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LAUSANNE AND SOME ENGLISH WRITERS

Lausanne, because of its position on one of the main highways of Europe, the direct road from the English Channel to Milan and Rome via the Grand St. Bernard or the Simplon, has seen innumerable travellers go up and down its narrow hilly streets. It has long been a favourite stopping place for these travellers, lying as it does on the shore of a beautiful lake, half-way between the Jura and the Alps. Even limiting it to English travellers, a list of the many distinguished people who once stopped over at Lausanne would be a long one, and a writer familiar with the lives of all the men and women who have left a name in English literature could record many more connections between Lausanne and English literature than the few that are discussed here. The present writer has chosen to limit himself to five English writers of the past two centuries, whose letters or memoirs reflect some characteristic aspects of his own city.

Gibbon is the English writer whose association with Lausanne was the longest, and was to prove the most fruitful.

As is known to every reader of his *Memoirs*, he first came to Lausanne as a boy of sixteen, sent there by his father, in the summer of 1753, in an attempt (which succeeded only too well, since it eventually turned the young Gibbon from a Christian to a deist) to cure him of his recent infatuation for the « errors of the Church of Rome »¹. The young Gibbon « arrived the 30th of June at Lausanne », delighted with himself and his journey and determined to play « the honorable and important part » of an exile and a martyr².

¹ *Memoirs of My Life and Writings*, Vol. I, p. 55, in *Miscellaneous Works of Edward Gibbon, Esq. (...)*, ed. John Lord Sheffield, 1796. I have used the Basle edition of the *Miscellaneous Works*, in seven volumes 8^o, whose text appears to be identical with that of the London 1st edition of the same year. This edition is henceforth referred to as *Misc. Wks* (I, II, etc.).

² *Misc. Wks*. I, 66.

As soon however as his pleasant travelling companion, one Mr. Frey, «a Swiss gentleman of Basil»¹ had safely «resigned» him into the hands of M. Pavillard (or Pavilliard, as the name is spelt in the *Memoirs*), the Lausanne « Calvinist Minister »¹ to whom had been entrusted «the duty (...) to reclaim» the young rebel «from the errors of popery»², Gibbon's spirits fell «at the strange and melancholy prospect before [him]»³.

«*My first complaint*», he tells us in a passage of his *Memoirs* where regret for lost creature comforts strangely mingles with complaints of a less material nature, «*arose from my ignorance of the language. In my childhood I had once studied the French grammar, and I could imperfectly understand the easy prose of a familiar subject. But when I was thus suddenly cast on a foreign land, I found myself deprived of the use of speech and of hearing; and, during some weeks, incapable not only of enjoying the pleasures of conversation, but even of asking or answering a question in the common intercourse of life. (...) I had now exchanged my elegant apartment in Magdalen College, for a narrow, gloomy street, the most unfrequented of an unhandsome town, for an old inconvenient house, and for a small chamber ill-contrived and ill-furnished, which, on the approach of Winter, instead of a companionable fire, must be warmed by the dull invisible heat of a stove. From a man I was again degraded to the dependance of a school-boy. Mr. Pavilliard managed my expenses, which had been reduced to a diminutive state: I received a small monthly allowance for my pocket-money; and helpless and awkward as I have ever been, I no longer enjoyed the indispensable comfort of a servant. My condition seemed as destitute of hope as it was devoid of pleasure: I was separated for an indefinite, which appeared an infinite term, from my native country; and I had lost all connexion with my catholic friends*»⁴.

Readers of Gibbon's *Memoirs* are familiar with the astonishingly rapid process by which Gibbon passed from this dispirited and disenchanted view of the «unhandsome town» to which his own rashness

¹ *Misc. Wks. I*, 66.

² *Ibid.*, 72.

³ *Ibid.*, 67.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 67-68. The house described by Gibbon is no. 16, rue Cité-Derrière. It is still standing, in very decayed condition, but will soon be incorporated into a new building that will house the Vaudois *gendarmerie*. Gibbon spent but one year in this house. In the following year, 1754, the Pavillard household moved into another house in the lower part of the Cité, near the present Collège scientifique. This house is no longer extant.

and his father's severity had exiled him, to a delighted appreciation of the many attractions the little Swiss city held in store for him. Pastor Pavillard was both an excellent teacher and an understanding and liberal-minded man. He soon realised what an unusually bright and essentially reasonable young man he had to deal with, and, after putting Gibbon in a fair way of making a systematic study « of modern history and geography, (...) and (...) the French and Latin classics »¹, « he wisely left me to my genius »². It is a matter of common knowledge where Gibbon's genius led him. Although willing to allow the tactful and persuasive Pavillard « a handsome share of the honor of [his] conversion »³, this conversion, Gibbon proudly declares, was « principally effected by my private reflections »³, aided, as his *Memoirs* further indicate, by training in logical argumentation deriving from assiduous study of J. P. de Crousaz's *Système de réflexions (...) ou Nouvel essai de logique*. Eventually, after appearing, on December 22, 1754, before the *Vénérable Compagnie pastorale* of Lausanne, where he made an acknowledgement of his errors, the young Gibbon was re-admitted into the Protestant fold « and after a full conviction, on Christmas-day 1754, I received the sacrament in the church of Lausanne »⁴. More important still, though for this also, Gibbon was indebted « to the lessons of Mr. Pavilliard »⁵, at Lausanne he acquired that familiarity with both the French language and with the French and Latin classics, and those habits of critical and systematic reading of classical and other works, which laid the first solid foundation for his future work as a historian. In fact, when he « took [his] leave of Lausanne on the 11th of April 1758, with a mixture of joy and regret »⁶, after five years of what he was now pleased to call « the fortunate banishment which placed

¹ *Misc. Wks. I*, 71.

² *Ibid.*, 73.

