ODYSSEY ENABLED

Call #: PQ265 .D37 1995
Location: HAYDEN STACKS SHELF

TN#: 616480

Shipping Address:
University of Arizona Library, ILL
1510 E University Blvd.
Tucson, AZ 85721-0055
E-Mail: askill@u.library.arizona.edu
Fax: (520) 621-4619

Notice: This material may be protected by Copyright Law (Title 17 U.S.C.).

Pulled by ______ (Initials)
Scanned by ______ (Initials)

Reason Not Filled (check one):
☐ NOS ☐ NFAC ☐ NONCIRC
☐ MISSING FROM VOL ☐ TOO LONG
☐ OTHER ____________________________

ARIEL INFORMATION:

Ariel Address: 150.135.238.50

Enter Ariel Address Manually if unable to scan.
If Ariel address blank, send via US Mail.
Thérèse philosophe,  
ou mémoires pour servir à  
l’histoire du P. Dirrag  
et de Mlle Eradice  

*(Thérèse philosophe, Or, Memoirs About  
the Affair Between Father Dirrag  
and Mademoiselle Eradice)*

[No date or place of publication; probably first published in 1748; probably written by Jean-Baptiste de Boyer, marquis d’Argens]

**WHAT, SIR, YOU SERIOUSLY** want me to write the story of my life? You wish me to describe for you the mystical scenes between Mademoiselle Eradice and the Reverend Father Dirrag and inform you about the adventures of Mme C. with abbé T.? You are asking for an orderly and detailed description from a girl who has never written a word before? You would like an account in which the scenes that I have described to you, or those in which we have taken part, should be rendered in all their lasciviousness, and the metaphysical arguments should be preserved with all their force. In truth, my dear Count, that’s beyond my capabilities. Besides, Eradice was my friend and Father Dirrag my confessor, and I have reason to be grateful to Mme C. and to abbé T. Will I betray the confidence of those to whom I am the most indebted? It is their deeds or, in some cases, their wise counsel which have caused the scales to fall from my eyes concerning my youthful prejudices. But, you say, if their example and their argument have brought me happiness, why wouldn’t I try to bring happiness to others by the same means—by example and by argument? Why be afraid to write
useful truths for the good of society? Well, my dear benefactor, I will resist no longer: I'll write; my ingenuity will make up for my lack of a polished style—at least for thinking men, and I care little for fools. No, you'll be denied nothing by your dear Thérèse, you'll know all the secret places of her heart from her earliest days. Her soul will be completely revealed through the little adventures which have led her, despite herself, step by step, to the height of sensual delight.

* * *

Address to the Theologians
on the Liberty of Man

Answer me this, you theologians, either canny or stupid, who tax us with crimes at your whim: Who put in me the two passions which warred within me, the love of God and the love of sensual pleasure? Was it nature or the devil? Choose. But would you dare to assert that either one is more powerful than God Himself? If they are both subordinate to Him, it must be God Himself who ordained that these passions should be in me, who am His creation. But—you reply—God gave you reason to enlighten you. Yes, but not in order to determine my will. Reason certainly helped me perceive the two passions which enveloped me; that's how I concluded finally that, since everything came from God, so also had these two passions in all their force. But this same reason which guided me didn't help me to choose. But—you'll continue—since God had created you mistress of your own will, you were free to opt for good or evil. A pure play on words! This free will and this so-called liberty have no force of their own: they only operate in response to the force of the passions and the appetites which drive us. For example, I would appear to be free to kill myself, to jump out the window. But not at all: while the desire to live is stronger in me than the desire to die, I'll never be able to kill myself. A certain man—you'll say—is perfectly capable of giving to the poor, or to his indulgent confessor, the 100 lous which he has in his pocket. Far from it: since the desire which he has to keep his money is greater than that of obtaining a
useless absolution from his sins, he will of course hang on to his coins. Anyone, thus, can see for himself that reason serves only to make a man aware of the strength of the desire he has to do or not do something or other, relative to the pleasure or displeasure he will derive from it. From this awareness achieved through reason, we acquire what we call will and determination. But this will and this determination are just as inferior to the forces of passion and desire which rule us as a two-pound weight trying to tip a scale that has a four-pound weight on the other side.

But—so a debater will insist who sees only externals—am I not free to drink with my dinner either Burgundy or Champagne? May I not choose for my walk either the grande allée at the Tuileries or the terrace of the Feuillants?

I agree that whenever the soul is completely indifferent to its fate, that when one’s desire to do one thing or another is exactly balanced—in a perfect equilibrium—we cannot perceive this absence of liberty. It exists as a far-off haze in which we can discern no objects. But when we draw a little closer to these objects, we can observe quite distinctly the mechanisms of our actions. And as soon as we understand one, we understand them all, for nature is guided in all things by one and the same principle. Our interlocutor sits himself down at the table and orders oysters: the dish demands Champagne. But, you say, he was free to choose a Burgundy. I object; it is true that another reason, or a competing desire stronger than the first one, might have led him to opt for the Burgundy, but here again, this other whim would just as surely have compromised his supposed freedom of choice.

This same man, entering the Tuileries Gardens, catches sight of an attractive woman of his acquaintance on the terrace of the Feuillants: he decides to join her—unless some other motive propels him down the grande allée. But whichever path he chooses, there will always be a reason, a desire, which will lead him invincibly to the decision that reflects it.

To maintain that man is free, one must assume that he is capable of self-determination. But if he is determined instead by the degrees of passion instilled in him by nature and his senses, he is not free, for one degree of desire will tip the balance as surely
as a four-pound weight will outweigh a three-pound one. Furthermore, I ask my interlocutor to tell me what prevents him from thinking as I do about the subject here under discussion, or why I cannot bring myself to reckon as he does on this point. He will reply no doubt that his ideas, his notions, his sensations force him to think as he does. But, having said this—and having thus demonstrated to himself that he is as incapable of willing himself to think like me as I am incapable of thinking as he does—he must admit that we are not free to think in one way or another. Moreover, if we have no freedom of thought, how could we have freedom of action, since thought is the cause and action only the effect? Could a free effect result from a cause which is not free? There is a contradiction here.

In order, finally, to convince ourselves of this truth, let's examine the question in the light of experience. Gregory, Damon, and Philinte are three brothers who have been educated by the same masters to the age of twenty-five. They have never been separated, have received the same upbringing, the same lessons on religion and morals. Gregory, however, loves wine, Damon loves women, and Philinte is very devout. What has caused these three different propensities in these three brothers? It cannot be their learning or their knowledge of moral good and evil, for they have each received the same precepts from the same masters. Each of them must, then, have had within himself different principles and different passions, which determined their dissimilar predilections despite the similarity of their received knowledge. What's more, Gregory, the wine lover, was, when sober, the greatest gentleman, the most sociable, and the dearest friend; but as soon as he had tasted the bewitching brew, he became carping, quarrelsome, and accusatory. He would have delighted in cutting the throat of his best friend. But had Gregory any control over this temperamental change that suddenly took place in him? Certainly not, for when he was sober he detested the actions which he was forced to commit when he was in his cups. Certain fools, however, admired the sexual restraint of Gregory, who had no taste for women, the sobriety of Damon, who hated wine, and the piety of Philinte, who cared not a whit for women or wine but who derived his own and equal pleasure from his devotional urgings.
Thus does most of humankind delude itself as to its virtues and vices.

To sum up, the arrangement of our organs, the disposition of our fibers, a certain movement of our fluids, all determine the type of passions which work upon us, directing our reason and our will in the smallest as well as the greatest actions we perform. Thus are zealots formed, as well as sages and fools. The fool is no freer than the other two, for he acts according to the same principles: nature is uniform. To imagine that man is truly free and capable of self-determination is to place him on a par with God.

Thérèse Leaves her Convent at the age of Twenty-Three Close to Death from the Efforts she has made to struggle against her Temperament

Let's get back to my own story. I have recounted how my mother removed me, at the age of twenty-three and near death's door, from the convent where I had been. My whole machine [i.e., body] was listless, my complexion jaundiced, my lips inflamed. I resembled a living skeleton. The practice of religion had almost dispatched me, when I regained my mother's home. A skilled doctor, whom she had sent to see me at the convent, had immediately spotted the cause of my illness: that divine liquid which affords us the one physical pleasure—the only one which we taste without bitterness—the one, as I say, whose flow is as necessary to certain temperaments as nourishment from food is to others, had flowed out of its customary channels and into unfamiliar ones, all of which had produced disorder throughout my machine.

My mother was advised to find me a husband as the only remedy for this life-threatening situation. She proposed this to me with great tenderness. But, infatuated as I was with my own prejudices, I responded angrily that I would rather die than displease God by accepting such a despicable estate, which He could tolerate only by His great kindness. All her arguments failed to shake my resolve. My weakened state left me no further desire for this earthly world, and I aspired only to the happiness which had been promised to me in the next.
She puts herself under the Direction of Father Dirrag at Volnot and becomes the Friend and Confidante of Mademoiselle Eradice

I continued thus my pious exercises with all imaginable fervor. I had heard much talk of the famous Father Dirrag: I wanted to see him. He became my confessor and Mlle Eradice, his most engaging disciple, was soon my best friend.

You know, my dear Count, the story of these two famous personages. I will make no attempt to repeat here all that the public knows about them and all that has been said on their subject. But one anecdote, in which I was personally involved, might amuse you and help to convince you that, even if Mlle Eradice eventually, with full knowledge of her actions, entered into a romantic relationship with this hypocrite, it is no less clear that she was, for a long time, the unwitting target of his pious lechery.

Mlle Eradice had entered into the most loving friendship with me; she entrusted to me her most secret thoughts. The closeness of our dispositions, our habits, our religious beliefs, perhaps even of our natures, made us inseparable. We were both virtuous, but we were consumed by a passion to gain a reputation for saintliness, together with an outlandish desire to perform miracles. This passion ruled her so completely that she would have endured all imaginable torments with a constancy worthy of the martyrs if she had been persuaded that she could thereby raise a second Lazarus from the dead. Father Dirrag had, first and foremost, the talent for making her believe anything he wanted. Eradice had confided to me on several occasions, with a sort of vanity, that the father would speak freely only with her, and that in these intimate conversations, which they often had in her room, he had assured her that she was only a few short steps away from sainthood, that God had revealed to him in a dream how she was just on the verge of performing the very greatest miracles if she only continued to comport herself with the required degree of virtue and mortification.

Everyone is prey to jealousy and envy, but a pious woman is perhaps the most susceptible of all.
Eradice saw that I was jealous of her happiness, and, moreover, that I seemed skeptical of all that she told me. In fact, I displayed all the more surprise at hearing of these intimate conversations with Father Dirrag, because he had always managed to avoid just this kind of encounter with me, in the house of one of his followers, a friend of mine who had received the stigmata, as had Eradice. Probably my sad mien and my sallow complexion didn’t appeal enough to the holy father to excite in him the appetite for his spiritual labors. I was drawn further into the competition. No stigmata! No conversations with me alone! I let my anger show and pretended to believe none of it. Eradice, very moved, proposed that I should, on the following morning, witness her happiness with my own eyes.

