex*, the interior man, to use an expression of Buffon, immediately rouses himself and rends you with his keen points of contact.

This description of a special class of human creatures, which we hope you will not run up against during your earthly journey, presents a picture of what your wife may be to you. Every one of the sentiments which nature has endowed your heart with, in their gentlest form, will become a dagger in the hand of your wife. You will be stabbed every moment, and you will necessarily succumb; for your love will flow like blood from every wound.

This is the last struggle, but for her it also means victory.

In order to carry out the distinction which we think we have established among three sorts of feminine temperament, we will divide this Meditation into three parts, under the following titles:

1. OF HEADACHES.
2. OF NERVOUS AFFECTATIONS.
3. OF MODESTY, IN ITS CONNECTION WITH MARRIAGE.

### 1. OF HEADACHES.

Women are constantly the dupes or the victims of excessive sensibility; but we have already demonstrated that with the greater number of them this delicacy of soul must needs, almost without their knowing it, receive many rude blows, from the very fact of their marriage. (See Meditations entitled *The Predestined* and *Of the Honeymoon*.) Most of the means of defence instinctively employed by husbands are nothing but traps set for the liveliness of feminine affections.

Now the moment comes when the wife, during the Civil War, traces by a single act of thought the history of her moral life, and is irritated on perceiving the prodigious way in which you have taken advantage of her sensibility. It is very rarely that women, moved either by an innate feeling for revenge, which they themselves can never explain, or by their instinct of domination, fail to discover that this quality in their natural machinery, when brought into play against the man, is inferior to no other instrument for obtaining ascendancy over him.

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With admirable cleverness, they proceed to find out what chords in the hearts of their husbands are most easily touched; and when once they discover this secret, they eagerly proceed to put it into practice; then, like a child with a mechanical toy, whose spring excites their curiosity, they go on employing it, carelessly calling into play the movements of the instrument, and satisfied simply with their success in doing so. If they kill you, they will mourn over you with the best grace in the world, as the most virtuous, the most excellent, the most sensible of men.

In this way your wife will first arm herself with that generous sentiment which leads us to respect those who are in pain. The man most disposed to quarrel with a woman full of life and health becomes helpless before a woman who is weak and feeble. If your wife has not attained the end of her secret designs, by means of those various methods already described, she will quickly seize this all-powerful weapon. In virtue of this new strategic method, you will see the young girl, so strong in life and beauty, whom you had wedded in her flower, metamorphosing herself into a pale and sickly woman.

Now headache is an affection which affords infinite resources to a woman. This malady, which is the easiest of all to feign, for it is destitute of any apparent symptom, merely obliges her to say: "I have a headache." A woman trifles with you and there is no one in the world who can contradict her skull, whose impenetrable bones defy touch or ocular test. Moreover, headache is, in our opinion, the queen of maladies, the pleasantest and the most terrible weapon employed by wives against their husbands. There are some coarse and violent men who have been taught the tricks of women by their mistresses, in the happy hours of their celibacy, and so flatter themselves that they are never to be caught by this vulgar trap. But all their efforts, all their arguments end by being vanquished before the magic of these words: "I have a headache." If a husband complains, or ventures on a reproach, if he tries to resist the power of this *Il buondo cani* of marriage, he is lost.

Imagine a young woman, voluptuously lying on a divan, her head softly supported by a cushion, one hand hanging down; on a small table close at hand is her glass of lime-water. Now place by her side a burly husband. He has made five or six turns round the room; but each time he has turned on his heels to begin his walk all over again, the little invalid has made a slight movement of her eyebrows in a vain attempt to remind him that the slightest noise fatigues her. At last he musters all his courage and utters a protest against her pretended malady, in the bold phrase:

"And have you really a headache?"

At these words the young woman slightly raises her languid head, lifts an arm, which feebly falls back again upon her divan, raises her eyes to the ceiling, raises all that she has power to raise; then darting at you a leaden glance, she says in a voice of remarkable feebleness:

"Oh! What can be the matter with me? I suffer the agonies of death! And this is all the comfort you give me! Ah! you men, it is plainly seen that nature has not given you the task of bringing children into the world. What egoists and tyrants you are! You take us in all the beauty of our youth, fresh, rosy, with tapering waist, and then all is well! When your pleasures have ruined the blooming gifts which we received from nature, you never forgive us for having forfeited them to you! That was all understood. You will allow us to have neither the virtues nor the sufferings of our condition. You must needs have children, and we pass many nights in taking care of them. But child-bearing has ruined our health, and left behind the germs of serious maladies.—Oh, what pain I suffer! There are few women who are not subject to headaches; but your wife must be an exception. You even laugh at our sufferings; that is generosity!—please don't walk about—I should not have expected this of you!—Stop the clock; the click of the pendulum rings in my head. Thanks! Oh, what an unfortunate creature I am! Have you a scent-bottle with you? Yes, oh! for pity's sake, allow me to suffer in peace, and go away; for this scent splits my head!"

What can you say in reply? Do you not hear within you a voice which cries, "And what if she is actually suffering?" Moreover, almost all husbands evacuate the field of battle very quietly, while their wives watch them from the corner of their eyes, marching off on tip-toe and closing the door quietly on the chamber henceforth to be considered sacred by them.

Such is the headache, true or false, which is patronized at your home. Then the headache begins to play a regular role in the bosom of your family. It is a theme on which a woman can play many admirable variations. She sets it forth in every key. With the aid of the headache alone a wife can make a husband desperate. A headache seizes madame when she chooses, where she chooses, and as much as she chooses. There are headaches

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of five days, of ten minutes, periodic or intermittent headaches.

You sometimes find your wife in bed, in pain, helpless, and the blinds of her room are closed. The headache has imposed silence on every one, from the regions of the porter's lodge, where he is cutting wood, even to the garret of your groom, from which he is throwing down innocent bundles of straw. Believing in this headache, you leave the house, but on your return you find that madame has decamped! Soon madame returns, fresh and ruddy:

"The doctor came," she says, "and advised me to take exercise, and I find myself much better!"

Another day you wish to enter madame's room.

"Oh, sir," says the maid, showing the most profound astonishment, "madame has her usual headache, and I have never seen her in such pain! The doctor has been sent for."

"You are a happy man," said Marshal Augereau to General R——, "to have such a pretty wife!"

"To have!" replied the other. "If I have my wife ten days in the year, that is about all. These confounded women have always either the headache or some other thing!"

The headache in France takes the place of the sandals, which, in Spain, the Confessor leaves at the door of the chamber in which he is with his penitent.

If your wife, foreseeing some hostile intentions on your part, wishes to make herself as inviolable as the charter, she immediately gets up a little headache performance. She goes to bed in a most deliberate fashion, she utters shrieks which rend the heart of the hearer. She goes gracefully through a series of gesticulations so cleverly executed that you might think her a professional contortionist. Now what man is there so inconsiderate as to dare to speak to a suffering woman about desires which, in him, prove the most perfect health? Politeness alone demands of him perfect silence. A woman knows under these circumstances that by means of this all-powerful headache, she can at her will paste on her bed the placard which sends back home the amateurs who have been allured by the announcement of the Comedie Francaise, when they read the words: "Closed through the sudden indisposition of Mademoiselle Mars."

O headache, protectress of love, tariff of married life, buckler against which all married desires expire! O mighty headache! Can it be possible that lovers have never sung thy praises, personified thee, or raised thee to the skies? O magic headache, O delusive headache, blest be the brain that first invented thee! Shame on the doctor who shall find out thy preventive! Yes, thou art the only ill that women bless, doubtless through gratitude for the good things thou dispensest to them, O deceitful headache! O magic headache!

### 2. OF NERVOUS AFFECTATIONS.

There is, however, a power which is superior even to that of the headache; and we must avow to the glory of France, that this power is one of the most recent which has been won by Parisian genius. As in the case with all the most useful discoveries of art and science, no one knows to whose intellect it is due. Only, it is certain that it was towards the middle of the last century that "Vapors" made their first appearance in France. Thus while Papin was applying the force of vaporized water in mechanical problems, a French woman, whose name unhappily is unknown, had the glory of endowing her sex with the faculty of vaporizing their fluids. Very soon the prodigious influence obtained by vapors was extended to the nerves; it was thus in passing from fibre to fibre that the science of neurology was born. This admirable science has since then led such men as Philips and other clever physiologists to the discovery of the nervous fluid in its circulation; they are now perhaps on the eve of identifying its organs, and the secret of its origin and of its evaporation. And thus, thanks to certain quackeries of this kind, we may be enabled some day to penetrate the mysteries of that unknown power which we have already called more than once in the present book, the *Will*. But do not let us trespass on the territory of medical philosophy. Let us consider the nerves and the vapors solely in their connection with marriage.

Victims of Neurosis (a pathological term under which are comprised all affections of the nervous system) suffer in two ways, as far as married women are concerned; for our physiology has the loftiest disdain for medical classifications. Thus we recognize only:

#### 1. CLASSIC NEUROSIIS.

#### 2. ROMANTIC NEUROSIIS.

The classic affection has something bellicose and excitable on it. Those who thus suffer are as violent in their antics as pythonesses, as frantic as *monads*, as excited as *bacchantes*; it is a revival of antiquity, pure and simple.

