HONORÉ DE BALZAC

PETTY TROUBLES OF MARRIED LIFE, FIRST PART

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Содержание

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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 to-morrow. 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 will 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 though?"

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.

You have broken the ice, though you have not even scratched its glossy surface: you have placed your hand upon the croup of the most ferocious and savage, the most wakeful and clear-sighted, the most restless, the swiftest, the most jealous, the

most ardent and violent, the simplest and most elegant, the most unreasonable, the most watchful chimera of the moral world – THE VANITY OF A WOMAN!

Caroline clasps you in her arms with a saintly embrace, thanks you for your advice, and loves you the more for it; she wishes to be beholden to you for everything, even for her intellect; she may be a dunce, but, what is better than saying fine things, she knows how to do them! But she desires also to be your pride! It is not a question of taste in dress, of elegance and beauty; she wishes to make you proud of her intelligence. You are the luckiest of men in having successfully managed to escape from this first dangerous pass in conjugal life.

"We are going this evening to Madame Deschars', where they never know what to do to amuse themselves; they play all sorts of forfeit games on account of a troop of young women and girls there; you shall see!" she says.

You are so happy at this turn of affairs, that you hum airs and carelessly chew bits of straw and thread, while still in your shirt and drawers. You are like a hare frisking on a flowering dew-perfumed meadow. You leave off your morning gown till the last extremity, when breakfast is on the table. During the day, if you meet a friend and he happens to speak of women, you defend them; you consider women charming, delicious, there is something divine about them.

How often are our opinions dictated to us by the unknown events of our life!

You take your wife to Madame Deschars'. Madame Deschars is a mother and is exceedingly devout. You never see any newspapers at her house: she keeps watch over her daughters by three different husbands, and keeps them all the more closely from the fact that she herself has, it is said, some little things to reproach herself with during the career of her two former lords. At her house, no one dares risk a jest. Everything there is white and pink and perfumed with sanctity, as at the houses of widows who are approaching the confines of their third youth. It seems as if every day were Sunday there.

You, a young husband, join the juvenile society of young women and girls, misses and young people, in the chamber of Madame Deschars. The serious people, politicians, whist-players, and tea-drinkers, are in the parlor.

In Madame Deschars' room they are playing a game which consists in hitting upon words with several meanings, to fit the answers that each player is to make to the following questions:

How do you like it?

What do you do with it?

Where do you put it?

Your turn comes to guess the word, you go into the parlor, take part in a discussion, and return at the call of a smiling young lady. They have selected a word that may be applied to the most enigmatical replies. Everybody knows that, in order to puzzle the strongest heads, the best way is to choose a very ordinary word, and to invent phrases that will send the parlor Oedipus a thousand

leagues from each of his previous thoughts.

This game is a poor substitute for lansquenet or dice, but it is not very expensive.

The word MAL has been made the Sphinx of this particular occasion. Every one has determined to put you off the scent. The word, among other acceptations, has that of *mal* [evil], a substantive that signifies, in aesthetics, the opposite of good; of *mal* [pain, disease, complaint], a substantive that enters into a thousand pathological expressions; then *malle* [a mail-bag], and finally *malle* [a trunk], that box of various forms, covered with all kinds of skin, made of every sort of leather, with handles, that journeys rapidly, for it serves to carry travelling effects in, as a man of Delille's school would say.

For you, a man of some sharpness, the Sphinx displays his wiles; he spreads his wings and folds them up again; he shows you his lion's paws, his woman's neck, his horse's loins, and his intellectual head; he shakes his sacred fillets, he strikes an attitude and runs away, he comes and goes, and sweeps the place with his terrible equine tail; he shows his shining claws, and draws them in; he smiles, frisks, and murmurs. He puts on the looks of a joyous child and those of a matron; he is, above all, there to make fun of you.

You ask the group collectively, "How do you like it?"

"I like it for love's sake," says one.

"I like it regular," says another.

"I like it with a long mane."

"I like it with a spring lock."

"I like it unmasked."

"I like it on horseback."

"I like it as coming from God," says Madame Deschars.

"How do you like it?" you say to your wife.

"I like it legitimate."

This response of your wife is not understood, and sends you a journey into the constellated fields of the infinite, where the mind, dazzled by the multitude of creations, finds it impossible to make a choice.

"Where do you put it?"

"In a carriage."

"In a garret."

"In a steamboat."

"In the closet."

"On a cart."

"In prison."

"In the ears."

"In a shop."

Your wife says to you last of all: "In bed."

You were on the point of guessing it, but you know no word that fits this answer, Madame Deschars not being likely to have allowed anything improper.

"What do you do with it?"

"I make it my sole happiness," says your wife, after the answers of all the rest, who have sent you spinning through a

whole world of linguistic suppositions.

