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SPECIMENS OF JESUIT MORAL THEOLOGY  
IN THE PROVINCIAL LETTERS.

Recently the QUARTERLY contained a few passages from Pascal's *Pensées*. The editor desired a translation of one or two of the Provincial Letters with a modicum of introduction and comment; and the present writer hastens to comply with that request. Blaise Pascal was born at Clermont June 19, 1623. In 1631 Stephan Pascal removed to Paris with his family. He held a good position under the government; and as he possessed a fine mind, the foremost philosophers and savants of the land often met at his house. Little Blaise was present at some of these meetings, and it was not long before he became eager and quick to learn. At the age of eleven he wrote a treatise on the cessation of the sounds of vibrating bodies when touched by the finger. His father had told him something about the nature of mathematics, promising fuller instruction later on. Imagine his surprise when he found his hopeful boy solving the 32d proposition of the first book of Euclid—that the three angles of a triangle are equal to two right angles! Pascal drew his figures on the wall with charcoal and used a terminology of his own invention: "bar" for line, "round" for circle, and so on. In his sixteenth year he wrote a treatise on Conic Sections—a work so clever that Descartes could not believe that he was its author. When Pascal was nineteen years old he invented the first calculating machine, since perfected by Babbage. He was now one of the best of geometricians. Successive experiments taught him to modify the accepted theories of the horror vacui. The Jesuits were his first and most fierce opponents. He confuted their arguments by taking the mercury to the top of the Puy de Dome. One day as his carriage was about to cross the bridge at Neuilly the horses dashed into the Seine; but he escaped with a shock which all but deprived him of life. Ever after that he seemed to see the precipice

before him, and his attendants even had to place a chair at his bedside to convince him that what he saw was not a yawning chasm, but a solid floor. . . . He wrote several books on mathematics, planned a work on Christian evidences (the *Pensées*), and wrote those Provincial Letters by which he is best remembered. His many vigils and penances broke down his weak body. And in the morning of the 19th August, 1662, he resigned his soul to God with the simplicity of a child and the confidence of a steadfast believer. His extraordinary vigor of mind was allied with a singularly meek and humble spirit.

The questions of free will, efficacious grace, good works, and predestination were again brought up for discussion and the controversy about them renewed on the appearance of the "Augustinus" of Cornelius Jansen, bishop of Ypres. In this work the learned and pious bishop had revived St. Augustine's doctrine of grace as opposed to that of Pelagius. To a certain extent the book presented a picture of the primitive Church in indirect contrast with the Church as a hierarchy and as coming more and more under the control of the Jesuits. Loyola's followers felt offended. They had an old score to settle with Jansen, and now their time had come. It seems that Jansen had obliged his literary executors to submit his book to the Pope for correction, but that they had disregarded this injunction. By what means did the Jesuits accomplish their revenge? Papal authority to tear down the splendid monument erected over Jansen's grave; papal bull condemning the "Augustinus" without examination; papal bull fulminated against author and book after examination; condemnation by the theological faculty of Paris, royal edict and parliamentary condemnation; and, to clinch the matter, the Jesuits drew up five propositions *not* contained in the book, interpreted them wrongly, then anathematized these propositions; all persons professing them; all who denied them to be in the "Augustinus;" all who gave them a Jansenist interpreta-

tion; and all who gave them any interpretation different from the one condemned.

A little company of learned, cultured, and pious men and women lived at Port Royal, Paris, forming "far from the world a society wholly occupied with labor and meditation." They led a simple, earnest Christian life in holy fellowship much like that of early believers. The best of the haughty French nobility visited, respected, protected them. Port Royal zealously defended Jansen and protested loudly against the wilfully wrong interpretation of his "Augustinus." Antoine Arnauld, member of a family of high consideration and great talents, was in the forefront of the fight. He had a facile pen and earnestness for this warfare. His writings were at once condemned, and he was expelled from the Sorbonne after a stormy session.

