ЖАН-ЖАК РУССО

THE CONFESSIONS OF JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU — VOLUME 12

Жан-Жак Руссо

The Confessions of Jean Jacques Rousseau — Volume 12

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau
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BOOK XII

With this book begins the work of darkness, in which I have for the last eight years been enveloped, though it has not by any means been possible for me to penetrate the dreadful obscurity. In the abyss of evil into which I am plunged, I feel the blows reach me, without perceiving the hand by which they are directed or the means it employs. Shame and misfortune seem of themselves to fall upon me. When in the affliction of my heart I suffer a groan to escape me, I have the appearance of a man who complains without reason, and the authors of my ruin have the inconceivable art of rendering the public unknown to itself, or without its perceiving the effects of it, accomplice in their conspiracy. Therefore, in my narrative of circumstances relative to myself, of the treatment I have received, and all that has happened to me, I shall not be able to indicate the hand by which the whole has been directed, nor assign the causes,

while I state the effect. The primitive causes are all given in the preceding books; and everything in which I am interested, and all the secret motives pointed out. But it is impossible for me to explain, even by conjecture, that in which the different causes are combined to operate the strange events of my life. If amongst my readers one even of them should be generous enough to wish to examine the mystery to the bottom, and discover the truth, let him carefully read over a second time the three preceding books, afterwards at each fact he shall find stated in the books which follow, let him gain such information as is within his reach, and go back from intrigue to intrigue, and from agent to agent, until he comes to the first mover of all. I know where his researches will terminate; but in the meantime I lose myself in the crooked and obscure subterraneous path through which his steps must be directed.

During my stay at Yverdon, I became acquainted with all the family of my friend Roguin, and amongst others with his niece, Madam Boy de la Tour, and her daughters, whose father, as I think I have already observed, I formerly knew at Lyons. She was at Yverdon, upon a visit to her uncle and his sister; her eldest daughter, about fifteen years of age, delighted me by her fine understanding and excellent disposition. I conceived the most tender friendship for the mother and the daughter. The latter was destined by M. Rougin to the colonel, his nephew, a man already verging towards the decline of life, and who showed me marks of great esteem and affection; but although the heart of

the uncle was set upon this marriage, which was much wished for by the nephew also, and I was greatly desirous to promote the satisfaction of both, the great disproportion of age, and the extreme repugnancy of the young lady, made me join with the mother in postponing the ceremony, and the affair was at length broken off. The colonel has since married Mademoiselle Dillan, his relation, beautiful, and amiable as my heart could wish, and who has made him the happiest of husbands and fathers. However, M. Rougin has not yet forgotten my opposition to his wishes. My consolation is in the certainty of having discharged to him, and his family, the duty of the most pure friendship, which does not always consist in being agreeable, but in advising for the best.

I did not remain long in doubt about the reception which awaited me at Geneva, had I chosen to return to that city. My book was burned there, and on the 18th of June, nine days after an order to arrest me had been given at Paris, another to the same effect was determined upon by the republic. So many incredible absurdities were stated in this second decree, in which the ecclesiastical edict was formally violated, that I refused to believe the first accounts I heard of it, and when these were well confirmed, I trembled lest so manifest an infraction of every law, beginning with that of common-sense, should create the greatest confusion in the city. I was, however, relieved from my fears; everything remained quiet. If there was any rumor amongst the populace, it was unfavorable to me, and I was publicly treated

by all the gossips and pedants like a scholar threatened with a flogging for not having said his catechism.

