



***JOHANN
WOLFGANG
VON GOETHE***

***LETTERS FROM
SWITZERLAND
AND TRAVELS
IN ITALY***

Johann Wolfgang von Goethe

Letters from Switzerland and Travels in Italy

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When, a few years ago, the copies of the following letters were first made known to us, it was asserted that they had been found among Werther's papers, and it was pretended that before his acquaintance with Charlotte, he had been in Switzerland. We have never seen the originals: however we would not on any account anticipate the judgment and feelings of our readers; for whatever may be their true history, it is impossible to read them without sympathy.



PART THE FIRST.

How do all my descriptions disgust me, when I read them over. Nothing but your advice, your command, your injunction could have induced me to attempt anything of the kind. How many descriptions, too, of these scenes had I not read before I saw them. Did these, then, afford me an image of them,—or at best but a mere vague notion? In vain did my imagination attempt to bring the objects before it; in vain did my mind try to think upon them. Here I now stand contemplating these wonders, and what are my feelings in the midst of them? I can think of nothing—I can feel nothing,—and how willingly would I both think and feel. The glorious scene before me excites my soul to its inmost depths, and impels me to be doing; and yet what can I do—what do I? I set myself down and scribble and describe!—Away with you, ye descriptions—delude my friend—make him believe that I am doing something—that he sees and reads something.

Were, then, these Switzers free? Free, these opulent burghers in their little pent-up towns—free, those poor devils on their rocks and crags? What is it that man cannot be made to believe, especially when he cherishes in his heart the memory of some old tale of marvel? Once, forsooth, they did break a tyrant's yoke, and might for the moment fancy themselves free; but out of the carcase of the single oppressor the good sun, by a strange new birth, has hatched a swarm of petty tyrants. And so now they are ever telling that old tale of marvel: one hears it till one is

sick of it. They formerly made themselves free, and have ever since remained free! and now they sit behind their walls, hugging themselves with their customs and laws—their philandering and philistering. And there, too, on the rocks, it is surely fine to talk of liberty, when for six months of the year they, like the marmot, are bound hand and foot by the snow.

Alas! how wretched must any work of man look, in the midst of this great and glorious Nature, but especially such sorry, poverty-stricken works as these black and dirty little towns—such mean heaps of stones and rubbish! Large rubble and other stones on the roofs too, that the miserable thatch may not be carried off from the top of them,—and then the filth, the dung, and the gaping idiots! When here you meet with man and the wretched work of his hands, you are glad to fly away immediately from both.

That there are in man very many intellectual capacities which in this life he is unable to develop, which therefore point to a better future, and to a more harmonious state of existence: on this point we are both agreed. But further than this I cannot give up that other fancy of mine, even though on account of it you may again call me, as you have so often done already, a mere enthusiast. For my part, I do think that man feels conscious also of corporeal qualities, of whose mature expansion he can have no hope in this life. This most assuredly is the case with "*flying*." How strongly at one time used the clouds, as they drove along the blue

sky, to tempt me to travel with them to foreign lands! and now in what danger do I stand, lest they should carry me away with them from the mountain peak as they sweep violently by. What desire do I not feel to throw myself into the boundless regions of the air—to poise over the terrific abyss, or to alight on some otherwise inaccessible rock. With what a longing do I draw deeper and deeper breath, when, in the dark blue depth below, the eagle soars over rocks and forests, or in company, and in sweet concord with his mate, wheels in wide circles round the eyrie to which he has entrusted his young. Must I then never do more than creep up to the summits? Must I always go on clinging to the highest rocks, as well as to the lowest plain; and when I have at last, with much toil, reached the desired eminence, must I still anxiously grasp at every holding place, shudder at the thought of return, and tremble at the chance of a fall.

With what wonderful properties are we *Fancies and* not born,—what vague aspirations rise *feelings*. within us! How rarely do imagination and our bodily powers work in opposition! Peculiarities of my early boyhood again recur. While I am walking, and have a long road before me, my arms go dangling by my side, I often make a grasp, as if I would seize a javelin, and hurl it I know not at whom, or what; and then I fancy an arrow is shot at me which pierces me to the heart; I strike my hand upon my breast, and feel an inexpressible sweetness; and then after this I soon revert to my natural state. Whence comes this strange phenomenon,—what is the meaning of it? and why does it invariably recur under the same figures,

in the same bodily movement, and with the same sensation?

