

ЖАН-ЖАК РУССО

THE CONFESSIONS OF
JEAN JACQUES
ROUSSEAU — VOLUME
07

Жан-Жак Руссо
The Confessions of Jean
Jacques Rousseau — Volume 07

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Jean-Jacques Rousseau

The Confessions

of Jean Jacques

Rousseau — Volume 07

BOOK VII

After two years' silence and patience, and notwithstanding my resolutions, I again take up my pen: Reader, suspend your judgment as to the reasons which force me to such a step: of these you can be no judge until you shall have read my book.

My peaceful youth has been seen to pass away calmly and agreeably without any great disappointments or remarkable prosperity. This mediocrity was mostly owing to my ardent yet feeble nature, less prompt in undertaking than easy to discourage; quitting repose for violent agitations, but returning to it from lassitude and inclinations, and which, placing me in an idle and tranquil state for which alone I felt I was born, at a distance from the paths of great virtues and still further from those of great vices, never permitted me to arrive at anything great, either good or bad. What a different account will I soon have to give of myself! Fate, which for thirty years forced my inclinations,

for thirty others has seemed to oppose them; and this continued opposition, between my situation and inclinations, will appear to have been the source of enormous faults, unheard of misfortunes, and every virtue except that fortitude which alone can do honor to adversity.

The history of the first part of my life was written from memory, and is consequently full of errors. As I am obliged to write the second part from memory also, the errors in it will probably be still more numerous. The agreeable remembrance of the finest portion of my years, passed with so much tranquillity and innocence, has left in my heart a thousand charming impressions which I love incessantly to call to my recollection. It will soon appear how different from these those of the rest of my life have been. To recall them to my mind would be to renew their bitterness. Far from increasing that of my situation by these sorrowful reflections, I repel them as much as possible, and in this endeavor often succeed so well as to be unable to find them at will. This facility of forgetting my misfortunes is a consolation which Heaven has reserved to me in the midst of those which fate has one day to accumulate upon my head. My memory, which presents to me no objects but such as are agreeable, is the happy counterpoise of my terrified imagination, by which I foresee nothing but a cruel futurity.

All the papers I had collected to aid my recollection, and guide me in this undertaking, are no longer in my possession, nor can I ever again hope to regain them.

I have but one faithful guide on which I can depend: this is the chain of the sentiments by which the succession of my existence has been marked, and by these the events which have been either the cause or the effect of the manner of it. I easily forget my misfortunes, but I cannot forget my faults, and still less my virtuous sentiments. The remembrance of these is too dear to me ever to suffer them to be effaced from my mind. I may omit facts, transpose events, and fall into some errors of dates; but I cannot be deceived in what I have felt, nor in that which from sentiment I have done; and to relate this is the chief end of my present work. The real object of my confessions is to communicate an exact knowledge of what I interiorly am and have been in every situation of my life. I have promised the history of my mind, and to write it faithfully I have no need of other memoirs: to enter into my own heart, as I have hitherto done, will alone be sufficient.

There is, however, and very happily, an interval of six or seven years, relative to which I have exact references, in a collection of letters copied from the originals, in the hands of M. du Peyrou. This collection, which concludes in 1760, comprehends the whole time of my residence at the hermitage, and my great quarrel with those who called themselves my friends; that memorable epocha of my life, and the source of all my other misfortunes. With respect to more recent original letters which may remain in my possession, and are but few in number, instead of transcribing them at the end of this collection, too voluminous

to enable me to deceive the vigilance of my Arguses, I will copy them into the work whenever they appear to furnish any explanation, be this either for or against myself; for I am not under the least apprehension lest the reader should forget I make my confession, and be induced to believe I make my apology, but he cannot expect I shall conceal the truth when it testifies in my favor.

The second part, it is likewise to be remembered, contains nothing in common with the first, except truth; nor has any other advantage over it, but the importance of the facts; in everything else, it is inferior to the former. I wrote the first with pleasure, with satisfaction, and at my ease, at Wootton, or in the castle Trie: everything I had to recollect was a new enjoyment. I returned to my closet with an increased pleasure, and, without constraint, gave that turn to my descriptions which most flattered my imagination.