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The romantic sufferers are mild and plaintive as the ballads sung amid the mists of Scotland. They are pallid as young girls carried to their bier by the dance or by love; they are eminently elegiac and they breathe all the melancholy of the North.

That woman with black hair, with piercing eye, with high color, with dry lips and a powerful hand, will become excited and convulsive; she represents the genius of classic neurosis; while a young blonde woman, with white skin, is the genius of romantic neurosis; to one belongs the empire gained by nerves, to the other the empire gained by vapors.

Very frequently a husband, when he comes home, finds his wife in tears.

"What is the matter, my darling?"

"It is nothing."

"But you are in tears!"

"I weep without knowing why. I am quite sad! I saw faces in the clouds, and those faces never appear to me except on the eve of some disaster—I think I must be going to die."

Then she talks to you in a low voice of her dead father, of her dead uncle, of her dead grandfather, of her dead cousin. She invokes all these mournful shades, she feels as if she had all their sicknesses, she is attacked with all the pains they felt, she feels her heart palpitate with excessive violence, she feels her spleen swelling. You say to yourself, with a self-satisfied air:

"I know exactly what this is all about!"

And then you try to soothe her; but you find her a woman who yawns like an open box, who complains of her chest, who begins to weep anew, who implores you to leave her to her melancholy and her mournful memories. She talks to you about her last wishes, follows her own funeral, is buried, plants over her tomb the green canopy of a weeping willow, and at the very time when you would like to raise a joyful epithalamium, you find an epitaph to greet you all in black. Your wish to console her melts away in the cloud of Ixion.

There are women of undoubted fidelity who in this way extort from their feeling husbands cashmere shawls, diamonds, the payment of their debts, or the rent of a box at the theatre; but almost always vapors are employed as decisive weapons in Civil War.

On the plea of her spinal affection or of her weak chest, a woman takes pains to seek out some distraction or other; you see her dressing herself in soft fabrics like an invalid with all the symptoms of spleen; she never goes out because an intimate friend, her mother or her sister, has tried to tear her away from that divan which monopolizes her and on which she spends her life in improvising elegies. Madame is going to spend a fortnight in the country because the doctor orders it. In short, she goes where she likes and does what she likes. Is it possible that there can be a husband so brutal as to oppose such desires, by hindering a wife from going to seek a cure for her cruel sufferings? For it has been established after many long discussions that in the nerves originate the most fearful torture.

But it is especially in bed that vapors play their part. There when a woman has not a headache she has her vapors; and when she has neither vapors nor headache, she is under the protection of the girdle of Venus, which, as you know, is a myth.

Among the women who fight with you the battle of vapors, are some more blonde, more delicate, more full of feeling than others, and who possess the gift of tears. How admirably do they know how to weep! They weep when they like, as they like and as much as they like. They organize a system of offensive warfare which consists of manifesting sublime resignation, and they gain victories which are all the more brilliant, inasmuch as they remain all the time in excellent health.

Does a husband, irritated beyond all measure, at last express his wishes to them? They regard him with an air of submission, bow their heads and keep silence. This pantomime almost always puts a husband to rout. In conjugal struggles of this kind, a man prefers a woman should speak and defend herself, for then he may show elation or annoyance; but as for these women, not a word. Their silence distresses you and you experience a sort of remorse, like the murderer who, when he finds his victim offers no resistance, trembles with redoubled fear. He would prefer to slay him in self-defence. You return to the subject. As you draw near, your wife wipes away her tears and hides her handkerchief, so as to let you see that she has been weeping. You are melted, you implore your little Caroline to speak, your sensibility has been touched and you forget everything; then she sobs while she speaks, and speaks while she sobs. This is a sort of machine eloquence; she deafens you with her tears, with her

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words which come jerked out in confusion; it is the clapper and torrent of a mill.

French women and especially Parisians possess in a marvelous degree the secret by which such scenes are enacted, and to these scenes their voices, their sex, their toilet, their manner give a wonderful charm. How often do the tears upon the cheeks of these adorable actresses give way to a piquant smile, when they see their husbands hasten to break the silk lace, the weak fastening of their corsets, or to restore the comb which holds together the tresses of their hair and the bunch of golden ringlets always on the point of falling down?

But how all these tricks of modernity pale before the genius of antiquity, before nervous attacks which are violent, before the Pyrrhic dance of married life! Oh! how many hopes for a lover are there in the vivacity of those convulsive movements, in the fire of those glances, in the strength of those limbs, beautiful even in contortion! It is then that a woman is carried away like an impetuous wind, darts forth like the flames of a conflagration, exhibits a movement like a billow which glides over the white pebbles. She is overcome with excess of love, she sees the future, she is the seer who prophesies, but above all, she sees the present moment and tramples on her husband, and impresses him with a sort of terror.

The sight of his wife flinging off vigorous men as if they were so many feathers, is often enough to deter a man from ever striving to wrong her. He will be like the child who, having pulled the trigger of some terrific engine, has ever afterwards an incredible respect for the smallest spring. I have known a man, gentle and amiable in his ways, whose eyes were fixed upon those of his wife, exactly as if he had been put into a lion's cage, and some one had said to him that he must not irritate the beast, if he would escape with his life.

Nervous attacks of this kind are very fatiguing and become every day more rare. Romanticism, however, has maintained its ground.

Sometimes, we meet with phlegmatic husbands, those men whose love is long enduring, because they store up their emotions, whose genius gets the upper hand of these headaches and nervous attacks; but these sublime creatures are rare. Faithful disciples of the blessed St. Thomas, who wished to put his finger into the wound, they are endowed with an incredulity worthy of an atheist. Imperturbable in the midst of all these fraudulent headaches and all these traps set by neurosis, they concentrate their attention on the comedy which is being played before them, they examine the actress, they search for one of the springs that sets her going; and when they have discovered the mechanism of this display, they arm themselves by giving a slight impulse to the puppet-valve, and thus easily assure themselves either of the reality of the disease or the artifices of these conjugal mummeries.

But if by study which is almost superhuman in its intensity a husband escapes all the artifices which lawless and untamable love suggests to women, he will beyond doubt be overcome by the employment of a terrible weapon, the last which a woman would resort to, for she never destroys with her own hands her empire over her husband without some sort of repugnance. But this is a poisoned weapon as powerful as the fatal knife of the executioner. This reflection brings us to the last paragraph of the present Meditation.

#### 3. OF MODESTY, IN ITS CONNECTION WITH MARRIAGE.

Before taking up the subject of modesty, it may perhaps be necessary to inquire whether there is such a thing. Is it anything in a woman but well understood coquetry? Is it anything but a sentiment that claims the right, on a woman's part, to dispose of her own body as she chooses, as one may well believe, when we consider that half the women in the world go almost naked? Is it anything but a social chimera, as Diderot supposed, reminding us that this sentiment always gives way before sickness and before misery?

Justice may be done to all these questions.

An ingenious author has recently put forth the view that men are much more modest than women. He supports this contention by a great mass of surgical experiences; but, in order that his conclusions merit our attention, it would be necessary that for a certain time men were subjected to treatment by women surgeons.

The opinion of Diderot is of still less weight.

To deny the existence of modesty, because it disappears during those crises in which almost all human sentiments are annihilated, is as unreasonable as to deny that life exists because death sooner or later comes.

Let us grant, then, that one sex has as much modesty as the other, and let us inquire in what modesty consists.

Rousseau makes modesty the outcome of all those coquetries which females display before males. This opinion appears to us equally mistaken.

The writers of the eighteenth century have doubtless rendered immense services to society; but their

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philosophy, based as it is upon sensualism, has never penetrated any deeper than the human epidermis. They have only considered the exterior universe; and so they have retarded, for some time, the moral development of man and the progress of science which will always draw its first principles from the Gospel, principles hereafter to be best understood by the fervent disciples of the Son of Man.

The study of thought's mysteries, the discovery of those organs which belong to the human soul, the geometry of its forces, the phenomena of its active power, the appreciation of the faculty by which we seem to have an independent power of bodily movement, so as to transport ourselves whither we will and to see without the aid of bodily organs,—in a word the laws of thought's dynamic and those of its physical influence,—these things will fall to the lot of the next century, as their portion in the treasury of human sciences. And perhaps we, of the present time, are merely occupied in quarrying the enormous blocks which later on some mighty genius will employ in the building of a glorious edifice.

Thus the error of Rousseau is simply the error of his age. He explains modesty by the relations of different human beings to each other instead of explaining it by the moral relations of each one with himself. Modesty is no more susceptible of analysis than conscience; and this perhaps is another way of saying that modesty is the conscience of the body; for while conscience directs our sentiments and the least movement of our thoughts towards the good, modesty presides over external movements. The actions which clash with our interests and thus disobey the laws of conscience wound us more than any other; and if they are repeated call forth our hatred. It is the same with acts which violate modesty in their relations to love, which is nothing but the expression of our whole sensibility. If extreme modesty is one of the conditions on which the reality of marriage is based, as we have tried to prove [See *Conjugal Catechism, Meditation IV.*], it is evident that immodesty will destroy it. But this position, which would require long deductions for the acceptance of the physiologist, women generally apply, as it were, mechanically; for society, which exaggerates everything for the benefit of the exterior man, develops this sentiment of women from childhood, and around it are grouped almost every other sentiment. Moreover, the moment that this boundless veil, which takes away the natural brutality from the least gesture, is dragged down, woman disappears. Heart, mind, love, grace, all are in ruins. In a situation where the virginal innocence of a daughter of Tahiti is most brilliant, the European becomes detestable. In this lies the last weapon which a wife seizes, in order to escape from the sentiment which her husband still fosters towards her. She is powerful because she had made herself loathsome; and this woman, who would count it as the greatest misfortune that her lover should be permitted to see the slightest mystery of her toilette, is delighted to exhibit herself to her husband in the most disadvantageous situation that can possibly be imagined.