I am repeatedly told that the people who have met me on my journey are little satisfied with me. I can readily believe it, for neither has any one of them contributed to my satisfaction. I cannot tell how it comes to pass, that society oppresses me; that the forms of politeness are disagreeable to me—that what people talk about does not interest me,—that all that they show to me is either quite indifferent, or else produces quite an opposite impression to what they expect. When I am shown a drawing or painting of any beautiful spot, immediately a feeling of disquiet arises within me which is utterly inexpressible. My toes within my shoes begin to bend, as if they would clutch the ground—a cramp-like motion runs through my fingers. I bite my lips, and I hasten to leave the company I am in, and throw myself down in the presence of the majesty of nature on the first seat however inconvenient. I try to take in the scene before me with my eye—to seize all its beauties, and on the spot I love to cover a whole sheet with scratches, which represent nothing exactly, but which, nevertheless, possess an infinite value in my eyes, as serving to remind me of the happy moment, whose bliss even this bungling exercise could not mar. What means, then, this strange effort to pass from art to nature, and then back again from nature to art: If it gives promise of an artist, why is steadiness wanting to me? If it calls me to enjoyment, wherefore, then, am I not able to seize it? I lately had a present of a basket of fruit. I was in raptures at the sight of it as of something heavenly,—such

riches, such abundance, such variety and yet such affinity! I could not persuade myself to pluck off a single berry—I could not bring myself to take a single peach or a fig. Most assuredly this gratification of the eye and the inner sense is the highest and most worthy of man; in all probability it is the design of Nature, when the hungry and thirsty believe that she has exhausted herself in marvels merely for the gratification of their palate. Ferdinand came and found me in the midst of these meditations: he did me justice, and then said, smiling, but with a deep sigh, "Yes, we are not worthy to consume these glorious products of Nature; truly it were a pity. Permit me to make a present of them to my beloved?" How glad was I to see the basket carried off! How did I love Ferdinand—how did I thank him for the feeling he had excited in me—for the prospect he gave me? Aye, we ought to acquaint ourselves with the beautiful; we ought to contemplate it with rapture, and attempt to raise ourselves up to its height. And in order to gain strength for that, we must keep ourselves thoroughly unselfish—we must not make it our own, but rather seek to communicate it: indeed, to make a sacrifice of it to those who are dear and precious to us.

How sedulously are we shaped and moulded in our youth—how constantly are we then called on to lay aside now this, now that bad feeling! But what, in fact, are our so-called bad feelings but so many organs by means of which man is to help himself in life. How is not the poor child worried, in whom but a little spark of vanity is discovered! and yet what a poor miserable creature is the man who has

no vanity at all. I will now tell you what has led me to make all these reflections. The day before yesterday we were joined by a young fellow, who was most disagreeable to me and to Ferdinand. His weak points were so prominent, his emptiness so manifest, and his care for his outward appearance so obvious, that we looked down upon him as far inferior to ourselves, yet everywhere he was better received than we were. Among other of his follies, he wore a waist-coat of red satin, which round the neck was so cut as to look like the ribbon of some order or other. We could not restrain our jokes at this piece of absurdity, but he let them all pass, for he drew a good profit from it, and perhaps secretly laughed at us. For host and hostess, coachman, waiter and chambermaid, and indeed not a few of our fellow-travellers, were taken in by this seeming ornament, and showed him greater politeness than ourselves. Not only was he always first waited upon, but, to our great humiliation, we saw that all the pretty girls in the inns bestowed all their stolen glances upon him; and then, when it came to the reckoning, which his eminence and distinction had enhanced, we had to pay our full shares. Who, then, was the fool in the game?—not he, assuredly.

There is something pretty and *Conventional* instructive about the symbols and maxims *education*. which one here sees on all the stoves. Here you have the drawing of one of these symbols which particularly caught my fancy. A horse tethered by his hind foot to a stake is grazing round it as far as his tether will permit; beneath is written, "Allow me to take my allotted

portion of food." This, too, will be the case with me, when I come home, and, like the horse in the mill, shall have to work away at your pleasure, and in return, like the horse here on the stove, shall receive a nicely-measured dole for my support. Yes, I am coming back, and what awaits me was certainly well worth all the trouble of climbing up these mountain heights, of wandering through these valleys, and seeing this blue sky—of discovering that there is a nature which exists by an eternal voiceless necessity, which has no wants, no feelings, and is divine, whilst we, whether in the country or in the towns, have alike to toil hard to gain a miserable subsistence, and at the same time struggle to subject everything to our lawless caprice, and call it liberty!

