

Rousseau (Volume 1 and 2) eBook

Rousseau (Volume 1 and 2) by John Morley, 1st Viscount Morley of Blackburn

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JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

Born 1712

Fled from Geneva *March*, 1728

Changes religion at Turin *April*, "

With Madame de Warens, including various
intervals, until *April*, 1740

Goes to Paris with musical schemes 1741

Secretary at Venice *Spring*, 1743



Paris, first as secretary to M. Francueil, then { 1744
as composer, and copyist { to
{ 1756

The Hermitage *April 9*, 1756

Montmorency *Dec. 15*, 1757

Yverdun *June 14*, 1762

Motiers-Travers *July 10*, 1762



ROUSSEAU.

CHAPTER I.

PRELIMINARY.

Christianity is the name for a great variety of changes which took place during the first centuries of our era, in men's ways of thinking and feeling about their spiritual relations to unseen powers, about their moral relations to one another, about the basis and type of social union. So the Revolution is now the accepted name for a set of changes which began faintly to take a definite practical shape first in America, and then in France, towards the end of the eighteenth century; they had been directly prepared by a small number of energetic thinkers, whose speculations represented, as always, the prolongation of some old lines of thought in obedience to the impulse of new social and intellectual conditions. While one movement supplied the energy and the principles which extricated civilisation from the ruins of the Roman empire, the other supplies the energy and the principles which already once, between the Seven Years'



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War and the assembly of the States General, saved human progress in face of the political fatuity of England and the political nullity of France; and they are now, amid the distraction of the various representatives of an obsolete ordering, the only forces to be trusted at once for multiplying the achievements of human intelligence stimulated by human sympathy, and for diffusing their beneficent results with an ampler hand and more far-scattering arm. Faith in a divine power, devout obedience to its supposed will, hope of ecstatic, unspeakable reward, these were the springs of the old movement. Undivided love of our fellows, steadfast faith in human nature, steadfast search after justice, firm aspiration towards improvement, and generous contentment in the hope that others may reap whatever reward may be, these are the springs of the new.

There is no given set of practical maxims agreed to by all members of the revolutionary schools for achieving the work of release from the pressure of an antiquated social condition, any more than there is one set of doctrines and one kind of discipline accepted by all Protestants. Voltaire was a revolutionist in one sense, Diderot in another, and Rousseau in a third, just as in the practical order, Lafayette, Danton, Robespierre, represented three different aspirations and as many methods. Rousseau was the most directly revolutionary of all the speculative precursors, and he was the first to apply his mind boldly to those of the social conditions which the revolution is concerned by one solution or another to modify. How far his direct influence was disastrous in consequence of a mischievous method, we shall have to examine. It was so various that no single answer can comprehend an exhaustive judgment. His writings produced that glow of enthusiastic feeling in France, which led to the all-important assistance rendered by that country to the American colonists in a struggle so momentous for mankind. It was from his writings that the Americans took the ideas and the phrases of their great charter, thus uniting the native principles of their own direct Protestantism with principles that were strictly derivative from the Protestantism of Geneva. Again, it was his work more than that of any other one man, that France arose from the deadly decay which had laid hold of her whole social and political system, and found that irresistible energy which warded off dissolution within and partition from without. We shall see, further, that besides being the first immediately revolutionary thinker in politics, he was the most stirring of reactionists in religion. His influence formed not only Robespierre and Paine, but Chateaubriand, not only Jacobinism, but the Catholicism of the Restoration. Thus he did more than any one else at once to give direction to the first episodes of revolution, and force to the first episode of reaction.

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There are some teachers whose distinction is neither correct thought, nor an eye for the exigencies of practical organisation, but simply depth and fervour of the moral sentiment, bringing with it the indefinable gift of touching many hearts with love of virtue and the things of the spirit. The Christian organisations which saved western society from dissolution owe all to St. Paul, Hildebrand, Luther, Calvin; but the spiritual life of the west during all these generations has burnt with the pure flame first lighted by the sublime mystic of the Galilean hills. Aristotle acquired for men much knowledge and many instruments for gaining more; but it is Plato, his master, who moves the soul with love of truth and enthusiasm for excellence. There is peril in all such leaders of souls, inasmuch as they incline men to substitute warmth for light, and to be content with aspiration where they need direction. Yet no movement goes far which does not count one of them in the number of its chiefs. Rousseau took this place among those who prepared the first act of that revolutionary drama, whose fifth act is still dark to us.

At the heart of the Revolution, like a torrid stream flowing undiscernible amid the waters of a tumbling sea, is a new way of understanding life. The social changes desired by the various assailants of the old order are only the expression of a deeper change in moral idea, and the drift of the new moral idea is to make life simpler. This in a sense is at the bottom of all great religious and moral movements, and the Revolution emphatically belongs to the latter class. Like such movements in the breast of the individual, those which stir an epoch have their principle in the same craving for disentanglement of life. This impulse to shake off intricacies is the mark of revolutionary generations, and it was the starting-point of all Rousseau's mental habits, and of the work in which they expressed themselves. His mind moved outwards from this centre, and hence the fact that he dealt principally with government and education, the two great agencies which, in an old civilisation with a thousand roots and feelers, surround external life and internal character with complexity. Simplification of religion by clearing away the overgrowth of errors, simplification of social relations by equality, of literature and art by constant return to nature, of manners by industrious homeliness and thrift,—this is the revolutionary process and ideal, and this is the secret of Rousseau's hold over a generation that was lost amid the broken maze of fallen systems.

* * * * *

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The personality of Rousseau has most equivocal and repulsive sides. It has deservedly fared ill in the esteem of the saner and more rational of those who have judged him, and there is none in the history of famous men and our spiritual fathers that begat us, who make more constant demands on the patience or pity of those who study his life. Yet in no other instance is the common eagerness to condense all predication about a character into a single unqualified proposition so fatally inadequate. If it is indispensable that we should be for ever describing, naming, classifying, at least it is well, in speaking of such a nature as his, to enlarge the vocabulary beyond the pedantic formulas of unreal ethics, and to be as sure as we know how to make ourselves, that each of the sympathies and faculties which together compose our power of spiritual observation, is in a condition of free and patient energy. Any less open and liberal method, which limits our sentiments to absolute approval or disapproval, and fixes the standard either at the balance of common qualities which constitutes mediocrity, or at the balance of uncommon qualities which is divinity as in a Shakespeare, must leave in a cloud of blank incomprehensibility those singular spirits who come from time to time to quicken the germs of strange thought and shake the quietness of the earth.

We may forget much in our story that is grievous or hateful, in reflecting that if any man now deems a day basely passed in which he has given no thought to the hard life of garret and hovel, to the forlorn children and trampled women of wide squalid wildernesses in cities, it was Rousseau who first in our modern time sounded a new trumpet note for one more of the great battles of humanity. He makes the poor very proud, it was truly said. Some of his contemporaries followed the same vein of thought, as we shall see, and he was only continuing work which others had prepared. But he alone had the gift of the golden mouth. It was in Rousseau that polite Europe first hearkened to strange voices and faint reverberation from out of the vague and cavernous shadow in which the common people move. Science has to feel the way towards light and solution, to prepare, to organise. But the race owes something to one who helped to state the problem, writing up in letters of flame at the brutal feast of kings and the rich that civilisation is as yet only a mockery, and did furthermore inspire a generation of men and women with the stern resolve that they would rather perish than live on in a world where such things can be.

CHAPTER II.

YOUTH.

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Jean Jacques Rousseau was born at Geneva, June 28, 1712. He was of old French stock. His ancestors had removed from Paris to the famous city of refuge as far back as 1529, a little while before Farel came thither to establish the principles of the Reformation, and seven years before the first visit of the more extraordinary man who made Geneva the mother city of a new interpretation of Christianity, as Rome was the mother city of the old. Three generations in a direct line separated Jean Jacques from Didier Rousseau, the son of a Paris bookseller, and the first emigrant.[1] Thus Protestant tradition in the Rousseau family dates from the appearance of Protestantism in Europe, and seems to have exerted the same kind of influence upon them as it did, in conjunction with the rest of the surrounding circumstances, upon the other citizens of the ideal state of the Reformation. It is computed by the historians that out of three thousand families who composed the population of Geneva towards the end of the seventeenth century, there were hardly fifty who before the Reformation had acquired the position of burghership. The curious set of conditions which thus planted a colony of foreigners in the midst of a free polity, with a new doctrine and newer discipline, introduced into Europe a fresh type of character and manners. People declared they could recognise in the men of Geneva neither French vivacity, nor Italian subtlety and clearness, nor Swiss gravity. They had a zeal for religion, a vigorous energy in government, a passion for freedom, a devotion to ingenious industries, which marked them with a stamp unlike that of any other community.[2] Towards the close of the seventeenth century some of the old austerity and rudeness was sensibly modified under the influence of the great neighbouring monarchy. One striking illustration of this tendency was the rapid decline of the Savoyard patois in popular use. The movement had not gone far enough when Rousseau was born, to take away from the manners and spirit of his country their special quality and individual note.

The mother of Jean Jacques, who seems to have been a simple, cheerful, and tender woman, was the daughter of a Genevan minister; her maiden name, Bernard. The birth of her son was fatal to her, and the most touching and pathetic of all the many shapes of death was the fit beginning of a life preappointed to nearly unlifting cloud. "I cost my mother her life," he wrote, "and my birth was the first of my woes." [3] Destiny thus touches us with magical finger, long before consciousness awakens to the forces that have been set to work in our personality, launching us into the universe with country, forefathers, and physical predispositions, all fixed without choice of ours. Rousseau was born dying, and though he survived this first crisis by the affectionate care of one of his father's sisters, yet his constitution remained infirm and disordered.



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Inborn tendencies, as we perceive on every side, are far from having unlimited irresistible mastery, if they meet early encounter from some wise and patient external will. The father of Rousseau was unfortunately cast in the same mould as his mother, and the child's own morbid sensibility was stimulated and deepened by the excessive sensibility of his first companion. Isaac Rousseau, in many of his traits, was a reversion to an old French type. In all the Genevese there was an underlying tendency of this kind. "Under a phlegmatic and cool air," wrote Rousseau, when warning his countrymen against the inflammatory effects of the drama, "the Genevese hide an ardent and sensitive character, that is more easily moved than controlled." [4] And some of the episodes in their history during the eighteenth century might be taken for scenes from the turbulent dramas of Paris. But Isaac Rousseau's restlessness, his eager emotion, his quick and punctilious sense of personal dignity, his heedlessness of ordered affairs, were not common in Geneva, fortunately for the stability of her society and the prosperity of her citizens. This disorder of spirit descended in modified form to the son; it was inevitable that he should be indirectly affected by it. Before he was seven years old he had learnt from his father to indulge a passion for the reading of romances. The child and the man passed whole nights in a fictitious world, reading to one another in turn, absorbed by vivid interest in imaginary situations, until the morning note of the birds recalled them to a sense of the conditions of more actual life, and made the elder cry out in confusion that he was the more childish of the two.

The effect of this was to raise passion to a premature exaltation in the young brain. "I had no idea of real things," he said, "though all the sentiments were already familiar to me. Nothing had come to me by conception, everything by sensation. These confused emotions, striking me one after another, did not warp a reason that I did not yet possess, but they gradually shaped in me a reason of another cast and temper, and gave me bizarre and romantic ideas of human life, of which neither reflection nor experience has ever been able wholly to cure me." [5] Thus these first lessons, which have such tremendous influence over all that follow, had the direct and fatal effect in Rousseau's case of deadening that sense of the actual relations of things to one another in the objective world, which is the master-key and prime law of sanity.

In time the library of romances came to an end (1719), and Jean Jacques and his father fell back on the more solid and moderated fiction of history and biography. The romances had been the possession of the mother; the more serious books were inherited from the old minister, her father. Such books as Nani's History of Venice, and Le Sueur's History of the Church and the Empire, made less impression on the young Rousseau than the admirable Plutarch; and



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he used to read to his father during the hours of work, and read over again to himself during all hours, those stories of free and indomitable souls which are so proper to kindle the glow of generous fire. Plutarch was dear to him to the end of his life; he read him in the late days when he had almost ceased to read, and he always declared Plutarch to be nearly the only author to whom he had never gone without profit." [6] "I think I see my father now," he wrote when he had begun to make his mark in Paris, "living by the work of his hands, and nourishing his soul on the sublimest truths. I see Tacitus, Plutarch, and Grotius, lying before him along with the tools of his craft. I see at his side a cherished son receiving instruction from the best of fathers, alas, with but too little fruit." [7] This did little to implant the needed impressions of the actual world. Rousseau's first training continued to be in an excessive degree the exact reverse of our common method; this stirs the imagination too little, and shuts the young too narrowly within the strait pen of present and visible reality. The reader of Plutarch at the age of ten actually conceived himself a Greek or a Roman, and became the personage whose strokes of constancy and intrepidity transported him with sympathetic ecstasy, made his eyes sparkle, and raised his voice to heroic pitch. Listeners were even alarmed one day as he told the tale of Scaevola at table, to see him imitatively thrust forth his arm over a hot chafing-dish. [8]

Rousseau had one brother, on whom the spirit of the father came down in ample measure, just as the sensibility of the mother descended upon Jean Jacques. He passed through a boyhood of revolt, and finally ran away into Germany, where he was lost from sight and knowledge of his kinsmen for ever. Jean Jacques was thus left virtually an only child, [9] and he commemorates the homely tenderness and care with which his early years were surrounded. Except in the hours which he passed in reading by the side of his father, he was always with his aunt, in the self-satisfying curiosity of childhood watching her at work with the needle and busy about affairs of the house, or else listening to her with contented interest, as she sang the simple airs of the common people. The impression of this kind and cheerful figure was stamped on his memory to the end; her tone of voice, her dress, the quaint fashion of her hair. The constant recollection of her shows, among many other signs, how he cherished that conception of the true unity of a man's life, which places it in a closely-linked chain of active memories, and which most of us lose in wasteful dispersion of sentiment and poor fragmentariness of days. When the years came in which he might well say, I have no pleasure in them, and after a manhood of distress and suspicion and diseased sorrows had come to dim those blameless times, he could still often surprise himself unconsciously humming the tune of one of his aunt's old songs, with many tears in his eyes. [10]



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This affectionate schooling came suddenly to an end. Isaac Rousseau in the course of a quarrel in which he had involved himself, believed that he saw unfairness in the operation of the law, for the offender had kinsfolk in the Great Council. He resolved to leave his country rather than give way, in circumstances which compromised his personal honour and the free justice of the republic. So his house was broken up, and his son was sent to school at the neighbouring village of Bossey (1722), under the care of a minister, "there to learn along with Latin all the medley of sorry stuff with which, under the name of education, they accompany Latin." [11] Rousseau tells us nothing of the course of his intellectual instruction here, but he marks his two years' sojourn under the roof of M. Lambercier by two forward steps in that fateful acquaintance with good and evil, which is so much more important than literary knowledge. Upon one of these fruits of the tree of nascent experience, men usually keep strict silence. Rousseau is the only person that ever lived who proclaimed to the whole world as a part of his own biography the ignoble circumstances of the birth of sensuality in boyhood. Nobody else ever asked us to listen while he told of the playmate with which unwarned youth takes its heedless pleasure, which waxes and strengthens with years, until the man suddenly awakens to find the playmate grown into a master, grotesque and foul, whose unclean grip is not to be shaken off, and who poisons the air with the goatish fume of the satyr. It is on this side that the unspoken plays so decisive a part, that most of the spoken seems but as dust in the balance; it is here that the flesh spreads gross clouds over the firmament of the spirit. Thinking of it, we flee from talk about the high matters of will and conscience, of purity of heart and the diviner mind, and hurry to the physician. Manhood commonly saves itself by its own innate healthiness, though the decent apron bequeathed to us in the old legend of the fall, the thick veil of a more than legendary reserve, prevents us from really measuring the actual waste of delicacy and the finer forces. Rousseau, most unhappily for himself, lacked this innate healthiness; he never shook off the demon which would be so ridiculous, if it did not hide such terrible power. With a moral courage, that it needs hardly less moral courage in the critic firmly to refrain from calling cynical or shameless, he has told the whole story of this lifelong depravation. In the present state of knowledge, which in the region of the human character the false shamefacedness of science, aided and abetted by the mutilating hand of religious asceticism, has kept crude and imperfect, there is nothing very profitable to be said on all this. When the great art of life has been more systematically conceived in the long processes of time and endeavour, and when more bold, effective, and far-reaching advance has been made in defining those pathological manifestations



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which deserve to be seriously studied, as distinguished from those of a minor sort which are barely worth registering, then we should know better how to speak, or how to be silent, in the present most unwelcome instance. As it is, we perhaps do best in chronicling the fact and passing on. The harmless young are allowed to play without monition or watching among the deep open graves of temperament; and Rousseau, telling the tale of his inmost experience, unlike the physician and the moralist who love decorous surfaces of things, did not spare himself nor others a glimpse of the ignominies to which the body condemns its high tenant, the soul.[12]

The second piece of experience which he acquired at Bossey was the knowledge of injustice and wrongful suffering as things actual and existent. Circumstances brought him under suspicion of having broken the teeth of a comb which did not belong to him. He was innocent, and not even the most terrible punishment could wring from him an untrue confession of guilt. The root of his constancy was not in an abhorrence of falsehood, which is exceptional in youth, and for which he takes no credit, but in a furious and invincible resentment against the violent pressure that was unjustly put upon him. "Picture a character, timid and docile in ordinary life, but ardent, impetuous, indomitable in its passions; a child always governed by the voice of reason, always treated with equity, gentleness, and consideration, who had not even the idea of injustice, and who for the first time experiences an injustice so terrible, from the very people whom he most cherishes and respects! What a confusion of ideas, what disorder of sentiments, what revolution in heart, in brain, in every part of his moral and intellectual being!" He had not learnt, any more than other children, either to put himself in the place of his elders, or to consider the strength of the apparent case against him. All that he felt was the rigour of a frightful chastisement for an offence of which he was innocent. And the association of ideas was permanent. "This first sentiment of violence and injustice has remained so deeply engraved in my soul, that all the ideas relating to it bring my first emotion back to me; and this sentiment, though only relative to myself in its origin, has taken such consistency, and become so disengaged from all personal interest, that my heart is inflamed at the sight or story of any wrongful action, just as much as if its effect fell on my own person. When I read of the cruelties of some ferocious tyrant, or the subtle atrocities of some villain of a priest, I would fain start on the instant to poniard such wretches, though I were to perish a hundred times for the deed.... This movement may be natural to me, and I believe it is so; but the profound recollection of the first injustice I suffered was too long and too fast bound up with it, not to have strengthened it enormously." [13]



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To men who belong to the silent and phlegmatic races like our own, all this may possibly strike on the ear like a false or strained note. Yet a tranquil appeal to the real history of one's own strongest impressions may disclose their roots in facts of childish experience, which remoteness of time has gradually emptied of the burning colour they once had. This childish discovery of the existence in his own world of that injustice which he had only seen through a glass very darkly in the imaginary world of his reading, was for Rousseau the angry dismissal from the primitive Eden, which in one shape and at one time or another overtakes all men. "Here," he says, "was the term of the serenity of my childish days. From this moment I ceased to enjoy a pure happiness, and I feel even at this day that the reminiscence of the delights of my infancy here comes to an end.... Even the country lost in our eyes that charm of sweetness and simplicity which goes to the heart; it seemed sombre and deserted, and was as if covered by a veil, hiding its beauties from our sight. We no longer tended our little gardens, our plants, our flowers. We went no more lightly to scratch the earth, shouting for joy as we discovered the germ of the seed we had sown."

Whatever may be the degree of literal truth in the Confessions, the whole course of Rousseau's life forbids us to pass this passionate description by as overcharged or exaggerated. We are conscious in it of a constitutional infirmity. We perceive an absence of healthy power of reaction against moral shock. Such shocks are experienced in many unavoidable forms by all save the dullest natures, when they first come into contact with the sharp tooth of outer circumstance. Indeed, a man must be either miraculously happy in his experiences, or exceptionally obtuse in observing and feeling, or else be the creature of base and cynical ideals, if life does not to the end continue to bring many a repetition of that first day of incredulous bewilderment. But the urgent demands for material activity quickly recall the mass of men to normal relations with their fellows and the outer world. A vehement objective temperament, like Voltaire's, is instantly roused by one of these penetrative stimuli into angry and tenacious resistance. A proud and collected soul, like Goethe's, loftily follows its own inner aims, without taking any heed of the perturbations that arise from want of self-collection in a world still spelling its rudiments. A sensitive and depressed spirit, like Rousseau's or Cowper's, finds itself without any of these reacting kinds of force, and the first stroke of cruelty or oppression is the going out of a divine light.



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Leaving Bossey, Rousseau returned to Geneva, and passed two or three years with his uncle, losing his time for the most part, but learning something of drawing and something of Euclid, for the former of which he showed special inclination.[14] It was a question whether he was to be made a watchmaker, a lawyer, or a minister. His own preference, as his after-life might have led us to suppose, was in favour of the last of the three; "for I thought it a fine thing," he says, "to preach." The uncle was a man of pleasure, and as often happens in such circumstances, his love of pleasure had the effect of turning his wife into a pietist. Their son was Rousseau's constant comrade. "Our friendship filled our hearts so amply, that if we were only together, the simplest amusements were a delight." They made kites, cages, bows and arrows, drums, houses; they spoiled the tools of their grandfather, in trying to make watches like him. In the same cheerful imitative spirit, which is the main feature in childhood when it is not disturbed by excess of literary teaching, after Geneva had been visited by an Italian showman with a troop of marionettes, they made puppets and composed comedies for them; and when one day the uncle read aloud an elegant sermon, they abandoned their comedies, and turned with blithe energy to exhortation. They had glimpses of the rougher side of life in the biting mockeries of some schoolboys of the neighbourhood. These ended in appeal to the god of youthful war, who pronounced so plainly for the bigger battalions, that the release of their enemies from school was the signal for the quick retreat of our pair within doors. All this is an old story in every biography written or unwritten. It seldom fails to touch us, either in the way of sympathetic reminiscence, or if life should have gone somewhat too hardly with a man, then in the way of irony, which is not less real and poetic than the eironeia of a Greek dramatist, for being concerned with more unheroic creatures.

And this rough play of the streets always seemed to Rousseau a manlier schooling than the effeminate tendencies which he thought he noticed in Genevese youth in after years. "In my time," he says admiringly, "children were brought up in rustic fashion and had no complexion to keep.... Timid and modest before the old, they were bold, haughty, combative among themselves; they had no curled locks to be careful of; they defied one another at wrestling, running, boxing. They returned home sweating, out of breath, torn; they were true blackguards, if you will, but they made men who have zeal in their heart to serve their country and blood to shed for her. May we be able to say as much one day of our fine little gentlemen, and may these men at fifteen not turn out children at thirty." [15]



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Two incidents of this period remain to us, described in Rousseau's own words, and as they reveal a certain sweetness in which his life unhappily did not afterwards greatly abound, it may help our equitable balance of impressions about him to reproduce them. Every Sunday he used to spend the day at Paquis at Mr. Fazy's, who had married one of his aunts, and who carried on the production of printed calicoes. "One day I was in the drying-room, watching the rollers of the hot press; their brightness pleased my eye; I was tempted to lay my fingers on them, and I was moving them up and down with much satisfaction along the smooth cylinder, when young Fazy placed himself in the wheel and gave it a half-quarter turn so adroitly, that I had just the ends of my two longest fingers caught, but this was enough to crush the tips and tear the nails. I raised a piercing cry; Fazy instantly turned back the wheel, and the blood gushed from my fingers. In the extremity of consternation he hastened to me, embraced me, and besought me to cease my cries, or he would be undone. In the height of my own pain, I was touched by his; I instantly fell silent, we ran to the pond, where he helped me to wash my fingers and to staunch the blood with moss. He entreated me with tears not to accuse him; I promised him that I would not, and I kept my word so well that twenty years after no one knew the origin of the scar. I was kept in bed for more than three weeks, and for more than two months was unable to use my hand. But I persisted that a large stone had fallen and crushed my fingers." [16]

The other story is of the same tenour, though there is a new touch of sensibility in its concluding words. "I was playing at ball at Plain Palais, with one of my comrades named Plince. We began to quarrel over the game; we fought, and in the fight he dealt me on my bare head a stroke so well directed, that with a stronger arm it would have dashed my brains out. I fell to the ground, and there never was agitation like that of this poor lad, as he saw the blood in my hair. He thought he had killed me. He threw himself upon me, and clasped me eagerly in his arms, while his tears poured down his cheeks, and he uttered shrill cries. I returned his embrace with all my force, weeping like him, in a state of confused emotion which was not without a kind of sweetness. Then he tried to stop the blood which kept flowing, and seeing that our two handkerchiefs were not enough, he dragged me off to his mother's; she had a small garden hard by. The good woman nearly fell sick at sight of me in this condition; she kept strength enough to dress my wound, and after bathing it well, she applied flower-de-luce macerated in brandy, an excellent remedy much used in our country. Her tears and those of her son, went to my very heart, so that I looked upon them for a long while as my mother and my brother." [17]



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If it were enough that our early instincts should be thus amiable and easy, then doubtless the dismal sloughs in which men and women lie floundering would occupy a very much more insignificant space in the field of human experience. The problem, as we know, lies in the discipline of this primitive goodness. For character in a state of society is not a tree that grows into uprightness by the law of its own strength, though an adorable instance here and there of rectitude and moral loveliness that seem intuitive may sometimes tempt us into a moment's belief in a contrary doctrine. In Rousseau's case this serious problem was never solved; there was no deliberate preparation of his impulses, prepossessions, notions; no foresight on the part of elders, and no gradual acclimatisation of a sensitive and ardent nature in the fixed principles which are essential to right conduct in the frigid zone of our relations with other people. It was one of the most elementary of Rousseau's many perverse and mischievous contentions, that it is their education by the older which ruins or wastes the abundant capacity for virtue that subsists naturally in the young. His mind seems never to have sought much more deeply for proof of this, than the fact that he himself was innocent and happy so long as he was allowed to follow without disturbance the easy simple proclivities of his own temperament. Circumstances were not indulgent enough to leave the experiment to complete itself within these very rudimentary conditions.

Rousseau had been surrounded, as he is always careful to protest, with a religious atmosphere. His father, though a man of pleasure, was possessed also not only of probity but of religion as well. His three aunts were all in their degrees gracious and devout. M. Lambercier at Bossey, "although Churchman and preacher," was still a sincere believer and nearly as good in act as in word. His inculcation of religion was so hearty, so discreet, so reasonable, that his pupils, far from being wearied by the sermon, never came away without being touched inwardly and stirred to make virtuous resolutions. With his Aunt Bernard devotion was rather more tiresome, because she made a business of it.[18] It would be a distinct error to suppose that all this counted for nothing, for let us remember that we are now engaged with the youth of the one great religious writer of France in the eighteenth century. When after many years Rousseau's character hardened, the influences which had surrounded his boyhood came out in their full force and the historian of opinion soon notices in his spirit and work a something which had no counterpart in the spirit and work of men who had been trained in Jesuit colleges. At the first outset, however, every trace of religious sentiment was obliterated from sight, and he was left unprotected against the shocks of the world and the flesh.

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At the age of eleven Jean Jacques was sent into a notary's office, but that respectable calling struck him in the same repulsive and insufferable way in which it has struck many other boys of genius in all countries. Contrary to the usual rule, he did not rebel, but was ignominiously dismissed by his master[19] for dulness and inaptitude; his fellow-clerks pronounced him stupid and incompetent past hope. He was next apprenticed to an engraver,[20] a rough and violent man, who seems to have instantly plunged the boy into a demoralised stupefaction. The reality of contact with this coarse nature benumbed as by touch of torpedo the whole being of a youth who had hitherto lived on pure sensations and among those ideas which are nearest to sensations. There were no longer heroic Romans in Rousseau's universe. "The vilest tastes, the meanest bits of rascality, succeeded to my simple amusements, without even leaving the least idea behind. I must, in spite of the worthiest education, have had a strong tendency to degenerate." The truth was that he had never had any education in its veritable sense, as the process, on its negative side, of counteracting the inborn. There are two kinds, or perhaps we should more correctly say two degrees, of the constitution in which the reflective part is weak. There are the men who live on sensation, but who do so lustily, with a certain fulness of blood and active energy of muscle. There are others who do so passively, not searching for excitement, but acquiescing. The former by their sheer force and plenitude of vitality may, even in a world where reflection is a first condition, still go far. The latter succumb, and as reflection does nothing for them, and as their sensations in such a world bring them few blandishments, they are tolerably early surrounded with a self-diffusing atmosphere of misery. Rousseau had none of this energy which makes oppression bracing. For a time he sank.

It would be a mistake to let the story of the Confessions carry us into exaggerations. The brutality of his master and the harshness of his life led him to nothing very criminal, but only to wrong acts which are despicable by their meanness, rather than in any sense atrocious. He told lies as readily as the truth. He pilfered things to eat. He cunningly found a means of opening his master's private cabinet, and of using his master's best instruments by stealth. He wasted his time in idle and capricious tasks. When the man, with all the ravity of an adult moralist, describes these misdeeds of the boy, they assume a certain ugliness of mien, and excites a strong disgust which, when the misdeeds themselves are before us in actual life, we experience in a far more considerate form. The effect of calm, retrospective avowal is to create a kind of feeling which is essentially unlike our feeling at what is actually avowed. Still it is clear that his unlucky career as apprentice brought out in Rousseau slyness, greediness, slovenliness,



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untruthfulness, and the whole ragged regiment of the squalider vices. The evil of his temperament now and always was of the dull smouldering kind, seldom breaking out into active flame. There is a certain sordidness in the scene. You may complain that the details which Rousseau gives of his youthful days are insipid. Yet such things are the web and stuff of life, and these days of transition from childhood to full manhood in every case mark a crisis. These insipidities test the education of home and family, and they presage definitely what is to come. The roots of character, good or bad, are shown for this short space, and they remain unchanged, though most people learn from their fellows the decent and useful art of covering them over with a little dust, in the shape of accepted phrases and routine customs and a silence which is not oblivion.

After a time the character of Jean Jacques was absolutely broken down. He says little of the blows with which his offences were punished by his master, but he says enough to enable us to discern that they were terrible to him. This cowardice, if we choose to give the name to an overmastering physical horror, at length brought his apprentice days to an end. He was now in his sixteenth year. He was dragged by his comrades into sports for which he had little inclination, though he admits that once engaged in them he displayed an impetuosity that carried him beyond the others. Such pastimes naturally led them beyond the city walls, and on two occasions Rousseau found the gates closed on his return. His master when he presented himself in the morning gave him such greeting as we may imagine, and held out things beyond imagining as penalty for a second sin in this kind. The occasion came, as, alas, it nearly always does. "Half a league from the town," says Rousseau, "I hear the retreat sounded, and redouble my pace; I hear the drum beat, and run at the top of my speed: I arrive out of breath, bathed in sweat; my heart beats violently, I see from a distance the soldiers at their post, and call out with choking voice. It was too late. Twenty paces from the outpost sentinel, I saw the first bridge rising. I shuddered, as I watched those terrible horns, sinister and fatal augury of the inevitable lot which that moment was opening for me." [21]

In manhood when we have the resource of our own will to fall back upon, we underestimate the unsurpassed horror and anguish of such moments as this in youth, when we know only the will of others, and that this will is inexorable against us. Rousseau dared not expose himself to the fulfilment of his master's menace, and he ran away (1728). But for this, wrote the unhappy man long years after, "I should have passed, in the bosom of my religion, of my native land, of my family, and my friends, a mild and peaceful life, such as my character required, in the uniformity of work which suited my taste, and of a society after my heart. I should have been a good Christian, good citizen, good father of a family, good friend, good craftsman, good man in all. I should have been happy in my condition, perhaps I might have honoured it; and after living a life obscure and simple, but even and gentle, I should have died peacefully in

the midst of my own people. Soon forgotten, I should at any rate have been regretted as long as any memory of me was left."^[22]

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As a man knows nothing about the secrets of his own individual organisation, this illusory mapping out of a supposed Possible need seldom be suspected of the smallest insincerity. The poor madman who declares that he is a king kept out of his rights only moves our pity, and we perhaps owe pity no less to those in all the various stages of aberration uncertificated by surgeons, down to the very edge of most respectable sanity, who accuse the injustice of men of keeping them out of this or that kingdom, of which in truth their own composition finally disinherited them at the moment when they were conceived in a mother's womb. The first of the famous Five Propositions of Jansen, which were a stumbling-block to popes and to the philosophy of the eighteenth-century foolishness, put this clear and permanent truth into a mystic and perishable formula, to the effect that there are some commandments of God which righteous and good men are absolutely unable to obey, though ever so disposed to do them, and God does not give them so much grace that they are able to observe them.

If Rousseau's sensations in the evening were those of terror, the day and its prospect of boundless adventures soon turned them into entire delight. The whole world was before him, and all the old conceptions of romance were instantly revived by the supposed nearness of their realisation. He roamed for two or three days among the villages in the neighbourhood of Geneva, finding such hospitality as he needed in the cottages of friendly peasants. Before long his wanderings brought him to the end of the territory of the little republic. Here he found himself in the domain of Savoy, where dukes and lords had for ages been the traditional foes of the freedom and the faith of Geneva, Rousseau came to the village of Confignon, and the name of the priest of Confignon recalled one of the most embittered incidents of the old feud. This feud had come to take new forms; instead of midnight expeditions to scale the city walls, the descendants of the Savoyard marauders of the sixteenth century were now intent with equivocal good will on rescuing the souls of the descendants of their old enemies from deadly heresy. At this time a systematic struggle was going on between the priests of Savoy and the ministers of Geneva, the former using every effort to procure the conversion of any Protestant on whom they could lay hands.[23] As it happened, the priest of Confignon was one of the most active in this good work.[24] He made the young Rousseau welcome, spoke to him of the heresies of Geneva and of the authority of the holy Church, and gave him some dinner. He could hardly have had a more easy convert, for the nature with which he had to deal was now swept and garnished, ready for the entrance of all devils or gods. The dinner went for much. "I was too good a guest," writes Rousseau in one of his few passages of humour, "to be a good theologian, and his Frangi wine, which struck me as excellent, was such a triumphant



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argument on his side, that I should have blushed to oppose so capital a host.”[25] So it was agreed that he should be put in a way to be further instructed of these matters. We may accept Rousseau’s assurance that he was not exactly a hypocrite in this rapid complaisance. He admits that any one who should have seen the artifices to which he resorted, might have thought him very false. But, he argues, “flattery, or rather concession, is not always a vice; it is oftener a virtue, especially in the young. The kindness with which a man receives us, attaches us to him; it is not to make a fool of him that we give way, but to avoid displeasing him, and not to return him evil for good.” He never really meant to change his religion; his fault was like the coquetting of decent women, who sometimes, to gain their ends, without permitting anything or promising anything, lead men to hope more than they mean to hold good.[26] Thereupon follow some austere reflections on the priest, who ought to have sent him back to his friends; and there are strictures even upon the ministers of all dogmatic religions, in which the essential thing is not to do but to believe; their priests therefore, provided that they can convert a man to their faith, are wholly indifferent alike as to his worth and his worldly interests. All this is most just; the occasion for such a strain of remark, though so apposite on one side, is hardly well chosen to impress us. We wonder, as we watch the boy complacently hoodwinking his entertainer, what has become of the Roman severity of a few months back. This nervous eagerness to please, however, was the complementary element of a character of vague ambition, and it was backed by a stealthy consciousness of intellectual superiority, which perhaps did something, though poorly enough, to make such ignominy less deeply degrading.

The die was cast. M. Pontverre despatched his brand plucked from the burning to a certain Madame de Warens, a lady living at Annecy, and counted zealous for the cause of the Church. In an interview whose minutest circumstances remained for ever stamped in his mind (March 21, 1728), Rousseau exchanged his first words with this singular personage, whose name and character he has covered with doubtful renown. He expected to find some gray and wrinkled woman, saving a little remnant of days in good works. Instead of this, there turned round upon him a person not more than eight-and-twenty years old, with gentle caressing air, a fascinating smile, a tender eye. Madame de Warens read the letters he brought, and entertained their bearer cheerfully. It was decided after consultation that the heretic should be sent to a monastery at Turin, where he might be brought over in form to the true Church. At the monastery not only would the spiritual question of faith and the soul be dealt with, but at the same time the material problem of shelter and subsistence for the body would be solved likewise. Elated with vanity at the



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thought of seeing before any of his comrades the great land of promise beyond the mountains, heedless of those whom he had left, and heedless of the future before him and the object which he was about, the young outcast made his journey over the Alps in all possible lightness of heart. "Seeing country is an allurements which hardly any Genevese can ever resist. Everything that met my eye seemed the guarantee of my approaching happiness. In the houses I imagined rustic festivals; in the fields, joyful sports; along the streams, bathing and fishing; on the trees, delicious fruits; under their shade, voluptuous interviews; on the mountains, pails of milk and cream, a charming idleness, peace, simplicity, the delight of going forward without knowing whither." [27] He might justly choose out this interval as more perfectly free from care or anxiety than any other of his life. It was the first of the too rare occasions when his usually passive sensuousness was stung by novelty and hope into an active energy.

The seven or eight days of the journey came to an end, and the youth found himself at Turin without money or clothes, an inmate of a dreary monastery, among some of the very basest and foulest of mankind, who pass their time in going from one monastery to another through Spain and Italy, professing themselves Jews or Moors for the sake of being supported while the process of their conversion was going slowly forward. At the Hospice of the Catechumens the work of his conversion was begun in such earnest as the insincerity of at least one of the parties to it might allow. It is needless to enter into the circumstances of Rousseau's conversion to Catholicism. The mischievous zeal for theological proselytising has led to thousands of such hollow and degrading performances, but it may safely be said that none of them was ever hollower than this. Rousseau avows that he had been brought up in the heartiest abhorrence of the older church, and that he never lost this abhorrence. He fully explains that he accepted the arguments with which he was not very energetically plied, simply because he could not bear the idea of returning to Geneva, and he saw no other way out of his present destitute condition. "I could not dissemble from myself that the holy deed I was about to do, was at the bottom the action of a bandit." "The sophism which destroyed me," he says in one of those eloquent pieces of moralising, which bring ignoble action into a relief that exaggerates our condemnation, "is that of most men, who complain of lack of strength when it is already too late for them to use it. It is only through our own fault that virtue costs us anything; if we could be always sage, we should rarely feel the need of being virtuous. But inclinations that might be easily overcome, drag us on without resistance; we yield to light temptations of which we despise the hazard. Insensibly we fall into perilous situations, against which we could easily have shielded ourselves, but from which we can



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afterwards only make a way out by heroic efforts that stupefy us, and so we sink into the abyss, crying aloud to God, Why hast thou made me so weak? But in spite of ourselves, God gives answer to our conscience, 'I made thee too weak to come out from the pit, because I made thee strong enough to avoid falling into it.'"[28] So the hopeful convert did fall in, not as happens to the pious soul "too hot for certainties in this our life," to find rest in liberty of private judgment and an open Bible, but simply as a means of getting food, clothing, and shelter.[29] The boy was clever enough to make some show of resistance, and he turned to good use for this purpose the knowledge of Church history and the great Reformation controversy which he had picked up at M. Lambercier's. He was careful not to carry things too far, and exactly nine days after his admission into the Hospice, he "abjured the errors of the sect." [30] Two days after that he was publicly received into the kindly bosom of the true Church with all solemnity, to the high edification of the devout of Turin, who marked their interest in the regenerate soul by contributions to the extent of twenty francs in small money.

With that sum and formal good wishes the fathers of the Hospice of the Catechumens thrust him out of their doors into the broad world. The youth who had begun the day with dreams of palaces, found himself at night sleeping in a den where he paid a halfpenny for the privilege of resting in the same room with the rude woman who kept the house, her husband, her five or six children, and various other lodgers. This rough awakening produced no consciousness of hardship in a nature which, beneath all fantastic dreams, always remained true to its first sympathy with the homely lives of the poor. The woman of the house swore like a carter, and was always dishevelled and disorderly: this did not prevent Rousseau from recognising her kindness of heart and her staunch readiness to befriend. He passed his days in wandering about the streets of Turin, seeing the wonders of a capital, and expecting some adventure that should raise him to unknown heights. He went regularly to mass, watched the pomp of the court, and counted upon stirring a passion in the breast of a princess. A more important circumstance was the effect of the mass in awakening in his own breast his latent passion for music; a passion so strong that the poorest instrument, if it were only in tune, never failed to give him the liveliest pleasure. The king of Sardinia was believed to have the best performers in Europe; less than that was enough to quicken the musical susceptibility which is perhaps an invariable element in the most completely sensuous natures.

When the end of the twenty francs began to seem a thing possible, he tried to get work as an engraver. A young woman in a shop took pity on him, gave him work and food, and perhaps permitted him to make dumb and grovelling love to her, until her husband returned home and drove her client away from the door with threats and the waving of a wand not magical.[31] Rousseau's self-love sought an explanation in the natural fury of an Italian husband's jealousy; but we need hardly ask for any other cause than a shopkeeper's reasonable objection to vagabonds.



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The next step of this youth, who was always dreaming of the love of princesses, was to accept with just thankfulness the position of lackey or footboy in the household of a widow. With Madame de Vercellis he passed three months, and at the end of that time she died. His stay here was marked by an incident that has filled many pages with stormful discussion. When Madame de Vercellis died, a piece of old rose-coloured ribbon was missing; Rousseau had stolen it, and it was found in his possession. They asked him whence he had taken it. He replied that it had been given to him by Marion, a young and comely maid in the house. In her presence and before the whole household he repeated his false story, and clung to it with a bitter effrontery that we may well call diabolic, remembering how the nervous terror of punishment and exposure sinks the angel in man. Our phrase, want of moral courage, really denotes in the young an excruciating physical struggle, often so keen that the victim clutches after liberation with the spontaneous tenacity and cruelty of a creature wrecked in mastering waters. Undisciplined sensations constitute egoism in the most ruthless of its shapes, and at this epoch, owing either to the brutalities which surrounded his apprentice life at Geneva, or to that rapid tendency towards degeneration which he suspected in his own character, Rousseau was the slave of sensations which stained his days with baseness. "Never," he says, in his account of this hateful action, "was wickedness further from me than at this cruel moment; and when I accused the poor girl, it is contradictory and yet it is true that my affection for her was the cause of what I did. She was present to my mind, and I threw the blame from myself on to the first object that presented itself. When I saw her appear my heart was torn, but the presence of so many people was too strong for my remorse. I feared punishment very little; I only feared disgrace, but I feared that more than death, more than crime, more than anything in the world. I would fain have buried myself in the depths of the earth; invincible shame prevailed over all, shame alone caused my effrontery, and the more criminal I became, the more intrepid was I made by the fright of confessing it. I could see nothing but the horror of being recognised and declared publicly to my face a thief, liar, and traducer." [32] When he says that he feared punishment little, his analysis of his mind is most likely wrong, for nothing is clearer than that a dread of punishment in any physical form was a peculiarly strong feeling with him at this time. However that may have been, the same over-excited imagination which put every sense on the alarm and led him into so abominable a misdemeanour, brought its own penalties. It led him to conceive a long train of ruin as having befallen Marion in consequence of his calumny against her, and this dreadful thought haunted him to the end of his life. In the long sleepless nights



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he thought he saw the unhappy girl coming to reproach him with a crime that seemed as fresh to him as if it had been perpetrated the day before.[33] Thus the same brooding memory which brought back to him the sweet pain of his gentle kinswoman's household melody, preserved the darker side of his history with equal fidelity and no less perfect continuousness. Rousseau expresses a hope and belief that this burning remorse would serve as expiation for his fault; as if expiation for the destruction of another soul could be anything but a fine name for self-absolution. We may, however, charitably and reasonably think that the possible consequences of his fault to the unfortunate Marion were not actual, but were as much a hallucination as the midnight visits of her reproachful spirit. Indeed, we are hardly condoning evil, in suggesting that the whole story from its beginning is marked with exaggeration, and that we who have our own lives to lead shall find little help in criticising at further length the exact heinousness of the ignoble falsehood of a boy who happened to grow up into a man of genius.[34]

After an interval of six weeks, which were passed in the garret or cellar of his rough patroness with kind heart and ungentle tongue, Rousseau again found himself a lackey in the house of a Piedmontese person of quality. This new master, the Count of Gouvon, treated him with a certain unusual considerateness, which may perhaps make us doubt the narrative. His son condescended to teach the youth Latin, and Rousseau presumed to entertain a passion for one of the daughters of the house, to whom he paid silent homage in the odd shape of attending to her wants at table with special solicitude. In this situation he had, or at least he supposed that he had, an excellent chance of ultimate advancement. But advancement here or elsewhere means a measure of stability, and Rousseau's temperament in his youth was the archtype of the mutable. An old comrade from Geneva visited him,[35] and as almost any incident is stimulating enough to fire the restlessness of imaginative youth, the gratitude which he professed to the Count of Gouvon and his family, the prudence with which he marked his prospects, the industry with which he profited by opportunity, all faded quickly into mere dead and disembodied names of virtues. His imagination again went over the journey across the mountains; the fields, the woods, the streams, began to absorb his whole life. He recalled with delicious satisfaction how charming the journey had seemed to him, and thought how far more charming it would be in the society of a comrade of his own age and taste, without duty, or constraint, or obligation to go or stay other than as it might please them. "It would be madness to sacrifice such a piece of good fortune to projects of ambition, which were slow, difficult, doubtful of execution, and which, even if they should one day be realised, were not with all their glory worth a quarter of an hour of true pleasure and freedom in youth." [36]



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On these high principles he neglected his duties so recklessly that he was dismissed from his situation, and he and his comrade began their homeward wanderings with more than apostolic heedlessness as to what they should eat or wherewithal they should be clothed. They had a toy fountain; they hoped that in return for the amusement to be conferred by this wonder they should receive all that they might need. Their hopes were not fulfilled. The exhibition of the toy fountain did not excuse them from their reckoning. Before long it was accidentally broken, and to their secret satisfaction, for it had lost its novelty. Their naked, vagrancy was thus undisguised. They made their way by some means or other across the mountains, and their enjoyment of vagabondage was undisturbed by any thought of a future. "To understand my delirium at this moment," Rousseau says, in words which shed much light on darker parts of his history than fits of vagrancy, "it is necessary to know to what a degree my heart is subject to get aflame with the smallest things, and with what force it plunges into the imagination of the object that attracts it, vain as that object may be. The most grotesque, the most childish, the maddest schemes come to caress my favourite idea, and to show me the reasonableness of surrendering myself to it." [37] It was this deep internal vehemence which distinguished Rousseau all through his life from the commonplace type of social revolter. A vagrant sensuous temperament, strangely compounded with Genevese austerity; an ardent and fantastic imagination, incongruously shot with threads of firm reason; too little conscience and too much; a monstrous and diseased love of self, intertwined with a sincere compassion and keen interest for the great fellowship of his brothers; a wild dreaming of dreams that were made to look like sanity by the close and specious connection between conclusions and premisses, though the premisses happened to have the fault of being profoundly unreal:—this was the type of character that lay unfolded in the youth who, towards the autumn of 1729, reached Annecy, penniless and ragged, throwing himself once more on the charity of the patroness who had given him shelter eighteen months before. Few figures in the world at that time were less likely to conciliate the favour or excite the interest of an observer, who had not studied the hidden convolutions of human character deeply enough to know that a boy of eighteen may be sly, sensual, restless, dreamy, and yet have it in him to say things one day which may help to plunge a world into conflagration.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] Here is the line:—

Didier Rousseau. | Jean | ----- | | David. Noah. | |
 Isaac (b. 1680-5, d. 1745-7). Jean Francois. | | | ----- | |
 | JEAN JACQUES. Jean. Theodore.

(*Musset-Pathay*, ii. 283.)

[2] Picot's *Hist. de Geneve*, iii. 114.



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[3] *Conf.*, i. 7.

[4] *Lettre a D'Alembert*, p. 187. Also *Nouv. Hel.*, VI. v. 239.

[5] *Conf.*, i. 9. Also Second Letter to M. de Malesherbes, p. 356.

[6] *Reveries*, iv. p. 189. "My master and counsellor, Plutarch," he says, when he lends a volume to Madame d'Epinay in 1756. *Corr.*, i. 265.

[7] Dedication of the *Discours sur l'Origine de l'Inegalite*, p. 201. (June, 1754.)

[8] *Conf.*, i. 1.

[9] *Ib*, i. 12.

[10] The tenacity of this grateful recollection is shown in letters to her (Madame Gonceru)—one in 1754 (*Corr.*, i. 204), another as late as 1770 (vi. 129), and a third in 1762 (*Oeuvr. et Corr. Ined.*, 392).

[11] *Conf.*, i. 17-32.

[12] See also *Conf.*, i. 43; iii. 185; vii. 73; xii. 188, *n.* 2.

[13] *Conf.*, i. 27-31.

[14] *Conf.*, i. 38-47.

[15] *Lettre a D'Alembert*(1758), 178, 179.

[16] *Reveries*, iv. 211, 212.

[17] *Conf.* 212, 213.

[18] *Conf.*, ii. 102, 103.

[19] M. Masseron.

[20] M. Ducommun.

[21] *Conf.*, i. 69.

[22] *Conf.*, i. 72.

[23] J. Gaberel's *Histoire de l'Eglise de Geneve* (Geneva, 1853-62), vol. iii. p. 285.



[24] There is a minute in the register of the company of ministers, to the effect that the Sieur de Pontverre “is attracting many young men from this town, and changing their religion, and that the public ought to be warned.” (Gaberel, iii. 224.)

[25] *Conf.*, ii. 76.

[26] *Conf.*, ii. 77.

[27] *Conf.*, ii. 90-97.

[28] *Conf.*, ii. 107

[29] See *Emile*, iv. 124, 125, where the youth who was born a Calvinist, finding himself a stranger in a strange land, without resource, “changed his religion to get bread.”

[30] In the *Confessions* (ii. 115) he has grace enough to make the period a month; but the extract from the register of his baptism (Gaberel’s *Hist. de l’Eglise de Geneve*, iii. 224), which has been recently published, shows that this is untrue: “Jean Jacques Rousseau, de Geneve (Calviniste), entre a l’hospice a l’age de 16 ans, le 12 avril, 1728. Abjura les erreurs de la secte le 21; et le 23 du meme mois lui fut administre le saint bapteme, ayant pour parrain le sieur Andre Ferrero et pour marraine Francoise Christine Rora (ou Rovea).”

A little further on (p. 119) he speaks of having been shut up “for two months,” but this is not true even on his own showing.

[31] Madame Basile. *Conf.*, ii. 121-135.

[32] *Conf.* ii. ad finem.

[33] *Conf.*, ii. 144.

[34] Another version of the story mentioned by Musset-Pathay (i. 7) makes the object of the theft a diamond, but there is really no evidence in the matter beyond that given by Rousseau himself.



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[35] Bacle, by name.

[36] *Conf.*, iii. 168.

[37] *Conf.*, iii. 170. A slightly idealised account of the situation is given in *Emile*, Bk. iv. 125.

CHAPTER III.

SAVOY.

The commonplace theory which the world takes for granted as to the relations of the sexes, makes the woman ever crave the power and guidance of her physically stronger mate. Even if this be a true account of the normal state, there is at any rate a kind of temperament among the many types of men, in which it seems as if the elements of character remain mere futile and dispersive particles, until compelled into unity and organisation by the creative shock of feminine influence. There are men, famous or obscure, whose lives might be divided into a number of epochs, each defined and presided over by the influence of a woman. For the inconstant such a calendar contains many divisions, for the constant it is brief and simple; for both alike it marks the great decisive phases through which character has moved.

Rousseau's temperament was deeply marked by this special sort of susceptibility in one of its least agreeable forms. His sentiment was neither robustly and courageously animal, nor was it an intellectual demand for the bright and vivacious sympathies in which women sometimes excel. It had neither bold virility, nor that sociable energy which makes close emotional companionship an essential condition of freedom of faculty and completeness of work. There is a certain close and sickly air round all his dealings with women and all his feeling for them. We seem to move not in the star-like radiance of love, nor even in the fiery flames of lust, but among the humid heats of some unknown abode of things not wholesome or manly. "I know a sentiment," he writes, "which is perhaps less impetuous than love, but a thousand times more delicious, which sometimes is joined to love, and which is very often apart from it. Nor is this sentiment friendship only; it is more voluptuous, more tender; I do not believe that any one of the same sex could be its object; at least I have been a friend, if ever man was, and I never felt this about any of my friends." [38] He admits that he can only describe this sentiment by its effects; but our lives are mostly ruled by elements that defy definition, and in Rousseau's case the sentiment which he could not describe was a paramount trait of his mental constitution. It was as a voluptuous garment; in it his imagination was cherished into activity, and protected against that outer air of reality which braces ordinary men, but benumbs and disintegrates the whole vital apparatus of such an organisation as Rousseau's. If he had been devoid of this feeling about



women, his character might very possibly have remained sterile. That feeling was the complementary contribution, without which could be no fecundity.

When he returned from his squalid Italian expedition in search of bread and a new religion, his mind was clouded with the vague desire, the sensual moodiness, which in such natures stains the threshold of manhood. This unrest, with its mysterious torments and black delights, was banished, or at least soothed into a happier humour, by the influence of a person who is one of the most striking types to be found in the gallery of fair women.



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I.

A French writer in the eighteenth century, in a story which deals with a rather repulsive theme of action in a tone that is graceful, simple, and pathetic, painted the portrait of a creature for whom no moralist with a reputation to lose can say a word; and we may, if we choose, fool ourselves by supposing her to be without a counterpart in the better-regulated world of real life, but, in spite of both these objections, she is an interesting and not untouching figure to those who like to know all the many-webbed stuff out of which their brothers and sisters are made. The Manon Lescaut of the unfortunate Abbe Prevost, kindly, bright, playful, tender, but devoid of the very germ of the idea of that virtue which is counted the sovereign recommendation of woman, helps us to understand Madame de Warens. There are differences enough between them, and we need not mistake them for one and the same type. Manon Lescaut is a prettier figure, because romance has fewer limitations than real life; but if we think of her in reading of Rousseau's benefactress, the vision of the imaginary woman tends to soften our judgment of the actual one, as well as to enlighten our conception of a character that eludes the instruments of a commonplace analysis.[39]

She was born at Vevai in 1700; she married early, and early disagreed with her husband, from whom she eventually went away, abandoning family, religion, country, and means of subsistence, with all gaiety of heart. The King of Sardinia happened to be keeping his court at a small town on the southern shores of the lake of Geneva, and the conversion of Madame de Warens to Catholicism by the preaching of the Bishop of Annecy,[40] gave a zest to the royal visit, as being a successful piece of sport in that great spiritual hunt which Savoy loved to pursue at the expense of the reformed church in Switzerland. The king, to mark his zeal for the faith of his house, conferred on the new convert a small pension for life; but as the tongues of the scandalous imputed a less pure motive for such generosity in a parsimonious prince, Madame de Warens removed from the court and settled at Annecy. Her conversion was hardly more serious than Rousseau's own, because seriousness was no condition of her intelligence on any of its sides or in any of its relations. She was extremely charitable to the poor, full of pity for all in misfortune, easily moved to forgiveness of wrong or ingratitude; careless, gay, open-hearted; having, in a word, all the good qualities which spring in certain generous soils from human impulse, and hardly any of those which spring from reflection, or are implanted by the ordering of society. Her reason had been warped in her youth by an instructor of the devil's stamp;[41] finding her attached to her husband and to her duties, always cold, argumentative, and impregnable on the side of the senses, he attacked her by sophisms, and



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at last persuaded her that the union of the sexes is in itself a matter of the most perfect indifference, provided only that decorum of appearance be preserved, and the peace of mind of persons concerned be not disturbed.[42] This execrable lesson, which greater and more unselfish men held and propagated in grave books before the end of the century, took root in her mind. If we accept Rousseau's explanation, it did so the more easily as her temperament was cold, and thus corroborated the idea of the indifference of what public opinion and private passion usually concur in investing with such enormous weightiness. "I will even dare to say," Rousseau declares, "that she only knew one true pleasure in the world, and that was to give pleasure to those whom she loved." [43] He is at great pains to protest how compatible this coolness of temperament is with excessive sensibility of character; and neither ethological theory nor practical observation of men and women is at all hostile to what he is so anxious to prove. The cardinal element of character is the speed at which its energies move; its rapidity or its steadiness, concentration or volatility; whether the thought and feeling travel as quickly as light or as slowly as sound. A rapid and volatile constitution like that of Madame de Warens is inconsistent with ardent and glowing warmth, which belongs to the other sort, but it is essentially bound up with sensibility, or readiness of sympathetic answer to every cry from another soul. It is the slow, brooding, smouldering nature, like Rousseau's own, in which we may expect to find the tropics.

To bring the heavy artillery of moral reprobation to bear upon a poor soul like Madame de Warens is as if one should denounce flagrant want of moral purpose in the busy movements of ephemera. Her activity was incessant, but it ended in nothing better than debt, embarrassment, and confusion. She inherited from her father a taste for alchemy, and spent much time in search after secret elixirs and the like. "Quacks, taking advantage of her weakness, made themselves her master, constantly infested her, ruined her, and wasted, in the midst of furnaces and chemicals, intelligence, talents, and charms which would have made her the delight of the best societies." [44] Perhaps, however, the too notorious vagrancy of her amours had at least as much to do with her failure to delight the best societies as her indiscreet passion for alchemy. Her person was attractive enough. "She had those points of beauty," says Rousseau, "which are desirable, because they reside rather in expression than in feature. She had a tender and caressing air, a soft eye, a divine smile, light hair of uncommon beauty. You could not see a finer head or bosom, finer arms or hands." [45] She was full of tricks and whimsies. She could not endure the first smell of the soup and meats at dinner; when they were placed on the table she nearly swooned, and her disgust lasted some time, until at the end of half an hour or so she took her first morsel. [46] On the whole, if we accept the current standard of sanity, Madame de Warens must be pronounced ever so little flighty; but a monotonous world can afford to be lenient to people with a slight craziness, if it only has hearty benevolence and cheerfulness in its company, and is free from egoism or rapacious vanity.



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This was the person within the sphere of whose attraction Rousseau was decisively brought in the autumn of 1729, and he remained, with certain breaks of vagabondage, linked by a close attachment to her until 1738. It was in many respects the truly formative portion of his life. He acquired during this time much of his knowledge of books, such as it was, and his principles of judging them. He saw much of the lives of the poor and of the world's ways with them. Above all his ideal was revolutionised, and the recent dreams of Plutarchian heroism, of grandeur, of palaces, princesses, and a glorious career full in the world's eye, were replaced by a new conception of blessedness of life, which never afterwards faded from his vision, and which has held a front place in the imagination of literary Europe ever since. The notions or aspirations which he had picked up from a few books gave way to notions and aspirations which were shaped and fostered by the scenes of actual life into which he was thrown, and which found his character soft for their impression. In one way the new pictures of a future were as dissociated from the conditions of reality as the old had been, and the sensuous life of the happy valley in Savoy as little fitted a man to compose ideals for our gnarled and knotted world as the mental life among the heroics of sentimental fiction had done.

Rousseau's delight in the spot where Madame de Warens lived at Annecy was the mark of the new ideal which circumstances were to engender in him, and after him to spread in many hearts. His room looked over gardens and a stream, and beyond them stretched a far landscape. "It was the first time since leaving Bossey that I had green before my windows. Always shut in by walls, I had nothing under my eye but house-tops and the dull gray of the streets. How moving and delicious this novelty was to me! It brightened all the tenderness of my disposition. I counted the landscape among the kindnesses of my dear benefactress; it seemed as if she had brought it there expressly for me. I placed myself there in all peacefulness with her; she was present to me everywhere among the flowers and the verdure; her charms and those of spring were all mingled together in my eyes. My heart, which had hitherto been stifled, found itself more free in this ample space, and my sighs had more liberal vent among these orchard gardens."^[47] Madame de Warens was the semi-divine figure who made the scene live, and gave it perfect and harmonious accent. He had neither transports nor desires by her side, but existed in a state of ravishing calm, enjoying without knowing what. "I could have passed my whole life and eternity itself in this way, without an instant of weariness. She is the only person with whom I never felt that dryness in conversation, which turns the duty of keeping it up into a torment. Our intercourse was not so much conversation as an inexhaustible stream of chatter, which never came to an end until



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it was interrupted from without. I only felt all the force of my attachment for her when she was out of my sight. So long as I could see her I was merely happy and satisfied, but my disquiet in her absence went so far as to be painful. I shall never forget how one holiday, while she was at vespers, I went for a walk outside the town, my heart full of her image and of an eager desire to pass all my days by her side. I had sense enough to see that for the present this was impossible, and that the bliss which I relished so keenly must be brief. This gave to my musing a sadness which was free from everything sombre, and which was moderated by pleasing hope. The sound of the bells, which has always moved me to a singular degree, the singing of the birds, the glory of the weather, the sweetness of the landscape, the scattered rustic dwellings in which my imagination placed our common home;—all this so struck me with a vivid, tender, sad, and touching impression that I saw myself as in an ecstasy transported into the happy time and the happy place where my heart, possessed of all the felicity that could bring it delight, without even dreaming of the pleasures of sense, should share joys inexpressible."[48]

There was still, however, a space to be bridged between the doubtful now and this delicious future. The harshness of circumstance is ever interposing with a money question, and for a vagrant of eighteen the first of all problems is a problem of economics. Rousseau was submitted to the observation of a kinsman of Madame de Warens,[49] and his verdict corresponded with that of the notary of Geneva, with whom years before Rousseau had first tried the critical art of making a living. He pronounced that in spite of an animated expression, the lad was, if not thoroughly inept, at least of very slender intelligence, without ideas, almost without attainments, very narrow indeed in all respects, and that the honour of one day becoming a village priest was the highest piece of fortune to which he had any right to aspire.[50] So he was sent to the seminary, to learn Latin enough for the priestly offices. He began by conceiving a deadly antipathy to his instructor, whose appearance happened to be displeasing to him. A second was found,[51] and the patient and obliging temper, the affectionate and sympathetic manner of his new teacher made a great impression on the pupil, though the progress in intellectual acquirement was as unsatisfactory in one case as in the other. It is characteristic of that subtle impressionableness to physical comeliness, which in ordinary natures is rapidly effaced by press of more urgent considerations, but which Rousseau's strongly sensuous quality retained, that he should have remembered, and thought worth mentioning years afterwards, that the first of his two teachers at the seminary of Annecy had greasy black hair, a complexion as of gingerbread, and bristles in place of beard, while the second had the most touching expression he ever saw in his life, with fair hair and large blue eyes, and a glance and a tone which made you feel that he was one of the band predestined from their birth to unhappy days. While at Turin, Rousseau had made the acquaintance of another sage and benevolent priest,[52] and uniting the two good men thirty years after he conceived and drew the character of the Savoyard Vicar.[53]



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Shortly the seminarists reported that, though not vicious, their pupil was not even good enough for a priest, so deficient was he in intellectual faculty. It was next decided to try music, and Rousseau ascended for a brief space into the seventh heaven of the arts. This was one of the intervals of his life of which he says that he recalls not only the times, places, persons, but all the surrounding objects, the temperature of the air, its odour, its colour, a certain local impression only felt there, and the memory of which stirs the old transports anew. He never forgot a certain tune, because one Advent Sunday he heard it from his bed being sung before daybreak on the steps of the cathedral; nor an old lame carpenter who played the counter-bass, nor a fair little abbe who played the violin in the choir.[54] Yet he was in so dreamy, absent, and distracted a state, that neither his good-will nor his assiduity availed, and he could learn nothing, not even music. His teacher, one Le Maitre, belonged to that great class of irregular and disorderly natures with which Rousseau's destiny, in the shape of an irregular and disorderly temperament of his own, so constantly brought him into contact. Le Maitre could not work without the inspiration of the wine cup, and thus his passion for his art landed him a sot. He took offence at a slight put upon him by the precentor of the cathedral of which he was choir-master, and left Annecy in a furtive manner along with Rousseau, whom the too comprehensive solicitude of Madame de Warens despatched to bear him company. They went together as far as Lyons; here the unfortunate musician happened to fall into an epileptic fit in the street. Rousseau called for help, informed the crowd of the poor man's hotel, and then seizing a moment when no one was thinking about him, turned the street corner and finally disappeared, the musician being thus "abandoned by the only friend on whom he had a right to count." [55] It thus appears that a man maybe exquisitely moved by the sound of bells, the song of birds, the fairness of smiling gardens, and yet be capable all the time without a qualm of misgiving of leaving a friend senseless in the road in a strange place. It has ceased to be wonderful how many ugly and cruel actions are done by people with an extraordinary sense of the beauty and beneficence of nature. At the moment Rousseau only thought of getting back to Annecy and Madame de Warens. "It is not," he says in words of profound warning, which many men have verified in those two or three hours before the tardy dawn that swell into huge purgatorial aeons,—"it is not when we have just done a bad action, that it torments us; it is when we recall it long after, for the memory of it can never be thrust out." [56]

II.



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When he made his way homewards again, he found to his surprise and dismay that his benefactress had left Annecy, and had gone for an indefinite time to Paris. He never knew the secret of this sudden departure, for no man, he says, was ever so little curious as to the private affairs of his friends. His heart, completely occupied with the present, filled its whole capacity and entire space with that, and except for past pleasures no empty corner was ever left for what was done with.[57] He says he was too young to take the desertion deeply to heart. Where he found subsistence we do not know. He was fascinated by a flashy French adventurer,[58] in whose company he wasted many hours, and the precious stuff of youthful opportunity. He passed a summer day in joyful rustic fashion with two damsels whom he hardly ever saw again, but the memory of whom and of the holiday that they had made with him remained stamped in his brain, to be reproduced many a year hence in some of the traits of the new Heloise and her friend Claire.[59] Then he accepted an invitation from a former waiting-woman of Madame de Warens to attend her home to Freiburg. On this expedition he paid an hour's visit to his father, who had settled and remarried at Nyon. Returning from Freiburg, he came to Lausanne, where, with an audacity that might be taken for the first presage of mental disturbance, he undertook to teach music. "I have already," he says, "noted some moments of inconceivable delirium, in which I ceased to be myself. Behold me now a teacher of singing, without knowing how to decipher an air. Without the least knowledge of composition, I boasted of my skill in it before all the world; and without ability to score the slenderest vaudeville, I gave myself out for a composer. Having been presented to M. de Treytorens, a professor of law, who loved music and gave concerts at his house, I insisted on giving him a specimen of my talent, and I set to work to compose a piece for his concert with as much effrontery as if I knew all about it." The performance came off duly, and the strange impostor conducted it with as much gravity as the profoundest master. Never since the beginning of opera has the like charivari greeted the ears of men.[60] Such an opening was fatal to all chance of scholars, but the friendly tavern-keeper who had first taken him in did not lack either hope or charity. "How is it," Rousseau cried, many years after this, "that having found so many good people in my youth, I find so few in my advanced life? Is their stock exhausted? No; but the class in which I have to seek them now is not the same as that in which I found them then. Among the common people, where great passions only speak at intervals, the sentiments of nature make themselves heard oftener. In the higher ranks they are absolutely stifled, and under the mask of sentiment it is only interest or vanity that speaks." [61]

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From Lausanne he went to Neuchatel, where he had more success, for, teaching others, he began himself to learn. But no success was marked enough to make him resist a vagrant chance. One day in his rambles falling in with an archimandrite of the Greek church, who was traversing Europe in search of subscriptions for the restoration of the Holy Sepulchre, he at once attached himself to him in the capacity of interpreter. In this position he remained for a few weeks, until the French minister at Soleure took him away from the Greek monk, and despatched him to Paris to be the attendant of a young officer.[62] A few days in the famous city, which he now saw for the first time, and which disappointed his expectations just as the sea and all other wonders disappointed them,[63] convinced him that here was not what he sought, and he again turned his face southwards in search of Madame de Warens and more familiar lands.

The interval thus passed in roaming over the eastern face of France, and which we may date in the summer of 1732,[64] was always counted by Rousseau among the happy epochs of his life, though the weeks may seem grievously wasted to a generation which is apt to limit its ideas of redeeming the time to the two pursuits of reading books or making money. He travelled alone and on foot from Soleure to Paris and from Paris back again to Lyons, and this was part of the training which served him in the stead of books. Scarcely any great writer since the revival of letters has been so little literary as Rousseau, so little indebted to literature for the most characteristic part of his work. He was formed by life; not by life in the sense of contact with a great number of active and important persons, or with a great number of persons of any kind, but in the rarer sense of free surrender to the plenitude of his own impressions. A world composed of such people, all dispensing with the inherited portion of human experience, and living independently on their own stock, would rapidly fall backwards into dissolution. But there is no more rash idea of the right composition of a society than one which leads us to denounce a type of character for no better reason than that, if it were universal, society would go to pieces. There is very little danger of Rousseau's type becoming common, unless lunar or other great physical influences arise to work a vast change in the cerebral constitution of the species. We may safely trust the prodigious *vis inertioe* of human nature to ward off the peril of an eccentricity beyond bounds spreading too far. At present, however, it is enough, without going into the general question, to notice the particular fact that while the other great exponents of the eighteenth century movement, Hume, Voltaire, Diderot, were nourishing their natural strength of understanding by the study and practice of literature, Rousseau, the leader of the reaction against that movement, was wandering a beggar and an outcast, craving the rude fare of the peasant's hut, knocking at roadside inns, and passing nights in caves and holes in the fields, or in the great desolate streets of towns.



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If such a life had been disagreeable to him, it would have lost all the significance that it now has for us. But where others would have found affliction, he had consolation, and where they would have lain desperate and squalid, he marched elate and ready to strike the stars. "Never," he says, "did I think so much, exist so much, be myself so much, as in the journeys that I have made alone and on foot. Walking has something about it which animates and enlivens my ideas. I can hardly think while I am still; my body must be in motion, to move my mind. The sight of the country, the succession of agreeable views, open air, good appetite, the freedom of the alehouse, the absence of everything that could make me feel dependence, or recall me to my situation—all this sets my soul free, gives me a greater boldness of thought. I dispose of all nature as its sovereign lord; my heart, wandering from object to object, mingles and is one with the things that soothe it, wraps itself up in charming images, and is intoxicated by delicious sentiment. Ideas come as they please, not as I please: they do not come at all, or they come in a crowd, overwhelming me with their number and their force. When I came to a place I only thought of eating, and when I left it I only thought of walking. I felt that a new paradise awaited me at the door, and I thought of nothing but of hastening in search of it." [65]

Here again is a picture of one whom vagrancy assuredly did not degrade:—"I had not the least care for the future, and I awaited the answer [as to the return of Madame de Warens to Savoy], lying out in the open air, sleeping stretched out on the ground or on some wooden bench, as tranquilly as on a bed of roses. I remember passing one delicious night outside the town [Lyons], in a road which ran by the side of either the Rhone or the Saone, I forget which of the two. Gardens raised on a terrace bordered the other side of the road. It had been very hot all day, and the evening was delightful; the dew moistened the parched grass, the night was profoundly still, the air fresh without being cold; the sun in going down had left red vapours in the heaven, and they turned the water to rose colour; the trees on the terrace sheltered nightingales, answering song for song. I went on in a sort of ecstasy, surrendering my heart and every sense to the enjoyment of it all, and only sighing for regret that I was enjoying it alone. Absorbed in the sweetness of my musing, I prolonged my ramble far into the night, without ever perceiving that I was tired. At last I found it out. I lay down luxuriously on the shelf of a niche or false doorway made in the wall of the terrace; the canopy of my bed was formed by overarching tree-tops; a nightingale was perched exactly over my head, and I fell asleep to his singing. My slumber was delicious, my awaking more delicious still. It was broad day, and my opening eyes looked on sun and water and green things, and an adorable landscape. I rose up and gave myself a shake; I felt hungry and started gaily for the town, resolved to spend on a good breakfast the two pieces of money which I still had left. I was in such joyful spirits that I went along the road singing lustily." [66]



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There is in this the free expansion of inner sympathy; the natural sentiment spontaneously responding to all the delicious movement of the external world on its peaceful and harmonious side, just as if the world of many-hued social circumstance which man has made for himself had no existence. We are conscious of a full nervous elation which is not the product of literature, such as we have seen so many a time since, and which only found its expression in literature in Rousseau's case by accident. He did not feel in order to write, but felt without any thought of writing. He dreamed at this time of many lofty destinies, among them that of marshal of France, but the fame of authorship never entered into his dreams. When the time for authorship actually came, his work had all the benefit of the absence of self-consciousness, it had all the disinterestedness, so to say, with which the first fresh impressions were suffered to rise in his mind.

One other picture of this time is worth remembering, as showing that Rousseau was not wholly blind to social circumstances, and as illustrating, too, how it was that his way of dealing with them was so much more real and passionate, though so much less sagacious in some of its aspects, than the way of the other revolutionists of the century. One day, when he had lost himself in wandering in search of some site which he expected to find beautiful, he entered the house of a peasant, half dead with hunger and thirst. His entertainer offered him nothing more restoring than coarse barley bread and skimmed milk. Presently, after seeing what manner of guest he had, the worthy man descended by a small trap into his cellar, and brought up some good brown bread, some meat, and a bottle of wine, and an omelette was added afterwards. Then he explained to the wondering Rousseau, who was a Swiss, and knew none of the mysteries of the French fisc, that he hid away his wine on account of the duties, and his bread on account of the *taille*, and declared that he would be a ruined man if they suspected that he was not dying of hunger. All this made an impression on Rousseau which he never forgot. "Here," he says, "was the germ of the inextinguishable hatred which afterwards grew up in my heart against the vexations that harass the common people, and against all their oppressors. This man actually did not dare to eat the bread which he had won by the sweat of his brow, and only avoided ruin by showing the same misery as reigned around him." [67]

It was because he had thus seen the wrongs of the poor, not from without but from within, not as a pitying spectator but as of their own company, that Rousseau by and by brought such fire to the attack upon the old order, and changed the blank practice of the elder philosophers into a deadly affair of ball and shell. The man who had been a servant, who had wanted bread, who knew the horrors of the midnight street, who had slept in dens, who had been befriended by rough men



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and rougher women, who saw the goodness of humanity under its coarsest outside, and who above all never tried to shut these things out from his memory, but accepted them as the most interesting, the most touching, the most real of all his experiences, might well be expected to penetrate to the root of the matter, and to protest to the few who usurp literature and policy with their ideas, aspirations, interests, that it is not they but the many, whose existence stirs the heart and fills the eye with the great prime elements of the human lot.

III.

It was, then, some time towards the middle of 1732 that Rousseau arrived at Chamberi, and finally took up his residence with Madame de Warens, in the dullest and most sombre room of a dull and sombre house. She had procured him employment in connection with a land survey which the government of Charles Emmanuel III. was then executing. It was only temporary, and Rousseau's function was no loftier than that of clerk, who had to copy and reduce arithmetical calculations. We may imagine how little a youth fresh from nights under the summer sky would relish eight hours a day of surly toil in a gloomy office, with a crowd of dirty and ill-smelling fellow-workers.[68] If Rousseau was ever oppressed by any set of circumstances, his method was invariable: he ran away from them. So now he threw up his post, and again tried to earn a little money by that musical instruction in which he had made so many singular and grotesque endeavours. Even here the virtues which make ordinary life a possible thing were not his. He was pleased at his lessons while there, but he could not bear the idea of being bound to be there, nor the fixing of an hour. In time this experiment for a subsistence came to the same end as all the others. He next rushed to Besancon in search of the musical instruction which he wished to give to others, but his baggage was confiscated at the frontier, and he had to return.[69] Finally he abandoned the attempt, and threw himself loyally upon the narrow resources of Madame de Warens, whom he assisted in some singularly indefinite way in the transaction of her very indefinite and miscellaneous affairs,—if we are here, as so often, to give the name of affairs to a very rapid and heedless passage along a shabby road to ruin.

The household at this time was on a very remarkable footing. Madame de Warens was at its head, and Claude Anet, gardener, butler, steward, was her factotum. He was a discreet person, of severe probity and few words, firm, thrifty, and sage. The too comprehensive principles of his mistress admitted him to the closest intimacy, and in due time, when Madame de Warens thought of the seductions which ensnare the feet of youth, Rousseau was delivered from them in an equivocal way by solicitous application of the same maxims of comprehension. "Although Claude Anet was as young as she was, he was so mature and so grave, that he looked upon

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us as two children worthy of indulgence, and we both looked upon him as a respectable man, whose esteem it was our business to conciliate. Thus there grew up between us three a companionship, perhaps without another example like it upon earth. All our wishes, our cares, our hearts were in common; nothing seemed to pass outside our little circle. The habit of living together, and of living together exclusively, became so strong that if at our meals one of the three was absent, or there came a fourth, all was thrown out; and in spite of our peculiar relations, a *tete-a-tete* was less sweet than a meeting of all three." [70] Fate interfered to spoil this striking attempt after a new type of the family, developed on a duandric base. Claude Anet was seized with illness, a consequence of excessive fatigue in an Alpine expedition in search of plants, and he came to his end. [71] In him Rousseau always believed that he lost the most solid friend he ever possessed, "a rare and estimable man, in whom nature served instead of education, and who nourished in obscure servitude all the virtues of great men." [72] The day after his death, Rousseau was speaking of their lost friend to Madame de Warens with the liveliest and most sincere affliction, when suddenly in the midst of the conversation he remembered that he should inherit the poor man's clothes, and particularly a handsome black coat. A reproachful tear from his Maman, as he always somewhat nauseously called Madame de Warens, extinguished the vile thought and washed away its last traces. [73] After all, those men and women are exceptionally happy, who have no such involuntary meanness of thought standing against themselves in that unwritten chapter of their lives which even the most candid persons keep privately locked up in shamefast recollection.

Shortly after his return to Chamberi, a wave from the great tide of European affairs surged into the quiet valleys of Savoy. In the February of 1733, Augustus the Strong died, and the usual disorder followed in the choice of a successor to him in the kingship of Poland. France was for Stanislaus, the father-in-law of Lewis XV., while the Emperor Charles VI. and Anne of Russia were for August III., elector of Saxony. Stanislaus was compelled to flee, and the French Government, taking up his quarrel, declared war against the Emperor (October 14, 1733). The first act of this war, which was to end in the acquisition of Naples and the two Sicilies by Spanish Bourbons, and of Lorraine by France, was the despatch of a French expedition to the Milanese under Marshall Villars, the husband of one of Voltaire's first idols. This took place in the autumn of 1733, and a French column passed through Chamberi, exciting lively interest in all minds, including Rousseau's. He now read the newspapers for the first time, with the most eager sympathy for the country with whose history his own name was destined to be so permanently associated. "If this mad passion," he says, "had



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only been momentary, I should not speak of it; but for no visible reason it took such root in my heart, that when I afterwards at Paris played the stern republican, I could not help feeling in spite of myself a secret predilection for the very nation that I found so servile, and the government I made bold to assail." [74] This fondness for France was strong, constant, and invincible, and found what was in the eighteenth century a natural complement in a corresponding dislike of England. [75]

Rousseau's health began to show signs of weakness. His breath became asthmatic, he had palpitations, he spat blood, and suffered from a slow feverishness from which he never afterwards became entirely free. [76] His mind was as feverish as his body, and the morbid broodings which active life reduces to their lowest degree in most young men, were left to make full havoc along with the seven devils of idleness and vacuity. An instinct which may flow from the unrecognised animal lying deep down in us all, suggested the way of return to wholesomeness. Rousseau prevailed upon Madame de Warens to leave the stifling streets for the fresh fields, and to deliver herself by retreat to rural solitude from the adventurers who made her their prey. Les Charmettes, the modest farm-house to which they retired, still stands. The modern traveller, with a taste for relieving an imagination strained by great historic monuments and secular landmarks, with the sight of spots associated with the passion and meditation of some far-shining teacher of men, may walk a short league from where the gray slate roofs of dull Chamberi bake in the sun, and ascending a gently mounting road, with high leafy bank on the right throwing cool shadows over his head, and a stream on the left making music at his feet, he sees an old red housetop lifted lonely above the trees. The homes in which men have lived now and again lend themselves to the beholder's subjective impression; they seemed to be brooding in forlorn isolation like some life-wearied gray-beard over ancient and sorrow-stricken memories. At Les Charmettes a pitiful melancholy penetrates you. The supreme loveliness of the scene, the sweet-smelling meadows, the orchard, the water-ways, the little vineyard with here and there a rose glowing crimson among the yellow stunted vines, the rust-red crag of the Nivolet rising against the sky far across the broad valley; the contrast between all this peace, beauty, silence, and the diseased miserable life of the famous man who found a scanty span of paradise in the midst of it, touches the soul with a pathetic spell. We are for the moment lifted out of squalor, vagrancy, and disorder, and seem to hear some of the harmonies which sounded to this perturbed spirit, soothing it, exalting it, and stirring those inmost vibrations which in truth make up all the short divine part of a man's life. [77]



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"No day passes," he wrote in the very year in which he died, "in which I do not recall with joy and tender effusion this single and brief time in my life, when I was fully myself, without mixture or hindrance, and when I may say in a true sense that I lived. I may almost say, like the prefect when disgraced and proceeding to end his days tranquilly in the country, 'I have passed seventy years on the earth, and I have lived but seven of them.' But for this brief and precious space, I should perhaps have remained uncertain about myself; for during all the rest of my life I have been so agitated, tossed, plucked hither and thither by the passions of others, that, being nearly passive in a life so stormy, I should find it hard to distinguish what belonged to me in my own conduct,—to such a degree has harsh necessity weighed upon me. But during these few years I did what I wished to do, I was what I wished to be." [78] The secret of such rare felicity is hardly to be described in words. It was the ease of a profoundly sensuous nature with every sense gratified and fascinated. Caressing and undivided affection within doors, all the sweetness and movement of nature without, solitude, freedom, and the busy idleness of life in gardens,—these were the conditions of Rousseau's ideal state. "If my happiness," he says, in language of strange felicity, "consisted in facts, actions, or words, I might then describe and represent it in some way; but how say what was neither said nor done nor even thought, but only enjoyed and felt without my being able to point to any other object of my happiness than the very feeling itself? I arose with the sun and I was happy; I went out of doors and I was happy; I saw Maman and I was happy; I left her and I was happy; I went among the woods and hills, I wandered about in the dells, I read, I was idle, I dug in the garden, I gathered fruit, I helped them indoors, and everywhere happiness followed me. It was not in any given thing, it was all in myself, and could never leave me for a single instant." [79] This was a true garden of Eden, with the serpent in temporary quiescence, and we may count the man rare since the fall who has found such happiness in such conditions, and not less blessed than he is rare. The fact that he was one of this chosen company was among the foremost of the circumstances which made Rousseau seem to so many men in the eighteenth century as a spring of water in a thirsty land.

All innocent and amiable things moved him. He used to spend hours together in taming pigeons; he inspired them with such confidence that they would follow him about, and allow him to take them wherever he would, and the moment that he appeared in the garden two or three of them would instantly settle on his arms or his head. The bees, too, gradually came to put the same trust in him, and his whole life was surrounded with gentle companionship. He always began the day with the sun, walking on the high ridge



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above the slope on which the house lay, and going through his form of worship. "It did not consist in a vain moving of the lips, but in a sincere elevation of heart to the author of the tender nature whose beauties lay spread out before my eyes. This act passed rather in wonder and contemplation than in requests; and I always knew that with the dispenser of true blessings, the best means of obtaining those which are needful for us, is less to ask than to deserve them." [80] These effusions may be taken for the beginning of the deistical reaction in the eighteenth century. While the truly scientific and progressive spirits were occupied in laborious preparation for adding to human knowledge and systematising it, Rousseau walked with his head in the clouds among gods, beneficent authors of nature, wise dispensers of blessings, and the like. "Ah, madam," he once said, "sometimes in the privacy of my study, with my hands pressed tight over my eyes or in the darkness of the night, I am of his opinion that there is no God. But look yonder (pointing with his hand to the sky, with head erect, and an inspired glance): the rising of the sun, as it scatters the mists that cover the earth and lays bare the wondrous glittering scene of nature, disperses at the same moment all cloud from my soul. I find my faith again, and my God, and my belief in him. I admire and adore him, and I prostrate myself in his presence." [81] As if that settled the question affirmatively, any more than the absence of such theistic emotion in many noble spirits settles it negatively. God became the highest known formula for sensuous expansion, the synthesis of all complacent emotions, and Rousseau filled up the measure of his delight by creating and invoking a Supreme Being to match with fine scenery and sunny gardens. We shall have a better occasion to mark the attributes of this important conception when we come to *Emilius*, where it was launched in a panoply of resounding phrases upon a Europe which was grown too strong for Christian dogma, and was not yet grown strong enough to rest in a provisional ordering of the results of its own positive knowledge. Walking on the terrace at Les Charmettes, you are at the very birth-place of that particular Etre Supreme to whom Robespierre offered the incense of an official festival.

Sometimes the reading of a Jansenist book would make him unhappy by the prominence into which it brought the displeasing idea of hell, and he used now and then to pass a miserable day in wondering whether this cruel destiny should be his. Madame de Warens, whose softness of heart inspired her with a theology that ought to have satisfied a seraphic doctor, had abolished hell, but she could not dispense with purgatory because she did not know what to do with the souls of the wicked, being unable either to damn them, or to instal them among the good until they had been purified into goodness. In truth it must be confessed, says Rousseau, that alike in this world and the other

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the wicked are extremely embarrassing.[82] His own search after knowledge of his fate is well known. One day, amusing himself in a characteristic manner by throwing stones at trees, he began to be tormented by fear of the eternal pit. He resolved to test his doom by throwing a stone at a particular tree; if he hit, then salvation; if he missed, then perdition. With a trembling hand and beating heart he threw; as he had chosen a large tree and was careful not to place himself too far away, all was well.[83] As a rule, however, in spite of the ugly phantoms of theology, he passed his days in a state of calm. Even when illness brought it into his head that he should soon know the future lot by more assured experiment, he still preserved a tranquillity which he justly qualifies as sensual.

In thinking of Rousseau's peculiar feeling for nature, which acquired such a decisive place in his character during his life at Les Charmettes, it is to be remembered that it was entirely devoid of that stormy and boisterous quality which has grown up in more modern literature, out of the violent attempt to press nature in her most awful moods into the service of the great revolt against a social and religious tradition that can no longer be endured. Of this revolt Rousseau was a chief, and his passion for natural aspects was connected with this attitude, but he did not seize those of them which the poet of *Manfred*, for example, forced into an imputed sympathy with his own rebellion. Rousseau always loved nature best in her moods of quiescence and serenity, and in proportion as she lent herself to such moods in men. He liked rivulets better than rivers. He could not bear the sight of the sea; its infertile bosom and blind restless tumblings filled him with melancholy. The ruins of a park affected him more than the ruins of castles.[84] It is true that no plain, however beautiful, ever seemed so in his eyes; he required torrents, rocks, dark forests, mountains, and precipices.[85] This does not affect the fact that he never moralised appalling landscape, as post-revolutionary writers have done, and that the Alpine wastes which throw your puniest modern into a rapture, had no attraction for him. He could steep himself in nature without climbing fifteen thousand feet to find her. In landscape, as has been said by one with a right to speak, Rousseau was truly a great artist, and you can, if you are artistic too, follow him with confidence in his wanderings; he understood that beauty does not require a great stage, and that the effect of things lies in harmony.[86] The humble heights of the Jura, and the lovely points of the valley of Chamberi, sufficed to give him all the pleasure of which he was capable. In truth a man cannot escape from his time, and Rousseau at least belonged to the eighteenth century in being devoid of the capacity for feeling awe, and the taste for objects inspiring it. Nature was a tender friend with softest bosom, and

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no sphinx with cruel enigma. He felt neither terror, nor any sense of the littleness of man, nor of the mysteriousness of life, nor of the unseen forces which make us their sport, as he peered over the precipice and heard the water roaring at the bottom of it; he only remained for hours enjoying the physical sensation of dizziness with which it turned his brain, with a break now and again for hurling large stones, and watching them roll and leap down into the torrent, with as little reflection and as little articulate emotion as if he had been a child.[87]

Just as it is convenient for purposes of classification to divide a man into body and soul, even when we believe the soul to be only a function of the body, so people talk of his intellectual side and his emotional side, his thinking quality and his feeling quality, though in fact and at the roots these qualities are not two but one, with temperament for the common substratum. During this period of his life the whole of Rousseau's true force went into his feelings, and at all times feeling predominated over reflection, with many drawbacks and some advantages of a very critical kind for subsequent generations of men. Nearly every one who came into contact with him in the way of testing his capacity for being instructed pronounced him hopeless. He had several excellent opportunities of learning Latin, especially at Turin in the house of Count Gouvon, and in the seminary at Annecy, and at Les Charmettes he did his best to teach himself, but without any better result than a very limited power of reading. In learning one rule he forgot the last; he could never master the most elementary laws of versification; he learnt and re-learnt twenty times the Eclogues of Virgil, but not a single word remained with him.[88] He was absolutely without verbal memory, and he pronounces himself wholly incapable of learning anything from masters. Madame de Warens tried to have him taught both dancing and fencing; he could never achieve a minuet, and after three months of instruction he was as clumsy and helpless with his foil as he had been on the first day. He resolved to become a master at the chessboard; he shut himself up in his room, and worked night and day over the books with indescribable efforts which covered many weeks. On proceeding to the cafe to manifest his powers, he found that all the moves and combinations had got mixed up in his head, he saw nothing but clouds on the board, and as often as he repeated the experiment he only found himself weaker than before. Even in music, for which he had a genuine passion and at which he worked hard, he never could acquire any facility at sight, and he was an inaccurate scorer, even when only copying the score of others.[89]



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Two things nearly incompatible, he writes in an important passage, are united in me without my being able to think how; an extremely ardent temperament, lively and impetuous passions, along with ideas that are very slow in coming to birth, very embarrassed, and which never arise until after the event. "One would say that my heart and my intelligence do not belong to the same individual.... I feel all, and see nothing; I am carried away, but I am stupid.... This slowness of thinking, united with such vivacity of feeling, possesses me not only in conversation, but when I am alone and working. My ideas arrange themselves in my head with incredible difficulty; they circulate there in a dull way and ferment until they agitate me, fill me with heat, and give me palpitations; in the midst of this stir I see nothing clearly, I could not write a single word. Insensibly the violent emotion grows still, the chaos is disentangled, everything falls into its place, but very slowly and after long and confused agitation." [90]

So far from saying that his heart and intelligence belonged to two persons, we might have been quite sure, knowing his heart, that his intelligence must be exactly what he describes its process to have been. The slow-burning ecstasy in which he knew himself at his height and was most conscious of fulness of life, was incompatible with the rapid and deliberate generation of ideas. The same soft passivity, the same receptiveness, which made his emotions like the surface of a lake under sky and breeze, entered also into the working of his intellectual faculties. But it happens that in this region, in the attainment of knowledge, truth, and definite thoughts, even receptiveness implies a distinct and active energy, and hence the very quality of temperament which left him free and eager for sensuous impressions, seemed to muffle his intelligence in a certain opaque and resisting medium, of the indefinable kind that interposes between will and action in a dream. His rational part was fatally protected by a non-conducting envelope of sentiment; this intercepted clear ideas on their passage, and even cut off the direct and true impress of those objects and their relations, which are the material of clear ideas. He was no doubt right in his avowal that objects generally made less impression on him than the recollection of them; that he could see nothing of what was before his eyes, and had only his intelligence in cases where memories were concerned; and that of what was said or done in his presence, he felt and penetrated nothing. [91] In other words, this is to say that his material of thought was not fact but image. When he plunged into reflection, he did not deal with the objects of reflection at first hand and in themselves, but only with the reminiscences of objects, which he had never approached in a spirit of deliberate and systematic observation, and with those reminiscences, moreover, suffused and saturated by the impalpable but most



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potent essences of a fermenting imagination. Instead of urgently seeking truth with the patient energy, the wariness, and the conscience, with the sharpened instruments, the systematic apparatus, and the minute feelers and tentacles of the genuine thinker and solid reasoner, he only floated languidly on a summer tide of sensation, and captured premiss and conclusion in a succession of swoons. It would be a mistake to contend that no work can be done for the world by this method, or that truth only comes to those who chase her with logical forceps. But one should always try to discover how a teacher of men came by his ideas, whether by careful toil, or by the easy bequest of generous phantasy.

To give a zest to rural delight, and partly perhaps to satisfy the intellectual interest which must have been an instinct in one who became so consummate a master in the great and noble art of composition, Rousseau, during the time when he lived with Madame de Warens, tried as well as he knew how to acquire a little knowledge of what fruit the cultivation of the mind of man had hitherto brought forth. According to his own account, it was Voltaire's Letters on the English which first drew him seriously to study, and nothing which that illustrious man wrote at this time escaped him. His taste for Voltaire inspired him with the desire of writing with elegance, and of imitating "the fine and enchanting colour of Voltaire's style"[92]—an object in which he cannot be held to have in the least succeeded, though he achieved a superb style of his own. On his return from Turin Madame de Warens had begun in some small way to cultivate a taste for letters in him, though he had lost the enthusiasm of his childhood for reading. Saint Evremond, Puffendorff, the Henriade, and the Spectator happened to be in his room, and he turned over their pages. The Spectator, he says, pleased him greatly and did him much good.[93] Madame de Warens was what he calls protestant in literary taste, and would talk for ever of the great Bayle, while she thought more of Saint Evremond than she could ever persuade Rousseau to think. Two or three years later than this he began to use his own mind more freely, and opened his eyes for the first time to the greatest question that ever dawns upon any human intelligence that has the privilege of discerning it, the problem of a philosophy and a body of doctrine.

His way of answering it did not promise the best results. He read an introduction to the Sciences, then he took an Encyclopaedia and tried to learn all things together, until he repented and resolved to study subjects apart. This he found a better plan for one to whom long application was so fatiguing, that he could not with any effect occupy himself for half an hour on any one matter, especially if following the ideas of another person. [94] He began his morning's work, after an hour or two of dispersive chat, with the Port-Royal Logic, Locke's Essay on the Human Understanding, Malebranche,



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Leibnitz, Descartes.[95] He found these authors in a condition of such perpetual contradiction among themselves, that he formed the chimerical design of reconciling them with one another. This was tedious, so he took up another method, on which he congratulated himself to the end of his life. It consisted in simply adopting and following the ideas of each author, without comparing them either with one another or with those of other writers, and above all without any criticism of his own. Let me begin, he said, by collecting a store of ideas, true or false, but at any rate clear, until my head is well enough stocked to enable me to compare and choose. At the end of some years passed "in never thinking exactly, except after other people, without reflecting so to speak, and almost without reasoning," he found himself in a state to think for himself. "In spite of beginning late to exercise my judicial faculty, I never found that it had lost its vigour, and when I came to publish my own ideas, I was hardly accused of being a servile disciple." [96]

To that fairly credible account of the matter, one can only say that this mutually exclusive way of learning the thoughts of others, and developing thoughts of your own, is for an adult probably the most mischievous, where it is not the most impotent, fashion in which intellectual exercise can well be taken. It is exactly the use of the judicial faculty, criticising, comparing, and defining, which is indispensable in order that a student should not only effectually assimilate the ideas of a writer, but even know what those ideas come to and how much they are worth. And so when he works at ideas of his own, a judicial faculty which has been kept studiously slumbering for some years, is not likely to revive in full strength without any preliminary training. Rousseau was a man of singular genius, and he set an extraordinary mark on Europe, but this mark would have been very different if he had ever mastered any one system of thought, or if he had ever fully grasped what systematic thinking means. Instead of this, his debt to the men whom he read was a debt of piecemeal, and his obligation an obligation for fragments; and this is perhaps the worst way of acquiring an intellectual lineage, for it leaves out the vital continuity of temper and method. It is a small thing to accept this or that of Locke's notions upon education or the origin of ideas, if you do not see the merit of his way of coming by his notions. In short, Rousseau has distinctions in abundance, but the distinction of knowing how to think, in the exact sense of that term, was hardly among them, and neither now nor at any other time did he go through any of that toilsome and vigorous intellectual preparation to which the ablest of his contemporaries, Diderot, Voltaire, D'Alembert, Turgot, Condorcet, Hume, all submitted themselves. His comfortable view was that "the sensible and interesting conversations of a woman of merit are more proper to form a young man than all the pedantical philosophy of books." [97]



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Style, however, in which he ultimately became such a proficient, and which wrought such marvels as only style backed by passion can work, already engaged his serious attention. We have already seen how Voltaire implanted in him the first root idea, which so many of us never perceive at all, that there is such a quality of writing as style. He evidently took pains with the form of expression and thought about it, in obedience to some inborn harmonious predisposition which is the source of all veritable eloquence, though there is no strong trace now nor for many years to come of any irresistible inclination for literary composition. We find him, indeed, in 1736 showing consciousness of a slight skill in writing,[98] but he only thought of it as a possible recommendation for a secretaryship to some great person. He also appears to have practised verses, not for their own sake, for he always most justly thought his own verses mediocre, and they are even worse; but on the ground that verse-making is a rather good exercise for breaking one's self to elegant inversions, and learning a greater ease in prose.[99] At the age of one and twenty he composed a comedy, long afterwards damned as *Narcisse*. Such prelusions, however, were of small importance compared with the fact of his being surrounded by a moral atmosphere in which his whole mind was steeped. It is not in the study of Voltaire or another, but in the deep soft soil of constant mood and old habit that such a style as Rousseau's has its growth.

It was the custom to return to Chamberi for the winter, and the day of their departure from Les Charmettes was always a day blurred and tearful for Rousseau; he never left it without kissing the ground, the trees, the flowers; he had to be torn away from it as from a loved companion. At the first melting of the winter snows they left their dungeon in Chamberi, and they never missed the earliest song of the nightingale. Many a joyful day of summer peace remained vivid in Rousseau's memory, and made a mixed heaven and hell for him long years after in the stifling dingy Paris street, and the raw and cheerless air of a Derbyshire winter.[100] "We started early in the morning," he says, describing one of these simple excursions on the day of St. Lewis, who was the very unconscious patron saint of Madame de Warens, "together and alone; I proposed that we should go and ramble about the side of the valley opposite to our own, which we had not yet visited. We sent our provisions on before us, for we were to be out all day. We went from hill to hill and wood to wood, sometimes in the sun and often in the shade, resting from time to time and forgetting ourselves for whole hours; chatting about ourselves, our union, our dear lot, and offering unheard prayers that it might last. All seemed to conspire for the bliss of this day. Rain had fallen a short time before; there was no dust, and the little streams were full; a light fresh breeze



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stirred the leaves, the air was pure, the horizon without a cloud, and the same serenity reigned in our own hearts. Our dinner was cooked in a peasant's cottage, and we shared it with his family. These Savoyards are such good souls! After dinner we sought shade under some tall trees, where, while I collected dry sticks for making our coffee, Maman amused herself by botanising among the bushes, and the expedition ended in transports of tenderness and effusion." [101] This is one of such days as the soul turns back to when the misery that stalks after us all has seized it, and a man is left to the sting and smart of the memory of irrecoverable things.

