The Open Court

A MONTHLY MAGAZINE

Devoted to the Science of Religion, the Religion of Science, and the Extension of the Religious Parliament Idea

Founded by Edward C. Hegeler

Volume XXXIX (No. 9) SEPTEMBER, 1925 (No. 832)

CONTENTS

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JEAN-JACQUES ROUSSEAU

BY LEWIS PIAGET SHANKS

IN HIS restless curiosity Diderot best presents the radical spirit of the eighteenth century. From that point of view, he is the first intellectual romanticist, and he certainly foresaw the literature of democracy, which was to supplant a rationalism fast turning into cynical license and a taste already fallen into Marivaudage. But despite a widening public and its demands, it took another type of writer to voice the new poetry of feeling—a greater genius to spread the Gospel of Nature from the salons of Paris to the Petit Trianon. That task called for a scion of a different stock. It needed one reared outside the conventional society of the age, one who hated that society with all his heart. It took one bold enough, or defiant enough, to sign his writings, and to advertise them by his fervidly eccentric personality. It called for a man of greater sensitiveness and passion than Diderot, a greater artist, a poet, a master of musical prose. This poet, whose persuasive fiery eloquence is quite without parallel between the times of Bossuet and the Revolution, was Jean-Jacques Rousseau.

"Si je ne vaux pas mieux, au moins je suis autre." He was indeed different, and not merely by the egotism of that proud admission. Born a Swiss, of a French family whose ancestor had left his fatherland to keep his Huguenot faith, Jean-Jacques was a natural non-conformist. True, he did renounce the religion of his forefathers—this boy of sixteen, blinded by the prospect of seeing Turin no less than by the blonde beauty of Madame de Warens. Yet in a way this very act was the result of the protestant spirit in the little runaway, expressing in a rejection of his past an instinctive defiance of authority and tradition, a confidence in the feelings and desires which shaped an "inner conviction." Now sentimental, now rational, this independence is traceable in all his fellow French-Swiss, from Madame de Staël to Amiel and Scherer.

Significance may justify even the repetition of a platitude. We must never forget that the apostle of democracy was born, not in the France of Louis XIV, but in Geneva, which remained a free city down to the nineteenth century. Rousseau grew up in the capital of Protestantism, the city which had burned Servetus. He knew alike the pride, the aloofness and the suspicion characteristic of that theocracy, which regulated the dress and the habits of its citizens, banned the theatre and compelled church-attendance. This helps us better to understand the compound of militant individualism and intolerance which developed in the writer of the *Contrat Social;* this helps to explain Jean-Jacques' role as a reformer, his natural mastery of the hortatory style; and if the very first page of the *Confessions* pens a picture of the Last Judgment, it is because the boy Rousseau had caught in Genevan chapels the trick of that oratorical fire which was to furnish with phrases the demagogues of '93.

The reformer's immediate ancestry has also its importance. His mother, charming and sentimental, transmitted an intellectual strain already manifest in her uncle, Pastor Bernard. But unhappily for Jean-Jacques she died in bringing him into the world. His father, Isaac Rousseau, was a genial ne'er-do-well with a bit of artistic temperament—if we may judge by the fact that he was not only a watchmaker but a teacher of dancing: a wastrel who squandered most of his wife's fortune, abandoned his family for a six-years' stay in Constantinople, and neglected his elder son Francois until the youth went to the bad and disappeared. This happy-go-lucky sire did all he could to spoil the motherless Jean-Jacques; at seven, the child read with him the silly seventeenth-century love-stories left by his mother; often they would pass the night in these debauches of feeling and imagination. How many other precocious lads have suffered from his choice of First Readers! Then, the romances finished, Rousseau devoured in the same manner the pastor's library, including, with Ovid and Bossuet, Plutarch's *Lives*, which afforded a pattern of moral eloquence and a convex mirror of his heroic ideals. Neither his father nor the uncle who replaced him, men of pleasure both, seem ever to have punished the boy; he was "idolized by everyone around him." But Rousseau did not dream that he was spoiled: "my desires were so little stirred up or aroused that it never entered my head to have any." So when Isaac, fleeing the consequences of a brawl with a French officer, practically abandoned his son at the age of twelve, his desertion probably did not greatly matter: the twig was bent.