At present my head and memory are become so weak as to render me almost incapable of every kind of application: my present undertaking is the result of constraint, and a heart full of sorrow. I have nothing to treat of but misfortunes, treacheries, perfidies, and circumstances equally afflicting. I would give the world, could I bury in the obscurity of time, every thing I have to say, and which, in spite of myself, I am obliged to relate. I am, at the same time, under the necessity of being mysterious and subtle, of endeavoring to impose and of descending to things the most foreign to my nature. The ceiling under which I write

has eyes; the walls of my chamber have ears. Surrounded by spies and by vigilant and malevolent inspectors, disturbed, and my attention diverted, I hastily commit to paper a few broken sentences, which I have scarcely time to read, and still less to correct. I know that, notwithstanding the barriers which are multiplied around me, my enemies are afraid truth should escape by some little opening. What means can I take to introduce it to the world? This, however, I attempt with but few hopes of success. The reader will judge whether or not such a situation furnishes the means of agreeable descriptions, or of giving them a seductive coloring! I therefore inform such as may undertake to read this work, that nothing can secure them from weariness in the prosecution of their task, unless it be the desire of becoming more fully acquainted with a man whom they already know, and a sincere love of justice and truth.

In my first part I brought down my narrative to my departure with infinite regret from Paris, leaving my heart at Charmettes, and, there building my last castle in the air, intending some day to return to the feet of mamma, restored to herself, with the treasures I should have acquired, and depending upon my system of music as upon a certain fortune.

I made some stay at Lyons to visit my acquaintance, procure letters of recommendation to Paris, and to sell my books of geometry which I had brought with me. I was well received by all whom I knew. M. and Madam de Malby seemed pleased to see me again, and several times invited me to dinner. At their house

I became acquainted with the Abbe de Malby, as I had already done with the Abbe de Condillac, both of whom were on a visit to their brother. The Abbe de Malby gave me letters to Paris; among others, one to M. de Pontenelle, and another to the Comte de Caylus. These were very agreeable acquaintances, especially the first, to whose friendship for me his death only put a period, and from whom, in our private conversations, I received advice which I ought to have more exactly followed.

I likewise saw M. Bordes, with whom I had been long acquainted, and who had frequently obliged me with the greatest cordiality and the most real pleasure. He it was who enabled me to sell my books; and he also gave me from himself good recommendations to Paris. I again saw the intendant for whose acquaintance I was indebted to M. Bordes, and who introduced me to the Duke de Richelieu, who was then passing through Lyons. M. Pallu presented me. The Duke received me well, and invited me to come and see him at Paris; I did so several times; although this great acquaintance, of which I shall frequently have occasion to speak, was never of the most trifling utility to me.

I visited the musician David, who, in one of my former journeys, and in my distress, had rendered me service. He had either lent or given me a cap and a pair of stockings, which I have never returned, nor has he ever asked me for them, although we have since that time frequently seen each other. I, however, made him a present, something like an equivalent. I would say more upon this subject, were what I have owned in question; but

I have to speak of what I have done, which, unfortunately, is far from being the same thing.

I also saw the noble and generous Perrichon, and not without feeling the effects of his accustomed munificence; for he made me the same present he had previously done to the elegant Bernard, by paying for my place in the diligence. I visited the surgeon Parisot, the best and most benevolent of men; as also his beloved Godefroi, who had lived with him ten years, and whose merit chiefly consisted in her gentle manners and goodness of heart. It was impossible to see this woman without pleasure, or to leave her without regret. Nothing better shows the inclinations of a man, than the nature of his attachments.

[Unless he be deceived in his choice, or that she, to whom he attaches himself, changes her character by an extraordinary concurrence of causes, which is not absolutely impossible. Were this consequence to be admitted without modification, Socrates must be judged of by his wife Xantippe, and Dion by his friend Calippus, which would be the most false and iniquitous judgment ever made. However, let no injurious application be here made to my wife. She is weak and more easily deceived than I at first imagined, but by her pure and excellent character she is worthy of all my esteem.]

Those who had once seen the gentle Godefroi, immediately knew the good and amiable Parisot.

I was much obliged to all these good people, but I afterwards neglected them all; not from ingratitude, but from

that invincible indolence which so often assumes its appearance. The remembrance of their services has never been effaced from my mind, nor the impression they made from my heart; but I could more easily have proved my gratitude, than assiduously have shown them the exterior of that sentiment. Exactitude in correspondence is what I never could observe; the moment I began to relax, the shame and embarrassment of repairing my fault made me aggravate it, and I entirely desist from writing; I have, therefore, been silent, and appeared to forget them. Parisot and Perrichon took not the least notice of my negligence, and I ever found them the same. But, twenty years afterwards it will be seen, in M. Bordes, to what a degree the self-love of a wit can make him carry his vengeance when he feels himself neglected.

