

Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 03 eBook

Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 03 by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

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BOOK III.

Leaving the service of Madam de Vercellis nearly as I had entered it, I returned to my former hostess, and remained there five or six weeks; during which time health, youth, and laziness, frequently rendered my temperament importunate. I was restless, absent, and thoughtful: I wept and sighed for a happiness I had no idea of, though at the same time highly sensible of some deficiency. This situation is indescribable, few men can even form any conception of it, because, in general, they have prevented that plenitude of life, at once tormenting and delicious. My thoughts were incessantly occupied with girls and women, but in a manner peculiar to myself: these ideas kept my senses in a perpetual and disagreeable activity, though, fortunately, they did not point out the means of deliverance. I would have given my life to have met with a Miss Goton, but the time was past in which the play of infancy predominated; increase of years had introduced shame, the inseparable companion of a conscious deviation from rectitude, which so confirmed my natural timidity as to render it invincible; and never, either at that time or since, could I prevail on myself to offer a proposition favorable to my wishes (unless in a manner constrained to it by previous advances) even with those whose scruples I had no cause to dread.

My stay at Madam de Vercellis's had procured me some acquaintance, which I thought might be serviceable to me, and therefore wished to retain. Among others, I sometimes visited a Savoyard abbe, M. Gaime, who was tutor to the Count of Melarede's children. He was young, and not much known, but possessed an excellent cultivated understanding, with great probity, and was, altogether, one of the best men I ever knew. He was incapable of doing me the service I then stood most in need of, not having sufficient interest to procure me a situation, but from him I reaped advantages far more precious, which have been useful to me through life, lessons of pure morality, and maxims of sound judgment.

In the successive order of my inclinations and ideas, I had ever been too high or too low. Achilles or Thersites; sometimes a hero, at others a villain. M. Gaime took pains to make me properly acquainted with myself, without sparing or giving me too much discouragement. He spoke in advantageous terms of my disposition and talents, adding, that he foresaw obstacles which would prevent my profiting by them; thus, according to him, they were to serve less as steps by which I should mount to fortune, than as resources which might enable me to exist without one. He gave me a true picture of human life, of which, hitherto, I had formed but a very erroneous idea, teaching me, that a man of understanding, though destined to experience adverse fortune, might, by skilful management, arrive at happiness; that there was no true felicity without virtue, which was practicable in every situation.

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He greatly diminished my admiration of grandeur, by proving that those in a superior situation are neither better nor happier than those they command. One of his maxims has frequently returned to my memory: it was, that if we could truly read the hearts of others we should feel more inclination to descend than rise: this reflection, the truth of which is striking without extravagance, I have found of great utility, in the various exigences of my life, as it tended to make me satisfied with my condition. He gave me the first just conception of relative duties, which my high-flown imagination had ever pictured in extremes, making me sensible that the enthusiasm of sublime virtues is of little use in society; that while endeavoring to rise too high we are in danger of falling; and that a virtuous and uniform discharge of little duties requires as great a degree of fortitude as actions which are called heroic, and would at the same time procure more honor and happiness. That it was infinitely more desirable to possess the lasting esteem of those about us, than at intervals to attract admiration.

In properly arranging the various duties between man and man, it was necessary to ascend to principles; the step I had recently taken, and of which my present situation was the consequence, naturally led us to speak of religion. It will easily be conceived that the honest M. Gaime was, in a great measure, the original of the Savoyard Vicar; prudence only obliging him to deliver his sentiments, on certain points, with more caution and reserve, and explain himself with less freedom; but his sentiments and councils were the same, not even excepting his advice to return to my country; all was precisely as I have since given it to the public. Dwelling no longer, therefore, on conversations which everyone may see the substance of, I shall only add, that these wise instructions (though they did not produce an immediate effect) were as so many seeds of virtue and religion in my heart which were never rooted out, and only required the fostering cares of friendship to bring to maturity.

Though my conversation was not very sincere, I was affected by his discourses, and far from being weary, was pleased with them on account of their clearness and simplicity, but above all because his heart seemed interested in what he said. My disposition is naturally tender, I have ever been less attached to people for the good they have really done me than for that they designed to do, and my feelings in this particular have seldom misled me: thus I truly esteemed M. Gaime. I was in a manner his second disciple, which even at that time was of inestimable service in turning me from a propensity to vice into which my idleness was leading me.

One day, when I least expected it, I was sent for by the Count de la Roque. Having frequently called at his house, without being able to speak with him, I grew weary, and supposing he had either forgot me or retained some unfavorable impression of me, returned no more: but I was mistaken in both these conjectures. He had more than once witnessed the pleasure I took in fulfilling my duty to his aunt: he had even mentioned it to her, and afterwards spoke of it, when I no longer thought of it myself.

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He received me graciously, saying that instead of amusing me with useless promises, he had sought to place me to advantage; that he had succeeded, and would put me in a way to better my situation, but the rest must depend on myself. That the family into which he should introduce me being both powerful and esteemed, I should need no other patrons; and though at first on the footing of a servant, I might be assured, that if my conduct and sentiments were found above that station, I should not long remain in it. The end of this discourse cruelly disappointed the brilliant hopes the beginning had inspired. "What! forever a footman?" said I to myself, with a bitterness which confidence presently effaced, for I felt myself too superior to that situation to fear long remaining there.

He took me to the Count de Gauvon, Master of the Horse to the Queen, and Chief of the illustrious House of Solar. The air of dignity conspicuous in this respectable old man, rendered the affability with which he received me yet more interesting. He questioned me with evident interest, and I replied with sincerity. He then told the Count de la Roque, that my features were agreeable, and promised intellect, which he believed I was not deficient in; but that was not enough, and time must show the rest; after which, turning to me, he said, "Child, almost all situations are attended with difficulties in the beginning; yours, however, shall not have too great a portion of them; be prudent, and endeavor to please everyone, that will be almost your only employment; for the rest fear nothing, you shall be taken care of." Immediately after he went to the Marchioness de Breil, his daughter-in-law, to whom he presented me, and then to the Abbe de Gauvon, his son. I was elated with this beginning, as I knew enough of the world already to conclude, that so much ceremony is not generally used at the reception of a footman. In fact, I was not treated like one. I dined at the steward's table; did not wear a livery; and the Count de Favria (a giddy youth) having commanded me to get behind his coach, his grandfather ordered that I should get behind no coach, nor follow any one out of the house. Meantime, I waited at table, and did, within doors, the business of a footman; but I did it, as it were, of my own free will, without being appointed to any particular service; and except writing some letters, which were dictated to me, and cutting out some ornaments for the Count de Favria, I was almost the absolute master of my time. This trial of my discretion, which I did not then perceive, was certainly very dangerous, and not very humane; for in this state of idleness I might have contracted vices which I should not otherwise have given into. Fortunately, it did not produce that effect; my memory retained the lessons of M. Gaime, they had made an impression on my heart, and I sometimes escaped from the house of my patron to obtain a repetition of them. I believe those

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who saw me going out, apparently by stealth, had no conception of my business. Nothing could be more prudent than the advice he gave me respecting my conduct. My beginning was admirable; so much attention, assiduity, and zeal, had charmed everyone. The Abby Gaime advised me to moderate this first ardor, lest I should relax, and that relaxation should be considered as neglect. "Your setting out," said he, "is the rule of what will be expected of you; endeavor gradually to increase your attentions, but be cautious how you diminish them."

As they paid but little attention to my trifling talents, and supposed I possessed no more than nature had given me, there was no appearance (notwithstanding the promises of Count de Gauvon) of my meeting with any particular consideration. Some objects of more consequence had intervened. The Marquis de Breil, son of the Count de Gauvon, was then ambassador at Vienna; some circumstances had occurred at that court which for some weeks kept the family in continual agitation, and left them no time to think of me. Meantime I had relaxed but little in my attentions, though one object in the family did me both good and harm, making me more secure from exterior dissipation, but less attentive to my duty.