³ *Ibid.*, 72.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 72. — Gibbon's *Memoirs* do not mention his appearance, on Dec. 22, 1754, before the *Vénérable Compagnie pastorale*, nor his matriculation, on October 1, 1756, as a student in the Lausanne *Académie* (the present *Université*). The relevant facts will be found in H. Vuilleumier's *Histoire de l'Eglise réformée du Pays de Vaud sous le régime bernois*, Lausanne, 1923, vol. IV, p. 365. A letter of Gibbon to his aunt Mrs. Catherine Porten, undated, but probably written in February 1755, reports that « I am now good protestant (*sic*) and am extremely glad of it ». (*The Letters of Edward Gibbon*, ed. J. E. Norton, 1956, Vol. I, p. 3.) (This edition is henceforth referred to as *Letters (I, II or III.)*)

⁵ *Misc. Wks. I*, 70.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 90.

me at Lausanne»¹, he took away with him the plan and the first pages of his first book, his French *Essai sur l'étude de la littérature*².

However studious, Gibbon's life in this, his first stay at Lausanne, had not been that of a recluse. « *The acquaintance of the Pavilliards prepared me by degrees for more elegant society. I was received with kindness and indulgence in the best families of Lausanne ; and it was in one of these that I formed an intimate and lasting connexion with Mr. Deyverdun, a young man of an amiable temper and excellent understanding,* »³ whose house Gibbon was to share in his third and last stay at Lausanne. In the pleasant « assemblies of men and women » which Gibbon thus « frequented, for the first time »³, members of the best local families hobnobbed with distinguished foreign visitors, drawn to Lausanne by the beauty of the site, the gay social life and the comparatively liberal atmosphere. It was Gibbon's good fortune to meet at Lausanne the great Voltaire, whom he was privileged to hear « *declaim his own productions on the stage (...) at Monrepos, a country-house at the end of a suburb. (...) The author directed the rehearsals with the zeal and attention of paternal love. In two successive winters [1757 and 1758] his tragedies of Zayre, Alzire Zulime, and his sentimental comedy of the Enfant Prodigue, were played at the theatre of Monrepos. Voltaire represented the characters best adapted to his years, Lusignan, Alvarez, Benassar, Euphemon. His declamation was fashioned to the pomp and cadence of the old stage ; and he expressed the enthusiasm of poetry, rather than the feelings of nature. My ardor, which soon became conspicuous, seldom failed of procuring me a ticket. The habits of pleasure fortified my taste for the French theatre, and that taste has perhaps abated my idolatry for the gigantic genius of Shakspeare,*

¹ *Misc. Wks. I*, 88.

² D. M. Low, *Edward Gibbon, 1734-1794*, 1937, pp. 102 ff. (henceforth referred to as *Low*). — The *Essai*, which Gibbon finished in England between 1758 and 1761, was published in London in July 1761 (see Gibbon's own statement on the matter in *Misc. Wks. IV*, 128). « Twenty copies were dispatched to Lausanne as the first fruits of the author's education and a grateful token of his remembrance » (M. Joyce, *Edward Gibbon*, 1953, p. 46). — A « very badly done » English version was made « later in the year » (*Low*, 103) and was published in 1764. The *Essai*, reprinted « with corrections and additions from an interleaved copy which my Friend gave to me several years ago » (thus Lord Sheffield in *Misc. Wks. I*, ix) will be found in *Misc. Wks. IV*, 127-198 (French text), and *VII*, 79-142 (English translation).

³ *Misc. Wks. I*, 70.



TURNER : LAUSANNE (*dessin*)

which is inculcated from our infancy as the first duty of an Englishman. »¹

At Lausanne it was also that, in June 1757, the twenty year old Gibbon first saw the beautiful and virtuous Suzanne Curchod, daughter of the then « minister of Crassy »², fell in love with her, and, in the course of several meetings with his beloved at Lausanne, Crassy and other places, indulged a « dream of [married] felicity »³, which was dispelled by the discovery, soon after his return to England in April 1758, that his father would never consent to his marrying the dowerless daughter of a Swiss minister. A famous passage of Gibbon's *Memoirs* describes, with more rhetorical aptness than truth, the « painful struggle » with his father's opposition and his own feelings — a struggle which ended when Gibbon, with more worldly wisdom than genuine passion, reluctantly, but definitely, « yielded to [his] fate : I sighed as a lover, I obeyed as a son »⁴.

Five years were to elapse Gibbon saw Lausanne and the fair Suzanne Curchod again. No longer a school-boy of sixteen, but a man of twenty-six, he « arrived in the month of May 1763 on the banks of the Lemman Lake. It had been my intention to pass the Alps in the autumn, but such are the simple attractions of the place, that the year had almost expired before my departure from Lausanne in the ensuing spring »⁵. Although Gibbon dutifully paid a visit to his old friend and tutor, « the good Pavilliard », who, he rather patronisingly says, « shed tears of joy as he embraced a pupil, whose literary merit he might fairly impute to his own labors »⁵, the once raw young Briton now grown into a connoisseur of French cuisine and wines, and a frequenter of the most elegant salons « of England and Paris », could not, as he smugly tells us, « have returned with satisfaction to

¹ *Misc. Wks. I*, 85. — The present 'Mon Repos' is a later (early 19th century) building. The only remainder of the 'Monrepos' Gibbon knew is the little octagonal pavilion in the park a few feet west of the house.

² *Ibid.*, 86. — Crassy, now Crassier, is a village on the road from Nyon to Divonne.

³ *Ibid.*, 87.