Before I leave Lyons, I must not forget an amiable person, whom I again saw with more pleasure than ever, and who left in my heart the most tender remembrance. This was Mademoiselle Serre, of whom I have spoken in my first part; I renewed my acquaintance with her whilst I was at M. de Malby's.

Being this time more at leisure, I saw her more frequently, and she made the most sensible impressions on my heart. I had some reason to believe her own was not unfavorable to my pretensions; but she honored me with her confidence so far as to remove from me all temptation to allure her partiality.

She had no fortune, and in this respect exactly resembled myself; our situations were too similar to permit us to become united; and with the views I then had, I was far from thinking

of marriage. She gave me to understand that a young merchant, one M. Geneve, seemed to wish to obtain her hand. I saw him once or twice at her lodgings; he appeared to me to be an honest man, and this was his general character. Persuaded she would be happy with him, I was desirous he should marry her, which he afterwards did; and that I might not disturb their innocent love, I hastened my departure; offering up, for the happiness of that charming woman, prayers, which, here below were not long heard. Alas! her time was very short, for I afterwards heard she died in the second or third year after her marriage. My mind, during the journey, was wholly absorbed in tender regret. I felt, and since that time, when these circumstances have been present to my recollection, have frequently done the same; that although the sacrifices made to virtue and our duty may sometimes be painful, we are well rewarded by the agreeable remembrance they leave deeply engravers in our hearts.

I this time saw Paris in as favorable a point of view as it had appeared to me in an unfavorable one at my first journey; not that my ideas of its brilliancy arose from the splendor of my lodgings; for in consequence of an address given me by M. Bordes, I resided at the Hotel St. Quentin, Rue des Cordier, near the Sorbonne; a vile street, a miserable hotel, and a wretched apartment: but nevertheless a house in which several men of merit, such as Gresset, Bordes, Abbe Malby, Condillac, and several others, of whom unfortunately I found not one, had taken up their quarters; but I there met with M. Bonnefond, a man

unacquainted with the world, lame, litigious, and who affected to be a purist. To him I owe the acquaintance of M. Roguin, at present the oldest friend I have and by whose means I became acquainted with Diderot, of whom I shall soon have occasion to say a good deal.

I arrived at Paris in the autumn of 1741, with fifteen louis in my purse, and with my comedy of Narcissus and my musical project in my pocket. These composed my whole stock; consequently I had not much time to lose before I attempted to turn the latter to some advantage. I therefore immediately thought of making use of my recommendations.

A young man who arrives at Paris, with a tolerable figure, and announces himself by his talents, is sure to be well received. This was my good fortune, which procured me some pleasure without leading to anything solid. Of all the persons to whom I was recommended, three only were useful to me. M. Damesin, a gentleman of Savoy, at that time equerry, and I believe favorite, of the Princess of Carignan; M. de Boze, Secretary of the Academy of Inscriptions, and keeper of the medals of the king's cabinet; and Father Castel, a Jesuit, author of the 'Clavecin oculaire'.—[ocular harpsichord.]

All these recommendations, except that to M. Damesin, were given me by the Abbe de Malby.

M. Damesin provided me with that which was most needful, by means of two persons with whom he brought me acquainted. One was M. Gase, 'president a mortier' of the parliament of

Bordeaux, and who played very well upon the violin; the other, the Abbe de Leon, who then lodged in the Sorbonne, a young nobleman; extremely amiable, who died in the flower of his age, after having, for a few moments, made a figure in the world under the name of the Chevalier de Rohan. Both these gentlemen had an inclination to learn composition. In this I gave them lessons for a few months, by which means my decreasing purse received some little aid. The Abbe Leon conceived a friendship for me, and wished me to become his secretary; but he was far from being rich, and all the salary he could offer me was eight hundred livres, which, with infinite regret, I refused; since it was insufficient to defray the expenses of my lodging, food, and clothing.