It is by means of this rigorous system that she will try to banish you from the conjugal bed. Mrs. Shandy may be taken to mean us harm in bidding the father of Tristram wind up the clock; so long as your wife is not blamed for the pleasure she takes in interrupting you by the most imperative questions. Where there formerly was movement and life is now lethargy and death. An act of love becomes a transaction long discussed and almost, as it were, settled by notarial seal. But we have in another place shown that we never refuse to seize upon the comic element in a matrimonial crisis, although here we may be permitted to disdain the diversion which the muse of Verville and of Marshall have found in the treachery of feminine manoeuvres, the insulting audacity of their talk, amid the cold-blooded cynicism which they exhibit in certain situations. It is too sad to laugh at, and too funny to mourn over. When a woman resorts to such extreme measures, worlds at once separate her from her husband. Nevertheless, there are some women to whom Heaven has given the gift of being charming under all circumstances, who know how to put a certain witty and comic grace into these performances, and who have such smooth tongues, to use the expression of Sully, that they obtain forgiveness for their caprices and their mockeries, and never estrange the hearts of their husbands.

What soul is so robust, what man so violently in love as to persist in his passion, after ten years of marriage, in presence of a wife who loves him no longer, who gives him proofs of this every moment, who repulses him, who deliberately shows herself bitter, caustic, sickly and capricious, and who will abjure her vows of elegance and cleanliness, rather than not see her husband turn away from her; in presence of a wife who will stake the success of her schemes upon the horror caused by her indecency?

All this, my dear sir, is so much more horrible because—

XCII.



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#### LOVERS IGNORE MODESTY.

We have now arrived at the last infernal circle in the Divine Comedy of Marriage. We are at the very bottom of Hell. There is something inexpressibly terrible in the situation of a married woman at the moment when unlawful love turns her away from her duties as mother and wife. As Diderot has very well put it, "infidelity in a woman is like unbelief in a priest, the last extreme of human failure; for her it is the greatest of social crimes, since it implies in her every other crime besides, and indeed either a wife profanes her lawless love by continuing to belong to her husband, or she breaks all the ties which attach her to her family, by giving herself over altogether to her lover. She ought to choose between the two courses, for her sole possible excuse lies in the intensity of her love."

She lives then between the claims of two obligations. It is a dilemma; she will work either the unhappiness of her lover, if he is sincere in his passion, or that of her husband, if she is still beloved by him.

It is to this frightful dilemma of feminine life that all the strange inconsistencies of women's conduct is to be attributed. In this lies the origin of all their lies, all their perfidies; here is the secret of all their mysteries. It is something to make one shudder. Moreover, even as simply based upon cold-blooded calculations, the conduct of a woman who accepts the unhappiness which attends virtue and scorns the bliss which is bought by crime, is a hundred times more reasonable. Nevertheless, almost all women will risk suffering in the future and ages of anguish for the ecstasy of one half hour. If the human feeling of self-preservation, if the fear of death does not check them, how fruitless must be the laws which send them for two years to the Madelonnettes? O sublime infamy! And when one comes to think that he for whom these sacrifices are to be made is one of our brethren, a gentleman to whom we would not trust our fortune, if we had one, a man who buttons his coat just as all of us do, it is enough to make one burst into a roar of laughter so loud, that starting from the Luxembourg it would pass over the whole of Paris and startle an ass browsing in the pasture at Montmartre.

It will perhaps appear extraordinary that in speaking of marriage we have touched upon so many subjects; but marriage is not only the whole of human life, it is the whole of two human lives. Now just as the addition of a figure to the drawing of a lottery multiplies the chances a hundredfold, so one single life united to another life multiplies by a startling progression the risks of human life, which are in any case so manifold.

## MEDITATION XXVII. OF THE LAST SYMPTOMS.

The author of this book has met in the world so many people possessed by a fanatic passion for a knowledge of the mean time, for watches with a second hand, and for exactness in the details of their existence, that he has considered this Meditation too necessary for the tranquillity of a great number of husbands, to be omitted. It would have been cruel to leave men, who are possessed with the passion for learning the hour of the day, without a compass whereby to estimate the last variations in the matrimonial zodiac, and to calculate the precise moment when the sign of the Minotaur appears on the horizon. The knowledge of conjugal time would require a whole book for its exposition, so fine and delicate are the observations required by the task. The master admits that his extreme youth has not permitted him as yet to note and verify more than a few symptoms; but he feels a just pride, on his arrival at the end of his difficult enterprise, from the consciousness that he is leaving to his successors a new field of research; and that in a matter apparently so trite, not only was there much to be said, but also very many points are found remaining which may yet be brought into the clear light of observation. He therefore presents here without order or connection the rough outlines which he has so far been able to execute, in the hope that later he may have leisure to co-ordinate them and to arrange them in a complete system. If he has been so far kept back in the accomplishment of a task of supreme national importance, he believes, he may say, without incurring the charge of vanity, that he has here indicated the natural division of those symptoms. They are necessarily of two kinds: the unicorns and the bicorn. The unicorn Minotaur is the least mischievous. The two culprits confine themselves to a platonic love, in which their passion, at least, leaves no visible traces among posterity; while the bicorn Minotaur is unhappiness with all its fruits.

We have marked with an asterisk the symptoms which seem to concern the latter kind.

### MINOTAURIC OBSERVATIONS.

#### I.

\*When, after remaining a long time aloof from her husband, a woman makes overtures of a very marked character in order to attract his love, she acts in accordance with the axiom of maritime law, which says: *The flag protects the cargo.*

#### II.

A woman is at a ball, one of her friends comes up to her and says:

"Your husband has much wit."

"You find it so?"

#### III.

Your wife discovers that it is time to send your boy to a boarding school, with whom, a little time ago, she was never going to part.

#### IV.

\*In Lord Abergavenny's suit for divorce, the *valet de chambre* deposed that "the countess had such a detestation of all that belonged to my lord that he had very often seen her burning the scraps of paper which he had touched in her room."

#### V.

If an indolent woman becomes energetic, if a woman who formerly hated study learns a foreign language; in short, every appearance of a complete change in character is a decisive symptom.

#### VI.

The woman who is happy in her affections does not go much into the world.

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### VII.

The woman who has a lover becomes very indulgent in judging others.

### VIII.

\*A husband gives to his wife a hundred crowns a month for dress; and, taking everything into account, she spends at least five hundred francs without being a sou in debt; the husband is robbed every night with a high hand by escalade, but without burglarious breaking in.

### IX.

\*A married couple slept in the same bed; madame was always sick. Now they sleep apart, she has no more headache, and her health becomes more brilliant than ever; an alarming symptom!

### X.

A woman who was a sloven suddenly develops extreme nicety in her attire. There is a Minotaur at hand!

### XI.

"Ah! my dear, I know no greater torment than not to be understood."

"Yes, my dear, but when one is—"

"Oh, that scarcely ever happens."

"I agree with you that it very seldom does. Ah! it is great happiness, but there are not two people in the world who are able to understand you."

### XII.

\*The day when a wife behaves nicely to her husband—all is over.

### XIII.

I asked her: "Where have you been, Jeanne?"

"I have been to your friend's to get your plate that you left there."

"Ah, indeed! everything is still mine," I said. The following year I repeated the question under similar circumstances.

"I have been to bring back our plate."

"Well, well, part of the things are still mine," I said. But after that, when I questioned her, she spoke very differently.

"You wish to know everything, like great people, and you have only three shirts. I went to get my plate from my friend's house, where I had stopped."

"I see," I said, "nothing is left me."

### XIV.

Do not trust a woman who talks of her virtue.

### XV.

Some one said to the Duchess of Chaulnes, whose life was despaired of:

"The Duke of Chaulnes would like to see you once more."

"Is he there?"

"Yes."

"Let him wait; he shall come in with the sacraments." This minotauric anecdote has been published by Chamfort, but we quote it here as typical.

### XVI.

\*Some women try to persuade their husbands that they have duties to perform towards certain persons.

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"I am sure that you ought to pay a visit to such and such a man. . . . We cannot avoid asking such and such a man to dinner."

#### XVII.

"Come, my son, hold yourself straight: try to acquire good manners! Watch such and such a man! See how he walks! Notice the way in which he dresses."

#### XVIII.

When a woman utters the name of a man but twice a day, there is perhaps some uncertainty about her feelings toward him—but if thrice? —Oh! oh!

#### XIX.

When a woman goes home with a man who is neither a lawyer nor a minister, to the door of his apartment, she is very imprudent.

#### XX.

It is a terrible day when a husband fails to explain to himself the motive of some action of his wife.

#### XXI.

\*The woman who allows herself to be found out deserves her fate.

What should be the conduct of a husband, when he recognizes a last symptom which leaves no doubt as to the infidelity of his wife? There are only two courses open; that of resignation or that of vengeance; there is no third course. If vengeance is decided upon, it should be complete.