These two decrees were the signal for the cry of malediction, raised against me with unexampled fury in every part of Europe. All the gazettes, journals and pamphlets, rang the alarm-bell. The French especially, that mild, generous, and polished people, who so much pique themselves upon their attention and proper condescension to the unfortunate, instantly forgetting their favorite virtues, signalized themselves by the number and violence of the outrages with which, while each seemed to strive who should afflict me most, they overwhelmed me. I was impious, an atheist, a madman, a wild beast, a wolf. The continuator of the Journal of Trevoux was guilty of a piece of extravagance in attacking my pretended Lycanthropy, which was by no means proof of his own. A stranger would have thought an author in Paris was afraid of incurring the animadversion of the police, by publishing a work of any kind without cramming into it some insult to me. I sought in vain the cause of this unanimous animosity, and was almost tempted to believe the world was gone mad. What! said I to myself, the editor of the 'Perpetual Peace', spread discord; the author of the 'Confession of the Savoyard Vicar', impious; the writer of the 'New Eloisa', a wolf; the author of 'Emilius', a madman! Gracious God! what then should I have been had I published the 'Treatise de l'Esprit', or any similar work? And yet, in the storm raised against the author of that book, the public, far from joining the cry of his persecutors,

revenged him of them by eulogium. Let his book and mine, the receptions the two works met with, and the treatment of the two authors in the different countries of Europe, be compared; and for the difference let causes satisfactory to, a man of sense be found, and I will ask no more.

I found the residence of Yverdon so agreeable that I resolved to yield to the solicitations of M. Roguin and his family, who, were desirous of keeping me there. M. de Moiry de Gingins, bailiff of that city, encouraged me by his goodness to remain within his jurisdiction. The colonel pressed me so much to accept for my habitation a little pavilion he had in his house between the court and the garden, that I complied with his request, and he immediately furnished it with everything necessary for my little household establishment.

The banneret Roguin, one of the persons who showed me the most assiduous attention, did not leave me for an instant during the whole day. I was much flattered by his civilities, but they sometimes importuned me. The day on which I was to take possession of my new habitation was already fixed, and I had written to Theresa to come to me, when suddenly a storm was raised against me in Berne, which was attributed to the devotees, but I have never been able to learn the cause of it. The senate, excited against me, without my knowing by whom, did not seem disposed to suffer me to remain undisturbed in my retreat. The moment the bailiff was informed of the new fermentation, he wrote in my favor to several of the members of the government,

reproaching them with their blind intolerance, and telling them it was shameful to refuse to a man of merit, under oppression, the asylum which such a numerous banditti found in their states. Sensible people were of opinion the warmth of his reproaches had rather embittered than softened the minds of the magistrates. However this may be, neither his influence nor eloquence could ward off the blow. Having received an intimation of the order he was to signify to me, he gave me a previous communication of it; and that I might wait its arrival, I resolved to set off the next day. The difficulty was to know where to go, finding myself shut out from Geneva and all France, and foreseeing that in the affair each state would be anxious to imitate its neighbor.

Madam Boy de la Tour proposed to me to go and reside in an uninhabited but completely furnished house, which belonged to her son in the village of Motiers, in the Val de Travers, in the county of Neuchatel. I had only a mountain to cross to arrive at it. The offer came the more opportunely, as in the states of the King of Prussia I should naturally be sheltered from all persecution, at least religion could not serve as a pretext for it. But a secret difficulty: improper for me at that moment to divulge, had in it that which was very sufficient to make me hesitate. The innnate love of justice, to which my heart was constantly subject, added to my secret inclination to France, had inspired me with an aversion to the King of Prussia, who by his maxims and conduct, seemed to tread under foot all respect for natural law and every duty of humanity. Amongst the framed engravings, with which I

had decorated my alcove at Montmorency, was a portrait of this prince, and under it a distich, the last line of which was as follows:

> Il pense en philosophe, et se conduit en roi.
> [He thinks like a philosopher, and acts like a king.]