Some time afterwards in a company of friends he read a paper which he intended to publish. But as he met neither approbation nor encouragement he turned to Pascal and said: "You ought to do something; you are young yet." "Pascal, who had written almost nothing as yet and who did not know how successful he would be," promised to outline a writing which some one else should revise and prepare for the press. Next day he composed a letter and read it to his friends. Arnauld said straightway, "That's excellent; it will be appreciated; it must be printed." All were of the same opinion. It was done. That letter is the first of the imperishable Provincial Letters. It bore date January 13, 1656. The Letters were first known as Little Letters; the printer once entitled them Letters written to a Provincial [man in one of the provinces of France. Tr.] By One of his Friends; then they appeared as Letters written by Louis de Montalte to a Provincial, his Friend, and to the Rev. Jesuit Fathers about the Morality and the Policy of These Fathers. The post office was full of them; they found their way to Cardinal Mazarin. And the police never could seize the press. (On one occasion the printer's

wife bore away the forms in her apron right under the nose of a police commissary whose name—strange enough—was Tardif!) The letters were printed secretly in a mill in sheets of eight quarto pages; and a peculiar kind of ink which dried easily enabled M. Perrier to secure a rapid impression.

It is not now our purpose to speak of the literary and artistic value of the Provincial Letters, but merely to lay before the reader a few specimen passages partly in the fine version of Rev. Thomas McCrie, partly in our own translation. And bear in mind that Sainte-Beuve—to mention no others—carefully compared Pascal's quotations with the Jesuit originals and not only finds them to be correct but that the casuists do not gain so much as lose on such comparison.

Both as a scientist and as a Christian Pascal had to give battle to the Jesuits; and as his experiments confuted Jesuit philosophers his Provincial Letters pilloried Jesuit casuists to the unceasing laughter of mankind. Now among the many inventions of the Jesuits three shine pre-eminent for absurdity and wickedness: the doctrines of probable opinions, of definition, and of the direction of the intention. All Jesuit moral theology is based on these cardinal doctrines; and if you are acquainted with these glorious contrivances it will go hard, indeed, if you can not find in one of them justification for any wicked act.

Escobar, immortalized by Pascal's satire so that *esco-barder* means "to cheat by cunning devices," compiled a moral theology from the writings of twenty-four Jesuit casuists. Their definition of *probableism* is: "An opinion is called probable when founded upon reasons of some consideration. Hence it sometimes happens that a single very grave doctor may render an opinion probable." Escobar in princ. ex. 3, N. 8. "A doctor, on being consulted, may give advice not only probable according to his own opinion, but even contrary to it—if others consider it probable—if

the advice is more favorable or agreeable to the person consulting him. Si forte haec favorabilior seu exoptatior sit. More; I say it would not be unreasonable for him to give those who consult him advice deemed probable by some learned person even tho' he be satisfied in his own mind that it is absolutely false." Escobar in princ. ex. 3, N. 24. And Pascal shows in Letter Six that this most comfortable teaching justifies simony, theft, disobedience of the commands of ecclesiastical authorities, etc. Nay, probableism even invents new sins. Caramuel says of another Jesuit: "Diana has rendered probable many opinions which were not so before; and that therefore in following them persons do not sin now tho' they would have sinned formerly. Jam non peccant; licet ante peccaverint." Caramuel: Fundamental Theology.

"To refuse absolution to a penitent who has acted on a probable opinion is in the very nature of a mortal sin." Suarez t. 4, dist. 32, sect. 5; Vasquez disp. 62, c. 7. Sanchez in Sum. l. 1, c. 9, n. 29.

Another way of avoiding the guilt of sin is gained by Jesuit definition. Here are two fragrant and flagrant examples of this fine device: "Are assassins unworthy of sanctuary in churches? Yes, according to the bull of Gregory XIV they are." [Not the law of God! Tr.] "But we understand 'assassins' to mean persons who have received money for murdering somebody. Consequently such as kill without taking a reward for the deed but *merely to oblige their friends* do not come under the category of assassins." Luke says: "Give alms of your superfluity." [Luke 11, 41, "Give alms of such things as ye have." King James' version.] "Several casuists, however, have contrived to discharge the wealthiest from the obligation of giving alms. This may seem to be another paradox, but the apparent contradiction is easily removed by so interpreting the word 'superfluity' that one hardly ever will have anything of the kind. And the learned Vasquez accomplished

this feat in his Treatise on Alms—giving chapter IV, n. 14: ‘What men of the world lay up for the purpose of improving their condition and that of their relatives can not be termed superfluity. Such a thing as superfluity, therefore, seldom is to be found among men of the world, not even excepting kings.’”