The husband who does not separate himself forever from his wife is a veritable simpleton. If a wife and husband think themselves fit for that union of friendship which exists between men, it is odious in the husband to make his wife feel his superiority over her.

Here are some anecdotes, most of them as yet unpublished, which indicate pretty plainly, in my opinion, the different shades of conduct to be observed by a husband in like case.

M. de Roquemont slept once a month in the chamber of his wife, and he used to say, as he went away:

"I wash my hands of anything that may happen."

There is something disgusting in that remark, and perhaps something profound in its suggestion of conjugal policy.

A diplomat, when he saw his wife's lover enter, left his study and, going to his wife's chamber, said to the two: "I hope you will at least refrain from fighting."

This was good humor.

M. de Boufflers was asked what he would do if on returning after a long absence he found his wife with child?

"I would order my night dress and slippers to be taken to her room."

This was magnanimity.

"Madame, if this man ill treats you when you are alone, it is your own fault; but I will not permit him to behave ill towards you in my presence, for this is to fail in politeness in me."

This was nobility.

The sublime is reached in this connection when the square cap of the judge is placed by the magistrate at the foot of the bed wherein the two culprits are asleep.

There are some fine ways of taking vengeance. Mirabeau has admirably described in one of the books he wrote to make a living the mournful resignation of that Italian lady who was condemned by her husband to perish with him in the Maremma.

#### LAST AXIOMS.

XCIII. It is no act of vengeance to surprise a wife and her lover and to kill

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them locked in each other's arms; it is a great favor to them both.

XCIV.

A husband will be best avenged by his wife's lover.

## MEDITATION XXVIII. OF COMPENSATIONS.

The marital catastrophe which a certain number of husbands cannot avoid, almost always forms the closing scene of the drama. At that point all around you is tranquil. Your resignation, if you are resigned, has the power of awakening keen remorse in the soul of your wife and of her lover; for their happiness teaches them the depth of the wound they have inflicted upon you. You are, you may be sure, a third element in all their pleasures. The principle of kindness and goodness which lies at the foundation of the human soul, is not so easily repressed as people think; moreover the two people who are causing you tortures are precisely those for whom you wish the most good.

In the conversations so sweetly familiar which link together the pleasures of love, and form in some way to lovers the caresses of thought, your wife often says to your rival:

"Well, I assure you, Auguste, that in any case I should like to see my poor husband happy; for at bottom he is good; if he were not my husband, but were only my brother, there are so many things I would do to please him! He loves me, and—his friendship is irksome to me."

"Yes, he is a fine fellow!"

Then you become an object of respect to the celibate, who would yield to you all the indemnity possible for the wrong he has done you; but he is repelled by the disdainful pride which gives a tone to your whole conversation, and is stamped upon your face.

So that actually, during the first moments of the Minotaur's arrival, a man is like an actor who feels awkward in a theatre where he is not accustomed to appear. It is very difficult to bear the affront with dignity; but though generosity is rare, a model husband is sometimes found to possess it.

Eventually you are little by little won over by the charming way in which your wife makes herself agreeable to you. Madame assumes a tone of friendship which she never henceforth abandons. The pleasant atmosphere of your home is one of the chief compensations which renders the Minotaur less odious to a husband. But as it is natural to man to habituate himself to the hardest conditions, in spite of the sentiment of outraged nobility which nothing can change, you are gradually induced by a fascination whose power is constantly around you, to accept the little amenities of your position.

Suppose that conjugal misfortune has fallen upon an epicure. He naturally demands the consolations which suit his taste. His sense of pleasure takes refuge in other gratifications, and forms other habits. You shape your life in accordance with the enjoyment of other sensations.

One day, returning from your government office, after lingering for a long time before the rich and tasteful book shop of Chevet, hovering in suspense between the hundred francs of expense, and the joys of a Strasbourg *pate de fois gras*, you are struck dumb on finding this *pate* proudly installed on the sideboard of your dining-room. Is this the vision offered by some gastronomic mirage? In this doubting mood you approach with firm step, for a *pate* is a living creature, and seem to neigh as you scent afar off the truffles whose perfumes escape through the gilded enclosure. You stoop over it two distinct times; all the nerve centres of your palate have a soul; you taste the delights of a genuine feast, etc.; and during this ecstasy a feeling of remorse seizes upon you, and you go to your wife's room.

"Really, my dear girl, we have not means which warrant our buying *pates*."

"But it costs us nothing!"

"Oh! ho!"

"Yes, it is M. Achille's brother who sent it to him."

You catch sight of M. Achille in a corner. The celibate greets you, he is radiant on seeing that you have accepted the *pate*. You look at your wife, who blushes; you stroke your beard a few times; and, as you express no thanks, the two lovers divine your acceptance of the compensation.

A sudden change in the ministry takes place. A husband, who is Councillor of State, trembles for fear of being wiped from the roll, when the night before he had been made director-general; all the ministers are opposed to him and he has turned Constitutionalist. Foreseeing his disgrace he has betaken himself to Auteuil, in search of consolation from an old friend who quotes Horace and Tibullus to him. On returning home he sees the table laid

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as if to receive the most influential men of the assembly.

"In truth, madame," he says with acrimony as he enters his wife's room, where she is finishing her toilette, "you seem to have lost your habitual tact. This is a nice time to be giving dinner parties! Twenty persons will soon learn—"

"That you are director-general!" she cries, showing him a royal despatch.

He is thunderstruck. He takes the letter, he turns it now one way, now another; he opens it. He sits down and spreads it out.

"I well know," he says, "that justice would be rendered me under whatever ministers I served."

"Yes, my dear! But M. Villeplaine has answered for you with his life, and his eminence the Cardinal de——of whom he is the——"

"M. de Villeplaine?"

This is such a munificent recompense, that the husband adds with the smile of a director-general:

"Why, deuce take it, my dear, this is your doing!"

"Ah! don't thank me for it; Adolphe did it from personal attachment to you."

On a certain evening a poor husband was kept at home by a pouring rain, or tired, perhaps, of going to spend his evening in play, at the cafe, or in the world, and sick of all this he felt himself carried away by an impulse to follow his wife to the conjugal chamber. There he sank into an arm-chair and like any sultan awaited his coffee, as if he would say:

"Well, after all, she is my wife!"

The fair siren herself prepares the favorite draught; she strains it with special care, sweetens it, tastes it, and hands it to him; then, with a smile, she ventures like a submissive odalisque to make a joke, with a view to smoothing the wrinkles on the brow of her lord and master. Up to that moment he had thought his wife stupid; but on hearing a sally as witty as that which even you would cajole with, madame, he raises his head in the way peculiar to dogs who are hunting the hare.

"Where the devil did she get that—but it's a random shot!" he says to himself.

From the pinnacle of his own greatness he makes a piquant repartee. Madame retorts, the conversation becomes as lively as it is interesting, and this husband, a very superior man, is quite astonished to discover the wit of his wife, in other respects, an accomplished woman; the right word occurs to her with wonderful readiness; her tact and keenness enable her to meet an innuendo with charming originality. She is no longer the same woman. She notices the effect she produces upon her husband, and both to avenge herself for his neglect and to win his admiration for the lover from whom she has received, so to speak, the treasures of her intellect, she exerts herself, and becomes actually dazzling. The husband, better able than any one else to appreciate a species of compensation which may have some influence on his future, is led to think that the passions of women are really necessary to their mental culture.

But how shall we treat those compensations which are most pleasing to husbands?

Between the moment when the last symptoms appear, and the epoch of conjugal peace, which we will not stop to discuss, almost a dozen years have elapsed. During this interval and before the married couple sign the treaty which, by means of a sincere reconciliation of the feminine subject with her lawful lord, consecrates their little matrimonial restoration, in order to close in, as Louis XVIII said, the gulf of revolutions, it is seldom that the honest woman has but one lover. Anarchy has its inevitable phases. The stormy domination of tribunes is supplanted by that of the sword and the pen, for few loves are met with whose constancy outlives ten years. Therefore, since our calculations prove that an honest woman has merely paid strictly her physiological or diabolical dues by rendering but three men happy, it is probable that she has set foot in more than one region of love. Sometimes it may happen that in an interregnum of love too long protracted, the wife, whether from whim, temptation or the desire of novelty, undertakes to seduce her own husband.

Imagine charming Mme. de T——, the heroine of our Meditation of *Strategy*, saying with a fascinating smile:

"I never before found you so agreeable!"

By flattery after flattery, she tempts, she rouses curiosity, she soothes, she rouses in you the faintest spark of desire, she carries you away with her, and makes you proud of yourself. Then the right of indemnifications for her husband comes. On this occasion the wife confounds the imagination of her husband. Like cosmopolitan travelers

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she tells tales of all the countries which she had traversed. She intersperses her conversation with words borrowed from several languages. The passionate imagery of the Orient, the unique emphasis of Spanish phraseology, all meet and jostle one another. She opens out the treasures of her notebook with all the mysteries of coquetry, she is delightful, you never saw her thus before! With that remarkable art which women alone possess of making their own everything that has been told them, she blends all shades and variations of character so as to create a manner peculiarly her own. You received from the hands of Hymen only one woman, awkward and innocent; the celibate returns you a dozen of them. A joyful and rapturous husband sees his bed invaded by the giddy and wanton courtesans, of whom we spoke in the Meditation on *The First Symptoms*. These goddesses come in groups, they smile and sport under the graceful muslin curtains of the nuptial bed. The Phoenician girl flings to you her garlands, gently sways herself to and fro; the Chalcidian woman overcomes you by the witchery of her fine and snowy feet; the Unelmane comes and speaking the dialect of fair Ionia reveals the treasures of happiness unknown before, and in the study of which she makes you experience but a single sensation.