This verse, which from any other pen would have been a fine eulogium, from mine had an unequivocal meaning, and too clearly explained the verse by which it was preceded. The distich had been, read by everybody who came to see me, and my visitors were numerous. The Chevalier de Lorenzy had even written it down to give it to D'Alembert, and I had no doubt but D' Alembert had taken care to make my court with it to the prince. I had also aggravated this first fault by a passage in 'Emilius', where under the name of Adrastus, king of the Daunians, it was clearly seen whom I had in view, and the remark had not escaped critics, because Madam de Boufflers had several times mentioned the subject to me. I was, therefore, certain of being inscribed in red ink in the registers of the King of Prussia, and besides, supposing his majesty to have the principles I had dared to attribute to him, he, for that reason, could not but be displeased with my writings and their author; for everybody knows the worthless part of mankind, and tyrants have never failed to conceive the most mortal hatred against me, solely on reading my works, without being acquainted with my person.

However, I had presumption enough to depend upon his mercy, and was far from thinking I ran much risk. I knew none but weak men were slaves to the base passions, and that these had

but little power over strong minds, such as I had always thought his to be. According to his art of reigning, I thought he could not but show himself magnanimous on this occasion, and that being so in fact was not above his character. I thought a mean and easy vengeance would not for a moment counterbalance his love of glory, and putting myself in his place, his taking advantage of circumstances to overwhelm with the weight of his generosity a man who had dared to think ill of him, did not appear to me impossible. I therefore went to settle at Motiers, with a confidence of which I imagined he would feel all the value, and said to myself: When Jean Jacques rises to the elevation of Coriolanus, will Frederick sink below the General of the Volsci?

Colonel Roguin insisted on crossing the mountain with me, and installing me at Moiters. A sister-in-law to Madam Boy de la Tour, named Madam Girardier, to whom the house in which I was going to live was very convenient, did not see me arrive there with pleasure; however, she with a good grace put me in possession of my lodgings, and I eat with her until Theresa came, and my little establishment was formed.

Perceiving at my departure from Montmorency I should in future be a fugitive upon the earth, I hesitated about permitting her to come to me and partake of the wandering life to which I saw myself condemned. I felt the nature of our relation to each other was about to change, and that what until then had on my part been favor and friendship, would in future become so on hers. If her attachment was proof against my misfortunes, to this

I knew she must become a victim, and that her grief would add to my pain. Should my disgrace weaken her affections, she would make me consider her constancy as a sacrifice, and instead of feeling the pleasure I had in dividing with her my last morsel of bread, she would see nothing but her own merit in following me wherever I was driven by fate.

I must say everything; I have never concealed the vices either of my poor mamma or myself; I cannot be more favorable to Theresa, and whatever pleasure I may have in doing honor to a person who is dear to me, I will not disguise the truth, although it may discover in her an error, if an involuntary change of the affections of the heart be one. I had long perceived hers to grow cooler towards me, and that she was no longer for me what she had been in our younger days. Of this I was the more sensible, as for her I was what I had always been. I fell into the same inconvenience as that of which I had felt the effect with mamma, and this effect was the same now I was with Theresa. Let us not seek for perfection, which nature never produces; it would be the same thing with any other woman. The manner in which I had disposed of my children, however reasonable it had appeared to me, had not always left my heart at ease. While writing my 'Treatise on Education', I felt I had neglected duties with which it was not possible to dispense. Remorse at length became so strong that it almost forced from me a public confession of my fault at the beginning of my 'Emilius', and the passage is so clear, that it is astonishing any person should, after

reading it, have had the courage to reproach me with my error. My situation was however still the same, or something worse, by the animosity of my enemies, who sought to find me in a fault. I feared a relapse, and unwilling to run the risk, I preferred abstinence to exposing Theresa to a similar mortification. I had besides remarked that a connection with women was prejudicial to my health; this double reason made me form resolutions to which I had but sometimes badly kept, but for the last three or four years I had more constantly adhered to them. It was in this interval I had remarked Theresa's coolness; she had the same attachment to me from duty, but not the least from love. Our intercourse naturally became less agreeable, and I imagined that, certain of the continuation of my cares wherever she might be, she would choose to stay at Paris rather than to wander with me. Yet she had given such signs of grief at our parting, had required of me such positive promises that we should meet again, and, since my departure, had expressed to the Prince de Conti and M. de Luxembourg so strong a desire of it, that, far from having the courage to speak to her of separation, I scarcely had enough to think of it myself; and after having felt in my heart how impossible it was for me to do without her, all I thought of afterwards was to recall her to me as soon as possible. I wrote to her to this effect, and she came. It was scarcely two months since I had quitted her; but it was our first separation after a union of so many years. We had both of us felt it most cruelly. What emotion in our first embrace! O how delightful are the tears of tenderness