I was well received by M. de Boze. He had a thirst for knowledge, of which he possessed not a little, but was somewhat pedantic. Madam de Boze much resembled him; she was lively and affected. I sometimes dined with them, and it is impossible to be more awkward than I was in her presence. Her easy manner intimidated me, and rendered mine more remarkable. When she presented me a plate, I modestly put forward my fork to take one of the least bits of what she offered me, which made her give the plate to her servant, turning her head aside that I might not see her laugh. She had not the least suspicion that in the head of the rustic with whom she was so diverted there was some small portion of wit. M. de Boze presented me to M. de Reaumur, his friend, who came to dine with him every Friday, the day on which

the Academy of Sciences met. He mentioned to him my project, and the desire I had of having it examined by the academy. M. de Reaumur consented to make the proposal, and his offer was accepted. On the day appointed I was introduced and presented by M. de Reaumur, and on the same day, August 22d, 1742, I had the honor to read to the academy the memoir I had prepared for that purpose. Although this illustrious assembly might certainly well be expected to inspire me with awe, I was less intimidated on this occasion than I had been in the presence of Madam de Boze, and I got tolerably well through my reading and the answers I was obliged to give. The memoir was well received, and acquired me some compliments by which I was equally surprised and flattered, imagining that before such an assembly, whoever was not a member of it could not have commonsense. The persons appointed to examine my system were M. Mairan, M. Hellot, and M. de Fouchy, all three men of merit, but not one of them understood music, at least not enough of composition to enable them to judge of my project.

During my conference with these gentlemen, I was convinced with no less certainty than surprise, that if men of learning have sometimes fewer prejudices than others, they more tenaciously retain those they have. However weak or false most of their objections were, and although I answered them with great timidity, and I confess, in bad terms, yet with decisive reasons, I never once made myself understood, or gave them any explanation in the least satisfactory. I was constantly surprised at

the facility with which, by the aid of a few sonorous phrases, they refuted, without having comprehended me. They had learned, I know not where, that a monk of the name of Souhaitti had formerly invented a mode of noting the gamut by ciphers: a sufficient proof that my system was not new. This might, perhaps, be the case; for although I had never heard of Father Souhaitti, and notwithstanding his manner of writing the seven notes without attending to the octaves was not, under any point of view, worthy of entering into competition with my simple and commodious invention for easily noting by ciphers every possible kind of music, keys, rests, octaves, measure, time, and length of note; things on which Souhaitti had never thought it was nevertheless true, that with respect to the elementary expression of the seven notes, he was the first inventor.

But besides their giving to this primitive invention more importance than was due to it, they went still further, and, whenever they spoke of the fundamental principles of the system, talked nonsense. The greatest advantage of my scheme was to supersede transpositions and keys, so that the same piece of music was noted and transposed at will by means of the change of a single initial letter at the head of the air. These gentlemen had heard from the music—masters of Paris that the method of executing by transposition was a bad one; and on this authority converted the most evident advantage of my system into an invincible objection against it, and affirmed that my mode of notation was good for vocal music, but bad for instrumental;

instead of concluding as they ought to have done, that it was good for vocal, and still better for instrumental. On their report the academy granted me a certificate full of fine compliments, amidst which it appeared that in reality it judged my system to be neither new nor useful. I did not think proper to ornament with such a paper the work entitled 'Dissertation sur la musique moderne', by which I appealed to the public.

I had reason to remark on this occasion that, even with a narrow understanding, the sole but profound knowledge of a thing is preferable for the purpose of judging of it, to all the lights resulting from a cultivation of the sciences, when to these a particular study of that in question has not been joined. The only solid objection to my system was made by Rameau. I had scarcely explained it to him before he discovered its weak part. "Your signs," said he, "are very good inasmuch as they clearly and simply determine the length of notes, exactly represent intervals, and show the simple in the double note, which the common notation does not do; but they are objectionable on account of their requiring an operation of the mind, which cannot always accompany the rapidity of execution. The position of our notes," continued he, "is described to the eye without the concurrence of this operation. If two notes, one very high and the other very low, be joined by a series of intermediate ones, I see at the first glance the progress from one to the other by conjoined degrees; but in your system, to perceive this series, I must necessarily run over your ciphers one after the other; the glance of the eye

is here useless." The objection appeared to me insurmountable, and I instantly assented to it. Although it be simple and striking, nothing can suggest it but great knowledge and practice of the art, and it is by no means astonishing that not one of the academicians should have thought of it. But what creates much surprise is, that these men of great learning, and who are supposed to possess so much knowledge, should so little know that each ought to confine his judgment to that which relates to the study with which he has been conversant.

