VARIOUS

THE PUBLIC VS. M. GUSTAVE FLAUBERT

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The Public vs. M. Gustave Flaubert / Various — «Public Domain»,

Содержание

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The folios referred to in the trial are the folios either of the *Revue de Paris* or of the first edition of the book.—EDITOR.

Speech of the Prosecuting Attorney,

M. ERNEST PINARD

Gentlemen, in entering upon this debate, the Public Attorney is in the presence of a difficulty which he cannot ignore. It cannot be put even in the nature of a condemnation, since offenses to public morals and to religion are somewhat vague and elastic expressions which it would be necessary to define precisely. Nevertheless, when we speak to right-minded, practical men we are sure of being sufficiently understood to distinguish whether a certain page of a book carries an attack against religion and morals or not. The difficulty is not in arousing a prejudice, it is far more in explaining the work of which you are to judge. It deals entirely with romance. If it were a newspaper article which we were bringing before you, it could be seen at once where the fault began and where it ended; it would simply be read by the ministry and submitted to you for judgment. Here we are not concerned with a newspaper article, but entirely with a romance, which begins the first of October, finishes the fifteenth of December, and is composed of six numbers, in the *Revue de Paris*, 1856. What is to be done in such a case? What is the duty of the Public Ministry? To read the whole romance? That is impossible. On the other hand, to read only the incriminating texts would expose us to deep reproach. They could say to us: If you do not show the case in all its parts, if you pass over that which precedes and that which follows the incriminating passages, it is evident that you wish to suppress the debate by restricting the ground of discussion. In order to avoid this twofold difficulty, there is but one course to follow, and that is, to relate to you the whole story of the romance without reading any of it, or pointing out any incriminating passage; then to cite incriminating texts, and finally to answer the objections that may arise against the general method of indictment.

What is the title of the romance? *Madame Bovary*. This title in itself explains nothing. There is a second in parentheses: *Provincial Morals and Customs*. This is also a title which does not explain the thought of the author but which gives some intimation of it. The author does not endeavour to follow such or such a system of philosophy, true or false; he endeavours to produce certain pictures, and you shall see what kind of pictures! Without doubt, it is the husband who begins and who terminates the book; but the most serious portrait of the work, the one that illumines the other paintings, is that of Madame Bovary.

Here I relate, I do not cite. It takes the husband first at college, and it must be stated that the boy already gave evidence of the kind of husband he would make. He is excessively heavy and timid, so timid that when he arrives at the college and is asked his name, he responds: "*Charbovari*" He is so dull that he works continually without advancing. He is never the first, nor is he the last in his class; he is the type, if not of the cipher at least of the laughing-stock of the college. After finishing his studies here, he goes to study medicine at Rouen, in a fourth-story room overlooking the Seine, which his mother rented for him, in the house of a dyer of her acquaintance. Here he studies his medical books, and arrives little by little, not at the degree of doctor of medicine, but that of health officer. He frequented the inns, failed in his studies, but as for the rest, he had no other passion than that of playing dominoes. This is M. Bovary.

The time comes for him to marry. His mother finds him a wife in the widow of a sheriff's officer of Dieppe; she is virtuous and plain, is forty-five years old, and has six thousand a year income. Only, the lawyer who had her capital to invest set out one fine morning for America, and the younger Madame Bovary was so much affected, so struck down by this unexpected blow that she died of it. Here we have the first marriage and the first scene.

M. Bovary, now being a widower, begins to think of marrying again. He questions his memory; there is no need of going far; there immediately comes to his mind the daughter of a neighboring farmer, Mile. Emma Rouault, who had strangely aroused Madame Bovary's suspicions. Farmer Rouault had but one daughter, and she had been brought up by the Ursuline sisters at Rouen. She was little interested in matters of the farm; her father was anxious for her to marry. The health

officer presented himself, there was no difficulty about the *dot*, and you understand that with such a disposition on both sides, these things are quickly settled. The marriage takes place. M. Bovary is at his wife's knees, is the happiest of men and the blindest of husbands. His sole occupation is anticipating his wife's wishes.

Here the rôle of M. Bovary ends; that of Madame Bovary becomes the serious work of the book.

Gentlemen, does Madame Bovary love her husband, or try to love him? No; and from the beginning there has been what we might call the scene of initiation. From the moment of her marriage, another horizon stretched itself out before her, a new life appeared to her. The proprietor of Vaubyessard Castle gave a grand entertainment. He invited the health officer and his wife, and this was for her an initiation into all the ardour of voluptuousness! There she discovered the Duke of Laverdière who had had some success at Court; she waltzed with a viscount and experienced an unusual disturbance of mind. From this moment she lived a new life; her husband and all her surroundings became insupportable to her. One day, in looking over some furniture, she hit a piece of wire which tore her finger; it was the wire from her wedding bouquet.