“You’ll see,” she fervently assured me, “the power of my spiritual exercises and the stages of repentance through which the good father is leading me to sainthood. And you’ll no longer be able to doubt the ecstasies and the raptures which these exercises produce. My dear Thérèse,” she added more calmly, “I do hope that, as my first miracle, my example can awaken in you the force to liberate your spirit from matter, through meditation, and to fix it on God alone!”

Mlle Eradice shuts Thérèse in a Closet from which she can View her room, so that Thérèse can Witness her Exercises with Father Dirrag

I arrived at five o’clock the following morning at Eradice’s room, as agreed between us. I found her at prayer, a book in her hand.

“The holy man is coming,” she told me, “and God with him. Hide in this little closet, from which you can both see and hear just how far divine mercy will extend to save its vile creation through the pious ministrations of our confessor.” A moment later there was a soft knock at the door. I hid myself in the closet; Eradice pocketed the key. Through a hole as large as my hand, covered by an old, almost transparent Bergamo embroidery, I could easily observe the room in its entirety with no danger of being seen myself.
Father Dirrag Visits the Stigmata placed beneath the Left Breast of Eradice

The good father entered the room. “Good day, my dear sister in God!” he greeted Eradice. “May the Holy Spirit and St. Francis be with you!”

She attempted to throw herself at his feet, but he raised her and bade her sit near him.

“It is necessary,” said the holy man, “that I go over with you the principles by which you must be guided in all the actions of your life. But tell me first about your stigmata. The mark which you have on your breast—is it exactly as it was? Let’s have a look.”

Eradice made a move to uncover her left breast, just above his gaze.

“Ahh, sister!” he cried. “Stop! Stop! Cover your breast with this handkerchief.” (He held one out to her.) “Such things are not fit for a member of our society. It will be enough for me to see the wound which St. Francis has imprinted there. Ah! it’s still there. Good,” he said, “I’m delighted. St. Francis still loves you: the wound is neat and red. I’ve thought to bring with me the holy remnant of his cord. We’ll make use of it later in our devotions.”

Physical Demonstration by Father Dirrag in order to Convince Eradice to Suffer Flagellation without Complaint

“I have already told you, sister,” the father continued, “that I have singled you out from all my followers, your companions, for I observe that God Himself has chosen you among His sacred lambs, just as the sun is singled out from the moon and the other planets. It is for this reason that I am not afraid to reveal to you His most hidden mysteries. I have advised you, my dear sister: forget yourself and let yourself go. God desires from men only their hearts and their minds. Only by forgetting the body can we find unity with God, approach sainthood, perform miracles. I cannot keep from you, my little angel, the fact that, during our last exercise, I noticed that your mind was still tuned to your flesh. What! Can you not imitate to some extent those blessed martyrs who were flagellated, tortured, roasted
without the least suffering, because their imagination was so totally absorbed in God's glory that there wasn't the tiniest bit left over for other thoughts?

The mechanism is infallible, my dear girl: we feel, and we receive our ideas of physical good and evil, as well as moral good and evil, only through our senses. When we touch or hear or see an object, little particles of thought flow into the hollows of our nerves, and continue on to alert the soul. If, by the force of your meditations on your love of God, you have enough energy to gather together all the little particles of thought which are within you and apply them all to this end, not one will be left to warn your soul of the blows which your flesh is about to receive. You won't feel them at all. Consider the hunter: when his imagination is entirely occupied with the pleasure of stalking his prey, he will feel neither the thorns nor the brambles which tear at him as he advances through the forest. You may be weaker than he, but your goal is a thousand times greater. Will you feel the faint blows of the rod if your soul is fully occupied with the happiness which awaits you? This is the touchstone which leads us to perform miracles; this should be the perfect state which unites us with God.

Father Dirrag tells Eradice that he will make her Experience a Host of Pleasures by means of a Remnant of St. Francis's Cord (which he has in his possession)

"We're going to begin, my dear girl," the father continued. "Attend well to your duties and you'll be sure that, with the help of St. Francis's cord and your meditation, this holy exercise will end in a host of inexpressible pleasures. Get down on your knees, my child, and uncover those parts of your body which inspire God's anger. The mortification which they're going to experience will unite your spirit intimately with Him. I remind you once again: forget yourself and let yourself go."

Eradice uncovers her Buttocks to receive the Discipline of Father Dirrag

Mlle Eradice obeyed immediately without reply. She knelt upon a prayer stool with a book before her. Then, raising her
skirts and her shift to her waist, she revealed her snow white buttocks, which formed two perfect ovals surmounting two thighs of admirable proportions.

"Raise your shift higher," the father told her. "It isn't quite right ... Yes, that's it. Now put your hands together and raise your soul to God, filling your mind with the idea of the eternal bliss which is promised you." The father at this point brought over a stool, upon which he himself knelt behind and slightly to the side of Eradice. Under his robe, which he now raised and anchored under his belt, was a thick bunch of long birch rods. He presented them to his charge so that she might kiss them.

**Father Dirrag Flagellates her while Reciting Verses**

While watching this scene take shape I was filled with a kind of holy terror, and I experienced a sort of trembling which I can scarcely describe. Eradice said nothing. The father meanwhile devoured with his feverish eyes her buttocks, which were within full view of him, and, as he did so, I heard him gloat, under his breath:

"Oh, what a beautiful bosom! What charming tits!" He hunched forward, then backward, rocking rhythmically and muttering a few biblical verses. He gave free rein to his lust. After several minutes, he asked his disciple if her soul were in a state of contemplation.

"Yes, my very holy father," she said. "I feel that my spirit is completely detached from my flesh, and I beg you to begin your holy work."

"That's as it should be," the father replied. "Your spirit will find contentment." He repeated a few more prayers, after which the ceremony commenced with three strokes of the birches applied rather lightly to her behind. These were followed by a recitation of Scripture, succeeded by three more applications of the birches a little harder than the first.

**He produces the Supposed Cord of St. Francis**

After five or six of these scriptural recitations, interspersed with whippings, to my astonishment I saw Father Dirrag un-
button his pants and pull out an inflamed object identical to the dreaded serpent which had got me into trouble with my former confessor. This monster had the length, the width, and the firmness foretold by the Capucine. I trembled at the sight. Its reddish head seemed to threaten Eradice's buttocks, which had now become quite scarlet. The father's face was aflame.

"You should now be," he said, "in a state of the most perfect contemplation; your soul should be detached from your senses. If my child does not disappoint my holy expectations, she sees nothing, hears nothing, and feels nothing."

As he spoke these words, the torturer delivered a rain of blows over all the exposed parts of Eradice's body. Despite this, she remained motionless and spoke not a word, appearing insensitive to these terrible blows. The only movement I could distinguish in her was the convulsive movement of her two buttocks, which tightened and loosened incessantly.

After a quarter hour of this cruel punishment, "I'm pleased with you," the father said. "The time has come for you to taste the fruit of your holy work. Don't listen to me, my dear child; just let yourself be carried away. Bend forward face down. With the venerable cord of St. Francis I'm going to purge you of all your impurities."

The good father did, in fact, place her in this position—humiliating, truth to tell, but also the most useful for what he had in mind. He had never had such an appealing prospect: her buttocks were spread apart, affording him an unimpeded access to the twin routes of desire.

The hypocrite, after a few moments of contemplation, moistened with saliva what he called "the cord" and, pronouncing some words in the tone of an exorcist chasing the devil from a body possessed, His Grace began to insert it.

I was placed in such a way as not to miss the smallest detail of this scene. The windows of the room I was observing were directly opposite the door of the closet where I was hiding. Eradice was kneeling on the floor, her arms crossed on the step of the prayer stool and her head resting on her arms. Her shift had been carefully raised to her waist, and I had a view, in half profile, of her admirable loins and buttocks.
He is embarrassed by the Choice presented to him by the Two Orifices of Eradice. Prudence rules over his Natural Predilection

This pleasurable perspective commanded the full attention of the very reverend father, who had himself sunk to his knees, the legs of his young disciple between his own, his underpants pulled down, his terrible "cord" in his hand, as he murmured some barely articulate phrases. He remained for several moments in this edifying posture, his excited gaze drinking in the altar, seemingly unable to decide as to the nature of the sacrifice he was going to offer. Two orifices presented themselves to him. He devoured them with his eyes, overcome with the richness of the choice. One was a delicious morsel for a man of the cloth, but he had promised pleasure, ecstasy even, to his disciple. What should he do? He dared to direct the head of his instrument several times to the door he preferred. It knocked lightly against it, but prudence, finally, won out over his natural inclination.

He penetrates her. Exact Description of his Movements, his Positions, etc.

It must be said, in fairness to him, that I distinctly saw His Holiness's ruby red member take the canonical path, after he delicately opened its purple lips with the thumb and index finger of each hand. This work was begun with three forceful thrusts which caused half of it to enter. Then, all of a sudden, the apparent tranquility of the father was transformed into a sort of fury! Oh, God! What a countenance! He was like a satyr, his lips frothing, his mouth ajar, grinding his teeth and snorting like a bull. His nostrils flared, but he kept his hands raised in the air above Eradice's haunches, obviously reluctant to use them as a point of support. His fingers thus contorted and spread apart looked like the feet of a roasted capon. His head was bent and his glistening eyes were fixed on the work of his battering ram, whose thrusts he controlled in such a manner that, as it retracted, it did not leave its sheath completely and, as it shot forward, his stomach did not come into contact with the thighs.
of his charge, who might thus, upon reflection, have guessed the origin of this supposed cord. What presence of mind! I noted that approximately a thumbnail’s width of the holy instrument was always held back, deprived of a role in the festivities. I saw also that with each backward movement of the father’s rump, as the cord withdrew and its head appeared, the lips of Eradice spread open, revealing a crimson hue wondrous to behold. I noted that, in the next moment, as the father thrust forward, these same lips, of which one could now see only the short black hairs covering them, grasped the member so tightly that it seemed all but swallowed up. It would have been difficult to say to which of the two actors this tool belonged, as both of them appeared equally attached to it.

What mechanics! What a sight, my dear Count, for a girl of my age who had no knowledge whatsoever of these sorts of mysteries. So many strange ideas passed through my head! I could hardly think straight! I do remember that twenty times I was on the point of throwing myself at the feet of this famous confessor and begging him to treat me just like my friend. Was it a welling up of faith? Or was it a welling up of lust? That’s what I still cannot quite sort out in my own mind.