He was resolved to bind himself to Madame de Warens with an inalterable fidelity for all the rest of his days; he would watch over her with all the dutiful and tender vigilance of a son, and she should be to him something dearer than mother or wife or sister. What actually befell was this. He was attacked by vapours, which he characterises as the disorder of the happy. One symptom of his disease was the conviction derived from the rash perusal of surgeon's treatises, that he was suffering from a polypus in the heart. On the not very chivalrous principle that if he did not spend Madame de Warens' money, he was only leaving it for adventurers and knaves, he proceeded to Montpellier to consult the physicians, and took the money for his expenses out of his benefactress's store, which was always slender because it was always open to any hand. While on the road, he fell into an intrigue with a travelling companion, whom critics have compared to the fair Philina of Wilhelm Meister. In due time, the Montpellier doctor being unable to discover a disease, declared that the patient had none. The scenery was dull and unattractive, and this would have counterbalanced the weightiest prudential reasons with him at any time. Rousseau debated whether he should keep tryst with his gay fellow-traveller, or return to Chamberi. Remorse and that intractable emptiness of pocket which is the iron key to many a deed of ingenuous-looking self-denial and Spartan virtue, directed him homewards. Here he had a surprise, and perhaps learnt a lesson. He found installed in the house a personage whom he describes as tall, fair, noisy, coxcombical, flat-faced, flat-souled. Another triple alliance seemed a thing odious in the eyes of a man whom his travelling diversions had made a Pharisee for the hour. He protested, but Madame de Warens was a woman of principle, and declined to let Rousseau, who had profited by the doctrine of indifference, now set up in his own favour the contrary doctrine of a narrow and churlish partiality. So a short, delicious, and never-forgotten episode came to an end: this pair who had known so much happiness together were happy together no more, and the air became peopled for Rousseau with wan spectres of dead joys and fast gathering cares.



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The dates of the various events described in the fifth and sixth books of the *Confessions* are inextricable, and the order is evidently inverted more than once. The inversion of order is less serious than the contradictions between the dates of the *Confessions* and the more authentic and unmistakable dates of his letters. For instance, he describes a visit to Geneva as having been made shortly before Lautrec's temporary pacification of the civic troubles of that town; and that event took place in the spring of 1738. This would throw the Montpellier journey, which he says came after the visit to Geneva, into 1738, but the letters to Madame de Warens from Grenoble and Montpellier are dated in the autumn and winter of 1737.[102] Minor verifications attest the exactitude of the dates of the letters,[103] and we may therefore conclude that he returned from Montpellier, found his place taken and lost his old delight in Les Charmettes, in the early part of 1738. In the tenth of the *Reveries* he speaks of having passed "a space of four or five years" in the bliss of Les Charmettes, and it is true that his connection with it in one way and another lasted from the middle of 1736 until about the middle of 1741. But as he left for Montpellier in the autumn of 1737, and found the obnoxious Vinzenried installed in 1738, the pure and characteristic felicity of Les Charmettes perhaps only lasted about a year or a year and a half. But a year may set a deep mark on a man, and give him imperishable taste of many things bitter and sweet.

FOOTNOTES:

[38] *Conf.*, iii. 177.

[39] Lamartine in *Raphael* defies "a reasonable man to recompose with any reality the character that Rousseau gives to his mistress, out of the contradictory elements which he associates in her nature. One of these elements excludes the other." It is worth while for any who care for this kind of study to compare Madame de Warens with the Marquise de Courcelles, whom Sainte-Beuve has well called the Manon Lescaut of the seventeenth century.

[40] Described by Rousseau in a memorandum for the biographer of M. de Bernex, printed in *Melanges*, pp. 139-144.

[41] De Tavel, by name. Disorderly ideas as to the relations of the sexes began to appear in Switzerland along with the reformation of religion. In the sixteenth century a woman appeared at Geneva with the doctrine that it is as inhuman and as unjustifiable to refuse the gratification of this appetite in a man as to decline to give food and drink to the starving. Picot's *Hist. de Geneve*, vol. ii.

[42] *Conf.*, v. 341. Also ii. 83; and vi. 401.

[43] *Conf.*, v. 345.



[44] *Conf.*, ii. 83.

[45] *Ib.* ii. 82.

[46] *Ib.* iii. 179. See also 200.

[47] *Conf.*, iii. 177, 178.

[48] *Conf.*, iii. 183.



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[49] M. d'Aubonne.

[50] *Conf.*, iii 192.

[51] M. Gatier.

[52] M. Gaime.

[53] *Conf.*, iii. 204.

[54] *Ib.* iii. 209, 210.

[55] *Conf.*, iii. 217-222.

[56] *Conf.*, iv. 227.

[57] *Ib.* iii. 224.

[58] One Venture de Villeneuve, who visited him years afterwards (1755) in Paris, when Rousseau found that the idol of old days was a crapulent debauchee. *Ib.* viii. 221.

[59] Mdles. de Graffenried and Galley. *Conf.*, iv. 231.

[60] *Ib.* iv. 254-256.

[61] *Conf.*, iv. 253.

[62] While in the ambassador's house at Soleure, he was lodged in a room which had once belonged to his namesake, Jean Baptiste Rousseau (*b.* 1670—*d.* 1741), whom the older critics astonishingly insist on counting the first of French lyric poets. There was a third Rousseau, Pierre [*b.* 1725—*d.* 1785], who wrote plays and did other work now well forgotten. There are some lines imperfectly commemorative of the trio—

Trois auteurs que Rousseau l'on nomme, Connus de Paris jusqu'a Rome,
Sont differens; voici par ou; Rousseau de Paris fut grand homme;
Rousseau de Geneve est un fou; Rousseau de Toulouse un atome.

Jean Jacques refers to both his namesakes in his letter to Voltaire, Jan. 30, 1750. *Corr.*, i. 145.

[63] The only object which ever surpassed his expectation was the great Roman structure near Nismes, the Pont du Gard. *Conf.*, vi. 446.

[64] Rousseau gives 1732 as the probable date of his return to Chamberi, after his first visit to Paris [*Conf.*, v. 305], and the only objection to this is his mention of the incident of the march of the French troops, which could not have happened until the winter of



1733, as having taken place “some months” after his arrival. Musset-Pathay accepts this as decisive, and fixes the return in the spring of 1733 [i. 12]. My own conjectural chronology is this: Returns from Turin towards the autumn of 1729; stays at Annecy until the spring of 1731; passes the winter of 1731-2 at Neuchatel; first visits Paris in spring of 1732; returns to Savoy in the early summer of 1732. But a precise harmonising of the dates in the Confessions is impossible; Rousseau wrote them three and thirty years after our present point [in 1766 at Wootton], and never claimed to be exact in minuteness of date. Fortunately such matters in the present case are absolutely devoid of importance.

[65] *Conf.*, iv. 279, 280.

[66] *Conf.*, iv. 290, 291,

[67] *Conf.*, iv. 281-283.

[68] *Conf.*, v. 325.

[69] *Conf.*, v. 360-364. *Corr.*, i. 21-24.

[70] *Conf.*, v. 349, 350.

[71] Apparently in the summer of 1736, though, the reference to the return of the French troops at the peace [*Ib.* v. 365] would place it in 1735.



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[72] *Ib.* v. 356

[73] *Ib.*

[74] *Conf.*, v. 315, 316.

[75] *Ib.* iv. 276. *Nouv. Hel.*, II. xiv. 381, *etc.*

[76] He refers to the ill-health of his youth, *Conf.*, vii. 32, and describes an ominous head seizure while at Chamberi, *Ib.* vi. 396.

[77] Rousseau's description of Les Charmettes is at the end of the fifth book. The present proprietor keeps the house arranged as it used to be, and has gathered one or two memorials of its famous tenant, including his poor *clavecin* and his watch. In an outside wall, Hérault de Séchelles, when Commissioner from the Convention in the department of Mont Blanc, inserted a little white stone with two most lapidary stanzas inscribed upon it, about *genie, solitude, fierte, gloire, verite, envie*, and the like.

[78] *Reveries*, x. 336 (1778).

[79] *Conf.*, vi. 393.

[80] *Conf.*, vi. 412.

[81] *Mem. de Mdme. d'Épinay*, i. 394. (M. Boiteau's edition: Charpentier. 1865.)

[82] *Conf.*, vi. 399.

[83] *Ib.* vi. 424. Goethe made a similar experiment; see Mr. Lewes's *Life*, p. 126.

[84] Bernardin de Saint Pierre tells us this. *Oeuvres* (Ed. 1818), xii. 70, *etc.*

[85] *Conf.*, iv. 297. See also the description of the scenery of the Valais, in the *Nouv. Hel.*, Pt. I. Let. xxiii.

[86] George Sand in *Mademoiselle la Quintinie* (p. 27), a book containing some peculiarly subtle appreciations of the Savoy landscape.

[87] *Conf.*, iv. 298.

[88] *Conf.*, vi. 416, 422, *etc.*; iii. 164; iii. 203; v. 347; v. 383, 384. Also vii. 53.

[89] *Conf.*, v. 313, 367; iv. 293; ix. 353. Also *Mem. de Mdme. d'Épinay*, ii. 151.

[90] *Ib.* iii. 192, 193.



[91] *Conf.*, iv. 301; iii. 195.

[92] *Conf.*, v. 372, 373. The mistaken date assigned to the correspondence between Voltaire and Frederick is one of many instances how little we can trust the Confessions for minute accuracy, though their substantial veracity is confirmed by all the collateral evidence that we have.

[93] *Ib.* iii. 188. For his debt in the way of education to Madame de Warens, see also *Ib.* vii. 46.

[94] *Conf.*, vi. 409.

[95] *Ib.* vi. 413. He adds a suspicious-looking "*et cetera.*"

[96] *Conf.*, vi. 414

[97] *Conf.*, iv. 295. See also v. 346.

[98] *Corr.*, 1736, pp. 26, 27.

[99] *Conf.*, iv. 271, where he says further that he never found enough attraction in French poetry to make him think of pursuing it.

[100] The first part of the Confessions was written in Wootton in Derbyshire, in the winter of 1766-1767.

[101] *Conf.*, vi. 422.



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[102] *Corr.*, i. 43, 46, 62, *etc.*

[103] *Musset-Pathay*, i. 23, *n.*

CHAPTER IV.

THERESA LE VASSEUR.

Men like Rousseau, who are most heedless in letting their delight perish, are as often as not most loth to bury what they have slain, or even to perceive that life has gone out of it. The sight of simple hearts trying to coax back a little warm breath of former days into a present that is stiff and cold with indifference, is touching enough. But there is a certain grossness around the circumstances in which Rousseau now and too often found himself, that makes us watch his embarrassment with some composure. One cannot easily think of him as a simple heart, and we feel perhaps as much relief as he, when he resolves after making all due efforts to thrust out the intruder and bring Madame de Warens over from theories which had become too practical to be interesting, to leave Les Charmettes and accept a tutorship at Lyons. His new patron was a De Mably, elder brother of the philosophic abbe of the same name (1709-85), and of the still more notable Condillac (1714-80).

The future author of the most influential treatise on education that has ever been written, was not successful in the practical and far more arduous side of that master art. [104] We have seen how little training he had ever given himself in the cardinal virtues of collectedness and self-control, and we know this to be the indispensable quality in all who have to shape young minds for a humane life. So long as all went well, he was an angel, but when things went wrong, he is willing to confess that he was a devil. When his two pupils could not understand him, he became frantic; when they showed wilfulness or any other part of the disagreeable materials out of which, along with the rest, human excellence has to be ingeniously and painfully manufactured, he was ready to kill them. This, as he justly admits, was not the way to render them either well learned or sage. The moral education of the teacher himself was hardly complete, for he describes how he used to steal his employer's wine, and the exquisite draughts which he enjoyed in the secrecy of his own room, with a piece of cake in one hand and some dear romance in the other. We should forgive greedy pilferings of this kind more easily if Rousseau had forgotten them more speedily. These are surely offences for which the best expiation is oblivion in a throng of worthier memories.

It is easy to understand how often Rousseau's mind turned from the deadly drudgery of his present employment to the beatitude of former days. "What rendered my present condition insupportable was the recollection of my beloved Charmettes, of my garden, my trees, my fountain, my orchard, and above all of her for whom I felt myself born and

who gave life to it all. As I thought of her, of our pleasures, our guileless days, I was seized by a tightness in



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my heart, a stopping of my breath, which robbed me of all spirit." [105] For years to come this was a kind of far-off accompaniment, thrumming melodiously in his ears under all the discords of a miserable life. He made another effort to quicken the dead. Throwing up his office with his usual promptitude in escaping from the irksome, after a residence of something like a year at Lyons (April, 1740—spring of 1741), he made his way back to his old haunts. The first half-hour with Madame de Warens persuaded him that happiness here was really at an end. After a stay of a few months, his desolation again overcame him. It was agreed that he should go to Paris to make his fortune by a new method of musical notation which he had invented, and after a short stay at Lyons, he found himself for the second time in the famous city which in the eighteenth century had become for the moment the centre of the universe. [106]

It was not yet, however, destined to be a centre for him. His plan of musical notation was examined by a learned committee of the Academy, no member of whom was instructed in the musical art. Rousseau, dumb, inarticulate, and unready as usual, was amazed at the ease with which his critics by the free use of sounding phrases demolished arguments and objections which he perceived that they did not at all understand. His experience on this occasion suggested to him the most just reflection, how even without breadth of intelligence, the profound knowledge of any one thing is preferable in forming a judgment about it, to all possible enlightenment conferred by the cultivation of the sciences, without study of the special matter in question. It astonished him that all these learned men, who knew so many things, could yet be so ignorant that a man should only pretend to be a judge in his own craft. [107]

His musical path to glory and riches thus blocked up, he surrendered himself not to despair but to complete idleness and peace of mind. He had a few coins left, and these prevented him from thinking of a future. He was presented to one or two great ladies, and with the blundering gallantry habitual to him he wrote a letter to one of the greatest of them, declaring his passion for her. Madame Dupin was the daughter of one, and the wife of another, of the richest men in France, and the attentions of a man whose acquaintance Madame Beuzenval had begun by inviting him to dine in the servants' hall, were not pleasing to her. [108] She forgave the impertinence eventually, and her stepson, M. Francueil, was Rousseau's patron for some years. [109] On the whole, however, in spite of his own account of his social ineptitude, there cannot have been anything so repulsive in his manners as this account would lead us to think. There is no grave anachronism in introducing here the impression which he made on two fine ladies not many years after this. "He pays compliments, yet he is not polite, or at least he is without the air of politeness. He seems to be ignorant of



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the usages of society, but it is easily seen that he is infinitely intelligent. He has a brown complexion, while eyes that overflow with fire give animation to his expression. When he has spoken and you look at him, he appears comely; but when you try to recall him, his image is always extremely plain. They say that he has bad health, and endures agony which from some motive of vanity he most carefully conceals. It is this, I fancy, which gives him from time to time an air of sullenness." [110] The other lady, who saw him at the same time, speaks of "the poor devil of an author, who's as poor as Job for you, but with wit and vanity enough for four.... They say his history is as queer as his person, and that is saying a good deal.... Madame Maupeou and I tried to guess what it was. 'In spite of his face,' said she (for it is certain he is uncommonly plain), 'his eyes tell that love plays a great part in his romance.' 'No,' said I, 'his nose tells me that it is vanity.' 'Well then, 'tis both one and the other.'" [111]

One of his patronesses took some trouble to procure him the post of secretary to the French ambassador at Venice, and in the spring of 1743 our much-wandering man started once more in quest of meat and raiment in the famous city of the Adriatic. This was one of those steps of which there are not a few in a man's life, that seem at the moment to rank foremost in the short line of decisive acts, and then are presently seen not to have been decisive at all, but mere interruptions conducting nowhither. In truth the critical moments with us are mostly as points in slumber. Even if the ancient oracles of the gods were to regain their speech once more on the earth, men would usually go to consult them on days when the answer would have least significance, and could guide them least far. That one of the most heedless vagrants in Europe, and as it happened one of the men of most extraordinary genius also, should have got a footing in the train of the ambassador of a great government, would naturally seem to him and others as chance's one critical stroke in his life. In reality it was nothing. The Count of Montaignu, his master, was one of the worst characters with whom Rousseau could for his own profit have been brought into contact. In his professional quality he was not far from imbecile. The folly and weakness of the government at Versailles during the reign of Lewis XV., and its indifference to competence in every department except perhaps partially in the fisc, was fairly illustrated in its absurd representative at Venice. The secretary, whose renown has preserved his master's name, has recorded more amply than enough the grounds of quarrel between them. Rousseau is for once eager to assert his own efficiency, and declares that he rendered many important services for which he was repaid with ingratitude and persecution. [112] One would be glad to know what the Count of Montaignu's version of matters was, for in truth Rousseau's conduct in previous posts makes us wonder how it was that he who had hitherto always been unfaithful over few things, suddenly touched perfection when he became lord over many.



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There is other testimony, however, to the ambassador's morbid quality, of which, after that general imbecility which was too common a thing among men in office to be remarkable, avarice was the most striking trait. For instance, careful observation had persuaded him that three shoes are equivalent to two pairs, because there is always one of a pair which is more worn than its fellow; and hence he habitually ordered his shoes in threes.[113] It was natural enough that such a master and such a secretary should quarrel over perquisites. That slightly cringing quality which we have noticed on one or two occasions in Rousseau's hungry youthful time, had been hardened out of him by circumstance or the strengthening of inborn fibre. He would now neither dine in a servants' hall because a fine lady forgot what was due to a musician, nor share his fees with a great ambassador who forgot what was due to himself. These sordid disputes are of no interest now to anybody, and we need only say that after a period of eighteen months passed in uncongenial company, Rousseau parted from his count in extreme dudgeon, and the diplomatic career which he had promised to himself came to the same close as various other careers had already done.

He returned to Paris towards the end of 1744, burning with indignation at the unjust treatment which he believed himself to have suffered, and laying memorial after memorial before the minister at home. He assures us that it was the justice and the futility of his complaints, that left in his soul the germ of exasperation against preposterous civil institutions, "in which the true common weal and real justice are always sacrificed to some seeming order or other, which is in fact destructive of all order, and only adds the sanction of public authority to the oppression of the weak and the iniquity of the strong." [114]

One or two pictures connected with the Venetian episode remain in the memory of the reader of the Confessions, and among them perhaps with most people is that of the quarantine at Genoa in Rousseau's voyage to his new post. The travellers had the choice of remaining on board the felucca, or passing the time in an unfurnished lazaretto. This, we may notice in passing, was his first view of the sea; he makes no mention of the fact, nor does the sight or thought of the sea appear to have left the least mark in any line of his writings. He always disliked it, and thought of it with melancholy. Rousseau, as we may suppose, found the want of space and air in the boat the most intolerable of evils, and preferred to go alone to the lazaretto, though it had neither window-sashes nor tables nor chairs nor bed, nor even a truss of straw to lie down upon. He was locked up and had the whole barrack to himself. "I manufactured," he says, "a good bed out of my coats and shirts, sheets out of towels which I stitched together, a pillow out of my old cloak rolled up. I made myself a seat of one trunk placed



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flat, and a table of the other. I got out some paper and my writing-desk, and arranged some dozen books that I had by way of library. In short I made myself so comfortable, that, with the exception of curtains and windows, I was nearly as well off in this absolutely naked lazaretto as in my lodgings in Paris. My meals were served with much pomp; two grenadiers, with bayonets at their musket-ends, escorted them; the staircase was my dining-room, the landing did for table and the lower step for a seat, and when my dinner was served, they rang a little bell as they withdrew, to warn me to seat myself at table. Between my meals, when I was neither writing nor reading, nor busy with my furnishing, I went for a walk in the Protestant graveyard, or mounted into a lantern which looked out on to the port, and whence I could see the ships sailing in and out. I passed a fortnight in this way, and I could have spent the whole three weeks of the quarantine without feeling an instant's weariness." [115]

These are the occasions when we catch glimpses of the true Rousseau; but his residence in Venice was on the whole one of his few really sociable periods. He made friends and kept them, and there was even a certain gaiety in his life. He used to tell people their fortunes in a way that an earlier century would have counted unholy. [116] He rarely sought pleasure in those of her haunts for which the Queen of the Adriatic had a guilty renown, but he has left one singular anecdote, showing the degree to which profound sensibility is capable of doing the moralist's work in a man, and how a stroke of sympathetic imagination may keep one from sin more effectually than an ethical precept. [117] It is pleasanter to think of him as working at the formation of that musical taste which ten years afterwards led him to amaze the Parisians by proving that French melody was a hollow idea born of national self-delusion. A Venetian experiment, whose evidence in the special controversy is less weighty perhaps than Rousseau supposed, was among the facts which persuaded him that Italian is the language of music. An Armenian who had never heard any music was invited to listen first of all to a French monologue, and then to an air of Galuppi's. Rousseau observed in the Armenian more surprise than pleasure during the performance of the French piece. The first notes of the Italian were no sooner struck, than his eyes and whole expression softened; he was enchanted, surrendered his whole soul to the ravishing impressions of the music, and could never again be induced to listen to the performance of any French air. [118]

More important than this was the circumstance that the sight of the defects of the government of the Venetian Republic first drew his mind to political speculation, and suggested to him the composition of a book that was to be called *Institutions Politiques*. [119] The work, as thus designed and named, was never written, but the idea of it, after many years of meditation, ripened first in the *Discourse on Inequality*, and then in the *Social Contract*.



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If Rousseau's departure for Venice was a wholly insignificant element in his life, his return from it was almost immediately followed by an event which counted for nothing at the moment, which his friends by and by came to regard as the fatal and irretrievable disaster of his life, but which he persistently described as the only real consolation that heaven permitted him to taste in his misery, and the only one that enabled him to bear his many sore burdens.[120]

He took up his quarters at a small and dirty hotel not far from the Sorbonne, where he had alighted on the occasion of his second arrival in Paris.[121] Here was a kitchen-maid, some two-and-twenty years old, who used to sit at table with her mistress and the guests of the house. The company was rough, being mainly composed of Irish and Gascon abbes, and other people to whom graces of mien and refinement of speech had come neither by nature nor cultivation. The hostess herself pitched the conversation in merry Rabelaisian key, and the apparent modesty of her serving-woman gave a zest to her own licence. Rousseau was moved with pity for a maid defenceless against a ribald storm, and from pity he advanced to some warmer sentiment, and he and Theresa Le Vasseur took each other for better for worse, in a way informal but sufficiently effective. This was the beginning of a union which lasted for the length of a generation and more, down to the day of Rousseau's most tragical ending.[122] She thought she saw in him a worthy soul; and he was convinced that he saw in her a woman of sensibility, simple and free from trick, and neither of the two, he says, was deceived in respect of the other. Her intellectual quality was unique. She could never be taught to read with any approach to success. She could never follow the order of the twelve months of the year, nor master a single arithmetical figure, nor count a sum of money, nor reckon the price of a thing. A month's instruction was not enough to give knowledge of the hours of the day on the dial-plate. The words she used were often the direct opposites of the words that she meant to use.[123]

The marriage choice of others is the inscrutable puzzle of those who have no eye for the fact that such choice is the great match of cajolery between purpose and invisible hazard; the blessedness of many lives is the stake, as intention happens to cheat accident or to be cheated by it. When the match is once over, deep criticism of a game of pure chance is time wasted. The crude talk in which the unwise deliver their judgments upon the conditions of success in the relations between men and women, has flowed with unprofitable copiousness as to this not very inviting case. People construct an imaginary Rousseau out of his writings, and then fetter their elevated, susceptible, sensitive, and humane creation, to the unfortunate woman who could never be taught that April is the month after March, or that twice four and a half are nine. Now we



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have already seen enough of Rousseau to know for how infinitely little he counted the gift of a quick wit, and what small store he set either on literary varnish or on capacity for receiving it. He was touched in people with whom he had to do, not by attainment, but by moral fibre or his imaginary impression of their moral fibre. Instead of analysing a character, bringing its several elements into the balance, computing the more or less of this faculty or that, he loved to feel its influence as a whole, indivisible, impalpable, playing without sound or agitation around him like soft light and warmth and the fostering air. The deepest ignorance, the dullest incapacity, the cloudiest faculties of apprehension, were nothing to him in man or woman, provided he could only be sensible of that indescribable emanation from voice and eye and movement, that silent effusion of serenity around spoken words, which nature has given to some tranquillising spirits, and which would have left him free in an even life of indolent meditation and unfretted sense. A woman of high, eager, stimulating kind would have been a more fatal mate for him than the most stupid woman that ever rivalled the stupidity of man. Stimulation in any form always meant distress to Rousseau. The moist warmth of the Savoy valleys was not dearer to him than the subtle inhalations of softened and close enveloping companionship, in which the one needful thing is not intellectual equality, but easy, smooth, constant contact of feeling about the thousand small matters that make up the existence of a day. This is not the highest ideal of union that one's mind can conceive from the point of view of intense productive energy, but Rousseau was not concerned with the conditions of productive energy. He only sought to live, to be himself, and he knew better than any critics can know for him, what kind of nature was the best supplement for his own. As he said in an apophthegm with a deep melancholy lying at the bottom of it,—you never can cite the example of a thoroughly happy man, for no one but the man himself knows anything about it.[124] “By the side of people we love,” he says very truly, “sentiment nourishes the intelligence as well as the heart, and we have little occasion to seek ideas elsewhere. I lived with my Theresa as pleasantly as with the finest genius in the universe.”[125]

Theresa Le Vasseur would probably have been happier if she had married a stout stable-boy, as indeed she did some thirty years hence by way of gathering up the fragments that were left; but there is little reason to think that Rousseau would have been much happier with any other mate than he was with Theresa. There was no social disparity between the two. She was a person accustomed to hardship and coarseness, and so was he. And he always systematically preferred the honest coarseness of the plain people from whom he was sprung and among whom he had lived, to the more hateful coarseness of heart which so often lurks



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under fine manners and a complete knowledge of the order of the months in the year and the arithmetical table. Rousseau had been a serving-man, and there was no deterioration in going with a serving-woman.[126] However this may be, it is certain that for the first dozen years or so of his partnership—and many others as well as he are said to have found in this term a limit to the conditions of the original contract,—Rousseau had perfect and entire contentment in the Theresa whom all his friends pronounced as mean, greedy, jealous, degrading, as she was avowedly brutish in understanding. Granting that she was all these things, how much of the responsibility for his acts has been thus shifted from the shoulders of Rousseau himself, whose connection with her was from beginning to end entirely voluntary? If he attached himself deliberately to an unworthy object by a bond which he was indisputably free to break on any day that he chose, were not the effects of such a union as much due to his own character which sought, formed, and perpetuated it, as to the character of Theresa Le Vasseur? Nothing, as he himself said in a passage to which he appends a vindication of Theresa, shows the true leanings and inclinations of a man better than the sort of attachments which he forms.[127]

It is a natural blunder in a literate and well-mannered society to charge a mistake against a man who infringes its conventions in this particular way. Rousseau knew what he was about, as well as politer persons. He was at least as happy with his kitchen wench as Addison was with his countess, or Voltaire with his marchioness, and he would not have been what he was, nor have played the part that he did play in the eighteenth century, if he had felt anything derogatory or unseemly in a kitchen wench. The selection was probably not very deliberate; as it happened, Theresa served as a standing illustration of two of his most marked traits, a contempt for mere literary culture, and a yet deeper contempt for social accomplishments and social position. In time he found out the grievous disadvantages of living in solitude with a companion who did not know how to think, and whose stock of ideas was so slight that the only common ground of talk between them was gossip and quodlibets. But her lack of sprightliness, beauty, grace, refinement, and that gentle initiative by which women may make even a sombre life so various, went for nothing with him. What his friends missed in her, he did not seek and would not have valued; and what he found in her, they were naturally unable to appreciate, for they never were in the mood for detecting it. "I have not seen much of happy men," he wrote when near his end, "perhaps nothing; but I have many a time seen contented hearts, and of all the objects that have struck me, I believe it is this which has always given most contentment to myself." [128] This moderate conception of felicity, which was always so characteristic with him, as an even, durable, and rather low-toned state of the feelings, accounts for his prolonged acquiescence in a companion whom men with more elation in their ideal would assuredly have found hostile even to the most modest contentment.



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"The heart of my Theresa," he wrote long after the first tenderness had changed into riper emotion on his side, and, alas, into indifference on hers, "was that of an angel; our attachment waxed stronger with our intimacy, and we felt more and more each day that we were made for one another. If our pleasures could be described, their simplicity would make you laugh; our excursions together out of town, in which I would munificently expend eight or ten halfpence in some rural tavern; our modest suppers at my window, seated in front of one another on two small chairs placed on a trunk that filled up the breadth of the embrasure. Here the window did duty for a table, we breathed the fresh air, we could see the neighbourhood and the people passing by, and though on the fourth story, could look down into the street as we ate. Who shall describe, who shall feel the charms of those meals, consisting of a coarse quartern loaf, some cherries, a tiny morsel of cheese, and a pint of wine which we drank between us? Ah, what delicious seasoning there is in friendship, confidence, intimacy, gentleness of soul! We used sometimes to remain thus until midnight, without once thinking of the time." [129]

Men and women are often more fairly judged by the way in which they bear the burden of what they have done, than by the prime act which laid the burden on their lives. [130] The deeper part of us shows in the manner of accepting consequences. On the whole, Rousseau's relations with this woman present him in a better light than those with any other person whatever. If he became with all the rest of the world suspicious, angry, jealous, profoundly diseased in a word, with her he was habitually trustful, affectionate, careful, most long-suffering. It sometimes even occurs to us that his constancy to Theresa was only another side of the morbid perversity of his relations with the rest of the world. People of a certain kind not seldom make the most serious and vital sacrifices for bare love of singularity, and a man like Rousseau was not unlikely to feel an eccentric pleasure in proving that he could find merit in a woman who to everybody else was desperate. One who is on bad terms with the bulk of his fellows may contrive to save his self-respect and confirm his conviction that they are all in the wrong, by preserving attachment to some one to whom general opinion is hostile; the private argument being that if he is capable of this degree of virtue and friendship in an unfavourable case, how much more could he have practised it with others, if they would only have allowed him. Whether this kind of apology was present to his mind or not, Rousseau could always refer those who charged him with black caprice, to his steady kindness towards Theresa Le Vasseur. Her family were among the most odious of human beings, greedy, idle, and ill-humoured, while her mother had every fault that a woman could have in Rousseau's eyes, including that worst fault of setting herself up for a fine wit. Yet he bore with them all for years, and did not break with Madame Le Vasseur until she had poisoned the mind of her daughter, and done her best by rapacity and lying to render him contemptible to all his friends.



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In the course of years Theresa herself gave him unmistakable signs of a change in her affections. "I began to feel," he says, at a date of sixteen or seventeen years from our present point, "that she was no longer for me what she had been in our happy years, and I felt it all the more clearly as I was still the same towards her."^[131] This was in 1762, and her estrangement grew deeper and her indifference more open, until at length, seven years afterwards, we find that she had proposed a separation from him. What the exact reasons for this gradual change may have been we do not know, nor have we any right in ignorance of the whole facts to say that they were not adequate and just. There are two good traits recorded of the woman's character. She could never console herself for having let her father be taken away to end his days miserably in a house of charity.^[132] And the repudiation of her children, against which the glowing egoism of maternity always rebelled, remained a cruel dart in her bosom as long as she lived. We may suppose that there was that about household life with Rousseau which might have bred disgusts even in one as little fastidious as Theresa was. Among other things which must have been hard to endure, we know that in composing his works he was often weeks together without speaking a word to her.^[133] Perhaps again it would not be difficult to produce some passages in Rousseau's letters and in the Confessions, which show traces of that subtle contempt for women that lurks undetected in many who would blush to avow it. Whatever the causes may have been, from indifference she passed to something like aversion, and in the one place where a word of complaint is wrung from him, he describes her as rending and piercing his heart at a moment when his other miseries were at their height. His patience at any rate was inexhaustible; now old, worn by painful bodily infirmities, racked by diseased suspicion and the most dreadful and tormenting of the minor forms of madness, nearly friendless, and altogether hopeless, he yet kept unabated the old tenderness of a quarter of a century before, and expressed it in words of such gentleness, gravity, and self-respecting strength, as may touch even those whom his books leave unmoved, and who view his character with deepest distrust. "For the six-and-twenty years, dearest, that our union has lasted, I have never sought my happiness except in yours, and have never ceased to try to make you happy; and you saw by what I did lately,^[134] that your honour and happiness were one as dear to me as the other. I see with pain that success does not answer my solicitude, and that my kindness is not as sweet to you to receive, as it is sweet to me to show. I know that the sentiments of honour and uprightness with which you were born will never change in you; but as for those of tenderness and attachment which were once reciprocal between us, I feel that they now only exist on my side. Not only, dearest of all friends, have you ceased to find



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pleasure in my company, but you have to tax yourself severely even to remain a few minutes with me out of complaisance. You are at your ease with all the world but me. I do not speak to you of many other things. We must take our friends with their faults, and I ought to pass over yours, as you pass over mine. If you were happy with me I could be content, but I see clearly that you are not, and this is what makes my heart sore. If I could do better for your happiness, I would do it and hold my peace; but that is not possible. I have left nothing undone that I thought would contribute to your felicity. At this moment, while I am writing to you, overwhelmed with distress and misery, I have no more true or lively desire than to finish my days in closest union with you. You know my lot,—it is such as one could not even dare to describe, for no one could believe it. I never had, my dearest, other than one single solace, but that the sweetest; it was to pour out all my heart in yours; when I talked of my miseries to you, they were soothed; and when you had pitied me, I needed pity no more. My every resource, my whole confidence, is in you and in you only; my soul cannot exist without sympathy, and cannot find sympathy except with you. It is certain that if you fail me and I am forced to live alone, I am as a dead man. But I should die a thousand times more cruelly still, if we continued to live together in misunderstanding, and if confidence and friendship were to go out between us. It would be a hundred times better to cease to see each other; still to live, and sometimes to regret one another. Whatever sacrifice may be necessary on my part to make you happy, be so at any cost, and I shall be content. We have faults to weep over and to expiate, but no crimes; let us not blot out by the imprudence of our closing days the sweetness and purity of those we have passed together." [135] Think ill as we may of Rousseau's theories, and meanly as we may of some parts of his conduct, yet to those who can feel the pulsing of a human life apart from a man's formulae, and can be content to leave to sure circumstance the tragic retaliation for evil behaviour, this letter is like one of the great master's symphonies, whose theme falls in soft strokes of melting pity on the heart. In truth, alas, the union of this now diverse pair had been stained by crimes shortly after its beginning. In the estrangement of father and mother in their late years we may perhaps hear the rustle and spy the pale forms of the avenging spectres of their lost children.

At the time when the connection with Theresa Le Vasseur was formed, Rousseau did not know how to gain bread. He composed the musical diversion of the Muses Galantes, which Rameau rightly or wrongly pronounced a plagiarism, and at the request of Richelieu he made some minor re-adaptations in Voltaire's *Princesse de Navarre*, which Rameau had set to music—that "farce of the fair" to which the author of *Zaire* owed



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his seat in the Academy.[136] But neither task brought him money, and he fell back on a sort of secretaryship, with perhaps a little of the valet in it, to Madame Dupin and her son-in-law, M. de Francueil, for which he received the too moderate income of nine hundred francs. On one occasion he returned to his room expecting with eager impatience the arrival of a remittance, the proceeds of some small property which came to him by the death of his father.[137] He found the letter, and was opening it with trembling hands, when he was suddenly smitten with shame at his want of self-control; he placed it unopened on the chimney-piece, undressed, slept better than usual, and when he awoke the next morning, he had forgotten all about the letter until it caught his eye. He was delighted to find that it contained his money, but "I can swear," he adds, "that my liveliest delight was in having conquered myself." An occasion for self-conquest on a more considerable scale was at hand. In these tight straits, he received grievous news from the unfortunate Theresa. He made up his mind cheerfully what to do; the mother acquiesced after sore persuasion and with bitter tears; and the new-born child was dropped into oblivion in the box of the asylum for foundlings. Next year the same easy expedient was again resorted to, with the same heedlessness on the part of the father, the same pain and reluctance on the part of the mother. Five children in all were thus put away, and with such entire absence of any precaution with a view to their identification in happier times, that not even a note was kept of the day of their birth. [138]

People have made a great variety of remarks upon this transaction, from the economist who turns it into an illustration of the evil results of hospitals for foundlings in encouraging improvident unions, down to the theologian who sees in it new proof of the inborn depravity of the human heart and the fall of man. Others have vindicated it in various ways, one of them courageously taking up the ground that Rousseau had good reason to believe that the children were not his own, and therefore was fully warranted in sending the poor creatures kinless into the universe.[139] Perhaps it is not too transcendental a thing to hope that civilisation may one day reach a point when a plea like this shall count for an aggravation rather than a palliative; when a higher conception of the duties of humanity, familiarised by the practice of adoption as well as by the spread of both rational and compassionate considerations as to the blameless little ones, shall have expelled what is surely as some red and naked beast's emotion of fatherhood. What may be an excellent reason for repudiating a woman, can never be a reason for abandoning a child, except with those whom reckless egoism has made willing to think it a light thing to fling away from us the moulding of new lives and the ensuring of salutary nurture for growing souls.



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We are, however, dispensed from entering into these questions of the greater morals by the very plain account which the chief actor has given us, almost in spite of himself. His crime like most others was the result of heedlessness, of the overriding of duty by the short dim-eyed selfishness of the moment. He had been accustomed to frequent a tavern, where the talk turned mostly upon topics which men with much self-respect put as far from them, as men with little self-respect will allow them to do. "I formed my fashion of thinking from what I perceived to reign among people who were at bottom extremely worthy folk, and I said to myself, Since it is the usage of the country, as one lives here, one may as well follow it. So I made up my mind to it cheerfully, and without the least scruple." [140] By and by he proceeded to cover this nude and intelligible explanation with finer phrases, about preferring that his children should be trained up as workmen and peasants rather than as adventurers and fortune-hunters, and about his supposing that in sending them to the hospital for foundlings he was enrolling himself a citizen in Plato's Republic. [141] This is hardly more than the talk of one become famous, who is defending the acts of his obscurity on the high principles which fame requires. People do not turn citizens of Plato's Republic "cheerfully and without the least scruple," and if a man frequents company where the despatch of inconvenient children to the hospital was an accepted point of common practice, it is superfluous to drag Plato and his Republic into the matter. Another turn again was given to his motives when his mind had become clouded by suspicious mania. Writing a year or two before his death he had assured himself that his determining reason was the fear of a destiny for his children a thousand times worse than the hard life of foundlings, namely, being spoiled by their mother, being turned into monsters by her family, and finally being taught to hate and betray their father by his plotting enemies. [142] This is obviously a mixture in his mind of the motives which led to the abandonment of the children and justified the act to himself at the time, with the circumstances that afterwards reconciled him to what he had done; for now he neither had any enemies plotting against him, nor did he suppose that he had. As for his wife's family, he showed himself quite capable, when the time came, of dealing resolutely and shortly with their importunities in his own case, and he might therefore well have trusted his power to deal with them in the case of his children. He was more right when in 1770, in his important letter to M. de St. Germain, he admitted that example, necessity, the honour of her who was dear to him, all united to make him entrust his children to the establishment provided for that purpose, and kept him from fulfilling the first and holiest of natural duties. "In this, far from excusing, I accuse myself; and when my reason tells me that I did what I ought to have



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done in my situation, I believe that less than my heart, which bitterly belies it." [143] This coincides with the first undisguised account given in the Confessions, which has been already quoted, and it has not that flawed ring of cant and fine words which sounds through nearly all his other references to this great stain upon his life, excepting one, and this is the only further document with which we need concern ourselves. In that, [144] which was written while the unholy work was actually being done, he states very distinctly that the motives were those which are more or less closely connected with most unholy works, motives of money—the great instrument and measure of our personal convenience, the quantitative test of our self-control in placing personal convenience behind duty to other people. "If my misery and my misfortunes rob me of the power of fulfilling a duty so dear, that is a calamity to pity me for, rather than a crime to reproach me with. I owe them subsistence, and I procured a better or at least a surer subsistence for them than I could myself have provided; this condition is above all others." Next comes the consideration of their mother, whose honour must be kept. "You know my situation; I gained my bread from day to day painfully enough; how then should I feed a family as well? And if I were compelled to fall back on the profession of author, how would domestic cares and the confusion of children leave me peace of mind enough in my garret to earn a living? Writings which hunger dictates are hardly of any use, and such a resource is speedily exhausted. Then I should have to resort to patronage, to intrigue, to tricks ... in short to surrender myself to all those infamies, for which I am penetrated with such just horror. Support myself, my children, and their mother on the blood of wretches? No, madame, it were better for them to be orphans than to have a scoundrel for their father.... Why have I not married, you will ask? Madame, ask it of your unjust laws. It was not fitting for me to contract an eternal engagement; and it will never be proved to me that my duty binds me to it. What is certain is that I have never done it, and that I never meant to do it. But we ought not to have children when we cannot support them. Pardon me, madame; nature means us to have offspring, since the earth produces sustenance enough for all; but it is the rich, it is your class, which robs mine of the bread of my children.... I know that foundlings are not delicately nurtured; so much the better for them, they become more robust. They have nothing superfluous given to them, but they have everything that is necessary. They do not make gentlemen of them, but peasants or artisans.... They would not know how to dance, or ride on horseback, but they would have strong unwearied legs. I would neither make authors of them, nor clerks; I would not practise them in handling the pen, but the plough, the file, and the plane, instruments for leading a healthy,



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laborious, innocent life.... I deprived myself of the delight of seeing them, and I have never tasted the sweetness of a father's embrace. Alas, as I have already told you, I see in this only a claim on your pity, and I deliver them from misery at my own expense." [145] We may see here that Rousseau's sophistical eloquence, if it misled others, was at least as powerful in misleading himself, and it may be noted that this letter, with its talk of the children of the rich taking bread out of the mouths of the children of the poor, contains the first of those socialistic sentences by which the writer in after times gained so famous a name. It is at any rate clear from this that the real motive of the abandonment of the children was wholly material. He could not afford to maintain them, and he did not wish to have his comfort disturbed by their presence.

There is assuredly no word to be said by any one with firm reason and unsophisticated conscience in extenuation of this crime. We have only to remember that a great many other persons in that lax time, when the structure of the family was undermined alike in practice and speculation, were guilty of the same crime; that Rousseau, better than they, did not erect his own criminality into a social theory, but was tolerably soon overtaken by a remorse which drove him both to confess his misdeed, and to admit that it was inexpiable; and that the atrocity of the offence owes half the blackness with which it has always been invested by wholesome opinion, to the fact that the offender was by and by the author of the most powerful book by which parental duty has been commended in its full loveliness and nobility. And at any rate, let Rousseau be a little free from excessive reproach from all clergymen, sentimentalists, and others, who do their worst to uphold the common and rather bestial opinion in favour of reckless propagation, and who, if they do not advocate the despatch of children to public institutions, still encourage a selfish incontinence which ultimately falls in burdens on others than the offenders, and which turns the family into a scene of squalor and brutishness, producing a kind of parental influence that is far more disastrous and demoralising than the absence of it in public institutions can possibly be. If the propagation of children without regard to their maintenance be either a virtue or a necessity, and if afterwards the only alternatives are their maintenance in an asylum on the one hand, and their maintenance in the degradation of a poverty-stricken home on the other, we should not hesitate to give people who act as Rousseau acted, all that credit for self-denial and high moral courage which he so audaciously claimed for himself. It really seems to be no more criminal to produce children with the deliberate intention of abandoning them to public charity, as Rousseau did, than it is to produce them in deliberate reliance on the besotted maxim that he who sends mouths will send meat, or any other of the spurious saws which make Providence do duty for self-control, and add to the gratification of physical appetite the grotesque luxury of religious unction.



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In 1761 the Marechale de Luxembourg made efforts to discover Rousseau's children, but without success. They were gone beyond hope of identification, and the author of *Emitius* and his sons and daughters lived together in this world, not knowing one another. Rousseau with singular honesty did not conceal his satisfaction at the fruitlessness of the charitable endeavours to restore them to him. "The success of your search," he wrote, "could not give me pure and undisturbed pleasure; it is too late, too late.... In my present condition this search interested me more for another person [Theresa] than myself; and considering the too easily yielding character of the person in question, it is possible that what she had found already formed for good or for evil, might turn out a sorry boon to her." [146] We may doubt, in spite of one or two charming and graceful passages, whether Rousseau was of a nature to have any feeling for the pathos of infancy, the bright blank eye, the eager unpurposed straining of the hand, the many turns and changes in murmurings that yet can tell us nothing. He was both too self-centred and too passionate for warm ease and fulness of life in all things, to be truly sympathetic with a condition whose feebleness and immaturity touch us with half-painful hope.

Rousseau speaks in the Confessions of having married Theresa five-and-twenty years after the beginning of their acquaintance, [147] but we hardly have to understand that any ceremony took place which anybody but himself would recognise as constituting a marriage. What happened appears to have been this. Seated at table with Theresa and two guests, one of them the mayor of the place, he declared that she was his wife. "This good and seemly engagement was contracted," he says, "in all the simplicity but also in all the truth of nature, in the presence of two men of worth and honour.... During the short and simple act, I saw the honest pair melted in tears." [148] He had at this time whimsically assumed the name of Renou, and he wrote to a friend that of course he had married in this name, for he adds, with the characteristic insertion of an irrelevant bit of magniloquence, "it is not names that are married; no, it is persons." "Even if in this simple and holy ceremony names entered as a constituent part, the one I bear would have sufficed, since I recognise no other. If it were a question of property to be assured, then it would be another thing, but you know very well that is not our case." [149] Of course, this may have been a marriage according to the truth of nature, and Rousseau was as free to choose his own rites as more sacramental performers, but it is clear from his own words about property that there was no pretence of a marriage in law. He and Theresa were on profoundly uncomfortable terms about this time, [150] and Rousseau is not the only person by many thousands who has deceived himself into thinking that some form of words between man and woman must magically transform the substance of their characters and lives, and conjure up new relations of peace and steadfastness.

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We have, however, been outstripping slow-footed destiny, and have now to return to the time when Theresa did not drink brandy, nor run after stable-boys, nor fill Rousseau's soul with bitterness and suspicion, but sat contentedly with him in an evening taking a stoic's meal in the window of their garret on the fourth floor, seasoning it with "confidence, intimacy, gentleness of soul," and that general comfort of sensation which, as we know to our cost, is by no means an invariable condition either of duty done externally or of spiritual growth within. It is perhaps hard for us to feel that we are in the presence of a great religious reactionist; there is so little sign of the higher graces of the soul, there are so many signs of the lowering clogs of the flesh. But the spirit of a man moves in mysterious ways, and expands like the plants of the field with strange and silent stirrings. It is one of the chief tests of worthiness and freedom from vulgarity of soul in us, to be able to have faith that this expansion is a reality, and the most important of all realities. We do not rightly seize the type of Socrates if we can never forget that he was the husband of Xanthippe, nor David's if we can only think of him as the murderer of Uriah, nor Peter's if we can simply remember that he denied his master. Our vision is only blindness, if we can never bring ourselves to see the possibilities of deep mystic aspiration behind the vile outer life of a man, or to believe that this coarse Rousseau, scantily supping with his coarse mate, might yet have many glimpses of the great wide horizons that are haunted by figures rather divine than human.

FOOTNOTES:

[104] In theory he was even now curiously prudent and almost sagacious; witness the *Projet pour l'Education, etc.*, submitted to M. de Mably, and printed in the volume of his Works entitled *Melanges*, pp. 106-136. In the matter of Latin, it may be worth noting that Rousseau rashly or otherwise condemns the practice of writing it, as a vexatious superfluity (p. 132).

[105] *Conf.*, vi. 471.

[106] *Ib.*, vi. 472-475; vii. 8.

[107] *Conf.*, vii. 18, 19.

[108] Musset-Pathay (ii. 72) quotes the passage from Lord Chesterfield's Letters, where the writer suggests Madame Dupin as a proper person with whom his son might in a regular and business-like manner open the elevating game of gallant intrigue.

[109] M. Dupin deserves honourable mention as having helped the editors of the Encyclopaedia by procuring information for them as to salt-works (D'Alembert's



Discours Preliminaire). His son M. Dupin de Francueil, it may be worth noting, is a link in the genealogical chain between two famous personages. In 1777, the year before Rousseau's death, he married (in the chapel of the French embassy in London) Aurora de Saxe, a natural daughter of the marshal, himself the natural son of August the Strong, King of Poland. From this union was born Maurice Dupin, and Maurice Dupin was the father of Madame George Sand. M. Francueil died in 1787.



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[110] *Mem. de M^{de}. d'Epinay*, vol. i. ch. iv. p. 176.

[111] *Ib.* vol. i. ch. iv. pp. 178, 179.

[112] *Conf.*, vii. 46, 51, 52, etc. A diplomatic piece in Rousseau's handwriting has been found in the archives of the French consulate at Constantinople, as M. Girardin informs us. Voltaire unworthily spread the report that Rousseau had been the ambassador's private attendant. For Rousseau's reply to the calumny, see *Corr.*, v. 75 (Jan. 5, 1767); also iv. 150.

[113] Bernardin de St. Pierre, *Oeuv.*, xii. 55 seq.

[114] *Conf.*, vii. 92.

[115] *Conf.*, vii. 38, 39.

[116] *Lettres de la Montagne*, iii. 266.

[117] *Conf.*, vii. 75-84. Also a second example, 84-86. For Byron's opinion of one of these stories, see Lockhart's *Life of Scott*, vi. 132. (Ed. 1837.)

[118] *Lettre sur la Musique Francaise* (1753), p. 186.

[119] *Conf.*, ix. 232.

[120] *Ib.* vii. 97.

[121] Hotel St. Quentin, rue des Cordiers, a narrow street running between the rue St. Jacques and the rue Victor Cousin. The still squalid hostelry is now visible as Hotel J.J. Rousseau. There is some doubt whether he first saw Theresa in 1743 or 1745. The account in Bk. vii. of the *Confessions* is for the latter date (see also *Corr.*, ii. 207), but in the well-known letter to her in 1769 (*Ib.* vi. 79), he speaks of the twenty-six years of their union. Their so-called marriage took place in 1768, and writing in that year he speaks of the five-and-twenty years of their attachment (*Ib.* v. 323), and in the *Confessions* (ix. 249) he fixes their marriage at the same date; also in the letter to Saint-Germain (vi. 152). Musset-Pathay, though giving 1745 in one place (i. 45), and 1743 in another (ii. 198), has with less than his usual care paid no attention to the discrepancy.

[122] *Conf.*, vii. 97-100.

[123] *Conf.*, vii. 101. A short specimen of her composition may be interesting, at any rate to hieroglyphic students: "Mesiceuras ancor mien re mies quan geu ceures o pres deu vous, e deu vous temoes tous la goies e latandres deu mon querque vous cones ces que getou gour e rus pour vous, e qui neu finiraes quotobocs ces mon quere qui vous paleu ces paes mes le vre ... ge sui avestous lamities e la reu conec caceu posible



e la tacheman mon cher bonnamies votreau enble e bon amiess theress le vasseur.” Of which dark words this is the interpretation:—“Mais il sera encore mieux remis quand je sera aupres de vous, et de vous temoigner toute la joie et la tendresse de mon coeur que vous connaissez que j’ai toujours eue pour vous, et qui ne finira qu’au tombeau; c’est mon coeur qui vous parle, c’est pas mes levres.... Je suis avec toute l’amitie et la reconnaissance possibles, et l’attachement, mon cher bon ami, votre humble et bonne amie, Therese Le Vasseur.” (*Rousseau, ses Amis et ses Ennemis*, ii. 450.) Certainly it was not learning and arts which hindered Theresa’s manners from being pure.



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[124] *Oeuv. et Corr. Ined.*, 365.

[125] *Conf.*, vii. 102. See also *Corr.*, v. 373 (Oct. 10, 1768). On the other hand, *Conf.*, ix. 249.

[126] M. St. Marc Girardin, in one of his admirable papers on Rousseau, speaks of him as “a bourgeois unclassed by an alliance with a tavern servant” (*Rev. des Deux Mondes*, Nov. 1852, p. 759); but surely Rousseau had unclassed himself long before, in the houses of Madame Vercellis, Count Gouvon, and even Madame de Warens, and by his repudiation, from the time when he ran away from Geneva, of nearly every bourgeois virtue and bourgeois prejudice.

[127] *Conf.*, vii. 11. Also footnote.

[128] *Reveries*, ix. 309.

[129] *Conf.*, viii. 142, 143.

[130] The other day I came for the first time upon the following in the sayings of Madame de Lambert:—“Ce ne sont pas toujours les fautes qui nous perdent; c’est la maniere de se conduire apres les avoir faites.” [1877.]

[131] *Conf.*, xii. 187, 188.

[132] *Ib.*, viii. 221.

[133] Bernardin de St. Pierre, *Oeuv.*, xii. 103. See *Conf.*, xii 188, and *Corr.*, v. 324.

[134] Referring, no doubt, to the ceremony which he called their marriage, and which had taken place in 1768.

[135] *Corr.*, vi. 79-86. August 12, 1769.

[136] Composed in 1745. The *Fetes de Ramire* was represented at Versailles at the very end of this year.

[137] Some time in 1746-7. *Conf.*, vii. 113, 114.

[138] Probably in the winter of 1746-7. *Corr.*, ii. 207. *Conf.*, vii. 120-124. *Ib.*, viii. 148. *Corr.*, ii. 208. June 12, 1761, to the Marechale de Luxembourg.

[139] George Sand,—in an eloquent piece entitled *A Propos des Charmettes* (*Revue des Deux Mondes*, November 15, 1863), in which she expresses her own obligations to Jean Jacques. In 1761 Rousseau declares that he had never hitherto had the least reason to suspect Theresa’s fidelity. *Corr.*, ii. 209



[140] *Conf.*, vii. 123.

[141] *Ib.*, viii. 145-151.

[142] *Reveries*, ix. 313. The same reason is given, *Conf.*, ix. 252; also in Letter to Madame B., January 17, 1770 (*Corr.*, vi. 117).

[143] *Corr.*, vi. 152, 153. Feb. 27, 1770.

[144] Letter to Madame de Francueil, April 20, 1751. *Corr.*, i. 151.

[145] *Corr.*, i. 151-155

[146] August 10, 1761. *Corr.*, ii. 220. The Marechale de Luxembourg's note on the subject, to which this is a reply, is given in *Rousseau, ses Amis et ses Ennemis*, i. 444.

[147] *Conf.*, x. 249. See above, p. 106, *n*.

[148] To Lalliaud, Aug 31, 1768. *Corr.*, v. 324. See also D'Escherny, quoted in Musset-Pathay, i. 169, 170.

[149] To Du Peyrou, Sept. 26, 1768. *Corr.*, v. 360.



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[150] To Mdlle. Le Vasseur, July 25, 1768. *Corr.*, v. 116-119.

CHAPTER V.

THE DISCOURSES.

The busy establishment of local academies in the provincial centres of France only preceded the outbreak of the revolution by ten or a dozen years; but one or two of the provincial cities, such as Bordeaux, Rouen, Dijon, had possessed academies in imitation of the greater body of Paris for a much longer time. Their activity covered a very varied ground, from the mere commonplaces of literature to the most practical details of material production. If they now and then relapsed into inquiries about the laws of Crete, they more often discussed positive and scientific theses, and rather resembled our chambers of agriculture than bodies of more learned pretension. The academy of Dijon was one of the earliest of these excellent institutions, and on the whole the list of its theses shows it to have been among the most sensible in respect of the subjects which it found worth thinking about. Its members, however, could not entirely resist the intellectual atmosphere of the time. In 1742 they invited discussion of the point, whether the natural law can conduct society to perfection without the aid of political laws.[151] In 1749 they proposed this question as a theme for their prize essay: *Has the restoration of the sciences contributed to purify or to corrupt manners?* Rousseau was one of fourteen competitors, and in 1750 his discussion of the academic theme received the prize.[152] This was his first entry on the field of literature and speculation. Three years afterwards the same academy propounded another question: *What is the origin of inequality among men, and is it authorised by the natural law?* Rousseau again competed, and though his essay neither gained the prize, nor created as lively an agitation as its predecessor had done, yet we may justly regard the second as a more powerful supplement to the first.

It is always interesting to know the circumstances under which pieces that have moved a world were originally composed, and Rousseau's account of the generation of his thoughts as to the influence of enlightenment on morality, is remarkable enough to be worth transcribing. He was walking along the road from Paris to Vincennes one hot summer afternoon on a visit to Diderot, then in prison for his Letter on the Blind (1749), when he came across in a newspaper the announcement of the theme propounded by the Dijon academy. "If ever anything resembled a sudden inspiration, it was the movement which began in me as I read this. All at once I felt myself dazzled by a thousand sparkling lights; crowds of vivid ideas thronged into my mind with a force and confusion that threw me into unspeakable agitation; I felt my head whirling in a giddiness like that of intoxication. A violent palpitation oppressed me; unable to walk for difficulty of breathing,



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I sank under one of the trees of the avenue, and passed half an hour there in such a condition of excitement, that when I arose I saw that the front of my waistcoat was all wet with my tears, though I was wholly unconscious of shedding them. Ah, if I could ever have written the quarter of what I saw and felt under that tree, with what clearness should I have brought out all the contradictions of our social system; with what simplicity I should have demonstrated that man is good naturally, and that by institutions only is he made bad."[153] Diderot encouraged him to compete for the prize, and to give full flight to the ideas which had come to him in this singular way.[154]

People have held up their hands at the amazing originality of the idea that perhaps sciences and arts have not purified manners. This sentiment is surely exaggerated, if we reflect first that it occurred to the academicians of Dijon as a question for discussion, and second that, if you are asked whether a given result has or has not followed from certain circumstances, the mere form of the question suggests No quite as readily as Yes. The originality lay not in the central contention, but in the fervour, sincerity, and conviction of a most unacademic sort with which it was presented and enforced. There is less originality in denouncing your generation as wicked and adulterous than there is in believing it to be so, and in persuading the generation itself both that you believe it and that you have good reasons to give. We have not to suppose that there was any miracle wrought by agency celestial or infernal in the sudden disclosure of his idea to Rousseau. Rousseau had been thinking of politics ever since the working of the government of Venice had first drawn his mind to the subject. What is the government, he had kept asking himself, which is most proper to form a sage and virtuous nation? What government by its nature keeps closest to the law? What is this law? And whence?[155] This chain of problems had led him to what he calls the historic study of morality, though we may doubt whether history was so much his teacher as the rather meagrely nourished handmaid of his imagination. Here was the irregular preparation, the hidden process, which suddenly burst into light and manifested itself with an exuberance of energy, that passed to the man himself for an inward revolution with no precursive sign.

Rousseau's ecstatic vision on the road to Vincennes was the opening of a life of thought and production which only lasted a dozen years, but which in that brief space gave to Europe a new gospel. Emilius and the Social Contract were completed in 1761, and they crowned a work which if you consider its origin, influence, and meaning with due and proper breadth, is marked by signal unity of purpose and conception. The key to it is given to us in the astonishing transport at the foot of the wide-spreading oak. Such a transport does not come to us of cool and rational



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western temperament, but more often to the oriental after lonely sojourning in the wilderness, or in violent reactions on the road to Damascus and elsewhere. Jean Jacques detected oriental quality in his own nature,[156] and so far as the union of ardour with mysticism, of intense passion with vague dream, is to be defined as oriental, he assuredly deserves the name. The ideas stirred in his mind by the Dijon problem suddenly "opened his eyes, brought order into the chaos in his head, revealed to him another universe. From the active effervescence which thus began in his soul, came sparks of genius which people saw glittering in his writings through ten years of fever and delirium, but of which no trace had been seen in him previously, and which would probably have ceased to shine henceforth, if he should have chanced to wish to continue writing after the access was over. Inflamed by the contemplation of these lofty objects, he had them incessantly present to his mind. His heart, made hot within him by the idea of the future happiness of the human race, and by the honour of contributing to it, dictated to him a language worthy of so high an enterprise ... and for a moment, he astonished Europe by productions in which vulgar souls saw only eloquence and brightness of understanding, but in which those who dwell in the ethereal regions recognised with joy one of their own." [157]

This was his own account of the matter quite at the end of his life, and this is the only point of view from which we are secure against the vulgarity of counting him a deliberate hypocrite and conscious charlatan. He was possessed, as holier natures than his have been, by an enthusiastic vision, an intoxicated confidence, a mixture of sacred rage and prodigious love, an insensate but absolutely disinterested revolt against the stone and iron of a reality which he was bent on melting in a heavenly blaze of splendid aspiration and irresistibly persuasive expression. The last word of this great expansion was *Emilius*, its first and more imperfectly articulated was the earlier of the two Discourses.

Rousseau's often-repeated assertion that here was the instant of the ruin of his life, and that all his misfortunes flowed from that unhappy moment, has been constantly treated as the word of affectation and disguised pride. Yet, vain as he was, it may well have represented his sincere feeling in those better moods when mental suffering was strong enough to silence vanity. His visions mastered him for these thirteen years, *grande mortalis oevi spatium*. They threw him on to that turbid sea of literature for which he had so keen an aversion, and from which, let it be remarked, he fled finally away, when his confidence in the ease of making men good and happy by words of monition had left him. It was the torment of his own enthusiasm which rent that veil of placid living, that in his normal moments he would fain have interposed between his existence and the tumult of a generation with which he was profoundly out of sympathy. In this way the first Discourse was the letting in of much evil upon him, as that and the next and the *Social Contract* were the letting in of much evil upon all Europe.



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Of this essay the writer has recorded his own impression that, though full of heat and force, it is absolutely wanting in logic and order, and that of all the products of his pen, it is the feeblest in reasoning and the poorest in numbers and harmony. "For," as he justly adds, "the art of writing is not learnt all at once." [158] The modern critic must be content to accept the same verdict; only a generation so in love as this was with anything that could tickle its intellectual curiousness, would have found in the first of the two Discourses that combination of speculative and literary merit which was imputed to Rousseau on the strength of it, and which at once brought him into a place among the notables of an age that was full of them. [159] We ought to take in connection with it two at any rate of the vindications of the Discourse, which the course of controversy provoked from its author, and which serve to complete its significance. It is difficult to analyse, because in truth it is neither closely argumentative, nor is it vertebrate, even as a piece of rhetoric. The gist of the piece, however, runs somewhat in this wise:—

Before art had fashioned our manners, and taught our passions to use a too elaborate speech, men were rude but natural, and difference of conduct announced at a glance difference of character. To-day a vile and most deceptive uniformity reigns over our manners, and all minds seem as if they had been cast in a single mould. Hence we never know with what sort of person we are dealing, hence the hateful troop of suspicions, fears, reserves, and treacheries, and the concealment of impiety, arrogance, calumny, and scepticism, under a dangerous varnish of refinement. So terrible a set of effects must have a cause. History shows that the cause here is to be found in the progress of sciences and arts. Egypt, once so mighty, becomes the mother of philosophy and the fine arts; straightway behold its conquest by Cambyses, by Greeks, by Romans, by Arabs, finally by Turks. Greece twice conquered Asia, once before Troy, once in its own homes; then came in fatal sequence the progress of the arts, the dissolution of manners, and the yoke of the Macedonian. Rome, founded by a shepherd and raised to glory by husbandmen, began to degenerate with Ennius, and the eve of her ruin was the day when she gave a citizen the deadly title of arbiter of good taste. China, where letters carry men to the highest dignities of the state, could not be preserved by all her literature from the conquering power of the ruder Tartar. On the other hand, the Persians, Scythians, Germans, remain in history as types of simplicity, innocence, and virtue. Was not he admittedly the wisest of the Greeks, who made of his own apology a plea for ignorance, and a denunciation of poets, orators, and artists? The chosen people of God never cultivated the sciences, and when the new law was established, it was not the learned, but the simple and lowly, fishers and workmen, to whom Christ entrusted his teaching and its ministry. [160]

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This, then, is the way in which chastisement has always overtaken our presumptuous efforts to emerge from that happy ignorance in which eternal wisdom placed us; though the thick veil with which that wisdom has covered all its operations seemed to warn us that we were not destined to fatuous research. All the secrets that Nature hides from us are so many evils against which she would fain shelter us.

Is probity the child of ignorance, and can science and virtue be really inconsistent with one another? These sounding contrasts are mere deceits, because if you look nearly into the results of this science of which we talk so proudly, you will perceive that they confirm the results of induction from history. Astronomy, for instance, is born of superstition; geometry from the desire of gain; physics from a futile curiosity; all of them, even morals, from human pride. Are we for ever to be the dupes of words, and to believe that these pompous names of science, philosophy, and the rest, stand for worthy and profitable realities?[161] Be sure that they do not.

How many errors do we pass through on our road to truth, errors a thousandfold more dangerous than truth is useful? And by what marks are we to know truth, when we think that we have found it? And above all, if we do find it, who of us can be sure that he will make good use of it? If celestial intelligences cultivated science, only good could result; and we may say as much of great men of the stamp of Socrates, who are born to be the guides of others.[162] But the intelligences of common men are neither celestial nor Socratic.

Again, every useless citizen may be fairly regarded as a pernicious man; and let us ask those illustrious philosophers who have taught us what insects reproduce themselves curiously, in what ratio bodies attract one another in space, what curves have conjugate points, points of inflection or reflection, what in the planetary revolutions are the relations of areas traversed in equal times—let us ask those who have attained all this sublime knowledge, by how much the worse governed, less flourishing, or less perverse we should have been if they had attained none of it? Now if the works of our most scientific men and best citizens lead to such small utility, tell us what we are to think of the crowd of obscure writers and idle men of letters who devour the public substance in pure loss.

Then it is in the nature of things that devotion to art leads to luxury, and luxury, as we all know from our own experience, no less than from the teaching of history, saps not only the military virtues by which nations preserve their independence, but also those moral virtues which make the independence of a nation worth preserving. Your children go to costly establishments where they learn everything except their duties. They remain ignorant of their own tongue, though they will speak others not in use anywhere in the world; they gain the faculty of composing verses which they can barely understand; without capacity to distinguish truth from error, they possess the art of rendering them indistinguishable to others by specious arguments. Magnanimity, equity, temperance,

courage, humanity, have no real meaning to them; and if they hear speak of God, it breeds more terror than awful fear.



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Whence spring all these abuses, if not from the disastrous inequality introduced among men by the distinction of talents and the cheapening of virtue?[163] People no longer ask of a man whether he has probity, but whether he is clever; nor of a book whether it is useful, but whether it is well written. And after all, what is this philosophy, what are these lessons of wisdom, to which we give the prize of enduring fame? To listen to these sages, would you not take them for a troop of charlatans, all bawling out in the market-place, Come to me, it is only I who never cheat you, and always give good measure? One maintains that there is no body, and that everything is mere representation; the other that there is no entity but matter, and no God but the universe: one that moral good and evil are chimeras; the other that men are wolves and may devour one another with the easiest conscience in the world. These are the marvellous personages on whom the esteem of contemporaries is lavished so long as they live, and to whom immortality is reserved after their death. And we have now invented the art of making their extravagances eternal, and thanks to the use of typographic characters the dangerous speculations of Hobbes and Spinoza will endure for ever. Surely when they perceive the terrible disorders which printing has already caused in Europe, sovereigns will take as much trouble to banish this deadly art from their states as they once took to introduce it.

If there is perhaps no harm in allowing one or two men to give themselves up to the study of sciences and arts, it is only those who feel conscious of the strength required for advancing their subjects, who have any right to attempt to raise monuments to the glory of the human mind. We ought to have no tolerance for those compilers who rashly break open the gate of the sciences, and introduce into their sanctuary a populace that is unworthy even to draw near to it. It may be well that there should be philosophers, provided only and always that the people do not meddle with philosophising.[164]

In short, there are two kinds of ignorance: one brutal and ferocious, springing from a bad heart, multiplying vices, degrading the reason, and debasing the soul: the other "a reasonable ignorance, which consists in limiting our curiosity to the extent of the faculties we have received; a modest ignorance, born of a lively love for virtue, and inspiring indifference only for what is not worthy of filling a man's heart, or fails to contribute to its improvement; a sweet and precious ignorance, the treasure of a pure soul at peace with itself, which finds all its blessedness in inward retreat, in testifying to itself its own innocence, and which feels no need of seeking a warped and hollow happiness in the opinion of other people as to its enlightenment." [165]

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Some of the most pointed assaults in this Discourse, such for instance as that on the pedantic parade of wit, or that on the excessive preponderance of literary instruction in the art of education, are due to Montaigne; and in one way, the Discourse might be described as binding together a number of that shrewd man's detached hints by means of a paradoxical generalisation. But the Rousseau is more important than the Montaigne in it. Another remark to be made is that its vigorous disparagement of science, of the emptiness of much that is called science, of the deadly pride of intellect, is an anticipation in a very precise way of the attitude taken by the various Christian churches and their representatives now and for long, beginning with De Maistre, the greatest of the religious reactionaries after Rousseau. The vilification of the Greeks is strikingly like some vehement passages in De Maistre's estimate of their share in sophisticating European intellect. At last Rousseau even began to doubt whether "so chattering a people could ever have had any solid virtues, even in primitive times."^[166] Yet Rousseau's own thinking about society is deeply marked with opinions borrowed exactly from these very chatterers. His imagination was fascinated from the first by the freedom and boldness of Plato's social speculations, to which his debt in a hundred details of his political and educational schemes is well known. What was more important than any obligation of detail was the fatal conception, borrowed partly from the Greeks and partly from Geneva, of the omnipotence of the Lawgiver in moulding a social state after his own purpose and ideal. We shall presently quote the passage in which he holds up for our envy and imitation the policy of Lycurgus at Sparta, who swept away all that he found existing and constructed the social edifice afresh from foundation to roof.^[167] It is true that there was an unmistakable decay of Greek literary studies in France from the beginning of the eighteenth century, and Rousseau seems to have read Plato only through Ficinus's translation. But his example and its influence, along with that of Mably and others, warrant the historian in saying that at no time did Greek ideas more keenly preoccupy opinion than during this century.^[168] Perhaps we may say that Rousseau would never have proved how little learning and art do for the good of manners, if Plato had not insisted on poets being driven out of the Republic. The article on Political Economy, written by him for the Encyclopaedia (1755), rings with the names of ancient rulers and lawgivers; the project of public education is recommended by the example of Cretans, Lacedaemonians, and Persians, while the propriety of the reservation of a state domain is suggested by Romulus.

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It may be added that one of the not too many merits of the essay is the way in which the writer, more or less in the Socratic manner, insists on dragging people out of the refuge of sonorous general terms, with a great public reputation of much too well-established a kind to be subjected to the affront of analysis. It is true that Rousseau himself contributed nothing directly to that analytic operation which Socrates likened to midwifery, and he set up graven images of his own in place of the idols which he destroyed. This, however, did not wholly efface the distinction, which he shares with all who have ever tried to lead the minds of men into new tracks, of refusing to accept the current coins of philosophical speech without test or measurement. Such a treatment of the great trite words which come so easily to the tongue and seem to weigh for so much, must always be the first step towards bringing thought back into the region of real matter, and confronting phrases, terms, and all the common form of the discussion of an age, with the actualities which it is the object of sincere discussion to penetrate.

The refutation of many parts of Rousseau's main contention on the principles which are universally accepted among enlightened men in modern society is so extremely obvious that to undertake it would merely be to draw up a list of the gratulatory commonplaces of which we hear quite enough in the literature and talk of our day. In this direction, perhaps it suffices to say that the Discourse is wholly one-sided, admitting none of the conveniences, none of the alleviations of suffering of all kinds, nothing of the increase of mental stature, which the pursuit of knowledge has brought to the race. They may or may not counterbalance the evils that it has brought, but they are certainly to be put in the balance in any attempt at philosophic examination of the subject. It contains no serious attempt to tell us what those alleged evils really are, or definitely to trace them one by one, to abuse of the thirst for knowledge and defects in the method of satisfying it. It omits to take into account the various other circumstances, such as climate, government, race, and the disposition of neighbours, which must enter equally with intellectual progress into whatever demoralisation has marked the destinies of a nation. Finally it has for the base of its argument the entirely unsupported assumption of there having once been in the early history of each society a stage of mild, credulous, and innocent virtue, from which appetite for the fruit of the forbidden tree caused an inevitable degeneration. All evidence and all scientific analogy are now well known to lead to the contrary doctrine, that the history of civilisation is a history of progress and not of decline from a primary state. After all, as Voltaire said to Rousseau in a letter which only showed a superficial appreciation of the real drift of the argument, we must confess that these thorns attached to literature

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are only as flowers in comparison with the other evils that have deluged the earth. "It was not Cicero nor Lucretius nor Virgil nor Horace, who contrived the proscriptions of Marius, of Sulla, of the debauched Antony, of the imbecile Lepidus, of that craven tyrant basely surnamed Augustus. It was not Marot who produced the St. Bartholomew massacre, nor the tragedy of the Cid that led to the wars of the Fronde. What really makes, and always will make, this world into a valley of tears, is the insatiable cupidity and indomitable insolence of men, from Kouli Khan, who did not know how to read, down to the custom-house clerk, who knows nothing but how to cast up figures. Letters nourish the soul, they strengthen its integrity, they furnish a solace to it,"—and so on in the sense, though without the eloquence, of the famous passage in Cicero's defence of Archias the poet.[169] All this, however, in our time is in no danger of being forgotten, and will be present to the mind of every reader. The only danger is that pointed out by Rousseau himself: "People always think they have described what the sciences do, when they have in reality only described what the sciences ought to do." [170]

What we are more likely to forget is that Rousseau's piece has a positive as well as a negative side, and presents, in however vehement and overstated a way, a truth which the literary and speculative enthusiasm of France in the eighteenth century, as is always the case with such enthusiasm whenever it penetrates either a generation or an individual, was sure to make men dangerously ready to forget.[171] This truth may be put in different terms. We may describe it as the possibility of eminent civic virtue existing in people, without either literary taste or science or speculative curiosity. Or we may express it as the compatibility of a great amount of contentment and order in a given social state, with a very low degree of knowledge. Or finally, we may give the truth its most general expression, as the subordination of all activity to the promotion of social aims. Rousseau's is an elaborate and roundabout manner of saying that virtue without science is better than science without virtue; or that the well-being of a country depends more on the standard of social duty and the willingness of citizens to conform to it, than on the standard of intellectual culture and the extent of its diffusion. In other words, we ought to be less concerned about the speculative or scientific curiousness of our people than about the height of their notion of civic virtue and their firmness and persistency in realising it. It is a moralist's way of putting the ancient preacher's monition, that they are but empty in whom is not the wisdom of God. The importance of stating this is in our modern era always pressing, because there is a constant tendency on the part of energetic intellectual workers, first, to concentrate their energies on a minute specialty, leaving public affairs and interests to their own



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course. Second, they are apt to overestimate their contributions to the stock of means by which men are made happier, and what is more serious, to underestimate in comparison those orderly, modest, self-denying, moral qualities, by which only men are made worthier, and the continuity of society is made surer. Third, in consequence of their greater command of specious expression and their control of the organs of public opinion, they both assume a kind of supreme place in the social hierarchy, and persuade the majority of plain men unsuspectingly to take so very egregious an assumption for granted. So far as Rousseau's Discourse recalled the truth as against this sort of error it was full of wholesomeness.

Unfortunately his indignation against the overweening pretensions of the verse-writer, the gazetteer, and the great band of socialists at large, led him into a general position with reference to scientific and speculative energy, which seems to involve a perilous misconception of the conditions of this energy producing its proper results. It is easy now, as it was easy for Rousseau in the last century, to ask in an epigrammatical manner by how much men are better or happier for having found out this or that novelty in transcendental mathematics, biology, or astronomy; and this is very well as against the discoverer of small marvels who shall give himself out for the benefactor of the human race. But both historical experience and observation of the terms on which the human intelligence works, show us that we can only make sure of intellectual activity on condition of leaving it free to work all round, in every department and in every remotest nook of each department, and that its most fruitful epochs are exactly those when this freedom is greatest, this curiosity most keen and minute, and this waste, if you choose to call the indispensable superfluity of force in a natural process waste, most copious and unsparing. You will not find your highest capacity in statesmanship, nor in practical science, nor in art, nor in any other field where that capacity is most urgently needed for the right service of life, unless there is a general and vehement spirit of search in the air. If it incidentally leads to many industrious futilities and much learned refuse, this is still the sign and the generative element of industry which is not futile, and of learning which is something more than mere water spilled upon the ground.

We may say in fine that this first Discourse and its vindications were a dim, shallow, and ineffective feeling after the great truth, that the only normal state of society is that in which neither the love of virtue has been thrust far back into a secondary place by the love of knowledge, nor the active curiosity of the understanding dulled, blunted, and made ashamed by soft, lazy ideals of life as a life only of the affections. Rousseau now and always fell into the opposite extreme from that against which his whole



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work was a protest. We need not complain very loudly that while remonstrating against the restless intrepidity of the rationalists of his generation, he passed over the central truth, namely that the full and ever festal life is found in active freedom of curiosity and search taking significance, motive, force, from a warm inner pulse of human love and sympathy. It was not given to Rousseau to see all this, but it was given to him to see the side of it for which the most powerful of the men living with him had no eyes, and the first Discourse was only a moderately successful attempt to bring his vision before Europe. It was said at the time that he did not believe a word of what he had written. [172] It is a natural characteristic of an age passionately occupied with its own set of ideas, to question either the sincerity or the sanity of anybody who declares its sovereign conceptions to be no better than foolishness. We cannot entertain such a suspicion. Perhaps the vehemence of controversy carries him rather further than he quite meant to go, when he declares that if he were a chief of an African tribe, he would erect on his frontier a gallows, on which he would hang without mercy the first European who should venture to pass into his territory, and the first native who should dare to pass out of it.[173] And there are many other extravagances of illustration, but the main position is serious enough, as represented in the emblematic vignette with which the essay was printed—the torch of science brought to men by Prometheus, who warns a satyr that it burns; the satyr, seeing fire for the first time and being fain to embrace it, is the symbol of the vulgar men who, seduced by the glitter of literature, insist on delivering themselves up to its study.[174] Rousseau's whole doctrine hangs compactly together, and we may see the signs of its growth after leaving his hands in the crude formula of the first Discourse, if we proceed to the more audacious paradox of the second.

II.

The Discourse on the Origin of Inequality among men opens with a description of the natural state of man, which occupies considerably more than half of the entire performance. It is composed in a vein which is only too familiar to the student of the literature of the time, picturing each habit and thought, and each step to new habits and thoughts, with the minuteness, the fulness, the precision, of one who narrates circumstances of which he has all his life been the close eye-witness. The natural man reveals to us every motive, every process internal and external, every slightest circumstance of his daily life, and each element that gradually transformed him into the non-natural man. One who had watched bees or beetles for years could not give us a more full or confident account of their doings, their hourly goings in and out, than it was the fashion in the eighteenth century to give of the walk and conversation of the primeval ancestor. The conditions of primitive man were discussed by very incompetent ladies and gentlemen at convivial supper parties, and settled with complete assurance. [175]

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Rousseau thought and talked about the state of nature because all his world was thinking and talking about it. He used phrases and formulas with reference to it which other people used. He required no more evidence than they did, as to the reality of the existence of the supposed set of conditions to which they gave the almost sacramental name of state of nature. He never thought of asking, any more than anybody else did in the middle of the eighteenth century, what sort of proof, how strong, how direct, was to be had, that primeval man had such and such habits, and changed them in such a way and direction, and for such reasons. Physical science had reached a stage by this time when its followers were careful to ask questions about evidence, correct description, verification. But the idea of accurate method had to be made very familiar to men by the successes of physical science in the search after truths of one kind, before the indispensableness of applying it in the search after truths of all kinds had extended to the science of the constitution and succession of social states. In this respect Rousseau was not guiltier than the bulk of his contemporaries. Voltaire's piercing common sense, Hume's deep-set sagacity, Montesquieu's caution, prevented them from launching very far on to this metaphysical sea of nature and natural laws and states, but none of them asked those critical questions in relation to such matters which occur so promptly in the present day to persons far inferior to them in intellectual strength. Rousseau took the notion of the state of nature because he found it to his hand; he fitted to it his own characteristic aspirations, expanding and vivifying a philosophic conception with all the heat of humane passion; and thus, although, at the end of the process when he had done with it, the state of nature came out blooming as the rose, it was fundamentally only the dry, current abstraction of his time, artificially decorated to seduce men into embracing a strange ideal under a familiar name.

Before analysing the Discourse on Inequality, we ought to make some mention of a remarkable man whose influence probably reached Rousseau in an indirect manner through Diderot; I mean Morelly.[176] In 1753 Morelly published a prose poem called the Basiliade, describing the corruption of manners introduced by the errors of the lawgiver, and pointing out how this corruption is to be amended by return to the empire of nature and truth. He was no doubt stimulated by what was supposed to be the central doctrine of Montesquieu, then freshly given to the world, that it is government and institutions which make men what they are. But he was stimulated into a reaction, and in 1754 he propounded his whole theory, in a piece which in closeness, consistency, and thoroughness is admirably different from Rousseau's rhetoric.[177] It lacked the sovereign quality of persuasiveness, and so fell on deaf ears. Morelly accepts the doctrine that men are formed by the laws,



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but insists that moralists and statesmen have always led us wrong by legislating and prescribing conduct on the false theory that man is bad, whereas he is in truth a creature endowed with natural probity. Then he strikes to the root of society with a directness that Rousseau could not imitate, by the position that “these laws by establishing a monstrous division of the products of nature, and even of their very elements—by dividing what ought to have remained entire, or ought to have been restored to entireness if any accident had divided them, aided and favoured the break-up of all sociability.” All political and all moral evils are the effects of this pernicious cause—private property. He says of Rousseau’s first Discourse that the writer ought to have seen that the corruption of manners which he set down to literature and art really came from this venomous principle of property, which infects all that it touches.[178] Christianity, it is true, assailed this principle and restored equality or community of possessions, but Christianity had the radical fault of involving such a detachment from earthly affections, in order to deliver ourselves to heavenly meditation, as brought about a necessary degeneration in social activity. The form of government is a matter of indifference, provided you can only assure community of goods. Political revolutions are at bottom the clash of material interests, and until you have equalised the one you will never prevent the other.[179]

Let us turn from this very definite position to one of the least definite productions to be found in all literature.

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It will seem a little odd that more than half of a discussion on the origin of inequality among men should be devoted to a glowing imaginary description, from which no reader could conjecture what thesis it was designed to support. But we have only to remember that Rousseau’s object was to persuade people that the happier state is that in which inequality does not subsist, that there had once been such a state, and that this was first the state of nature, and then the state only one degree removed from it, in which we now find the majority of savage tribes. At the outset he defines inequality as a word meaning two different things; one, natural or physical inequality, such as difference of age, of health, of physical strength, of attributes of intelligence and character; the other, moral or political inequality, consisting in difference of privileges which some enjoy to the detriment of the rest, such as being richer, more honoured, more powerful. The former differences are established by nature, the latter are authorised, if they were not established, by the consent of men.[180] In the state of nature no inequalities flow from the differences among men in point of physical advantage and disadvantage, and which remain without derivative differences so long as the state of nature endures undisturbed. Nature deals with men as the law of Sparta dealt with the children of its citizens; she makes those who are well constituted strong and robust, and she destroys all the rest.



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The surface of the earth is originally covered by dense forest, and inhabited by animals of every species. Men, scattered among them, imitate their industry, and so rise to the instinct of the brutes, with this advantage that while each species has only its own, man, without anything special, appropriates the instincts of all. This admirable creature, with foes on every side, is forced to be constantly on the alert, and hence to be always in full possession of all his faculties, unlike civilised man, whose native force is enfeebled by the mechanical protections with which he has surrounded himself. He is not afraid of the wild beasts around him, for experience has taught him that he is their master. His health is better than ours, for we live in a time when excess of idleness in some, excess of toil in others, the heating and over-abundant diet of the rich, the bad food of the poor, the orgies and excesses of every kind, the immoderate transport of every passion, the fatigue and strain of spirit,—when all these things have inflicted more disorders upon us than the vaunted art of medicine has been able to keep pace with. Even if the sick savage has only nature to hope from, on the other hand he has only his own malady to be afraid of. He has no fear of death, for no animal can know what death is, and the knowledge of death and its terrors is one of the first of man's terrible acquisitions after abandoning his animal condition.[181] In other respects, such as protection against weather, such as habitation, such as food, the savage's natural power of adaptation, and the fact that his demands are moderate in proportion to his means of satisfying them, forbid us to consider him physically unhappy. Let us turn to the intellectual and moral side.

If you contend that men were miserable, degraded, and outcast during these primitive centuries because the intelligence was dormant, then do not forget, first, that you are drawing an indictment against nature,—no trifling blasphemy in those days—and second, that you are attributing misery to a free creature with tranquil spirit and healthy body, and that must surely be a singular abuse of the term. We see around us scarcely any but people who complain of the burden of their lives; but who ever heard of a savage in full enjoyment of his liberty ever dreaming of complaint about his life or of self-destruction?

With reference to virtues and vices in a state of nature, Hobbes is wrong in declaring that man in this state is vicious, as not knowing virtue. He is not vicious, for the reason that he does not know what being good is. It is not development of enlightenment nor the restrictions of law, but the calm of the passions and ignorance of vice, which keep them from doing ill. *Tanto plus in illis proficit vitiorum ignoratio, quam in his cognitio virtutis.*



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Besides man has one great natural virtue, that of pity, which precedes in him the use of reflection, and which indeed he shares with some of the brutes. Mandeville, who was forced to admit the existence of this admirable quality in man, was absurd in not perceiving that from it flow all the social virtues which he would fain deny. Pity is more energetic in the primitive condition than it is among ourselves. It is reflection which isolates one. It is philosophy which teaches the philosopher to say secretly at sight of a suffering wretch, Perish if it please thee; I am safe and sound. They may be butchering a fellow-creature under your window; all you have to do is to clap your hands to your ears, and argue a little with yourself to hinder nature in revolt from making you feel as if you were in the case of the victim.[182] The savage man has not got this odious gift. In the state of nature it is pity that takes the place of laws, manners, and virtue. It is in this natural sentiment rather than in subtle arguments that we have to seek the reluctance that every man would feel to do ill, even without the precepts of education.[183]

Finally, the passion of love, which produces such disasters in a state of society, where the jealousy of lovers and the vengeance of husbands lead each day to duels and murders, where the duty of eternal fidelity only serves to occasion adulteries, and where the law of continence necessarily extends the debauching of women and the practice of procuring abortion[184]—this passion in a state of nature, where it is purely physical, momentary, and without any association of durable sentiment with the object of it, simply leads to the necessary reproduction of the species and nothing more.

“Let us conclude, then, that wandering in the forests, without industry, without speech, without habitation, without war, without connection of any kind, without any need of his fellows or without any desire to harm them, perhaps even without ever recognising one of them individually, savage man, subject to few passions and sufficing to himself, had only the sentiments and the enlightenment proper to his condition. He was only sensible of his real wants, and only looked because he thought he had an interest in seeing; and his intelligence made no more progress than his vanity. If by chance he hit on some discovery, he was all the less able to communicate it; as he did not know even his own children. An art perished with its inventor. There was neither education nor progress; generations multiplied uselessly; and as each generation always started from the same point, centuries glided away in all the rudeness of the first ages, the race was already old, the individual remained always a child.”

This brings us to the point of the matter. For if you compare the prodigious diversities in education and manner of life which reign in the different orders of the civil condition, with the simplicity and uniformity of the savage and animal life, where all find nourishment in the same articles of food, live in the same way, and do exactly the same things, you will easily understand to what degree the difference between man and man must be less in the state of nature than in that of society.[185] Physical inequality is hardly perceived in the state of nature, and its indirect influences there are almost non-existent.



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Now as all the social virtues and other faculties possessed by man potentially were not bound by anything inherent in him to develop into actuality, he might have remained to all eternity in his admirable and most fitting primitive condition, but for the fortuitous concurrence of a variety of external changes. What are these different changes, which may perhaps have perfected human reason, while they certainly have deteriorated the race, and made men bad in making them sociable?

What, then, are the intermediary facts between the state of nature and the state of civil society, the nursery of inequality? What broke up the happy uniformity of the first times? First, difference in soil, in climate, in seasons, led to corresponding differences in men's manner of living. Along the banks of rivers and on the shores of the sea, they invented hooks and lines, and were eaters of fish. In the forests they invented bows and arrows, and became hunters. In cold countries they covered themselves with the skins of beasts. Lightning, volcanoes, or some happy chance acquainted them with fire, a new protection against the rigours of winter. In company with these natural acquisitions, grew up a sort of reflection or mechanical prudence, which showed them the kind of precautions most necessary to their security. From this rudimentary and wholly egoistic reflection there came a sense of the existence of a similar nature and similar interests in their fellow-creatures. Instructed by experience that the love of well-being and comfort is the only motive of human actions, the savage united with his neighbours when union was for their joint convenience, and did his best to blind and outwit his neighbours when their interests were adverse to his own, and he felt himself the weaker. Hence the origin of certain rude ideas of mutual obligation.[186]

Soon, ceasing to fall asleep under the first tree, or to withdraw into caves, they found axes of hard stone, which served them to cut wood, to dig the ground, and to construct hovels of branches and clay. This was the epoch of a first revolution, which formed the establishment and division of families, and which introduced a rough and partial sort of property. Along with rudimentary ideas of property, though not connected with them, came the rudimentary forms of inequality. When men were thrown more together, then he who sang or danced the best, the strongest, the most adroit, or the most eloquent, acquired the most consideration—that is, men ceased to take uniform and equal place. And with the coming of this end of equality there passed away the happy primitive immunity from jealousy, envy, malice, hate.



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On the whole, though men had lost some of their original endurance, and their natural pity had already undergone a certain deterioration, this period of the development of the human faculties, occupying a just medium between the indolence of the primitive state and the petulant activity of our modern self-love, must have been at once the happiest and the most durable epoch. The more we reflect, the more evident we find it that this state was the least subject to revolutions and the best for man. "So long as men were content with their rustic hovels, so long as they confined themselves to stitching their garments of skin with spines or fish bones, to decking their bodies with feathers and shells and painting them in different colours, to perfecting and beautifying their bows and arrows—in a word, so long as they only applied themselves to works that one person could do, and to arts that needed no more than a single hand, then they lived free, healthy, good, and happy, so far as was compatible with their natural constitution, and continued to enjoy among themselves the sweetness of independent intercourse. But from the moment that one man had need of the help of another, as soon as they perceived it to be useful for one person to have provisions for two, then equality disappeared, property was introduced, labour became necessary, and the vast forests changed into smiling fields, which had to be watered by the sweat of men, and in which they ever saw bondage and misery springing up and growing ripe with the harvests." [187]

The working of metals and agriculture have been the two great agents in this revolution. For the poet it is gold and silver, but for the philosopher it is iron and corn, that have civilised men and undone the human race. It is easy to see how the latter of the two arts was suggested to men by watching the reproducing processes of vegetation. It is less easy to be sure how they discovered metal, saw its uses, and invented means of smelting it, for nature had taken extreme precautions to hide the fatal secret. It was probably the operation of some volcano which first suggested the idea of fusing ore. From the fact of land being cultivated its division followed, and therefore the institution of property in its full shape. From property arose civil society. "The first man who, having enclosed a piece of ground, could think of saying, *This is mine*, and found people simple enough to believe him, was the real founder of civil society. How many crimes, wars, murders, miseries, and horrors would not have been spared to the human race by one who, plucking up the stakes, or filling in the trench, should have called out to his fellows: Beware of listening to this impostor; you are undone if you forget that the earth belongs to no one, and that its fruits are for all." [188]



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Things might have remained equal even in this state, if talents had only been equal, and if for example the employment of iron and the consumption of agricultural produce had always exactly balanced one another. But the stronger did more work; the cleverer got more advantage from his work; the more ingenious found means of shortening his labour; the husbandman had more need of metal, or the smith more need of grain; and while working equally, one got much gain, and the other could scarcely live. This distinction between Have and Have-not led to confusion and revolt, to brigandage on the one side and constant insecurity on the other.

Hence disorders of a violent and interminable kind, which gave rise to the most deeply designed project that ever entered the human mind. This was to employ in favour of property the strength of the very persons who attacked it, to inspire them with other maxims, and to give them other institutions which should be as favourable to property as natural law had been contrary to it. The man who conceived this project, after showing his neighbours the monstrous confusion which made their lives most burdensome, spoke in this wise: "Let us unite to shield the weak from oppression, to restrain the proud, and to assure to each the possession of what belongs to him; let us set up rules of justice and peace, to which all shall be obliged to conform, without respect of persons, and which may repair to some extent the caprices of fortune, by subjecting the weak and the mighty alike to mutual duties. In a word, instead of turning our forces against one another, let us collect them into one supreme power to govern us by sage laws, to protect and defend all the members of the association, repel their common foes, and preserve us in never-ending concord." This, and not the right of conquest, must have been the origin of society and laws, which threw new chains round the poor and gave new might to the rich; and for the profit of a few grasping and ambitious men, subjected the whole human race henceforth and for ever to toil and bondage and wretchedness without hope.

The social constitution thus propounded and accepted was radically imperfect from the outset, and in spite of the efforts of the sagest lawgivers, it has always remained imperfect, because it was the work of chance, and because, inasmuch as it was ill begun, time, while revealing defects and suggesting remedies, could never repair its vices; *people went on incessantly repairing and patching, instead of which it was indispensable to begin by making a clean surface and by throwing aside all the old materials, just as Lycurgus did in Sparta.*



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Put shortly, the main positions are these. In the state of nature each man lived in entire isolation, and therefore physical inequality was as if it did not exist. After many centuries, accident, in the shape of difference of climate and external natural conditions, enforcing for the sake of subsistence some degree of joint labour, led to an increase of communication among men, to a slight development of the reasoning and reflective faculties, and to a rude and simple sense of mutual obligation, as a means of greater comfort in the long run. The first state was good and pure, but the second state was truly perfect. It was destroyed by a fresh succession of chances, such as the discovery of the arts of metal-working and tillage, which led first to the institution of property, and second to the prominence of the natural or physical inequalities, which now began to tell with deadly effectiveness. These inequalities gradually became summed up in the great distinction between rich and poor; and this distinction was finally embodied in the constitution of a civil society, expressly adapted to consecrate the usurpation of the rich, and to make the inequality of condition between them and the poor eternal.

We thus see that the Discourse, unlike Morelly's terse exposition, contains no clear account of the kind of inequality with which it deals. Is it inequality of material possession or inequality of political right? Morelly tells you decisively that the latter is only an accident, flowing from the first; that the key to renovation lies in the abolition of the first. Rousseau mixes the two confusedly together under a single name, bemoans each, but shrinks from a conclusion or a recommendation as to either. He declares property to be the key to civil society, but falls back from any ideas leading to the modification of the institution lying at the root of all that he deplors.

The first general criticism, which in itself contains and covers nearly all others, turns on Method. "Conjectures become reasons when they are the most likely that you can draw from the nature of things," and "it is for philosophy in lack of history to determine the most likely facts." In an inductive age this royal road is rigorously closed. Guesses drawn from the general nature of things can no longer give us light as to the particular nature of the things pertaining to primitive men, any more than such guesses can teach us the law of the movement of the heavenly bodies, or the foundations of jurisprudence. Nor can deduction from anything but propositions which have themselves been won by laborious induction, ever lead us to the only kind of philosophy which has fair pretension to determine the most probable of the missing facts in the chain of human history. That quantitative and differentiating knowledge which is science, was not yet thought of in connection with the movements of our own race upon the earth. It is to be said, further, that of the two possible ways of guessing about the early state, the conditions of advance from it, and the rest, Rousseau's guess that all movement away from it has been towards corruption, is less supported by subsequent knowledge than the guess of his adversaries, that it has been a movement progressive and upwards.



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This much being said as to incurable vice of method, and there are fervent disciples of Rousseau now living who will regard one's craving for method in talking about men as a foible of pedantry, we may briefly remark on one or two detached objections to Rousseau's story. To begin with, there is no certainty as to there having ever been a state of nature of a normal and organic kind, any more than there is any one normal and typical state of society now. There are infinitely diverse states of society, and there were probably as many diverse states of nature. Rousseau was sufficiently acquainted with the most recent metaphysics of his time to know that you cannot think of a tree in general, nor of a triangle in general, but only of some particular tree or triangle.[189] In a similar way he might have known that there never was any such thing as a state of nature in the general and abstract, fixed, typical, and single. He speaks of the savage state also, which comes next, as one, identical, normal. It is, of course, nothing of the kind. The varieties of belief and habit and custom among the different tribes of savages, in reference to every object that can engage their attention, from death and the gods and immortality down to the uses of marriage and the art of counting and the ways of procuring subsistence, are infinitely numerous; and the more we know about this vast diversity, the less easy is it to think of the savage state in general. When Rousseau extols the savage state as the veritable youth of the world, we wonder whether we are to think of the negroes of the Gold Coast, or the Dyaks of Borneo, Papuans or Maoris, Cheyennes or Tierra-del-Fuegians or the fabled Troglodytes; whether in the veritable youth of the world they counted up to five or only to two; whether they used a fire-drill, and if so what kind of drill; whether they had the notion of personal identity in so weak a shape as to practise the couvade; and a hundred other points, which we should now require any writer to settle, who should speak of the savage state as sovereign, one, and indivisible, in the way in which Rousseau speaks of it, and holds it up to our vain admiration.

Again, if the savage state supervened upon the state of nature in consequence of certain climatic accidents of a permanent kind, such as living on the banks of a river or in a dense forest, how was it that the force of these accidents did not begin to operate at once? How could the isolated state of nature endure for a year in face of them? Or what was the precipitating incident which suddenly set them to work, and drew the primitive men from an isolation so profound that they barely recognised one another, into that semi-social state in which the family was founded?