This response strikes everybody, and you especially; so you persist in seeking the meaning of it. You think of the bottle of hot water that your wife has put to her feet when it is cold, – of the warming pan, above all! Now of her night-cap, – of her handkerchief, – of her curling paper, – of the hem of her chemise, – of her embroidery, – of her flannel jacket, – of your bandanna, – of the pillow.

In short, as the greatest pleasure of the respondents is to see their Oedipus mystified, as each word guessed by you throws them into fits of laughter, superior men, perceiving no word that will fit all the explanations, will sooner give it up than make three unsuccessful attempts. According to the law of this innocent game you are condemned to return to the parlor after leaving a forfeit; but you are so exceedingly puzzled by your wife's answers, that you ask what the word was.

"Mal," exclaims a young miss.

You comprehend everything but your wife's replies: she has not played the game. Neither Madame Deschars, nor any one of the young women understand. She has cheated. You revolt, there is an insurrection among the girls and young women. They seek and are puzzled. You want an explanation, and every one participates in your desire.

"In what sense did you understand the word, my dear?" you say to Caroline.

"Why, *male*!" [male.]

Madame Deschars bites her lips and manifests the greatest displeasure; the young women blush and drop their eyes; the little girls open theirs, nudge each other and prick up their ears. Your feet are glued to the carpet, and you have so much salt in your throat that you believe in a repetition of the event which delivered Lot from his wife.

You see an infernal life before you; society is out of the question.

To remain at home with this triumphant stupidity is equivalent to condemnation to the state's prison.

Axiom. – Moral tortures exceed physical sufferings by all the difference which exists between the soul and the body.

THE ATTENTIONS OF A WIFE

Among the keenest pleasures of bachelor life, every man reckons the independence of his getting up. The fancies of the morning compensate for the glooms of evening. A bachelor turns over and over in his bed: he is free to gape loud enough to justify apprehensions of murder, and to scream at a pitch authorizing the suspicion of joys untold. He can forget his oaths of the day before, let the fire burn upon the hearth and the candle sink to its socket, – in short, go to sleep again in spite of pressing work. He can curse the expectant boots which stand holding their black mouths open at him and pricking up their ears. He can pretend not to see the steel hooks which glitter in a sunbeam which has stolen through the curtains, can disregard the sonorous summons of the obstinate clock, can bury himself in a soft place, saying: "Yes, I was in a hurry, yesterday, but am so no longer to-day. Yesterday was a dotard. To-day is a sage: between them stands the night which brings wisdom, the night which gives light. I ought to go, I ought to do it, I promised I would – I am weak, I know. But how can I resist the downy creases of my bed? My feet feel flaccid, I think I must be sick, I am too happy just here. I long to see the ethereal horizon of my dreams again, those women without claws, those winged beings and their obliging ways. In short, I have found the grain of salt to put upon the tail of that bird that was always flying away: the coquette's feet are caught

in the line. I have her now – "

Your servant, meantime, reads your newspaper, half-opens your letters, and leaves you to yourself. And you go to sleep again, lulled by the rumbling of the morning wagons. Those terrible, vexatious, quivering teams, laden with meat, those trucks with big tin teats bursting with milk, though they make a clatter most infernal and even crush the paving stones, seem to you to glide over cotton, and vaguely remind you of the orchestra of Napoleon Musard. Though your house trembles in all its timbers and shakes upon its keel, you think yourself a sailor cradled by a zephyr.

You alone have the right to bring these joys to an end by throwing away your night-cap as you twist up your napkin after dinner, and by sitting up in bed. Then you take yourself to task with such reproaches as these: "Ah, mercy on me, I must get up!" "Early to bed and early to rise, makes a man healthy – !" "Get up, lazy bones!"

All this time you remain perfectly tranquil. You look round your chamber, you collect your wits together. Finally, you emerge from the bed, spontaneously! Courageously! of your own accord! You go to the fireplace, you consult the most obliging of timepieces, you utter hopeful sentences thus couched: "Whatshisname is a lazy creature, I guess I shall find him in. I'll run. I'll catch him if he's gone. He's sure to wait for me. There is a quarter of an hour's grace in all appointments, even between debtor and creditor."

You put on your boots with fury, you dress yourself as if you were afraid of being caught half-dressed, you have the delight of being in a hurry, you call your buttons into action, you finally go out like a conqueror, whistling, brandishing your cane, pricking up your ears and breaking into a canter.

After all, you say to yourself, you are responsible to no one, you are your own master!