The education of Rousseau—or shall we say his early lack of education?—has many a parallel to the system of the *Emile*. But we must leave such details to the vivid pages of the *Confessions*. Here best we can see how environment affected this impressionable boy, *né mourant*, cursed with a congenital neurasthenia and a near-sightedness which, quite as much as his morbid imagination, increased his natural physical timidity. Small wonder that he became the plaything of circumstances, apprenticed as he was at thirteen and left to guide his boat through shifting winds of impulse. A true rolling-stone, like his father and brother before him, he ran away from Geneva at sixteen, met Madame de Warens, went to Italy to be converted, began and abandoned a dozen different trades, and followed the caprices of his humor in a decade of vagabondage, prompted mainly by the poet's wish to be where one is not. Highly "suggestible" because of his imagination, seeking everywhere "a princess and a romance" to fit his dream, bewildered by every pair of woman's eyes that looked into his, he lived in fact the youth of a sentimental Gil Blas or a timid Casanova, except that experience did not cure him of his illusions. For life treated him kindly, on the whole. If he suffered short rations at times, he had a friend always ready to pardon his escapades and welcome him home; with her in the background, this child of nature was able to remain a child until he reached his thirtieth year. Not till then did he have to face the hard necessity of earning a living without help from "Maman," in a world of men. No, fate did not treat him badly through all these years of rainbow-chasing; he made friends everywhere, for with good looks he had the gift of ready feeling and enthusiasm. Rousseau's early friendships show us that he knew how to charm, and their evidence refutes in part the semi-slanders circulated later by Grimm and Diderot.

But no childhood, however prolonged, can last indefinitely; Jean Jacques was forced to quit his protectress by the coming of a successor to her affections. Relegated to the cottage at Chambéry, *Les Charmettes*, he had feverishly prepared himself for his exist by a heavy course of reading, encyclopaedic in range but so hurried that he soon gave up any attempt to coordinate theories and facts. Then the little Swiss musician betook himself to the capital of France. Into this world of elegance and convention, highly organized and thoroughly sophisticated—into this polished society, where *savoir-faire* was everything and originality was taboo, came the dreaming vagabond, a poet living in his moods, a grown man with all a boy's

timidity, a poor half-alien rustic, devoid of social graces and social tact. His failure to impress people was inevitable; inevitable too were the results of it in a soul smarting with discomfiture and seeking amid rebuffs a new basis for its pride. All the philosopher's theories arose from his reaction to his new environment, discovered too late to let him learn conformity.

It took several years of accumulated rancour to provoke the reaction. Has he not confessed: "I should like society as well as any one, if I were not sure to appear in it not merely to my disadvantage, but absolutely different from what I am"? So at the beginning Rousseau made his effort to conform; he wished to get his operas accepted and produced; he was forced to earn his living, and the living of his newly-acquired servant-mistress Thérèse. But disappointment and rebellion were everyday gaining force, subconsciously, in Madame Dupin's timid little secretary, still waiting for literary recognition after eight long years in Paris. One day in 1749, hard pressed for money, he learned of an essay contest on the moral aspects of the Renaissance. Diderot's suggestion to defend the negative dropped into his heart like a match into a powder magazine: he wrote his sense of personal wrongs and his imaginative sensibility gave conviction to his pen. An indictment of civilization! Now at last the unsuccessful genius may give vent to his opinion of this world of urban constraint, so different from the ideal of his vagrant adolescence.