My frequent visits to the literati appointed to examine my system and the other academicians gave me an opportunity of becoming acquainted with the most distinguished men of letters in Paris, and by this means the acquaintance that would have been the consequence of my sudden admission amongst them, which afterwards came to pass, was already established. With respect to the present moment, absorbed in my new system of music, I obstinately adhered to my intention of effecting a revolution in the art, and by that means of acquiring a celebrity which, in the fine arts, is in Paris mostly accompanied by fortune. I shut myself in my chamber and labored three or four months with inexpressible ardor, in forming into a work for the public eye, the memoir I had read before the academy. The difficulty was to find a bookseller to take my manuscript; and this on account of the necessary expenses for new characters, and because booksellers give not their money by handfuls to young authors; although to me it seemed but just my work should render me the bread I had

eaten while employed in its composition.

Bonnefond introduced me to Quillau the father, with whom I agreed to divide the profits, without reckoning the privilege, of which I paid the whole expense. Such were the future proceedings of this Quillau that I lost the expenses of my privilege, never having received a farthing from that edition; which, probably, had but very middling success, although the Abbe des Fontaines promised to give it celebrity, and, notwithstanding the other journalists, had spoken of it very favorably.

The greatest obstacle to making the experiment of my system was the fear, in case of its not being received, of losing the time necessary to learn it. To this I answered, that my notes rendered the ideas so clear, that to learn music by means of the ordinary characters, time would be gained by beginning with mine. To prove this by experience, I taught music gratis to a young American lady, Mademoiselle des Roulins, with whom M. Roguin had brought me acquainted. In three months she read every kind of music, by means of my notation, and sung at sight better than I did myself, any piece that was not too difficult. This success was convincing, but not known; any other person would have filled the journals with the detail, but with some talents for discovering useful things, I never have possessed that of setting them off to advantage.

Thus was my airy castle again overthrown; but this time I was thirty years of age, and in Paris, where it is impossible to live for a

trifle. The resolution I took upon this occasion will astonish none but those by whom the first part of these memoirs has not been read with attention. I had just made great and fruitless efforts, and was in need of relaxation. Instead of sinking with despair I gave myself up quietly to my indolence and to the care of Providence, and the better to wait for its assistance with patience, I lay down a frugal plan for the slow expenditure of a few louis, which still remained in my possession, regulating the expense of my supine pleasures without retrenching it; going to the coffee-house but every other day, and to the theatre but twice a week. With respect to the expenses of girls of easy virtue, I had no retrenchment to make; never having in the whole course of my life applied so much as a farthing to that use except once, of which I shall soon have occasion to speak. The security, voluptuousness, and confidence with which I gave myself up to this indolent and solitary life, which I had not the means of continuing for three months, is one of the singularities of my life, and the oddities of my disposition. The extreme desire I had, the public should think of me was precisely what discouraged me from showing myself; and the necessity of paying visits rendered them to such a degree insupportable, that I ceased visiting the academicians and other men of letters, with whom I had cultivated an acquaintance. Marivaux, the Abbe Malby, and Fontenelle, were almost the only persons whom I sometimes went to see. To the first I showed my comedy of Narcissus. He was pleased with it, and had the goodness to make in it some improvements. Diderot,

younger than these, was much about my own age. He was fond of music, and knew it theoretically; we conversed together, and he communicated to me some of his literary projects. This soon formed betwixt us a more intimate connection, which lasted fifteen years, and which probably would still exist were not I, unfortunately, and by his own fault, of the same profession with himself.

It would be impossible to imagine in what manner I employed this short and precious interval which still remained to me, before circumstances forced me to beg my bread:—in learning by memory passages from the poets which I had learned and forgotten a hundred times. Every morning at ten o'clock, I went to walk in the Luxembourg with a Virgil and a Rousseau in my pocket, and there, until the hour of dinner, I passed away the time in restoring to my memory a sacred ode or a bucolic, without being discouraged by forgetting, by the study of the morning, what I had learned the evening before. I recollected that after the defeat of Nicias at Syracuse the captive Athenians obtained a livelihood by reciting the poems of Homer. The use I made of this erudition to ward off misery was to exercise my happy memory by learning all the poets by rote.