⁴ *Ibid, ibid.* — Readers wishing to form an opinion of Gibbon's conduct in this episode of his life should read (a) the correspondence exchanged between the two lovers (*Letters I, passim*; see list of the letters on pp. 394-395), and (b) the full discussions of the affair to be found in Appendix II to the *Letters* (*Letters I*, pp. 391-401) and in Appendice II to *Le Journal de Gibbon à Lausanne : 17 Août 1763-19 Avril 1764*, ed. G. Bonnard (Lausanne, Publications de la Faculté des Lettres VIII, 1945, pp. 281-304).

⁵ *Misc. Wks. I*, 128. — « I got here only the 25th » (Gibbon to his father, Lausanne, May 31, 1763), in *Letters I*, 146.

the coarse and homely table of Madame Pavilliard »¹. He therefore entered himself « as a *pensionnaire*, or boarder, in the elegant house of Mr. De Mesery », situated « in the best street [of Lausanne], and commanding, from behind, a noble prospect over the country and the Lake »¹.

In this second stay at Lausanne, as in the first, Gibbon wisely divided his time between study and pleasure. He spent many a gay afternoon and evening in the « pleasant assemblies » held in the aristocratic houses of the *rue de Bourg* and in the country-seats on the outskirts of the town. A lively group of young women of his own age, « *la société du printemps* », was particularly congenial to him. « They laughed, they sung, they danced, they played at cards, they acted comedies. »¹ Gibbon freely took part in these and other pleasures, indulged, with a group of Swiss and English rowdies, in at least one drunken bout, and flirted, with what Mr. Low aptly calls « a calculated mixture of ardour and restraint »², with at least one married lady. He never however let these amusements seriously interfere with his work, nor did he respond with any encouraging words to Suzanne Curchod's pitiful efforts to recapture his heart³. He studied most diligently the geography and history of ancient Italy as a preparation for his coming journey, so that, when, on April 18, 1764, he left Lausanne for Italy, he had made himself an expert in this subject and laid another solid foundation for his work as an historian.⁴

¹ *Misc. Wks. I*, 130. — The « best street » is the *rue de Bourg*, then lined with the town-houses of the first families of Lausanne. The Mesery (or Mésery) house no longer exists. On Gibbon's second stay at Lausanne see, besides his *Memoirs* and *Journal*, *Letters I*, pp. 146-171. Particularly entertaining is the reflection on Madame Pavillard's cuisine contained in Gibbon's letter of June 8, 1763, where he tells his step-mother that, though he did not want to disoblige his « old friend » Pavillard by not staying with him, « I did not chuse to see the Leg of Mutton roasted a second time with a gash in it » (*Letters I*, 151).

² *Low*, 163-164. — The incident of the drunken brawl is not mentioned in Gibbon's *Memoirs*. A rather full account, based on Gibbon's *Journal* and the records of the Lausanne City Council, will be found in *Low*, 151-153. Cf. also *Journal*, ed. Bonnard, pp. 7 and 273-280.

³ Cf. above, p. 95, n. 4. — Mr. Low's version of the Suzanne Curchod-Edward Gibbon affair, as contained in chapter 10 of his *Edward Gibbon*, is no longer tenable.

⁴ Cf. *Journal*, ed. Bonnard, *passim*. Cf. also *Letters I*, 153-154, where Gibbon describes his plan for writing « a Description of the ancient Geography of Italy, taken from the Original writers », which « will be a most useful preparation to my tour of Italy », and *Letters I*, 169 and 171, which establish the fact that he left Lausanne on April 18, 1764.

When he next arrived at Lausanne, on the 27th of September 1783, « nearly twenty years after my second departure »¹, it was under very different circumstances. For the last ten years or so he had been engaged in his great work, whose fourth volume was now finished « except for the last chapter »². Lausanne appeared the ideal place to complete the whole work. « The academical library of Lausanne », though not very rich, « contained at least the fathers and councils »³. The public libraries of Basle, Berne and Geneva could supply, Gibbon hoped, what books he needed besides those he had sent to Lausanne in « two immense Cases »⁴. Also, whereas, in London, Gibbon had been « lost in the crowd », at Lausanne he would rank « with the first families » and his « style of prudent expense [would] enable [him] to maintain a fair balance of reciprocal civilities »⁵. In fact, the modest income which, in London, had barely sufficed to maintain the establishment « of a solitary bachelor, who might afford some occasional dinners »⁵ would now allow him to live with dignity and ease, « within [his] income » and to « save and even accumulate [his] ready money » while waiting for the publication of his *History* to bring him « profit as well as fame »⁶. Truly, as Gibbon soon found out, Lausanne, though delightfully quiet after London, was no longer quite the peaceful spot it had been twenty years before. « The situation and beauty of the Pays de Vaud, » Gibbon complained, « the long

¹ *Misc. Wks. I*, 177.

² *Letters II*, 344 n. 1. — According to Gibbon's *Memoirs* (see p. 99 below), he conceived the idea of writing a book on the decline and fall of Rome « at Rome on the 15th of October 1764 ». There is no reference to this in his *Journal* for 1764, nor in the detailed and enthusiastic letters he sent from Rome to his father at that time, and there is some (slight) discrepancy among the three different Ms. versions of the passage in the *Memoirs*. Some doubt has therefore been entertained as to its credibility (on this cf. G. Bonnard, « L'importance des deux séjours de Gibbon à Lausanne dans la formation de l'historien », in *Mélanges d'histoire et de littérature offerts à Monsieur Charles Gilliard*, Lausanne, 1944, p. 420.) The first reference to Gibbon being engaged in the « prosecution of my great Work » is to be found in a letter dated September 10, 1773 (*Letters I*, 377), the first reference to it *by name* in one dated September 24, 1774 (*Letters II*, 34 : « the Bath Journey (...) will most wonderfully delay the fall of the Roman Empire »). Vol. I (ch. 1 to 16) of *The Decline and Fall* was published on Feb. 17, 1776 (*Letters II*, 97), Vols. II and III (ch. 17-26 and 27-38) on March 1, 1781 (*Letters II*, 260-261), Vols. IV, V and VI (ch. 39-47, 48-57 and 58-71) on May 8, 1788 (*Letters III*, 99).