To try to dispel the *ennui* that was consuming her, M. Bovary sacrificed his office and established himself at Yonville. Here was the scene of the first fall. We are now in the second number. Madame arrived at Yonville, and there, the first person she met upon whom she could fix her attention was—not the notary of the place, but the only clerk of that notary, Léon Dupuis. This is a young man who is making his own way and is about to set out for the capital. Any other than M. Bovary would have been disquieted by the visits of the young clerk, but M. Bovary is so ingenuous that he believes in his wife's virtue. Léon, wholly inexperienced, has the same idea. He goes away, and the occasion is lost; but occasions are easily found again.

There was in the neighborhood of Yonville one Rodolphe Boulanger (you understand that I am narrating). He was a man of thirty-four years old and of a brutal temperament; he had had much success and many easy conquests; he then had an actress for a mistress. He saw Madame Bovary; she was young and charming; he resolved to make her his mistress. The thing was easy; three meetings were sufficient to bring it about. The first time he came to an agricultural meeting, the second time he paid her a visit, the third time he accompanied her on a horseback ride which her husband judged necessary to her health; it was then, in a first visit to the forest, that the fall took place. Their meetings multiplied after this, at Rodolphe's chateau and in the health officer's garden. The lovers reached the extreme limits of voluptuousness! Madame Bovary wished to elope with Rodolphe, but while Rodolphe dared not say no, he wrote a letter in which he tried to show her that for many reasons, he could not elope. Stricken down by the reception of this letter, Madame Bovary had a brain fever, following which typhoid fever declared itself. The fever killed the love, but the malady remained. This is the second scene.

We come now to the third scene. The fall with Rodolphe was followed by a religious reaction, but it was short; Madame Bovary was about to fall anew. The husband thought the theatre useful in the convalescence of his wife and took her to Rouen. In a box opposite that occupied by M. and Madame Bovary, was Léon Dupuis, the notary's young clerk, who had made his way to Paris, and who had now become strangely experienced and knowing. He went to see Madame Bovary and proposed a *rendezvous*. Madame Bovary suggested the cathedral. On coming out of the cathedral, Léon proposed that they take a cab. She resisted at first, but Léon told her that this was done in Paris, and there was no further obstacle. The fall takes place in the cab! Meetings follow for Léon, as for Rodolphe, at the health officer's house, and then at a room which they rented in Rouen. Finally, she became weary of the second love, and here begins the scene of distress; it is the last of the romance.

Madame Bovary was prodigal, having lavished gifts upon Rodolphe and Léon; she had led a life of luxury and, in order to meet such expense had put her name to a number of promissory notes. She had obtained a power of attorney from her husband in the management of their common

patrimony, fell in with a usurer who discounted the notes which, not being paid at the expiration of the time, were renewed under the name of a boon companion. Then came the stamped paper, the protests, judgments and executions, and, finally, the posting for sale of the furniture of Monsieur Bovary, who knew nothing of all this. Reduced to the most cruel extremities, Madame Bovary asked money from everybody, but got none. Léon had nothing, and recoiled frightened at the idea of a crime that was suggested to him for procuring funds. Having gone through every degree of humiliation, Madame Bovary turned to Rodolphe; she was not successful; Rodolphe did not have 3000 francs. There remained to her but one course: to beg her husband's pardon? No. To explain the matter to him? No, for this husband would be generous enough to pardon her, and that was a humiliation which she could not accept: she must poison herself.

We come now to grievous scenes. The husband is there beside his wife's icy body. He has her night robe brought, orders her wrapped in it and her remains placed in a triple coffin.

One day he opens a secretary and there finds Rodolphe's picture, his letters and Léon's. Do you think his love is then shattered? No, no! on the contrary, he is excited and extols this woman whom others have possessed, as proved by these souvenirs of voluptuousness which she had left to him; and from that moment he neglects his office, his family, lets go to the winds the last vestige of his patrimony, and is found dead one day in the arbor in his garden, holding in his hand a long lock of black hair. This is the romance. I have related it to you, suppressing no scene in it. It is called *Madame Bovary*. You could with justice give it another title and call it. *Story of the Adulteries of a Provincial Woman*.

Gentlemen, the first part of my task is fulfilled. I have related, I shall now cite, and after the citations come the indictments which are brought upon two counts: offense against public morals and offense against religious morals. The offense against public morals lies in the lascivious pictures which I have brought before your eyes; the offense against religious morals consists in mingling voluptuous images with sacred things. I now come to the citations. I will be brief, for you will read the entire romance. I shall limit myself to citing four scenes, or rather four tableaux. The first will be that of the fall with Rodolphe; the second, the religious reaction between the two adulteries; the third, the fall with Léon, which is the second adultery, and finally the fourth, the death of Madame Bovary.