Filled with regret at having disdained so many charms, and frequently tired of finding too often as much perfidiousness in priestesses of Venus as in honest women, the husband sometimes hurries on by his gallantry the hour of reconciliation desired of worthy people. The aftermath of bliss is gathered even with greater pleasure, perhaps, than the first crop. The Minotaur took your gold, he makes restoration in diamonds. And really now seems the time to state a fact of the utmost importance. A man may have a wife without possessing her. Like most husbands you had hitherto received nothing from yours, and the powerful intervention of the celibate was needed to make your union complete. How shall we give a name to this miracle, perhaps the only one wrought upon a patient during his absence? Alas, my brothers, we did not make Nature!

But how many other compensations, not less precious, are there, by which the noble and generous soul of the young celibate may many a time purchase his pardon! I recollect witnessing one of the most magnificent acts of reparation which a lover should perform toward the husband he is minotaurizing.

One warm evening in the summer of 1817, I saw entering one of the rooms of Tortoni one of the two hundred young men whom we confidently style our friends; he was in the full bloom of his modesty. A lovely woman, dressed in perfect taste, and who had consented to enter one of the cool parlors devoted to people of fashion, had stepped from an elegant carriage which had stopped on the boulevard, and was approaching on foot along the sidewalk. My young friend, the celibate, then appeared and offered his arm to his queen, while the husband followed holding by the hand two little boys, beautiful as cupids. The two lovers, more nimble than the father of the family, reached in advance of him one of the small rooms pointed out by the attendant. In crossing the vestibule the husband knocked up against some dandy, who claimed that he had been jostled. Then arose a quarrel, whose seriousness was betrayed by the sharp tones of the altercation. The moment the dandy was about to make a gesture unworthy of a self-respecting man, the celibate intervened, seized the dandy by the arm, caught him off his guard, overcame and threw him to the ground; it was magnificent. He had done the very thing the aggressor was meditating, as he exclaimed:

"Monsieur!"

This "Monsieur" was one of the finest things I have ever heard. It was as if the young celibate had said: "This father of a family belongs to me; as I have carried off his honor, it is mine to defend him. I know my duty, I am his substitute and will fight for him." The young woman behaved superbly! Pale, and bewildered, she took the arm of her husband, who continued his objurgations; without a word she led him away to the carriage, together with her children. She was one of those women of the aristocracy, who also know how to retain their dignity and self-control in the midst of violent emotions.

"O Monsieur Adolphe!" cried the young lady as she saw her friend with an air of gayety take his seat in the carriage.

"It is nothing, madame, he is one of my friends; we have shaken hands."

Nevertheless, the next morning, the courageous celibate received a sword thrust which nearly proved fatal, and confined him six months to his bed. The attentions of the married couple were lavished upon him. What numerous compensations do we see here! Some years afterwards, an old uncle of the husband, whose opinions did not fit in with those of the young friend of the house, and who nursed a grudge against him on account of some political discussion, undertook to have him driven from the house. The old fellow went so far as to tell his nephew to choose between being his heir and sending away the presumptuous celibate. It was then that the worthy



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stockbroker said to his uncle:

"Ah, you must never think, uncle, that you will succeed in making me ungrateful! But if I tell him to do so this young man will let himself be killed for you. He has saved my credit, he would go through fire and water for me, he has relieved me of my wife, he has brought me clients, he has procured for me almost all the business in the Villele loans—I owe my life to him, he is the father of my children; I can never forget all this."

In this case the compensations may be looked upon as complete; but unfortunately there are compensations of all kinds. There are those which must be considered negative, deluding, and those which are both in one.

I knew a husband of advanced years who was possessed by the demon of gambling. Almost every evening his wife's lover came and played with him. The celibate gave him a liberal share of the pleasures which come from games of hazard, and knew how to lose to him a certain number of francs every month; but madame used to give them to him, and the compensation was a deluding one.

You are a peer of France, and you have no offspring but daughters. Your wife is brought to bed of a boy! The compensation is negative.

The child who is to save your name from oblivion is like his mother. The duchess persuades you that the child is yours. The negative compensation becomes deluding.

Here is one of the most charming compensations known. One morning the Prince de Ligne meets his wife's lover and rushes up to him, laughing wildly:

"My friend," he says to him, "I cuckolded you, last night!"

If some husbands attain to conjugal peace by quiet methods, and carry so gracefully the imaginary ensigns of matrimonial pre-eminence, their philosophy is doubtless based on the *comfortabilisme* of accepting certain compensations, a *comfortabilisme* which indifferent men cannot imagine. As years roll by the married couple reach the last stage in that artificial existence to which their union has condemned them.

## MEDITATION XXIX. OF CONJUGAL PEACE.

My imagination has followed marriage through all the phases of its fantastic life in so fraternal a spirit, that I seem to have grown old with the house I made my home so early in life at the commencement of this work.

After experiencing in thought the ardor of man's first passion; and outlining, in however imperfect a way, the principal incidents of married life; after struggling against so many wives that did not belong to me, exhausting myself in conflict with so many personages called up from nothingness, and joining so many battles, I feel an intellectual lassitude, which makes me see everything in life hang, as it were, in mournful crape. I seem to have a catarrh, to look at everything through green spectacles, I feel as if my hands trembled, as if I must needs employ the second half of my existence and of my book in apologizing for the follies of the first half.

I see myself surrounded by tall children of whom I am not the father, and seated beside a wife I never married. I think I can feel wrinkles furrowing my brow. The fire before which I am placed crackles, as if in derision, the room is ancient in its furniture; I shudder with sudden fright as I lay my hand upon my heart, and ask myself: "Is that, too, withered?"

I am like an old attorney, unswayed by any sentiment whatever. I never accept any statement unless it be confirmed, according to the poetic maxim of Lord Byron, by the testimony of at least two false witnesses. No face can delude me. I am melancholy and overcast with gloom. I know the world and it has no more illusions for me. My closest friends have proved traitors. My wife and myself exchange glances of profound meaning and the slightest word either of us utters is a dagger which pierces the heart of the other through and through. I stagnate in a dreary calm. This then is the tranquillity of old age! The old man possesses in himself the cemetery which shall soon possess him. He is growing accustomed to the chill of the tomb. Man, according to philosophers, dies in detail; at the same time he may be said even to cheat death; for that which his withered hand has laid hold upon, can it be called life?

Oh, to die young and throbbing with life! 'Tis a destiny enviable indeed! For is not this, as a delightful poet has said, "to take away with one all one's illusions, to be buried like an Eastern king, with all one's jewels and treasures, with all that makes the fortune of humanity!"

How many thank-offerings ought we to make to the kind and beneficent spirit that breathes in all things here below! Indeed, the care which nature takes to strip us piece by piece of our raiment, to unclothe the soul by enfeebling gradually our hearing, sight, and sense of touch, in making slower the circulation of our blood, and congealing our humors so as to make us as insensible to the approach of death as we were to the beginnings of life, this maternal care which she lavishes on our frail tabernacle of clay, she also exhibits in regard to the emotions of man, and to the double existence which is created by conjugal love. She first sends us Confidence, which with extended hand and open heart says to us: "Behold, I am thine forever!" Lukewarmness follows, walking with languid tread, turning aside her blonde face with a yawn, like a young widow obliged to listen to the minister of state who is ready to sign for her a pension warrant. Then Indifference comes; she stretches herself on the divan, taking no care to draw down the skirts of her robe which Desire but now lifted so chastely and so eagerly. She casts a glance upon the nuptial bed, with modesty and without shamelessness; and, if she longs for anything, it is for the green fruit that calls up again to life the dulled papillae with which her blase palate is bestrewn. Finally the philosophical Experience of Life presents herself, with careworn and disdainful brow, pointing with her finger to the results, and not the causes of life's incidents; to the tranquil victory, not to the tempestuous combat. She reckons up the arrearages, with farmers, and calculates the dowry of a child. She materializes everything. By a touch of her wand, life becomes solid and springless; of yore, all was fluid, now it is crystallized into rock. Delight no longer exists for our hearts, it has received its sentence, 'twas but mere sensation, a passing paroxysm. What the soul desires to-day is a condition of fixity; and happiness alone is permanent, and consists in absolute tranquillity, in the regularity with which eating and sleeping succeed each other, and the sluggish organs perform their functions.

"This is horrible!" I cried; "I am young and full of life! Perish all the books in the world rather than my illusions should perish!"

I left my laboratory and plunged into the whirl of Paris. As I saw the fairest faces glide by before me, I felt

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that I was not old. The first young woman who appeared before me, lovely in face and form and dressed to perfection, with one glance of fire made all the sorcery whose spells I had voluntarily submitted to vanish into thin air. Scarcely had I walked three steps in the Tuileries gardens, the place which I had chosen as my destination, before I saw the prototype of the matrimonial situation which has last been described in this book. Had I desired to characterize, to idealize, to personify marriage, as I conceived it to be, it would have been impossible for the Creator himself to have produced so complete a symbol of it as I then saw before me.

