

The Polite Gunner

By Charles Baudelaire
Translated from the French by Aleister Crowley

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As the carriage rolled through the wood, he stopped it in the neighborhood of a shooting gallery, saying it would be agreeable to him to fire a few shots to kill time. To kill that monster is surely the most ordinary and legitimate occupation of all of us, is it not?

And he offered politely his hand to his beloved, delicious, execrable wife, to the mysterious woman to whom he owes so many pleasures, so many sorrows, and perhaps also a great part of his genius.

Several balls struck far from the hull's-eye; one of them even buried itself in the ceiling. And as the charming creature laughed wildly, in mockery of her husband's bad shooting, he turned sharply towards her and said, "You see that doll down there on the right with its nose in the air and so haughty an expression?—Well, my dear angel, I imagine to myself that it is you," and he shut his eyes and pulled the trigger. The doll was cleanly beheaded.

Then, bending towards his beloved, his delicious, his execrable wife, his inevitable and pitiless muse, he kissed her hand respectfully, and added, "Ah, dear angel, how I thank you for my skill!"