Before raising the curtain on these four pictures, permit me to inquire what colour, what stroke of the brush M. Flaubert employs—for this romance is a picture, and it is necessary to know to what school he belongs—what colour he uses and what sort of portrait he makes of his heroine.

The general colour of the author, allow me to tell you, is a lascivious colour, before, during, and after the falls! When she is a child ten or twelve years of age, she is at the Ursuline convent. At this age, when the young girl is not formed, when the woman cannot feel those emotions which reveal to her a new world, she goes to confession:

"When she went to confession, she invented little sins in order that she might stay there longer, kneeling in the shadow, her hands joined, her face against the grating beneath the whispering of the priest. The comparisons of betrothed, husband, celestial lover, and eternal marriage, that recur in sermons, stirred within her soul depths of unexpected sweetness."

Is it natural for a little girl to invent small sins, since we know that for a child the smallest sins are confessed with the greatest difficulty? And again, at this age, when a little girl is not formed, does it not make what I have called a lascivious picture to show her inventing little sins in the shadow, under the whisperings of the priest, recalling comparisons she has heard about the affianced, the celestial lover and eternal marriage which gave her a shiver of voluptuousness?

Would you see Madame Bovary in her lesser acts, in a free state, without a lover and without sin? I pass over those words, "the next day," and that bride who left nothing to be discovered which could be divined or found out, as the phrase in itself is more than equivocal; but we shall see how it was with the husband:

The husband of the next day, "whom one would have taken for an old maid," the bridegroom of this bride who "left nothing to be discovered that could be divined," arose and went out, "his heart full of the felicities of the night, with mind tranquil and flesh content," going about "ruminating upon his happiness like one who is still enjoying after dinner the taste of the truffles he is digesting."

It now remains, gentlemen, to determine upon the literary stamp of M. Flaubert and upon the strokes of his brush. Now, at the Castle Vaubyessard do you know what most attracted this young woman, what struck her most forcibly? It is always the same thing—the Duke of Laverdiere, as a lover—"as they say, of Marie-Antoinette, between the Messrs. de Coigny and de Lauzun." "Emma's eyes turned upon him of their own accord, as upon something extraordinary and august; he had lived at Court and slept in the bed of queens!" Can it be said that this is only an historic parenthesis? Sad and useless parenthesis! History can authorise suspicions, but has not the right to establish them as fact. History has spoken of the necklace in all romances; history has spoken of a thousand things; but these are only suspicions and, I repeat, I know not by what authority these suspicions should be established as facts. And, since Marie-Antoinette died with the dignity of a sovereign and the calmness of a Christian, her life-blood should efface faults of which there are the strongest suspicions. M. Flaubert was in need of a striking example in the painting of his heroine, but Heaven knows why he has taken this one to express, all at once, the perverse instincts and the ambition of Madame Bovary!

Madame Bovary dances very well, and here she is waltzing:

"They began slowly, then went more rapidly. They turned; all around them was turning—the lamps, the furniture, the wainscoting, the floor, like a disc on a pivot. On passing near the doors the bottom of Emma's dress caught against his trousers. Their legs commingled; he looked down at her; she raised her eyes to his. A torpor seized her; she stopped. They started again, and with a more rapid movement; the Viscount, dragging her along, disappeared with her to the end of the gallery, where, panting, she almost fell, and for a moment rested her head upon his breast. And then, still turning, but more slowly, he guided her back to her seat. She leant back against the wall and covered her eyes with her hands."

I know well that the waltz is more or less like this, but that makes it no more moral!

Take Madame Bovary in her most simple acts, and we have always the same stroke of the brush, on every page. Even Justin, the neighbouring chemist's boy, undergoes some astonishment when he is initiated into the secrets of this woman's toilette. He carries his voluptuous admiration as far as the kitchen.

"With his elbows on the long board on which she was ironing, he greedily watched all these women's clothes spread out about him, the dimity petticoats, the fichus, the collars, and the drawers with running-strings, wide at the hips and growing narrower below.

"What is that for?" asked the young fellow, passing his hand over the crinoline or the hooks and eyes.

"'Why, haven't you ever seen anything?' Félicité answered laughing. 'As if your mistress, Madame Homais, didn't wear the same.'"

The husband also asks, in the presence of this fresh-smelling woman, whether the odour comes from the skin or from the chemise.

"Every evening he found a blazing fire, his dinner ready, easy-chairs, and a well-dressed woman, charming with an odour of freshness, though no one could say whence the perfume came, or if it were not her skin that made odourous her chemise."