**Eradice and Father Dirrag Swoon with Pleasure. The Young Woman believes herself to be enjoying a purely Celestial Happiness**

Let’s get back to our acolytes. The father’s movements were accelerating. He could scarcely now maintain his equilibrium. He had positioned himself so that he formed something resembling an S from his head to his knees, and the belly of this S moved in and out in a horizontal relationship with Eradice’s buttocks. Her private part acted as a channel for the work in progress of his battering ram and directed the operations, while two enormous growths which hung down between the thighs of His Reverence seemed to be standing by as witnesses.

“Is your mind at ease, my little saint?” he asked, as a sort of sigh escaped him. “As for me, I see the heavens opening, and sufficient grace is carrying me aloft. I . . .”

“Oh, Father!” cried Eradice. “Such pleasure is penetrating
me! Oh, yes, I'm feeling celestial happiness. I sense that my mind is completely detached from matter. Further, Father, further! Root out all that is impure in me. I see the angels. Push forward... push now... Ah! Ah! Good... St. Francis! Don't abandon me! I feel the cord... the cord... the cord... I give up... I'm dying!"

The father, who was feeling the same rush of overwhelming pleasure, stuttered as he pushed, puffing and panting. When at last Eradice's words sounded the signal of retreat, I saw the once-proud serpent, now humble, creep foam-covered from its holder. Everything was promptly put back in its place. The father lowered his robe and, with an unsteady step, approached the prayer stool which Eradice had just left. There, after feigning to be lost in prayer for some moments, he beckoned Eradice to rise and cover herself, and then to come join him in thanking the Lord for the favors she had just received.

What more should I say, my dear Count? Dirrag left the room, and Eradice, having opened the door of my closet, fell upon my neck, crying:

"Ah, my dear Thérèse, do share my happiness! Yes, I have seen Paradise unveiled; I've experienced angelic bliss. So much pleasure, my friend, for only a moment of pain! By virtue of the holy cord my soul was almost freed from matter. You could see just how our good confessor introduced it into me. Well, I promise you that I felt it penetrate practically to my heart. Make no mistake: one degree more of excitement and I would have passed over forever into the realm of heavenly contentment."

Eradice told me a thousand other things, and in such a vivacious tone that I had no doubts at all as to the reality of the supreme happiness which she had experienced. I was so moved myself that I scarcely could find the words to congratulate her. With my heart in a state of the very greatest agitation, I embraced her and went away.

* * *

(Thérèse then retires to her room, falls asleep, and dreams about the scene she has witnessed. Unable to contain her sexual energy,
An Introduction to Mme C. and abbé T.

As it is only fair, my dear Count, that you know who Mme C. and M. l'abbé T. are, I think it's time to give you some idea.

Mme C. was born in a family of good standing. Her parents had forced her, at the age of fifteen, to marry an old naval officer who was sixty. Her husband died five years after their marriage, leaving Mme C. pregnant with a child who, at his birth, almost cost his mother her life. The infant died three months later, and Mme C. found herself, after his death, in possession of a rather considerable fortune. A pretty young widow, self-sufficient at the age of only twenty, she was soon pursued by all the wife-seekers in the neighborhood. But she asserted so firmly her decision never again to run the risk of childbirth, after the miraculous escape from her first experience, that even her most enthusiastic suitors abandoned the field.

Mme C. was very intelligent, and she stood by her opinions, which she adopted only after mature reflection. She read a great deal and enjoyed conversation on the most abstract subjects. Her personal conduct was above reproach. Ever the indispensable friend, she helped out whenever she could. My mother had some useful experience of this when she was twenty-six years old. I will have an opportunity later to paint her portrait for you.

M. l'abbé T. was a particular friend of Mme C. as well as her confessor. He was, moreover, a person of real merit. He was forty-four or forty-five, small but attractive, with an open countenance. He was a witty man and a scrupulous observer of the niceties of his estate. He was much admired and sought out by members of polite society, who delighted in his company. He was intelligent and a man of broad learning as well. These good qualities, which were generally recognized, had earned for him
the post he filled at that time, and about which I must not speak here. He was the confessor and friend of many goodly persons of both sexes, unlike Father Dirrag, who specialized in professional holy women, enthusiasts, quietists [mystics], and fanatics.

Mme C. sends Thérèse to M. l'abbé T. for Confession

I returned the next morning to Mme C.'s at the appointed hour. "Well, my dear Thérèse," she said, as she entered the room, "how are your poor little wounded parts? Did you sleep well?"

"Everything is improving, Madame," I replied. "I did as you advised me. I bathed everything very well. That soothed me, but I hope at least that I haven't offended God." Mme C. smiled, and, after she had given me some coffee, she spoke.

"What you told me yesterday," she said, "is of much greater importance than you imagine. I thought it wise to discuss it with M. T., who is waiting for you at the moment in his confessional. I am asking you to go and find him and repeat to him word for word just what you told me. He's a gentleman and a wise counselor—just what you need. I think he will prescribe a change of conduct for you, something necessary for your health and your salvation. Your mother would die of worry if she knew what I know, for I must tell you that these are horrible things that you have seen at Mlle Eradice's. Now go, Thérèse, and put your complete trust in M. T. You'll have no reason to regret it."

I began to cry, and left all atremble to go in search of M. T., who entered his confessional as soon as he caught sight of me.

Salutary Advice from the Confessor to Thérèse

I hid nothing from M. T., who heard me out attentively, interrupting only to ask for clarification of certain points which he did not understand.

"You have just," he said, "made some astonishing revelations to me. Father Dirrag is a scoundrel, a poor devil who is letting himself be carried away by his passions. He is going to rack and ruin, and he's taking Mlle Eradice with him. However, Made-
moiselle, they are more to be pitied than blamed. We are not masters of our fate and cannot always resist temptation. Our lives are often determined by circumstances. Stay away, then, from these people. Stop seeing Father Dirrag and the young women in his care, without, however, speaking ill of any of them. Charity would have it thus. Spend your time instead with Mme C., who has grown very attached to you. She will give you nothing but good advice and wholesome examples to follow.

"Now let's speak, my child, of these powerful urges which you often feel in that part of your body which has rubbed itself against your bedpost. These are instincts as natural as those of hunger and thirst. You shouldn't search them out or excite them, but, on the other hand, if you feel an active pressure to do so, there's nothing wrong with using your hand, or your finger, to assuage that body part with the rubbing necessary for its relief. However, I expressly forbid you to introduce your finger inside the opening there. It's enough for you to know, for now, that this could arouse doubts in the mind of the man you will marry. Furthermore—I repeat it yet again—just as this need is aroused in us by the immutable laws of nature, it is from the hands of nature itself that we take the measures I've recommended to satisfy this need. Besides, as we are assured that natural law is divinely inspired, how could we fear that we offend God in relieving our needs by the means He has afforded us, the objects of His creation, especially when these means in no way disturb the social order? This is certainly not the case, my dear girl, for what happened between Father Dirrag and Mlle Eradice: the father tricked his disciple. He ran the risk of impregnating her by substituting for the pretended cord of St. Francis his own male member, which is used for procreation. In so doing, he offended against the natural law which teaches us to love our neighbor as ourselves. Is it neighborly love to expose Mlle Eradice, as he did, to the threat of lifelong dishonor and disgrace?

"My dear child, the insertion of the father's member in the private parts of his charge, and its movements which you have seen, are part of the mechanism for the production of the human race and are only sanctioned within the state of matri-
mony. If engaged in by an unmarried girl, this action could trouble family tranquility and work against the public good, which we must always respect. And so, as long as you are not bound by the sacrament of marriage, you must be careful to avoid such an act with any man, in any posture whatsoever. I have suggested to you a remedy which will moderate the excesses of your yearnings and cool the fire that excites them. This very remedy will improve the state of your health and put some weight on you, too. Your good looks will not fail to attract many suitors who will try to seduce you. Be ever on your guard, and keep in mind the lessons I have taught you. That's enough for today." The wise confessor added, "You can find me here a week from now at the same hour. Please remember that everything which is said here in the confessional is sacred for sinner and confessor alike. It is a heinous sin to reveal the smallest detail to anyone."

Thérèse makes a Happy Discovery while Bathing her Sexual Parts

The precepts of my new confessor had charmed my soul. I perceived in him an air of veracity, a kind of careful reasoning, a charitable philosophy which called into question everything I had heard heretofore.

I spent the rest of the day in reflection, and, when evening came, as I prepared for bed, I thought to bathe my painful private parts. Safe from all interfering hands and eyes, I pulled up my skirts and, sitting on the edge of my bed, I spread my legs as wide as I could and set about to examine in detail that part of my body which makes me a woman. I spread apart the lips of it and searched with my finger for the opening through which Father Dirrag had been able to penetrate Eradice with such a gross instrument. What I discovered left me still in doubt. The smallness of the orifice puzzled me, and I was attempting to introduce my finger into it when I remembered M. T's injunction. I withdrew it promptly. As my finger traveled up the length of the opening, a little protuberance that I encountered there caused me to shiver. I lingered there, rubbed harder, and soon gained the heights of pleasure. What a happy discovery
for a girl who had within her an abundant quantity of the liquid which is the principle of pleasure!

For six months thereafter I bathed continually in a river of voluptuousness. During this period nothing else occurred that need concern us here.

My health was completely restored. My conscience was clear, owing to the ministrations of my new confessor, who gave me counsel that was both wise and well suited to human passions. I saw him regularly every Monday in the confessional—and every day at Mme C.'s. I now never left the side of this admirable woman. The cobwebs in my mind were dissipating little by little, and I was growing accustomed to think and combine things in my reason. No more Father Dirrag for me, and no more Eradice.

Precept and example are the greatest teachers in the schooling of the mind and heart! While admitting that they impart nothing, that each of us has within himself the seeds of his future development, it is nevertheless certain that they help to nurture these seeds. They make us aware of the ideas and the emotions to which we are susceptible, and which, in the absence of teaching or example, would remain buried or fettered deep within us.

Meanwhile, my mother continued her wholesale business, which was progressing badly. Many people owed her money, and she feared the looming bankruptcy of a Parisian merchant who might bring about her fall along with his own. After seeking advice on the matter, she decided to travel to this proud city. This loving mother cared too much for me to be out of touch during what might be a prolonged absence: it was decided that I would accompany her. Alas! The poor woman could not foresee that she would end her sad life there, and that I would find there in the arms of my dear Count the source of my own happiness.

We determined to leave in a month's time—a period which I would spend with Mme C. in her country house just a league away from town. The abbé stopped by regularly every day and stayed overnight when his duties permitted. Both of them heaped caresses upon me. They were not at all shy about speaking freely before me. They spoke of moral philosophy, of reli-
gion and metaphysical subjects, all in a manner very much at variance with the precepts I had been taught. I felt that Mme C. was quite satisfied with my way of thinking and reasoning, and that she took pleasure in shepherding me through my arguments to the proper conclusions. On occasion, however, I was distressed to note that M. l’abbé T. signaled to her not to forge ahead with certain arguments on certain topics. This discovery humiliated me. I resolved to do all in my power to discover what they were trying to hide from me. I hadn’t the slightest suspicion, at that point, of the affection they felt for each other. Soon my curiosity would be satisfied, as you will hear.