³ *Misc. Wks. I*, 181. Cf. also *Letters II*, 335.

⁴ *Letters II*, 360.

⁵ *Misc. Wks. I*, 178.

⁶ *Letters II*, 342 (Gibbon to Lord Sheffield, July 10, 1783).

habits of the English, the medical reputation of Dr. Tissot, and the fashion of viewing the mountains and *Glaciers*, have opened us on all sides to the incursions of foreigners »¹. Fortunately, among these 'foreigners' there were many (Charles Fox, for instance, Lord and Lady Sheffield and their daughters, and many others) whose visits Gibbon much enjoyed, as he did those of his former lover, Suzanne Curchod, now Madame Necker, and her husband and eighteen-year old daughter, the future Madame de Staël, « one of the greatest heiresses in Europe », whom Gibbon describes as « wild, vain but goodnatured and with a much larger provision of wit than beauty »². Above all, Lausanne in 1783, to Gibbon, meant the devoted yet unobtrusive companionship of the tactful and intelligent Deyverdun and the privilege of sharing with him, under the most convenient and mutually agreeable terms, the use of a « spacious and convenient mansion », *La Grotte*, « connected on the north side with the city, and open on the south to a beautiful and boundless horizon »³. The view from the terrace was magnificent. Instead of the massive office-buildings and blocks of flats now crowding the steep slope between place St. François and the Lake, « a rich scenery of meadows and vineyards », with a few scattered *cabinets de vigne*, left the eye free to wander from the *berceau d'acacias* below Gibbon's windows to the few fishermen's houses clustered round the ruined Château d'Ouchy, and, beyond Ouchy and the lake, to « the stupendous mountains of Savoy »³.

Under circumstances thus conducive to peace of mind, ease of body, and fruitful intellectual labour, it is no wonder if the great *History*, whose progress had been « suspended » for « a full twelve-month » by « the hurry of my departure, the joy of my arrival, the

¹ *Misc. Wks. I*, 179.

² *Letters III*, 11 (Gibbon to Lady Sheffield, Oct. 22, 1784).

³ *Misc. Wks.*, 178. Of *La Grotte* only the name remains. It stood on the site of the present post-office at Place St. François. The grounds, which were quite extensive and included « a garden of four acres » (*Misc. Wks. I*, 179) tastefully laid out by Deyverdun, are now almost entirely built over. They are occupied by various office and other buildings extending east and west from the rue de la Grotte to the rue du Petit-Chêne, and north and south from Place St. François to the rue Edward Gibbon and the rue du Midi. One interesting relic of this period of Gibbon's life remains. It is the little wooden pavilion « with slatted windows » (*Low*, 337) perched above the Escaliers du Marché in front of the West porch of the Cathedral. It once belonged to Pastor Levade, and Gibbon was often a guest of Levade's in the little salon inside the pavilion (cf. *Low*, 337-338, and G. A. Bridel and Dr. E. Bach, *Lausanne, promenades historiques et archéologiques*, Lausanne 1931, pp. 28-29).

delay of my tools »¹, proceeded with renewed energy, until, on the 27th of June 1787, Gibbon wrote the last words of the work which had first been conceived when, « *at Rome, on the 15th of October 1764, as I sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, while the bare-footed friars were singing vespers in the Temple of Jupiter (...) the idea of writing the decline and fall of the city first started to my mind* »² Many years had « elapsed, and several avocations intervened, » before he had actually « engaged in the execution of that laborious work »². All who have read Gibbon's *Memoirs* know with what mixture of sadness and relief he now laid aside the last sheet covered with his neat handwriting. The passage is well-known, but will bear quoting again.

« *I have presumed to mark the moment of conception : I shall now commemorate the hour of my final deliverance. It was on the day, or rather night, of the 27th of June 1787, between the hours of eleven and twelve, that I wrote the last lines of the last page, in a summer-house in my garden. After laying down my pen, I took several turns in a berceau, or covered walk of acacias, which commands a prospect of the country, the lake, and the mountains. The air was temperate, the sky was serene, the silver orb of the moon was reflected from the waters, and all nature was silent. I will not dissemble the first emotions of joy on the recovery of my freedom, and, perhaps, the establishment of my fame. But my pride was soon humbled, and a sober melancholy was spread over my mind, by the idea that I had taken an everlasting leave of an old and agreeable companion, and that whatsoever might be the future date of my History, the life of the historian must be short and precarious.* »³

When Gibbon wrote these lines he had every intention of staying on indefinitely in the pleasant little city which he had chosen as « the retreat of [his] declining age » and which he now considered his home⁴. Not even poor Deyverdun's death, on July 4th, 1789, nor the breaking-out of the French Revolution could at first drive him away from his beloved « Fanny Lausanne ».⁵ Only in May 1793,

¹ *Misc. Wks. I*, 180-181. The « two immense Cases of books, the tools of my historical manufacture » (*Letters II*, 360) sent to Lausanne on August 18, 1783 (*Letters II*, 354), which Gibbon had hoped would arrive there « almost as soon as myself » (*Ibid. ibid.*), only reached Lausanne on Feb. 2, 1784 (*Letters II*, 399).

² *Misc. Wks. I*, 137.

³ *Ibid.*, 182-183.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 176. Cf. *Low*, 318-319.