Enough of quotations in detail! You know now the physiognomy of Madame Bovary in repose, when she is inciting no one, when she does not sin, when she is still completely innocent, and when, on her return from a rendezvous, she is by the side of her husband, whom she detests; you know now the general colour of the picture, the general physiognomy of Madame Bovary. The author has taken the greatest care, employed all the prestige of his style in painting the portrait of this woman. Has he tried to show her on the side of intelligence? Never. From the side of the heart? Not at all. On the

part of mind? No. From the side of physical beauty? Not even that. Oh! I know very well that the portrait of Madame Bovary after the adultery is most brilliant; but the picture is above all lascivious, the post is voluptuous, the beauty a beauty of provocation.

I come now to the four important quotations; I shall make but four; I hold to my outline: I have said that the first would be the love for Rodolphe, the second the religious reaction, the third the love for Léon, the fourth her death.

Here is the first. Madame Bovary is near her fall, nearly ready to succumb.

"Domestic mediocrity drove her to lewd fancies, marriage tendernesses to adulterous desires. She would have liked Charles to beat her, that she might have a better right to hate him, to revenge herself upon him."

What was it that seduced Rodolphe and prepared him? The opening of Madame Bovary's dress which had burst in places along the seams of the corsage. Rodolphe took his servant to Bovary's house, to bleed him. The servant was very ill, and Madame Bovary held the basin.

"Madame Bovary took the basin to put it under the table. With the movement she made in bending down, her skirt (it was a summer frock with four flounces, yellow, long in the waist and wide in the skirt) spread out around her on the flags of the room; and as Emma, stooping, staggered a little as she stretched out her arms, the stuff here and there gave with the inflections of her bust."

Here is Rodolphe's reflection: "He again saw Emma in her room, dressed as he had seen her, and he undressed her."

It is the first day they had spoken to each other. "They looked at one another. A supreme desire made their dry lips tremble, and softly, without an effort, their fingers intertwined."

These are the preliminaries of the fall. It is necessary to read the fall itself.

"When the habit was ready, Charles wrote to Monsieur Boulanger that his wife was at his command, and that they counted on his good-nature.

"The next day at noon, Rodolphe appeared at Charles's door with two saddle-horses. One had pink rosettes at his ears and a deerskin side-saddle.

"Rodolphe had put on high soft boots, saying to himself that no doubt she had never seen anything like them. In fact, Emma was charmed with his appearance as he stood on the landing in his great velvet coat and white corduroy breeches."

"As soon as he felt the ground, Emma's horse set off at a gallop. Rodolphe galloped by her side."

Here they are in the forest.

"He drew her farther on to a small pool where duckweeds made a greenness on the water. Faded waterlilies lay motionless between the reeds. At the noise of their steps in the grass, frogs jumped away to hide themselves.

"'I am wrong! I am wrong!' she said. 'I am mad to listen to you!'"

"'Why? Emma! Emma!'"

"'Oh, Rodolphe!' said the young woman slowly, leaning on his shoulder."

"The cloth of her habit caught against the velvet of his coat. She threw back her white neck, swelling with a sigh, and faltering, in tears, with a long shudder and hiding her face, she gave herself up to him."

Then she arose and, after shaking off the fatigue of voluptuousness, returned to the domestic hearth, to that hearth where she would find a husband who adored her. After this first fall, after this first adultery, this first fault, is it a sentiment of remorse that she feels, in the presence of this deceived husband who adores her? No! with a bold front, she enters, glorifying adultery.

"But when she saw herself in the glass she wondered at her face. Never had her eyes been so large, so black, of so profound a depth. Something subtle about her being transfigured her. She repeated, 'I have a lover! a lover!' delighting at the idea as if a second puberty had come to her. So at last she was to know those joys of love, that fever of happiness of which she had despaired! She was entering upon marvels where all would be passion, ecstasy, delirium."

Thus, from this first fault, this first fall, she glorified adultery, she sang the song of adultery, its poesy and its delights. This, gentlemen, to me is much more dangerous and immoral than the fall itself! Gentlemen, all pales before this glorification of adultery, even the rendezvous at night some time after:

"To call her, Rodolphe threw a sprinkle of sand at the shutters. She jumped up with a start; but sometimes he had to wait, for Charles had a mania for chatting by the fireside, and he would not stop. She was wild with impatience; if her eyes could have done it, she would have hurled him out at the window. At last she would begin to undress, then take up a book, and go on reading very quietly as if the book amused her. But Charles, who was in bed, called to her to come too.

"'Come, now, Emma,' he said, 'it is time.'

"'Yes, I am coming,' she answered.

"Then, as the candles dazzled him, he turned to the wall and fell asleep. She escaped, smiling, palpitating, undressed.