You will see, my dear Count, from whence I garnered those moral and metaphysical principles which you have cultivated so well—those same principles which have shown me what we are in this world, and in doing so have assured me of this tranquil life, in which you are the happy centerpiece.

Thérèse Hides in a Thicket, from which she uncovers the Love Affair between Mme C. and l’abbé T.

We were then in a period of fine summer weather. Mme C. rose regularly around five o’clock in the morning and went to stroll in a little wood located at the bottom of her garden. I had noticed that l’abbé T. went there, too, when he spent the night in the country, and that after an hour or so, the two returned together to Mme C.’s apartment, and that neither one of them was seen thereafter until eight or nine o’clock in the morning.

I resolved to arrive in the little wood before them and to hide so that I could overhear them. As I hadn’t the slightest suspicion of their love affair, I didn’t realize what I might miss by not being able to see them. I went down to look over the terrain and find the most appropriate location for my plan.

That evening, at supper, the conversation turned to the workings of nature and her creations.

“What is this ‘nature,’ after all?” asked Mme C. “Is it some kind of being? Isn’t everything created by God? Could it be some kind of lesser divinity?”

“In truth, you’re not very rational when you speak like that,”
the abbé T. retorted quickly, with a wink in her direction. "I promise on our walk tomorrow morning to explain to you the idea one should have of the mother of all mankind. It's too late now to discuss this subject. Don't you see how boring it would be for Mlle Thérèse, who's nodding off already. If you'll take my advice, both of you should go up to bed. I'll finish my offices and follow your example."

The abbé's advice was heeded: each of us retired to her apartment.

The next morning, at dawn, I stole down to take up watch in my hiding place. I stationed myself in the bushes at the end of a tree-lined alley ornamented with green-painted benches and, here and there, a statue. After an hour's wait, in which I grew increasingly impatient, my heroes arrived and sat themselves on the very bench in front of my hiding place.

"Yes, indeed," the abbé was saying as they approached, "she does grow prettier every day. Her breasts have grown to the point where they could very well fit into the hand of an honest priest. Her eyes have a vivacity that betrays a fiery temperament, for she certainly has a strong one, that saucy little Thérèse! Can you imagine that, since I gave her permission to calm her passions with her finger, she's done it at least once a day! You must admit that I'm a good doctor as well as a kindly confessor. I've cured both her body and her mind."

"But, l'abbé," Mme C. retorted, "haven't we heard enough already about your Thérèse? Did we come here to talk about her beautiful eyes and her temperament? I suspect, my bawdy fellow, that you'd rather like to spare her the trouble she takes to apply your treatment on her own. For that matter, you know that I'm a good sport, and that I'd agree to it willingly if it weren't for the danger to you. Thérèse has lots of spirit, but she's too young and has too little experience of the world to be relied upon. I grant you her curiosity is without equal. In the long run she could develop into a very fine disciple, and, if it weren't for the drawbacks I've just mentioned, I wouldn't hesitate at all to include her in our pleasures. Because let's admit that it's silly to be jealous or envious of one's friends' happiness, especially when their enjoyment takes nothing away from our own."
Why Jealousy is Ridiculous

"You're absolutely right, Madame," said the abbé. "These are two passions which drive to distraction all those who lack an innate ability to reason. We must, however, distinguish between envy and jealousy. Envy is a passion inborn in man; it's part of his essence: babies in the cradle are envious of what their peers receive. Only education can moderate the effects of this passion, which we receive at the hands of nature. Jealousy, in its relationship to the pleasures of love, is something quite different. This passion arises from our sense of self-love and from prejudice. We can point to other nations where men offer their guests the enjoyment of their wives just as we offer ours the finest wines in our cellars. This foreigner gives a pat on the back to the lover in his wife's arms while his companions applaud and congratulate him. A Frenchman, in a similar situation, would pull a long face. He would be mocked and held up to public ridicule. A Persian would no doubt stab both the lover and the mistress, and everyone would applaud this double homicide."

"It is therefore clear that jealousy is not a passion instilled in us by nature. It is our education, our local prejudice, which gives rise to it. From infancy, a young woman in Paris reads and hears it said that it is a humiliation to endure the infidelity of her lover. Young men are assured that an unfaithful mistress or wife wounds their pride and dishonors either her lover or her husband. Out of these teachings, which are imbibed, we might say, with our mothers' milk, jealousy is born—that green-eyed monster who leads men to rack and ruin all because of an imaginary slight. Let's be clear, however, about the difference between inconstancy and infidelity. I love a woman who loves me; her character is at one with my own; the sight of her face, the enjoyment of her person fill me with delight. She leaves me: in these circumstances, my pain is not the result of prejudice, it's reasonable. I'm losing a clear asset, an accustomed pleasure, which I cannot be sure I will be able to replace. But a passing infidelity, which may be only a whim or a libidinal response, perhaps only a demonstration of gratitude or proof of a heart that's tender and sensitive to the pain or pleasure of
someone else—what possible harm can come of that? In truth, no matter what people say, you’d have to be pretty silly to get upset over what’s called, with reason, ‘a swordstroke in the water’—something which has no effect whatsoever.”

“Oh, I see where you’re heading,” said Mme C., interrupting l’abbé T. “You’re introducing the idea very gently that you, out of your good heart or just to give pleasure to Thérèse, might be the person to give her a little lesson in sexuality, a little friendly humping which, according to you, would be neither here nor there to me. Well, my dear abbé,” she went on, “I’m all for it. I love you both, and you’ll both be the better for it, while I’ll lose nothing by it. Why would I be opposed to it? If I were upset about it, you’d have to conclude, with reason, that I love only myself and my own selfish pleasure, which I would rather increase at the expense of denying you yours; but that’s not at all the case. I know how to find my own gratification independently of anything that can help you to increase yours. And so, my dear friend, without any fear of annoying me, you can frot Thérèse’s pussy for all you’re worth. It will do the poor girl good. Just watch out, I repeat, and don’t be imprudent . . .”

“What folly!” the abbé retorted. “I swear to you that I’m not thinking of Thérèse at all. I simply wanted to explain to you the mechanism whereby nature . . .”

“Well, let’s not talk about it any further,” replied Mme C. “But, speaking of nature, you’re forgetting, it seems to me, that you promised to define this good mother for me. Let’s see how you can cope with this assignment, for you claim to be able to explain any and everything.”

**Abbé T.’s Exercise, which he recommends for the Use of all Reasonable Men**

“I’m happy to do so,” answered the abbé. “But first, my little mother, you know what I have to do. I’m good for nothing if I haven’t done the little job which affects my imagination most. Otherwise I can’t sort out my ideas clearly; they all get mixed up in this one preoccupation. I’ve told you already that, when I lived in Paris and passed my time almost entirely in reading and the study of the most abstract sciences, whenever I felt inter-
rupted by the goading of the flesh, I had a young girl ad hoc, like a chamberpot for peeing, and I also stuck it to her once or twice in the way you’d just as soon do without. Then, with my mind at ease and my ideas clear, I’d go back to work. And I maintain that any man of letters, any studious fellow who has a little temperament should make use of this remedy, which is as salutary for the body as for the mind. I’ll go further: I assert that any gentleman conscious of his social obligations should make use of it, just to be sure that he doesn’t become so aroused that he forgets his duty and debauches the wife or daughter of one of his friends or neighbors.”

Instructions for the Women, the Girls, and the Men who wish to Travel Safely through the Pitfalls of Sexual Pleasure

“Now, Madame, perhaps you’ll ask me,” the abbé continued, “what women and girls should do. They have the same needs, you’ll tell me, as men; they’re made of the same stuff. They do not, however, have the same resources at their disposal. Concern for their good name, fear of an indiscreet or clumsy partner, fear of pregnancy—these do not permit them to have recourse to the same remedy as the men. Moreover, you’ll say, where could they find these available men like your little ad hoc girl? Well, Madame,” T. continued, “they should do just as you and Thérèse. If that game doesn’t suit them (for, in fact, it doesn’t suit everybody), then they should make use of one of these ingenious instruments called ‘dildos.’ They’re a rather good imitation of the real thing. Add to that the helpful role that imagination can play. When all is said and done, I repeat, men and women must only procure themselves pleasures in such a way as not to trouble the inner order of the established society. Women must consort, then, only with those who are suitable for them, owing to the duties which society imposes upon them. You will cry out against this injustice in vain: what you may regard as injustice for the individual assures the good of the generality, which no one should try to infringe.”

“Oh, I’ve got you now, Monsieur l’abbé,” replied Mme C. “You’re telling me now that no woman or girl should be permit-
ted to do you-know-what with a man, and that no gentleman should threaten the public order by attempting to seduce her. All this, while you yourself, you dirty old man, have tormented me a hundred times for just this purpose. In fact, you would have made quick work of it, indeed, were it not for the insurmountable fear I have of becoming pregnant. So you weren’t at all afraid, when it came to satisfying your particular needs, to act against the common good that you’re always preaching about!”

“Good! Here we go again!” replied the abbé. “Are you beginning again with the same old song, my little mother? Haven’t I told you already that, if you take certain precautions, you won’t run that risk? Didn’t we agree that women have only three things to worry about: fear of the devil, their reputations, and pregnancy? Your mind is very much at ease, I think, on the first point. I don’t believe that you worry about indiscretion or imprudence on my part, which are the only things that could tarnish your reputation. And finally, women only become mothers through the thoughtlessness of their lovers. Moreover, I’ve explained to you already more than once, by expounding the mechanism of procreation, that nothing is simpler to avoid. Let’s go over it once again, then. The lover, either as a result of reflection or the sight of his mistress, finds himself in the state necessary for the act of procreation: his blood, his spirits, and his erecting nerve have together caused his member to swell and become hard. The two of them, having agreed, assume the appropriate posture, and the arrow of the lover is thrust into the quiver of his mistress; the seed is prepared by the mutual rubbing of their sexual parts. A wave of pleasure engulfs them: already the divine juices are beginning to flow. But now the wise lover, master of his emotions, draws the bird from its nest, and his hand, or his mistress’s, achieves, with a few deft strokes, a safe ejaculation. No danger of a child in this case. The thoughtless and brutal lover, on the other hand, pushes deep into the vagina and spreads his seeds there. They penetrate the womb and, from there, into her tubes, where procreation occurs.

“There you have it, Madame,” M. T. continued, “since you desired that I go over it once again—the mechanics of sexual pleasure. Knowing me as well as you do, can you imagine that I
would be one of the imprudent types? No, my dear friend, I've
done it a hundred times the other way. I beg you, let me do it
again today with you. Just look at what a triumphant state my
funny thing is in... Yes, take it; squeeze it in your hand. You
see that it's begging a favor from you, and I..."