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We cannot tell how the state of nature continued to subsist, or, if it ever subsisted, how and why it ever came to an end, because the agencies which are alleged to have brought it to an end must have been coeval with the appearance of man himself. If gods had brought to men seed, fire, and the mechanical arts, as in one of the Platonic myths,[190] we could understand that there was a long stage preliminary to these heavenly gifts. But if the gods had no part nor lot in it, and if the accidents that slowly led the human creature into union were as old as that nature, of which indeed they were actually the component elements, then man must have quitted the state of nature the very day on which he was born into it. And what can be a more monstrous anachronism than to turn a flat-headed savage into a clever, self-conscious, argumentative utilitarian of the eighteenth century; working the social problem out in his flat head with a keenness, a consistency, a grasp of first principles, that would have entitled him to a chair in the institute of moral sciences, and entering the social union with the calm and reasonable deliberation of a great statesman taking a critical step in policy? Aristotle was wiser when he fixed upon sociability as an ultimate quality of human nature, instead of making it, as Rousseau and so many others have done, the conclusion of an unimpeachable train of syllogistic reasoning.[191] Morelly even, his own contemporary, and much less of a sage than Aristotle, was still sage enough to perceive that this primitive human machine, "though composed of intelligent parts, generally operates independently of its reason; its deliberations are forestalled, and only leave it to look on, while sentiment does its work." [192] It is the more remarkable that Rousseau should have fallen into this kind of error, as it was one of his distinctions to have perceived and partially worked out the principle, that men guide their conduct rather from passion and instinct than from reasoned enlightenment.[193] The ultimate quality which he named pity is, after all, the germ of sociability, which is only extended sympathy. But he did not firmly adhere to this ultimate quality, nor make any effort consistently to trace out its various products.

We do not find, however, in Rousseau any serious attempt to analyse the composition of human nature in its primitive stages. Though constantly warning his readers very impressively against confounding domesticated with primitive men, he practically assumes that the main elements of character must always have been substantially identical with such elements and conceptions as are found after the addition of many ages of increasingly complex experience. There is something worth considering in his notion that civilisation has had effects upon man analogous to those of domestication upon animals, but he lacked logical persistency enough to enable him to adhere to his own idea, and work out conclusions from it.



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It might further be pointed out in another direction that he takes for granted that the mode of advance into a social state has always been one and the same, a single and uniform process, marked by precisely the same set of several stages, following one another in precisely the same order. There is no evidence of this; on the contrary, evidence goes to show that civilisation varies in origin and process with race and other things, and that though in all cases starting from the prime factor of sociableness in man, yet the course of its development has depended on the particular sets of circumstances with which that factor has had to combine. These are full of variety, according to climate and racial predisposition, although, as has been justly said, the force of both these two elements diminishes as the influence of the past in giving consistency to our will becomes more definite, and our means of modifying climate and race become better known. There is no sign that Rousseau, any more than many other inquirers, ever reflected whether the capacity for advance into the state of civil society in any highly developed form is universal throughout the species, or whether there are not races eternally incapable of advance beyond the savage state. Progress would hardly be the exception which we know it to be in the history of communities if there were not fundamental diversities in the civilisable quality of races. Why do some bodies of men get on to the high roads of civilisation, while others remain in the jungle and thicket of savagery; and why do some races advance along one of these roads, and others advance by different roads?

Considerations of this sort disclose the pinched frame of trim theory with which Rousseau advanced to set in order a huge mass of boundlessly varied, intricate, and unmanageable facts. It is not, however, at all worth while to extend such criticism further than suffices to show how little his piece can stand the sort of questions which may be put to it from a scientific point of view. Nothing that Rousseau had to say about the state of nature was seriously meant for scientific exposition, any more than the Sermon on the Mount was meant for political economy. The importance of the Discourse on Inequality lay in its vehement denunciation of the existing social state. To the writer the question of the origin of inequality is evidently far less a matter at heart, than the question of its results. It is the natural inclination of one deeply moved by a spectacle of depravation in his own time and country, to extol some other time or country, of which he is happily ignorant enough not to know the drawbacks. Rousseau wrote about the savage state in something of the same spirit in which Tacitus wrote the Germania. And here, as in the Discourse on the influence of science and art upon virtue, there is a positive side. To miss this in resentment of the unscientific paradox that lies about it, is to miss the force of the piece,



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and to render its enormous influence for a generation after it was written incomprehensible. We may always be quite sure that no set of ideas ever produced this resounding effect on opinion, unless they contained something which the social or spiritual condition of the men whom they inflamed made true for the time, and true in an urgent sense. Is it not tenable that the state of certain savage tribes is more normal, offers a better balance between desire and opportunity, between faculty and performance, than the permanent state of large classes in western countries, the broken wreck of civilisation?[194] To admit this is not to conclude, as Rousseau so rashly concluded, that the movement away from the primitive stages has been productive only of evil and misery even to the masses of men, the hewers of wood and the drawers of water; or that it was occasioned, and has been carried on by the predominance of the lower parts and principles of human nature. Our provisional acquiescence in the straitness and blank absence of outlook or hope of the millions who come on to the earth that greets them with no smile, and then stagger blindly under dull burdens for a season, and at last are shovelled silently back under the ground,—our acquiescence can only be justified in the sight of humanity by the conviction that this is one of the temporary conditions of a vast process, working forwards through the impulse and agency of the finer human spirits, but needing much blood, many tears, uncounted myriads of lives, and immeasurable geologic periods of time, for its high and beneficent consummation. There is nothing surprising, perhaps nothing deeply condemnable, in the burning anger for which this acquiescence is often changed in the more impatient natures. As against the ignoble host who think that the present ordering of men, with all its prodigious inequalities, is in foundation and substance the perfection of social blessedness, Rousseau was almost in the right. If the only alternative to the present social order remaining in perpetuity were a retrogression to some such condition as that of the islanders of the South Sea, a lover of his fellow-creatures might look upon the result, so far as it affected the happiness of the bulk of them, with tolerably complete indifference. It is only the faith that we are moving slowly away from the existing order, as our ancestors moved slowly away from the old want of order, that makes the present endurable, and makes any tenacious effort to raise the future possible.

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An immense quantity of nonsense has been talked about the equality of man, for which those who deny that doctrine and those who assert it may divide the responsibility. It is in reality true or false, according to the doctrines with which it is confronted. As against the theory that the existing way of sharing the laboriously acquired fruits and delights of the earth is a just representation and fair counterpart of natural inequalities among men in merit and capacity, the revolutionary theory is true, and the passionate revolutionary cry for equality of external chance most righteous and unanswerable. But the issues do not end here. Take such propositions as these:—there are differences in the capacity of men for serving the community; the well-being of the community demands the allotment of high function in proportion to high faculty; the rights of man in politics are confined to a right of the same protection for his own interests as is given to the interests of others. As against these principles, the revolutionary deductions from the equality of man are false. And such pretensions as that every man could be made equally fit for every function, or that not only each should have an equal chance, but that he who uses his chance well and sociably should be kept on a level in common opinion and trust with him who uses it ill and unsociably, or does not use it at all,—the whole of this is obviously most illusory and most disastrous, and in whatever decree any set of men have ever taken it up, to that degree they have paid the penalty.

What Rousseau's Discourse meant, what he intended it to mean, and what his first direct disciples understood it as meaning, is not that all men are born equal. He never says this, and his recognition of natural inequality implies the contrary proposition. His position is that the artificial differences, springing from the conditions of the social union, do not coincide with the differences in capacity springing from original constitution; that the tendency of the social union as now organised is to deepen the artificial inequalities, and make the gulf between those endowed with privileges and wealth and those not so endowed ever wider and wider. It would have been very difficult a hundred years ago to deny the truth of this way of stating the case. If it has to some extent already ceased to be entirely true, and if violent popular forces are at work making it less and less true, we owe the origin of the change, among other causes and influences, not least to the influence of Rousseau himself, and those whom he inspired. It was that influence which, though it certainly did not produce, yet did as certainly give a deep and remarkable bias, first to the American Revolution, and a dozen years afterwards to the French Revolution.



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It would be interesting to trace the different fortunes which awaited the idea of the equality of man in America and in France. In America it has always remained strictly within the political order, and perhaps with the considerable exception of the possible share it may have had, along with Christian notions of the brotherhood of man, and statesmanlike notions of national prosperity, in leading to the abolition of slavery, it has brought forth no strong moral sentiment against the ethical and economic bases of any part of the social order. In France, on the other hand, it was the starting-point of movements that have had all the fervour and intensity of religions, and have made men feel about social inequalities the burning shame and wrath with which a Christian saw the flourishing temples of unclean gods. This difference in the interpretation and development of the first doctrine may be explained in various ways,—by difference of material circumstance between America and France; difference of the political and social level from which the principle of equality had to start; and not least by difference of intellectual temperament. This last was itself partly the product of difference in religion, which makes the English dread the practical enforcement of logical conclusions, while the French have hitherto been apt to dread and despise any tendency to stop short of that.

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Let us notice, finally, the important fact that the appearance of Rousseau's Discourses was the first sign of reaction against the historic mode of inquiry into society that had been initiated by Montesquieu. The Spirit of Laws was published in 1748, with a truly prodigious effect. It coloured the whole of the social literature in France during the rest of the century. A history of its influence would be a history of one of the most important sides of speculative activity. In the social writings of Rousseau himself there is hardly a chapter which does not contain tacit reference to Montesquieu's book. The Discourses were the beginning of a movement in an exactly opposite direction; that is, away from patient collection of wide multitudes of facts relating to the conditions of society, towards the promulgation of arbitrary systems of absolute social dogmas. Mably, the chief dogmatic socialist of the century, and one of the most dignified and austere characters, is an important example of the detriment done by the influence of Rousseau to that of Montesquieu, in the earlier stages of the conflict between the two schools. Mably (1709-1785), of whom the remark is to be made that he was for some years behind the scenes of government as De Tencin's secretary and therefore was versed in affairs, began his inquiries with Greece and Rome. "You will find everything in ancient history," he said.[195] And he remained entirely in this groove of thought until Rousseau appeared. He then gradually left Montesquieu. "To find the duties of



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a legislator," he said, "I descend into the abysses of my heart, I study my sentiments." He opposed the Economists, the other school that was feeling its way imperfectly enough to a positive method. "As soon as I see landed property established," he wrote, "then I see unequal fortunes; and from these unequal fortunes must there not necessarily result different and opposed interests, all the vices of riches, all the vices of poverty, the brutalisation of intelligence, the corruption of civil manners?" and so forth. [196] In his most important work, published in 1776, we see Rousseau's notions developed, with a logic from which their first author shrunk, either from fear, or more probably from want of firmness and consistency as a reasoner. "It is to equality that nature has attached the preservation of our social faculties and happiness: and from this I conclude that legislation will only be taking useless trouble, unless all its attention is first of all directed to the establishment of equality in the fortune and condition of citizens." [197] That is to say not only political equality, but economic communism. "What miserable folly, that persons who pass for philosophers should go on repeating after one another that without property there can be no society. Let us leave illusion. It is property that divides us into two classes, rich and poor; the first will always prefer their fortune to that of the state, while the second will never love a government or laws that leave them in misery." [198] This was the kind of opinion for which Rousseau's diffuse and rhetorical exposition of social necessity had prepared France some twenty years before. After powerfully helping the process of general dissolution, it produced the first fruits specifically after its own kind some twenty years later in the system of Baboeuf. [199]

The unflinching application of principles is seldom achieved by the men who first launch them. The labour of the preliminary task seems to exhaust one man's stock of mental force. Rousseau never thought of the subversion of society or its reorganisation on a communistic basis. Within a few months of his profession of profound lament that the first man who made a claim to property had not been instantly unmasked as the arch foe of the race, he speaks most respectfully of property as the pledge of the engagements of citizens and the foundation of the social pact, while the first condition of that pact is that every one should be maintained in peaceful enjoyment of what belongs to him. [200] We need not impute the apparent discrepancy to insincerity. Rousseau was always apt to think in a slipshod manner. He sensibly though illogically accepted wholesome practical maxims, as if they flowed from theoretical premisses that were in truth utterly incompatible with them.

FOOTNOTES:

[151] Delandine's *Couronnes Academiques, ou Recueil de prix proposes par les Societes Savantes*. (Paris, 2 vols., 1787.)



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[152] Musset-Pathay has collected the details connected with the award of the prize, ii. 365-367.

[153] Second Letter to M. de Malesherbes, p. 358. Also *Conf.*, viii. 135.

[154] Diderot's account (*Vie de Seneque*, sect. 66, *Oeuv.*, iii. 98; also ii. 285) is not inconsistent with Rousseau's own, so that we may dismiss as apocryphal Marmontel's version of the story (*Mem.* VIII.), to the effect that Rousseau was about to answer the question with a commonplace affirmative, until Diderot persuaded him that a paradox would attract more attention. It has been said also that M. de Francueil, and various others, first urged the writer to take a negative line of argument. To suppose this possible is to prove one's incapacity for understanding what manner of man Rousseau was.

[155] *Conf.*, ix. 232, 233.

[156] *Rousseau Juge de Jean Jacques, Dialogues*, i. 252.

[157] *Dialogues*, i. 275, 276.

[158] *Conf.*, viii. 138.

[159] "It made a kind of revolution in Paris," says Grimm. *Corr. Lit.*, i. 108.

[160] *Rep. au Roi de Pologne*, p. 111 and p. 113.

[161] *Rep. a M. Bordes*, 138.

[162] *Ib.* 137.

[163] "The first source of the evil is inequality; from inequality come riches ... from riches are born luxury and idleness; from luxury come the fine arts, and from idleness the sciences." *Rep. au Roi de Pologne*, 120, 121.

[164] *Rep. a M. Bordes*, 147. In the same spirit he once wrote the more wholesome maxim, "We should argue with the wise, and never with the public." *Corr.*, i. 191.

[165] *Rep. au Roi de Pologne*, 128, 129.

[166] *Rep. a M. Bordes*, 150-161.

[167] P. 174.

[168] Egger's *Hellenisme en France*, 28ieme lecon, p. 265.

[169] Voltaire to J.J.R. Aug. 30, 1755.



[170] *Rep. au Roi de Pologne*, 105.

[171] In 1753 the French Academy, by way no doubt of summoning a counter-blast to Rousseau, boldly offered as the subject of their essay the thesis that “The love of letters inspires the love of virtue,” and the prize was won fitly enough by a Jesuit professor of rhetoric. See Delandine, i. 42.

[172] Preface to *Narcisse*, 251.

[173] *Rep. a M. Bordes*, 167.

[174] P. 187.

[175] See for instance a strange discussion about *morale universelle* and the like in *Mem. de Mme. d’Epinay*, i. 217-226.

[176] Often described as Morelly the Younger, to distinguish him from his father, who wrote an essay on the human heart, and another on the human intelligence.

[177] *Code de la Nature, ou le veritable esprit de ses loix, de tout tems negligé ou meconnu*.

[178] P. 169. Rousseau did not see it then, but he showed himself on the track.



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[179] At the end of the *Code de la Nature* Morelly places a complete set of rules for the organisation of a model community. The base of it was the absence of private property—a condition that was to be preserved by vigilant education of the young in ways of thinking, that should make the possession of private property odious or inconceivable. There are to be sumptuary laws of a moderate kind. The government is to be in the hands of the elders. The children are to be taken away from their parents at the age of five; reared and educated in public establishments; and returned to their parents at the age of sixteen or so when they will marry. Marriage is to be dissoluble at the end of ten years, but after divorce the woman is not to marry a man younger than herself, nor is the man to marry a woman younger than the wife from whom he has parted. The children of a divorced couple are to remain with the father, and if he marries again, they are to be held the children of the second wife. Mothers are to suckle their own children (p. 220). The whole scheme is fuller of good ideas than such schemes usually are.

[180] P. 218.

[181] This is obviously untrue. Animals do not know death in the sense of scientific definition, and probably have no abstract idea of it as a general state; but they know and are afraid of its concrete phenomena, and so are most savages.

[182] This is one of the passages in the *Discourse*, the harshness of which was afterwards attributed by Rousseau to the influence of Diderot. *Conf.*, viii. 205, *n*.

[183] P. 261.

[184] As if sin really came by the law in this sense; as if a law defining and prohibiting a malpractice were the cause of the commission of the act which it constituted a malpractice. As if giving a name and juristic classification to any kind of conduct were adding to men's motives for indulging in it.

[185] P. 269.

[186] P. 278.

[187] Pp. 285-287.

[188] P. 273.

[189] P. 250.

[190] *Politicus*, 268 D-274 E.

[191] Here for instance is D'Alembert's story:—"The necessity of shielding our own body from pain and destruction leads us to examine among external objects those which are useful and those which are hurtful, so that we may seek the one and flee the others.



But we hardly begin our search into such objects before we discover among them a great number of beings which strike us as exactly like ourselves; that is, whose form is just like our own, and who, so far as we can judge at the first glance, appear to have the same perceptions. Everything therefore leads us to suppose that they have also the same wants, and consequently the same interest in satisfying them, whence it results that we must find great advantage in joining with them for the purpose of distinguishing in nature what has the power of preserving us from what has the power of hurting us. The communication of ideas is the principle and the stay of this union, and necessarily demands the invention of signs; such is the origin of the formation of societies.”
Discours Preliminaire de l'Encyclopedie. Contrast this with Aristotle’s sensible statement (*Polit.* I. ii. 15) that “there is in men by nature a strong impulse to enter into such union.”



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[192] *Code de la Nature*.

[193] See, for example, his criticism on the Abbe de St. Pierre. *Conf.*, viii. 264. And also in the analysis of this very Discourse, above, vol. i. p. 163.

[194] "I have lived with communities of savages in South America and in the East, who have no laws or law courts but the public opinion of the visage freely expressed. Each man scrupulously respects the rights of his fellow, and any infraction of those rights rarely or never takes place. In such a community all are nearly equal. There are none of those wide distinctions of education and ignorance, wealth and poverty, master and servant, which are the products of our civilisation; there is none of that widespread division of labour which, while it increases wealth, produces also conflicting interests; there is not that severe competition and struggle for existence, or for wealth, which the dense population of civilised countries inevitably creates. All incitements to great crimes are thus wanting, and petty ones are repressed, partly by the influence of public opinion, but chiefly by that natural sense of justice and of his neighbour's right, which seems to be in some degree inherent in every race of man. Now, although we have progressed vastly beyond the savage state in intellectual achievements, we have not advanced equally in morals. It is true that among those classes who have no wants that cannot be easily supplied, and among whom public opinion has great influence, the rights of others are fully respected. It is true, also, that we have vastly extended the sphere of those rights, and include within them all the brotherhood of man. But it is not too much to say, that the mass of our populations have not at all advanced beyond the savage code of morals, and have in many cases sunk below it." Wallace's *Malay Archipelago*, vol. ii. pp. 460-461.

[195] So too Bougainville, a brother of the navigator, said in 1760, "For an attentive observer who sees nothing in events of the utmost diversity of appearance but the natural effects of a certain number of causes differently combined, Greece is the universe in small, and the history of Greece an excellent epitome of universal history." (Quoted in Egger's *Hellenisme en France*, ii. 272.) The revolutionists of the next generation, who used to appeal so unseasonably to the ancients, were only following a literary fashion set by their fathers.

[196] *Doutes sur l'Ordre Naturel; Oeuv.*, xi. 80. (Ed. 1794, 1795.)

[197] *La Legislation*, I. i.

[198] *Ibid.*

[199] It is not within our province to examine the vexed question whether the Convention was fundamentally socialist, and not merely political. That socialist ideas were afloat in the minds of some members, one can hardly doubt. See Von Sybel's

Hist. of the French Revolution, Bk. II. ch. iv., on one side, and Quinet's *La Revolution*, ii. 90-107, on the other.



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[200] *Economie Politique*, pp. 41, 53, etc.

CHAPTER VI.

PARIS.

I.

By what subtle process did Rousseau, whose ideal had been a summer life among all the softnesses of sweet gardens and dappled orchards, turn into panegyrist of the harsh austerity of old Cato and grim Brutus's civic devotion? The amiability of eighteenth century France—and France was amiable in spite of the atrocities of White Penitents at Toulouse, and black Jansenists at Paris, and the men and women who dealt in *lettres-de-cachet* at Versailles—was revolted by the name of the cruel patriot who slew his son for the honour of discipline.[201] How came Rousseau of all men, the great humanitarian of his time, to rise to the height of these unlovely rigours?

The answer is that he was a citizen of Geneva transplanted. He had been bred in puritan and republican tradition, with love of God and love of law and freedom and love of country all penetrating it, and then he had been accidentally removed to a strange city that was in active ferment with ideas that were the direct abnegation of all these. In Paris the idea of a God was either repudiated along with many other ancestral conceptions, or else it was fatally entangled with the worst superstition and not seldom with the vilest cruelties. The idea of freedom was unknown, and the idea of law was benumbed by abuses and exceptions. The idea of country was enfeebled in some and displaced in others by a growing passion for the captivating something styled citizenship of the world. If Rousseau could have ended his days among the tranquil lakes and hills of Savoy, Geneva might possibly never have come back to him. For it depends on circumstance, which of the chances that slumber within us shall awake, and which shall fall unroused with us into the darkness. The fact of Rousseau ranking among the greatest of the writers of the French language, and the yet more important fact that his ideas found their most ardent disciples and exploded in their most violent form in France, constantly make us forget that he was not a Frenchman, but a Genevese deeply imbued with the spirit of his native city. He was thirty years old before he began even temporarily to live in France: he had only lived there some five or six years when he wrote his first famous piece, so un-French in all its spirit; and the ideas of the Social Contract were in germ before he settled in France at all.

There have been two great religious reactions, and the name of Geneva has a fundamental association with each of them. The first was that against the paganised Catholicism of the renaissance, and of this Calvin was a prime leader; the second was

that against the materialism of the eighteenth century, of which the prime leader was Rousseau. The diplomatist was right who called Geneva the fifth part of the world.



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At the congress of Vienna, some one, wearied at the enormous place taken by the hardly visible Geneva in the midst of negotiations involving momentous issues for the whole habitable globe, called out that it was after all no more than a grain of sand. But he was not wrong who made bold to reply, "Geneva is no grain of sand; 'tis a grain of musk that perfumes all Europe." [202] We have to remember that it was at all events as a grain of musk ever pervading the character of Rousseau. It happened in later years that he repudiated his allegiance to her, but however bitterly a man may quarrel with a parent, he cannot change blood, and Rousseau ever remained a true son of the city of Calvin. We may perhaps conjecture without excessive fancifulness that the constant spectacle and memory of a community, free, energetic, and prosperous, whose institutions had been shaped and whose political temper had been inspired by one great lawgiver, contributed even more powerfully than what he had picked up about Lycurgus and Lacedaemon, to give him a turn for Utopian speculation, and a conviction of the artificiality and easy modifiableness of the social structure. This, however, is less certain than that he unconsciously received impressions in his youth from the circumstances of Geneva, both as to government and religion, as to freedom, order, citizenship, manners, which formed the deepest part of him on the reflective side, and which made themselves visible whenever he exchanged the life of beatified sense for moods of speculative energy, "Never," he says, "did I see the walls of that happy city, I never went into it, without feeling a certain faintness at my heart, due to excess of tender emotion. At the same time that the noble image of freedom elevated my soul, those of equality, of union, of gentle manners, touched me even to tears." [203] His spirit never ceased to haunt city and lake to the end, and he only paid the debt of an owed acknowledgment in the dedication of his Discourse on Inequality to the republic of Geneva. [204] It was there it had its root. The honour in which industry was held in Geneva, the democratic phrases that constituted the dialect of its government, the proud tradition of the long battle which had won and kept its independence, the severity of its manners, the simplicity of its pleasures,—all these things awoke in his memory as soon as ever occasion drew him to serious thought. More than that, he had in a peculiar manner drawn in with the breath of his earliest days in this theocratically constituted city, the vital idea that there are sacred things and objects of reverence among men. And hence there came to him, though with many stains and much misdirection, the most priceless excellence of a capacity for devout veneration.



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There is certainly no real contradiction between the quality of reverence and the more equivocal quality of a sensuous temperament, though a man may well seem on the surface, as the first succeeds the second in rule over him, to be the contradiction to his other self. The objects of veneration and the objects of sensuous delight are externally so unlike and so incongruous, that he who follows both in their turns is as one playing the part of an ironical chorus in the tragi-comic drama of his own life. You may perceive these two to be mere imperfect or illusory opposites, when you confront a man like Rousseau with the true opposite of his own type; with those who are from their birth analysts and critics, keen, restless, urgent, inexorably questioning. That energetic type, though not often dead or dull on the side of sense, yet is incapable of steeping itself in the manifold delights of eye and ear, of nostril and touch, with the peculiar intensity of passive absorption that seeks nothing further nor deeper than unending continuance of this profound repose of all filled sensation, just as it is incapable of the kindred mood of elevated humility and joyful unmasking devoutness in the presence of emotions and dim thoughts that are beyond the compass of words.

The citizen of Geneva with this unseen fibre of Calvinistic veneration and austerity strong and vigorous within him, found a world that had nothing sacred and took nothing for granted; that held the past in contempt, and ever like old Athenians asked for some new thing; that counted simplicity of life an antique barbarism, and literary curiousness the master virtue. There were giants in this world, like the panurgic Diderot. There were industrious, worthy, disinterested men, who used their minds honestly and actively with sincere care for truth, like D'Holbach. There was poured around the whole, like a high stimulating atmosphere to the stronger, and like some evil mental aphrodisiac to the weaker, the influence of Voltaire, the great indomitable chieftain of them all. Intellectual size half redeems want of perfect direction by its generous power and fulness. It was not the strong men, atheists and philosophisers as they were, who first irritated Rousseau into revolt against their whole system of thought in all its principles. The dissent between him and them was fundamental and enormous, and in time it flamed out into open war. Conflict of theory, however, was brought home to him first by slow-growing exasperation at the follies in practice of the minor disciples of the gospel of knowing and acting, as distinguished from his own gospel of placid being. He craved beliefs that should uphold men in living their lives, substantial helps on which they might lean without examination and without mistrust: his life in Paris was thrown among people who lived in the midst of open questions, and revelled in a reflective and didactic morality, which had no root in the heart and so made things easy for the practical



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conscience. He sought tranquillity and valued life for its own sake, not as an arena and a theme for endless argument and debate: he found friends who knew no higher pleasure than the futile polemics of mimic philosophy over dessert, who were as full of quibble as the wrong-headed interlocutors in a Platonic dialogue, and who babbled about God and state of nature, about virtue and the spirituality of the soul, much as Boswell may have done when Johnson complained of him for asking questions that would make a man hang himself. The highest things were thus brought down to the level of the cheapest discourse, and subjects which the wise take care only to discuss with the wise, were here everyday topics for all comers.

The association with such high themes of those light qualities of tact, gaiety, complaisance, which are the life of the superficial commerce of men and women of the world, probably gave quite as much offence to Rousseau as the doctrines which some of his companions had the honest courage or the heedless fatuity to profess. It was an outrage to all the serious side of him to find persons of quality introducing materialism as a new fashion, and atheism as the liveliest of condiments. The perfume of good manners only made what he took for bad principles the worse, and heightened his impatience at the flippancy of pretensions to overthrow the beliefs of a world between two wines.

Doctrine and temperament united to set him angrily against the world around him. The one was austere and the other was sensuous, and the sensuous temperament in its full strength is essentially solitary. The play of social intercourse, its quick transitions, and incessant demands, are fatal to free and uninterrupted abandonment to the flow of soft internal emotions. Rousseau, dreaming, moody, indolently, meditative, profoundly enwrapped in the brooding egoism of his own sensations, had to mix with men and women whose egoism took the contrary form of an eager desire to produce flashing effects on other people. We may be sure that as the two sides of his character—his notions of serious principle, and his notions of personal comfort—both went in the same direction, the irritation and impatience with which they inspired him towards society did not lessen with increased communication, but naturally deepened with a more profoundly settled antipathy.

Rousseau lived in Paris for twelve years, from his return from Venice in 1744 until his departure in 1756 for the rustic lodge in a wood which the good-will of Madame d'Epinau provided for him. We have already seen one very important side of his fortunes during these years, in the relations he formed with Theresa, and the relations which he repudiated with his children. We have heard too the new words with which during these years he first began to make the hearts of his contemporaries wax hot within them. It remains to examine the current of daily circumstance on which his life was embarked, and the shores to which it was bearing him.



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His patrons were at present almost exclusively in the circle of finance. Richelieu, indeed, took him for a moment by the hand, but even the introduction to him was through the too frail wife of one of the greatest of the farmers general.[205] Madame Dupin and Madame d'Epinau, his two chief patronesses, were also both of them the wives of magnates of the farm. The society of the great people of this world was marked by all the glare, artificiality, and sentimentalism of the epoch, but it had also one or two specially hollow characteristics of its own. As is always the case when a new rich class rises in the midst of a community possessing an old caste, the circle of Parisian financiers made it their highest social aim to thrust and strain into the circle of the Versailles people of quality. They had no normal life of their own, with independent traditions and self-respect; and for the same reason that an essentially worn-out aristocracy may so long preserve a considerable degree of vigour and even of social utility under certain circumstances by means of tenacious pride in its own order, a new plutocracy is demoralised from the very beginning of its existence by want of a similar kind of pride in itself, and by the ignoble necessity of craving the countenance of an upper class that loves to despise and humiliate it. Besides the more obvious evils of a position resting entirely on material opulence, and maintaining itself by coarse and glittering ostentation, there is a fatal moral hollowness which infects both serious conduct and social diversion. The result is seen in imitative manners, affected culture, and a mixture of timorous self-consciousness within and noisy self-assertion without, which completes the most distasteful scene that any collected spirit can witness.

Rousseau was, as has been said, the secretary of Madame Dupin and her stepson Francueil. He occasionally went with them to Chenonceaux in Touraine, one of Henry the Second's castles built for Diana of Poitiers, and here he fared sumptuously every day. In Paris his means, as we know, were too strait. For the first two years he had a salary of nine hundred francs; then his employers raised it to as much as fifty louis. For the first of the Discourses the publisher gave him nothing, and for the second he had to extract his fee penny by penny, and after long waiting. His comic opera, the Village Soothsayer, was a greater success; it brought him the round sum of two hundred louis from the court, and some five and twenty more from the bookseller, and so, he says, "the interlude, which cost me five or six weeks of work, produced nearly as much money as Emilius afterwards did, which had cost me twenty years of meditation and three years of composition." [206] Before the arrival of this windfall, M. Francueil, who was receiver-general, offered him the post of cashier in that important department, and Rousseau attended for some weeks to receive the necessary instructions.



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His progress was tardy as usual, and the complexities of accounts were as little congenial to him as notarial complexities had been three and twenty years previously. It is, however, one of the characteristics of times of national break-up not to be peremptory in exacting competence, and Rousseau gravely sat at the receipt of custom, doing the day's duty with as little skill as liking. Before he had been long at his post, his official chief going on a short journey left him in charge of the chest, which happened at the moment to contain no very portentous amount. The disquiet with which the watchful custody of this moderate treasure harassed and afflicted Rousseau, not only persuaded him that nature had never designed him to be the guardian of money chests, but also threw him into a fit of very painful illness. The surgeons let him understand that within six months he would be in the pale kingdoms. The effect of such a hint on a man of his temper, and the train of reflections which it would be sure to set aflame, are to be foreseen by us who know Rousseau's fashion of dealing with the irksome. Why sacrifice the peace and charm of the little fragment of days left to him, to the bondage of an office for which he felt nothing but disgust? How reconcile the austere principles which he had just adopted in his denunciation of sciences and arts, and his panegyric on the simplicity of the natural life, with such duties as he had to perform? And how preach disinterestedness and frugality from amid the cashboxes of a receiver-general? Plainly it was his duty to pass in independence and poverty the little time that was yet left to him, to bring all the forces of his soul to bear in breaking the fetters of opinion, and to carry out courageously whatever seemed best to himself, without suffering the judgment of others to interpose the slightest embarrassment or hindrance.[207]

With Rousseau, to conceive a project of this kind for simplifying his life was to hasten urgently towards its realisation, because such projects harmonised with all his strongest predispositions. His design mastered and took whole possession of him. He resolved to earn his living by copying music, as that was conformable to his taste, within his capacity, and compatible with entire personal freedom. His patron did as the world is so naturally ready to do with those who choose the stoic's way; he declared that Rousseau was gone mad.[208] Talk like this had no effect on a man whom self-indulgence led into a path that others would only have been forced into by self-denial. Let it be said, however, that this is a form of self-indulgence of which society is never likely to see an excess, and meanwhile we may continue to pay it some respect as assuredly leaning to virtue's side. Rousseau's many lapses from grace perhaps deserve a certain gentleness of treatment, after the time when with deliberation and collected effort he set himself to the hard task of fitting his private life to his public principles. Anything that heightens the self-respect of the race is good for us to behold, and it is a permanent source of comfort to all who thirst after reality in teachers, whether their teaching happens to be our own or not, to find that the prophet of social equality was not a fine gentleman, nor the teacher of democracy a hanger-on to the silly skirts of fashion.



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Rousseau did not merely throw up a post which would one day have made him rich. Stoicism on the heroic, peremptory scale is not so difficult as the application of the same principle to trifles. Besides this greater sacrifice, he gave up the pleasant things for which most men value the money that procures them, and instituted an austere sumptuary reform in truly Genevese spirit. His sword was laid aside; for flowing peruke was substituted the small round wig; he left off gilt buttons and white stockings, and he sold his watch with the joyful and singular thought that he would never again need to know the time. One sacrifice remained to be made. Part of his equipment for the Venetian embassy had been a large stock of fine linen, and for this he retained a particular affection, for both now and always Rousseau had a passion for personal cleanliness, as he had for corporeal wholesomeness. He was seasonably delivered from bondage to his fine linen by aid from without. One Christmas Eve it lay drying in a garret in the rather considerable quantity of forty-two shirts, when a thief, always suspected to be the brother of Theresa, broke open the door and carried off the treasure, leaving Rousseau henceforth to be the contented wearer of coarser stuffs. [209]

We may place this reform towards the end of the year 1750, or the beginning of 1751, when his mind was agitated by the busy discussion which his first Discourse excited, and by the new ideas of literary power which its reception by the public naturally awakened in him. "It takes," wrote Diderot, "right above the clouds; never was such a success." [210] We can hardly have a surer sign of a man's fundamental sincerity than that his first triumph, the first revelation to him of his power, instead of seducing him to frequent the mischievous and disturbing circle of his applauders, should throw him inwards upon himself and his own principles with new earnestness and refreshed independence. Rousseau very soon made up his mind what the world was worth to him; and this, not as the ordinary sentimentalist or satirist does, by way of set-off against the indulgence of personal foibles, but from recognition of his own qualities, of the bounds set to our capacity of life, and of the limits of the world's power to satisfy us. "When my destiny threw me into the whirlpool of society," he wrote in his last meditation on the course of his own life, "I found nothing there to give a moment's solace to my heart. Regret for my sweet leisure followed me everywhere; it shed indifference or disgust over all that might have been within my reach, leading to fortune and honours. Uncertain in the disquiet of my desires, I hoped for little, I obtained less, and I felt even amid gleams of prosperity that if I obtained all that I supposed myself to be seeking, I should still not have found the happiness for which my heart was greedily athirst, though without distinctly knowing its object. Thus everything served to detach my affections from society, even before the misfortunes which were to make me wholly a stranger to it. I reached the age of forty, floating between indigence and fortune, between wisdom and disorder, full of vices of habit without any evil tendency at heart, living by hazard, distracted as to my duties without despising them, but often without much clear knowledge what they were." [211]



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A brooding nature gives to character a connectedness and unity that is in strong contrast with the dispersion and multiformity of the active type. The attractions of fame never cheated Rousseau into forgetfulness of the commanding principle that a man's life ought to be steadily composed to oneness with itself in all its parts, as by mastery of an art of moral counterpoint, and not crowded with a wild mixture of aim and emotion like distracted masks in high carnival. He complains of the philosophers with whom he came into contact, that their philosophy was something foreign to them and outside of their own lives. They studied human nature for the sake of talking learnedly about it, not for the sake of self-knowledge; they laboured to instruct others, not to enlighten themselves within. When they published a book, its contents only interested them to the extent of making the world accept it, without seriously troubling themselves whether it were true or false, provided only that it was not refuted. "For my own part, when I desired to learn, it was to know things myself, and not at all to teach others. I always believed that before instructing others it was proper to begin by knowing enough for one's self; and of all the studies that I have tried to follow in my life in the midst of men, there is hardly one that I should not have followed equally if I had been alone, and shut up in a desert island for the rest of my days." [212]

When we think of Turgot, whom Rousseau occasionally met among the society which he denounces, such a denunciation sounds a little outrageous. But then Turgot was perhaps the one sane Frenchman of the first eminence in the eighteenth century. Voltaire chose to be an exile from the society of Paris and Versailles as pertinaciously as Rousseau did, and he spoke more bitterly of it in verse than Rousseau ever spoke bitterly of it in prose. [213] It was, as has been so often said, a society dominated by women, from the king's mistress who helped to ruin France, down to the financier's wife who gave suppers to flashy men of letters. The eighteenth century salon has been described as having three stages; the salon of 1730, still retaining some of the stately domesticity, elegance, dignity of the age of Lewis XIV.; that of 1780, grave, cold, dry, given to dissertation; and between the two, the salon of 1750, full of intellectual stir, brilliance, frivolous originality, glittering wastefulness. [214] Though this division of time must not be pressed too closely, it is certain that the era of Rousseau's advent in literature with his Discourses fell in with the climax of social unreality in the surface intercourse of France, and that the same date marks the highest point of feminine activity and power.



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The common mixture of much reflective morality in theory with much light-hearted immorality in practice, never entered so largely into manners. We have constantly to wonder how they analysed and defined the word Virtue, to which they so constantly appealed in letters, conversation, and books, as the sovereign object for our deepest and warmest adoration. A whole company of transgressors of the marriage law would melt into floods of tears over a hymn to virtue, which they must surely have held of too sacred an essence to mix itself with any one virtue in particular, except that very considerable one of charitably letting all do as they please. It is much, however, that these tears, if not very burning, were really honest. Society, though not believing very deeply in the supernatural, was not cursed with an arid, parching, and hardened scepticism about the genuineness of good emotions in a man, and so long as people keep this baleful poison out of their hearts, their lives remain worth having.

It is true that cynicism in the case of some women of this time occasionally sounded in a diabolic key, as when one said, "It is your lover to whom you should never say that you don't believe in God; to one's husband that does not matter, because in the case of a lover one must reserve for one's self some door of escape, and devotional scruples cut everything short." [215] Or here: "I do not distrust anybody, for that is a deliberate act; but I do not trust anybody, and there is no trouble in this." [216] Or again in the word thrown to a man vaunting the probity of some one: "What! can a man of intelligence like you accept the prejudice of *meum* and *tuum*?" [217] Such speech, however, was probably most often a mere freak of the tongue, a mode and fashion, as who should go to a masked ball in guise of Mephistopheles, without anything more Mephistophelian about him than red apparel and peaked toes. "She was absolutely charming," said one of a new-comer; "she did not utter one single word that was not a paradox." [218] This was the passing taste. Human nature is able to keep itself wholesome in fundamentals even under very great difficulties, and it is as wise as it is charitable in judging a sharp and cynical tone to make large allowances for mere costume and assumed character.

In respect of the light companionship of common usage, however, it is exactly the costume which comes closest to us, and bad taste in that is most jarring and least easily forgiven. There is a certain stage in an observant person's experience of the heedlessness, indolence, and native folly of men and women—and if his observation be conducted in a catholic spirit, he will probably see something of this not merely in others—when the tolerable average sanity of human arrangements strikes him as the most marvellous of all the fortunate accidents in the universe. Rousseau could not even accept the fact of this miraculous result, the provisional and temporary sanity of things,



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and he confronted society with eyes of angry chagrin. A great lady asked him how it was that she had not seen him for an age. "Because when I wish to see you, I wish to see no one but you. What do you want me to do in the midst of your society? I should cut a sorry figure in a circle of mincing tripping coxcombs; they do not suit me." We cannot wonder that on some occasion when her son's proficiency was to be tested before a company of friends, Madame d'Epinau prayed Rousseau to be of them, on the ground that he would be sure to ask the child outrageously absurd questions, which would give gaiety to the affair.[219] As it happened, the father was unwise. He was a man of whom it was said that he had devoured two million francs, without either saying or doing a single good thing. He rewarded the child's performance with the gift of a superb suit of cherry-coloured velvet, extravagantly trimmed with costly lace; the peasant from whose sweat and travail the money had been wrung, went in heavy rags, and his children lived as the beasts of the field. The poor youth was ill dealt with. "That is very fine," said rude Duclos, "but remember that a fool in lace is still a fool." Rousseau, in reply to the child's importunity, was still blunter: "Sir, I am no judge of finery, I am only a judge of man; I wished to talk with you a little while ago, but I wish so no longer." [220]

Marmontel, whose account may have been coloured by retrospection in later years, says that before the success of the first Discourse, Rousseau concealed his pride under the external forms of a politeness that was timid even to obsequiousness; in his uneasy glance you perceived mistrust and observant jealousy; there was no freedom in his manner, and no one ever observed more cautiously the hateful precept to live with your friends as though they were one day to be your enemies.[221] Grimm's description is different and more trustworthy. Until he began to affect singularity, he says, Rousseau had been gallant and overflowing with artificial compliment, with manners that were honeyed and even wearisome in their soft elaborateness. All at once he put on the cynic's cloak, and went to the other extreme. Still in spite of an abrupt and cynical tone he kept much of his old art of elaborate fine speeches, and particularly in his relations with women.[222] Of his abruptness, he tells a most displeasing tale. "One day Rousseau told us with an air of triumph, that as he was coming out of the opera where he had been seeing the first representation of the Village Soothsayer, the Duke of Zweibruecken had approached him with much politeness, saying, 'Will you allow me to pay you a compliment?' and that he replied, 'Yes, if it be very short.' Everybody was silent at this, until I said to him laughingly, 'Illustrious citizen and co-sovereign of Geneva, since there resides in you a part of the sovereignty of the republic, let me represent to you that, for all the severity of your principles, you should hardly refuse to a sovereign prince the respect due to a water-carrier, and that if you had met a word of good-will from a water-carrier with an answer as rough and brutal as that, you would have had to reproach yourself with a most unseasonable piece of impertinence.'" [223]



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There were still more serious circumstances when exasperation at the flippant tone about him carried him beyond the ordinary bounds of that polite time. A guest at table asked contemptuously what was the use of a nation like the French having reason, if they did not use it. "They mock the other nations of the earth, and yet are the most credulous of all." ROUSSEAU: "I forgive them for their credulity, but not for condemning those who are credulous in some other way." Some one said that in matters of religion everybody was right, but that everybody should remain in that in which he had been born. ROUSSEAU, with warmth: "Not so, by God, if it is a bad one, for then it can do nothing but harm." Then some one contended that religion always did some good, as a kind of rein to the common people who had no other morality. All the rest cried out at this in indignant remonstrance, one shrewd person remarking that the common people had much livelier fear of being hanged than of being damned. The conversation was broken off for a moment by the hostess calling out, "After all, one must nourish the tattered affair we call our body, so ring and let them bring us the joint." This done, the servants dismissed, and the door shut, the discussion was resumed with such vehemence by Duclos and Saint Lambert, that, says the lady who tells us the story, "I feared they were bent on destroying all religion, and I prayed for some mercy to be shown at any rate to natural religion." There was not a whit more sympathy for that than for the rest. Rousseau declared himself *paullo infirmior*, and clung to the morality of the gospel as the natural morality which in old times constituted the whole and only creed. "But what is a God," cried one impetuous disputant, "who gets angry and is appeased again?" Rousseau began to murmur between grinding teeth, and a tide of pleasantries set in at his expense, to which came this: "If it is a piece of cowardice to suffer ill to be spoken of one's friend behind his back, 'tis a crime to suffer ill to be spoken of one's God, who is present; and for my part, sirs, I believe in God." "I admit," said the atheistic champion, "that it is a fine thing to see this God bending his brow to earth and watching with admiration the conduct of a Cato. But this notion is, like many others, very useful in some great heads, such as Trajan, Marcus Aurelius, Socrates, where it can only produce heroism, but it is the germ of all madnesses." ROUSSEAU: "Sirs, I leave the room if you say another word more," and he was rising to fulfil his threat, when the entry of a new-comer stopped the discussion.[224]



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His words on another occasion show how all that he saw helped to keep up a fretted condition of mind, in one whose soft tenacious memory turned daily back to simple and unsophisticated days among the green valleys, and refused to acquiesce in the conditions of changed climate. So terrible a thing is it to be the bondsman of reminiscence. Madame d'Epinau was suspected, wrongfully as it afterwards proved, of having destroyed some valuable papers belonging to a dead relative. There was much idle and cruel gossip in an ill-natured world. Rousseau, her friend, kept steadfast silence: she challenged his opinion. "What am I to say?" he answered; "I go and come, and all that I hear outrages and revolts me. I see the one so evidently malicious and so adroit in their injustice; the other so awkward and so stupid in their good intentions, that I am tempted (and it is not the first time) to look on Paris as a cavern of brigands, of whom every traveller in his turn is the victim. What gives me the worst idea of society is to see how eager each person is to pardon himself, by reason of the number of the people who are like him." [225]

Notwithstanding his hatred of this cavern of brigands, and the little pains he took to conceal his feelings from any individual brigand, whether male or female, with whom he had to deal, he found out that "it is not always so easy as people suppose to be poor and independent." Merciless invasion of his time in every shape made his life weariness. Sometimes he had the courage to turn and rend the invader, as in the letter to a painter who sent him the same copy of verses three times, requiring immediate acknowledgment. "It is not just," at length wrote the exasperated Rousseau, "that I should be tyrannised over for your pleasure; not that my time is precious, as you say; it is either passed in suffering or it is lost in idleness; but when I cannot employ it usefully for some one, I do not wish to be hindered from wasting it in my own fashion. A single minute thus usurped is what all the kings of the universe could not give me back, and it is to be my own master that I flee from the idle folk of towns,—people as thoroughly wearied as they are thoroughly wearisome,—who, because they do not know what to do with their own time, think they have a right to waste that of others." [226] The more abruptly he treated visitors, persecuting dinner-givers, and all the tribe of the importunate, the more obstinate they were in possessing themselves of his time. In seizing the hours they were keeping his purse empty, as well as keeping up constant irritation in his soul. He appears to have earned forty sous for a morning's work, and to have counted this a fair fee, remarking modestly that he could not well subsist on less. [227] He had one chance of a pension, which he threw from him in a truly characteristic manner.



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When he came to Paris he composed his musical diversion of the Muses Galantes, which was performed (1745) in the presence of Rameau, under the patronage of M. de la Popeliniere. Rameau apostrophised the unlucky composer with much violence, declaring that one-half of the piece was the work of a master, while the other was that of a person entirely ignorant of the musical rudiments; the bad work therefore was Rousseau's own, and the good was a plagiarism.[228] This repulse did not daunt the hero. Five or six years afterwards on a visit to Passy, as he was lying awake in bed, he conceived the idea of a pastoral interlude after the manner of the Italian comic operas. In six days the Village Soothsayer was sketched, and in three weeks virtually completed. Duclos procured its rehearsal at the Opera, and after some debate it was performed before the court at Fontainebleau. The Plutarchian stoic, its author, went from Paris in a court coach, but his Roman tone deserted him, and he felt shamefaced as a schoolboy before the great world, such divinity doth hedge even a Lewis XV., and even in a soul of Genevan temper. The piece was played with great success, and the composer was informed that he would the next day have the honour of being presented to the king, who would most probably mark his favour by the bestowal of a pension. [229] Rousseau was tossed with many doubts. He would fain have greeted the king with some word that should show sensibility to the royal graciousness, without compromising republican severity, "clothing some great and useful truth in a fine and deserved compliment." This moral difficulty was heightened by a physical one, for he was liable to an infirmity which, if it should overtake him in presence of king and courtiers, would land him in an embarrassment worse than death. What would become of him if mind or body should fail, if either he should be driven into precipitate retreat, or else there should escape him, instead of the great truth wrapped delicately round in veracious panegyric, a heavy, shapeless word of foolishness? He fled in terror, and flung up the chance of pension and patronage. We perceive the born dreamer with a phantasmagoric imagination, seizing nothing in just proportion and true relation, and paralysing the spirit with terror of unrealities; in short, with the most fatal form of moral cowardice, which perhaps it is a little dangerous to try to analyse into finer names.

When Rousseau got back to Paris he was amazed to find that Diderot spoke to him of this abandonment of the pension with a fire that he could never have expected from a philosopher, Rousseau plainly sharing the opinion of more vulgar souls that philosopher is but fool writ large. "He said that if I was disinterested on my own account, I had no right to be so on that of Madame Le Vasseur and her daughter, and that I owed it to them not to let pass any possible and honest means of giving them bread.... This was the first real dispute I had with him, and all our quarrels that followed were of the same kind; he laying down for me what he insisted that I should do, and I refusing because I thought that I ought not to do it." [230]



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Let us abstain, at this and all other points, from being too sure that we easily see to the bottom of our Rousseau. When we are most ready to fling up the book and to pronounce him all selfishness and sophistry, some trait is at hand to revive moral interest in him, and show him unlike common men, reverent of truth and human dignity. There is a slight anecdote of this kind connected with his visit to Fontainebleau. The day after the representation of his piece, he happened to be taking his breakfast in some public place. An officer entered, and, proceeding to describe the performance of the previous day, told at great length all that had happened, depicted the composer with much minuteness, and gave a circumstantial account of his conversation. In this story, which was told with equal assurance and simplicity, there was not a word of truth, as was clear from the fact that the author of whom he spoke with such intimacy sat unknown and unrecognised before his eyes. The effect on Rousseau was singular enough. "The man was of a certain age; he had no coxcombical or swaggering air; his expression bespoke a man of merit, and his cross of St. Lewis showed that he was an old officer. While he was retailing his untruths, I grew red in the face, I lowered my eyes, I sat on thorns; I tried to think of some means of believing him to have made a mistake in good faith. At length trembling lest some one should recognise me and confront him, I hastened to finish my chocolate without saying a word; and stooping down as I passed in front of him, I went out as fast as possible, while the people present discussed his tale. I perceived in the street that I was bathed in sweat, and I am sure that if any one had recognised me and called me by name before I got out, they would have seen in me the shame and embarrassment of a culprit, simply from a feeling of the pain the poor man would have had to suffer if his lie had been discovered." [231] One who can feel thus vividly humiliated by the meanness of another, assuredly has in himself the wholesome salt of respect for the erectness of his fellows; he has the rare sentiment that the compromise of integrity in one of them is as a stain on his own self-esteem, and a lowering of his own moral stature. There is more deep love of humanity in this than in giving many alms, and it was not the less deep for being the product of impulse and sympathetic emotion, and not of a logical sorites.

Another scene in a cafe is worth referring to, because it shows in the same way that at this time Rousseau's egoism fell short of the fatuousness to which disease or vicious habit eventually depraved it. In 1752 he procured the representation of his comedy of *Narcisse*, which he had written at the age of eighteen, and which is as well worth reading or playing as most comedies by youths of that amount of experience of the ways of the world and the heart of man. Rousseau was amazed and touched by the indulgence of the public,



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in suffering without any sign of impatience even a second representation of his piece. For himself, he could not so much as sit out the first; quitting the theatre before it was over, he entered the famous cafe de Procope at the other side of the street, where he found critics as wearied as himself. Here he called out, "The new piece has fallen flat, and it deserved to fall flat; it wearied me to death. It is by Rousseau of Geneva, and I am that very Rousseau." [232] The relentless student of mental pathology is very likely to insist that even this was egoism standing on its head and not on its feet, choosing to be noticed for an absurdity, rather than not be noticed at all. It may be so, but this inversion of the ordinary form of vanity is rare enough to be not unrefreshing, and we are very loth to hand Rousseau wholly over to the pathologist before his hour has come.

II.

In the summer of 1754 Rousseau, in company with his Theresa, went to revisit the city of his birth, partly because an exceptionally favourable occasion presented itself, but in yet greater part because he was growing increasingly weary of the uncongenial world in which he moved. On his road he turned aside to visit her who had been more than even his birth-place to him. He felt the shock known to all who cherish a vision for a dozen years, and then suddenly front the changed reality. He had not prepared himself by recalling the commonplace which we only remember for others, how time wears hard and ugly lines into the face that recollection at each new energy makes lovelier with an added sweetness. "I saw her," he says, "but in what a state, O God, in what debasement! Was this the same Madame de Warens, in those days so brilliant, to whom the priest of Pontverre had sent me! How my heart was torn by the sight!" Alas, as has been said with a truth that daily experience proves to those whom pity and self-knowledge have made most indulgent, as to those whom pinched maxims have made most rigorous,—*morality is the nature of things.* [233] We may have a humane tenderness for our Manon Lescaut, but we have a deep presentiment all the time that the poor soul must die in a penal settlement. It is partly a question of time; whether death comes fast enough to sweep you out of reach of the penalties which the nature of things may appoint, but which in their fiercest shape are mostly of the loitering kind. Death was unkind to Madame de Warens, and the unhappy creature lived long enough to find that morality does mean something after all; that the old hoary world has not fixed on prudence in the outlay of money as a good thing, out of avarice or pedantic dryness of heart; nor on some continence and order in the relations of men and women as a good thing, out of cheerless grudge to the body, but because the breach of such virtues is ever in the long run deadly to mutual trust, to strength, to freedom, to collectedness, which are the reserve of humanity against days of ordeal.



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Rousseau says that he tried hard to prevail upon his fallen benefactress to leave Savoy, to come and take up her abode peacefully with him, while he and Theresa would devote their days to making her happy. He had not forgotten her in the little glimpse of prosperity; he had sent her money when he had it.[234] She was sunk in indigence, for her pension had long been forestalled, but still she refused to change her home. While Rousseau was at Geneva she came to see him. "She lacked money to complete her journey; I had not enough about me; I sent it to her an hour afterwards by Theresa. Poor Maman! Let me relate this trait of her heart. The only trinket she had left was a small ring; she took it from her finger to place it on Theresa's, who instantly put it back, as she kissed the noble hand and bathed it with her tears." In after years he poured bitter reproaches upon himself for not quitting all to attach his lot to hers until her last hour, and he professes always to have been haunted by the liveliest and most enduring remorse.[235] Here is the worst of measuring duty by sensation instead of principle; if the sensations happen not to be in right order at the critical moment, the chance goes by, never to return, and then, as memory in the best of such temperaments is long though not without intermittence, old sentiment revives and drags the man into a burning pit. Rousseau appears not to have seen her again, but the thought of her remained with him to the end, like a soft vesture fragrant with something of the sweet mysterious perfume of many-scented night in the silent garden at Charmettes. She died in a hovel eight years after this, sunk in disease, misery, and neglect, and was put away in the cemetery on the heights above Chamberi.[236] Rousseau consoled himself with thoughts of another world that should reunite him to her and be the dawn of new happiness; like a man who should illusorily confound the last glistening of a wintry sunset seen through dark yew-branches, with the broad-beaming strength of the summer morning. "If I thought," he said, "that I should not see her in the other life, my poor imagination would shrink from the idea of perfect bliss, which I would fain promise myself in it." [237] To pluck so gracious a flower of hope on the edge of the sombre unechoing gulf of nothingness into which our friend has slid silently down, is a natural impulse of the sensitive soul, numbing remorse and giving a moment's relief to the hunger and thirst of a tenderness that has been robbed of its object. Yet would not men be more likely to have a deeper love for those about them, and a keener dread of filling a house with aching hearts, if they courageously realised from the beginning of their days that we have none of this perfect companionable bliss to promise ourselves in other worlds, that the black and horrible grave is indeed the end of our communion, and that we know one another no more?



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The first interview between Rousseau and Madame de Warens was followed by his ludicrous conversion to Catholicism (1728); the last was contemporary with his re-conversion to the faith in which he had been reared. The sight of Geneva gave new fire to his Republican enthusiasm; he surrendered himself to transports of patriotic zeal. The thought of the Parisian world that he had left behind, its frivolity, its petulance, its disputation over all things in heaven and on the earth, its profound deadness to all civic activity, quickened his admiration for the simple, industrious, and independent community from which he never forgot that he was sprung. But no Catholic could enjoy the rights of citizenship. So Rousseau proceeded to reflect that the Gospel is the same for all Christians, and the substance of dogma only differs, because people interposed with explanations of what they could not understand; that therefore it is in each country the business of the sovereign to fix both the worship and the amount and quality of unintelligible dogma; that consequently it is the citizen's duty to admit the dogma, and follow the worship by law appointed. "The society of the Encyclopaedists, far from shaking my faith, had confirmed it by my natural aversion for partisanship and controversy. The reading of the Bible, especially of the Gospel, to which I had applied myself for several years, had made me despise the low and childish interpretation put upon the words of Christ by the people who were least worthy to understand him. In a word, philosophy by drawing me towards the essential in religion, had drawn me away from that stupid mass of trivial formulas with which men had overlaid and darkened it." [238] We may be sure that if Rousseau had a strong inclination towards a given course of action, he would have no difficulty in putting his case in a blaze of the brightest light, and surrounding it with endless emblems and devices of superlative conviction. In short, he submitted himself faithfully to the instruction of the pastor of his parish; was closely catechised by a commission of members of the consistory; received from them a certificate that he had satisfied the requirements of doctrine in all points; was received to partake of the Communion, and finally restored to all his rights as a citizen. [239]

This was no farce, such as Voltaire played now and again at the expense of an unhappy bishop or unhappier parish priest; nor such as Rousseau himself had played six-and-twenty years before, at the expense of those honest Catholics of Turin whose helpful donation of twenty francs had marked their enthusiasm over a soul that had been lost and was found again. He was never a Catholic, any more than he was ever an atheist, and if it might be said in one sense that he was no more a Protestant than he was either of these two, yet he was emphatically the child of Protestantism. It is hardly too much to say that one bred in Catholic tradition and observance, accustomed to think of the



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whole life of men as only a manifestation of the unbroken life of the Church, and of all the several communities of men as members of that great organisation which binds one order to another, and each generation to those that have gone before and those that come after, would never have dreamed that monstrous dream of a state of nature as a state of perfection. He would never have held up to ridicule and hate the idea of society as an organism with normal parts and conditions of growth, and never have left the spirit of man standing in bald isolation from history, from his fellows, from a Church, from a mediator, face to face with the great vague phantasm. Nor, on the other hand, is it likely that one born and reared in the religious school of authority with its elaborately disciplined hierarchy, would have conceived that passion for political freedom, that zeal for the rights of peoples against rulers, that energetic enthusiasm for a free life, which constituted the fire and essence of Rousseau's writing. As illustration of this, let us remark how Rousseau's teaching fared when it fell upon a Catholic country like France: so many of its principles were assimilated by the revolutionary schools as were wanted for violent dissolvents, while the rest dropped away, and in this rejected portion was precisely the most vital part of his system. In other words, in no country has the power of collective organisation been so pressed and exalted as in revolutionised France, and in no country has the free life of the individual been made to count for so little. With such force does the ancient system of temporal and spiritual organisation reign in the minds of those who think most confidently that they have cast it wholly out of them. The use of reason may lead a man far, but it is the past that has cut the groove.

In re-embracing the Protestant confession, therefore, Rousseau was not leaving Catholicism, to which he had never really passed over; he was only undergoing in entire gravity of spirit a formality which reconciled him with his native city, and reunited those strands of spiritual connection with it which had never been more than superficially parted. There can be little doubt that the four months which he spent in Geneva in 1754 marked a very critical time in the formation of some of the most memorable of his opinions. He came from Paris full of inarticulate and smouldering resentment against the irreverence and denial of the materialistic circle which used to meet at the house of D'Holbach. What sort of opinions he found prevailing among the most enlightened of the Genevese pastors we know from an abundance of sources. D'Alembert had three or four years later than this to suffer a bitter attack from them, but the account of the creed of some of the ministers which he gave in his article on Geneva in the Encyclopedia, was substantially correct. "Many of them," he wrote, "have ceased to believe in the divinity of Jesus Christ. Hell, one of the principal points



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in our belief, is no longer one with many of the Genevese pastors, who contend that it is an insult to the Divinity to imagine that a being full of goodness and justice can be capable of punishing our faults by an eternity of torment. In a word, they have no other creed than pure Socinianism, rejecting everything that they call mysteries, and supposing the first principle of a true religion to be that it shall propose nothing for belief which clashes with reason. Religion here is almost reduced to the adoration of one single God, at least among nearly all who do not belong to the common people; and a certain respect for Jesus Christ and the Scriptures is nearly the only thing that distinguishes the Christianity of Geneva from pure Deism." [240] And it would be easy to trace the growth of these rationalising tendencies. Throughout the seventeenth century men sprang up who anticipated some of the rationalistic arguments of the eighteenth, in denying the Trinity, and so forth, [241] but the time was not then ripe. The general conditions grew more favourable. Burnet, who was at Geneva in 1685-6, says that though there were not many among the Genevese of the first form of learning, "yet almost everybody here has a good tincture of a learned education." [242] The pacification of civic troubles in 1738 was followed by a quarter of a century of extreme prosperity and contentment, and it is in such periods that the minds of men previously trained are wont to turn to the great matters of speculation. There was at all times a constant communication, both public and private, going on between Geneva and Holland, as was only natural between the two chief Protestant centres of the Continent. The controversy of the seventeenth century between the two churches was as keenly followed in Geneva as at Leyden, and there is more than one Genevese writer who deserves a place in the history of the transition in the beginning of the eighteenth century from theology proper to that metaphysical theology, which was the first marked dissolvent of dogma within the Protestant bodies. To this general movement of the epoch, of course, Descartes supplied the first impulse. The leader of the movement in Geneva, that is of an attempt to pacify the Christian churches on the basis of some such Deism as was shortly to find its passionate expression in the Savoyard Vicar's Confession of Faith, was John Alphonse Turretini (1661-1737). He belonged to a family of Italian refugees from Lucca, and his grandfather had been sent on a mission to Holland for aid in defence of Geneva against Catholic Savoy. He went on his travels in 1692; he visited Holland, where he saw Bayle, and England, where he saw Newton, and France, where he saw Bossuet. Chouet initiated him into the mysteries of Descartes. All this bore fruit when he returned home, and his eloquent exposition of rationalistic ideas aroused the usual cry of heresy from the people who justly insist that Deism is not Christianity. There was much stir for many years, but he succeeded in holding his own and in finding many considerable followers. [243] For example, some three years or so after his death, a work appeared in Geneva under the title of *La Religion Essentielle a l'Homme*, showing that faith in the existence of a God suffices, and treating with contempt the belief in the inspiration of the Gospels. [244]



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Thus we see what vein of thought was running through the graver and more active minds of Geneva about the time of Rousseau's visit. Whether it be true or not that the accepted belief of many of the preachers was a pure Deism, it is certain that the theory was fully launched among them, and that those who could not accept it were still pressed to refute it, and in refuting, to discuss. Rousseau's friendships were according to his own account almost entirely among the ministers of religion and the professors of the academy, precisely the sort of persons who would be most sure to familiarise him, in the course of frequent conversations, with the current religious ideas and the arguments by which they were opposed or upheld. We may picture the effect on his mind of the difference in tone and temper in these grave, candid, and careful men, and the tone of his Parisian friends in discussing the same high themes; how this difference would strengthen his repugnance, and corroborate his own inborn spirit of veneration; how he would here feel himself in his own world. For as wise men have noticed, it is not so much difference of opinion that stirs resentment in us, at least in great subjects where the difference is not trivial but profound, as difference in gravity of humour and manner of moral approach. He returned to Paris (Oct. 1754) warm with the resolution to give up his concerns there, and in the spring go back once and for all to the city of liberty and virtue, where men revered wisdom and reason instead of wasting life in the frivolities of literary dialectic.[245]

The project, however, grew cool. The dedication of his Discourse on Inequality to the Republic was received with indifference by some and indignation by others.[246] Nobody thought it a compliment, and some thought it an impertinence. This was one reason which turned his purpose aside. Another was the fact that the illustrious Voltaire now also signed himself Swiss, and boasted that if he shook his wig the powder flew over the whole of the tiny Republic. Rousseau felt certain that Voltaire would make a revolution in Geneva, and that he should find in his native country the tone, the air, the manners which were driving him from Paris. From that moment he counted Geneva lost. Perhaps he ought to make head against the disturber, but what could he do alone, timid and bad talker as he was, against a man arrogant, rich, supported by the credit of the great, of brilliant eloquence, and already the very idol of women and young men? [247] Perhaps it would not be uncharitable to suspect that this was a reason after the event, for no man was ever so fond as Rousseau, or so clever a master in the art, of covering an accident in a fine envelope of principle, and, as we shall see, he was at this time writing to Voltaire in strains of effusive panegyric. In this case he almost tells us that the one real reason why he did not return to Geneva was that he found a shelter from Paris close at hand. Even before then he had begun to conceive characteristic doubts whether his fellow-citizens at Geneva would not be nearly as hostile to his love of living solitarily and after his own fashion as the good people of Paris.



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Rousseau has told us a pretty story, how one day he and Madame d'Epinay wandering about the park came upon a dilapidated lodge surrounded by fruit gardens, in the skirts of the forest of Montmorency; how he exclaimed in delight at its solitary charm that here was the very place of refuge made for him; and how on a second visit he found that his good friend had in the interval had the old lodge pulled down, and replaced by a pretty cottage exactly arranged for his own household. "My poor bear," she said, "here is your place of refuge; it was you who chose it, 'tis friendship offers it; I hope it will drive away your cruel notion of going from me." [248] Though moved to tears by such kindness, Rousseau did not decide on the spot, but continued to waver for some time longer between this retreat and return to Geneva.

In the interval Madame d'Epinay had experience of the character she was dealing with. She wrote to Rousseau pressing him to live at the cottage in the forest, and begging him to allow her to assist him in assuring the moderate annual provision which he had once accidentally declared to mark the limit of his wants. [249] He wrote to her bitterly in reply, that her proposition struck ice into his soul, and that she could have but sorry appreciation of her own interests in thus seeking to turn a friend into a valet. He did not refuse to listen to what she proposed, if only she would remember that neither he nor his sentiments were for sale. [250] Madame d'Epinay wrote to him patiently enough in return, and then Rousseau hastened to explain that his vocabulary needed special appreciation, and that he meant by the word valet "the degradation into which the repudiation of his principles would throw his soul. The independence I seek is not immunity from work; I am firm for winning my own bread, I take pleasure in it; but I mean not to subject myself to any other duty, if I can help it. I will never pledge any portion of my liberty, either for my own subsistence or that of any one else. I intend to work, but at my own will and pleasure, and even to do nothing, if it happens to suit me, without any one finding fault except my stomach." [251] We may call this unamiable, if we please, but in a frivolous world amiability can hardly go with firm resolve to live an independent life after your own fashion. The many distasteful sides of Rousseau's character ought not to hinder us from admiring his steadfastness in refusing to sacrifice his existence to the first person who spoke him civilly. We may wish there had been more of rugged simplicity in his way of dealing with temptations to sell his birthright for a mess of pottage; less of mere irritability. But then this irritability is one side of soft temperament. The soft temperament is easily agitated, and this unpleasant disturbance does not stir up true anger nor lasting indignation, but only sends quick currents of eager irritation along the sufferer's nerves. Rousseau, quivering from head to foot with self-consciousness, is sufficiently unlike our plain Johnson, the strong-armoured; yet persistent withstanding of the patron is as worthy of our honour in one instance as in the other. Indeed, resistance to humiliating pressure is harder for such a temper as Rousseau's, in which deliberate endeavour is needed, than it is for the naturally stoical spirit which asserts itself spontaneously and rises without effort.



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When our born solitary, wearied of Paris and half afraid of the too friendly importunity of Geneva, at length determined to accept Madame d'Epinaÿ's offer of the Hermitage on conditions which left him an entire sentiment of independence of movement and freedom from all sense of pecuniary obligation, he was immediately exposed to a very copious torrent of pleasantry and remonstrance from the highly social circle who met round D'Holbach's dinner-table. They deemed it sheer midsummer madness, or even a sign of secret depravity, to quit their cheerful world for the dismal solitude of woods and fields. "Only the bad man is alone," wrote Diderot in words which Rousseau kept resentfully in his memory as long as he lived. The men and women of the eighteenth century had no comprehension of solitude, the strength which it may impart to the vigorous, the poetic graces which it may shed about the life of those who are less than vigorous; and what they did not comprehend, they dreaded and abhorred, and thought monstrous in the one man who did comprehend it. They were all of the mind of Socrates when he said to Phaedrus, "Knowledge is what I love, and the men who dwell in the town are my teachers, not trees and landscape." [252] Sarcasms fell on him like hail, and the prophecies usual in cases where a stray soul does not share the common tastes of the herd. He would never be able to live without the incense and the amusements of the town; he would be back in a fortnight; he would throw up the whole enterprise within three months. [253] Amid a shower of such words, springing from men's perverse blindness to the binding propriety of keeping all propositions as to what is the best way of living in respect of place, hours, companionship, strictly relative to each individual case, Rousseau stubbornly shook the dust of the city from off his feet, and sought new life away from the stridulous hum of men. Perhaps we are better pleased to think of the unwearied Diderot spending laborious days in factories and quarries and workshops and forges, while friendly toilers patiently explained to him the structure of stocking looms and velvet looms, the processes of metal-casting and wire-drawing and slate-cutting, and all the other countless arts and ingenuities of fabrication, which he afterwards reproduced to a wondering age in his spacious and magnificent repertory of human thought, knowledge, and practical achievement. And it is yet more elevating to us to think of the true stoic, the great high-souled Turgot, setting forth a little later to discharge beneficent duty in the hard field of his distant Limousin commissionership, enduring many things and toiling late and early for long years, that the burden of others might be lighter, and the welfare of the land more assured. But there are many paths for many men, and if only magnanimous self-denial has the power of inspiration, and can move us with the deep thrill of the heroic, yet every truthful protest, even of excessive personality, against the gregarious trifling of life in the social groove, has a side which it is not ill for us to consider, and perhaps for some men and women in every generation to seek to imitate.



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FOOTNOTES:

[201] *Rep. a M. Bordes*, 163.

[202] *Pictet de Sergy.*, i. 18.

[203] *Conf.*, iv. 248.

[204] *Ib.* ix. 279. Also *Economie Politique*.

[205] Madame de la Popelinier, whose adventures and the misadventures of her husband are only too well known to the reader of Marmontel's *Memoirs*.

[206] The passages relating to income during his first residence in Paris (1744-1756) are at pp. 119, 145, 153, 165, 200, 227, in Books vii.-ix. of the *Confessions*. Rousseau told Bernardin de St. Pierre (*Oeuv.*, xii. 74) that Emile was sold for 7000 livres. In the *Confessions* (xi. 126), he says 6000 livres, and one or two hundred copies. It may be worth while to add that Diderot and D'Alembert received 1200 livres a year apiece for editing the *Encyclopaedia*. Sterne received L650 for two volumes of *Tristram Shandy* in 1780. Walpole's *Letters*, in. 298.

[207] *Conf.*, viii. 154-157.

[208] *Ib.* viii. 160.

[209] *Conf.*, viii. 160, 161.

[210] *Ib.* viii. 159.

[211] *Reveries*, iii. 168.

[212] *Reveries*, iii. 166.

[213] See the *Epitre a Mdme. la Marquise du Chatelet, sur la Calomnie*.

[214] *La Femme au 18ieme siecle*, par MM. de Goncourt, p. 40.

[215] Madame d'Epinay's *Mem.*, i. 295.

[216] Quoted in Goncourt's *Femme au 18ieme siecle*, p. 378.

[217] *Ib.*, p. 337.

[218] Mdlle. L'Espinasse's *Letters*, ii. 89.



[219] Madame d'Épinay's *Mem.*, ii. 47, 48.

[220] *Ib.*, ii. 55.

[221] *Mem.*, Bk. iv. 327.

[222] *Corr. Lit.*, iii. 58.

[223] *Ib.*, 54.

[224] Madame d'Épinay's *Mem.*, i. 378-381. Saint Lambert formulated his atheism afterwards in the *Catechisme Universel*.

[225] Madame d'Épinay's *Mem.*, i. 443.

[226] *Corr.*, i. 317. Sept. 14, 1756.

[227] Letter to Madame de Créqui, 1752. *Corr.*, i. 171.

[228] *Conf.*, vii. 104.

[229] The *Devin du Village* was played at Fontainebleau on October 18, 1752, and at the Opera in Paris in March 1753. Madame de Pompadour took a part in it in a private performance. See Rousseau's note to her, *Corr.*, i. 178.

[230] *Conf.*, viii. 190.

[231] *Conf.*, viii. 183.

[232] *Conf.*, viii. 202; and Musset-Pathay, ii. 439. When in Strasburg, in 1765, he could not bring himself to be present at its representation. *Oeuv. et Corr. Ined.*, p. 434.

[233] Madame de Staël insisted that her father said this, and Necker insisted that it was his daughter's.

[234] *Corr.*, i. 176. Feb. 13, 1753.



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[235] *Conf.*, viii. 208-210.

[236] She died on July 30, 1762, aged “about sixty-three years.” Arthur Young, visiting Chamberi in 1789, with some trouble procured the certificate of her death, which may be found in his *Travels*, i. 272. See a letter of M. de Conzie to Rousseau, in M. Streckeisen-Moultou’s collection, ii. 445.

[237] *Conf.*, xii. 233.

[238] *Conf.*, viii. 210.

[239] Gaberel’s *Rousseau et les Genevois*, p. 62. *Conf.*, viii. 212.

[240] The venerable Company of Pastors and Professors of the Church and Academy of Geneva appointed a committee, as in duty bound, to examine these allegations, and the committee, equally in duty bound, reported (Feb. 10, 1758) with mild indignation, that they were unfounded, and that the flock was untainted by unseasonable use of its mind. See on this Rousseau’s *Lettres écrites de la Montagne*, ii. 231.

[241] See Picot’s *Hist. de Geneve*, ii. 415.

[242] *Letters containing an account of Switzerland, Italy, etc., in 1685-86*. By G. Burnet, p. 9.

[243] J.A. Turretini’s complete works were published as late as 1776, including among much besides that no longer interests men, an *Oratio de Scientiarum Vanitate et Proestantia* (vol. iii. 437), not at all in the vein of Rousseau’s Discourse, and a treatise in four parts, *De Legibus Naturalibus*, in which, among other matters, he refutes Hobbes and assails the doctrine of Utility (i. 173, etc.), by limiting its definition to [Greek: to pros heauton] in its narrowest sense. He appears to have been a student of Spinoza (i. 326). Francis Turretini, his father, took part in the discussion as to the nature of the treaty or contract between God and man, in a piece entitled *Foedus Naturae a primo homine ruptum, ejusque Proevagationem posteris imputatam* (1675).

[244] Gaberel’s *Eglise de Geneve*, iii. 188.

[245] *Corr.*, i. 223 (to Vernes, April 5, 1755).

[246] *Conf.*, viii. 215, 216. *Corr.*, i. 218 (to Perdriau, Nov. 28, 1754).

[247] *Conf.*, viii. 218.

[248] *Conf.*, viii. 217. It is worth noticing as bearing on the accuracy of the Confessions, that Madame d’Epinay herself (*Mem.*, ii. 115) says that when she began to prepare the Hermitage for Rousseau he had never been there, and that she was careful to lead him



to believe that the expense had not been incurred for him. Moreover her letter to him describing it could only have been written to one who had not seen it, and though her Memoirs are full of sheer imagination and romance, the documents in them are substantially authentic, and this letter is shown to be so by Rousseau's reply to it.

[249] *Mem.*, ii. 116.

[250] *Corr.* (1755), i. 242.

[251] *Corr.*, i. 245.

[252] *Phaedrus*, 230.



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[253] *Conf.*, viii. 221, *etc.*

CHAPTER VII.

THE HERMITAGE.

It would have been a strange anachronism if the decade of the Encyclopaedia and the Seven Years' War had reproduced one of those scenes which are as still resting-places amid the ceaseless forward tramp of humanity, where some holy man turned away from the world, and with adorable seriousness sought communion with the divine in mortification of flesh and solitude of spirit. Those were the retreats of firm hope and beatified faith. The hope and faith of the eighteenth century were centred in action, not in contemplation, and the few solitaries of that epoch, as well as of another nearer to our own, fled away from the impotence of their own will, rather than into the haven of satisfied conviction and clear-eyed acceptance. Only one of them—Wordsworth, the poetic hermit of our lakes—impresses us in any degree like one of the great individualities of the ages when men not only craved for the unseen, but felt the closeness of its presence over their heads and about their feet. The modern anchorite goes forth in the spirit of the preacher who declared all the things that are under the sun to be vanity, not in the transport of the saint who knew all the things that are under the sun to be no more than the shadow of a dream in the light of a celestial brightness to come.

Rousseau's mood, deeply tinged as it was by bitterness against society and circumstance, still contained a strong positive element in his native exultation in all natural objects and processes, which did not leave him vacantly brooding over the evil of the world he had quitted. The sensuousness that penetrated him kept his sympathy with life extraordinarily buoyant, and all the eager projects for the disclosure of a scheme of wisdom became for a time the more vividly desired, as the general tide of desire flowed more fully within him. To be surrounded with the simplicity of rural life was with him not only a stimulus, but an essential condition to free intellectual energy. Many a time, he says, when making excursions into the country with great people, "I was so tired of fine rooms, fountains, artificial groves and flower beds, and the still more tiresome people who displayed all these; I was so worn out with pamphlets, card-playing, music, silly jokes, stupid airs, great suppers, that as I spied a poor hawthorn copse, a hedge, a farmstead, a meadow, as in passing through a hamlet I snuffed the odour of a good chervil omelette, as I heard from a distance the rude refrain of the shepherd's songs, I used to wish at the devil the whole tale of rouge and furbelows." [254] He was no anchorite proper, one weary of the world and waiting for the end, but a man with a strong dislike for one kind of life and a keen liking for another kind. He thought he was now about to reproduce the old days of the Charmettes, true to his inveterate error that one may efface years



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and accurately replace a past. He forgot that instead of the once vivacious and tender benefactress who was now waiting for slow death in her hovel, his house-mates would be a poor dull drudge and her vile mother. He forgot, too, that since those days the various processes of intellectual life had expanded within him, and produced a busy fermentation which makes a man's surroundings very critical. Finally, he forgot that in proportion as a man suffers the smooth course of his thought to depend on anything external, whether on the greenness of the field or the gaiety of the street or the constancy of friends, so comes he nearer to chance of making shipwreck. Hence his tragedy, though the very root of the tragedy lay deeper,—in temperament.

I.

Rousseau's impatience drove him into the country almost before the walls of his little house were dry (April 9, 1756). "Although it was cold, and snow still lay upon the ground, the earth began to show signs of life; violets and primroses were to be seen; the buds on the trees were beginning to shoot; and the very night of my arrival was marked by the first song of the nightingale. I heard it close to my window in a wood that touched the house. After a light sleep I awoke, forgetting that I was transplanted; I thought myself still in the Rue de Grenelle, when in an instant the warbling of the birds made me thrill with delight. My very first care was to surrender myself to the impression of the rustic objects about me. Instead of beginning by arranging things inside my quarters, I first set about planning my walks, and there was not a path nor a copse nor a grove round my cottage which I had not found out before the end of the next day. The place, which was lonely rather than wild, transported me in fancy to the end of the world, and no one could ever have dreamed that we were only four leagues from Paris." [255]

This rural delirium, as he justly calls it, lasted for some days, at the end of which he began seriously to apply himself to work. But work was too soon broken off by a mood of vehement exaltation, produced by the stimulus given to all his senses by the new world of delight in which he found himself. This exaltation was in a different direction from that which had seized him half a dozen years before, when he had discarded the usage and costume of politer society, and had begun to conceive an angry contempt for the manners, prejudices, and maxims of his time. Restoration to a more purely sensuous atmosphere softened this austerity. No longer having the vices of a great city before his eyes, he no longer cherished the wrath which they had inspired in him. "When I did not see men, I ceased to despise them; and when I had not the bad before my eyes, I ceased to hate them. My heart, little made as it is for hate, now did no more than deplore their wretchedness, and made no distinction between their wretchedness and



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their badness. This state, so much more mild, if much less sublime, soon dulled the glowing enthusiasm that had long transported me." [256] That is to say, his nature remained for a moment not exalted but fairly balanced. It was only for a moment. And in studying the movements of impulse and reflection in him at this critical time of his life, we are hurried rapidly from phase to phase. Once more we are watching a man who lived without either intellectual or spiritual direction, swayed by a reminiscence, a passing mood, a personality accidentally encountered, by anything except permanent aim and fixed objects, and who would at any time have surrendered the most deliberately pondered scheme of persistent effort to the fascination of a cottage slumbering in a bounteous landscape. Hence there could be no normally composed state for him; the first soothing effect of the rich life of forest and garden on a nature exasperated by the life of the town passed away, and became transformed into an exaltation that swept the stoic into space, leaving sensuousness to sovereign and uncontrolled triumph, until the delight turned to its inevitable ashes and bitterness.

At first all was pure and delicious. In after times when pain made him gloomily measure the length of the night, and when fever prevented him from having a moment of sleep, he used to try to still his suffering by recollection of the days that he had passed in the woods of Montmorency, with his dog, the birds, the deer, for his companions. "As I got up with the sun to watch his rising from my garden, if I saw the day was going to be fine, my first wish was that neither letters nor visits might come to disturb its charm. After having given the morning to divers tasks which I fulfilled with all the more pleasure that I could put them off to another time if I chose, I hastened to eat my dinner, so as to escape from the importunate and make myself a longer afternoon. Before one o'clock, even on days of fiercest heat, I used to start in the blaze of the sun, along with my faithful Achates, hurrying my steps lest some one should lay hold of me before I could get away. But when I had once passed a certain corner, with what beating of the heart, with what radiant joy, did I begin to breathe freely, as I felt myself safe and my own master for the rest of the day! Then with easier pace I went in search of some wild and desert spot in the forest, where there was nothing to show the hand of man, or to speak of servitude and domination; some refuge where I could fancy myself its discoverer, and where no inopportune third person came to interfere between nature and me. She seemed to spread out before my eyes a magnificence that was always new. The gold of the broom and the purple of the heather struck my eyes with a glorious splendour that went to my very heart; the majesty of the trees that covered me with their shadow, the delicacy of the shrubs that surrounded me, the astonishing variety of grasses and flowers that I trod under foot,



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kept my mind in a continual alternation of attention and delight.... My imagination did not leave the earth thus superbly arrayed without inhabitants. I formed a charming society, of which I did not feel myself unworthy; I made a golden age to please my own fancy, and filling up these fair days with all those scenes of my life that had left sweet memories behind, and all that my heart could yet desire or hope in scenes to come, I waxed tender even to shedding tears over the true pleasures of humanity, pleasures so delicious, so pure, and henceforth so far from the reach of men. Ah, if in such moments any ideas of Paris, of the age, of my little aureole as author, came to trouble my dreams, with what disdain did I drive them out, to deliver myself without distraction to the exquisite sentiments of which I was so full. Yet in the midst of it all, the nothingness of my chimeras sometimes broke sadly upon my mind. Even if every dream had suddenly been transformed into reality, it would not have been enough; I should have dreamed, imagined, yearned still." Alas, this deep insatiableness of sense, the dreary vacuity of soul that follows fulness of animal delight, the restless exactingness of undirected imagination, was never recognised by Rousseau distinctly enough to modify either his conduct or his theory of life. He filled up the void for a short space by that sovereign aspiration, which changed the dead bones of old theology into the living figure of a new faith. "From the surface of the earth I raised my ideas to all the existences in nature, to the universal system of things, to the incomprehensible Being who embraces all. Then with mind lost in that immensity, I did not think, I did not reason, I did not philosophise; with a sort of pleasure I felt overwhelmed by the weight of the universe, I surrendered myself to the ravishing confusion of these vast ideas. I loved to lose myself in imagination in immeasurable space; within the limits of real existences my heart was too tightly compressed; in the universe I was stifled; I would fain have launched myself into the infinite. I believe that if I had unveiled all the mysteries of nature, I should have found myself in a less delicious situation than that bewildering ecstasy to which my mind so unreservedly delivered itself, and which sometimes transported me until I cried out, 'O mighty Being! O mighty Being!' without power of any other word or thought." [257]

It is not wholly insignificant that though he could thus expand his soul with ejaculatory delight in something supreme, he could not endure the sight of one of his fellow-creatures. "If my gaiety lasted the whole night, that showed that I had passed the day alone; I was very different after I had seen people, for I was rarely content with others and never with myself. Then in the evening I was sure to be in taciturn or scolding humour." It is not in every condition that effervescent passion for ideal forms of the religious imagination assists sympathy



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with the real beings who surround us. And to this let us add that there are natures in which all deep emotion is so entirely associated with the ideal, that real and particular manifestations of it are repugnant to them as something alien; and this without the least insincerity, though with a vicious and disheartening inconsistency. Rousseau belonged to this class, and loved man most when he saw men least. Bad as this was, it does not justify us in denouncing his love of man as artificial; it was one side of an ideal exaltation, which stirred the depths of his spirit with a force as genuine as that which is kindled in natures of another type by sympathy with the real and concrete, with the daily walk and conversation and actual doings and sufferings of the men and women whom we know. The fermentation which followed his arrival at the Hermitage, in its first form produced a number of literary schemes. The idea of the Political Institutions, first conceived at Venice, pressed upon his meditations. He had been earnestly requested to compose a treatise on education. Besides this, his thoughts wandered confusedly round the notion of a treatise to be called Sensitive Morality, or the Materialism of the Sage, the object of which was to examine the influence of external agencies, such as light, darkness, sound, seasons, food, noise, silence, motion, rest, on our corporeal machine, and thus indirectly upon the soul also. By knowing these and acquiring the art of modifying them according to our individual needs, we should become surer of ourselves and fix a deeper constancy in our lives. An external system of treatment would thus be established, which would place and keep the soul in the condition most favourable to virtue.[258] Though the treatise was never completed, and the sketch never saw the light, we perceive at least that Rousseau would have made the means of access to character wide enough, and the material influences that impress it and produce its caprices, multitudinous enough, instead of limiting them with the medical specialist to one or two organs, and one or two of the conditions that affect them. Nor, on the other hand, do the words in which he sketches his project in the least justify the attribution to him of the doctrine of the absolute power of the physical constitution over the moral habits, whether that doctrine would be a credit or a discredit to his philosophical thoroughness of perception. No one denies the influence of external conditions on the moral habits, and Rousseau says no more than that he proposed to consider the extent and the modifiableness of this influence. It was not then deemed essential for a spiritualist thinker to ignore physical organisation.



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A third undertaking of a more substantial sort was to arrange and edit the papers and printed works of the Abbe de Saint Pierre (1658-1743), confided to him through the agency of Saint Lambert, and partly also of Madame Dupin, the warm friend of that singular and good man.[259] This task involved reading, considering, and picking extracts from twenty-three diffuse and chaotic volumes, full of prolixity and repetition. Rousseau, dreamer as he was, yet had quite keenness of perception enough to discern the weakness of a dreamer of another sort; and he soon found out that the Abbe de Saint Pierre's views were impracticable, in consequence of the author's fixed idea that men are guided rather by their lights than by their passions. In fact, Saint Pierre was penetrated with the eighteenth-century faith to a peculiar degree. As with Condorcet afterwards, he was led by his admiration for the extent of modern knowledge to adopt the principle that perfected reason is capable of being made the base of all institutions, and would speedily terminate all the great abuses of the world. "He went wrong," says Rousseau, "not merely in having no other passion but that of reason, but by insisting on making all men like himself, instead of taking them as they are and as they will continue to be." The critic's own error in later days was not very different from this, save that it applied to the medium in which men live, rather than to themselves, by refusing to take complex societies as they are, even as starting-points for higher attempts at organisation. Rousseau had occasionally seen the old man, and he preserved the greatest veneration for his memory, speaking of him as the honour of his age and race, with a fulness of enthusiasm very unusual towards men, though common enough towards inanimate nature. The sincerity of this respect, however, could not make the twenty-three volumes which the good man had written, either fewer in number or lighter in contents, and after dealing as well as he could with two important parts of Saint Pierre's works, he threw up the task.[260] It must not be supposed that Rousseau would allow that fatigue or tedium had anything to do with a resolve which really needed no better justification. As we have seen before, he had amazing skill in finding a certain ingeniously contrived largeness for his motives. Saint Pierre's writings were full of observations on the government of France, some of them remarkably bold in their criticism, but he had not been punished for them because the ministers always looked upon him as a kind of preacher rather than a genuine politician, and he was allowed to say what he pleased, because it was observed that no one listened to what he said. Besides, he was a Frenchman, and Rousseau was not, and hence the latter, in publishing Saint Pierre's strictures on French affairs, was exposing himself to a sharp question why he meddled with a country that did not concern him. "It surprised me," says Rousseau, "that the reflection had not occurred to me earlier," but this coincidence of the discovery that the work was imprudent, with the discovery that he was weary of it, will surprise nobody versed in study of a man who lives in his sensations, and yet has vanity enough to dislike to admit it.



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The short remarks which Rousseau appended to his abridgment of Saint Pierre's essays on Perpetual Peace, and on a Polysynodia, or Plurality of Councils, are extremely shrewd and pointed, and would suffice to show us, if there were nothing else to do so, the right kind of answer to make to the more harmful dreams of the Social Contract. Saint Pierre's fault is said, with entire truth, to be a failure to make his views relative to men, to times, to circumstances; and there is something that startles us when we think whose words we are reading, in the declaration that, "whether an existing government be still that of old times, or whether it have insensibly undergone a change of nature, it is equally imprudent to touch it: if it is the same, it must be respected, and if it has degenerated, that is due to the force of time and circumstance, and human sagacity is powerless." Rousseau points to France, asking his readers to judge the peril of once moving by an election the enormous masses comprising the French monarchy; and in another place, after a wise general remark on the futility of political machinery without men of a certain character, he illustrates it by this scornful question: When you see all Paris in a ferment about the rank of a dancer or a wit, and the affairs of the academy or the opera making everybody forget the interest of the ruler and the glory of the nation, what can you hope from bringing political affairs close to such a people, and removing them from the court to the town?[261] Indeed, there is perhaps not one of these pages which Burke might not well have owned.[262]

A violent and prolonged crisis followed this not entirely unsuccessful effort after sober and laborious meditation. Rousseau was now to find that if society has its perils, so too has solitude, and that if there is evil in frivolous complaisance for the puppet-work of a world that is only a little serious, so there is evil in a passionate tenderness for phantoms of an imaginary world that is not serious at all. To the pure or stoical soul the solitude of the forest is strength, but then the imagination must know the yoke. Rousseau's imagination, in no way of the strongest either as receptive or inventive, was the free accomplice of his sensations. The undisciplined force of animal sensibility gradually rose within him, like a slowly welling flood. The spectacle does not either brighten or fortify the student's mind, yet if there are such states, it is right that those who care to speak of human nature should have an opportunity of knowing its less glorious parts. They may be presumed to exist, though in less violent degree, in many people whom we meet in the street and at the table, and there can be nothing but danger in allowing ourselves to be so narrowed by our own virtuousness, viciousness being conventionally banished to the remoter region of the third person, as to forget the presence of "the brute brain within the man's." In Rousseau's case, at any rate, it was no wicked



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broth nor magic potion that “confused the chemic labour of the blood,” but the too potent wine of the joyful beauty of nature herself, working misery in a mental structure that no educating care nor envelope of circumstance had ever hardened against her intoxication. Most of us are protected against this subtle debauch of sensuous egoism by a cool organisation, while even those who are born with senses and appetites of great strength and keenness, are guarded by accumulated discipline of all kinds from without, especially by the necessity for active industry which brings the most exaggerated native sensibility into balance. It is the constant and rigorous social parade which keeps the eager regiment of the senses from making furious rout. Rousseau had just repudiated all social obligation, and he had never gone through external discipline. He was at an age when passion that has never been broken in has the beak of the bald vulture, tearing and gnawing a man; but its first approach is in fair shapes.

Wandering and dreaming “in the sweetest season of the year, in the month of June, under the fresh groves, with the song of the nightingale and the soft murmuring of the brooks in his ear,” he began to wonder restlessly why he had never tasted in their plenitude the vivid sentiments which he was conscious of possessing in reserve, or any of that intoxicating delight which he felt potentially existent in his soul. Why had he been created with faculties so exquisite, to be left thus unused and unfruitful? The feeling of his own quality, with this of a certain injustice and waste superadded, brought warm tears which he loved to let flow. Visions of the past, from girl playmates of his youth down to the Venetian courtesan, thronged in fluttering tumult into his brain. He saw himself surrounded by a seraglio of houris whom he had known, until his blood was all aflame and his head in a whirl. His imagination was kindled into deadly activity. “The impossibility of reaching to the real beings plunged me into the land of chimera; and seeing nothing actual that rose to the height of my delirium, I nourished it in an ideal world, which my creative imagination had soon peopled with beings after my heart’s desire. In my continual ecstasies, I made myself drunk with torrents of the most delicious sentiments that ever entered the heart of man. Forgetting absolutely the whole human race, I invented for myself societies of perfect creatures, as heavenly for their virtues as their beauties; sure, tender, faithful friends, such as I never found in our nether world. I had such a passion for haunting this empyrean with all its charming objects, that I passed hours and days in it without counting them as they went by; and losing recollection of everything else, I had hardly swallowed a morsel in hot haste, before I began to burn to run off in search of my beloved groves. If, when I was ready to start for the enchanted world, I saw unhappy mortals coming to detain me on the dull earth, I could neither moderate nor hide my spleen, and, no longer master over myself, I used to give them greeting so rough that it might well be called brutal.”[263]



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This terrific malady was something of a very different kind from the tranquil sensuousness of the days in Savoy, when the blood was young, and life was not complicated with memories, and the sweet freshness of nature made existence enough. Then his supreme expansion had been attended with a kind of divine repose, and had found edifying voice in devout acknowledgment in the exhilaration of the morning air of the goodness and bounty of a beneficent master. In this later and more pitiable time the beneficent master hid himself, and creation was only not a blank because it was veiled by troops of sirens not in the flesh. Nature without the association of some living human object, like Madame de Warens, was a poison to Rousseau, until the advancing years which slowly brought decay of sensual force thus brought the antidote. At our present point we see one stricken with an ugly disease. It was almost mercy when he was laid up with a sharp attack of the more painful, but far less absorbing and frightful disorder, to which Rousseau was subject all his life long. It gave pause to what he misnames his angelic loves. "Besides that one can hardly think of love when suffering anguish, my imagination, which is animated by the country and under the trees, languishes and dies in a room and under roof-beams." This interval he employed with some magnanimity, in vindicating the ways and economy of Providence, in the letter to Voltaire which we shall presently examine. The moment he could get out of doors again into the forest, the transport returned, but this time accompanied with an active effort in the creative faculties of his mind to bring the natural relief to these overwrought paroxysms of sensual imagination. He soothed his emotions by associating them with the life of personages whom he invented, and by introducing into them that play and movement and changing relation which prevented them from bringing his days to an end in malodorous fever. The egoism of persistent invention and composition was at least better than the egoism of mere unreflecting ecstasy in the charm of natural objects, and took off something from the violent excess of sensuous force. His thought became absorbed in two female figures, one dark and the other fair, one sage and the other yielding, one gentle and the other quick, analogous in character but different, not handsome but animated by cheerfulness and feeling. To one of these he gave a lover, to whom the other was a tender friend. He planted them all, after much deliberation and some changes, on the shores of his beloved lake at Vevay, the spot where his benefactress was born, and which he always thought the richest and loveliest in all Europe.



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This vicarious or reflected egoism, accompanied as it was by a certain amount of productive energy, seemed to mark a return to a sort of moral convalescence. He walked about the groves with pencil and tablets, assigning this or that thought or expression to one or other of the three companions of his fancy. When the bad weather set in, and he was confined to the house (the winter of 1756-7), he tried to resume his ordinary indoor labour, the copying of music and the compilation of his Musical Dictionary. To his amazement he found that this was no longer possible. The fever of that literary composition of which he had always such dread had strong possession of him. He could see nothing on any side but the three figures and the objects about them made beautiful by his imagination. Though he tried hard to dismiss them, his resistance was vain, and he set himself to bringing some order into his thoughts "so as to produce a kind of romance." We have a glimpse of his mental state in the odd detail, that he could not bear to write his romance on anything but the very finest paper with gilt edges; that the powder with which he dried the ink was of azure and sparkling silver; and that he tied up the quires with delicate blue riband.[264] The distance from all this to the state of nature is obviously very great indeed. It must not be supposed that he forgot his older part as Cato, Brutus, and the other Plutarchians. "My great embarrassment," he says honestly, "was that I should belie myself so clearly and thoroughly. After the severe principles I had just been laying down with so much bustle, after the austere maxims I had preached so energetically, after so many biting invectives against the effeminate books that breathed love and soft delights, could anything be imagined more shocking, more unlooked-for, than to see me inscribe myself with my own hand among the very authors on whose books I had heaped this harsh censure? I felt this inconsequence in all its force, I taxed myself with it, I blushed over it, and was overcome with mortification; but nothing could restore me to reason." [265] He adds that perhaps on the whole the composition of the New Heloisa was turning his madness to the best account. That may be true, but does not all this make the bitter denunciation, in the Letter to D'Alembert, of love and of all who make its representation a considerable element in literature or the drama, at the very time when he was composing one of the most dangerously attractive romances of his century, a rather indecent piece of invective? We may forgive inconsistency when it is only between two of a man's theories, or two self-concerning parts of his conduct, but hardly when it takes the form of reviling in others what the reviler indulgently permits to himself.



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We are more edified by the energy with which Rousseau refused connivance with the public outrages on morality perpetrated by a patron. M. d'Epina y went to pay him a visit at the Hermitage, taking with him two ladies with whom his relations were less than equivocal, and for whom among other things he had given Rousseau music to copy. "They were curious to see the eccentric man," as M. d'Epina y afterwards told his scandalised wife, for it was in the manners of the day on no account to parade even the most notorious of these unblest connections. "He was walking in front of the door; he saw me first; he advanced cap in hand; he saw the ladies; he saluted us, put on his cap, turned his back, and stalked off as fast as he could. Can anything be more mad?"[266] In the miserable and intricate tangle of falsity, weakness, sensuality, and quarrel, which make up this chapter in Rousseau's life, we are glad of even one trait of masculine robustness. We should perhaps be still more glad if the unwedded Theresa were not visible in the background of this scene of high morals.