Mademoiselle de Breil was about my own age, tolerably handsome, and very fair complexioned, with black hair, which notwithstanding, gave her features that air of softness so natural to the flaxen, and which my heart could never resist. The court dress, so favorable to youth, showed her fine neck and shape to advantage, and the mourning, which was then worn, seemed to add to her beauty. It will be said, a domestic should not take notice of these things; I was certainly to blame, yet I perceived all this, nor was I the only one; the maitre d' hotel and valet de chambre spoke of her sometimes at table with a vulgarity that pained me extremely. My head, however, was not sufficiently turned to allow of my being entirely in love; I did not forget myself, or my situation. I loved to see Mademoiselle de Breil; to hear her utter anything that marked wit, sense, or good humor: my ambition, confined to a desire of waiting on her, never exceeded its just rights. At table I was ever attentive to make the most of them; if her footman quitted her chair, I instantly supplied his place; in default of this, I stood facing her, seeking in her eyes what she was about to ask for, and watching the moment to change her plate. What would I not have given to hear her command, to have her look at, or speak the smallest word to me! but no, I had the mortification to be beneath her regard; she did not even perceive I was there. Her brother, who frequently spoke to me while at table, having one day said something which I did not consider obliging, I made him so arch and well-turned an answer, that it drew her attention; she cast her eyes upon me, and this glance was sufficient to fill me with transport. The next day, a second

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occasion presented itself, which I fortunately made use of. A great dinner was given; and I saw, with astonishment, for the first time, the maitre d' hotel waiting at table, with a sword by his side, and hat on his head. By chance, the discourse turned on the motto of the house of Solar, which was, with the arms, worked in the tapestry: 'Tel fiert qui ne fue pas'. As the Piedmontese are not in general very perfect in the French language, they found fault with the orthography, saying, that in the word fiert there should be no 't'. The old Count de Gauvon was going to reply, when happening to cast his eyes on me, he perceived I smiled without daring to say anything; he immediately ordered me to speak my opinion. I then said, I did not think the 't' superfluous, 'fiert' being an old French word, not derived from the noun 'ferus', proud, threatening; but from the verb 'ferit', he strikes, he wounds; the motto, therefore, did not appear to mean, some threat, but, 'Some strike who do not kill'. The whole company fixed their eyes on me, then on each other, without speaking a word; never was a greater degree of astonishment; but what most flattered me, was an air of satisfaction which I perceived on the countenance of Mademoiselle de Breil. This scornful lady deigned to cast on me a second look at least as valuable as the former, and turning to her grandfather, appeared to wait with impatience for the praise that was due to me, and which he fully bestowed, with such apparent satisfaction, that it was eagerly chorused by the whole table. This interval was short, but delightful in many respects; it was one of those moments so rarely met with, which place things in their natural order, and revenge depressed merit for the injuries of fortune. Some minutes after Mademoiselle de Breil again raised her eyes, desiring me with a voice of timid affability to give her some drink. It will easily be supposed I did not let her wait, but advancing towards her, I was seized with such a trembling, that having filled the glass too full, I spilled some of the water on her plate, and even on herself. Her brother asked me, giddily, why I trembled thus? This question increased my confusion, while the face of Mademoiselle de Breil was suffused with a crimson blush.

Here ended the romance; where it may be remarked (as with Madam Basile, and others in the continuation of my life) that I was not fortunate in the conclusion of my amours. In vain I placed myself in the antechamber of Madam de Breil, I could not obtain one mark of attention from her daughter; she went in and out without looking at me, nor had I the confidence to raise my eyes to her; I was even so foolishly stupid, that one day, on dropping her glove as she passed, instead of seizing and covering it with kisses, as I would gladly have done, I did not dare to quit my place, but suffered it to be taken up by a great booby of a footman, whom I could willingly have knocked down for his officiousness. To complete my timidity, I perceived I had not the good fortune to please Madam de Breil; she not only never ordered, but even rejected, my services; and having twice found me in her antechamber, asked me, dryly, "If I had nothing to do?" I was obliged, therefore, to renounce this dear antechamber; at first it caused me some uneasiness, but other things intervening, I presently thought no more of it.

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The disdain of Madam de Breil was fully compensated by the kindness of her father-in-law, who at length began to think of me. The evening after the entertainment, I have already mentioned, he had a conversation with me that lasted half an hour, which appeared to satisfy him, and absolutely enchanted me. This good man had less sense than Madam de Vercellis, but possessed more feeling; I therefore succeeded much better with him. He bade me attach myself to his son, the Abbe Gauvon, who had an esteem for me, which, if I took care to cultivate, might be serviceable in furnishing me with what was necessary to complete their views for my future establishment. The next morning I flew to M. the Abbe, who did not receive me as a servant, but made me sit by his fireside, and questioned me with great affability. He soon found that my education, which had attempted many things, had completed none; but observing that I understood something of Latin, he undertook to teach me more, and appointed me to attend him every morning. Thus, by one of the whimsicalities which have marked the whole course of my life, at once above and below my natural situation, I was pupil and footman in the same house: and though in servitude, had a preceptor whose birth entitled him to supply that place only to the children of kings.

The Abbe de Gauvon was a younger son, and designed by his family for a bishopric, for which reason his studies had been pursued, further than is usual with people of quality. He had been sent to the university of Sienna, where he had resided some years, and from whence he had brought a good portion of cruscantism, designing to be that at Turin which the Abbe de Dangeau was formerly at Paris. Being disgusted with theology, he gave in to the belle-lettres, which is very frequent in Italy, with those who have entered the career of prelacy. He had studied the poets, and wrote tolerable Latin and Italian verses; in a word, his taste was calculated to form mine, and give some order to that chaos of insignificant trash with which my brain was encumbered; but whether my prating had misled him, or that he could not support the trouble of teaching the elementary parts of Latin, he put me at first too high; and I had scarcely translated a few fables of Phœdrus before he put me into Virgil, where I could hardly understand anything. It will be seen hereafter that I was destined frequently to learn Latin, but never to attain it. I labored with assiduity, and the abbe bestowed his attention with a degree of kindness, the remembrance of which, even at this time, both interests and softens me. I passed the greater part of the morning with him as much for my own instruction as his service; not that he ever permitted me to perform any menial office, but to copy, or write from his dictating; and my employment of secretary was more useful than that of scholar, and by this means I not only learned the Italian in its utmost purity, but also acquired a taste for literature, and some discernment of composition, which could not have been at La Tribu's, and which was useful to me when I afterwards wrote alone.

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At this period of my life, without being romantic, I might reasonably have indulged the hope of preferment. The abbe, thoroughly pleased with me, expressed his satisfaction to everyone, while his father had such a singular affection for me, that I was assured by the Count de Favria, that he had spoken of me to the king; even Madam de Breil had laid aside her disdainful looks; in short I was a general favorite, which gave great jealousy to the other servants, who seeing me honored by the instructions of their master's son, were persuaded I should not remain their equal.

As far as I could judge by some words dropped at random, and which I reflected on afterwards, it appeared to me, that the House of Solar, wishing to run the career of embassies, and hoping perhaps in time to arrive at the ministry, wished to provide themselves with a person of merit and talents, who depending entirely on them, might obtain their confidence, and be of essential service. This project of the Count de Gauvon was judicious, magnanimous, and truly worthy of a powerful nobleman, equally provident and generous; but besides my not seeing, at that time, its full extent, it was far too rational for my brain, and required too much confinement.

My ridiculous ambition sought for fortune in the midst of brilliant adventures, and not finding one woman in all this scheme, it appeared tedious, painful and melancholy; though I should rather have thought it more honorable on this account, as the species of merit generally patronized by women is certainly less worthy that I was supposed to possess.

Everything succeeded to my wish: I had obtained, almost forced, the esteem of all; the trial was over, and I was universally considered as a young man with flattering prospects, who was not at present in his proper sphere, but was expected soon to reach it; but my place was not assigned me by man, and I was to reach it by very difficult paths. I now come to one of those characteristic traits, which are so natural to me, and which, indeed, the reader might have observed without this reflection.

There were at Turin several new converts of my own stamp, whom I neither liked nor wish to see; but I had met with some Genevese who were not of this description, and among others a M. Mussard, nicknamed Wryneck, a miniature painter, and a distant relation. This M. Mussard, having learned my situation at the Count de Gauvon's, came to see me, with another Genevese, named Bacle, who had been my comrade during my apprenticeship. This Bacle was a very sprightly, amusing young fellow, full of lively sallies, which at his time of life appeared extremely agreeable. At once, then, behold me delighted with M. Bacle; charmed to such a degree that I found it impossible to quit him. He was shortly to depart for Geneva; what a loss had I to sustain! I felt the whole force of it, and resolving to make the best use of this precious interval, I determined not to leave him, or, rather, he never quitted

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me, for my head was not yet sufficiently turned to think of quitting the house without leave, but it was soon perceived that he engrossed my whole time, and he was accordingly forbid the house. This so incensed me, that forgetting everything but my friend Bacle, I went neither to the abbe nor the count, and was no longer to be found at home. I paid no attention to repeated reprimands, and at length was threatened with dismissal. This threat was my ruin, as it suggested the idea that it was not absolutely necessary that Bacle should depart alone. From that moment I could think of no other pleasure, no other situation or happiness than taking this journey. To render the felicity still more complete, at the end of it (though at an immense distance) I pictured to myself Madam de Warrens; for as to returning to Geneva, it never entered into my imagination. The hills, fields, brooks and villages, incessantly succeeded each other with new charms, and this delightful jaunt seemed worthy to absorb my whole existence. Memory recalled, with inexpressible pleasure, how charming the country had appeared in coming to Turin; what then must it be, when, to the pleasure of independence, should be added the company of a good-humored comrade of my own age and disposition, without any constraint or obligation, but free to go or stay as we pleased? Would it not be madness to sacrifice the prospect of so much felicity to projects of ambition, slow and difficult in their execution, and uncertain in their event? But even supposing them realized, and in their utmost splendor, they were not worth one quarter of an hour of the sweet pleasure and liberty of youth.

