









# Contents

## PART FIRST

PREFACE

PETTY TROUBLES OF MARRIED LIFE

THE UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL.

REVELATIONS.

AXIOMS.

THE ATTENTIONS OF A WIFE.

SMALL VEXATIONS.

THE ULTIMATUM.

WOMEN'S LOGIC.

THE JESUITISM OF WOMEN.

MEMORIES AND REGRETS.

OBSERVATIONS.

THE MATRIMONIAL GADFLY.

HARD LABOR.

FORCED SMILES.

NOSOGRAPHY OF THE VILLA.

TROUBLE WITHIN TROUBLE.

A HOUSEHOLD REVOLUTION.

THE ART OF BEING A VICTIM.

THE FRENCH CAMPAIGN.

A SOLO ON THE HEARSE.

**PART SECOND**

PREFACE

HUSBANDS DURING THE SECOND MONTH.

DISAPPOINTED AMBITION.

THE PANGS OF INNOCENCE.

THE UNIVERSAL AMADIS.

WITHOUT AN OCCUPATION.

INDISCRETIONS.

BRUTAL DISCLOSURES.

A TRUCE.

USELESS CARE.

SMOKE WITHOUT FIRE.

THE DOMESTIC TYRANT.

THE AVOWAL.

HUMILIATIONS.

THE LAST QUARREL.

A SIGNAL FAILURE.

THE CHESTNUTS IN THE FIRE.

ULTIMA RATIO.

COMMENTARY. IN WHICH IS EXPLAINED LA FELICITA OF FINALES.





## PART FIRST

### PREFACE

IN WHICH EVERY ONE WILL FIND HIS OWN IMPRESSIONS OF MARRIAGE. A friend, in speaking to you of a young woman, says: "Good family, well bred, pretty, and three hundred thousand in her own right." You have expressed a desire to meet this charming creature. Usually, chance interviews are premeditated. And you speak with this object, who has now become very timid. YOU. — "A delightful evening!" SHE. — "Oh! yes, sir." You are allowed to become the suitor of this young person. THE MOTHER-IN-LAW (to the intended groom). — "You can't imagine how susceptible the dear girl is of attachment." Meanwhile there is a delicate pecuniary question to be discussed by the two families. YOUR FATHER (to the mother-in-law). — "My property is valued at five hundred thousand francs, my dear madame!" YOUR FUTURE MOTHER-IN-LAW. — "And our house, my dear sir, is on a corner lot." A contract follows, drawn up by two hideous notaries, a small one, and a big one. Then the two families judge it necessary to convoy you to the civil magistrate's and to the church, before conducting the bride to her chamber. Then what?... Why, then come a crowd of petty unforeseen troubles, like the following:



## PETTY TROUBLES OF MARRIED LIFE

### THE UNKINDEST CUT OF ALL.

Is it a petty or a profound trouble? I knew not; it is profound for your sons-in-law or daughters-in-law, but exceedingly petty for you.

"Petty! You must be joking; why, a child costs terribly dear!" exclaims a ten-times-too-happy husband, at the baptism of his eleventh, called the little last newcomer, — a phrase with which women beguile their families.

"What trouble is this?" you ask me. Well! this is, like many petty troubles of married life, a blessing for some one.

You have, four months since, married off your daughter, whom we will call by the sweet name of CAROLINE, and whom we will make the type of all wives. Caroline is, like all other young ladies, very charming, and you have found for her a husband who is either a lawyer, a captain, an engineer, a judge, or perhaps a young viscount. But he is more likely to be what sensible families must seek, — the ideal of their desires — the only son of a rich landed proprietor. (See the *Preface*.)

This phoenix we will call ADOLPHE, whatever may be his position in the world, his age, and the color of his hair.

The lawyer, the captain, the engineer, the judge, in short, the son-in-law, Adolphe, and his family, have seen in Miss Caroline:

I. — Miss Caroline;

II. — The only daughter of your wife and you.

Here, as in the Chamber of Deputies, we are compelled to call for a division of the house:

1.—As to your wife.

Your wife is to inherit the property of a maternal uncle, a gouty old fellow whom she humors, nurses, caresses, and muffles up; to say nothing of her father's fortune. Caroline has always adored her uncle,—her uncle who trotted her on his knee, her uncle who—her uncle whom—her uncle, in short,—whose property is estimated at two hundred thousand.

Further, your wife is well preserved, though her age has been the subject of mature reflection on the part of your son-in-law's grandparents and other ancestors. After many skirmishes between the mothers-in-law, they have at last confided to each other the little secrets peculiar to women of ripe years.

"How is it with you, my dear madame?"

"I, thank heaven, have passed the period; and you?"

"I really hope I have, too!" says your wife.