Aye, I have ascended the *Furca*—the summit of S. Gotthard. These sublime, incomparable scenes of nature, will ever stand before my eye. Aye, I have read the Roman history, in order to gain from the comparison a distinct and vivid feeling what a thoroughly miserable being I am.

Never has it been so clear to me as during these last few days, that I too could be happy on moderate means—could be quite as happy as any one else, if only I knew a trade—an exciting one, indeed, but yet one which had no consequences for the morrow, which required nothing but industry and attention at the time, without calling for either foresight or retrospection. Every mechanic seems to me the happiest of mortals: all that he has to do is already settled for him, what he can do is fixed and known. He has not to

rack his brains over the task that is set him; he works away without thinking, without exertion or haste, but still with diligence and pleasure in his work, like a bird building its nest, or a bee constructing its cells. He is but a degree above the beasts, and yet he is a perfect man. How do I envy the potter at his wheel, or the joiner behind his bench!

Tilling the soil is not to my liking—this first and most necessary of man's occupations is disagreeable to me. In it man does but ape nature, who scatters her seeds everywhere, whereas man would choose that a particular field should produce none but one particular fruit. But things do not go on exactly so—the weeds spring up luxuriantly—the cold and wet injures the crop, or the hail cuts it off entirely. The poor husbandman anxiously waits throughout the year to see how the cards will decide the game with the clouds, and determine whether he shall win or lose his stakes. Such a doubtful ambiguous condition may be right suitable to man, in his present ignorance, while he knows not whence he came, nor whither he is going. It may then be tolerable to man to resign all his labours to chance; and thus the parson, at any rate, has an opportunity, when things look thoroughly bad, to remind him of Providence, and to connect the sins of his flock with the incidents of nature.

So then I have nothing to joke *An Adventure*. Ferdinand about! I too have met with a pleasant adventure. Adventure! why do I use the silly word?

There is nothing of adventure in a gentle attraction which draws man to man. Our social life, our false relations, those are adventures, these are monstrosities and yet they come before us as well-known and as nearly akin to us, as Uncle and Aunt.

We had been introduced to Herr Tüdou, and we found ourselves very happy among this family—rich, open-hearted, good-natured, lively people, who in the society of their children, in comfort and without care, enjoy the good which each day brings with it—their property and their glorious neighbourhood. We young folks were not required, as is too often the ease, in so many formal households, to sacrifice ourselves at the card-table, in order to humour the old. On the contrary, the old people, father, mother, and aunts, gathered round us, when for our own amusement, we got up some little games, in which chance, and thought, and wit, had their counteracting influence. Eleonora—for I must now at last mention her name—the second daughter—her image will for ever be present to my mind—a slim slight-frame, delicately chiselled features, a bright eye—a palish complexion, which in young girls of her age is rather pleasing than disagreeable, as being a sign of no very incurable a malady—on the whole, her appearance was extremely agreeable. She seemed cheerful and lively and every one felt at his ease with her. Soon—indeed I may venture to say at once,—at once, on the very first evening she made me her companion; she sat by my side, and if the game separated us a moment, she soon contrived to find her old place again. I was gay and cheerful—my journey, the beautiful weather, the country—all had contributed to

produce in me an immoderate cheerfulness—aye, I might almost venture to say, a state of excitement. I derived it from everything and imparted it to everything; even Ferdinand seemed to forget his fair one. We had almost exhausted ourselves in varying our amusements when we at last thought of the "Game of Matrimony." The names of the ladies and of the gentlemen were thrown separately into two hats, and then the pairs were drawn out one by one. On each couple, as determined by the lot, one of the company whose turn it might happen to be, had to write a little poem. Every one of the party, father, mother, and aunts, were obliged to put their names in the hats; we cast in besides the names of our acquaintances, and to enlarge the number of candidates for matrimony, we threw in those of all the well-known characters of the literary and of the political world. We commenced playing, and the first pairs that were drawn were highly distinguished personages. It was not every one, however, who was ready at once with his verses. *She*, Ferdinand and myself, and one of the aunts who wrote very pretty verses in French—we soon divided among ourselves the office of secretary. The conceits were mostly good and the verses tolerable. Her's especially, had a touch of nature about them which distinguished them from all others; without being really clever they had a happy turn; they were playful without being bitter, and shewed good will towards every one. The father laughed heartily, and his face was lit up with joy when his daughter's verses were declared to be the best after mine. Our unqualified approbation highly delighted him,—we praised as men praise unexpected merit—as we praise an author who has bribed