That the nominal subject of his indictment was not civilization but the fine arts, and that he was himself a writer of little comedies and operettas, did not trouble him in the least. Human motives are usually mixed, and in the man of moods it were a rash thing to seek consistency. So Rousseau finished his essay, won the prize, and, in the first flush of fame which the event brought him, threw aside all attempts to compromise with his world. He undertook a personal reformation: he became, as he tells us, "virtuous or at least intoxicated with virtue," resigned his secretaryship to earn his living by copying music, discarded the sword of the gentleman, abandoned silk hose for woolen. The Armenian costume, which combined comfort and conspicuousness, came later; now he only added to the republican simplicity of his dress a cynic's rudeness of manner. One remembers his early reading and his life-long admiration of Plutarch.

Thus he dramatized his life, like the romanticist he was. But the result speedily justified the means, and to a degree the innocent

antinomian never perhaps expected. Jean Jacques became famous. "All Paris," he tells us, "repeated his biting sarcasms"; the despised plebeian and the haughty aristocrat now exchanged roles. Such a transposition could hardly have been unpleasant. If meanwhile our philosopher was sending his illegitimate children one after the other to the foundling's home, it merely shows how hard it is to achieve consistency and escape the influence of one's age. Even this crime cannot be used to impugn the sincerity of Rousseau's conversion.

It was a real conversion, for through it he rediscovered emotion in the realm of morality. Jean Jacques, it must be remembered, was thirty-seven, his first adolescent response to passion dulled by long experience. He was destined to recover the intoxication of love, reminiscentially at least, when he quitted the world of men and actualities for the dream-life of the Hermitage. But now, with the first delights of his liaison behind him, his heart was drifting like a ship becalmed. Fate offered—for Diderot had enrolled him among the collaborators of the Encyclopaedia—the chance to divorce his brain and his heart, to learn the joys of objective thinking. But with the First Discourse a new and different storm of sentiment overcame him; the stilled waters began to course once more; a fresh tide of passion bore him away for a decade, until the flood had spent itself in the torrential rhetoric of *Julie, Emile* and the *Contrat Social.*

The last books of the *Confessions* show us a darker picture: the reformer paid the price for defying the censor by signing his pages. The condemnation of his books, the warrant for his arrest, the necessity for flight and the ten-years' Odyssey he endured—these were enough to unbalance a nature less nervously timid than Rousseau's. In this morbidly egotistic soul, they were more than enough, coupled as they were with the jealousy and trouble-making of his mistress, to arouse the persecution-mania which embittered his last days. One can only pity the victim of sentiment, grown eccentric in his self-exile from the rest of mankind, quarreling with his friends as he had quarrelled with the Encyclopaedists who had tried to influence him, over-jealous of his liberty of action. One can only pity the misanthrope abandoned to that old age of moral loneliness, suspicion and fear which was the price of his life-long cult of feeling for its own sake. All in all, his was a career which has well been called a sentimental novel.

II

The sophomoric quality of Rousseau's First Discourse makes it today rather difficult reading. Its ideas are familiar, its reasoning childish, its rhetoric strained and false. It is commonplace, but it is commonplace because six generations of followers have made it so. It lacks art, but it contains the germs of ideas that we find developed in the three masterpieces of 1761-1762—that triple gospel of modern individualism.

Could one imagine a young girl brought up exclusively on Pope and Dryden, reading Shelley for the first time—could one conceive a boy long chained to mathematics or logic, then discovering Byron and Tolstoy—could one combine in a single exemplar all the philosophical "revelations" of one's own youth, all the antinomian gospels which marked one's revolt from inherited beliefs: Emerson, Darwin, Nietzsche, Freud, it were possible to understand something of the force of Rousseau's indictment, in that society swayed by the doctrine of progress, in that age which believed itself the heir of all the ages. Carat, a contemporary, writes: "At this moment a voice, no longer young and yet quite unknown, was lifted up, not from the depths of deserts and forests, but from the very heart of that society. . . . And in the name of truth, it brought forth an accusation before the whole of humanity, against letters, arts, sciences and society itself. . . . And it was not scandal that arose, but admiration and a sort of terror which were almost universal."

