

Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 04 eBook

Confessions of J. J. Rousseau, the — Volume 04 by Jean-Jacques Rousseau

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BOOK IV.

Let any one judge my surprise and grief at not finding her on my arrival. I now felt regret at having abandoned M. le Maitre, and my uneasiness increased when I learned the misfortunes that had befallen him. His box of music, containing all his fortune, that precious box, preserved with so much care and fatigue, had been seized on at Lyons by means of Count Dortan, who had received information from the Chapter of our having absconded with it. In vain did Le Maitre reclaim his property, his means of existence, the labor of his life; his right to the music in question was at least subject to litigation, but even that liberty was not allowed him, the affair being instantly decided on the principal of superior strength. Thus poor Le Maitre lost the fruit of his talents, the labor of his youth, and principal dependence for the support of old age.

Nothing was wanting to render the news I had received truly afflicting, but I was at an age when even the greatest calamities are to be sustained; accordingly I soon found consolation. I expected shortly to hear news of Madam de Warrens, though I was ignorant of the address, and she knew nothing of my return. As to my desertion of Le Maitre (all things considered) I did not find it so very culpable. I had been serviceable to him at his retreat; it was not in my power to give him any further assistance. Had I remained with him in France it would not have cured his complaint. I could not have saved his music, and should only have doubled his expense: in this point of view I then saw my conduct; I see it otherwise now. It frequently happens that a villainous action does not torment us at the instant we commit it, but on recollection, and sometimes even after a number of years have elapsed, for the remembrance of crimes is not to be extinguished.

The only means I had to obtain news of Madam de Warrens was to remain at Annecy. Where should I seek her in Paris? or how bear the expense of such a journey? Sooner or later there was no place where I could be so certain to hear of her as that I was now at; this consideration determined me to remain there, though my conduct was very indifferent. I did not go to the bishop, who had already befriended me, and might continue to do so; my patroness was not present, and I feared his reprimands on the subject of our flight; neither did I go to the seminary, M. Graswas no longer there; in short, I went to none of my acquaintances. I should gladly have visited the intendant's lady, but did not dare; I did worse, I sought out M. Venture, whom (notwithstanding my enthusiasm) I had never thought of since my departure. I found him quite gay, in high spirits, and the universal favorite of the ladies of Annecy.



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This success completed my infatuation; I saw nothing but M. Venture; he almost made me forget even Madam de Warrens. That I might profit more at ease by his instructions and example, I proposed to share his lodgings, to which he readily consented. It was at a shoemaker's; a pleasant, jovial fellow, who, in his county dialect, called his wife nothing but trollop; an appellation which she certainly merited. Venture took care to augment their differences, though under an appearance of doing the direct contrary, throwing out in a distant manner, and provincial accents, hints that produced the utmost effect, and furnished such scenes as were sufficient to make any one die with laughter. Thus the mornings passed without our thinking of them; at two or three o'clock we took some refreshment. Venture then went to his various engagements, where he supped, while I walked alone, meditating on his great merit, coveting and admiring his rare talents, and cursing my own unlucky stars, that did not call me to so happy a life. How little did I then know of myself! mine had been a thousand times more delightful, had I not been such a fool, or known better how to enjoy it.

Madam de Warrens had taken no one with her but Anet: Merceret, the chambermaid, whom I have before mentioned, still remained in the house. Merceret was something older than myself, not pretty, but tolerably agreeable; good-natured, free from malice, having no fault to my knowledge but being a little refractory with her mistress. I often went to see her; she was an old acquaintance, who recalled to my remembrance one more beloved, and this made her dear to me. She had several friends, and among others one Mademoiselle Giraud, a Genevese, who, for the punishment of my sins, took it in her head to have an inclination for me, always pressing Merceret, when she returned her visits, to bring me with her. As I liked Merceret, I felt no disinclination to accompany her; besides I met there with some young people whose company pleased me. For Mademoiselle Giraud, who offered every kind of enticement, nothing could increase the aversion I had for her. When she drew near me, with her dried black snout, smeared with Spanish snuff, it was with the utmost difficulty that I could refrain from expressing my distaste; but, being pleased with her visitors, I took patience. Among these were two girls who (either to pay their court to Mademoiselle Giraud or myself) paid me every possible attention. I conceived this to be only friendship; but have since thought it depended only on myself to have discovered something more, though I did not even think of it at the time.



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There was another reason for my stupidity. Seamstresses, chambermaids, or milliners, never tempted me; I sighed for ladies! Every one has his peculiar taste, this has ever been mine; being in this particular of a different opinion from Horace. Yet it is not vanity of riches or rank that attracts me; it is a well-preserved complexion, fine hands, elegance of ornaments, an air of delicacy and neatness throughout the whole person; more in taste, in the manner of expressing themselves, a finer or better made gown, a well-turned ankle, small foot, ribbons, lace, and well-dressed hair; I even prefer those who have less natural beauty, provided they are elegantly decorated. I freely confess this preference is very ridiculous; yet my heart gives in to it spite of my understanding. Well, even this advantage presented itself, and it only depended on my own resolution to have seized the opportunity.

How do I love, from time to time, to return to those moments of my youth, which were so charmingly delightful; so short, so scarce, and enjoyed at so cheap a rate!—how fondly do I wish to dwell on them! Even yet the remembrance of these scenes warms my heart with a chaste rapture, which appears necessary to reanimate my drooping courage, and enable me to sustain the weariness of my latter days.

The appearance of Aurora seemed so delightful one morning that, putting on my clothes, I hastened into the country, to see the rising of the sun. I enjoyed that pleasure in its utmost extent; it was one week after midsummer; the earth was covered with verdure and flowers, the nightingales, whose soft warblings were almost concluded, seemed to vie with each other, and in concert with birds of various kinds to bid adieu to spring, and hail the approach of a beautiful summer's day: one of those lovely days that are no longer to be enjoyed at my age, and which have never been seen on the melancholy soil I now inhabit.

I had rambled insensibly, to a considerable distance from the town—the heat augmented—I was walking in the shade along a valley, by the side of a brook, I heard behind me the steps of horses, and the voice of some females who, though they seemed embarrassed, did not laugh the less heartily on that account. I turn round, hear myself called by name, and approaching, find two young people of my acquaintance, Mademoiselle de G—— and Mademoiselle Galley, who, not being very excellent horsewomen, could not make their horses cross the rivulet.

Mademoiselle de G—— was a young lady of Berne, very amiable; who, having been sent from that country for some youthful folly, had imitated Madam de Warrens, at whose house I had sometimes seen her; but not having, like her, a pension, she had been fortunate in this attachment to Mademoiselle Galley, who had prevailed on her mother to engage her young friend as a companion, till she could be otherwise provided for. Mademoiselle Galley was one year younger than her friend, handsomer, more delicate,



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more ingenious, and to complete all, extremely well made. They loved each other tenderly, and the good disposition of both could not fail to render their union durable, if some lover did not derange it. They informed me they were going to Toune, an old castle belonging to Madam Galley, and implored my assistance to make their horses cross the stream, not being able to compass it themselves. I would have given each a cut or two with the whip, but they feared I might be kicked, and themselves thrown; I therefore had recourse to another expedient, I took hold of Mademoiselle Galley's horse and led him through the brook, the water reaching half-way up my legs. The other followed without any difficulty. This done, I would have paid my compliments to the ladies, and walked off like a great booby as I was, but after whispering each other, Mademoiselle de G—— said, "No, no, you must not think to escape thus; you have got wet in our service, and we ought in conscience to take care and dry you. If you please you must go with us, you are now our prisoner." My heart began to beat—I looked at Mademoiselle Galley—"Yes, yes," added she, laughing at my fearful look; "our prisoner of war; come, get up behind her, we shall give a good account of you."—"But, mademoiselle," continued I, "I have not the honor to be acquainted with your mother; what will she say on my arrival?"—"Her mother," replied Mademoiselle de G—— is not at Toune, we are alone, we shall return at night, and you shall come back with us."

The stroke of electricity has not a more instantaneous effect than these words produced on me. Leaping behind Mademoiselle de G——, I trembled with joy, and when it became necessary to clasp her in order to hold myself on, my heart beat so violently that she perceived it, and told me hers beat also from a fear of falling. In my present posture, I might naturally have considered this an invitation to satisfy myself of the truth of her assertion, yet I did not dare, and during the whole way my arm served as a girdle (a very close one, I must confess), without being a moment displaced. Some women that may read this would be for giving me a box on the ear, and, truly, I deserved it.

The gayety of the journey, and the chat of these girls, so enlivened me, that during the whole time we passed together we never ceased talking a moment. They had set me so thoroughly at ease, that my tongue spoke as fast as my eyes, though not exactly the same things. Some minutes, indeed, when I was left alone with either, the conversation became a little embarrassed, but neither of them was absent long enough to allow time for explaining the cause.