us. At last out came my lot, and chance had taken honourable care of me. It was no less a personage than the Empress of all the Russias, who was drawn to be my partner for life. The company laughed heartily at the match, and Eleonora maintained that the whole company must try their best to do honour to so eminent a consort. All began to try: a few pens were bitten to pieces; she was ready first, but wished to read last; the mother and the aunt could make nothing of the subject, and although the father was rather matter-of-fact, Ferdinand somewhat humorous, and the aunts rather reserved, still, through all you could see friendship and good-will. At last it came to her turn; she drew a deep breath, her ease and cheerfulness left her; she did not read but rather lisped it out—and laid it before me to read it to the rest. I was astonished, amazed. Thus does the bud of love open in beauty and modesty! I felt as if a whole spring had showered upon me all its flowers at once! Every one was silent, Ferdinand lost not his presence of mind. "Beautiful," he exclaimed, "very beautiful! he deserves the poem as little as an Empire." "If, only we have rightly understood it," said the father; the rest requested I would read it once more. My eyes had hitherto been fixed on the precious words, a shudder ran through me from head to foot, Ferdinand who saw my perplexity, took the paper up and read it. She scarcely allowed him to finish before she drew out the lots for another pair. The play was not kept up long after this and refreshments were brought in.

Shall I or shall I not? Is it right of me to hide in silence any thing from him to whom I tell so much—nay, all? Shall I

keep back from you a great matter, when I yet weary you with so many trifles which assuredly no one would ever read but you who have taken so wonderful a liking for me? or shall I keep back anything from you because it might perhaps give you a false, not to say an ill opinion of me? No—you know me better than I even know myself. If I should do anything which you do not believe possible I could do, you will amend it; if I should do anything deserving of censure, you will not spare me,—you will lead me and guide me whenever my peculiarities entice me off the right road.

My joy, my rapture at works of art when *Art and nature*. they are true, when they are immediate and speaking expressions of Nature afford the greatest delight to every collector, to every dilettante. Those indeed who call themselves connoisseurs are not always of my opinion; but I care nothing for their connoisseurship when I am happy. Does not living nature vividly impress itself on my sense of vision? Do not its images remain fixed in my brain? Do not they there grow in beauty, delighting to compare themselves in turn with the images of art which the mind of others has also embellished and beautified? I confess to you that my fondness for nature arises from the fact of my always seeing her so beautiful, so lovely, so brilliant, so ravishing, that the simulation of the artist, even his imperfect imitation transports me almost as much, as if it were a perfect type. It is only such works of art, however, as bespeak genius and feeling that have any charms for me. Those cold imitations which confine themselves to the narrow circle of a certain meagre mannerism, of mere painstaking diligence, are to me utterly intolerable. You see,

therefore, that my delight and taste cannot well be riveted by a work of art, unless it imitates such objects of nature as are well known to me, so that I am able to test the imitation by my own experience of the originals. Landscape, with all that lives and moves therein—flowers and fruit-trees. Gothic churches,—a portrait taken directly from Nature, all this I can recognize, feel, and if you like, judge of. Honest W—— amused himself with this trait of my character, and in such a way that I could not be offended, often made merry with it at my expense. He sees much further in this matter, than I do, and I shall always prefer that people should laugh at me while they instruct, than that they should praise me without benefitting me. He had noticed what things I was most immediately pleased with, and after a short acquaintance did not hesitate to avow that in the objects that so transported me there might be much that was truly estimable, and which time alone would enable me to distinguish.