But the greatest, as it is the simplest, Jesuit invention is the doctrine of the direction of the intention. When all other resources fail one can fall back upon that. It is the easiest device to use, and never fails. So great are its possibilities that a yearning world can not be too grateful to the ingenious, but not ingenious obscure men who formulated and developed this doctrine so easy to understand and practise, so universal of application. . . . The interlocutors of the following dialog, rendered verbatim, are the Jesuit doctor whom Pascal pretends to consult and Pascal himself.

“You know, said he” [the Jesuit] “that the ruling passion of persons of rank is the ‘point d’honneur’ which ever leads them to commit acts of violence apparently quite at variance with Christian piety; so that almost all of them would have been excluded from our confessionals had not our fathers [means Jesuit casuists always in this Letter. Tr.] relaxed a little from the strictness of religion to accommodate themselves to the weakness of mankind. But as they wished both to observe the Gospel by doing their duty to God, and to please the men of the world by showing charity to their neighbor, they needed all the wisdom they possessed to devise expedients which should so nicely adjust matters that without wounding one’s conscience one may vindicate one’s honor by the means usually resorted to in the world, and thus reconcile two things apparently so opposed to each other as piety and the ‘point d’honneur.’ But the utility of this design was not inferior to the difficulty of execution. You can not fail to realize that.”

“It astonishes me,” said I, rather coldly.

“I can well believe that,” said he, “for it would astonish many another. Why, don’t you know, that on the one hand the Gospel commands us: ‘not to render evil for evil, but to leave vengeance to God,’ and that on the other the laws of the world [absurd selfmade “law of chivalry,” so-called. Tr.] forbid our enduring an affront without demanding satisfaction, and that often at the expense of the offender’s life? Do you know any two things more opposed to each other? And yet when I tell you that our casuists have reconciled them you merely say that this astonishes you!”

“I did not sufficiently explain myself, father. I should have considered the thing impossible, indeed, if I had not known, from what I have seen of your fathers, that they are capable of doing with ease what is impossible to other men. This leads me to believe that they have discovered a way out of the difficulty. And I admire the device without knowing it, and beg you to explain it to me.”

“Since that is your view of the matter,” replied the monk, “I can not refuse you. Know, then, that this marvellous principle is our grand method of *directing the intention*—the importance of which in our moral theology is such that I might venture to compare it almost with the doctrine of probability. You had some glimpses of it in passing, from certain maxims I mentioned to you. For example, when I was showing you how servants might carry certain troublesome messages [love letters, etc. Tr.] with a safe conscience, did you not remark that it was simply by diverting their intention from the evil they helped to do to the profit which they might reap from the transaction? Now that is what we call *directing the intention*. You saw, too, that were it not for a similar divergence of the mind, those who give money for livings would be downright simoniacs. But I will show you this grand method in all its glory, as it applies to the subject of homicide—a crime which it justifies in a thousand instances; in order that, from



this startling result, you may form an idea of its great possibilities."

"I foresee already," said I, "that, thanks to this contrivance, everything will be permitted. It will stick at nothing."

"You always fly from one extreme to another," said he; "get rid of that habit. For just to show you that we are far from permitting everything, let me tell you that we never suffer such a thing as a formal intention to sin with the sole design of sinning; and if any person whatever should persist in having no other end but evil, in the evil that he does, we have nothing more to do with him. But when the person is not of such a wretched disposition as this, we try to put in practice our method of directing the intention, which consists simply in directing one's intention to some object not forbidden. Not that we do not endeavor, as far as we can, to dissuade men from doing things forbidden; but when we can not prevent the act, we at least purify the motive, and thus correct the viciousness of the mean by the goodness of the end.

"Such is the way in which our fathers have contrived to permit those acts of violence to which men usually resort in vindication of their honor. They have no more to do than to turn their intention away from the desire of revenge and direct it to a desire to defend their honor, which, according to us, is quite permissible. And in this way our doctors discharge all their duty to God and to man. By permitting the deed, they gratify the world; and by purifying the intention, they comply with the Gospel. This was entirely unknown to the ancients. And the world is indebted to our doctors for this discovery. You understand it now, I hope?"

"Perfectly," said I. "To men you grant the outward, material effect of the act, and to God you give the inner and spiritual movement of the intention. And by this equitable distribution you form an alliance between the laws of

God and those of man. But, to be frank with you, I can hardly trust your promises, and rather suspect that your authors will tell another tale."