"Rodolphe had a large cloak; he wrapped her in it, and putting his arm around her waist, he drew her without a word to the end of the garden."

"It was in the arbour, on the same seat of old sticks where formerly Léon had looked at her so amorously on the summer evenings. She never thought of him now.

"The cold of the nights made them clasp closer; the sighs of their lips seemed to them deeper; their eyes, that they could hardly see, larger; and in the midst of the silence low words were spoken that fell on their souls sonorous crystalline, and reverberating in multiplied vibrations."

Gentlemen, do you know of language anywhere in the world more expressive? Have you ever seen a more lascivious picture? Listen further:

"Never had Madame Bovary been so beautiful as at this period; she had that indefinable beauty that results from joy, from enthusiasm, from success, and that is only the harmony of temperament with circumstances. Her desires, her sorrows, the experience of pleasure and her ever-young illusions had, as soil and rain and winds and the sun make flowers grow, gradually developed her, and she at length blossomed forth in all the plentitude of her nature. Her eyelids seemed chiselled expressly for her long amorous looks in which the pupil disappeared, while a strong inspiration expanded her delicate nostrils and raised the fleshy corner of her lips, shaded in the light by a little black down. One would have thought that an artist apt in conception had arranged the curls of hair upon her neck; they fell in a thick mass, negligently and with the changing chances of their adultery that unbound them every day. Her voice now took more mellow inflections, her figure also; something subtle and penetrating escaped even from the folds of her gown and from the line of her foot. Charles, as when they were first married, thought her delicious and quite irresistible."

Up to this time this woman's beauty had consisted of her grace, her elegance, and her clothes; finally she is shown to you without a veil and you can say whether adultery has embellished her or not.

"'Take me away,' she cried, 'carry me off! Oh, I entreat you!'

"And she threw herself upon his mouth, as if to seize there the unexpected consent it breathed forth in a kiss."

Here is a portrait, gentlemen, which M. Flaubert knows well how to draw. How the eyes of this woman enlarge! Something ravishing expands around her, and then her fall! Her beauty has never been so brilliant as the next day after her fall and the days following. What the author shows you is the poetry of adultery, and I ask you again whether these lascivious pages do not express a profound immorality!

I come now to the second situation, which is the religious reaction. Madame Bovary is very ill, is at death's door. She is brought back to life, and her convalescence is made remarkable by a little religious awakening.

"It was at this hour that Monsieur Bournisien came to see her. He inquired after her health, gave her news, exhorted her to religion in a coaxing little gossip that was not without its charm. The mere thought of his cassock comforted her."

Finally, she goes to communion. I do not like much to meet these holy things in a romance; but at least, when one speaks of them, he need not travesty them by his language. Is there in this adulterous woman going to communion anything of the repentant faith of a Magdalene? No, no; she is always the same passionate woman, seeking illusions and seeking them even among the most august and holy things.

"One day, when at the height of her illness, she had thought herself dying, and had asked for the communion; and, while they were making the preparations in her room for the sacrament, while they were turning the night-table covered with sirups into an altar, and while Félicité was strewing dahlia flowers on the floor, Emma felt some power passing over her that freed her from her pains, from all perception, from all feeling. Her body, relieved, no longer thought; another life was beginning; it seemed to her that her being, mounting toward God, would be annihilated in that love like a burning incense that melts into vapour."

In what tongue does one pray to God in language addressed to a lover in the outpourings of adultery? Without doubt they will tell us it is local colour, and excuse it on the ground that a vapourous, romantic woman does nothing, even in religion, like anybody else. There is no local colour which can excuse this mixture! Voluptuous one day, religious the next, there is no woman, even in other countries, under the sky of Spain or Italy, who murmurs to God the adulterous caresses which she gives her lover. You can appreciate this language, gentlemen, and you will not excuse adulterous words being introduced in any way into the sanctuary of the Divinity!

This is the second situation. I now come to the third, which is a series of adulteries.

After the religious transition, Madame Bovary is again ready to fall. She goes to the theatre at Rouen. The play is *Lucia di Lammermoor*. Emma returns to her old self.

"Ah! if in the freshness of her beauty, before the pollution of marriage and the disillusions of adultery, she could have anchored her life upon some great, strong heart, then virtue, tenderness, voluptuousness, and duty blending, she would never have fallen from so high a happiness."

Seeing Lagardy upon the stage, she had a desire to run into his arms, to take refuge in his strength, even as in the incarnation of love, and of saying to him: "Take me, take me away, let us go! thine, thine, with thee are all my ardour and all my dreams!"

Léon was with the Bovarys.

"He was standing behind her, leaning with his shoulder against the wall of the box; now and again she felt herself shuddering beneath the hot breath from his nostrils falling upon her hair."