But I turn from this subject and must now, however circuitously, come to the matter which, though reluctantly, I cannot but confide to you. I can see you in your room, in your little garden, where, over a pipe of tobacco, you will probably break the seal and read this letter. Can your thoughts follow me into this free and motley world? Will the circumstances and true state of the case become clear to your imagination? And will you be as indulgent towards your absent friend as I have often found you when present?

When my artistic friend became better *Studies of the* acquainted with me, and judged me *nude*.
worthy of being gradually introduced to

better pieces of art, he one day, not without a most mysterious look, took me to a case, which, being opened, displayed a Danæ, of the size of life, receiving in her bosom the golden shower. I was amazed at the splendour of the limbs—the magnificence of the posture and arrangement—the intense tenderness and the intellectuality of the sensual subject; and yet I did but stand before it in silent contemplation. It did not excite in me *that* rapture, *that* delight, *that* inexpressible pleasure. My friend, who went on descanting upon the merits of the picture, was too full of his own enthusiasm to notice my coldness, and was delighted with the opportunity this painting afforded him of pointing out the distinctive excellences of the Italian School.

But the sight of this picture has not made me happy—it has made me uneasy. How! said I to myself—in what a strange case do we civilized men find ourselves with our many conventional restraints! A mossy rock, a waterfall rivets my eye so long that I can tell everything about it—its heights, its cavities, its lights and shades, its hues, its blending tints and reflections—all is distinctly present to my mind; and whenever I please, comes vividly before me, in a most happy imitation. But of that masterpiece of Nature, the human frame—of the order and symmetry of the limbs, of all this I have but a very general notion—which in fact is no notion at all. My imagination presents to me anything but a vivid image of this glorious structure, and when art presents an imitation of it, to my eye it awakens in me no sensation and I am unable to judge of the merits of the picture. No, I will remain no longer in this state of stupidity. I will stamp on

my mind the shape of man, as well as that of a cluster of grapes or of a peach-tree.

I sought an occasion and got Ferdinand to take a swim in the lake. What a glorious shape has my friend; how duly proportioned are all his limbs: what fulness of form; what splendour of youth! What a gain to have enriched my imagination with this perfect model of manhood! Now I can people the woods, the meadow, and the hills, with similar fine forms! I can see him as Adonis chasing the boar, or as Narcissus contemplating himself in the mirror of the spring.

But alas! my imagination cannot furnish, as yet, a Venus, who holds him from the chace, a Venus who bewails his death, or a beautiful Echo casting one sad look more on the cold corpse of the youth before she vanishes for ever! I have therefore resolved, cost what it will, to see a female form in the state that I have seen my friend.

When, therefore, we reached Geneva, I made arrangements in the character of an artist to complete my studies of the nude figure, and to-morrow evening my wish is to be gratified.

I cannot avoid going to-day with Ferdinand to a grand party. It will form an excellent foil to the studies of this evening. Well enough do I know those formal parties where the old women require you to play at cards with them, and the young ones to ogle with them; where you must listen to the learned, pay respect to the parson, and give way to the noble, where the numerous lights show you scarcely one tolerable form, and that one hidden and buried beneath some barbarous load of frippery. I shall have to speak

French, too,—a foreign tongue—the use of which always makes a man appear silly, whatever he may think of himself, since the best he can express in it is nothing but common place, and the most obvious of remarks, and that, too, only with stammering and hesitating lips. For what is it that distinguishes the blockhead from the really clever man but the peculiar quickness and vividness with which the latter discerns the nicer shades and proprieties of all that come before him, and expresses himself thereon with facility; whereas the former, (just as we all do with a foreign language,) is forced on every occasion to have recourse to some ready found and conversational phrase or other? To-day I will calmly put up with the sorry entertainment, in expectation of the rare scene of nature which awaits me in the evening.



My adventure is over. It has fully equalled my expectation—nay, surpassed it; and yet I know not whether to congratulate, or to blame myself on account of it.



PART THE SECOND.

Munster, October 3, 1797.

From Basle you will receive a packet containing an account of my travels up to that point, for we are now continuing in good earnest our tours through Switzerland. On our route to Biel we rode up the beautiful valley of the Birsch, and at last reached the pass which leads to this place.

Among the ridges of the broad and lofty *The valley of* range of mountains the little stream of the *the Birsch.*

Birsch found of old a channel for itself.