I had another expedient, not less solid, in the game of chess, to which I regularly dedicated, at Maugis, the evenings on which I did not go to the theatre. I became acquainted with M. de Legal, M. Husson, Philidor, and all the great chess players of the day, without making the least improvement in the game. However, I

had no doubt but, in the end, I should become superior to them all, and this, in my own opinion, was a sufficient resource. The same manner of reasoning served me in every folly to which I felt myself inclined. I said to myself: whoever excels in anything is sure to acquire a distinguished reception in society. Let us therefore excel, no matter in what, I shall certainly be sought after; opportunities will present themselves, and my own merit will do the rest. This childishness was not the sophism of my reason; it was that of my indolence. Dismayed at the great and rapid efforts which would have been necessary to call forth my endeavors, I strove to flatter my idleness, and by arguments suitable to the purpose, veiled from my own eyes the shame of such a state.

I thus calmly waited for the moment when I was to be without money; and had not Father Castel, whom I sometimes went to see in my way to the coffee-house, roused me from my lethargy, I believe I should have seen myself reduced to my last farthing without the least emotion. Father Castel was a madman, but a good man upon the whole; he was sorry to see me thus impoverish myself to no purpose. "Since musicians and the learned," said he, "do not sing by your scale, change the string, and apply to the women. You will perhaps succeed better with them. I have spoken of you to Madam de Beuzenval; go to her from me; she is a good woman who will be glad to see the countryman of her son and husband. You will find at her house Madam de Broglie, her daughter, who is a woman of wit. Madam

Dupin is another to whom I also have mentioned you; carry her your work; she is desirous of seeing you, and will receive you well. No thing is done in Paris without the women. They are the curves, of which the wise are the asymptotes; they incessantly approach each other, but never touch."

After having from day to day delayed these very disagreeable steps, I at length took courage, and called upon Madam de Beuzenval. She received me with kindness; and Madam de Broglio entering the chamber, she said to her: "Daughter, this is M. Rousseau, of whom Father Castel has spoken to us." Madam de Broglie complimented me upon my work, and going to her harpsichord proved to me she had already given it some attention. Perceiving it to be about one o'clock, I prepared to take my leave. Madam de Beuzenval said to me: "You are at a great distance from the quarter of the town in which you reside; stay and dine here." I did not want asking a second time. A quarter of an hour afterwards, I understood, by a word, that the dinner to which she had invited me was that of her servants' hall. Madam de Beuzenval was a very good kind of woman, but of a confined understanding, and too full of her illustrious Polish nobility: she had no idea of the respect due to talents. On this occasion, likewise, she judged me by my manner rather than by my dress, which, although very plain, was very neat, and by no means announced a man to dine with servants. I had too long forgotten the way to the place where they eat to be inclined to take it again. Without suffering my anger to appear, I told Madam de

Beuzenval that I had an affair of a trifling nature which I had just recollected obliged me to return home, and I immediately prepared to depart. Madam de Broglie approached her mother, and whispered in her ear a few words which had their effect. Madam de Beuzenval rose to prevent me from going, and said, "I expect that you will do us the honor to dine with us." In this case I thought to show pride would be a mark of folly, and I determined to stay. The goodness of Madam de Broglie had besides made an impression upon me, and rendered her interesting in my eyes. I was very glad to dine with her, and hoped, that when she knew me better, she would not regret having procured me that honor. The President de Lamoignon, very intimate in the family, dined there also. He, as well as Madam de Broglie, was a master of all the modish and fashionable small talk jargon of Paris. Poor Jean Jacques was unable to make a figure in this way. I had sense enough not to pretend to it, and was silent. Happy would it have been for me, had I always possessed the same wisdom; I should not be in the abyss into which I am now fallen. I was vexed at my own stupidity, and at being unable to justify to Madam de Broglie what she had done in my favor.

After dinner I thought of my ordinary resource. I had in my pocket an epistle in verse, written to Parisot during my residence at Lyons. This fragment was not without some fire, which I increased by my manner of reading, and made them all three shed tears. Whether it was vanity, or really the truth, I thought the eyes of Madam de Broglie seemed to say to her mother: "Well,

mamma, was I wrong in telling you this man was fitter to dine with us than with your women?" Until then my heart had been rather burdened, but after this revenge I felt myself satisfied. Madam de Broglie, carrying her favorable opinion of me rather too far, thought I should immediately acquire fame in Paris, and become a favorite with fine ladies. To guide my inexperience she gave me the confessions of the Count de —— . "This book," said she, "is a Mentor, of which you will stand in need in the great world. You will do well by sometimes consulting it." I kept the book upwards of twenty years with a sentiment of gratitude to her from whose hand I had received it, although I frequently laughed at the opinion the lady seemed to have of my merit in gallantry. From the moment I had read the work, I was desirous of acquiring the friendship of the author. My inclination led me right; he is the only real friend I ever possessed amongst men of letters.