II.

The New Heloisa was not to be completed without a further extension of morbid experience of a still more burning kind than the sufferings of compressed passion. The feverish torment of mere visions of the air swarming impalpable in all his veins, was replaced when the earth again began to live and the sap to stir in plants, by the more concentrated fire of a consuming passion for one who was no dryad nor figure of a dream. In the spring of 1757 he received a visit from Madame d'Houdetot, the sister-in-law of Madame d'Epina y.[267] Her husband had gone to the war (we are in the year of Rossbach), and so had her lover, Saint Lambert, whose passion had been so fatal to Voltaire's Marquise du Chatelet eight years before. She rode over in man's guise to the Hermitage from a house not very far off, where she was to pass her retreat during the absence of her two natural protectors. Rousseau had seen her before on various occasions; she had been to the Hermitage the previous year, and had partaken of its host's homely fare.[268] But the time was not ripe; the force of a temptation is not from without but within. Much, too, depended with our hermit on the temperature; one who would have been a very ordinary mortal to him in cold and rain, might grow to Aphrodite herself in days when the sun shone hot and the air was aromatic. His fancy was suddenly struck with the romantic guise of the female cavalier, and this was the first onset of a veritable intoxication, which many men have felt, but which no man before or since ever invited the world to hear the story of. He may truly say that after the first interview with her in this disastrous spring, he was as one who had thirstily drained a poisoned bowl. A sort of palsy struck him. He lay weeping in his bed at night, and on days when he did not see the sorceress he wept in the woods.[269] He talked to himself for hours, and was of a black humour to his house-mates. When approaching the object of this deadly fascination, his whole organisation seemed to be dissolved. He walked in a dream that filled him with a sense of sickly torture, commixed with sicklier delight.



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People speak with precisely marked division of mind and body, of will, emotion, understanding; the division is good in logic, but its convenient lines are lost to us as we watch a being with soul all blurred, body all shaken, unstrung, poisoned, by erotic mania, rising in slow clouds of mephitic steam from suddenly heated stagnancies of the blood, and turning the reality of conduct and duty into distant unmeaning shadows. If such a disease were the furious mood of the brute in spring-time, it would be less dreadful, but shame and remorse in the ever-struggling reason of man or woman in the grip of the foul thing, produces an aggravation of frenzy that makes the mental healer tremble. Add to all this lurking elements of hollow rage that his passion was not returned; of stealthy jealousy of the younger man whose place he could not take, and who was his friend besides; of suspicion that he was a little despised for his weakness by the very object of it, who saw that his hairs were sprinkled with gray,—and the whole offers a scene of moral humiliation that half sickens, half appals, and we turn away with dismay as from a vision of the horrid loves of heavy-eyed and scaly shapes that haunted the warm primeval ooze.

Madame d'Houdetot, the unwilling enchantress bearing in an unconscious hand the cup of defilement, was not strikingly singular either in physical or mental attraction. She was now seven-and-twenty. Small-pox, the terrible plague of the country, had pitted her face and given a yellowish tinge to her complexion; her features were clumsy and her brow low; she was short-sighted, and in old age at any rate was afflicted by an excessive squint. This homeliness was redeemed by a gentle and caressing expression, and by a sincerity, a gaiety of heart, and free sprightliness of manner, that no trouble could restrain. Her figure was very slight, and there was in all her movements at once awkwardness and grace. She was natural and simple, and had a fairly good judgment of a modest kind, in spite of the wild sallies in which her spirits sometimes found vent. Capable of chagrin, she was never prevented by it from yielding to any impulse of mirth. "She weeps with the best faith in the world, and breaks out laughing at the same moment; never was anybody so happily born," says her much less amiable sister-in-law. [270] Her husband was indifferent to her. He preserved an attachment to a lady whom he knew before his marriage, whose society he never ceased to frequent, and who finally died in his arms in 1793. Madame d'Houdetot found consolation in the friendship of Saint Lambert. "We both of us," said her husband, "both Madame d'Houdetot and I, had a vocation for fidelity, only there was a mis-arrangement." She occasionally composed verses of more than ordinary point, but she had good sense enough not to write them down, nor to set up on the strength of them for poetess and wit.[271] Her talk in her later years, and she lived down to the year of Leipsic, preserved

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the pointed sententiousness of earlier time. One day, for instance, in the era of the Directory, a conversation was going on as to the various merits and defects of women; she heard much, and then with her accustomed suavity of voice contributed this light summary:—"Without women, the life of man would be without aid at the beginning, without pleasure in the middle, and without solace at the end." [272]

We may be sure that it was not her power of saying things of this sort that kindled Rousseau's flame, but rather the sprightly naturalness, frankness, and kindly softness of a character which in his opinion united every virtue except prudence and strength, the two which Rousseau would be least likely to miss. The bond of union between them was subtle. She found in Rousseau a sympathetic listener while she told the story of her passion for Saint Lambert, and a certain contagious force produced in him a thrill which he never felt with any one else before or after. Thus, as he says, there was equally love on both sides, though it was not reciprocal. "We were both of us intoxicated with passion, she for her lover, I for her; our sighs and sweet tears mingled. Tender confidants, each of the other, our sentiments were of such close kin that it was impossible for them not to mix; and still she never forgot her duty for a moment, while for myself, I protest, I swear, that if sometimes drawn astray by my senses, still"—still he was a paragon of virtue, subject to rather new definition. We can appreciate the author of the *New Heloise*; we can appreciate the author of *Emilius*; but this strained attempt to confound those two very different persons by combining tearful erotics with high ethics, is an exhibition of self-delusion that the most patient analyst of human nature might well find hard to suffer. "The duty of privation exalted my soul. The glory of all the virtues adorned the idol of my heart in my sight; to soil its divine image would have been to annihilate it," and so forth. [273] Moon-lighted landscape gave a background for the sentimentalist's picture, and dim groves, murmuring cascades, and the soft rustle of the night air, made up a scene which became for its chief actor "an immortal memory of innocence and delight." "It was in this grove, seated with her on a grassy bank, under an acacia heavy with flowers, that I found expression for the emotions of my heart in words that were worthy of them. 'Twas the first and single time of my life; but I was sublime, if you can use the word of all the tender and seductive things that the most glowing love can bring into the heart of a man. What intoxicating tears I shed at her knees, what floods she shed in spite of herself! At length in an involuntary transport, she cried out, 'Never was man so tender, never did man love as you do! But your friend Saint Lambert hears us, and my heart cannot love twice.'" [274] Happily, as we learn from another source, a breath of wholesome life from without brought the transcendental to grotesque end. In the climax of tears and protestations, an honest waggoner at the other side of the park wall, urging on a lagging beast launched a round and far-sounding oath out into the silent night. Madame d'Houdetot answered with a lively continuous peal of young laughter, while an angry chill brought back the discomfited lover from an ecstasy that was very full of peril. [275]



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Rousseau wrote in the New Heloisa very sagely that you should grant to the senses nothing when you mean to refuse them anything. He admits that the saying was falsified by his relations with Madame d'Houdetot. Clearly the credit of this happy falsification was due to her rather than to himself. What her feelings were, it is not very easy to see. Honest pity seems to have been the strongest of them. She was idle and unoccupied, and idleness leaves the soul open for much stray generosity of emotion, even towards an importunate lover. She thought him mad, and she wrote to Saint Lambert to say so. "His madness must be very strong," said Saint Lambert, "since she can perceive it." [276]

Character is ceaselessly marching, even when we seem to have sunk into a fixed and stagnant mood. The man is awakened from his dream of passion by inexorable event; he finds the house of the soul not swept and garnished for a new life, but possessed by demons who have entered unseen. In short, such profound disorder of spirit, though in its first stage marked by ravishing delirium, never escapes a bitter sequel. When a man lets his soul be swept away from the narrow track of conduct appointed by his relations with others, still the reality of such relations survives. He may retreat to rural lodges; that will not save him either from his own passion, or from some degree of that kinship with others which instantly creates right and wrong like a wall of brass around him. Let it be observed that the natures of finest stuff suffer most from these forced reactions, and it was just because Rousseau had innate moral sensitiveness, and a man like Diderot was without it, that the first felt his fall so profoundly, while the second was unconscious of having fallen at all.

One day in July Rousseau went to pay his accustomed visit. He found Madame d'Houdetot dejected, and with the flush of recent weeping on her cheeks. A bird of the air had carried the matter. As usual, the matter was carried wrongly, and apparently all that Saint Lambert suspected was that Rousseau's high principles had persuaded Madame d'Houdetot of the viciousness of her relations with her lover. [277] "They have played us an evil turn," cried Madame d'Houdetot; "they have been unjust to me, but that is no matter. Either let us break off at once, or be what you ought to be." [278] This was Rousseau's first taste of the ashes of shame into which the lusciousness of such forbidden fruit, plucked at the expense of others, is ever apt to be transformed. Mortification of the considerable spiritual pride that was yet alive after this lapse, was a strong element in the sum of his emotion, and it was pointed by the reflection which stung him so incessantly, that his mistress was younger than himself. He could never master his own contempt for the gallantry of grizzled locks. [279] His austerer self might at any rate have been consoled by knowing that this scene was the beginning of the end, though the end came



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without any seeking on his part and without violence. To his amazement, one day Saint Lambert and Madame d'Houdetot came to the Hermitage, asking him to give them dinner, and much to the credit of human nature's elasticity, the three passed a delightful afternoon. The wronged lover was friendly, though a little stiff, and he passed occasional slights which Rousseau would surely not have forgiven, if he had not been disarmed by consciousness of guilt. He fell asleep, as we can well imagine that he might do, while Rousseau read aloud his very inadequate justification of Providence against Voltaire.[280]

In time he returned to the army, and Rousseau began to cure himself of his mad passion. His method, however, was not unsuspecting, for it involved the perilous assistance of Madame d'Houdetot. Fortunately her loyalty and good sense forced a more resolute mode upon him. He found, or thought he found her distracted, embarrassed, indifferent. In despair at not being allowed to heal his passionate malady in his own fashion, he did the most singular thing that he could have done under the circumstances. He wrote to Saint Lambert.[281] His letter is a prodigy of plausible duplicity, though Rousseau in some of his mental states had so little sense of the difference between the actual and the imaginary, and was moreover so swiftly borne away on a flood of fine phrases, that it is hard to decide how far this was voluntary, and how far he was his own dupe. Voluntary or not, it is detestable. We pass the false whine about "being abandoned by all that was dear to him," as if he had not deliberately quitted Paris against the remonstrance of every friend he had; about his being "solitary and sad," as if he was not ready at this very time to curse any one who intruded on his solitude, and hindered him of a single half-hour in the desert spots that he adored. Remembering the scenes in moon-lighted groves and elsewhere, we read this:—"Whence comes her coldness to me? Is it possible that you can have suspected me of wronging you with her, and of turning perfidious in consequence of an unseasonably rigorous virtue? A passage in one of your letters shows a glimpse of some such suspicion. No, no, Saint Lambert, the breast of J.J. Rousseau never held the heart of a traitor, and I should despise myself more than you suppose, if I had ever tried to rob you of her heart.... Can you suspect that her friendship for me may hurt her love for you? Surely natures endowed with sensibility are open to all sorts of affections, and no sentiment can spring up in them which does not turn to the advantage of the dominant passion. Where is the lover who does not wax the more tender as he talks to his friend of her whom he loves? And is it not sweeter for you in your banishment that there should be some sympathetic creature to whom your mistress loves to talk of you, and who loves to hear?"



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Let us turn to another side of his correspondence. The way in which the sympathetic creature in the present case loved to hear his friend's mistress talk of him, is interestingly shown in one or two passages from a letter to her; as when he cries, "Ah, how proud would even thy lover himself be of thy constancy, if he only knew how much it has surmounted.... I appeal to your sincerity. You, the witness and the cause of this delirium, these tears, these ravishing ecstasies, these transports which were never made for mortal, say, have I ever tasted your favours in such a way that I deserve to lose them?... Never once did my ardent desires nor my tender supplications dare to solicit supreme happiness, without my feeling stopped by the inner cries of a sorrow-stricken soul.... O Sophie, after moments so sweet, the idea of eternal privation is too frightful for one who groans that he cannot identify himself with thee. What, are thy tender eyes never again to be lowered with a delicious modesty, intoxicating me with pleasure? What, are my burning lips never again to lay my very soul on thy heart along with my kisses? What, may I never more feel that heavenly shudder, that rapid and devouring fire, swifter than lightning?"[282].... We see a sympathetic creature assuredly, and listen to the voice of a nature endowed with sensibility even more than enough, but with decency, loyalty, above all with self-knowledge, far less than enough.

One more touch completes the picture of the fallen desperate man. He takes great trouble to persuade Saint Lambert that though the rigour of his principles constrains him to frown upon such breaches of social law as the relations between Madame d'Houdetot and her lover, yet he is so attached to the sinful pair that he half forgives them. "Do not suppose," he says, with superlative gravity, "that you have seduced me by your reasons; I see in them the goodness of your heart, not your justification. I cannot help blaming your connection: you can hardly approve it yourself; and so long as you both of you continue dear to me, I will never leave you in careless security as to the innocence of your state. Yet love such as yours deserves considerateness.... I feel respect for a union so tender, and cannot bring myself to attempt to lead it to virtue along the path of despair" (p. 401).

Ignorance of the facts of the case hindered Saint Lambert from appreciating the strange irony of a man protesting about leading to virtue along the path of despair a poor woman whom he had done as much as he could to lead to vice along the path of highly stimulated sense. Saint Lambert was as much a sentimentalist as Rousseau was, but he had a certain manliness, acquired by long contact with men, which his correspondent only felt in moods of severe exaltation. Saint Lambert took all the blame on himself. He had desired that his mistress and his friend should love one another; then he thought he saw some coolness in



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his mistress, and he set the change down to his friend, though not on the true grounds. "Do not suppose that I thought you perfidious or a traitor; I knew the austerity of your principles; people had spoken to me of it; and she herself did so with a respect that love found hard to bear." In short, he had suspected Rousseau of nothing worse than being over-virtuous, and trying in the interest of virtue to break off a connection sanctioned by contemporary manners, but not by law or religion. If Madame d'Houdetot had changed, it was not that she had ceased to honour her good friend, but only that her lover might be spared a certain chagrin, from suspecting the excess of scrupulosity and conscience in so austere an adviser.[283]

It is well known how effectively one with a germ of good principle in him is braced by being thought better than he is. With this letter in his hands and its words in his mind, Rousseau strode off for his last interview with Madame d'Houdetot. Had Saint Lambert, he says, been less wise, less generous, less worthy, I should have been a lost man. As it was, he passed four or five hours with her in a delicious calm, infinitely more delightful than the accesses of burning fever which had seized him before. They formed the project of a close companionship of three, including the absent lover; and they counted on the project coming more true than such designs usually do, "since all the feelings that can unite sensitive and upright hearts formed the foundation of it, and we three united talents enough as well as knowledge enough to suffice to ourselves, without need of aid or supplement from others." What happened was this. Madame d'Houdetot for the next three or four months, which were among the most bitter in Rousseau's life, for then the bitterness which became chronic was new and therefore harder to be borne, wrote him the wisest, most affectionate, and most considerate letters that a sincere and sensible woman ever wrote to the most petulant, suspicious, perverse, and unrestrainable of men. For patience and exquisite sweetness of friendship some of these letters are matchless, and we can only conjecture the wearing querulousness of the letters to which they were replies. If through no fault of her own she had been the occasion of the monstrous delirium of which he never shook off the consequences, at least this good soul did all that wise counsel and grave tenderness could do, to bring him out of the black slough of suspicion and despair into which he was plunged.[284] In the beginning of 1758 there was a change. Rousseau's passion for her somehow became known to all the world; it reached the ears of Saint Lambert, and was the cause of a passing disturbance between him and his mistress. Saint Lambert throughout acted like a man who is thoroughly master of himself. At first, we learn, he ceased for a moment to see in Rousseau the virtue which he sought in him, and which he was persuaded that he found in him. "Since



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then, however," wrote Madame d'Houdetot, "he pities you more for your weakness than he reproaches you, and we are both of us far from joining the people who wish to blacken your character; we have and always shall have the courage to speak of you with esteem." [285] They saw one another a few times, and on one occasion the Count and Countess d'Houdetot, Saint Lambert, and Rousseau all sat at table together, happily without breach of the peace. [286] One curious thing about this meeting was that it took place some three weeks after Rousseau and Saint Lambert had interchanged letters on the subject of the quarrel with Diderot, in which each promised the other contemptuous oblivion. [287] Perpetuity of hate is as hard as perpetuity of love for our poor short-spanned characters, and at length the three who were once to have lived together in self-sufficing union, and then in their next mood to have forgotten one another instantly and for ever, held to neither of the extremes, but settled down into an easier middle path of indifferent good-will. The conduct of all three, said the most famous of them, may serve for an example of the way in which sensible people separate, when it no longer suits them to see one another. [288] It is at least certain that in them Rousseau lost two of the most unimpeachably good friends that he ever possessed.

III.

The egoistic character that loves to brood and hates to act, is big with catastrophe. We have now to see how the inevitable law accomplished itself in the case of Rousseau. In many this brooding egoism produces a silent and melancholy insanity; with him it was developed into something of acridly corrosive quality. One of the agents in this disastrous process was the wearing torture of one of the most painful of disorders. This disorder, arising from an internal malformation, harassed him from his infancy to the day of his death. Our fatuous persistency in reducing man to the spiritual, blinds the biographer to the circumstance that the history of a life is the history of a body no less than that of a soul. Many a piece of conduct that divides the world into two factions of moral assailants and moral vindicators, provoking a thousand ingenuities of ethical or psychological analysis, ought really to have been nothing more than an item in a page of a pathologist's case-book. We are not to suspend our judgment on action; right and wrong can depend on no man's malformations. In trying to know the actor, it is otherwise; here it is folly to underestimate the physical antecedents of mental phenomena. In firm and lofty character, pain is mastered; in a character so little endowed with cool tenacious strength as Rousseau's, pain such as he endured was enough to account, not for his unsociality, which flowed from temperament, but for the bitter, irritable, and suspicious form which this unsociality now first assumed. Rousseau was never a saintly nature, but far the reverse, and in reading the tedious tale of his quarrels with Grimm and Madame d'Epinau and Diderot—a tale of labyrinthine nightmares—let us remember that we may even to this point explain what happened,

without recourse to the too facile theory of insanity, unless one defines that misused term so widely as to make many sane people very uncomfortable.



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His own account was this: "In my quality of solitary, I am more sensitive than another; if I am wrong with a friend who lives in the world, he thinks of it for a moment, and then a thousand distractions make him forget it for the rest of the day; but there is nothing to distract me as to his wrong towards me; deprived of my sleep, I busy myself with him all night long; solitary in my walks, I busy myself with him from sunrise until sunset; my heart has not an instant's relief, and the harshness of a friend gives me in one day years of anguish. In my quality of invalid, I have a title to the considerateness that humanity owes to the weakness or irritation of a man in agony. Who is the friend, who is the good man, that ought not to dread to add affliction to an unfortunate wretch tormented with a painful and incurable malady?"[289] We need not accept this as an adequate extenuation of perversities, but it explains them without recourse to the theory of uncontrollable insanity. Insanity came later, the product of intellectual excitation, public persecution, and moral reaction after prolonged tension. Meanwhile he may well be judged by the standards of the sane; knowing his temperament, his previous history, his circumstances, we have no difficulty in accounting for his conduct. Least of all is there any need for laying all the blame upon his friends. There are writers whom enthusiasm for the principles of Jean Jacques has driven into fanatical denigration of every one whom he called his enemy, that is to say, nearly every one whom he ever knew.[290] Diderot said well, "Too many honest people would be wrong, if Jean Jacques were right."

The first downright breach was with Grimm, but there were angry passages during the year 1757, not only with him, but with Diderot and Madame d'Epainay as well. Diderot, like many other men of energetic nature unchastened by worldly wisdom, was too interested in everything that attracted his attention to keep silence over the indiscretion of a friend. He threw as much tenacity and zeal into a trifle, if it had once struck him, as he did into the Encyclopaedia. We have already seen how warmly he rated Jean Jacques for missing the court pension. Then he scolded and laughed at him for turning hermit. With still more seriousness he remonstrated with him for remaining in the country through the winter, thus endangering the life of Theresa's aged mother. This stirred up hot anger in the Hermitage, and two or three bitter letters were interchanged, [291] those of Diderot being pronounced by a person who was no partisan of Rousseau decidedly too harsh.[292] Yet there is copious warmth of friendship in these very letters, if only the man to whom they were written had not hated interference in his affairs as the worst of injuries. "I loved Diderot tenderly, I esteemed him sincerely," says Rousseau, "and I counted with entire confidence upon the same sentiments in him. But worn out by his unwearied obstinacy in everlastingly thwarting



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my tastes, my inclinations, my ways of living, everything that concerned myself only; revolted at seeing a younger man than myself insist with all his might on governing me like a child; chilled by his readiness in giving his promise and his negligence in keeping it; tired of so many appointments which he made and broke, and of his fancy for repairing them by new ones to be broken in their turn; provoked at waiting for him to no purpose three or four times a month on days which he had fixed, and of dining alone in the evening, after going on as far as St. Denis to meet him and waiting for him all day, —I had my heart already full of a multitude of grievances." [293] This irritation subsided in presence of the storms that now rose up against Diderot. He was in the thick of the dangerous and mortifying distractions stirred up by the foes of the Encyclopaedia. Rousseau in friendly sympathy went to see him; they embraced, and old wrongs were forgotten until new arose. [294]

There is a less rose-coloured account than this. Madame d'Epinay assigns two motives to Rousseau: a desire to find an excuse for going to Paris, in order to avoid seeing Saint Lambert; secondly, a wish to hear Diderot's opinion of the two first parts of the New Heloisa. She says that he wanted to borrow a portfolio in which to carry the manuscripts to Paris; Rousseau says that they had already been in Diderot's possession for six months. [295] As her letters containing this very circumstantial story were written at the moment, it is difficult to uphold the Confessions as valid authority against them. Thirdly, Rousseau told her that he had not taken his manuscripts to Paris (p. 302), whereas Grimm writing a few days later (p. 309) mentions that he has received a letter from Diderot, to the effect that Rousseau's visit had no other object than the revision of these manuscripts. The scene is characteristic. "Rousseau kept him pitilessly at work from Saturday at ten o'clock in the morning till eleven at night on Monday, hardly giving him time to eat and drink. The revision at an end, Diderot chats with him about a plan he has in his head, and begs Rousseau to help him in contriving some incident which he cannot yet arrange to his taste. 'It is too difficult,' replies the hermit coldly, 'it is late, and I am not used to sitting up. Good night; I am off at six in the morning, and 'tis time for bed.' He rises from his chair, goes to bed, and leaves Diderot petrified at his behaviour. The day of his departure, Diderot's wife saw that her husband was in bad spirits, and asked the reason. 'It is that man's want of delicacy,' he replied, 'which afflicts me; he makes me work like a slave, but I should never have found that out, if he had not so drily refused to take an interest in me for a quarter of an hour.' 'You are surprised at that,' his wife answered; 'do you not know him? He is devoured with envy; he goes wild with rage when anything fine appears that is not his own. You will see him one day commit some great crime rather than let himself be ignored. I declare I would not swear that he will not join the ranks of the Jesuits, and undertake their vindication.'"



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Of course we cannot be sure that Grimm did not manipulate these letters long after the event, but there is nothing in Rousseau's history to make us perfectly sure that he was incapable either of telling a falsehood to Madame d'Epinay, or of being shamelessly selfish in respect of Diderot. I see no reason to refuse substantial credit to Grimm's account, and the points of coincidence between that and the Confessions make its truth probable.[296]

Rousseau's relations with Madame d'Epinay were more complex, and his sentiments towards her underwent many changes. There was a prevalent opinion that he was her lover, for which no real foundation seems to have existed.[297] Those who disbelieved that he had reached this distinction, yet made sure that he had a passion for her, which may or may not have been true.[298] Madame d'Epinay herself was vain enough to be willing that this should be generally accepted, and it is certain that she showed a friendship for him which, considering the manners of the time, was invitingly open to misconception. Again, she was jealous of her sister-in-law, Madame d'Houdetot, if for no other reason than that the latter, being the wife of a Norman noble, had access to the court, and this was unattainable by the wife of a farmer-general. Hence Madame d'Epinay's barely-concealed mortification when she heard of the meetings in the forest, the private suppers, the moonlight rambles in the park. When Saint Lambert first became uneasy as to the relations between Rousseau and his mistress, and wrote to her to say that he was so, Rousseau instantly suspected that Madame d'Epinay had been his informant. Theresa confirmed the suspicion by tales of baskets and drawers ransacked by Madame d'Epinay in search of Madame d'Houdetot's letters to him. Whether these tales were true or not, we can never know; we can only say that Madame d'Epinay was probably not incapable of these meannesses, and that there is no reason to suppose that she took the pains to write directly to Saint Lambert a piece of news which she was writing to Grimm, knowing that he was then in communication with Saint Lambert. She herself suspected that Theresa had written to Saint Lambert, [299] but it may be doubted whether Theresa's imagination could have risen to such feat as writing to a marquis, and a marquis in what would have seemed to her to be remote and inaccessible parts of the earth. All this, however, has become ghostly for us; a puzzle that can never be found out, nor be worth finding out. Rousseau was persuaded that Madame d'Epinay was his betrayer, and was seized by one of his blackest and most stormful moods. In reply to an affectionate letter from her, inquiring why she had not seen him for so long, he wrote thus: "I can say nothing to you yet. I wait until I am better informed, and this I shall be sooner or later. Meanwhile, be certain that accused innocence will find a champion ardent enough to make calumniators repent, whoever they may



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be.” It is rather curious that so strange a missive as this, instead of provoking Madame d’Epinay to anger, was answered by a warmer and more affectionate letter than the first. To this Rousseau replied with increased vehemence, charged with dark and mysteriously worded suspicion. Still Madame d’Epinay remained willing to receive him. He began to repent of his imprudent haste, because it would certainly end by compromising Madame d’Houdetot, and because, moreover, he had no proof after all that his suspicions had any foundation. He went instantly to the house of Madame d’Epinay; at his approach she threw herself on his neck and melted into tears. This unexpected reception from so old a friend moved him extremely; he too wept abundantly. She showed no curiosity as to the precise nature of his suspicions or their origin, and the quarrel came to an end.[300]

Grimm’s turn followed. Though they had been friends for many years, there had long been a certain stiffness in their friendship. Their characters were in fact profoundly antipathetic. Rousseau we know,—sensuous, impulsive, extravagant, with little sense of the difference between reality and dreams. Grimm was exactly the opposite; judicious, collected, self-seeking, coldly upright. He was a German (born at Ratisbon), and in Paris was first a reader to the Duke of Saxe Gotha, with very scanty salary. He made his way, partly through the friendship of Rousseau, into the society of the Parisian men of letters, rapidly acquired a perfect mastery of the French language, and with the inspiring help of Diderot, became an excellent critic. After being secretary to sundry high people, he became the literary correspondent of various German sovereigns, keeping them informed of what was happening in the world of art and letters, just as an ambassador keeps his government informed of what happens in politics. The sobriety, impartiality, and discrimination of his criticism make one think highly of his literary judgment; he had the courage, or shall we say he preserved enough of the German, to defend both Homer and Shakespeare against the unhappy strictures of Voltaire.[301] This is not all, however; his criticism is conceived in a tone which impresses us with the writer’s integrity. And to this internal evidence we have to add the external corroboration that in the latter part of his life he filled various official posts, which implied a peculiar confidence in his probity on the part of those who appointed him. At the present moment (1756-57), he was acting as secretary to Marshal d’Estrees, commander of the French army in Westphalia at the outset of the Seven Years’ War. He was an able and helpful man, in spite of his having a rough manner, powdering his face, and being so monstrously scented as to earn the name of the musk-bear. He had that firmness and positivity which are not always beautiful, but of which there is probably too little rather than too much in the world, certainly in the France of his time, and of



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which there was none at all in Rousseau. Above all things he hated declamation. Apparently cold and reserved, he had sensibility enough underneath the surface to go nearly out of his mind for love of a singer at the opera who had a thrilling voice. As he did not believe in the metaphysical doctrine about the freedom of the will, he accepted from temperament the necessity which logic confirmed, of guiding the will by constant pressure from without. "I am surprised," Madame d'Epainay said to him, "that men should be so little indulgent to one another." "Nay, the want of indulgence comes of our belief in freedom; it is because the established morality is false and bad, inasmuch as it starts from this false principle of liberty." "Ah, but the contrary principle, by making one too indulgent, disturbs order." "It does nothing of the kind. Though man does not wholly change, he is susceptible of modification; you can improve him; hence it is not useless to punish him. The gardener does not cut down a tree that grows crooked; he binds up the branch and keeps it in shape; that is the effect of public punishment." [302] He applied the same doctrine, as we shall see, to private punishment for social crookedness.

It is easy to conceive how Rousseau's way of ordering himself would gradually estrange so hard a head as this. What the one thought a weighty moral reformation, struck the other as a vain desire to attract attention. Rousseau on the other hand suspected Grimm of intriguing to remove Theresa from him, as well as doing his best to alienate all his friends. The attempted alienation of Theresa consisted in the secret allowance to her mother and her by Grimm and Diderot of some sixteen pounds a year. [303] Rousseau was unaware of this, but the whisperings and goings and comings to which it gave rise, made him darkly uneasy. That the suspicions in other respects were in a certain sense not wholly unfounded, is shown by Grimm's own letters to Madame d'Epainay. He disapproved of her installing Rousseau in the Hermitage, and warned her in a very remarkable prophecy that solitude would darken his imagination. [304] "He is a poor devil who torments himself, and does not dare to confess the true subject of all his sufferings, which is in his cursed head and his pride; he raises up imaginary matters, so as to have the pleasure of complaining of the whole human race." [305] More than once he assures her that Rousseau will end by going mad, it being impossible that so hot and ill-organised a head should endure solitude. [306] Rousseauite partisans usually explain all this by supposing that Grimm was eager to set a woman for whom he had a passion, against a man who was suspected of having a passion for her; and it is possible that jealousy may have stimulated the exercise of his natural shrewdness. But this shrewdness, added to entire want of imagination and a very narrow range of sympathy, was quite enough to account for Grimm's harsh judgment, without



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the addition of any sinister sentiment. He was perfectly right in suspecting Rousseau of want of loyalty to Madame d'Epinau, for we find our hermit writing to her in strains of perfect intimacy, while he was writing of her to Madame d'Houdetot as "your unworthy sister." [307] On the other hand, while Madame d'Epinau was overwhelming him with caressing phrases, she was at the same moment describing him to Grimm as a master of impertinence and intractableness. As usual where there is radical incompatibility of character, an attempted reconciliation between Grimm and Rousseau (some time in the early part of October 1757) had only made the thinly veiled antipathy more resolute. Rousseau excused himself for wrongs of which in his heart he never thought himself guilty. Grimm replied by a discourse on the virtues of friendship and his own special aptitude for practising them. He then conceded to the impetuous penitent the kiss of peace, in a slight embrace which was like the accolade given by a monarch to new knights. [308] The whole scene is ignoble. We seem to be watching an unclean cauldron, with Theresa's mother, a cringing and babbling crone, standing witch-like over it and infusing suspicion, falsehood, and malice. When minds are thus surcharged, any accident suffices to release the evil creatures that lurk in an irritated imagination.

One day towards the end of the autumn of 1757, Rousseau learned to his unbounded surprise that Madame d'Epinau had been seized with some strange disorder, which made it advisable that she should start without any delay for Geneva, there to place herself under the care of Tronchin, who was at that time the most famous doctor in Europe. His surprise was greatly increased by the expectation which he found among his friends that he would show his gratitude for her many kindnesses to him, by offering to bear her company on her journey, and during her stay in a town which was strange to her and thoroughly familiar to him. It was to no purpose that he protested how unfit was one invalid to be the nurse of another; and how great an incumbrance a man would be in a coach in the bad season, when for many days he was absolutely unable to leave his chamber without danger. Diderot, with his usual eagerness to guide a friend's course, wrote him a letter urging that his many obligations, and even his grievances in respect of Madame d'Epinau, bound him to accompany her, as he would thus repay the one and console himself for the other. "She is going into a country where she will be like one fallen from the clouds. She is ill; she will need amusement and distraction. As for winter, are you worse now than you were a month back, or than you will be at the opening of the spring? For me, I confess that if I could not bear the coach, I would take a staff and follow her on foot." [309] Rousseau trembled with fury, and as soon as the transport was over, he wrote an indignant reply, in which he more or less politely bade the panurgic one to attend



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to his own affairs, and hinted that Grimm was making a tool of him. Next he wrote to Grimm himself a letter, not unfriendly in form, asking his advice and promising to follow it, but hardly hiding his resentment. By this time he had found out the secret of Madame d'Epinaÿ's supposed illness and her anxiety to pass some months away from her family, and the share which Grimm had in it. This, however, does not make many passages of his letter any the less ungracious or unseemly. "If Madame d'Epinaÿ has shown friendship to me, I have shown more to her.... As for benefits, first of all I do not like them, I do not want them, and I owe no thanks for any that people may burden me with by force. Madame d'Epinaÿ, being so often left alone in the country, wished me for company; it was for that she had kept me. After making one sacrifice to friendship, I must now make another to gratitude. A man must be poor, must be without a servant, must be a hater of constraint, and he must have my character, before he can know what it is for me to live in another person's house. For all that, I lived two years in hers, constantly brought into bondage with the finest harangues about liberty, served by twenty domestics, and cleaning my own shoes every morning, overloaded with gloomy indigestion, and incessantly sighing for my homely porringer.... Consider how much money an hour of the life and the time of a man is worth; compare the kindnesses of Madame d'Epinaÿ with the sacrifice of my native country and two years of serfdom; and then tell me whether the obligation is greater on her side or mine." He then urges with a torrent of impetuous eloquence the thoroughly sound reasons why it was unfair and absurd for him, a beggar and an invalid, to make the journey with Madame d'Epinaÿ, rich and surrounded by attendants. He is particularly splenetic that the philosopher Diderot, sitting in his own room before a good fire and wrapped in a well-lined dressing-gown, should insist on his doing his five and twenty leagues a day on foot, through the mud in winter.[310]

The whole letter shows, as so many incidents in his later life showed, how difficult it was to do Rousseau a kindness with impunity, and how little such friends as Madame d'Epinaÿ possessed the art of soothing this unfortunate nature. They fretted him by not leaving him sufficiently free to follow his own changing moods, while he in turn lost all self-control, and yielded in hours of bodily torment to angry and resentful fancies. But let us hasten to an end. Grimm replied to his eloquent manifesto somewhat drily, to the effect that he would think the matter over, and that meanwhile Rousseau had best keep quiet in his hermitage. Rousseau burning with excitement at once conceived a thousand suspicions, wholly unable to understand that a cold and reserved German might choose to deliberate at length, and finally give an answer with brevity. "After centuries of expectation in the cruel uncertainty in which this



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barbarous man had plunged me”—that is after eight or ten days, the answer came, apparently not without a second direct application for one.[311] It was short and extremely pointed, not complaining that Rousseau had refused to accompany Madame d’Epinay but protesting against the horrible tone of the apology which he had sent to him for not accompanying her. “It has made me quiver with indignation; so odious are the principles it contains, so full is it of blackness and duplicity. You venture to talk to me of your slavery, to me who for more than two years have been the daily witness of all the marks of the tenderest and most generous friendship that you have received at the hands of that woman. If I could pardon you, I should think myself unworthy of having a single friend. I will never see you again while I live, and I shall think myself happy if I can banish the recollection of your conduct from my mind.”[312] A flash of manly anger like this is very welcome to us, who have to thread a tedious way between morbid egoistic irritation on the one hand, and sly pieces of equivocal complaisance on the other. The effect on Rousseau was terrific. In a paroxysm he sent Grimm’s letter back to him, with three or four lines in the same key. He wrote note after note to Madame d’Houdetot, in shrieks. “Have I a single friend left, man or woman? One word, only one word, and I can live.” A day or two later: “Think of the state I am in. I can bear to be abandoned by all the world, but you! You who know me so well! Great God! am I a scoundrel? a scoundrel, I!”[313] And so on, raving. It was to no purpose that Madame d’Houdetot wrote him soothing letters, praying him to calm himself, to find something to busy himself with, to remain at peace with Madame d’Epinay, “who had never appeared other than the most thoughtful and warm-hearted friend to him.”[314] He was almost ready to quarrel with Madame d’Houdetot herself because she paid the postage of her letters, which he counted an affront to his poverty.[315] To Madame d’Epinay he had written in the midst of his tormenting uncertainty as to the answer which Grimm would make to his letter. It was an ungainly assertion that she was playing a game of tyranny and intrigue at his cost. For the first time she replied with spirit and warmth. “Your letter is hardly that of a man who, on the eve of my departure, swore to me that he could never in his life repair the wrongs he had done me.” She then tersely remarks that it is not natural to pass one’s life in suspecting and insulting one’s friends, and that he abuses her patience. To this he answered with still greater terseness that friendship was extinct between them, and that he meant to leave the Hermitage, but as his friends desired him to remain there until the spring he would with her permission follow their counsel. Then she, with a final thrust of impatience, in which we perhaps see the hand of Grimm: “Since you meant to leave the Hermitage, and felt you ought



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to do so, I am astonished that your friends could detain you. For me, I don't consult mine as to my duties, and I have nothing more to say to you as to yours." This was the end. Rousseau returned for a moment from ignoble petulance to dignity and self-respect. He wrote to her that if it is a misfortune to make a mistake in the choice of friends, it is one not less cruel to awake from so sweet an error, and two days before he wrote, he left her house. He found a cottage at Montmorency, and thither, nerved with fury, through snow and ice he carried his scanty household goods (Dec. 15, 1757).[316]

We have a picture of him in this fatal month. Diderot went to pay him a visit (Dec. 5). Rousseau was alone at the bottom of his garden. As soon as he saw Diderot, he cried in a voice of thunder and with his eyes all aflame: "What have you come here for?" "I want to know whether you are mad or malicious." "You have known me for fifteen years; you are well aware how little malicious I am, and I will prove to you that I am not mad: follow me." He then drew Diderot into a room, and proceeded to clear himself, by means of letters, of the charge of trying to make a breach between Saint Lambert and Madame d'Houdetot. They were in fact letters that convicted him, as we know, of trying to persuade Madame d'Houdetot of the criminality of her relations with her lover, and at the same time to accept himself in the very same relation. Of all this we have heard more than enough already. He was stubborn in the face of Diderot's remonstrance, and the latter left him in a state which he described in a letter to Grimm the same night. "I throw myself into your arms, like one who has had a shock of fright: that man intrudes into my work; he fills me with trouble, and I am as if I had a damned soul at my side. May I never see him again; he would make me believe in devils and hell." [317] And thus the unhappy man who had begun this episode in his life with confident ecstasy in the glories and clear music of spring, ended it looking out from a narrow chamber upon the sullen crimson of the wintry twilight and over fields silent in snow, with the haggard desperate gaze of a lost spirit.

FOOTNOTES:

[254] *Conf.*, ix. 247.

[255] *Conf.*, ix. 230. Madame d'Epinay (*Mem.*, ii. 132) has given an account of the installation, with a slight discrepancy of date. When Madame d'Epinay's son-in-law emigrated at the Revolution, the Hermitage—of which nothing now stands—along with the rest of the estate became national property, and was bought after other purchasers by Robespierre, and afterwards by Gretry the composer, who paid 10,000 livres for it.

[256] *Conf.*, ix. 255.

[257] Third letter to Malesherbes, 364-368.



[258] *Conf.*, ix. 239.

[259] *Conf.*, ix. 237, 238, and 263, *etc.*

[260] The extract from the Project for Perpetual Peace and the Polysynodia, together with Rousseau's judgments on them, are found at the end of the volume containing the Social Contract. The first, but without the judgment, was printed separately without Rousseau's permission, in 1761, by Bastide, to whom he had sold it for twelve louis for publication in his journal only. *Conf.*, xi. 107. *Corr.*, ii. 110, 128.



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[261] P. 485.

[262] For a sympathetic account of the Abbe de Saint Pierre's life and speculations, see M. Leonce de Lavergne's *Economistes francais du 18ieme siecle* (Paris: 1870). Also Comte's *Lettres a M. Valat*, p. 73.

[263] *Conf.*, ix. 270-274.

[264] *Conf.*, ix. 289.

[265] *Ib.* ix. 286.

[266] D'Epinay, ii. 153.

[267] Madame d'Houdetot, (b. 1730—d. 1813) was the daughter of M. de Bellegarde, the father of Madame d'Epinay's husband. Her marriage with the Count d'Houdetot, of high Norman stock, took place in 1748. The circumstances of the marriage, which help to explain the lax view of the vows common among the great people of the time, are given with perhaps a shade too much dramatic colouring in Madame d'Epinay's *Mem.*, i. 101.

[268] *Conf.*, ix. 281.

[269] D'Epinay, ii. 246.

[270] D'Epinay, ii. 269.

[271] Musset-Pathay has collected two or three trifles of her composition, ii. 136-138. Heal so quotes Madame d'Allard's account of her, pp. 140, 141.

[272] Quoted by M. Girardin, *Rev. des Deux Mondes*, Sept. 1853, p. 1080.

[273] *Conf.*, ix. 304.

[274] *Ib.* ix. 305. Slightly modified version in *Corr.*, i. 377.

[275] M. Boiteau's note to Madame d'Epinay, ii. 273.

[276] Grimm, to Madame d'Epinay, ii. 305.

[277] This is shown partly by Saint Lambert's letter to Rousseau, to which we come presently, and partly by a letter of Madame d'Houdetot to Rousseau in May, 1758 (Streckeisen-Moultou, i. 411-413), where she distinctly says that she concealed his mad passion for her from Saint Lambert, who first heard of it in common conversation.

[278] *Conf.*, ix. 311.



[279] Besides the many hints of reference to this in the Confessions, see the phrenetic Letters to Sarah, printed in the *Melanges*, pp. 347-360.

[280] *Conf.*, ix. 337.

[281] *Corr.*, i. 398. Sept. 4, 1757.

[282] To Madame d'Houdetot. *Corr.*, i. 376-387. June 1757.

[283] Saint Lambert to Rousseau, from Wolfenbuttel, Oct. 11, 1757. Streckeisen-Moultou, i. 415.

[284] These letters are given in M. Streckeisen-Moultou's first volume (pp. 354-414). The thirty-second of them (Jan. 10, 1758) is perhaps the one best worth turning to.

[285] Streckeisen-Moultou, i. 412. May 6, 1768. *Conf.*, x. 15.

[286] *Ib.* x. 22.

[287] *Ib.* x. 18. Streckeisen, i. 422.

[288] *Conf.*, x. 24.

[289] To Madame d'Epinay, 1757. *Corr.*, i. 362, 353. See also *Conf.*, ix. 307.

[290] One of the most unflinching in this kind is an *Essai sur la vie et le caractere de J.J. Rousseau*, by G.H. Morin (Paris: 1851): the laborious production of a bitter advocate, who accepts the Confessions, Dialogues, Letters, etc., with the reverence due to verbal inspiration, and writes of everybody who offended his hero, quite in the vein of Marat towards aristocrats.



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[291] *Corr.*, i. 327-335. D'Epina y, ii. 165-182

[292] D'Epina y, ii. 173.

[293] *Conf.*, ix. 325.

[294] *Ib.*, ix. 334.

[295] *Mem.*, ii. 297. She also places the date many mouths later than Rousseau, and detaches the reconciliation from the quarrel in the winter of 1756-1757.

[296] The same story is referred to in Madame de Vandeu l's *Mem. de Diderot*, p. 61.

[297] *Conf.*, ix. 245, 246.

[298] Grimm to Madame d'Epina y, ii. 259, 269, 313, 326. *Conf.*, x. 17.

[299] *Mem.*, ii. 318.

[300] *Conf.*, ix. 322. Madame d'Epina y (*Mem.*, ii. 326), writing to Grimm, gives a much colder and stiffer colour to the scene of reconciliation, but the nature of her relations with him would account for this. The same circumstance, as M. Girardin has pointed out (*Rev. des Deux Mondes*, Sept. 1853), would explain the discrepancy between her letters as given in the Confessions, and the copies of them sent to Grimm, and printed in her Memoirs. M. Sainte Beuve, who is never perfectly master of himself in dealing with the chiefs of the revolutionary schools, as might indeed have been expected in a writer with his predilections for the seventeenth century, rashly hints (*Causeries*, vii. 301) that Rousseau was the falsifier. The publication from the autograph originals sets this at rest.

[301] For Shakespeare, see *Corr. Lit.*, iv. 143, etc.

[302] D'Epina y, ii. 188.

[303] D'Epina y, ii. 150. Also Vandeu l's *Mem. de Diderot*, p. 61.

[304] *Mem.* ii. 128.

[305] P. 258. See also p. 146.

[306] Pp. 282, 336, etc.

[307] *Corr.*, i. 386. June 1757.

[308] *Conf.*, ix. 355. For Madame d'Epina y's equally credible version, assigning all the stiffness and arrogance to Rousseau, see *Mem.*, ii. 355-358. Saint Lambert refers to



the momentary reconciliation in his letter to Rousseau of Nov. 21 (Streckeisen, i. 418), repeating what he had said before (p. 417), that Grimm always spoke of Mm in amicable terms, though complaining of Rousseau's injustice.

[309] *Conf.*, ix. 372.

[310] *Corr.*, i. 404-416. Oct 19, 1757.

[311] Grimm to Diderot, in Madame d'Epainay's *Mem.* ii. 386. Nov. 3, 1757.

[312] D'Epainay, ii. 387. Nov. 3.

[313] *Corr.*, i. 425. Nov. 8. *Ib.* 426.

[314] Streckeisen-Moultou, i. 381-383.

[315] *Ib.* 387. Many years after, Rousseau told Bernardin de St. Pierre (*Oeuv.*, xii. 57) that one of the reasons which made him leave the Hermitage was the indiscretion of friends who insisted on sending him letters by some conveyance that cost 4 francs, when it might equally well have been sent for as many sous.

[316] The sources of all this are in the following places. *Corr.*, i. 416. Oct. 29. Streckeisen, i. 349. Nov. 12. *Conf.*, ix. 377. *Corr.*, i. 427. Nov. 23. *Conf.*, ix. 381. Dec. 1. *Ib.*, ix. 383. Dec. 17.



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[317] Diderot to Grimm; D'Epinay, ii. 397. Diderot's *Oeuv.*, xix. 446. See also 449 and 210.

CHAPTER VIII.

MUSIC.

Simplification has already been used by us as the key-word to Rousseau's aims and influence. The scheme of musical notation with which he came to try his fortune in Paris in 1741, his published vindication of it, and his musical compositions afterwards all fall under this term. Each of them was a plea for the extrication of the simple from the cumbrousness of elaborated pedantry, and for a return to nature from the unmeaning devices of false art. And all tended alike in the popular direction, towards the extension of enjoyment among the common people, and the glorification of their simple lives and moods, in the art designed for the great.

The Village Soothsayer was one of the group of works which marked a revolution in the history of French music, by putting an end to the tyrannical tradition of Lulli and Rameau, and preparing the way through a middle stage of freshness, simplicity, naturalism, up to the noble severity of Gluck (1714-1787). This great composer, though a Bohemian by birth, found his first appreciation in a public that had been trained by the Italian pastoral operas, of which Rousseau's was one of the earliest produced in France. Gretri, the Fleming (1741-1813), who had a hearty admiration for Jean Jacques, and out of a sentiment of piety lived for a time in his Hermitage, came in point of musical excellence between the group of Rousseau, Philidor, Duni, and the rest, and Gluck. "I have not produced exaltation in people's heads by tragical superlative," Gretri said, "but I have revealed the accent of truth, which I have impressed deeper in men's hearts." [318] These words express sufficiently the kind of influence which Rousseau also had. Crude as the music sounds to us who are accustomed to more sumptuous schools, we can still hear in it the note which would strike a generation weary of Rameau. It was the expression in one way of the same mood which in another way revolted against paint, false hair, and preposterous costume as of savages grown opulent. Such music seems without passion or subtlety or depth or magnificence. Thus it had hardly any higher than a negative merit, but it was the necessary preparation for the acceptance of a more positive style, that should replace both the elaborate false art of the older French composers and the too colourless realism of the pastoral comic opera, by the austere loveliness and elevation of *Orfeo* and *Alceste*.



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In 1752 an Italian company visited Paris, and performed at the Opera a number of pieces by Pergolese, and other composers of their country. A violent war arose, which agitated Paris far more intensely than the defeat of Rossbach and the loss of Canada did afterwards. The quarrel between the Parliament and the Clergy was at its height. The Parliament had just been exiled, and the gravest confusion threatened the State. The operatic quarrel turned the excitement of the capital into another channel. Things went so far that the censor was entreated to prohibit the printing of any work containing the damnable doctrine and position that Italian music is good. Rousseau took part enthusiastically with the Italians.[319] His Letter on French Music (1753) proved to the great fury of the people concerned, that the French had no national music, and that it would be so much the worse for them if they ever had any. Their language, so proper to be the organ of truth and reason, was radically unfit either for poetry or music. All national music must derive its principal characteristics from the language. Now if there is a language in Europe fit for music, it is certainly the Italian, for it is sweet, sonorous, harmonious, and more accentuated than any other, and these are precisely the four qualities which adapt a language to singing. It is sweet because the articulations are not composite, because the meeting of consonants is both infrequent and soft, and because a great number of the syllables being only formed of vowels, frequent elisions make its pronunciation more flowing. It is sonorous because most of the vowels are full, because it is without composite diphthongs, because it has few or no nasal vowels. Again, the inversions of the Italian are far more favourable to true melody than the didactic order of French. And so onwards, with much close grappling of the matter. French melody does not exist; it is only a sort of modulated plain-song which has nothing agreeable in itself, which only pleases with the aid of a few capricious ornaments, and then only pleases those who have agreed to find it beautiful.[320]

The letter contains a variety of acute remarks upon music, and includes a vigorous protest against fugues, imitations, double designs, and the like. Scarcely any one succeeds in them, and success even when obtained hardly rewards the labour. As for counterfugues, double fugues, and “other difficult fooleries that the ear cannot endure nor the reason justify,” they are evidently relics of barbarism and bad taste which only remain, like the porticoes of our gothic churches, to the disgrace of those who had patience enough to construct them.[321] The last phrase—and both Voltaire and Turgot used gothic architecture as the symbol for the supreme of rudeness and barbarism—shows that even a man who seems to run counter to the whole current of his time yet does not escape its influence.



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Grimm, after remarking on the singularity of a demonstration of the impossibility of setting melody to French words on the part of a writer who had just produced the *Village Soothsayer*, informs us that the letter created a furious uproar, and set all Paris in a blaze. He had himself taken the side of the Italians in an amusing piece of pleasantry, which became a sort of classic model for similar facetiousness in other controversies of the century. The French, as he said, forgive everything in favour of what makes them laugh, but Rousseau talked reason and demolished the pretensions of French music with great sounding strokes as of an axe.[322] Rousseau expected to be assassinated, and gravely assures us that there was a plot to that effect, as well as a design to put him in the Bastille. This we may fairly surmise to have been a fiction of his own imagination, and the only real punishment that overtook him was the loss of his right to free admission to the Opera. After what he had said of the intolerable horrors of French music, the directors of the theatre can hardly be accused of vindictiveness in releasing him from them.[323] Some twenty years after (1774), when Paris was torn asunder by the violence of the two great factions of the Gluckists and Piccinists, Rousseau retracted his opinion as to the impossibility of wedding melody to French words.[324] He went as often as he could to hear the works both of Gretri and Gluck, and *Orfeo* delighted him, while the *Fausse magie* of the former moved him to say to the composer, "Your music stirs sweet sensations to which I thought my heart had long been closed." [325] This being so, and life being as brief as art is long, we need not further examine the controversy. It may be worth adding that Rousseau wrote some of the articles on music for the Encyclopaedia, and that in 1767 he published a not inconsiderable Musical Dictionary of his own.

His scheme of a new musical notation and the principles on which he defended it are worth attention, because some of the ideas are now accepted as the base of a well-known and growing system of musical instruction. The aim of the scheme, let us say to begin with, was at once practical and popular; to reduce the difficulty of learning music to the lowest possible point, and so to bring the most delightful of the arts within the reach of the largest possible number of people. Hence, although he maintains the fitness of his scheme for instrumental as well as vocal performances, it is clearly the latter which he has most at heart, evidently for the reason that this is the kind of music most accessible to the thousands, and it was always the thousands of whom Rousseau thought. This is the true distinction of music, it is for the people; and the best musical notation is that which best enables persons to sing at sight. The difficulty of the old notation had come practically before him as a teacher. The quantity of details which the pupil



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was forced to commit to memory before being able to sing from the open book, struck him then as the chief obstacle to anything like facility in performance, and without some of this facility he rightly felt that music must remain a luxury for the few. So genuine was his interest in the matter, that he was not very careful to fight for the originality of his own scheme. Our present musical signs, he said, are so imperfect and so inconvenient that it is no wonder that several persons have tried to re-cast or amend them; nor is it any wonder that some of them should have hit upon the same device in selecting the signs most natural and proper, such as numerical figures. As much, however, depends on the way of dealing with these figures, as with their adoption, and here he submitted that his own plan was as novel as it was advantageous.[326] Thus we have to bear in mind that Rousseau's scheme was above all things a practical device, contrived for making the teaching and the learning of musical elements an easier process.[327]

The chief element of the project consists in the substitution of a relative series of notes or symbols in place of an absolute series. In the common notation any given note, say the A of the treble clef, is uniformly represented by the same symbol, namely, the position of second space in the clef, whatever key it may belong to. Rousseau, insisting on the varying quality impressed on any tone of a given pitch by the key-note of the scale to which it belongs, protested against the same name being given to the tone, however the quality of it might vary. Thus Re or D, which is the second tone in the key of C, ought, according to him, to have a different name when found as the fifth in the key of G, and in every case the name should at once indicate the interval of a tone from its key-note. His mode of effecting this change is as follows. The names *ut*, *re*, and the rest, are kept for the fixed order of the tones, C, D, E, and the rest. The key of a piece is shown by prefixing one of these symbols, and this determines the absolute quality of the melody as to pitch. That settled, every tone is expressed by a number bearing a relation to the key-note. This tonic note is represented by one, the other six tones of the scale are expressed by the numbers from two to seven. In the popular Tonic Sol-Fa notation, which corresponds so closely to Rousseau's in principle, the key-note is always styled Do, and the other symbols, *mi*, *la*, and the rest, indicate at once the relative position of these tones in their particular key or scale. Here the old names were preserved as being easily sung; Rousseau selected numbers because he supposed that they best expressed the generation of the sounds.[328]



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Rousseau attempted to find a theoretic base for this symbolic establishment of the relational quality of tones, and he dimly guessed that the order of the harmonics or upper tones of a given tonic would furnish a principle for forming the familiar major scale,[329] but his knowledge of the order was faulty. He was perhaps groping after the idea by which Professor Helmholtz has accounted for the various mental effects of the several intervals in a key—namely, the degree of natural affinity, measured by means of the upper tones, existing between the given tone and its tonic. Apart from this, however, the practical value of his ideas in instruction in singing is clearly shown by the circumstance that at any given time many thousands of young children are now being taught to read melody in the Sol-Fa notation in a few weeks. This shows how right Rousseau was in continually declaring the ease of hitting a particular tone, when the relative position of the tone in respect to the key-note is clearly manifested. A singer in trying to hit the tone is compelled to measure the interval between it and the preceding tone, and the simplest and easiest mode of doing this is to associate every tone with the tonics, thus constituting it a term of a relation with this fundamental tone.

Rousseau made a mistake when he supposed that his ideas were just as applicable to instrumental as they were to vocal music. The requirements of the singer are not those of the player. To a performer on the piano, who has to light rapidly and simultaneously on a number of tones, or to a violinist who has to leap through several octaves with great rapidity, the most urgent need is that of a definite and fixed mark, by which the absolute pitch of each successive tone may be at once recognised. Neither of these has any time to think about the melodious relation of the tones; it is quite as much as they can do to find their place on the key-board or the string. Rousseau's scheme, or any similar one, fails to supply the clear and obvious index to pitch supplied by the old system. Old Rameau pointed this out to Rousseau when the scheme was laid before him, and Rousseau admitted that the objection was decisive,[330] though his admission was not practically deterrent.

His device for expressing change of octave by means of points would render the rapid seizing of a particular tone by the performer still more difficult, and it is strange that he should have preferred this to the other plan suggested, of indicating height of octave by visible place above or below a horizontal line. Again, his attempt to simplify the many varieties of musical time by reducing them all to the two modes of double and triple time, though laudable enough, yet implies an imperfect recognition of the full meaning of time, by omitting all reference to the distribution of accent and to the average time value of the tones in a particular movement.

FOOTNOTES:



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[318] Quoted in Martin's *Hist. de France*, xvi. 158.

[319] *Conf.*, viii. 197. Grimm, *Corr. Lit.*, i. 27.

[320] *Lettre sur la Musique Francaise*, 178, etc., 187.

[321] P. 197.

[322] *Corr. Lit.*, i. 92. His own piece was *Le petit prophete de Boehmischbroda*, the style of which will be seen in a subsequent footnote.

[323] He was burnt in effigy by the musicians of the Opera. Grimm, *Corr. Lit.*, i. 113.

[324] This is Turgot's opinion on the controversy (Letter to Caillard, *Oeuv.*, ii. 827):—"Tous avez donc vu Jean-Jacques; la musique est un excellent passe-port aupres de lui. Quant a l'impossibilite de faire de la musique francaise, je ne puis y croire, et votre raison ne me parait pas bonne; car il n'est point vrai que l'essence de la langue francaise est d'etre sans accent. Point de conversation animee sans beaucoup d'accent; mais l'accent est libre et determine seulement par l'affection de celui qui parle, sans etre fixe par des conventions sur certaines syllabes, quoique nous ayons aussi dans plusieurs mots des syllabes dominantes qui seules peuvent etre accentuees."

[325] Musset-Pathay, i. 289.

[326] Preface to *Dissertation sur la Musique Moderne*, pp. 32, 33.

[327] I am indebted to Mr. James Sully, M.A., for furnishing me with notes on a technical subject with which I have too little acquaintance.

[328] *Dissertation*, p. 42.

[329] P. 52.

[330] *Conf.*, vii. 18, 19. Also *Dissertation*, pp. 74, 75.

CHAPTER IX.

VOLTAIRE AND D'ALEMBERT.

Everybody in the full tide of the eighteenth century had something to do with Voltaire, from serious personages like Frederick the Great and Turgot, down to the sorriest poetaster who sent his verses to be corrected or bepraised. Rousseau's debt to him in the days of his unformed youth we have already seen, as well as the courtesies with which they approached one another, when Richelieu employed the struggling musician



to make some modifications in the great man's unconsidered court-piece. Neither of them then dreamed that their two names were destined to form the great literary antithesis of the century. In the ten years that elapsed between their first interchange of letters and their first fit of coldness, it must have been tolerably clear to either of them, if either of them gave thought to the matter, that their dissidence was increasing and likely to increase. Their methods were different, their training different, their points of view different, and above all these things, their temperaments were different by a whole heaven's breadth.



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A great number of excellent and pointed half-truths have been uttered by various persons in illustration of all these contrasts. The philosophy of Voltaire, for instance, is declared to be that of the happy, while Rousseau is the philosopher of the unhappy. Voltaire steals away their faith from those who doubt, while Rousseau strikes doubt into the mind of the unbeliever. The gaiety of the one saddens, while the sadness of the other consoles. If we pass from the marked divergence in tendencies, which is imperfectly hinted at in such sayings as these, to the divergence between them in all the fundamental conditions of intellectual and moral life, then the variation which divided the revolutionary stream into two channels, flowing broadly apart through unlike regions and climates down to the great sea, is intelligible enough. Voltaire was the arch-representative of all those elements in contemporary thought, its curiosity, irreverence, intrepidity, vivaciousness, rationality, to which, as we have so often had to say, Rousseau's temperament and his Genevese spirit made him profoundly antipathetic. Voltaire was the great high priest, robed in the dazzling vestments of poetry and philosophy and history, of that very religion of knowledge and art which Rousseau declared to be the destroyer of the felicity of men. The glitter has faded away from Voltaire's philosophic raiment since those days, and his laurel bough lies a little leafless. Still this can never make us forget that he was in his day and generation one of the sovereign emancipators, because he awoke one dormant set of energies, just as Rousseau presently came to awake another set. Each was a power, not merely by virtue of some singular preeminence of understanding or mysterious unshared insight of his own, but for a far deeper reason. No partial and one-sided direction can permanently satisfy the manifold aspirations and faculties of the human mind in the great average of common men, and it is the common average of men to whom exceptional thinkers speak, whom they influence, and by whom they are in turn influenced, depressed, or buoyed up, just as a painter or a dramatist is affected. Voltaire's mental constitution made him eagerly objective, a seeker of true things, quivering for action, admirably sympathetic with all life and movement, a spirit restlessly traversing the whole world. Rousseau, far different from this, saw in himself a reflected microcosm of the outer world, and was content to take that instead of the outer world, and as its truest version. He made his own moods the premisses from which he deduced a system of life for humanity, and so far as humanity has shared his moods or some parts of them, his system was true, and has been accepted. To him the bustle of the outer world was only a hindrance to that process of self-absorption which was his way of interpreting life. Accessible only to interests of emotion and sense, he was saved from intellectual sterility, and made eloquent, by the vehemence of his emotion and the fire of his senses. He was a master example of sensibility, as Voltaire was a master example of clear-eyed penetration.



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This must not be taken for a rigid piece of mutually exclusive division, for the edges of character are not cut exactly sharp, as words are. Especially when any type is intense, it seems to meet and touch its opposite. Just as Voltaire's piercing activity and soundness of intelligence made him one of the humanest of men, so Rousseau's emotional susceptibility endowed him with the gift of a vision that carried far into the social depths. It was a very early criticism on the pair, that Voltaire wrote on more subjects, but that Rousseau was the more profound. In truth one was hardly much more profound than the other. Rousseau had the sonorousness of speech which popular confusion of thought is apt to identify with depth. And he had seriousness. If profundity means the quality of seeing to the heart of subjects, Rousseau had in a general way rather less of it than the shrewd-witted crusher of the Infamous. What the distinction really amounts to is that Rousseau had a strong feeling for certain very important aspects of human life, which Voltaire thought very little about, or never thought about at all, and that while Voltaire was concerned with poetry, history, literature, and the more ridiculous parts of the religious superstition of his time, Rousseau thought about social justice and duty and God and the spiritual consciousness of men, with a certain attempt at thoroughness and system. As for the substance of his thinking, as we have already seen in the Discourses, and shall soon have an opportunity of seeing still more clearly, it was often as thin and hollow as if he had belonged to the company of the epigrammatical, who, after all, have far less of a monopoly of shallow thinking than is often supposed. The prime merit of Rousseau, in comparing him with the brilliant chief of the rationalistic school of the time, is his reverence; reverence for moral worth in however obscure intellectual company, for the dignity of human character and the loftiness of duty, for some of those cravings of the human mind after the divine and incommensurable, which may indeed often be content with solutions proved by long time and slow experience to be inadequate, but which are closely bound up with the highest elements of nobleness of soul.

It was this spiritual part of him which made Rousseau a third great power in the century, between the Encyclopaedic party and the Church. He recognised a something in men, which the Encyclopaedists treated as a chimera imposed on the imagination by theologians and others for their own purposes. And he recognised this in a way which did not offend the rational feeling of the times, as the Catholic dogmas offended it. In a word he was religious. In being so, he separated himself from Voltaire and his school, who did passably well without religion. Again, he was a puritan. In being this, he was cut off from the intellectually and morally unreformed church, which was then the organ of religion in France. Nor is this all.



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It was Rousseau, and not the feeble controversialists put up from time to time by the Jesuits and other ecclesiastical bodies, who proved the effective champion of religion, and the only power who could make head against the triumphant onslaught of the Voltaireans. He gave up Christian dogmas and mysteries, and, throwing himself with irresistible ardour upon the emotions in which all religions have their root and their power, he breathed new life into them, he quickened in men a strong desire to have them satisfied, and he beat back the army of emancipators with the loud and incessantly repeated cry that they were not come to deliver the human mind, but to root out all its most glorious and consolatory attributes. This immense achievement accomplished,—the great framework of a faith in God and immortality and providential government of the world thus preserved, it was an easy thing by and by for the churchmen to come back, and once more unpack and restore to their old places the temporarily discredited paraphernalia of dogma and mystery. How far all this was good or bad for the mental elevation of France and Europe, we shall have a better opportunity of considering presently.

We have now only to glance at the first skirmishes between the religious reactionist, on the one side, and, on the other, the leader of the school who believed that men are better employed in thinking as accurately, and knowing as widely, and living as humanely, as all those difficult processes are possible, than in wearying themselves in futile search after gods who dwell on inaccessible heights.

* * * * *

Voltaire had acknowledged Rousseau's gift of the second Discourse with his usual shrewd pleasantry: "I have received your new book against the human race, and thank you for it. Never was such cleverness used in the design of making us all stupid. One longs in reading your book to walk on all fours. But as I have lost that habit for more than sixty years, I feel unhappily the impossibility of resuming it. Nor can I embark in search of the savages of Canada, because the maladies to which I am condemned render a European surgeon necessary to me; because war is going on in those regions; and because the example of our actions has made the savages nearly as bad as ourselves. So I content myself with being a very peaceable savage in the solitude which I have chosen near your native place, where you ought to be too." After an extremely inadequate discussion of one or two points in the essay,[331] he concludes:—"I am informed that your health is bad; you ought to come to set it up again in your native air, to enjoy freedom, to drink with me the milk of our cows and browse our grass." [332] Rousseau replied to all this in a friendly way, recognising Voltaire as his chief, and actually at the very moment when he tells us that the corrupting presence of the arrogant and seductive man at Geneva helped to make the idea of returning to Geneva odious to him, hailing



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him in such terms as these:—"Sensible of the honour you do my country, I share the gratitude of my fellow-citizens, and hope that it will increase when they have profited by the lessons that you of all men are able to give them. Embellish the asylum you have chosen; enlighten a people worthy of your instruction; and do you who know so well how to paint virtue and freedom, teach us to cherish them in our walls." [333]

Within a year, however, the bright sky became a little clouded. In 1756 Voltaire published one of the most sincere, energetic, and passionate pieces to be found in the whole literature of the eighteenth century, his poem on the great earthquake of Lisbon (November 1755). No such word had been heard in Europe since the terrible images in which Pascal had figured the doom of man. It was the reaction of one who had begun life by refuting Pascal with doctrines of cheerfulness drawn from the optimism of Pope and Leibnitz, who had done Pope's *Essay on Man* (1732-34) into French verse as late as 1751, [334] and whose imagination, already sombered by the triumphant cruelty and superstition which raged around him, was suddenly struck with horror by a catastrophe which, in a world where whatever is best, destroyed hundreds of human creatures in the smoking ashes and engulfed wreck of their city. How, he cried, can you persist in talking of the deliberate will of a free and benevolent God, whose eternal laws necessitated such an appalling climax of misery and injustice as this? Was the disaster retributive? If so, why is Lisbon in ashes, while Paris dances? The enigma is desperate and inscrutable, and the optimist lives in the paradise of the fool. We ask in vain what we are, where we are, whither we go, whence we came. We are tormented atoms on a clod of earth, whom death at last swallows up, and with whom destiny meanwhile makes cruel sport. The past is only a disheartening memory, and if the tomb destroys the thinking creature, how frightful is the present!

Whatever else we may say of Voltaire's poem, it was at least the first sign of the coming reaction of sympathetic imagination against the polished common sense of the great Queen Anne school, which had for more than a quarter of a century such influence in Europe. [335] It is a little odd that Voltaire, the most brilliant and versatile branch of this stock, should have broken so energetically away from it, and that he should have done so, shows how open and how strong was the feeling in him for reality and actual circumstance.

Rousseau was amazed that a man overwhelmed as Voltaire was with prosperity and glory, should declaim against the miseries of this life and pronounce that all is evil and vanity. "Voltaire in seeming always to believe in God, never really believed in anybody but the devil, since his pretended God is a maleficent being who according to him finds all his pleasure in working mischief. The absurdity of this doctrine is especially revolting in a man crowned with good things of every sort, and who from the midst of his own happiness tries to fill his fellow-creatures with despair, by the cruel and terrible image of the serious calamities from which he is himself free." [336]



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As if any doctrine could be more revolting than this which Rousseau so quietly takes for granted, that if it is well with me and I am free from calamities, then there must needs be a beneficent ruler of the universe, and the calamities of all the rest of the world, if by chance they catch the fortunate man's eye, count for nothing in our estimate of the method of the supposed divine government. It is hard to imagine a more execrable emotion than the complacent religiosity of the prosperous. Voltaire is more admirable in nothing than in the ardent humanity and far-spreading lively sympathy with which he interested himself in all the world's fortunes, and felt the catastrophe of Lisbon as profoundly as if the Geneva at his gates had been destroyed. He relished his own prosperity keenly enough, but his prosperity became ashes in his mouth when he heard of distress or wrong, and he did not rest until he had moved heaven and earth to soothe the distress and repair the wrong. It was his impatience in the face of the evils of the time which wrung from him this desperate cry, and it is precisely because these evils did not touch him in his own person, that he merits the greater honour for the surpassing energy and sincerity of his feeling for them.

Rousseau, however, whose biographer has no such stories to tell as those of Calas and La Barre, Sirven and Lally, but only tales of a maiden wrongfully accused of theft, and a friend left senseless on the pavement of a strange town, and a benefactress abandoned to the cruelty of her fate, still was moved in the midst of his erotic visions in the forest of Montmorency to speak a jealous word in vindication of the divine government of our world. For him at any rate life was then warm and the day bright and the earth very fair, and he lauded his gods accordingly. It was his very sensuousness, as we are so often saying, that made him religious. The optimism which Voltaire wished to destroy was to him a sovereign element of comfort. "Pope's poem," he says, "softens my misfortunes and inclines me to patience, while yours sharpens all my pains, excites me to murmuring, and reduces me to despair. Pope and Leibnitz exhort me to resignation by declaring calamities to be a necessary effect of the nature and constitution of the universe. You cry, Suffer for ever, unhappy wretch; if there be a God who created thee, he could have stayed thy pains if he would: hope for no end to them, for there is no reason to be discerned for thy existence, except to suffer and to perish." [337] Rousseau then proceeds to argue the matter, but he says nothing really to the point which Pope had not said before, and said far more effectively. He begins, however, originally enough by a triumphant reference to his own great theme of the superiority of the natural over the civil state. Moral evil is our own work, the result of our liberty; so are most of our physical evils, except death, and that is mostly an evil only from the preparations that



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we make for it. Take the case of Lisbon. Was it nature who collected the twenty thousand houses, all seven stories high? If the people of Lisbon had been dispersed over the face of the country, as wild tribes are, they would have fled at the first shock, and they would have been seen the next day twenty leagues away, as gay as if nothing had happened. And how many of them perished in the attempt to rescue clothes or papers or money? Is it not true that the person of a man is now, thanks to civilisation, the least part of himself, and is hardly worth saving after loss of the rest? Again, there are some events which lose much of their horror when we look at them closely. A premature death is not always a real evil and may be a relative good; of the people crushed to death under the ruins of Lisbon, many no doubt thus escaped still worse calamities. And is it worse to be killed swiftly than to await death in prolonged anguish? [338]

The good of the whole is to be sought before the good of the part. Although the whole material universe ought not to be dearer to its Creator than a single thinking and feeling being, yet the system of the universe which produces, preserves, and perpetuates all thinking and feeling beings, ought to be dearer to him than any one of them, and he may, notwithstanding his goodness, or rather by reason of his goodness, sacrifice something of the happiness of individuals to the preservation of the whole. "That the dead body of a man should feed worms or wolves or plants is not, I admit, a compensation for the death of such a man; but if in the system of this universe, it is necessary for the preservation of the human race that there should be a circulation of substance between men, animals, vegetables, then the particular mishap of an individual contributes to the general good. I die, I am eaten by worms; but my children, my brothers, will live as I have lived; my body enriches the earth of which they will consume the fruits; and so I do, by the order of nature and for all men, what Codrus, Curtius, the Decii, and a thousand others, did of their own free will for a small part of men." (p. 305.)

All this is no doubt very well said, and we are bound to accept it as true doctrine. Although, however, it may make resignation easier by explaining the nature of evil, it does not touch the point of Voltaire's outburst, which is that evil exists, and exists in shapes which it is a mere mockery to associate with the omnipotence of a benevolent controller of the world's forces. According to Rousseau, if we go to the root of what he means, there is no such thing as evil, though much that to our narrow and impatient sight has the look of it. This may be true if we use that fatal word in an arbitrary and unreal sense, for the avoidable, the consequent without antecedent, or antecedent without consequent. If we consent to talk in this way, and only are careful to define terms so that there is no doubt as to their



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meaning, it is hardly deniable that evil is a mere word and not a reality, and whatever is indeed right and best, because no better is within our reach. Voltaire, however, like the man of sense that he was, exclaimed that at any rate relatively to us poor creatures the existence of pain, suffering, waste, whether caused or uncaused, whether in accordance with stern immutable law or mere divine caprice, is a most indisputable reality: from our point of view it is a cruel puerility to cry out at every calamity and every iniquity that all is well in the best of possible worlds, and to sing hymns of praise and glory to the goodness and mercy of a being of supreme might, who planted us in this evil state and keeps us in it. Voltaire's is no perfect philosophy; indeed it is not a philosophy at all, but a passionate ejaculation; but it is perfect in comparison with a cut and dried system like this of Rousseau's, which rests on a mocking juggle with phrases, and the substitution by dexterous sleight of hand of one definition for another.

Rousseau really gives up the battle, by confessing frankly that the matter is beyond the light of reason, and that, "if the theist only founds his sentiment on probabilities, the atheist with still less precision only founds his on the alternative possibilities." The objections on both sides are insoluble, because they turn on things of which men can have no veritable idea; "yet I believe in God as strongly as I believe any other truth, because believing and not believing are the last things in the world that depend on me." So be it. But why take the trouble to argue in favour of one side of an avowedly insoluble question? It was precisely because he felt that the objections on both sides cannot be answered, that Voltaire, hastily or not, cried out that he faced the horrors of such a catastrophe as the Lisbon earthquake without a glimpse of consolation. The upshot of Rousseau's remonstrance only amounted to this, that he could not furnish one with any consolation out of the armoury of reason, that he himself found this consolation, but in a way that did not at all depend upon his own effort or will, and was therefore as incommunicable as the advantage of having a large appetite or being six feet high. The reader of Rousseau becomes accustomed to this way of dealing with subjects of discussion. We see him using his reason as adroitly as he knows how for three-fourths of the debate, and then he suddenly flings himself back with a triumphant kind of weariness into the buoyant waters of emotion and sentiment. "You sir, who are a poet," once said Madame d'Epinau to Saint Lambert, "will agree with me that the existence of a Being, eternal, all powerful, and of sovereign intelligence, is at any rate the germ of the finest enthusiasm."^[339] To take this position and cleave to it may be very well, but why spoil its dignity and repose by an unmeaning and superfluous flourish of the weapons of the reasoner?



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With the same hasty change of direction Rousseau says the true question is not whether each of us suffers or not, but whether it is good that the universe should be, and whether our misfortunes were inevitable in its constitution. Then within a dozen lines he admits that there can be no direct proof either way; we must content ourselves with settling it by means of inference from the perfections of God. Of course, it is clear that in the first place what Rousseau calls the true question consists of two quite distinct questions. Is the universe in its present ordering on the whole good relatively either to men, or to all sentient creatures? Next was evil an inevitable element in that ordering? Second, this way of putting it does not in the least advance the case against Voltaire, who insisted that no fine phrases ought to hide from us the dreadful power and crushing reality of evil and the desolate plight in which we are left. This is no exhaustive thought, but a deep cry of anguish at the dark lot of men, and of just indignation against the philosophy which to creatures asking for bread gave the brightly polished stone of sentimental theism. Rousseau urged that Voltaire robbed men of their only solace. What Voltaire really did urge was that the solace derived from the attribution of humanity and justice to the Supreme Being, and from the metaphysical account of evil, rests on too narrow a base either to cover the facts, or to be a true solace to any man who thinks and observes. He ought to have gone on, if it had only been possible in those times, to persuade his readers that there is no solace attainable, except that of an energetic fortitude, and that we do best to go into life not in a softly lined silken robe, but with a sharp sword and armour thrice tempered. As between himself and Rousseau, he saw much the more keenly of the two, and this was because he approached the matter from the side of the facts, while the latter approached it from the side of his own mental comfort and the preconceptions involved in it.

The most curious part of this curious letter is the conclusion, where Rousseau, loosely wandering from his theme, separates Voltaire from the philosopher, and beseeches him to draw up a moral code or profession of civil faith that should contain positively the social maxims that everybody should be bound to admit, and negatively the intolerant maxims that everybody should be forced to reject as seditious. Every religion in accord with the code should be allowed, and every religion out of accord with it proscribed, or a man might be free to have no other religion but the code itself.



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Voltaire was much too clear-headed a person to take any notice of nonsense like this. Rousseau's letter remained unanswered, nor is there any reason to suppose that Voltaire ever got through it, though Rousseau chose to think that *Candide* (1759) was meant for a reply to him.[340] He is careful to tell us that he never read that incomparable satire, for which one would be disposed to pity any one except Rousseau, whose appreciation of wit, if not of humour also, was probably more deficient than in any man who ever lived, either in Geneva or any other country fashioned after Genevan guise. Rousseau's next letter to Voltaire was four years later, and by that time the alienation which had no definitely avowed cause, and can be marked by no special date, had become complete. "I hate you, in fact," he concluded, "since you have so willed it; but I hate you like a man still worthier to have loved you, if you had willed it. Of all the sentiments with which my heart was full towards you, there only remains the admiration that we cannot refuse to your fine genius, and love for your writings. If there is nothing in you which I can honour but your talents, that is no fault of mine." [341] We know that Voltaire did not take reproach with serenity, and he behaved with bitter violence towards Rousseau in circumstances when silence would have been both more magnanimous and more humane. Rousseau occasionally, though not very often, retaliated in the same vein.[342] On the whole his judgment of Voltaire, when calmly given, was not meant to be unkind. "Voltaire's first impulse," he said, "is to be good; it is reflection that makes him bad." [343] Tronchin had said in the same way that Voltaire's heart was the dupe of his understanding. Rousseau is always trying to like him, he always recognises him as the first man of the time, and he subscribed his mite for the erection of a statue to him. It was the satire and mockery in Voltaire which irritated Rousseau more than the doctrines or denial of doctrine which they cloaked; in his eyes sarcasm was always the veritable dialect of the evil power. It says something for the sincerity of his efforts after equitable judgment, that he should have had the patience to discern some of the fundamental merit of the most remorseless and effective mocker that ever made superstition look mean, and its doctors ridiculous.

II.

Voltaire was indirectly connected with Rousseau's energetic attack upon another great Encyclopaedist leader, the famous Letter to D'Alembert on Stage Plays. "There," Rousseau said afterwards, "is my favourite book, my Benjamin, because I produced it without effort, at the first inspiration, and in the most lucid moments of my life." [344] Voltaire, who to us figures so little as a poet and dramatist, was to himself and to his contemporaries of this date a poet and dramatist before all else, the author of *Zaire* and *Mahomet*, rather than of *Candide*



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and the *Philosophical Dictionary*. D'Alembert was Voltaire's staunchest henchman. He only wrote his article on Geneva for the Encyclopaedia to gratify the master. Fresh from a visit to him when he composed it, he took occasion to regret that the austerity of the tradition of the city deprived it of the manifold advantages of a theatre. This suggestion had its origin partly in a desire to promote something that would please the eager vanity of the dramatist whom Geneva now had for so close a neighbour, and who had just set her the example by setting up a theatre of his own; and partly, also, because it gave the writer an opportunity of denouncing the intolerant rigour with which the church nearer home treated the stage and all who appeared on it. Geneva was to set an example that could not be resisted, and France would no longer see actors on the one hand pensioned by the government, and on the other an object of anathema, excommunicated by priests and regarded with contempt by citizens.[345]

The inveterate hostility of the church to the theatre was manifested by the French ecclesiastics in the full eighteenth century as bitterly as ever. The circumstance that Voltaire was the great play-writer of the time would not tend to soften their traditional prejudice, and the persecution of players by priests was in some sense an episode of the war between the priest and the philosophers. The latter took up the cause of the stage partly because they hoped to make the drama an effective rival to the teaching of pulpit and confessional, partly from their natural sympathy with an elevated form of intellectual manifestation, and partly from their abhorrence of the practical inhumanity with which the officers of the church treated stage performers. While people of quality eagerly sought the society of those who furnished them as much diversion in private as in public, the church refused to all players the marriage blessing; when an actor or actress wished to marry, they were obliged to renounce the stage, and the Archbishop of Paris diligently resisted evasion or subterfuge.[346] The atrocities connected with the refusal of burial, as well in the case of players as of philosophers, are known to all readers in a dozen illustrious instances, from Moliere and Adrienne Lecouvreur downwards.

Here, as along the whole line of the battle between new light and old prejudice, Rousseau took part, if not with the church, at least against its adversaries. His point of view was at bottom truly puritanical. Jeremy Collier in his *Short View of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage* (1698) takes up quite a different position. This once famous piece was not a treatment of the general question, but an attack on certain specific qualities of the plays of his time—their indecency of phrase, their oaths, their abuse of the clergy, the gross libertinism of the characters. One can hardly deny that this was richly deserved by the English drama of the Restoration,



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and Collier's strictures were not applicable, nor meant to apply, either to the ancients, for he has a good word even for Aristophanes, or to the French drama. Bossuet's loftier denunciation, like Rousseau's, was puritanical, and it extended to the whole body of stage plays. He objected to the drama as a school of concupiscence, as a subtle or gross debaucher of the gravity and purity of the understanding, as essentially a charmer of the senses, and therefore the most equivocal and untrustworthy of teachers. He appeals to the fathers, to Scripture, to Plato, and even to Christ, who cried, *Woe unto you that laugh*.^[347] There is a fine austerity about Bossuet's energetic criticism; it is so free from breathless eagerness, and so severe without being thinly bitter. The churchmen of a generation or two later had fallen from this height into gloomy peevishness.

Rousseau's letter on the theatre, it need hardly be said, is meant to be an appeal to the common sense and judgment of his readers, and not conceived in the ecclesiastical tone of unctuous anathema and fulgurant menace. It is no bishop's pastoral, replete with solecisms of thought and idiom, but a piece of firm dialectic in real matter. His position is this: that the moral effect of the stage can never be salutary in itself, while it may easily be extremely pernicious, and that the habit of frequenting the theatre, the taste for imitating the style of the actors, the cost in money, the waste in time, and all the other accessory conditions, apart from the morality of the matter represented, are bad things in themselves, absolutely and in every circumstance. Secondly, these effects in all kinds are specially bad in relation to the social condition and habits of Geneva.^[348] The first part of the discussion is an ingenious answer to some of the now trite pleas for the morality of the drama, such as that tragedy leads to pity through terror, that comedy corrects men while amusing them, that both make virtue attractive and vice hateful.^[349] Rousseau insists with abundance of acutely chosen illustration that the pity that is awaked by tragedy is a fleeting emotion which subsides when the curtain falls; that comedy as often as not amuses men at the expense of old age, uncouth virtue, paternal carefulness, and other objects which we should be taught rather to revere than to ridicule; and that both tragedy and comedy, instead of making vice hateful, constantly win our sympathy for it. Is not the French stage, he asks, as much the triumph of great villains, like Catilina, Mahomet, Atreus, as of illustrious heroes?



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This rude handling of accepted commonplace is always one of the most interesting features in Rousseau's polemic. It was of course a characteristic of the eighteenth century always to take up the ethical and high prudential view of whatever had to be justified, and Rousseau seems from this point to have been successful in demolishing arguments which might hold of Greek tragedy at its best, but which certainly do not hold of any other dramatic forms. The childishness of the old criticism which attaches the label of some moral from the copybook to each piece, as its lesson and point of moral aim, is evident. In repudiating this Rousseau was certainly right.[350] Both the assailants and the defenders of the stage, however, commit the double error, first of supposing that the drama is always the same thing, from the Agamemnon down to the last triviality of a London theatre, and next of pitching the discussion in too high a key, as if the effect or object of a stage play in the modern era, where grave sentiment clothes itself in other forms, were substantially anything more serious than an evening's amusement. Apart from this, and in so far as the discussion is confined to the highest dramatic expression, the true answer to Rousseau is now a very plain one. The drama does not work in the sphere of direct morality, though like everything else in the world it has a moral or immoral aspect. It is an art of ideal presentation, not concerned with the inculcation of immediate practical lessons, but producing a stir in all our sympathetic emotions, quickening the imagination, and so communicating a wider life to the character of the spectator. This is what the drama in the hands of a worthy master does; it is just what noble composition in music does, and there is no more directly moralising effect in the one than in the other. You must trust to the sum of other agencies to guide the interest and sympathy thus quickened into channels of right action. Rousseau, like most other controversialists, makes an attack of which the force rests on the assumption that the special object of the attack is the single influencing element and the one decisive instrument in making men had or good. What he says about the drama would only be true if the public went to the play all day long, and were accessible to no other moral force whatever, modifying and counteracting such lessons as they might learn at the theatre. He failed here as in the wider controversy on the sciences and arts, to consider the particular subject of discussion in relation to the whole of the general medium in which character moves, and by whose manifold action and reaction it is incessantly affected and variously shaped.



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So when he passed on from the theory of dramatic morality to the matter which he had more at heart, namely, the practical effects of introducing the drama into Geneva, he keeps out of sight all the qualities in the Genevese citizen which would protect him against the evil influence of the stage, though it is his anxiety for the preservation of these very qualities that gives all its fire to his eloquence. If the citizen really was what Rousseau insisted that he was, then his virtues would surely neutralise the evil of the drama; if not, the drama would do him no harm. We need not examine the considerations in which Rousseau pointed out the special reasons against introducing a theatre into his native town. It would draw the artisans away from their work, cause wasteful expenditure of money in amusements, break up the harmless and inexpensive little clubs of men and the social gatherings of women. The town was not populous enough to support a theatre, therefore the government would have to provide one, and this would mean increased taxation. All this was the secondary and merely colourable support by argumentation, of a position that had been reached and was really held by sentiment. Rousseau hated the introduction of French plays in the same way that Cato hated the introduction of fine talkers from Greece. It was an innovation, and so habitual was it with Rousseau to look on all movement in the direction of what the French writers called taste and cultivation as depraving, that he cannot help taking for granted that any change in manners associated with taste must necessarily be a change for the worse. Thus the Letter to D'Alembert was essentially a supplement to the first Discourse; it was an application of its principles to a practical case. It was part of his general reactionary protest against philosophers, poets, men of letters, and all their works, without particular apprehension on the side of the drama. Hence its reasoning is much less interesting than its panegyric on the simplicity, robust courage, and manliness of the Genevese, and its invective against the effeminacy and frivolity of the Parisian. One of the most significant episodes in the discussion is the lengthy criticism on the immortal Misanthrope of Moliere. Rousseau admits it for the masterpiece of the comic muse, though with characteristic perversity he insists that the hero is not misanthropic enough, nor truly misanthropic at all, because he flies into rage at small things affecting himself, instead of at the large follies of the race. Again, he says that Moliere makes Alceste ridiculous, virtuous as he is, in order to win the applause of the pit. It is for the character of Philinte, however, that Rousseau reserves all his spleen. He takes care to describe him in terms which exactly hit Rousseau's own conception of his philosophic enemies, who find all going well because they have no interest in anything going better; who are content with everybody, because they do not care



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for anybody; who round a full table maintain that it is not true that the people are hungry. As criticism, one cannot value this kind of analysis. D'Alembert replied with a much more rational interpretation of the great comedy, but finding himself seized with the critic's besetting impertinence of improving masterpieces, he suddenly stopped with the becoming reflection—"But I perceive, sir, that I am giving lessons to Moliere." [351]

The constant thought of Paris gave Rousseau an admirable occasion of painting two pictures in violent contrast, each as over-coloured as the other by his mixed conceptions of the Plutarchian antique and imaginary pastoral. We forget the depravation of the stage and the ill living of comedians in magnificent descriptions of the manly exercises and cheerful festivities of the free people on the shores of the Lake of Geneva, and in scornful satire on the Parisian seraglios, where some woman assembles a number of men who are more like women than their entertainers. We see on the one side the rude sons of the republic, boxing, wrestling, running, in generous emulation, and on the other the coxcombs of cultivated Paris imprisoned in a drawing-room, "rising up, sitting down, incessantly going and coming to the fire-place, to the window, taking up a screen and putting it down again a hundred times, turning over books, flitting from picture to picture, turning and pirouetting about the room, while the idol stretched motionless on a couch all the time is only alive in her tongue and eyes" (p. 161). If the rough patriots of the Lake are less polished in speech, they are all the weightier in reason; they do not escape by a pleasantry or a compliment; each feeling himself attacked by all the forces of his adversary, he is obliged to employ all his own to defend himself, and this is how a mind acquires strength and precision. There may be here and there a licentious phrase, but there is no ground for alarm in that. It is not the least rude who are always the most pure, and even a rather clownish speech is better than that artificial style in which the two sexes seduce one another, and familiarise themselves decently with vice. 'Tis true our Swiss drinks too much, but after all let us not calumniate even vice; as a rule drinkers are cordial and frank, good, upright, just, loyal, brave, and worthy folk. Wherever people have most abhorrence of drunkenness, be sure they have most reason to fear lest its indiscretion should betray intrigue and treachery. In Switzerland it is almost thought well of, while at Naples they hold it in horror; but at bottom which is the more to be dreaded, the intemperance of the Swiss or the reserve of the Italian? It is hardly surprising to learn that the people of Geneva were as little gratified by this well-meant panegyric on their jollity as they had been by another writer's friendly eulogy on their Socinianism. [352]



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The reader who was not moved to turn brute and walk on all fours by the pictures of the state of nature in the Discourses, may find it more difficult to resist the charm of the brotherly festivities and simple pastimes which in the Letter to D'Alembert the patriot holds up to the admiration of his countrymen and the envy of foreigners. The writer is in Sparta, but he tempers his Sparta with a something from Charmettes. Never before was there so attractive a combination of martial austerity with the grace of the idyll. And the interest of these pictures is much more than literary; it is historic also. They were the original version of those great gatherings in the Champ de Mars and strange suppers of fraternity during the progress of the Revolution in Paris, which have amused the cynical ever since, but which pointed to a not unworthy aspiration. The fine gentlemen whom Rousseau did so well to despise had then all fled, and the common people under Rousseauite leaders were doing the best they could to realise on the banks of the Seine the imaginary joy-making and simple fellowship which had been first dreamed of for the banks of Lake Lemman, and commended with an eloquence that struck new chords in minds satiated or untouched by the brilliance of mere literature. There was no real state of things in Geneva corresponding to the gracious picture which Rousseau so generously painted, and some of the citizens complained that his account of their social joys was as little deserved as his ingenious vindication of their hearty feeling for barrel or bottle was little founded.[353]

The glorification of love of country did little for the Genevese for whom it was meant, but it penetrated many a soul in the greater nation that lay sunk in helpless indifference to its own ruin. Nowhere else among the writers who are the glory of France at this time, is any serious eulogy of patriotism. Rousseau glows with it, and though he always speaks in connection with Geneva, yet there is in his words a generous breadth and fire which gave them an irresistible contagiousness. There are many passages of this fine persuasive force in the Letter to D'Alembert; perhaps this, referring to the citizens of Geneva who had gone elsewhere in search of fortune, is as good as another. Do you think that the opening of a theatre, he asks, will bring them back to their mother city? No; "each of them must feel that he can never find anywhere else what he has left behind in his own land; an invincible charm must call him back to the spot that he ought never to have quitted; the recollection of their first exercises, their first pleasures, their first sights, must remain deeply graven in their hearts; the soft impressions made in the days of their youth must abide and grow stronger with advancing years, while a thousand others wax dim; in the midst of the pomp of great cities and all their cheerless magnificence, a secret voice must for ever cry in the depth of the wanderer's soul, Ah,



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where are the games and holidays of my youth? Where is the concord of the townsmen, where the public brotherhood? Where is pure joy and true mirth? Where are peace, freedom, equity? Let us hasten to seek all these. With the heart of a Genevese, with a city as smiling, a landscape as full of delight, a government as just, with pleasures so true and so pure, and all that is needed to be able to relish them, how is it that we do not all adore our birth-land? It was thus in old times that by modest feasts and homely games her citizens were called back by that Sparta which I can never quote often enough as an example for us; thus in Athens in the midst of fine art, thus in Susa in the very bosom of luxury and soft delights, the wearied Spartan sighed after his coarse pastimes and exhausting exercises" (p. 211).[354]

Any reference to this powerfully written, though most sophistical piece, would be imperfect which should omit its slightly virulent onslaught upon women and the passion which women inspire. The modern drama, he said, being too feeble to rise to high themes, has fallen back on love; and on this hint he proceeds to a censure of love as a poetic theme, and a bitter estimate of women as companions for men, which might have pleased Calvin or Knox in his sternest mood. The same eloquence which showed men the superior delights of the state of nature, now shows the superior fitness of the oriental seclusion of women; it makes a sympathetic reader tremble at the want of modesty, purity, and decency, in the part which women are allowed to take by the infatuated men of a modern community.

All this, again, is directed against "that philosophy of a day, which is born and dies in the corner of a city, and would fain stifle the cry of nature and the unanimous voice of the human race" (p. 131). The same intrepid spirits who had brought reason to bear upon the current notions of providence, inspiration, ecclesiastical tradition, and other unlighted spots in the human mind, had perceived that the subjection of women to a secondary place belonged to the same category, and could not any more successfully be defended by reason. Instead of raging against women for their boldness, their frivolousness, and the rest, as our passionate sentimentalist did, the opposite school insisted that all these evils were due to the folly of treating women with gallantry instead of respect, and to the blindness of refusing an equally vigorous and masculine education to those who must be the closest companions of educated man. This was the view forced upon the most rational observers of a society where women were so powerful, and so absolutely unfit by want of intellectual training for the right use of social power. D'Alembert expressed this view in a few pages of forcible pleading in his reply to Rousseau,[355] and some thirty-two years later, when all questions had become political (1790), Condorcet ably extended the same line of argument so as to make



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it cover the claims of women to all the rights of citizenship.[356] From the nature of the case, however, it is impossible to confute by reason a man who denies that the matter in dispute is within the decision and jurisdiction of reason, and who supposes that his own opinion is placed out of the reach of attack when he declares it to be the unanimous voice of the human race. We may remember that the author of this philippic against love was at the very moment brooding over the New Heloisa, and was fresh from strange transports at the feet of the Julie whom we know.

The Letter on the Stage was the definite mark of Rousseau's schism from the philosophic congregation. Has Jean Jacques turned a father of the church? asked Voltaire. Deserters who fight against their country ought to be hung. The little flock are falling to devouring one another. This arch-madman, who might have been something, if he would only have been guided by his brethren of the Encyclopaedia, takes it into his head to make a band of his own. He writes against the stage, after writing a bad play of his own. He finds four or five rotten staves of Diogenes' tub, and instals himself therein to bark at his friends.[357] D'Alembert was more tolerant, but less clear-sighted. He insisted that the little flock should do its best to heal divisions instead of widening them. Jean Jacques, he said, "is a madman who is very clever, and who is only clever when he is in a fever; it is best therefore neither to cure nor to insult him."

Rousseau made the preface to the Letter on the Stage an occasion for a proclamation of his final breach with Diderot. "I once," he said, "possessed a severe and judicious Aristarchus; I have him no longer, and wish for him no longer." To this he added in a footnote a passage from Ecclesiasticus, to the effect that if you have drawn a sword on a friend there still remains a way open, and if you have spoken cheerless words to him concord is still possible, but malicious reproach and the betrayal of a secret—these things banish friendship beyond return. This was the end of his personal connection with the men whom he always contemptuously called the Holbachians. After 1760 the great stream divided into two; the rationalist and the emotional schools became visibly antipathetic, and the voice of the epoch was no longer single or undistracted.

FOOTNOTES:

[331] See above p. 149.

[332] Voltaire to Rousseau. Aug. 30, 1755.

[333] *Corr.*, i. 237. Sept. 10, 1755.

[334] *La Loi Naturelle*.



[335] In 1754 the Berlin Academy proposed for a prize essay, *An Examination of Pope's System*, and Lessing the next year wrote a pamphlet to show that Pope had no system, but only a patchwork. See Mr. Pattison's *Introduction to Pope's Essay on Man*, p. 12. Sime's *Lessing*, i. 128.

[336] *Conf.* ix. 276.



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[337] *Corr.*, i. 289-316. Aug. 18, 1756.

[338] Joseph De Maistre put all this much more acutely; *Soirees*, iv.

[339] Madame d'Epainay, *Mem.*, i. 380.

[340] *Conf.*, ix. 277. Also *Corr.*, iii. 326. March 11, 1764. Tronchin's long letter, to which Rousseau refers in this passage, is given in M. Streckeisen-Moultou's collection, i. 323, and is interesting to people who care to know how Voltaire looked to a doctor who saw him closely.

[341] *Corr.*, ii. 132. June 17, 1760. Also *Conf.*, x. 91.

[342] Some other interesting references to Voltaire in Rousseau's letters are—ii. 170 (Nov. 29, 1760), denouncing Voltaire as "that trumpet of impiety, that fine genius, and that low soul," and so forth; iii. 29 (Oct. 30, 1762), accusing Voltaire of malicious intrigues against him in Switzerland; iii. 168 (Mar. 21, 1763), that if there is to be any reconciliation, Voltaire must make first advances; iii. 280 (Dec., 1763), described a trick played by Voltaire; iv. 40 (Jan. 31, 1765) 64; *Corr.*, v. 74 (Jan. 5, 1767), replying to Voltaire's calumnious account of his early life; note on this subject giving Voltaire the lie direct, iv. 150 (May 31, 1765); the *Lettre a D'Ambert*, p. 193, etc.