You were spoken to just now of the pollution of marriage; then you are shown adultery in all its poesy, in its ineffable seductions. I have said that the expression should be modified to read: the disillusions of marriage and the pollution of adultery. Very often when one is married, in the place of happiness without clouds which one promises himself, he finds but sacrifice and bitterness. The word disillusion can then be used justifiably, that of pollution, never.

Léon and Emma have a rendezvous at the cathedral. They look around or they do not, it makes no difference. They go out.

"A lad was playing about the close.

"'Go and get me a cab!'

"The child bounded off like a ball by the Rue Quartre-Vents; then they were alone a few minutes, face to face, and a little embarrassed.

"'Ah! Léon! Really—I don't know—if I ought,' she whispered. Then with a more serious air, 'Do you know, it is very improper?'

"'How so?' replied the clerk. 'It is done at Paris.'

"And that, as an irresistible argument, decided her."

We know now, gentlemen, that the fall did not take place in the cab. Through a scruple which honors him, the editor of the *Revue de Paris* has suppressed the passage of the fall in the cab. But if the *Revue* lowered the blinds of the cab, it does allow us to penetrate into the room where they found a rendezvous.

Emma wished to leave it, because she had given her word that she would return that evening.

"Moreover, Charles expected her, and in her heart she felt already that cowardly docility that is for some women at once the chastisement and atonement of adultery."

Once upon the sidewalk, Léon continued to walk; she followed him as far as the hotel; he mounted the stairs, opened the door and entered. What an embrace! Words followed each other quickly after the kisses. They told the disappointments of the week, their presentiments, their fears about the letters; but now all was forgotten, and they were face to face, with their laugh of voluptuousness and terms of endearment.

"The bed was large, of mahogany, in the shape of a boat. The curtains were in red levantine, that hung from the ceiling and bulged out too much towards the bell-shaped bed-side; and nothing in the world was so lovely as her brown head and white skin standing out against this purple colour, when, with a movement of shame, she crossed her bare arms, hiding her face in her hands.

"The warm room, with its discreet carpet, its gay ornaments, and its calm light, seemed made for the intimacies of passion."

We are told what happened in that room. Here is still a passage, very important as a piece of lascivious painting:

"How they loved that dear room, so full of gaiety, despite of its rather faded splendour! They always found the furniture in the same place, and sometimes hairpins that she had forgotten the Thursday before under the pedestal of the clock. They lunched by the fireside on a little round table, inlaid with rosewood. Emma carved, put bits on his plate with all sorts of coquettish ways, and she laughed with a sonorous and libertine laugh when the froth of the champagne ran over from the glass to the rings on her fingers. They were so completely lost in the possession of each other that they thought themselves in their own house, and that they would live there till death, like two spouses eternally young. They said 'our room,' 'our carpet,' she even said 'my slippers,' a gift of Léon's, a whim she had had. They were pink satin, bordered with swansdown. When she sat on his knees, her leg, then too short, hung in the air, and the dainty shoe, that had no back to it, was held on only by the toes to her bare foot.

"He for the first time enjoyed the inexpressible delicacy of feminine refinements. He had never met this grace of language, this reserve of clothing, these poses of the weary dove. He admired the exaltation of her soul and the lace on her petticoat. Besides, was she not 'a lady' and a married woman —a real mistress, in fine?"

This, gentlemen, is a description which leaves nothing to be desired, I hope, from the point of view of conviction. Here is another, or rather here is the continuation of the same scene:

"She used some words which inflamed him, with some kisses which drew forth his soul. Where had she learned these caresses almost immaterial, so profound and evasive were they?"

Oh! I well understand, gentlemen, the disgust inspired in her by that husband who wished to embrace her upon her return; I comprehend admirably that after a rendezvous of this kind, she felt with horror at night, "that man against her flesh stretched out asleep."

That is not all, for according to the last tableau that I cannot omit, she came to be weary of her voluptuousness.

"She was constantly promising herself a profound felicity on her next journey. Then she confessed to herself that she felt nothing extraordinary. This disappointment quickly gave way to a new hope, and Emma returned to him more inflamed, more eager than ever. She undressed hastily, tearing off the thin laces of her corset that nestled around her hips like a gliding snake. She went

on tip-toe, barefooted, to see once more that the door was closed; then, pale, serious, and without speaking, with one movement she threw herself upon his breast with a long shudder."

I notice here two things, gentlemen, an admirable picture, the product of a talented hand, but an execrable picture from a moral point of view. Yes, M. Flaubert knows how to embellish his paintings with all the resources of art, but without the discretion of art. With him there is no gauze, no veils, it is nature in all her nudity, in all her crudity!