Mme C. affords M. l'abbé T. some Disinterested Pleasure

"No, if you please, my dear abbé," Mme C. quickly replied,
"I'll have none of it, not on my life. Nothing you've said can
calm my fears, and I would just be giving you a pleasure I
couldn't experience myself, which wouldn't be at all fair. Let
me do things my way. I'm going to teach this little upstart a
lesson. Well!" she went on, "are you satisfied with my breasts
and my thighs? Have you had enough of kissing them and
squeezing them? Why are you pulling my sleeves up above my
elbows? Monsieur is aroused, no doubt, by the sight of bare
arms in motion. How am I doing? You can't say a word! Ah,
the rascal, what fun he's having!"

There was a moment of silence. Then, suddenly, I heard the
abbé cry: "My darling little mother, I can't take it any longer!
Go a little faster! Give me your little tongue, now, please! Ah!
It's com... ing...!"

You can imagine, my dear Count, the state I was in as I lis-
tened to this edifying conversation. I tried twenty times to raise
myself, to try and find some opening through which I would see
them. But the noise of the leaves always held me back. I was
sitting there, then I lay back as well as I could and, in an effort
to put out the fire that was consuming me, I had recourse to my
usual little exercises.

M. l'abbé T. proves that the Pleasures of the Little Goose are
entirely Lawful

After several moments, during which, no doubt, M. l'abbé T.
repaired the disorder in his garments, he spoke:

"In truth, my good friend, after thinking it over, I'm sure you
were right in refusing me the enjoyment I asked from you. I
felt a pleasure so great, an arousal so powerful, that I suspect
that the dam would have broken if you had let me have my way. One must admit that we’re very weak animals indeed and very seldom able to master our urges.”

“I know all that, my poor abbé,” Mme C. replied. “You’re not telling me anything I don’t know already. But tell me, are we not, by dabbling in these pleasures as we do, sinning against the good of society as a whole? And this wise lover, whose prudence you applaud, who pulls the bird from its nest and spills the stuff of life on the ground, isn’t he also committing a crime? Because you must admit that we’re all depriving the world of another citizen who might be useful to society.”

“Such reasoning,” the abbé answered, “would seem at first glance germane, but you’re going to see, my lovely lady, how superficial it really is. There is no law, either human or divine, which urges—much less requires—us to work for the multiplication of the species. Young men and women are allowed by law to remain single, giving rise to hordes of underemployed monks and useless nuns. And a married man may lawfully cohabit with his pregnant wife, expending his seed, in these circumstances, fruitlessly. Virginity is even held to be preferable to marriage. However, this being said, isn’t it true that the man with his little trick and we, who play the ‘little goose’ game, are doing nothing more than monks or nuns or anyone else who lives in celibacy? The latter are conserving in their loins, to no avail, the seed which the former are spilling to no purpose. Are they not both then in precisely the same position, with relation to society? None of them are producing citizens. But doesn’t sweet reason dictate that we indulge ourselves in pleasure, without harm to our fellow man, by spilling our seed rather than bottling it up in our spermicidal vessels—which is just as useless but also threatens our health and even, in some cases, our lives. And so you see, Miss know-it-all,” the abbé added, “that our pleasures do no more harm to society than the celibacy of the monks and the nuns, and so we can go on about our little business.”

No doubt that, having said this, the abbé put himself in a position to render a little service to Mme C., for, a moment later, I heard her say:

“Oh, stop that, you rascal abbot! Take your finger away. I’m
not up to it today. I'm still suffering a bit from our follies yesterday. Let's put the next one off until tomorrow. In any case, you know I like to be in a comfortable position, spread out on my bed. This bench isn't the least bit right for it. But, wait, just one more thing: the only thing I want from you at present is the definition you promised me of Mother Nature. Here you are at your ease, Monsieur philosopher. Just talk: I'm listening."

Definition of what we should understand by the Word "Nature"

"Mother Nature?" replied the abbé. "My goodness, you'll soon know as much about her as I do. She's a figment of the imagination, a word devoid of sense. The first religious leaders—the original political thinkers—were in doubt about the ideas of good and evil they should offer to their public, and so they invented a being who stands between us and God, whom they imagined to be the author of our passions, our sicknesses, and our crimes. In fact, failing this, how could they have reconciled their system with the infinite goodness of God? How else could they have explained our desire to rob, to murder, and to bear false witness? Why are there so many ills, so many human frailties? What did man—this poor worm born to crawl along the earth his whole life long—ever do to God to deserve it? A theologian would answer: 'This is a consequence of nature.' But just what is this nature? Is it another god which we don't know or understand? Does she act on her own, independently of the will of God? 'No,' the theologian answers again, dryly. 'As God cannot be the author of evil, evil can only exist by the action of nature.' What nonsense! Is it the stick that hit me I ought to be angry at, or the person who wielded it? Isn't he the real cause of the pain I'm feeling? Why can't we admit, once and for all, that nature is a construct of the mind, a mere empty word; that everything comes from God; that the physical evil which strikes down one contributes to the well-being of another; that, from the point of view of the Divinity, there is no evil in the world, only good; that everything we call 'good' or 'evil' exists only in relation to the interests of society as established by man? In relation to God, we act of necessity according to the first laws
laid down by the divine will, the first principles of movement, which He established in all that is. A man steals: he does himself good, he does evil to society, whose laws he breaks, but he does nothing in the eyes of God.”

Why Evildoers should be Punished

“I agree, however, that this man should be punished,” [the abbé went on] “even though he acted out of necessity, even though I am persuaded that he was not free to commit or not commit his crime. He must be punished, because the punishment of someone who disturbs the public order makes an impression, mechanically, by means of the senses, upon the souls of other potential wrongdoers, who will be reluctant to risk incurring the same, and because the punishment meted out to the poor wretch for his crime will contribute to the general good, which should always be preferred to the good of the individual. I would add that every effort should be made to cover the relatives, friends, and associates of a criminal with opprobrium, to encourage, thereby, the members of society to feel a mutually inspired horror for the crimes or other acts which may disturb domestic tranquility. A tranquility that our natural disposition, our needs, and our individual well-being are always leading us to violate. A disposition that can only be developed in man through education and through the impressions made upon his soul by the teaching or example of his friends and associates—in a word, by external sensations, which, together with internal dispositions, direct all our actions. One must, then, stimulate men and constrain them to arouse among themselves the sensations that promote the general welfare.

“I believe, Madame, that you now understand what one means by the word ‘nature.’ I plan to address you tomorrow morning on the proper concept of religion. It is a subject which is important to our happiness, but it’s too late to take it up today. I have a feeling that I need to take my chocolate.”

“I’d be very pleased,” said Mme C. as she rose. “The philosopher must need a little physical restoration after all the libidinous losses he has incurred with my help. You’ve earned it,” she continued. “You have done, and you have said, admirable
things, none more so than your observations on nature. But allow me to say that I have grave doubts that you'll be as illuminating on the subject of religion, which you have touched on several times already with much less success. How, in effect, can one give proofs in a realm of such abstraction, and one where everything is based on faith?"

"That's what we'll see tomorrow," the abbé answered.

"Oh, don't think you'll get off tomorrow with arguments," replied Mme C. "We'll go home early, if you please, to my room, where I'll have need of you and of my couch."

Several moments later, they started for home. I followed them by a hidden pathway. I stopped for only an instant in my room to change my dress, and took myself immediately to Mme C.'s apartment, where I was afraid the abbé might already have launched into the subject of religion, which I wanted to hear at all costs. His talk on nature had made a powerful impression on me: I saw clearly that God and nature were one and the same thing, or, at least, that nature acted only through the direct will of God. From this I drew my own little conclusions, and I began to think perhaps for the first time in my life.

The abbé affords some Interested Pleasure in his turn to Mme. C.

I trembled as I entered Mme C.'s apartment. It seemed to me that she would be able to perceive by my manner the kind of treachery I had just committed and the many thoughts racing through my mind. Abbé T. watched me closely. I thought all was lost. But then I heard him speak, barely audibly, to Mme C.:

"Don't you see how pretty Thérèse is? Her coloring is so delightful, her eyes so lively, and her expression grows more intelligent with every passing day."

I don't know what Mme C. answered in return. They were both smiling. I behaved as though I'd heard nothing, and I took great pains not to leave their side during the rest of the day.

That evening, when I returned to my room, I formed my plan for the next morning. I was very fearful of not being able to wake myself early enough, with the result that I wasn't able to
sleep at all. Toward five o’clock I saw Mme C. head for the little wood, where M. T. was already waiting for her. If all proceeded according to what I had overheard the day before, she would soon be returning to her bedroom and to the couch that she had mentioned. I didn’t hesitate to slip into the room and hide, crouching on the floor behind her bed, with my back up against the wall at its head. The hangings of the bed obscured me, but I could draw them aside as needed and have an unobstructed view of the couch, which stood in the opposite corner of the room. Anything said there would be entirely audible to me.

Thus I waited behind the scenes, and my growing impatience was beginning to make me fear that I had missed my chance, when my two actors entered the room.

“Take me, lie with me for real, my dear friend,” said Mme C., as she let herself fall back onto the couch. “Reading your awful Portier des Chartreux has set me all on fire. Its portraits are so well wrought; they have an air of truth about them which is irresistible. If it were less dirty, it would be an inimitable book of its type. Put it to me today, abbé, I beg you,” she added. “I’m dying of desire, and I’ll even risk the worst.”

“No, not me,” the abbé replied, “for two good reasons: first, because I love you and I’m too much of a gentleman to risk your reputation and your justified reproaches by this imprudence; second, because Monsieur the doctor is not, as you see, at his most brilliant today, I’m not a Gascon, and . . .”

“I can see that very well,” replied Mme C. “The latter reason is so compelling that you actually needn’t have troubled to flat-ter yourself with the first one. But lie down here, at least, beside me,” she added, stretching out lustfully on the bed, “and let’s, as you say, ‘sing the little service’ together.”

“Ah! With all my heart, my dear little mother,” responded the abbé, who was at that moment standing. He began carefully to uncover the breasts of Madame.

Next he raised her dress and her shift above her navel, then he opened her thighs, elevating her knees slightly, so that her heels, drawn in close to her buttocks, were almost touching and supported by the foot of the bed.

In this position, partly hidden from me by the abbé, who was kissing all the beautiful parts of her body in turn, Mme C.
appeared immobile and deep in contemplation, meditating on the nature of those pleasures of which she felt already the first stirrings. Her eyes were half closed, the point of her tongue was visible between her deep red lips, and all the muscles of her face were drawn up in a frenzy of desire.

"Have done with kissing," she said to abbé T. "Can't you see that I'm waiting for you? I can't stand it much longer . . ."

The obliging confessor didn't wait to be asked twice for his services. He slipped over the foot of the bed between Mme C. and the wall, and passed his left hand under the head of the tender C., pressing her to him. Their mouths met in a kiss, and their tongues made small movements of the greatest voluptuousness. His other hand was occupied with the principal action: it was caressing artfully, massaging that part which makes us women, and which, on Mme C., was abundantly decorated with curly, jet black hair. The finger of the abbé played here the most interesting role.