and joy! How does my heart drink them up! Why have I not had reason to shed them more frequently?

On my arrival at Motiers I had written to Lord Keith, marshal of Scotland and governor of Neuchatel, informing him of my retreat into the states of his Prussian majesty, and requesting of him his protection. He answered me with his well-known generosity, and in the manner I had expected from him. He invited me to his house. I went with M. Martinet, lord of the manor of Val de Travers, who was in great favor with his excellency. The venerable appearance of this illustrious and virtuous Scotchman, powerfully affected my heart, and from that instant began between him and me the strong attachment, which on my part still remains the same, and would be so on his, had not the traitors, who have deprived me of all the consolation of life, taken advantage of my absence to deceive his old age and depreciate me in his esteem.

George Keith, hereditary marshal of Scotland, and brother to the famous General Keith, who lived gloriously and died in the bed of honor, had quitted his country at a very early age, and was proscribed on account of his attachment to the house of Stuart. With that house, however, he soon became disgusted with the unjust and tyrannical spirit he remarked in the ruling character of the Stuart family. He lived a long time in Spain, the climate of which pleased him exceedingly, and at length attached himself, as his brother had done, to the service of the King of Prussia, who knew men and gave them the reception they

merited. His majesty received a great return for this reception, in the services rendered him by Marshal Keith, and by what was infinitely more precious, the sincere friendship of his lordship. The great mind of this worthy man, haughty and republican, could stoop to no other yoke than that of friendship, but to this it was so obedient, that with very different maxims he saw nothing but Frederic the moment he became attached to him. The king charged the marshal with affairs of importance, sent him to Paris, to Spain, and at length, seeing he was already advanced in years, let him retire with the government of Neuchatel, and the delightful employment of passing there the remainder of his life in rendering the inhabitants happy.

The people of Neuchatel, whose manners are trivial, know not how to distinguish solid merit, and suppose wit to consist in long discourses. When they saw a sedate man of simple manners appear amongst them, they mistook his simplicity for haughtiness, his candor for rusticity, his laconism for stupidity, and rejected his benevolent cares, because, wishing to be useful, and not being a sycophant, he knew not how to flatter people he did not esteem. In the ridiculous affair of the minister Petitpierre, who was displaced by his colleagues, for having been unwilling they should be eternally damned, my lord, opposing the usurpations of the ministers, saw the whole country of which he took the part, rise up against him, and when I arrived there the stupid murmur had not entirely subsided. He passed for a man influenced by the prejudices with which he was inspired

by others, and of all the imputations brought against him it was the most devoid of truth. My first sentiment on seeing this venerable old man, was that of tender commiseration, on account of his extreme leanness of body, years having already left him little else but skin and bone; but when I raised my eyes to his animated, open, noble countenance, I felt a respect, mingled with confidence, which absorbed every other sentiment. He answered the very short compliment I made him when I first came into his presence by speaking of something else, as if I had already been a week in his house. He did not bid us sit down. The stupid chatelain, the lord of the manor, remained standing. For my part I at first sight saw in the fine and piercing eye of his lordship something so conciliating that, feeling myself entirely at ease, I without ceremony, took my seat by his side upon the sofa. By the familiarity of his manner I immediately perceived the liberty I took gave him pleasure, and that he said to himself: This is not a Neuchatelois.

