



## ① *Le petit coin que j'habite*

(Première Lettre au Maréchal de Luxembourg)

*Le rallon, appelé le Val-De-Travers du nom d'un village qui est à son extrémité orientale, est garni de quatre ou cinq autres villages à peu de distance les uns des autres; celui de Môtiers qui forme le milieu est dominé par un vieux château dont le voisinage et la situation solitaire et sauvage m'attirent souvent*

(Seconde Lettre au Maréchal de Luxembourg)

*Je trouvais le séjour de Môtiers fort agréable, et pour me déterminer à y finir mes jours il ne me manquait qu'une subsistance assurée*

(Confessions, XII)

Condemned by the French Parliament, his *Emile* was burnt in Paris, the *Social Contract* was forbidden, their author – made famous by *The New Heloise* – under the threat of being imprisoned, flew away from France and Geneva, then, expelled from Yverdon, came by chance to place himself under the protection of the King of Prussia, Frederic II (1712 - 1786), in his Principality of Neuchâtel.

In April 1763 he was officially accepted as a subject of Neuchâtel, and in May he gave up his citizenship of Geneva. Finally he was received as a member of the Community of Couvet in January 1765; a gift of £42, i.e. a golden coin of King Louis, was made in his name in 1766 as his contribution to the erection of the steeple of the church of Couvet.

The second of these two *Letters* to the Marshall of Luxembourg – which were published only in 1782 – describes Rousseau's way of life. The procession of visitors carried with it such a "touristy" movement that Val-de-Travers became over-represented by 14 engravings in *Picturesque Views of Switzerland* (1780 - 1786). The way the 'Alps' are represented is often fantastical, and the engravers often misinterpreted the original sketches of the artists.



## ② L'asile offert par l'amitié

*La maison que j'occupe [...] est grande assez commode, elle a une galerie extérieure où je me promène dans les mauvais temps, et ce qui vaut mieux que tout le reste c'est un asile offert par l'amitié.*

*J'ai vis-à-vis de mes fenêtres une superbe cascade qui du haut de la montagne tombe par l'escarpement d'un rocher dans le Vallon avec un bruit qui se fait entendre au loin, surtout quand les eaux sont grandes.*

*(Seconde Lettre au Maréchal de Luxembourg)*

From 1762 to 1765, Rousseau lived in Môtiers, a borough of about 350 inhabitants, in the small house he rented from Mrs Boy de la Tour. Originally dating back to the end of the XV<sup>th</sup> century, it was hardly fit to accommodate him. It had a three room apartment on the first floor, with a kitchen and back-kitchen. Nowadays there is only half of the space left.

Therese, his companion, enjoyed the best room which faced the High Street, adjacent to the kitchen where she did wonders.

Rousseau occupied the room facing North where he worked, with a bed and a two door cupboard. He had a bookshelf made for it. On the right hand side of the window he had his desk. Later this desk was cut to small pieces by the 'pilgrims' and sold to a stranger about 1820.

In spite of the improvements, he suffered from the cold and he had to escape from unwelcome visitors through a secret door, opening on the contiguous barn. He aspired to a more comfortable abode.



### ③ *Je pris l'habit arménien*

*Peu de temps après mon établissement à Môtiers. Enravers, ayant toutes les assurances possibles qu'on m'y laisserait tranquille, je pris l'habit arménien.*  
(Confessions, XII)

Why did Rousseau choose to wear such singular clothing ? From about 1751, he had started some changes in his clothing style. In 1752, a pastel drawing by Maurice Quentin de La Tour, exhibited at the 'Salon' of 1753 and criticised by Diderot, immortalised him in very simple dress, which he also wore at the first performance of *Devin du Village* in Fontainebleau in front of Louis XV and the Court. Suffering from difficulties of urination, he had an ample gown made for him. But he started actually wearing that 'Armenian gown' only in autumn 1762 in Môtiers, which he did for nearly five years, for convenience' sake and not to follow any pseudo oriental fashion. A ware that he attracted people's attention, he was careful always to look well dressed.

It was in Môtiers in 1762 that he finally agreed to have his portrait engraved, under three conditions: it was to be done after the pastel drawing by La Tour, without his name but with his motto 'Vitam impendere vero' – to dedicate one's life to the truth – and with his then present furry cap. These engravings had many descendants, which eventually turned to make Jean-Jacques unrecognisable !