Full of these wise conclusions, I conducted myself so improperly, that (not indeed without some trouble) I got myself dismissed; for on my return one night the maitre de hotel gave me warning on the part of the count. This was exactly what I wanted; for feeling, spite of myself, the extravagance of my conduct, I wished to excuse it by the addition of injustice and ingratitude, by throwing the blame on others, and sheltering myself under the idea of necessity.

I was told the Count de Favria wished to speak with me the next morning before my departure; but, being sensible that my head was so far turned as to render it possible for me to disobey the injunction, the maitre de hotel declined paying the money designed me, and which certainly I had very ill earned, till after this visit; for my kind patrons being unwilling to place me in the situation of a footman, I had not any fixed wages.

The Count de Favria, though young and giddy, talked to me on this occasion in the most sensible and serious manner: I might add, if it would not be thought vain, with the utmost tenderness. He reminded me, in the most flattering terms, of the cares of his uncle, and intentions of his grandfather; after having drawn in lively colors what I was sacrificing to ruin, he offered to make my peace, without stipulating any conditions, but that I should no more see the worthless fellow who had seduced me.

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It was so apparent that he did not say all this of himself, that notwithstanding my blind stupidity, I powerfully felt the kindness of my good old master, but the dear journey was too firmly printed on my imagination for any consideration to balance the charm. Bereft of understanding, firm to my purpose, I hardened myself against conviction, and arrogantly answered, that as they had thought fit to give me warning, I had resolved to take it, and conceived it was now too late to retract, since, whatever might happen to me, I was fully resolved not to be driven a second time from the same house. The count, justly irritated, bestowed on me some names which I deserved, and putting me out of his apartment by the shoulders, shut the door on me. I departed triumphant, as if I had gained the greatest victory, and fearful of sustaining a second combat even had the ingratitude to leave the house without thanking the abbe for his kindness.

To form a just conception of my delirium at that moment, the excess to which my heart is subject to be heated by the most trifling incidents, and the ardor with which my imagination seizes on the most attractive objects should be conceived. At these times, plans the most ridiculous, childish, and void of sense, flatter my favorite idea, and persuade me that it is reasonable to sacrifice everything to the possession of it. Would it be believed, that when near nineteen, any one could be so stupid as to build his hopes of future subsistence on an empty phial? For example:

The Abbe de Gauvon had made me a present, some weeks before, of a very pretty heron fountain, with which I was highly delighted. Playing with this toy, and speaking of our departure, the sage Bacle and myself thought it might be of infinite advantage, and enable us to lengthen our journey. What in the world was so curious as a heron fountain? This idea was the foundation on which we built our future fortune: we were to assemble the country people in every village we might pass through, and delight them with the sight of it, when feasting and good cheer would be sure to pour on us abundantly; for we were both firmly persuaded, that provisions could cost nothing to those who grew and gathered them, and if they did not stuff travellers, it was downright ill-nature.

We pictured in all parts entertainments and weddings, reckoning that without any expense but wind from our lungs, and the water of our fountain, we should be maintained through Piedmont, Savoy, France, and indeed, all the world over. There was no end to our projected travels, and we immediately directed our course northward, rather for the pleasure of crossing the Alps, than from a supposed necessity of being obliged to stop at any place.

Such was the plan on which I set out, abandoning without regret, my preceptors, studies, and hopes, with the almost certain attainment of a fortune, to lead the life of a real vagabond. Farewell to the capital; adieu to the court, ambition, love, the fair, and all the great adventures into which hope had led me during the preceding year! I departed with my fountain and my friend Bacle, a purse lightly furnished, but a heart over-flowing

with pleasure, and only thinking how to enjoy the extensive felicity which I supposed my project encircled.

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This extravagant journey was performed almost as agreeably as I had expected, though not exactly on the same plan; not but our fountain highly amused the hostess and servants for some minutes at all the ale-houses where we halted, yet we found it equally necessary to pay on our departure; but that gave us no concern, as we never thought of depending on it entirely until our money should be expended. An accident spared us that trouble, our fountain was broken near Bramant, and in good time, for we both felt (though without daring to own it to each other) that we began to be weary of it. This misfortune rendered us gayer than ever; we laughed heartily at our giddiness in having forgotten that our clothes and shoes would wear out, or trusting to renew them by the play of our fountain. We continued our journey as merrily as we had begun it, only drawing faster towards that termination where our drained purses made it necessary for us to arrive.

At Chambery I became pensive; not for the folly I had committed, for never did any one think less of the past, but on account of the reception I should meet with from Madam de Warrens; for I looked on her house as my paternal home. I had written her an account of my reception at the Count de Gauvon's; she knew my expectancies, and, in congratulating me on my good fortune, had added some wise lessons on the return I ought to make for the kindness with which they treated me. She looked on my fortune as already made, if not destroyed by my own negligence; what then would she say on my arrival? for it never entered my mind that she might shut the door against me, but I dreaded the uneasiness I might give her; I dreaded her reproaches, to me more wounding than want; I resolved to bear all in silence, and, if possible to appease her. I now saw nothing but Madam de Warrens in the whole universe, and to live in disgrace with her was impossible.

I was most concerned about my companion, whom I did not wish to offend, and feared I should not easily get rid of. I prefaced this separation by an affected coldness during the last day's journey. The drole understood me perfectly; in fact, he was rather giddy than deficient in point of sense—I expected he would have been hurt at my inconstancy, but I was quite mistaken; nothing affected my friend Bacle, for hardly had we set foot in town, on our arrival in Annecy, before he said, "You are now at home,"—embraced—bade me adieu—turned on his heel, and disappeared; nor have I ever heard of him since.

How did my heart beat as I approached the habitation of Madam de Warrens! my legs trembled under me, my eyes were clouded with a mist, I neither saw, heard, nor recollected any one, and was obliged frequently to stop that I might draw breath, and recall my bewildered senses. Was it fear of not obtaining that succor I stood in need of, which agitated me to this degree? At the age I then was, does the fear of perishing with hunger give such alarms? No: I declare

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with as much truth as pride, that it was not in the power of interest or indigence, at any period of my life, to expand or contract my heart. In the course of a painful life, memorable for its vicissitudes, frequently destitute of an asylum, and without bread, I have contemplated, with equal indifference, both opulence and misery. In want I might have begged or stolen, as others have done, but never could feel distress at being reduced to such necessities. Few men have grieved more than myself, few have shed so many tears; yet never did poverty, or the fear of falling into it, make me heave a sigh or moisten my eyelids. My soul, in despite of fortune, has only been sensible of real good and evil, which did not depend on her; and frequently, when in possession of everything that could make life pleasing, I have been the most miserable of mortals.

The first glance of Madam de Warrens banished all my fears—my heart leaped at the sound of her voice; I threw myself at her feet, and in transports of the most lively joy, pressed my lips upon her hand. I am ignorant whether she had received any recent information of me. I discovered but little surprise on her countenance, and no sorrow. “Poor child!” said she, in an affectionate tone, “art thou here again? I knew you were too young for this journey; I am very glad, however, that it did not turn out so bad as I apprehended.” She then made me recount my history; it was not long, and I did it faithfully: suppressing only some trifling circumstances, but on the whole neither sparing nor excusing myself.

The question was, where I could lodge: she consulted her maid on this point—I hardly dared to breathe during the deliberation; but when I heard I was to sleep in the house, I could scarce contain my joy; and saw the little bundle I brought with me carried into my destined apartment with much the same sensations as St. Preux saw his chaise put up at Madam de Wolmar’s. To complete all, I had the satisfaction to find that this favor was not to be transitory; for at a moment when they thought me attentive to something else, I heard Madam de Warrens say, “They may talk as they please, but since Providence has sent him back, I am determined not to abandon him.”

Behold me, then, established at her house; not, however, that I date the happiest days of my life from this period, but this served to prepare me for them. Though that sensibility of heart, which enables us truly to enjoy our being, is the work of Nature, and perhaps a mere effect of organization, yet it requires situations to unfold itself, and without a certain concurrence of favorable circumstances, a man born with the most acute sensibility may go out of the world without ever having been acquainted with his own temperament. This was my case till that time, and such perhaps it might have remained had I never known Madam de Warrens, or even having known her, had I not remained with her long enough to contract

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that pleasing habit of affectionate sentiments with which she inspired me. I dare affirm, that those who only love, do not feel the most charming sensations we are capable of: I am acquainted with another sentiment, less impetuous, but a thousand times more delightful; sometimes joined with love, but frequently separated from it. This feeling is not simply friendship; it is more enchanting, more tender; nor do I imagine it can exist between persons of the same sex; at least I have been truly a friend, if ever a man was, and yet never experienced it in that kind. This distinction is not sufficiently clear, but will become so hereafter: sentiments are only distinguishable by their effects.