[343] Bernardin St. Pierre, xii. 96. In the same sense, in Dusaulx, *Mes Rapports avec J.J.R.*, (Paris: 1798), p. 101. See also *Corr.*, iv. 254. Dec. 30, 1765. And again, iv. 276, Feb. 28, 1766, and p. 356.

[344] Dusaulx, p. 102.

[345] This part of D'Alembert's article is reproduced in Rousseau's preface, and the whole is given at the end of the volume in M. Auguis's edition, p. 409.

[346] Goncourt, *Femme au 18ieme siecle*, p. 256. Grimm, *Corr. Lit.*, vi. 248.

[347] *Maximes sur la Comedie*, Sec.15, etc. They were written in reply to a plea for Comedy by Caffaro, a Jesuit father.

[348] The letter may be conveniently divided into three parts: I. pp. 1-89, II. pp. 90-145, III. pp. 146 to the end. Of course if Rousseau in saying that tragedy leads to pity through terror, was thinking of the famous passage in the sixth chapter of Aristotle's *Poetics*, he was guilty of a shocking mistranslation.

[349] Some of the arguments seem drawn from Plato; see, besides the well-known passages in the *Republic*, the *Laws*, iv. 719, and still more directly, *Gorgias*, 502.



[350] Yet D'Alembert in his very cool and sensible reply (p. 245) repeats the old saws, as that in *Catilina* we learn the lesson of the harm which may be done to the human race by the abuse of great talents, and so forth.

[351] *Lettre a M. J.J. Rousseau*, p. 258.

[352] D'Alembert's *Lettre a J.J. Rousseau*, p. 277. Rousseau has a passage to the same effect, that false people are always sober, in the *Nouv. Hel.*, Pt. I. xxiii. 123.



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[353] Tronchin, for instance, in a letter to Rousseau, in M. Streckeisen-Moultou's collection, i. 325.

[354] A troop of comedians had been allowed to play for a short time in Geneva, with many protests, during the mediation of 1738. In 1766, eight years after Rousseau's letter, the government gave permission for the establishment of a theatre in the town. It was burnt down in 1768, and Voltaire spitefully hinted that the catastrophe was the result of design, instigated by Rousseau (*Corr.* v. 299, April 26, 1768). The theatre was not re-erected until 1783, when the oligarchic party regained the ascendancy and brought back with them the drama, which the democrats in their reign would not permit.

[355] *Lettre a J.J. Rousseau*, pp. 265-271.

[356] *Oeuv.*, x. 121.

[357] To Thieriot, Sept. 17, 1758. To D'Alembert, Oct. 20, 1761. *Ib.* March 19, 1761.

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ROUSSEAU.

CHAPTER I.

MONTMORENCY—THE NEW HELOISA.



The many conditions of intellectual productiveness are still hidden in such profound obscurity that we are unable to explain why a period of stormy moral agitation seems to be in certain natures the indispensable antecedent of their highest creative effort. Byron is one instance, and Rousseau is another, in which the current of stimulating force made this rapid way from the lower to the higher parts of character, and only expended itself after having traversed the whole range of emotion and faculty, from their meanest, most realistic, most personal forms of exercise, up to the summit of what is lofty and ideal. No man was ever involved in such an odious complication of moral maladies as beset Rousseau in the winter of 1758. Yet within three years of this miserable epoch he had completed not only the *New Heloisa*, which is the monument of his fall, but the *Social Contract*, which was the most influential, and *Emilius*, which was perhaps the



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most elevated and spiritual, of all the productions of the prolific genius of France in the eighteenth century. A poor light-hearted Marmontel thought that the secret of Rousseau's success lay in the circumstance that he began to write late, and it is true that no other author, so considerable as Rousseau, waited until the age of fifty for the full vigour of his inspiration. No tale of years, however, could have ripened such fruit without native strength and incommunicable savour. Nor can the mechanical movement of those better ordered characters which keep the balance of the world even, impart to literature that peculiar quality, peculiar but not the finest, that comes from experience of the black unlighted abysses of the soul.

The period of actual production was externally calm. The New Heloisa was completed in 1759, and published in 1761. The Social Contract was published in the spring of 1762, and Emilius a few weeks later. Throughout this period Rousseau was, for the last time in his life, at peace with most of his fellows. Though he never relented from his antipathy to the Holbachians, for the time it slumbered, until a more real and serious persecution than any which he imputed to them, transformed his antipathy into a gloomy frenzy.

The new friends whom he made at Montmorency were among the greatest people in the kingdom. The Duke of Luxembourg (1702-64) was a marshal of France, and as intimate a friend of the king as the king was capable of having. The Marechale de Luxembourg (1707-87) had been one of the most beautiful, and continued to be one of the most brilliant leaders of the last aristocratic generation that was destined to sport on the slopes of the volcano. The former seems to have been a loyal and homely soul; the latter, restless, imperious, penetrating, unamiable. Their dealings with Rousseau were marked by perfect sincerity and straightforward friendship. They gave him a convenient apartment in a small summer lodge in the park, to which he retreated when he cared for a change from his narrow cottage. He was a constant guest at their table, where he met the highest personages in France. The marshal did not disdain to pay him visits, or to walk with him, or to discuss his private affairs. Unable as ever to shine in conversation, yet eager to show his great friends that they had to do with no common mortal, Rousseau bethought him of reading the New Heloisa aloud to them. At ten in the morning he used to wait upon the marechale, and there by her bedside he read the story of the love, the sin, the repentance of Julie, the distraction of Saint Preux, the wisdom of Wolmar, and the sage friendship of Lord Edward, in tones which enchanted her both with his book and its author for all the rest of the day, as all the women in France were so soon to be enchanted.[1] This, as he expected, amply reconciled her to the uncouthness and clumsiness of his conversation, which was at least as maladroit and as spiritless in the presence of a duchess as it was in presences less imposing.



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One side of character is obviously tested by the way in which a man bears himself in his relations with those of greater social consideration. Rousseau was taxed by some of his plebeian enemies with a most unheroic deference to his patrician friends. He had a dog whose name was *Duc*. When he came to sit at a duke's table, he changed his dog's name to *Turc*.^[2] Again, one day in a transport of tenderness he embraced the old marshal—the duchess embraced Rousseau ten times a day, for the age was effusive—“Ah, monsieur le marechal, I used to hate the great before I knew you, and I hate them still more, since you make me feel so strongly how easy it would be for them to have themselves adored.”^[3] On another occasion he happened to be playing at chess with the Prince of Conti, who had come to visit him in his cottage.^[4] In spite of the signs and grimaces of the attendants, he insisted on beating the prince in a couple of games. Then he said with respectful gravity, “Monseigneur, I honour your serene highness too much not to beat you at chess always.”^[5] A few days after, the vanquished prince sent him a present of game which Rousseau duly accepted. The present was repeated, but this time Rousseau wrote to Madame de Boufflers that he would receive no more, and that he loved the prince's conversation better than his gifts.^[6] He admits that this was an ungracious proceeding, and that to refuse game “from a prince of the blood who throws such good feeling into the present, is not so much the delicacy of a proud man bent on preserving his independence, as the rusticity of an unmannerly person who does not know his place.”^[7] Considering the extreme virulence with which Rousseau always resented gifts even of the most trifling kind from his friends, one may perhaps find some inconsistency in this condemnation of a sort of conduct to which he tenaciously clung on all other occasions. If the fact of the donor being a prince of the blood is allowed to modify the quality of the donation, that is hardly a defensible position in the austere citizen of Geneva. Madame de Boufflers,^[8] the intimate friend of our sage Hume, and the yet more intimate friend of the Prince of Conti, gave him a judicious warning when she bade him beware of laying himself open to a charge of affectation, lest it should obscure the brightness of his virtue and so hinder its usefulness. “Fabius and Regulus would have accepted such marks of esteem, without feeling in them any hurt to their disinterestedness and frugality.”^[9] Perhaps there is a flutter of self-consciousness that is not far removed from this affectation, in the pains which Rousseau takes to tell us that after dining at the castle, he used to return home gleefully to sup with a mason who was his neighbour and his friend.^[10] On the whole, however, and so far as we know, Rousseau conducted himself not unworthily with these high people. His letters to them are for the most part marked by self-respect and a moderate



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graciousness, though now and again he makes rather too much case of the difference of rank, and asserts his independence with something too much of protestation.[11] Their relations with him are a curious sign of the interest which the members of the great world took in the men who were quietly preparing the destruction both of them and their world. The Marechale de Luxembourg places this squalid dweller in a hovel on her estate in the place of honour at her table, and embraces his Theresa. The Prince of Conti pays visits of courtesy and sends game to a man whom he employs at a few sous an hour to copy manuscript for him. The Countess of Boufflers, in sending him the money, insists that he is to count her his warmest friend.[12] When his dog dies, the countess writes to sympathise with his chagrin, and the prince begs to be allowed to replace it.[13] And when persecution and trouble and infinite confusion came upon him, they all stood as fast by him as their own comfort would allow. Do we not feel that there must have been in the unhappy man, besides all the recorded pettinesses and perversities which revolt us in him, a vein of something which touched men, and made women devoted to him, until he splenetically drove both men and women away from him? With Madame d'Epainay and Madame d'Houdetot, as with the dearer and humbler patroness of his youth, we have now parted company. But they are instantly succeeded by new devotees. And the lovers of Rousseau, in all degrees, were not silly women led captive by idle fancy. Madame de Boufflers was one of the most distinguished spirits of her time. Her friendship for him was such, that his sensuous vanity made Rousseau against all reason or probability confound it with a warmer form of emotion, and he plumes himself in a manner most displeasing on the victory which he won over his own feelings on the occasion.[14] As a matter of fact he had no feelings to conquer, any more than the supposed object of them ever bore him any ill-will for his indifference, as in his mania of suspicion he afterwards believed.

There was a calm about the too few years he passed at Montmorency, which leaves us in doubt whether this mania would ever have afflicted him, if his natural irritation had not been made intense and irresistible by the cruel distractions that followed the publication of Emilius. He was tolerably content with his present friends. The simplicity of their way of dealing with him contrasted singularly, as he thought, with the never-ending solitudes, as importunate as they were officious, of the patronising friends whom he had just cast off.[15] Perhaps, too, he was soothed by the companionship of persons whose rank may have flattered his vanity, while unlike Diderot and his old literary friends in Paris, they entered into no competition with him in the peculiar sphere of his own genius. Madame de Boufflers, indeed, wrote a tragedy, but he told her gruffly enough that it was a plagiarism from Southerne's Oroonoko.[16]



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That Rousseau was thoroughly capable of this pitiful emotion of sensitive literary jealousy is proved, if by nothing else, by his readiness to suspect that other authors were jealous of him. No one suspects others of a meanness of this kind unless he is capable of it himself. The resounding success which followed the *New Heloisa* and *Emilius* put an end to these apprehensions. It raised him to a pedestal in popular esteem as high as that on which Voltaire stood triumphant. That very success unfortunately brought troubles which destroyed Rousseau's last chance of ending his days in full reasonableness.

Meanwhile he enjoyed his final interval of moderate wholesomeness and peace. He felt his old healthy joy in the green earth. One of the letters commemorates his delight in the great scudding south-west winds of February, soft forerunners of the spring, so sweet to all who live with nature.[17] At the end of his garden was a summer-house, and here even on wintry days he sat composing or copying. It was not music only that he copied. He took a curious pleasure in making transcripts of his romance, and he sold them to the Duchess of Luxembourg and other ladies for some moderate fee.[18] Sometimes he moved from his own lodging to the quarters in the park which his great friends had induced him to accept. "They were charmingly neat; the furniture was of white and blue. It was in this perfumed and delicious solitude, in the midst of woods and streams and choirs of birds of every kind, with the fragrance of the orange-flower poured round me, that I composed in a continual ecstasy the fifth book of *Emilius*. With what eagerness did I hasten every morning at sunrise to breathe the balmy air! What good coffee I used to make under the porch in company with my Theresa! The cat and the dog made up the party. That would have sufficed me for all the days of my life, and I should never have known weariness." And so to the assurance, so often repeated under so many different circumstances, that here was a true heaven upon earth, where if fates had only allowed he would have known unbroken innocence and lasting happiness.[19]

Yet he had the wisdom to warn others against attempting a life such as he craved for himself. As on a more memorable occasion, there came to him a young man who would fain have been with him always, and whom he sent away exceeding sorrowful. "The first lesson I should give you would be not to surrender yourself to the taste you say you have for the contemplative life. It is only an indolence of the soul, to be condemned at any age, but especially so at yours. Man is not made to meditate, but to act. Labour therefore in the condition of life in which you have been placed by your family and by providence: that is the first precept of the virtue which you wish to follow. If residence at Paris, joined to the business you have there, seems to you irreconcilable with virtue, do better still, and return to your own



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province. Go live in the bosom of your family, serve and solace your honest parents. There you will be truly fulfilling the duties that virtue imposes on you." [20] This intermixture of sound sense with unutterable perversities almost suggests a doubt how far the perversities were sincere, until we remember that Rousseau even in the most exalted part of his writings was careful to separate immediate practical maxims from his theoretical principles of social philosophy. [21]

Occasionally his good sense takes so stiff and unsympathetic a form as to fill us with a warmer dislike for him than his worst paradoxes inspire. A correspondent had written to him about the frightful persecutions which were being inflicted on the Protestants in some district of France. Rousseau's letter is a masterpiece in the style of Eliphaz the Temanite. Our brethren must surely have given some pretext for the evil treatment to which they were subjected. One who is a Christian must learn to suffer, and every man's conduct ought to conform to his doctrine. Our brethren, moreover, ought to remember that the word of God is express upon the duty of obeying the laws set up by the prince. The writer cannot venture to run any risk by interceding in favour of our brethren with the government. "Every one has his own calling upon the earth; mine is to tell the public harsh but useful truths. I have preached humanity, gentleness, tolerance, so far as it depended upon me; 'tis no fault of mine if the world has not listened. I have made it a rule to keep to general truths; I produce no libels, no satires; I attack no man, but men; not an action, but a vice." [22] The worst of the worthy sort of people, wrote Voltaire, is that they are such cowards: a man groans over a wrong, he holds his tongue, he takes his supper, and he forgets all about it. [23] If Voltaire could not write like Fenelon, at least he could never talk like Tartufe; he responded to no tale of wrong with words about his mission, with strings of antitheses, but always with royal anger and the spring of alert and puissant endeavour. In an hour of oppression one would rather have been the friend of the saviour of the Calas and of Sirven, than of the vindicator of theism.

Rousseau, however, had good sense enough in less equivocal forms than this. For example, in another letter he remonstrates with a correspondent for judging the rich too harshly. "You do not bear in mind that having from their childhood contracted a thousand wants which we are without, then to bring them down to the condition of the poor, would be to make them more miserable than the poor. We should be just towards all the world, even to those who are not just to us. Ah, if we had the virtues opposed to the vices which we reproach in them, we should soon forget that such people were in the world. One word more. To have any right to despise the rich, we ought ourselves to be prudent and thrifty, so as to have no need of riches." [24] In the observance of



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this just precept Rousseau was to the end of his life absolutely without fault. No one was more rigorously careful to make his independence sure by the fewness of his wants and by minute financial probity. This firm limitation of his material desires was one cause of his habitual and almost invariable refusal to accept presents, though no doubt another cause was the stubborn and ungracious egoism which made him resent every obligation.

It is worth remembering in illustration of the peculiar susceptibility and softness of his character where women were concerned—it was not quite without exception—that he did not fly into a fit of rage over their gifts, as he did over those of men. He remonstrated, but in gentler key. “What could I do with four pullets?” he wrote to a lady who had presented them to him. “I began by sending two of them to people to whom I am indifferent. That made me think of the difference there is between a present and a testimony of friendship. The first will never find in me anything but a thankless heart; the second.... Ah, if you had only given me news of yourself without sending me anything else, how rich and how grateful you would have made me; instead of that the pullets are eaten, and the best thing I can do is to forget all about them; let us say no more.”[25] Rude and repellent as this may seem, and as it is, there is a rough kind of playfulness about it, when compared with the truculence which he was not slow to exhibit to men. If a friend presumed to thank him for any service, he was peremptorily rebuked for his ignorance of the true qualities of friendship, with which thankfulness has no connection. He ostentatiously refused to offer thanks for services himself, even to a woman whom he always treated with so much consideration as the Marechale de Luxembourg. He once declared boldly that modesty is a false virtue,[26] and though he did not go so far as to make gratitude the subject of a corresponding formula of denunciation, he always implied that this too is really one of the false virtues. He confessed to Malesherbes, without the slightest contrition, that he was ungrateful by nature.[27] To Madame d’Epinay he once went still further, declaring that he found it hard not to hate those who had used him well.[28] Undoubtedly he was right so far as this, that gratitude answering to a spirit of exaction in a benefactor is no merit; a service done in expectation of gratitude is from that fact stripped of the quality which makes gratitude due, and is a mere piece of egoism in altruistic disguise. Kindness in its genuine forms is a testimony of good feeling, and conventional speech is perhaps a little too hard, as well as too shallow and unreal, in calling the recipient evil names because he is unable to respond to the good feeling. Rousseau protested against a conception of friendship which makes of what ought to be disinterested helpfulness a title to everlasting tribute. His way of expressing this was harsh



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and unamiable, but it was not without an element of uprightness and veracity. As in his greater themes, so in his paradoxes upon private relations, he hid wholesome ingredients of rebuke to the unquestioning acceptance of common form. "I am well pleased," he said to a friend, "both with thee and thy letters, except the end, where thou say'st thou art more mine than thine own. For there thou liest, and it is not worth while to take the trouble to *thee* and *thou* a man as thine intimate, only to tell him untruths." [29] Chesterfield was for people with much self-love of the small sort, probably a more agreeable person to meet than Doctor Johnson, but Johnson was the more wholesome companion for a man.

Occasionally, though not very often, he seems to have let spleen take the place of honest surliness, and so drifted into clumsy and ill-humoured banter, of a sort that gives a dreary shudder to one fresh from Voltaire. "So you have chosen for yourself a tender and virtuous mistress! I am not surprised; all mistresses are that. You have chosen her in Paris! To find a tender and virtuous mistress in Paris is to have not such bad luck. You have made her a promise of marriage? My friend, you have made a blunder; for if you continue to love, the promise is superfluous, and if you do not, then it is no avail. You have signed it with your blood? That is all but tragic; but I don't know that the choice of the ink in which he writes, gives anything to the fidelity of the man who signs." [30]

We can only add that the health in which a man writes may possibly excuse the dismal quality of what he writes, and that Rousseau was now as always the prey of bodily pain which, as he was conscious, made him distraught. "My sufferings are not very excruciating just now," he wrote on a later occasion, "but they are incessant, and I am not out of pain a single moment day or night, and this quite drives me mad. I feel bitterly my wrong conduct and the baseness of my suspicions; but if anything can excuse me, it is my mournful state, my loneliness," and so on. [31] This prolonged physical anguish, which was made more intense towards the end of 1761 by the accidental breaking of a surgical instrument, [32] sometimes so nearly wore his fortitude away as to make him think of suicide. [33] In Lord Edward's famous letter on suicide in the *New Heloisa*, while denying in forcible terms the right of ending one's days merely to escape from intolerable mental distress, he admits that inasmuch as physical disorders only grow incessantly worse, violent and incurable bodily pain may be an excuse for a man making away with himself; he ceases to be a human being before dying, and in putting an end to his life he only completes his release from a body that embarrasses him, and contains his soul no longer. [34] The thought was often present to him in this form. Eighteen months later than our last date, the purpose grew very deliberate under an aggravation of his malady, and he seriously looked upon his own case as falling within the conditions of Lord Edward's exception. [35] It is difficult, in the face of outspoken declarations like these, to know what writers can be thinking of when, with respect to the controversy on the manner of Rousseau's death, they pronounce him

incapable of such a dereliction of his own most cherished principles as anything like self-destruction would have been.



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As he sat gnawed by pain, with surgical instruments on his table, and sombre thoughts of suicide in his head, the ray of a little episode of romance shone in incongruously upon the scene. Two ladies in Paris, absorbed in the New Heloisa, like all the women of the time, identified themselves with the Julie and the Claire of the novel that none could resist. They wrote anonymously to the author, claiming their identification with characters fondly supposed to be immortal. "You will know that Julie is not dead, and that she lives to love you; I am not this Julie, you perceive it by my style; I am only her cousin, or rather her friend, as Claire was." The unfortunate Saint Preux responded as gallantly as he could be expected to do in the intervals of surgery. "You do not know that the Saint Preux to whom you write is tormented with a cruel and incurable disorder, and that the very letter he writes to you is often interrupted by distractions of a very different kind."^[36] He figures rather uncouthly, but the unknown fair were not at first disabused, and one of them never was. Rousseau was deeply suspicious. He feared to be made the victim of a masculine pleasantry. From women he never feared anything. His letters were found too short, too cold. He replied to the remonstrance by a reference of extreme coarseness. His correspondents wrote from the neighbourhood of the Palais Royal, then and for long after the haunt of mercenary women. "You belong to your quarter more than I thought," he said brutally.^[37] The vulgarity of the lackey was never quite obliterated in him, even when the lackey had written Emilius. This was too much for the imaginary Claire. "I have given myself three good blows on my breast for the correspondence that I was silly enough to open between you," she wrote to Julie, and she remained implacable. The Julie, on the contrary, was faithful to the end of Rousseau's life. She took his part vehemently in the quarrel with Hume, and wrote in defence of his memory after he was dead. She is the most remarkable of all the instances of that unreasoning passion which the New Heloisa inflamed in the breasts of the women of that age. Madame Latour pursued Jean Jacques with a devotion that no coldness could repulse. She only saw him three times in all, the first time not until 1766, when he was on his way through Paris to England. The second time, in 1772, she visited him without mentioning her name, and he did not recognise her; she brought him some music to copy, and went away unknown. She made another attempt, announcing herself: he gave her a frosty welcome, and then wrote to her that she was to come no more. With a strange fidelity she bore him no grudge, but cherished his memory and sorrowed over his misfortunes to the day of her death. He was not an idol of very sublime quality, but we may think kindly of the idolatress.^[38] Worshippers are ever dearer to us than their graven images. Let us turn to the romance which touched women in this way, and helped to give a new spirit to an epoch.



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II.

As has been already said, it is the business of criticism to separate what is accidental in form, transitory in manner, and merely local in suggestion, from the general ideas which live under a casual and particular literary robe. And so we have to distinguish the external conditions under which a book like the *New Heloisa* is produced, from the living qualities in the author which gave the external conditions their hold upon him, and turned their development in one direction rather than another. We are only encouraging poverty of spirit, when we insist on fixing our eyes on a few of the minutiae of construction, instead of patiently seizing larger impressions and more durable meanings; when we stop at the fortuitous incidents of composition, instead of advancing to the central elements of the writer's character.

These incidents in the case of the *New Heloisa* we know; the sensuous communion with nature in her summer mood in the woods of Montmorency, the long hours and days of solitary expansion, the despairing passion for the too sage Julie of actual experience. But the power of these impressions from without depended on secrets of conformation within. An adult with marked character is, consciously or unconsciously, his own character's victim or sport. It is his whole system of impulses, ideas, pre-occupations, that make those critical situations ready, into which he too hastily supposes that an accident has drawn him. And this inner system not only prepares the situation; it forces his interpretation of the situation. Much of the interest of the *New Heloisa* springs from the fact that it was the outcome, in a sense of which the author himself was probably unconscious, of the general doctrine of life and conduct which he only professed to expound in writings of graver pretension. Rousseau generally spoke of his romance in phrases of depreciation, as the monument of a passing weakness. It was in truth as entirely a monument of the strength, no less than the weakness, of his whole scheme, as his weightiest piece. That it was not so deliberately, only added to its effect. The slow and musing air which underlies all the assumption of ardent passion, made a way for the doctrine into sensitive natures, that would have been untouched by the pretended ratiocination of the *Discourses*, and the didactic manner of the *Emilius*.

Rousseau's scheme, which we must carefully remember was only present to his own mind in an informal and fragmentary way, may be shortly described as an attempt to rehabilitate human nature in as much of the supposed freshness of primitive times, as the hardened crust of civil institutions and social use might allow. In this survey, however incoherently carried out, the mutual passion of the two sexes was the very last that was likely to escape Rousseau's attention. Hence it was with this that he began. The *Discourses* had been an attack upon the general ordering of society,



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and an exposition of the mischief that society has done to human nature at large. The romance treated one set of emotions in human nature particularly, though it also touches the whole emotional sphere indirectly. And this limitation of the field was accompanied by a total revolution in the method. Polemic was abandoned; the presence of hostility was forgotten in appearance, if not in the heart of the writer; instead of discussion, presentation; instead of abstract analysis of principles, concrete drawing of persons and dramatic delineation of passion. There is, it is true, a monstrous superfluity of ethical exposition of most doubtful value, but then that, as we have already said, was in the manners of the time. All people in those days with any pretensions to use their minds, wrote and talked in a superfine ethical manner, and violently translated the dictates of sensibility into formulas of morality. The important thing to remark is not that this semi-didactic strain is present, but that there is much less of it, and that it takes a far more subordinate place, than the subject and the reigning taste would have led us to expect. It is true, also, that Rousseau declared his intention in the two characters of Julie and of Wolmar, who eventually became Julie's husband, of leading to a reconciliation between the two great opposing parties, the devout and the rationalistic; of teaching them the lesson of reciprocal esteem, by showing the one that it is possible to believe in a God without being a hypocrite, and the other that it is possible to be an unbeliever without being a scoundrel.[39] This intention, if it was really present to Rousseau's mind while he was writing, and not an afterthought characteristically welcomed for the sake of giving loftiness and gravity to a composition of which he was always a little ashamed, must at any rate have been of a very pale kind. It would hardly have occurred to a critic, unless Rousseau had so emphatically pointed it out, that such a design had presided over the composition, and contemporary readers saw nothing of it. In the first part of the story, which is wholly passionate, it is certainly not visible, and in the second part neither of the two contending factions was likely to learn any lesson with respect to the other. Churchmen would have insisted that Wolmar was really a Christian dressed up as an atheist, and philosophers would hardly have accepted Julie as a type of the too believing people who broke Calas on the wheel, and cut off La Barre's head.

French critics tell us that no one now reads the New Heloisa in France except deliberate students of the works of Rousseau, and certainly few in this generation read it in our own country.[40] The action is very slight, and the play of motives very simple, when contrasted with the ingenuity of invention, the elaborate subtleties of psychological analysis, the power of rapid change from one perturbing incident or excited humour to another, which mark the modern writer of sentimental



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fiction. As the title warns us, it is a story of a youthful tutor and a too fair disciple, straying away from the lessons of calm philosophy into the heated places of passion. The high pride of Julie's father forbade all hope of their union, and in very desperation the unhappy pair lost the self-control of virtue, and threw themselves into the pit that lies so ready to our feet. Remorse followed with quick step, for Julie had with her purity lost none of the other lovelinesses of a dutiful character. Her lover was hurried away from the country by the generous solicitude of an English nobleman, one of the bravest, tenderest, and best of men. Julie, left undisturbed by her lover's presence, stricken with affliction at the death of a sweet and affectionate mother, and pressed by the importunities of a father whom she dearly loved, in spite of all the disasters which his will had brought upon her, at length consented to marry a foreign baron from some northern court. Wolmar was much older than she was; a devotee of calm reason, without a system and without prejudices, benevolent, orderly, above all things judicious. The lover meditated suicide, from which he was only diverted by the arguments of Lord Edward, who did more than argue; he hurried the forlorn man on board the ship of Admiral Anson, then just starting for his famous voyage round the world. And this marks the end of the first episode.

Rousseau always urged that his story was dangerous for young girls, and maintained that Richardson was grievously mistaken in supposing that they could be instructed by romances. It was like setting fire to the house, he said, for the sake of making the pumps play.[41] As he admitted so much, he is not open to attack on this side, except from those who hold the theory that no books ought to be written which may not prudently be put into the hands of the young,—a puerile and contemptible doctrine that must emasculate all literature and all art, by excluding the most interesting of human relations and the most powerful of human passions. There is not a single composition of the first rank outside of science, from the Bible downwards, that could undergo the test. The most useful standard for measuring the significance of a book in this respect is found in the manners of the time, and the prevailing tone of contemporary literature. In trying to appreciate the meaning of the *New Heloise* and its popularity, it is well to think of it as a delineation of love, in connection not only with such a book as the *Pucelle*, where there is at least wit, but with a story like Duclos's, which all ladies both read and were not in the least ashamed to acknowledge that they had read; or still worse, such an abomination as Diderot's first stories; or a story like Laclos's, which came a generation later, and with its infinite briskness and devilry carried the tradition of artistic impurity to as vigorous a manifestation as it is capable of reaching.[42] To a generation whose literature is as pure as the best English, American, and German literature is in the present day, the *New Heloise* might without doubt be corrupting. To the people who read *Crebillon* and the *Pucelle*, it was without doubt elevating.



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The case is just as strong if we turn from books to manners. Without looking beyond the circle of names that occur in Rousseau's own history, we see how deep the depravity had become. Madame d'Epinay's gallant sat at table with the husband, and the husband was perfectly aware of the relations between them. M. d'Epinay had notorious relations with two public women, and was not ashamed to refer to them in the presence of his wife, and even to seek her sympathy on an occasion when one of them was in some trouble. Not only this, but husband and lover used to pursue their debaucheries in the town together in jovial comradeship. An opera dancer presided at the table of a patrician abbe in his country house, and he passed weeks in her house in the town. As for shame, says Barbier on one occasion, "'tis true the king has a mistress, but who has not?—except the Duke of Orleans; he has withdrawn to *Ste. Genevieve*, and is thoroughly despised in consequence, and rightly." [43] Reeking disorder such as all this illustrates, made the passion of the two imaginary lovers of the fair lake seem like a breath from the garden of Eden. One virtue was lost in that simple paradise, but even that loss was followed by circumstances of mental pain and far circling distress, which banished the sin into a secondary place; and what remained to strike the imagination of the time were delightful pictures of fast union between two enchanting women, of the patience and compassionateness of a grave mother, of the chivalrous warmth and helpfulness of a loyal friend. Any one anxious to pick out sensual strokes and turns of grossness could make a small collection of such defilements from the *New Heloisa* without any difficulty. They were in Rousseau's character, and so they came out in his work. Saint Preux afflicts us with touches of this kind, just as we are afflicted with similar touches in the *Confessions*. They were not noticed at that day, when people's ears did not affect to be any chaster than the rest of them.

A historian of opinion is concerned with the general effect that was actually produced by a remarkable book, and with the causes that produced it. It is not his easy task to produce a demonstration that if the readers had all been as wise and as virtuous as the moralist might desire them to be, or if they had all been discriminating and scientific critics, not this, but a very different impression would have followed. Today we may wonder at the effect of the *New Heloisa*. A long story told in letters has grown to be a form incomprehensible and intolerable to us. We find Richardson hard to be borne, and he put far greater vivacity and wider variety into his letters than Rousseau did, though he was not any less diffuse, and he abounds in repetitions as Rousseau does not. Rousseau was absolutely without humour; that belongs to the keenly observant natures, and to those who love men in the concrete, not only humanity in the abstract. The pleasantries of Julie's



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cousin, for instance, are heavy and misplaced. Thus the whole book is in one key, without the dramatic changes of Richardson, too few even as those are. And who now can endure that antique fashion of apostrophising men and women, hot with passion and eager with all active impulses, in oblique terms of abstract qualities, as if their passion and their activity were only the inconsiderable embodiment of fine general ideas? We have not a single thrill, when Saint Preux being led into the chamber where his mistress is supposed to lie dying, murmurs passionately, "What shall I now see in the same place of refuge where once all breathed the ecstasy that intoxicated my soul, in this same object who both caused and shared my transports! the image of death, virtue unhappy, beauty expiring!"[44] This rhetorical artificiality of phrase, so repulsive to the more realistic taste of a later age, was as natural then as that facility of shedding tears, which appears so deeply incredible a performance to a generation that has lost that particular fashion of sensibility, without realising for the honour of its ancestors the physiological truth of the power of the will over the secretions.

The characters seem as stiff as some of the language, to us who are accustomed to an Asiatic luxuriousness of delineation. Yet the New Heloise was nothing less than the beginning of that fresh, full, highly-coloured style which has now taught us to find so little charm in the source and original of it. Saint Preux is a personage whom no widest charity, literary, philosophic, or Christian, can make endurable. Egoism is made thrice disgusting by a ceaseless redundance of fine phrases. The exaggerated conceits of love in our old poets turn graciously on the lover's eagerness to offer every sacrifice at the feet of his mistress. Even Werther, stricken creature as he was, yet had the stoutness to blow his brains out, rather than be the instrument of surrounding the life of his beloved with snares. Saint Preux's egoism is unbrightened by a single ray of tender abnegation, or a single touch of the sweet humility of devoted passion. The slave of his sensations, he has no care beyond their gratification. With some rotund nothing on his lips about virtue being the only path to happiness, his heart burns with sickly desire. He writes first like a pedagogue infected by some cantharidean philter, and then like a pedagogue without the philter, and that is the worse of the two. Lovelace and the Count of Valmont are manly and hopeful characters in comparison. Werther, again, at least represents a principle of rebellion, in the midst of all his self-centred despair, and he retains strength enough to know that his weakness is shameful. His despair, moreover, is deeply coloured with repulsed social ambition.[45] He feels the world about him. His French prototype, on the contrary, represents nothing but the unalloyed selfishness of a sensual love for which there is no universe outside of its own fevered pulsation.



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Julie is much less displeasing, partly perhaps for the reason that she belongs to the less displeasing sex. At least, she preserves fortitude, self-control, and profound considerateness for others. At a certain point her firmness even moves a measure of enthusiasm. If the New Heloisa could be said to have any moral intention, it is here where women learn from the example of Julie's energetic return to duty, the possibility and the satisfaction of bending character back to comeliness and honour. Excellent as this is from a moral point of view, the reader may wish that Julie had been less of a preacher, as well as less of a sinner. And even as sinner, she would have been more readily forgiven if she had been less deliberate. A maiden who sacrifices her virtue in order that the visible consequences may force her parents to consent to a marriage, is too strategical to be perfectly touching. As was said by the cleverest, though not the greatest, of all the women whose youth was fascinated by Rousseau, when one has renounced the charms of virtue, it is at least well to have all the charms that entire surrender of heart can bestow.[46] In spite of this, however, Julie struck the imagination of the time, and struck it in a way that was thoroughly wholesome. The type taught men some respect for the dignity of women, and it taught women a firmer respect for themselves. It is useless, even if it be possible, to present an example too lofty for the comprehension of an age. At this moment the most brilliant genius in the country was filling France with impish merriment at the expense of the greatest heroine that France had then to boast. In such an atmosphere Julie had almost the halo of saintliness.

We may say all we choose about the inconsistency, the excess of preaching, the excess of prudence, in the character of Julie. It was said pungently enough by the wits of the time.[47] Nothing that could be said on all this affected the fact, that the women between 1760 and the Revolution were intoxicated by Rousseau's creation to such a pitch that they would pay any price for a glass out of which Rousseau had drunk, they would kiss a scrap of paper that contained a piece of his handwriting, and vow that no woman of true sensibility could hesitate to consecrate her life to him, if she were only certain to be rewarded by his attachment.[48] The booksellers were unable to meet the demand. The book was let out at the rate of twelve sous a volume, and the volume could not be detained beyond an hour. All classes shared the excitement, courtiers, soldiers, lawyers, and bourgeois.[49] Stories were told of fine ladies, dressed for the ball, who took the book up for half an hour until the time should come for starting; they read until midnight, and when informed that the carriage waited, answered not a word, and when reminded by and by that it was two o'clock, still read on, and then at four, having ordered the horses to be taken out of the carriage, disrobed, went to bed, and passed



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the remainder of the night in reading. In Germany the effect was just as astonishing. Kant only once in his life failed to take his afternoon walk, and this unexampled omission was due to the witchery of the New Heloisa. Gallantry was succeeded by passion, expansion, exaltation; moods far more dangerous for society, as all enthusiasm is dangerous, but also far higher and pregnant with better hopes for character. To move the sympathetic faculties is the first step towards kindling all the other energies which make life wiser and more fruitful. It is especially worth noticing that nothing in the character of Julie concentrates this outburst of sympathy in subjective broodings. Julie is the representative of one recalled to the straight path by practical, wholesome, objective sympathy for others, not of one expiring in unsatisfied yearnings for the sympathy of others for herself, and in moonstruck subjective aspirations. The women who wept over her romance read in it the lesson of duty, not of whimpering introspection. The danger lay in the mischievous intellectual direction which Rousseau imparted to this effusion.

The stir which the Julie communicated to the affections in so many ways, marked progress, but in all the elements of reason she was the most perilous of reactionaries. So hard it is with the human mind, constituted as it is, to march forward a space further to the light, without making some fresh swerve obliquely towards old darkness. The great effusion of natural sentiment was in the air before the New Heloisa appeared, to condense and turn it into definite channels. One beautiful character, Vauven argues (1715-1747), had begun to teach the culture of emotional instinct in some sayings of exquisite sweetness and moderation, as that "Great thoughts come from the heart." But he came too soon, and, alas for us all, he died young, and he made no mark. Moderation never can make a mark in the epochs when men are beginning to feel the urgent spirit of a new time. Diderot strove with more powerful efforts, in the midst of all his herculean labours for the acquisition and ordering of knowledge, in the same direction towards the great outer world of nature, and towards the great inner world of nature in the human breast. His criticisms on the paintings of each year, mediocre as the paintings were, are admirable even now for their richness and freshness. If Diderot had been endowed with emotional tenacity, as he was with tenacity of understanding and of purpose, the student of the eighteenth century would probably have been spared the not perfectly agreeable task of threading a way along the sinuosities of the character and work of Rousseau. But Rousseau had what Diderot lacked—sustained ecstatic moods, and fervid trances; his literary gesture was so commanding, his apparel so glistening, his voice so rich in long-drawn notes of plangent vibration. His words are the words of a prophet; a prophet, it is understood, who had lived in Paris, and belonged



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to the eighteenth century, and wrote in French instead of Hebrew. The mischief of his work lay in this, that he raised feeling, now passionate, now quietest, into the supreme place which it was to occupy alone, and not on an equal throne and in equal alliance with understanding. Instead of supplementing reason, he placed emotion as its substitute. And he made this evil doctrine come from the lips of a fictitious character, who stimulated fancy and fascinated imagination. Voltaire laughed at the *baisers acres* of Madame de Wolmar, and declared that a criticism of the Marquis of Ximenes had crushed the wretched romance.[50] But Madame de Wolmar was so far from crushed, that she turned the flood of feeling which her own charms, passion, remorse, and conversion had raised, in a direction that Voltaire abhorred, and abhorred in vain.

It is after the marriage of Julie to Wolmar that the action of the story takes the turn which sensible men like Voltaire found laughable. Saint Preux is absent with Admiral Anson for some years. On his return to Europe he is speedily invited by the sage Wolmar, who knows his past history perfectly well, to pay them a visit. They all meet with leapings on the neck and hearty kisses, the unprejudiced Wolmar preserving an open, serene, and smiling air. He takes his young friend to a chamber, which is to be reserved for him and for him only. In a few days he takes an opportunity of visiting some distant property, leaving his wife and Saint Preux together, with the sublime of magnanimity. At the same time he confides to Claire his intention of entrusting to Saint Preux the education of his children. All goes perfectly well, and the household presents a picture of contentment, prosperity, moderation, affection, and evenly diffused happiness, which in spite of the disagreeableness of the situation is even now extremely charming. There is only one cloud. Julie is devoured by a source of hidden chagrin. Her husband, "so sage, so reasonable, so far from every kind of vice, so little under the influence of human passions, is without the only belief that makes virtue precious, and in the innocence of an irreproachable life he carries at the bottom of his heart the frightful peace of the wicked." [51] He is an atheist. Julie is now a pietest, locking herself for hours in her chambers, spending days in self-examination and prayer, constantly reading the pages of the good Fenelon.[52] "I fear," she writes to Saint Preux, "that you do not gain all you might from religion in the conduct of your life, and that philosophic pride disdains the simplicity of the Christian. You believe prayers to be of scanty service. That is not, you know, the doctrine of Saint Paul, nor what our Church professes. We are free, it is true, but we are ignorant, feeble, prone to ill. And whence should light and force come, if not from him who is their very well-spring?... Let us be humble, to be sage; let us see our weakness, and



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we shall be strong." [53] This was the opening of the deistical reaction; it was thus, associated with everything that struck imagination and moved the sentiment of his readers, that Rousseau brought back those sophistical conclusions which Pascal had drawn from premisses of dark profound truth, and that enervating displacement of reason by celestial contemplation, which Fenelon had once made beautiful by the persuasion of virtuous example. He was justified in saying, as he afterwards did, that there was nothing in the Savoyard Vicar's Profession of Faith which was not to be found in the letters of Julie. These were the effective preparations for that more famous manifesto; they surrounded belief with all the attractions of an interesting and sympathetic preacher, and set it to a harmony of circumstance that touched softer fibres.

For, curiously enough, while the first half of the romance is a scene of disorderly passion, the second is the glorification of the family. A modern writer of genius has inveighed with whimsical bitterness against the character of Wolmar,—supposed, we may notice in passing, to be partially drawn from D'Holbach,—a man performing so long an experiment on these two souls, with the terrible curiosity of a surgeon engaged in vivisection. [54] It was, however, much less difficult for contemporaries than it is for us to accept so unwholesome and prurient a situation. They forgot all the evil that was in it, in the charm of the account of Wolmar's active, peaceful, frugal, sunny household. The influence of this was immense. [55] It may be that the overstrained scene where Saint Preux waits for Julie in her room, suggested the far lovelier passage of Faust in the chamber of the hapless Margaret. But we may, at least, be sure that Werther (1774) would not have found Charlotte cutting bread and butter, if Saint Preux had not gone to see Julie take cream and cakes with her children and her female servants. And perhaps the other and nobler Charlotte of the *Wahlverwandtschaften* (1809) would not have detained us so long with her moss hut, her terrace, her park prospect, if Julie had not had her elysium, where the sweet freshness of the air, the cool shadows, the shining verdure, flowers diffusing fragrance and colour, water running with soft whisper, and the song of a thousand birds, reminded the returned traveller of Tinian and Juan Fernandez. There is an animation, a variety, an accuracy, a realistic brightness in this picture, which will always make it enchanting, even to those who cannot make their way through any other letter in the *New Heloisa*. [56] Such qualities place it as an idyllic piece far above such pieces in Goethe's two famous romances. They have a clearness and spontaneous freshness which are not among the bountiful gifts of Goethe. There are other admirable landscapes in the *New Heloisa*, though not too many of them, and the minute and careful way in which Rousseau made their features real to himself,



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is accidentally shown in his urgent prayer for exactitude in the engraving of the striking scene where Saint Preux and Julie visit the monuments of their old love for one another. [57] "I have traversed all Rousseau's ground with the Heloisa before me," said Byron, "and am struck to a degree I cannot express, with the force and accuracy of his descriptions and the beauty of their reality." [58] They were memories made true by long dreaming, by endless brooding. The painter lived with these scenes ever present to the inner eye. They were his real world, of which the tamer world of meadow and woodland actually around him only gave suggestion. He thought of the green steeps, the rocks, the mountain pines, the waters of the lake, "the populous solitude of bees and birds," as of some divine presence, too sublime for personality. And they were always benign, standing in relief with the malignity or folly of the hurtful insect, Man. He was never a manichaeon towards nature. To him she was all good and bounteous. The demon forces that so fascinated Byron were to Rousseau invisible. These were the compositions that presently inspired the landscapes of *Paul and Virginia* (1788), of *Atala* and *Rene* (1801), and of *Obermann* (1804), as well as those punier imitators who resemble their masters as the hymns of a methodist negro resemble the psalms of David. They were the outcome of eager and spontaneous feeling for nature, and not the mere hackneyed common-form and inflated description of the literary pastoral. [59]

This leads to another great and important distinction to be drawn between Rousseau and the school whom in other respects he inspired. The admirable Sainte Beuve perplexes one by his strange remark, that the union of the poetry of the family and the hearth with the poetry of nature is essentially wanting to Rousseau. [60] It only shows that the great critic had for the moment forgotten the whole of the second part of the *New Heloisa*, and his failure to identify Cowper's allusion to the *matinee a l'anglaise* certainly proves that he had at any rate forgotten one of the most striking and delicious scenes of the hearth in French literature. [61] The tendency to read Rousseau only in the Byronic sense is one of those foregone conclusions which are constantly tempting the critic to travel out of his record. Rousseau assuredly had a Byronic side, but he is just as often a Cowper done into splendid prose. His pictures are full of social animation and domestic order. He had exalted the simplicity of the savage state in his *Discourses*, but when he came to constitute an ideal life, he found it in a household that was more, and not less, systematically disciplined than those of the common society around him. The paradise in which his Julie moved with Wolmar and Saint Preux, was no more and no less than an establishment of the best kind of the rural middle-class, frugal, decorous, wholesome, tranquilly austere. No most sentimental savage could have found it endurable, or could himself without profound transformation of his manners have been endured in it. The *New Heloisa* ends by exalting respectability, and putting the spirit of insurrection to shame. Self-control, not revolt, is its last word.



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This is what separates Rousseau here and throughout from Senancour, Byron, and the rest. He consummates the triumph of will, while their reigning mood is grave or reckless protest against impotence of will, the little worth of common aims, the fretting triviality of common rules. Franklin or Cobbett might have gloried in the regularity of Madame de Wolmar's establishment. The employment of the day was marked out with precision. By artful adjustment of pursuits, it was contrived that the men-servants should be kept apart from the maid-servants, except at their repasts. The women, namely, a cook, a housemaid, and a nurse, found their pastime in rambles with their mistress and her children, and lived mainly with them. The men were amused by games for which their master made regulated provision, now for summer, now for winter, offering prizes of a useful kind for prowess and adroitness. Often on a Sunday night all the household met in an ample chamber, and passed the evening in dancing. When Saint Preux inquired whether this was not a rather singular infraction of puritan rule, Julie wisely answered that pure morality is so loaded with severe duties, that if you add to them the further burden of indifferent forms, it must always be at the cost of the essential.[62] The servants were taken from the country, never from the town. They entered the household young, were gradually trained, and never went away except to establish themselves.

The vulgar and obvious criticism on all this is that it is utopian, that such households do not generally exist, because neither masters nor servants possess the qualities needed to maintain these relations of unbroken order and friendliness. Perhaps not; and masters and servants will be more and more removed from the possession of such qualities, and their relations further distant from such order and friendliness, if writers cease to press the beauty and serviceableness of a domesticity that is at present only possible in a few rare cases, or to insist on the ugliness, the waste of peace, the deterioration of character, that are the results of our present system. Undoubtedly it is much easier for Rousseau to draw his picture of semi-patriarchal felicity, than for the rest of us to realise it. It was his function to press ideals of sweeter life on his contemporaries, and they may be counted fortunate in having a writer who could fulfil this function with Rousseau's peculiar force of masterly persuasion. His scornful diatribes against the domestic police of great houses, and the essential inhumanity of the ordinary household relations, are both excellent and of permanent interest. There is the full breath of a new humaneness in them. They were the right way of attacking the decrepitude of feudal luxury and insolence, and its imitation among the great farmers-general. This criticism of the conditions of domestic service marks a beginning of true democracy, as distinguished from the mere pulverisation of aristocracy. It rests on the claim of the common people to an equal consideration, as equally useful and equally capable of virtue and vice; and it implies the essential priority of social over political reform.



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The story abounds in sumptuary detail. The table partakes of the general plenty, but this plenty is not ruinous. The senses are gratified without daintiness. The food is common, but excellent of its kind. The service is simple, yet exquisite. All that is mere show, all that depends on vulgar opinion, all fine and elaborate dishes whose value comes of their rarity, and whose names you must know before finding any goodness in them, are banished without recall. Even in such delicacies as they permit themselves, our friends abstain every day from certain things which are reserved for feasts on special occasions, and which are thus made more delightful without being more costly. What do you suppose these delicacies are? Rare game, or fish from the sea, or dainties from abroad? Better than all that; some delicious vegetable of the district, one of the savoury things that grow in our garden, some fish from the lake dressed in a peculiar way, some cheese from our mountains. The service is modest and rustic, but clean and smiling. Neither gold-laced liveries in sight of which you die of hunger, nor tall crystals laden with flowers for your only dessert, here take the place of honest dishes. Here people have not the art of nourishing the stomach through the eyes, but they know how to add grace to good cheer, to eat heartily without inconvenience, to drink merrily without losing reason, to sit long at table without weariness, and always to rise from it without disgust.[63]

One singularity in this ideal household was the avoidance of those middle exchanges between production and consumption, which enrich the shopkeeper but impoverish his customers. Not one of these exchanges is made without loss, and the multiplication of these losses would weaken even a man of fortune. Wolmar seeks those real exchanges in which the convenience of each party to the bargain serves as profit for both. Thus the wool is sent to the factories, from which they receive cloth in exchange; wine, oil, and bread are produced in the house; the butcher pays himself in live cattle; the grocer receives grain in return for his goods; the wages of the labourers and the house-servants are derived from the produce of the land which they render valuable. [64] It was reserved for Fourier, Cabet, and the rest, to carry to its highest point this confusion of what is so fascinating in a book with what is practicable in society.

The expatiation on the loveliness of a well-ordered interior may strike the impatient modern as somewhat long, and the movement as very slow, just as people complain of the same things in Goethe's *Wahlverwandtschaften*. Such complaint only proves inability, which is or is not justifiable, to seize the spirit of the writer. The expatiation was long and the movement slow, because Rousseau was full of his thoughts; they were a deep and glowing part of himself, and did not merely skim swiftly and lightly through his mind. Anybody



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who takes the trouble may find out the difference between this expression of long mental brooding, and a merely elaborated diction.[65] The length is an essential part of the matter. The whole work is the reflection of a series of slow inner processes, the many careful weavings of a lonely and miserable man's dreams. And Julie expressed the spirit and the joy of these dreams when she wrote, "People are only happy before they are happy. Man, so eager and so feeble, made to desire all and obtain little, has received from heaven a consoling force which brings all that he desires close to him, which subjects it to his imagination, which makes it sensible and present before him, which delivers it over to him. The land of chimera is the only one in this world that is worth dwelling in, and such is the nothingness of the human lot, that except the being who exists in and by himself, there is nothing beautiful except that which does not exist." [66]

Closely connected with the vigorous attempt to fascinate his public with the charm of a serene, joyful, and ordered house, is the restoration of marriage in the *New Heloise* to a rank among high and honourable obligations, and its representation as the best support of an equable life of right conduct and fruitful harmonious emotion. Rousseau even invested it with the mysterious dignity as of some natural sacrament. "This chaste knot of nature is subject neither to the sovereign power nor to paternal authority," he cried, "but only to the authority of the common Father." And he pointed his remark by a bitter allusion to a celebrated case in which a great house had prevailed on the courts to annul the marriage of an elder son with a young actress, though her character was excellent, and though she had befriended him when he was abandoned by everybody else.[67] This was one of the countless democratic thrusts in the book. In the case of its heroine, however, the author associated the sanctity of marriage not only with equality but with religion. We may imagine the spleen with which the philosophers, with both their hatred of the faith, and their light esteem of marriage bonds, read Julie's eloquent account of her emotions at the moment of her union with Wolmar. "I seemed to behold the organ of Providence and to hear the voice of God, as the minister gravely pronounced the words of the holy service. The purity, the dignity, the sanctity of marriage, so vividly set forth in the words of scripture; its chaste and sublime duties, so important to the happiness, order, and peace of the human race, so sweet to fulfil even for their own sake—all this made such an impression on me that I seemed to feel within my breast a sudden revolution. An unknown power seemed all at once to arrest the disorder of my affections, and to restore them to accordance with the law of duty and of nature. The eternal eye that sees everything, I said to myself, now reads to the depth of my heart." [68] She has all the well-known fervour



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of the proselyte, and never wearies of extolling the peace of the wedded state. Love is no essential to its perfection. "Worth, virtue, a certain accord not so much in condition and age as in character and temper, are enough between husband and wife; and this does not prevent the growth from such a union of a very tender attachment, which is none the less sweet for not being exactly love, and is all the more lasting." [69] Years after, when Saint Preux has returned and is settled in the household, she even tries to persuade him to imitate her example, and find contentment in marriage with her cousin. The earnestness with which she presses the point, the very sensible but not very delicate references to the hygienic drawbacks of celibacy, and the fact that the cousin whom she would fain have him marry, had complaisantly assisted them in their past loves, naturally drew the fire of Rousseau's critical enemies.

Such matters did not affect the general enthusiasm. When people are weary of a certain way of surveying life, and have their faces eagerly set in some new direction, they read in a book what it pleases them to read; they assimilate as much as falls in with their dominant mood, and the rest passes away unseen. The French public were bewitched by Julie, and were no more capable of criticising her than Julie was capable of criticising Saint Preux in the height of her passion for him. When we say that Rousseau was the author of this movement, all we mean is that his book and its chief personage awoke emotion to self-consciousness, gave it a dialect, communicated an impulse in favour of social order, and then very calamitously at the same moment divorced it from the fundamental conditions of progress, by divorcing it from disciplined intelligence and scientific reason.

Apart from the general tendency of the *New Heloisa* in numberless indirect ways to bring the manners of the great into contempt, by the presentation of the happiness of a simple and worthy life, thrifty, self-sufficing, and homely, there is one direct protest of singular eloquence and gravity. Julie's father is deeply revolted at the bare notion of marrying his daughter to a teacher. Rousseau puts his vigorous remonstrance against pride of birth into the mouth of an English nobleman. This is perhaps an infelicitous piece of prosopopoeia, but it is interesting as illustrative of the idea of England in the eighteenth century as the home of stout-hearted freedom. We may quote one piece from the numerous bits of very straightforward speaking in which our representative expressed his mind as to the significance of birth. "My friend has nobility," cried Lord Edward, "not written in ink on mouldering parchments, but graven in his heart in characters that can never be effaced. For my own part, by God, I should be sorry to have no other proof of my merit but that of a man who has been in his grave these five hundred years. If you know the English nobility, you know that it is



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the most enlightened, the best informed, the wisest, the bravest in Europe. That being so, I don't care to ask whether it is the oldest or not. We are not, it is true, the slaves of the prince, but his friends; nor the tyrants of the people, but their leaders. We hold the balance true between people, and monarch. Our first duty is towards the nation, our second towards him who governs; it is not his will but his right that we consider.... We suffer no one in the land to say *God and my sword*, nor more than this, *God and my right*."[70] All this was only putting Montesquieu into heroics, it is true, but a great many people read the romance who were not likely to read the graver book. And there was a wide difference between the calm statement of a number of political propositions about government, and their transformation into dramatic invective against the arrogance of all social inequality that does not correspond with inequalities of worth.

There is no contradiction between this and the social quietism of other parts of the book. Moral considerations and the paramount place that they hold in Rousseau's way of thinking, explain at once his contempt for the artificial privileges and assumptions of high rank, and his contempt for anything like discontent with the conditions of humble rank. Simplicity of life was his ideal. He wishes us to despise both those who have departed from it, and those who would depart from it if they could. So Julie does her best to make the lot of the peasants as happy as it is capable of being made, without ever helping them to change it for another. She teaches them to respect their natural condition in respecting themselves. Her prime maxim is to discourage change of station and calling, but above all to dissuade the villager, whose life is the happiest of all, from leaving the true pleasures of his natural career for the fever and corruption of towns.[71] Presently a recollection of the sombre things that he had seen in his rambles through France crossed Rousseau's pastoral visions, and he admitted that there were some lands in which the publican devours the fruits of the earth; where the misery that covers the fields, the bitter greed of some grasping farmer, the inflexible rigour of an inhuman master, take something from the charm of his rural scenes. "Worn-out horses ready to expire under the blows they receive, wretched peasants attenuated by hunger, broken by weariness, clad in rags, hamlets all in ruins—these things offer a mournful spectacle to the eye: one is almost sorry to be a man, as we think of the unhappy creatures on whose blood we have to feed."[72]



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Yet there is no hint in the New Heloisa of the socialism which Morelly and Mably flung themselves upon, as the remedy for all these desperate horrors. Property, in every page of the New Heloisa, is held in full respect; the master has the honourable burden of patriarchal duty; the servant the not less honourable burden of industry and faithfulness; disobedience or vice is promptly punished with paternal rigour and more than paternal inflexibility. The insurrectionary quality and effect of Rousseau's work lay in no direct preaching or vehement denunciation of the abuses that filled France with cruelty on the one hand and sodden misery on the other. It lay in pictures of a social state in which abuses and cruelty cannot exist, nor any miseries save those which are inseparable from humanity. The contrast between the sober, cheerful, prosperous scenes of romance, and the dreariness of the reality of the field life of France,—this was the element that filled generous souls with an intoxicating transport.

Rousseau's way of dealing with the portentous questions that lay about that tragic scene of deserted fields, ruined hamlets, tottering brutes, and hunger-stricken men, may be gathered from one of the many traits in Julie which endeared her to that generation, and might endear her even to our own if it only knew her. Wolmar's house was near a great high-road, and so was daily haunted by beggars. Not one of these was allowed to go empty away. And Julie had as many excellent reasons to give for her charity, as if she had been one of the philosophers of whom she thought so surpassingly ill. If you look at mendicancy merely as a trade, what is the harm of a calling whose end is to nourish feelings of humanity and brotherly love? From the point of view of talent, why should I not pay the eloquence of a beggar who stirs my pity, as highly as that of a player who makes me shed tears over imaginary sorrows? If the great number of beggars is burdensome to the state, of how many other professions that people encourage, may you not say the same? How can I be sure that the man to whom I give alms is not an honest soul, whom I may save from perishing? In short, whatever we may think of the poor wretches, if we owe nothing to the beggar, at least we owe it to ourselves to pay honour to suffering humanity or to its image.[73] Nothing could be more admirably illustrative of the author's confidence that the first thing for us to do is to satisfy our fine feelings, and that then all the rest shall be added unto us. The doctrine spread so far, that Necker,—a sort of Julie in a frock-coat, who had never fallen, the incarnation of this doctrine on the great stage of affairs,—was hailed to power to ward off the bankruptcy of the state by means of a good heart and moral sentences, while Turgot with science and firmness for his resources was driven away as an economist and a philosopher.



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At a first glance, it may seem that there was compensation for the triumph of sentiment over reason, and that if France was ruined by the dreams in which Rousseau encouraged the nation to exult, she was saved by the fervour and resoluteness of the aspirations with which he filled the most generous of her children. No wide movement, we may be sure, is thoroughly understood until we have mastered both its material and its ideal sides. Materially, Rousseau's work was inevitably fraught with confusion because in this sphere not to be scientific, not to be careful in tracing effects to their true causes, is to be without any security that the causes with which we try to deal will lead to the effects that we desire. A Roman statesman who had gone to the Sermon on the Mount for a method of staying the economic ruin of the empire, its thinning population, its decreasing capital, would obviously have found nothing of what he sought. But the moral nature of man is redeemed by teaching that may have no bearing on economics, or even a bearing purely mischievous, and which has to be corrected by teaching that probably goes equally far in the contrary direction of moral mischief. In the ideal sphere, the processes are very complex. In measuring a man's influence within it we have to balance. Rousseau's action was undoubtedly excellent in leading men and women to desire simple lives, and a more harmonious social order. Was this eminent benefit more than counterbalanced by the eminent disadvantage of giving a reactionary intellectual direction? By commending irrational retrogression from active use of the understanding back to dreamy contemplation?

To one teacher is usually only one task allotted. We do not reproach want of science to the virtuous and benevolent Channing; his goodness and effusion stirred women and the young, just as Rousseau did, to sentimental but humane aspiration. It was this kind of influence that formed the opinion which at last destroyed American slavery. We owe a place in the temple that commemorates human emancipation, to every man who has kindled in his generation a brighter flame of moral enthusiasm, and a more eager care for the realisation of good and virtuous ideals.

III.

The story of the circumstances of the publication of *Emilius* and the persecution which befell its author in consequence, recalls us to the distinctively evil side of French history in this critical epoch, and carries us away from light into the thick darkness of political intrigue, obscurantist faction, and a misgovernment which was at once tyrannical and decrepit. It is almost impossible for us to realise the existence in the same society of such boundless license of thought, and such unscrupulous restraint upon its expression. Not one of Rousseau's three chief works, for instance, was printed in France. The whole trade in books was a sort of contraband, and was carried



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on with the stealth, subterfuge, daring, and knavery that are demanded in contraband dealings. An author or a bookseller was forced to be as careful as a kidnapper of coolies or the captain of a slaver would be in our own time. He had to steer clear of the court, of the parliament, of Jansenists, of Jesuits, of the mistresses of the king and the minister, of the friends of the mistresses, and above all of that organised hierarchy of ignorance and oppression in all times and places where they raise their masked heads,—the bishops and ecclesiastics of every sort and condition. Palissot produced his comedy to please the devout at the expense of the philosophers (1760). Madame de Robecq, daughter of Rousseau's marshal of Luxembourg, instigated and protected him, for Diderot had offended her.[74] Morellet replied in a piece in which the keen vision of feminine spite detected a reference to Madame de Robecq. Though dying, she still had relations with Choiseul, and so Morellet was flung into the Bastile.[75] Diderot was thrown for three months into Vincennes, where we saw him on a memorable occasion, for his Letter on the Blind (1748), nominally because it was held to contain irreligious doctrine, really because he had given offence to D'Argenson's mistress by hinting that she might be very handsome, but that her judgment on scientific experiment was of no value.[76]

The New Heloisa could not openly circulate in France so long as it contained the words, "I would rather be the wife of a charcoal-burner than the mistress of a king." The last word was altered to "prince," and then Rousseau was warned that he would offend the Prince de Conti and Madame de Boufflers.[77] No work of merit could appear without more or less of slavish mutilation, and no amount of slavish mutilation could make the writer secure against the accidental grudge of people who had influence in high quarters.[78]

If French booksellers in the stirring intellectual time of the eighteenth century needed all the craft of a smuggler, their morality was reduced to an equally low level in dealing not only with the police, but with their own accomplices, the book-writers. They excused themselves from paying proper sums to authors, on the ground that they were robbed of the profits that would enable them to pay such sums, by the piracy of their brethren in trade. But then they all pirated the works of one another. The whole commerce was a mass of fraud and chicane, and every prominent author passed his life between two fires. He was robbed, his works were pirated, and, worse than robbery and piracy, they were defaced and distorted by the booksellers. On the other side he was tormented to death by the suspicion and timidity, alternately with the hatred and active tyranny of the administration. As we read the story of the lives of all these strenuous men, their struggles, their incessant mortifications, their constantly reviving and ever irrepressible vigour and interest in the fight,



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we may wish that the shabbiness and the pettiness of the daily lives of some of them had faded away from memory, and left us nothing to think of in connection with their names but the alertness, courage, tenacity, self-sacrifice, and faith with which they defended the cause of human emancipation and progress. Happily the mutual hate of the Christian factions, to which liberty owes at least as much as charity owes to their mutual love, prevented a common union for burning the philosophers as well as their books. All torments short of this they endured, and they had the great merit of enduring them without any hope of being rewarded after their death, as truly good men must always be capable of doing.

Rousseau had no taste for martyrdom, nor any intention of courting it in even its slightest forms. Holland was now the great printing press of France, and when we are counting up the contributions of Protestantism to the enfranchisement of Europe, it is just to remember the indispensable services rendered by the freedom of the press in Holland to the dissemination of French thought in the eighteenth century, as well as the shelter that it gave to the French thinkers in the seventeenth, including Descartes, the greatest of them all. The monstrous tediousness of printing a book at Amsterdam or the Hague, the delay, loss, and confusion in receiving and transmitting the proofs, and the subterranean character of the entire process, including the circulation of the book after it was once fairly printed, were as grievous to Rousseau as to authors of more impetuous temper. He agreed with Rey, for instance, the Amsterdam printer, to sell him the *Social Contract* for 1000 francs. The manuscript had then to be cunningly conveyed to Amsterdam. Rousseau wrote it out in very small characters, sealed it carefully up, and entrusted it to the care of the chaplain of the Dutch embassy, who happened to be a native of Vaud. In passing the barrier, the packet fell into the hands of the officials. They tore it open and examined it, happily unconscious that they were handling the most explosive kind of gunpowder that they had ever meddled with. It was not until the chaplain claimed it in the name of ambassadorial privilege, that the manuscript was allowed to go on its way to the press.[79] Rousseau repeats a hundred times, not only in the *Confessions*, but also in letters to his friends, how resolutely and carefully he avoided any evasion of the laws of the country in which he lived. The French government was anxious enough on all grounds to secure for France the production of the books of which France was the great consumer, but the severity of its censorship prevented this.[80] The introduction of the books, when printed, was tolerated or connived at, because the country would hardly have endured to be deprived of the enjoyment of its own literature. By a greater inconsistency the reprinting of a book which had once found admission into the country, was also



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connived at. Thus M. de Malesherbes, out of friendship for Rousseau, wished to have an edition of the *New Heloisa* printed in France, and sold for the benefit of the author. That he should have done so is a curious illustration of the low morality engendered by a repressive system imperfectly carried out. For Rousseau had sold the book to Rey. Rey had treated with a French bookseller in the usual way, that is, had sent him half the edition printed, the bookseller paying either in cash or other books for all the copies he received. Therefore to print an independent edition in Paris was to injure, not Rey the foreigner, but the French bookseller who stood practically in Rey's place. It was setting two French booksellers to ruin one another. Rousseau emphatically declined to receive any profit from such a transaction. But, said Malesherbes, you sold to Rey a right which you had not got, the right of sole proprietorship, excluding the competition of a pirated reprint. Then, answered Rousseau, if the right which I sold happens to prove less than I thought, it is clear that far from taking advantage of my mistake, I owe to Rey compensation for any loss that he may suffer.[81]

The friendship of Malesherbes for the party of reason was shown on numerous occasions. As director of the book trade he was really the censor of the literature of the time.[82] The story of his service to Diderot is well known—how he warned Diderot that the police were about to visit his house and overhaul his papers, and how when Diderot despaired of being able to put them out of sight in his narrow quarters, Malesherbes said, "Then send them all to me," and took care of them until the storm was overpast. The proofs of the *New Heloisa* came through his hands, and now he made himself Rousseau's agent in the affairs relative to the printing of *Emilius*. Rousseau entrusted the whole matter to him and to Madame de Luxembourg, being confident that, in acting through persons of such authority and position, he should be protected against any unwitting illegality. Instead of being sent to Rey, the manuscript was sold to a bookseller in Paris for six thousand francs.[83] A long time elapsed before any proofs reached the author, and he soon perceived that an edition was being printed in France as well as in Holland. Still, as Malesherbes was in some sort the director of the enterprise, the author felt no alarm. Duclos came to visit him one day, and Rousseau read aloud to him the *Savoyard Vicar's Profession of Faith*. "What, citizen," he cried, "and that is part of a book that they are printing at Paris! Be kind enough not to tell any one that you read this to me." [84] Still Rousseau remained secure. Then the printing came to a standstill, and he could not find out the reason, because Malesherbes was away, and the printer did not take the trouble to answer his letters. "My natural tendency," he says, and as the rest of his life only too abundantly proved, "is to be afraid of darkness; mystery



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always disturbs me, it is utterly antipathetic to my character, which is open even to the pitch of imprudence. The aspect of the most hideous monster would alarm me little, I verily believe; but if I discern at night a figure in a white sheet, I am sure to be terrified out of my life." [85] So he at once fancied that by some means the Jesuits had got possession of his book, and knowing him to be at death's door, designed to keep the Emilius back until he was actually dead, when they would publish a truncated version of it to suit their own purposes. [86] He wrote letter upon letter to the printer, to Malesherbes, to Madame de Luxembourg, and if answers did not come, or did not come exactly when he expected them, he grew delirious with anxiety. If he dropped his conviction that the Jesuits were plotting the ruin of his book and the defilement of his reputation, he lost no time in fastening a similar design upon the Jansenists, and when the Jansenists were acquitted, then the turn of the philosophers came. We have constantly to remember that all this time the unfortunate man was suffering incessant pain, and passing his nights in sleeplessness and fever. He sometimes threw off the black dreams of unfathomable suspicion, and dreamed in their stead of some sunny spot in pleasant Touraine, where under a mild climate and among a gentle people he should peacefully end his days. [87] At other times he was fond of supposing M. de Luxembourg not a duke, nor a marshal of France, but a good country squire living in some old mansion, and himself not an author, not a maker of books, but with moderate intelligence and slight attainment, finding with the squire and his dame the happiness of his life, and contributing to the happiness of theirs. [88] Alas, in spite of all his precautions, he had unwittingly drifted into the stream of great affairs. He and his book were sacrificed to the exigencies of faction; and a persecution set in, which destroyed his last chance of a composed life, by giving his reason, already disturbed, a final blow from which it never recovered.

Emilius appeared in the crisis of the movement against the Jesuits. That formidable order had offended Madame de Pompadour by a refusal to recognise her power and position,—a manly policy, as creditable to their moral vigour as it was contrary to the maxims which had made them powerful. They had also offended Choiseul by the part they had taken in certain hostile intrigues at Versailles. The parliaments had always been their enemies. This was due first to the jealousy with which corporations of lawyers always regard corporations of ecclesiastics, and next to their hatred of the bull Unigenitus, which had been not only an infraction of French liberties, but the occasion of special humiliation to the parliaments. Then the hostility of the parliaments to the Jesuits was caused by the harshness with which the system of confessional tickets was at this time being carried out. Finally, the once powerful house of Austria,



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the protector of all retrograde interests, was now weakened by the Seven Years' War; and was unable to bring effective influence to bear on Lewis XV. At last he gave his consent to the destruction of the order. The commercial bankruptcy of one of their missions was the immediate occasion of their fall, and nothing could save them. "I only know one man," said Grimm, "in a position to have composed an apology for the Jesuits in fine style, if it had been in his way to take the side of that tribe, and this man is M. Rousseau." The parliaments went to work with alacrity, but they were quite as hostile to the philosophers as they were to the Jesuits, and hence their anxiety to show that they were no allies of the one even when destroying the other.

Contemporaries seldom criticise the shades and variations of innovating speculation with any marked nicety. Anything with the stamp of rationality on its phrases or arguments was roughly set down to the school of the philosophers, and Rousseau was counted one of their number, like Voltaire or Helvetius. The *Emilius* appeared in May 1762. On the 11th of June the parliament of Paris ordered the book to be burnt by the public executioner, and the writer to be arrested. For Rousseau always scorned the devices of Voltaire and others; he courageously insisted on placing his name on the title-page of all his works,[89] and so there was none of the usual difficulty in identifying the author. The grounds of the proceedings were alleged irreligious tendencies to be found in the book.[90]

The indecency of the requisition in which the advocate-general demanded its proscription, was admitted even by people who were least likely to defend Rousseau. [91] The author was charged with saying not only that man may be saved without believing in God, but even that the Christian religion does not exist—paradox too flagrant even for the writer of the *Discourse on Inequality*. No evidence was produced either that the alleged assertions were in the book, or that the name of the author was really the name on its title-page. Rousseau fared no worse, but better, than his fellows, for there was hardly a single man of letters of that time who escaped arbitrary imprisonment.

The unfortunate author had news of the ferment which his work was creating in Paris, and received notes of warning from every hand, but he could not believe that the only man in France who believed in God was to be the victim of the defenders of Christianity. [92] On the 8th of June he spent a merry day with two friends, taking their dinner in the fields. "Ever since my youth I had a habit of reading at night in my bed until my eyes grew heavy. Then I put out the candle, and tried to fall asleep for a few minutes, but they seldom lasted long. My ordinary reading at night was the Bible, and I have read it continuously through at least five or six times in this way. That night, finding myself more wakeful than usual, I prolonged my reading, and read through the whole of the book which ends with the Levite of Ephraim, and which if I mistake not is the book of

Judges. The story affected me deeply, and I was busy over it in a kind of dream, when all at once I was roused by lights and noises."[93]



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It was two o'clock in the morning. A messenger had come in hot haste to carry him to Madame de Luxembourg. News had reached her of the proposed decree of the parliament. She knew Rousseau well enough to be sure that if he were seized and examined, her own share and that of Malesherbes in the production of the condemned book would be made public, and their position uncomfortably compromised. It was to their interest that he should avoid arrest by flight, and they had no difficulty in persuading him to fall in with their plans. After a tearful farewell with Theresa, who had hardly been out of his sight for seventeen years, and many embraces from the greater ladies of the castle, he was thrust into a chaise and despatched on the first stage of eight melancholy years of wandering and despair, to be driven from place to place, first by the fatuous tyranny of magistrates and religious doctors, and then by the yet more cruel spectres of his own diseased imagination, until at length his whole soul became the home of weariness and torment.

FOOTNOTES:

[1] *Conf.*, x. 62.

[2] *Conf.*, x.

[3] *Ib.* x. 70.

[4] Louis Francois de Bourbon, Prince de Conti (1717-1776), was great-grandson of the brother of the Great Conde. He performed creditable things in the war of the Austrian Succession (in Piedmont 1744, in Belgium 1745); had a scheme of foreign policy as director of the secret diplomacy of Lewis XV. (1745-1756), which was to make Turkey, Poland, Sweden, Prussia, a barrier against Russia primarily, and Austria secondarily; lastly went into moderate opposition to the court, protesting against the destruction of the *parlements* (1771), and afterwards opposing the reforms of Turgot (1776). Finally he had the honour of refusing the sacraments of the church on his deathbed. See Martin's *Hist. de France*, xv. and xvi.

[5] *Conf.*, 97. *Corr.*, v. 215.

[6] *Corr.*, ii. 144. Oct. 7, 1760.

[7] *Conf.*, x. 98.

[8] The reader will distinguish this correspondent of Rousseau's, *Comtesse de Boufflers-Rouveret* (1727-18—), from the *Duchesse de Boufflers*, which was the title of Rousseau's Marechale de Luxembourg before her second marriage. And also from the *Marquise de Boufflers*, said to be the mistress of the old king Stanislaus at Luneville, and the mother of the Chevalier de Boufflers (who was the intimate of Voltaire, sat in the States General, emigrated, did homage to Napoleon, and finally died peaceably under



Lewis XVIII.). See *Jal's Dict. Critique*, 259-262. Sainte Beuve has an essay on our present Comtesse de Boufflers (*Nouveaux Lundis*, iv. 163). She is the Madame de Boufflers who was taken by Beauclerk to visit Johnson in his Temple chambers, and was conducted to her coach by him in a remarkable manner (Boswell's *Life*, ch. li. p. 467). Also much talked of in H. Walpole's Letters. See D'Alembert to Frederick, April 15, 1768.



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[9] *Streckeisen*, ii. 32.

[10] *Conf.*, x. 71.

[11] For instance, *Corr.* ii. 85, 90, 92, *etc.* 1759.

[12] *Streckeisen*, ii. 28, *etc.*

[13] *Ib.*, 29.

[14] *Conf.*, x. 99.

[15] *Ib.*, x. 57.

[16] *Ib.*, xi. 119.

[17] *Corr.*, ii. 196. Feb. 16, 1761.

[18] *Ib.*, ii. 102, 176, *etc.*

[19] *Conf.*, x. 60.

[20] *Corr.*, ii. 12.

[21] As M. St. Marc Girardin has put it: "There are in all Rousseau's discussions two things to be carefully distinguished from one another; the maxims of the discourse, and the conclusions of the controversy. The maxims are ordinarily paradoxical; the conclusions are full of good sense." *Rev. des Deux Mondes*, Aug. 1852, p. 501.

[22] *Corr.*, ii. 244-246. Oct. 24, 1761.

[23] *Ib.*, 1766. *Oeuv.*, lxxv. 364.

[24] *Corr.*, ii. 32. (1758.)

[25] *Corr.*, ii. 63. Jan. 15, 1779.

[26] Bernardin de St. Pierre, xii. 102.

[27] 4th Letter, p. 375.

[28] *Mem.*, ii. 299.

[29] *Corr.*, ii. 98. July 10, 1759.

[30] *Corr.*, ii. 106. Nov. 10, 1759.



[31] *Ib.*, ii. 179. Jan. 18, 1761.

[32] *Ib.*, ii. 268. Dec. 12, 1761.

[33] *Ib.*, ii. 28. Dec. 23, 1761.

[34] *Nouv. Hel.*, III. xxii. 147. In 1784 Hume's suppressed essays on "Suicide and the Immortality of the Soul" were published in London:—"With Remarks, intended as an Antidote to the Poison contained in these Performances, by the Editor; to which is added, Two Letters on Suicide, from Rousseau's Eloisa." In the preface the reader is told that these "two very masterly letters have been much celebrated." See Hume's *Essays*, by Green and Grose, i. 69, 70.

[35] *Corr.*, iii. 235. Aug. 1, 1763.

[36] *Corr.*, ii. 226. Sept. 29, 1761.

[37] P. 294. Jan. 11, 1762.

[38] Madame Latour (Nov. 7, 1730-Sept. 6, 1789) was the wife of a man in the financial world, who used her ill and dissipated as much of her fortune as he could, and from whom she separated in 1775. After that she resumed her maiden name and was known as Madame de Franqueville. Musset-Pathay, ii. 182, and Sainte Beuve, *Causeries*, ii. 63.

[39] *Corr.*, ii. 214. *Conf.*, ix. 289.

[40] English translations of Rousseau's works appeared very speedily after the originals. A second edition of the Heloisa was called for as early as May 1761. See *Corr.* ii. 223. A German translation of the Heloisa appeared at Leipzig in 1761, in six duodecimos.

[41] For instance, *Corr.*, ii. 168. Nov. 19, 1762.

[42] Choderlos de La Clos: 1741-1803.

[43] *Journal*, iv. 496. (Ed. Charpentier, 1857.)



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[44] *Nouv. Hel.*, III. xiv. 48.

[45] *E.g.* Letters, 40-46.

[46] Madame de Stael (1765-1817), in her *Lettres sur les ecrits et le caractere de J.J. Rousseau*, written when she was twenty, and her first work of any pretensions. *Oeuv.*, i. 41. Ed. 1820.

[47] Nowhere more pungently than in a little piece of some half-dozen pages, headed, *Prediction tiree d'un vieux Manuscrit*, the form of which is borrowed from Grimm's squib in the dispute about French music, *Le petit Prophete de Boehmischbroda*, though it seems to me to be superior to Grimm in pointedness. Here are a few verses from the supposed prophecy of the man who should come—and of what he should do. “Et la multitude courra sur ses pas et plusieurs croiront en lui. Et il leur dira: Vous etes des scelerats et des fripons, vos femmes sont toutes des femmes perdues, et je viens vivre parmi vous. Et il ajoutera tous les hommes sont vertueux dans le pays ou je suis ne, et je n'habiterai jamais le pays ou je suis ne.... Et il dira aussi qu'il est impossible d'avoir des moeurs, et de lire des Romans, et il fera un Roman; et dans son Roman le vice sera en action et la vertu en paroles, et ses personages seront forcenes d'amour et de philosophie. Et dans son Roman on apprendra l'art de suborner philosophiquement une jeune fille. Et l'Ecoliere perdra toute honte et toute pudeur, et elle fera avec son maitre des sottises et des maximes.... Et le bel Ami etant dans un Bateau seul avec sa Maitresse voudra le jeter dans l'eau et se precipiter avec elle. Et ils appelleront tout cela de la Philosophie et de la Vertu,” and so on, humorously enough in its way.

[48] See passages in Goncourt's *La Femme au 18ieme siecle*, p. 380.

[49] Musset-Pathay, II. 361. See Madame Roland's *Mem.*, i. 207.

[50] *Corr.*, March 3, and March 19, 1761. The criticisms of Ximenes, a thoroughly mediocre person in all respects, were entirely literary, and were directed against the too strained and highly coloured quality of the phrases—“baisers acres”—among them.

[51] *Nouv. Hel.*, V. v. 115.

[52] VI. vii.

[53] VI. vi.

[54] Michelet's *Louis XV. et Louis XVI.*, p. 58.

[55] See Hettner's *Literaturgeschichte*, II. 486.

[56] IV. xi.



[57] IV. xvii. See vol. iii. 423.

[58] In 1816. Moore's *Life*, iii. 247; also 285. And the note to the stanzas in the Third Canto,—a note curious for a slight admixture of transcendentalism, so rare a thing with Byron, who, sentimental though he was, usually rejoiced in a truly Voltairean common sense.



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[59] “The present fashion in France, of passing some time in the country, is new; at this time of the year, and for many weeks past, Paris is, comparatively speaking, empty. Everybody who has a country seat is at it, and such as have none visit others who have. This remarkable revolution in the French manners is certainly one of the best customs they have taken from England; and its introduction was effected the easier, being assisted by the magic of Rousseau’s writings. Mankind are much indebted to that splendid genius, who, when living, was hunted from country to country, to seek an asylum, with as much venom as if he had been a mad dog; thanks to the vile spirit of bigotry, which has not received its death wound. Women of the first fashion in France are now ashamed of not nursing their own children; and stays are universally proscribed from the bodies of the poor infants, which were for so many ages torture to them, as they are still in Spain. The country residence may not have effects equally obvious; but they will be no less sure in the end, and in all respects beneficial to every class in the state.” Arthur Young’s *Travels*, i. 72.

[60] *Causeries*, xi. 195.

[61] *Nouv. Hel.*, V. iii. “You remember Rousseau’s description of an English morning: such are the mornings I spend with these good people.”—Cowper to Joseph Hill, Oct. 25, 1765. *Works*, iii. 269. In a letter to William Unwin (Sept. 21, 1779), speaking of his being engaged in mending windows, he says, “Rousseau would have been charmed to have seen me so occupied, and would have exclaimed with rapture that he had found the Emilius who, he supposed, had subsisted only in his own idea.” For a description illustrative of the likeness between Rousseau and Cowper in their feeling for nature, see letter to Newton (Sept. 18, 1784, v. 78), and compare it with the description of Les Charmettes, making proper allowance for the colour of prose.

[62] IV. x. 260.

[63] V. ii. 37.

[64] V. ii. 47-52.

[65] Rousseau considered that the Fourth and Sixth parts of the New Heloisa were masterpieces of diction. *Conf.* ix. 334.

[66] VI. viii.. 298. *Conf.*, xi. 106.

[67] The La Bedoyere case, which began in 1745. See Barbier, iv. 54, 59, etc.

[68] III. xviii. 84.

[69] III. xx. 116. In the letter to Christopher de Beaumont (p. 102), he fires a double shot against the philosophers on the one hand, and the church on the other; exalting continence and purity, of which the philosophers in their reaction against asceticism



thought lightly, and exalting marriage over the celibate state, which the churchmen associated with mysterious sanctity.

[70] I. lxii.

[71] V. ii.

[72] V. vii. 141.

[73] V. ii. 31-33.

[74] For the Robecq family, see Saint Simon, xviii. 58.

[75] Morellet's *Mem.*, i. 89-93. Rousseau, *Conf.*, x. 85, *etc.* This *Vision* is also in the style of Grimm's *Petit Prophete*, like the piece referred to in a previous note, vol. ii. p. 31.



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[76] Madame de Vandeuil's *Mem. sur Diderot*, p. 27. Rousseau, *Conf.*, vii. 130.

[77] *Nouv. Hel.*, V. xiii. 194. *Conf.*, x. 43.

[78] The reader will find a fuller mention of the French book trade in my *Diderot*, ch. vi.

[79] *Conf.*, xi. 127.

[80] See a letter from Rousseau to Malesherbes, Nov. 5, 1760. *Corr.*, ii. 157.

[81] *Corr.*, ii. 157.

[82] C.G. de Lamoignon de Malesherbes (p. 1721—guillotined, 1794), son of the chancellor, and one of the best instructed and most enlightened men of the century—a Turgot of the second rank—was Directeur de la Librairie from 1750-1763. The process was this: a book was submitted to him; he named a censor for it; on the censor's report the director gave or refused permission to print, or required alterations. Even after these formalities were complied with, the book was liable to a decree of the royal council, a decree of the parliament, or else a *lettre-de-cachet* might send the author to the Bastille. See Barbier, vii. 126.

After Lord Shelburne saw Malesherbes, he said, "I have seen for the first time in my life what I never thought could exist—a man whose soul is absolutely free from hope or fear, and yet who is full of life and ardour." Mdlle. Lespinasse's *Lettres*, 90.

[83] See note, p. 132.

[84] *Conf.*, xi. 134.

[85] *Conf.*, xi. 139.

[86] *Ib.*, xi. 139. *Corr.*, ii. 270, etc. Dec. 12, 1761, etc.

[87] *Conf.*, xi. 150.

[88] Fourth Letter to Malesherbes, p. 377.

[89] With one trifling exception, the Letter to Grimm on the Opera of Omphale (1752): *Ecrits sur la Musique*, p. 337.

[90] See Barbier's Journal, viii. 45 (Ed. Charpentier, 1857). A succinct contemporary account of the general situation is to be found in D'Alembert's little book, the *Destruction des Jesuites*.

[91] Grimm, for instance: *Corr. Lit.*, iii. 117.



[92] *Corr.*, ii. 337. June 7, 1672. *Conf.*, xi. 152, 162.

[93] *Conf.*, xi. 162. The Levite's story is to be read in *Judges*, ch. xix.

CHAPTER II.

PERSECUTION.[94]

Those to whom life consists in the immediate consciousness of their own direct relations with the people and circumstances that are in close contact with them, find it hard to follow the moods of a man to whom such consciousness is the least part of himself, and such relations the least real part of his life. Rousseau was no sooner in the post-chaise which was bearing him away towards Switzerland, than the troubles of the previous day at once dropped into a pale and distant past, and he returned to a world where was neither parliament, nor decree for burning books, nor any warrant for personal arrest. He took



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up the thread where harassing circumstances had broken it, and again fell musing over the tragic tale of the Levite of Ephraim. His dream absorbed him so entirely as to take specific literary form, and before the journey was at an end he had composed a long impassioned version of the Bible story. Though it has Rousseau's usual fine sonorousness in a high degree, no man now reads it; the author himself always preserved a certain tenderness for it.[95] The contrast between this singular quietism and the angry stir that marked Voltaire's many flights in post-chaises, points like all else to the profound difference between the pair. Contrast with Voltaire's shrill cries under any personal vexation, this calm utterance:—"Though the consequences of this affair have plunged me into a gulf of woes from which I shall never come up again so long as I live, I bear these gentlemen no grudge. I am aware that their object was not to do me any harm, but only to reach ends of their own. I know that towards me they have neither liking nor hate. I was found in their way, like a pebble that you thrust aside with the foot without even looking at it. They ought not to say they have performed their duty, but that they have done their business." [96] A new note from a persecuted writer.

Rousseau, in spite of the belief which henceforth possessed him that he was the victim of a dark unfathomable plot, and in spite of passing outbreaks of gloomy rage, was incapable of steady glowing and active resentments. The world was not real enough to him for this. A throng of phantoms pressed noiselessly before his sight, and dulled all sense of more actual impression. "It is amazing," he wrote, "with what ease I forget past ill, however fresh it may be. In proportion as the anticipation of it alarms and confuses me when I see it coming, so the memory of it returns feebly to my mind and dies out the moment after it has arrived. My cruel imagination, which torments itself incessantly in anticipating woes that are still unborn, makes a diversion for my memory, and hinders me from recalling those which have gone. I exhaust disaster beforehand. The more I have suffered in foreseeing it, the more easily do I forget it; while on the contrary, being incessantly busy with my past happiness, I recall it and brood and ruminate over it, so as to enjoy it over again whenever I wish." [97] The same turn of humour saved him from vindictiveness. "I concern myself too little with the offence, to feel much concern about the offender. I only think of the hurt that I have received from him, on account of the hurt that he may still do me; and if I were sure he would do me no more, what he had already done would be forgotten straightway." Though he does not carry the analysis any further, we may easily perceive that the same explanation covers what he called his natural ingratitude. Kindness was not much more vividly understood by him than malice. It was only one form of the troublesome interposition



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of an outer world in his life; he was fain to hurry back from it to the real world of his dreams. If any man called practical is tempted to despise this dreaming creature, as he fares in his chaise from stage to stage, let him remember that one making that journey through France less than thirty years later might have seen the castles of the great flaring in the destruction of a most righteous vengeance, the great themselves fleeing ignobly from the land to which their selfishness, and heedlessness, and hatred of improvement, and inhuman pride had been a curse, while the legion of toilers with eyes blinded by the oppression of ages were groping with passionate uncertain hand for that divine something which they thought of as justice and right. And this was what Rousseau both partially foresaw and helped to prepare,[98] while the common politicians, like Choiseul or D'Aiguillon, played their poor game—the elemental forces rising unseen into tempest around them.

He reached the territory of the canton of Berne, and alighted at the house of an old friend at Yverdun,[99] where native air, the beauty of the spot, and the charms of the season, immediately repaired all weariness and fatigue.[100] Friends at Geneva wrote letters of sincere feeling, joyful that he had not followed the precedent of Socrates too closely by remaining in the power of a government eager to destroy him.[101] A post or two later brought worse news. The Council at Geneva ordered not only Emilius, but the Social Contract also, to be publicly burnt, and issued a warrant of arrest against their author, if he should set foot in the territory of the republic (June 19).[102] Rousseau could hardly believe it possible that the free Government which he had held up to the reverence of Europe, could have condemned him unheard, but he took occasion in a highly characteristic manner to chide severely a friend at Geneva who had publicly taken his part.[103] Within a fortnight this blow was followed by another. His two books were reported to the senate of Berne, and Rousseau was informed by one of the authorities that a notification was on its way admonishing him to quit the canton within the space of fifteen days.[104] This stroke he avoided by flight to Motiers, a village in the principality of Neuchatel (July 10), then part of the dominions of the King of Prussia. [105] Rousseau had some antipathy to Frederick, both because he had beaten the French, whom Rousseau loved, and because his maxims and his conduct alike seemed to trample under foot respect for the natural law and not a few human duties. He had composed a verse to the effect that Frederick thought like a philosopher and acted like a king, philosopher and king notoriously being words of equally evil sense in his dialect. There was also a passage in Emilius about Adrastus, King of the Daunians, which was commonly understood to mean Frederick, King of the Prussians. Still Rousseau was acute enough to know that mean passions usually only rule the weak,



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and have little hold over the strong. He boldly wrote both to the king and to Lord Marischal, the governor of the principality, informing them that he was there, and asking permission to remain in the only asylum left for him upon the earth.[106] He compared himself loftily to Coriolanus among the Volscians, and wrote to the king in a vein that must have amused the strong man. "I have said much ill of you, perhaps I shall still say more; yet, driven from France, from Geneva, from the canton of Berne, I am come to seek shelter in your states. Perhaps I was wrong in not beginning there; this is eulogy of which you are worthy. Sire, I have deserved no grace from you, and I seek none, but I thought it my duty to inform your majesty that I am in your power, and that I am so of set design. Your majesty will dispose of me as shall seem good to you." [107] Frederick, though no admirer of Rousseau or his writings, [108] readily granted the required permission. He also, says Lord Marischal, "gave me orders to furnish him his small necessaries if he would accept them; and though that king's philosophy be very different from that of Jean Jacques, yet he does not think that a man of an irreproachable life is to be persecuted because his sentiments are singular. He designs to build him a hermitage with a little garden, which I find he will not accept, nor perhaps the rest, which I have not yet offered him." [109] When the offer of the flour, wine, and firewood was at length made in as delicate terms as possible, Rousseau declined the gift on grounds which may raise a smile, but which are not without a rather touching simplicity. [110] "I have enough to live on for two or three years," he said, "but if I were dying of hunger, I would rather in the present condition of your good prince, and not being of any service to him, go and eat grass and grub up roots, than accept a morsel of bread from him." [111] Hume might well call this a phenomenon in the world of letters, and one very honourable for the person concerned. [112] And we recognise its dignity the more when we contrast it with the baseness of Voltaire, who drew his pension from the King of Prussia while Frederick was in his most urgent straits, and while the poet was sportively exulting to all his correspondents in the malicious expectation that he would one day have to allow the King of Prussia himself a pension. [113] And Rousseau was a poor man, living among the poor and in their style. His annual outlay at this time was covered by the modest sum of sixty louis. [114] What stamps his refusal of Frederick's gifts as true dignity, is the fact that he not only did not refuse money for any work done, but expected and asked for it. Malesherbes at this very time begged him to collect plants for him. Joyfully, replied Rousseau, "but as I cannot subsist without the aid of my own labour, I never meant, in spite of the pleasure that it might otherwise have been to me, to offer you the use of my time for nothing." [115]



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In the same year, we may add, when the tremendous struggle of the Seven Years' War was closing, the philosopher wrote a second terse epistle to the king, and with this their direct communication came to an end. "Sire, you are my protector and my benefactor; I would fain repay you if I can. You wish to give me bread; is there none of your own subjects in want of it? Take that sword away from my sight, it dazzles and pains me. It has done its work only too well; the sceptre is abandoned. Great is the career for kings of your stuff, and you are still far from the term; time presses, you have not a moment to lose. Fathom well your heart, O Frederick! Can you dare to die without having been the greatest of men? Would that I could see Frederick, the just and the redoubtable, covering his states with multitudes of men to whom he should be a father; then will J.J. Rousseau, the foe of kings, hasten to die at the foot of his throne." [116] Frederick, strong as his interest was in all curious persons who could amuse him, was too busy to answer this, and Rousseau was not yet recognised as Voltaire's rival in power and popularity.

Motiers is one of the half-dozen decent villages standing in the flat bottom of the Val de Travers, a widish valley that lies between the gorges of the Jura and the Lake of Neuchatel, and is famous in our day for its production of absinthe and of asphalt. The flat of the valley, with the Reuss making a bald and colourless way through the midst of it, is nearly treeless, and it is too uniform to be very pleasing. In winter the climate is most rigorous, for the level is high, and the surrounding hills admit the sun's rays late and cut them off early. Rousseau's description, accurate and recognisable as it is, [117] strikes an impartial tourist as too favourable. But when a piece of scenery is a home to a man, he has an eye for a thousand outlines, changes of light, soft variations of colour; the landscape lives for him with an unspoken suggestion and intimate association, to all of which the swift passing stranger is very cold.

His cottage, which is still shown, was in the midst of the other houses, and his walks, which were at least as important to him as the home in which he dwelt, lay mostly among woody heights with streaming cascades. The country abounded in natural curiosities of a humble sort, and here that interest in plants which had always been strong in him, began to grow into a passion. Rousseau had so curious a feeling about them, that when in his botanical expeditions he came across a single flower of its kind, he could never bring himself to pluck it. His sight, though not good for distant objects, was of the very finest for things held close; his sense of smell was so acute and subtle that, according to a good witness, he might have classified plants by odours, if language furnished as many names as nature supplies varieties of fragrance. [118] He insisted in all botanising and other walking excursions



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on going bareheaded, even in the heat of the dog-days; he declared that the action of the sun did him good. When the days began to turn, the summer was straightway at an end for him: "My imagination," he said, in a phrase which went further through his life than he supposed, "at once brings winter." He hated rain as much as he loved sun, so he must once have lost all the mystic fascination of the green Savoy lakes gleaming luminous through pale showers, and now again must have lost the sombre majesty of the pines of his valley dripping in torn edges of cloud, and all those other sights in landscape that touch subtler parts of us than comforted sense.

One of his favourite journeys was to Colombier, the summer retreat of Lord Marischal. For him he rapidly conceived the same warm friendship which he felt for the Duke of Luxembourg, whom he had just left. And the sagacious, moderate, silent Scot had as warm a liking for the strange refugee who had come to him for shelter, or shall we call it a kind of shaggy compassion, as of a faithful inarticulate creature. His letters, which are numerous enough, abound in expressions of hearty good-will. These, if we reflect on the genuine worth, veracity, penetration, and experience of the old man who wrote them, may fairly be counted the best testimony that remains to the existence of something sterling at the bottom of Rousseau's character.[119] It is here no insincere fine lady of the French court, but a homely and weather-beaten Scotchman, who speaks so often of his refugee's rectitude of heart and true sensibility.[120]

He insisted on being allowed to settle a small sum on Theresa, who had joined Rousseau at Motiers, and in other ways he showed a true solicitude and considerateness both for her and for him.[121] It was his constant dream, that on his return to Scotland, Jean Jacques should accompany him, and that with David Hume, they would make a trio of philosophic hermits; that this was no mere cheery pleasantry is shown by the pains he took in settling the route for the journey.[122] The plan only fell through in consequence of Frederick's cordial urgency that his friend should end his days with him; he returned to Prussia and lived at Sans Souci until the close, always retaining something of his good-will for "his excellent savage," as he called the author of the Discourses. They had some common antipathies, including the fundamental one of dislike to society, and especially to the society of the people of Neuchatel, the Gascons of Switzerland. "Rousseau is gay in company," Lord Marischal wrote to Hume, "polite, and what the French call *aimable*, and gains ground daily in the opinion of even the clergy here. His enemies elsewhere continue to persecute him, and he is pestered with anonymous letters." [123]



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Some of these were of a humour that disclosed the master hand. Voltaire had been universally suspected of stirring up the feeling of Geneva against its too famous citizen, [124] though for a man of less energy the affair of the Calas, which he was now in the thick of, might have sufficed. Voltaire's letters at this time show how hard he found it in the case of Rousseau to exercise his usual pity for the unfortunate. He could not forget that the man who was now tasting persecution had barked at philosophers and stage-plays; that he was a false brother, who had fatuously insulted the only men who could take his part; that he was a Judas who had betrayed the sacred cause.[125] On the whole, however, we ought probably to accept his word, though not very categorically given,[126] that he had nothing to do with the action taken against Rousseau. That action is quite adequately explained, first by the influence of the resident of France at Geneva, which we know to have been exerted against the two fatal books,[127] and second by the anxiety of the oligarchic party to keep out of their town a man whose democratic tendencies they now knew so well and so justly dreaded.[128] Moulto, a Genevese minister, in the full tide of devotion and enthusiasm for the author of *Emilius*, met Voltaire at the house of a lady in Geneva. All will turn out well, cried the patriarch; "the syndics will say M. Rousseau, you have done ill to write what you have written; promise for the future to respect the religion of your country. Jean Jacques will promise, and perhaps he will say that the printer took the liberty of adding a sheet or two to his book." "Never," cried the ardent Moulto; "Jean Jacques never puts his name to works to disown them after." [129] Voltaire disowned his own books with intrepid and sustained mendacity, yet he bore no grudge to Moulto for his vehemence. He sent for him shortly afterwards, professed an extreme desire to be reconciled with Rousseau, and would talk of nothing else. "I swear to you," wrote Moulto, "that I could not understand him the least in the world; he is a marvellous actor; I could have sworn that he loved you." [130] And there really was no acting in it. The serious Genevese did not see that he was dealing with "one all fire and fickleness, a child."