Necessity soon after may have driven men to clamber wearily and painfully through its gorges. The Romans in their time enlarged the track, and now you may travel through it with perfect ease. The stream, dashing over crags and rocks, and the road run side by side, and except at a few points, these make up the whole breadth of the pass which is hemmed in by rocks, the top of which is easily reached by the eye. Behind them the mountain chain rose with a slight inclination; the summits, however, were veiled by a mist.

Here walls of rock rise precipitously one above another; there immense strata run obliquely down to the river and the road—here again broad masses lie piled one over another, while close beside stands a line of sharp-pointed crags. Wide clefts run yawning upwards, and blocks, of the size of a wall, have detached themselves from the rest of the stony mass. Some fragments of the rock have rolled to the bottom; others are still suspended, and by their position

alarm you, as also likely at any moment to come toppling down.

Now round, now pointed, now overgrown, now bare are the tops of these rocks among and high above which some single bald summit boldly towers, while along the perpendicular cliffs and among the hollows below, the weather has worn many a deep and winding cranny.

The passage through this defile raised in me a grand but calm emotion. The sublime produces a beautiful calmness in the soul which entirely possessed by it, feels as great as it ever can feel. How glorious is such a pure feeling, when it rises to the very highest, without overflowing. My eye and my soul were both able to take in the objects before me, and as I was pre-occupied by nothing, and had no false tastes to counteract their impression, they had on me their full and natural effect. When we compare such a feeling with that we are sensible of, when we laboriously harass ourselves with some trifle, and strain every nerve to gain as much as possible for it, and as it were, to patch it out, striving to furnish joy and aliment to the mind from its own creation; we then feel sensibly what a poor expedient, after all, the latter is.

A young man, whom we have had for our companion from Basle, said his feelings were very far from what they were on his first visit, and gave all the honour to novelty. I however would say, when we see such objects as these for the first time, the unaccustomed soul has to expand itself, and this gives rise to a sort of painful joy—an overflowing of emotion which agitates the mind, and draws from us the most delicious tears. By this operation the soul, without

knowing it, becomes greater in itself, and is of course not capable of ever feeling again such a sensation, and man thinks in consequence that he has lost something, whereas in fact he has gained. What he loses in delight he gains in inward riches. If only destiny had bidden me to dwell in the midst of some grand scenery, then would I every morning have imbibed greatness from its grandeur, as from a lonely valley I would extract patience and repose.

After reaching the end of the gorge I alighted, and went back alone through a part of the valley. I thus called forth another profound feeling—one by which the attentive mind may expand its joys to a high degree. One guesses in the dark about the origin and existence of these singular forms. It may have happened, when and how it may,—these masses must, according to the laws of gravity and affinity, have been formed grandly and simply by aggregation. Whatever revolutions may subsequently have upheaved, rent and divided them, the latter were only partial convulsions, and even the idea of such mighty commotions gives one a deep feeling of the eternal stability of the masses. Time, too, bound by the everlasting law, has had here greater, here less, effect upon them.

Internally their colour appears to be yellowish. The air, however, and the weather has changed the surface into a bluish-grey, so that the original colour is only visible here and there in streaks and in the fresh cracks. The stone itself slowly crumbles beneath the influence of the weather, becoming rounded at the edges, as the softer flakes wear away. In this manner have been formed hollows and cavities

gracefully shelving off, which when they have sharp slanting and pointed edges, present a singular appearance.

Vegetation maintains its rights on every ledge, on every flat surface, for in every fissure the pines strike root, and the mosses and plants spread themselves over the rocks. One feels deeply convinced that here there is nothing accidental; that here there is working an eternal law which, however slowly, yet surely governs the universe,—that there is nothing here from the hand of man but the convenient road, by means of which this singular region is traversed.

Geneva, October 27, 1779.