Madam de Warrens inhabited an old house, but large enough to have a handsome spare apartment, which she made her drawing-room. I now occupied this chamber, which was in the passage I have before mentioned as the place of our first meeting. Beyond the brook and gardens was a prospect of the country, which was by no means uninteresting to the young inhabitant, being the first time, since my residence at Bossey, that I had seen anything before my windows but walls, roofs, or the dirty street. How pleasing then was this novelty! it helped to increase the tenderness of my disposition, for I looked on this charming landscape as the gift of my dear patroness, who I could almost fancy had placed it there on purpose for me. Peaceably seated, my eyes pursued her amidst the flowers and the verdure; her charms seemed to me confounded with those of the spring; my heart, till now contracted, here found means to expand itself, and my sighs exhaled freely in this charming retreat.

The magnificence I had been accustomed to at Turin was not to be found at Madam de Warrens, but in lieu of it there was neatness, regularity, and a patriarchal abundance, which is seldom attached to pompous ostentation. She had very little plate, no china, no game in her kitchen, or foreign wines in her cellar, but both were well furnished, and at every one's service; and her coffee, though served in earthenware cups, was excellent. Whoever came to her house was invited to dine there, and never did laborer, messenger, or traveller, depart without refreshment. Her family consisted of a pretty chambermaid from Fribourg, named Merceret; a valet from her own country called Claude Anet (of whom I shall speak hereafter), a cook, and two hired chairmen when she visited, which seldom happened. This was a great deal to be done out of two thousand livres a year; yet, with good management, it might have been sufficient in a country where land is extremely good, and money very scarce. Unfortunately, economy was never her favorite virtue; she contracted debts—paid them—thus her money passed from hand to hand like a weaver's shuttle, and quickly disappeared.

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The arrangement of her housekeeping was exactly what I should have chosen, and I shared it with satisfaction. I was least pleased with the necessity of remaining too long at table. Madam de Warrens was so much incommoded with the first smell of soup or meat, as almost to occasion fainting; from this she slowly recovered, talking meantime, and never attempting to eat for the first half hour. I could have dined thrice in the time, and had ever finished my meal long before she began; I then ate again for company; and though by this means I usually dined twice, felt no inconvenience from it. In short, I was perfectly at my ease, and the happier as my situation required no care. Not being at this time instructed in the state of her finances, I supposed her means were adequate to her expense; and though I afterwards found the same abundance, yet when instructed in her real situation, finding her pension ever anticipated, prevented me from enjoying the same tranquility. Foresight with me has always embittered enjoyment; in vain I saw the approach of misfortunes, I was never the more likely to avoid them.

From the first moment of our meeting, the softest familiarity was established between us: and in the same degree it continued during the rest of her life. Child was my name, Mamma was hers, and child and mamma we have ever continued, even after a number of years had almost effaced the apparent difference of age between us. I think those names convey an exact idea of our behavior, the simplicity of our manners, and above all, the similarity of our dispositions. To me she was the tenderest of mothers, ever preferring my welfare to her own pleasure; and if my own satisfaction found some interest in my attachment to her, it was not to change its nature, but only to render it more exquisite, and infatuate me with the charm of having a mother young and handsome, whom I was delighted to caress: I say literally, to caress, for never did it enter into her imagination to deny me the tenderest maternal kisses and endearments, or into my heart to abuse them. It will be said, at length our connection was of a different kind: I confess it; but have patience, that will come in its turn.

The sudden sight of her, on our first interview, was the only truly passionate moment she ever inspired me with; and even that was principally the work of surprise. With her I had neither transports nor desires, but remained in a ravishing calm, sensible of a happiness I could not define, and thus could I have passed my whole life, or even eternity, without feeling an instant of uneasiness.

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She was the only person with whom I never experienced that want of conversation, which to me is so painful to endure. Our tete-a-tetes were rather an inexhaustible chat than conversation, which could only conclude from interruption. So far from finding discourse difficult, I rather thought it a hardship to be silent; unless, when contemplating her projects, she sunk into a reverie; when I silently let her meditate, and gazing on her, was the happiest of men. I had another singular fancy, which was that without pretending to the favor of a tete-a-tete, I was perpetually seeking occasion to form them, enjoying such opportunities with rapture; and when importunate visitors broke in upon us, no matter whether it was man or woman, I went out murmuring, not being able to remain a secondary object in her company; then, counting the minutes in her antechamber, I used to curse these eternal visitors, thinking it inconceivable how they could find so much to say, because I had still more.

If ever I felt the full force of my attachment, it was when I did not see her. When in her presence, I was only content; when absent, my uneasiness reached almost to melancholy, and a wish to live with her gave me emotions of tenderness even to tears. Never shall I forget one great holiday, while she was at vespers, when I took a walk out of the city, my heart full of her image, and the ardent wish to pass my life with her. I could easily enough see that at present this was impossible; that the happiness I enjoyed would be of short duration, and this idea gave to my contemplations a tincture of melancholy, which, however, was not gloomy, but tempered with a flattering hope. The ringing of bells, which ever particularly affects me, the singing of birds, the fineness of the day, the beauty of the landscape, the scattered country houses, among which in idea I placed our future dwelling, altogether struck me with an impression so lively, tender, melancholy, and powerful, that I saw myself in ecstasy transported into that happy time and abode, where my heart, possessing all the felicity it could desire, might taste it with raptures inexpressible.

I never recollect to have enjoyed the future with such force of illusions as at that time; and what has particularly struck me in the recollection of this reverie, is that when realized, I found my situation exactly as I had imagined it. If ever waking dream had an appearance of a prophetic vision, it was assuredly this; I was only deceived in its imaginary duration, for days, years, and life itself, passed ideally in perfect tranquility, while the reality lasted but a moment. Alas! my most durable happiness was but as a dream, which I had no sooner had a glimpse of, than I instantly awoke.

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I know not when I should have done, if I was to enter into a detail of all the follies that affection for my dear Madam de Warrens made me commit. When absent from her, how often have I kissed the bed on a supposition that she had slept there; the curtains and all the furniture of my chamber, on recollecting they were hers, and that her charming hands had touched them; nay, the floor itself, when I considered she had walked there. Sometimes even in her presence, extravagancies escaped me, which only the most violent passions seemed capable of inspiring; in a word, there was but one essential difference to distinguish me from an absolute lover, and that particular renders my situation almost inconceivable.

I had returned from Italy, not absolutely as I went there, but as no one of my age, perhaps, ever did before, being equally unacquainted with women. My ardent constitution had found resources in those means by which youth of my disposition sometimes preserve their purity at the expense of health, vigor, and frequently of life itself. My local situation should likewise be considered—living with a pretty woman, cherishing her image in the bottom of my heart, seeing her during the whole day, at night surrounded with objects that recalled her incessantly to my remembrance, and sleeping in the bed where I knew she had slept. What a situation! Who can read this without supposing me on the brink of the grave? But quite the contrary; that which might have ruined me, acted as a preservative, at least for a time. Intoxicated with the charm of living with her, with the ardent desire of passing my life there, absent or present I saw in her a tender mother, an amiable sister, a respected friend, but nothing more; meantime, her image filled my heart, and left room far no other object. The extreme tenderness with which she inspired me excluded every other woman from my consideration, and preserved me from the whole sex: in a word, I was virtuous, because I loved her. Let these particulars, which I recount but indifferently, be considered, and then let any one judge what kind of attachment I had for her: for my part, all I can say, is, that if it hitherto appears extraordinary, it will appear much more so in the sequel.

My time passed in the most agreeable manner, though occupied in a way which was by no means calculated to please me; such as having projects to digest, bills to write fair, receipts to transcribe, herbs to pick, drugs to pound, or distillations to attend; and in the midst of all this, came crowds of travellers, beggars, and visitors of all denominations. Some times it was necessary to converse at the same time with a soldier, an apothecary, a prebendary, a fine lady, and a lay brother. I grumbled, swore, and wished all this troublesome medley at the devil, while she seemed to enjoy it, laughing at my chagrin till the tears ran down her cheeks. What excited her mirth still more, was to see that my anger was

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increased by not being able myself to refrain from laughter. These little intervals, in which I enjoyed the pleasure of grumbling, were charming; and if, during the dispute, another importunate visitor arrived, she would add to her amusement by maliciously prolonging the visit, meantime casting glances at me for which I could almost have beat her; nor could she without difficulty refrain from laughter on seeing my constrained politeness, though every moment glancing at her the look of a fury, while, even in spite of myself, I thought the scene truly diverting.

All this, without being pleasing in itself, contributed to amuse, because it made up a part of a life which I thought delightful. Nothing that was performed around me, nothing that I was obliged to do, suited my taste, but everything suited my heart; and I believe, at length, I should have liked the study of medicine, had not my natural distaste to it perpetually engaged us in whimsical scenes, that prevented my thinking of it in a serious light. It was, perhaps, the first time that this art produced mirth. I pretended to distinguish a physical book by its smell, and what was more diverting, was seldom mistaken. Madam de Warrens made me taste the most nauseous drugs; in vain I ran, or endeavored to defend myself; spite of resistance or wry faces, spite of my struggles, or even of my teeth, when I saw her charming fingers approach my lips, I was obliged to give up the contest.