Imagine a woman of fifty, dressed in a jacket of reddish brown merino, holding in her left hand a green cord, which was tied to the collar of an English terrier, and with her right arm linked with that of a man in knee-breeches and silk stockings, whose hat had its brim whimsically turned up, while snow-white tufts of hair like pigeon plumes rose at its sides. A slender queue, thin as a quill, tossed about on the back of his sallow neck, which was thick, as far as it could be seen above the turned down collar of a threadbare coat. This couple assumed the stately tread of an ambassador; and the husband, who was at least seventy, stopped complaisantly every time the terrier began to gambol. I hastened to pass this living impersonation of my Meditation, and was surprised to the last degree to recognize the Marquis de T——, friend of the Comte de Noce, who had owed me for a long time the end of the interrupted story which I related in the *Theory of the Bed*. [See Meditation XVII.]

"I have the honor to present to you the Marquise de T——," he said to me.

I made a low bow to a lady whose face was pale and wrinkled; her forehead was surmounted by a toupee, whose flattened ringlets, ranged around it, deceived no one, but only emphasized, instead of concealing, the wrinkles by which it was deeply furrowed. The lady was slightly roughed, and had the appearance of an old country actress.

"I do not see, sir, what you can say against a marriage such as ours," said the old man to me.

"The laws of Rome forefend!" I cried, laughing.

The marchioness gave me a look filled with inquietude as well as disapprobation, which seemed to say, "Is it possible that at my age I have become but a concubine?"

We sat down upon a bench, in the gloomy clump of trees planted at the corner of the high terrace which commands La Place Louis XV, on the side of the Garde-Meuble. Autumn had already begun to strip the trees of their foliage, and was scattering before our eyes the yellow leaves of his garland; but the sun nevertheless filled the air with grateful warmth.

"Well, is your work finished?" asked the old man, in the unctuous tones peculiar to men of the ancient aristocracy.

And with these words he gave a sardonic smile, as if for commentary.

"Very nearly, sir," I replied. "I have come to the philosophic situation, which you appear to have reached, but I confess that I—"

"You are searching for ideas?" he added—finishing for me a sentence, which I confess I did not know how to end.

"Well," he continued, "you may boldly assume, that on arriving at the winter of his life, a man—a man who thinks, I mean—ends by denying that love has any existence, in the wild form with which our illusions invested it!"

"What! would you deny the existence of love on the day after that of marriage?"

"In the first place, the day after would be the very reason; but my marriage was a commercial speculation," replied he, stooping to speak into my ear. "I have thereby purchased the care, the attention, the services which I need; and I am certain to obtain all the consideration my age demands; for I have willed all my property to my nephew, and as my wife will be rich only during my life, you can imagine how—"

I turned on the old marquis a look so piercing that he wrung my hand and said: "You seem to have a good heart, for nothing is certain in this life—"

"Well, you may be sure that I have arranged a pleasant surprise for her in my will," he replied, gayly.

"Come here, Joseph," cried the marchioness, approaching a servant who carried an overcoat lined with silk. "The marquis is probably feeling the cold."

The old marquis put on his overcoat, buttoned it up, and taking my arm, led me to the sunny side of the terrace.

"In your work," he continued, "you have doubtless spoken of the love of a young man. Well, if you wish to act

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up to the scope which you give to your work—in the word ec—elec—"

"Eclectic," I said, smiling, seeing he could not remember this philosophic term.

"I know the word well!" he replied. "If then you wish to keep your vow of eclecticism, you should be willing to express certain virile ideas on the subject of love which I will communicate to you, and I will not grudge you the benefit of them, if benefit there be; I wish to bequeath my property to you, but this will be all that you will get of it."

"There is no money fortune which is worth as much as a fortune of ideas if they be valuable ideas! I shall, therefore, listen to you with a grateful mind."

"There is no such thing as love," pursued the old man, fixing his gaze upon me. "It is not even a sentiment, it is an unhappy necessity, which is midway between the needs of the body and those of the soul. But siding for a moment with your youthful thoughts, let us try to reason upon this social malady. I suppose that you can only conceive of love as either a need or a sentiment."

I made a sign of assent.

"Considered as a need," said the old man, "love makes itself felt last of all our needs, and is the first to cease. We are inclined to love in our twentieth year, to speak in round numbers, and we cease to do so at fifty. During these thirty years, how often would the need be felt, if it were not for the provocation of city manners, and the modern custom of living in the presence of not one woman, but of women in general? What is our debt to the perpetuation of the race? It probably consists in producing as many children as we have breasts—so that if one dies the other may live. If these two children were always faithfully produced, what would become of nations? Thirty millions of people would constitute a population too great for France, for the soil is not sufficient to guarantee more than ten millions against misery and hunger. Remember that China is reduced to the expedient of throwing its children into the water, according to the accounts of travelers. Now this production of two children is really the whole of marriage. The superfluous pleasures of marriage are not only profligate, but involve an immense loss to the man, as I will now demonstrate. Compare then with this poverty of result, and shortness of duration, the daily and perpetual urgency of other needs of our existence. Nature reminds us every hour of our real needs; and, on the other hand, refuses absolutely to grant the excess which our imagination sometimes craves in love. It is, therefore, the last of our needs, and the only one which may be forgotten without causing any disturbance in the economy of the body. Love is a social luxury like lace and diamonds. But if we analyze it as a sentiment, we find two distinct elements in it; namely, pleasure and passion. Now analyze pleasure. Human affections rest upon two foundations, attraction and repulsion. Attraction is a universal feeling for those things which flatter our instinct of self-preservation; repulsion is the exercise of the same instinct when it tells us that something is near which threatens it with injury. Everything which profoundly moves our organization gives us a deeper sense of our existence; such a thing is pleasure. It is contracted of desire, of effort, and the joy of possessing something or other. Pleasure is a unique element in life, and our passions are nothing but modifications, more or less keen, of pleasure; moreover, familiarity with one pleasure almost always precludes the enjoyment of all others. Now, love is the least keen and the least durable of our pleasures. In what would you say the pleasure of love consists? Does it lie in the beauty of the beloved? In one evening you may obtain for money the loveliest odalisques; but at the end of a month you will in this way have burnt out all your sentiment for all time. Would you love a woman because she is well dressed, elegant, rich, keeps a carriage, has commercial credit? Do not call this love, for it is vanity, avarice, egotism. Do you love her because she is intellectual? You are in that case merely obeying the dictates of literary sentiment."

"But," I said, "love only reveals its pleasures to those who mingle in one their thoughts, their fortunes, their sentiments, their souls, their lives—"

"Oh dear, dear!" cried the old man, in a jeering tone. "Can you show me five men in any nation who have sacrificed anything for a woman? I do not say their life, for that is a slight thing,—the price of a human life under Napoleon was never more than twenty thousand francs; and there are in France to-day two hundred and fifty thousand brave men who would give theirs for two inches of red ribbon; while seven men have sacrificed for a woman ten millions on which they might have slept in solitude for a whole night. Dubreuil and Phmeja are still rarer than is the love of Dupris and Bolingbroke. These sentiments proceed from an unknown cause. But you have brought me thus to consider love as a passion. Yes, indeed, it is the last of them all and the most contemptible. It promises everything, and fulfils nothing. It comes, like love, as a need, the last, and dies away the first. Ah, talk to

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me of revenge, hatred, avarice, of gaming, of ambition, of fanaticism. These passions have something virile in them; these sentiments are imperishable; they make sacrifices every day, such as love only makes by fits and starts. But," he went on, "suppose you abjure love. At first there will be no disquietudes, no anxieties, no worry, none of those little vexations that waste human life. A man lives happy and tranquil; in his social relations he becomes infinitely more powerful and influential. This divorce from the thing called love is the primary secret of power in all men who control large bodies of men; but this is a mere trifle. Ah! if you knew with what magic influence a man is endowed, what wealth of intellectual force, what longevity in physical strength he enjoys, when detaching himself from every species of human passion he spends all his energy to the profit of his soul! If you could enjoy for two minutes the riches which God dispenses to the enlightened men who consider love as merely a passing need which it is sufficient to satisfy for six months in their twentieth year; to the men who, scorning the luxurious and surfeiting beefsteaks of Normandy, feed on the roots which God has given in abundance, and take their repose on a bed of withered leaves, like the recluses of the Thebaid!—ah! you would not keep on three seconds the wool of fifteen merinos which covers you; you would fling away your childish switch, and go to live in the heaven of heavens! There you would find the love you sought in vain amid the swine of earth; there you would hear a concert of somewhat different melody from that of M. Rossini, voices more faultless than that of Malibran. But I am speaking as a blind man might, and repeating hearsays. If I had not visited Germany about the year 1791, I should know nothing of all this. Yes!—man has a vocation for the infinite. There dwells within him an instinct that calls him to God. God is all, gives all, brings oblivion on all, and thought is the thread which he has given us as a clue to communication with himself!"

He suddenly stopped, and fixed his eyes upon the heavens.

"The poor fellow has lost his wits!" I thought to myself.

