

ЖАН-ЖАК РУССО

THE CONFESSIONS OF
JEAN JACQUES
ROUSSEAU — VOLUME
05

Жан-Жак Руссо
The Confessions of Jean
Jacques Rousseau — Volume 05

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The Confessions

of Jean Jacques

Rousseau — Volume 05

BOOK V

It was, I believe, in 1732, that I arrived at Chambéry, as already related, and began my employment of registering land for the king. I was almost twenty-one, my mind well enough formed for my age, with respect to sense, but very deficient in point of judgment, and needing every instruction from those into whose hands I fell, to make me conduct myself with propriety; for a few years' experience had not been able to cure me radically of my romantic ideas; and notwithstanding the ills I had sustained, I knew as little of the world, or mankind, as if I had never purchased instruction. I slept at home, that is, at the house of Madam de Warrens; but it was not as at Annecy: here were no gardens, no brook, no landscape; the house was dark and dismal, and my apartment the most gloomy of the whole. The prospect a dead wall, an alley instead of a street, confined air, bad light, small rooms, iron bars, rats, and a rotten floor; an assemblage of

circumstances that do not constitute a very agreeable habitation; but I was in the same house with my best friend, incessantly near her, at my desk, or in chamber, so that I could not perceive the gloominess of my own, or have time to think of it. It may appear whimsical that she should reside at Chambery on purpose to live in this disagreeable house; but it was a trait of contrivance which I ought not to pass over in silence. She had no great inclination for a journey to Turin, fearing that after the recent revolutions, and the agitation in which the court yet was, she should not be very favorably received there; but her affairs seemed to demand her presence, as she feared being forgotten or ill-treated, particularly as the Count de Saint-Laurent, Intendant-general of the Finances, was not in her interest. He had an old house in Chambery, ill-built, and standing in so disagreeable a situation that it was always untenanted; she hired, and settled in this house, a plan that succeeded much better than a journey to Turin would have done, for her pension was not suppressed, and the Count de Saint-Laurent was ever after one of her best friends.

Her household was much on the old footing; her faithful Claude Anet still remained with her. He was, as I have before mentioned, a peasant of Moutru, who in his childhood had gathered herbs in Jura for the purpose of making Swiss tea; she had taken him into her service for his knowledge of drugs, finding it convenient to have a herbalist among her domestics. Passionately fond of the study of plants, he became a real botanist, and had he not died young, might have acquired as

much fame in that science as he deserved for being an honest man. Serious even to gravity, and older than myself, he was to me a kind of tutor, commanding respect, and preserving me from a number of follies, for I dared not forget myself before him. He commanded it likewise from his mistress, who knew his understanding, uprightness, and inviolable attachment to herself, and returned it. Claude Anet was of an uncommon temper. I never encountered a similar disposition: he was slow, deliberate, and circumspect in his conduct; cold in his manner; laconic and sententious in his discourse; yet of an impetuosity in his passions, which (though careful to conceal) preyed upon him inwardly, and urged him to the only folly he ever committed; that folly, indeed was terrible, it was poisoning himself. This tragic scene passed soon after my arrival, and opened my eyes to the intimacy that subsisted between Claude Anet and his mistress, for had not the information come from her, I should never have suspected it; yet, surely, if attachment, fidelity, and zeal, could merit such a recompense, it was due to him, and what further proves him worthy such a distinction, he never once abused her confidence. They seldom disputed, and their disagreements ever ended amicably; one, indeed, was not so fortunate; his mistress, in a passion, said something affronting, which not being able to digest, he consulted only with despair, and finding a bottle of laudanum at hand, drank it off; then went peaceably to bed, expecting to awake no more. Madam de Warrens herself was uneasy, agitated, wandering about the

house and happily—finding the phial empty—guessed the rest. Her screams, while flying to his assistance, alarmed me; she confessed all, implored my help, and was fortunate enough, after repeated efforts, to make him throw up the laudanum. Witness of this scene, I could not but wonder at my stupidity in never having suspected the connection; but Claude Anet was so discreet, that a more penetrating observer might have been deceived. Their reconciliation affected me, and added respect to the esteem I before felt for him. From this time I became, in some measure, his pupil, nor did I find myself the worse for his instruction.