Still another quotation:

"They knew one another too well for any of those surprises of possession that increase its joys a hundred-fold. She was as sick of him as he was weary of her. Emma found again in adultery all the platitudes of marriage."

The platitudes of marriage and the poetry of adultery! Sometimes it is the pollution of marriage, sometimes the platitudes, but always the poetry of adultery. These, gentlemen, are the situations which M. Flaubert loves to paint, and which, unfortunately, he paints only too well.

I have related three scenes: the scene with Rodolphe, and you have seen the fall in the forest, the glorification of adultery, and this woman whose beauty became greater with this poesy. I have spoken of the religious transition, and you saw there a prayer imprinted with adulterous language. I have spoken of the second fall, I have unrolled before you the scenes which took place with Léon. I have shown you the scene of the cab—suppressed—and I have shown you the picture of the room and the bed. Now that we believe your convictions are formed, we come to the last scene,—that of the punishment.

Numerous excisions have been made, it would appear, by the *Revue de Paris*. Here are the terms in which M. Flaubert complains of it:

"Some consideration which I do not appreciate has led the *Revue de Paris* to suppress the number of December 1st. Its scruples being revived on the occasion of the present number, it has seen fit to cut out still more passages. In consequence, I wish to deny all responsibility in the lines which follow; the reader is informed that he sees only fragments and not the complete work."

Let us pass, then, over these fragments and come to the death. She poisons herself. She poisons herself, why? Ah! it is a very little thing, is death, she thinks; I am going to fall asleep and all will be finished. Then, without remorse, without an avowal, without a tear of repentance over this suicide which is brought about by adulteries in the night watches, she goes to receive the sacrament for the dying. Why the sacrament, since in her last thought she is going to annihilation? Why, when there is not a tear, not a sigh of the Magdalene over her crime of infidelity, her suicide, or her adulteries?

After this scene comes that of extreme unction. These are holy and sacred words for all. It is with these words that our ancestors have fallen asleep, our fathers and our relatives, and it is with them that one day our children will see us sleep. When one wishes to make use of them, it should be done with exactness; it is not necessary, at least to accompany them with the voluptuous image of a past life.

You know how the priest makes the holy unctions upon the forehead, the ears, upon the mouth, the feet, pronouncing at the same time the liturgical phrases: *quidquam per pedes, per auras, per pectus*, etc., always following with the words *misericordia* … sin on one side and pity on the other. These holy, sacred words should be reproduced exactly; and if they cannot be reproduced exactly, at least nothing voluptuous should be put with them.

"She turned her face slowly and seemed filled with joy on seeing suddenly the violet stole, no doubt finding again, in the midst of a temporary lull in her pain, the lost voluptuousness of her first mystical transports, with the visions of eternal beatitude that were beginning.

"The priest rose to take the crucifix; then she stretched forward her neck as one who is athirst, and gluing her lips to the body of the Man-God, she pressed upon it with all her expiring strength the fullest kiss of love that she had ever given. Then he recited the *Misereatur* and the *Indulgentiam*, dipped his right thumb in the oil and began to give extreme unction. First, upon the eyes, that had

so coveted all worldly pomp; then upon the nostrils, that had been greedy of the warm breeze and amorous odours; then upon the mouth that had uttered lies, that had been curled with pride and cried out in lewdness; then upon the hands, that had delighted in sensual touches; and finally upon the soles of the feet, so swift of yore, when she was running to satisfy her desires, and that would now walk no more."

Now, in the prayers for the dying which the priest recites, at the end or at the close of each verse occur these words: "Christian soul, go out to a higher region." They are murmured at the moment when the last breath of the dying escapes from his lips. The priest recites, etc.

"As the death-rattle became stronger the priest prayed faster; his prayers mingled with the stifled sobs of Bovary, and sometimes all seemed lost in the muffled murmur of the Latin syllables that tolled like a passing-bell."

After the fashion of alternating these words, the author has tried to make for them a sort of reply. He puts upon the sidewalk a blind man who intones a song of which the profane words are a kind of response to the prayers for the dying.

"Suddenly on the pavement was heard a loud noise of clogs and the clattering of a stick; and a voice rose—a raucous voice—that sang—

"'Maids in the warmth of a summer day
Dream of love and of love alway.
The wind is strong this summer day,
Her petticoat has flown away.'"

This is the moment when Madame Bovary dies.

Thus we have here the picture: on one side the priest reciting the prayers for the dying; on the other the hand-organ player who excites from the dying woman

"an atrocious, frantic, despairing laugh, thinking she saw the hideous face of the poor wretch that stood out against the eternal night like a menace…. She fell back upon the mattress in a convulsion. They all drew near. She was dead."