Singular effect of the similarity of characters! At an age when the heart loses its natural warmth, that of this good old man grew warm by his attachment to me to a degree which surprised everybody. He came to see me at Motiers under the pretence of quail shooting, and stayed there two days without touching a gun. We conceived such a friendship for each other that we knew not how to live separate; the castle of Colombier, where he passed the summer, was six leagues from Motiers; I went there at least once a fortnight, and made a stay of twenty-four hours, and then

returned like a pilgrim with my heart full of affection for my host. The emotion I had formerly experienced in my journeys from the Hermitage to Raubonne was certainly very different, but it was not more pleasing than that with which I approached Columbier.

What tears of tenderness have I shed when on the road to it, while thinking of the paternal goodness, amiable virtues, and charming philosophy of this respectable old man! I called him father, and he called me son. These affectionate names give, in some measure, an idea of the attachment by which we were united, but by no means that of the want we felt of each other, nor of our continual desire to be together. He would absolutely give me an apartment at the castle of Columbier, and for a long time pressed me to take up my residence in that in which I lodged during my visits. I at length told him I was more free and at my ease in my own house, and that I had rather continue until the end of my life to come and see him. He approved of my candor, and never afterwards spoke to me on the subject. Oh, my good lord! Oh, my worthy father! How is my heart still moved when I think of your goodness? Ah, barbarous wretches! how deeply did they wound me when they deprived me of your friendship? But no, great man, you are and ever will be the same for me, who am still the same. You have been deceived, but you are not changed. My lord marechal is not without faults; he is a man of wisdom, but he is still a man. With the greatest penetration, the nicest discrimination, and the most profound knowledge of men, he sometimes suffers himself to be deceived,

and never recovers his error. His temper is very singular and foreign to his general turn of mind. He seems to forget the people he sees every day, and thinks of them in a moment when they least expect it; his attention seems ill-timed; his presents are dictated by caprice and not by propriety. He gives or sends in an instant whatever comes into his head, be the value of it ever so small. A young Genevese, desirous of entering into the service of Prussia, made a personal application to him; his lordship, instead of giving him a letter, gave him a little bag of peas, which he desired him to carry to the king. On receiving this singular recommendation his majesty gave a commission to the bearer of it. These elevated geniuses have between themselves a language which the vulgar will never understand. The whimsical manner of my lord marechal, something like the caprice of a fine woman, rendered him still more interesting to me. I was certain, and afterwards had proofs, that it had not the least influence over his sentiments, nor did it affect the cares prescribed by friendship on serious occasions, yet in his manner of obliging there is the same singularity as in his manners in general. Of this I will give one instance relative to a matter of no great importance. The journey from Motiers to Colombier being too long for me to perform in one day, I commonly divided it by setting off after dinner and sleeping at Brot, which is half way. The landlord of the house where I stopped, named Sandoz, having to solicit at Berlin a favor of importance to him, begged I would request his excellency to ask it in his behalf. "Most willingly," said I, and

took him with me. I left him in the antechamber, and mentioned the matter to his lordship, who returned me no answer. After passing with him the whole morning, I saw as I crossed the hall to go to dinner, poor Sandoz, who was fatigued to death with waiting. Thinking the governor had forgotten what I had said to him, I again spoke of the business before we sat down to table, but still received no answer. I thought this manner of making me feel I was importunate rather severe, and, pitying the poor man in waiting, held my tongue. On my return the next day I was much surprised at the thanks he returned me for the good dinner his excellency had given him after receiving his paper. Three weeks afterwards his lordship sent him the rescript he had solicited, dispatched by the minister, and signed by the king, and this without having said a word either to myself or Sandoz concerning the business, about which I thought he did not wish to give himself the least concern.