"You can marry Caroline," says Adolphe's mother to your future son-in-law; "Caroline will be the sole heiress of her mother, of her uncle, and her grandfather."

2.—As to yourself.

You are also the heir of your maternal grandfather, a good old man whose possessions will surely fall to you, for he has grown imbecile, and is therefore incapable of making a will.

You are an amiable man, but you have been very dissipated in your youth. Besides, you are fifty-nine years old, and your head is bald, resembling a bare knee in the middle of a gray wig.

III.—A dowry of three hundred thousand.

IV.—Caroline's only sister, a little dunce of twelve, a sickly child, who bids fair to fill an early grave.

V.—Your own fortune, father-in-law (in certain kinds of society they say *papa father-in-law*) yielding an income of twenty thousand, and which will soon be increased by an inheritance.

VI.—Your wife's fortune, which will be increased by two inheritances—from her uncle and her grandfather. In all, thus:

Three inheritances and interest, 750,000 Your fortune, 250,000  
Your wife's fortune, 250,000 \_\_\_\_\_ Total, 1,250,000

which surely cannot take wing!

Such is the autopsy of all those brilliant marriages that conduct their processions of dancers and eaters, in white gloves, flowering at the button-hole, with bouquets of orange flowers, furbelows, veils, coaches and coach-drivers, from the magistrate's to the church, from the church to the banquet, from the banquet to the dance, from the dance to the nuptial chamber, to the music of the orchestra and the accompaniment of the immemorial pleasantries uttered by relics of dandies, for are there not, here and there in society, relics of dandies, as there are relics of English horses? To be sure, and such is the osteology of the most amorous intent.

The majority of the relatives have had a word to say about this marriage.

Those on the side of the bridegroom:

"Adolphe has made a good thing of it."

Those on the side of the bride:

"Caroline has made a splendid match. Adolphe is an only son, and will have an income of sixty thousand, *some day or other!*"

Some time afterwards, the happy judge, the happy engineer, the happy captain, the happy lawyer, the happy only son of a rich landed proprietor, in short Adolphe, comes to dine with you, accompanied by his family.

Your daughter Caroline is exceedingly proud of the somewhat rounded form of her waist. All women display an innocent artfulness, the first time they find themselves facing motherhood. Like a soldier who makes a brilliant toilet for his first battle, they love to play the pale, the suffering; they rise in a certain manner, and walk with the prettiest affectation. While yet flowers, they bear a fruit; they enjoy their maternity by anticipation. All those little ways are exceedingly charming—the first time.

Your wife, now the mother-in-law of Adolphe, subjects herself to the pressure of tight corsets. When her daughter laughs, she weeps;

when Caroline wishes her happiness public, she tries to conceal hers. After dinner, the discerning eye of the co-mother-in-law divines the work of darkness.

Your wife also is an expectant mother! The news spreads like lightning, and your oldest college friend says to you laughingly: "Ah! so you are trying to increase the population again!"

You have some hope in a consultation that is to take place tomorrow. You, kind-hearted man that you are, you turn red, you hope it is merely the dropsy; but the doctors confirm the arrival of a *little last one!*

In such circumstances some timorous husbands go to the country or make a journey to Italy. In short, a strange confusion reigns in your household; both you and your wife are in a false position.

"Why, you old rogue, you, you ought to be ashamed of yourself!" says a friend to you on the Boulevard.

"Well! do as much if you can," is your angry retort.

"It's as bad as being robbed on the highway!" says your son-in-law's family. "Robbed on the highway" is a flattering expression for the mother-in-law.

The family hopes that the child which divides the expected fortune in three parts, will be, like all old men's children, scrofulous, feeble, an abortion. Will it be likely to live? The family awaits the delivery of your wife with an anxiety like that which agitated the house of Orleans during the confinement of the Duchess de Berri: a second son would secure the throne to the younger branch without the onerous conditions of July; Henry V would easily seize the crown. From that moment the house of Orleans was obliged to play double or quits: the event gave them the game.

The mother and the daughter are put to bed nine days apart.

Caroline's first child is a pale, cadaverous little girl that will not live.

Her mother's last child is a splendid boy, weighing twelve pounds, with two teeth and luxuriant hair.

For sixteen years you have desired a son. This conjugal annoyance is the only one that makes you beside yourself with joy. For your rejuvenated wife has attained what must be called the *Indian Summer* of women; she nurses, she has a full breast of milk! Her complexion is fresh, her color is pure pink and white. In her forty-second year, she affects the young woman, buys little baby stockings, walks about followed by a nurse, embroiders caps and tries on the cunningest headdresses. Alexandrine has resolved to instruct her daughter by her example; she is delightful and happy. And yet this is a trouble, a petty one for you, a serious one for your son-in-law. This annoyance is of the two sexes, it is common to you and your wife. In short, in this instance, your paternity renders you all the more proud from the fact that it is incontestable, my dear sir!