I could not learn, without pain, that she lived in greater intimacy with another than with myself: it was a situation I had not even thought of, but (which was very natural) it hurt me to see another in possession of it. Nevertheless, instead of feeling any aversion to the person who had this advantage over me, I found the attachment I felt for her actually extend to him. I desired her happiness above all things, and since he was concerned in her plan of felicity, I was content he should be happy likewise. Meantime he perfectly entered into the views of his mistress; conceived a sincere friendship for me, and without affecting the authority his situation might have entitled him to, he naturally possessed that which his superior judgment gave him over mine. I dared do nothing he disproved of, but he was sure to disapprove only what merited disapprobation: thus we lived in an union which rendered us mutually happy, and which death alone could dissolve.

One proof of the excellence of this amiable woman's character, is, that all those who loved her, loved each other; even jealousy and rivalship submitting to the more powerful sentiment with which she inspired them, and I never saw any of those who surrounded her entertain the least ill will among themselves. Let the reader pause a moment on this encomium, and if he can recollect any other woman who deserves it, let him attach himself to her, if he would obtain happiness.

From my arrival at Chambéry to my departure for Paris, 1741, included an interval of eight or nine years, during which time I have few adventures to relate; my life being as simple as it was agreeable. This uniformity was precisely what was most wanting to complete the formation of my character, which continual troubles had prevented from acquiring any degree of stability. It was during this pleasing interval, that my unconnected, unfinished education, gained consistence, and made me what I have unalterably remained amid the storms with which I have since been surrounded.

The progress was slow, almost imperceptible, and attended by few memorable circumstances; yet it deserves to be followed and investigated.

At first, I was wholly occupied with my business, the constraint of a desk left little opportunity for other thoughts, the small portion of time I was at liberty was passed with my dear Madam de Warrens, and not having leisure to read, I felt no inclination for it; but when my business (by daily repetition)

became familiar, and my mind was less occupied, study again became necessary, and (as my desires were ever irritated by any difficulty that opposed the indulgence of them) might once more have become a passion, as at my master's, had not other inclinations interposed and diverted it.

Though our occupation did not demand a very profound skill in arithmetic, it sometimes required enough to puzzle me. To conquer this difficulty, I purchased books which treated on that science, and learned well, for I now studied alone. Practical arithmetic extends further than is usually supposed if you would attain exact precision. There are operations of extreme length in which I have sometimes seen good geometricians lose themselves. Reflection, assisted by practice, gives clear ideas, and enables you to devise shorter methods, these inventions flatter our self-complacency, while their exactitude satisfies our understanding, and renders a study pleasant, which is, of itself, heavy and unentertaining. At length I became so expert as not to be puzzled by any question that was solvable by arithmetical calculation; and even now, while everything I formerly knew fades daily on my memory, this acquirement, in a great measure remains, through an interval of thirty years. A few days ago, in a journey I made to Davenport, being with my host at an arithmetical lesson given his children, I did (with pleasure, and without errors) a most complicated work. While setting down my figures, methought I was still at Chambery, still in my days of happiness—how far had I to look back for them!

The colored plans of our geometricians had given me a taste for drawing: accordingly I bought colors, and began by attempting flowers and landscapes. It was unfortunate that I had not talents for this art, for my inclination was much disposed to it, and while surrounded with crayons, pencils, and colors, I could have passed whole months without wishing to leave them. This amusement engaged me so much that they were obliged to force me from it; and thus it is with every inclination I give into, it continues to augment, till at length it becomes so powerful, that I lose sight of everything except the favorite amusement. Years have not been able to cure me of that fault, nay, have not even diminished it; for while I am writing this, behold me, like an old dotard, infatuated with another, to me useless study, which I do not understand, and which even those who have devoted their youthful days to the acquisition of, are constrained to abandon, at the age I am beginning with it.

At that time, the study I am now speaking of would have been well placed, the opportunity was good, and I had some temptation to profit by it; for the satisfaction I saw in the eyes of Anet, when he came home loaded with new discovered plants, set me two or three times on the point of going to herbalize with him, and I am almost certain that had I gone once, I should have been caught, and perhaps at this day might have been an excellent botanist, for I know no study more congenial to my natural inclination, than that of plants; the life I have led for these ten years past, in the country, being little more than a