"You wrong me," rejoined the monk, "I advance nothing, but what I am ready to prove, and that by such a rich array of passages, that their number, authority, and reasoning will fill you with admiration. To show you, for example, the alliance which our fathers have formed between the maxims of the Gospel and those of the world, by thus regulating the intention, let me refer you to Reginald: 'Private persons are forbidden to avenge themselves. For St. Paul says to the Romans (chap. 12): "Recompense to no man evil for evil," and Ecclesiastes says (c. 28): "He that taketh vengeance shall draw upon himself the vengeance of God, and his sins will not be forgotten." To say nothing of what is said Matthew c. VII and VIII.'"

"Well, father, if, after that, he says anything contrary to Scripture, he can not plead ignorance. Pray, how does he conclude?"

"You shall hear," he said. "'From this it appears that a military man at once may pursue the person who has injured him—not, indeed, with the intention of returning evil for evil, but with that of preserving his honor. Non ut malum pro malo reddat, sed ut conservet honorem.' In praxi bk. XXI, num. 62, p. 260. Do you see how carefully they guard against the intention of returning evil for evil, because Holy Writ forbids it? They have never tolerated that. Lessius says: 'If a man has received a blow on the face he must on no account have the intention to avenge himself. But he may lawfully have the intention to avert infamy, and may, with that in view, repel the insult immediately, even at the point of the sword—*etiam cum gladio!*' De Just. bk II, c. 9, d. 12, n. 79. . . . 'If your enemy is disposed to injure you,' says Escobar (Tr. 5, ex. 5, n. 145.) 'you have no right to wish his death, in a movement of hatred, tho' you may with the wish to save yourself from

harm.' So legitimate, indeed, is this wish, with such an intention, that our great Hurtado de Mendoza says 'we may *pray* God to visit with speedy death those who are bent on persecuting us, if there is no other way of escape!' (De Spe. vol. II, d. 15, sec. 4, 48.) "'An incumbent may, without any mortal sin, desire the decease of a life-renter on his living, and a son that of his father, and rejoice when it happens; provided, always, that it is for the sake of the profit that is to accrue from that event, and not from personal aversion.'" De Sub. Pecc. Diff. 9, Diana p. 5; tr. 14, r. 99.

"Good!" cried I. "That is certainly a fine fruit of the direction of the intention. . . . Show me that it is allowable to fight a duel."

"Our great Hurtado de Mendoza," said the father, "will satisfy you on that point in a twinkling. 'If a gentleman,' says he in a passage cited by Diana, 'who is challenged to fight a duel is well known to have no religion, and if the vices to which he is openly and unscrupulously addicted are such as would lead people to conclude, should he refuse to fight, that he is actuated, not by the fear of God, but by cowardice, and induce them to say of him that he is a hen and not a man—*gallina et non vir*—in that case he may appear at the appointed place to save his honor. Not, indeed, with the express intent to fight a duel, but merely to defend himself, should the person who challenged him come there unjustly to attack him. . . . What moral evil is there in taking a stroll in expectation of meeting a person and defending one's self on being attacked? And thus the gentleman is guilty of no sin whatever since he does not accept a challenge at all, his intention being directed to other circumstances. And the acceptance of a challenge consists in the express intention to fight—an intention the gentleman never had,'" Diana as quoted above.

"You have not kept your word," I said. "This is not, properly speaking, to permit duelling. On the contrary,

this casuist is so persuaded that this practice is forbidden, that in permitting it he carefully avoids calling it a duel.”

“Now you begin to understand the matter,” said the monk. . . . “But since you want a straightforward answer, I shall allow our father Layman to give it for me. He permits duelling in so many words, provided that, in accepting the challenge, the person directs his intention solely to the preservation of his honor or his property. ‘If a soldier or a courtier is in danger of losing either his honor or his fortune unless he accepts a challenge I fail to see how anybody can condemn him for doing so in self-defense.’ Bk. 3, p. 3, c. 3, n. 2. 3. Peter Hurtado says the same thing, according to Escobar, tr. 1, ex. 7, n. 96 and 98: ‘One may fight a duel even to defend one’s property, should that be necessary. Because every man has the right to defend his property even at the expense of his enemy’s life.’”