I could wish incessantly to speak of George Keith; from him proceeds my recollection of the last happy moments I have enjoyed: the rest of my life, since our separation, has been passed in affliction and grief of heart. The remembrance of this is so melancholy and confused that it was impossible for me to observe the least order in what I write, so that in future I shall be under the necessity of stating facts without giving them a regular arrangement.

I was soon relieved from my inquietude arising from the uncertainty of my asylum, by the answer from his majesty to

the lord marshal, in whom, as it will readily be believed, I had found an able advocate. The king not only approved of what he had done, but desired him, for I must relate everything, to give me twelve louis. The good old man, rather embarrassed by the commission, and not knowing how to execute it properly, endeavored to soften the insult by transforming the money into provisions, and writing to me that he had received orders to furnish me with wood and coal to begin my little establishment; he moreover added, and perhaps from himself, that his majesty would willingly build me a little house, such a one as I should choose to have, provided I would fix upon the ground. I was extremely sensible of the kindness of the last offer, which made me forget the weakness of the other. Without accepting either, I considered Frederic as my benefactor and protector, and became so sincerely attached to him, that from that moment I interested myself as much in his glory as until then I had thought his successes unjust. At the peace he made soon after, I expressed my joy by an illumination in a very good taste: it was a string of garlands, with which I decorated the house I inhabited, and in which, it is true, I had the vindictive haughtiness to spend almost as much money as he had wished to give me. The peace ratified, I thought as he was at the highest pinnacle of military and political fame, he would think of acquiring that of another nature, by reanimating his states, encouraging in them commerce and agriculture, creating a new soil, covering it with a new people, maintaining peace amongst his neighbors, and becoming

the arbitrator, after having been the terror, of Europe. He was in a situation to sheath his sword without danger, certain that no sovereign would oblige him again to draw it. Perceiving he did not disarm, I was afraid he would profit but little by the advantages he had gained, and that he would be great only by halves. I dared to write to him upon the subject, and with a familiarity of a nature to please men of his character, conveying to him the sacred voice of truth, which but few kings are worthy to hear. The liberty I took was a secret between him and myself. I did not communicate it even to the lord marshal, to whom I sent my letter to the king sealed up. His lordship forwarded my dispatch without asking what it contained. His majesty returned me no answer and the marshal going soon after to Berlin, the king told him he had received from me a scolding. By this I understood my letter had been ill received, and the frankness of my zeal had been mistaken for the rusticity of a pedant. In fact, this might possibly be the case; perhaps I did not say what was necessary, nor in the manner proper to the occasion. All I can answer for is the sentiment which induced me to take up the pen.

Shortly after my establishment at Motiers, Travers having every possible assurance that I should be suffered to remain there in peace, I took the Armenian habit. This was not the first time I had thought of doing it. I had formerly had the same intention, particularly at Montmorency, where the frequent use of probes often obliging me to keep my chamber, made me more clearly perceive the advantages of a long robe. The convenience

of an Armenian tailor, who frequently came to see a relation he had at Montmorency, almost tempted me to determine on taking this new dress, troubling myself but little about what the world would say of it. Yet, before I concluded about the matter, I wished to take the opinion of M. de Luxembourg, who immediately advised me to follow my inclination. I therefore procured a little Armenian wardrobe, but on account of the storm raised against me, I was induced to postpone making use of it until I should enjoy tranquillity, and it was not until some months afterwards that, forced by new attacks of my disorder, I thought I could properly, and without the least risk, put on my new dress at Motiers, especially after having consulted the pastor of the place, who told me I might wear it even in the temple without indecency. I then adopted the waistcoat, caffetan, fur bonnet, and girdle; and after having in this dress attended divine service, I saw no impropriety in going in it to visit his lordship. His excellency in seeing me clothed in this manner made me no other compliment than that which consisted in saying "Salaam aliakum," i.e., "Peace be with you;" the common Turkish salutation; after which nothing more was said upon the subject, and I continued to wear my new dress.

