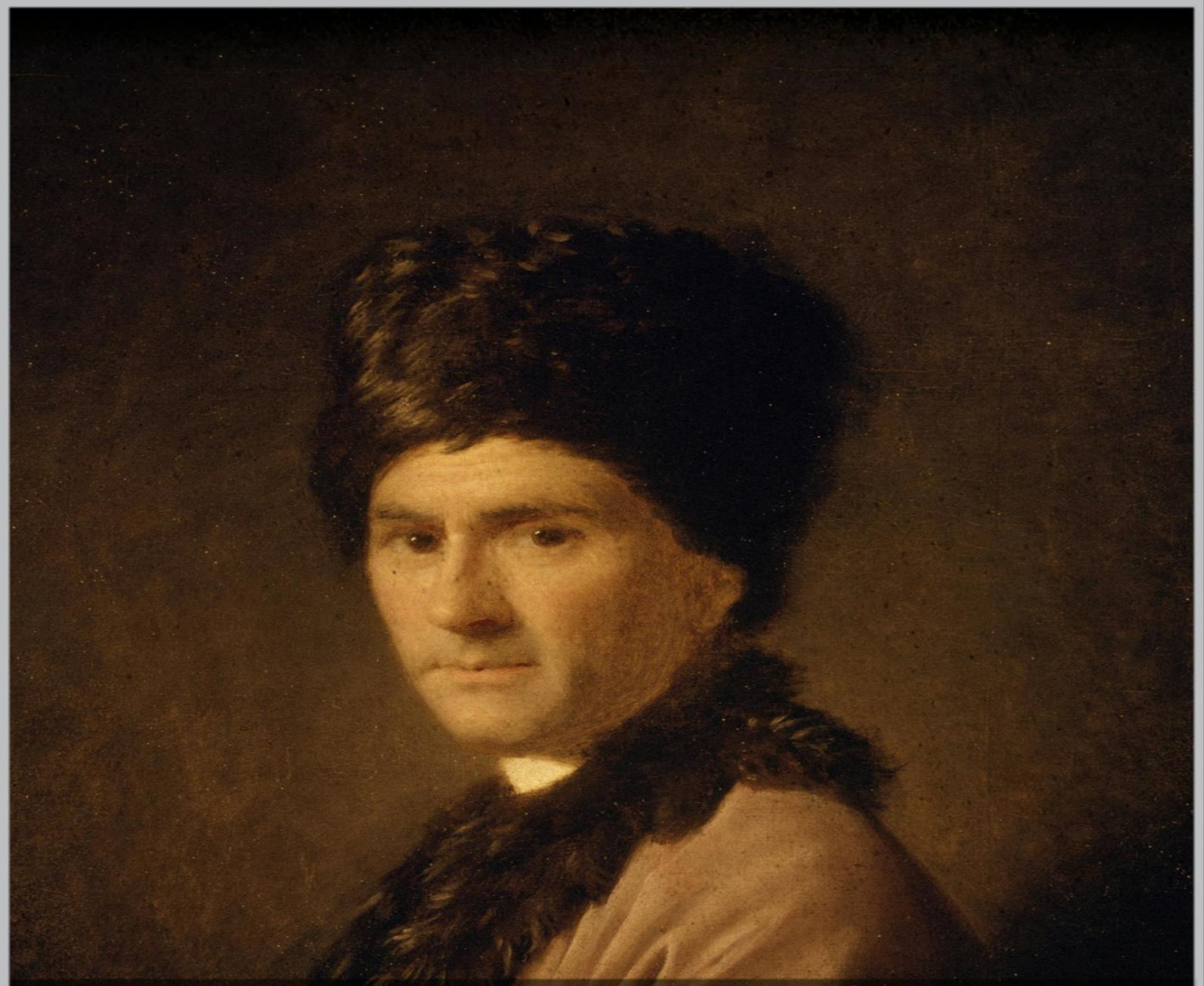

THE CONFESSIONS OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU

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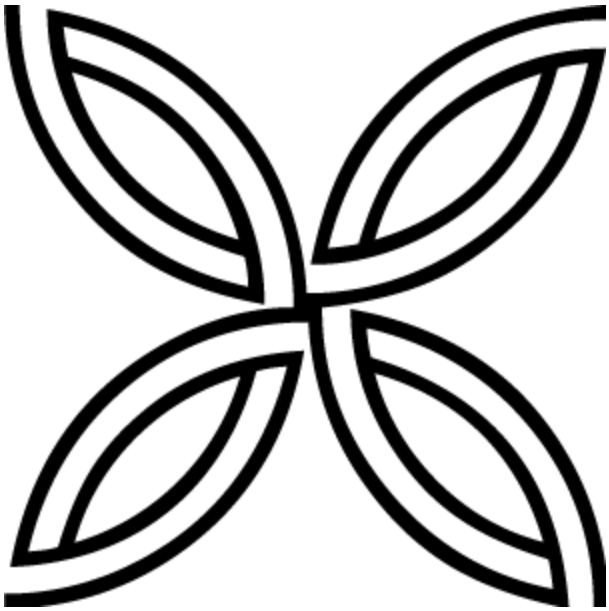

INTRODUCTION.

Among the notable books of later times—we may say, without exaggeration, of all time—must be reckoned The Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau. It deals with leading personages and transactions of a momentous epoch, when absolutism and feudalism were rallying for their last struggle against the modern spirit, chiefly represented by Voltaire, the Encyclopedists, and Rousseau himself—a struggle to which, after many fierce intestine quarrels and sanguinary wars throughout Europe and America, has succeeded the prevalence of those more tolerant and rational principles by which the statesmen of our own day are actuated.