## REVELATIONS.

Generally speaking, a young woman does not exhibit her true character till she has been married two or three years. She hides her faults, without intending it, in the midst of her first joys, of her first parties of pleasure. She goes into society to dance, she visits her relatives to show you off, she journeys on with an escort of love's first wiles; she is gradually transformed from girlhood to womanhood. Then she becomes mother and nurse, and in this situation, full of charming pangs, that leaves neither a word nor a moment for observation, such are its multiplied cares, it is impossible to judge of a woman. You require, then, three or four years of intimate life before you discover an exceedingly melancholy fact, one that gives you cause for constant terror.

Your wife, the young lady in whom the first pleasures of life and love supplied the place of grace and wit, so arch, so animated, so vivacious, whose least movements spoke with delicious eloquence, has cast off, slowly, one by one, her natural artifices. At last you perceive the truth! You try to disbelieve it, you think yourself deceived; but no: Caroline lacks intellect, she is dull, she can neither joke nor reason, sometimes she has little tact. You are frightened. You find yourself forever obliged to lead this darling through the thorny paths, where you must perforce leave your self-esteem in tatters.

You have already been annoyed several times by replies that, in society, were politely received: people have held their tongues instead of smiling; but you were certain that after your departure the women looked at each other and said: "Did you hear Madame Adolphe?"

"Your little woman, she is—"

"A regular cabbage-head."

"How could he, who is certainly a man of sense, choose—?"

"He should educate, teach his wife, or make her hold her tongue."



## AXIOMS.

Axiom.—In our system of civilization a man is entirely responsible for his wife.

Axiom.—The husband does not mould the wife.

Caroline has one day obstinately maintained, at the house of Madame de Fischtaminel, a very distinguished lady, that her little last one resembled neither its father nor its mother, but looked like a certain friend of the family. She perhaps enlightens Monsieur de Fischtaminel, and overthrows the labors of three years, by tearing down the scaffolding of Madame de Fischtaminel's assertions, who, after this visit, will treat you with coolness, suspecting, as she does, that you have been making indiscreet remarks to your wife.

On another occasion, Caroline, after having conversed with a writer about his works, counsels the poet, who is already a prolific author, to try to write something likely to live. Sometimes she complains of the slow attendance at the tables of people who have but one servant and have put themselves to great trouble to receive her. Sometimes she speaks ill of widows who marry again, before Madame Deschars who has married a third time, and on this occasion, an ex-notary, Nicolas-Jean-Jerome-Nepomucene-Ange-Marie-Victor-Joseph Deschars, a friend of your father's.

In short, you are no longer yourself when you are in society with your wife. Like a man who is riding a skittish horse and glares straight between the beast's two ears, you are absorbed by the attention with which you listen to your Caroline.

In order to compensate herself for the silence to which young ladies are condemned, Caroline talks; or rather babbles. She wants to make a sensation, and she does make a sensation; nothing stops her. She addresses the most eminent men, the most celebrated women. She introduces herself, and puts you on the rack. Going into society is going to the stake.

She begins to think you are cross-grained, moody. The fact is, you are watching her, that's all! In short, you keep her within a small

circle of friends, for she has already embroiled you with people on whom your interests depended.

How many times have you recoiled from the necessity of a remonstrance, in the morning, on awakening, when you had put her in a good humor for listening! A woman rarely listens. How many times have you recoiled from the burthen of your imperious obligations!

The conclusion of your ministerial communication can be no other than: "You have no sense." You foresee the effect of your first lesson. Caroline will say to herself: "Ah I have no sense! Haven't I thought?"

No woman ever takes this in good part. Both of you must draw the sword and throw away the scabbard. Six weeks after, Caroline may prove to you that she has quite sense enough to *minotaurize* you without your perceiving it.

Frightened at such a prospect, you make use of all the eloquent phrases to gild this pill. In short, you find the means of flattering Caroline's various self-loves, for:

Axiom. — A married woman has several self-loves.

You say that you are her best friend, the only one well situated to enlighten her; the more careful you are, the more watchful and puzzled she is. At this moment she has plenty of sense.

You ask your dear Caroline, whose waist you clasp, how she, who is so brilliant when alone with you, who retorts so charmingly (you remind her of sallies that she has never made, which you put in her mouth, and, which she smilingly accepts), how she can say this, that, and the other, in society. She is, doubtless, like many ladies, timid in company.

"I know," you say, "many very distinguished men who are just the same."

You cite the case of some who are admirable tea-party oracles, but who cannot utter half a dozen sentences in the tribune. Caroline should keep watch over herself; you vaunt silence as the surest method of being witty. In society, a good listener is highly prized.