What Rousseau appealed to was not merely the emotions or even the passions. He stirred up forces which had long lain quiescent, the volcanic forces of the subconscious in men's hearts. He galvanized the bases of human nature, that animal part of us which persists through every attempt to overlay it with logic and discipline and self-denial. How comfortable for men grown tired of hearing about Christian "other-worldliness" and Cartesian self-control, to rediscover beneath stiff garments of reason and scruple the vital blood of individual feeling! To be told that man is good, that Nature is good, that God needs no temples and creeds, since he is best revealed in nature and in the heart of man: to hear that society and luxury and sophistication are vain things beside the joys of simple living; to hear that men are born free and equal and should

be governed only by their own consent; to be told that formal education is only wasted time, and to be told these things by a man who seemed to have proved them in his own life. It mattered little that Rousseau's gospel sprang from an inferiority-complex, if he made valid the dreams of all the unsuccessful. It mattered little that he opposed a formal theology, if his theory had a Biblical as well as a sentimental justification. Did not Genesis reveal a Paradise of blissful ignorance, and had not the Preacher said that he who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow?

He rediscovered certain truths, because they were in the air. Truths and fallacies, he gathered them up, touched them with the flame of his eloquence, and made a gospel—a gospel composite of Shaftesbury, Locke and Hobbes, of Montaigne, Fénelon, Montesquieu, the Abbé de Saint-Pierre, the Physiocrats—but the list of Rousseau's sources is too long to find a place here. The very form of the novel by which he created modern fiction and founded Romanticism came from England; Richardson's stories in letters, *Pamela* and *Clarissa*, had been put into French in 1742 and 1751. He borrowed too from the translator of his beloved Richardson, the Abbé Prévost, and from Marivaux, who long before Rousseau's *Julie*, had appealed to the feelings of their readers. But he was to give a new force to this sentimentality in *Julie*, which owes much of its success to the fact that it revived the novel of the seventeenth century, by uniting the vividness of the new English naturalism with the luscious metaphors of Petrarch and Metastasio. It was not for nothing that Jean Jacques learned to read in d'Urfé's *Astrée* or Mademoiselle de Scudéri, and that he passed several years in Italy; it was not for nothing that he escaped the conventional education of the age of criticism. He filled the demands of a growing feminine public for a book to weep over.

Like all the works of this passionate spirit, *Julie ou la nouvelle Héloise* sprang from circumstances. After fifteen years in the capital, Rousseau finally escaped from the hated city to the sylvan elysium of the Hermitage: after fifteen years "he had green to gaze upon" again. Restored to his beloved woods and fields, the dreamer and the poet awoke a second time. And as so often happens, senescence gave an erotic turn to this emotional rebirth. The delights of Arcadian reverie, of wandering in a self-created *pays de Chimères* with the nymphs of his imagination, were now, long before Chateaubriand, to be turned to literary account: at forty-four, the disappointed seeker for an ideal passion created the composite figure of

Julie and her companion Claire, to be his companions in his lonely promenades through the woods of Madame d'Epinay's estate. He wrote a sheaf of love-letters to his imaginary Egeria, and these were the seeds of the novel; when his hostess' sister-in-law, Madame d'Houdetot appeared on the scene, she only enabled Jean-Jacques to transplant his hot-house love into the warm soil of actuality. His hopeless passion soon made his tears and transports real.

Julie or the New Heloisa has therefore all the authenticity of a confession, and when it finally was published (1759-1761) its effect was tremendous. One reader declares that he was ill after finishing the novel, with its long account of the death-bed of the heroine. Another puts off for three days the reading of the final letter. A lady of the provinces is so moved that she can listen to only a few pages at a time. These readers wanted no psychological analysis of emotion; they craved these realities of lyric description, painted in language so ardent that it seemed to convey the fire of passion or the torpor of despair. Women gave up balls to complete the story; a few hopeless lovers committed suicide, and if any should doubt the truth of this last statement, the present writer knows of a popular living author who admitted considering self-destruction, when he read the book after an unfortunate love-affair of his student days.