Rousseau soon found out that he had excited not only the band of professed unbelievers, but also the tormenting wasps of orthodoxy. The doctors of the Sorbonne, not to be outdone in fervour for truth by the lawyers of the parliament, had condemned *Emilius* as a matter of course. In the same spirit of generous emulation, Christopher de Beaumont, "by the divine compassion archbishop of Paris, Duke of Saint Cloud, peer of France, commander of the order of the Holy Ghost," had issued (Aug. 20, 1762) one of those hateful documents in which bishops, Catholic and Protestant, have been wont for the last century and a half to hide with swollen bombastic phrase their dead and decomposing



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ideas. The windy folly of these poor pieces is usually in proportion to the hierarchic rank of those who promulgate them, and an archbishop owes it to himself to blaspheme against reason and freedom in superlatives of malignant unction. Rousseau's reply (Nov. 18, 1762) is a masterpiece of dignity and uprightness. Turning to it from the mandate which was its provocative, we seem to grasp the hand of a man, after being chased by a nightmare of masked figures. Rousseau never showed the substantial quality of his character more surely and unmistakably than in controversy. He had such gravity, such austere self-command, such closeness of grip. Most of us feel pleasure in reading the matchless banter with which Voltaire assailed his theological enemies. Reading Rousseau's letter to De Beaumont we realise the comparative lowness of the pleasure which Voltaire had given us. We understand how it was that Rousseau made fanatics, while Voltaire only made sceptics. At the very first words, the mitre, the crosier, the ring, fall into the dust; the Archbishop of Paris, the Duke of Saint Cloud, the peer of France, the commander of the Holy Ghost, is restored from the disguises of his enchantment, and becomes a human being. We hear the voice of a man hailing a man. Voltaire often sank to the level of ecclesiastics. Rousseau raised the archbishop to his own level, and with magnanimous courtesy addressed him as an equal. "Why, my lord, have I anything to say to you? What common tongue can we use? How are we to understand one another? And what is there between me and you?" And he persevered in this distant lofty vein, hardly permitting himself a single moment of acerbity. We feel the ever-inspiring breath of seriousness and sincerity. This was because, as we repeat so often, Rousseau's ideas, all engendered of dreams as they were, yet lived in him and were truly rooted in his character. He did not merely say, as any of us can say so fluently, that he craved reality in human relations, that distinctions of rank and post count for nothing, that our lives are in our own hands and ought not to be blown hither and thither by outside opinion and words heedlessly scattered; that our faith, whatever it may be, is the most sacred of our possessions, organic, indissoluble, self-sufficing; that our passage across the world, if very short, is yet too serious to be wasted in frivolous disrespect for ourselves, and angry disrespect for others. All this was actually his mind. And hence the little difficulty he had in keeping his retort to the archbishop, as to his other antagonists, on a worthy level.

Only once or twice does his sense of the reckless injustice with which he had been condemned, and of the persecution which was inflicted on him by one government after another, stir in him a blaze of high remonstrance. "You accuse me of temerity," he cried; "how have I earned such a name, when I only propounded difficulties, and even that with so much reserve; when I only advanced reasons, and



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even that with so much respect; when I attacked no one, nor even named one? And you, my lord, how do you dare to reproach with temerity a man of whom you speak with such scanty justice and so little decency, with so small respect and so much levity? You call me impious, and of what impiety can you accuse me—me who never spoke of the Supreme Being except to pay him the honour and glory that are his due, nor of man except to persuade all men to love one another? The impious are those who unworthily profane the cause of God by making it serve the passions of men. The impious are those who, daring to pass for the interpreters of divinity, and judges between it and man, exact for themselves the honours that are due to it only. The impious are those who arrogate to themselves the right of exercising the power of God upon earth, and insist on opening and shutting the gates of heaven at their own good will and pleasure. The impious are those who have libels read in the church. At this horrible idea my blood is enkindled, and tears of indignation fall from my eyes. Priests of the God of peace, you shall render an account one day, be very sure, of the use to which you have dared to put his house.... My lord, you have publicly insulted me: you are now convicted of heaping calumny upon me. If you were a private person like myself, so that I could cite you before an equitable tribunal, and we could both appear before it, I with my book, and you with your mandate, assuredly you would be declared guilty; you would be condemned to make reparation as public as the wrong was public. But you belong to a rank that relieves you from the necessity of being just, and I am nothing. Yet you who profess the gospel, you, a prelate appointed to teach others their duty, you know what your own duty is in such a case. Mine I have done: I have nothing more to say to you, and I hold my peace." [131]

The letter was as good in dialectic as it was in moral tone. For this is a little curious, that Rousseau, so diffuse in expounding his opinions, and so unscientific in his method of coming to them, should have been one of the keenest and most trenchant of the controversialists of a very controversial time. Some of his strokes in defence of his first famous assault on civilisation are as hard, as direct, and as effective as any in the records of polemical literature. We will give one specimen from the letter to the Archbishop of Paris; it has the recommendation of touching an argument that is not yet quite universally recognised for slain. The Savoyard Vicar had dwelt on the difficulty of accepting revelation as the voice of God, on account of the long distance of time between us, and the questionableness of the supporting testimony. To which the archbishop thus:—"But is there not then an infinity of facts, even earlier than those of the Christian revelation, which it would be absurd to doubt? By what way other than that of human testimony has our author himself known the



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Sparta, the Athens, the Rome, whose laws, manners, and heroes he extols with such assurance? How many generations of men between him and the historians who have preserved the memory of these events?" First, says Rousseau in answer, "it is in the order of things that human circumstances should be attested by human evidence, and they can be attested in no other way. I can only know that Rome and Sparta existed, because contemporaries assure me that they existed. In such a case this intermediate communication is indispensable. But why is it necessary between God and me? Is it simple or natural that God should have gone in search of Moses to speak to Jean Jacques Rousseau? Second, nobody is obliged to believe that Sparta once existed, and nobody will be devoured by eternal flames for doubting it. Every fact of which we are not witnesses is only established by moral proofs, and moral proofs have various degrees of strength. Will the divine justice hurl me into hell for missing the exact point at which a proof becomes irresistible? If there is in the world an attested story, it is that of vampires; nothing is wanting for judicial proof,—reports and certificates from notables, surgeons, clergy, magistrates. But who believes in vampires, and shall we all be damned for not believing? Third, *my constant experience and that of all men is stronger in reference to prodigies than the testimony of some men.*"

He then strikes home with a parable. The Abbe Paris had died in the odour of Jansenist sanctity (1727), and extraordinary doings went on at his tomb; the lame walked, men and women sick of the palsy were made whole, and so forth. Suppose, says Rousseau, that an inhabitant of the Rue St. Jacques speaks thus to the Archbishop of Paris, "My lord, I know that you neither believe in the beatitude of St. Jean de Paris, nor in the miracles which God has been pleased publicly to work upon his tomb in the sight of the most enlightened and most populous city in the world; but I feel bound to testify to you that I have just seen the saint in person raised from the dead in the spot where his bones were laid." The man of the Rue St. Jacques gives all the detail of such a circumstance that could strike a beholder. "I am persuaded that on hearing such strange news, you will begin by interrogating him who testifies to its truth, as to his position, his feelings, his confessor, and other such points; and when from his air, as from his speech, you have perceived that he is a poor workman, and when having no confessional ticket to show you, he has confirmed your notion that he is a Jansenist, Ah, ah, you will say to him, you are a convulsionary, and have seen Saint Paris resuscitated. There is nothing wonderful in that; you have seen so many other wonders!" The man would insist that the miracle had been seen equally by a number of other people, who though Jansenists, it is true, were persons of sound sense, good character, and excellent reputation.



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Some would send the man to Bedlam, "but you after a grave reprimand, will be content with saying: I know that two or three witnesses, good people and of sound sense, may attest the life or the death of a man, but I do not know how many more are needed to establish the resurrection of a Jansenist. Until I find that out, go, my son, and try to strengthen your brain: I give you a dispensation from fasting, and here is something for you to make your broth with. That is what you would say, and what any other sensible man would say in your place. Whence I conclude that even according to you and to every other sensible man, the moral proofs which are sufficient to establish facts that are in the order of moral possibilities, are not sufficient to establish facts of another order and purely supernatural." [132]

Perhaps, however, the formal denunciation by the Archbishop of Paris was less vexatious than the swarming of the angrier hive of ministers at his gates. "If I had declared for atheism," he says bitterly, "they would at first have shrieked, but they would soon have left me in peace like the rest. The people of the Lord would not have kept watch over me; everybody would not have thought he was doing me a high favour in not treating me as a person cut off from communion, and I should have been quits with all the world. The holy women in Israel would not have written me anonymous letters, and their charity would not have breathed devout insults. They would not have taken the trouble to assure me in all humility of heart that I was a castaway, an execrable monster, and that the world would have been well off if some good soul had been at the pains to strangle me in my cradle. Worthy people on their side would not torment themselves and torment me to bring me back to the way of salvation; they would not charge at me from right and left, nor stifle me under the weight of their sermons, nor force me to bless their zeal while I cursed their importunity, nor to feel with gratitude that they are obeying a call to lay me in my very grave with weariness." [133]

He had done his best to conciliate the good opinion of his vigilant neighbours. Their character for contentious orthodoxy was well known. It was at Neuchatel that the controversy as to the eternal punishment of the wicked raged with a fury that ended in a civil outbreak. The peace of the town was violently disturbed, ministers were suspended, magistrates were interdicted, life was lost, until at last Frederick promulgated his famous bull:—"Let the parsons who make for themselves a cruel and barbarous God, be eternally damned as they desire and deserve; and let those parsons who conceive God gentle and merciful, enjoy the plenitude of his mercy." [134] When Rousseau came within the territory, preparations were made to imitate the action of Paris, Geneva, and Berne. It was only the king's express permission that saved him from a fourth proscription. The minister at Motiers was of the less inhuman stamp, and Rousseau,



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feeling that he could not, without failing in his engagements and his duty as a citizen, neglect the public profession of the faith to which he had been restored eight years before, attended the religious services with regularity. He even wrote to the pastor a letter in vindication of his book, and protesting the sincerity of his union with the reformed congregation.[135] The result of this was that the pastor came to tell him how great an honour he held it to count such a member in his flock, and how willing he was to admit him without further examination to partake of the communion.[136] Rousseau went to the ceremony with eyes full of tears and a heart swelling with emotion. We may respect his mood as little or as much as we please, but it was certainly more edifying than the sight of Voltaire going through the same rite, merely to harass a priest and fill a bishop with fury.

In all other respects he lived a harmless life during the three years of his sojourn in the Val de Travers. As he could never endure what he calls the inactive chattering of the parlour—people sitting in front of one another with folded hands and nothing in motion except the tongue—he learnt the art of making laces; he used to carry his pillow about with him, or sat at his own door working like the women of the village, and chatting with the passers-by. He made presents of his work to young women about to marry, always on the condition that they should suckle their children when they came to have them. If a little whimsical, it was a harmless and respectable pastime. It is pleasanter to think of a philosopher finding diversion in weaving laces, than of noblemen making it the business of their lives to run after ribands. A society clothed in breeches was incensed about the same time by Rousseau's adoption of the Armenian costume, the vest, the furred bonnet, the caftan, and the girdle. There was nothing very wonderful in this departure from use. An Armenian tailor used often to visit some friends at Montmorency. Rousseau knew him, and reflected that such a dress would be of singular comfort to him in the circumstances of his bodily disorder.[137] Here was a solid practical reason for what has usually been counted a demonstration of a turned brain. Rousseau had as good cause for going about in a caftan as Chatham had for coming to the House of Parliament wrapped in flannel. Vanity and a desire to attract notice may, we admit, have had something to do with Rousseau's adoption of an uncommon way of dressing. Shrewd wits like the Duke of Luxembourg and his wife did not suppose that it was so. We, living a hundred years after, cannot possibly know whether it was so or not, and our estimate of Rousseau's strange character would be very little worth forming, if it only turned on petty singularities of this kind. The foolish, equivocally gifted with the quality of articulate speech, may, if they choose, satisfy their own self-love by reducing all action out of the common course to a series of variations on the same motive in others. Men blessed by the benignity of experience will be thankful not to waste life in guessing evil about unknowable trifles.



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During his stay at Motiers Rousseau's time was hardly ever his own. Visitors of all nations, drawn either by respect for his work or by curiosity to see a man who had been proscribed by so many governments, came to him in throngs. His partisans at Geneva insisted on sending people to convince themselves how good a man they were persecuting. "I had never been free from strangers for six weeks," he writes. "Two days after, I had a Westphalian gentleman and one from Genoa; six days later, two persons from Zurich, who stayed a week; then a Genevese, recovering from an illness, and coming for change of air, fell ill again, and he has only just gone away." [138] One visitor, writing home to his wife of the philosopher to whom he had come on a pilgrimage, describes his manners in terms which perhaps touch us with surprise:—"Thou hast no idea how charming his society is, what true politeness there is in his manners, what a depth of serenity and cheerfulness in his talk. Didst thou not expect quite a different picture, and figure to thyself an eccentric creature, always grave and sometimes even abrupt? Ah, what a mistake! To an expression of great mildness he unites a glance of fire, and eyes of a vivacity the like of which never was seen. When you handle any matter in which he takes an interest, then his eyes, his lips, his hands, everything about him speaks. You would be quite wrong to picture in him an everlasting grumbler. Not at all; he laughs with those who laugh, he chats and jokes with children, he rallies his housekeeper." [139] He was not so civil to all the world, and occasionally turned upon his pursuers with a word of most sardonic roughness. [140] But he could also be very generous. We find him pressing a loan from his scanty store on an outcast adventurer, and warning him, "When I lend (which happens rarely enough), 'tis my constant maxim never to count on repayment, nor to exact it." [141] He received hundreds of letters, some seeking an application of his views on education to a special case, others craving further exposition of his religious doctrines. Before he had been at Motiers nine months he had paid ten louis for the postage of letters, which after all contained little more than reproaches, insults, menaces, imbecilities. [142]

Not the least curious of his correspondence at this time is that with the Prince of Wuerttemberg, then living near Lausanne. [143] The prince had a little daughter four months old, and he was resolved that her upbringing should be carried on as the author of *Emilius* might please to direct. Rousseau replied courteously that he did not pretend to direct the education of princes or princesses. [144] His undaunted correspondent sent him full details of his babe's habits and faculties, and continued to do so at short intervals, with the fondness of a young mother or an old nurse. Rousseau was interested, and took some trouble to draw up rules for the child's nurture and admonition. One may smile now and



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then at the prince's ingenuous zeal, but his fervid respect and devotion for the teacher in whom he thought he had found the wisest man that ever lived, and who had at any rate spoken the word that kindled the love of virtue and truth in him, his eagerness to know what Rousseau thought right, and his equal eagerness in trying to do it, his care to arrange his household in a simple and methodical way to please his master, his discipular patience when Rousseau told him that his verses were poor, or that he was too fond of his wife,—all this is a little uncommon in a prince, and deserves a place among the ample mass of other evidence of the power which Rousseau's pictures of domestic simplicity and wise and humane education had in the eighteenth century. It gives us a glimpse, close and direct, of the naturalist revival reaching up into high places. But the trade of philosopher in such times is perhaps an irksome one, and Rousseau was the private victim of his public action. His prince sent multitudes of Germans to visit the sage, and his letters, endless with their details of the nursery, may well have become a little tedious to a worn-out creature who only wanted to be left alone.[145] The famous Prince Henry, Frederick's brother, thought a man happy who could have the delight of seeing Rousseau as often as he chose.[146] People forgot the other side of this delight, and the unlucky philosopher found in a hundred ways alike from enemies and the friends whose curiosity makes them as bad as enemies, that the pedestal of glory partakes of the nature of the pillory or the stocks.

It is interesting to find the famous English names of Gibbon and Boswell in the list of the multitudes with whom he had to do at this time.[147] The former was now at Lausanne, whither he had just returned from that memorable visit to England which persuaded him that his father would never endure his alliance with the daughter of an obscure Swiss pastor. He had just "yielded to his fate, sighed as a lover, and obeyed as a son." "How sorry I am for our poor Mademoiselle Curchod," writes Moultoou to Rousseau; "Gibbon whom she loves, and to whom she has sacrificed, as I know, some excellent matches, has come to Lausanne, but cold, insensible, and as entirely cured of his old passion as she is far from cure. She has written me a letter that makes my heart ache." He then entreats Rousseau to use his influence with Gibbon, who is on the point of starting for Motiers, by extolling to him the lady's worth and understanding.[148] "I hope Mr. Gibbon will not come," replied the sage; "his coldness makes me think ill of him. I have been looking over his book again [the *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*, 1761]; he runs after brilliance too much, and is strained and stilted. Mr. Gibbon is not the man for me, and I do not think he is the man for Mademoiselle Curchod either." [149] Whether Gibbon went or not, we do not know. He knew in after years what had been said of him by Jean Jacques, and protested with mild pomp that this extraordinary man should have been less precipitate in condemning the moral character and the conduct of a stranger.[150]



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Boswell, as we know, had left Johnson “rolling his majestic frame in his usual manner” on Harwich beach in 1763, and was now on his travels. Like many of his countrymen, he found his way to Lord Marischal, and here his indomitable passion for making the personal acquaintance of any one who was much talked about, naturally led him to seek so singular a character as the man who was now at Motiers. What Rousseau thought of one who was as singular a character as himself in another direction, we do not know. [151] Lord Marischal warned Rousseau that his visitor is of excellent disposition, but full of visionary ideas, even having seen spirits—a serious proof of unsoundness to a man who had lived in the very positive atmosphere of Frederick’s court at Berlin. “I only hope,” says the sage Scot, of the Scot who was not sage, “that he may not fall into the hands of people who will turn his head: he was very pleased with the reception you gave him.”[152] As it happens, he was the means of sending Boswell to a place where his head was turned, though not very mischievously. Rousseau was at that time full of Corsican projects, of which this is the proper place for us very briefly to speak.

The prolonged struggles of the natives of Corsica to assert their independence of the oppressive administration of the Genoese, which had begun in 1729, came to end for a moment in 1755, when Paoli (1726-1807) defeated the Genoese, and proceeded to settle the government of the island. In the Social Contract Rousseau had said, “There is still in Europe one country capable of legislation, and that is the island of Corsica. The valour and constancy with which this brave people has succeeded in recovering and defending its liberty, entitle it to the good fortune of having some wise man to teach them how to preserve it. I have a presentiment that this little isle will one day astonish Europe,”[153]—a presentiment that in a sense came true enough long after Rousseau was gone, in a man who was born on the little island seven years later than the publication of this passage. Some of the Corsican leaders were highly flattered, and in August 1764, Buttafuoco entered into correspondence with Rousseau for the purpose of inducing him to draw up a set of political institutions and a code of laws. Paoli himself was too shrewd to have much belief in the application of ideal systems, and we are assured that he had no intention of making Rousseau the Solon of his island, but only of inducing him to inflame the gallantry of its inhabitants by writing a history of their exploits.[154] Rousseau, however, did not understand the invitation in this narrower sense. He replied that the very idea of such a task as legislation transported his soul, and he entered into it with the liveliest ardour. He resolved to quarter himself with Theresa in a cottage in some lonely district in the island; in a year he would collect the necessary information as to the manners and opinions of the



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inhabitants, and three years afterwards he would produce a set of institutions that should be fit for a free and valorous people.[155] In the midst of this enthusiasm (May 1765) he urged Boswell to visit Corsica, and gave him a letter to Paoli, with results which we know in the shape of an *Account of Corsica* (1768), and in a feverishness of imagination upon the subject for many a long day afterwards. "Mind your own affairs," at length cried Johnson sternly to him, "and leave the Corsicans to theirs; I wish you would empty your head of Corsica." [156] At the end of 1765, the immortal hero-worshipper on his return expected to come upon his hero at Motiers, but finding that he was in Paris wrote him a wonderful letter in wonderful French. "You will forget all your cares for many an evening, while I tell you what I have seen. I owe you the deepest obligation for sending me to Corsica. The voyage has done me marvellous good. It has made me as if all the lives of Plutarch had sunk into my soul... I am devoted to the Corsicans heart and soul; if you, illustrious Rousseau, the philosopher whom they have chosen to help them by your lights to preserve and enjoy the liberty which they have acquired with so much heroism—if you have cooled towards these gallant islanders, why then I am sorry for you, that is all I can say." [157]

Alas, by this time the gallant islanders had been driven out of Rousseau's mind by personal mishaps. First, Voltaire or some other enemy had spread the rumour that the invitation to become the Lycurgus of Corsica was a practical joke, and Rousseau's suspicious temper found what he took for confirmation of this in some trifling incidents with which we certainly need not concern ourselves.[158] Next, a very real storm had burst upon him which drove him once more to seek a new place of shelter, other than an island occupied by French troops. For France having begun by despatching auxiliaries to the assistance of the Genoese (1764), ended by buying the island from the Genoese senate, with a sort of equity of redemption (1768)—an iniquitous transaction, as Rousseau justly called it, equally shocking to justice, humanity, reason, and policy. [159] Civilisation would have been saved one of its sorest trials if Genoa could have availed herself of her equity, and so have delivered France from the acquisition of the most terrible citizen that ever scourged a state.[160]

The condemnation of Rousseau by the Council in 1762 had divided Geneva into two camps, and was followed by a prolonged contention between his partisans and his enemies. The root of the contention was political rather than theological. To take Rousseau's side was to protest against the oligarchic authority which had condemned him, and the quarrel about Emilius was only an episode in the long war between the popular and aristocratic parties. This strife, after coming to a height for the first time in 1734, had abated after the pacification of 1738, but the pacification



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was only effective for a time, and the roots of division were still full of vitality. The lawfulness of the authority and the regularity of the procedure by which Rousseau had been condemned, offered convenient ground for carrying on the dispute, and its warmth was made more intense by the suggestion on the popular side that perhaps the religion of the book which the oligarchs had condemned was more like Christianity than the religion of the oligarchs who condemned it.

Rousseau was too near the scene of the quarrel, too directly involved in its issues, too constantly in contact with the people who were engaged in it, not to feel the angry buzzings very close about his ears. If he had been as collected and as self-possessed as he loved to fancy, they would have gone for very little in the life of the day. But Rousseau never stood on the heights whence a strong man surveys with clear eye and firm soul the unjust or mean or furious moods of the world. Such achievement is not hard for the creature who is wrapped up in himself; who is careless of the passions of men about him, because he thinks they cannot hurt him, and not because he has measured them, and deliberately assigned them a place among the elements in which a man's destiny is cast. It is only hard for one who is penetrated by true interest in the opinion and action of his fellows, thus to keep both sympathy warm and self-sufficiency true. The task was too hard for Rousseau, though his patience under long persecution far surpassed that of any of the other oppressed teachers of the time. In the spring of 1763 he deliberately renounced in all due forms his rights of burghership and citizenship in the city and republic of Geneva.[161] And at length he broke forth against his Genevese persecutors in the *Letters from the Mountain* (1764), a long but extremely vigorous and adroit rejoinder to the pleas which his enemies had put forth in *Tronchin's Letters from the Country*. If any one now cares to satisfy himself how really unjust and illegal the treatment was, which Rousseau received at the hands of the authorities of his native city, he may do so by examining these most forcible letters. The second part of them may interest the student of political history by its account of the working of the institutions of the little republic. We seem to be reading over again the history of a Greek city; the growth of a wealthy class in face of an increasing number of poor burghesses, the imposition of burdens in unfair proportions upon the *metoikoi*, the gradual usurpation of legislative and administrative function (including especially the judicial) by the oligarchs, and the twisting of democratic machinery to oligarchic ends; then the growth of *staseis* or violent factions, followed by *metabole* or overthrow of the established constitution, ending in foreign intervention. The Four Hundred at Athens would have treated any *Social Contract* that should have appeared in their day, just as sternly as the Two Hundred or the Twenty-five treated the *Social Contract* that did appear, and for just the same reasons.



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Rousseau proved his case with redundancy of demonstration. A body of burgesses had previously availed themselves (Nov. 1763) of a legal right, and made a technical representation to the Lesser Council that the laws had been broken in his case. The Council in return availed itself of an equally legal right, its *droit negatif*, and declined to entertain the representation, without giving any reasons. Unfortunately for Rousseau's comfort, the ferment which his new vindication of his cause stirred up, did not end with the condemnation and burning of his manifesto. For the parliament of Paris ordered the Letters from the Mountain to be burned, and the same decree and the same faggot served for that and for Voltaire's Philosophical Dictionary (April 1765).[162] It was also burned at the Hague (Jan. 22). An observer by no means friendly to the priests noticed that at Paris it was not the fanatics of orthodoxy, but the encyclopaedists and their flock, who on this occasion raised the storm and set the zeal of the magistrates in motion. [163] The vanity and egoism of rationalistic sects can be as fatal to candour, justice, and compassion as the intolerant pride of the great churches.

Persecution came nearer to Rousseau and took more inconvenient shapes than this. A terrible libel appeared (Feb. 1765), full of the coarsest calumnies. Rousseau, stung by their insolence and falseness, sent it to Paris to be published there with a prefatory note, stating that it was by a Genevese pastor whom he named. This landed him in fresh mortification, for the pastor disavowed the libel, Rousseau declined to accept the disavowal, and sensible men were wearied by acrimonious declarations, explanations, protests.[164] Then the clergy of Neuchatel were not able any longer to resist the opportunity of inflicting such torments as they could, upon a heretic whom they might more charitably have left to those ultimate and everlasting torments which were so precious to their religious imagination. They began to press the pastor of the village where Rousseau lived, and with whom he had hitherto been on excellent terms. The pastor, though he had been liberal enough to admit his singular parishioner to the communion, in spite of the Savoyard Vicar, was not courageous enough to resist the bigotry of the professional body to which he belonged. He warned Rousseau not to present himself at the next communion. The philosopher insisted that he had a right to do this, until formally cast out by the consistory. The consistory, composed mainly of a body of peasants entirely bound to their minister in matters of religion, cited him to appear, and answer such questions as might test his loyalty to the faith. Rousseau prepared a most deliberate vindication of all that he had written, which he intended to speak to his rustic judges. The eve of the morning on which he had to appear, he knew his discourse by heart; when morning came he could not repeat two sentences.



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So he fell back on the instrument over which he had more mastery than he had over tongue or memory, and wrote what he wished to say. The pastor, in whom irritated egoism was probably by this time giving additional heat to professional zeal, was for fulminating a decree of excommunication, but there appears to have been some indirect interference with the proceedings of the consistory by the king's officials at Neuchatel, and the ecclesiastical bolt was held back.[165] Other weapons were not wanting. The pastor proceeded to spread rumours among his flock that Rousseau was a heretic, even an atheist, and most prodigious of all, that he had written a book containing the monstrous doctrine that women have no souls. The pulpit resounded with sermons proving to the honest villagers that antichrist was quartered in their parish in very flesh. The Armenian apparel gave a high degree of plausibleness to such an opinion, and as the wretched man went by the door of his neighbours, he heard cursing and menace, while a hostile pebble now and again whistled past his ear. His botanising expeditions were believed to be devoted to search for noxious herbs, and a man who died in the agonies of nephritic colic, was supposed to have been poisoned by him.[166] If persons went to the post-office for letters for him, they were treated with insult.[167] At length the ferment against him grew hot enough to be serious. A huge block of stone was found placed so as to kill him when he opened his door; and one night an attempt was made to stone him in his house.[168] Popular hate shown with this degree of violence was too much for his fortitude, and after a residence of rather more than three years (September 8-10, 1765), he fled from the inhospitable valley to seek refuge he knew not where.

In his rambles of a previous summer he had seen a little island in the lake of Bienne, which struck his imagination and lived in his memory. Thither he now, after a moment of hesitation, turned his steps, with something of the same instinct as draws a child towards a beam of the sun. He forgot or was heedless of the circumstance that the isle of St. Peter lay in the jurisdiction of the canton of Berne, whose government had forbidden him their territory. Strong craving for a little ease in the midst of his wretchedness extinguished thought of jurisdictions and proscriptive decrees.

The spot where he now found peace for a brief space usually disappoints the modern hunter for the picturesque, who after wearying himself with the follies of a capital seeks the most violent tonic that he can find in the lonely terrors of glacier and peak, and sees only tameness in a pygmy island, that offers nothing sublimer than a high grassy terrace, some cool over-branching avenues, some mimic vales, and meadows and vineyards sloping down to the sheet of blue water at their feet. Yet, as one sits here on a summer day, with tired mowers sleeping on their grass heaps in the sun, in



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a stillness faintly broken by the timid lapping of the water in the sedge, or the rustling of swift lizards across the heated sand, while the Bernese snow giants line a distant horizon with mysterious solitary shapes, it is easy to know what solace life in such a scene might bring to a man distracted by pain of body and pain and weariness of soul. Rousseau has commemorated his too short sojourn here in the most perfect of all his compositions.[169]

"I found my existence so charming, and led a life so agreeable to my humour, that I resolved here to end my days. My only source of disquiet was whether I should be allowed to carry my project out. In the midst of the presentiments that disturbed me, I would fain have had them make a perpetual prison of my refuge, to confine me in it for all the rest of my life. I longed for them to cut off all chance and all hope of leaving it; to forbid me holding any communication with the mainland, so that, knowing nothing of what was going on in the world, I might have forgotten the world's existence, and people might have forgotten mine too. They only suffered me to pass two months in the island, but I could have passed two years, two centuries, and all eternity, without a moment's weariness, though I had not, with my companion, any other society than that of the steward, his wife, and their servants. They were in truth honest souls and nothing more, but that was just what I wanted.... Carried thither in a violent hurry, alone and without a thing, I afterwards sent for my housekeeper, my books, and my scanty possessions, of which I had the delight of unpacking nothing, leaving my boxes and chests just as they had come, and dwelling in the house where I counted on ending my days, exactly as if it were an inn whence I must needs set forth on the morrow. All things went so well, just as they were, that to think of ordering them better were to spoil them. One of my greatest joys was to leave my books safely fastened up in their boxes, and to be without even a case for writing. When any luckless letter forced me to take up a pen for an answer, I grumblingly borrowed the steward's inkstand, and hurried to give it back to him with all the haste I could, in the vain hope that I should never have need of the loan any more. Instead of meddling with those weary quires and reams and piles of old books, I filled my chamber with flowers and grasses, for I was then in my first fervour for botany. Having given up employment that would be a task to me, I needed one that would be an amusement, nor cause me more pains than a sluggard might choose to take. I undertook to make the *Flora petrinsularis*, and to describe every single plant on the island, in detail enough to occupy me for the rest of my days. In consequence of this fine scheme, every morning after breakfast, which we all took in company, I used to go with a magnifying glass in my hand and my Systema Naturae under my arm, to visit some district of the island.



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I had divided it for that purpose into small squares, meaning to go through them one after another in each season of the year. At the end of two or three hours I used to return laden with an ample harvest, a provision for amusing myself after dinner indoors, in case of rain. I spent the rest of the morning in going with the steward, his wife, and Theresa, to see the labourers and the harvesting, and I generally set to work along with them; many a time when people from Berne came to see me, they found me perched on a high tree, with a bag fastened round my waist; I kept filling it with fruit and then let it down to the ground with a rope. The exercise I had taken in the morning and the good humour that always comes from exercise, made the repose of dinner vastly pleasant to me. But if dinner was kept up too long, and fine weather invited me forth, I could not wait, but was speedily off to throw myself all alone into a boat, which, when the water was smooth enough, I used to pull out to the middle of the lake. There, stretched at full length in the boat's bottom, with my eyes turned up to the sky, I let myself float slowly hither and thither as the water listed, sometimes for hours together, plunged in a thousand confused delicious musings, which, though they had no fixed nor constant object, were not the less on that account a hundred times dearer to me than all that I had found sweetest in what they call the pleasures of life. Often warned by the going down of the sun that it was time to return, I found myself so far from the island that I was forced to row with all my might to get in before it was pitch dark. At other times, instead of losing myself in the midst of the waters, I had a fancy to coast along the green shores of the island, where the clear waters and cool shadows tempted me to bathe. But one of my most frequent expeditions was from the larger island to the less; there I disembarked and spent my afternoon, sometimes in mimic rambles among wild elders, persicaries, willows, and shrubs of every species, sometimes settling myself on the top of a sandy knoll, covered with turf, wild thyme, flowers, even sainfoin and trefoil that had most likely been sown there in old days, making excellent quarters for rabbits. They might multiply in peace without either fearing anything or harming anything. I spoke of this to the steward. He at once had male and female rabbits brought from Neuchatel, and we went in high state, his wife, one of his sisters, Theresa, and I, to settle them in the little islet. The foundation of our colony was a feast-day. The pilot of the Argonauts was not prouder than I, as I bore my company and the rabbits in triumph from our island to the smaller one....When the lake was too rough for me to sail, I spent my afternoon in going up and down the island, gathering plants to right and left; seating myself now in smiling lonely nooks to dream at my ease, now on little terraces and knolls,



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to follow with my eyes the superb and ravishing prospect of the lake and its shores, crowned on one side by the neighbouring hills, and on the other melting into rich and fertile plains up to the feet of the pale blue mountains on their far-off edge. As evening drew on, I used to come down from the high ground and sit on the beach at the water's brink in some hidden sheltering place. There the murmur of the waves and their agitation, charmed all my senses and drove every other movement away from my soul; they plunged it into delicious dreamings, in which I was often surprised by night. The flux and reflux of the water, its ceaseless stir-swelling and falling at intervals, striking on ear and sight, made up for the internal movements which my musings extinguished; they were enough to give me delight in mere existence, without taking any trouble of thinking. From time to time arose some passing thought of the instability of the things of this world, of which the face of the waters offered an image; but such light impressions were swiftly effaced in the uniformity of the ceaseless motion, which rocked me as in a cradle; it held me with such fascination that even when called at the hour and by the signal appointed, I could not tear myself away without summoning all my force. After supper, when the evening was fine, we used to go all together for a saunter on the terrace, to breathe the freshness of the air from the lake. We sat down in the arbour, laughing, chatting, or singing some old song, and then we went home to bed, well pleased with the day, and only craving another that should be exactly like it on the morrow.... All is in a continual flux upon the earth. Nothing in it keeps a form constant and determinate; our affections, fastening on external things, necessarily change and pass just as they do. Ever in front of us or behind us, they recall the past that is gone, or anticipate a future that in many a case is destined never to be. There is nothing solid to which the heart can fix itself. Here we have little more than a pleasure that comes and passes away; as for the happiness that endures, I cannot tell if it be so much as known among men. There is hardly in the midst of our liveliest delights a single instant when the heart could tell us with real truth—"*I would this instant might last for ever.*" And how can we give the name of happiness to a fleeting state that all the time leaves the heart unquiet and void, that makes us regret something gone, or still long for something to come? But if there is a state in which the soul finds a situation solid enough to comport with perfect repose, and with the expansion of its whole faculty, without need of calling back the past, or pressing on towards the future; where time is nothing for it, and the present has no ending; with no mark for its own duration and without a trace of succession; without a single other



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sense of privation or delight, of pleasure or pain, of desire or apprehension, than this single sense of existence—so long as such a state endures, he who finds himself in it may talk of bliss, not with a poor, relative, and imperfect happiness such as people find in the pleasures of life, but with a happiness full, perfect, and sufficing, that leaves in the soul no conscious unfilled void. Such a state was many a day mine in my solitary musings in the isle of St. Peter, either lying in my boat as it floated on the water, or seated on the banks of the broad lake, or in other places than the little isle on the brink of some broad stream, or a rivulet murmuring over a gravel bed. What is it that one enjoys in a situation like this? Nothing outside of one's self, nothing except one's self and one's own existence.... But most men, tossed as they are by unceasing passion, have little knowledge of such a state; they taste it imperfectly for a few moments, and then retain no more than an obscure confused idea of it, that is too weak to let them feel its charm. It would not even be good in the present constitution of things, that in their eagerness for these gentle ecstasies, they should fall into a disgust for the active life in which their duty is prescribed to them by needs that are ever on the increase. But a wretch cut off from human society, who can do nothing here below that is useful and good either for himself or for other people, may in such a state find for all lost human felicities many recompenses, of which neither fortune nor men can ever rob him. 'Tis true that these recompenses cannot be felt by all souls, nor in all situations. The heart must be in peace, nor any passion come to trouble its calm. There must be in the surrounding objects neither absolute repose nor excess of agitation, but a uniform and moderated movement without shock, without interval. With no movement, life is only lethargy. If the movement be unequal or too strong, it awakes us; by recalling us to the objects around, it destroys the charm of our musing, and plucks us from within ourselves, instantly to throw us back under the yoke of fortune and man, in a moment to restore us to all the consciousness of misery. Absolute stillness inclines one to gloom. It offers an image of death: then the help of a cheerful imagination is necessary, and presents itself naturally enough to those whom heaven has endowed with such a gift. The movement which does not come from without then stirs within us. The repose is less complete, it is true; but it is also more agreeable when light and gentle ideas, without agitating the depths of the soul, only softly skim the surface. This sort of musing we may taste whenever there is tranquillity about us, and I have thought that in the Bastille, and even in a dungeon where no object struck my sight, I could have dreamed away many a thrice pleasurable day. But it must be said that all this came



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better and more happily in a fruitful and lonely island, where nothing presented itself to me save smiling pictures, where nothing recalled saddening memories, where the fellowship of the few dwellers there was gentle and obliging, without being exciting enough to busy me incessantly, where, in short, I was free to surrender myself all day long to the promptings of my taste or to the most luxurious indolence.... As I came out from a long and most sweet musing fit, seeing myself surrounded by verdure and flowers and birds, and letting my eyes wander far over romantic shores that fringed a wide expanse of water bright as crystal, I fitted all these attractive objects into my dreams; and when at last I slowly recovered myself and recognised what was about me, I could not mark the point that cut off dream from reality, so equally did all things unite to endear to me the lonely retired life I led in this happy spot! Why can that life not come back to me again? Why can I not go finish my days in the beloved island, never to quit it, never again to see in it one dweller from the mainland, to bring back to me the memory of all the woes of every sort that they have delighted in heaping on my head for all these long years?... Freed from the earthly passions engendered by the tumult of social life, my soul would many a time lift itself above this atmosphere, and commune beforehand with the heavenly intelligences, into whose number it trusts to be ere long taken.”

The exquisite dream, thus set to words of most soothing music, came soon to its end. The full and perfect sufficiency of life was abruptly disturbed. The government of Berne gave him notice to quit the island and their territory within fifteen days. He represented to the authorities that he was infirm and ill, that he knew not whither to go, and that travelling in wintry weather would be dangerous to his life. He even made the most extraordinary request that any man in similar straits ever did make. “In this extremity,” he wrote to their representative, “I only see one resource for me, and however frightful it may appear, I will adopt it, not only without repugnance, but with eagerness, if their excellencies will be good enough to give their consent. It is that it should please them for me to pass the rest of my days in prison in one of their castles, or such other place in their states as they may think fit to select. I will there live at my own expense, and I will give security never to put them to any cost. I submit to be without paper or pen, or any communication from without, except so far as may be absolutely necessary, and through the channel of those who shall have charge of me. Only let me have left, with the use of a few books, the liberty to walk occasionally in a garden, and I am content. Do not suppose that an expedient, so violent in appearance, is the fruit of despair. My mind is perfectly calm at this moment; I have taken time to think about it, and it



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is only after profound consideration that I have brought myself to this decision. Mark, I pray you, that if this seems an extraordinary resolution, my situation is still more so. The distracted life that I have been made to lead for several years without intermission would be terrible for a man in full health; judge what it must be for a miserable invalid worn down with weariness and misfortune, and who has now no wish save only to die in a little peace." [170]

That the request was made in all sincerity we may well believe. The difference between being in prison and being out of it was really not considerable to a man who had the previous winter been confined to his chamber for eight months without a break. [171] In other respects the world was as cheerless as any prison could be. He was an exile from the only places he knew, and to him a land unknown was terrible. He had thought of Vienna, and the Prince of Wuertemburg had sought the requisite permission for him, but the priests were too strong in the court of the house of Austria. [172] Madame d'Houdetot offered him a resting-place in Normandy, and Saint Lambert in Lorraine. [173] He thought of Potsdam. Rey, the printer, pressed him to go to Holland. He wondered if he should have strength to cross the Alps and make his way to Corsica. Eventually he made up his mind to go to Berlin, and he went as far as Strasburg on his road thither. [174] Here he began to fear the rude climate of the northern capital; he changed his plans, and resolved to accept the warm invitations that he had received to cross over to England. His friends used their interest to procure a passport for him, [175] and the Prince of Conti offered him an apartment in the privileged quarter of the Temple, on his way through Paris. His own purpose seems to have been irresolute to the last, but his friends acted with such energy and bustle on his behalf that the English scheme was adopted, and he found himself in Paris (Dec. 17, 1765), on his way to London, almost before he had deliberately realised what he was doing. It was a step that led him into many fatal vexations, as we shall presently see. Meanwhile we may pause to examine the two considerable books which had involved his life in all this confusion and perplexity.

FOOTNOTES:

[94] June, 1762-December, 1765.

[95] *Conf.*, xi. 175. It is generally printed in the volume of his works entitled *Melanges*.

[96] *Corr.*, iii. 416.

[97] *Conf.*, xi. 172.

[98] For a remarkable anticipation of the ruin of France, see *Conf.*, xi. 136.



[99] M. Roguin. June 14, 1762.

[100] *Corr.*, ii. 347.

[101] Streckeisen, i. 35.

[102] His friend Moultou wrote him the news, Streckeisen, i. 43. Geneva was the only place at which the Social Contract was burnt. Here there were peculiar reasons, as we shall see.



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[103] *Corr.*, ii. 356.

[104] *Ib.*, ii. 358, 369, *etc.*

[105] The principality of Neuchatel had fallen by marriage (1504) to the French house of Orleans-Longueville, which with certain interruptions retained it until the extinction of the line by the death of Marie, Duchess of Nemours (1707). Fifteen claimants arose with fifteen varieties of far-off title, as well as a party for constituting Neuchatel a Republic and making it a fourteenth canton. (Saint Simon, v. 276.) The Estates adjudged the sovereignty to the Protestant house of Prussia (Nov. 3, 1707). Lewis XIV., as heir of the pretensions of the extinct line, protested. Finally, at the peace of Utrecht (1713), Lewis surrendered his claim in exchange for the cession by Prussia of the Principality of Orange, and Prussia held it until 1806. The disturbed history of the connection between Prussia and Neuchatel from 1814, when it became the twenty-first canton of the Swiss Confederation, down to 1857, does not here concern us.

[106] *Corr.*, ii. 370.

[107] *Corr.*, ii. 371. July 1762.

[108] D'Alembert, who knew Frederick better than any of the philosophers, to Voltaire, Nov. 22, 1765.

[109] Letter to Hume; Burton's *Life of Hume*, ii. 105, corroborating *Conf.*, xii. 196.

[110] Marischal to J.J.R.; Streckeisen, ii. 70.

[111] *Corr.*, iii. 40. Nov. 1, 1762.

[112] Burton's *Life*, ii. 113.

[113] Voltaire's *Corr.* (1758). *Oeuv.*, lxxv. pp. 31 and 80.

[114] *Conf.*, xii. 237.

[115] *Corr.*, iii. 41. Nov. 11, 1762.

[116] *Corr.*, iii. 38. Oct. 30, 1762.

[117] *Ib.*, iii. 110-115. Jan. 28, 1763.

[118] Bernardin de St. Pierre, xii. 103, 59, *etc.*

[119] George Keith (1685-1778) was elder brother of Frederick's famous field-marshal, James Keith. They had taken part in the Jacobite rising of 1715, and fled abroad on its



failure. James Keith brought his brother into the service of the King of Prussia, who sent him as ambassador to Paris (1751), afterwards made him Governor of Neuchatel (1754), and eventually prevailed on the English Government to reinstate him in the rights which he had forfeited by his share in the rebellion (1763).

[120] Streckeisen, ii. 98, *etc.*

[121] One of Rousseau's chief distresses hitherto arose from the indigence in which Theresa would be placed in case of his death. Rey, the bookseller, gave her an annuity of about L16 a year, and Lord Marischal's gift seems to have been 300 louis, the only money that Rousseau was ever induced to accept from any one in his life. See Streckeisen, ii. 99; *Corr.*, iii. 336. The most delicate and sincere of the many offers to provide for Theresa was made by Madame de Verdelin (Streckeisen, ii. 506). The language in which Madame de Verdelin speaks of Theresa in all her letters is the best testimony to character that this much-abused creature has to produce.



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[122] *Ib.*, 90, 92, *etc.* Summer of 1763.

[123] Burton's *Life of Hume*, ii. 105. Oct. 2, 1762.

[124] The Confessions are not our only authority for this. See Streckeisen, ii. 64; also D'Alembert to Voltaire, Sept. 8, 1762.

[125] Voltaire's *Corr. Oeuv.*, lxvii. 458, 459, 485, *etc.*

[126] To D'Alembert, Sept. 15, 1762.

[127] Moultou to Rousseau, Streckeisen, i. 85, 87.

[128] Moultou to Rousseau, Streckeisen, i. 85, 87.

[129] Streckeisen, i. 50.

[130] *Ib.*, i. 76.

[131] *Lettre a Christophe de Beaumont*, pp. 163-166.

[132] *Lettre a Christophe de Beaumont*, pp. 130-135.

[133] *Lettre a Christophe de Beaumont*, p. 93.

[134] Carlyle's *Frederick*, Bk. xxi. ch. iv. Rousseau, *Corr.*, iii. 102.

[135] *Corr.*, iii. 57. Nov. 1762. To M. Montmollin.

[136] *Conf.*, xii. 206.

[137] *Conf.*, xii. 198.

[138] *Corr.*, iii. 295. Dec. 25, 1763.

[139] Quoted in Musset-Pathay, ii. 500.

[140] For instance, *Corr.*, iii. 249.

[141] *Ib.*, iii. 364, 381.

[142] *Corr.*, iii. 181-186, *etc.*

[143] Prince Lewis Eugene, son of Charles Alexander (reigning duke from 1733 to 1737); a younger brother of Charles Eugene, known as Schiller's Duke of Wuerttemberg, who reigned up to 1793. Frederick Eugene, known in the Seven Years' War, was



another brother. Rousseau's correspondent became reigning duke in 1793, but only lived a year and a half afterwards.

[144] *Corr.*, iii. 250. Sept. 29, 1763.

[145] The prince's letters are given in the Streckeisen collection, vol. ii.

[146] Streckeisen, ii. 202.

[147] Possibly Wilkes also; *Corr.*, iv. 200.

[148] Streckeisen, i. 89. June 1, 1763.

[149] *Corr.*, iii. 202. June 4, 1763.

[150] *Memoirs of my Life*, p. 55, *n.* (Ed. 1862). Necker (1732-1804), whom Mdlle. Curchod ultimately married, was an eager admirer of Rousseau. "Ah, how close the tender, humane, and virtuous soul of Julie," he wrote to her author, "has brought me to you. How the reading of those letters gratified me! how many good emotions did they stir or fortify! How many sublimities in a thousand places in these six volumes; not the sublimity that perches itself in the clouds, but that which pushes everyday virtues to their highest point," and so on. Feb. 16, 1761. Streckeisen, i. 333.

[151] Boswell's name only occurs twice in Rousseau's letters, I believe; once (*Corr.*, iv. 394) as the writer of a letter which Hume was suspected of tampering with, and previously (iv. 70) as the bearer of a letter. See also Streckeisen, i. 262.

[152] Streckeisen, ii. 111. Jan. 18, 1765.



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[153] Bk. ii. ch. x.

[154] Boswell's *Account of Corsica*, p. 367.

[155] The correspondence between Rousseau and Buttafuoco has been published in the *Oeuvres et Corr. Inédites de J.J.R.*, 1861. See pp. 35, 43, etc.

[156] Boswell's *Life*, 179, 193, etc. (Ed. 1866).

[157] "*Je suis tout homme de pouvoir vous regarder avec pitié!*" Letter dated Jan. 4, 1766, and given by Musset-Pathay as from a Scotch lord, unnamed. Boswell had the honour of conducting Theresa to England, after Hume had taken Rousseau over. "This young gentleman," writes Hume, "very good-humoured, very agreeable, and very mad—has such a rage for literature that I dread some circumstance fatal to our friend's honour. You remember the story of Terentia, who was first married to Cicero, then to Sallust, and at last in her old age married a young nobleman, who imagined that she must possess some secret which would convey to him eloquence and genius." Burton's *Life*, ii. 307, 308. Boswell mentions that he met Rousseau in England (*Account of Corsica*, p. 340), and also gives Rousseau's letter introducing him to Paoli (p. 266).

[158] To Buttafuoco, p. 48, etc.

[159] *Corr.*, vi. 176. Feb. 26, 1770.

[160] It may be worth noticing, as a link between historic personages, that Napoleon Bonaparte's first piece was a *Lettre a Matteo Buttafuoco* (1791), the same Buttafuoco with whom Rousseau corresponded, who had been Choiseul's agent in the union of the island to France, was afterwards sent as deputy to the Constituent, and finally became the bitterest enemy of Paoli and the patriotic party.

[161] *Corr.*, iii. 190. To the First Syndic, May 12, 1763.

[162] Grimm's *Corr. Lit.*, iv. 235. For Rousseau's opinion of his book's companion at the stake, see *Corr.*, iii. 442.

[163] *Streckeisen*, ii. 526.

[164] There appears to be no doubt that Rousseau was wrong in attributing to Vernes the *Sentimens des Citoyens*.

[165] *Corr.*, iv. 116, 122 (April 1765), 165-196 (August); also *Conf.*, xii. 245.

[166] Note to M. Auguis's edition, *Corr.*, v. 395.

[167] *Corr.*, iv. 204.



[168] *Conf.*, xii. 259. This lapidation has sometimes been doubted, and treated as an invention of Rousseau's morbid suspicion. The official documents prove that his account was substantially true (see Musset-Pathay, ii. 559.)

[169] The fifth of the *Reveries*. See also *Conf.*, 262-279, and *Corr.*, iv. 206-224. His stay in the island was from the second week in September down to the last in October, 1765.

[170] *Corr.*, iv. 221. Oct. 20, 1765.

[171] *Ib.*, iv. 136, *etc.* April 27, 1765.

[172] Streckeisen-Moultou, ii. 209, 212.

[173] *Ib.*, ii. 554.



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[174] He arrived at Strasburg on the 2d or 3d of November, left it about the end of the first week in December, and arrived in Paris on the 16th of December 1765. A sort of apocryphal tradition is said to linger in the island about Rousseau's last evening on the island, how after supper he called for a lute, and sang some passably bad verses. See M. Bougy's *J.J. Rousseau*, p. 179 (Paris: 1853.)

[175] Madame de Verdelin to J.J.R. Streckeisen, ii. 532. The minister even expressed his especial delight at being able to serve Rousseau, so little seriousness was there now in the formalities of absolution. *Ib.* 547.

CHAPTER III.

THE SOCIAL CONTRACT.

The dominant belief of the best minds of the latter half of the eighteenth century was a passionate faith in the illimitable possibilities of human progress. Nothing short of a general overthrow of the planet could in their eyes stay the ever upward movement of human perfectibility. They differed as to the details of the philosophy of government which they deduced from this philosophy of society, but the conviction that a golden era of tolerance, enlightenment, and material prosperity was close at hand, belonged to them all. Rousseau set his face the other way. For him the golden era had passed away from our globe many centuries ago. Simplicity had fled from the earth. Wisdom and heroism had vanished from out of the minds of leaders. The spirit of citizenship had gone from those who should have upheld the social union in brotherly accord. The dream of human perfectibility which nerved men like Condorcet, was to Rousseau a sour and fantastic mockery. The utmost that men could do was to turn their eyes to the past, to obliterate the interval, to try to walk for a space in the track of the ancient societies. They would hardly succeed, but endeavour might at least do something to stay the plague of universal degeneracy. Hence the fatality of his system. It placed the centre of social activity elsewhere than in careful and rational examination of social conditions, and in careful and rational effort to modify them. As we began by saying, it substituted a retrograde aspiration for direction, and emotion for the discovery of law. We can hardly wonder, when we think of the intense exaltation of spirit produced both by the perfectibilitarians and the followers of Rousseau, and at the same time of the political degradation and material disorder of France, that so violent a contrast between the ideal and the actual led to a great volcanic outbreak. Alas, the crucial difficulty of political change is to summon new force without destroying the sound parts of a structure which it has taken so many generations to erect. The Social Contract is the formal denial of the possibility of successfully overcoming the difficulty.



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“Although man deprives himself in the civil state of many advantages which he holds from nature, yet he acquires in return others so great, his faculties exercise and develop themselves, his ideas extend, his sentiments are ennobled, his whole soul is raised to such a degree, that if the abuses of this new condition did not so often degrade him below that from which he has emerged, he would be bound to bless without ceasing the happy moment which rescued him from it for ever, and out of a stupid and blind animal made an intelligent being and a man.”[176] The little parenthesis as to the frequent degradation produced by the abuses of the social condition, does not prevent us from recognising in the whole passage a tolerably complete surrender of the main position which was taken up in the two Discourses. The short treatise on the Social Contract is an inquiry into the just foundations and most proper form of that very political society, which the Discourses showed to have its foundation in injustice, and to be incapable of receiving any form proper for the attainment of the full measure of human happiness.

Inequality in the same way is no longer denounced, but accepted and defined. Locke’s influence has begun to tell. The two principal objects of every system of legislation are declared to be liberty and equality. By equality we are warned not to understand that the degrees of power and wealth should be absolutely the same, but that in respect of power, such power should be out of reach of any violence, and be invariably exercised in virtue of the laws; and in respect of riches, that no citizen should be wealthy enough to buy another, and none poor enough to sell himself. Do you say this equality is a mere chimera? It is precisely because the force of things is constantly tending to destroy equality, that the force of legislation ought as constantly to be directed towards upholding it.[177] This is much clearer than the indefinite way of speaking which we have already noticed in the second Discourse. It means neither more nor less than that equality before the law which is one of the elementary marks of a perfectly free community.

The idea of the law being constantly directed to counteract the tendencies to violent inequalities in material possessions among different members of a society, is too vague to be criticised. Does it cover and warrant so sweeping a measure as the old *seisachtheia* of Solon, voiding all contracts in which the debtor had pledged his land or his person; or such measures as the agrarian laws of Licinius and the Gracchi? Or is it to go no further than to condemn such a law as that which in England gives unwilled lands to the eldest son? We can only criticise accurately a general idea of this sort in connection with specific projects in which it is applied. As it stands, it is no more than the expression of what the author thinks a wise principle of public policy. It assumes the existence of property just as completely



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as the theory of the most rigorous capitalist could do; it gives no encouragement, as the Discourse did, to the notion of an equality in being without property. There is no element of communism in a principle so stated, but it suggests a social idea, based on the moral claim of men to have equality of opportunity. This ideal stamped itself on the minds of Robespierre and the other revolutionary leaders, and led to practical results in the sale of the Church and other lands in small lots, so as to give the peasant a market to buy in. The effect of the economic change thus introduced happened to work in the direction in which Rousseau pointed, for it is now known that the most remarkable and most permanent of the consequences of the revolution in the ownership of land was the erection, between the two extreme classes of proprietors, of an immense body of middle-class freeholders. This state is not equality, but gradation, and there is undoubtedly an immense difference between the two. Still its origin is an illustration on the largest scale in history of the force of legislation being exerted to counteract an irregularity that had become unbearable.[178]

Notwithstanding the disappearance of the more extravagant elements of the old thesis, the new speculation was far from being purged of the fundamental errors that had given such popularity to its predecessors. "If the sea," he says in one place, "bathes nothing but inaccessible rocks on your coasts, remain barbarous ichthyophagi; you will live all the more tranquilly for it, better perhaps, and assuredly more happily." [179] Apart from an outburst like this, the central idea remained the same, though it was approached from another side and with different objects. The picture of a state of nature had lost none of its perilous attraction, though it was hung in a slightly changed light. It remained the starting-point of the right and normal constitution of civil society, just as it had been the starting-point of the denunciation of civil society as incapable of right constitution, and as necessarily and for ever abnormal. Equally with the Discourses, the Social Contract is a repudiation of that historic method which traces the present along a line of ascertained circumstances, and seeks an improved future in an unbroken continuation of that line. The opening words, which sent such a thrill through the generation to which they were uttered in two continents, "Man is born free, and everywhere he is in chains," tell us at the outset that we are as far away as ever from the patient method of positive observation, and as deeply buried as ever in deducing practical maxims from a set of conditions which never had any other than an abstract and phantasmatic existence. How is a man born free? If he is born into isolation, he perishes instantly. If he is born into a family, he is at the moment of his birth committed to a state of social relation, in however rudimentary a form; and the more or less

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of freedom which this state may ultimately permit to him, depends upon circumstances. Man was hardly born free among Romans and Athenians, when both law and public opinion left a father at perfect liberty to expose his new-born infant. And the more primitive the circumstances, the later the period at which he gains freedom. A child was not born free in the early days of the Roman state, when the *patria potestas* was a vigorous reality. Nor, to go yet further back, was he born free in the times of the Hebrew patriarchs, when Abraham had full right of sacrificing his son, and Jephthah of sacrificing his daughter.

But to speak thus is to speak what we do know. Rousseau was not open to such testimony. "My principles," he said in contempt of Grotius, "are not founded on the authority of poets; they come from the nature of things and are based on reason." [180] He does indeed in one place express his reverence for the Judaic law, and administers a just rebuke to the philosophic arrogance which saw only successful impostors in the old legislators. [181] But he paid no attention to the processes and usages of which this law was the organic expression, nor did he allow himself to learn from it the actual conditions of the social state which accepted it. It was Locke, whose essay on civil government haunts us throughout the Social Contract, who had taught him that men are born free, equal, and independent. Locke evaded the difficulty of the dependence of childhood by saying that when the son comes to the estate that made his father a free man, he becomes a free man too. [182] What of the old Roman use permitting a father to sell his son three times? In the same metaphysical spirit Locke had laid down the absolute proposition that "conjugal society is made by a voluntary compact between man and woman." [183] This is true of a small number of western societies in our own day, but what of the primitive usages of communal marriages, marriages by capture, purchase, and the rest? We do not mean it as any discredit to writers upon government in the seventeenth century that they did not make good out of their own consciousness the necessary want of knowledge about primitive communities. But it is necessary to point out, first, that they did not realise all the knowledge within their reach, and next that, as a consequence of this, their propositions had a quality that vitiated all their speculative worth. Filmer's contention that man is not naturally free was truer than the position of Locke and Rousseau, and it was so because Filmer consulted and appealed to the most authentic of the historic records then accessible. [184]



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It is the more singular that Rousseau should have thus deliberately put aside all but the most arbitrary and empirical historical lessons, and it shows the extraordinary force with which men may be mastered by abstract prepossessions, even when they have a partial knowledge of the antidote; because Rousseau in several places not only admits, but insists upon, the necessity of making institutions relative to the state of the community, in respect of size, soil, manners, occupation, morality, character. "It is in view of such relations as these that we must assign to each people a particular system, which shall be the best, not perhaps in itself, but for the state for which it is destined." [185] In another place he calls attention to manners, customs, above all to opinion, as the part of a social system on which the success of all the rest depends; particular rules being only the arching of the vault, of which manners, though so much tardier in rising, form a key-stone that can never be disturbed. [186] This was excellent so far as it went, but it was one of the many great truths, which men may hold in their minds without appreciating their full value. He did not see that these manners, customs, opinions, have old roots which must be sought in a historic past; that they are connected with the constitution of human nature, and that then in turn they prepare modifications of that constitution. His narrow, symmetrical, impatient humour unfitted him to deal with the complex tangle of the history of social growths. It was essential to his mental comfort that he should be able to see a picture of perfect order and logical system at both ends of his speculation. Hence, he invented, to begin with, his ideal state of nature, and an ideal mode of passing from that to the social state. He swept away in his imagination the whole series of actual incidents between present and past; and he constructed a system which might be imposed upon all societies indifferently by a legislator summoned for that purpose, to wipe out existing uses, laws, and institutions, and make afresh a clear and undisturbed beginning of national life. The force of habit was slowly and insensibly to be substituted for that of the legislator's authority, but the existence of such habits previously as forces to be dealt with, and the existence of certain limits of pliancy in the conditions of human nature and social possibility, are facts of which the author of the Social Contract takes not the least account.

Rousseau knew hardly any history, and the few isolated pieces of old fact which he had picked up in his very slight reading were exactly the most unfortunate that a student in need of the historic method could possibly have fallen in with. The illustrations which are scantily dispersed in his pages,—and we must remark that they are no more than illustrations for conclusions arrived at quite independently of them, and not the historical proof and foundations of his conclusions,—are nearly all from



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the annals of the small states of ancient Greece, and from the earlier times of the Roman republic. We have already pointed out to what an extent his imagination was struck at the time of his first compositions by the tale of Lycurgus. The influence of the same notions is still paramount. The hopelessness of giving good laws to a corrupt people is supposed to be demonstrated by the case of Minos, whose legislation failed in Crete because the people for whom he made laws were sunk in vices; and by the further example of Plato, who refused to give laws to the Arcadians and Cyrenians, knowing that they were too rich and could never suffer equality.[187] The writer is thinking of Plato's Laws, when he says that just as nature has fixed limits to the stature of a well-formed man, outside of which she produces giants and dwarfs, so with reference to the best constitution for a state, there are bounds to its extent, so that it may be neither too large to be capable of good government, nor too small to be independent and self-sufficing. The further the social bond is extended, the more relaxed it becomes, and in general a small state is proportionally stronger than a large one.[188] In the remarks with which he proceeds to corroborate this position, we can plainly see that he is privately contrasting an independent Greek community with the unwieldy oriental monarchy against which at one critical period Greece had to contend. He had never realised the possibility of such forms of polity as the Roman Empire, or the half-federal dominion of England which took such enormous dimensions in his time, or the great confederation of states which came to birth two years before he died. He was the servant of his own metaphor, as the Greek writers so often were. His argument that a state must be of a moderate size because the rightly shapen man is neither dwarf nor giant, is exactly on a par with Aristotle's argument to the same effect, on the ground that beauty demands size, and there must not be too great nor too small size, because a ship sails badly if it be either too heavy or too light.[189] And when Rousseau supposes the state to have ten thousand inhabitants, and talks about the right size of its territory,[190] who does not think of the five thousand and forty which the Athenian Stranger prescribed to Cleinias the Cretan as the exactly proper number for the perfectly formed state?[191] The prediction of the short career which awaits a state that is cursed with an extensive and accessible seaboard, corresponds precisely with the Athenian Stranger's satisfaction that the new city is to be eighty stadia from the coast. [192] When Rousseau himself began to think about the organisation of Corsica, he praised the selection of Corte as the chief town of a patriotic administration, because it was far from the sea, and so its inhabitants would long preserve their simplicity and uprightness.[193] And in later years still, when meditating upon a constitution for Poland, he propounded an economic system essentially Spartan; the people were enjoined to think little about foreigners, to give themselves little concern about commerce, to suppress stamped paper, and to put a tithe upon the land.[194]



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The chapter on the Legislator is in the same region. We are again referred to Lycurgus; and to the circumstance that Greek towns usually confided to a stranger the sacred task of drawing up their laws. His experience in Venice and the history of his native town supplemented the examples of Greece. Geneva summoned a stranger to legislate for her, and "those who only look on Calvin as a theologian have a scanty idea of the extent of his genius; the preparation of our wise edicts, in which he had so large a part, do him as much honour as his Institutes." [195] Rousseau's vision was too narrow to let him see the growth of government and laws as a co-ordinate process, flowing from the growth of all the other parts and organs of society, and advancing in more or less equal step along with them. He could begin with nothing short of an absolute legislator, who should impose a system from without by a single act, a structure hit upon once for all by his individual wisdom, not slowly wrought out by many minds, with popular assent and co-operation, at the suggestion of changing social circumstances and need. [196]

All this would be of very trifling importance in the history of political literature, but for the extraordinary influence which circumstances ultimately bestowed upon it. The Social Contract was the gospel of the Jacobins, and much of the action of the supreme party in France during the first months of the year 1794 is only fully intelligible when we look upon it as the result and practical application of Rousseau's teaching. The conception of the situation entertained by Robespierre and Saint Just was entirely moulded on all this talk about the legislators of Greece and Geneva. "The transition of an oppressed nation to democracy is like the effort by which nature rose from nothingness to existence. You must entirely refashion a people whom you wish to make free—destroy its prejudices, alter its habits, limit its necessities, root up its vices, purify its desires. The state therefore must lay hold on every human being at his birth, and direct his education with powerful hand. Solon's weak confidence threw Athens into fresh slavery, while Lycurgus's severity founded the republic of Sparta on an immovable basis." [197] These words, which come from a decree of the Committee of Public Safety, might well be taken for an excerpt from the Social Contract. The fragments of the institutions by which Saint Just intended to regenerate his country, reveal a man with the example of Lycurgus before his eyes in every line he wrote. [198] When on the eve of the Thermidorian revolution which overthrew him and his party, he insisted on the necessity of a dictatorship, he was only thinking of the means by which he should at length obtain the necessary power for forcing his regenerating projects on the country; for he knew that Robespierre, whom he named as the man for the dictatorship, accepted his projects, and would lend the full force of the temporal arm



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to the propagation of ideas which they had acquired together from Jean Jacques, and from the Greeks to whom Jean Jacques had sent them for example and instruction. [199] No doubt the condition of France after 1792 must naturally have struck any one too deeply imbued with the spirit of the Social Contract to look beneath the surface of the society with which the Convention had to deal, as urgently inviting a lawgiver of the ancient stamp. The old order in church and state had been swept away, no organs for the performance of the functions of national life were visible, the moral ideas which had bound the social elements together in the extinct monarchy seemed to be permanently sapped. A politician who had for years been dreaming about Minos and Lycurgus and Calvin, especially if he lived in a state with such a tradition of centralisation as ruled in France, was sure to suppose that here was the scene and the moment for a splendid repetition on an immense scale of those immortal achievements. The futility of the attempt was the practical and ever memorable illustration of the defect of Rousseau's geometrical method. It was one thing to make laws for the handful of people who lived in Geneva in the sixteenth century, united in religious faith, and accepting the same form and conception of the common good. It was a very different thing to try to play Calvin over some twenty-five millions of a heterogeneously composed nation, abounding in variations of temperament, faith, laws, and habits and weltering in unfathomable distractions. The French did indeed at length invite a heaven-sent stranger from Corsica to make laws for them, but not until he had set his foot upon their neck; and even Napoleon Bonaparte, who had begun life like the rest of his generation by writing Rousseauite essays, made a swift return to the historic method in the equivocal shape of the Concordat.

Not only were Rousseau's schemes of polity conceived from the point of view of a small territory with a limited population. "You must not," he says in one place, "make the abuses of great states an objection to a writer who would fain have none but small ones." [200] Again, when he said that in a truly free state the citizens performed all their services to the community with their arms and none by money, and that he looked upon the corvee (or compulsory labour on the public roads) as less hostile to freedom than taxes, [201] he showed that he was thinking of a state not greatly passing the dimensions of a parish. This was not the only defect of his schemes. They assumed a sort of state of nature in the minds of the people with whom the lawgiver had to deal. Saint Just made the same assumption afterwards, and trusted to his military school to erect on these bare plots whatever superstructure he might think fit to appoint. A society that had for so many centuries been organised and moulded by a powerful and energetic church, armed with a definite doctrine, fixing the same moral tendencies in a long series of successive



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generations, was not in the naked mental state which the Jacobins postulated. It was not prepared to accept free divorce, the substitution of friendship for marriage, the displacement of the family by the military school, and the other articles in Saint Just's programme of social renovation. The twelve apostles went among people who were morally swept and garnished, and they went armed with instruments proper to seize the imagination of their hearers. All moral reformers seek the ignorant and simple, poor fishermen in one scene, labourers and women in another, for the good reason that new ideas only make way on ground that is not already too heavily encumbered with prejudices. But France in 1793 was in no condition of this kind. Opinion in all its spheres was deepened by an old and powerful organisation, to a degree which made any attempt to abolish the opinion, as the organisation appeared to have been abolished, quite hopeless until the lapse of three or four hundred years had allowed due time for dissolution. After all it was not until the fourth century of our era that the work of even the twelve apostles began to tell decisively and quickly. As for the Lycurgus of whom the French chattered, if such a personality ever existed out of the region of myth, he came to his people armed with an oracle from the gods, just as Moses did, and was himself regarded as having a nature touched with divinity. No such pretensions could well be made by any French legislator within a dozen years or so of the death of Voltaire.

Let us here remark that it was exactly what strikes us as the desperate absurdity of the assumptions of the Social Contract, which constituted the power of that work, when it accidentally fell into the hands of men who surveyed a national system wrecked in all its parts. The Social Contract is worked out precisely in that fashion which, if it touches men at all, makes them into fanatics. Long trains of reasoning, careful allegation of proofs, patient admission on every hand of qualifying propositions and multitudinous limitations, are essential to science, and produce treatises that guide the wise statesman in normal times. But it is dogma that gives fervour to a sect. There are always large classes of minds to whom anything in the shape of a vigorously compact system is irresistibly fascinating, and to whom the qualification of a proposition, or the limitation of a theoretic principle is distressing or intolerable. Such persons always come to the front for a season in times of distraction, when the party that knows its own aims most definitely is sure to have the best chance of obtaining power. And Rousseau's method charmed their temperament. A man who handles sets of complex facts is necessarily slow-footed, but one who has only words to deal with, may advance with a speed, a precision, a consistency, a conclusiveness, that has a magical potency over men who insist on having politics and theology drawn out in exact theorems like those of Euclid.



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Rousseau traces his conclusions from words, and develops his system from the interior germs of phrases. Like the typical schoolman, he assumes that analysis of terms is the right way of acquiring new knowledge about things; he mistakes the multiplication of propositions for the discovery of fresh truth. Many pages of the *Social Contract* are mere logical deductions from verbal definitions: the slightest attempt to confront them with actual fact would have shown them to be not only valueless, but wholly meaningless, in connection with real human nature and the visible working of human affairs. He looks into the word, or into his own verbal notion, and tells us what is to be found in that, whereas we need to be told the marks and qualities that distinguish the object which the word is meant to recall. Hence arises his habit of setting himself questions, with reference to which we cannot say that the answers are not true, but only that the questions themselves were never worth asking. Here is an instance of his method of supposing that to draw something from a verbal notion is to find out something corresponding to fact. "We can distinguish in the magistrate three essentially different wills: 1st, the will peculiar to him as an individual, which only tends to his own particular advantage; 2nd, the common will of the magistrates, which refers only to the advantage of the prince [*i.e.* the government], and this we may name corporate will, which is general in relation to the government, and particular in relation to the state of which the government is a part; 3rd, the will of the people or sovereign will, which is general, as well in relation to the state considered as a whole, as in relation to the government considered as part of the whole." [202] It might be hard to prove that all this is not true, but then it is unreal and comes to nothing, as we see if we take the trouble to turn it into real matter. Thus a member of the British House of Commons, who is a magistrate in Rousseau's sense, has three essentially different wills: first, as a man, Mr. So-and-so; second, his corporate will, as member of the chamber, and this will is general in relation to the legislature, but particular in relation to the whole body of electors and peers; third, his will as a member of the great electoral body, which is a general will alike in relation to the electoral body and to the legislature. An English publicist is perfectly welcome to make assertions of this kind, if he chooses to do so, and nobody will take the trouble to deny them. But they are nonsense. They do not correspond to the real composition of a member of parliament, nor do they shed the smallest light upon any part either of the theory of government in general, or the working of our own government in particular. Almost the same kind of observation might be made of the famous dogmatic statements about sovereignty. "Sovereignty, being only the exercise of the general will, can never be alienated, and the sovereign,



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who is only a collective being, can only be represented by himself: the power may be transmitted, but not the will;"[203] sovereignty is indivisible, not only in principle, but in object;[204] and so forth. We shall have to consider these remarks from another point of view. At present we refer to them as illustrating the character of the book, as consisting of a number of expansions of definitions, analysed as words, not compared with the facts of which the words are representatives. This way of treating political theory enabled the writer to assume an air of certitude and precision, which led narrow deductive minds completely captive. Burke poured merited scorn on the application of geometry to politics and algebraic formulas to government, but then it was just this seeming demonstration, this measured accuracy, that filled Rousseau's disciples with a supreme and undoubting confidence which leaves the modern student of these schemes in amazement unspeakable. The thinness of Robespierre's ideas on government ceases to astonish us, when we remember that he had not trained himself to look upon it as the art of dealing with huge groups of conflicting interests, of hostile passions, of hardly reconcilable aims, of vehemently opposed forces. He had disciplined his political intelligence on such meagre and unsubstantial argumentation as the following:—"Let us suppose the state composed of ten thousand citizens. The sovereign can only be considered collectively and as a body; but each person, in his quality as subject, is considered as an individual unit; thus the sovereign is to the subject as ten thousand is to one; in other words, each member of the state has for his share only the ten-thousandth part of the sovereign authority, though he is submitted to it in all his own entirety. If the people be composed of a hundred thousand men, the condition of the subjects does not change, and each of them bears equally the whole empire of the laws, while his suffrage, reduced to a hundred-thousandth, has ten times less influence in drawing them up. Then, the subject remaining still only one, the relation of the sovereign augments in the ratio of the number of the citizens. Whence it follows that, the larger the state becomes, the more does liberty diminish."[205]

Apart from these arithmetical conceptions, and the deep charm which their assurance of expression had for the narrow and fervid minds of which England and Germany seem to have got finally rid in Anabaptists and Fifth Monarchy men, but which still haunted France, there were maxims in the Social Contract of remarkable convenience for the members of a Committee of Public Safety. "How can a blind multitude," the writer asks in one place, "which so often does not know its own will, because it seldom knows what is good for it, execute of itself an undertaking so vast and so difficult as a system of legislation?"[206] Again, "as nature gives to each man an absolute power over all his members, so the social pact gives



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to the body politic an absolute power over all its members; and it is this same power which, when directed by the general will, bears, as I have said, the name of sovereignty." [207] Above all, the little chapter on a dictatorship is the very foundation of the position of the Robespierrists in the few months immediately preceding their fall. "It is evidently the first intention of the people that the state should not perish," and so on, with much criticism of the system of occasional dictatorships, as they were resorted to in old Rome. [208] Yet this does not in itself go much beyond the old monarchic doctrine of Prerogative, as a corrective for the slowness and want of immediate applicability of mere legal processes in cases of state emergency; and it is worth noticing again and again that in spite of the shriekings of reaction, the few atrocities of the Terror are an almost invisible speck compared with the atrocities of Christian churchmen and lawful kings, perpetrated in accordance with their notion of what constituted public safety. So far as Rousseau's intention goes, we find in his writings one of the strongest denunciations of the doctrine of public safety that is to be found in any of the writings of the century. "Is the safety of a citizen," he cries, "less the common cause than the safety of the state? They may tell us that it is well that one should perish on behalf of all. I will admire such a sentence in the mouth of a virtuous patriot, who voluntarily and for duty's sake devotes himself to death for the salvation of his country. But if we are to understand that it is allowed to the government to sacrifice an innocent person for the safety of the multitude, I hold this maxim for one of the most execrable that tyranny has ever invented, and the most dangerous that can be admitted." [209] It may be said that the Terrorists did not sacrifice innocent life, but the plea is frivolous on the lips of men who proscribed whole classes. You cannot justly draw a capital indictment against a class. Rousseau, however, cannot fairly be said to have had a share in the responsibility for the more criminal part of the policy of 1793, any more than the founder of Christianity is responsible for the atrocities that have been committed by the more ardent worshippers of his name, and justified by stray texts caught up from the gospels. Helvetius had said, "All becomes legitimate and even virtuous on behalf of the public safety." Rousseau wrote in the margin, "The public safety is nothing unless individuals enjoy security." [210] The author of a theory is not answerable for the applications which may be read into it by the passions of men and the exigencies of a violent crisis. Such applications show this much and no more, that the theory was constructed with an imperfect consideration of the qualities of human nature, with too narrow a view of the conditions of society, and therefore with an inadequate appreciation of the consequences which the theory might be drawn to support.



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It is time to come to the central conception of the Social Contract, the dogma which made of it for a time the gospel of a nation, the memorable doctrine of the sovereignty of peoples. Of this doctrine Rousseau was assuredly not the inventor, though the exaggerated language of some popular writers in France leads us to suppose that they think of him as nothing less. Even in the thirteenth century the constitution of the Orders, and the contests of the friars with the clergy, had engendered faintly democratic ways of thinking.[211] Among others the great Aquinas had protested against the juristic doctrine that the law is the pleasure of the prince. The will of the prince, he says, to be a law, must be directed by reason; law is appointed for the common good, and not for a special or private good: it follows from this that only the reason of the multitude, or of a prince representing the multitude, can make a law.[212] A still more remarkable approach to later views was made by Marsilio of Padua, physician to Lewis of Bavaria, who wrote a strong book on his master's side, in the great contest between him and the pope (1324). Marsilio in the first part of his work not only lays down very elaborately the proposition that laws ought to be made by the "*universitas civium*"; he places this sovereignty of the people on the true basis (which Rousseau only took for a secondary support to his original compact), namely, the greater likelihood of laws being obeyed in the first place, and being good laws in the second, when they are made by the body of the persons affected. "No one knowingly does hurt to himself, or deliberately asks what is unjust, and on that account all or a great majority must wish such law as best suits the common interest of the citizens." [213] Turning from this to the Social Contract, or to Locke's essay on Government, the identity in doctrine and correspondence in dialect may teach us how little true originality there can be among thinkers who are in the same stage; how a metaphysician of the thirteenth century and a metaphysician of the eighteenth hit on the same doctrine; and how the true classification of thinkers does not follow intervals of time, but is fixed by differences of method. It is impossible that in the constant play of circumstances and ideas in the minds of different thinkers, the same combinations of form and colour in a philosophic arrangement of such circumstances and ideas should not recur. Signal novelties in thought are as limited as signal inventions in architectural construction. It is only one of the great changes in method, that can remove the limits of the old combinations, by bringing new material and fundamentally altering the point of view.



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In the sixteenth century there were numerous writers who declared the right of subjects to depose a bad sovereign, but this position is to be distinguished from Rousseau's doctrine. Thus, if we turn to the great historic event of 1581, the rejection of the yoke of Spain by the Dutch, we find the Declaration of Independence running, "that if a prince is appointed by God over the land, it is to protect them from harm, even as a shepherd to the guardianship of his flock. The subjects are not appointed by God for the behoof of the prince, but the prince for his subjects, without whom he is no prince." This is obviously divine right, fundamentally modified by a popular principle, accepted to meet the exigencies of the occasion, and to justify after the event a measure which was dictated by urgent need for practical relief. Such a notion of the social compact was still emphatically in the semi-patriarchal stage, and is distinct as can be from the dogma of popular sovereignty as Rousseau understood it. But it plainly marked a step on the way. It was the development of Protestant principles which produced and necessarily involved the extreme democratic conclusion. Time was needed for their full expansion in this sense, but the result could only have been avoided by a suppression of the Reformation, and we therefore count it inevitable. Bodin (1577) had defined sovereignty as residing in the supreme legislative authority, without further inquiry as to the source or seat of that authority, though he admits the vague position which even Lewis XIV. did not deny, that the object of political society is the greatest good of every citizen or the whole state. In 1603 a Protestant professor of law in Germany, Althusen by name, published a treatise of Politics, in which the doctrine of the sovereignty of peoples was clearly formulated, to the profound indignation both of Jesuits and of Protestant jurists. [214] Rousseau mentions his name; [215] it does not appear that he read Althusen's rather uncommon treatise, but its teaching would probably have a place in the traditions of political theorising current at Geneva, to the spirit of whose government it was so congenial. Hooker, vindicating episcopacy against the democratic principles of the Puritans, had still been led, apparently by way of the ever dominant idea of a law natural, to base civil government on the assent of the governed, and had laid down such propositions as these: "Laws they are not, which public approbation hath not made so. Laws therefore human, of what kind soever, are available by consent," and so on. [216] The views of the Ecclesiastical Polity were adopted by Locke, and became the foundation of the famous essay on Civil Government, from which popular leaders in our own country drew all their weapons down to the outbreak of the French Revolution. Grotius (1625) starting from the principle that the law of nature enjoins that we should stand by our agreements, then proceeded to assume either an express, or at any rate a tacit and implied, promise on the part of all who become members of a community, to obey the majority of the body, or a majority of those to whom authority has been delegated. [217] This is a unilateral view of the social contract, and omits the element of reciprocity which in Rousseau's idea was cardinal.



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Locke was Rousseau's most immediate inspirer, and the latter affirmed himself to have treated the same matters exactly on Locke's principles. Rousseau, however, exaggerated Locke's politics as greatly as Condillac exaggerated his metaphysics. There was the important difference that Locke's essay on Civil Government was the justification in theory of a revolution which had already been accomplished in practice, while the Social Contract, tinged as it was by silent reference in the mind of the writer to Geneva, was yet a speculation in the air. The circumstances under which it was written gave to the propositions of Locke's piece a reserve and moderation which savour of a practical origin and a special case. They have not the wide scope and dogmatic air and literary precision of the corresponding propositions in Rousseau. We find in Locke none of those concise phrases which make fanatics. But the essential doctrine is there. The philosopher of the Revolution of 1688 probably carried its principles further than most of those who helped in the Revolution had any intention to carry them, when he said that "the legislature being only a fiduciary power to act for certain ends, there remains still in the people a supreme power to remove or alter the legislative." [218] It may be questioned how many of the peers of that day would have assented to the proposition that the people—and did Locke mean by the people the electors of the House of Commons, or all males over twenty-one, or all householders paying rates?—could by any expression of their will abolish the legislative power of the upper chamber, or put an end to the legislative and executive powers of the crown. But Locke's statements are direct enough, though he does not use so terse a label for his doctrine as Rousseau affixed to it.

Again, besides the principle of popular sovereignty, Locke most likely gave to Rousseau the idea of the origin of this sovereignty in the civil state in a pact or contract, which was represented as the foundation and first condition of the civil state. From this naturally flowed the connected theory, of a perpetual consent being implied as given by the people to each new law. We need not quote passages from Locke to demonstrate the substantial correspondence of assumption between him and the author of the Social Contract. They are found in every chapter. [219] Such principles were indispensable for the defence of a Revolution like that of 1688, which was always carefully marked out by its promoters, as well as by its eloquent apologist and expositor a hundred years later, the great Burke, as above all things a revolution within the pale of the law or the constitution. They represented the philosophic adjustment of popular ideas to the political changes wrought by shifting circumstances, as distinguished from the biblical or Hebraic method of adjusting such ideas, which had prevailed in the contests of the previous generation.



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Yet there was in the midst of those contests one thinker of the first rank in intellectual power, who had constructed a genuine philosophy of government. Hobbes's speculations did not fit in with the theory of either of the two bodies of combatants in the Civil War. They were each in the theological order of ideas, and neither of them sought or was able to comprehend the application of philosophic principles to their own case or to that of their adversaries.[220] Hebrew precedents and bible texts, on the one hand; prerogative of use and high church doctrine, on the other. Between these was no space for the acceptance of a secular and rationalistic theory, covering the whole field of a social constitution. Now the influence of Hobbes upon Rousseau was very marked, and very singular. There were numerous differences between the philosopher of Geneva and his predecessor of Malmesbury. The one looked on men as good, the other looked on them as bad. The one described the state of nature as a state of peace, the other as a state of war. The one believed that laws and institutions had depraved man, the other that they had improved him.[221] But these differences did not prevent the action of Hobbes on Rousseau. It resulted in a curious fusion between the premisses and the temper of Hobbes and the conclusions of Locke. This fusion produced that popular absolutism of which the Social Contract was the theoretical expression, and Jacobin supremacy the practical manifestation. Rousseau borrowed from Hobbes the true conception of sovereignty, and from Locke the true conception of the ultimate seat and original of authority, and of the two together he made the great image of the sovereign people. Strike the crowned head from that monstrous figure which is the frontispiece of the Leviathan, and you have a frontispiece that will do excellently well for the Social Contract. Apart from a multitude of other obligations, good and bad, which Rousseau owed to Hobbes, as we shall point out, we may here mention that of the superior accuracy of the notion of law in the Social Contract over the notion of law in Montesquieu's work. The latter begins, as everybody knows, with a definition inextricably confused: "Laws are necessary relations flowing from the nature of things, and in this sense all beings have their laws, divinity has its laws, the material world has its laws, the intelligences superior to men have their laws, the beasts have their laws, man has his laws.... There is a primitive reason, and laws are the relations to be found between that and the different beings, and the relations of these different beings among one another." [222] Rousseau at once put aside these divergent meanings, made the proper distinction between a law of nature and the imperative law of a state, and justly asserted that the one could teach us nothing worth knowing about the other.[223] Hobbes's phraseology is much less definite than this, and shows that he had not himself wholly shaken off the same confusion as reigned



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in Montesquieu's account a century later. But then Hobbes's account of the true meaning of sovereignty was so clear, firm, and comprehensive, as easily to lead any fairly perspicuous student who followed him, to apply it to the true meaning of law. And on this head of law not so much fault is to be found with Rousseau, as on the head of larger constitutional theory. He did not look long enough at given laws, and hence failed to seize all their distinctive qualities; above all he only half saw, if he saw at all, that a law is a command and not a contract, and his eyes were closed to this, because the true view was incompatible with his fundamental assumption of contract as the base of the social union.[224] But he did at all events grasp the quality of generality as belonging to laws proper, and separated them justly from what he calls decrees, which we are now taught to name occasional or particular commands.[225] This is worth mentioning, because it shows that, in spite of his habits of intellectual laxity, Rousseau was capable, where he had a clear-headed master before him, of a very considerable degree of precision of thought, however liable it was to fall into error or deficiency for want of abundant comparison with bodies of external fact. Let us now proceed to some of the central propositions of the Social Contract.

1. The origin of society dates from the moment when the obstacles which impede the preservation of men in a state of nature are too strong for such forces as each individual can employ in order to keep himself in that state. At this point they can only save themselves by aggregation. Problem: to find a form of association which defends and protects with the whole common force the person and property of each associate, and by which, each uniting himself to all, still only obeys himself, and remains as free as he was before. Solution: a social compact reducible to these words, "Each of us places in common his person and his whole power under the supreme direction of the general will; and we further receive each member as indivisible part of the whole." This act of association constitutes a moral and collective body, a public person.

The practical importance and the mischief of thus suffering society to repose on conventions which the human will had made, lay in the corollary that the human will is competent at any time to unmake them, and also therefore to devise all possible changes that fell short of unmaking them. This was the root of the fatal hypothesis of the dictator, or divinely commissioned lawgiver. External circumstance and human nature alike were passive and infinitely pliable; they were the material out of which the legislator was to devise conventions at pleasure, without apprehension as to their suitability either to the conditions of society among which they were to work, or to the passions and interests of those by whom they were to be carried out, and who were supposed to have given



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assent to them. It would be unjust to say that Rousseau actually faced this position and took the consequences. He expressly says in more places than one that the science of Government is only a science of combinations, applications, and exceptions, according to time, place, and circumstance.[226] But to base society on conventions is to impute an element of arbitrariness to these combinations and applications, and to make them independent, as they can never be, of the limits inexorably fixed by the nature of things. The notion of compact is the main source of all the worst vagaries in Rousseau's political speculation.

It is worth remarking in the history of opinion, that there was at this time in France a little knot of thinkers who were nearly in full possession of the true view of the limits set by the natural ordering of societies to the power of convention and the function of the legislators. Five years after the publication of the *Social Contract*, a remarkable book was written by one of the economic sect of the Physiocrats, the later of whom, though specially concerned with the material interests of communities, very properly felt the necessity of connecting the discussion of wealth with the assumption of certain fundamental political conditions. They felt this, because it is impossible to settle any question about wages or profits, for instance, until you have first settled whether you are assuming the principles of liberty and property. This writer with great consistency found the first essential of all social order in conformity of positive law and institution to those qualities of human nature, and their relations with those material instruments of life, which, and not convention, were the true origin, as they are the actual grounds, of the perpetuation of our societies.[227] This was wiser than Rousseau's conception of the lawgiver as one who should change human nature, and take away from man the forces that are naturally his own, to replace them by others comparatively foreign to him.[228] Rousseau once wrote, in a letter about Riviere's book, that the great problem in politics, which might be compared with the quadrature of the circle in geometry, is to find a form of government which shall place law above man.[229] A more important problem, and not any less difficult for the political theoriser, is to mark the bounds at which the authority of the law is powerless or mischievous in attempting to control the egoistic or non-social parts of man. This problem Rousseau ignored, and that he should do so was only natural in one who believed that man had bound himself by a convention, strictly to suppress his egoistic and non-social parts, and who based all his speculation on this pact as against the force, or the paternal authority, or the will of a Supreme Being, in which other writers founded the social union.

2. The body thus constituted by convention is the sovereign. Each citizen is a member of the sovereign, standing in a definite relation to individuals *qua* individuals; he is also as an individual a member of the state and subject to the sovereign, of which from the first point of view he is a component element. The sovereign and the body politic are one and the same thing.[230]



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Of the antecedents and history of this doctrine enough has already been said. Its general truth as a description either of what is, or what ought to be and will be, demands an ampler discussion than there is any occasion to carry on here. We need only point out its place as a kind of intermediate dissolvent for which the time was most ripe. It breaks up the feudal conception of political authority as a property of land-ownership, noble birth, and the like, and it associates this authority widely and simply with the bare fact of participation in any form of citizenship in the social union. The later and higher idea of every share of political power as a function to be discharged for the good of the whole body, and not merely as a right to be enjoyed for the advantage of its possessor, was a form of thought to which Rousseau did not rise. That does not lessen the effectiveness of the blow which his doctrine dealt to French feudalism, and which is its main title to commemoration in connection with his name.

The social compact thus made is essentially different from the social compact which Hobbes described as the origin of what he calls commonwealths by institution, to distinguish them from commonwealths by acquisition, that is to say, states formed by conquest or resting on hereditary rule. "A commonwealth," Hobbes says, "is said to be instituted when a multitude of men do agree and covenant, every one with every one, that to whatsoever man or assembly of men shall be given by the major part the right to present the person of them all, that is to say, to be their representative; every one ... shall authorise all the actions and judgments of that man or assembly of men, in the same manner as if they were his own, to the end to live peaceably among themselves, and be protected against other men." [231] But Rousseau's compact was an act of association among equals, who also remained equals. Hobbes's compact was an act of surrender on the part of the many to one or a number. The first was the constitution of civil society, the second was the erection of a government. As nobody now believes in the existence of any such compact in either one form or the other, it would be superfluous to inquire which of the two is the less inaccurate. All we need do is to point out that there was this difference. Rousseau distinctly denied the existence of any element of contract in the erection of a government; there is only one contract in the state, he said, and it is that of association. [232] Locke's notion of the compact which was the beginning of every political society is indefinite on this point; he speaks of it indifferently as an agreement of a body of free men to unite and incorporate into a society, and an agreement to set up a government. [233] Most of us would suppose the two processes to be as nearly identical as may be; Rousseau drew a distinction, and from this distinction he derived further differences.



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Here, we may remark, is the starting-point in the history of the ideas of the revolution, of one of the most prominent of them all, that of Fraternity. If the whole structure of society rests on an act of partnership entered into by equals on behalf of themselves and their descendants for ever, the nature of the union is not what it would be, if the members of the union had only entered it to place their liberties at the feet of some superior power. Society in the one case is a covenant of subjection, in the other a covenant of social brotherhood. This impressed itself deeply on the feelings of men like Robespierre, who were never so well pleased as when they could find for their sentimentalism a covering of neat political logic. The same idea of association came presently to receive a still more remarkable and momentous extension, when it was translated from the language of mere government into that of the economic organisation of communities. Rousseau's conception went no further than political association, as distinct from subjection. Socialism, which came by and by to the front place, carried the idea to its fullest capacity, and presented all the relations of men with one another as fixed by the same bond. Men had entered the social union as brethren, equal, and co-operators, not merely for purposes of government, but for purposes of mutual succour in all its aspects. This naturally included the most important of all, material production. They were not associated merely as equal participants in political sovereignty; they were equal participants in all the rest of the increase made to the means of human happiness by united action. Socialism is the transfer of the principle of fraternal association from politics, where Rousseau left it, to the wider sphere of industrial force.

It is perhaps worth notice that another famous revolutionary term belongs to the same source. All the associates of this act of union, becoming members of the city, are as such to be called Citizens, as participating in the sovereign authority.[234] The term was in familiar use enough among the French in their worst days, but it was Rousseau's sanction which marked it in the new times with a sort of sacramental stamp. It came naturally to him, because it was the name of the first of the two classes which constituted the active portion of the republic of Geneva, and the only class whose members were eligible to the chief magistracies.

3. We next have a group of propositions setting forth the attributes of sovereignty. It is inalienable.[235] It is indivisible.

These two propositions, which play such a part in the history of some of the episodes of the French Revolution, contain no more than was contended for by Hobbes, and has been accepted in our own times by Austin. When Hobbes says that "to the laws which the sovereign maketh, the sovereign is not subject, for if he were subject to the civil laws he were subject to himself, which were not subjection but freedom,"



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his notion of sovereignty is exactly that expressed by Rousseau in his unexplained dogma of the inalienableness of sovereignty. So Rousseau means no more by the dogma that sovereignty is indivisible, than Austin meant when he declared of the doctrine that the legislative sovereign powers and the executive sovereign powers belong in any society to distinct parties, that it is a supposition too palpably false to endure a moment's examination.[236] The way in which this account of the indivisibleness of sovereignty was understood during the revolution, twisted it into a condemnation of the dreaded idea of Federalism. It might just as well have been interpreted to condemn alliances between nations; for the properties of sovereignty are clearly independent of the dimensions of the sovereign unit. Another effect of this doctrine was the rejection by the Constituent Assembly of the balanced parliamentary system, which the followers of Montesquieu would fain have introduced on the English model. Whether that was an evil or a good, publicists will long continue to dispute.

4. The general will of the sovereign upon an object of common interest is expressed in a law. Only the sovereign can possess this law-making power, because no one but the sovereign has the right of declaring the general will. The legislative power cannot be exerted by delegation or representation. The English fancy that they are a free nation, but they are grievously mistaken. They are only free during the election of members of parliament; the members once chosen, the people are slaves, nay, as people they have ceased to exist.[237] It is impossible for the sovereign to act, except when the people are assembled. Besides such extraordinary assemblies as unforeseen events may call for, there must be fixed periodical meetings that nothing can interrupt or postpone. Do you call this chimerical? Then you have forgotten the Roman comitia, as well as such gatherings of the people as those of the Macedonians and the Franks and most other nations in their primitive times. What has existed is certainly possible.[238]

It is very curious that Rousseau in this part of his subject should have contented himself with going back to Macedonia and Rome, instead of pointing to the sovereign states that have since become confederate with his native republic. A historian in our own time has described with an enthusiasm that equals that of the Social Contract, how he saw the sovereign people of Uri and the sovereign people of Appenzell discharge the duties of legislation and choice of executive, each in the majesty of its corporate person.[239] That Rousseau was influenced by the free sovereignty of the states of the Swiss confederation, as well as by that of his own city, we may well believe. Whether he was or not, it must always be counted a serious misfortune that a writer who was destined to exercise such power in a crisis of the history of a great nation, should have chosen his illustrations

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from a time and from societies so remote, that the true conditions of their political system could not possibly be understood with any approach to reality, while there were, within a few leagues of his native place, communities where the system of a sovereign public in his own sense was actually alive and flourishing and at work. From them the full meaning of his theories might have been practically gathered, and whatever useful lessons lay at the bottom of them might have been made plain. As it was, it came to pass singularly enough that the effect of the French Revolution was the suppression, happily only for a time, of the only governments in Europe where the doctrine of the favourite apostle of the Revolution was a reality. The constitution of the Helvetic Republic in 1798 was as bad a blow to the sovereignty of peoples in a true sense, as the old house of Austria or Charles of Burgundy could ever have dealt. That constitution, moreover, was directly opposed to the Social Contract in setting up what it called representative democracy, for representative democracy was just what Rousseau steadily maintained to be a nullity and a delusion.

The only lesson which the Social Contract contained for a statesman bold enough to take into his hands the reconstruction of France, undoubtedly pointed in the direction of confederation. At one place, where he became sensible of the impotence which his assumption of a small state inflicted on his whole speculation, Rousseau said he would presently show how the good order of a small state might be united to the external power of a great people. Though he never did this, he hints in a footnote that his plan belonged to the theory of confederations, of which the principles were still to be established.[240] When he gave advice for the renovation of the wretched constitution of Poland, he insisted above all things that they should apply themselves to extend and perfect the system of federate governments, "the only one that unites in itself all the advantages of great and small states." [241] A very few years after the appearance of his book, the great American union of sovereign states arose to point the political moral. The French revolutionists missed the force alike of the practical example abroad, and of the theory of the book which they took for gospel at home. How far they were driven to this by the urgent pressure of foreign war, or whether they would have followed the same course without that interference, merely in obedience to the catholic and monarchic absolutism which had sunk so much deeper into French character than people have been willing to admit, we cannot tell. The fact remains that the Jacobins, Rousseau's immediate disciples, at once took up the chain of centralised authority where it had been broken off by the ruin of the monarchy. They caught at the letter of the dogma of a sovereign people, and lost its spirit. They missed the germ of truth in Rousseau's scheme, namely, that for order and freedom and just administration



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the unit should not be too large to admit of the participation of the persons concerned in the management of their own public affairs. If they had realised this and applied it, either by transforming the old monarchy into a confederacy of sovereign provinces, or by some less sweeping modification of the old centralised scheme of government, they might have saved France.[242] But, once more, men interpret a political treatise on principles which either come to them by tradition; or else spring suddenly up from roots of passion.[243]

5. The government is the minister of the sovereign. It is an intermediate body set up between sovereign and subjects for their mutual correspondence, charged with the execution of the laws and the maintenance of civil and political freedom. The members comprising it are called magistrates or kings, and to the whole body so composed, whether of one or of more than one, is given the name of prince. If the whole power is centred in the hands of a single magistrate, from whom all the rest hold their authority, the government is called a monarchy. If there are more persons simply citizens than there are magistrates, this is an aristocracy.[244] If more citizen magistrates than simple private citizens, that is a democracy. The last government is as a general rule best fitted for small states, and the first for large ones—on the principle that the number of the supreme magistrates ought to be in the inverse ratio of that of the citizens. But there is a multitude of circumstances which may furnish reasons for exceptions to this general rule.