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Arrived at Toune, and myself well dried, we breakfasted together; after which it was necessary to settle the important business of preparing dinner. The young ladies cooked, kissing from time to time the farmer's children, while the poor scullion looked on grumbling. Provisions had been sent for from town, and there was everything necessary for a good dinner, but unhappily they had forgotten wine; this forgetfulness was by no means astonishing to girls who seldom drank any, but I was sorry for the omission, as I had reckoned on its help, thinking it might add to my confidence. They were sorry likewise, and perhaps from the same motive; though I have no reason to say this, for their lively and charming gayety was innocence itself; besides, there were two of them, what could they expect from me? they went everywhere about the neighborhood to seek for wine, but none could be procured, so pure and sober are the peasants in those parts. As they were expressing their concern, I begged them not to give themselves any uneasiness on my account, for while with them I had no occasion for wine to intoxicate me. This was the only gallantry I ventured at during the whole of the day, and I believe the sly rogues saw well enough that I said nothing but the truth.

We dined in the kitchen; the two friends were seated on the benches, one on each side the long table, and their guest at the end, between them, on a three—legged stool. What a dinner! how charming the remembrance! While we can enjoy, at so small an expense, such pure, such true delights, why should we be solicitous for others? Never did those 'petite soupes', so celebrated in Paris, equal this; I do not only say for real pleasure and gayety, but even for sensuality.

After dinner, we were economical; instead of drinking the coffee we had reserved at breakfast, we kept it for an afternoon collation, with cream, and some cake they had brought with them. To keep our appetites in play, we went into the orchard, meaning to finish our dessert with cherries. I got into a tree, throwing them down bunches, from which they returned the stones through the branches. One time, Mademoiselle Galley, holding out her apron, and drawing back her head, stood so fair, and I took such good aim, that I dropped a bunch into her bosom. On her laughing, I said to myself, "Why are not my lips cherries? How gladly would I throw them there likewise."

Thus the day passed with the greatest freedom, yet with the utmost decency; not a single equivocal word, not one attempt at double-meaning pleasantry; yet this delicacy was not affected, we only performed the parts our hearts dictated; in short, my modesty, some will say my folly, was such that the greatest familiarity that escaped me was once kissing the hand of Mademoiselle Galley; it is true, the attending circumstances helped to stamp a value on this trifling favor; we were alone, I was embarrassed, her eyes were fixed on the ground, and my lips, instead of uttering words, were pressed on her hand, which she drew gently back after the salute, without any appearance of displeasure. I know not what I should have said to her; but her friend entered, and at that moment I thought her ugly.

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At length, they bethought themselves, that they must return to town before night; even now we had but just time to reach it by daylight; and we hastened our departure in the same order we came. Had I pleased myself, I should certainly have reversed this order, for the glance of Mademoiselle Galley had reached my heart, but I dared not mention it, and the proposal could not reasonably come from her. On the way, we expressed our sorrow that the day was over, but far from complaining of the shortness of its duration, we were conscious of having prolonged it by every possible amusement.

I quitted them in nearly the same spot where I had taken them up. With what regret did we part! With what pleasure did we form projects to renew our meeting! Delightful hours, which we passed innocently together, yet were worth ages of familiarity! The sweet remembrance of those days cost those amiable girls nothing; the tender union which reigned among us equalled more lively pleasures, with which it could not have existed. We loved each other without shame or mystery, and wished to continue our reciprocal affection. There is a species of enjoyment connected with innocence of manners which is superior to any other, because it has no interval; for myself, the remembrance of such a day touches me nearer, delights me more, and returns with greater rapture to my heart than any other pleasure I ever tasted. I hardly knew what I wished with those charming girls. I do not say: that had the arrangement been in my power, I should have divided my heart between them; I certainly felt some degree of preference: though I should have been happy to have had Mademoiselle de G——, for a mistress, I think, by choice, I should have liked her, better as a confidante; be that as it may, I felt on leaving them as though I could not live without either. Who would have thought that I should never see them more; and that here our ephemeral amours must end?

Those who read this will not fail to laugh at my gallantries, and remark, that after very promising preliminaries, my most forward adventures concluded by a kiss of the hand: yet be not mistaken, reader, in your estimate of my enjoyments; I have, perhaps, tasted more real pleasure in my amours, which concluded by a kiss of the hand, than you will ever have in yours, which, at least, begin there.

Venture, who had gone to bed late the night before, came in soon after me. I did not now see him with my usual satisfaction, and took care not to inform him how I had passed the day. The ladies had spoken of him slightly, and appeared discontented at finding me in such bad hands; this hurt him in my esteem; besides, whatever diverted my ideas from them was at this time disagreeable. However, he soon brought me back to him and myself, by speaking of the situation of my affairs, which was too critical to last; for, though I spent very little, my slender finances were almost exhausted. I was without resource; no news of Madam de Warrens; not knowing what would become of me, and feeling a cruel pang at heart to see the friend of Mademoiselle Galley reduced to beggary.



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I now learned from Venture that he had spoken of me to the Judge Major, and would take me next day to dine with him; that he was a man who by means of his friends might render me essential service. In other respects he was a desirable acquaintance, being a man of wit and letters, of agreeable conversation, one who possessed talents and loved them in others. After this discourse (mingling the most serious concerns with the most trifling frivolity) he showed me a pretty couplet, which came from Paris, on an air in one of Moutet's operas, which was then playing. Monsieur Simon (the judge major) was so pleased with this couplet, that he determined to make another in answer to it, on the same air. He had desired Venture to write one, and he wished me to make a third, that, as he expressed it, they might see couplets start up next day like incidents in a comic romance.

In the night (not being able to sleep) I composed a couplet, as my first essay in poetry. It was passable; better, or at least composed with more taste than it would have been the preceding night, the subject being tenderness, to which my heart was now entirely disposed. In the morning I showed my performance to Venture, who, being pleased with the couplet, put it in his pocket, without informing me whether he had made his. We dined with M. Simon, who treated us very politely. The conversation was agreeable; indeed it could not be otherwise between two men of natural good sense, improved by reading. For me, I acted my proper part, which was to listen without attempting to join in the conversation. Neither of them mentioned the couplet nor do I know that it ever passed for mine. M. Simon appeared satisfied with my behavior; indeed, it was almost all he saw of me at this interview. We had often met at Madam de Warrens, but he had never paid much attention to me; it is from this dinner, therefore, that I date our acquaintance, which, though of no use in regard to the object I then had in view, was afterwards productive of advantages which make me recollect it with pleasure. I should be wrong not to give some account of this person, since from his office of magistrate, and the reputation of wit on which he piqued himself, no idea could be formed of it. The judge major, Simon, certainly was not two feet high; his legs spare, straight, and tolerably long, would have added something to his stature had they been vertical, but they stood in the direction of an open pair of compasses. His body was not only short, but thin, being in every respect of most inconceivable smallness—when naked he must have appeared like a grasshopper. His head was of the common size, to which appertained a well-formed face, a noble look, and tolerably fine eyes; in short, it appeared a borrowed head, stuck on a miserable stump. He might very well have dispensed with dress, for his large wig alone covered him from head to foot.



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He had two voices, perfectly different, which intermingled perpetually in his conversation, forming at first a diverting, but afterwards a very disagreeable contrast. One grave and sonorous, was, if I may hazard the expression, the voice of his head: the other, clear, sharp, and piercing, the voice of his body. When he paid particular attention, and spoke leisurely, so as to preserve his breath, he could continue his deep tone; but if he was the least animated, or attempted a lively accent, his voice sounded like the whistling of a key, and it was with the utmost difficulty that he could return to the bass.

With the figure I have just described, and which is by no means overcharged, M. Simon was gallant, ever entertaining the ladies with soft tales, and carrying the decoration of his person even to foppery. Willing to make use of every advantage he, during the morning, gave audience in bed, for when a handsome head was discovered on the pillow no one could have imagined what belonged to it. This circumstance gave birth to scenes, which I am certain are yet remembered by all Annecy.

One morning, when he expected to give audience in bed, or rather on the bed, having on a handsome night-cap ornamented with rose-colored ribbon, a countryman arriving knocked at the door; the maid happened to be out; the judge, therefore, hearing the knock repeated, cried "Come in," and, as he spoke rather loud, it was in his shrill tone. The man entered, looked about, endeavoring to discover whence the female voice proceeded and at length seeing a handsome head-dress set off with ribbons, was about to leave the room, making the supposed lady a hundred apologies. M. Simon, in a rage, screamed the more; and the countryman, yet more confirmed in his opinion, conceiving himself to be insulted, began railing in his turn, saying that, "Apparently, she was nothing better than a common streetwalker, and that the judge major should be ashamed of setting such ill examples." The enraged magistrate, having no other weapon than the jordan under his bed, was just going to throw it at the poor fellow's head as his servant returned.

This dwarf, ill-used by nature as to his person, was recompensed by possessing an understanding naturally agreeable, and which he had been careful to cultivate. Though he was esteemed a good lawyer, he did not like his profession, delighting more in the finer parts of literature, which he studied with success: above all, he possessed that superficial brilliancy, the art of pleasing in conversation, even with the ladies. He knew by heart a number of little stories, which he perfectly well knew how to make the most of; relating with an air of secrecy, and as an anecdote of yesterday, what happened sixty years before. He understood music, and could sing agreeably; in short, for a magistrate, he had many pleasing talents. By flattering the ladies of Annecy, he became fashionable among them, appearing continually in their train. He even pretended to favors, at which they were much amused. A Madam D'Epigny used to say "The greatest favor he could aspire to, was to kiss a lady on her knees."