In England, Hume hastily got the well-known painter Allan Ramsay to do his portrait, an oil painting Rousseau finally hated, particularly the engravings copied from it.

When he came back from England, he abandoned this by then legendary garb, and adopted the French style of dress.





#### ④ Les Neuchâtelois

*Beaucoup d'esprit et encore plus de prétention, mais sans aucun goût, voilà ce qui m'a d'abord frappé chez les Neuchâtelois.*

*Flatté de leur estime et touché de leurs bontés, je me ferai toujours un devoir et un plaisir de leur marquer mon attachement et ma reconnaissance, mais l'accueil qu'ils m'ont fait n'a rien de commun avec le gouvernement neuchâtelois qui m'en eût fait un bien différent s'il en eût été le maître.*

*(Première Lettre au Maréchal de Luxembourg)*

During the first part of his stay, Rousseau, who did his best to become a member of the local society, was very well accepted, and he easily made new friends, among whom the Governor of Neuchâtel, Lord Keith (called 'Milord Marechal'). Before their clash on questions of dogma, the Protestant Minister, Frederic de Montmollin, welcomed him, accepted him at communion and he even lent his coach to enable Therese to attend mass.

Apart from Mrs Boy de la Tour, Rousseau could rely on the help of Mrs de Luze-Warney; he made the acquaintance of the two sisters d'Ivernois; the younger, Isabelle, showed him how to make lace, which he did during the evenings he spent with other people; the elder, Anne-Marie, decided for which purpose it was intended. Each of the two sisters received such a ribbon as reward for having agreed to suckle their infants, thus following the precepts of *Emile*.

As honorary member of the 'Shooting Society of Môtiers', in 1764 he made them a gift of two fine pewter plates as prizes.

Rousseau also made the acquaintance of Abram Pury, who, in his country house of "Monlési", introduced him to Pierre Alexandre DuPeyrou, a faithful friend with unlimited obligingness. Other companions took part in their botanical excursions.



## ⑤ *Àyant quitté tout à fait la Littérature*

*Confessions*, XII)

*Je n'ai jamais rien pu faire la plume à la main vis-à-vis d'une table et de mon papier; c'est à la promenade, au milieu des bois, [...] que j'écris dans mon cerveau*

*(Confessions*, III)

*je repris mon Dictionnaire de musique, que dix ans de travail avait déjà fort avancé, et auquel il ne manquait que la dernière main et d'être mis au net. Mes [...] papiers qui me furent envoyés en même temps me mirent en état de commencer l'entreprise de mes mémoires, dont je voulais uniquement m'occuper désormais.*

*(Confessions*, XII)

The written production of Rousseau at the time of *Môtiers* is not limited to his *Dictionary of Music* and the first four Books of his *Confessions*, begun in 1764, while preparing a *Project of Constitution* for Corsica. It mainly displays a profound change in his writing: from creation to self-defence.

During his journey from Paris to Yverdon, he had undertaken writing *Le Léviote d'Ephraïm*. He carried on with *Pygmalion*, then with *Emile and Sophie, or the Solitaires*.

Apart from a very copious correspondence – 700 to 800 letters, more than a third of what has been kept – in spite of his promise to publish nothing, he was bound to reply to the “Mandement” of His Lordship Christophe de Beaumont, archbishop of Paris.

Under the parody of a title, *Letters Written from the Mountain*, he endeavoured to refute the *Letters Written from the Country* by Public Prosecutor Tronchin, and he could not but take part in religious and political controversies which re-kindled conflicts.

Above all, Voltaire's vile pamphlet, *The Feeling of the Citizens*, which Rousseau insisted in attributing to Minister Vernes, prompted him to continue what he had outlined in the *Four Letters to President Malesherbes*, prolegomena to the *Confessions*.