On these matters, however, it is not our province to enlarge; nor is it necessary to furnish any detailed account of our author's political, religious, and philosophic axioms and systems, his paradoxes and his errors in logic: these have been so long and so exhaustively disputed over by contending factions that little is left for even the most assiduous gleaner in the field. The inquirer will find, in Mr. John Money's excellent work, the opinions of Rousseau reviewed succinctly and impartially. The 'Contrat Social', the 'Lettres Ecrites de la Montagne', and other treatises that once aroused fierce controversy, may therefore be left in the repose to which they have long been consigned, so far as the mass of mankind is concerned, though they must always form part of the library of the politician and the historian. One prefers to turn to the man Rousseau as he paints himself in the remarkable work before us.

That the task which he undertook in offering to show himself—as Persius puts it—'Intus et in cute', to posterity, exceeded his powers, is a trite criticism; like all human enterprises, his purpose was only imperfectly fulfilled; but

this circumstance in no way lessens the attractive qualities of his book, not only for the student of history or psychology, but for the intelligent man of the world. Its startling frankness gives it a peculiar interest wanting in most other autobiographies.

Many censors have elected to sit in judgment on the failings of this strangely constituted being, and some have pronounced upon him very severe sentences. Let it be said once for all that his faults and mistakes were generally due to causes over which he had but little control, such as a defective education, a too acute sensitiveness, which engendered suspicion of his fellows, irresolution, an overstrained sense of honour and independence, and an obstinate refusal to take advice from those who really wished to befriend him; nor should it be forgotten that he was afflicted during the greater part of his life with an incurable disease.

Lord Byron had a soul near akin to Rousseau's, whose writings naturally made a deep impression on the poet's mind, and probably had an influence on his conduct and modes of thought: In some stanzas of 'Childe Harold' this sympathy is expressed with truth and power; especially is the weakness of the Swiss philosopher's character summed up in the following admirable lines:

"Here the self-torturing sophist, wild Rousseau,
The apostle of affliction, he who threw
Enchantment over passion, and from woe
Wrung overwhelming eloquence, first drew
The breath which made him wretched; yet he knew
How to make madness beautiful, and cast
O'er erring deeds and thoughts a heavenly hue
Of words, like sunbeams, dazzling as they passed
The eyes, which o'er them shed tears feelingly and fast.

"His life was one long war with self-sought foes,

Or friends by him self-banished; for his mind
Had grown Suspicion's sanctuary, and chose,
For its own cruel sacrifice, the kind,
'Gainst whom he raged with fury strange and blind.
But he was frenzied,—wherefore, who may know?
Since cause might be which skill could never find;
But he was frenzied by disease or woe
To that worst pitch of all, which wears a reasoning show."

One would rather, however, dwell on the brighter hues of the picture than on its shadows and blemishes; let us not, then, seek to "draw his frailties from their dread abode." His greatest fault was his renunciation of a father's duty to his offspring; but this crime he expiated by a long and bitter repentance. We cannot, perhaps, very readily excuse the way in which he has occasionally treated the memory of his mistress and benefactress. That he loved Madame de Warens—his 'Mamma'—deeply and sincerely is undeniable, notwithstanding which he now and then dwells on her improvidence and her feminine indiscretions with an unnecessary and unbecoming lack of delicacy that has an unpleasant effect on the reader, almost seeming to justify the remark of one of his most lenient critics—that, after all, Rousseau had the soul of a lackey. He possessed, however, many amiable and charming qualities, both as a man and a writer, which were evident to those amidst whom he lived, and will be equally so to the unprejudiced reader of the Confessions. He had a profound sense of justice and a real desire for the improvement and advancement of the race. Owing to these excellences he was beloved to the last even by persons whom he tried to repel, looking upon them as members of a band of conspirators, bent upon destroying his domestic peace and depriving him of the means of

subsistence.
Those of his writings that are most nearly allied in tone and spirit to the 'Confessions' are the 'Reveries d'un Promeneur Solitaire' and 'La Nouvelle Heloise'. His correspondence throws much light on his life and character, as do also parts of 'Emile'. It is not easy in our day to realize the effect wrought upon the public mind by the advent of 'La Nouvelle Heloise'. Julie and Saint-Preux became names to conjure with; their ill-starred amours were everywhere sighed and wept over by the tender-hearted fair; indeed, in composing this work, Rousseau may be said to have done for Switzerland what the author of the Waverly Novels did for Scotland, turning its mountains, lakes and islands, formerly regarded with aversion, into a fairyland peopled with creatures whose joys and sorrows appealed irresistibly to every breast. Shortly after its publication began to flow that stream of tourists and travellers which tends to make Switzerland not only more celebrated but more opulent every year. It, is one of the few romances written in the epistolary form that do not oppress the reader with a sense of languor and unreality; for its creator poured into its pages a tide of passion unknown to his frigid and stilted predecessors, and dared to depict Nature as she really is, not as she was misrepresented by the modish authors and artists of the age. Some persons seem shy of owning an acquaintance with this work; indeed, it has been made the butt of ridicule by the disciples of a decadent school. Its faults and its beauties are on the surface; Rousseau's own estimate is freely expressed at the beginning of the eleventh book of the Confessions and elsewhere. It might be wished that the preface had been differently conceived and worded; for the assertion made therein that the book may prove dangerous has caused it to be inscribed on a sort of Index, and good folk who never read a line of it blush at its name. Its "sensibility," too, is a little overdone, and has supplied the wits with opportunities for satire; for

example, Canning, in his 'New Morality':

"Sweet Sensibility, who dwells enshrined
In the fine foldings
Sweet child of sickly Fancy!—her of yore
From her loved France Rousseau to exile bore;
And while 'midst lakes and mountains wild he ran,
Full of himself, and shunned the haunts of man,
Taught her o'er each lone vale and Alpine, steep
To lisp the story of his wrongs and weep."