“On hearing these passages I remembered that while the piety of the king appeared in his exerting all his power to prohibit and abolish the practice of duelling in the state, the piety of the Jesuits is shown in employing all their ingenuity to tolerate and sanction it in the Church. . . . And Sanchez goes a step farther in his Moral Theology, bk. II, c. 39, n. 7: ‘It is perfectly reasonable to hold that a man may fight a duel to save his life, his honor, or any considerable portion of his property when it is apparent that there is a design to deprive him of these unjustly by law-suits and chicanery, and when there is no other way of preserving them. Navarre justly observes that in such cases it is lawful either to accept or to send a challenge—*licet acceptare et offerre duellum*. And one may also secretly despatch one’s enemy. Indeed, in the circumstances referred to, it is advisable to avoid duelling if it is possible to end the difficulty by privately killing our enemy. For by this means we escape at once from endangering our life in combat and from participating in the sin which our opponent would have committed by fighting the duel.’”

“A most pious assassination!” said I. “Still it *is* assassination if a man is permitted to kill his enemy in a treacherous manner.”

“Did I say he might kill him treacherously?” cried the monk. “God forbid! I said he might kill him *privately*, and you conclude that he may kill him *treacherously*, as if that were the same thing! Attend to Escobar’s definition before allowing yourself to speak again on this subject. ‘We call it killing in treachery when the person who is slain had no reason to suspect such a fate. He, therefore, that slays his *enemy* can not be said to kill him in treachery, even tho’ the blow was struck insidiously and behind his back—*licet per insidias aut a tergo percutiat.*’ Escobar, tr. 6, ex. 4, n. 26. And again: ‘He that kills his enemy, with whom he was reconciled under promise of never again attempting his life can not be said, *absolutely*, to kill in treachery unless there was between them a very close friendship—*arctior amicitia.*’” No. 56. . . .

“This is quite new to me,” I replied, “and I learn from that definition that never, perhaps, was anybody killed in a treacherous manner. For people seldom think of assassinating anybody but their enemies. . . . It seems that, according to Sanchez, a man may freely slay (I do not say *treacherously*, but only insidiously, and behind his back) a slanderer, for instance, who brings suit against him?”

“Certainly he may,” returned the monk, “if he directs the intention properly. . . . And, to crown the whole, our learned fathers Tanner and Emmanuel do say it is lawful to kill both the false witness and *the judge himself* if he is in collusion with them.”

“Well, father,” I said, “I think I now understand pretty well your principle of directing the intention; but I should like to know something of its consequences and all the cases in which this method of yours permits killing. Let us go over them again, lest I mistake. For in this matter equivocation may be attended by dangerous results.

Killing must be well-timed and supported by a good probable opinion. You have assured me that by giving a proper turn to the intention it is lawful, according to your fathers, for the preservation of one's honor, or even property, to accept a challenge, to send one sometimes, to kill in a private way a false accuser, and his witnesses with him, and even the judge who has been bribed to favor them, and you have also told me that he who received a blow, may, without seeking revenge, retaliate with the sword. But you have not told me to what length he may go."

"He can hardly commit a mistake," the father replied, "for he may go all the length of killing his man. Escobar (tr. 1, ex. 7, n. 48) quoting Henriquez (bk. 14, c. 10, n. 3) says: 'It is perfectly right to kill a person who has given us a box on the ear, altho' he ran away, provided it is not done thro' hatred or revenge, and there is no danger of thereby causing murders of a gross kind and hurtful to society. And the reason is, that it is as lawful to pursue the thief that has stolen our honor, as him that has run away with our property. For altho' your honor can not be said to be in the hands of your enemy in the same sense as your goods and chattels are in the hands of the thief, still it may be recovered in the same way—by a display of greatness and authority [killing him. Tr.] and thus acquiring the esteem of men. And, in point of fact, it is not certain that the man who has received a buffet on the ear is considered to be in disgrace until he has wiped out the insult with the blood of his enemy.'"

"Nay, it is allowable," he continued, "to prevent a buffet by killing him that meant to give it, if there be no other way to escape insult. For instance, Azor (Inst. Mor., par. 3, p. 105) asks: 'Is it lawful for a man of honor to kill another; who threatens to give him a slap on the face, or strike him with a stick?' and answers, 'Some say he may not; alleging that the life of our neighbor is more precious than our honor; and that it would be an act of

cruelty to kill a man merely to avoid a blow. Others, however, think that it may be allowed. And I certainly consider it probable, when there is no other way of warding off the insult. For otherwise the honor of the innocent constantly would be exposed to the malice of the insolent.'". . .

"But, father, may not one be allowed to kill for something still less? Could one not so direct his intention as lawfully to kill another for telling a lie?"