And then later, when the body is cold, above all should the cadaver, which the soul has just left, be respected. When the husband is there on his knees, weeping for his wife, when he extends the shroud over her, any other would have stopped, but M. Flaubert makes a final stroke with his brush:

"The sheet sank in from her breast to her knees, and then rose at the tips of her toes."

This the scene of death. I have abridged it and have grouped it after a fashion. It is now for you to judge and determine whether there is a mixture of the sacred and the profane in it, or rather, a mixture of the sacred and the voluptuous.

I have related the romance, I have brought a charge against it and, permit me to say, against the kind of art that M. Flaubert cultivates, the kind that is realistic but not discreet. You shall see to what limits he has gone. A copy of the *Artiste* lately came to my hand; it is not for us to make accusations against the *Artiste*, but to learn to what school M. Flaubert belongs, and I ask your permission to read you some lines, which have nothing to do with M. Flaubert's prosecuted book, only to show to what a degree he excels in this kind of painting. He loves to paint temptations, especially the temptations to which Madame Bovary succumbed. Well, I find a model of its kind in the lines to follow, from the *Artiste*, for the month of January, signed *Gustave Flaubert*, upon the temptation of Saint Anthony. Heaven knows it is a subject upon which many things might be said, but I do not believe it possible to give more vivacity to the image, stronger lines to the picture. Apollonius says to Saint Anthony:—

"What is knowledge? What is glory? Wouldst thou refresh thine eyes under the humid jasmines? Wouldst thou feel thy body sink itself, as in a wave, in the sweet flesh of swooning women?"

Ah! well! here is the same colour, the same strength of the brush, the same vivacity of expression!

To resume. I have analyzed the book, I have related the story without forgetting a page, I have then made the charge, which was the second part of my task. I have exhibited some of the portraits, I have shown Madame Bovary in repose, by the side of her husband, in contact with those whom she could not tempt, and I have pointed out to you the lascivious colour of that portrait! Then I have analyzed some of the great scenes: the fall with Rodolphe, the religious transition, the meetings with Léon, the death scene, and in all this I find the double count of offense against public morals and against religion.

I had need of but two scenes: Do you not see the moral outrage in the fall with Rodolphe? Do you not see the glorification of adultery in it? And then, the religious outrage, which I find in the drawing of the confession, in the religious transition, and finally, the scene of death.

You have before you, gentlemen, three guilty ones: M. Flaubert, the author of the book, M. Pichat who accepted it, and M. Pillet, who printed it. In this matter, there is no misdemeanor without publicity, and all those concerned in the publicity should be equally blamed. But we hasten to say that the manager of the *Revue* and the printer are only in the second rank. The principal offender is the author, M. Flaubert; M. Flaubert who admonished by a note from the editor, protested against the suppression which had been made in his work. After him comes M. Laurent Pichat, from whom you will demand a reason, not for the suppression which he has made, but of that which he should have made; and finally comes the printer, who is a sentinel at the door of scandal. M. Pillet, besides, is an honourable man against whom I have nothing to say. We ask but one thing of you, which is to apply the law to him. Printers should read; when they do not read or have read what they print, it is at their own risk and peril. Printers are not machines; they have a privilege, they take an oath, they are in a special situation and they are responsible. Again, they are, if you will permit the expression, like an advanced guard; if they allow a misdemeanor to pass, it is like allowing the enemy to pass. Make the penalty as mild as you will for Pillet, be as indulgent as you like with the manager of the *Revue*; but as for Flaubert, the principal culprit, it is for him you should reserve your severities!

My task is accomplished; we await the objections on the part of the defense. The general objection will be: But after all the romance is moral on the whole, for is not adultery punished?

To this objection there are two replies: I believe that in a hypothetically moral work, a moral conclusion cannot be reached by the presentation of the lascivious details we find here. And again I say: that the work is not moral at the foundation.

I say, gentlemen, that lascivious details cannot be covered by a moral conclusion, otherwise one could relate all the orgies imaginable, describe all the turpitude of a public woman, making her die in a charity bed of a hospital. It would be allowable to study and depict all the poses of lasciviousness. It would be going against all the rules of good sense. It would place the poison at the door of all, the remedy at the doors of few, if there were any remedy. Who are the ones to read M. Flaubert's romance? Are they men who are interested in political or social economy? No! The light pages of Madame Bovary fall into hands still lighter, into the hands of young girls, sometimes of married women. Well, when the imagination has been seduced, when this seduction has fallen upon the heart, when the heart shall have told it to the senses, do you believe that cold reason would have much power against this seduction of sense and sentiment? And then, man should not clothe himself too much in his power and his virtue; man has low instincts and high ideas, and, with all, virtue is only the consequence of an effort ofttimes laborious. Lascivious pictures have generally more influence than cold reason. This is what I respond to that theory, that is, as a first response; but I have a second.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.