This common definition of the three forms of governments according to the mere number of the participants in the chief magistracy, though adopted by Hobbes and other writers, is certainly inadequate and uninformative, without some further qualification. Aristotle, for instance, furnishes such a qualification, when he refers to the interests in which the government is carried on, whether the interest of a small body or of the whole of the citizens.[245] Montesquieu's well-known division, though logically faulty, still has the merit of pointing to conditions of difference among forms of government, outside of and apart from the one fact of the number of the sovereign. To divide governments, as Montesquieu did, into republics, monarchies, and despotisms, was to use two principles of division, first the number of the sovereign, and next something else, namely, the difference between a constitutional and an absolute monarch. Then he returned to the first principle of division, and separated a republic into a government of all, which is a democracy, and a government by a part, which is aristocracy.[246] Still, to have introduced the element of law-abidingness in the chief magistracy, whether of one or more, was to have called attention to the fact that no single distinction is enough to furnish us with a conception of the real and vital differences which may exist between one form of government and another.[247]



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The important fact about a government lies quite as much in the qualifying epithet which is to be affixed to any one of the three names, as in the name itself. We know nothing about a monarchy, until we have been told whether it is absolute or constitutional; if absolute, whether it is administered in the interests of the realm, like that of Prussia under Frederick the Great, or in the interests of the ruler, like that of an Indian principality under a native prince; if constitutional, whether the real power is aristocratic, as in Great Britain a hundred years ago, or plutocratic, as in Great Britain to-day, or popular, as it may be here fifty years hence. And so with reference to each of the other two forms; neither name gives us any instruction, except of a merely negative kind, until it has been made precise by one or more explanatory epithets. What is the common quality of the old Roman republic, the republics of the Swiss confederation, the republic of Venice, the American republic, the republic of Mexico? Plainly the word republic has no further effect beyond that of excluding the idea of a recognised dynasty.

Rousseau is perhaps less open to this kind of criticism than other writers on political theory, for the reason that he distinguishes the constitution of the state from the constitution of the government. The first he settles definitely. The whole body of the people is to be sovereign, and to be endowed alone with what he conceived as the only genuinely legislative power. The only question which he considers open is as to the form in which the *delegated executive authority* shall be organised. Democracy, the immediate government of all by all, he rejects as too perfect for men; it requires a state so small that each citizen knows all the others, manners so simple that the business may be small and the mode of discussion easy, equality of rank and fortune so general as not to allow of the overriding of political equality by material superiority, and so forth. [248] Monarchy labours under a number of disadvantages which are tolerably obvious. "One essential and inevitable defect, which must always place monarchic below republican government, is that in the latter the public voice hardly ever promotes to the first places any but capable and enlightened men who fill them with honour; whereas those who get on in monarchies, are for the most part small busybodies, small knaves, small intriguers, in whom the puny talents which are the secret of reaching substantial posts in courts, only serve to show their stupidity to the public as soon as they have made their way to the front. The people is far less likely to make a blunder in a choice of this sort, than the prince, and a man of true merit is nearly as rare in the ministry, as a fool at the head of the government of a republic." [249] There remains aristocracy. Of this there are three sorts: natural, elective, and hereditary. The first can only thrive among primitive folk, while



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the third is the worst of all governments. The second is the best, for it is aristocracy properly so called. If men only acquire rule in virtue of election, then purity, enlightenment, experience, and all the other grounds of public esteem and preference, become so many new guarantees that the administration shall be wise and just. It is the best and most natural order that the wisest should govern the multitude, provided you are sure that they will govern the multitude for its advantage, and not for their own. If aristocracy of this kind requires one or two virtues less than a popular executive, it also demands others which are peculiar to itself, such as moderation in the rich and content in the poor. For this form comports with a certain inequality of fortune, for the reason that it is well that the administration of public affairs should be confided to those who are best able to give their whole time to it. At the same time it is of importance that an opposite choice should occasionally teach the people that in the merit of men there are more momentous reasons of preference than wealth.[250] Rousseau, as we have seen, had pronounced English liberty to be no liberty at all, save during the few days once in seven years when the elections to parliament take place. Yet this scheme of an elective aristocracy was in truth a very near approach to the English form as it is theoretically presented in our own day, with a suffrage gradually becoming universal. If the suffrage were universal, and if its exercise took place once a year, our system, in spite of the now obsolescent elements of hereditary aristocracy and nominal monarchy, would be as close a realisation of the scheme of the Social Contract as any representative system permits. If Rousseau had further developed his notions of confederation, the United States would most have resembled his type.

6. What is to be the attitude of the state in respect of religion? Certainly not that prescribed by the policy of the middle ages. The separation of the spiritual from the temporal power, indicated by Jesus Christ, and developed by his followers in the course of many subsequent generations, was in Rousseau's eyes most mischievous, because it ended in the subordination of the temporal power to the spiritual, and that is incompatible with an efficient polity. Even the kings of England, though they style themselves heads of the church, are really its ministers and servants.[251]

The last allegation evinces Rousseau's usual ignorance of history, and need not be discussed, any more than his proposition on which he lays so much stress, that Christians cannot possibly be good soldiers, nor truly good citizens, because their hearts being fixed upon another world, they must necessarily be indifferent to the success or failure of such enterprises as they may take up in this.[252] In reading the Social Contract, and some other of the author's writings besides, we have constantly to interpret the direct,



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positive, categorical form of assertion into something of this kind—"Such and such consequences ought logically to follow from the meaning of the name, or the definition of a principle, or from such and such motives." The change of this moderate form of provisional assertion into the unconditional statement that such and such consequences have actually followed, constantly lands the author in propositions which any reader who tests them by an appeal to the experience of mankind, written and unwritten, at once discovers to be false and absurd. Rousseau himself took less trouble to verify his conclusions by such an appeal to experience than any writer that ever lived in a scientific age. The other remark to be made on the above section is that the rejection of the Christian or ecclesiastical division of the powers of the church and the powers of the state, is the strongest illustration that could be found of the debt of Rousseau's conception of a state to the old pagan conception. It was the main characteristic of the politics which Christian monotheism and feudalism together succeeded in replacing, to recognise no such division as that between church and state, pope and emperor. Rousseau resumed the old conception. But he adjusted it in a certain degree to the spirit of his own time, and imposed certain philosophical limitations upon it. His scheme is as follows.

Religion, he says, in its relation to the state, may be considered as of three kinds. First, natural religion, without temple, altar, or rite, the true and pure theism of the natural conscience of man. Second, local, civil, or positive religion, with dogmas, rites, exercises; a theology of a primitive people, exactly co-extensive with all the rights and all the duties of men. Third, a religion like the Christianity of the Roman church, which gives men two sets of laws, two chiefs, two countries, submits them to contradictory duties, and prevents them from being able to be at once devout and patriotic. The last of these is so evidently pestilent as to need no discussion. The second has the merit of teaching men to identify duty to their gods with duty to their country; under this to die for the land is martyrdom, to break its laws impiety, and to subject a culprit to public execration is to devote him to the anger of the gods. But it is bad, because it is at bottom a superstition, and because it makes a people sanguinary and intolerant. The first of all, which is now styled a Christian theism, having no special relation with the body politic, adds no force to the laws. There are many particular objections to Christianity flowing from the fact of its not being a kingdom of this world, and this above all, that Christianity only preaches servitude and dependence.[253] What then is to be done? The sovereign must establish a purely civil profession of faith. It will consist of the following positive dogmas:—the existence of a divinity, powerful, intelligent, beneficent and foreseeing; the life to



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come; the happiness of the just, the chastisement of the wicked; the sanctity of the social contract and the laws. These articles of belief are imposed, not as dogmas of religion exactly, but as sentiments of sociability. If any one declines to accept them, he ought to be exiled, not for being impious, but for being unsociable, incapable of sincere attachment to the laws, or of sacrificing his life to his duty. If any one, after publicly recognising these dogmas, carries himself as if he did not believe them, let him be punished by death, for he has committed the worst of crimes, he has lied before the laws.[254]

Rousseau thus, unconsciously enough, brought to its climax that reaction against the absorption of the state in the church which had first taken a place in literature in the controversy between legists and canonists, and had found its most famous illustration in the *De Monarchia* of the great poet of catholicism. The division of two co-equal realms, one temporal, the other spiritual, was replaced in the Genevese thinker by what he admitted to be “pure Hobbism.” This, the rigorous subordination of the church to the state, was the end, so far as France went, of the speculative controversy which had occupied Europe for so many ages, as to the respective powers of pope and emperor, of positive law and law divine. The famous civil constitution of the clergy (1790), which was the expression of Rousseau’s principle as formulated by his disciples in the Constituent Assembly, was the revolutionary conclusion to the world-wide dispute, whose most melodramatic episode had been the scene in the courtyard of Canossa.

Rousseau’s memorable prescription, banishing all who should not believe in God, or a future state, or in rewards and punishments for the deeds done in the body, and putting to death any who, after subscribing to the required profession, should seem no longer to hold it, has naturally created a very lively horror in a tolerant generation like our own, some of whose finest spirits have rejected deliberately and finally the articles of belief, without which they could not have been suffered to exist in Rousseau’s state. It seemed to contemporaries, who were enthusiastic above all things for humanity and infinite tolerance, these being the prizes of the long conflict which they hoped they were completing, to be a return to the horrors of the Holy Office. Men were as shocked as the modern philosopher is, when he finds the greatest of the followers of Socrates imposing in his latest piece the penalty of imprisonment for five years, to be followed in case of obduracy by death, on one who should not believe in the gods set up for the state by the lawmaker.[255] And we can hardly comfort ourselves, as Milton did about Plato, who framed laws which no city ever yet received, and “fed his fancy with making many edicts to his airy burgomasters, which they who otherwise admire him, wish had been rather buried and excused in the genial cups of an academic



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night-sitting.”[256] Rousseau’s ideas fell among men who were most potent and corporeal burgomasters. In the winter of 1793 two parties in Paris stood face to face; the rationalistic, Voltairean party of the Commune, named improperly after Hebert, but whose best member was Chaumette, and the sentimental, Rousseauite party, led by Robespierre. The first had industriously desecrated the churches, and consummated their revolt against the gods of the old time by the public worship of the Goddess of Reason, who was prematurely set up for deity of the new time. Robespierre retaliated with the mummeries of the Festival of the Supreme Being, and protested against atheism as the crime of aristocrats. Presently the atheistic party succumbed. Chaumette was not directly implicated in the proceedings which led to their fall, but he was by and by accused of conspiring with Hebert, Cloutz, and the rest, “to destroy all notion of Divinity and base the government of France on atheism.” “They attack the immortality of the soul,” cried Saint Just, “the thought which consoled Socrates in his dying moments, and their dream is to raise atheism into a worship.” And this was the offence, technically and officially described, for which Chaumette and Cloutz were sent to the guillotine (April 1794), strictly on the principle which had been laid down in the Social Contract, and accepted by Robespierre.[257]

It would have been odd in any writer less firmly possessed with the infallibility of his own dreams than Rousseau was, that he should not have seen the impossibility in anything like the existing conditions of human nature, of limiting the profession of civil faith to the three or four articles which happened to constitute his own belief. Having once granted the general position that a citizen may be required to profess some religious faith, there is no speculative principle, and there is no force in the world, which can fix any bound to the amount or kind of religious faith which the state has the right thus to exact. Rousseau said that a man was dangerous to the city who did not believe in God, a future state, and divine reward and retribution. But then Calvin thought a man dangerous who did not believe both that there is only one God, and also that there are three Gods. And so Chaumette went to the scaffold, and Servetus to the stake, on the one common principle that the civil magistrate is concerned with heresy. And Hebert was only following out the same doctrine in a mild and equitable manner, when he insisted on preventing the publication of a book in which the author professed his belief in a God. A single step in the path of civil interference with opinion leads you the whole way.



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The history of the Protestant churches is enough to show the pitiable futility of the proviso for religious tolerance with which Rousseau closed his exposition. "If there is no longer an exclusive national religion, then every creed ought to be tolerated which tolerates other creeds, so long as it contains nothing contrary to the duties of the citizen. But whoever dares to say, *Out of the church, no salvation*, ought to be banished from the state." The reason for which Henry IV. embraced the Roman religion—namely, that in that he might be saved, in the opinion alike of Protestants and Catholics, whereas in the reformed faith, though he was saved according to Protestants, yet according to Catholics he was necessarily damned,—ought to have made every honest man, and especially every prince, reject it. It was the more curious that Rousseau did not see the futility of drawing the line of tolerance at any given set of dogmas, however simple and slight and acceptable to himself they might be, because he invited special admiration for D'Argenson's excellent maxim that "in the republic everybody is perfectly free in what does not hurt others." [258] Surely this maxim has very little significance or value, unless we interpret it as giving entire liberty of opinion, because no opinion whatever can hurt others, until it manifests itself in act, including of course speech, which is a kind of act. Rousseau admitted that over and above the profession of civil faith, a citizen might hold what opinions he pleased, in entire freedom from the sovereign's cognisance or jurisdiction; "for as the sovereign has no competence in the other world, the fate of subjects in that other world is not his affair, provided they are good citizens in this." But good citizenship consists in doing or forbearing from certain actions, and to punish men on the inference that forbidden action is likely to follow from the rejection of a set of opinions, or to exact a test oath of adherence to such opinions on the same principle, is to concede the whole theory of civil intolerance, however little Rousseau may have realised the perfectly legitimate applications of his doctrine. It was an unconscious compromise. He was thinking of Calvin in practice and Hobbes in theory, and he was at the same time influenced by the moderate spirit of his time, and the comparatively reasonable character of his personal belief. He praised Hobbes as the only author who had seen the right remedy for the conflict of the spiritual and temporal jurisdictions, by proposing to unite the two heads of the eagle, and reducing all to political unity, without which never will either state or government be duly constituted. But Hobbes was consistent without flinching. He refused to set limits to the religious prescriptions which a sovereign might impose, for "even when the civil sovereign is an infidel, every one of his own subjects that resisteth him, sinneth against the laws of God (for such are the laws of nature), and rejecteth



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the counsel of the apostles, that admonisheth all Christians to obey their princes.... And for their faith, it is internal and invisible: they have the licence that Naaman had, and need not put themselves into danger for it; but if they do, they ought to expect their reward in heaven, and not complain of their lawful sovereign." [259] All this flowed from the very idea and definition of sovereignty, which Rousseau accepted from Hobbes, as we have already seen. Such consequences, however, stated in these bold terms, must have been highly revolting to Rousseau; he could not assent to an exercise of sovereignty which might be atheistic, Mahometan, or anything else unqualifiedly monstrous. He failed to see the folly of trying to unite the old notions of a Christian commonwealth with what was fundamentally his own notion of a commonwealth after the ancient type. He stripped the pagan republics, which he took for his model, of their national and official polytheism, and he put on in its stead a scanty remnant of theism slightly tinged with Christianity.

Then he practically accepted Hobbes's audacious bidding to the man who should not be able to accept the state creed, to go courageously to martyrdom, and leave the land in peace. For the modern principle, which was contained in D'Argenson's saying previously quoted, that the civil power does best absolutely and unreservedly to ignore spirituals, he was not prepared either by his emancipation from the theological ideas of his youth, or by his observation of the working and tendencies of systems, which involved the state in some more or less close relations with the church, either as superior, equal, or subordinate. Every test is sure to insist on mental independence ending exactly where the speculative curiosity of the time is most intent to begin.

Let us now shortly confront Rousseau's ideas with some of the propositions belonging to another method of approaching the philosophy of government, that have for their keynote the conception of expediency or convenience, and are tested by their conformity to the observed and recorded experience of mankind. According to this method, the ground and origin of society is not a compact; that never existed in any known case, and never was a condition of obligation either in primitive or developed societies, either between subjects and sovereign, or between the equal members of a sovereign body. The true ground is an acceptance of conditions which came into existence by the sociability inherent in man, and were developed by man's spontaneous search after convenience. The statement that while the constitution of man is the work of nature, that of the state is the work of art, [260] is as misleading as the opposite statement that governments are not made but grow. [261] The truth lies between them, in such propositions as that institutions owe their existence and development to deliberate human effort, working in accordance with circumstances

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naturally fixed both in human character and in the external field of its activity. The obedience of the subject to the sovereign has its root not in contract but in force,—the force of the sovereign to punish disobedience. A man does not consent to be put to death if he shall commit a murder, for the reason alleged by Rousseau, namely, as a means of protecting his own life against murder.[262] There is no consent in the transaction. Some person or persons, possessed of sovereign authority, promulgated a command that the subject should not commit murder, and appointed penalties for such commission and it was not a fictitious assent to these penalties, but the fact that the sovereign was strong enough to enforce them, which made the command valid.

Supposing a law to be passed in an assembly of the sovereign people by a majority; what binds a member of the minority to obedience? Rousseau's answer is this:—When the law is proposed, the question put is not whether they approve or reject the proposition, but whether it is conformable to the general will: the general will appears from the votes: if the opinion contrary to my own wins the day, that only proves that I was mistaken, and that what I took for the general will was not really so.[263] We can scarcely imagine more nonsensical sophistry than this. The proper answer evidently is, that either experience or calculation has taught the citizens in a popular government that in the long run it is most expedient for the majority of votes to decide the law. In other words, the inconvenience to the minority of submitting to a law which they dislike, is less than the inconvenience of fighting to have their own way, or retiring to form a separate community. The minority submit to obey laws which were made against their will, because they cannot avoid the necessity of undergoing worse inconveniences than are involved in this submission. The same explanation partially covers what is unfortunately the more frequent case in the history of the race, the submission of the majority to the laws imposed by a minority of one or more. In both these cases, however, as in the general question of the source of our obedience to the laws, deliberate and conscious sense of convenience is as slight in its effect upon conduct here, as it is in the rest of the field of our moral motives. It is covered too thickly over and constantly neutralised by the multitudinous growths of use, by the many forms of fatalistic or ascetic religious sentiment, by physical apathy of race, and all other conditions that interpose to narrow or abrogate the authority of pure reason over human conduct. Rousseau, expounding his conception of a normal political state, was no doubt warranted in leaving these complicating conditions out of account, though to do so is to rob any treatise on government of much of its possible value. The same excuse cannot warrant him in basing his political institutions upon a figment, instead of upon the substantial ground of propositions about



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human nature, which the average of experience in given races and at given stages of advancement has shown to be true within those limits. There are places in his writings where he reluctantly admits that men are only moved by their interests, and he does not even take care to qualify this sufficiently.[264] But throughout the *Social Contract* we seem to be contemplating the erection of a machine which is to work without reference to the only forces that can possibly impart movement to it.

The consequence of this is that Rousseau gives us not the least help towards the solution of any of the problems of actual government, because these are naturally both suggested and guided by considerations of expediency and improvement. It is as if he had never really settled the ends for which government exists, beyond the construction of the symmetrical machine of government itself. He is a geometer, not a mechanician; or shall we say that he is a mechanician, and not a biologist concerned with the conditions of a living organism. The analogy of the body politic to the body natural was as present to him as it had been to all other writers on society, but he failed to seize the only useful lessons which such an analogy might have taught him—diversity of structure, difference of function, development of strength by exercise, growth by nutrition—all of which might have been serviceably translated into the dialect of political science, and might have bestowed on his conception of political society more of the features of reality. We see no room for the free play of divergent forces, the active rivalry of hostile interests, the regulated conflict of multifarious personal aims, which can never be extinguished, except in moments of driving crisis, by the most sincere attachment to the common causes of the land. Thus the modern question which is of such vital interest for all the foremost human societies, of the union of collective energy with the encouragement of individual freedom, is, if not wholly untouched, at least wholly unilluminated by anything that Rousseau says. To tell us that a man on entering a society exchanges his natural liberty for civil liberty which is limited by the general will, [265] is to give us a phrase, where we seek a solution. To say that if it is the opposition of private interests which made the establishment of societies necessary, it is the accord of those interests which makes them possible,[266] is to utter a truth which feeds no practical curiosity. The opposition of private interests remains, in spite of the yoke which their accord has imposed upon it, but which only controls and does not suppress such an opposition. What sort of control? What degree? What bounds?



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So again let us consider the statement that the instant the government usurps the sovereignty, then the social pact is broken, and all the citizens, restored by right to their natural liberty, are forced but not morally obliged to obey.[267] He began by telling his readers that man, though born free, is now everywhere in chains; and therefore it would appear that in all existing cases the social pact has been broken, and the citizens living under the reign of force, are free to resume their natural liberty, if they are only strong enough to do so. This declaration of the general duty of rebellion no doubt had its share in generating that fervid eagerness that all other peoples should rise and throw off the yoke, which was one of the most astonishing anxieties of the French during their revolution. That was not the worst quality of such a doctrine. It made government impossible, by basing the right or duty of resistance on a question that could not be reached by positive evidence, but must always be decided by an arbitrary interpretation of an arbitrarily imagined document. The moderate proposition that resistance is lawful if a government is a bad one, and if the people are strong enough to overthrow it, and if their leaders have reason to suppose they can provide a less bad one in its place, supplies tests that are capable of application. Our own writers in favour of the doctrine of resistance partly based their arguments upon the historic instances of the Old Testament, and it is one of the most striking contributions of Protestantism to the cause of freedom, that it sent people in an admiring spirit to the history of the most rebellious nation that ever existed, and so provided them in Hebrew insurgency with a corrective for the too submissive political teaching of the Gospel. But these writers have throughout a tacit appeal to expediency, as writers might always be expected to have, who were really meditating on the possibility of their principles being brought to the test of practice. There can be no evidence possible, with a test so vague as the fact of the rupture of a compact whose terms are authentically known to nobody concerned. Speak of bad laws and good, wise administration or unwise, just government or unjust, extravagant or economical, civically elevating or demoralising; all these are questions which men may apply themselves to settle with knowledge, and with a more or less definite degree of assurance. But who can tell how he is to find out whether sovereignty has been usurped, and the social compact broken? Was there a usurpation of sovereignty in France not many years ago, when the assumption of power by the prince was ratified by many millions of votes?



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The same case, we are told, namely, breach of the social compact and restoration of natural liberty, occurs when the members of the government usurp separately the power which they ought only to exercise in a body.[268] Now this description applies very fairly to the famous episode in our constitutional history, connected with George the Third's first attack of madness in 1788. Parliament cannot lawfully begin business without a declaration of the cause of summons from the crown. On this occasion parliament both met and deliberated without communication from the crown. What was still more important was a vote of the parliament itself, authorising the passing of letters patent under the great seal for opening parliament by commission, and for giving assent to a Regency Bill. This was a distinct usurpation of regal authority. Two members of the government (in Rousseau's sense of the term), namely the houses of parliament, usurped the power which they ought only to have exercised along with the crown.[269] The Whigs denounced the proceeding as a fiction, a forgery, a phantom, but if they had been readers of the Social Contract, and if they had been bitten by its dogmatic temper, they would have declared the compact of union violated, and all British citizens free to resume their natural rights. Not even the bitter virulence of faction at that time could tempt any politician to take up such a line, though within half a dozen years each of the democratic factions in France had worked at the overthrow of every other in turn, on the very principle which Rousseau had formulated and Robespierre had made familiar, that usurped authority is a valid reason for annihilating a government, no matter under what circumstances, nor how small the chance of replacing it by a better, nor how enormous the peril to the national well-being in the process. The true opposite to so anarchic a doctrine is assuredly not that of passive obedience either to chamber or monarch, but the right and duty of throwing off any government which inflicts more disadvantages than it confers advantages. Rousseau's whole theory tends inevitably to substitute a long series of struggles after phrases and shadows in the new era, for the equally futile and equally bloody wars of dynastic succession which have been the great curse of the old. Men die for a phrase as they used to die for a family. The other theory, which all English politicians accept in their hearts, and so many commanding French politicians have seemed in their hearts to reject, was first expounded in direct view of Rousseau's teaching by Paley.[270] Of course the greatest, widest, and loftiest exposition of the bearings of expediency on government and its conditions, is to be found in the magnificent and immortal pieces of Burke, some of them suggested by absolutist violations of the doctrine in our own affairs, and some of them by anarchic violation of it in the affairs of France, after the seed sown by Rousseau had brought forth fruit.



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We should, however, be false to our critical principle, if we did not recognise the historical effect of a speculation scientifically valueless. There has been no attempt to palliate either the shallowness or the practical mischievousness of the Social Contract. But there is another side to its influence. It was the match which kindled revolutionary fire in generous breasts throughout Europe. Not in France merely, but in Germany as well, its phrases became the language of all who aspired after freedom. Schiller spoke of Rousseau as one who "converted Christians into human beings," and the *Robbers* (1778) is as if it had been directly inspired by the doctrine that usurped sovereignty restores men to their natural rights. Smaller men in the violent movement which seized all the youth of Germany at that time, followed the same lead, if they happened to have any feeling about the political condition of their enslaved countries.

There was alike in France and Germany a craving for a return to nature among the whole of the young generation.[271] The Social Contract supplied a dialect for this longing on one side, just as the Emilius supplied it on another. Such parts in it as people did not understand or did not like, they left out. They did not perceive its direction towards that "perfect Hobbism," which the author declared to be the only practical alternative to a democracy so austere as to be intolerable. They grasped phrases about the sovereignty of the people, the freedom for which nature had destined man, the slavery to which tyrants and oppressors had brought him. Above all they were struck by the patriotism which shines so brightly in every page, like the fire on the altar of one of those ancient cities which had inspired the writer's ideal.

Yet there is a marked difference in the channels along which Rousseau's influence moved in the two countries. In France it was drawn eventually into the sphere of direct politics. In Germany it inspired not a great political movement, but an immense literary revival. In France, as we have already said, the patriotic flame seemed extinct. The ruinous disorder of the whole social system made the old love of country resemble love for a phantom, and so much of patriotic speech as survived was profoundly hollow. Even a man like Turgot was not so much a patriot as a passionate lover of improvement, and with the whole school of which this great spirit was the noblest and strongest, a generous citizenship of the world had replaced the narrower sentiment which had inflamed antique heroism. Rousseau's exaltation of the Greek and Roman types in all their concentration and intensity, touches mortals of commoner mould. His theory made the native land what it had been to the citizens of earlier date, a true centre of existence, round which all the interests of the community, all its pursuits, all its hopes, grouped themselves with entire singleness of convergence, just as religious faith is the centre of existence to a church. It was the virile and patriotic energy thus evoked which presently saved France from partition.



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We complete the estimate of the positive worth and tendencies of the Social Contract by adding to this, which was for the time the cardinal service, of rekindling the fire of patriotism, the rapid deduction from the doctrine of the sovereignty of peoples of the great truth, that a nation with a civilised polity does not consist of an order or a caste, but of the great body of its members, the army of toilers who make the most painful of the sacrifices that are needed for the continuous nutrition of the social organisation. As Condorcet put it, and he drew inspiration partly from the intellectual school of Voltaire, and partly from the social school of Rousseau, all institutions ought to have for their aim the physical, intellectual, and moral amelioration of the poorest and most numerous class.[272] This is the People. Second, there gradually followed from the important place given by Rousseau to the idea of equal association, as at once the foundation and the enduring bond of a community, those schemes of Mutualism, and all the other shapes of collective action for a common social good, which have possessed such commanding attraction for the imagination of large classes of good men in France ever since. Hitherto these forms have been sterile and deceptive, and they must remain so, until the idea of special function has been raised to an equal level of importance with that of united forces working together to a single end.

In these ways the author of the Social Contract did involuntarily and unconsciously contribute to the growth of those new and progressive ideas, in which for his own part he lacked all faith. Prae-Newtonians knew not the wonders of which Newton was to find the key; and so we, grown weary of waiting for the master intelligence who may effect the final combination of moral and scientific ideas needed for a new social era, may be inclined to lend a half-complacent ear to the arid sophisters who assume that the last word of civilisation has been heard in existing arrangements. But we may perhaps take courage from history to hope that generations will come, to whom our system of distributing among a few the privileges and delights that are procured by the toil of the many, will seem just as wasteful, as morally hideous, and as scientifically indefensible, as that older system which impoverished and depopulated empires, in order that a despot or a caste might have no least wish ungratified, for which the lives or the hard-won treasure of others could suffice.

FOOTNOTES:

[176] *Cont. Soc.*, I. viii.

[177] *Cont. Soc.*, II. xi. He had written in much the same sense in his article on Political Economy in the Encyclopaedia, p. 34.



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[178] Robespierre disclaimed the intention of attacking property, and took up a position like that of Rousseau—teaching the poor contempt for the rich, not envy. “I do not want to touch your treasures,” he cried, on one occasion, “however impure their source. It is far more an object of concern to me to make poverty honourable, than to proscribe wealth; the thatched hut of Fabricius never need envy the palace of Crassus. I should be at least as content, for my own part, to be one of the sons of Aristides, brought up in the Prytaneium at the public expense, as the heir presumptive of Xerxes, born in the mire of royal courts, to sit on a throne decorated by the abasement of the people, and glittering with the public misery.” Quoted in Malon’s *Expose des Ecoles Socialistes francaises*, 15. Baboeuf carried Rousseau’s sentiments further towards their natural conclusion by such propositions as these: “The goal of the revolution is to destroy inequality, and to re-establish the happiness of all.” “The revolution is not finished, because the rich absorb all the property, and hold exclusive power; while the poor toil like born slaves, languish in wretchedness, and are nothing in the state.” *Expose des Ecoles Socialistes francaises*, p. 29.

[179] *Cont. Soc.*, II. xi.

[180] *Cont. Soc.*, I. iv.

[181] *Ib.*, II. vii.

[182] Ch. vi. (vol. v. 371; edit. 1801).

[183] Ch. vii. (p. 383.)

[184] Goguet, in his *Origine des Lois, des Arts, et des Sciences* (1758), really attempted as laboriously as possible to carry out a notion of the historical method, but the fact that history itself at that time had never been subjected to scientific examination made his effort valueless. He accumulates testimony which would be excellent evidence, if only it had been sifted, and had come out of the process substantially undiminished. Yet even Goguet, who thus carefully followed the accounts of early societies given in the Bible and other monuments, intersperses abstract general statements about man being born free and independent (i. 25), and entering society as the result of deliberate reflection.

[185] *Cont. Soc.*, II. xi. Also III. viii.

[186] II. xi. Also ch. viii.

[187] II. viii.

[188] II. ix.

[189] *Politics*, VII. iv. 8, 10.



[190] *Cont. Soc.*, II. x.

[191] Plato's *Laws*, v. 737.

[192] *Ib.*, iv. 705.

[193] *Projet de Constitution pour la Corse*, p. 75.

[194] *Gouvernement de Pologne*, ch. xi.

[195] *Cont. Soc.*, II. vii.

[196] Goguet was much nearer to a true conception of this kind; see, for instance, *Origine des Lois*, i. 46.

[197] Decree of the Committee, April 20, 1794, reported by Billaud-Varenes. Compare ch. iv. of Rousseau's *Considerations sur le Gouvernement de Pologne*.



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[198] Here are some of Saint Just's regulations:—No servants, nor gold or silver vessels; no child under 16 to eat meat, nor any adult to eat meat on three days of the decade; boys at the age of 7 to be handed over to the school of the nation, where they were to be brought up to speak little, to endure hardships, and to train for war; divorce to be free to all; friendship ordained a public institution, every citizen on coming to majority being bound to proclaim his friends, and if he had none, then to be banished; if one committed a crime, his friends were to be banished. Quoted in Von Sybel's *Hist. French Rev.*, iv. 49. When Morelly dreamed his dream of a model community in 1754 (see above, vol. i. p. 158) he little supposed, one would think, that within forty years a man would be so near trying the experiment in France as Saint Just was. Baboeuf is pronounced by La Harpe to have been inspired by the Code de la Nature, which La Harpe impudently set down to Diderot, on whom every great destructive piece was systematically fathered.

[199] I forget where I have read the story of some member of the Convention being very angry because the library contained no copy of the laws which Minos gave to the Cretans.

[200] III. xiii.

[201] III. xv. He actually recommended the Poles to pay all public functionaries in kind, and to have the public works executed on the system of corvee. *Gouvernement de Pologne*, ch. xi.

[202] *Cont. Soc.*, III. ii.

[203] II. i.

[204] II. ii.

[205] III. i.

[206] II. vi.

[207] II. iv.

[208] IV. vi.

[209] *Economie Politique*, p. 30.

[210] *Melanges*, p. 310.

[211] See for instance Green's *History of the English People*, i. 266.



[212] *Summa*, xc.-cviii. (1265-1273). See Maurice's *Moral and Metaphysical Philosophy*, i. 627, 628. Also Franck's *Reformateurs et Publicistes de l'Europe*, p. 48, etc.

[213] *Defensor Pacis*, Pt. I., ch. xii. This, again, is an example of Marsilio's position:—"Convenerunt enim homines ad civilem communicationem propter commodum et vitae sufficientiam consequendam, et opposita declinandum. Quae igitur omnium tangere possunt commodum et incommodum, ab omnibus sciri debent et audiri, ut commodum assequi et oppositum repellere possint." The whole chapter is a most interesting anticipation, partly due to the influence of Aristotle, of the notions of later centuries.

[214] See Bayle's Dict., s.v. *Althusius*.

[215] *Lettres de la Montagne*, l. vi. 388.

[216] *Eccles. Polity*, Bk. i.; bks. i.-iv., 1594; bk. v., 1597; bks. vi.-viii., 1647,—being forty-seven years after the author's death.

[217] Goguet (*Origine des Lois*, i. 22) dwells on tacit conventions as a kind of engagement to which men commit themselves with extreme facility. He was thus rather near the true idea of the spontaneous origin and unconscious acceptance of early institutions.



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[218] Of Civil Government, ch. xiii. See also ch. xi. “This legislative is not only the supreme power of the commonwealth, but sacred and unalterable in the hands where the community have once placed it; nor can any edict of anybody else, in what form soever conceived, or by what power soever backed, have the force and obligation of a law, which has not its sanction from that legislative which the public has chosen and appointed; for without this the law could not have that which is absolutely necessary to its being a law—the consent of the society; over whom nobody can have a power to make laws, but by their own consent, and by authority received from them.” If Rousseau had found no neater expression for his doctrine than this, the Social Contract would assuredly have been no explosive.

[219] See especially ch. viii.

[220] Hence the antipathy of the clergy, catholic, episcopalian, and presbyterian, to which, as Austin has pointed out (*Syst. of Jurisprudence*, i. 288, *n.*), Hobbes mainly owes his bad repute.

[221] See Diderot’s article on *Hobbisme* in the *Encyclopaedia, Oeuv.*, xv. 122.

[222] *Esprit des Lois*, I. i.

[223] *Cont. Soc.*, II. vi. 50.

[224] Goguet has the merit of seeing distinctly that command is the essence of law.

[225] *Cont. Soc.*, II. vi. 51-53. See Austin’s *Jurisprudence*, i. 95, *etc.*; also *Lettres ecrites de la Montagne*, I. vi. 380, 381.

[226] See, for instance, letter to Mirabeau (*l’ami des hommes*), July 26, 1767. *Corr.*, v. 179. The same letter contains his criticism on the good despot of the Economists.

[227] *L’Ordre Naturel et Essentiel des Societes Politiques* (1767). By Mercier de la Riviere. One episode in the life of Mercier de la Riviere is worth recounting, as closely connected with the subject we are discussing. Just as Corsicans and Poles applied to Rousseau, Catherine of Russia, in consequence of her admiration for Riviere’s book, summoned him to Russia to assist her in making laws. “Sir,” said the Czarina, “could you point out to me the best means for the good government of a state?” “Madame, there is only one way, and that is being just; in other words, in keeping order and exacting obedience to the laws.” “But on what base is it best to make the laws of an empire repose?” “There is only one base, Madame: the nature of things and of men.” “Just so; but when you wish to give laws to a people, what are the rules which indicate most surely such laws as are most suitable?” “To give or make laws, Madame, is a task that God has left to none. Ah, who is the man that should think himself capable of dictating laws for beings that he does not know, or knows so ill? And by what right can

he impose laws on beings whom God has never placed in his hands?" "To what, then, do you reduce the science of government?" "To studying carefully; recognising



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and setting forth the laws which God has graven so manifestly in the very organisation of men, when he called them into existence. To wish to go any further would be a great misfortune and a most destructive undertaking." "Sir, I am very pleased to have heard what you have to say; I wish you good day." Quoted from Thiebault's *Souvenirs de Berlin*, in M. Daire's edition of the *Physiocrates*, ii. 432.

[228] *Cont. Soc.*, II. vii.

[229] *Corr.*, v. 181.

[230] *Cont. Soc.*, I. v., vi., vii.

[231] *Leviathan*, II., ch. xviii. vol. iii. 159 (Molesworth's edition).

[232] *Cont. Soc.*, III. xvi.

[233] *Civil Government*, ch. viii. Sec. 99.

[234] I. vi. Especially the footnote.

[235] *Cont. Soc.*, II. i.

[236] *Syst. of Jurisprudence*, i. 256.

[237] *Cont. Soc.*, III. xv. 137. It was not long, however, before Rousseau found reason to alter his opinion in this respect. The champions of the Council at Geneva compared the *droit negatif*, in the exercise of which the Council had refused to listen to the representations of Rousseau's partisans (see above, vol. ii. p. 105) to the right of veto possessed by the crown in Great Britain. Rousseau seized upon this egregious blunder, which confused the power of refusing assent to a proposed law, with the power of refusing justice under law already passed. He at once found illustrations of the difference, first in the case of the printers of No. 45 of the *North Briton*, who brought actions for false imprisonment (1763), and next in the proceedings against Wilkes at the same time. If Wilkes, said Rousseau, had written, printed, published, or said, one-fourth against the Lesser Council at Geneva of what he said, wrote, printed, and published openly in London against the court and the government, he would have been heavily punished, and most likely put to death. And so forth, until he has proved very pungently how different degrees of freedom are enjoyed in Geneva and in England. *Lettres ecrites de la Montagne*, ix. 491-500. When he wrote this he was unaware that the Triennial Act had long been replaced by the Septennial Act of the 1 Geo. I. On finding out, as he did afterwards, that a parliament could sit for seven years, he thought as meanly of our liberty as ever. *Considerations sur les gouvernement de Pologne*, ch. vii. 253-260. In



his *Projet de Constitution pour la Corse*, p. 113, he says that “the English do not love liberty for itself, but because it is most favourable to money-making.”

[238] III., xi., xii., and xiii.

[239] Mr. Freeman’s *Growth of the English Constitution*, c. i.

[240] *Cont. Soc.*, III. xv. 140. A small manuscript containing his ideas on confederation was given by Rousseau to the Count d’Antraigues (afterwards an *emigre*), who destroyed it in 1789, lest its arguments should be used to sap the royal authority. See extract from his pamphlet, prefixed to M. Auguis’s edition of the *Social Contract*, pp. xxiii, xxiv.



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[241] *Gouvernement de Pologne*, v. 246.

[242] Of course no such modification as that proposed by Comte (*Politique Positive*, iv. 421) would come within the scope of the doctrine of the Social Contract. For each of the seventeen Intendances into which Comte divides France, is to be ruled by a chief, “always appointed and removed by the central power.” There is no room for the sovereignty of the people here, even in things parochial.

[243] There was one extraordinary instance during the revolution of attempting to make popular government direct on Rousseau’s principle, in the scheme (1790) of which Danton was a chief supporter, for reorganising the municipal administration of Paris. The assemblies of sections were to sit permanently; their vote was to be taken on current questions; and action was to follow the aggregate of their degrees. See Von Sybel’s *Hist. Fr. Rev.* i. 275; M. Louis Blanc’s *History*, Bk. III. ch. ii.

[244] This was also Bodin’s definition of an aristocratic state; “si minor pars civium caeteris imperat.”

[245] *Politics*, III. vi.-vii.

[246] *Esprit des Lois*, II. i. ii.

[247] Rousseau gave the name of *tyrant* to a usurper of royal authority in a kingdom, and *despot* to a usurper of the sovereign authority (*i.e.* [Greek: tyrannos] in the Greek sense). The former might govern according to the laws, but the latter placed himself above the laws (*Cont. Soc.*, III. x.) This corresponded to Locke’s distinction: “As usurpation is the exercise of power which another hath a right to, so tyranny is the exercise of a power beyond right, which nobody can have a right to.” *Civil Gov.*, ch. xviii.

[248] III. iv.

[249] III. vi.

[250] III. v.

[251] *Cont. Soc.*, IV. viii.

[252] *Cont. Soc.*, IV. viii. 197-201.

[253] This is not unlike what Tocqueville says somewhere, that Christianity bids you render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s, but seems to discourage any inquiry whether Caesar is an usurper or a lawful ruler.

[254] *Cont. Soc.*, IV. viii. 203. As we have already seen, he had entreated Voltaire, of all men in the world, to draw up a civil profession of faith. See vol. i. 326.



In the *New Heloisa* (V. v. 117, *n.*) Rousseau expresses his opinion that “no true believer could be intolerant or a persecutor. *If I were a magistrate, and if the law pronounced the penalty of death against atheists, I would begin by burning as such whoever should come to inform against another.*”

[255] Plato’s *Laws*, Bk. x. 909, *etc.*

[256] *Areopagitica*, p. 417. (Edit. 1867.)

[257] See a speech of his, which is Rousseau’s “civil faith” done into rhetoric, given in M. Louis Blanc’s *Hist. de la Rev. Francaise*, Bk. x. c. xiv.



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[258] *Considerations sur le gouvernement ancien et present de la France* (1764). Quoted by Rousseau from a manuscript copy.

[259] *Leviathan*, ch. xliii. 601. Also ch. xlii.

[260] *Cont. Soc.*, III. xi. Borrowed from Hobbes, who said, "Magnus ille Leviathan quae civitas appellatur, opificium artis est."

[261] Mackintosh's.

[262] *Cont. Soc.*, II. v.

[263] IV. ii.

[264] For instance, *Gouvernement de la Pologne*, ch. xi. p. 305. And *Corr.*, v. 180.

[265] *Cont. Soc.*, I. viii.

[266] *Cont. Soc.*, II. i.

[267] *Ib.*, III. x. "Let every individual who may usurp the sovereignty be instantly put to death by free men." Robespierre's *Declaration des droits de l'homme*, Sec. 27. "When the government violates the rights of the people, insurrection becomes for the people the most sacred of rights and the most indispensable of duties." Sec. 35.

[268] *Cont. Soc.*, III. x.

[269] See May's *Constitutional Hist. of England*, ch. iii; and Lord Stanhope's *Life of Pitt*, vol. ii. ch. xii.

[270] In the 6th book of the *Moral Philosophy* (1785), ch. iii., and elsewhere. In the preface he refers to the effect which Rousseau's political theory was supposed to have had in the civil convulsions of Geneva, as one of the reasons which encouraged him to publish his own book.

[271] One side of this was the passion for geographical exploration which took possession of Europe towards the middle of the eighteenth century. See the *Life of Humboldt*, i. 28, 29. (*Eng. Trans.* by Lassell.)

[272] Rousseau's influence on Condorcet is seen in the latter's maxim, which has found such favour in the eyes of socialist writers, that "not only equality of right, but equality of fact, is the goal of the social art."



CHAPTER IV.

EMILIUS.

One whose most intense conviction was faith in the goodness of all things and creatures as they are first produced by nature, and so long as they remain unsophisticated by the hand and purpose of man, was in some degree bound to show a way by which this evil process of sophistication might be brought to the lowest possible point, and the best of all natural creatures kept as near as possible to his high original. Rousseau, it is true, held in a sense of his own the doctrine of the fall of man. That doctrine, however, has never made people any more remiss in the search after a virtue, which if they ought to have regarded it as hopeless according to strict logic, is still indispensable in actual life. Rousseau's way of believing that man had fallen was so coloured at once by that expansion of sanguine emotion which marked his century, and by that necessity for repose in idyllic perfection of simplicity which marked his own temperament, that



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enthusiasm for an imaginary human creature effectually shut out the dogma of his fatal depravation. "How difficult a thing it is," Madame d'Epina y once said to him, "to bring up a child." "Assuredly it is," answered Rousseau; "because the father and mother are not made by nature to bring it up, nor the child to be brought up." [273] This cynical speech can only have been an accidental outbreak of spleen. It was a contradiction to his one constant opinion that nature is all good and bounteous, and that the inborn capacity of man for reaching true happiness knows no stint.

In writing *Emilius*, he sat down to consider what man is, and what can be made of him. Here, as in all the rest of his work, he only obeyed the tendencies of his time in choosing a theme. An age touched by the spirit of hope inevitably turns to the young; for with the young lies fulfilment. Such epochs are ever pressing with the question, how is the future to be shaped? Our answer depends on the theory of human disposition, and in these epochs the theory is always optimistic. Rousseau was saved, as so many thousands of men have been alike in conduct and speculation, by inconsistency, and not shrinking from two mutually contradictory trains of thought. Society is corrupt, and society is the work of man. Yet man, who has engendered this corrupted birth, is good and whole. The strain in the argument may be pardoned for the hopefulness of the conclusion. It brought Rousseau into harmony with the eager effort of the time to pour young character into finer mould, and made him the most powerful agent in giving to such efforts both fervour and elevation. While others were content with the mere enunciation of maxims and precepts, he breathed into them the spirit of life, and enforced them with a vividness of faith that clothed education with the augustness and unction of religion. The training of the young soul to virtue was surrounded with something of the awful holiness of a sacrament; and those who laboured in this sanctified field were exhorted to a constancy of devotion, and were promised a fulness of recompense, that raised them from the rank of drudges to a place of highest honour among the ministers of nature.

Everybody at this time was thinking about education, partly perhaps on account of the suppression of the Jesuits, the chief instructors of the time, and a great many people were writing about it. The Abbe de Saint Pierre had had new ideas on education, as on all the greater departments of human interest. Madame d'Epina y wrote considerations upon the bringing up of the young. [274] Madame de Grafigny did the same in a less grave shape. [275] She received letters from the precociously sage Turgot, abounding in the same natural and sensible precepts which ten years later were commended with more glowing eloquence in the pages of *Emilius*. [276] Grimm had an elaborate scheme for a treatise on education. [277] Helvetius followed his exploration of the composition of the



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human mind, by a treatise on the training proper for the intellectual and moral faculties. Education by these and other writers was being conceived in a wider sense than had been known to ages controlled by ecclesiastical collegians. It slowly came to be thought of in connection with the family. The improvement of ideas upon education was only one phase of that great general movement towards the restoration of the family, which was so striking a spectacle in France after the middle of the century. Education now came to comprehend the whole system of the relations between parents and their children, from earliest infancy to maturity. The direction of this wider feeling about such relations tended strongly towards an increased closeness in them, more intimacy, and a more continuous suffusion of tenderness and long attachment. All this was part of the general revival of naturalism. People began to reflect that nature was not likely to have designed infants to be suckled by other women than their own mothers, nor that they should be banished from the society of those who are most concerned in their well-being, from the cheerful hearth and wise affectionate converse of home, to the frigid discipline of colleges and convents and the unamiable monition of strangers.

Then the rising rebellion against the church and its faith perhaps contributed something towards a movement which, if it could not break the religious monopoly of instruction, must at least introduce the parent as a competitor with the priestly instructor for influence over the ideas, habits, and affections of his children. The rebellion was aimed against the spirit as well as the manner of the established system. The church had not fundamentally modified the significance of the dogma of the fall and depravity of man; education was still conceived as a process of eradication and suppression of the mystical old Adam. The new current flowed in channels far away from that black folly of superstition. Men at length ventured once more to look at one another with free and generous gaze. The veil of the temple was rent, and the false mockeries of the shrine of the Hebrew divinity made plain to scornful eyes. People ceased to see one another as guilty victims cowering under a divine curse. They stood erect in consciousness of manhood. The palsied conception of man, with his large discourse of reason looking before and after, his lofty and majestic patience in search for new forms of beauty and new secrets of truth, his sense of the manifold sweetness and glory and awe of the universe, above all, his infinite capacity of loyal pity and love for his comrades in the great struggle, and his high sorrow for his own wrong-doing,—the palsied and crushing conception of this excellent and helpful being as a poor worm, writhing under the vindictive and meaningless anger of an omnipotent tyrant in the large heavens, only to be appeased by sacerdotal intervention, was fading back into those



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regions of night, whence the depth of human misery and the obscuration of human intelligence had once permitted its escape, to hang evilly over the western world for a season. So vital a change in the point of view quickly touched the theory and art of the upbringing of the young. Education began to figure less as the suppression of the natural man, than his strengthening and development; less as a process of rooting out tares, more as the grateful tending of shoots abounding in promise of richness. What had been the most drearily mechanical of duties, was transformed into a task that surpassed all others in interest and hope. If man be born not bad but good, under no curse, but rather the bestower and receiver of many blessings, then the entire atmosphere of young life, in spite of the toil and the peril, is made cheerful with the sunshine and warmth of the great folded possibilities of excellence, happiness, and well-doing.

I.

Locke in education, as in metaphysics and in politics, was the pioneer of French thought. In education there is less room for scientific originality. The sage of a parish, provided only she began her trade with an open and energetic mind, may here pass philosophers. Locke was nearly as sage, as homely, as real, as one of these strenuous women. The honest plainness of certain of his prescriptions for the preservation of physical health perhaps keeps us somewhat too near the earth. His manner throughout is marked by the stout wisdom of the practical teacher, who is content to assume good sense in his hearers, and feels no necessity for kindling a blaze or raising a tempest. He gives us a practical manual for producing a healthy, instructed, upright, well-mannered young English squire, who shall be rightly fitted to take his own life sensibly in hand, and procure from it a fair amount of wholesome satisfaction both for himself and the people with whom he is concerned. Locke's treatise is one of the most admirable protests in the world against effeminacy and pedantry, and parents already moved by grave desire to do their duty prudently to their sons, will hardly find another book better suited to their ends. Besides Locke, we must also count Charron, and the amazing educator of Gargantua, and Montaigne before either, among the writers whom Rousseau had read, with that profit and increase which attends the dropping of the good ideas of other men into fertile minds.

There is an immense class of natures, and those not the lowest, which the connection of duty with mere prudence does not carry far enough. They only stir when something has moved their feeling for the ideal, and raised the mechanical offices of the narrow day into association with the spaciousness and height of spiritual things. To these Rousseau came. For both the tenour and the wording of the most striking precepts of the Emilius, he owes much to Locke. But what was so realistic in him becomes blended in Rousseau with all the power and richness and beauty of an ideal that can move the



most generous parts of human character. The child is treated as the miniature of humanity; it thus touches the whole sphere of our sympathies, warms our curiosity as to the composition of man's nature, and becomes the very eye and centre of moral and social aspirations.



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Accordingly Rousseau almost at once begins by elaborating his conception of the kind of human creature which it is worth while to take the trouble to rear, and the only kind which pure nature will help you in perfecting. Hence *Emilius*, besides being a manual for parents, contains the lines of a moral type of life and character for all others. The old thought of the *Discourses* revives in full vigour. The artifices of society, the perverting traditions of use, the feeble maxims of indolence, convention, helpless dependence on the aid or the approval of others, are routed at the first stroke. The old regimen of accumulated prejudice is replaced, in dealing alike with body and soul, by the new system of liberty and nature. In saying this we have already said that the exaltation of Spartan manners which runs through Rousseau's other writings has vanished, and that every trace of the much-vaunted military and public training has yielded before the attractive thought of tender parents and a wisely ruled home. Public instruction, we learn, can now no longer exist, because there is no longer such a thing as country, and therefore there can no longer be citizens. Only domestic education can now help us to rear the man according to nature,—the man who knows best among us how to bear the mingled good and ill of our life.

The artificial society of the time, with its aspirations after a return to nature, was moved to the most energetic enthusiasm by Rousseau's famous exhortations to mothers to nourish their own little ones. Morelly, as we have seen, had already enjoined the adoption of this practice. So too had Buffon. But Morelly's voice had no resonance, Buffon's reasons were purely physical, and children were still sent out to nurse, until Rousseau's more passionate moral entreaties awoke maternal conscience. "Do these tender mothers," he exclaimed, "who, when they have got rid of their infants, surrender themselves gaily to all the diversions of the town, know what sort of usage the child in the village is receiving, fastened in his swaddling band? At the least interruption that comes, they hang him up by a nail like a bundle of rags, and there the poor creature remains thus crucified, while the nurse goes about her affairs. Every child found in this position had a face of purple; as the violent compression of the chest would not allow the blood to circulate, it all went to the head, and the victim was supposed to be very quiet, just because it had not strength enough to cry out." [278] But in Rousseau, as in Beethoven, a harsh and rugged passage is nearly always followed by some piece of exquisite and touching melody. The force of these indignant pictures was heightened and relieved by moving appeal to all the tender joys of maternal solicitude, and thoughts of all that this solicitude could do for the happiness of the home, the father, and the young. The attraction of domestic life is pronounced the best antidote to the ill living of the time. The bustle of children, which you now think so importunate, gradually becomes delightful; it brings father and mother nearer to one another; and the lively animation of a family added to domestic cares, makes the dearest occupation of the wife, and the sweetest of all his amusements to the husband. If women will only once more become mothers again, men will very soon become fathers and husbands. [279]



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The physical effect of this was not altogether wholesome. Rousseau's eloquence excited women to an inordinate pitch of enthusiasm for the duty of suckling their infants, but his contemptuous denunciation of the gaities of Paris could not extinguish the love of amusement.

Quid quod libelli Stoici inter sericos
Jacere pulvillos amant?

So young mothers tried as well as they could to satisfy both desires, and their babes were brought to them at all unseasonable hours, while they were full of food and wine, or heated with dancing or play, and there received the nurture which, but for Rousseau, they would have drawn in more salutary sort from a healthy foster-mother in the country. This, however, was only an incidental drawback to a movement which was in its main lines full of excellent significance. The importance of giving freedom to the young limbs, of accustoming the body to rudeness and vicissitude of climate, of surrounding youth with light and cheerfulness and air, and even a tiny detail such as the propriety of substituting for coral or ivory some soft substance against which the growing teeth might press a way without irritation, all these matters are handled with a fervid reality of interest that gives to the tedium of the nursery a genuine touch of the poetic. Swathings, bandages, leading-strings, are condemned with a warmth like that with which the author had denounced comedy.[280] The city is held up to indignant reprobation as the gulf of infant life, just as it had been in his earlier pieces as the gulf of all the loftiest energies of the adult life. Every child ought to be born and nursed in the country, and it would be all the better if it remained in the country to the last day of its existence. You must accustom it little by little to the sight of disagreeable objects, such as toads and snakes; also in the same gradual manner to the sound of alarming noises, beginning with snapping a cap in a pistol. If the infant cries from pain which you cannot remove, make no attempt to soothe it; your caresses will not lessen the anguish of its colic, while the child will remember what it has to do in order to be coaxed and to get its own way. The nurse may amuse it by songs and lively cries, but she is not to din useless words into its ears; the first articulations that come to it should be few, easy, distinct, frequently repeated, and only referring to objects which may be shown to the child. "Our unlucky facility in cheating ourselves with words that we do not understand, begins earlier than we suppose." Let there be no haste in inducing the child to speak articulately. The evil of precipitation in this respect is not that children use and hear words without sense, but that they use and hear them in a different sense from our own, without our perceiving it. Mistakes of this sort, committed thus early, have an influence, even after they are cured, over the turn of the mind for the rest of the creature's life. Hence it is a good thing to keep a child's vocabulary as limited as possible, lest it should have more words than ideas, and should say more than it can possibly realise in thought.[281]



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In moral as in intellectual habits, the most perilous interval in human life is that between birth and the age of twelve. The great secret is to make the early education purely negative; a process of keeping the heart, naturally so good, clear of vice, and the intelligence, naturally so true, clear of error. Take for first, second, and third precept, to follow nature and leave her free to the performance of her own tasks. Until the age of reason, there can be no idea of moral beings or social relations. Therefore, says Rousseau, no moral discussion. Locke's maxim in favour of constantly reasoning with children was a mistake. Of all the faculties of man, reason, which is only a compound of the rest, is that which is latest in development, and yet it is this which we are to use to develop those which come earliest of all. Such a course is to begin at the end, and to turn the finished work into an instrument. "In speaking to children in these early years a language which they do not comprehend, we accustom them to cheat themselves with words, to criticise what is said to them, to think themselves as wise as their masters, to become disputatious and mutinous." If you forget that nature meant children to be children before growing into men, you only force a fruit that has neither ripeness nor savour, and must soon go bad; you will have youthful doctors and old infants.

To all this, however, there is certainly another side which Rousseau was too impetuous to see. Perfected reason is truly the tardiest of human endowments, but it can never be perfected at all unless the process be begun, and, within limits, the sooner the beginning is made, the earlier will be the ripening. To know the grounds of right conduct is, we admit, a different thing from feeling a disposition to practise it. But nobody will deny the expediency of an intelligent acquaintance with the reasons why one sort of conduct is bad, and its opposite good, even if such an acquaintance can never become a substitute for the spontaneous action of thoroughly formed habit. For one thing, cases are constantly arising in a man's life that demand the exercise of reason, to settle the special application of principles which may have been acquired without knowledge of their rational foundation. In such cases, which are the critical and testing points of character, all depends upon the possession of a more or less justly trained intelligence, and the habit of using it. Now, as we have said, it is one of the great merits of the *Emilius* that it calls such attention to the early age at which mental influences begin to operate. Why should the gradual formation of the master habit of using the mind be any exception?



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Belief in the efficacy of preaching is the bane of educational systems. Verbal lessons seem as if they ought to be so deeply effective, if only the will and the throng of various motives which guide it, instantly followed impression of a truth upon the intelligence. And they are, moreover, so easily communicated, saving the parent a lifetime of anxious painstaking in shaping his own character, after such a pattern as shall silently draw all within its influence to pursuit of good and honourable things. The most valuable of Rousseau's notions about education, though he by no means consistently adhered to them, was his urgent contempt for this fatuous substitution of spoken injunctions and prohibitions, for the deeper language of example, and the more living instruction of visible circumstance. The vast improvements that have since taken place in the theory and the art of education all over Europe, and of which he has the honour of being the first and most widely influential promoter, may all be traced to the spread of this wise principle, and its adoption in various forms. The change in the up-bringing of the young exactly corresponds to the change in the treatment of the insane. We may look back to the old system of endless catechisms, apophthegms, moral fables, and the rest of the paraphernalia of moral didactics, with the same horror with which we regard the gags, strait-waistcoats, chains, and dark cells, of poor mad people before the intervention of Pinel.

It is clear now to everybody who has any opinion on this most important of all subjects, that spontaneousness is the first quality in connection with right doing, which you can develop in the young, and this spontaneousness of habit is best secured by associating it with the approval of those to whom the child looks. Sympathy, in a word, is the true foundation from which to build up the structure of good habit. The young should be led to practise the elementary parts of right conduct from the desire to please, because that is a securer basis than the conclusions of an embryo reason, applied to the most complex conditions of action, while the grounds on which action is justified or condemned may be made plain in the fulness of time, when the understanding is better able to deal with the ideas and terms essential to the matter. You have two aims to secure, each without sacrifice of the other. These are, first, that the child shall grow up with firm and promptly acting habit; second, that it shall retain respect for reason and an open mind. The latter may be acquired in the less immature years, but if the former be not acquired in the earlier times, a man grows up with a drifting unsettledness of will, that makes his life either vicious by quibbling sophistries, or helpless for want of ready conclusions.



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The first idea which is to be given to a child, little as we might expect such a doctrine from the author of the Second Discourse, is declared to be that of property. And he can only acquire this idea by having something of his own. But how are we to teach him the significance of a thing being one's own? It is a prime rule to attempt to teach nothing by a verbal lesson; all instruction ought to be left to experience.[282] Therefore you must contrive some piece of experience which shall bring this notion of property vividly into a child's mind; the following for instance. Emilius is taken to a piece of garden; his instructor digs and dresses the ground for him, and the boy takes possession by sowing some beans. "We come every day to water them, and see them rise out of the ground with transports of joy. I add to this joy by saying, This belongs to you. Then explaining the term, I let him feel that he has put into the ground this time, labour, trouble, his person in short; that there is in this bit of ground something of himself which he may maintain against every comer, as he might withdraw his own arm from the hand of another man who would fain retain it in spite of him." One day Emilius comes to his beloved garden, watering-pot in hand, and finds to his anguish and despair that all the beans have been plucked up, that the ground has been turned over, and that the spot is hardly recognisable. The gardener comes up, and explains with much warmth that he had sown the seed of a precious Maltese melon in that particular spot long before Emilius had come with his trumpery beans, and that therefore it was his land; that nobody touches the garden of his neighbour, in order that his own may remain untouched; and that if Emilius wants a piece of garden, he must pay for it by surrendering to the owner half the produce.[283] Thus, says Rousseau, the boy sees how the notion of property naturally goes back to the right of the first occupant as derived from labour. We should have thought it less troublesome, as it is certainly more important, to teach a boy the facts of property positively and imperatively. This rather elaborate ascent to origins seems an exaggerated form of that very vice of over-instructing the growing reason in abstractions, which Rousseau had condemned so short a time before.

Again, there is the very strong objection to conveying lessons by artificially contrived incidents, that children are nearly always extremely acute in suspecting and discovering such contrivances. Yet Rousseau recurs to them over and over again, evidently taking delight in their ingenuity. Besides the illustration of the origin and significance of property, there is the complex fancy in which a juggler is made to combine instruction as to the properties of the magnet with certain severe moral truths.[284] The tutor interests Emilius in astronomy and geography by a wonderful stratagem indeed. The poor youth loses his way in a wood, is overpowered by hunger and weariness, and then is



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led on by his cunning tutor to a series of inferences from the position of the sun and so forth, which convince him that his home is just over the hedge, where it is duly found to be.[285] Here, again, is the way in which the instructor proposes to stir activity of limb in the young Emilius. "In walking with him of an afternoon, I used sometimes to put in my pocket two cakes of a sort he particularly liked; we each of us ate one. One day he perceived that I had three cakes; he could easily have eaten six; he promptly despatches his own, to ask me for the third. Nay, I said to him, I could well eat it myself, or we would divide it, but I would rather see it made the prize of a running match between the two little boys there." The little boys run their race, and the winner devours the cake. This and subsequent repetitions of the performance at first only amused Emilius, but he presently began to reflect, and perceiving that he also had two legs, he began privately to try how fast he could run. When he thought he was strong enough, he importuned his tutor for the third cake, and on being refused, insisted on being allowed to compete for it. The habit of taking exercise was not the only advantage gained. The tutor resorted to a variety of further stratagems in order to induce the boy to find out and practise visual compass, and so forth.[286] If we consider, as we have said, first the readiness of children to suspect a stratagem wherever instruction is concerned, and next their resentment on discovering artifice of that kind, all this seems as little likely to be successful as it is assuredly contrary to Rousseau's general doctrine of leaving circumstances to lead.

In truth Rousseau's appreciation of the real nature of spontaneousness in the processes of education was essentially inadequate, and that it was so, arose from a no less inadequate conception of the right influence upon the growing character, of the great principle of authority. His dread lest the child should ever be conscious of the pressure of a will external to its own, constituted a fundamental weakness of his system. The child, we are told with endless repetition, ought always to be led to suppose that it is following its own judgment or impulses, and has only them and their consequences to consider. But Rousseau could not help seeing, as he meditated on the actual development of his Emilius, that to leave him thus to the training of accident would necessarily end in many fatal gaps and chasms. Yet the hand and will of the parent or the master could not be allowed to appear. The only alternative, therefore, was the secret preparation of artificial sets of circumstances, alike in work and in amusement. Jean Paul was wiser than Jean Jacques. "Let not the teacher after the work also order and regulate the games. It is decidedly better not to recognise or make any order in games, than to keep it up with difficulty and send the zephyrets of pleasure through artistic bellows and air-pumps to the little flowers." [287]



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The spontaneousness which we ought to seek, does not consist in promptly willing this or that, independently of an authority imposed from without, but in a self-acting desire to do what is right under all its various conditions, including what the child finds pleasant to itself on the one hand, and what it has good reason to suppose will be pleasant to its parents on the other. "You must never," Rousseau gravely warns us, "inflict punishment upon children as punishment; it should always fall upon them as a natural consequence of their ill-behaviour." [288] But why should one of the most closely following of all these consequences be dissembled or carefully hidden from sight, namely, the effect of ill-behaviour upon the contentment of the child's nearest friend? Why are the effects of conduct upon the actor's own physical well-being to be the only effects honoured with the title of being natural? Surely, while we leave to the young the widest freedom of choice, and even habitually invite them to decide for themselves between two lines of conduct, we are bound afterwards to state our approval or disapproval of their decision, so that on the next occasion they may take this anger or pleasure in others into proper account in their rough and hasty forecast, often less hasty than it seems, of the consequences of what they are about to do. One of the most important of educating influences is lost, if the young are not taught to place the feelings of others in a front place, when they think in their own simple way of what will happen to them from yielding to a given impulse. Rousseau was quite right in insisting on practical experience of consequences as the only secure foundation for self-acting habit; he was fatally wrong in mutilating this experience by the exclusion from it of the effects of perceiving, resisting, accepting, ignoring, all will and authority from without. The great, and in many respects so admirable, school of Rousseauite philanthropists, have always been feeble on this side, alike in the treatment of the young by their instructors, and the treatment of social offenders by a government.

Again, consider the large group of excellent qualities which are associated with affectionate respect for a more fully informed authority. In a world where necessity stands for so much, it is no inconsiderable gain to have learnt the lesson of docility on easy terms in our earliest days. If in another sense the will of each individual is all-powerful over his own destinies, it is best that this idea of firm purpose and a settled energy that will not be denied, should grow up in the young soul in connection with a riper wisdom and an ampler experience than its own; for then, when the time for independent action comes, the force of the association will continue. Finally, although none can be vicariously wise, none sage by proxy, nor any pay for the probation of another, yet is it not a puerile wastefulness to send forth the young all bare to the ordeal, while the armour of old experience



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and tempered judgment hangs idle on the wall? Surely it is thus by accumulation of instruction from generation to generation, that the area of right conduct in the world is extended. Such instruction must with youth be conveyed by military word of command as often as by philosophical persuasion of its worth. Nor is the atmosphere of command other than bracing, even to those who are commanded. If education is to be mainly conducted by force of example, it is a dreadful thing that the child is ever to have before its eyes as living type and practical exemplar the pale figure of parents without passions, and without a will as to the conduct of those who are dependent on them. Even a slight excess of anger, impatience, and the spirit of command, would be less demoralising to the impressionable character than the constant sight of a man artificially impassive. Rousseau is perpetually calling upon men to try to lay aside their masks; yet the model instructor whom he has created for us is to be the most artfully and elaborately masked of all men; unless he happens to be naturally without blood and without physiognomy.

Rousseau, then, while he put away the old methods which imprisoned the young spirit in injunctions and over-solicitous monitions, yet did none the less in his own scheme imprison it in a kind of hothouse, which with its regulated temperature and artificially contrived access of light and air, was in many respects as little the method of nature, that is to say it gave as little play for the spontaneous working and growth of the forces of nature in the youth's breast, as that regimen of the cloister which he so profoundly abhorred. Partly this was the result of a ludicrously shallow psychology. He repeats again and again that self-love is the one quality in the youthful embryo of character, from which you have to work. From this, he says, springs the desire of possessing pleasure and avoiding pain, the great fulcrum on which the lever of experience rests. Not only so, but from this same unslumbering quality of self-love you have to develop regard for others. The child's first affection for his nurse is a result of the fact that she serves his comfort, and so down to his passion in later years for his mistress. Now this is not the place for a discussion as to the ultimate atom of the complex moral sentiments of men and women, nor for an examination of the question whether the faculty of sympathy has or has not an origin independent of self-love. However that may be, no one will deny that sympathy appears in good natures extremely early, and is susceptible of rapid cultivation from the very first. Here is the only adequate key to that education of the affections, from their rudimentary expansion in the nursery, until they include the complete range of all the objects proper to them.



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One secret of Rousseau's omission of this, the most important of all educating agencies, from the earlier stages of the formation of character, was the fact which is patent enough in every page, that he was not animated by that singular tenderness and almost mystic affection for the young, which breathes through the writings of some of his German followers, of Richter above all others, and which reveals to those who are sensible of it, the hold that may so easily be gained for all good purposes upon the eager sympathy of the youthful spirit. The instructor of Emilius speaks the words of a wise onlooker, sagely meditating on the ideal man, rather than of a parent who is living the life of his child through with him. Rousseau's interest in children, though perfectly sincere, was still aesthetic, moral, reasonable, rather than that pure flood of full-hearted feeling for them, which is perhaps seldom stirred except in those who have actually brought up children of their own. He composed a vindication of his love for the young in an exquisite piece;^[289] but it has none of the yearnings of the bowels of tenderness.

II.

Education being the art of preparing the young to grow into instruments of happiness for themselves and others, a writer who undertakes to speak about it must naturally have some conception of the kind of happiness at which his art aims. We have seen enough of Rousseau's own life to know what sort of ideal he would be likely to set up. It is a healthier epicureanism, with enough stoicism to make happiness safe in case that circumstances should frown. The man who has lived most is not he who has counted most years, but he who has most felt life.^[290] It is mere false wisdom to throw ourselves incessantly out of ourselves, to count the present for nothing, ever to pursue without ceasing a future which flees in proportion as we advance, to try to transport ourselves from whence we are not, to some place where we shall never be.^[291] He is happiest who suffers fewest pains, and he is most miserable who feels fewest pleasures. Then we have a half stoical strain. The felicity of man here below is only a negative state, to be measured by the more or less of the ills he undergoes. It is in the disproportion between desires and faculties that our misery consists. Happiness, therefore, lies not in diminishing our desires, nor any more in extending our faculties, but in diminishing the excess of desire over faculty, and in bringing power and will into perfect balance.^[292] Excepting health, strength, respect for one's self, all the goods of this life reside in opinion; excepting bodily pain and remorse of conscience, all our ills are in imagination. Death is no evil; it is only made so by half-knowledge and false wisdom. "Live according to nature, be patient, and drive away physicians; you will not avoid death, but you will only feel it once, while they on the other hand would bring it daily before



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your troubled imagination, and their false art, instead of prolonging your days, only hinders you from enjoying them. Suffer, die, or recover; but above all things live, live up to your last hour." It is foresight, constantly carrying us out of ourselves, that is the true source of our miseries.[293] O man, confine thy existence within thyself, and thou wilt cease to be miserable. Thy liberty, thy power, reach exactly as far as thy natural forces, and no further; all the rest is slavery and illusion. The only man who has his own will is he who does not need in order to have it the arms of another person at the end of his own.[294]

The training that follows from this is obvious. The instructor has carefully to distinguish true or natural need from the need which is only fancied, or which only comes from superabundance of life. Emilius, who is brought up in the country, has nothing in his room to distinguish it from that of a peasant.[295] If he is taken to a luxurious banquet, he is bidden, instead of heedlessly enjoying it, to reflect austere how many hundreds or thousands of hands have been employed in preparing it.[296] His preference for gay colours in his clothes is to be consulted, because this is natural and becoming to his age, but the moment he prefers a stuff merely because it is rich, behold a sophisticated creature.[297] The curse of the world is inequality, and inequality springs from the multitude of wants, which cause us to be so much the more dependent. What makes man essentially good is to have few wants, and to abstain from comparing himself with others; what makes him essentially bad, is to have many wants, and to cling much to opinion.[298] Hence, although Emilius happened to have both wealth and good birth, he is not brought up to be a gentleman, with the prejudices and helplessness and selfishness too naturally associated with that abused name.

This cardinal doctrine of limitation of desire, with its corollary of self-sufficiency, contains in itself the great maxim that Emilius and every one else must learn some trade. To work is an indispensable duty in the social man. Rich or poor, powerful or weak, every idle citizen is a knave. And every boy must learn a real trade, a trade with his hands. It is not so much a matter of learning a craft for the sake of knowing one, as for the sake of conquering the prejudices which despise it. Labour for glory, if you have not to labour from necessity. Lower yourself to the condition of the artisan, so as to be above your own. In order to reign in opinion, begin by reigning over it. All things well considered, the trade most to be preferred is that of carpenter; it is clean, useful, and capable of being carried on in the house; it demands address and diligence in the workman, and though the form of the work is determined by utility, still elegance and taste are not excluded.[299] There are few prettier pictures than that where Sophie enters the workshop, and sees in amazement her young lover at the other end, in his white shirt-sleeves, his hair loosely fastened back, with a chisel in one hand and a mallet in the other, too intent upon his work to perceive even the approach of his mistress.[300]



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When the revolution came, and princes and nobles wandered in indigent exile, the disciples of Rousseau pointed in unkind triumph to the advantage these unfortunate wretches would have had if they had not been too puffed up with the vanity of feudalism to follow the prudent example of Emilius in learning a craft. That Rousseau should have laid so much stress on the vicissitudes of fortune, which might cause even a king to be grateful one day that he had a trade at the end of his arms, is sometimes quoted as a proof of his foresight of troublous times. This, however, goes too far, because, apart from the instances of such vicissitudes among the ancients, the King of Syracuse keeping school at Corinth, or Alexander, son of Perseus, becoming a Roman scrivener, he actually saw Charles Edward, the Stuart pretender, wandering from court to court in search of succour and receiving only rebuffs; and he may well have known that after the troubles of 1738 a considerable number of the oligarchs of his native Geneva had gone into exile, rather than endure the humiliation of their party.[301] Besides all this, the propriety of being able to earn one's bread by some kind of toil that would be useful in even the simplest societies, flowed necessarily from every part of his doctrine of the aims of life and the worth of character. He did, however, say, "We approach a state of crisis and an age of revolutions," which proved true, but he added too much when he pronounced it impossible that the great monarchies of Europe could last long.[302] And it is certain that the only one of the great monarchies which did actually fall would have had a far better chance of surviving if Lewis XVI. had been as expert in the trade of king as he was in that of making locks and bolts.

From this semi-stoical ideal there followed certain social notions, of which Rousseau had the distinction of being the most powerful propagator. As has so often been said, his contemporaries were willing to leave social questions alone, provided only the government would suffer the free expression of opinion in literature and science. Rousseau went deeper. His moral conception of individual life and character contained in itself a social conception, and he did not shrink from boldly developing it. The rightly constituted man suffices for himself and is free from prejudices. He has arms, and knows how to use them; he has few wants, and knows how to satisfy them. Nurtured in the most absolute freedom, he can think of no worse ill than servitude. He attaches himself to the beauty which perishes not, limiting his desires to his condition, learning to lose whatever may be taken away from him, to place himself above events, and to detach his heart from loved objects without a pang.[303] He pities miserable kings, who are the bondsmen of all that seems to obey them; he pities false sages, who are fast bound in the chains of their empty renown; he pities the silly rich, martyrs to their own ostentation.[304] All the sympathies of



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such a man therefore naturally flow away from these, the great of the earth, to those who lead the stoic's life perforce. "It is the common people who compose the human race; what is not the people is hardly worth taking into account. Man is the same in all ranks; that being so, the ranks which are most numerous deserve most respect. Before one who reflects, all civil distinctions vanish: he marks the same passions and the same feelings in the clown as in the man covered with reputation; he can only distinguish their speech, and a varnish more or less elaborately laid on. Study people of this humble condition; you will perceive that under another sort of language, they have as much intelligence as you, and more good sense. Respect your species: reflect that it is essentially made up of the collection of peoples; that if every king and every philosopher were cut off from among them, they would scarcely be missed, and the world would go none the worse." [305] As it is, the universal spirit of the law in every country is invariably to favour the strong against the weak, and him who has, against him who has not. The many are sacrificed to the few. The specious names of justice and subordination serve only as instruments for violence and arms for iniquity. The ostentatious orders who pretend to be useful to the others, are in truth only useful to themselves at the expense of the others. [306]

This was carrying on the work which had already been begun in the *New Heloisa*, as we have seen, but in the *Emilius* it is pushed with a gravity and a directness, that could not be imparted to the picture of a fanciful and arbitrarily chosen situation. The only writer who has approached Rousseau, so far as I know, in fulness and depth of expression in proclaiming the sorrows and wrongs of the poor blind crowd, who painfully drag along the car of triumphant civilisation with its handful of occupants, is the author of the *Book of the People*. Lamennais even surpasses Rousseau in the profundity of his pathos; his pictures of the life of hut and hovel are as sincere and as touching; and there is in them, instead of the anger and bitterness of the older author, righteous as that was, a certain heroism of pity and devoted sublimity of complaint, which lift the soul up from resentment into divine moods of compassion and resolve, and stir us like a tale of noble action. [307] It was Rousseau, however, who first sounded the note of which the religion that had once been the champion and consoler of the common people, seemed long to have lost even the tradition. Yet the teaching was not constructive, because the ideal man was not made truly social. *Emilius* is brought up in something of the isolation of the imaginary savage of the state of nature. He marries, and then he and his wife seem only fitted to lead a life of detachment from the interests of the world in which they are placed. Social or political education, that is the training which character receives



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from the medium in which it grows, is left out of account, and so is the correlative process of preparation for the various conditions and exigencies which belong to that medium, until it is too late to take its natural place in character. Nothing can be clumsier than the way in which Rousseau proposes to teach Emilius the existence and nature of his relations with his fellows. And the reason of this was that he had never himself in the course of his ruminations, willingly thought of Emilius as being in a condition of active social relation, the citizen of a state.

III.

There appear to be three dominant states of mind, with groups of faculties associated with each of them, which it is the business of the instructor firmly to establish in the character of the future man. The first is a resolute and unflinching respect for Truth; for the conclusions, that is to say, of the scientific reason, comprehending also a constant anxiety to take all possible pains that such conclusions shall be rightly drawn. Connected with this is the discipline of the whole range of intellectual faculties, from the simple habit of correct observation, down to the highly complex habit of weighing and testing the value of evidence. This very important branch of early discipline, Rousseau for reasons of his own which we have already often referred to, cared little about, and he throws very little light upon it, beyond one or two extremely sensible precepts of the negative kind, warning us against beginning too soon and forcing an apparent progress too rapidly. The second fundamental state in a rightly formed character is a deep feeling for things of the spirit which are unknown and incommensurable; a sense of awe, mystery, sublimity, and the fateful bounds of life at its beginning and its end. Here is the Religious side, and what Rousseau has to say of this we shall presently see. It is enough now to remark that Emilius was never to hear the name of a God or supreme being until his reason was fairly ripened. The third state, which is at least as difficult to bring to healthy perfection as either of the other two, is a passion for Justice.

The little use which Rousseau made of this momentous and much-embracing word, which names the highest peak of social virtue, is a very striking circumstance. The reason would seem to be that his sense of the relations of men with one another was not virile enough to comprehend the deep austerer lines which mark the brow of the benignant divinity of Justice. In the one place in his writings where he speaks of justice freely, he shows a narrowness of idea, which was perhaps as much due to intellectual confusion as to lack of moral robustness. He says excellently that "love of the human race is nothing else in us but love of justice," and that "of all the virtues, justice is that which contributes most to the common good of men." While enjoining the discipline



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of pity as one of the noblest of sentiments, he warns us against letting it degenerate into weakness, and insists that we should only surrender ourselves to it when it accords with justice.[308] But that is all. What constitutes justice, what is its standard, what its source, what its sanction, whence the extraordinary holiness with which its name has come to be invested among the most highly civilised societies of men, we are never told, nor do we ever see that our teacher had seen the possibility of such questions being asked. If they had been propounded to him, he would, it is most likely, have fallen back upon the convenient mystery of the natural law. This was the current phrase of that time, and it was meant to embody a hypothetical experience of perfect human relations in an expression of the widest generality. If so, this would have to be impressed upon the mind of Emilius in the same way as other mysteries. As a matter of fact, Emilius was led through pity up to humanity, or sociality in an imperfect signification, and there he was left without a further guide to define the marks of truly social conduct.

This imperfection was a necessity, inseparable from Rousseau's tenacity in keeping society in the background of the picture of life which he opened to his pupil. He said, indeed, "We must study society by men, and men by society; those who would treat politics and morality apart will never understand anything about either one or the other." [309] This is profoundly true, but we hardly see in the morality which is designed for Emilius the traces of political elements. Yet without some gradually unfolded presentation of society as a whole, it is scarcely possible to implant the idea of justice with any hope of large fertility. You may begin at a very early time to develop, even from the primitive quality of self-love, a notion of equity and a respect for it, but the vast conception of social justice can only find room in a character that has been made spacious by habitual contemplation of the height and breadth and close compactedness of the fabric of the relations that bind man to man, and of the share, integral or infinitesimally fractional, that each has in the happiness or woe of other souls. And this contemplation should begin when we prepare the foundation of all the other maturer habits. Youth can hardly recognise too soon the enormous unresting machine which bears us ceaselessly along, because we can hardly learn too soon that its force and direction depend on the play of human motives, of which our own for good or evil form an inevitable part when the ripe years come. To one reared with the narrow care devoted to Emilius, or with the capricious negligence in which the majority are left to grow to manhood, the society into which they are thrown is a mere moral wilderness. They are to make such way through it as they can, with egotism for their only trusty instrument. This egotism may either be a bludgeon, as with the most part, or it may be a delicately adjusted



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and fastidiously decorated compass, as with an Emilius. In either case is no perception that the gross outer contact of men with another is transformed by worthiness of common aim and loyal faith in common excellences, into a thing beautiful and generous. It is our business to fix and root the habit of thinking of that *moral* union, into which, as Kant has so admirably expressed it, the *pathological* necessities of situation that first compelled social concert, have been gradually transmuted. Instead of this, it is exactly the primitive pathological conditions that a narrow theory of education brings first into prominence; as if knowledge of origins were indispensable to a right attachment to the transformed conditions of a maturer system.

It has been said that Rousseau founds all morality upon personal interest, perhaps even more specially than Helvetius himself. The accusation is just. Emilius will enter adult life without the germs of that social conscience, which animates a man with all the associations of duty and right, of gratitude for the past and resolute hope for the future, in face of the great body of which he finds himself a part. "I observe," says Rousseau, "that in the modern ages men have no hold upon one another save through force and interest, while the ancients on the other hand acted much more by persuasion and the affections of the soul." [310] The reason was that with the ancients, supposing him to mean the Greeks and Romans, the social conscience was so much wider in its scope than the comparatively narrow fragment of duty which is supposed to come under the sacred power of conscience in the more complex and less closely contained organisation of a modern state. The neighbours to whom a man owed duty in those times comprehended all the members of his state. The neighbours of the modern preacher of duty are either the few persons with whom each of us is brought into actual and palpable contact, or else the whole multitude of dwellers on the earth,—a conception that for many ages to come will remain with the majority of men and women too vague to exert an energetic and concentrating influence upon action, and will lead them no further than an uncoloured and nerveless cosmopolitanism.

What the young need to have taught to them in this too little cultivated region, is that they are born not mere atoms floating independent and apart for a season through a terraqueous medium, and sucking up as much more than their share of nourishment as they can seize; nor citizens of the world with no more definite duty than to keep their feelings towards all their fellows in a steady simmer of bland complacency; but soldiers in a host, citizens of a polity whose boundaries are not set down in maps, members of a church the handwriting of whose ordinances is not in the hieroglyphs of idle mystery, nor its hope and recompense in the lands beyond death. They need to be taught that they owe a share of their energies to the great



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struggle which is in ceaseless progress in all societies in an endless variety of forms, between new truth and old prejudice, between love of self or class and solicitous passion for justice, between the obstructive indolence and inertia of the many and the generous mental activity of the few. This is the sphere and definition of the social conscience. The good causes of enlightenment and justice in all lands,—here is the church militant in which we should early seek to enrol the young, and the true state to which they should be taught that they owe the duties of active and arduous citizenship. These are the struggles with which the modern instructor should associate those virtues of fortitude, tenacity, silent patience, outspoken energy, readiness to assert ourselves and readiness to efface ourselves, willingness to suffer and resolution to inflict suffering, which men of old knew how to show for their gods or their sovereign. But the ideal of Emilius was an ideal of quietism; to possess his own soul in patience, with a suppressed intelligence, a suppressed sociality, without a single spark of generous emulation in the courses of strong-fibred virtue, or a single thrill of heroic pursuit after so much as one great forlorn cause.

“If it once comes to him, in reading these parallels of the famous ancients, to desire to be another rather than himself, were this other Socrates, were he Cato, you have missed the mark; he who begins to make himself a stranger to himself, is not long before he forgets himself altogether.”[311] But if a man only nurses the conception of his own personality, for the sake of keeping his own peace and self-contained comfort at a glow of easy warmth, assuredly the best thing that can befall him is that he should perish, lest his example should infect others with the same base contagion. Excessive personality when militant is often wholesome, excessive personality that only hugs itself is under all circumstances chief among unclean things. Thus even Rousseau’s finest monument of moral enthusiasm is fatally tarnished by the cold damp breath of isolation, and the very book which contained so many elements of new life for a state, was at bottom the apotheosis of social despair.

IV.

The great agent in fostering the rise to vigour and uprightness of a social conscience, apart from the yet more powerful instrument of a strong and energetic public spirit at work around the growing character, must be found in the study of history rightly directed with a view to this end. It is here, in observing the long processes of time and appreciating the slowly accumulating sum of endeavour, that the mind gradually comes to read the great lessons how close is the bond that links men together. It is here that he gradually begins to acquire the habit of considering what are the conditions of wise social activity, its limits, its objects, its rewards, what is the capacity of collective achievement, and of what sort is the significance and purport of the little span of time that cuts off the yesterday of our society from its to-morrow.



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Rousseau had very rightly forbidden the teaching of history to young children, on the ground that the essence of history lies in the moral relations between the bare facts which it recounts, and that the terms and ideas of these relations are wholly beyond the intellectual grasp of the very young.[312] He might have based his objections equally well upon the impossibility of little children knowing the meaning of the multitude of descriptive terms which make up a historical manual, or realising the relations between events in bare point of time, although childhood may perhaps be a convenient period for some mechanical acquisition of dates. According to Rousseau, history was to appear very late in the educational course, when the youth was almost ready to enter the world. It was to be the finishing study, from which he should learn not sociality either in its scientific or its higher moral sense, but the composition of the heart of man, in a safer way than through actual intercourse with society. Society might make him either cynical or frivolous. History would bring him the same information, without subjecting him to the same perils. In society you only hear the words of men; to know man you must observe his actions, and actions are only unveiled in history.[313] This view is hardly worth discussing. The subject of history is not the heart of man, but the movements of societies. Moreover, the oracles of history are entirely dumb to one who seeks from them maxims for the shaping of daily conduct, or living instruction as to the motives, aims, caprices, capacities of self-restraint, self-sacrifice, of those with whom the occasions of life bring us into contact.

It is true that at the close of the other part of his education, Emilius was to travel and there find the comment upon the completed circle of his studies.[314] But excellent as travel is for some of the best of those who have the opportunity, still for many it is valueless for lack of the faculty of curiosity. For the great majority it is impossible for lack of opportunity. To trust so much as Rousseau did to the effect of travelling, is to leave a large chasm in education unbridged.

It is interesting, however, to notice some of Rousseau's notions about history as an instrument for conveying moral instruction, a few of them are so good, others are so characteristically narrow. "The worst historians for a young man," he says, "are those who judge. The facts, the facts; then let him judge for himself. If the author's judgment is for ever guiding him, he is only seeing with the eye of another, and as soon as this eye fails him, he sees nothing." Modern history is not fit for instruction, not only because it has no physiognomy, all our men being exactly like one another, but because our historians, intent on brilliance above all other things, think of nothing so much as painting highly coloured portraits, which for the most part represent nothing at all.[315] Of course such a judgment as this



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implies an ignorance alike of the ends and meaning of history, which, considering that he was living in the midst of a singular revival of historical study, is not easy to pardon. If we are to look only to perfection of form and arrangement, it may have been right for one living in the middle of the last century to place the ancients in the first rank without competitors. But the author of the Discourse upon literature and the arts might have been expected to look beyond composition, and the contemporary of Voltaire's *Essai sur les Moeurs* (1754-1757) might have been expected to know that the profitable experience of the human race did not close with the fall of the Roman republic. Among the ancient historians, he counted Thucydides to be the true model, because he reports facts without judging, and omits none of the circumstances proper for enabling us to judge of them for ourselves—though how Rousseau knew what facts Thucydides has omitted, I am unable to divine. Then come Caesar's Commentaries and Xenophon's Retreat of the Ten Thousand. The good Herodotus, without portraits and without maxims, but abounding in details the most capable of interesting and pleasing, would perhaps be the best of historians, if only these details did not so often degenerate into puerilities. Livy is unsuited to youth, because he is political and a rhetorician. Tacitus is the book of the old; you must have learnt the art of reading facts, before you can be trusted with maxims.

The drawback of histories such as those of Thucydides and Caesar, Rousseau admits to be that they dwell almost entirely on war, leaving out the true life of nations, which belongs to the unwritten chronicles of peace. This leads him to the equally just reflection that historians while recounting facts omit the gradual and progressive causes which led to them. "They often find in a battle lost or won the reason of a revolution, which even before the battle was already inevitable. War scarcely does more than bring into full light events determined by moral causes, which historians can seldom penetrate." [316] A third complaint against the study which he began by recommending as a proper introduction to the knowledge of man, is that it does not present men but actions, or at least men only in their parade costume and in certain chosen moments, and he justly reproaches writers alike of history and biography, for omitting those trifling strokes and homely anecdotes, which reveal the true physiognomy of character. "Remain then for ever, without bowels, without nature; harden your hearts of cast iron in your trumpety decency, and make yourselves despicable by force of dignity." [317] And so after all, by a common stroke of impetuous inconsistency, he forsakes history, and falls back upon the ancient biographies, because, all the low and familiar details being banished from modern style, however true and characteristic, men are as elaborately tricked out by our authors in their private lives as they were tricked out upon the stage of the world.



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V.

As women are from the constitution of things the educators of us all at the most critical periods, and mainly of their own sex from the beginning to the end of education, the writer of the most imperfect treatise on this world-interesting subject can hardly avoid saying something on the upbringing of women. Such a writer may start from one of three points of view; he may consider the woman as destined to be a wife, or a mother, or a human being; as the companion of a man, as the rearer of the young, or as an independent personality, endowed with gifts, talents, possibilities, in less or greater number, and capable, as in the case of men, of being trained to the worst or the best uses. Of course to every one who looks into life, each of these three ideals melts into the other two, and we can only think of them effectively when they are blended. Yet we test a writer's appreciation of the conditions of human progress by observing the function which he makes most prominent. A man's whole thought of the worth and aim of womanhood depends upon the generosity and elevation of the ideal which is silently present in his mind, while he is specially meditating the relations of woman as wife or as mother. Unless he is really capable of thinking of them as human beings, independently of these two functions, he is sure to have comparatively mean notions in connection with them in respect of the functions which he makes paramount.

Rousseau breaks down here. The unsparing fashion in which he developed the theory of individualism in the case of Emilius, and insisted on man being allowed to grow into the man of nature, instead of the man of art and manufacture, might have led us to expect that when he came to speak of women, he would suffer equity and logic to have their way, by giving equally free room in the two halves of the human race, for the development of natural force and capacity. If, as he begins by saying, he wishes to bring up Emilius, not to be a merchant nor a physician nor a soldier nor to the practice of any other special calling, but to be first and above all a man, why should not Sophie too be brought up above all to be a human being, in whom the special qualifications of wifehood and motherhood may be developed in their due order? Emilius is a man first, a husband and a father afterwards and secondarily. How can Sophie be a companion for him, and an instructor for their children, unless she likewise has been left in the hands of nature, and had the same chances permitted to her as were given to her predestined mate? Again, the pictures of the New Heloise would have led us to conceive the ideal of womanly station not so much in the wife, as in the house-mother, attached by esteem and sober affection to her husband, but having for her chief functions to be the gentle guardian of her little ones, and the mild, firm, and prudent administrator of a cheerful and well-ordered household. In the



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last book of the Emilius, which treats of the education of girls, education is reduced within the compass of an even narrower ideal than this. We are confronted with the oriental conception of women. Every principle that has been followed in the education of Emilius is reversed in the education of women. Opinion, which is the tomb of virtue among men, is among women its high throne. The whole education of women ought to be relative to men; to please them, to be useful to them, to make themselves loved and honoured by them, to console them, to render their lives agreeable and sweet to them, —these are the duties which ought to be taught to women from their childhood. Every girl ought to have the religion of her mother, and every wife that of her husband. Not being in a condition to judge for themselves, they ought to receive the decision of fathers and husbands as if it were that of the church. And since authority is the rule of faith for women, it is not so much a matter of explaining to them the reasons for belief, as for expounding clearly to them what to believe. Although boys are not to hear of the idea of God until they are fifteen, because they are not in a condition to apprehend it, yet girls who are still less in a condition to apprehend it, are *therefore* to have it imparted to them at an earlier age. Woman is created to give way to man, and to suffer his injustice. Her empire is an empire of gentleness, mildness, and complaisance. Her orders are caresses, and her threats are tears. Girls must not only be made laborious and vigilant; they must also very early be accustomed to being thwarted and kept in restraint. This misfortune, if they feel it one, is inseparable from their sex, and if ever they attempt to escape from it, they will only suffer misfortunes still more cruel in consequence.[318]

After a series of oriental and obscurantist propositions of this kind, it is of little purpose to tell us that women have more intelligence and men more genius; that women observe, while men reason; that men will philosophise better upon the human heart, while women will be more skilful in reading it.[319] And it is a mere mockery to end the matter by a fervid assurance, that in spite of prejudices that have their origin in the manners of the time, the enthusiasm for what is worthy and noble is no more foreign to women than it is to men, and that there is nothing which under the guidance of nature may not be obtained from them as well as from ourselves.[320] Finally there is a complete surrender of the obscurantist position in such a sentence as this: "I only know for either sex two really distinct classes; one the people who think, the other the people who do not think, and this difference comes almost entirely from education. A man of the first of these classes ought not to marry into the other; for the greatest charm of companionship is wanting, when in spite of having a wife he is reduced to think by himself. It is only a cultivated spirit



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that provides agreeable commerce, and 'tis a cheerless thing for a father of a family who loves his home, to be obliged to shut himself up within himself, and to have no one about him who understands him. Besides, how is a woman who has no habits of reflection to bring up her children?"[321] Nothing could be more excellently urged. But how is a woman to have habits of reflection, when she has been constantly brought up in habits of the closest mental bondage, trained always to consider her first business to be the pleasing of some man, and her instruments not reasonable persuasion but caressing and crying?

This pernicious nonsense was mainly due, like nearly all his most serious errors, to Rousseau's want of a conception of improvement in human affairs. If he had been filled with that conception as Turgot, Condorcet, and others were, he would have been forced as they were, to meditate upon changes in the education and the recognition accorded to women, as one of the first conditions of improvement. For lack of this, he contributed nothing to the most important branch of the subject that he had undertaken to treat. He was always taunting the champions of reigning systems of training for boys, with the vicious or feeble men whom he thought he saw on every hand around him. The same kind of answer obviously meets the current idea, which he adopted with a few idyllic decorations of his own, of the type of the relations between men and women. That type practically reduces marriage in ninety-nine cases out of every hundred to a dolorous parody of a social partnership. It does more than any one other cause to keep societies back, because it prevents one half of the members of a society from cultivating all their natural energies. Thus it produces a waste of helpful quality as immeasurable as it is deplorable, and besides rearing these creatures of mutilated faculty to be the intellectually demoralising companions of the remaining half of their own generation, makes them the mothers and the earliest and most influential instructors of the whole of the generation that comes after.[322] Of course, if any one believes that the existing arrangements of a western community are the most successful that we can ever hope to bring into operation, we need not complain of Rousseau. If not, then it is only reasonable to suppose that a considerable portion of the change will be effected in the hitherto neglected and subordinate half of the race. That reconstitution of the family, which Rousseau and others among his contemporaries rightly sought after as one of the most pressing needs of the time, was essentially impossible, so long as the typical woman was the adornment of a semi-philosophic seraglio, a sort of compromise between the frowzy ideal of an English bourgeois and the impertinent ideal of a Parisian gallant. Condorcet and others made a grievous mistake in defending the free gratification of sensual passion, as one of the conditions of happiness and making the most of our lives.[323] But even this was not at bottom more fatal to the maintenance and order of the family, than Rousseau's enervating notion of keeping women in strict intellectual and moral subjection was fatal to the family as the true school of high and equal companionship, and the fruitful seed-ground of wise activities and new hopes for each fresh generation.



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This was one side of Rousseau's reactionary tendencies. Fortunately for the revolution of thirty years later, which illustrated the gallery of heroic women with some of its most splendid names, his power was in this respect neutralised by other stronger tendencies in the general spirit of the age. The aristocracy of sex was subjected to the same destructive criticism as the aristocracy of birth. The same feeling for justice which inspired the demand for freedom and equality of opportunity among men, led to the demand for the same freedom and equality of opportunity between men and women. All this was part of the energy of the time, which Rousseau disliked with undisguised bitterness. It broke inconveniently in upon his quietest visions. He had no conception, with his sensuous brooding imagination, never wholly purged of grossness, of that high and pure type of women whom French history so often produced in the seventeenth century, and who were not wanting towards the close of the eighteenth, a type in which devotion went with force, and austerity with sweetness, and divine candour and transparent innocence with energetic loyalty and intellectual uprightness and a firmly set will. Such thoughts were not for Rousseau, a dreamer led by his senses. Perhaps they are for none of us any more. When we turn to modern literature from the pages in which Fenelon speaks of the education of girls, who does not feel that the world has lost a sacred accent, as if some ineffable essence has passed out from our hearts?

The fifth book of *Emilius* is not a chapter on the education of women, but an idyll. We have already seen the circumstances under which Rousseau composed it, in a profound and delicious solitude, in the midst of woods and streams, with the fragrance of the orange-flower poured around him, and in continual ecstasy. As an idyll it is delicious; as a serious contribution to the hardest of problems it is naught. The sequel, by a stroke of matchless whimsicality, unless it be meant, as it perhaps may have been, for a piece of deep tragic irony, is the best refutation that Rousseau's most energetic adversary could have desired. The Sophie who has been educated on the oriental principle, has presently to confess a flagrant infidelity to the blameless *Emilius*, her lord. [324]

VI.