Although a thousand novels had been published in France from 1740 to 1760, the romance had been a despised type of literature, still suffering from the contempt of Boileau. By filling the novel with eloquence and poetry, Rousseau made of it a serious thing, a means of self-expression and an arm for the spreading of ideas. With *Julie* fiction assumes its modern place as a literary form, and that fact alone is enough to class Rousseau's work as the greatest novel of its century. All the successors of Jean Jacques will cultivate the novel: by the side of Bernardin de Saint-Pierre and Chateaubriand we find Restif de la Bretonne and Choderlos de Laclos.

For even that precious pair are his disciples. Their model is the first half of *Julie*, in which the poor tutor wins the heart and body of his heiress-pupil. These chapters represent the unregenerate Rousseau, with all his memories and frustrated desires. The second part, in which Julie yields to reason and parental authority, marries the man of her father's choice and becomes an ideal housewife and mother, reveals the Rousseau who has become the apostle of nature and virtue; and the last chapters, with their project of educating Julie's children, foreshadow the Emile.

In her essentials Julie is the type of woman that Rousseau dreamed of because he never found; she is the mother of the type represented as the Romantic ideal. She is good, she is weak, she is sympathetic and she is much addicted to tears. Her beauty is a "touching beauty," composite of pallor and sensibility. Saint-Preux, her lover, also has the "physionomie intéressante" of a Romantic hero; like Hernani, he is the weak but poetic victim of circumstances; like his creator, he has the envy and the rancour of the pervenu. There is a plain Romantic thesis in the unequal rank of the lovers and its implications; it is the thesis of many of George Sand's novels, "Love levels all."

Indeed, a moral is overlaid on even the first part of the story, written before Rousseau realized the demands of a public which looked to him as a reformer. If Julie falls from virtue, the blame for that fact is to be placed upon society and her false education. And certainly the heroine makes up afterwards for the error of her adolescence. From the time she yields to her father's wishes and dismisses her lover, she never ceases to preach to him, by letter or otherwise; the last two-thirds of the book is an almost continuous series of little sermon-essays. Hardly a vestige of a plot leads through this morass of sentiment and morals—unless we except the return of Saint-Preux to live with Julie and her husband, in a *ménage à trois* suggested by Rousseau's own early life and destined to serve later as a model for Musset and George Sand at Venice. The death of the heroine after the fatal moonlight boat-ride alone stops her gentle moralizing.

So the novel becomes a resume of Rousseaus' philosophy, containing his ideas on religion, education and society. It contrasts the fashionable frivolities of Paris with the simple pleasures of country life, the artificialities of Parisian women with the candour of the mountaineer girls of the Valais. There are pages on the virtues of Geneva, there is much significant criticism of the classical stage. But the finest chapters are those which set forth the scenic backgrounds, the lyrical descriptions which paint the beauties of Lake Leman or the majesty of the Alps or the Jura. The world of nature now enters into the novel: nature seen through a temperament, through a poet's eyes, nature viewed as a confidant of human sorrows and a partner of human joys. This is Jean Jacques best gift to the novel and to Romanticism. A century later, the realists may treat their backgrounds more objectively, but henceforward none will forget Rousseau's "discovery of green."

Space fails us to discuss the *Emile*, so revolutionary in modern education, or the *Contrat Social* which marks an era in history not yet brought to a close, since Rousseau and his disciple Marx are largely responsible for recent changes in Russia and Germany. The *Confessions* and their sequel the *Rêveries* are more important for their influence upon Romanticism, as they are more important for the study of the writer and the man.