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As he was well read, and spoke fluently, his conversation was both amusing and instructive. When I afterwards took a taste for study, I cultivated his acquaintance, and found my account in it: when at Chambéry, I frequently went from thence to see him. His praises increased my emulation, to which he added some good advice respecting the prosecution of my studies, which I found useful. Unhappily, this weakly body contained a very feeling soul. Some years after, he was chagrined by I know not what unlucky affair, but it cost him his life. This was really unfortunate, for he was a good little man, whom at a first acquaintance one laughed at, but afterwards loved. Though our situations in life were very little connected with each other, as I received some useful lessons from him, I thought gratitude demanded that I should dedicate a few sentences to his memory.

As soon as I found myself at liberty, I ran into the street where Mademoiselle Galley lived, flattering myself that I should see someone go in or out, or at least open a window, but I was mistaken, not even a cat appeared, the house remaining as close all the time as if it had been uninhabited. The street was small and lonely, any one loitering about was, consequently, more likely to be noticed; from time to time people passed in and out of the neighborhood; I was much embarrassed, thinking my person might be known, and the cause that brought me there conjectured; this idea tortured me, for I have ever preferred the honor and happiness of those I love to my own pleasures.

At length, weary of playing the Spanish lover, and having no guitar, I determined to write to Mademoiselle de G——. I should have preferred writing to her friend, but did not dare take that liberty, as it appeared more proper to begin with her to whom I owed the acquaintance, and with whom I was most familiar. Having written my letter, I took it to Mademoiselle Giraud, as the young ladies had agreed at parting, they having furnished me with this expedient. Mademoiselle Giraud was a quilter, and sometimes worked at Madam Galley's, which procured her free admission to the house. I must confess, I was not thoroughly satisfied with this messenger, but was cautious of starting difficulties, fearing that if I objected to her no other might be named, and it was impossible to intimate that she had an inclination to me herself. I even felt humiliated that she should think I could imagine her of the same sex as those young ladies: in a word, I accepted her agency rather than none, and availed myself of it at all events.



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At the very first word, Giraud discovered me. I must own this was not a difficult matter, for if sending a letter to young girls had not spoken sufficiently plain, my foolish embarrassed air would have betrayed me. It will easily be supposed that the employment gave her little satisfaction, she undertook it, however, and performed it faithfully. The next morning I ran to her house and found an answer ready for me. How did I hurry away that I might have an opportunity to read and kiss it alone! though this need not been told, but the plan adopted by Mademoiselle Giraud (and in which I found more delicacy and moderation than I had expected) should. She had sense enough to conclude that her thirty—seven years, hare's eyes, daubed nose, shrill voice, and black skin, stood no chance against two elegant young girls, in all the height and bloom of beauty; she resolved, therefore, nether to betray nor assist them, choosing rather to lose me entirely than entertain me for them.

As Merceret had not heard from her mistress for some time, she thought of returning to Fribourg, and the persuasions of Giraud determined her; nay more, she intimated it was proper someone should conduct her to her father's and proposed me. As I happened to be agreeable to little Merceret, she approved the idea, and the same day they mentioned it to me as a fixed point. Finding nothing displeasing in the manner they had disposed of me, I consented, thinking it could not be above a week's journey at most; but Giraud, who had arranged the whole affair, thought otherwise. It was necessary to avow the state of my finances, and the conclusion was, that Merceret should defray my expenses; but to retrench on one hand what was expended on the other, I advised that her little baggage should be sent on before, and that we should proceed by easy journeys on foot.

I am sorry to have so many girls in love with me, but as there is nothing to be very vain of in the success of these amours, I think I may tell the truth without scruple. Merceret, younger and less artful than Giraud, never made me so many advances, but she imitated my manners, my actions, repeated my words, and showed me all those little attentions I ought to have had for her. Being very timorous, she took great care that we should both sleep in the same chamber; a circumstance that usually produces some consequences between a lad of twenty and a girl of twenty —five.

For once, however, it went no further; my simplicity being such, that though Merceret was by no means a disagreeable girl, an idea of gallantry never entered my head, and even if it had, I was too great a novice to have profited by it. I could not imagine how two young persons could bring themselves to sleep together, thinking that such familiarity must require an age of preparation. If poor Merceret paid my expenses in hopes of any return, she was terribly cheated, for we arrived at Fribourg exactly as we had quitted Annecy.



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I passed through Geneva without visiting any one. While going over the bridges, I found myself so affected that I could scarcely proceed. Never could I see the walls of that city, never could I enter it, without feeling my heart sink from excess of tenderness, at the same time that the image of liberty elevated my soul. The ideas of equality, union, and gentleness of manners, touched me even to tears, and inspired me with a lively regret at having forfeited all these advantages. What an error was I in! but yet how natural! I imagined I saw all this in my native country, because I bore it in my heart.

It was necessary to pass through Nion: could I do this without seeing my good father? Had I resolved on doing so, I must afterwards have died with regret. I left Merceret at the inn, and ventured to his house. How wrong was I to fear him! On seeing me, his soul gave way to the parental tenderness with which it was filled. What tears were mingled with our embraces! He thought I was returned to him: I related my history, and informed him of my resolution. He opposed it feebly, mentioning the dangers to which I exposed myself, and telling me the shortest follies were best, but did not attempt to keep me by force, in which particular I think he acted right; but it is certain he did not do everything in his power to detain me, even by fair means. Whether after the step I had taken, he thought I ought not to return, or was puzzled at my age to know what to do with me—I have since found that he conceived a very unjust opinion of my travelling companion. My step—mother, a good woman, a little coaxingly put on an appearance of wishing me to stay to supper; I did not, however, comply, but told them I proposed remaining longer with them on my return; leaving as a deposit my little packet, that had come by water, and would have been an incumbrance, had I taken it with me. I continued my journey the next morning, well satisfied that I had seen my father, and had taken courage to do my duty.

We arrived without any accident at Fribourg. Towards the conclusion of the journey, the politeness of Mademoiselle Merceret rather diminished, and, after our arrival, she treated me even with coldness. Her father, who was not in the best circumstances, did not show me much attention, and I was obliged to lodge at an alehouse. I went to see them the next morning, and received an invitation to dine there, which I accepted. We separated without tears at night; I returned to my paltry lodging, and departed the second day after my arrival, almost without knowing whither to go to.



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This was a circumstance of my life in which Providence offered me precisely what was necessary to make my days pass happily. Merceret was a good girl, neither witty, handsome, nor ugly; not very lively, but tolerably rational, except while under the influence of some little humors, which usually evaporated in tears, without any violent outbreak of temper. She had a real inclination for me; I might have married her without difficulty, and followed her father's business. My taste for music would have made me love her; I should have settled at Fribourg, a small town, not pretty, but inhabited by very worthy people—I should certainly have missed great pleasures, but should have lived in peace to my last hour, and I must know best what I should have gained by such a step.

I did not return to Nion, but to Lausanne, wishing to gratify myself with a view of that beautiful lake which is seen there in its utmost extent. The greater part of my secret motives have not been so reasonable. Distant expectation has rarely strength enough to influence my actions; the uncertainty of the future ever making me regard projects whose execution requires a length of time as deceitful lures. I give in to visionary scenes of hope as well as others, provided they cost nothing, but if attended with any trouble, I have done with them. The smallest, the most trifling pleasure that is conveniently within my reach, tempts me more than all the joys of paradise. I must except, however, those pleasures which are necessarily followed by pain; I only love those enjoyments which are unadulterated, which can never be the case where we are conscious they must be followed by repentance.

It was necessary I should arrive at some place, and the nearest was best; for having lost my way on the road, I found myself in the evening at Moudon, where I spent all that remained of my little stock except ten creuzers, which served to purchase my next day's dinner. Arriving in the evening at Lausanne, I went into an ale-house, without a penny in my pocket to pay for my lodging, or knowing what would become of me. I found myself extremely hungry—setting, therefore, a good face on the matter, I ordered supper, made my meal, went to bed without thought and slept with great composure. In the morning, having breakfasted and reckoned with my host, I offered to leave my waistcoat in pledge for seven batz, which was the amount of my expenses. The honest man refused this, saying, thank Heaven, he had never stripped any one, and would not now begin for seven batz, adding I should keep my waistcoat and pay him when I could. I was affected with this unexpected kindness, but felt it less than I ought to have done, or have since experienced on the remembrance of it. I did not fail sending him his money, with thanks, by one I could depend on. Fifteen years after, passing Lausanne, on my return from Italy, I felt a sensible regret at having forgotten the name of the landlord and house. I wished to see him, and should have felt real pleasure in recalling to his memory that worthy action. Services which doubtless have been much more important, but rendered with ostentation, have not appeared to me so worthy of gratitude as the simple unaffected humanity of this honest man.



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As I approached Lausanne, I thought of my distress, and the means of extricating myself, without appearing in want to my step-mother. I compared myself, in this walking pilgrimage, to my friend Venture, on his arrival at Annecy, and was so warmed with the idea, that without recollecting that I had neither his gentility nor his talents, I determined to act the part of little Venture at Lausanne, to teach music, which I did not understand, and say I came from Paris, where I had never been.