As might be imagined, Voltaire had slight sympathy with our social reformer's notions and ways of promulgating them, and accordingly took up his wonted weapons—sarcasm and ridicule—against poor Jean-Jacques. The quarrels of these two great men cannot be described in this place; but they constitute an important chapter in the literary and social history of the time. In the work with which we are immediately concerned, the author seems to avoid frequent mention of Voltaire, even where we should most expect it. However, the state of his mind when he penned this record of his life should be always remembered in relation to this as well as other occurrences.

Rousseau had intended to bring his autobiography down to a later date, but obvious causes prevented this: hence it is believed that a summary of the chief events that marked his closing years will not be out of place here.

On quitting the Ile de Saint-Pierre he travelled to Strasbourg, where he was warmly received, and thence to Paris, arriving in that city on December 16, 1765. The Prince de Conti provided him with a lodging in the Hotel Saint-Simon, within the precincts of the Temple—a place of sanctuary for those under the ban of authority. 'Every one was eager to see the illustrious proscript, who complained of being made a daily show, "like Sancho Panza in his island

of Barataria." During his short stay in the capital there was circulated an ironical letter purporting to come from the Great Frederick, but really written by Horace Walpole. This cruel, clumsy, and ill-timed joke angered Rousseau, who ascribed it to, Voltaire. A few sentences may be quoted:

"My Dear Jean-Jacques,—You have renounced Geneva, your native
place. You have caused your expulsion from Switzerland, a country
so extolled in your writings; France has issued a warrant against
you: so do you come to me. My states offer you a peaceful retreat.
I wish you well, and will treat you well, if you will let me. But,
if you persist in refusing my help, do not reckon upon my telling
any one that you did so. If you are bent on tormenting your spirit
to find new misfortunes, choose whatever you like best. I am a
king, and can procure them for you at your pleasure; and, what will
certainly never happen to you in respect of your enemies, I will
cease to persecute you as soon as you cease to take a pride in being
persecuted. Your good friend,

"FREDERICK."

Early in 1766 David Hume persuaded Rousseau to go with him to England, where the exile could find a secure shelter. In London his appearance excited general attention. Edmund Burke had an interview with him and held that

inordinate vanity was the leading trait in his character. Mr. Davenport, to whom he was introduced by Hume, generously offered Rousseau a home at Wootton, in Staffordshire, near the Peak Country; the latter, however, would only accept the offer on condition that he should pay a rent of L 30 a year. He was accorded a pension of L 100 by George III., but declined to draw after the first annual payment. The climate and scenery of Wootton being similar to those of his native country, he was at first delighted with his new abode, where he lived with Therese, and devoted his time to herborising and inditing the first six books of his Confessions. Soon, however, his old hallucinations acquired strength, and Rousseau convinced himself that enemies were bent upon his capture, if not his death. In June, 1766, he wrote a violent letter to Hume, calling him "one of the worst of men." Literary Paris had combined with Hume and the English Government to surround him—as he supposed —with guards and spies; he revolved in his troubled mind all the reports and rumours he had heard for months and years; Walpole's forged letter rankled in his bosom; and in the spring of 1767 he fled; first to Spalding, in Lincolnshire, and subsequently to Calais, where he landed in May.
On his arrival in France his restless and wandering disposition forced him continually to change his residence, and acquired for him the title of "Voyageur Perpetuel." While at Trye, in Gisors, in 1767—8, he wrote the second part of the Confessions. He had assumed the surname of Renou, and about this time he declared before two witnesses that Therese was his wife—a proceeding to which he attached the sanctity of marriage. In 1770 he took up his abode in Paris, where he lived continuously for seven years, in a street which now bears his name, and gained a living by copying music. Bernardin de Saint-Pierre, the author of 'Paul and Virginia', who became acquainted with him in 1772, has left some interesting particulars of Rousseau's daily mode of life at this period. Monsieur de Girardin

having offered him an asylum at Ermemonville in the spring of 1778, he and Therese went thither to reside, but for no long time. On the 3d of July, in the same year, this perturbed spirit at last found rest, stricken by apoplexy. A rumor that he had committed suicide was circulated, but the evidence of trustworthy witnesses, including a physician, effectually contradicts this accusation. His remains, first interred in the Ile des Peupliers, were, after the Revolution, removed to the Pantheon. In later times the Government of Geneva made some reparation for their harsh treatment of a famous citizen, and erected his statue, modelled by his compatriot, Pradier, on an island in the Rhone.

"See nations, slowly wise and meanly just,
To buried merit raise the tardy bust."

BOOK I.

Ihave entered upon a performance which is without example, whose accomplishment will have no imitator. I mean to present my fellow-mortals with a man in all the integrity of nature; and this man shall be myself.

I know my heart, and have studied mankind; I am not made like any one I have been acquainted with, perhaps like no one in existence; if not better, I at least claim originality, and whether Nature did wisely in breaking the mould with which she formed me, can only be determined after having read this work.