⁵ *Letters III*, 32 (« My passion for my wife or mistress (Fanny Lausanne) is not palled by satiety and possession of two years [the letter, addressed to Lord

when « those vile miscreants the French Democrats » were « within forty miles of Lausanne »¹, was Gibbon finally persuaded by his anxious family and friends to give up, temporarily as he thought, a retreat which had obviously become unsafe. He left Lausanne on May 10th with a heavy heart. He was fated never to see it or his Lausanne friends again. His English friends, though « greatly alarmed », as Lord Sheffield reports, by the « prodigious increase » in Gibbon's « corpulency »², did not realise that he was a doomed man. His conversation, at the many dinners he still attended, was cheerful and witty as ever, and when, on January 15, 1794, eight months only after his departure from Lausanne he was suddenly taken very ill, and expired « about a quarter before one »³ the next day, his *valet de chambre* alone was witness to his silent passing away.

*

La Grotte, its acacias, and the little summer-house where Gibbon had finished writing his *History* were still standing when, on June 27, 1816, two young adventurous English poets, engaged in a tour round the Lake of Geneva in the course of which their little craft was nearly wrecked off the rocky shore of Meillerie, were shown these relics of Gibbon's last stay at Lausanne. A rainstorm detained the travellers for two days at Ouchy where, as a plaque on the *Hôtel d'Angleterre* (then the more modest *Auberge de l'Ancre*) testifies, the older of the two young men, working with incredible rapidity under the strong impression of the Swiss landscape, the storm on the lake and his visit to Chillon, wrote *The Prisoner of Chillon*⁴.

Sheffield, is dated October 1, 1785]. I have seen her in all seasons and in all humours, and though she is not without faults, they are infinitely overbalanced by her good qualities. Her face is not handsome, but her person and everything about her has admirable grace and beauty ; she is of a very chearful sociable temper, without much learning she is endowed with taste and good-sense, and though not rich the simplicity of her education makes her a very good oeconomist ; she is forbid by her parents to wear any expensive finery, and though her limbs are not much calculated for walking, she has not yet asked me to keep her a Coach. »), and 156-157 (on Deyverdun's death).

¹ Mrs. Gibbon in *Low*, 344.

² *Misc. Wks. I*, 324 and 315.

³ Lord Sheffield, *Ibid.*, 332.

⁴ Careful comparison of the dates in the relevant contemporary documents (i. e., (a) Byron's letters, dated « Evian, June 23rd 1816 », in *Lord Byron's Correspondence*, ed. Murray, Vol. II, 1922, pp. 11-12, and « Ouchy near Lausanne », June 27, 1816 (*Letters and Journals*, ed. Prothero, Vol. III, 1904, pp. 333-334) ; (b) Shelley's long, diary-like letter, describing the tour of the Lake, sent to

This is Byron's rather dry account of his visit to Gibbon's house and garden :

«*Ouchy, near Lausanne, June 27, 1816. — I am thus far (kept by stress of weather) on my way back to Diodati (near Geneva) from a voyage in my boat round the Lake ; and I enclose you a sprig of Gibbon's Acacia and some rose-leaves from his garden, which, with part of his house, I have just seen. (...) The garden and summer-house, where he composed, are neglected, and the last utterly decayed ; but they still show it as his 'Cabinet', and seem perfectly aware of his memory.* »¹

Shelley, who had spent much of his time in the course of this adventurous voyage reading *La Nouvelle Héloïse*, and had, but two days before, trod with reverent steps the, to him, consecrated ground where he fondly imagined Julie and her lover had once walked «looking towards these mountains which I now behold ; nay, treading on the ground which I now tread »², describes their visit in a very different tone, and his sketch of the « yellow fire » on the lake is worthy of the greater poet he was.

«*The rain detained us two days at Ouchy. We, however, visited Lausanne, and saw Gibbon's house. We were shown the decayed summer-house where he finished his History, and the old acacias on the terrace, from which he saw Mont Blanc, after having written the last sentence. There is something grand and even touching in the regret which he expresses at the completion of his task. It was conceived amid the ruins of the Capitol. The sudden departure of his cherished and accustomed toil must have left him, like the death of a dear friend, sad and solitary.*

T. L. Peacock from Geneva on July 12, 1816 (*Letters of P. B. Shelley*, ed. Ingpen, Vol. II, 1914, pp. 488-501) ; and (c) Polidori's diary, as referred to in the notes to pp. 630-632 of Vol. II of Leslie A. Marchand's *Byron, A Biography*, 1957) makes it apparent that Byron and Shelley left Geneva on June 22 (not June 23rd, as Shelley says in his letter, where the dates are all one day off), were nearly wrecked off Meillerie on the 24th, visited Chillon and Clarens on the 25th, arrived at Ouchy on the evening of the 26th, visited Gibbon's house on the 27th, left Ouchy on the 29th or, possibly, 30th, and « after two days of pleasant sailing » (Shelley's letter) arrived at Geneva on the eve of either June 30 or July 1. (Claire-Éliane Engel's statement, in her *Byron et Shelley en Suisse et en Savoie, Mai-Octobre 1816*, Chambéry 1930, pp. 42-43, that the two travellers were back at Geneva on June 29 after leaving Ouchy the same morning, is obviously wrong. It is based on a misreading, on p. 42, of the date of the letter of Byron to Rogers which is given correctly on the next page).

¹ Byron's *Letters and Journals*, l. c., III, 333-334.

² Shelley's letter to Peacock, in *Letters of P. B. Shelley*, l. c., 498.