[I have so long been of the same opinion, and so perfectly convinced of its being well founded, that since my return to Paris I confided to him the manuscript of my confessions. The suspicious J. J. never suspected perfidy and falsehood until he had been their victim.]

From this time I thought I might depend on the services of Madam the Baroness of Beuzenval, and the Marchioness of Broglie, and that they would not long leave me without resource. In this I was not deceived. But I must now speak of my first visit to Madam Dupin, which produced more lasting consequences.

Madam Dupin was, as every one in Paris knows, the daughter of Samuel Bernard and Madam Fontaine. There were three sisters, who might be called the three graces. Madam de la Touche who played a little prank, and went to England with the Duke of Kingston. Madam Darby, the eldest of the three, the friend, the only sincere friend of the Prince of Conti; an adorable woman, as well by her sweetness and the goodness of her charming character, as by her agreeable wit and incessant cheerfulness. Lastly, Madam Dupin, more beautiful than either of her sisters, and the only one who has not been reproached with some levity of conduct.

She was the reward of the hospitality of M. Dupin, to whom her mother gave her in marriage with the place of farmer general and an immense fortune, in return for the good reception he had given her in his province. When I saw her for the first time, she was still one of the finest women in Paris. She received me at her toilette, her arms were uncovered, her hair dishevelled, and her combing-cloth ill-arranged. This scene was new to me; it was too powerful for my poor head, I became confused, my senses wandered; in short, I was violently smitten by Madam Dupin.

My confusion was not prejudicial to me; she did not perceive it. She kindly received the book and the author; spoke with information of my plan, sung, accompanied herself on the harpsichord, kept me to dinner, and placed me at table by her side. Less than this would have turned my brain; I became mad. She permitted me to visit her, and I abused the permission. I

went to see her almost every day, and dined with her twice or thrice a week. I burned with inclination to speak, but never dared attempt it. Several circumstances increased my natural timidity. Permission to visit in an opulent family was a door open to fortune, and in my situation I was unwilling to run the risk of shutting it against myself.

Madam Dupin, amiable as she was, was serious and unanimated; I found nothing in her manners sufficiently alluring to embolden me. Her house, at that time, as brilliant as any other in Paris, was frequented by societies the less numerous, as the persons by whom they were composed were chosen on account of some distinguished merit. She was fond of seeing every one who had claims to a marked superiority; the great men of letters, and fine women. No person was seen in her circle but dukes, ambassadors, and blue ribbons. The Princess of Rohan, the Countess of Forcalquier, Madam de Mirepoix, Madam de Brignole, and Lady Hervey, passed for her intimate friends. The Abbes de Fontenelle, de Saint Pierre, and Saltier, M. de Fourmont, M. de Berms, M. de Buffon, and M. de Voltaire, were of her circle and her dinners. If her reserved manner did not attract many young people, her society inspired the greater awe, as it was composed of graver persons, and the poor Jean-Jacques had no reason to flatter himself he should be able to take a distinguished part in the midst of such superior talents. I therefore had not courage to speak; but no longer able to contain myself, I took a resolution to write. For the first two days she said

not a word to me upon the subject. On the third day, she returned me my letter, accompanying it with a few exhortations which froze my blood. I attempted to speak, but my words expired upon my lips; my sudden passion was extinguished with my hopes, and after a declaration in form I continued to live with her upon the same terms as before, without so much as speaking to her even by the language of the eyes.

I thought my folly was forgotten, but I was deceived. M. de Francueil, son to M. Dupin, and son-in-law to Madam Dupin, was much the same with herself and me. He had wit, a good person, and might have pretensions. This was said to be the case, and probably proceeded from his mother-in-law's having given him an ugly wife of a mild disposition, with whom, as well as with her husband, she lived upon the best of terms. M. de Francueil was fond of talents in others, and cultivated those he possessed. Music, which he understood very well, was a means of producing a connection between us. I frequently saw him, and he soon gained my friendship. He, however, suddenly gave me to understand that Madam Dupin thought my visits too frequent, and begged me to discontinue them. Such a compliment would have been proper when she returned my letter; but eight or ten days afterwards, and without any new cause, it appeared to me ill-timed. This rendered my situation the more singular, as M. and Madam de Francueil still continued to give me the same good reception as before.