Whenever the last trumpet shall sound, I will present myself before the sovereign judge with this book in my hand, and loudly proclaim, thus have I acted; these were my thoughts; such was I. With equal freedom and veracity have I related what was laudable or wicked, I have concealed no crimes, added no virtues; and if I have sometimes introduced superfluous ornament, it was merely to occupy a void occasioned by defect of memory: I may have supposed that certain, which I only knew to be probable, but have never asserted as truth, a conscious falsehood. Such as I was, I have declared myself; sometimes vile and despicable, at others, virtuous, generous and sublime; even as thou hast read my inmost soul: Power eternal! assemble round thy throne an innumerable throng of my fellow-mortals, let them listen to my confessions, let them blush at my depravity, let them tremble at my sufferings; let each in his turn expose with equal sincerity the failings, the wanderings of his heart, and, if he dare, aver, I was better than that man.

I was born at Geneva, in 1712, son of Isaac Rousseau and Susannah Bernard, citizens. My father's share of a moderate competency, which was divided among fifteen

children, being very trivial, his business of a watchmaker (in which he had the reputation of great ingenuity) was his only dependence. My mother's circumstances were more affluent; she was daughter of a Mons. Bernard, minister, and possessed a considerable share of modesty and beauty; indeed, my father found some difficulty in obtaining her hand.

The affection they entertained for each other was almost as early as their existence; at eight or nine years old they walked together every evening on the banks of the Treille, and before they were ten, could not support the idea of separation. A natural sympathy of soul confined those sentiments of predilection which habit at first produced; born with minds susceptible of the most exquisite sensibility and tenderness, it was only necessary to encounter similar dispositions; that moment fortunately presented itself, and each surrendered a willing heart. The obstacles that opposed served only to give a decree of vivacity to their affection, and the young lover, not being able to obtain his mistress, was overwhelmed with sorrow and despair. She advised him to travel—to forget her. He consented—he travelled, but returned more passionate than ever, and had the happiness to find her equally constant, equally tender. After this proof of mutual affection, what could they resolve?—to dedicate their future lives to love! the resolution was ratified with a vow, on which Heaven shed its benediction.

Fortunately, my mother's brother, Gabriel Bernard, fell in love with one of my father's sisters; she had no objection to the match, but made the marriage of his sister with her brother an indispensable preliminary. Love soon removed every obstacle, and the two weddings were celebrated the same day: thus my uncle became the husband of my aunt, and their children were doubly cousins german. Before a year was expired, both had the happiness to become fathers, but were soon after obliged to submit to a

separation.
My uncle Bernard, who was an engineer, went to serve in the empire and Hungary, under Prince Eugene, and distinguished himself both at the siege and battle of Belgrade. My father, after the birth of my only brother, set off, on recommendation, for Constantinople, and was appointed watchmaker to the Seraglio. During his absence, the beauty, wit, and accomplishments of my mother attracted a number of admirers, among whom Mons. de la Closure, Resident of France, was the most assiduous in his attentions.

[They were too brilliant for her situation, the minister, her father, having bestowed great pains on her education. She was taught drawing, singing, and to play on the theorbo; had learning, and wrote very agreeable verses. The following is an extempore piece which she composed in the absence of her husband and brother, in a conversation with some person relative to them, while walking with her sister-in-law, and their two children:

Ces deux messieurs, qui sont absens,
Nous sont chers de bien des manieres;
Ce sont nos amis, nos amans,
Ce sont nos maris et nos freres,
Et les peres de ces enfans.

These absent ones, who just claim
Our hearts, by every tender name,
To whom each wish extends
Our husbands and our brothers are,
The fathers of this blooming pair,

Our lovers and our friends.]

His passion must have been extremely violent, since after a period of thirty years I have seen him affected at the very mention of her name. My mother had a defence more powerful even than her virtue; she tenderly loved my father, and conjured him to return; his inclination seconding his request, he gave up every prospect of emolument, and hastened to Geneva.

I was the unfortunate fruit of this return, being born ten months after, in a very weakly and infirm state; my birth cost my mother her life, and was the first of my misfortunes. I am ignorant how my father supported her loss at that time, but I know he was ever after inconsolable. In me he still thought he saw her he so tenderly lamented, but could never forget I had been the innocent cause of his misfortune, nor did he ever embrace me, but his sighs, the convulsive pressure of his arms, witnessed that a bitter regret mingled itself with his caresses, though, as may be supposed, they were not on this account less ardent. When he said to me, "Jean Jacques, let us talk of your mother," my usual reply was, "Yes, father, but then, you know, we shall cry," and immediately the tears started from his eyes. "Ah!" exclaimed he, with agitation, "Give me back my wife; at least console me for her loss; fill up, dear boy, the void she has left in my soul. Could I love thee thus wert thou only my son?" Forty years after this loss he expired in the arms of his second wife, but the name of the first still vibrated on his lips, still was her image engraved on his heart.

Such were the authors of my being: of all the gifts it had pleased Heaven to bestow on them, a feeling heart was the only one that descended to me; this had been the source of their felicity, it was the foundation of all my misfortunes.

I came into the world with so few signs of life, that they

entertained but little hope of preserving me, with the seeds of a disorder that has gathered strength with years, and from which I am now relieved at intervals, only to suffer a different, though more intolerable evil. I owed my preservation to one of my father's sisters, an amiable and virtuous girl, who took the most tender care of me; she is yet living, nursing, at the age of four-score, a husband younger than herself, but worn out with excessive drinking. Dear aunt! I freely forgive your having preserved my life, and only lament that it is not in my power to bestow on the decline of your days the tender solicitude and care you lavished on the first dawn of mine. My nurse, Jaqueline, is likewise living: and in good health—the hands that opened my eyes to the light of this world may close them at my death. We suffer before we think; it is the common lot of humanity. I experienced more than my proportion of it. I have no knowledge of what passed prior to my fifth or sixth year; I recollect nothing of learning to read, I only remember what effect the first considerable exercise of it produced on my mind; and from that moment I date an uninterrupted knowledge of myself.