» *My companion gathered some acacia leaves to preserve in remembrance of him. I refrained from doing so, fearing to outrage the greater and more sacred name of Rousseau ; the contemplation of whose imperishable creations had left no vacancy in my heart for mortal things. Gibbon had a cold and unimpassioned spirit. I never felt more inclination to rail at the prejudices which cling to such a thing, than now that «Julie» and Clarens, Lausanne and the «Roman Empire», compelled me to contrast between Rousseau and Gibbon.*

» *When we returned, in the only interval of sunshine during the day, I walked on the pier which the lake was lashing with its waves. A rainbow spanned the lake, or rather rested one extremity of its arch upon the water, and the other at the foot of the mountains of Savoy. Some white houses, I know not if they were those of Meillerie, shone through the yellow fire.* »¹

*

« On the evening of Thursday the 11th of June » 1846, there alighted at the Hôtel Gibbon, Lausanne, a big and ugly house opened seven years before on the same piece of property as *La Grotte*, and like it overlooking the Savoy Alps and the Lake, a lively English gentleman of thirty-four, travelling, in three coaches, with his household, composed of his wife, sister-in-law, six children (ranging all the way from nine years to seven months old), three female servants and a dog². The gentleman was the famous author of *The Pickwick Papers*, *Oliver Twist*, *Nicholas Nickleby*, and other works. His two most recent books, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, 1845, and *Pictures from Italy*, 1846, had been decidedly inferior work. They could hardly have been anything else, considering that they had been written in great hurry, by a tired man who had known little peace of mind in the last months, engaged as he had been in a number of non-literary enterprises, the latest of which was the founding and editing of a daily newspaper³.

¹ Shelley's letter to Peacock, in *Letters of P. B. Shelley*, l. c., 499-501.

² J. Forster, *The Life of Charles Dickens*, Vol. I, 1908, p. 405 (henceforth referred to as *Forster I*). — Cf. also E. Johnson, *Charles Dickens, His Tragedy And Triumph*, Vol. II, 1953, p. 592. — *La Grotte* was pulled down in 1896 to make room for the present post-office, and the Hotel Gibbon (opened in 1839) in 1920 to make room for the building of the Société de Banque Suisse.

³ Cf. E. Johnson, l. c., Vol. I, ch. VII («Birthpangs of the *Daily News*»), 565-585.

All through these last hectic months Dickens had felt the necessity of procuring for himself some temporary retreat where, free from the pressure of social and business engagements, he could concentrate on the writing of a new novel (he had not written one since the 1843 *Martin Chuzzlewit*). He also intended to write another Christmas story, his last one, *The Cricket on the Hearth*, having been a great success.

Twice before, on returning from Italy (in November 1844 over the Simplon, in June 1845 over the Saint Gotthard), Dickens had been impressed by the beauty of the Swiss scenery, with its neat Alpine villages appearing to the passing traveller « so many little havens of refuge from the troubles and miseries of great towns »¹.

By the Spring of 1846 Dickens's mind was made up : as he informed his friend Angela Burdett-Coutts on April 22, « *I have conceived the idea of going to Switzerland for a year. Firstly, because I am most desirous to separate myself in a marked way from the Daily News (with which I have long since ceased to have any connexion, and in connecting myself with which at all, I have no doubt I made a mistake). Secondly, because I have a long book to write, which I could write better in retirement. Thirdly, because I want to get up some mountain knowledge in all the four seasons of the year, for purposes of fiction* »². A fourth reason, also listed in this letter, was that, at Lausanne (« or some such place, where there are English clergymen who take pupils »), 'Charley', Dickens's nine year old son, could prepare for King's College School — the London school where Dickens had first thought of sending him — « at greater advantage and with a better prestige about him, than if he began as I originally designed. »² And so, after subletting his London house, no. 1, Devonshire Terrace, for £ 300, and arranging with Bradbury and Evans, his new publishers, to write a novel for them « in twenty monthly parts »³, Dickens arrived at Lausanne on June 11, and immediately began house-hunting. He soon found a house, which, although he always described it as a doll's house, was yet large enough to lodge his whole family, with one bed room to spare. The house, *Rosemont*, Dickens was able to rent at the very moderate rate of « ten pounds a month for half a year, with reduction to eight for the second half, if he should stay so long »⁴.

¹ Dickens to Forster, Lucerne, June 14, 1845, in *Forster I*, 387.

² Dickens to A. Burdett-Coutts, in *Letters from Charles Dickens to Angela Burdett-Coutts, 1841-1865*, ed. E. Johnson, 1953, p. 77.

³ E. Johnson, *l. c.*, Vol. II, 590-1.

⁴ *Forster I*, 406.

Rosemont, though situated, as Dickens wrote Forster, « within ten minutes' walk » of the centre of town¹, stood in the midst of a then utterly unspoilt stretch of land, all meadows and fields and vineyards, extending all the way from the present *avenue de la Gare* to what is now the heavily built-over *quartier de Montchoisi*, then another large, unspoilt estate, belonging to the Cerjat family. So rustic a place was *Rosemont* in Dickens's day that, as he also reported to Forster, a field of wheat sloped right down « to the side window of his dining-room »².

« *This is an odd little house,* » he wrote Miss Burdett-Coutts on June 25, « *which I think might be easily put into the great sala of our old Genoese Palazzo — bodily. It stands in the midst of beautiful grounds, on the slope of the Hill going down to the Lake — and the blue waters thereof, and the whole range of mountains, lie in front of the windows. Between it, and Ouchy, is a School, very famous in these parts, kept by a German gentleman; and in that School, Charley is imprisoned as a weekly Boarder. As there are only three other English boys, I hope he will soon be a proficient in the French language (...) His sisters have a little French governess at home, who can't speak a word of English* »³.