Having quite abandoned literature, all I now thought of was leading a quiet life, and one as agreeable as I could make it. When alone, I have never felt weariness of mind, not even in complete inaction; my imagination filling up every void, was sufficient to keep up my attention. The inactive babbling of a private circle,

where, seated opposite to each other, they who speak move nothing but the tongue, is the only thing I have ever been unable to support. When walking and rambling about there is some satisfaction in conversation; the feet and eyes do something; but to hear people with their arms across speak of the weather, of the biting of flies, or what is still worse, compliment each other, is to me an insupportable torment. That I might not live like a savage, I took it into my head to learn to make laces. Like the women, I carried my cushion with me, when I went to make visits, or sat down to work at my door, and chatted with passers-by. This made me the better support the emptiness of babbling, and enabled me to pass my time with my female neighbors without weariness. Several of these were very amiable and not devoid of wit. One in particular, Isabella d'Ivernois, daughter of the attorney-general of Neuchatel, I found so estimable as to induce me to enter with her into terms of particular friendship, from which she derived some advantage by the useful advice I gave her, and the services she received from me on occasions of importance, so that now a worthy and virtuous mother of a family, she is perhaps indebted to me for her reason, her husband, her life, and happiness. On my part, I received from her gentle consolation, particularly during a melancholy winter, through out the whole of which when my sufferings were most cruel, she came to pass with Theresa and me long evenings, which she made very short for us by her agreeable conversation, and our mutual openness of heart. She called me papa, and I called her

daughter, and these names, which we still give to each other, will, I hope, continue to be as dear to her as they are to me. That my laces might be of some utility, I gave them to my young female friends at their marriages, upon condition of their suckling their children; Isabella's eldest sister had one upon these terms, and well deserved it by her observance of them; Isabella herself also received another, which, by intention she as fully merited. She has not been happy enough to be able to pursue her inclination. When I sent the laces to the two sisters, I wrote each of them a letter; the first has been shown about in the world; the second has not the same celebrity: friendship proceeds with less noise.

Amongst the connections I made in my neighborhood, of which I will not enter into a detail, I must mention that with Colonel Pury, who had a house upon the mountain, where he came to pass the summer. I was not anxious to become acquainted with him, because I knew he was upon bad terms at court, and with the lord marshal, whom he did not visit. Yet, as he came to see me, and showed me much attention, I was under the necessity of returning his visit; this was repeated, and we sometimes dined with each other. At his house I became acquainted with M. du Perou, and afterwards too intimately connected with him to pass his name over in silence.

M. du Perou was an American, son to a commandant of Surinam, whose successor, M. le Chambrier, of Neuchatel, married his widow. Left a widow a second time, she came with her son to live in the country of her second husband.

Du Perou, an only son, very rich, and tenderly beloved by his mother, had been carefully brought up, and his education was not lost upon him. He had acquired much knowledge, a taste for the arts, and piqued himself upon his having cultivated his rational faculty: his Dutch appearance, yellow complexion, and silent and close disposition, favored this opinion. Although young, he was already deaf and gouty. This rendered his motions deliberate and very grave, and although he was fond of disputing, he in general spoke but little because his hearing was bad. I was struck with his exterior, and said to myself, this is a thinker, a man of wisdom, such a one as anybody would be happy to have for a friend. He frequently addressed himself to me without paying the least compliment, and this strengthened the favorable opinion I had already formed of him. He said but little to me of myself or my books, and still less of himself; he was not destitute of ideas, and what he said was just. This justness and equality attracted my regard. He had neither the elevation of mind, nor the discrimination of the lord marshal, but he had all his simplicity: this was still representing him in something. I did not become infatuated with him, but he acquired my attachment from esteem; and by degrees this esteem led to friendship, and I totally forgot the objection I made to the Baron Holbach: that he was too rich.

For a long time I saw but little of Du Perou, because I did not go to Neuchatel, and he came but once a year to the mountain of Colonel Pury. Why did I not go to Neuchatel? This proceeded from a childishness upon which I must not be silent.