In consequence of this noble project (as there was no company where I could introduce myself without expense, and not choosing to venture among professional people), I inquired for some little inn, where I could lodge cheap, and was directed to one named Perrotet, who took in boarders. This Perrotet, who was one of the best men in the world, received me very kindly, and after having heard my feigned story and profession, promised to speak of me, and endeavored to procure me scholars, saying he should not expect any money till I had earned it. His price for board, though moderate in itself, was a great deal to me; he advised me, therefore, to begin with half board, which consisted of good soup only for dinner, but a plentiful supper at night. I closed with this proposition, and the poor Perrotet trusted me with great cheerfulness, sparing, meantime, no trouble to be useful to me.

Having found so many good people in my youth, why do I find so few in my age? Is their race extinct? No; but I do not seek them in the same situation I did formerly, among the commonality, where violent passions predominate only at intervals, and where nature speaks her genuine sentiments. In more elevated stations they are entirely smothered, and under the mask of sentiment, only interest or vanity is heard.

Having written to my father from Lausanne, he sent my packet and some excellent advice, of which I should have profited better. I have already observed that I have moments of inconceivable delirium, in which I am entirely out of myself. The adventure I am about to relate is an instance of this: to comprehend how completely my brain was turned, and to what degree I had 'Venturised' (if I may be allowed the expression), the many extravagances I ran into at the same time should be considered. Behold me, then, a singing master, without knowing how to note a common song; for if the five or six months passed with Le Maitre had improved me, they could not be supposed sufficient to qualify me for such an undertaking; besides, being taught by a master was enough (as I have before observed) to make me learn ill. Being a Parisian from Geneva, and a Catholic in a Protestant country, I thought I should change my name with my religion and country, still approaching as near as possible to the great model I had in view. He called himself Venture de Villeneuve. I changed, by anagram, the name Rousseau into that of Vaussore, calling myself Monsieur Vaussore de Villeneuve.



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Venture was a good composer, though he had not said so; without knowing anything of the art, I boasted of my skill to every one. This was not all: being presented to Monsieur de Freytorens, professor of law, who loved music, and who gave concerts at his house, nothing would do but I must give him a proof of my talents, and accordingly I set about composing a piece for his concerts, as boldly as if I had really understood the science. I had the constancy to labor a fortnight at this curious business, to copy it fair, write out the different parts, and distribute them with as much assurance as if they had been masterpieces of harmony; in short (what will hardly be believed, though strictly true), I tacked a very pretty minuet to the end of it, that was commonly played about the streets, and which many may remember from these words, so well known at that time:

Quel caprice!
Quel injustice!
Quio, tu Clarice
Trahiriot tes feux? &'c.

Venture had taught me this air with the bass, set to other words, by the help of which I had retained it: thus at the end of my composition, I put this minuet and bass, suppressing the words, and uttering it for my own as confidently as if I had been speaking to the inhabitants of the moon. They assembled to perform my piece; I explain to each the movement, taste of execution, and references to his part—I was fully occupied. They were five or six minutes preparing, which were for me so many ages: at length, everything is adjusted, myself in a conspicuous situation, a fine roll of paper in my hand, gravely preparing to beat time. I gave four or five strokes with my paper, attending with “take care!” they begin —No, never since French operas existed was there such a confused discord! The minuet, however, presently put all the company in good humor; hardly was it begun, before I heard bursts of laughter from all parts, every one congratulated me on my pretty taste for music, declaring this minuet would make me spoken of, and that I merited the loudest praise. It is not necessary to describe my uneasiness, or to own how much I deserved it.

Next day, one of the musicians, named Lutold, came to see me and was kind enough to congratulate me on my success. The profound conviction of my folly, shame, regret, and the state of despair to which I was reduced, with the impossibility of concealing the cruel agitation of my heart, made me open it to him; giving, therefore, a loose to my tears, not content with owning my ignorance, I told all, conjuring him to secrecy; he kept his word, as every one will suppose. The same evening, all Lausanne knew who I was, but what is remarkable, no one seemed to know, not even the good Perrotet, who (notwithstanding what had happened) continued to lodge and board me.

I led a melancholy life here; the consequences of such an essay had not rendered Lausanne a very agreeable residence. Scholars did not present themselves in crowds,



not a single female, and not a person of the city. I had only two or three great dunces, as stupid as I was ignorant, who fatigued me to death, and in my hands were not likely to edify much.

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At length, I was sent for to a house, where a little serpent of a girl amused herself by showing me a parcel of music that I could not read a note of, and which she had the malice to sing before her master, to teach him how it should be executed; for I was so unable to read an air at first sight, that in the charming concert I have just described, I could not possibly follow the execution a moment, or know whether they played truly what lay before them, and I myself had composed.

In the midst of so many humiliating circumstances, I had the pleasing consolation, from time to time, of receiving letters from my two charming friends. I have ever found the utmost consolatory virtue in the fair; when in disgrace, nothing softens my affliction more than to be sensible that an amiable woman is interested for me. This correspondence ceased soon after, and was never renewed: indeed it was my own fault, for in changing situations I neglected sending my address, and forced by necessity to think perpetually of myself, I soon forgot them.

It is a long time since I mentioned Madam de Warrens, but it should not be supposed I had forgotten her; never was she a moment absent from my thoughts. I anxiously wished to find her, not merely because she was necessary to my subsistence, but because she was infinitely more necessary to my heart. My attachment to her (though lively and tender, as it really was) did not prevent my loving others, but then it was not in the same manner. All equally claimed my tenderness for their charms, but it was those charms alone I loved, my passion would not have survived them, while Madam de Warrens might have become old or ugly without my loving her the less tenderly. My heart had entirely transmitted to herself the homage it first paid to her beauty, and whatever change she might experience, while she remained herself, my sentiments could not change. I was sensible how much gratitude I owed to her, but in truth, I never thought of it, and whether she served me or not, it would ever have been the same thing. I loved her neither from duty, interest, nor convenience; I loved her because I was born to love her. During my attachment to another, I own this affection was in some measure deranged; I did not think so frequently of her, but still with the same pleasure, and never, in love or otherwise, did I think of her without feeling that I could expect no true happiness in life while in a state of separation.

Though in so long a time I had received no news from Madam de Warrens, I never imagined I had entirely lost her, or that she could have forgotten me. I said to myself, she will know sooner or later that I am wandering about, and will find some means to inform me of her situation: I am certain I shall find her. In the meantime, it was a pleasure to live in her native country, to walk in the streets where she had walked, and before the houses that she had lived in; yet all this was the work of conjecture,



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for one of my foolish peculiarities was, not daring to inquire after her, or even pronounce her name without the most absolute necessity. It seemed in speaking of her that I declared all I felt, that my lips revealed the secrets of my heart, and in some degree injured the object of my affection. I believe fear was likewise mingled with this idea; I dreaded to hear ill of her. Her management had been much spoken of, and some little of her conduct in other respects; fearing, therefore, that something might be said which I did not wish to hear, I preferred being silent on the subject.

As my scholars did not take up much of my time, and the town where she was born was not above four leagues from Lausanne, I made it a walk of three or four days; during which time a most pleasant emotion never left me. A view of the lake of Geneva and its admirable banks, had ever, in my idea, a particular attraction which I cannot describe; not arising merely from the beauty of the prospect, but something else, I know not why, more interesting, which affects and softens me. Every time I have approached the Vaudois country I have experienced an impression composed of the remembrance of Madam de Warrens, who was born there; of my father, who lived there; of Miss Vulson, who had been my first love, and of several pleasant journeys I had made there in my childhood, mingled with some nameless charm, more powerfully attractive than all the rest. When that ardent desire for a life of happiness and tranquility (which ever follows me, and for which I was born) inflames my mind, 'tis ever to the country of Vaud, near the lake, in those charming plains, that imagination leads me. An orchard on the banks of that lake, and no other, is absolutely necessary; a firm friend, an amiable woman, a cow, and a little boat; nor could I enjoy perfect happiness on earth without these concomitants. I laugh at the simplicity with which I have several times gone into that country for the sole purpose of seeking this imaginary happiness when I was ever surprised to find the inhabitants, particularly the women, of a quite different disposition to what I sought. How strange did this appear to me! The country and people who inhabit it, were never, in my idea, formed for each other.

Walking along these beautiful banks, on my way to Vevay, I gave myself up to the soft melancholy; my heart rushed with ardor into a thousand innocent felicities; melting to tenderness, I sighed and wept like a child. How often, stopping to weep more at my ease, and seated on a large stone, did I amuse myself with seeing my tears drop into the water.

On my arrival at Vevay, I lodged at the Key, and during the two days I remained there, without any acquaintance, conceived a love for that city, which has followed me through all my travels, and was finally the cause that I fixed on this spot, in the novel I afterwards wrote, for the residence of my hero and heroines. I would say to any one who has taste and feeling, go to Vevay, visit the surrounding country, examine the prospects, go on the lake and then say, whether nature has not designed this country

for a Julia, a Clara, and a St. Preux; but do not seek them there. I now return to my story.