To Forster Dickens described *Rosemont* at greater length, expatiating on the two drawing rooms downstairs, one of them « furnished (like a French hotel) with red velvet, and the other with green; in both, plenty of mirrors and nice white muslin curtains; and (...) the floors (...) inlaid in squares with different-coloured woods »⁴. Six French windows opened on to a « stone colonnade », whose pillars, supporting the upstairs balcony, were « clustered about » with « roses enough », he roguishly wrote to poor Forster, who had succeeded him in the editorial chair of the *Daily News*, « to smother the whole establishment of the *Daily News* in »⁵. From the balcony outside his study Dickens enjoyed a magnificent view of the « prodigious moun-

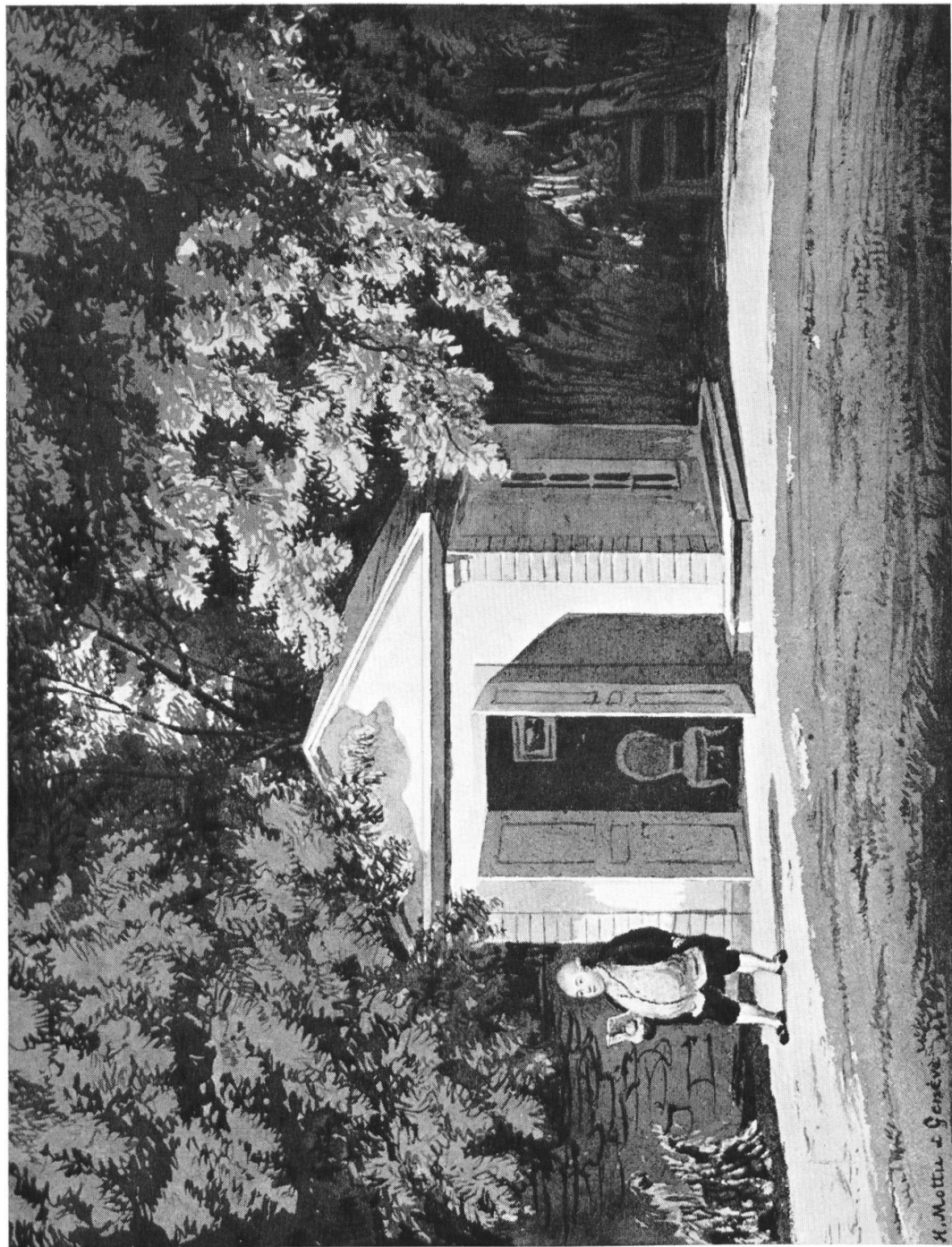
¹ *Forster I*, 406.

² *Ibid.*, 418. — Of the *Rosemont* Dickens knew, nothing remains. The house which had been much transformed since his day was pulled down in 1938 to make room for the large blocks of flats standing back of no. 14, *avenue Tissot*. The name remains as that of a street crossing part of the former *Rosemont* estate, and no. 14, *avenue Tissot* bears the name *Grand Rosemont*. The present *avenue Dickens* is one of the modern streets crossing the former *Rosemont* farm.

³ *Letters... to Angela Burdett-Coutts*, I. c., 83-84. — The school, *La Villa*, stood on the site now occupied by no. 57, *avenue d'Ouchy*. It had been founded in 1840 by a German gentleman, Theodore Devrient, born at Leipzig in 1808.

⁴ *Forster I*, 409 (no date given by Forster).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 408, and 406. — A contemporary sketch of the house, showing the very features described by Dickens, will be found in *Forster I*, 408.



(Photo de Jongh)

GIBBON DEVANT LE PAVILLON DE LA GROTTTE

(Musée du Vieux-Lausanne)

tains ris[ing] up from [the] opposite shore» of the lake¹. These mountains (the Savoy Alps, with the Grammont, Cornettes de Bise and Dent d'Oche as the most prominent peaks) so impressed Dickens that, in the same letter to Forster, he described them, with more romantic enthusiasm than accuracy, as «the Simplon, the St. Gothard, Mont Blanc and all the Alpine wonders (...) piled there, in tremendous grandeur»².

Lausanne, Dickens found a delightful place to live in after the misery and filth and superstition that had spoilt Italy for him. «*The general neatness,*» he wrote Forster, «*is a remarkable as in England. There are no priests or monks in the streets, and the people appear to be industrious and thriving. French (and very intelligible and pleasant French) seems to be the universal language. I never saw so many booksellers' shops crammed within the same space, as in the steep up-and-down streets of Lausanne*»³.