The Confessions need no general characterization for the well-informed reader—which at least proves one advantage of the *succès de scandale*. Curiously, the real origin of this frankness, as of the book itself, is a pure personal reaction prompted by circumstances. When in 1765 Voltaire published anonymously *Le Sentiment des Citoyens*, revealing to Geneva the crimes against fatherhood committed by the famous "Citoyen," Rousseau felt obliged to take up the charge. Walking in the lime-light, the reformer saw the need of justifying his actions by justifying his character. Consistency indeed he could no longer claim; yet he felt that he was naturally good, that all his actions had been good insofar as he and not society had prompted them. So he justified himself by turning his heart inside out to the public as he had done in his Catholic days to the priests; for like all poets he believed implicitly in the purity of his heart. Hence the *Confessions*, written as in a wager of absolute sincerity, but written by a lyrist who cannot keep from magnifying good and evil alike. Had Russeau only burned these revelations! The critics would certainly have had an easier task.

But what a book we should have lost! With all its bad taste the *Confessions* is our greatest autobiography; none of its imitators—though they are legion—have approached it. And its influence continues still, directly no less than indirectly, for it is the sole work of Rousseau that we can find in every bookstore. It created one literary genre, it may almost be said to have created two. Certainly the first half of the book, given over to the hero's childhood and adolescence, served as model for our modern stories of a child's life—stories which fall so charmingly from the lips of men like Daudet or Loti or Anatole France; Walpole's *Jeremy* and Tarkington's *Penrod* are their indirect descendants. None before Rousseau had considered man's irrational age as a subject of art. But this is not all the originality of the *Confessions*, which are ultimately responsible for all the personalia of the modern school, from Chateaubriand's *Mémoires* down to Goncourt's *Journal* and George Moore's *Ave atque Vale*, including a stack of "fiction" which can

hardly be divided from these—Musset's and Fromentin's single novels for example, or in our day, *Jean-Christophe*, Proust's monumental work, and probably too the work of Joyce and Lawrence. For Rousseau was the first of the moderns to hold the candle of memory over the gulf of the past, the first to depart *"à la recherche du temps perdu."* His memory for things which had touched his emotion was extraordinarily vivid; the disillusioned prophet finds happiness again in scrutinizing each detail beneath the magic glass. "Je sais bien que le lecteur n'a pas besoin de savoir tout cela, mais j'ai besoin moi de le lui dire." Yes, Proust himself might have said that. And with Rousseau as with Proust, we are glad of the author's need of confession, which paints our own remembrance upon the printed page.

It is so modern, this carefully stippled portrait, by which the father of romanticism impressed his very spirit upon his multitudinous children. His very spirit, with all its fallacies, all its delusions, as numerous in him as in any poet. There was first the fallacy of Nature's goodness, summed up in the phrase "Mother Nature." Only a poet would apply this antinomy to the calm-eyed Cybele whose vast indifference to man ought to teach that contempt of feeling which made the greatness of the Roman stoic. This was the first and worst of the Romantic fallacies; for if Nature becomes our guide, it follows that reason should yield to feeling, tradition to individual impulse, convention to spontaneity. With nature essentially good, all instinct must be pure.

Jean Jacques, however, was only a timid percursor. Close upon his heels came bolder spirits, men for whom there were no unconscious inhibitions bred by tradition or education, men emboldened by the electric air of the revolutionary decade. For these and for their sons no mere dream was enough, nor even a crushing contact with reality. Chateaubriand pursued the hope of an elective affinity through a dozen courtships, gilding idol after empty idol with the flame from his own breast, undaunted by failure and holding, as his memoirs reveal, Rousseau's dream of Pygmalion to the very end.

The basis of this illusion is a weakling's unwillingness to face the fact of our spiritual isolation, which previous generations had stifled through reason and masked with the social amenities that find delight or at least distraction in man's universal qualities. When life finally awakened the Romanticists to this ineluctable loneliness, they only made of it a source of pride, using their sense of isolation to confirm their pride. A new conception of genius is thus given to

the world: the suffering lonely soul, unable to cope with life as it is, finds in his idiosyncrasy and in his defect a compensatory vanity. Admirable provision of the subconscious in over-sensitive and introspective minds!