continual herbalizing, though I must confess, without object, and without improvement; but at the time I am now speaking of I had no inclination for botany, nay, I even despised, and was disgusted at the idea, considering it only as a fit study for an apothecary. Madam de Warrens was fond of it merely for this purpose, seeking none but common plants to use in her medical preparations; thus botany, chemistry, and anatomy were confounded in my idea under the general denomination of medicine, and served to furnish me with pleasant sarcasms the whole day, which procured me, from time to time, a box on the ear, applied by Madam de Warrens. Besides this, a very contrary taste grew up with me, and by degrees absorbed all others; this was music. I was certainly born for that science, I loved it from my infancy, and it was the only inclination I have constantly adhered to; but it is astonishing that what nature seemed to have designed me for should have cost so much pains to learn, and that I should acquire it so slowly, that after a whole life spent in the practice of this art, I could never attain to sing with any certainty at sight. What rendered the study of music more agreeable to me at that time, was, being able to practise it with Madam de Warrens. In other respects our tastes were widely different: this was a point of coincidence, which I loved to avail myself of. She had no more objection to this than myself. I knew at that time almost as much of it as she did, and after two or three efforts, we could make shift to decipher an air. Sometimes, when I saw her busy at her furnace, I have said, "Here now is a charming duet,

which seems made for the very purpose of spoiling your drugs;" her answer would be, "If you make me burn them, I'll make you eat them:" thus disputing, I drew her to the harpsichord; the furnace was presently forgotten, the extract of juniper or wormwood calcined (which I cannot recollect without transport), and these scenes usually ended by her smearing my face with the remains of them.

It may easily be conjectured that I had plenty of employment to fill up my leisure hours; one amusement, however, found room, that was well worth all the rest.

We lived in such a confined dungeon, that it was necessary sometimes to breathe the open air; Anet, therefore, engaged Madam de Warrens to hire a garden in the suburbs, both for this purpose and the convenience of rearing plants, etc.; to this garden was added a summer—house, which was furnished in the customary manner; we sometimes dined, and I frequently slept, there. Insensibly I became attached to this little retreat, decorated it with books and prints, spending part of my time in ornamenting it during the absence of Madam de Warrens, that I might surprise her the more agreeably on her return. Sometimes I quitted this dear friend, that I might enjoy the uninterrupted pleasure of thinking on her; this was a caprice I can neither excuse nor fully explain, I only know this really was the case, and therefore I avow it. I remember Madam de Luxembourg told me one day in raillery, of a man who used to leave his mistress that he might enjoy the satisfaction of writing to her; I answered, I

could have been this man; I might have added, That I had done the very same.

I did not, however, find it necessary to leave Madam de Warrens that I might love her the more ardently, for I was ever as perfectly free with her as when alone; an advantage I never enjoyed with any other person, man or woman, however I might be attached to them; but she was so often surrounded by company who were far from pleasing me, that spite and weariness drove me to this asylum, where I could indulge the idea, without danger of being interrupted by impertinence. Thus, my time being divided between business, pleasure, and instruction, my life passed in the most absolute serenity. Europe was not equally tranquil: France and the emperor had mutually declared war, the King of Sardinia had entered into the quarrel, and a French army had filed off into Piedmont to awe the Milanese. Our division passed through Chambery, and, among others, the regiment of Champagne, whose colonel was the Duke de la Trimouille, to whom I was presented. He promised many things, but doubtless never more thought of me. Our little garden was exactly at the end of the suburb by which the troops entered, so that I could fully satisfy my curiosity in seeing them pass, and I became as anxious for the success of the war as if it had nearly concerned me. Till now I had never troubled myself about politics, for the first time I began reading the gazettes, but with so much partiality on the side of France, that my heart beat with rapture on its most trifling advantages, and I was as much afflicted on a reverse of fortune,

as if I had been particularly concerned.

Had this folly been transient, I should not, perhaps, have mentioned it, but it took such root in my heart (without any reasonable cause) that when I afterwards acted the anti-despot and proud republican at Paris, in spite of myself, I felt a secret predilection for the nation I declared servile, and for that government I affected to oppose. The pleasantest of all was that, ashamed of an inclination so contrary to my professed maxims, I dared not own it to any one, but rallied the French on their defeats, while my heart was more wounded than their own. I am certainly the first man, that, living with a people who treated him well, and whom he almost adored, put on, even in their own country, a borrowed air of despising them; yet my original inclination is so powerful, constant, disinterested, and invincible, that even since my quitting that kingdom, since its government, magistrates, and authors, have outvied each other in rancor against me, since it has become fashionable to load me with injustice and abuse, I have not been able to get rid of this folly, but notwithstanding their ill-treatment, love them in spite of myself.