When shut up in an apartment with all her medical apparatus, any one who had heard us running and shouting amidst peals of laughter would rather have imagined we had been acting a farce than preparing opiates or elixirs.

My time, however, was not entirely passed in these fooleries; in the apartment which I occupied I found a few books: there was the Spectator, Puffendorf, St. Everemond, and the Henriade. Though I had not my old passion for books, yet I amused myself with reading a part of them. The Spectator was particularly pleasing and serviceable to me. The Abbe de Gauvon had taught me to read less eagerly, and with a greater degree of attention, which rendered my studies more serviceable. I accustomed myself to reflect on elocution and the elegance of composition; exercising myself in discerning pure French from my provincial idiom. For example, I corrected an orthographical fault (which I had in common with all Genevese) by these two lines of the Henriade:

Soit qu' un ancien respect pour le sang de leurs maitres,
Parlat encore pour lui dans le coeur de ces traitres

I was struck with the word 'parlat', and found a 't' was necessary to form the third person of the subjunctive, whereas I had always written and pronounced it parla, as in the present of the indicative.

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Sometimes my studies were the subject of conversation with Madam de Warrens; sometimes I read to her, in which I found great satisfaction; and as I endeavored to read well, it was extremely serviceable to me. I have already observed that her mind was cultivated; her understanding was at this time in its meridian. Several people of learning having been assiduous to ingratiate themselves, had taught her to distinguish works of merit; but her taste (if I may so express myself) was rather Protestant; ever speaking warmly of Bayle, and highly esteeming St. Evremond, though long since almost forgotten in France: but this did not prevent her having a taste for literature, or expressing her thoughts with elegance. She had been brought up with polite company, and coming young to Savoy, by associating with people of the best fashion, had lost the affected manners of her own country, where the ladies mistake wit for sense, and only speak in epigram.

Though she had seen the court but superficially, that glance was sufficient to give her a competent idea of it; and notwithstanding secret jealousies and the murmurs excited by her conduct and running in debt, she ever preserved friends there, and never lost her pension. She knew the world, and was useful. This was her favorite theme in our conversations, and was directly opposite to my chimerical ideas, though the kind of instruction I particularly had occasion for. We read Bruyere together; he pleased her more than Rochefoucault, who is a dull, melancholy author, particularly to youth, who are not fond of contemplating man as he really is. In moralizing she sometimes bewildered herself by the length of her discourse; but by kissing her lips or hand from time to time I was easily consoled, and never found them wearisome.

This life was too delightful to be lasting; I felt this, and the uneasiness that thought gave me was the only thing that disturbed my enjoyment. Even in playfulness she studied my disposition, observed and interrogated me, forming projects for my future fortune, which I could readily have dispensed with. Happily it was not sufficient to know my disposition, inclinations and talents; it was likewise necessary to find a situation in which they would be useful, and this was not the work of a day. Even the prejudices this good woman had conceived in favor of my merit put off the time of calling it into action, by rendering her more difficult in the choice of means; thus (thanks to the good opinion she entertained of me), everything answered to my wish; but a change soon happened which put a period to my tranquility.

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A relation of Madam de Warrens, named M. d'Aubonne, came to see her; a man of great understanding and intrigue, being, like her, fond of projects, though careful not to ruin himself by them. He had offered Cardinal Fleury a very compact plan for a lottery, which, however, had not been approved of, and he was now going to propose it to the court of Turin, where it was accepted and put into execution. He remained some time at Annecy, where he fell in love with the Intendant's lady, who was very amiable, much to my taste and the only person I saw with pleasure at the house of Madam de Warrens. M. d'Aubonne saw me, I was strongly recommended by his relation; he promised, therefore, to question and see what I was fit for, and, if he found me capable to seek me a situation. Madam de Warrens sent me to him two or three mornings, under pretense of messages, without acquainting me with her real intention. He spoke to me gayly, on various subjects, without any appearance of observation; his familiarity presently set me talking, which by his cheerful and jesting manner he encouraged without restraint—I was absolutely charmed with him. The result of his observations was, that notwithstanding the animation of my countenance, and promising exterior, if not absolutely silly, I was a lad of very little sense, and without ideas of learning; in fine, very ignorant in all respects, and if I could arrive at being curate of some village, it was the utmost honor I ought ever to aspire to. Such was the account he gave of me to Madam de Warrens. This was not the first time such an opinion had been formed of me, neither was it the last; the judgment of M. Masseron having been repeatedly confirmed.

The cause of these opinions is too much connected with my character not to need a particular explanation; for it will not be supposed that I can in conscience subscribe to them; and with all possible impartiality, whatever M. Masseron, M. d'Aubonne and many others may have said, I cannot help thinking them mistaken.

Two things very opposite, unite in me, and in a manner which I cannot myself conceive. My disposition is extremely ardent, my passions lively and impetuous, yet my ideas are produced slowly, with great embarrassment and after much afterthought. It might be said my heart and understanding do not belong to the same individual. A sentiment takes possession of my soul with the rapidity of lightning, but instead of illuminating, it dazzles and confounds me; I feel all, but see nothing; I am warm, but stupid; to think I must be cool. What is astonishing, my conception is clear and penetrating, if not hurried: I can make excellent impromptus at leisure, but on the instant, could never say or do anything worth notice. I could hold a tolerable conversation by the post, as they say the Spaniards play at chess, and when I read that anecdote of a duke of Savoy, who turned himself round, while on a journey, to cry out 'à votre gorge, marchand de Paris!' I said, "Here is a trait of my character!"

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This slowness of thought, joined to vivacity of feeling, I am not only sensible of in conversation, but even alone. When I write, my ideas are arranged with the utmost difficulty. They glance on my imagination and ferment till they discompose, heat, and bring on a palpitation; during this state of agitation, I see nothing properly, cannot write a single word, and must wait till it is over. Insensibly the agitation subsides, the chaos acquires form, and each circumstance takes its proper place. Have you never seen an opera in Italy? where during the change of scene everything is in confusion, the decorations are intermingled, and any one would suppose that all would be overthrown; yet by little and little, everything is arranged, nothing appears wanting, and we feel surprised to see the tumult succeeded by the most delightful spectacle. This is a resemblance of what passes in my brain when I attempt to write; had I always waited till that confusion was past, and then pointed, in their natural beauties, the objects that had presented themselves, few authors would have surpassed me.

Thence arises the extreme difficulty I find in writing; my manuscripts, blotted, scratched, and scarcely legible, attest the trouble they cost me; nor is there one of them but I have been obliged to transcribe four or five times before it went to press. Never could I do anything when placed at a table, pen in hand; it must be walking among the rocks, or in the woods; it is at night in my bed, during my wakeful hours, that I compose; it may be judged how slowly, particularly for a man who has not the advantage of verbal memory, and never in his life could retain by heart six verses. Some of my periods I have turned and returned in my head five or six nights before they were fit to be put to paper: thus it is that I succeed better in works that require laborious attention, than those that appear more trivial, such as letters, in which I could never succeed, and being obliged to write one is to me a serious punishment; nor can I express my thoughts on the most trivial subjects without it costing me hours of fatigue. If I write immediately what strikes me, my letter is a long, confused, unconnected string of expressions, which, when read, can hardly be understood.

It is not only painful to me to give language to my ideas but even to receive them. I have studied mankind, and think myself a tolerable observer, yet I know nothing from what I see, but all from what I remember, nor have I understanding except in my recollections. From all that is said, from all that passes in my presence, I feel nothing, conceive nothing, the exterior sign being all that strikes me; afterwards it returns to my remembrance; I recollect the place, the time, the manner, the look, and gesture, not a circumstance escapes me; it is then, from what has been done or said, that I imagine what has been thought, and I have rarely found myself mistaken.

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So little master of my understanding when alone, let any one judge what I must be in conversation, where to speak with any degree of ease you must think of a thousand things at the same time: the bare idea that I should forget something material would be sufficient to intimidate me. Nor can I comprehend how people can have the confidence to converse in large companies, where each word must pass in review before so many, and where it would be requisite to know their several characters and histories to avoid saying what might give offence. In this particular, those who frequent the world would have a great advantage, as they know better where to be silent, and can speak with greater confidence; yet even they sometimes let fall absurdities; in what predicament then must he be who drops as it were from the clouds? it is almost impossible he should speak ten minutes with impunity.

In a tete-a-tete there is a still worse inconvenience; that is; the necessity of talking perpetually, at least, the necessity of answering when spoken to, and keeping up the conversation when the other is silent. This insupportable constraint is alone sufficient to disgust me with variety, for I cannot form an idea of a greater torment than being obliged to speak continually without time for recollection. I know not whether it proceeds from my mortal hatred of all constraint; but if I am obliged to speak, I infallibly talk nonsense. What is still worse, instead of learning how to be silent when I have absolutely nothing to say, it is generally at such times that I have a violent inclination: and endeavoring to pay my debt of conversation as speedily as possible, I hastily gabble a number of words without ideas, happy when they only chance to mean nothing; thus endeavoring to conquer or hide my incapacity, I rarely fail to show it.