"Sir," I said to him, "it would be pushing my devotion to eclectic philosophy too far to insert your ideas in my book; they would destroy it. Everything in it is based on love, platonic and sensual. God forbid that I should end my book by such social blasphemies! I would rather try to return by some pantagruelian subtlety to my herd of celibates and honest women, with many an attempt to discover some social utility in their passions and follies. Oh! if conjugal peace leads us to arguments so disillusionizing and so gloomy as these, I know a great many husbands who would prefer war to peace."

"At any rate, young man," the old marquis cried, "I shall never have to reproach myself with refusing to give true directions to a traveler who had lost his way."

"Adieu, thou old carcass!" I said to myself; "adieu, thou walking marriage! Adieu, thou stick of a burnt-out fire-work! Adieu, thou machine! Although I have given thee from time to time some glimpses of people dear to me, old family portraits,—back with you to the picture dealer's shop, to Madame de T——, and all the rest of them; take your place round the bier with undertaker's mutes, for all I care!"

## MEDITATION XXX. CONCLUSION.

A recluse, who was credited with the gift of second sight, having commanded the children of Israel to follow him to a mountain top in order to hear the revelation of certain mysteries, saw that he was accompanied by a crowd which took up so much room on the road that, prophet as he was, his *amour-propre* was vastly tickled.

But as the mountain was a considerable distance off, it happened that at the first halt, an artisan remembered that he had to deliver a new pair of slippers to a duke and peer, a publican fell to thinking how he had some specie to negotiate, and off they went.

A little further on two lovers lingered under the olive trees and forgot the discourse of the prophet; for they thought that the promised land was the spot where they stood, and the divine word was heard when they talked to one another.

The fat people, loaded with punches a la Sancho, had been wiping their foreheads with their handkerchiefs, for the last quarter of an hour, and began to grow thirsty, and therefore halted beside a clear spring.

Certain retired soldiers complained of the corns which tortured them, and spoke of Austerlitz, and of their tight boots.

At the second halt, certain men of the world whispered together:

"But this prophet is a fool."

"Have you ever heard him?"

"I? I came from sheer curiosity."

"And I because I saw the fellow had a large following." (The last man who spoke was a fashionable.)

"He is a mere charlatan."

The prophet kept marching on. But when he reached the plateau, from which a wide horizon spread before him, he turned back, and saw no one but a poor Israelite, to whom he might have said as the Prince de Ligne to the wretched little bandy-legged drummer boy, whom he found on the spot where he expected to see a whole garrison awaiting him: "Well, my readers, it seems that you have dwindled down to one."

Thou man of God who has followed me so far—I hope that a short recapitulation will not terrify thee, and I have traveled on under the impression that thou, like me, hast kept saying to thyself, "Where the deuce are we going?"

Well, well, this is the place and the time to ask you, respected reader, what your opinion is with regard to the renewal of the tobacco monopoly, and what you think of the exorbitant taxes on wines, on the right to carry firearms, on gaming, on lotteries, on playing cards, on brandy, on soap, cotton, silks, etc.

"I think that since all these duties make up one-third of the public revenues, we should be seriously embarrassed if—"

So that, my excellent model husband, if no one got drunk, or gambled, or smoked, or hunted, in a word if we had neither vices, passions, nor maladies in France, the State would be within an ace of bankruptcy; for it seems that the capital of our national income consists of popular corruptions, as our commerce is kept alive by national luxury. If you cared to look a little closer into the matter you would see that all taxes are based upon some moral malady. As a matter of fact, if we continue this philosophical scrutiny it will appear that the gendarmes would want horses and leather breeches, if every one kept the peace, and if there were neither foes nor idle people in the world. Therefore impose virtue on mankind! Well, I consider that there are more parallels than people think between my honest woman and the budget, and I will undertake to prove this by a short essay on statistics, if you will permit me to finish my book on the same lines as those on which I have begun it. Will you grant that a lover must put on more clean shirts than are worn by either a husband, or a celibate unattached? This to me seems beyond doubt. The difference between a husband and a lover is seen even in the appearance of their toilette. The one is careless, he is unshaved, and the other never appears excepting in full dress. Sterne has pleasantly remarked that the account book of the laundress was the most authentic record he knew, as to the life of Tristram Shandy; and that it was easy to guess from the number of shirts he wore what passages of his book had cost him most. Well, with regard to lovers the account book of their laundresses is the most faithful historic record as well as the most impartial account of their various amours. And really a prodigious quantity of tippets, cravats, dresses,

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which are absolutely necessary to coquetry, is consumed in the course of an amour. A wonderful prestige is gained by white stockings, the lustre of a collar, or a shirt-waist, the artistically arranged folds of a man's shirt, or the taste of his necktie or his collar. This will explain the passages in which I said of the honest woman [Meditation II], "She spends her life in having her dresses starched." I have sought information on this point from a lady in order to learn accurately at what sum was to be estimated the tax thus imposed by love, and after fixing it at one hundred francs per annum for a woman, I recollect what she said with great good humor: "It depends on the character of the man, for some are so much more particular than others." Nevertheless, after a very profound discussion, in which I settled upon the sum for the celibates, and she for her sex, it was agreed that, one thing with another, since the two lovers belong to the social sphere which this work concerns, they ought to spend between them, in the matter referred to, one hundred and fifty francs more than in time of peace.

By a like treaty, friendly in character and long discussed, we arranged that there should be a collective difference of four hundred francs between the expenditure for all parts of the dress on a war footing, and for that on a peace footing. This provision was considered very paltry by all the powers, masculine or feminine, whom we consulted. The light thrown upon these delicate matters by the contributions of certain persons suggested to us the idea of gathering together certain savants at a dinner party, and taking their wise counsels for our guidance in these important investigations. The gathering took place. It was with glass in hand and after listening to many brilliant speeches that I received for the following chapters on the budget of love, a sort of legislative sanction. The sum of one hundred francs was allowed for porters and carriages. Fifty crowns seemed very reasonable for the little patties that people eat on a walk, for bouquets of violets and theatre tickets. The sum of two hundred francs was considered necessary for the extra expense of dainties and dinners at restaurants. It was during this discussion that a young cavalryman, who had been made almost tipsy by the champagne, was called to order for comparing lovers to distilling machines. But the chapter that gave occasion for the most violent discussion, and the consideration of which was adjourned for several weeks, when a report was made, was that concerning presents. At the last session, the refined Madame de D———was the first speaker; and in a graceful address, which testified to the nobility of her sentiments, she set out to demonstrate that most of the time the gifts of love had no intrinsic value. The author replied that all lovers had their portraits taken. A lady objected that a portrait was invested capital, and care should always be taken to recover it for a second investment. But suddenly a gentleman of Provence rose to deliver a philippic against women. He spoke of the greediness which most women in love exhibited for furs, satins, silks, jewels and furniture; but a lady interrupted him by asking if Madame d'O———y, his intimate friend, had not already paid his debts twice over.

"You are mistaken, madame," said the Provencal, "it was her husband."

"The speaker is called to order," cried the president, "and condemned to dine the whole party, for having used the word *husband*."

The Provencal was completely refuted by a lady who undertook to prove that women show much more self-sacrifice in love than men; that lovers cost very dear, and that the honest woman may consider herself very fortunate if she gets off with spending on them two thousand francs for a single year. The discussion was in danger of degenerating into an exchange of personalities, when a division was called for. The conclusions of the committee were adopted by vote. The conclusions were, in substance, that the amount for presents between lovers during the year should be reckoned at five hundred francs, but that in this computation should be included: (1) the expense of expeditions into the country; (2) the pharmaceutical expenses, occasioned by the colds caught from walking in the damp pathways of parks, and in leaving the theatre, which expenses are veritable presents; (3) the carrying of letters, and law expenses; (4) journeys, and expenses whose items are forgotten, without counting the follies committed by the spenders; inasmuch as, according to the investigations of the committee, it had been proved that most of a man's extravagant expenditure profited the opera girls, rather than the married women. The conclusion arrived at from this pecuniary calculation was that, in one way or another, a passion costs nearly fifteen hundred francs a year, which were required to meet the expense borne more unequally by lovers, but which would not have occurred, but for their attachment. There was also a sort of unanimity in the opinion of the council that this was the lowest annual figure which would cover the cost of a passion. Now, my dear sir, since we have proved, by the statistics of our conjugal calculations [See Meditations I, II, and III.] and proved irrefragably, that there exists a floating total of at least fifteen hundred thousand unlawful passions, it follows:

That the criminal conversations of a third among the French population contribute a sum of nearly three

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thousand millions to that vast circulation of money, the true blood of society, of which the budget is the heart;  
That the honest woman not only gives life to the children of the peerage, but also to its financial funds;  
That manufacturers owe their prosperity to this *systolic* movement;  
That the honest woman is a being essentially *budgetative*, and active as a consumer;  
That the least decline in public love would involve incalculable miseries to the treasury, and to men of invested fortunes;

That a husband has at least a third of his fortune invested in the inconstancy of his wife, etc.

I am well aware that you are going to open your mouth and talk to me about manners, politics, good and evil. But, my dear victim of the Minotaur, is not happiness the object which all societies should set before them? Is it not this axiom that makes these wretched kings give themselves so much trouble about their people? Well, the honest woman has not, like them, thrones, gendarmes and tribunals; she has only a bed to offer; but if our four hundred thousand women can, by this ingenious machine, make a million celibates happy, do not they attain in a mysterious manner, and without making any fuss, the end aimed at by a government, namely, the end of giving the largest possible amount of happiness to the mass of mankind?