The great mountain-range which, *La Vallée de* running from Basle to Geneva, divides *Joux*. Switzerland from France, is, as you are aware, named the Jura. Its principal heights run by Lausanne, and reach as far as Rolle and Nyon. In the midst of this summit ridge Nature has cut out—I might almost say washed out—a remarkable valley, for on the tops of all these limestone rocks the operation of the primal waters is manifest. It is called *La Vallée de Joux*, which means the Valley of the Rock, since *Joux* in the local dialect signifies a rock. Before I proceed with the further description of our journey, I will give you a brief geographical account of its situation. Lengthwise it stretches like the mountain range itself almost directly from south to north, and is locked in on the one side by *Sept Moncels*, and on the other by *Dent de Vaulion*, which, after the *Dole*, is the highest peak of the Jura. Its length, according to the statement of the neighbourhood, is nine short leagues, but according to our

rough reckoning as we rode through it, six good leagues. The mountainous ridge which bounds it lengthwise on the north, and is also visible from the flat lands, is called the Black Mountain (Le Noir Mont). Towards the west the Risou rises gradually, and slopes away towards Franche Comté. France and Berne divide the valley pretty evenly between them; the former claiming the upper and inferior half, and the latter possessing the lower and better portion, which is properly called La Vallée du Lac de Joux. Quite at the upper part of the valley, and at the foot of Sept Moncels, lies the Lac des Rousses, which has no single visible origin, but gathers its waters from the numerous springs which here gush out of the soil, and from the little brooks which run into the lake from all sides. Out of it flows the Orbe, which after running through the whole of the French, and a great portion of the Bernese territory, forms lower down, and towards the Dent de Vaulion, the Lac de Joux, which falls on one side into a smaller lake, the waters of which have some subterraneous outlet. The breadth of the valley varies; above, near the Lac des Rousses it is nearly half a league, then it closes in to expand again presently, and to reach its greatest breadth, which is nearly a league and a-half. So much to enable you better to understand what follows; while you read it, however, I would beg you now and then to cast a glance upon your map, although, so far as concerns this country, I have found them all to be incorrect.

October 24th. In company with a captain and an upper ranger of the forests in these parts, we rode first of all up Mont, a little scattered village, which much more correctly might be called a line of husbandmen's and vinedressers'

cottages. The weather was extremely clear; when we turned to look behind us, we had a view of the Lake of Geneva, the mountains of Savoy and Valais, and could just catch Lausanne, and also, through a light mist, the country round Geneva, Mont Blanc, which towers above all the mountains of Faucigni, stood out more and more distinctly. It was a brilliant sunset, and the view was so grand, that no human eye was equal to it. The moon rose almost at the full, as we got continually higher. Through large pine forests we continued to ascend the Jura, and saw the lake in a mist, and in it the reflection of the moon. It became lighter and lighter. The road is a well-made causeway, though it was laid down merely for the sake of facilitating the transport of the timber to the plains below. We had been ascending for full three leagues before the road began gently to descend. We thought we saw below us a vast lake, for a thick mist filled the whole valley which we overlooked. Presently we came nearer to the mist, and observed a white bow which the moon formed in it, and were soon entirely enveloped in the fog. The company of the captain procured us lodgings in a house where strangers were not usually entertained. In its internal arrangement it differed in nothing from usual buildings of the same kind, except that the great room in the centre was at once the kitchen, the ante-room, and general gathering-place of the family, and from it you entered at once into the sleeping-rooms, which were either on the same floor with it, or had to be approached by steps. On the one side was the fire, which was burning on the ground on some stone slabs, while a chimney, built durably and neatly of planks, received and carried off the smoke. In

the corner were the doors of the oven; all the rest of the floor was of wood, with the exception of a small piece near the window around the sink, which was paved. Moreover, all around, and over head on the beams a multitude of domestic articles and utensils were arranged in beautiful order, and all kept nice and clean.

October 26th.—This morning the weather was cold but clear, the meadows covered with hoar frost, and here and there light clouds were floating in the air. We could pretty nearly survey the whole of the lower valley, our house being situated at the foot of the eastern side of Noir Mont. About eight we set off, and in order to enjoy the sun fully, proceeded on the western side. The part of the valley we now traversed was divided into meadows, which, towards the lake were rather swampy. The inhabitants either dwell in detached houses built by the side of their farms, or else have gathered closer together in little villages, which bear simple names derived from their several sites. The first of those that we passed through was called "Le Sentier." We saw at a distance the Dent de Vaultion peeping out over a mist which rested on the lake. The valley grew broader, but our road now lay behind a ridge of rock which shut out our view of the lake, and then through another village called "Le Lieu." The mist arose, and fell off highly variegated by the sun. Close hereto is a small lake, which apparently has neither inlet nor outlet of its waters. The weather cleared up completely as we came to the foot of Dent de Vaultion, and reached the northern extremity of the great lake, which, as it turns westward, empties itself into a smaller by a dam beneath the bridge. The village just above is called "Le