I long sought the cause of this partiality, but was never able to find any, except in the occasion that gave it birth. A rising taste for literature attached me to French books, to their authors, and their country: at the very moment the French troops were passing Chambery, I was reading Brantome's 'Celebrated Captains'; my head was full of the Clissons, Bayards, Lautrecs Colignys,

Monmoreneys, and Trimouille, and I loved their descendants as the heirs of their merit and courage. In each regiment that passed by methought I saw those famous black bands who had formerly done so many noble exploits in Piedmont; in fine, I applied to these all the ideas I had gathered from books; my reading continued, which, still drawn from the same nation, nourished my affection for that country, till, at length, it became a blind passion, which nothing could overcome. I have had occasion to remark several times in the course of my travels, that this impression was not peculiar to me for France, but was more or less active in every country, for that part of the nation who were fond of literature, and cultivated learning; and it was this consideration that balanced in my mind the general hatred which the conceited air of the French is so apt to inspire. Their romances, more than their men, attract the women of all countries, and the celebrated dramatic pieces of France create a fondness in youth for their theaters; the reputation which that of Paris in particular has acquired, draws to it crowds of strangers, who return enthusiasts to their own country: in short, the excellence of their literature captivates the senses, and in the unfortunate war just ended, I have seen their authors and philosophers maintain the glory of France, so tarnished by its warriors.

I was, therefore, an ardent Frenchman; this rendered me a politician, and I attended in the public square, amid a throng of news-mongers, the arrival of the post, and, sillier than the

ass in the fable, was very uneasy to know whose packsaddle I should next have the honor to carry, for it was then supposed we should belong to France, and that Savoy would be exchanged for Milan. I must confess, however, that I experienced some uneasiness, for had this war terminated unfortunately for the allies, the pension of Madam de Warrens would have been in a dangerous situation; nevertheless, I had great confidence in my good friends, the French, and for once (in spite of the surprise of M. de Broglio) my confidence was not ill-founded—thanks to the King of Sardinia, whom I had never thought of.

While we were fighting in Italy, they were singing in France: the operas of Rameau began to make a noise there, and once more raise the credit of his theoretic works, which, from their obscurity, were within the compass of very few understandings. By chance I heard of his 'Treatise on Harmony', and had no rest till I purchased it. By another chance I fell sick; my illness was inflammatory, short and violent, but my convalescence was tedious, for I was unable to go abroad for a whole month. During this time I eagerly ran over my Treatise on Harmony, but it was so long, so diffuse, and so badly disposed, that I found it would require a considerable time to unravel it: accordingly I suspended my inclination, and recreated my sight with music.

The cantatas of Bernier were what I principally exercised myself with. These were never out of my mind; I learned four or five by heart, and among the rest, 'The Sleeping Cupids', which I have never seen since that time, though I still retain it almost

entirely; as well as 'Cupid Stung by a Bee', a very pretty cantata by Clerambault, which I learned about the same time.

To complete me, there arrived a young organist from Valdoste, called the Abbe Palais, a good musician and an agreeable companion, who performed very well on the harpsichord; I got acquainted with him, and we soon became inseparable. He had been brought up by an Italian monk, who was a capital organist. He explained to me his principles of music, which I compared with Rameau; my head was filled with accompaniments, concords and harmony, but as it was necessary to accustom the ear to all this, I proposed to Madam de Warrens having a little concert once a month, to which she consented.

Behold me then so full of this concert, that night or day I could think of nothing else, and it actually employed a great part of my time to select the music, assemble the musicians, look to the instruments, and write out the several parts. Madam de Warrens sang; Father Cato (whom I have before mentioned, and shall have occasion to speak of again) sang likewise; a dancing—master named Roche, and his son, played on the violin; Canavas, a Piedmontese musician (who was employed like myself in the survey, and has since married at Paris), played on the violoncello; the Abbe Palais performed on the harpsichord, and I had the honor to conduct the whole. It may be supposed all this was charming; I cannot say it equalled my concert at Monsieur de Tretoren's, but certainly it was not far behind it.

This little concert, given by Madam de Warrens, the new

convert, who lived (it was expressed) on the king's charity, made the whole tribe of devotees murmur, but was a very agreeable amusement to several worthy people, at the head of whom it would not be easily surmised that I should place a monk; yet, though a monk, a man of considerable merit, and even of a very amiable disposition, whose subsequent misfortunes gave me the most lively concern, and whose idea, attached to that of my happy days, is yet dear to my memory. I speak of Father Cato, a Cordelier, who, in conjunction with the Count d'Ortan, had caused the music of poor Le Maitre to be seized at Lyons; which action was far from being the brightest trait in his history. He was a Bachelor of Sorbonne, had lived long in Paris among the great world, and was particularly caressed by the Marquis d'Antremont, then Ambassador from Sardinia. He was tall and well made; full faced, with very fine eyes, and black hair, which formed natural curls on each side of his forehead. His manner was at once noble, open, and modest; he presented himself with ease and good manners, having neither the hypocritical nor impudent behavior of a monk, or the forward assurance of a fashionable coxcomb, but the manners of a well-bred man, who, without blushing for his habit, set a value on himself, and ever felt in his proper situation when in good company. Though Father Cato was not deeply studied for a doctor, he was much so for a man of the world, and not being compelled to show his talents, he brought them forward so advantageously that they appeared greater than they really were. Having lived much in the