I think I have said enough to show that, though not a fool, I have frequently passed for one, even among people capable of judging; this was the more vexatious, as my physiognomy and eyes promised otherwise, and expectation being frustrated, my stupidity appeared the more shocking. This detail, which a particular occasion gave birth to, will not be useless in the sequel, being a key to many of my actions which might otherwise appear unaccountable; and have been attributed to a savage humor I do not possess. I love society as much as any man, was I not certain to exhibit myself in it, not only disadvantageously, but totally different from what I really am. The plan I have adopted of writing and retirement, is what exactly suits me. Had I been present, my worth would never have been known, no one would even have suspected it; thus it was with Madam Dupin, a woman of sense, in whose house I lived for several years; indeed, she has often since owned it to me: though on the whole this rule may be subject to some exceptions. I shall now return to my history.

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The estimate of my talents thus fixed, the situation I was capable of promised, the question only remained how to render her capable of fulfilling my destined vocation. The principle difficulty was, I did not know Latin enough for a priest. Madam de Warrens determined to have me taught for some time at the seminary, and accordingly spoke of it to the Superior, who was a Lazarist, called M. Gras, a good-natured little fellow, half blind, meagre, gray-haired, insensible, and the least pedantic of any Lazarist I ever knew; which, in fact, is saying no great matter.

He frequently visited Madam de Warrens, who entertained, caressed, and made much of him, letting him sometimes lace her stays, an office he was willing enough to perform. While thus employed, she would run about the room, this way or that, as occasion happened to call her. Drawn by the lace, Monsieur the Superior followed, grumbling, repeating at every moment, "Pray, madam, do stand still;" the whole forming a scene truly diverting.

M. Gras willingly assented to the project of Madam de Warrens, and, for a very moderate pension, charged himself with the care of instructing me. The consent of the bishop was all that remained necessary, who not only granted it, but offered to pay the pension, permitting me to retain the secular habit till they could judge by a trial what success they might have in my improvement.

What a change! but I was obliged to submit; though I went to the seminary with about the same spirits as if they had been taking me to execution. What a melancholy abode! especially for one who left the house of a pretty woman. I carried one book with me, that I had borrowed of Madam de Warrens, and found it a capital resource! it will not be easily conjectured what kind of book this was—it was a music book. Among the talents she had cultivated, music was not forgotten; she had a tolerable good voice, sang agreeably, and played on the harpsichord. She had taken the pains to give me some lessons in singing, though before I was very uninformed in that respect, hardly knowing the music of our psalms. Eight or ten interrupted lessons, far from putting me in a condition to improve myself, did not teach me half the notes; notwithstanding, I had such a passion for the art, that I determined to exercise myself alone. The book I took was not of the most easy kind; it was the cantatas of Clerambault. It may be conceived with what attention and perseverance I studied, when I inform my reader, that without knowing anything of transposition or quantity, I contrived to sing with tolerable correctness, the first recitative and air in the cantata of Alpheus and Arethusa; it is true this air is, so justly set, that it is only necessary to recite the verses in their just measure to catch the music.

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There was at the seminary a curst Lazarist, who by undertaking to teach me Latin made me detest it. His hair was coarse, black and greasy, his face like those formed in gingerbread, he had the voice of a buffalo, the countenance of an owl, and the bristles of a boar in lieu of a beard; his smile was sardonic, and his limbs played like those of a puppet moved by wires. I have forgotten his odious name, but the remembrance of his frightful precise countenance remains with me, though hardly can I recollect it without trembling; especially when I call to mind our meeting in the gallery, when he graciously advanced his filthy square cap as a sign for me to enter his apartment, which appeared more dismal in my apprehension than a dungeon. Let any one judge the contrast between my present master and the elegant Abbe de Gauvon.

Had I remained two months at the mercy of this monster, I am certain my head could not have sustained it; but the good M. Gras, perceiving I was melancholy, grew thin, and did not eat my victuals, guessed the cause of my uneasiness (which indeed was not very difficult) and taking me from the claws of this beast, by another yet more striking contrast, placed me with the gentlest of men, a young Faucigneran abbe, named M. Gatier, who studied at the seminary, and out of complaisance for M. Gras, and humanity to myself, spared some time from the prosecution of his own studies in order to direct mine. Never did I see a more pleasing countenance than that of M. Gatier. He was fair complexioned, his beard rather inclined to red; his behavior like that of the generality of his countrymen (who under a coarseness of countenance conceal much understanding), marked in him a truly sensible and affectionate soul. In his large blue eyes there was a mixture of softness, tenderness, and melancholy, which made it impossible to see him without feeling one's self interested. From the looks and manner of this young abbe he might have been supposed to have foreseen his destiny, and that he was born to be unhappy.

His disposition did not belie his physiognomy: full of patience and complaisance, he rather appeared to study with than to instruct me. So much was not necessary to make me love him, his predecessor having rendered that very easy; yet, notwithstanding all the time he bestowed on me, notwithstanding our mutual good inclinations, and that his plan of teaching was excellent, with much labor, I made little progress. It is very singular, that with a clear conception I could never learn much from masters except my father and M. Lambercier; the little I know besides I have learned alone, as will be seen hereafter. My spirit, impatient of every species of constraint, cannot submit to the law of the moment; even the fear of not learning prevents my being attentive, and a dread of wearying those who teach, makes me feign to understand them; thus they proceed faster than I can comprehend, and the conclusion is I learn nothing. My understanding must take its own time and cannot submit to that of another.

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The time of ordination being arrived, M. Gatier returned to his province as deacon, leaving me with gratitude, attachment, and sorrow for his loss. The vows I made for him were no more answered than those I offered for myself. Some years after, I learned, that being vicar of a parish, a young girl was with child by him, being the only one (though he possessed a very tender heart) with whom he was ever in love. This was a dreadful scandal in a diocese severely governed, where the priests (being under good regulation) ought never to have children—except by married women. Having infringed this politic law, he was put in prison, defamed, and driven from his benefice. I know not whether it was ever after in his power to reestablish his affairs; but the remembrance of his misfortunes, which were deeply engraven on my heart, struck me when I wrote *Emilius*, and uniting M. Gatier with M. Gaime, I formed from these two worthy priests the character of the Savoyard Vicar, and flatter myself the imitation has not dishonored the originals.

While I was at the seminary, M. d'Aubonne was obliged to quit Annecy, Moulton being displeased that he made love to his wife, which was acting like a dog in the manger, for though Madam Moulton was extremely amiable, he lived very ill with her, treating her with such brutality that a separation was talked of. Moulton, by repeated oppressions, at length procured a dismissal from his employment: he was a disagreeable man; a mole could not be blacker, nor an owl more knavish. It is said the provincials revenge themselves on their enemies by songs; M. d'Aubonne revenged himself on his by a comedy, which he sent to Madam de Warrens, who showed it to me. I was pleased with it, and immediately conceived the idea of writing one, to try whether I was so silly as the author had pronounced me. This project was not executed till I went to Chambéry, where I wrote 'The Lover of Himself'. Thus when I said in the preface to that piece, "it was written at eighteen," I cut off a few years.

Nearly about this time an event happened, not very important in itself, but whose consequence affected me, and made a noise in the world when I had forgotten it. Once a week I was permitted to go out; it is not necessary to say what use I made of this liberty. Being one Sunday at Madam de Warrens, a building belonging to the Cordeliers, which joined her house, took fire; this building which contained their oven, being full of dry fagots, blazed violently and greatly endangered the house; for the wind happening to drive the flames that way, it was covered with them. The furniture, therefore, was hastily got out and carried into the garden which fronted the windows, on the other side the before-mentioned brook. I was so alarmed that I threw indiscriminately everything that came to hand out of the window, even to a large stone mortar, which at another time I should have found it difficult to remove, and should have thrown

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a handsome looking-glass after it had not some one prevented me. The good bishop, who that day was visiting Madam de Warrens, did not remain idle; he took her into the garden, where they went to prayers with the rest that were assembled there, and where sometime afterwards, I found them on their knees, and presently joined them. While the good man was at his devotions, the wind changed, so suddenly and critically, that the flames which had covered the house and began to enter the windows, were carried to the other side of the court, and the house received no damage. Two years after, Monsieur de Berner being dead, the Antoinettes, his former brethren, began to collect anecdotes which might serve as arguments of his beatification; at the desire of Father Baudet, I joined to these an attestation of what I have just related, in doing which, though I attested no more than the truth, I certainly acted ill, as it tended to make an indifferent occurrence pass for a miracle. I had seen the bishop in prayer, and had likewise seen the wind change during the prayer, and even much to the purpose, all this I could certify truly; but that one of these facts was the cause of the other, I ought not to have attested, because it is what I could not possibly be assured of. Thus much I may say, that as far as I can recollect what my ideas were at that time, I was sincerely, and in good earnest a Catholic. Love of the marvellous is natural to the human heart; my veneration for the virtuous prelate, and secret pride in having, perhaps, contributed to the event in question, all helped to seduce me; and certainly, if this miracle was the effect of ardent prayer, I had a right to claim a share of the merits.