Pont." The situation of the smaller lake is what you may easily conceive, as being in a peculiar little valley which may be called pretty. At the western extremity there is a singular mill, built in a ravine of the rock which the smaller lake used formerly to fill. At present it is dammed out of the mill which is erected in the hollow below. The water is conveyed by sluices to the wheel, from which it falls into crannies of the rock, and being sucked in by them, does not show itself again till it reaches Valorbe, which is a full league off, where it again bears the name of the Orbe. These outlets (*entonnoirs*) require to be kept clear, otherwise the water would rise and again fill the ravine, and overflow the mill as it has often done already. We saw the people hard at work removing the worn pieces of the lime-stone and replacing them by others.

We rode back again over the bridge *Dent de* towards "Le Pont," and took a guide for the *Vaulion*. *Dent du Vaulion*. In ascending it we now had the great Lake directly behind us. To the east its boundary is the Noir Mont, behind which the bald peak of the Dole rises up; to the west it is shut in by the mountain ridge, which on the side of the lake is perfectly bare. The sun felt hot: it was between eleven and twelve o'clock. By degrees we gained a sight of the whole valley, and were able to discern in the distance the "Lac des Rousses," and then stretching to our feet the district we had just ridden through and the road which remained for our return. During the ascent my guide discoursed of the whole range of the country and the lordships which, he said, it was possible to distinguish from the peak. In the midst of such talk we

reached the summit. But a very different spectacle was prepared for us. Under a bright and clear sky nothing was visible but the high mountain chain, all the lower regions were covered with a white sea of cloudy mist, which stretched from Geneva northwards, along the horizon and glittered brilliantly in the sunshine. Out of it, rose to the east, the whole line of snow and ice-capt mountains acknowledging no distinction of names of either the Princes or Peoples, who fancied they were owners of them, and owning subjection only to one Lord, and to the glance of the Sun which was tinging them with a beautiful red. Mont Blanc, right opposite to us, seemed the highest, next to it were the ice-crowned summits of Valais and Oberland, and lastly, came the lower mountains of the Canton of Berne. Towards the west, the sea of mist which was unconfined to one spot; on the left, in the remotest distance, appeared the mountains of Solothurn; somewhat nearer those of Neufchatel, and right before us some of the lower heights of the Jura. Just below, lay some of the masses of the Vaulion, to which belongs the Dent, (tooth) which takes from it its name. To the west, Franche-Comté, with its flat, outstretched and wood-covered hills, shut in the whole horizon; in the distance, towards the north-west, one single mass stood out distinct from all the rest. Straight before us, however, was a beautiful object. This was the peak which gives this summit the name of a tooth. It descends precipitously, or rather with a slight curve, inwards, and in the bottom it is succeeded by a small valley of pine-trees, with beautiful grassy patches here and there, while right beyond it lies the valley of the Orbe (Val-orbe), where you

see this stream coming out of the rock, and can trace, in thought, its route backwards to the smaller lake. The little town of Valorbe, also lies in this valley. Most reluctantly we quitted the spot. A delay of a few hours longer, (for the mist generally disperses in about that time), would have enabled us to distinguish the low lands with the lake—but in order that our enjoyment should be perfect, we must always have something behind still to be wished. As we descended we had the whole valley lying perfectly distinct before us. At Le Pont we again mounted our horses, and rode to the east side of the lake, and passed through l'Abbaye de Joux, which at present is a village, but once was a settlement of monks, to whom the whole valley belonged. Towards four, we reached our auberge and found our meal ready, of which we were assured by our hostess that at twelve o'clock it would have been good eating, and which, overdone as it was, tasted excellently.

Let me now add a few particulars just *The Dole*. as they were told me. As I mentioned just now, the valley belonged formerly to the monks, who having divided it again to feudatories, were with the rest ejected at the Reformation. At present it belongs to the Canton of Berne, and the mountains around are the timber-stores of the Pays de Vaud. Most of the timber is private property, and is cut up under supervision, and then carried down into the plains. The planks are also made here into deal utensils of all kinds, and pails, tubs, and similar articles manufactured.

The people are civil and well disposed. Besides their trade in wood, they also breed cattle. Their beasts are of a