world, he had rather attached himself to agreeable acquirements than to solid learning; had sense, made verses, spoke well, sang better, and aided his good voice by playing on the organ and harpsichord. So many pleasing qualities were not necessary to make his company sought after, and, accordingly, it was very much so, but this did not make him neglect the duties of his function: he was chosen (in spite of his jealous competitors) Definitor of his Province, or, according to them, one of the greatest pillars of their order.

Father Cato became acquainted with Madam de Warrens at the Marquis of Antremont's; he had heard of her concerts, wished to assist at them, and by his company rendered our meetings truly agreeable. We were soon attached to each other by our mutual taste for music, which in both was a most lively passion, with this difference, that he was really a musician, and myself a bungler. Sometimes assisted by Canavas and the Abbe Palais, we had music in his apartment; or on holidays at his organ, and frequently dined with him; for, what was very astonishing in a monk, he was generous, profuse, and loved good cheer, without the least tincture of greediness. After our concerts, he always used to stay to supper, and these evenings passed with the greatest gayety and good-humor; we conversed with the utmost freedom, and sang duets; I was perfectly at my ease, had sallies of wit and merriment; Father Cato was charming, Madam de Warrens adorable, and the Abbe Palais, with his rough voice, was the butt of the company. Pleasing moments of sportive youth, how long

since have ye fled!

As I shall have no more occasion to speak of poor Father Cato, I will here conclude in a few words his melancholy history. His brother monks, jealous, or rather exasperated to discover in him a merit and elegance of manners which favored nothing of monastic stupidity, conceived the most violent hatred to him, because he was not as despicable as themselves; the chiefs, therefore, combined against this worthy man, and set on the envious rabble of monks, who otherwise would not have dared to hazard the attack. He received a thousand indignities; they degraded him from his office, took away the apartment which he had furnished with elegant simplicity, and, at length, banished him, I know not whither: in short, these wretches overwhelmed him with so many evils, that his honest and proud soul sank under the pressure, and, after having been the delight of the most amiable societies, he died of grief, on a wretched bed, hid in some cell or dungeon, lamented by all worthy people of his acquaintance, who could find no fault in him, except his being a monk.

Accustomed to this manner of life for some time, I became so entirely attached to music that I could think of nothing else. I went to my business with disgust, the necessary confinement and assiduity appeared an insupportable punishment, which I at length wished to relinquish, that I might give myself up without reserve to my favorite amusement. It will be readily believed that this folly met with some opposition; to give up a creditable

employment and fixed salary to run after uncertain scholars was too giddy a plan to be approved of by Madam de Warrens, and even supposing my future success should prove as great as I flattered myself, it was fixing very humble limits to my ambition to think of reducing myself for life to the condition of a music-master. She, who formed for me the brightest projects, and no longer trusted implicitly to the judgment of M. d'Aubonne, seeing with concern that I was so seriously occupied with a talent which she thought frivolous, frequently repeated to me that provincial proverb, which does not hold quite so good in Paris,

"Qui biens chante et biens dance,
fait un metier qui peu avance."

[He who can sweetly sing and featly dance.
His interests right little shall advance.]

On the other hand, she saw me hurried away by this irresistible passion, my taste for music having become a furor, and it was much to be feared that my employment, suffering by my distraction, might draw on me a discharge, which would be worse than a voluntary resignation. I represented to her; that this employment could not last long, that it was necessary I should have some permanent means of subsistence, and that it would be much better to complete by practice the acquisition of that art to which my inclination led me than to make fresh essays,

which possibly might not succeed, since by this means, having passed the age most proper for improvement, I might be left without a single resource for gaining a livelihood: in short, I extorted her consent more by importunity and caresses than by any satisfactory reasons. Proud of my success, I immediately ran to thank M. Coccelli, Director-General of the Survey, as though I had performed the most heroic action, and quitted my employment without cause, reason, or pretext, with as much pleasure as I had accepted it two years before.

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