More than thirty years after, when I published the 'Lettres de la Montagne', M. Feron (I know not by what means) discovered this attestation, and made use of it in his paper. I must confess the discovery was very critically timed, and appeared very diverting, even to me.

I was destined to be the outcast of every condition; for notwithstanding M. Gatier gave the most favorable account he possibly could of my studies, they plainly saw the improvement I received bore no proportion to the pains taken to instruct me, which was no encouragement to continue them: the bishop and superior, therefore, were disheartened, and I was sent back to Madam de Warrens, as a subject not even fit to make a priest of; but as they allowed, at the same time, that I was a tolerably good lad, and far from being vicious, this account counterbalanced the former, and determined her not to abandon me.

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I carried back in triumph the dear music book, which had been so useful to me, the air of Alpheus and Arethusa being almost all I had learned at the seminary. My predilection for this art started the idea of making a musician of, me. A convenient opportunity offered; once a week, at least, she had a concert at her house, and the music-master from the cathedral, who directed this little band, came frequently to see her. This was a Parisian, named M. le Maitre, a good composer, very lively, gay, young, well made, of little understanding, but, upon the whole, a good sort of man. Madam de Warrens made us acquainted; I attached myself to him, and he seemed not displeased with me. A pension was talked of, and agreed on; in short, I went home with him, and passed the winter the more agreeably at his chambers, as they were not above twenty paces distant from Madam de Warrens', where we frequently supped together. It may easily be supposed that this situation, ever gay, and singing with the musicians and children of the choir, was more pleasing to me than the seminary and fathers of St. Lazarus. This life, though free, was regular; here I learned to prize independence, but never to abuse it. For six whole months I never once went out except to see Madam de Warrens, or to church, nor had I any inclination to it. This interval is one of those in which I enjoyed the greatest satisfaction, and which I have ever recollected with pleasure. Among the various situations I have been placed in, some were marked with such an idea of virtuous satisfaction, that the bare remembrance affects me as if they were yet present. I vividly recollect the time, the place, the persons, and even the temperature of the air, while the lively idea of a certain local impression peculiar to those times, transports me back again to the very spot; for example, all that was repeated at our meetings, all that was sung in the choir, everything that passed there; the beautiful and noble habits of the canons, the chasubles of the priests, the mitres of the singers, the persons of the musicians; an old lame carpenter who played the counter-bass, a little fair abbe who performed on the violin, the ragged cassock which M. le Maitre, after taking off his sword, used to put over his secular habit, and the fine surplice with which he covered the rags of the former, when he went to the choir; the pride with which I held my little flute to my lips, and seated myself in the orchestra, to assist in a recitative which M. le Maitre had composed on purpose for me; the good dinner that afterwards awaited us, and the good appetites we carried to it. This concourse of objects, strongly retraced in my memory, has charmed me a hundred time as much, or perhaps more, than ever the reality had done. I have always preserved an affection for a certain air of the 'Conditor alme Syderum', because one Sunday in Advent I heard that hymn sung on the steps of the cathedral, (according to the custom of that

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place) as I lay in bed before daybreak. Mademoiselle Merceret, Madam de Warrens' chambermaid, knew something of music; I shall never forget a little piece that M. le Maitre made me sing with her, and which her mistress listened to with great satisfaction. In a word, every particular, even down to the servant Perrine, whom the boys of the choir took such delight in teasing. The remembrance of these times of happiness and innocence frequently returning to my mind, both ravish and affect me.

I lived at Annecy during a year without the least reproach, giving universal satisfaction. Since my departure from Turin I had been guilty of no folly, committed none while under the eye of Madam de Warrens. She was my conductor, and ever led me right; my attachment for her became my only passion, and what proves it was not a giddy one, my heart and understanding were in unison. It is true that a single sentiment, absorbing all my faculties, put me out of a capacity of learning even music: but this was not my fault, since to the strongest inclination, I added the utmost assiduity. I was attentive and thoughtful; what could I do? Nothing was wanting towards my progress that depended on me; meantime, it only required a subject that might inspire me to occasion the commission of new follies: that subject presented itself, chance arranged it, and (as will be seen hereafter) my inconsiderate head gave in to it.

One evening, in the month of February, when it was very cold, being all sat round the fire, we heard some one knock at the street door. Perrine took a light, went down and opened it: a young man entering, came upstairs, presented himself with an easy air, and making M. Maitre a short, but well-turned compliment, announced himself as a French musician, constrained by the state of his finances to take this liberty. The heart of the good Le Maitre leaped at the name of a French musician, for he passionately loved both his country and profession; he therefore offered the young traveller his service—and use of his apartment, which he appeared to stand much in need of, and which he accepted without much ceremony. I observed him while he was chatting and warming himself before supper; he was short and thick, having some fault in his shape, though without any particular deformity; he had (if I may so express myself) an appearance of being hunchbacked, with flat shoulders, and I think he limped. He wore a black coat, rather worn than old, which hung in tatters, a very fine but dirty shirt, frayed ruffles; a pair of splatterdashes so large that he could have put both legs into either of them, and, to secure himself from the snow, a little hat, only fit to be carried under his arm. With this whimsical equipage, he had, however, something elegant in his manners and conversation; his countenance was expressive and agreeable, and he spoke with facility if not with modesty; in short, everything about him bore the mark of a young debauchee, who did not crave assistance like a beggar, but as a thoughtless madcap. He told us his name was Venture de Villeneuve, that he came from Paris, had lost his way, and seeming to forget that he had announced himself for a musician, added that he was going to Grenoble to see a relation that was a member of Parliament.

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During supper we talked of music, on which subject he spoke well: he knew all the great virtuosi, all the celebrated works, all the actors, actresses, pretty women, and powerful lords; in short nothing was mentioned but what he seemed thoroughly acquainted with. Though no sooner was any topic started, than by some drollery, which set every one a-laughing, he made them forget what had been said. This was on a Saturday; the next day there was to be music at the cathedral: M. le Maitre asked if he would sing there—"Very willingly."—"What part would he chose?"—"The counter-tenor:" and immediately began speaking of other things. Before he went to church they offered him his part to peruse, but he did not even look at it. This Gasconade surprised Le Maitre—"You'll see," said he, whispering to me, "that he does not know a single note."—I replied: "I am very much afraid of him." I followed them into the church; but was extremely uneasy, and when they began, my heart beat violently, so much was I interested in his behalf.

I was presently out of pain: he sung his two recitatives with all imaginable taste and judgment; and what was yet more, with a very agreeable voice. I never enjoyed a more pleasing surprise. After mass, M. Venture received the highest compliments from the canons and musicians, which he answered jokingly, though with great grace. M. le Maitre embraced him heartily; I did the same; he saw I was rejoiced at his success, and appeared pleased at my satisfaction.

It will easily be surmised, that after having been delighted with M. Bacle, who had little to attract my admiration, I should be infatuated with M. Venture, who had education, wit, talents, and a knowledge of the world, and might be called an agreeable rake. This was exactly what happened, and would, I believe, have happened to any other young man in my place; especially supposing him possessed of better judgment to distinguish merit, and more propensity to be engaged by it; for Venture doubtless possessed a considerable share, and one in particular, very rare at his age, namely, that of never being in haste to display his talents. It is true, he boasted of many things he did not understand, but of those he knew (which were very numerous) he said nothing, patiently waiting some occasion to display them, which he then did with ease, though without forwardness, and thus gave them more effect. As there was ever some intermission between the proofs of his various abilities, it was impossible to conjecture whether he had ever discovered all his talents. Playful, giddy, inexhaustible, seducing in conversation, ever smiling, but never laughing, and repeating the rudest things in the most elegant manner—even the most modest women were astonished at what they endured from him: it was in vain for them to determine to be angry; they could not assume the appearance of it. It was extraordinary that with so many agreeable talents, in a country where they are so well understood, and so much admired, he so long remained only a musician.

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My attachment to M. Venture, more reasonable in its cause, was also less extravagant in its effects, though more lively and durable than that I had conceived for M. Bacle. I loved to see him, to hear him, all his actions appeared charming, everything he said was an oracle to me, but the enchantment did not extend far enough to disable me from quitting him. I spoke of him with transport to Madam de Warrens, Le Maitre likewise spoke in his praise, and she consented we should bring him to her house. This interview did not succeed; he thought her affected, she found him a libertine, and, alarmed that I had formed such an ill acquaintance, not only forbade me bringing him there again, but likewise painted so strongly the danger I ran with this young man, that I became a little more circumspect in giving in to the attachment; and very happily, both for my manners and wits, we were soon separated.

M. le Maitre, like most of his profession, loved good wine; at table he was moderate, but when busy in his closet he must drink. His maid was so well acquainted with this humor that no sooner had he prepared his paper to compose, and taken his violoncello, than the bottle and glass arrived, and was replenished from time to time: thus, without being ever absolutely intoxicated, he was usually in a state of elevation. This was really unfortunate, for he had a good heart, and was so playful that Madam de Warrens used to call him the kitten. Unhappily, he loved his profession, labored much and drank proportionately, which injured his health, and at length soured his temper. Sometimes he was gloomy and easily offended, though incapable of rudeness, or giving offence to any one, for never did he utter a harsh word, even to the boys of the choir: on the other hand, he would not suffer another to offend him, which was but just: the misfortune was, having little understanding, he did not properly discriminate, and was often angry without cause.