Every night, after supper, we read some part of a small collection of romances which had been my mother's. My father's design was only to improve me in reading, and he thought these entertaining works were calculated to give me a fondness for it; but we soon found ourselves so interested in the adventures they contained, that we alternately read whole nights together, and could not bear to give over until at the conclusion of a volume. Sometimes, in a morning, on hearing the swallows at our window, my father, quite ashamed of this weakness, would cry, "Come, come, let us go to bed; I am more a child than thou art."

I soon acquired, by this dangerous custom, not only an extreme facility in reading and comprehending, but, for my age, a too intimate acquaintance with the passions. An infinity of sensations were familiar to me, without

possessing any precise idea of the objects to which they related—I had conceived nothing—I had felt the whole. This confused succession of emotions did not retard the future efforts of my reason, though they added an extravagant, romantic notion of human life, which experience and reflection have never been able to eradicate.

My romance reading concluded with the summer of 1719, the following winter was differently employed. My mother's library being quite exhausted, we had recourse to that part of her father's which had devolved to us; here we happily found some valuable books, which was by no means extraordinary, having been selected by a minister that truly deserved that title, in whom learning (which was the rage of the times) was but a secondary commendation, his taste and good sense being most conspicuous. The history of the Church and Empire by Le Sueur, Bossuett's Discourses on Universal History, Plutarch's Lives, the history of Venice by Nani, Ovid's Metamorphoses, La Bruyere, Fontenelle's World, his Dialogues of the Dead, and a few volumes of Moliere, were soon ranged in my father's closet, where, during the hours he was employed in his business, I daily read them, with an avidity and taste uncommon, perhaps unprecedented at my age.

Plutarch presently became my greatest favorite. The satisfaction I derived from repeated readings I gave this author, extinguished my passion for romances, and I shortly preferred Agesilaus, Brutus, and Aristides, to Orondates, Artemenes, and Juba. These interesting studies, seconded by the conversations they frequently occasioned with my father, produced that republican spirit and love of liberty, that haughty and invincible turn of mind, which rendered me impatient of restraint or servitude, and became the torment of my life, as I continually found myself in situations incompatible with these sentiments. Incessantly occupied with Rome and Athens, conversing, if I may so express myself with their illustrious heroes; born the

citizen of a republic, of a father whose ruling passion was a love of his country, I was fired with these examples; could fancy myself a Greek or Roman, and readily give into the character of the personage whose life I read; transported by the recital of any extraordinary instance of fortitude or intrepidity, animation flashed from my eyes, and gave my voice additional strength and energy. One day, at table, while relating the fortitude of Scoevola, they were terrified at seeing me start from my seat and hold my hand over a hot chafing—dish, to represent more forcibly the action of that determined Roman.

My brother, who was seven years older than myself, was brought up to my father's profession. The extraordinary affection they lavished on me might be the reason he was too much neglected: this certainly was a fault which cannot be justified. His education and morals suffered by this neglect, and he acquired the habits of a libertine before he arrived at an age to be really one. My father tried what effect placing him with a master would produce, but he still persisted in the same ill conduct. Though I saw him so seldom that it could hardly be said we were acquainted, I loved him tenderly, and believe he had as strong an affection for me as a youth of his dissipated turn of mind could be supposed capable of. One day, I remember, when my father was correcting him severely, I threw myself between them, embracing my brother, whom I covered with my body, receiving the strokes designed for him; I persisted so obstinately in my protection, that either softened by my cries and tears, or fearing to hurt me most, his anger subsided, and he pardoned his fault. In the end, my brother's conduct became so bad that he suddenly disappeared, and we learned some time after that he was in Germany, but he never wrote to us, and from that day we heard no news of him: thus I became an only son.

If this poor lad was neglected, it was quite different with his brother, for the children of a king could not be treated

with more attention and tenderness than were bestowed on my infancy, being the darling of the family; and what is rather uncommon, though treated as a beloved, never a spoiled child; was never permitted, while under paternal inspection, to play in the street with other children; never had any occasion to contradict or indulge those fantastical humors which are usually attributed to nature, but are in reality the effects of an injudicious education. I had the faults common to my age, was talkative, a glutton, and sometimes a liar, made no scruple of stealing sweetmeats, fruits, or, indeed, any kind of eatables; but never took delight in mischievous waste, in accusing others, or tormenting harmless animals. I recollect, indeed, that one day, while Madam Clot, a neighbor of ours, was gone to church, I made water in her kettle: the remembrance even now makes me smile, for Madame Clot (though, if you please, a good sort of creature) was one of the most tedious grumbling old women I ever knew. Thus have I given a brief, but faithful, history of my childish transgressions. How could I become cruel or vicious, when I had before my eyes only examples of mildness, and was surrounded by some of the best people in the world? My father, my aunt, my nurse, my relations, our friends, our neighbors, all I had any connection with, did not obey me, it is true, but loved me tenderly, and I returned their affection. I found so little to excite my desires, and those I had were so seldom contradicted, that I was hardly sensible of possessing any, and can solemnly aver I was an absolute stranger to caprice until after I had experienced the authority of a master.

Those hours that were not employed in reading or writing with my father, or walking with my governess, Jaqueline, I spent with my aunt; and whether seeing her embroider, or hearing her sing, whether sitting or standing by her side, I was ever happy. Her tenderness and unaffected gayety, the charms of her figure and countenance have left such

indelible impressions on my mind, that her manner, look, and attitude are still before my eyes; I recollect a thousand little caressing questions; could describe her clothes, her head-dress, nor have the two curls of fine black hair which hung on her temples, according to the mode of that time, escaped my memory.