I however made the intervals between my visits longer, and

I should entirely have ceased calling on them, had not Madam Dupin, by another unexpected caprice, sent to desire I would for a few days take care of her son, who changing his preceptor, remained alone during that interval. I passed eight days in such torments as nothing but the pleasure of obeying Madam Dupin could render supportable: I would not have undertaken to pass eight other days like them had Madam Dupin given me herself for the recompense.

M. de Francueil conceived a friendship for me, and I studied with him. We began together a course of chemistry at Rouelles. That I might be nearer at hand, I left my hotel at Quentin, and went to lodge at the Tennis Court, Rue Verdelet, which leads into the Rue Platiere, where M. Dupin lived. There, in consequence of a cold neglected, I contracted an inflammation of the lungs that had liked to have carried me off. In my younger days I frequently suffered from inflammatory disorders, pleurisies, and especially quinsies, to which I was very subject, and which frequently brought me near enough to death to familiarize me to its image.

During my convalescence I had leisure to reflect upon my situation, and to lament my timidity, weakness and indolence; these, notwithstanding the fire with which I found myself inflamed, left me to languish in an inactivity of mind, continually on the verge of misery. The evening preceding the day on which I was taken ill, I went to an opera by Royer; the name I have forgotten. Notwithstanding my prejudice in favor of the talents

of others, which has ever made me distrustful of my own, I still thought the music feeble, and devoid of animation and invention. I sometimes had the vanity to flatter myself: I think I could do better than that. But the terrible idea I had formed of the composition of an opera, and the importance I heard men of the profession affix to such an undertaking, instantly discouraged me, and made me blush at having so much as thought of it. Besides, where was I to find a person to write the words, and one who would give himself the trouble of turning the poetry to my liking? These ideas of music and the opera had possession of my mind during my illness, and in the delirium of my fever I composed songs, duets, and choruses. I am certain I composed two or three little pieces, 'di prima infenzione', perhaps worthy of the admiration of masters, could they have heard them executed. Oh, could an account be taken of the dreams of a man in a fever, what great and sublime things would sometimes proceed from his delirium!

These subjects of music and opera still engaged my attention during my convalescence, but my ideas were less energetic. Long and frequent meditations, and which were often involuntary, and made such an impression upon my mind that I resolved to attempt both words and music. This was not the first time I had undertaken so difficult a task. Whilst I was at Chambéry I had composed an opera entitled 'Iphis and Anaxarete', which I had the good sense to throw into the fire. At Lyons I had composed another, entitled 'La Decouverte du Nouveau Monde', which,

after having read it to M. Bordes, the Abbés Malby, Trublet, and others, had met the same fate, notwithstanding I had set the prologue and the first act to music, and although David, after examining the composition, had told me there were passages in it worthy of Buononcini.

Before I began the work I took time to consider of my plan. In a heroic ballet I proposed three different subjects, in three acts, detached from each other, set to music of a different character, taking for each subject the amours of a poet. I entitled this opera *Les Muses Galantes*. My first act, in music strongly characterized, was Tasso; the second in tender harmony, Ovid; and the third, entitled *Anacreon*, was to partake of the gayety of the dithyrambus. I tried my skill on the first act, and applied to it with an ardor which, for the first time, made me feel the delightful sensation produced by the creative power of composition. One evening, as I entered the opera, feeling myself strongly incited and overpowered by my ideas, I put my money again into my pocket, returned to my apartment, locked the door, and, having close drawn all the curtains, that every ray of light might be excluded, I went to bed, abandoning myself entirely to this musical and poetical 'oestrum', and in seven or eight hours rapidly composed the greatest part of an act. I can truly say my love for the Princess of Ferrara (for I was Tasso for the moment) and my noble and lofty sentiment with respect to her unjust brother, procured me a night a hundred times more delicious than one passed in the arms of the princess would have been. In

the morning but a very little of what I had done remained in my head, but this little, almost effaced by sleep and lassitude, still sufficiently evinced the energy of the pieces of which it was the scattered remains.

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