"He may," returned the monk. "According to Balselle (bk. 3, disp. 24, n. 24) as quoted by Escobar in N. 49: 'You may kill another for saying, You have told a lie; if there is no other way of shutting his mouth.' And Fathers Lessius and Héreau agree in the following: 'If you attempt to ruin my character by telling stories against me in the presence of men of honor, and I have no other way of preventing it than by putting you to death, may I do so? According to modern authors I may, and that even tho' I have been really guilty of the crime which you divulge, provided it is a secret one which you could not establish by legal evidence. And I prove it thus: If you mean to rob me of my honor by giving me a box on the ear, I may prevent it by force of arms; and the same mode of defense is lawful when you would do me the same injury with the tongue. Besides, we may lawfully prevent affronts, and therefore slanders. In fine, honor is dearer than life; and as it is lawful to kill in defense of life, it must be so to kill in defense of honor.' . . . But as our fathers are very circumspect, they have thought it proper to forbid putting this doctrine into practice on trifling occasions. They say at least, 'That it ought *hardly* be carried out in practice.'"

"I know what their reason will be. The law of God, which forbids us to kill, of course."

"They do not exactly take that ground. As a matter of conscience and viewing the thing abstractly, they hold it allowable." [Very Jesuitical this remark. Tr.]

"And why, then, do they forbid it?"

“Because, were we to kill all the defamers among us we should soon depopulate the country. ‘Altho’,’ says Reginald [bk. 21, N. 63, p. 260), ‘the opinion that we may kill a man for calumny is not without its probability in theory, the contrary one ought to be followed in practice. For in our mode of defending ourselves we should always avoid doing injury to the commonwealth; and it is evident that by killing people in this way there would be too many murders.’”

“One thing, at least, may be fairly inferred—that by taking care not to injure the commonwealth we may kill defamers with a safe conscience, provided we can do it with a sound skin. But, after having seen so well to the protection of honor, have you done nothing for property? Methinks one could so direct one’s intention as lawfully to kill for its preservation also.”—

And the monk really does show that, according to Molina, “One may kill a man quite properly for the value of a crown—*unius aurei vel minoris adhuc valoris.*” Whereupon Pascal exclaims: “O father! where can Molina have obtained all this wisdom to determine a matter of such importance without any aid from Scripture, the councils, or the fathers? It is quite evident that he possesses a very particular inner light—one so superior to that of St. Augustine in the matter of homicide as well as grace.”—

Finally the monk quotes Father Caramuel (*Fundamental Theology*, p. 543), “That a priest not only may kill a slanderer, but there are certain circumstances in which it may be his *duty* to do so—*etiam aliquando debet occidere.*” Caramuel, however, graciously says, the Jesuits may not kill the Jansenists, “because it is not in the power of the Jansenists to injure our reputation. They call us Pelagians, may not they be killed for that? No, inasmuch as the Jansenists can no more obscure the glory of the Society than an owl can darken that of the sun, on the contrary, they have (contrary to their intention) enhanced it—*occidi non possunt, quia nocere non potuerunt.*”



“Ha, father! do the lives of the Jansenists, then, depend on the contingency of their injuring your reputation? If so, I think they are far from safe. For supposing it should be thought in the slightest degree *probable* that they might do you some mischief, why, they are *killable* at once. You have only to draw up a syllogism in due form, and, with a direction of the intention, you may despatch your man at once with a safe conscience. How happy those must be who can not bear with injuries and who are taught this doctrine! But woe to the poor people who have offended them! Indeed, father, it would be better to have to do with persons who have no religion at all, than with those who have been brought up on this system. For, after all, the intention of the wounder conveys no comfort to the wounded. The poor man sees nothing of that secret direction of which you speak; he is only sensible of the direction of the blow. And I am by no means sure, but that a person would feel much less sorry to see himself brutally killed by an infuriated villain, than to find himself conscientiously stilettoed by a devotee. . . . You must know I am in the habit of writing from time to time to a friend of mine in the country [the ‘Provincial’ of these letters. Tr.] all that I can learn of the maxims of your doctors. Now, altho’ I do no more than simply report and faithfully quote their own words, yet I fear my letter may fall in the hands of some queer genius who may take it into his head that I have done you injury, and may draw some mischievous conclusion from your premises.”

“Go in peace,” cried the monk, “and fear no danger, on my word. Know that what our fathers have themselves printed with the approbation of our superiors, it can not be wrong to read nor dangerous to publish.” F. H. S.

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