Never has a picture been placed in a more advantageous light, from my point of view. The couch was positioned so that the fleece of Mme C. was directly before my eyes. Below it I could see, in part, her two buttocks, driven by a slight up-and-down movement which suggested internal ferment. Her thighs—the most round and white and beautiful imaginable—together with her knees, made another small movement, left and right. This doubtless contributed also to the joy of the principal part, which was the center of attention and whose every rise and fall the abbé's finger, buried in the fleece, followed.

Thérèse Crosses the Line and loses her Virginity, forgetting the Interdictions of her Confessor

I couldn't even attempt to tell you, my dear Count, what I thought at that moment: I was so moved that I felt nothing at all. I began mechanically to mimic everything I saw. My own hand did the work of the abbé's hand; I imitated all the movements of my good friend.

"Ah! I'm dying!" she cried all of a sudden. "Stick it in, my dear abbé. Yes, deep in, I beg you. Push hard, push, my little one. Ah! what bliss! I'm melting . . . I'm faint . . . ing!"

280
Continuing still to imitate exactly all that I saw and without a thought for my confessor’s interdiction, I stuck my finger in, in my turn. A slight pain that I felt didn’t stop me. I pushed with all my force and reached the heights of sensual delight.

Calm had followed upon these amorous carryings on, and I was dozing off despite my uncomfortable position, when I overheard Mme C. approaching the spot where I was hiding. I thought I was discovered, but I got off with only a fright. She pulled on the bellcord and ordered some chocolate, which they drank while praising those pleasures they had just tasted.

An Examination of Religions by Natural Light

"Why, then, aren’t they [sexual pleasures] entirely innocent?" asked Mme C. "Because you may say what you like, they’re in no way detrimental to the interests of society, and we’re all drawn to them by a need as natural to certain temperaments as hunger and thirst . . . You have demonstrated to me quite thoroughly that we act only in accordance with God’s will, that ‘nature’ is a word devoid of sense and is merely the effect of which God is the cause. But what will you have to say about religion? It denies us sexual pleasures outside the state of matrimony. Do we have here another word devoid of sense?"

“What, Madame,” answered the abbé, “don’t you remember that we’re not free at all, that all our actions are necessarily determined? And if we’re not free, how can we sin? But, since you want to, let’s get down seriously to the subject of religion. I know well your discretion and your prudence. And I have all the less to fear in setting forth my ideas as I swear before God to the good faith with which I have attempted to sort out truth from illusion. Here is the summary of my works and my thoughts on this important subject.

“God is good, I assert. His goodness assures me that, if I try avidly to find out if there is one true religious practice which He requires of me, He won’t mislead me. I will inevitably come to discover this religion; otherwise God would be unjust. He has given me reason so that I can use it, so that I can be guided by it. To what better use could I put it than this?

“If a believing Christian refuses to question his religion, why
would he expect (as he requires) that a convinced Moham-
medan would examine his? They both believe that their reli-
gions were revealed to them by God, one through Jesus Christ
and the other through Mohammed.

"Faith develops in us only because men have told us that God
has revealed certain truths. But other men, in other religions,
have said the same thing to their followers. Who should we
believe? In order to know that, we must examine the question
carefully, for everything that comes from men should be sub-
jected to our reason.

"All the authors of the diverse religions of this earth have
asserted with pride that theirs are revelations of God. Which
ones should we believe? We must ascertain which is the true
one. But, as all we know are the prejudices of our youth and
education, in order to judge wisely we must begin by sacrificing
before God all these prejudices, and then examining in the light
of reason a question so important that our happiness or unhap-
piness hangs by it, in this life and for all eternity.

"I begin by noting that there are four parts in the world, and
that the twentieth part, at most, of one of these four parts is
Catholic, and that all the inhabitants of the other parts say that
we worship a man, and also a piece of bread, that we multiply
the Divinity, and that almost all the Church Fathers have con-
tradicted each other in their writings—which proves that they
were not inspired by God.

"From Adam on, all the changes in religion made by Moses,
by Solomon, by Jesus Christ, and then by the Church Fathers,
all show that all these religions are nothing but the creation of
men. God never changes! He is immutable.

"God is everywhere. However, Holy Scripture says that God
sought out Adam in the earthly paradise (Adam, ubi es?); that
God walked there and had a conversation with the devil on the
subject of Job.

"Reason tells me that God is not subject to any passion. How-
ever, in Genesis, chapter VI, they have God say that He repents
of having created man, that His anger has not been without
effect. God appears so weak, in the Christian religion, that He
is incapable of making man come to heel. He punishes him by
water, then by fire: man is still the same. He sends the prophets:
men are still the same. He has only one son: He sends him, but men still don't change in the least. What foolishness the Christian religion attributes to God!

"Everyone agrees that God knows what will occur throughout eternity. But, they say, even before He knows what the results of our actions will be, He has foreseen that we will betray His grace and commit these same acts. Thus, with this foreknowledge, God, in creating us, knew in advance that we would be infallibly damned and eternally miserable.

"We read in the good book that God has sent His prophets to warn mankind and to exhort it to change its behavior. But God, who is all-knowing, knew very well that men would not change their behavior. The Holy Scriptures suppose, thus, that God is a cheat and a trickster. Can these ideas be reconciled with the certitude we have of the infinite goodness of God?

"We attribute to God, who is all-powerful, a dangerous rival in the person of the devil, who is forever winning over against Him some three quarters of the small number of the chosen, for whom he sacrificed his Son, with no worry at all for the fate of the rest of mankind. What pitiful absurdities!

"According to the Christian religion, we sin only as a result of temptation. It's the devil, they say, who tempts us. God would only have to destroy the devil and we would all be saved. There must be a lot of injustice or weakness on His part!

"A rather large number of Catholic clergymen assert that God has given us the Commandments but pretend that man cannot fulfill them without grace, which God accords to some as it pleases Him—and then punishes others who do not observe them. What a contradiction! What a monstrous impiety!

"What could be more contemptible than to hear God described as angry, jealous, and vindictive, or to see the Catholics offering up their prayers to the saints, as if these saints were, like God, omnipresent and could look into the hearts of men and hear them? How ridiculous it is to say that we must do everything for the greater glory of God! Can God's glory be increased by the imagination or by the actions of men? Can they increase anything in Him? Does he not suffice unto himself?

"What has made men think that the Divinity would be more
honored, more satisfied, to see them eat a herring rather than a lark, onion soup rather than soup made with bacon, or a sole instead of a partridge—and that this same Divinity would strike them with eternal damnation if, on certain days, they opted for the soup with bacon?

"Lowly mortals! You think you can offend God! Could you offend so much as a king or a prince, if they looked upon you rationally? They would despise your weakness and your ineffec-
tuality. You are told that God is an avenging God, and then that vengeance is a crime. What a contradiction! They assure you that forgiving your trespasses is a virtue, and then they dare to tell you that God will avenge involuntary trespassing with eternal suffering!

"If there is a God, they say, there must be religion. However, you must admit that, before the creation of the world, there was a God and no religious practice. Moreover, since the cre-
tation, there are creatures who exist—animals—who do not wor-
ship God in any form whatsoever. If there were no men, God would still exist, creatures would still exist, and there would be no religion. Man’s obsession is to conceive of God’s actions in the light of his own.

"The Christian religion gives a false idea of God. Christians say that earthly justice emanates from divine justice. Yet, by the canons of earthly justice, we could not but censure God’s actions toward his Son, toward Adam, and toward pagans and infants who die unbaptized.

"According to the Christian religion, one must strive toward perfection. The state of virginity, for them, is more perfect than that of marriage. It is clear, therefore, that the Christian idea of perfection leads to the destruction of the human race. If the efforts and the preaching of their priests succeeded, in sixty or eighty years the human race would cease to exist. Can such a religion come from God?

"Is there anything more absurd than to ask prayers of God through the intermediary of priests, monks, or others? This is conceiving of God in the image of earthly kings.

"What excessive folly to believe that God has created us to do only what is against nature, what can only bring us unhappi-
ness here below; that He requires that we turn away from sen-
sual satisfaction and our God-given appetites! What more could a tyrant do if he were determined to persecute us from the cradle to the grave?

"To be a perfect Christian, you must be ignorant, have blind faith, renounce all pleasures, all honors, all riches, abandon your parents and your friends, keep your virginity—in a word, do all that runs counter to nature. This nature, however, operates certainly only in accordance with God's will. What contrariness religion attributes to a Being who is infinitely good and just!

"As God is the master of all His creation, it is our task to employ it all to the uses which he intended and to make use of it in accordance with the end for which each thing was created. By means of our reason and the internal feelings He has given us, we can know His design and His goal, and reconcile them with the interests of the particular society in which we live.

"Man is not made to be inactive: he must busy himself with some activity which has as its goal his own personal advantage in concert with the general good. God has not willed the happiness of certain individuals only, but the happiness of all mankind. We should, then, render each other every sort of mutual service, provided that these services destroy no branches of established society. It is this last point which should govern our actions. By adhering to it in everything we do in our estate in life, we fulfill all our duties. Everything else is only prejudice and illusion.

The Origin of Religions

"All religions, without exception, are the work of men," [the abbé continued.] "There's not one without its martyrs and its supposed miracles. What is more convincing about ours than the other religions?

"Religions originated out of fear: thunder, storms, gales, hail—all destroyed the fruits and grains which nourished the first men scattered over the face of the earth. Their powerlessness in the face of these catastrophes led them to have recourse to prayers to a power they recognized as greater than themselves and which they saw as disposed to torment them.
Later, men of genius or ambition—powerful politicians—from different centuries, from different regions, played upon the credulity of their peoples by coming up with gods who were often strange, fantastic, or tyrannical. They established cults, and set out to form societies in which they would be the leaders and the lawgivers. They recognized that, in order to maintain these societies, it was necessary that each citizen sacrifice his pleasures and desires to the good of the others. For this it was necessary to create a system of punishments and rewards which would determine men to make these sacrifices. So these political leaders dreamed up religions. All of them promise rewards and punishments which encourage a large portion of mankind to resist the natural tendencies they have to appropriate another's goods, his wife, or his daughter, to seek vengeance, to malign their fellow man, and to besmirch the reputation of their neighbor so as to improve their own.”

The Origin of Honor

"Honor came to be associated, later on, with the religions. This phenomenon was just as illusionary as they were, and just as essential to the happiness of the individual and society. It was designed to confine within the same limits, and by means of the same principles, a certain number of other men.”

