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Variations on Sensuality
1916

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I know that sensual pleasure is a subject about which you do not like people to speak or to write. Dealing with it shocks you. Or it provokes a joke in bad taste among you. You have books in your libraries which embrace nearly all the branches of human activity. You possess dictionaries and encyclopedias. You count perhaps a hundred volumes on one specialty of manual production. And I do not speak of political or sociological books. But there is not on your shelves a single work consecrated to sensual pleasure. There are some journals concerned with numismatics, philately, heraldry, angling or lawn bowling. The least of the poetic or artistic tendencies has its organ. The tiniest chapel of an *ism* has its bulletin. The novels of love abound. And we find brochures and books concerned with free love or sexual hygiene. But not one periodical devoted to sensual pleasure frankly considered, without insinuations. As one of the sources of the effort to live. As a felicity. As a stimulant in the struggle for existence. Long studies unroll on the techniques of painting, and sculpture—on the working of wood, stone, and metals. But I search in vain for documented articles which consider sensual pleasure as an art—which exhibit its ancient refinements—which propose novel ones. It is not that pleasure leaves you indif-

ferent. But it is only clandestinely, in the shadows, behind closed doors that you discuss or debate it. As if nature was not truly voluptuous. As if the heat of the sun and the scent of the meadows did not invite sensual pleasure?

I am not unaware, certainly, of the reasons for your attitude. And I know its origin. The Christian poison flows in your veins. The Christian virus infects you cerebrally. The kingdom of your Master is not of this world. And you are his subjects. Yes, you, socialists, revolutionaries, anarchists, who swallow without batting an eye a hundred columns of estimates for demolition or social construction, but that two hundred lines of appeal to voluptuous experience "obsess"—that is to say "scandalize."

Oh, slaves!