The Chapter of Geneva, where so many princes and bishops formerly thought it an honor to be seated, though in exile it lost its ancient splendor, retained (without any diminution) its pride. To be admitted, you must either be a gentleman or Doctor of Sorbonne. If there is a pardonable pride, after that derived from personal merit, it is doubtless that arising from birth, though, in general, priests having laymen in their service treat them with sufficient haughtiness, and thus the canons behaved to poor Le Maitre. The chanter, in particular, who was called the Abbe de Vidonne, in other respects a well-behaved man, but too full of his nobility, did not always show him the attention his talents merited. M. le Maitre could not bear these indignities patiently; and this year, during passion week, they had a more serious dispute than ordinary. At an institution dinner that the bishop gave the canons, and to which M. Maitre was always invited, the abbe failed in some formality, adding, at the same time, some harsh words, which the

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other could not digest; he instantly formed the resolution to quit them the following night; nor could any consideration make him give up his design, though Madam de Warrens (whom he went to take leave of) spared no pains to appease him. He could not relinquish the pleasure of leaving his tyrants embarrassed for the Easter feast, at which time he knew they stood in greatest need of him. He was most concerned about his music, which he wished to take with him; but this could not easily be accomplished, as it filled a large case, and was very heavy, and could not be carried under the arm.

Madam de Warrens did what I should have done in her situation; and indeed, what I should yet do: after many useless efforts to retain him, seeing he was resolved to depart, whatever might be the event, she formed the resolution to give him every possible assistance. I must confess Le Maitre deserved it of her, for he was (if I may use the expression) dedicated to her service, in whatever appertained to either his art or knowledge, and the readiness with which he obliged gave a double value to his complaisance: thus she only paid back, on an essential occasion, the many favors he had been long conferring on her; though I should observe, she possessed a soul that, to fulfill such duties, had no occasion to be reminded of previous obligations. Accordingly she ordered me to follow Le Maitre to Lyons, and to continue with him as long as he might have occasion for my services. She has since avowed, that a desire of detaching me from Venture had a great hand in this arrangement. She consulted Claude Anet about the conveyance of the above-mentioned case. He advised, that instead of hiring a beast at Annecy, which would infallibly discover us, it would be better, at night, to take it to some neighboring village, and there hire an ass to carry it to Seyssel, which being in the French dominions, we should have nothing to fear. This plan was adopted; we departed the same night at seven, and Madam de Warrens, under pretense of paying my expenses, increased the purse of poor Le Maitre by an addition that was very acceptable. Claude Anet, the gardiner, and myself, carried the case to the first village, then hired an ass, and the same night reached Seyssel.

I think I have already remarked that there are times in which I am so unlike myself that I might be taken for a man of a direct opposite disposition; I shall now give an example of this. M. Reydelet, curate of Seyssel, was canon of St. Peter's, consequently known to M. le Maitre, and one of the people from whom he should have taken most pains to conceal himself; my advice, on the contrary, was to present ourselves to him, and, under some pretext, entreat entertainment as if we visited him by consent of the chapter. Le Maitre adopted the idea, which seemed to give his revenge the appearance of satire and waggery; in short, we went boldly to Reydelet, who received us very kindly. Le Maitre told him he was going

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to Bellay by desire of the bishop, that he might superintend the music during the Easter holidays, and that he proposed returning that way in a few days. To support this tale, I told a hundred others, so naturally that M. Reydelet thought me a very agreeable youth, and treated me with great friendship and civility. We were well regaled and well lodged: M. Reydelet scarcely knew how to make enough of us; and we parted the best friends in the world, with a promise to stop longer on our return. We found it difficult to refrain from laughter, or wait till we were alone to give free vent to our mirth: indeed, even now, the bare recollection of it forces a smile, for never was waggery better or more fortunately maintained. This would have made us merry during the remainder of our journey, if M. le Maitre (who did not cease drinking) had not been two or three times attacked with a complaint that he afterwards became very subject to, and which resembled an epilepsy. These fits threw me into the most fearful embarrassments, from which I resolved to extricate myself with the first opportunity.

According to the information given to M. Reydelet, we passed our Easter holidays at Bellay, and though not expected there, were received by the music—master, and welcomed by every one with great pleasure. M. le Maitre was of considerable note in his profession, and, indeed, merited that distinction. The music-master of Bellay (who was fond of his own works) endeavored to obtain the approbation of so good a judge; for besides being a connoisseur, M. le Maitre was equitable, neither a jealous, ill-natured critic, nor a servile flatterer. He was so superior to the generality of country music-masters and they were so sensible of it, that they treated him rather as their chief than a brother musician.

Having passed four or five days very agreeably at Bellay, we departed, and continuing our journey without meeting with any accidents, except those I have just spoken of, arrived at Lyons, and were lodged at Notre Dame de Pitie. While we waited for the arrival of the before-mentioned case (which by the assistance of another lie, and the care of our good patron, M. Reydelet, we had embarked on the Rhone) M. le Maitre went to visit his acquaintance, and among others Father Cato, a Cordelier, who will be spoken of hereafter, and the Abbe Dortan, Count of Lyons, both of whom received him well, but afterwards betrayed him, as will be seen presently; indeed, his good fortune terminated with M. Reydelet.

Two days after our arrival at Lyons, as we passed a little street not far from our inn, Le Maitre was attacked by one of his fits; but it was now so violent as to give me the utmost alarm. I screamed with terror, called for help, and naming our inn, entreated some one to bear him to it, then (while the people were assembled, and busy round a man that had fallen senseless in the street) he was abandoned by the only friend on whom he could have any reasonable dependence; I seized the instant when no one heeded me, turned the corner of the street and disappeared. Thanks to Heaven, I have made my

third painful confession; if many such remained, I should certainly abandon the work I have undertaken.

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Of all the incidents I have yet related, a few traces are remaining in the places where I have lived; but what I have to relate in the following book is almost entirely unknown; these are the greatest extravagancies of my life, and it is happy they had not worse conclusions. My head, (if I may use the simile) screwed up to the pitch of an instrument it did not naturally accord with, had lost its diapason; in time it returned to it again, when I discontinued my follies, or at least gave in to those more consonant to my disposition. This epoch of my youth I am least able to recollect, nothing having passed sufficiently interesting to influence my heart, to make me clearly retrace the remembrance. In so many successive changes, it is difficult not to make some transpositions of time or place. I write absolutely from memory, without notes or materials to help my recollection. Some events are as fresh in my idea as if they had recently happened, but there are certain chasms which I cannot fill up but by the aid of recital, as confused as the remaining traces of those to which they refer. It is possible, therefore, that I may have erred in trifles, and perhaps shall again, but in every matter of importance I can answer that the account is faithfully exact, and with the same veracity the reader may depend I shall be careful to continue it.

My resolution was soon taken after quitting Le Maitre; I set out immediately for Annecy. The cause and mystery of our departure had interested me for the security of our retreat: this interest, which entirely employed my thoughts for some days, had banished every other idea; but no sooner was I secure and in tranquility, than my predominant sentiment regained its place. Nothing flattered, nothing tempted me, I had no wish but to return to Madam de Warrens; the tenderness and truth of my attachment to her had rooted from my heart every imaginable project, and all the follies of ambition, I conceived no happiness but living near her, nor could I take a step without feeling that the distance between us was increased. I returned, therefore, as soon as possible, with such speed, and with my spirits in such a state of agitation, that though I recall with pleasure all my other travels, I have not the least recollection of this, only remembering my leaving Lyons and reaching Annecy. Let anyone judge whether this last event can have slipped my memory, when informed that on my arrival I found Madam de Warrens was not there, having set out for Paris.

I was never well informed of the motives of this journey. I am certain she would have told me had I asked her, but never was man less curious to learn the secrets of his friend. My heart is ever so entirely filled with the present, or with past pleasures, which become a principal part of my enjoyment, that there is not a chink or corner for curiosity to enter. All that I conceive from what I heard of it, is, that in the revolution caused at Turin by the abdication of

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the King of Sardinia, she feared being forgotten, and was willing by favor of the intrigues of M. d' Aubonne to seek the same advantage in the court of France, where she has often told me she should, have preferred it, as the multiplicity of business there prevents your conduct from being so closely inspected. If this was her business, it is astonishing that on her return she was not ill received; be that as it will, she continued to enjoy her allowance without any interruption. Many people imagined she was charged with some secret commission, either by the bishop, who then had business at the court of France, where he himself was soon after obliged to go, or some one yet more powerful, who knew how to insure her a gracious reception at her return. If this was the case, it is certain the ambassadress was not ill chosen, since being young and handsome, she had all the necessary qualifications to succeed in a negotiation.