Although protected by the King of Prussia and the lord marshal, while I avoided persecution in my asylum, I did not avoid the murmurs of the public, of municipal magistrates and ministers. After what had happened in France it became fashionable to insult me; these people would have been afraid to seem to disapprove of what my persecutors had done by not imitating them. The 'classe' of Neuchatel, that is, the ministers of that city, gave the impulse, by endeavoring to move the council of state against me. This attempt not having succeeded, the ministers addressed themselves to the municipal magistrate, who immediately prohibited my book, treating me on all occasions with but little civility, and saying, that had I wished to reside in the city I should not have been suffered to do it. They filled their Mercury with absurdities and the most stupid hypocrisy, which, although, it makes every man of sense laugh, animated the people against me. This, however, did not prevent them from setting forth that I ought to be very grateful for their permitting me to live at Motiers, where they had no authority; they would willingly have measured me the air by the pint, provided I had paid for it a dear price. They would have it that I was obliged to them for the protection the king granted me in spite of the efforts they incessantly made to deprive me of it. Finally, failing of success, after having done me all the injury they could, and defamed me to the utmost of their power, they made a merit of their impotence, by boasting of their goodness in suffering me to stay in their country. I ought to have laughed at their vain

efforts, but I was foolish enough to be vexed at them, and had the weakness to be unwilling to go to Neuchatel, to which I yielded for almost two years, as if it was not doing too much honor to such wretches, to pay attention to their proceedings, which, good or bad, could not be imputed to them, because they never act but from a foreign impulse. Besides, minds without sense or knowledge, whose objects of esteem are influence, power and money, and far from imagining even that some respect is due to talents, and that it is dishonorable to injure and insult them.

A certain mayor of a village, who from sundry malversations had been deprived of his office, said to the lieutenant of Val de Travers, the husband of Isabella: "I am told this Rousseau has great wit,—bring him to me that I may see whether he has or not." The disapprobation of such a man ought certainly to have no effect upon those on whom it falls.

After the treatment I had received at Paris, Geneva, Berne, and even at Neuchatel, I expected no favor from the pastor of this place. I had, however, been recommended to him by Madam Boy de la Tour, and he had given me a good reception; but in that country where every new-comer is indiscriminately flattered, civilities signify but little. Yet, after my solemn union with the reformed church, and living in a Protestant country, I could not, without failing in my engagements, as well as in the duty of a citizen, neglect the public profession of the religion into which I had entered; I therefore attended divine service. On the other hand, had I gone to the holy table, I was afraid of exposing myself

to a refusal, and it was by no means probable, that after the tumult excited at Geneva by the council, and at Neuchatel by the classe (the ministers), he would, without difficulty administer to me the sacrament in his church. The time of communion approaching, I wrote to M. de Montmollin, the minister, to prove to him my desire of communicating, and declaring myself heartily united to the Protestant church; I also told him, in order to avoid disputing upon articles of faith, that I would not hearken to any particular explanation of the point of doctrine. After taking these steps I made myself easy, not doubting but M. de Montmollin would refuse to admit me without the preliminary discussion to which I refused to consent, and that in this manner everything would be at an end without any fault of mine. I was deceived: when I least expected anything of the kind, M. de Montmollin came to declare to me not only that he admitted me to the communion under the condition which I had proposed, but that he and the elders thought themselves much honored by my being one of their flock. I never in my whole life felt greater surprise or received from it more consolation. Living always alone and unconnected, appeared to me a melancholy destiny, especially in adversity. In the midst of so many proscriptions and persecutions, I found it extremely agreeable to be able to say to myself: I am at least amongst my brethren; and I went to the communion with an emotion of heart, and my eyes suffused with tears of tenderness, which perhaps were the most agreeable preparation to Him to whose table I was drawing near.

Конец ознакомительного фрагмента.