But you, poor married man, you were stupid enough to say to your wife, "To-morrow, my dear" (sometimes she knows it two days beforehand), "I have got to get up early." Unfortunate Adolphe, you have especially proved the importance of this appointment: "It's to – and to – and above all to – in short to – "

Two hours before dawn, Caroline wakes you up gently and says to you softly: "Adolphy dear, Adolphy love!"

"What's the matter? Fire?"

"No, go to sleep again, I've made a mistake; but the hour hand was on it, any way! It's only four, you can sleep two hours more."

Is not telling a man, "You've only got two hours to sleep," the same thing, on a small scale, as saying to a criminal, "It's five in the morning, the ceremony will be performed at half-past seven"? Such sleep is troubled by an idea dressed in grey and furnished with wings, which comes and flaps, like a bat, upon the windows of your brain.

A woman in a case like this is as exact as a devil coming to claim a soul he has purchased. When the clock strikes five, your wife's voice, too well known, alas! resounds in your ear;

she accompanies the stroke, and says with an atrocious calmness, "Adolphe, it's five o'clock, get up, dear."

"Ye-e-e-s, ah-h-h-h!"

"Adolphe, you'll be late for your business, you said so yourself."

"Ah-h-h-h, ye-e-e-e-s." You turn over in despair.

"Come, come, love. I got everything ready last night; now you must, my dear; do you want to miss him? There, up, I say; it's broad daylight."

Caroline throws off the blankets and gets up: she wants to show you that *she* can rise without making a fuss. She opens the blinds, she lets in the sun, the morning air, the noise of the street, and then comes back.

"Why, Adolphe, you *must* get up! Who ever would have supposed you had no energy! But it's just like you men! I am only a poor, weak woman, but when I say a thing, I do it."

You get up grumbling, execrating the sacrament of marriage. There is not the slightest merit in your heroism; it wasn't you, but your wife, that got up. Caroline gets you everything you want with provoking promptitude; she foresees everything, she gives you a muffler in winter, a blue-striped cambric shirt in summer, she treats you like a child; you are still asleep, she dresses you and has all the trouble. She finally thrusts you out of doors. Without her nothing would go straight! She calls you back to give you a paper, a pocketbook, you had forgotten. You don't think of anything, she thinks of everything!

You return five hours afterwards to breakfast, between eleven and noon. The chambermaid is at the door, or on the stairs, or on the landing, talking with somebody's valet: she runs in on hearing or seeing you. Your servant is laying the cloth in a most leisurely style, stopping to look out of the window or to lounge, and coming and going like a person who knows he has plenty of time. You ask for your wife, supposing that she is up and dressed.

"Madame is still in bed," says the maid.

You find your wife languid, lazy, tired and asleep. She had been awake all night to wake you in the morning, so she went to bed again, and is quite hungry now.

You are the cause of all these disarrangements. If breakfast is not ready, she says it's because you went out. If she is not dressed, and if everything is in disorder, it's all your fault. For everything which goes awry she has this answer: "Well, you would get up so early!" "He would get up so early!" is the universal reason. She makes you go to bed early, because you got up early. She can do nothing all day, because you would get up so unusually early.

Eighteen months afterwards, she still maintains, "Without me, you would never get up!" To her friends she says, "My husband get up! If it weren't for me, he never *would* get up!"

To this a man whose hair is beginning to whiten, replies, "A graceful compliment to you, madame!" This slightly indelicate comment puts an end to her boasts.

This petty trouble, repeated several times, teaches you to live alone in the bosom of your family, not to tell all you know, and

to have no confidant but yourself: and it often seems to you a question whether the inconveniences of the married state do not exceed its advantages.

SMALL VEXATIONS

You have made a transition from the frolicsome allegretto of the bachelor to the heavy andante of the father of a family.

Instead of that fine English steed prancing and snorting between the polished shafts of a tilbury as light as your own heart, and moving his glistening croup under the quadruple network of the reins and ribbons that you so skillfully manage with what grace and elegance the Champs Elysees can bear witness – you drive a good solid Norman horse with a steady, family gait.

You have learned what paternal patience is, and you let no opportunity slip of proving it. Your countenance, therefore, is serious.

By your side is a domestic, evidently for two purposes like the carriage. The vehicle is four-wheeled and hung upon English springs: it is corpulent and resembles a Rouen scow: it has glass windows, and an infinity of economical arrangements. It is a barouche in fine weather, and a brougham when it rains. It is apparently light, but, when six persons are in it, it is heavy and tires out your only horse.

On the back seat, spread out like flowers, is your young wife in full bloom, with her mother, a big marshmallow with a great many leaves. These two flowers of the female species twitteringly talk of you, though the noise of the wheels and your attention to the horse, joined to your fatherly caution, prevent you from

hearing what they say.