Yet the sum of the merits of *Emilius* as a writing upon education is not to be lightly counted. Its value lies, as has been said of the *New Heloisa*, in the spirit which animates it and communicates itself with vivid force to the reader. It is one of the seminal books in the history of literature, and of such books the worth resides less in the parts than in the whole. It touched the deeper things of character. It filled parents with a sense of the dignity and moment of their task. It cleared away the accumulation of clogging prejudices and obscure inveterate usage, which made education one of the dark



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formalistic arts. It admitted floods of light and air into the tightly closed nurseries and schoolrooms. It effected the substitution of growth for mechanism. A strong current of manliness, wholesomeness, simplicity, self-reliance, was sent by it through Europe, while its eloquence was the most powerful adjuration ever addressed to parental affection to cherish the young life in all love and considerate solicitude. It was the charter of youthful deliverance. The first immediate effect of Emilius in France was mainly on the religious side. It was the Christian religion that needed to be avenged, rather than education that needed to be amended, and the press overflowed with replies to that profession of faith which we shall consider in the next chapter. Still there was also an immense quantity of educational books and pamphlets, which is to be set down, first to the suppression of the Jesuits, the great educating order, and the vacancy which they left; and next to the impulse given by the Emilius to a movement from which the book itself had originally been an outcome.[325] But why try to state the influence of Emilius on France in this way? To strike the account truly would be to write the history of the first French Revolution.[326] All mothers, as Michelet says, were big with Emilius. "It is not without good reason that people have noted the children born at this glorious moment, as animated by a superior spirit, by a gift of flame and genius. It is the generation of revolutionary Titans: the other generation not less hardy in science. It is Danton, Vergniaud, Desmoulins; it is Ampere, La Place, Cuvier, Geoffroy Saint Hilaire." [327]

In Germany Emilius had great power. There it fell in with the extraordinary movement towards naturalness and freedom of which we have already spoken.[328] Herder, whom some have called the Rousseau of the Germans, wrote with enthusiasm to his then beloved Caroline of the "divine Emilius," and he never ceased to speak of Rousseau as his inspirer and his master.[329] Basedow (1723), that strange, restless, and most ill-regulated person, was seized with an almost phrenetic enthusiasm for Rousseau's educational theories, translated them into German, and repeated them in his works over and over again with an incessant iteration. Lavater (1741-1801), who differed from Basedow in being a fervent Christian of soft mystic faith, was thrown into company with him in 1774, and grew equally eager with him in the cause of reforming education in the Rousseauite sense.[330] Pestalozzi (1746-1827), the most systematic, popular, and permanently successful of all the educational reformers, borrowed his spirit and his principles mainly from the Emilius, though he gave larger extension and more intelligent exactitude to their application. Jean Paul the Unique, in the preface to his *Levana*, or *Doctrine of Education* (1806), one of the most excellent of all books on the subject, declares that among previous works to which he owes a debt, "first and last



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he names Rousseau's Emilius; no preceding work can be compared to his; in no previous work on education was the ideal so richly combined with the actual," and so forth.[331] It was not merely a Goethe, a Schiller, a Herder, whom Rousseau fired with new thoughts. The smaller men, such as Fr. Jacobi, Heinse, Klinger, shared the same inspiration. The worship of Rousseau penetrated all classes, and touched every degree of intelligence.[332]

In our own country Emilius was translated as soon as it appeared, and must have been widely read, for a second version of the translation was called for in a very short time. So far as a cursory survey gives one a right to speak, its influence here in the field of education is not very perceptible. That subject did not yet, nor for some time to come, excite much active thought in England. Rousseau's speculations on society both in the Emilius and elsewhere seem to have attracted more attention. Reference has already been made to Paley.[333] Adam Ferguson's celebrated Essay on the History of Civil Society (1767) has many allusions, direct and indirect, to Rousseau.[334] Kames's Sketches of the History of Man (1774) abounds still more copiously in references to Emilius, sometimes to controvert its author, more often to cite him as an authority worthy of respect, and Rousseau's crude notions about women are cited with special acceptance.[335] Cowper was probably thinking of the Savoyard Vicar when he wrote the energetic lines in the Task, beginning "Haste now, philosopher, and set him free," scornfully defying the deist to rescue apostate man.[336] Nor should we omit what was counted so important a book in its day as Godwin's Enquiry concerning Political Justice (1793). It is perhaps more French in its spirit than any other work of equal consequence in our literature of politics, and in its composition the author was avowedly a student of Rousseau, as well as of the members of the materialistic school.

In fine we may add that Emilius was the first expression of that democratic tendency in education, which political and other circumstances gradually made general alike in England, France, and Germany; a tendency, that is, to look on education as a process concerning others besides the rich and the well-born. As has often been remarked, Ascham, Milton, Locke, Fenelon, busy themselves about the instruction of young gentlemen and gentlewomen. The rest of the world are supposed to be sufficiently provided for by the education of circumstance. Since the middle of the eighteenth century this monopolising conception has vanished, along with and through the same general agencies as the corresponding conception of social monopoly. Rousseau enforced the production of a natural and self-sufficing man as the object of education, and showed, or did his best to show, the infinite capacity of the young for that simple and natural cultivation. This easily and directly led people to reflect that such a capacity was not confined to the children of the rich, nor the hope of producing a natural and sufficing man narrowed to those who had every external motive placed around them for being neither natural nor self-sufficing.



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Voltaire pronounced *Emilius* a stupid romance, but admitted that it contained fifty pages which he would have bound in morocco. These, we may be sure, concerned religion; in truth it was the Savoyard Vicar's profession of faith which stirred France far more than the upbringing of the natural man in things temporal. Let us pass to that eloquent document which is inserted in the middle of the *Emilius*, as the expression of the religious opinion that best befits the man of nature—a document most hyperbolically counted by some French enthusiasts for the spiritualist philosophy and the religion of sentiment, as the noblest monument of the eighteenth century.

FOOTNOTES:

[273] *Mem. de Mdme. d'Epinau*, ii. 276, 278.

[274] *Lettres a mon Fils* (1758), and *Les Conversations d'Emilie* (1783).

[275] *Lettres Peruviennes*.

[276] *Oeuv.*, ii. 785-794.

[277] *Corr. Lit.*, iii. 65.

[278] *Emile*, I. 27.

[279] It is interesting to recall a similar movement in the Roman society of the second century of our era. See the advice of Favorinus to mothers, in Aulus Gellius, xii. 1. M. Boissier, contrasting the solicitude of Tacitus and Marcus Aurelius for the infant young with the brutality of Cicero, remarks that in the time of Seneca men discussed in the schools the educational theories of Rousseau's *Emilius*. (*La Relig. Romaine*, ii. 202.)

[280] See also his diatribe against whalebone and tight-lacing for girls, V. 27.

[281] *Emile*, I. 93, etc.

[282] *Emile*, II. 141.

[283] *Emile*, II. 156-160.

[284] *Emile*, III. 338-345.

[285] III. 358, etc.

[286] *Emile*, II. 263-267.

[287] *Levana*, ch. iii. Sec. 54.



[288] *Emile*, II. 163.

[289] The Ninth Promenade (*Reveries*, 309).

[290] *Emile*, I. 23.

[291] II. 109.

[292] II. 111.

[293] *Emile*, II. 113-117.

[294] II. 121.

[295] II. 143.

[296] *Emile*, III. 382.

[297] II. 227.

[298] IV. 10.

[299] *Emile*, III. 394.

[300] V. 199.

[301] The reader will not forget the famous supper-party of princes in *Candide*.

[302] *Emile*, III. 392, and note. A still more remarkable passage, as far as it goes, is that in the *Confessions* (xi. 136):—"The disasters of an unsuccessful war, all of which came from the fault of the government, the incredible disorder of the finances, the continual dissensions of the administration, divided as it was among two or three ministers at open war with one another, and who for the sake of hurting one another dragged the kingdom into ruin; the general discontent of the people, and of all the orders of the state; the obstinacy of a wrong-headed woman, who, always sacrificing her better judgment, if indeed she had any, to her tastes, dismissed the most capable from office, to make room for her favourites ... all this prospect of a coming break-up made me think of seeking shelter elsewhere."



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[303] *Emile*, V. 220.

[304] IV. 85.

[305] *Emile*, IV. 38, 39. Hence, we suppose, the famous reply to Lavoisier's request that his life might be spared from the guillotine for a fortnight, in order that he might complete some experiments, that the Republic has no need of chemists.

[306] IV. 65. Jefferson, who was American minister in France from 1784 to 1789, and absorbed a great many of the ideas then afloat, writes in words that seem as if they were borrowed from Rousseau:—"I am convinced that those societies (as the Indians) which live without government, enjoy in their general mass an infinitely greater degree of happiness than those who live under European governments. Among the former public opinion is in the state of law, and restrains morals as powerfully as laws ever did anywhere. Among the latter, under pretence of governing, they have divided their nation into two classes, wolves and sheep. I do not exaggerate; this is a true picture of Europe." Tucker's *Life of Jefferson*, i. 255.

[307] Lamennais was influenced by Rousseau throughout. In the *Essay on Indifference* he often appeals to him as the vindicator of the religious sentiment (e.g. i. 21, 52, iv. 375, etc. Ed. 1837). The same influence is seen still more markedly in the *Words of a Believer* (1835), when dogma had departed, and he was left with a kind of dual deism, thus being less estranged from Rousseau than in the first days (e.g. Sec. xix. "Tous naissent egaux," etc., Sec. xxi., etc.) The *Book of the People* is thoroughly Rousseauite.

[308] *Emile*, IV. 105.

[309] *Emile*, IV. 63.

[310] *Emile*, IV. 273.

[311] *Emile*, IV. 83.

[312] *Emile*, II. 185. See the previous page for some equally prudent observations on the folly of teaching geography to little children.

[313] *Emile*, IV. 68.

[314] V. 231, etc.

[315] *Emile*, IV. 71.

[316] *Emile*, IV. 73.

[317] IV. 77.



[318] *Emile*, V. 22, 53, 54, 101, 128-132.

[319] *Emile*, V. 78.

[320] V. 122.

[321] V. 129, 130.

[322] Well did Jean Paul say, "If we regard all life as an educational institution, a circumnavigator of the world is less influenced by all the nations he has seen than by his nurse."—*Levana*.

[323] *Tableau des Progres de l'Esprit Humain. Oeuv.*, vi. pp. 264, 523-526, and elsewhere. [Ed. 1847-1849.]

[324] *Emile et Sophie*, i.

[325] For an account of some of these, see Grimm's *Corr. Lit.*, iii. 211, 252, 347, etc. Also *Corr. Ined.*, p. 143.

[326] For the early date at which Rousseau's power began to meet recognition, see D'Alembert to Voltaire, July 31, 1762.



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[327] *Louis xv. et xvi.*, p. 226.

[328] See above, vol. ii. p. 193.

[329] Hettner, III. iii., 2, p. 27, s.v. Herder.

[330] The suggestion of the speculation with which Lavater's name is most commonly associated, is to be found in the *Emilius*. "It is supposed that physiognomy is only a development of features already marked by nature. For my part, I should think that besides this development, the features of a man's countenance form themselves insensibly and take their expression from the frequent and habitual wearing into them of certain affections of the soul. These affections mark themselves in the countenance, nothing is more certain; and when they grow into habits, they must leave durable impressions upon it." IV. 49, 50.

[331] Author's Preface, x.

[332] See an excellent page in M. Joret's *Herder*, 322.

[333] See above, vol. ii. p. 191.

[334] *E.g.* pp. 8, 198, 204, 205.

[335] *E.g.* Bk. I. Sec. 5, p. 279. Sec. 6, p. 406, 419, etc. (the portion concerning the female sex).

[336] Vv. 670-703. We have already seen (above, vol. ii. p. 41, *n.*) that Cowper had read *Emilius*, and the mocking reference to the Deist as "an Orpheus and omnipotent in song," coincides with Rousseau's comparison of the Savoyard Vicar to "the divine Orpheus singing the first hymn" (*Emile*, IV. 205).

CHAPTER V.

THE SAVOYARD VICAR.

The band of dogmatic atheists who met round D'Holbach's dinner-table indulged a shallow and futile hope, if it was not an ungenerous one, when they expected the immediate advent of a generation with whom a humane and rational philosophy should displace, not merely the superstitions which had grown around the Christian dogma, but every root and fragment of theistic conception. A hope of this kind implied a singularly random idea, alike of the hold which Christianity had taken of the religious emotion in western Europe, and of the durability of those conditions in human character, to which some belief in a deity with a greater or fewer number of good attributes brings solace and nourishment. A movement like that of Christianity does not pass through a



group of societies, and then leave no trace behind. It springs from many other sources besides that of adherence to the truth of its dogmas. The stream of its influence must continue to flow long after adherence to the letter has been confined to the least informed portions of a community. The Encyclopaedists knew that they had sapped religious dogma and shaken ecclesiastical organisation. They forgot that religious sentiment on the one hand, and habit of respect for authority on the other, were both of them still left behind. They had convinced themselves by a host of persuasive analogies that the universe is an automatic machine, and man only an industrious particle in the stupendous

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whole; that a final cause is not cognisable by our limited intelligence; and that to make emotion in this or any other respect a test of objective truth and a ground of positive belief, is to lower both truth and the reason which is its single arbiter. They forgot that imagination is as active in man as his reason, and that a craving for mental peace may become much stronger than passion for demonstrated truth. Christianity had given to this craving in western Europe a definite mould, which was not to be effaced in a day, and one or two of its lines mark a permanent and noble acquisition to the highest forces of human nature. There will have to be wrought a profounder and more far-spreading modification than any which the French atheists could effect, before all debilitating influences in the old creed can be effaced, its elevating influences finally separated from them, and then permanently preserved in more beneficent form and in an association less questionable to the understanding.

Neither a purely negative nor a direct attack can ever suffice. There must be a coincidence of many silently oppugnant forces, emotional, scientific, and material. And, above all, there must be the slow steadfast growth of some replacing faith, which shall retain all the elements of moral beauty that once gave light to the old belief that has disappeared, and must still possess a living force in the new.

Here we find the good side of a religious reaction such as that which Rousseau led in the last century, and of which the Savoyard Vicar's profession of faith was the famous symbol. Evil as this reaction was in many respects, and especially in the check which it gave to the application of positive methods and conceptions to the most important group of our beliefs, yet it had what was the very signal merit under the circumstances of the time, of keeping the religious emotions alive in association with a tolerant, pure, lofty, and living set of articles of faith, instead of feeding them on the dead superstitions which were at that moment the only practical alternative. The deism of Rousseau could not in any case have acquired the force of the corresponding religious reaction in England, because the former never acquired a compact and vigorous external organisation, as the latter did, especially in Wesleyanism and Evangelicalism, the most remarkable of its developments. In truth the vague, fluid, purely subjective character of deism disqualifies it from forming the doctrinal basis of any great objective and visible church, for it is at bottom the sublimation of individualism. But in itself it was a far less retrogressive, as well as a far less powerful, movement. It kept fewer of those dogmas which gradual change of intellectual climate had reduced to the condition of rank superstitions. It preserved some of its own, which a still further extension of the same change is assuredly destined to reduce to the same condition; but, nevertheless, along with them it cherished sentiments which the world will never willingly let die.



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The one cardinal service of the Christian doctrine, which is of course to be distinguished from the services rendered to civilisation in early times by the Christian church, has been the contribution to the active intelligence of the west, of those moods of holiness, awe, reverence, and silent worship of an Unseen not made with hands, which the Christianising Jews first brought from the east. Of the fabric which four centuries ago looked so stupendous and so enduring, with its magnificent whole and its minutely reticulated parts of belief and practice, this gradual creation of a new temperament in the religious imagination of Western Europe and the countries that take their mental direction from her, is perhaps the only portion that will remain distinctly visible, after all the rest has sunk into the repose of histories of opinion. Whether this be the case or not, the fact that these deeper moods are among the richest acquisitions of human nature, will not be denied either by those who think that Christianity associates them with objects destined permanently to awake them in their loftiest form, or by others who believe that the deepest moods of which man is capable, must ultimately ally themselves with something still more purely spiritual than the anthropomorphised deities of the falling church. And if so, then Rousseau's deism, while intercepting the steady advance of the rationalistic assault and diverting the current of renovating energy, still did something to keep alive in a more or less worthy shape those parts of the slowly expiring system which men have the best reasons for cherishing.

Let us endeavour to characterise Rousseau's deism with as much precision as it allows. It was a special and graceful form of a doctrine which, though susceptible, alike in theory and in the practical history of religious thought, of numberless wide varieties of significance, is commonly designated by the name of deism, without qualification. People constantly speak as if deism only came in with the eighteenth century. It would be impossible to name any century since the twelfth, in which distinct and abundant traces could not be found within the dominion of Christianity of a belief in a supernatural power apart from the supposed disclosure of it in a special revelation.[337] A praeter-Christian deism, or the principle of natural religion, was inevitably contained in the legal conception of a natural law, for how can we dissociate the idea of law from the idea of a definite lawgiver? The very scholastic disputations themselves, by the sharpness and subtlety which they gave to the reasoning faculty, set men in search of novelties, and these novelties were not always of a kind which orthodox views of the Christian mysteries could have sanctioned. It has been said that religion is at the cradle of every nation, and philosophy at its grave; it is at least true that the cradle of philosophy is the open grave of religion. Wherever there is argumentation,



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there is sure to be scepticism. When people begin to reason, a shadow has already fallen across faith, though the reasoners might have shrunk with horror from knowledge of the goal of their work, and though centuries may elapse before the shadow deepens into eclipse. But the church was strong and alert in the times when free thought vainly tried to rear a dangerous head in Italy. With the Protestant revolution came slowly a wider freedom, while the prolonged and tempestuous discussion between the old church and the reformed bodies, as well as the manifold variations among those bodies at strife with one another, stimulated the growth of religious thought in many directions that tended away from the exclusive pretensions of Christianity to be the oracle of the divine Spirit. The same feeling which thrust aside the sacerdotal interposition between the soul of man and its sovereign creator and inspirer, gradually worked towards the dethronement of those mediators other than sacerdotal, in whom the moral timidity of a dark and stricken age had once sought shade from the too dazzling brightness of the All-powerful and the Everlasting. The assertion of the rights and powers of the individual reason within the limits of the sacred documents, began in less than a hundred years to grow into an assertion of the same rights and powers beyond those limits. The rejection of tradition as a substitute for independent judgment, in interpreting or supplementing the records of revelation, gradually impaired the traditional authority both of the records themselves, and of the central doctrines which all churches had in one shape or another agreed to accept. The Trinitarian controversy of the sixteenth century must have been a stealthy solvent. The deism of England in the eighteenth century, which Voltaire was the prime agent in introducing in its negative, colourless, and essentially futile shape into his own country, had its main effect as a process of dissolution.

All this, however, down to the deistical movement which Rousseau found in progress at Geneva in 1754,[338] was distinctly the outcome in a more or less marked way of a rationalising and philosophic spirit, and not of the religious spirit. The sceptical side of it with reference to revealed religion, predominated over the positive side of it with reference to natural religion. The wild pantheism of which there were one or two extraordinary outbursts during the latter part of the middle ages, to mark the mystical influence which Platonic studies uncorrected by science always exert over certain temperaments, had been full of religiosity, such as it was. These had all passed away with a swift flash. There were, indeed, mystics like the author of the immortal *De Imitatione*, in whom the special qualities of Christian doctrine seem to have grown pale in a brighter flood of devout aspiration towards the perfections of a single Being. But this was not the deism with which either Christianity



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on the one side, or atheism on the other, had ever had to deal in France. Deism, in its formal acceptation, was either an idle piece of vaporous sentimentality, or else it was the first intellectual halting-place for spirits who had travelled out of the pale of the old dogmatic Christianity, and lacked strength for the continuance of their onward journey. In the latter case, it was only another name either for the shrewd rough conviction of the man of the world, that his universe could not well be imagined to go on without a sort of constitutional monarch, reigning but not governing, keeping evil-doers in order by fear of eternal punishment, and lending a sacred countenance to the indispensable doctrines of property, the gradation of rank and station, and the other moral foundations of the social structure. Or else it was a name for a purely philosophic principle, not embraced with fervour as the basis of a religion, but accepted with decorous satisfaction as the alternative to a religion; not seized upon as the mainspring of spiritual life, but held up as a shield in a controversy.

The deism which the Savoyard Vicar explained to Emilius in his profession of faith was pitched in a very different tone from this. Though the Vicar's conception of the Deity was lightly fenced round with rationalistic supports of the usual kind, drawn from the evidences of will and intelligence in the vast machinery of the universe, yet it was essentially the product not of reason, but of emotional expansion, as every fundamental article of a faith that touches the hearts of many men must always be. The Savoyard Vicar did not believe that a God had made the great world, and rules it with majestic power and supreme justice, in the same way in which he believed that any two sides of a triangle are greater than the third side. That there is a mysterious being penetrating all creation with force, was not a proposition to be demonstrated, but only the poor description in words of an habitual mood going far deeper into life than words can ever carry us. Without for a single moment falling off into the nullities of pantheism, neither did he for a single moment suffer his thought to stiffen and grow hard in the formal lines of a theological definition or a systematic credo. It remains firm enough to give the religious imagination consistency and a centre, yet luminous enough to give the spiritual faculty a vivifying consciousness of freedom and space. A creed is concerned with a number of affirmations, and is constantly held with honest strenuousness by multitudes of men and women who are unfitted by natural temperament for knowing what the glow of religious emotion means to the human soul,—for not every one that saith, Lord, Lord, enters the kingdom of heaven. The Savoyard Vicar's profession of faith was not a creed, and so has few affirmations; it was a single doctrine, melted in a glow of contemplative transport. It is impossible to set about disproving



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it, for its exponent repeatedly warns his disciple against the idleness of logomachy, and insists that the existence of the Divinity is traced upon every heart in letters that can never be effaced, if we are only content to read them with lowliness and simplicity. You cannot demonstrate an emotion, nor prove an aspiration. How reason, asks the Savoyard Vicar, about that which we cannot conceive? Conscience is the best of all casuists, and conscience affirms the presence of a being who moves the universe and ordains all things, and to him we give the name of God.

"To this name I join the ideas of intelligence, power, will, which I have united in one, and that of goodness, which is a necessary consequence flowing from them. But I do not know any the better for this the being to whom I have given the name; he escapes equally from my senses and my understanding; the more I think of him, the more I confound myself. I have full assurance that he exists, and that he exists by himself. I recognise my own being as subordinate to his and all the things that are known to me as being absolutely in the same case. I perceive God everywhere in his works; I feel him in myself; I see him universally around me. But when I fain would seek where he is, what he is, of what substance, he glides away from me, and my troubled soul discerns nothing." [339]

"In fine, the more earnestly I strive to contemplate his infinite essence, the less do I conceive it. But it is, and that suffices me. The less I conceive it, the more I adore. I bow myself down, and say to him, O being of beings, I am because thou art; to meditate ceaselessly on thee by day and night, is to raise myself to my veritable source and fount. The worthiest use of my reason is to make itself as naught before thee. It is the ravishment of my soul, it is the solace of my weakness, to feel myself brought low before the awful majesty of thy greatness." [340]

Souls weary of the fierce mockeries that had so long been flying like fiery shafts against the far Jehovah of the Hebrews, and the silent Christ of the later doctors and dignitaries, and weary too of the orthodox demonstrations that did not demonstrate, and leaden refutations that could not refute, may well have turned with ardour to listen to this harmonious spiritual voice, sounding clear from a region towards which their hearts yearned with untold aspiration, but from which the spirit of their time had shut them off with brazen barriers. It was the elevation and expansion of man, as much as it was the restoration of a divinity. To realise this, one must turn to such a book as Helvetius's, which was supposed to reveal the whole inner machinery of the heart. Man was thought of as a singular piece of mechanism principally moved from without, not as a conscious organism, receiving nourishment and direction from the medium in which it is placed, but reacting with a life of its own from within. It was this free and energetic inner life of the individual



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which the Savoyard Vicar restored to lawful recognition, and made once more the centre of that imaginative and spiritual existence, without which we live in a universe that has no sun by day nor any stars by night. A writer in whom learning has not extinguished enthusiasm, compares this to the advance made by Descartes, who had given certitude to the soul by turning thought confidently upon itself; and he declares that the Savoyard Vicar is for the emancipation of sentiment what the Discourse upon Method was for the emancipation of the understanding.[341] There is here a certain audacity of panegyric; still the fact that Rousseau chose to link the highest forms of man's ideal life with a fading projection of the lofty image which had been set up in older days, ought not to blind us to the excellent energies which, notwithstanding defect of association, such a vindication of the ideal was certain to quicken. And at least the lines of that high image were nobly traced.

Yet who does not feel that it is a divinity for fair weather? Rousseau, with his fine sense of a proper and artistic setting, imagined the Savoyard Vicar as leading his youthful convert at break of a summer day to the top of a high hill, at whose feet the Po flowed between fertile banks; in the distance the immense chain of the Alps crowned the landscape; the rays of the rising sun projected long level shadows from the trees, the slopes, the houses, and accented with a thousand lines of light the most magnificent of panoramas.[342] This was the fitting suggestion, so serene, warm, pregnant with power and hope, and half mysterious, of the idea of godhead which the man of peace after an interval of silent contemplation proceeded to expound. Rousseau's sentimental idea at least did not revolt moral sense; it did not afflict the firmness of intelligence; nor did it silence the diviner melodies of the soul. Yet, once more, the heavens in which such a deity dwells are too high, his power is too impalpable, the mysterious air which he has poured around his being is too awful and impenetrable, for the rays from the sun of such majesty to reach more than a few contemplative spirits, and these only in their hours of tranquillity and expansion. The thought is too vague, too far, to bring comfort and refreshment to the mass of travelling men, or to invest duty with the stern ennobling quality of being done, "if I have grace to use it so as ever in the great Taskmaster's eye."

The Savoyard Vicar was consistent with the sublimity of his own conception. He meditated on the order of the universe with a reverence too profound to allow him to mingle with his thoughts meaner desires as to the special relations of that order to himself. "I penetrate all my faculties," he said, "with the divine essence of the author of the world; I melt at the thought of his goodness, and bless all his gifts, but I do not pray to him. What should I ask of him? That for me he should change



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the course of things, and in my favour work miracles? Could I, who must love above all else the order established by his wisdom and upheld by his providence, presume to wish such order troubled for my sake? Nor do I ask of him the power of doing righteousness; why ask for what he has given me? Has he not bestowed on me conscience to love what is good, reason to ascertain it, freedom to choose it? If I do ill, I have no excuse; I do it because I will it. To pray to him to change my will, is to seek from him what he seeks from me; it is to wish no longer to be human, it is to wish something other than what is, it is to wish disorder and evil." [343] We may admire both the logical consistency of such self-denial and the manliness which it would engender in the character that were strong enough to practise it. But a divinity who has conceded no right of petition is still further away from our lives than the divinities of more popular creeds.

Even the fairest deism is of its essence a faith of egotism and complacency. It does not incorporate in the very heart of the religious emotion the pitifulness and sorrow which Christianity first clothed with associations of sanctity, and which can never henceforth miss their place in any religious system to be accepted by men. Why is this? Because a religion that leaves them out, or thrusts them into a hidden corner, fails to comprehend at least one half, and that the most touching and impressive half, of the most conspicuous facts of human life. Rousseau was fuller of the capacity of pity than ordinary men, and this pity was one of the deepest parts of himself. Yet it did not enter into the composition of his religious faith, and this shows that his religious faith, though entirely free from suspicion of insincerity or ostentatious assumption, was like deism in so many cases, whether rationalistic or emotional, a kind of gratuitously adopted superfluity, not the satisfaction of a profound inner craving and resistless spiritual necessity. He speaks of the good and the wicked with the precision and assurance of the most pharisaic theologian, and he begins by asking of what concern it is to him whether the wicked are punished with eternal torment or not, though he concludes more graciously with the hope that in another state the wicked, delivered from their malignity, may enjoy a bliss no less than his own. [344] But the divine pitifulness which we owe to Christianity, and which will not be the less eagerly cherished by those who repudiate Christian tradition and doctrines, enjoins upon us that we should ask, Who are the wicked, and which is he that is without sin among us? Rousseau answered this glibly enough by some formula of metaphysics, about the human will having been left and constituted free by the creator of the world; and that man is the bad man who abuses his freedom. Grace, fate, destiny, force of circumstances, are all so many names for the protests which the frank sense of fact has forced from man against this miserably inadequate explanation of the foundations of moral responsibility.



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Whatever these foundations may be, the theories of grace and fate had at any rate the quality of connecting human conduct with the will of the gods. Rousseau's deism, severing the influence of the Supreme Being upon man, at the very moment when it could have saved him from the guilt that brings misery,—that is at the moment when conduct begins to follow the preponderant motives or the will,—did thus effectually cut off the most admirable and fertile group of our sympathies from all direct connection with religious sentiment. Toiling as manfully as we may through the wilderness of our seventy years, we are to reserve our deepest adoration for the being who has left us there, with no other solace than that he is good and just and all-powerful, and might have given us comfort and guidance if he would. This was virtually the form which Pelagius had tried to impose upon Christianity in the fifth century, and which the souls of men, thirsting for consciousness of an active divine presence, had then under the lead of Augustine so energetically cast away from them. The faith to which they clung while rejecting this great heresy, though just as transcendental, still had the quality of satisfying a spiritual want. It was even more readily to be accepted by the human intelligence, for it endowed the supreme power with the father's excellence of compassion, and presented for our reverence and gratitude and devotion a figure who drew from men the highest love for the God whom they had not seen, along with the warmest pity and love for their brethren whom they had seen.

The Savoyard Vicar's own position to Christianity was one of reverential scepticism. "The holiness of the gospel," he said, "is an argument that speaks to my heart and to which I should even be sorry to find a good answer. Look at the books of the philosophers with all their pomp; how puny they are by the side of that! Is there here the tone of an enthusiast or an ambitious sectary? What gentleness, what purity, in his manners, what touching grace in his teaching, what loftiness in his maxims! Assuredly there was something more than human in such teaching, such a character, such a life, such a death. If the life and death of Socrates were those of a sage, the life and death of Jesus are those of a god. Shall we say that the history of the gospels is invented at pleasure? My friend, that is not the fashion of invention; and the facts about Socrates are less attested than the facts about Christ.[345] Yet with all that, this same gospel abounds in things incredible, which are repugnant to reason, and which it is impossible for any sensible man to conceive or admit. What are we to do in the midst of all these contradictions? To be ever modest and circumspect, my son; to respect in silence what one can neither reject nor understand, and to make one's self lowly before the great being who alone knows the truth." [346]



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"I regard all particular religions as so many salutary institutions, which prescribe in every country a uniform manner of honouring God by public worship. I believe them all good, so long as men serve God fittingly in them. The essential worship is the worship of the heart. God never rejects this homage, under whatever form it be offered to him. In other days I used to say mass with the levity which in time infects even the gravest things, when we do them too often. Since acquiring my new principles I celebrate it with more veneration; I am overwhelmed by the majesty of the Supreme Being, by his presence, by the insufficiency of the human mind, which conceives so little what pertains to its author. When I approach the moment of consecration, I collect myself for performing the act with all the feelings required by the church, and the majesty of the sacrament; I strive to annihilate my reason before the supreme intelligence, saying, 'Who art thou, that thou shouldest measure infinite power?'"[347]

A creed like this, whatever else it may be, is plainly a powerful solvent of every system of exclusive dogma. If the one essential to true worship, the worship of the heart and the inner sentiment, be mystic adoration of an indefinable Supreme, then creeds based upon books, prophecies, miracles, revelations, all fall alike into the second place among things that may be lawful and may be expedient, but that can never be exacted from men by a just God as indispensable to virtue in this world or to bliss in the next. No better answer has ever been given to the exclusive pretensions of sect, Christian, Jewish, or Mahometan, than that propounded by the Savoyard Vicar with such energy, closeness, and most sarcastic fire.[348] It was turning an unexpected front upon the presumptuousness of all varieties of theological infallibilists, to prove to them that if you insist upon acceptance of this or that special revelation, over and above the dictates of natural religion, then you are bound not only to grant, but imperatively to enjoin upon all men, a searching inquiry and comparison, that they may spare no pains in an affair of such momentous issue in proving to themselves that this, and none of the competing revelations, is the veritable message of eternal safety. "Then no other study will be possible but that of religion: hardly shall one who has enjoyed the most robust health, employed his time and used his reason to best purpose, and lived the greatest number of years, hardly shall such an one in his extreme age be quite sure what to believe, and it will be a marvel if he finds out before he dies, in what faith he ought to have lived." The superiority of the sceptical parts of the Savoyard Vicar's profession, as well as those of the Letters from the Mountain to which we referred previously, over the biting mockeries which Voltaire had made the fashionable method of assault, lay in this fact. The latter only revolted and irritated all serious



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temperaments to whom religion is a matter of honest concern, while the former actually appealed to their religious sense in support of his doubts; and the more intelligent and sincere this sense happened to be, the more surely would Rousseau's gravely urged objections dissolve the hard particles of dogmatic belief. His objections were on a moral level with the best side of the religion that they oppugned. Those of Voltaire were only on a level with its lowest side, and that was the side presented by the gross and repulsive obscurantism of the functionaries of the church.

Unfortunately Rousseau had placed in the hands of the partisans of every exclusive revelation an instrument which was quite enough to disperse all his objections to the winds, and which was the very instrument that defended his own cherished religion. If he was satisfied with replying to the atheist and the materialist, that he knew there is a supreme God, and that the soul must have here and hereafter an existence apart from the body, because he found these truths ineffaceably written upon his own heart, what could prevent the Christian or the Mahometan from replying to Rousseau that the New Testament or the Koran is the special and final revelation from the Supreme Power to his creatures? If you may appeal to the voice of the heart and the dictate of the inner sentiment in one case, why not in the other also? A subjective test necessarily proves anything that any man desires, and the accident of the article proved appearing either reasonable or monstrous to other people, cannot have the least bearing on its efficacy or conclusiveness.

Deism like the Savoyard Vicar's opens no path for the future, because it makes no allowance for the growth of intellectual conviction, and binds up religion with mystery, with an object whose attributes can neither be conceived nor defined, with a Being too all-embracing to be able to receive anything from us, too august, self-contained, remote, to be able to bestow on us the humble gifts of which we have need. The temperature of thought is slowly but without an instant's recoil rising to a point when a mystery like this, definite enough to be imposed as a faith, but too indefinite to be grasped by understanding as a truth, melts away from the emotions of religion. Then those instincts of holiness, without which the world would be to so many of its highest spirits the most dreary of exiles, will perhaps come to associate themselves less with unseen divinities, than with the long brotherhood of humanity seen and unseen. Here we shall move with an assurance that no scepticism and no advance of science can ever shake, because the benefactions which we have received from the strenuousness of human effort can never be doubted, and each fresh acquisition in knowledge or goodness can only kindle new fervour. Those who have the religious imagination struck by the awful procession of man from the region of impenetrable night, by his incessant struggle with



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the hardness of the material world, and his sublimer struggle with the hard world of his own egotistic passions, by the pain and sacrifice by which generation after generation has added some small piece to the temple of human freedom or some new fragment to the ever incomplete sum of human knowledge, or some fresh line to the types of strong or beautiful character,—those who have an eye for all this may indeed have no ecstasy and no terror, no heaven nor hell, in their religion, but they will have abundant moods of reverence, deep-seated gratitude, and sovereign pitifulness.

And such moods will not end in sterile exaltation, or the deathly chills of spiritual reaction. They will bring forth abundant fruit in new hope and invigorated endeavour. This devout contemplation of the experience of the race, instead of raising a man into the clouds, brings him into the closest, loftiest, and most conscious relations with his kind, to whom he owes all that is of value in his own life, and to whom he can repay his debt by maintaining the beneficent tradition of service, by cherishing honour for all the true and sage spirits that have shone upon the earth, and sorrow and reprobation for all the unworthier souls whose light has gone out in baseness. A man with this faith can have no foul spiritual pride, for there is no mysteriously accorded divine grace in which one may be a larger participant than another. He can have no incentives to that mutilation with which every branch of the church, from the oldest to the youngest and crudest, has in its degree afflicted and retarded mankind, because the key-note of his religion is the joyful energy of every faculty, practical, reflective, creative, contemplative, in pursuit of a visible common good. And he can be plunged into no fatal and paralysing despair by any doctrine of mortal sin, because active faith in humanity, resting on recorded experience, discloses the many possibilities of moral recovery, and the work that may be done for men in the fragment of days, redeeming the contrite from their burdens by manful hope. If religion is our feeling about the highest forces that govern human destiny, then as it becomes more and more evident how much our destiny is shaped by the generation of the dead who have prepared the present, and by the purport of our hopes and the direction of our activity for the generations that are to fill the future, the religious sentiment will more and more attach itself to the great unseen host of our fellows who have gone before us and who are to come after. Such a faith is no rag of metaphysic floating in the sunshine of sentimentalism, like Rousseau's faith. It rests on a positive base, which only becomes wider and firmer with the widening of experience and the augmentation of our skill in interpreting it. Nor is it too transcendent for practical acceptance. One of the most scientific spirits of the eighteenth century, while each moment expecting the knock of the executioner at his door, found as religious a

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solace as any early martyr had ever found in his barbarous mysteries, when he linked his own efforts for reason and freedom with the eternal chain of the destinies of man. "This contemplation," he wrote and felt, "is for him a refuge into which the rancour of his persecutors can never follow him; in which, living in thought with man reinstated in the rights and the dignity of his nature, he forgets man tormented and corrupted by greed, by base fear, by envy; it is here that he truly abides with his fellows, in an elysium that his reason has known how to create for itself, and that his love for humanity adorns with all purest delights." [349]

This, to the shame of those wavering souls who despair of progress at the first moment when it threatens to leave the path that they have marked out for it, was written by a man at the very close of his days, when every hope that he had ever cherished seemed to one without the eye of faith to be extinguished in bloodshed, disorder, and barbarism. But there is a still happier season in the adolescence of generous natures that have been wisely fostered, when the horizons of the dawning life are suddenly lighted up with a glow of aspiration towards good and holy things. Commonly, alas, this priceless opportunity is lost in a fit of theological exaltation, which is gradually choked out by the dusty facts of life, and slowly moulders away into dry indifference. It would not be so, but far different, if the Savoyard Vicar, instead of taking the youth to the mountain-top, there to contemplate that infinite unseen which is in truth beyond contemplation by the limited faculties of man, were to associate these fine impulses of the early prime with the visible, intelligible, and still sublime possibilities of the human destiny,—that imperial conception, which alone can shape an existence of entire proportion in all its parts, and leave no natural energy of life idle or athirst. Do you ask for sanctions! One whose conscience has been strengthened from youth in this faith, can know no greater bitterness than the stain cast by wrong act or unworthy thought on the high memories with which he has been used to walk, and the discord wrought in hopes that have become the ruling harmony of his days.

FOOTNOTES:

[337] See Hallam's *Literature of Europe*, Pt. I. ch. ii. Sec. 64. Again (for the 16th century), Pt. II. ch. ii. Sec. 53. See also for mention of a sect of deists at Lyons about 1560, Bayle's Dictionary, s.v. Viret.

[338] See above, vol. i. pp. 223-227.

[339] *Emile*, IV. 163.

[340] IV. 183-185.



[341] M. Henri Martin's *Hist. de France*, xvi. 101, where there is an interesting, but, as it seems to the present writer, hardly a successful attempt, to bring the Savoyard Vicar's eloquence into scientific form.

[342] *Emile*, IV. 135.

[343] *Emile*, IV. 204.



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[344] *Emile*, IV. 181, 182. In a letter to Vernes (Feb. 18, 1758. *Corr.*, ii. 9) he expresses his suspicion that possibly the souls of the wicked may be annihilated at their death, and that being and feeling may prove the first reward of a good life. In this letter he asks also, with the same magnanimous security as the Savoyard Vicar, "of what concern the destiny of the wicked can be to him."

[345] A similar disparagement of Socrates, in comparison with the Christ of the Gospels, is to be found in the long letter of Jan. 15, 1769 (*Corr.*, vi. 59, 60), to M——, accompanied by a violent denigration of the Jews, conformably to the philosophic prejudice of the time.

[346] *Emile*, IV. 241, 242.

[347] *Emile*, IV. 243.

[348] IV. 210-236.

[349] Condorcet's *Progres de l'Esprit Humain* (1794). *Oeuv.*, vi. 276.

CHAPTER VI.

ENGLAND.[350]

There is in an English collection a portrait of Jean Jacques, which was painted during his residence in this country by a provincial artist. Singular and displeasing as it is, yet this picture lights up for us many a word and passage in Rousseau's life here and elsewhere, which the ordinary engravings, and the trim self-complacency of the statue on the little island at Geneva, would leave very incomprehensible. It is almost as appalling in its realism as some of the dark pits that open before the reader of the Confessions. Hard struggles with objective difficulty and external obstacle wear deep furrows in the brow; they throw into the glance a solicitude, half penetrating and defiant, half dejected. When a man's hindrances have sprung up from within, and the ill-fought battle of his days has been with his own passions and morbid broodings and unchastened dreams, the eye and the facial lines tell the story of that profound moral defeat which is unlighted by the memories of resolute combat with evil and weakness, and leaves only eternal desolation and the misery that is formless. Our English artist has produced a vision from that prose Inferno which is made so populous in the modern epoch by impotence of will. Those who have seen the picture may easily understand how largely the character of the original must have been pregnant with harassing confusion and distress.

Four years before this (1762), Hume, to whom Lord Marischal had told the story of Rousseau's persecutions, had proffered his services, and declared his eagerness to help in finding a proper refuge for him in England. There had been an exchange of



cordial letters,[351] and then the matter had lain quiet, until the impossibility of remaining longer in Neuchatel had once more set his friends on procuring a safe establishment for their rather difficult refugee. Rousseau's appearance in Paris had created the keenest excitement. "People may talk of ancient Greece as they please,"



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wrote Hume from Paris, "but no nation was ever so proud of genius as this, and no person ever so much engaged their attention as Rousseau! Voltaire and everybody else are quite eclipsed by him." Even Theresa Le Vasseur, who was declared very homely and very awkward, was more talked of than the Princess of Morocco or the Countess of Egmont, on account of her fidelity towards him. His very dog had a name and reputation in the world.[352] Rousseau is always said to have liked the stir which his presence created, but whether this was so or not, he was very impatient to be away from it as soon as possible.

In company with Hume, he left Paris in the second week of January 1766. They crossed from Calais to Dover by night in a passage that lasted twelve hours. Hume, as the orthodox may be glad to know, was extremely ill, while Rousseau cheerfully passed the whole night upon deck, taking no harm, though the seamen were almost frozen to death.[353] They reached London on the thirteenth of January, and the people of London showed nearly as lively an interest in the strange personage whom Hume had brought among them, as the people of Paris had done. A prince of the blood at once went to pay his respects to the Swiss philosopher. The crowd at the playhouse showed more curiosity when the stranger came in than when the king and queen entered. Their majesties were as interested as their subjects, and could scarcely keep their eyes off the author of *Emilius*. George III., then in the heyday of his youth, was so pleased to have a foreigner of genius seeking shelter in his kingdom, that he readily acceded to Conway's suggestion, prompted by Hume, that Rousseau should have a pension settled on him. The ever illustrious Burke, then just made member of Parliament, saw him nearly every day, and became persuaded that "he entertained no principle either to influence his heart, or guide his understanding, but vanity." [354] Hume, on the contrary, thought the best things of his client; "He has an excellent warm heart, and in conversation kindles often to a degree of heat which looks like inspiration; I love him much, and hope that I have some share in his affections.... He is a very modest, mild, well-bred, gentle-spirited and warm-hearted man, as ever I knew in my life. He is also to appearance very sociable. I never saw a man who seems better calculated for good company, nor who seems to take more pleasure in it." "He is a very agreeable, amiable man; but a great humorist. The philosophers of Paris foretold to me that I could not conduct him to Calais without a quarrel; but I think I could live with him all my life in mutual friendship and esteem. I believe one great source of our concord is that neither he nor I are disputatious, which is not the case with any of them. They are also displeased with him, because they think he over-abounds in religion; and it is indeed remarkable that the philosopher of this age who has been most persecuted, is by far the most devout." [355]



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What the Scotch philosopher meant by calling his pupil a humorist, may perhaps be inferred from the story of the trouble he had in prevailing upon Rousseau to go to the play, though Garrick had appointed a special occasion and set apart a special box for him. When the hour came, Rousseau declared that he could not leave his dog behind him. "The first person," he said, "who opens the door, Sultan will run into the streets in search of me and will be lost." Hume told him to lock Sultan up in the room, and carry away the key in his pocket. This was done, but as they proceeded downstairs, the dog began to howl; his master turned back and avowed he had not resolution to leave him in that condition. Hume, however, caught him in his arms, told him that Mr. Garrick had dismissed another company in order to make room for him, that the king and queen were expecting to see him, and that without a better reason than Sultan's impatience it would be ridiculous to disappoint them. Thus, a little by reason, but more by force, he was carried off.[356] Such a story, whatever else we may think of it, shows at least a certain curious and not untouching simplicity. And singularity which made Rousseau like better to keep his dog company at home, than to be stared at by a gaping pit, was too private in its reward to be the result of that vanity and affectation with which he was taxed by men who lived in another sphere of motive.

There was considerable trouble in settling Rousseau. He was eager to leave London almost as soon as he arrived in it. Though pleased with the friendly reception which had been given him, he pronounced London to be as much devoted to idle gossip and frivolity as other capitals. He spent a few weeks in the house of a farmer at Chiswick, thought about fixing himself in the Isle of Wight, then in Wales, then somewhere in our fair Surrey, whose scenery, one is glad to know, greatly attracted him. Finally arrangements were made by Hume with Mr. Davenport for installing him in a house belonging to the latter, at Wootton, near Ashbourne, in the Peak of Derbyshire.[357] Hither Rousseau proceeded with Theresa, at the end of March. Mr. Davenport was a gentleman of large property, and as he seldom inhabited this solitary house, was very willing that Rousseau should take up his abode there without payment. This, however, was what Rousseau's independence could not brook, and he insisted that his entertainer should receive thirty pounds a year for the board of himself and Theresa. [358] So here he settled, in an extremely bitter climate, knowing no word of the language of the people about him, with no companionship but Theresa's, and with nothing to do but walk when the weather was fair, play the harpsicord when it rained, and brood over the incidents which had occurred to him since he had left Switzerland six months before. The first fruits of this unfortunate leisure were a bitter quarrel with Hume, one of the most famous and far-resounding of all the quarrels of illustrious men, but one about which very little needs now be said. The merits of it are plain, and all significance that may ever have belonged to it is entirely dead. The incubation of his grievances began immediately after his arrival at Wootton, but two months elapsed before they burst forth in full flame.[359]



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The general charge against Hume was that he was a member of an accursed triumvirate; Voltaire and D'Alembert were the other partners; and their object was to blacken the character of Rousseau and render his life miserable. The particular acts on which this belief was established were the following:—

(1) While Rousseau was in Paris, there appeared a letter nominally addressed to him by the King of Prussia, and written in an ironical strain, which persuaded Jean Jacques himself that it was the work of Voltaire.[360] Then he suspected D'Alembert. It was really the composition of Horace Walpole, who was then in Paris. Now Hume was the friend of Walpole, and had given Rousseau a card of introduction to him for the purpose of entrusting Walpole with the carriage of some papers. Although the false letter produced the liveliest amusement at Rousseau's cost, first in Paris and then in London, Hume, while feigning to be his warm friend and presenting him to the English public, never took any pains to tell the world that the piece was a forgery, nor did he break with its wicked author.[361] (2) When Rousseau assured Hume that D'Alembert was a cunning and dishonourable man, Hume denied it with an amazing heat, although he well knew the latter to be Rousseau's enemy.[362] (3) Hume lived in London with the son of Tronchin, the Genevese surgeon, and the most mortal of all the foes of Jean Jacques.[363] (4) When Rousseau first came to London, his reception was a distinguished triumph for the victim of persecution from so many governments. England was proud of being his place of refuge, and justly vaunted the freedom of her laws and administration. Suddenly and for no assignable cause the public tone changed, the newspapers either fell silent or else spoke unfavourably, and Rousseau was thought of no more. This must have been due to Hume, who had much influence among people of credit, and who went about boasting of the protection which he had procured for Jean Jacques in Paris.[364] (5) Hume resorted to various small artifices for preventing Rousseau from making friends, for procuring opportunities of opening Rousseau's letters, and the like.[365] (6) A violent satirical letter against Rousseau appeared in the English newspapers, with allusions which could only have been supplied by Hume. (7) On the first night after their departure from Paris, Rousseau, who occupied the same room with Hume, heard him call out several times in the middle of the night in the course of his dreams, *Je tiens Jean Jacques Rousseau*, with extreme vehemence— which words, in spite of the horribly sardonic tone of the dreamer, he interpreted favourably at the time, but which later event proved to have been full of malign significance.[366] (8) Rousseau constantly found Hume eyeing him with a glance of sinister and diabolic import that filled him with an astonishing disquietude, though he did his best to combat it. On one of these occasions he was seized with remorse, fell upon Hume's



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neck, embraced him warmly, and, suffocated with sobs and bathed in tears, cried out in broken accents, *No, no, David Hume is no traitor*, with many protests of affection. The phlegmatic Hume only returned his embrace with politeness, stroked him gently on the back, and repeated several times in a tranquil voice, *Quoi, mon cher monsieur! Eh! mon cher monsieur! Quoi donc, mon cher monsieur!*[367] (9) Although for many weeks Rousseau had kept a firm silence to Hume, neglecting to answer letters that plainly called for answer, and marking his displeasure in other unmistakable ways, yet Hume had never sought any explanation of what must necessarily have struck him as so singular, but continued to write as if nothing had happened. Was not this positive proof of a consciousness of perfidy?

Some years afterwards he substituted another shorter set of grievances, namely, that Hume would not suffer Theresa to sit at table with him; that he made a show of him; and that Hume had an engraving executed of himself, which made him as beautiful as a cherub, while in another engraving, which was a pendant to his own, Jean Jacques was made as ugly as a bear.[368]

It would be ridiculous for us to waste any time in discussing these charges. They are not open to serious examination, though it is astonishing to find writers in our own day who fully believe that Hume was a traitor, and behaved extremely basely to the unfortunate man whom he had inveigled over to a barbarous island. The only part of the indictment about which there could be the least doubt, was the possibility of Hume having been an accomplice in Walpole's very small pleasantry. Some of his friends in Paris suspected that he had had a hand in the supposed letter from the King of Prussia. Although the letter constituted no very malignant jest, and could not by a sensible man have been regarded as furnishing just complaint against one who, like Walpole, was merely an impudent stranger, yet if it could be shown that Hume had taken an active part either in the composition or the circulation of a spiteful bit of satire upon one towards whom he was pretending a singular affection, then we should admit that he showed such a want of sense of the delicacy of friendship as amounted to something like treachery. But a letter from Walpole to Hume sets this doubt at rest. "I cannot be precise as to the time of my writing the King of Prussia's letter, but ... I not only suppressed the letter while you stayed there, out of delicacy to you, but it was the reason why, out of delicacy to myself, I did not go to see him as you often proposed to me, thinking it wrong to go and make a cordial visit to a man, with a letter in my pocket to laugh at him." [369]



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With this all else falls to the ground. It would be as unwise in us, as it was in Rousseau himself, to complicate the hypotheses. Men do not act without motives, and Hume could have no motive in entering into any plot against Rousseau, even if the rival philosophers in France might have motives. We know the character of our David Hume perfectly well, and though it was not faultless, its fault certainly lay rather in an excessive desire to make the world comfortable for everybody, than in anything like purposeless malignity, of which he never had a trace. Moreover, all that befell Rousseau through Hume's agency was exceedingly to his advantage. Hume was not without vanity, and his letters show that he was not displeased at the addition to his consequence which came of his patronage of a man who was much talked about and much stared at. But, however this was, he did all for Rousseau that generosity and thoughtfulness could do. He was at great pains in establishing him; he used his interest to procure for him the grant of a pension from the king; when Rousseau provisionally refused the pension rather than owe anything to Hume, the latter, still ignorant of the suspicion that was blackening in Rousseau's mind, supposed that the refusal came from the fact of the pension being kept private, and at once took measures with the minister to procure the removal of the condition of privacy. Besides undeniable acts like these, the state of Hume's mind towards his curious ward is abundantly shown in his letters to all his most intimate friends, just as Rousseau's gratitude to him is to be read in all his early letters both to Hume and other persons. In the presence of such facts on the one side, and in the absence of any particle of intelligible evidence to neutralise them on the other, to treat Rousseau's charges with gravity is irrational.

If Hume had written back in a mild and conciliatory strain, there can be no doubt that the unfortunate victim of his own morbid imagination would, for a time at any rate, have been sobered and brought to a sense of his misconduct. But Hume was incensed beyond control at what he very pardonably took for a masterpiece of atrocious ingratitude. He reproached Rousseau in terms as harsh as those which Grimm had used nine years before. He wrote to all his friends, withdrawing the kindly words he had once used of Rousseau's character, and substituting in their place the most unfavourable he could find. He gave the philosophic circle in Paris exquisite delight by the confirmation which his story furnished of their own foresight, when they had warned him that he was taking a viper to his bosom. Finally, in spite of the advice of Adam Smith, of one of the greatest of men, Turgot, and one of the smallest, Horace Walpole, he published a succinct account of the quarrel, first in French, and then in English. This step was chiefly due to the advice of the clique of whom D'Alembert was the spokesman, though it is due to him to mention that he softened various expressions in Hume's narrative, which he pronounced too harsh. It may be true that a council of war never fights; a council of men of letters always does. The governing committee of a literary, philosophical, or theological clique form the very worst advisers any man can have.



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Much must be forgiven to Hume, stung as he was by what appeared the most hateful ferocity in one on whom he had heaped acts of affection. Still, one would have been glad on behalf of human dignity, if he had suffered with firm silence petulant charges against which the consciousness of his own uprightness should have been the only answer. That high pride, of which there is too little rather than too much in the world, and which saves men from waste of themselves and others in pitiful accusations, vindications, retaliations, should have helped humane pity in preserving him from this poor quarrel. Long afterwards Rousseau said, "England, of which they paint such fine pictures in France, has so cheerless a climate; my soul, wearied with many shocks, was in a condition of such profound melancholy, that in all that passed I believe I committed many faults. But are they comparable to those of the enemies who persecuted me, supposing them even to have done no more than published our private quarrels?"[370] An ampler contrition would have been more seemly in the first offender, but there is a measure of justice in his complaint. We need not, however, reproach the good Hume. Before six months were over, he admits that he is sometimes inclined to blame his publication, and always to regret it.[371] And his regret was not verbal merely. When Rousseau had returned to France, and was in danger of arrest, Hume was most urgent in entreating Turgot to use his influence with the government to protect the wretched wanderer, and Turgot's answer shows both how sincere this humane interposition was, and how practically serviceable.[372]

Meanwhile there ensued a horrible fray in print. Pamphlets appeared in Paris and London in a cloud. The Succinct Exposure was followed by succinct rejoinders. Walpole officiously printed his own account of his own share in the matter. Boswell officiously wrote to the newspapers defending Rousseau and attacking Walpole. King George followed the battle with intense curiosity. Hume with solemn formalities sent the documents to the British Museum. There was silence only in one place, and that was at Wootton. The unfortunate person who had done all the mischief printed not a word.

The most prompt and quite the least instructive of the remarks invariably made upon any one who has acted in an unusual manner, is that he must be mad. This universal criticism upon the unwonted really tells us nothing, because the term may cover any state of mind from a warranted dissent from established custom, down to absolute dementia. Rousseau was called mad when he took to wearing convenient clothes and living frugally. He was called mad when he quitted the town and went to live in the country. The same facile explanation covered his quarrel with importunate friends at the Hermitage. Voltaire called him mad for saying that if there were perfect harmony of taste and temperament between the king's daughter and the executioner's son, the pair



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ought to be allowed to marry. We who are not forced by conversational necessities to hurry to a judgment, may hesitate to take either taste for the country, or for frugal living, or even for democratic extravagances, as a mark of a disordered mind.[373] That Rousseau's conduct towards Hume was inconsistent with perfect mental soundness is quite plain. But to say this with crude trenchancy, teaches us nothing. Instead of paying ourselves with phrases like monomania, it is more useful shortly to trace the conditions which prepared the way for mental derangement, because this is the only means of understanding either its nature, or the degree to which it extended. These conditions in Rousseau's case are perfectly simple and obvious to any one who recognises the principle, that the essential facts of such mental disorder as his must be sought not in the symptoms, but from the whole range of moral and intellectual constitution, acted on by physical states and acting on them in turn.

Rousseau was born with an organisation of extreme sensibility. This predisposition was further deepened by the application in early youth of mental influences specially calculated to heighten juvenile sensibility. Corrective discipline from circumstance and from formal instruction was wholly absent, and thus the particular excess in his temperament became ever more and more exaggerated, and encroached at a rate of geometrical progression upon all the rest of his impulses and faculties; these, if he had been happily placed under some of the many forms of wholesome social pressure, would then on the contrary have gradually reduced his sensibility to more normal proportion. When the vicious excess had decisively rooted itself in his character, he came to Paris, where it was irritated into further activity by the uncongeniality of all that surrounded him. Hence the growth of a marked unsociality, taking literary form in the Discourses, and practical form in his retirement from the town. The slow depravation of the affective life was hastened by solitude, by sensuous expansion, by the long musings of literary composition. Well does Goethe's Princess warn the hapless Tasso:—

Dieser Pfad

Verleitet uns, durch einsames Gebuesch,
Durch stille Thaeler fortzuwandern; mehr
Und mehr verwoehnt sich das Gemueth und strebt
Die goldne Zeit, die ihm von aussen mangelt,
In seinem Innern wieder herzustellen,
So wenig der Versuch gelingen will.

Then came harsh and unjust treatment prolonged for many months, and this introduced a slight but genuinely misanthropic element of bitterness into what had hitherto been an excess of feeling about himself, rather than any positive feeling of hostility or suspicion about others. Finally and perhaps above all else, he was the victim of tormenting bodily pain, and of sleeplessness which resulted from it. The agitation and excitement



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of the journey to England, completed the sum of the conditions of disturbance, and as soon as ever he was settled at Wootton, and had leisure to brood over the incidents of the few weeks since his arrival in England, the disorder which had long been spreading through his impulses and affections, suddenly but by a most natural sequence extended to the faculties of his intelligence, and he became the prey of delusion, a delusion which was not yet fixed, but which ultimately became so.

“He has only *felt* during the whole course of his life,” wrote Hume sympathetically; “and in this respect his sensibility rises to a pitch beyond what I have seen any example of; but it still gives him a more acute feeling of pain than of pleasure. He is like a man who was stripped not only of his clothes, but of his skin, and turned out in that situation to combat with the rude and boisterous elements.”[374] A morbid affective state of this kind and of such a degree of intensity, was the sure antecedent of a morbid intellectual state, general or partial, depressed or exalted. One who is the prey of unsound feelings, if they are only marked enough and persistent enough, naturally ends by a correspondingly unsound arrangement of all or some of his ideas to match. The intelligence is seduced into finding supports in misconception of circumstances, for a misconception of human relation which had its root in disordered emotion. This completes the breach of correspondence between the man’s nature and the external facts with which he has to deal, though the breach may not, and in Rousseau’s case certainly did not, extend along the whole line of feeling and judgment. Rousseau’s delusion about Hume’s sinister feeling and designs, which was the first definite manifestation of positive unsoundness in the sphere of the intelligence, was a last result of the gradual development of an inherited predisposition to affective unsoundness, which unhappily for the man’s history had never been counteracted either by a strenuous education, or by the wholesome urgencies of life.

We have only to remember that with him, as with the rest of us, there was entire unity of nature, without cataclysm or marvel or inexplicable rupture of mental continuity. All the facts came in an order that might have been foretold; they all lay together, with their foundations down in physical temperament; the facts which made Rousseau’s name renowned and his influence a great force, along with those which made his life a scandal to others and a misery to himself. The deepest root of moral disorder lies in an immoderate expectation of happiness, and this immoderate unlawful expectation was the mark both of his character and his work. The exaltation of emotion over intelligence was the secret of his most striking production; the same exaltation, by gaining increased mastery over his whole existence, at length passed the limit of sanity and wrecked him. The tendency of the dominant



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side of a character towards diseased exaggeration is a fact of daily observation. The ruin which the excess of strong religious imagination works in natures without the quality of energetic objective reaction, was shown in the case of Rousseau's contemporary, Cowper. This gentle poet's delusions about the wrath of God were equally pitiable and equally a source of torment to their victim, with Rousseau's delusions about the malignity of his mysterious plotters among men. We must call such a condition unsound, but the important thing is to remember that insanity was only a modification of certain specially marked tendencies of the sufferer's sanity.

The desire to protect himself against the defamation of his enemies led him at this time to compose that account of his own life, which is probably the only one of his writings that continues to be generally read. He composed the first part of the Confessions at Wootton, during the autumn and winter of 1766. The idea of giving his memoirs to the public was an old one, originally suggested by one of his publishers. To write memoirs of one's own life was one of the fancies of the time, but like all else, it became in Rousseau's hand something more far-reaching and sincere than a passing fashion. Other people wrote polite histories of their outer lives, amply coloured with romantic decorations. Rousseau with unquailing veracity plunged into the inmost depths, hiding nothing that would be likely to make him either ridiculous or hateful in common opinion, and inventing nothing that could attract much sympathy or much admiration. Though, as has been pointed out already, the Confessions abound in small inaccuracies of date, hardly to be avoided by an oldish man in reference to the facts of his boyhood, whether a Rousseau or a Goethe, and though one or two of the incidents are too deeply coloured with the hues of sentimental reminiscence, and one or two of them are downright impossible, yet when all these deductions have been made, the substantial truthfulness of what remains is made more evident with every addition to our materials for testing them. When all the circumstances of Rousseau's life are weighed, and when full account has been taken of his proved delinquencies, we yet perceive that he was at bottom a character as essentially sincere, truthful, careful of fact and reality, as is consistent with the general empire of sensation over untrained intelligence.[375] As for the egotism of the Confessions, it is hard to see how a man is to tell the story of his own life without egotism. And it may be worth adding that the self-feeling which comes to the surface and asserts itself, is in a great many cases far less vicious and debilitating than the same feeling nursed internally with a troglodytish shyness. But Rousseau's egotism manifested itself perversely. This is true to a certain small extent, and one or two of the disclosures in the Confessions are in very nauseous matter, and are made moreover in a very nauseous manner.



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There are some vices whose grotesqueness stirs us more deeply than downright atrocities, and we read of certain puerilities avowed by Rousseau, with a livelier impatience than old Benvenuto Cellini quickens in us, when he confesses to a horrible assassination. This morbid form of self-feeling is only less disgusting than the allied form which clothes itself in the phrases of religious exaltation. And there is not much of it. Blot out half a dozen pages from the Confessions, and the egotism is no more perverted than in the confessions of Augustine or of Cardan.

These remarks are not made to extenuate Rousseau's faults, or to raise the popular estimate of his character, but simply in the interests of a greater precision of criticism. In England criticism has nearly always been of the most vulgar superficiality in respect to Rousseau, from the time of Horace Walpole downwards. The Confessions in their least agreeable parts, or rather especially in those parts, are the expression on a new side and in a peculiar way of the same notion of the essential goodness of nature and the importance of understanding nature and restoring its reign, which inspired the Discourses and Emilius. "I would fain show to my fellows," he began, "a man in all the truth of nature," and he cannot be charged with any failure to keep his word. He despised opinion, and hence was careless to observe whether or no this revelation of human nakedness was likely to add to the popular respect for nature and the natural man. After all, considering that literature is for the most part a hollow and pretentious phantasmagoria of mimic figures posing in breeches and peruke, we may try to forgive certain cruel blows to the dignified assumptions, solemn words, and high heels of convention, in one who would not lie, nor dissemble kinship with the four-footed. Intense subjective preoccupations in markedly emotional natures all tend to come to the same end. The distance from Rousseau's odious erotics to the glorified ecstasies of many a poor female saint is not far. In any case, let us know the facts about human nature, and the pathological facts no less than the others. These are the first thing, and the second, and the third also.

The exaltation of the opening page of the Confessions is shocking. No monk nor saint ever wrote anything more revolting in its blasphemous self-feeling. But the exaltation almost instantly became calm, when the course of the story necessarily drew the writer into dealings with objective facts, even muffled as they were by memory and imagination. The broodings over old reminiscence soothed him, the labour of composition occupied him, and he forgot, as the modern reader would never know from internal evidence, that he was preparing a vindication of his life and character against the infamies with which Hume and others were supposed to be industriously blackening them. While he was writing this famous composition, severed by so vast a gulf from the modes of English provincial life,



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he was on good terms with one or two of the great people in his neighbourhood, and kept up a gracious and social correspondence with them. He was greatly pleased by a compliment that was paid to him by the government, apparently through the interest of General Conway. The duty that had been paid upon certain boxes forwarded to Rousseau from Switzerland was recouped by the treasury,[376] and the arrangements for the annual pension of one hundred pounds were concluded and accepted by him, after he had duly satisfied himself that Hume was not the indirect author of the benefaction.[377] The weather was the worst possible, but whenever it allowed him to go out of doors, he found delight in climbing the heights around him in search of curious mosses; for he had now come to think the discovery of a single new plant a hundred times more useful than to have the whole human race listening to your sermons for half a century.[378] "This indolent and contemplative life that you do not approve," he wrote to the elder Mirabeau, "and for which I pretend to make no excuses, becomes every day more delicious to me: to wander alone among the trees and rocks that surround my dwelling; to muse or rather to extragate at my ease, and as you say to stand gaping in the air; when my brain gets too hot, to calm it by dissecting some moss or fern; in short, to surrender myself without restraint to my phantasies, which, heaven be thanked, are all under my own control,—all that is for me the height of enjoyment, to which I can imagine nothing superior in this world for a man of my age and in my condition." [379]

This contentment did not last long. The snow kept him indoors. The excitement of composition abated. Theresa harassed him by ignoble quarrels with the women in the kitchen. His delusions returned with greater force than before. He believed that the whole English nation was in a plot against him, that all his letters were opened before reaching London and before leaving it, that all his movements were closely watched, and that he was surrounded by unseen guards to prevent any attempt at escape.[380] At length these delusions got such complete mastery over him, that in a paroxysm of terror he fled away from Wootton, leaving money, papers, and all else behind him. Nothing was heard of him for a fortnight, when Mr. Davenport received a letter from him dated at Spalding in Lincolnshire. Mr. Davenport's conduct throughout was marked by a humanity and patience that do him the highest honour. He confesses himself "quite moved to read poor Rousseau's mournful epistle." "You shall see his letter," he writes to Hume, "the first opportunity; but God help him, I can't for pity give a copy; and 'tis so much mixed with his own poor little private concerns, that it would not be right in me to do it." [381] This is the generosity which makes Hume's impatience and that of his mischievous advisers in Paris appear petty. Rousseau had behaved quite as ill to Mr. Davenport as he had done to Hume,



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and had received at least equal services from him.[382] The good man at once sent a servant to Spalding in search of his unhappy guest, but Rousseau had again disappeared. The parson of the parish had passed several hours of each day in his company, and had found him cheerful and good-humoured. He had had a blue coat made for himself, and had written a long letter to the lord chancellor, praying him to appoint a guard, at Rousseau's own expense, to escort him in safety out of the kingdom where enemies were plotting against his life.[383] He was next heard of at Dover (May 18), whence he wrote a letter to General Conway, setting forth his delusion in full form. [384] He is the victim of a plot; the conspirators will not allow him to leave the island, lest he should divulge in other countries the outrages to which he has been subjected here; he perceives the sinister manoeuvres that will arrest him if he attempts to put his foot on board ship. But he warns them that his tragical disappearance cannot take place without creating inquiry. Still if General Conway will only let him go, he gives his word of honour that he will not publish a line of the memoirs he has written, nor ever divulge the wrongs which he has suffered in England. "I see my last hour approaching," he concluded; "I am determined, if necessary, to advance to meet it, and to perish or be free; there is no longer any other alternative." On the same evening on which he wrote this letter (about May 20-22), the forlorn creature took boat and landed at Calais, where he seems at once to have recovered his composure and a right mind.

FOOTNOTES:

[350] Jan. 1766—May 1767.

[351] Streckeisen, ii. 275, *etc. Corr.*, iii.

[352] Burton, ii. 299.

[353] The materials for this chapter are taken from Rousseau's *Correspondence* (vols. iv. and v.), and from Hume's letters to various persons, given in the second volume of Mr. Burton's *Life of Hume*. Everybody who takes an interest in Rousseau is indebted to Mr. Burton for the ample documents which he has provided. Yet one cannot but regret the satire on Rousseau with which he intersperses them, and which is not always felicitous. For one instance, he implies (p. 295) that Rousseau invented the story given in the Confessions, of Hume's correcting the proofs of Wallace's book against himself. The story may be true or not, but at any rate Rousseau had it very circumstantially from Lord Marischal; see letter from Lord M. to J.J.R., in Streckeisen, ii. 67. Again, such an expression as Rousseau's "*occasional* attention to small matters" (p. 321) only shows that the writer has not read Rousseau's letters, which are indeed not worth reading, except by those who wish to have a right to speak about Rousseau's character. The numerous pamphlets on the quarrel between Hume and Rousseau, if I may judge from

those of them which I have turned over, really shed no light on the matter, though they added much heat. For the journey, see *Corr.*, iv. 307; Burton, ii. 304.



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[354] *Letter to a Member of the National Assembly*. The same passage contains some strong criticism on Rousseau's style.

[355] Burton, 304, 309, 310.

[356] *Ib.* ii. 309, *n.*

[357] Mr. Howitt has given an account of Rousseau's quarters at Wootton, in his *Visits to Remarkable Places*. One or two aged peasants had some confused memory of "old Ross-hall." For Rousseau's own description, see his letters to *Mdme. de Luze*, May 10, 1766. *Corr.*, iv. 326.

[358] Burton, 313. It has been stated that Rousseau never paid this; at any rate when he fled, he left between thirty and forty pounds in Mr. Davenport's hands. See Davenport to Hume; Burton, 367. Rousseau's accurate probity in affairs of money is absolutely unimpeachable.

[359] *Corr.* iv. 312. April 9, 1766.

[360] Here is a translation of this rather poor piece of sarcasm:—"My dear Jean Jacques—You have renounced Geneva, your native place. You have caused your expulsion from Switzerland, a country so extolled in your writings; France has issued a warrant against you; so do you come to me. I admire your talents; I am amused by your dreamings, though let me tell you they absorb you too much and for too long. You must at length be sober and happy; you have caused enough talk about yourself by oddities which in truth are hardly becoming a really great man. Prove to your enemies that you can now and then have common sense. That will annoy them and do you no harm. My states offer you a peaceful retreat. I wish you well, and will treat you well, if you will let me. But if you persist in refusing my help, do not reckon upon my telling any one that you did so. If you are bent on tormenting your spirit to find new misfortunes, choose whatever you like best. I am a king, and can procure them for you at your pleasure; and what will certainly never happen to you in respect of your enemies, I will cease to persecute you as soon as you cease to take a pride in being persecuted. Your good friend, FREDERICK."

[361] *Corr.*, iv. 313, 343, 388, 398.

[362] *Ib.* 395.

[363] *Ib.* 389, *etc.*

[364] *Ib.* 384.

[365] *Ib.* 343, 344, 387, *etc.*



[366] *Corr.*, iv. 346.

[367] *Ib.* 390. A letter from Hume to Blair, long before the rupture overt, shows the former to have been by no means so phlegmatic on this occasion as he may have seemed. "I hope," he writes, "you have not so bad an opinion of me as to think I was not melted on this occasion; I assure you I kissed him and embraced him twenty times, with a plentiful effusion of tears. I think no scene of my life was ever more affecting." Burton, ii. 315. The great doubters of the eighteenth century could without fear have accepted the test of the ancient saying, that men without tears are worth little.

[368] Bernardin de St. Pierre, *Oeuv.*, xii. 79.



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[369] Walpole's *Letters*, v. 7 (Cunningham's edition). For other letters from the shrewd coxcomb on the same matter, see pp. 23-28. A corroboration of the statement that Hume knew nothing of the letter until he was in England, may be inferred from what he wrote to Madame de Boufflers; Burton, ii. 306, and *n.* 2.

[370] Bernardin de St. Pierre, *Oeuv.*, xii. 79.

[371] To Adam Smith. Burton, 380.

[372] Burton, 381.

[373] A very common but random opinion traces Rousseau's insanity to certain disagreeable habits avowed in the *Confessions*. They may have contributed in some small degree to depression of vital energies, though for that matter Rousseau's strength and power of endurance were remarkable to the end. But they certainly did not produce a mental state in the least corresponding to that particular variety of insanity, which possesses definitely marked features.

[374] Burton, ii. 314.

[375] For an instructive and, as it appears to me, a thoroughly trustworthy account of the temper in which the *Confessions* were written, see the 4th of the *Reveries*.

[376] Letter to the Duke of Grafton, Feb. 27, 1767. *Corr.*, v. 98: also 118.

[377] *Ib.* v. 133; also to General Conway (March 26), p. 137, *etc.*

[378] *Corr.*, v. 37.

[379] *Corr.*, v. 88.

[380] See the letters to Du Peyrou, of the 2d and 4th of April 1767. *Corr.*, v. 140-147.

[381] Davenport to Hume; Burton, 367-371.

[382] J.J.R. to Davenport, Dec. 22, 1766, and April 30, 1767. *Corr.*, v. 66, 152.

[383] Burton, 369, 375.

[384] *Corr.*, v. 153.

CHAPTER VII.

THE END.



Before leaving England, Rousseau had received more than one long and rambling letter from a man who was as unlike the rest of mankind as he was unlike them himself. This was the Marquis of Mirabeau (1715-89), the violent, tyrannical, pedantic, humoristic sire of a more famous son. Perhaps we might say that Mirabeau and Rousseau were the two most singular originals then known to men, and Mirabeau's originality was in some respects the more salient of the two. There is less of the conventional tone of the eighteenth century Frenchman in him than in any other conspicuous man of the time, though like many other headstrong and despotic souls he picked up the current notions of philanthropy and human brotherhood. He really was by very force of temperament that rebel against the narrowness, trimness, and moral formalism of the time which Rousseau only claimed and attempted to be, with the secondary degree of success that follows vehemence without native strength. Mirabeau was a sort of Swift, who had strangely taken up the trade of friendship for man and adopted the phrases of perfectibility; while Rousseau on the other hand was meant for a Fenelon, save that he became possessed of unclean devils.



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Mirabeau, like Jean Jacques himself, was so impressed by the marked tenor of contemporary feeling, its prudential didactics, its formulistic sociality, that his native insurgency only found vent in private life, while in public he played pedagogue to the human race. Friend of Quesnai and orthodox economist as he was, he delighted in Rousseau's books: "I know no morality that goes deeper than yours; it strikes like a thunderbolt, and advances with the steady assurance of truth, for you are always true, according to your notions for the moment." He wrote to tell him so, but he told him at the same time at great length, and with a caustic humour and incoherency less academic than Rabelaisian, that he had behaved absurdly in his quarrel with Hume. There is nothing more quaint than the appearance of a few of the sacramental phrases of the sect of the economists, floating in the midst of a copious stream of egoistic whimsicalities. He concludes with a diverting enumeration of all his country seats and demesnes, with their respective advantages and disadvantages, and prays Rousseau to take up his residence in whichever of them may please him best.[385]

Immediately on landing at Calais Rousseau informed Mirabeau, and Mirabeau lost no time in conveying him stealthily, for the warrant of the parliament of Paris was still in force, to a house at Fleury. But the Friend of Men, to use his own account of himself, "bore letters as a plum-tree bears plums," and wrote to his guest with strange humoristic volubility and droll imperturbable temper, as one who knew his Jean Jacques. He exhorts him in many sheets to harden himself against excessive sensibility, to be less pusillanimous, to take society more lightly, as his own light estimate of its worth should lead him to do. "No doubt its outside is a shifting surface-picture, nay even ridiculous, if you will; but if the irregular and ceaseless flight of butterflies wearies you in your walk, it is your own fault for looking continuously at what was only made to adorn and vary the scene. But how many social virtues, how much gentleness and considerateness, how many benevolent actions, remain at the bottom of it all." [386] Enormous manifestoes of the doctrine of perfectibility were not in the least degree either soothing or interesting to Rousseau, and the thrusts of shrewd candour at his expense might touch his fancy on a single occasion, but not oftener. Two humorists are seldom successful in amusing one another. Besides, Mirabeau insisted that Jean Jacques should read this or that of his books. Rousseau answered that he would try, but warned him of the folly of it. "I do not engage always to follow what you say, because it has always been painful to me to think, and fatiguing to follow the thoughts of other people, and at present I cannot do so at all." [387] Though they continued to be good friends, Rousseau only remained three or four weeks at Fleury. His old acquaintance at Montmorency, the Prince of Conti, partly perhaps from contrition at the rather unchivalrous fashion in which his great friends had hustled the philosopher away at the time of the decree of the parliament of Paris, offered him refuge at one of his country seats at Trye near Gisors. Here he installed Rousseau under the name of Renou, either to silence the indiscreet curiosity of neighbours, or to gratify a whim of Rousseau himself.



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Rousseau remained for a year (June 1767-June 1768), composing the second part of the Confessions, in a condition of extreme mental confusion. Dusky phantoms walked with him once more. He knew the gardener, the servants, the neighbours, all to be in the pay of Hume, and that he was watched day and night with a view to his destruction. [388] He entirely gave up either reading or writing, save a very small number of letters, and he declared that to take up the pen even for these was like lifting a load of iron. The only interest he had was botany, and for this his passion became daily more intense. He appears to have been as contented as a child, so long as he could employ himself in long expeditions in search of new plants, in arranging a herbarium, in watching the growth of the germ of some rare seed which needed careful tending. But the story had once more the same conclusion. He fled from Trye, as he had fled from Wootton. He meant apparently to go to Chamberi, drawn by the deep magnetic force of old memories that seemed long extinct. But at Grenoble on his way thither he encountered a substantial grievance. A man alleged that he had lent Rousseau a few francs seven years previously. He was undoubtedly mistaken, and was fully convicted of his mistake by proper authorities, but Rousseau's correspondents suffered none the less for that. We all know when monomania seizes a man, how adroitly and how eagerly it colours every incident. The mistaken claim was proof demonstrative of that frightful and tenebrous conspiracy, which they might have thought a delusion hitherto, but which, alas, this showed to be only too tragically real; and so on, through many pages of droning wretchedness.[389] Then we find him at Bourgoin, where he spent some months in shabby taverns, and then many months more at Monquin on adjoining uplands.[390] The estrangement from Theresa, of which enough has been said already, [391] was added to his other torments. He resolved, as so many of the self-tortured have done since, to go in search of happiness to the western lands beyond the Atlantic, where the elixir of bliss is thought by the wearied among us to be inexhaustible and assured. Almost in the same page he turns his face eastwards, and dreams of ending his days peacefully among the islands of the Grecian archipelago. Next he gravely, not only designed, but actually took measures, to return to Wootton. All was no more than the momentary incoherent purpose of a sick man's dream, the weary distraction of one who had deliberately devoted himself to isolation from his fellows, without first sitting down carefully to count the cost, or to measure the inner resources which he possessed to meet the deadly strain that isolation puts on every one of a man's mental fibres. Geographical loneliness is to some a condition of their fullest strength, but most of the few who dare to make a moral solitude for themselves, find that they have assuredly not made peace. Such solitude, as South said of the study of the Apocalypse, either finds a man mad, or leaves him so. Not all can play the stoic who will, and it is still more certain that one who like Rousseau has lain down with the doctrine that in all things imaginable it is impossible for him to do at all what he cannot do with pleasure, will end in a condition of profound and hopeless impotence in respect to pleasure itself.



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In July 1770, he made his way to Paris, and here he remained eight years longer, not without the introduction of a certain degree of order into his outer life, though the clouds of vague suspicion and distrust, half bitter, half mournful, hung heavily as ever upon his mind. The Dialogues, which he wrote at this period (1775-76) to vindicate his memory from the defamation that was to be launched in a dark torrent upon the world at the moment of his death, could not possibly have been written by a man in his right mind. Yet the best of the Musings, which were written still nearer the end, are masterpieces in the style of contemplative prose. The third, the fifth, the seventh, especially abound in that even, full, mellow gravity of tone which is so rare in literature, because the deep absorption of spirit which is its source is so rare in life. They reveal Rousseau to us with a truth beyond that attained in any of his other pieces—a mournful sombre figure, looming shadowily in the dark glow of sundown among sad and desolate places. There is nothing like them in the French tongue, which is the speech of the clear, the cheerful, or the august among men; nothing like this sonorous plainsong, the strangely melodious expression in the music of prose of a darkened spirit which yet had imaginative visions of beatitude.

* * * * *

It is interesting to look on one or two pictures of the last waste and obscure years of the man, whose words were at this time silently fermenting for good and for evil in many spirits—a Schiller, a Herder, a Jeanne Phlipon, a Robespierre, a Gabriel Mirabeau, and many hundreds of those whose destiny was not to lead, but ingenuously to follow. Rousseau seems to have repulsed nearly all his ancient friends, and to have settled down with dogged resolve to his old trade of copying music. In summer he rose at five, copied music until half-past seven; munched his breakfast, arranging on paper during the process such plants as he had gathered the previous afternoon; then he returned to his work, dined at half-past twelve, and went forth to take coffee at some public place. He would not return from his walk until nightfall, and he retired at half-past ten. The pavements of Paris were hateful to him because they tore his feet, and, said he, with deeply significant antithesis, "I am not afraid of death, but I dread pain." He always found his way as fast as possible to one of the suburbs, and one of his greatest delights was to watch Mont Valerien in the sunset. "Atheists," he said calumniously, "do not love the country; they like the environs of Paris, where you have all the pleasures of the city, good cheer, books, pretty women; but if you take these things away, then they die of weariness." The note of every bird held him attentive, and filled his mind with delicious images. A graceful story is told of two swallows who made a nest in Rousseau's sleeping-room, and hatched the eggs there. "I was no more than a doorkeeper for them," he said, "for I kept opening the window for them every moment. They used to fly with a great stir round my head, until I had fulfilled the duties of the tacit convention between these swallows and me."



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In January 1771, Bernardin de St. Pierre, author of the immortal *Paul and Virginia* (1788), finding himself at the Cape of Good Hope, wrote to a friend in France just previously to his return to Europe, counting among other delights that of seeing two summers in one year.[392] Rousseau happened to see the letter, and expressed a desire to make the acquaintance of a man who in returning home should think of that as one of his chief pleasures. To this we owe the following pictures of an interior from St. Pierre's hand:—

In the month of June in 1772, a friend having offered to take me to see Jean Jacques Rousseau, he brought me to a house in the Rue Platriere, nearly opposite to the Hotel de la Poste. We mounted to the fourth story. We knocked, and Madame Rousseau opened the door. "Come in, gentlemen," she said, "you will find my husband." We passed through a very small antechamber, where the household utensils were neatly arranged, and from that into a room where Jean Jacques was seated in an overcoat and a white cap, busy copying music. He rose with a smiling face, offered us chairs, and resumed his work, at the same time taking a part in conversation. He was thin and of middle height. One shoulder struck me as rather higher than the other ... otherwise he was very well proportioned. He had a brown complexion, some colour on his cheekbones, a good mouth, a well-made nose, a rounded and lofty brow, and eyes full of fire. The oblique lines falling from the nostrils to the extremity of the lips, and marking a physiognomy, in his case expressed great sensibility and something even painful. One observed in his face three or four of the characteristics of melancholy—the deep receding eyes and the elevation of the eyebrows; you saw profound sadness in the wrinkles of the brow; a keen and even caustic gaiety in a thousand little creases at the corners of the eyes, of which the orbits entirely disappeared when he laughed.... Near him was a spinette on which from time to time he tried an air. Two little beds of blue and white striped calico, a table, and a few chairs, made the stock of his furniture. On the walls hung a plan of the forest and park of Montmorency, where he had once lived, and an engraving of the King of England, his old benefactor. His wife was sitting mending linen; a canary sang in a cage hung from the ceiling; sparrows came for crumbs on to the sills of the windows, which on the side of the street were open; while in the window of the antechamber we noticed boxes and pots filled with such plants as it pleases nature to sow. There was in the whole effect of his little establishment an air of cleanness, peace, and simplicity, which was delightful.

A few days after, Rousseau returned the visit. "He wore a round wig, well powdered and curled, carrying a hat under his arm, and in a full suit of nankeen. His whole exterior was modest, but extremely neat." He expressed his passion for good



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coffee, saying that this and ice were the only two luxuries for which he cared. St. Pierre happened to have brought some from the Isle of Bourbon, so on the following day he rashly sent Rousseau a small packet, which at first produced a polite letter of thanks; but the day after the letter of thanks came one of harsh protest against the ignominy of receiving presents which could not be returned, and bidding the unfortunate donor to choose between taking his coffee back or never seeing his new friend again. A fair bargain was ultimately arranged, St. Pierre receiving in exchange for his coffee some curious root or other, and a book on ichthyology. Immediately afterwards he went to dine with his sage. He arrived at eleven in the forenoon, and they conversed until half-past twelve.

Then his wife laid the cloth. He took a bottle of wine, and as he put it on the table, asked whether we should have enough, or if I was fond of drinking. "How many are there of us," said I. "Three," he said; "you, my wife, and myself." "Well," I went on, "when I drink wine and am alone, I drink a good half-bottle, and I drink a trifle more when I am with friends." "In that case," he answered, "we shall not have enough; I must go down into the cellar." He brought up a second bottle. His wife served two dishes, one of small tarts, and another which was covered. He said, showing me the first, "That is your dish and the other is mine." "I don't eat much pastry," I said, "but I hope to be allowed to taste what you have got." "Oh, they are both common," he replied; "but most people don't care for this. 'Tis a Swiss dish; a compound of lard, mutton, vegetables, and chestnuts." It was excellent. After these two dishes, we had slices of beef in salad; then biscuits and cheese; after which his wife served the coffee.

* * * * *

One morning when I was at his house, I saw various domestics either coming for rolls of music, or bringing them to him to copy. He received them standing and uncovered. He said to some, "The price is so much," and received the money; to others, "How soon must I return my copy?" "My mistress would like to have it back in a fortnight." "Oh, that's out of the question: I have work, I can't do it in less than three weeks." I inquired why he did not take his talents to better market. "Ah," he answered, "there are two Rousseaus in the world; one rich, or who might have been if he had chosen; a man capricious, singular, fantastic; this is the Rousseau of the public; the other is obliged to work for his living, the Rousseau whom you see." [393]

They often took long rambles together, and all proceeded most harmoniously, unless St. Pierre offered to pay for such refreshment as they might take, when a furious explosion was sure to follow. Here is one more picture, without explosion.

An Easter Monday Excursion to Mont Valerien.



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We made an appointment at a cafe in the Champs Elysees. In the morning we took some chocolate. The wind was westerly, and the air fresh. The sun was surrounded by white clouds, spread in masses over an azure sky. Reaching the Bois de Boulogne by eight o'clock, Jean Jacques set to work botanising. As he collected his little harvest, we kept walking along. We had gone through part of the wood, when in the midst of the solitude we perceived two young girls, one of whom was arranging the other's hair.— [Reminded them of some verses of Virgil.]...Arrived on the edge of the river, we crossed the ferry with a number of people whom devotion was taking to Mont Valerien. We climbed an extremely stiff slope, and were hardly on the top before hunger overtook us and we began to think of dining. Rousseau then led the way towards a hermitage, where he knew we could make sure of hospitality. The brother who opened to us, conducted us to the chapel, where they were reciting the litanies of providence, which are extremely beautiful.... When we had prayed, Jean Jacques said to me with genuine feeling: "Now I feel what is said in the gospel, 'Where several of you are gathered together in my name, there will I be in the midst of them.' There is a sentiment of peace and comfort here that penetrates the soul." I replied, "If Fenelon were alive, you would be a Catholic." "Ah," said he, the tears in his eyes, "if Fenelon were alive, I would seek to be his lackey." Presently we were introduced into the refectory; we seated ourselves during the reading. The subject was the injustice of the complainings of man: God has brought him from nothing, he oweth him nothing. After the reading, Rousseau said to me in a voice of deep emotion: "Ah, how happy is the man who can believe...." We walked about for some time in the cloister and the gardens. They command an immense prospect. Paris in the distance reared her towers all covered with light, and made a crown to the far-spreading landscape. The brightness of the view contrasted with the great leaden clouds that rolled after one another from the west, and seemed to fill the valley.... In the afternoon rain came on, as we approached the Porte Maillot. We took shelter along with a crowd of other holiday folk under some chestnut-trees whose leaves were coming out. One of the waiters of a tavern perceiving Jean Jacques, rushed to him full of joy, exclaiming, "What, is it you, *mon bonhomme*? Why, it is a whole age since we have seen you." Rousseau replied cheerfully, "'Tis because my wife has been ill, and I myself have been out of sorts." "*Mon pauvre bonhomme*," replied the lad, "you must not stop here; come in, come in, and I will find room for you." He hurried us along to a room upstairs, where in spite of the crowd he procured for us chairs and a table, and bread and wine. I said to Jean Jacques, "He seems very familiar with you."



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He answered, "Yes, we have known one another some years. We used to come here in fine weather, my wife and I, to eat a cutlet of an evening." [394]

Things did not continue to go thus smoothly. One day St. Pierre went to see him, and was received without a word, and with stiff and gloomy mien. He tried to talk, but only got monosyllables; he took up a book, and this drew a sarcasm which sent him forth from the room. For more than two months they did not meet. At length they had an accidental encounter at a street corner. Rousseau accosted St. Pierre, and with a gradually warming sensibility proceeded thus: "There are days when I want to be alone and crave privacy. I come back from my solitary expeditions so calm and contented. There I have not been wanting to anybody, nor has anybody been wanting to me," and so on. [395] He expressed this humour more pointedly on some other occasion, when he said that there were times in which he fled from the eyes of men as from Parthian arrows. As one said who knew from experience, the fate of his most intimate friend depended on a word or a gesture. [396] Another of them declared that he knew Rousseau's style of discarding a friend by letter so thoroughly, that he felt confident he could supply Rousseau's place in case of illness or absence. [397] In much of this we suspect that the quarrel was perfectly justified. Sociality meant a futile display before unworthy and condescending curiosity. "It is not I whom they care for," he very truly said, "but public opinion and talk about me, without a thought of what real worth I may have." Hence his steadfast refusal to go out to dine or sup. The mere impertinence of the desire to see him was illustrated by some coxcombs who insisted with a famous actress of his acquaintance, that she should invite the strange philosopher to meet them. She was aware that no known force would persuade Rousseau to come, so she dressed up her tailor as philosopher, bade him keep a silent tongue, and vanish suddenly without a word of farewell. The tailor was long philosophically silent, and by the time that wine had loosened his tongue, the rest of the company were too far gone to perceive that the supposed Rousseau was chattering vulgar nonsense. [398] We can believe that with admirers of this stamp Rousseau was well pleased to let tailors or others stand in his place. There were some, however, of a different sort, who flitted across his sight and then either vanished of their own accord, or were silently dismissed, from Madame de Genlis up to Gretry and Gluck. With Gluck he seems to have quarrelled for setting his music to French words, when he must have known that Italian was the only tongue fit for music. [399] Yet it was remarked that no one ever heard him speak ill of others. His enemies, the figures of his delusion, were vaguely denounced in many dronings, but they remained in dark shadow and were unnamed. When Voltaire paid his famous last visit to the capital (1778), some one thought



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of paying court to Rousseau by making a mock of the triumphal reception of the old warrior, but Rousseau harshly checked the detractor. It is true that in 1770-71 he gave to some few of his acquaintances one or more readings of the Confessions, although they contained much painful matter for many people still living, among the rest for Madame d'Epinau. She wrote justifiably enough to the lieutenant of police, praying that all such readings might be prohibited, and it is believed that they were so prohibited. [400]

In 1769, when Polish anarchy was at its height, as if to show at once how profound the anarchy was, and how profound the faith among many minds in the power of the new French theories, an application was made to Mably to draw up a scheme for the renovation of distracted Poland. Mably's notions won little esteem from the persons who had sought for them, and in 1771 a similar application was made to Rousseau in his Parisian garret. He replied in the Considerations on the Government of Poland, which are written with a good deal of vigour of expression, but contain nothing that needs further discussion. He hinted to the Poles with some shrewdness that a curtailment of their territory by their neighbours was not far off,[401] and the prediction was rapidly fulfilled by the first partition of Poland in the following year.

He was asked one day of what nation he had the highest opinion. He answered, the Spanish. The Spanish nation, he said, has a character; if it is not rich, it still preserves all its pride and self-respect in the midst of its poverty; and it is animated by a single spirit, for it has not been scourged by the conflicting opinions of philosophy.[402]

He was extremely poor for these last eight years of his life. He seems to have drawn the pension which George III. had settled on him, for not more than one year. We do not know why he refused to receive it afterwards. A well-meaning friend, when the arrears amounted to between six and seven thousand francs, applied for it on his behalf, and a draft for the money was sent. Rousseau gave the offender a vigorous rebuke for meddling in affairs that did not concern him, and the draft was destroyed. Other attempts to induce him to draw this money failed equally.[403] Yet he had only about fifty pounds a year to live on, together with the modest amount which he earned by copying music.[404]

The sting of indigence began to make itself felt towards 1777. His health became worse and he could not work. Theresa was waxing old, and could no longer attend to the small cares of the household. More than one person offered them shelter and provision, and the old distractions as to a home in which to end his days began once again. At length M. Girardin prevailed upon him to come and live at Ermenonville, one of his estates some twenty miles from Paris. A dense cloud of obscure misery hangs over the last months of this forlorn existence.[405] No tragedy



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had ever a fifth act so squalid. Theresa's character seems to have developed into something truly bestial. Rousseau's terrors of the designs of his enemies returned with great violence. He thought he was imprisoned, and he knew that he had no means of escape. One day (July 2, 1778), suddenly and without a single warning symptom, all drew to an end; the sensations which had been the ruling part of his life were affected by pleasure and pain no more, the dusky phantoms all vanished into space. The surgeons reported that the cause of his death was apoplexy, but a suspicion has haunted the world ever since, that he destroyed himself by a pistol-shot. We cannot tell. There is no inherent improbability in the fact of his having committed suicide. In the *New Heloisa* he had thrown the conditions which justified self-destruction into a distinct formula. Fifteen years before, he declared that his own case fell within the conditions which he had prescribed, and that he was meditating action.[406] Only seven years before, he had implied that a man had the right to deliver himself of the burden of his own life, if its miseries were intolerable and irremediable.[407] This, however, counts for nothing in the absence of some kind of positive evidence, and of that there is just enough to leave the manner of his end a little doubtful.[408] Once more, we cannot tell.

By the serene moonrise of a summer night, his body was put under the ground on an island in the midst of a small lake, where poplars throw shadows over the still water, silently figuring the destiny of mortals. Here it remained for sixteen years. Then amid the roar of cannon, the crash of trumpet and drum, and the wild acclamations of a populace gone mad in exultation, terror, fury, it was ordered that the poor dust should be transported to the national temple of great men.

FOOTNOTES:

[385] Streckeisen, ii. 315-328.

[386] Streckeisen, ii. 337.

[387] June 19, 1767. *Corr.*, v. 172.

[388] *Corr.*, v. 267, 375.

[389] *Corr.*, v. 330-381, 408, *etc.*

[390] Bourgoïn, Aug. 1768, to March, 1769. Monquin, to July 1770.

[391] See above, vol. i. chap. iv.



[392] The life of Bernardin de St. Pierre (1737-1814) was nearly as irregular as that of his friend and master. But his character was essentially crafty and selfish, like that of many other sentimentalists of the first order.

[393] *Oeuv.*, xii. 69, 73.

[394] *Oeuv.*, xii. 104, *etc.*; and also the *Preamble de l'Arcadie*, *Oeuv.*, vii. 64, 65.

[395] *St. Pierre*, xii. 81-83.

[396] *Dusaulx*, p. 81. For his quarrel with Rousseau, see pp. 130, *etc.*

[397] *Rulhieres* in *Dusaulx*, p. 179. For a strange interview between *Rulhieres* and *Rousseau*, see pp. 185-186.

[398] *Musset-Pathay*, i. 181.



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[399] *Ib.*

[400] Musset-Pathay, i. 209. Rousseau gave a copy of the *Confessions* to Moulou, but forbade the publication before the year 1800. Notwithstanding this, printers procured copies surreptitiously, perhaps through Theresa, ever in need of money; the first part was published four years, and the second part with many suppressions eleven years, after his death, in 1782 and 1789 respectively. See Musset-Pathay, ii. 464.

[401] Ch. v. Such a curtailment, he says, "would no doubt be a great evil for the parts dismembered, but it would be a great advantage for the body of the nation." He urged federation as the condition of any solid improvement in their affairs.

[402] Bernardin de St. Pierre, xii. 37. Comte had a similar admiration for Spain and for the same reason.

[403] Corancez, quoted in Musset-Pathay, i. 239. Also *Corr.*, vi. 295.

[404] *Corr.*, vi. 303.

[405] Robespierre, then a youth, is said to have invited him here. See Hamel's *Robespierre*, i. 22.

[406] See above, vol. i. pp. 16, 17.

[407] *Corr.*, vi. 264.

[408] The case stands thus:—(1) There was the certificate of five doctors, attesting that Rousseau had died of apoplexy. (2) The assertion of M. Girardin, in whose house he died, that there was no hole in his head, nor poison in the stomach or viscera, nor other sign of self-destruction. (3) The assertion of Theresa to the same effect. On the other hand, we have the assertion of Corancez, that on his journey to Ermenonville on the day of Rousseau's burial a horse-master on the road had said, "Who would have supposed that M. Rousseau would have destroyed himself!"—and a variety of inferences from the wording of the certificate, and of Theresa's letter. Musset-Pathay believes in the suicide, and argued very ingeniously against M. Girardin. But his arguments do not go far beyond verbal ingenuity, showing that suicide was possible, and was consistent with the language of the documents, rather than adducing positive testimony. See vol. i. of his *History*, pp. 268, *etc.* The controversy was resumed as late as 1861, between the *Figaro* and the *Monde Illustré*. See also M. Jal's *Dict. Crit. de Biog. et d'Hist.*, p. 1091.

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