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Giving myself out for a Catholic, I followed without mystery or scruple the religion I had embraced. On a Sunday, if the weather was fine, I went to hear mass at Assans, a place two leagues distant from Lausanne, and generally in company with other Catholics, particularly a Parisian embroiderer, whose name I have forgotten. Not such a Parisian as myself, but a real native of Paris, an arch-Parisian from his maker, yet honest as a peasant. He loved his country so well, that he would not doubt my being his countryman, for fear he should not have so much occasion to speak of it. The lieutenant-governor, M. de Crouzas, had a gardener, who was likewise from Paris, but not so complaisant; he thought the glory of his country concerned, when any one claimed that honor who was not really entitled to it; he put questions to me, therefore, with an air and tone, as if certain to detect me in a falsehood, and once, smiling malignantly, asked what was remarkable in the 'Marcheneuf'? It may be supposed I asked the question; but I have since passed twenty years at Paris, and certainly know that city, yet was the same question repeated at this day, I should be equally embarrassed to answer it, and from this embarrassment it might be concluded I had never been there: thus, even when we meet with truths, we are subject to build our opinions on circumstances, which may easily deceive us.

I formed no ideas, while at Lausanne, that were worth recollecting, nor can I say exactly how long I remained there; I only know that not finding sufficient to subsist on, I went from thence to Neuchatel, where I passed the winter. Here I succeeded better, I got some scholars, and saved enough to pay my good friend Perrotet, who had faithfully sent my baggage, though at that time I was considerably in his debt.

By continuing to teach music, I insensibly gained some knowledge of it. The life I led was sufficiently agreeable, and any reasonable man might have been satisfied, but my unsettled heart demanded something more. On Sundays, or whenever I had leisure, I wandered, sighing and thoughtful, about the adjoining woods, and when once out of the city never returned before night. One day, being at Boudry, I went to dine at a public-house, where I saw a man with a long beard, dressed in a violet-colored Grecian habit, with a fur cap, and whose air and manner were rather noble. This person found some difficulty in making himself understood, speaking only an unintelligible jargon, which bore more resemblance to Italian than any other language. I understood almost all he said, and I was the only person present who could do so, for he was obliged to make his request known to the landlord and others about him by signs. On my speaking a few words in Italian, which he perfectly understood, he got up and embraced me with rapture; a connection was soon formed, and from that moment, I became his interpreter. His dinner was excellent, mine rather worse than indifferent, he gave me an invitation

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to dine with him, which I accepted without much ceremony. Drinking and chatting soon rendered us familiar, and by the end of the repast we had all the disposition in the world to become inseparable companions. He informed me he was a Greek prelate, and 'Archimandrite' of Jerusalem; that he had undertaken to make a gathering in Europe for the reestablishment of the Holy Sepulchre, and showed me some very fine patents from the czarina, the emperor, and several other sovereigns. He was tolerably content with what he had collected hitherto, though he had experienced inconceivable difficulties in Germany; for not understanding a word of German, Latin, or French, he had been obliged to have recourse to his Greek, Turkish *Lingua Franca*, which did not procure him much in the country he was travelling through; his proposal, therefore, to me was, that I should accompany him in the quality of secretary and interpreter. In spite of my violet-colored coat, which accorded well enough with the proposed employment, he guessed from my meagre appearance, that I should easily be gained; and he was not mistaken. The bargain was soon made, I demanded nothing, and he promised liberally; thus, without any security or knowledge of the person I was about to serve, I gave myself up entirely to his conduct, and the next day behold me on an expedition to Jerusalem.

We began our expedition unsuccessfully by the canton of Fribourg. Episcopal dignity would not suffer him to play the beggar, or solicit help from private individuals; but we presented his commission to the Senate, who gave him a trifling sum. From thence we went to Berne, where we lodged at the Falcon, then a good inn, and frequented by respectable company; the public table being well supplied and numerously attended. I had fared indifferently so long, that I was glad to make myself amends, therefore took care to profit by the present occasion. My lord, the Archimandrite, was himself an excellent companion, loved good cheer, was gay, spoke well for those who understood him, and knew perfectly well how to make the most of his Grecian erudition. One day, at dessert while cracking nuts, he cut his finger pretty deeply, and as it bled freely showed it to the company, saying with a laugh, "Mirate, signori; questo a sangue Pelasgo."

At Berne, I was not useless to him, nor was my performance so bad as I had feared: I certainly spoke better and with more confidence than I could have done for myself. Matters were not conducted here with the same simplicity as at Fribourg; long and frequent conferences were necessary with the Premiers of the State, and the examination of his titles was not the work of a day; at length, everything being adjusted, he was admitted to an audience by the Senate; I entered with him as interpreter, and was ordered to speak. I expected nothing less, for it never entered my mind, that after such long and frequent conferences with the members, it was necessary to address the



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assembly collectively, as if nothing had been said. Judge my embarrassment!—a man so bashful to speak, not only in public, but before the whole of the Senate of Berne! to speak impromptu, without a single moment for recollection; it was enough to annihilate me—I was not even intimidated. I described distinctly and clearly the commission of the Archimandrite; extolled the piety of those princes who had contributed, and to heighten that of their excellencies by emulation, added that less could not be expected from their well-known munificence; then, endeavoring to prove that this good work was equally interesting to all Christians, without distinction of sect; and concluded by promising the benediction of Heaven to all those who took part in it. I will not say that my discourse was the cause of our success, but it was certainly well received; and on our quitting the Archimandrite was gratified by a very genteel present, to which some very handsome compliments were added on the understanding of his secretary; these I had the agreeable office of interpreting; but could not take courage to render them literally.

This was the only time in my life that I spoke in public, and before a sovereign; and the only time, perhaps, that I spoke boldly and well. What difference in the disposition of the same person. Three years ago, having been to see my old friend, M. Roguin, at Yverdon, I received a deputation to thank me for some books I had presented to the library of that city; the Swiss are great speakers; these gentlemen, accordingly, made me a long harangue, which I thought myself obliged in honor to answer, but so embarrassed myself in the attempt, that my head became confused, I stopped short, and was laughed at. Though naturally timid, I have sometimes acted with confidence in my youth, but never in my advanced age: the more I have seen of the world the less I have been able to adapt its manners.

On leaving Berne, we went to Soleurre: the Archimandrite designing to re-enter Germany, and return through Hungary or Poland to his own country. This would have been a prodigious tour; but as the contents of his purse rather increased than diminished during his journey, he was in no haste to return. For me, who was almost as much pleased on horseback as on foot, I would have desired no better than to have travelled thus during my whole life; but it was pre-ordained that my journey should soon end.

The first thing we did after our arrival at Soleurre, was to pay our respects to the French ambassador there. Unfortunately for my bishop, this chanced to be the Marquis de Bonac, who had been ambassador at the Porte, and was acquainted with every particular relative to the Holy Sepulchre. The Archimandrite had an audience that lasted about a quarter of an hour, to which I was not admitted, as the ambassador spoke French and Italian at least as well as myself. On my Grecian's retiring, I was prepared to follow

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him, but was detained: it was now my turn. Having called myself a Parisian, as such, I was under the jurisdiction of his excellency: he therefore asked me who I was? exhorting me to tell the truth; this I promised to do, but entreated a private audience, which was immediately granted. The ambassador took me to his closet, and shut the door; there, throwing myself at his feet, I kept my word, nor should I have said less, had I promised nothing, for a continual wish to unbosom myself, puts my heart perpetually upon my lips. After having disclosed myself without reserve to the musician Lutold, there was no occasion to attempt acting the mysterious with the Marquis de Bonac, who was so well pleased with my little history, and the ingenuousness with which I had related it, that he led me to the ambassadress, and presented me, with an abridgment of my recital. Madam de Bonac received me kindly, saying, I must not be suffered to follow that Greek monk. It was accordingly resolved that I should remain at their hotel till something better could be done for me. I wished to bid adieu to my poor Archimandrite, for whom I had conceived an attachment, but was not permitted; they sent him word that I was to be detained there, and in quarter of an hour after, I saw my little bundle arrive. M. de la Martiniere, secretary of the embassy, had in a manner the care of me; while following him to the chamber appropriated to my use, he said, "This apartment was occupied under the Count de Luc, by a celebrated man of the same name as yourself; it is in your power to succeed him in every respect, and cause it to be said hereafter, Rousseau the First, Rousseau the Second." This similarity which I did not then expect, would have been less flattering to my wishes could I have foreseen at what price I should one day purchase the distinction.

What M. de la Martiniere had said excited my curiosity; I read the works of the person whose chamber I occupied, and on the strength of the compliment that had been paid me (imagining I had a taste for poetry) made my first essay in a cantata in praise of Madam de Bonac. This inclination was not permanent, though from time to time I have composed tolerable verses. I think it is a good exercise to teach elegant turns of expression, and to write well in prose, but could never find attractions enough in French poetry to give entirely in to it.

M. de la Martiniere wished to see my style, and asked me to write the detail I had before made the ambassador; accordingly I wrote him a long letter, which I have since been informed was preserved by M. de Marianne, who had long been attached to the Marquis de Bonac, and has since succeeded M. de Martiniere as secretary to the embassy of M. de Courtellies.