But others have written volumes on the fallacies of Rousseau, and he who runs may read. It were better to quote a more impartial critic, a Swiss and like all of us a literary grandchild of Rousseau, but one unblinded to his fellow-Genevan's qualities no less than to his faults of taste or reason. Amiel says—and later scholarship can only substitute "Rousseau popularized" for "he created":

"Rousseau originated walking tours, he created reverie before René, botanizing in literature before George Sand, nature-worship before Bernardin de Saint Pierre, the theory of democracy before the Revolution, political and theological discussion before Mirabeau and Renan, pedagogy before Pestalozzi: he brought music into fashion and awakened a taste for confessions in public, he created a new style in France. No one more than he influenced the French Revolution, since he was its demi-god, and no one more than he the nineteenth century, since among his descendants are numbered Byron, Chateaubriand, Madame de Staël and George Sand. There is something unhealthy, stormy turbulent and unbalanced in Rousseau, doubtless because reason and imagination are in him aroused and controlled by passion."

Hence it is that Jean Jacques, like Shelley, must be accepted and forgiven, or judged, through an analysis usually negative or hostile and highly inimical to a successful portrait. One cannot depict dispassionately this prose-poet, made all of passion and sensitiveness, as is every poet in a greater or less degree. Aubert de Vitry said: "Jean Jacques Rousseau is perhaps the most passionate, the most poetic nature that ever existed. . . . His *Confessions*, his *Dialogues*, his letters show him from his earliest childhood, hurling himself continually beyond the limits of this world of matter, and building for himself a universe of his own, outside of which he can not be happy nor even exist. Reality for him is the world of his feelings and his ideas."

Well, in this industrial age of ours, inspired and dominated by the Juggernaut of efficiency, when man spends his days bowed in toil or worship before the modern Wheel of Illusion, the flashing wheel of The Machine, there is no human need more widely felt than the need of escaping life as it is. The intellectual escape of classical literature is denied the ignorant and the millions whom

labor has left too tired to think. But all those who are vital enough not to fall completely under the spell of the cinema can find a superior hasheesh, an opium not entirely enervating, in the literature of imagination and feeling, as Rousseau found oblivion for his woes in dream days spent by the Lake of Bienne. And this quotation is needed to complete our portrait, for poets' portraits, "human, all too human," are ugly things if left without their due and proper glaze:

"As evening approached I would descend from the island-summits and sit by the lake shore, in a hidden nook on the beach, and the murmur of the waves and the moving of the water, fixing my senses and dispelling all tumult from my soul, plunged it into a delicious reverie wherein night often caught me without my perceiving its approach. The ebb and flow of the waves, their endless murmurings, louder at intervals and falling incessantly upon my ears and gaze, made up for the thoughts driven out of my mind by reverie, and sufficed to make me pleasurably conscious of existence, without the labor of thinking. From time to time came some tenous fleeting reflection upon the instability of the things of this world, imaged in the moving surface of the waters; but soon these faint impressions effaced themselves in the even motion cradling me and holding me without any active mental effort, yet so closely that when the hour and the signal came I could not tear myself away without a struggle."

A dozen phases of Rousseau's eloquence might thus be set before the reader—all suffused with an emotion deep enough to dictate the pattern, the rhythm, the every consonants and vowels needed in order to present his feeling. But even this translation is sufficient to reveal the secret underlying the greatest literary influence since the Renaissance. Rousseau's is the style of a musician, fingering a magic flute, voicing every stop in the diapason of the human heart. The contagion of his music explains the sorcery wielded by this leader of men, as it explains the fables of Orpheus and the Piper of Hamelin. For in the realm of aesthetics the only valid doctrine is the rhythmic teachings of Pythagoras.