Though my taste, or rather passion, for music, did not show itself until a considerable time after, I am fully persuaded it is to her I am indebted for it. She knew a great number of songs, which she sung with great sweetness and melody. The serenity and cheerfulness which were conspicuous in this lovely girl, banished melancholy, and made all round her happy.

The charms of her voice had such an effect on me, that not only several of her songs have ever since remained on my memory, but some I have not thought of from my infancy, as I grow old, return upon my mind with a charm altogether inexpressible. Would any one believe that an old dotard like me, worn out with care and infirmity, should sometime surprise himself weeping like a child, and in a voice querulous, and broken by age, muttering out one of those airs which were the favorites of my infancy? There is one song in particular, whose tune I perfectly recollect, but the words that compose the latter half of it constantly refuse every effort to recall them, though I have a confused idea of the rhymes. The beginning, with what I have been able to recollect of the remainder, is as follows:

Tircis, je n'ose
Ecouter ton Chalumeau
Sous l'Ormeau;
Car on en cause
Deja dans notre hameau.
—— —— ————-
———— —- un Berger
s'engager
sans danger,

Et toujours l'epine est sons la rose.

I have endeavored to account for the invincible charm my heart feels on the recollection of this fragment, but it is altogether inexplicable. I only know, that before I get to the end of it, I always find my voice interrupted by tenderness, and my eyes suffused with tears. I have a hundred times formed the resolution of writing to Paris for the remainder of these words, if any one should chance to know them: but I am almost certain the pleasure I take in the recollection would be greatly diminished was I assured any one but my poor aunt Susan had sung them.

Such were my affections on entering this life. Thus began to form and demonstrate itself, a heart, at once haughty and tender, a character effeminate, yet invincible; which, fluctuating between weakness and courage, luxury and virtue, has ever set me in contradiction to myself; causing abstinence and enjoyment, pleasure and prudence, equally to shun me.

This course of education was interrupted by an accident, whose consequences influenced the rest of my life. My father had a quarrel with M. G——, who had a captain's commission in France, and was related to several of the Council. This G——, who was an insolent, ungenerous man, happening to bleed at the nose, in order to be revenged, accused my father of having drawn his sword on him in the city, and in consequence of this charge they were about to conduct him to prison. He insisted (according to the law of this republic) that the accuser should be confined at the same time; and not being able to obtain this, preferred a voluntary banishment for the remainder of his life, to giving up a point by which he must sacrifice his honor and liberty. I remained under the tuition of my uncle Bernard, who was at that time employed in the fortifications of Geneva. He

had lost his eldest daughter, but had a son about my own age, and we were sent together to Bossey, to board with the Minister Lambercier. Here we were to learn Latin, with all the insignificant trash that has obtained the name of education.

Two years spent in this village softened, in some degree, my Roman fierceness, and again reduced me to a state of childhood. At Geneva, where nothing was exacted, I loved reading, which was, indeed, my principal amusement; but, at Bossey, where application was expected, I was fond of play as a relaxation. The country was so new, so charming in my idea, that it seemed impossible to find satiety in its enjoyments, and I conceived a passion for rural life, which time has not been able to extinguish; nor have I ever ceased to regret the pure and tranquil pleasures I enjoyed at this place in my childhood; the remembrance having followed me through every age, even to that in which I am hastening again towards it.

M. Lambercier was a worthy, sensible man, who, without neglecting our instruction, never made our acquisitions burthensome, or tasks tedious. What convinces me of the rectitude of his method is, that notwithstanding my extreme aversion to restraint, the recollection of my studies is never attended with disgust; and, if my improvement was trivial, it was obtained with ease, and has never escaped memory.

The simplicity of this rural life was of infinite advantage in opening my heart to the reception of true friendship. The sentiments I had hitherto formed on this subject were extremely elevated, but altogether imaginary. The habit of living in this peaceful manner soon united me tenderly to my cousin Bernard; my affection was more ardent than that I had felt for my brother, nor has time ever been able to efface it. He was a tall, lank, weakly boy, with a mind as mild as his body was feeble, and who did not wrong the good opinion they were disposed to entertain for the son of

my guardian. Our studies, amusements, and tasks, were the same; we were alone; each wanted a playmate; to separate would in some measure, have been to annihilate us. Though we had not many opportunities of demonstrating our attachment to each other, it was certainly extreme; and so far from enduring the thought of separation, we could not even form an idea that we should ever be able to submit to it. Each of a disposition to be won by kindness, and complaisant, when not soured by contradiction, we agreed in every particular. If, by the favor of those who governed us he had the ascendant while in their presence, I was sure to acquire it when we were alone, and this preserved the equilibrium so necessary in friendship. If he hesitated in repeating his task, I prompted him; when my exercises were finished, I helped to write his; and, in our amusements, my disposition being most active, ever had the lead. In a word, our characters accorded so well, and the friendship that subsisted between us was so cordial, that during the five years we were at Bossey and Geneva we were inseparable: we often fought, it is true, but there never was any occasion to separate us. No one of our quarrels lasted more than a quarter of an hour, and never in our lives did we make any complaint of each other. It may be said, these remarks are frivolous; but, perhaps, a similiar example among children can hardly be produced. The manner in which I passed my time at Bossey was so agreeable to my disposition, that it only required a longer duration absolutely to have fixed my character, which would have had only peaceable, affectionate, benevolent sentiments for its basis. I believe no individual of our kind ever possessed less natural vanity than myself. At intervals, by an extraordinary effort, I arrived at sublime ideas, but presently sunk again into my original languor. To be loved by every one who knew me was my most ardent wish. I was naturally mild, my cousin was equally so, and those who had the care of us were of similiar dispositions. Everything

contributed to strengthen those propensities which nature had implanted in my breast, and during the two years I was neither the victim nor witness of any violent emotions.