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The experience I began to acquire tended to moderate my romantic projects; for example, I did not fall in love with Madam de Bonac, but also felt I did not stand much chance of succeeding in the service of her husband. M. de la Martiniere was already in the only place that could have satisfied my ambition, and M. de Marianne in expectancy: thus my utmost hopes could only aspire to the office of under secretary, which did not infinitely tempt me: this was the reason that when consulted on the situation I should like to be placed in, I expressed a great desire to go to Paris. The ambassador readily gave in to the idea, which at least tended to disembarass him of me. M. de Mervilleux interpreting secretary to the embassy, said, that his friend, M. Godard, a Swiss colonel, in the service of France, wanted a person to be with his nephew, who had entered very young into the service, and made no doubt that I should suit him. On this idea, so lightly formed, my departure was determined; and I, who saw a long journey to perform with Paris at the end of it, was enraptured with the project. They gave me several letters, a hundred livres to defray the expenses of my journey, accompanied with some good advice, and thus equipped I departed.

I was a fortnight making the journey, which I may reckon among the happiest days of my life. I was young, in perfect health, with plenty of money, and the most brilliant hopes, add to this, I was on foot, and alone. It may appear strange, I should mention the latter circumstance as advantageous, if my peculiarity of temper is not already familiar to the reader. I was continually occupied with a variety of pleasing chimeras, and never did the warmth of my imagination produce more magnificent ones. When offered an empty place in a carriage, or any person accosted me on the road, how vexed was I to see that fortune overthrown, whose edifice, while walking, I had taken such pains to rear.

For once my ideas were all martial: I was going to live with a military man; nay, to become one, for it was concluded I should begin with being a cadet. I already fancied myself in regimentals, with a fine white feather nodding on my hat, and my heart was inflamed by the noble idea. I had some smattering of geometry and fortification; my uncle was an engineer; I was in a manner a soldier by inheritance. My short sight, indeed, presented some little obstacle, but did not by any means discourage me, as I reckoned to supply that defect by coolness and intrepidity. I had read, too, that Marshal Schomberg was remarkably shortsighted, and why might not Marshal Rousseau be the same? My imagination was so warm by these follies, that it presented nothing but troops, ramparts, gabions, batteries, and myself in the midst of fire and smoke, an eyeglass in hand, commanding with the utmost tranquility. Notwithstanding, when the country presented a delightful prospect, when I saw charming groves and rivulets, the pleasing sight made me sigh with regret, and feel, in the midst of all this glory, that my heart was not formed for such havoc; and soon without knowing how, I found my thoughts wandering among my dear sheep-folds, renouncing forever the labor of Mars.



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How much did Paris disappoint the idea I had formed of it! The exterior decorations I had seen at Turin, the beauty of the streets, the symmetry and regularity of the houses, contributed to this disappointment, since I concluded that Paris must be infinitely superior. I had figured to myself a splendid city, beautiful as large, of the most commanding aspect, whose streets were ranges of magnificent palaces, composed of marble and gold. On entering the faubourg St. Marceau, I saw nothing but dirty stinking streets, filthy black houses, an air of slovenliness and poverty, beggars, carters, butchers, cries of diet-drink and old hats. This struck me so forcibly, that all I have since seen of real magnificence in Paris could never erase this first impression, which has ever given me a particular disgust to residing in that capital; and I may say, the whole time I remained there afterwards, was employed in seeking resources which might enable me to live at a distance from it. This is the consequence of too lively imagination, which exaggerates even beyond the voice of fame, and ever expects more than is told. I have heard Paris so flatteringly described, that I pictured it like the ancient Babylon, which, perhaps, had I seen, I might have found equally faulty, and unlike that idea the account had conveyed. The same thing happened at the Opera-house, to which I hastened the day after my arrival! I was sensible of the same deficiency at Versailles! and some time after on viewing the sea. I am convinced this would ever be the consequence of a too flattering description of any object; for it is impossible for man, and difficult even for nature herself, to surpass the riches of my imagination.

By the reception I met with from all those to whom my letters were addressed, I thought my fortune was certainly made. The person who received me the least kindly was M. de Surbeck, to whom I had the warmest recommendation. He had retired from the service, and lived philosophically at Bagneux, where I waited on him several times without his offering me even a glass of water. I was better received by Madam de Merveilleux, sister-in-law to the interpreter, and by his nephew, who was an officer in the guards. The mother and son not only received me kindly, but offered me the use of their table, which favor I frequently accepted during my stay at Paris.

Madam de Merveilleux appeared to have been handsome; her hair was of a fine black, which, according to the old mode, she wore curled on the temples. She still retained (what do not perish with a set of features) the beauties of an amiable mind. She appeared satisfied with mine, and did all she could to render me service; but no one seconded her endeavors, and I was presently undeceived in the great interest they had seemed to take in my affairs. I must, however, do the French nation the justice to say, they do not so exhaust themselves with protestations, as some have represented, and that those they make



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are usually sincere; but they have a manner of appearing interested in your affairs, which is more deceiving than words. The gross compliments of the Swiss can only impose upon fools; the manners of the French are more seducing, and at the same time so simple, that you are persuaded they do not express all they mean to do for you, in order that you may be the more agreeably surprised. I will say more; they are not false in their protestations, being naturally zealous to oblige, humane, benevolent, and even (whatever may be said to the contrary) more sincere than any other nation; but they are too flighty: in effect they feel the sentiments they profess for you, but that sentiment flies off as instantaneously as it was formed. In speaking to you, their whole attention is employed on you alone, when absent you are forgotten. Nothing is permanent in their hearts, all is the work of the moment.

Thus I was greatly flattered, but received little service. Colonel Godard for whose nephew I was recommended, proved to be an avaricious old wretch, who, on seeing my distress (though he was immensely rich), wished to have my services for nothing, meaning to place me with his nephew, rather as a valet without wages than a tutor. He represented that as I was to be continually engaged with him, I should be excused from duty, and might live on my cadet's allowance; that is to say, on the pay of a soldier: hardly would he consent to give me a uniform, thinking the clothing of the army might serve. Madam de Merveilleux, provoked at his proposals, persuaded me not to accept them; her son was of the same opinion; something else was to be thought on, but no situation was procured. Meantime, I began to be necessitated; for the hundred livres with which I had commenced my journey could not last much longer; happily, I received a small remittance from the ambassador, which was very serviceable, nor do I think he would have abandoned me had I possessed more patience; but languishing, waiting, soliciting, are to me impossible: I was disheartened, displeased, and thus all my brilliant expectations came once more to nothing. I had not all this time forgotten my dear Madam de Warrens, but how was I to find her? Where should I seek her? Madam de Merveilleux, who knew my story, assisted me in the search, but for a long time unavailingly; at length, she informed me that Madam de Warrens had set out from Paris about two months before, but it was not known whether for Savoy or Turin, and that some conjectured she was gone to Switzerland. Nothing further was necessary to fix my determination to follow her, certain that wherever she might be, I stood more chance of finding her at those places than I could possibly do at Paris.



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Before my departure, I exercised my new poetical talent in an epistle to Colonel Godard, whom I ridiculed to the utmost of my abilities. I showed this scribble to Madam de Merveilleux, who, instead of discouraging me, as she ought to have done, laughed heartily at my sarcasms, as well as her son, who, I believe, did not like M. Godard; indeed, it must be confessed, he was a man not calculated to obtain affection. I was tempted to send him my verses, and they encouraged me in it; accordingly I made them up in a parcel directed to him, and there being no post then at Paris by which I could conveniently send this, I put it in my pocket, and sent it to him from Auxerre, as I passed through that place. I laugh, even yet, sometimes, at the grimaces I fancy he made on reading this panegyric, where he was certainly drawn to the life; it began thus:

Tu croyois, vieux Penard, qu' une folle manie
D' elever ton neveu m'inspireroit l'envie.

This little piece, which, it is true, was but indifferently written; did not want for salt, and announced a turn for satire; it is, notwithstanding, the only satirical writing that ever came from my pen. I have too little hatred in my heart to take advantage of such a talent; but I believe it may be judged from those controversies, in which from time to time I have been engaged in my own defence, that had I been of a vindictive disposition, my adversaries would rarely have had the laughter on their side.

What I most regret, is not having kept a journal of my travels, being conscious that a number of interesting details have slipped my memory; for never did I exist so completely, never live so thoroughly, never was so much myself, if I dare use the expression, as in those journeys made on foot. Walking animates and enlivens my spirits; I can hardly think when in a state of inactivity; my body must be exercised to make my judgment active. The view of a fine country, a succession of agreeable prospects, a free air, a good appetite, and the health I gained by walking; the freedom of inns, and the distance from everything that can make me recollect the dependence of my situation, conspire to free my soul, and give boldness to my thoughts, throwing me, in a manner, into the immensity of beings, where I combine, choose and appropriate them to my fancy, without constraint or fear. I dispose of all nature as I please; my heart wandering from object to object, approximates and unites with those that please it, is surrounded by charming images, and becomes intoxicated with delicious sensations. If, attempting to render these permanent, I am amused in describing to myself, what glow of coloring, what energy of expression, do I give them!—It has been said, that all these are to be found in my works, though written in the decline of life. Oh! had those of my early youth been seen, those made during my travels, composed, but never written!—Why did I not write them? will be asked; and why should



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I have written them? I may answer. Why deprive myself of the actual charm of my enjoyments to inform others what I enjoyed? What to me were readers, the public, or all the world, while I was mounting the empyrean. Besides, did I carry pens, paper and ink with me? Had I recollected all these, not a thought would have occurred worth preserving. I do not foresee when I shall have ideas; they come when they please, and not when I call for them; either they avoid me altogether, or rushing in crowds, overwhelm me with their force and number. Ten volumes a day would not suffice barely to enumerate my thoughts; how then should I find time to write them? In stopping, I thought of nothing but a hearty dinner; on departing, of nothing but a charming walk; I felt that a new paradise awaited me at the door, and eagerly leaped forward to enjoy it.