On the front seat, there is a nice tidy nurse holding a little girl in her lap: by her side is a boy in a red plaited shirt, who is continually leaning out of the carriage and climbing upon the cushions, and who has a thousand times drawn down upon himself those declarations of every mother, which he knows to be threats and nothing else: "Be a good boy, Adolphe, or else – " "I declare I'll never bring you again, so there!"

His mamma is secretly tired to death of this noisy little boy: he has provoked her twenty times, and twenty times the face of the little girl asleep has calmed her.

"I am his mother," she says to herself. And so she finally manages to keep her little Adolphe quiet.

You have put your triumphant idea of taking your family to ride into execution. You left your home in the morning, all the opposite neighbors having come to their windows, envying you the privilege which your means give you of going to the country and coming back again without undergoing the miseries of a public conveyance. So you have dragged your unfortunate Norman horse through Paris to Vincennes, from Vincennes to Saint Maur, from Saint Maur to Charenton, from Charenton opposite some island or other which struck your wife and mother-in-law as being prettier than all the landscapes through which you had driven them.

"Let's go to Maison's!" somebody exclaims.

So you go to Maison's, near Alfort. You come home by the left

bank of the Seine, in the midst of a cloud of very black Olympian dust. The horse drags your family wearily along. But alas! your pride has fled, and you look without emotion upon his sunken flanks, and upon two bones which stick out on each side of his belly. His coat is roughened by the sweat which has repeatedly come out and dried upon him, and which, no less than the dust, has made him gummy, sticky and shaggy. The horse looks like a wrathy porcupine: you are afraid he will be foundered, and you caress him with the whip-lash in a melancholy way that he perfectly understands, for he moves his head about like an omnibus horse, tired of his deplorable existence.

You think a good deal of this horse; your consider him an excellent one and he cost you twelve hundred francs. When a man has the honor of being the father of a family, he thinks as much of twelve hundred francs as you think of this horse. You see at once the frightful amount of your extra expenses, in case Coco should have to lie by. For two days you will have to take hackney coaches to go to your business. You wife will pout if she can't go out: but she will go out, and take a carriage. The horse will cause the purchase of numerous extras, which you will find in your coachman's bill, – your only coachman, a model coachman, whom you watch as you do a model anybody.

To these thoughts you give expression in the gentle movement of the whip as it falls upon the animal's ribs, up to his knees in the black dust which lines the road in front of La Verrerie.

At this moment, little Adolphe, who doesn't know what to do

in this rolling box, has sadly twisted himself up into a corner, and his grandmother anxiously asks him, "What is the matter?"

"I'm hungry," says the child.

"He's hungry," says the mother to her daughter.

"And why shouldn't he be hungry? It is half-past five, we are not at the barrier, and we started at two!"

"Your husband might have treated us to dinner in the country."

"He'd rather make his horse go a couple of leagues further, and get back to the house."

"The cook might have had the day to herself. But Adolphe is right, after all: it's cheaper to dine at home," adds the mother-in-law.

"Adolphe," exclaims your wife, stimulated by the word "cheaper," "we go so slow that I shall be seasick, and you keep driving right in this nasty dust. What are you thinking of? My gown and hat will be ruined!"

"Would you rather ruin the horse?" you ask, with the air of a man who can't be answered.

"Oh, no matter for your horse; just think of your son who is dying of hunger: he hasn't tasted a thing for seven hours. Whip up your old horse! One would really think you cared more for your nag than for your child!"

You dare not give your horse a single crack with the whip, for he might still have vigor enough left to break into a gallop and run away.

"No, Adolphe tries to vex me, he's going slower," says the

young wife to her mother. "My dear, go as slow as you like. But I know you'll say I am extravagant when you see me buying another hat."

Upon this you utter a series of remarks which are lost in the racket made by the wheels.

"What's the use of replying with reasons that haven't got an ounce of common-sense?" cries Caroline.

You talk, turning your face to the carriage and then turning back to the horse, to avoid an accident.

"That's right, run against somebody and tip us over, do, you'll be rid of us. Adolphe, your son is dying of hunger. See how pale he is!"

"But Caroline," puts in the mother-in-law, "he's doing the best he can."

Nothing annoys you so much as to have your mother-in-law take your part. She is a hypocrite and is delighted to see you quarreling with her daughter. Gently and with infinite precaution she throws oil on the fire.

When you arrive at the barrier, your wife is mute. She says not a word, she sits with her arms crossed, and will not look at you. You have neither soul, heart, nor sentiment. No one but you could have invented such a party of pleasure. If you are unfortunate enough to remind Caroline that it was she who insisted on the excursion, that morning, for her children's sake, and in behalf of her milk – she nurses the baby – you will be overwhelmed by an avalanche of frigid and stinging reproaches.

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