I knew nothing so delightful as to see every one content, not only with me, but all that concerned them. When repeating our catechism at church, nothing could give me greater vexation, on being obliged to hesitate, than to see Miss Lambercier's countenance express disapprobation and uneasiness. This alone was more afflicting to me than the shame of faltering before so many witnesses, which, notwithstanding, was sufficiently painful; for though not oversolicitous of praise, I was feelingly alive to shame; yet I can truly affirm, the dread of being reprimanded by Miss Lambercier alarmed me less than the thought of making her uneasy.

Neither she nor her brother were deficient in a reasonable severity, but as this was scarce ever exerted without just cause, I was more afflicted at their disapprobation than the punishment. Certainly the method of treating youth would be altered if the distant effects this indiscriminate, and frequently indiscreet method produces, were more conspicuous. I would willingly excuse myself from a further explanation, did not the lesson this example conveys (which points out an evil as frequent as it is pernicious) forbid my silence.

As Miss Lambercier felt a mother's affection, she sometimes exerted a mother's authority, even to inflicting on us when we deserved it, the punishment of infants. She had often threatened it, and this threat of a treatment entirely new, appeared to me extremely dreadful; but I found the reality much less terrible than the idea, and what is still more unaccountable, this punishment increased my affection for the person who had inflicted it. All this affection, aided by my natural mildness, was scarcely sufficient to prevent my seeking, by fresh offences, a return of the same chastisement; for a degree of sensuality had

mingled with the smart and shame, which left more desire than fear of a repetition. I was well convinced the same discipline from her brother would have produced a quite contrary effect; but from a man of his disposition this was not probable, and if I abstained from meriting correction it was merely from a fear of offending Miss Lambercier, for benevolence, aided by the passions, has ever maintained an empire over me which has given law to my heart.

This event, which, though desirable, I had not endeavored to accelerate, arrived without my fault; I should say, without my seeking; and I profited by it with a safe conscience; but this second, was also the last time, for Miss Lambercier, who doubtless had some reason to imagine this chastisement did not produce the desired effect, declared it was too fatiguing, and that she renounced it for the future. Till now we had slept in her chamber, and during the winter, even in her bed; but two days after another room was prepared for us, and from that moment I had the honor (which I could very well have dispensed with) of being treated by her as a great boy.

Who would believe this childish discipline, received at eight years old, from the hands of a woman of thirty, should influence my propensities, my desires, my passions, for the rest of my life, and that in quite a contrary sense from what might naturally have been expected? The very incident that inflamed my senses, gave my desires such an extraordinary turn, that, confined to what I had already experienced, I sought no further, and, with blood boiling with sensuality, almost from my birth, preserved my purity beyond the age when the coldest constitutions lose their insensibility; long tormented, without knowing by what, I gazed on every handsome woman with delight; imagination incessantly brought their charms to my remembrance, only to transform them into so many Miss Lamberciers.

If ever education was perfectly chaste, it was certainly that I received; my three aunts were not only of exemplary

prudence, but maintained a degree of modest reserve which women have long since thought unnecessary. My father, it is true, loved pleasure, but his gallantry was rather of the last than the present century, and he never expressed his affection for any woman he regarded in terms a virgin could have blushed at; indeed, it was impossible more attention should be paid to that regard we owe the morals of children than was uniformly observed by every one I had any concern with. An equal degree of reserve in this particular was observed at M. Lambercier's, where a good maid-servant was discharged for having once made use of an expression before us which was thought to contain some degree of indelicacy. I had no precise idea of the ultimate effect of the passions, but the conception I had formed was extremely disgusting; I entertained a particular aversion for courtesans, nor could I look on a rake without a degree of disdain mingled with terror.

These prejudices of education, proper in themselves to retard the first explosions of a combustible constitution, were strengthened, as I have already hinted, by the effect the first moments of sensuality produced in me, for notwithstanding the troublesome ebullition of my blood, I was satisfied with the species of voluptuousness I had already been acquainted with, and sought no further.

Thus I passed the age of puberty, with a constitution extremely ardent, without knowing or even wishing for any other gratification of the passions than what Miss Lambercier had innocently given me an idea of; and when I became a man, that childish taste, instead of vanishing, only associated with the other. This folly, joined to a natural timidity, has always prevented my being very enterprising with women, so that I have passed my days in languishing in silence for those I most admired, without daring to disclose my wishes.

To fall at the feet of an imperious mistress, obey her mandates, or implore pardon, were for me the most

exquisite enjoyments, and the more my blood was inflamed by the efforts of a lively imagination the more I acquired the appearance of a whining lover.

It will be readily conceived that this mode of making love is not attended with a rapid progress or imminent danger to the virtue of its object; yet, though I have few favors to boast of, I have not been excluded from enjoyment, however imaginary. Thus the senses, in concurrence with a mind equally timid and romantic, have preserved my moral chaste, and feelings uncorrupted, with precisely the same inclinations, which, seconded with a moderate portion of effrontery, might have plunged me into the most unwarrantable excesses.