## ⑥ *plus que du foin dans la tête*

(Lettre à François-Henri d'Ivernois, 1<sup>er</sup> août 1765)

*La botanique offre ici ses trésors à qui saurait les connaître, et souvent en voyant autour de moi cette profusion de plantes rares, je les foule à regret sous le pied d'un ignorant.*

*Plus j'examine en détail l'état et la position de ce vallon, plus je me persuade qu'il a jadis été sous l'eau, que ce qu'on appelle aujourd'hui le Val-de-Travers fut autrefois un lac*

(Seconde Lettre au Maréchal de Luxembourg)

Rousseau soon became passionately involved in botany, a subject in which he had been interested since his childhood. During this exile, he was introduced to this science by Doctor Jean Antoine d'Ivernois; he herborized on Chasseron and at Creux-du-Van with DuPeyrou (helped by Doctor Frédéric Samuel Neuhaus), Pury, and with a young admirer, François Louis d'Eschery; with naturalist Abraham Gagnebin he explored the coastal areas of the River Doubs.

On DuPeyrou's instigation he based his research on the system of Charles Linné, and he was in relation with specialists who did not hesitate to consider this self-taught amateur as their equal. In his botanical "pasigraphy", a system of simplification like short-hand, at the end of his life Rousseau would reconsider his idea of using numbers to write musical scores – which had received just a polite reaction.

During the 1770's, Rousseau and Malesherbes exchanged letters on botanical subjects.

In his (elementary) *Letters on Botany* to Mrs Delessert for her 5 year old daughter, Rousseau shows how good a teacher he was.

His curiosity also manifested itself about other phenomena like those linked to the emerging science of geology, but his views were confirmed only a century later.





## ① Dans cette île chérie

*De toutes les habitations où j'ai Demeuré (et j'en ai eu de charmantes), aucune ne m'a rendu si véritablement heureux et ne m'a laissé de si tendres regrets que L'Île De St. Pierre au milieu Du lac De Bienne.*

*(Rêveries, 5<sup>e</sup> Promenade)*

The entrancing stay in Môtiers of the beginning deteriorated, the atmosphere was gradually made more difficult by Therese's thoughtless gossip, and the theological quarrels finally made the situation worse. In villages people tend to take violently opposing sides, the tension grows and nerves break down. Feeling threatened, in spite of the declared protection given by the authority, Jean Jacques, who had already attempted to find another lodging, didn't accept the hospitality offered by the neighbouring village of Couvet, and in haste he flew away to other wanderings in September, 1765.

During six weeks he thought he had found a haven of peace in St. Peter Island in Lake Bienne – which he grew to idealise – a refuge where he thought he would peacefully end his days, happily botanizing.

Having given up writing, he had started a *Flora Petrinsularis* which he had to interrupt to go first to Bienne, then to Strasbourg, not quite sure whether to re-join Milord Marechal in Berlin, and finally accepting Hume's hospitality in England, never to come back to Switzerland.

Although Rousseau's stay in England was made pleasant by his activity as "herbalist of the Duchess of Portland", the episode ended in a violent quarrel and he returned to France for good in 1767.



## ⑧ *Le Ciel à son tour fera son œuvre.*

*Rousseau juge de Jean-Jacques)*

*Que la trompette du jugement dernier sonne quand elle voudra, je viendrai, ce livre à la main, me présenter devant le souverain juge. [...] Être éternel, rassemble autour de moi l'innombrable foule de mes semblables, qu'ils écoutent mes Confessions, qu'ils gémissent de mes indignités, qu'ils rougissent de mes misères. Que chacun d'eux découvre à son tour son cœur au pied de ton trône avec la même sincérité, et puis qu'un seul te dise, s'il l'ose: "je fus meilleur que cet homme - Là".*

*(Confessions, I)*

Recovering his former lodging in Rue Plâtrière in June 1770, Rousseau spent his last years in Paris, "celebrated town, town of noise, of smoke and of mud", which he had meant to leave for ever in April 1756, copying music for his livelihood, and still herborizing, before he eventually accepted a retreat north east of the capital in May 1778.

As guest of Marquis de Girardin in Ermenonville he died in the morning of 2<sup>nd</sup> July, 1778. He was buried there in Ile des Peupliers, but in 1794 the Convention had his remains placed in the Panthéon, opposite his enemy, Voltaire. Very soon Rousseau, celebrated and persecuted, was the object of true worshipping.

On his tombstone René Louis Girardin, who had created the park which sheltered it, had these words engraved: "Here lies the man of nature and of truth".

All the places associated with Rousseau continue to attract pilgrims and, on top of an abundant iconography, from the start but particularly in the XIX<sup>th</sup>-XX<sup>th</sup> centuries, he gave rise to the creation and commerce of lots of souvenir-objects.

*(translation Eric Christen)*