A Man's Life is compared to a Throw of the Dice

"There is a God, Creator and motive force of everything which exists, make no mistake about it. We are a part of this whole, and we act only as a consequence of the first principles of movement which God has given to it. All is essential and well devised; nothing is left to chance. Three dice cast by a gambler must of necessity give a certain score, according to the arrangement of the dice in their holder or the force or spin given them. This throw of the dice can be taken as a picture of all the actions of a lifetime. One die knocks against another, setting it in motion, and the result of their movements is a certain score. Likewise, in man, his first action—a first movement—determines a second and then a third, etc. To say that
man wants something simply because he wants it is meaningless. This would be the same as supposing that something could result from nothingness. Clearly there is a reason or a motive which causes him to desire this thing, and so from reason to reason, all of which are determined one by the other, man's will necessarily determines him to take this or that action throughout the course of his lifetime, whose end is the one set in motion by the throw of the dice.

"Let us love God, not because he requires it of us, but because He is supremely good. Let us fear only men and their laws. We will respect these laws because they are necessary for the good of society, in which each of us plays a part.

"There you have it, Madame," added abbé T., "what my friendship for you has extracted from me on the subject of religions. It's the fruit of twenty years' meditation and study and burning the midnight oil, during which time I have attempted in good faith to sift truth from falsehood.

"Let's conclude from this, my dear friend, that the pleasures which we enjoy, you and I, are innocent and pure, because they harm neither God nor man, owing to the secrecy and the propriety with which we conduct ourselves. Without these two conditions, I agree that we might cause a scandal and that we would be guilty of a crime against society: our example could seduce certain young hearts who were destined, by their families or by their birth, for useful service to society, and who might forget their duties in following the rush of their desires."

**Mme C. tries to persuade abbé T. that, for the Good of Society, he should communicate his Inspirations to the Public**

"But," replied Mme C., "if our pleasures are innocent, as I now understand them to be, why not, on the contrary, show the whole world how to have the same? Why not communicate the fruit garnered from your metaphysical meditations to your friends and fellow citizens, since nothing could contribute more to their happiness and tranquility? Haven't you told me a hundred times that there is no greater pleasure than that of spreading happiness?"

287
The Reason which abbé T. advances for Refusing

"I have told you the truth, Madame," replied the abbé. "But let's be careful not to reveal to fools truths that they could not appreciate or that they might misuse. They should only be accessible to those who know how to think, and whose passions are in such a healthy equilibrium that no one of them holds them in its sway. This type of man and woman is most rare: out of a hundred thousand persons, there are scarcely twenty who are accustomed to thinking, and out of these twenty, you could hardly find four who think, in effect, for themselves, or who are not dominated by some passion or other. We must, therefore, be extremely circumspect in regard to the sort of truths we have examined here today. As very few people understand the necessity of assuring their neighbors' happiness as a means to assuring their own, one must be chary of widely communicating these clear proofs of the weakness of religion. Religions still motivate a great many men, and keep them submissive to their duty and to the rules which, after all, are useful to society in their religious guise only because of the fear of damnation and the hope of eternal reward promised to the faithful. It is these hopes and fears which inspire the weak: their number is very large. It is honor, public interest, the laws of society which guide thinking men: their number is, in reality, quite small."

As soon as abbé T. had ceased to speak, Mme C. thanked him in the most glowing terms.

"You are adorable, my dear friend," she said, throwing her arms around his neck. "How fortunate I am to know you, to love a man who thinks as soundly as you! Be assured that I will never abuse your confidence, and that I will unswervingly follow your sound principles."

After still more kisses, given first by one and then the other—which greatly annoyed me because of the uncomfortable situation in which I found myself—my godly confessor and his willing proselyte descended to the drawing room. I promptly regained my room and shut myself in. A moment later, a message was brought from Mme C. calling for me to come to her. I sent word in reply that I had not slept the whole night, and
begged to be allowed to rest for several hours more. I used this time to set down in writing all that I had just heard.

* * *

(Following this initiation in the mysteries of philosophy, Thérèse accompanies her mother to Paris. Her mother dies soon after their arrival, leaving Thérèse with relatively little to live on in the wicked city. While trying to decide what to do with her life, Thérèse moves into a boardinghouse, where she is befriended by Mme Bois-Laurier, a former prostitute who has retired on a small fortune she inherited from the madame of her brothel. Mme Bois-Laurier recounts her sex life to Thérèse in elaborate detail and shows her around the city. Their excursions include an evening at the Opéra, where Thérèse meets the Count to whom she is addressing this narrative. So at this point it shifts to her relations with him.)

The Story of Thérèse, Continued

When Mme Bois-Laurier had finished, I assured her that she could count on my discretion, and I thanked her with all my heart for having overcome, for me, the natural reluctance one feels to speak about one’s dissolute past.

The noon hour was sounding. Mme Bois-Laurier and I were exchanging pleasantries when word came that you were asking to see me. My heart leaped with joy. I sprang up and ran to you; we dined and passed the rest of the day together.

Three weeks passed without, so to speak, our leaving each other’s sight, and without my having had the wit to notice that you were using this time to decide whether or not I was worthy of you. In fact, my soul, drunk with the pleasure of contemplating you, registered no other emotion whatsoever; and though I had no other desire than that of possessing you all my life, I never dreamed of forming some kind of plan which could assure my happiness.

Meanwhile, the modesty of your language and the moderation of your demeanor with me could not but alarm me. If he loved me, I told myself, he would be as lively in my presence
as my other suitors who were all assuring me of their undying love. This worried me. I didn't know then that reasonable people love in a reasonable way, and that scatterbrains are scatterbrains in everything they do.

_The Count of... offers to support Thérèse and to bring her to his Country Estate_

Finally, dear Count, after a month's time, you announced one day, rather laconically, that my situation had been weighing on your mind since the first day you met me, and that my expression, my character, my trust in you, all had convinced you to search for some means of freeing me from the labyrinth in which I was about to be engulfed.

"No doubt I appear rather cold to you, Mademoiselle," you added, "for a man who tells you he loves you. Nothing, however, is more certain. But you should know that the strongest passion I feel is the desire to make you happy." I wanted at that moment to interrupt you to express my gratitude.

"Now is not the moment, Mademoiselle," you answered. "Be good enough to hear me out. I have twelve thousand livres of income. I can, with no inconvenience at all, promise you two thousand during your lifetime. I'm single, with the firm intention never to marry, and I'm determined to leave high society, whose vagaries are beginning to weigh on me, and withdraw to a rather beautiful property I have about forty leagues from Paris. I'm leaving in four days' time. Would you like to come along as my companion? Perhaps, in time, you might decide to live with me as my mistress. That will depend on the pleasure you will have in giving me pleasure. But don't forget that this decision should not be taken unless you are certain within yourself that it will contribute to your happiness."

_The Definition of Pleasure and Happiness: They both depend on the Conformation of Sensations_

"It is folly," you added, "to believe that you can make yourself happy by your way of thinking. It has been shown that you cannot think as you like. In order to achieve happiness, one should
Thérèse Philosophe

seize the pleasure which is peculiar to oneself, which suits the passions with which one is endowed. In doing so, one must calculate the good and the bad which result from the enjoyment of this pleasure, taking care that this good and evil be considered not only in relation to oneself but also in relation to the public interest."

*Man, to Live happily, should be careful to Contribute to the Happiness of Others. He should be a Gentleman*

"It is axiomatic that man, who, because of the multiplicity of his needs, cannot achieve happiness without the help of an infinity of other persons, should be careful to do nothing to diminish his neighbor’s happiness. Anyone who holds himself aloof from this system eludes the happiness he is seeking. Whence one may conclude with certitude that the first principle one should follow to live happily in this world is to be a gentleman and to observe the laws of society, which are like the ties that bind our mutual needs together. It is evident, I say, that those who depart from this principle cannot be happy: they are persecuted by the rigor of the law, and by the hatred and disdain of their fellow citizens. Reflect, then, Mademoiselle," you continued, "upon everything I have just had the honor to tell you. Think about it, see if you can be happy while making me happy. I'm going to leave you. I'll come tomorrow to receive your answer."

Your speech had shaken me. I felt an inexpressible pleasure in imagining that I could contribute to the pleasures of a man who thought as you did. I perceived, at the same time, the labyrinth which loomed before me and from which your generosity could save me. I loved you. But how powerful are our prejudices and how difficult to destroy! The social position of a kept woman, to which I had always seen a certain shame attached, filled me with fear. I was afraid also of having a child: my mother and Mme C. had almost died in childbirth. Moreover, the habit I had of procuring for myself a kind of voluptuousness that I understood to be equal to that which we receive by making love to a man—this habit deadened the fire of my temperament. I wanted for nothing in this regard, because relief
followed immediately upon the desire. There was only, then, the prospect of misery to come, or the wish to find my own happiness while making yours, which could influence my choice. The first idea touched me only lightly; the second determined my decision.

Thérèse Surrenders herself to the Count of... as a Friend and departs with him for the Country

With what impatience I awaited your return once I had made my decision! The next day you appeared; I threw myself in your arms. "Yes, Monsieur, I am yours!" I cried. "Deal kindly with the heart of a young woman who adores you. Your feelings lead me to believe that you would never restrain mine. You know my fears, my weaknesses, and my habits. Let the passage of time and your teachings do their work. You understand the human heart and the power of the senses over our wills. Use these advantages to inspire in me those sensations you judge to be the most appropriate, so that I may be brought to contribute unreservedly to your pleasure. In the meantime, I shall be your friend, etc."

I remember that you interrupted me in the midst of this tender outpouring of my heart. You promised me that you would never constrain my tastes and my inclinations. Everything was arranged. The next day I announced my good fortune to Mme Bois-Laurier, who burst into tears as we parted. We left, at last, for your estate on the appointed day.

Once arrived in this lovely spot, I accepted quite naturally the change in my status, for my mind was entirely occupied with pleasing you.

The Count is Reduced to Playing the "Little Goose" Game

Two months passed, during which you abstained from pressing upon me those desires which you were trying imperceptibly to arouse in me. I anticipated you in the realization of all your pleasures, with one exception. You extolled the ecstasies it afforded, but I could not believe they could be stronger than those which I normally tasted, and which I offered to have you
share with me. On the contrary, I trembled at the sight of the member with which you were threatening to pierce me. How would it be possible, I asked myself, for something of this length and this width, with a head so monstrous, to be inserted into a space where I could barely fit my finger? Moreover, if I became pregnant, I felt, I would surely die of it.

“Ah! my dear friend,” I continued, “let’s avoid this fateful pitfall. Let me do it my way.”

I caressed you. I covered what you like to call your “doctor” with kisses. I aroused a quickening in him which led you to the height of voluptuousness and, as this divine liquid was stolen from you almost unawares, calm returned to your soul.

*Discourse on Self-Love, which determines all the Actions in our Lives*

I remarked that, once the knife of desire was whetted, under the pretext of catering to my taste for moral and metaphysical issues, you employed the force of argument to help me decide in favor of that which you desired of me.