"Yes, but the annoyances, the children, the troubles—"

Ah, you must permit me to proffer the consolatory thought with which one of our wittiest caricaturists closes his satiric observations: "Man is not perfect!" It is sufficient, therefore, that our institutions have no more disadvantages than advantages in order to be reckoned excellent; for the human race is not placed, socially speaking, between the good and the bad, but between the bad and the worse. Now if the work, which we are at present on the point of concluding, has had for its object the diminution of the worse, as it is found in matrimonial institutions, in laying bare the errors and absurdities due to our manners and our prejudices, we shall certainly have won one of the fairest titles that can be put forth by a man to a place among the benefactors of humanity. Has not the author made it his aim, by advising husbands, to make women more self-restrained and consequently to impart more violence to passions, more money to the treasury, more life to commerce and agriculture? Thanks to this last Meditation he can flatter himself that he has strictly kept the vow of eclecticism, which he made in projecting the work, and he hopes he has marshaled all details of the case, and yet like an attorney-general refrained from expressing his personal opinion. And really what do you want with an axiom in the present matter? Do you wish that this book should be a mere development of the last opinion held by Tronchet, who in his closing days thought that the law of marriage had been drawn up less in the interest of husbands than of children? I also wish it very much. Would you rather desire that this book should serve as proof to the peroration of the Capuchin, who preached before Anne of Austria, and when he saw the queen and her ladies overwhelmed by his triumphant arguments against their frailty, said as he came down from the pulpit of truth, "Now you are all honorable women, and it is we who unfortunately are sons of Samaritan women"? I have no objection to that either. You may draw what conclusion you please; for I think it is very difficult to put forth two contrary opinions, without both of them containing some grains of truth. But the book has not been written either for or against marriage; all I have thought you needed was an exact description of it. If an examination of the machine shall lead us to make one wheel of it more perfect; if by scouring away some rust we have given more elastic movement to its mechanism; then give his wage to the workman. If the author has had the impertinence to utter truths too harsh for you, if he has too often spoken of rare and exceptional facts as universal, if he has omitted the commonplaces which have been employed from time immemorial to offer women the incense of flattery, oh, let him be crucified! But do not impute to him any motive of hostility to the institution itself; he is concerned merely for men and women. He knows that from the moment marriage ceases to defeat the purpose of marriage, it is unassailable; and, after all, if there do arise serious complaints against this institution, it is perhaps because man has no memory excepting for his disasters, that he accuses his wife, as he accuses his life, for marriage is but a life within a life. Yet people whose habit it is to take their opinions from newspapers would perhaps despise a book in which they see the mania of eclecticism pushed too far; for then they absolutely demand something in the shape of a peroration, it is not hard to find one for them. And since the words of Napoleon served to start this book, why should it not end as it began? Before the whole Council of State the First Consul pronounced the following startling phrase, in which he at the same time eulogized and satirized marriage, and summed up the contents of this book:

"If a man never grew old, I would never wish him to have a wife!"



### The Physiology of Marriage Part 3

#### POSTSCRIPT.

"And so you are going to be married?" asked the duchess of the author who had read his manuscript to her. She was one of those ladies to whom the author has already paid his respects in the introduction of this work.

"Certainly, madame," I replied. "To meet a woman who has courage enough to become mine, would satisfy the wildest of my hopes."

"Is this resignation or infatuation?"

"That is my affair."

"Well, sir, as you are doctor of conjugal arts and sciences, allow me to tell you a little Oriental fable, that I read in a certain sheet, which is published annually in the form of an almanac. At the beginning of the Empire ladies used to play at a game in which no one accepted a present from his or her partner in the game, without saying the word, *Diadeste*. A game lasted, as you may well suppose, during a week, and the point was to catch some one receiving some trifle or other without pronouncing the sacramental word."

"Even a kiss?"

"Oh, I have won the *Diadeste* twenty times in that way," she laughingly replied.

"It was, I believe, from the playing of this game, whose origin is Arabian or Chinese, that my apologue takes its point. But if I tell you," she went on, putting her finger to her nose, with a charming air of coquetry, "let me contribute it as a finale to your work."

"This would indeed enrich me. You have done me so many favors already, that I cannot repay—"

She smiled slyly, and replied as follows:

A philosopher had compiled a full account of all the tricks that women could possibly play, and in order to verify it, he always carried it about with him. One day he found himself in the course of his travels near an encampment of Arabs. A young woman, who had seated herself under the shade of a palm tree, rose on his approach. She kindly asked him to rest himself in her tent, and he could not refuse. Her husband was then absent. Scarcely had the traveler seated himself on a soft rug, when the graceful hostess offered him fresh dates, and a cup of milk; he could not help observing the rare beauty of her hands as she did so. But, in order to distract his mind from the sensations roused in him by the fair young Arabian girl, whose charms were most formidable, the sage took his book, and began to read.

The seductive creature piqued by this slight said to him in a melodious voice:

"That book must be very interesting since it seems to be the sole object worthy of your attention. Would it be taking a liberty to ask what science it treats of?"

The philosopher kept his eyes lowered as he replied:

"The subject of this book is beyond the comprehension of ladies."

This rebuff excited more than ever the curiosity of the young Arabian woman. She put out the prettiest little foot that had ever left its fleeting imprint on the shifting sands of the desert. The philosopher was perturbed, and his eyes were too powerfully tempted to resist wandering from these feet, which betokened so much, up to the bosom, which was still more ravishingly fair; and soon the flame of his admiring glance was mingled with the fire that sparkled in the pupils of the young Asiatic. She asked again the name of the book in tones so sweet that the philosopher yielded to the fascination, and replied:

"I am the author of the book; but the substance of it is not mine: it contains an account of all the ruses and stratagems of women."

"What! Absolutely all?" said the daughter of the desert.

"Yes, all! And it has been only by a constant study of womankind that I have come to regard them without fear."

"Ah!" said the young Arabian girl, lowering the long lashes of her white eyelids.

Then, suddenly darting the keenest of her glances at the pretended sage, she made him in one instant forget the book and all its contents. And now our philosopher was changed to the most passionate of men. Thinking he saw in the bearing of the young woman a faint trace of coquetry, the stranger was emboldened to make an avowal. How could he resist doing so? The sky was blue, the sand blazed in the distance like a scimitar of gold, the wind of the desert breathed love, and the woman of Arabia seemed to reflect all the fire with which she was surrounded; her piercing eyes were suffused with a mist; and by a slight nod of the head she seemed to make the

### The Physiology of Marriage Part 3

luminous atmosphere undulate, as she consented to listen to the stranger's words of love. The sage was intoxicated with delirious hopes, when the young woman, hearing in the distance the gallop of a horse which seemed to fly, exclaimed:

"We are lost! My husband is sure to catch us. He is jealous as a tiger, and more pitiless than one. In the name of the prophet, if you love your life, conceal yourself in this chest!"

The author, frightened out of his wits, seeing no other way of getting out of a terrible fix, jumped into the box, and crouched down there. The woman closed down the lid, locked it, and took the key. She ran to meet her husband, and after some caresses which put him into a good humor, she said:

"I must relate to you a very singular adventure I have just had."

"I am listening, my gazelle," replied the Arab, who sat down on a rug and crossed his feet after the Oriental manner.

"There arrived here to-day a kind of philosopher," she began, "he professes to have compiled a book which describes all the wiles of which my sex is capable; and then this sham sage made love to me."

"Well, go on!" cried the Arab.

"I listened to his avowal. He was young, ardent—and you came just in time to save my tottering virtue."

The Arab leaped to his feet like a lion, and drew his scimitar with a shout of fury. The philosopher heard all from the depths of the chest and consigned to Hades his book, and all the men and women of Arabia Petraea.

"Fatima!" cried the husband, "if you would save your life, answer me— Where is the traitor?"

Terrified at the tempest which she had roused, Fatima threw herself at her husband's feet, and trembling beneath the point of his sword, she pointed out the chest with a prompt though timid glance of her eye. Then she rose to her feet, as if in shame, and taking the key from her girdle presented it to the jealous Arab; but, just as he was about to open the chest, the sly creature burst into a peal of laughter. Faroun stopped with a puzzled expression, and looked at his wife in amazement.

"So I shall have my fine chain of gold, after all!" she cried, dancing for joy. "You have lost the *Diadeste*. Be more mindful next time."

The husband, thunderstruck, let fall the key, and offered her the longed-for chain on bended knee, and promised to bring to his darling Fatima all the jewels brought by the caravan in a year, if she would refrain from winning the *Diadeste* by such cruel stratagems. Then, as he was an Arab, and did not like forfeiting a chain of gold, although his wife had fairly won it, he mounted his horse again, and galloped off, to complain at his will, in the desert, for he loved Fatima too well to let her see his annoyance. The young woman then drew forth the philosopher from the chest, and gravely said to him, "Do not forget, Master Doctor, to put this feminine trick into your collection."

"Madame," said I to the duchess, "I understand! If I marry, I am bound to be unexpectedly outwitted by some infernal trick or other; but I shall in that case, you may be quite sure, furnish a model household for the admiration of my contemporaries."

PARIS, 1824–29.