Never did I experience this so feelingly as in the perambulation I am now describing. On coming to Paris, I had confined myself to ideas which related to the situation I expected to occupy there. I had rushed into the career I was about to run, and should have completed it with tolerable eclat, but it was not that my heart adhered to. Some real beings obscured my imagined ones—Colonel Godard and his nephew could not keep pace with a hero of my disposition. Thank Heaven, I was soon delivered from all these obstacles, and could enter at pleasure into the wilderness of chimeras, for that alone remained before me, and I wandered in it so completely that I several times lost my way; but this was no misfortune, I would not have shortened it, for, feeling with regret, as I approached Lyons, that I must again return to the material world, I should have been glad never to have arrived there.

One day, among others, having purposely gone out of my way to take a nearer view of a spot that appeared delightful, I was so charmed with it, and wandered round it so often, that at length I completely lost myself, and after several hours' useless walking, weary, fainting with hunger and thirst, I entered a peasant's hut, which had not indeed a very promising appearance, but was the only one I could discover near me. I thought it was here, as at Geneva, or in Switzerland, where the inhabitants, living at ease, have it in their power to exercise hospitality. I entreated the countryman to give me some dinner, offering to pay for it: on which he presented me with some skimmed milk and coarse barley—bread, saying it was all he had. I drank the milk with pleasure, and ate the bread, chaff and all; but it was not very restorative to a man sinking with fatigue. The countryman, who watched me narrowly, judged the truth of my story by my appetite, and presently (after having said that he plainly saw I was an honest, good—natured young man, and did not come to betray him) opened a little trap door by the side of his kitchen, went down, and returned a moment after with a good brown loaf of pure wheat, the remains of a well-flavored ham, and a bottle of wine, the sight of which rejoiced my heart more than all the rest: he then prepared a good thick omelet, and I made such a dinner as none but a walking traveller ever enjoyed.



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When I again offered to pay, his inquietude and fears returned; he not only would have no money, but refused it with the most evident emotion; and what made this scene more amusing, I could not imagine the motive of his fear. At length, he pronounced tremblingly those terrible words, "Commissioners," and "Cellar-rats," which he explained by giving me to understand that he concealed his wine because of the excise, and his bread on account of the tax imposed on it; adding, he should be an undone man, if it was suspected he was not almost perishing with want. What he said to me on this subject (of which I had not the smallest idea) made an impression on my mind that can never be effaced, sowing seeds of that inextinguishable hatred which has since grow up in my heart against the vexations these unhappy people suffer, and against their oppressors. This man, though in easy circumstances, dare not eat the bread gained by the sweat of his brow, and could only escape destruction by exhibiting an outward appearance of misery!—I left his cottage with as much indignation as concern, deploring the fate of those beautiful countries, where nature has been prodigal of her gifts, only that they may become the prey of barbarous exactors.

The incident which I have just related, is the only one I have a distinct remembrance of during this journey: I recollect, indeed, that on approaching Lyons, I wished to prolong it by going to see the banks of the Lignon; for among the romances I had read with my father, Astrea was not forgotten and returned more frequently to my thoughts than any other. Stopping for some refreshment (while chatting with my hostess), I inquired the way to Forez, and was informed that country was an excellent place for mechanics, as there were many forges, and much iron work done there. This eulogium instantly calmed my romantic curiosity, for I felt no inclination to seek Dianas and Sylvanders among a generation of blacksmiths. The good woman who encouraged me with this piece of information certainly thought I was a journeyman locksmith.

I had some view in going to Lyons: on my arrival, I went to the Chasattes, to see Mademoiselle du Chatelet, a friend of Madam de Warrens, for whom I had brought a letter when I came there with M. le Maitre, so that it was an acquaintance already formed. Mademoiselle du Chatelet informed me her friend had passed through Lyons, but could not tell whether she had gone on to Piedmont, being uncertain at her departure whether it would not be necessary to stop in Savoy; but if I choose, she would immediately write for information, and thought my best plan would be to remain at Lyons till she received it. I accepted this offer; but did not tell Mademoiselle du Chatelet how much I was pressed for an answer, and that my exhausted purse would not permit me to wait long. It was not an appearance of coolness that withheld me, on the contrary, I was very kindly received, treated on the footing of equality, and this took from me the resolution of explaining my circumstances, for I could not bear to descend from a companion to a miserable beggar.



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I seem to have retained a very connecting remembrance of that part of my life contained in this book; yet I think I remember, about the same period, another journey to Lyons, (the particulars of which I cannot recollect) where I found myself much straitened, and a confused remembrance of the extremities to which I was reduced does not contribute to recall the idea agreeably. Had I been like many others, had I possessed the talent of borrowing and running in debt at every ale-house I came to, I might have fared better; but in that my incapacity equalled my repugnance, and to demonstrate the prevalence of both, it will be sufficient to say, that though I have passed almost my whole life in indifferent circumstances, and frequently have been near wanting bread, I was never once asked for money by a creditor without having it in my power to pay it instantly; I could never bear to contract clamorous debts, and have ever preferred suffering to owing.

Being reduced to pass my nights in the streets, may certainly be called suffering, and this was several times the case at Lyons, having preferred buying bread with the few pence I had remaining, to bestowing them on a lodging; as I was convinced there was less danger of dying for want of sleep than of hunger. What is astonishing, while in this unhappy situation, I took no care for the future, was neither uneasy nor melancholy, but patiently waited an answer to Mademoiselle du Chatelet's letter, and lying in the open air, stretched on the earth, or on a bench, slept as soundly as if reposing on a bed of roses. I remember, particularly, to have passed a most delightful night at some distance from the city, in a road which had the Rhone, or Soane, I cannot recollect which, on the one side, and a range of raised gardens, with terraces, on the other. It had been a very hot day, the evening was delightful, the dew moistened the fading grass, no wind was stirring, the air was fresh without chillness, the setting sun had tinged the clouds with a beautiful crimson, which was again reflected by the water, and the trees that bordered the terrace were filled with nightingales who were continually answering each other's songs. I walked along in a kind of ecstasy, giving up my heart and senses to the enjoyment of so many delights, and sighing only from a regret of enjoying them alone. Absorbed in this pleasing reverie, I lengthened my walk till it grew very late, without perceiving I was tired; at length, however, I discovered it, and threw myself on the step of a kind of niche, or false door, in the terrace wall. How charming was the couch! the trees formed a stately canopy, a nightingale sat directly over me, and with his soft notes lulled me to rest: how pleasing my repose; my awaking more so. It was broad day; on opening my eyes I saw the water, the verdure, and the admirable landscape before me. I arose, shook off the remains of drowsiness, and finding I was hungry, retook the way to the city, resolving, with inexpressible gayety,



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to spend the two pieces of six francs I had yet remaining in a good breakfast. I found myself so cheerful that I went all the way singing; I even remember I sang a cantata of Batistin's called the Baths of Thomery, which I knew by heart. May a blessing light on the good Batistin and his good cantata, which procured me a better breakfast than I had expected, and a still better dinner which I did not expect at all! In the midst of my singing, I heard some one behind me, and turning round perceived an Antonine, who followed after and seemed to listen with pleasure to my song. At length accosting me, he asked, If I understood music. I answered, "A little," but in a manner to have it understood I knew a great deal, and as he continued questioning of me, related a part of my story. He asked me, If I had ever copied music? I replied, "Often," which was true: I had learned most by copying. "Well," continued he, "come with me, I can employ you for a few days, during which time you shall want for nothing; provided you consent not to quit my room." I acquiesced very willingly, and followed him.

This Antonine was called M. Rotichon; he loved music, understood it, and sang in some little concerts with his friends; thus far all was innocent and right, but apparently this taste had become a furor, part of which he was obliged to conceal. He conducted me into a chamber, where I found a great quantity of music: he gave me some to copy, particularly the cantata he had heard me singing, and which he was shortly to sing himself.

I remained here three or four days, copying all the time I did not eat, for never in my life was I so hungry, or better fed. M. Rolichon brought my provisions himself from the kitchen, and it appeared that these good priests lived well, at least if every one fared as I did. In my life, I never took such pleasure in eating, and it must be owned this good cheer came very opportunely, for I was almost exhausted. I worked as heartily as I ate, which is saying a great deal; 'tis true I was not as correct as diligent, for some days after, meeting M. Rolichon in the street, he informed me there were so many omissions, repetitions, and transpositions, in the parts I had copied, that they could not be performed. It must be owned, that in choosing the profession of music, I hit on that I was least calculated for; yet my voice was good and I copied neatly; but the fatigue of long works bewilders me so much, that I spend more time in altering and scratching out than in pricking down, and if I do not employ the strictest attention in comparing the several parts, they are sure to fail in the execution. Thus, through endeavoring to do well, my performance was very faulty; for aiming at expedition, I did all amiss. This did not prevent M. Rolichon from treating me well to the last, and giving me half-a-crown at my departure, which I certainly did not deserve, and which completely set me up, for a few days after I received news from Madam de Warrens, who was at Chambery, with money to defray the expenses of my journey to her, which I performed with rapture. Since then my finances have frequently been very low, but never at such an ebb as to reduce me to fasting, and I mark this period with a heart fully alive to the bounty of Providence, as the last of my life in which I sustained poverty and hunger.