“It’s self-love,” you said to me one day, “which determines all the actions of our lives. I mean by ‘self-love’ that internal satisfaction which we feel in doing one thing or another. I love you, for example, because I take pleasure from loving you. What I have done for you may gratify you, may serve your purposes, but you shouldn’t feel any gratitude to me for it: my own self-love caused me to act thus. I have pinned my own happiness on the idea of contributing to yours. By the same token, you cannot make me perfectly happy unless your self-love finds satisfaction in doing so. Men often give alms to the poor; they go out of their way even to comfort them: their actions contribute to the good of society and, to that extent, are praiseworthy; but, from their personal point of view, far from it. They are giving alms because the compassion which they feel for the poor excites in them pain, and they find less discomfort in parting with their money than in continuing to endure the pain excited by their compassion. Or perhaps, yet again, their self-love, flattered by the vanity of passing for charitable men, is the real interior satisfaction which determines their decision. All
our actions are directed by these two principles: to procure ourselves more or less pleasure, to avoid more or less pain.”

**Discourse on the Soul’s Inability to act or think independently in One Manner or Another**

At other times, you explicated, and expanded upon, the short lessons I had received from M. l’abbé T.:

“He taught you,” you told me, “that we are no more able to think independently, to act with a free will, than we are able to control whether or not we should have a fever. In reality,” you added, “we see, through clear and simple observations, that the soul controls nothing, that it reacts only in response to the sensations and faculties of the body. The causes which can wreak chaos in the organs can trouble the soul and alter the mind. A vessel or a fiber disturbed in the brain can make an imbecile out of the most intelligent man in the world. We know that nature acts in the very simplest manner, and has one unvarying principle. Thus, since it is evident that we are not free in some of our actions, we are free in none of them.

“Furthermore, if souls were purely spiritual, they would all be the same. Being all the same, if they had the ability to think and will for themselves, they would all think and all decide in the same way when similar cases were put to them. However, such a situation never arises. They must, therefore, be determined by some other thing, and this other thing can only be matter, because even the weakest thinkers acknowledge only spirit and matter.”

**Reflections on the Meaning of the Spirit**

“Let’s ask these gullible men just what the spirit is. Can it exist and yet have no location? If it is located somewhere, it must occupy space, and, if it occupies space, it has extension, and, if it has extension, it must have parts, and, if it has parts, it is matter. Thus, either the spirit is imaginary, or it is part of matter.

“From these arguments,” you said, “one can conclude with certainty the following: first, that we think in one way or
another only because of the organization of our bodies, combined with the ideas we receive daily though feeling, hearing, sight, odor, and taste; second, that our happiness and unhappiness depend upon this modification of matter and upon these ideas, such that thinkers and geniuses must always be at great pains to inspire ideas which are apt to contribute constructively to the public well-being, and, more particularly, to the happiness of their own loved ones. Toward this end, what wouldn’t fathers and mothers do for their children, or tutors for their pupils?"

*The Count’s Wager with Thérèse*

Finally, my dear Count, you were beginning to be a little tired of my refusals, when you hit upon the idea of sending to Paris for your library of erotic books and your picture collection of the same sort. The taste which I had developed for books, and even more for painting, suggested to you these two avenues, which met with success.

“So, Mademoiselle Thérèse,” you said, in a teasing tone, “you like racy painting and literature? I’m delighted to hear it: you’re going to be treated to some of the most outstanding. But give in to this request, if you please: I agree to loan you, and to place in your apartment, my library and my pictures for one year, provided that you promise to refrain for two weeks from touching that part of your body which should, by rights, today be within my domain. You must in good faith accept divorce from ‘manualism.’ No quarter will be given,” you added. “It’s only fair that each of us brings a little accommodation to the bargain. I have good reason for asking this of you. Choose: without this arrangement, no books and no paintings.”

I only hesitated a moment before I took a vow of abstinence for two weeks.

“That’s not all,” you told me then. “Let’s make the conditions reciprocal. It’s not fair that you should make such a sacrifice just for a glance at the paintings or a quick read. Let’s make a wager, which you’ll no doubt win: I bet my library and my paintings against your virginity that you will not practice abstinence for two weeks, as you have promised.”
"In truth, Monsieur," I answered, with a slightly offended air, "you have a very curious idea of my temperament, and you attribute to me very little self-control."

"Oh! Mademoiselle," you replied, "no accusations, please. I can't be happy arguing over legal points with you. I sense, furthermore, that you don't guess the reason for my proposition. Listen to me. Isn't it true that every time I give you a present, your pride is wounded, because you are receiving it from a man whom you are not making as happy as he could be? Well! The library and the paintings, which you will love so much, will not make you blush, because you will have earned them."

"My dear Count," I replied, "you're setting a trap for me, but it's you who'll be caught, I warn you. I accept the wager!" I cried, "and, what's more, I agree to do nothing else every morning but read your books and look at your bewitching pictures."

The Effects of Reading and Painting

Everything was brought, as you ordered, to my room. In the first four days, I devoured with my eyes, or rather, raced through, the story of the Portier des Chartreux, followed by La Tourière des Carmelites, L'Académie des Dames, Les Lauriers ecclésiastiques, Thémidore, Frétillon, etc., and many others of the same type, which I only put down in order to examine the pictures avidly, where the most lascivious poses were rendered with a coloring and an expressiveness that sent fire coursing through my veins.

The fifth day, after an hour of reading, I fell into a kind of ecstasy. Stretched out on my bed with the curtains opened on all sides, I had two paintings—The Feast of Priapus and The Love Affair of Venus and Mars—directly before my eyes. As my imagination began to be ignited by the attitudes represented in them, I threw off my sheets and covers and, without pausing to think whether or not the door of my room was well secured, I prepared to imitate all the positions I saw. Each figure inspired in me the feeling which the artist had ascribed to it. Two athletes, in the left-hand part of The Feast of Priapus, enchanted me, transporting me by the conformity of the diminutive woman's taste with my own. Without thinking, my right hand
traveled to the spot where the man’s hand was placed, and I was on the point of inserting my finger there when I came to my senses. I became aware of my illusion, and the memory of the conditions of our wager obliged me to withdraw my hand.

How little I imagined that you were observing my weaknesses—if this sweet proclivity of nature is, in fact, one—and, oh God, how stupid I was to resist the inexpressible pleasures of its actual enjoyment! Such are the effects of prejudice: they are our tyrants. Other parts of this picture excited, one by one, my admiration and my pity. Finally I turned my gaze to the second one. What sensuality in Venus’ stance! Like her, I stretched out lazily. With my thighs slightly apart and my arms spread open voluptuously, I admired the striking attitude of the god Mars. The fire with which his eyes, and especially his lance, seemed to be animated passed directly into my heart. I slipped under the sheets. My buttocks rocked lustfully as though they would bear onward the crown destined for the conqueror.

“What!” I cried out. “The divinities even find their satisfaction in this good thing which I must forswear! Ah! dear lover! I can resist no longer. Come forward, Count, I’m no longer afraid of your dart. You may pierce your lover. You may even strike where you will. It’s all the same to me. I will suffer your blows trustingly, without a murmur. And to assure your victory, here! My finger is in place!”

*The Count Wins his Bet and finally Enjoys Thérèse*

What a surprise! What a joyful moment! You appeared all of a sudden, more proud, more brilliant than Mars in the painting. A light dressing gown that covered you was thrown aside.

“I had too much delicacy,” you told me, “to take advantage of the first opportunity you gave me. I was outside your door, and saw and heard everything, but I didn’t want to owe my happiness to the winning of a clever wager. I only came, my lovely Thérèse, because you called me. Have you decided?”

“Yes, dear lover!” I cried. “I am all yours. Beat me, I’m no longer afraid of your blows.”

At that very moment you fell into my arms. I seized without hesitation the arrow which, until then, had appeared so fearful
to me, and I placed it myself at the opening which it was threatening. You drove it in; your redoubled thrusts did not wrest from me the smallest cry. My attention, fixed on the idea of pleasure, did not allow me to register any sense of pain.

Our passion seemed already to have banished any philosophy of self-control, when you articulated these words with difficulty:

"I will not take advantage, Thérèse, of the full right I have earned. You are fearful of becoming a mother: I am going to spare you. The supreme pleasure is coming. Place your hand again on your conqueror as soon as I withdraw it, and help it with some squeezes to . . . it's time, my girl, I . . . from . . . pleasure . . ."

"Ah! I'm also dying!" I cried. "I feel nothing more. I . . . am . . . faint . . . ing . . ."

When I had seized his member, I pressed it lightly in my hand, which enclosed it like a case, and in which he managed to cover the distance which brought him to the threshold of voluptuousness. Afterwards we began again, and have continued to renew our pleasures in the same manner for ten years, without a problem, without a worry, without children.

Here, my dear benefactor, is what I believe you required that I write about the details of my life. How many fools—if ever this manuscript should appear—would cry out against sensuality, against the moral and metaphysical principles it contains! I would answer these fools, these clunking machines, these sorts of automatons accustomed to think with the brain of someone else, who do this or that thing only because they are told to do it—I would answer them, I say, that everything I have written is based on experience and on reason freed of all prejudice.

A Curious Reflection by Thérèse to prove that the Principles contained in her Book should contribute to the Happiness of Men

Yes, you know-nothings! Nature is an illusion, everything is the work of God. It is from Him that we take our needs: eating, drinking, and sensual enjoyment. Why then blush when we fulfill His designs? Why fear to contribute to the happiness of men by preparing for them different dishes which are apt to satisfy
Thérèse Philosophe

sensually their different appetites? Could I worry about displeasing God and men when I assert truths which can cause no harm, only enlighten?

She gives a Summary of Everything included in her Book

I'll tell you once more, you ill-humored critics: we do not think as we like. The soul has no will, and is only influenced by the senses; that is to say, by matter. Reason enlightens us, but cannot determine our actions. Self-love (the pleasure we hope for or the pain we try to avoid) is the motivating force for all our decisions. Happiness depends upon the conformation of our organs, our education, and our external sensations, and the laws of man are such that man can be happy only by observing them, by living as a gentleman. There is a God. We should love Him, for He is a supremely good and perfect Being. The rational man—the philosopher—should contribute to the happiness of society by the regularity of his morals. There is no religion, for God is sufficient unto Himself. Genuflections and grimaces, whatever we mortals have been able to invent, can do nothing to increase His glory. Moral good and evil exist only in respect to men, not at all in relation to God. If some physical ill harms someone, it is beneficial to another: doctors, attorneys, financiers live from the misfortunes of others; everything is interrelated. The laws established in each region in order to bind society together should be respected. Anyone who breaks them should be punished, because, just as example can hold in check men who are badly organized or wrongly intentioned, it is also true that the punishment of an infraction contributes to the general tranquility. Finally, kings, princes, magistrates, and all high officials, according to their rank, who serve the needs of the state, should be loved and respected, because each one of them contributes by his actions to the good of the whole.