I have made the first, most difficult step, in the obscure and painful maze of my Confessions. We never feel so great a degree of repugnance in divulging what is really criminal, as what is merely ridiculous. I am now assured of my resolution, for after what I have dared disclose, nothing can have power to deter me. The difficulty attending these acknowledgments will be readily conceived, when I declare, that during the whole of my life, though frequently laboring under the most violent agitation, being hurried away with the impetuosity of a passion which (when in company with those I loved) deprived me of the faculty of sight and hearing, I could never, in the course of the most unbounded familiarity, acquire sufficient resolution to declare my folly, and implore the only favor that remained to bestow.

In thus investigating the first traces of my sensible existence, I find elements, which, though seemingly incompatible, have united to produce a simple and uniform effect; while others, apparently the same, have, by the concurrence of certain circumstances, formed such different combinations, that it would never be imagined they had any affinity; who would believe, for example, that one of the most vigorous springs of my soul was tempered

in the identical source from whence luxury and ease mingled with my constitution and circulated in my veins? Before I quit this subject, I will add a striking instance of the different effects they produced.

One day, while I was studying in a chamber contiguous to the kitchen, the maid set some of Miss Lambercier's combs to dry by the fire, and on coming to fetch them some time after, was surprised to find the teeth of one of them broken off. Who could be suspected of this mischief? No one but myself had entered the room: I was questioned, but denied having any knowledge of it. Mr. and Miss Lambercier consult, exhort, threaten, but all to no purpose; I obstinately persist in the denial; and, though this was the first time I had been detected in a confirmed falsehood, appearances were so strong that they overthrew all my protestations. This affair was thought serious; the mischief, the lie, the obstinacy, were considered equally deserving of punishment, which was not now to be administered by Miss Lambercier. My uncle Bernard was written to; he arrived; and my poor cousin being charged with a crime no less serious, we were conducted to the same execution, which was inflicted with great severity. If finding a remedy in the evil itself, they had sought ever to allay my depraved desires, they could not have chosen a shorter method to accomplish their designs, and, I can assure my readers, I was for a long time freed from the dominion of them.

As this severity could not draw from me the expected acknowledgment, which obstinacy brought on several repetitions, and reduced me to a deplorable situation, yet I was immovable, and resolutely determined to suffer death rather than submit. Force, at length, was obliged to yield to the diabolical infatuation of a child, for no better name was bestowed on my constancy, and I came out of this dreadful trial, torn, it is true, but triumphant. Fifty years have expired since this adventure—the fear of punishment is no more. Well, then, I aver, in the face of Heaven, I was

absolutely innocent: and, so far from breaking, or even touching the comb, never came near the fire. It will be asked, how did this mischief happen? I can form no conception of it, I only know my own innocence.

Let any one figure to himself a character whose leading traits were docility and timidity, but haughty, ardent, and invincible, in its passions; a child, hitherto governed by the voice of reason, treated with mildness, equity, and complaisance, who could not even support the idea of injustice, experiencing, for the first time, so violent an instance of it, inflicted by those he most loved and respected. What perversion of ideas! What confusion in the heart, the brain, in all my little being, intelligent and moral! —let any one, I say, if possible, imagine all this, for I am incapable of giving the least idea of what passed in my mind at that period.

My reason was not sufficiently established to enable me to put myself in the place of others, and judge how much appearances condemned me, I only beheld the rigor of a dreadful chastisement, inflicted for a crime I had not committed; yet I can truly affirm, the smart I suffered, though violent, was inconsiderable compared to what I felt from indignation, rage, and despair. My cousin, who was almost in similar circumstances, having been punished for an involuntary fault as guilty of a premediated crime, became furious by my example. Both in the same bed, we embraced each other with convulsive transport; we were almost suffocated; and when our young hearts found sufficient relief to breathe out our indigination, we sat up in the bed, and with all our force, repeated a hundred times, Carnifex! Carnifex! Carnifex! executioner, tormentor.

Even while I write this I feel my pulse quicken, and should I live a hundred thousand years, the agitation of that moment would still be fresh in my memory. The first instance of violence and oppression is so deeply engraved on my soul, that every relative idea renews my emotion: the

sentiment of indignation, which in its origin had reference only to myself, has acquired such strength, and is at present so completely detached from personal motives, that my heart is as much inflamed at the sight or relation of any act of injustice (whatever may be the object, or wheresoever it may be perpetrated) as if I was the immediate sufferer. When I read the history of a merciless tyrant, or the dark and the subtle machination of a knavish designing priest, I could on the instant set off to stab the miscreants, though I was certain to perish in the attempt. I have frequently fatigued myself by running after and stoning a cock, a cow, a dog, or any animal I saw tormenting another, only because it was conscious of possessing superior strength. This may be natural to me, and I am inclined to believe it is, though the lively impression of the first injustice I became the victim of was too long and too powerfully remembered not to have added considerable force to it.

This occurrence terminated my infantine serenity; from that moment I ceased to enjoy a pure unadulterated happiness, and on a retrospection of the pleasure of my childhood, I yet feel they ended here. We continue at Bossey some months after this event, but were like our first parents in the Garden of Eden after they had lost their innocence; in appearance our situation was the same, in effect it was totally different.

Affection, respect; intimacy, confidence, no longer attached the pupils to their guides; we beheld them no longer as divinities, who could read the secrets of our hearts; we were less ashamed of committing faults, more afraid of being accused of them: we learned to dissemble, to rebel, to lie: all the vices common to our years began to corrupt our happy innocence, mingle with our sports, and embitter our amusements. The country itself, losing those sweet and simple charms which captivate the heart, appeared a gloomy desert, or covered with a veil that concealed its