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I remained at Lyons seven or eight days to wait for some little commissions with which Madam de Warrens had charged Mademoiselle du Chatelet, who during this interval I visited more assiduously than before, having the pleasure of talking with her of her friend, and being no longer disturbed by the cruel remembrance of my situation, or painful endeavors to conceal it. Mademoiselle du Chatelet was neither young nor handsome, but did not want for elegance; she was easy and obliging while her understanding gave price to her familiarity. She had a taste for that kind of moral observation which leads to the knowledge of mankind, and from her originated that study in myself. She was fond of the works of Le Sage, particularly Gil Blas, which she lent me, and recommended to my perusal. I read this performance with pleasure, but my judgment was not yet ripe enough to relish that sort of reading. I liked romances which abounded with high-flown sentiments.

Thus did I pass my time at the grate of Mademoiselle du Chatelet, with as much profit as pleasure. It is certain that the interesting and sensible conversation of a deserving woman is more proper to form the understanding of a young man than all the pedantic philosophy of books. I got acquainted at the Chasattes with some other boarders and their friends, and among the rest, with a young person of fourteen, called Mademoiselle Serre, whom I did not much notice at that time, though I was in love with her eight or nine years afterwards, and with great reason, for she was a most charming girl.

I was fully occupied with the idea of seeing Madam de Warrens, and this gave some respite to my chimeras, for finding happiness in real objects I was the less inclined to seek it in nonentities. I had not only found her, but also by her means, and near her, an agreeable situation, having sent me word that she had procured one that would suit me, and by which I should not be obliged to quit her. I exhausted all my conjectures in guessing what this occupation could be, but I must have possessed the art of divination to have hit it on the right. I had money sufficient to make my journey agreeable: Mademoiselle du Chatelet persuaded me to hire a horse, but this I could not consent to, and I was certainly right, for by so doing I should have lost the pleasure of the last pedestrian expedition I ever made; for I cannot give that name to those excursions I have frequently taken about my own neighborhood, while I lived at Motiers.

It is very singular that my imagination never rises so high as when my situation is least agreeable or cheerful. When everything smiles around me, I am least amused; my heart cannot confine itself to realities, cannot embellish, but must create. Real objects strike me as they really are, my imagination can only decorate ideal ones. If I would paint the spring, it must be in winter; if describe a beautiful landscape, it must be while surrounded with walls;



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and I have said a hundred times, that were I confined in the Bastile, I could draw the most enchanting picture of liberty. On my departure from Lyons, I saw nothing but an agreeable future, the content I now with reason enjoyed was as great as my discontent had been at leaving Paris, notwithstanding, I had not during this journey any of those delightful reveries I then enjoyed. My mind was serene, and that was all; I drew near the excellent friend I was going to see, my heart overflowing with tenderness, enjoying in advance, but without intoxication, the pleasure of living near her; I had always expected this, and it was as if nothing new had happened. Meantime, I was anxious about the employment Madam de Warrens had procured me, as if that alone had been material. My ideas were calm and peaceable, not ravishing and celestial; every object struck my sight in its natural form; I observed the surrounding landscape, remarked the trees, the houses, the springs, deliberated on the cross-roads, was fearful of losing myself, yet did not do so; in a word, I was no longer in the empyrean, but precisely where I found myself, or sometimes perhaps at the end of my journey, never farther.

I am in recounting my travels, as I was in making them, loath to arrive at the conclusion. My heart beat with joy as I approached my dear Madam de Warrens, but I went no faster on that account. I love to walk at my ease, and stop at leisure; a strolling life is necessary to me: travelling on foot, in a fine country, with fine weather and having an agreeable object to terminate my journey, is the manner of living of all others most suited to my taste.

It is already understood what I mean by a fine country; never can a flat one, though ever so beautiful, appear such in my eyes: I must have torrents, fir trees, black woods, mountains to climb or descend, and rugged roads with precipices on either side to alarm me. I experienced this pleasure in its utmost extent as I approached Chambery, not far from a mountain which is called Pas de l'Echelle. Above the main road, which is hewn through the rock, a small river runs and rushes into fearful chasms, which it appears to have been millions of ages in forming. The road has been hedged by a parapet to prevent accidents, which enabled me to contemplate the whole descent, and gain vertigoes at pleasure; for a great part of my amusement in these steep rocks, is, they cause a giddiness and swimming in my head, which I am particularly fond of, provided I am in safety; leaning, therefore, over the parapet, I remained whole hours, catching, from time to time, a glance of the froth and blue water, whose rushing caught my ear, mingled with the cries of ravens, and other birds of prey that flew from rock to rock, and bush to bush, at six hundred feet below me. In places where the slope was tolerably regular, and clear enough from bushes to let stones roll freely, I went a considerable way to gather them, bringing those I could but just carry, which I piled on the parapet, and then threw down one after the other, being transported at seeing them roll, rebound, and fly into a thousand pieces, before they reached the bottom of the precipice.



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Near Chambéry I enjoyed an equal pleasing spectacle, though of a different kind; the road passing near the foot of the most charming cascade I ever saw. The water, which is very rapid, shoots from the top of an excessively steep mountain, falling at such a distance from its base that you may walk between the cascade and the rock without any inconvenience; but if not particularly careful it is easy to be deceived as I was, for the water, falling from such an immense height, separates, and descends in a rain as fine as dust, and on approaching too near this cloud, without perceiving it, you may be wet through in an instant.

At length I arrived at Madam de Warrens; she was not alone, the intendant-general was with her. Without speaking a word to me, she caught my hand, and presenting me to him with that natural grace which charmed all hearts, said: "This, sir, is the poor young man I mentioned; deign to protect him as long as he deserves it, and I shall feel no concern for the remainder of his life." Then added, addressing herself to me, "Child, you now belong to the king, thank Monsieur the Intendant, who furnishes you with the means of existence." I stared without answering, without knowing what to think of all this; rising ambition almost turned my head; I was already prepared to act the intendant myself. My fortune, however, was not so brilliant as I had imagined, but it was sufficient to maintain me, which, as I was situated, was a capital acquisition. I shall now explain the nature of my employment.

King Victor Amadeus, judging by the event of preceding wars, and the situation of the ancient patrimony of his fathers, that he should not long be able to maintain it, wished to drain it beforehand. Resolving, therefore, to tax the nobility, he ordered a general survey of the whole country, in order that it might be rendered more equal and productive. This scheme, which was begun under the father, was completed by the son: two or three hundred men, part surveyors, who were called geometricians, and part writers, who were called secretaries, were employed in this work: among those of the latter description Madam de Warrens had got me appointed. This post, without being very lucrative, furnished the means of living eligibly in that country; the misfortune was, this employment could not be of any great duration, but it put me in train to procure something better, as by this means she hoped to insure the particular protection of the intendant, who might find me some more settled occupation before this was concluded.

I entered on my new employment a few days after my arrival, and as there was no great difficulty in the business, soon understood it; thus, after four or five years of unsettled life, folly, and suffering, since my departure from Geneva, I began, for the first time, to gain my bread with credit.



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These long details of my early youth must have appeared trifling, and I am sorry for it: though born a man, in a variety of instances, I was long a child, and am so yet in many particulars. I did not promise the public a great personage: I promised to describe myself as I am, and to know me in my advanced age it was necessary to have known me in my youth. As, in general, objects that are present make less impression on me than the bare remembrance of them (my ideas being all from recollection), the first traits which were engraven on my mind have distinctly remained: those which have since been imprinted there, have rather combined with the former than effaced them. There is a certain, yet varied succession of affections and ideas, which continue to regulate those that follow them, and this progression must be known in order to judge rightly of those they have influenced. I have studied to develop the first causes, the better to show the concatenation of effects. I would be able by some means to render my soul transparent to the eyes of the reader, and for this purpose endeavor to show it in every possible point of view, to give him every insight, and act in such a manner, that not a motion should escape him, as by this means he may form a judgment of the principles that produce them.

Did I take upon myself to decide, and say to the reader, "Such is my character," he might think that if I did not endeavor to deceive him, I at least deceived myself; but in, recounting simply all that has happened to me, all my actions, thoughts, and feelings, I cannot lead him into an error, unless I do it wilfully, which by this means I could not easily effect, since it is his province to compare the elements, and judge of the being they compose: thus the result must be his work, and if he is then deceived the error will be his own. It is not sufficient for this purpose that my recitals should be merely faithful, they must also be minute; it is not for me to judge of the importance of facts, I ought to declare them simply as they are, and leave the estimate that is to be formed of them to him. I have adhered to this principle hitherto, with the most scrupulous exactitude, and shall not depart from it in the continuation; but the impressions of age are less lively than those of youth; I began by delineating the latter: should I recollect the rest with the same precision, the reader, may, perhaps, become weary and impatient, but I shall not be dissatisfied with my labor. I have but one thing to apprehend in this undertaking: I do not dread saying too much, or advancing falsities, but I am fearful of not saying enough, or concealing truths.