These first pleasant impressions were confirmed when Dickens knew Lausanne and its environs better. Everywhere he went he met with nothing but civility and friendliness. The peasantry around Lausanne, he wrote Forster, «*have not the sweetness and grace of the Italians, or the agreeable manners of the better specimens of French peasantry, but they are admirably educated (the schools of this canton are extraordinarily good, in every little village), and always prepared to give a civil and pleasant answer. (...) I never saw more obliging servants, or people who did their work so truly with a will. And in point of cleanliness, order, and punctuality to the moment, they are unrivalled*»⁴.

Even the Swiss passion for rifle-shooting, which Ruskin found such a horribly vulgar and noisy pastime, Dickens observed with an amused and sympathetic eye. With Ruskin's irate description of «the Swiss vintagers of Zurich expressing their Christian thanks for the gift of the vine by assembling in knots in the 'towers of the vineyards' and slowly loading and firing horse-pistols from morning till evening»⁵, compare Dickens's amused account of the Rosemont farmer's equally

¹ *Forster I*, 407 (Dickens's first letter from Rosemont, no date given).

² *Ibid.*, *ibid.* — Neither the Simplon nor the St. Gothard can of course be seen from Lausanne, not even Mont Blanc is visible from that part of the town, and it is equally impossible to see Chillon from Rosemont, though Dickens described it in all good faith to Forster as «glittering in the sunlight on the lake» as he stepped out one day on his balcony there (*Forster I*, 409).

³ *Ibid.*, *ibid.* (Dickens's «next letter» from Rosemont, undated by Forster.)

⁴ *Ibid.*, 418-419 (no date given).

⁵ Ruskin, *Sesame and Lilies I*, § 35.

noisy celebration of a similar festive occasion : « *One of the farmer's people — a sister, I think — was married from here the other day (...)* The fondness of the Swiss for gunpowder on interesting occasions, is one of the drollest things. For three days before, the farmer himself, in the midst of his various agricultural duties, plunged out of a little door near my windows, about once in every hour, and fired off a rifle. I thought he was shooting rats who were spoiling the vines ; but he was merely relieving his mind, it seemed, on the subject of the approaching nuptials.»¹ In another letter to Forster Dickens described, with what a sense for the picturesque and what warm sensitive perception of the common humanity under different customs and costumes, Swiss peasants engaging in such characteristic avocations as target-shooting, dancing, drinking, and part-singing, and, the whole noisy and rowdy scene somehow becomes part of the beautiful landscape around it, instead of, as it would under Ruskin's pen, jarring upon it.

The occasion that provoked the letter was a fête at the *Signal*, the high hill, overlooking Lausanne on the north on the edge of the *Bois de Sauvabelin* — still, today, a place for popular rejoicings.

« *There were various booths for eating and drinking, and the selling of trinkets and sweetmeats ; and in one place there was a great circle cleared, in which the common people waltzed and polka'd, without cessation, to the music of a band. There was a great round-about for children (...) and there were some games of chance and skill established under trees. It was very pretty. In some of the drinking booths there were parties of German peasants [Dickens evidently means German-Swiss peasants], twenty together perhaps, singing national drinking-songs, and making a most exhilarating and musical chorus by rattling their cups and glasses on the table and clinking them against each other, to a regular tune. (...) Farther down the hill, other peasants were rifle-shooting for prizes, at targets set on the other side of a deep ravine, from two to three hundred yards off. It was quite fearful to see the astonishing accuracy of their aim, and how, every time a rifle awakened the ten thousand echoes of the green glen, some men crouching behind a little wall immediately in front of the targets, sprung up with large numbers in their hands denoting where the ball had struck the bull's eye — and then in a moment disappeared again. Standing in a ring near these shooters was another party of Germans singing hunting-songs in parts, most melodiously. And down in the distance was Lausanne, with all sorts of haunted-looking old towers rising up before the*

¹ Forster I, 418-419, undated by Forster.

smooth water of the lake, and an evening sky all red, and gold, and bright green. When it closed in quite dark, all the booths were lighted up; and the twinkling of the lamps among the forest of trees was beautiful.»¹

Dickens did not remain a mere observer of Swiss scenery and Swiss people. He soon made many friends in Lausanne. Through one of them, William Haldimand, a philanthropic and public-spirited man, Dickens was a frequent visitor at the *Asile des Aveugles*, an institution for the blind founded largely through Haldimand's benefaction in 1843². There Dickens took the greatest interest in two young people, both of them blind, deaf and dumb. One of them, a man of twenty, had recently been taught to speak (an accomplishment then believed all but impossible) thanks to the persistence and ingenuity of the then director of the *Asile*, an exceptionally brilliant man of thirty-one, Henri Hirzel³. «*The young man now speaks very plainly and distinctly,*» Dickens wrote Forster after his first visit to the institute, «*without the least modulation, of course, but with comparatively little hesitation; expressing the words aloud as they are struck, so to speak, upon his hands; and showing the most intense and wonderful delight in doing it*»⁴. Dickens and the young man got on famously together. «*He is very fond of smoking,*»

¹ Forster I, 418-419, also undated.

² William Haldimand (1784-1862) was born in London where his father, Anthony Francis (1741-1817), a merchant, born at Yverdon, Switzerland, had founded a banking-house. William Haldimand entered his father's counting-house at 16, and proved such a capable financier that he became a director of the Bank of England at 25. He was M. P. for Ipswich from 1820 to 1826. In 1827, partly for reasons of health, he came to Lausanne where he resided at *Le Denantou*, a large estate then extending all the way from the present *Tour Haldimand* to Ouchy. Haldimand not only provided the *Asile des Aveugles* with most of its initial capital but covered its monthly deficits and bequeathed it £ 20,000. He contributed £ 3,000 towards the construction of the English Church, avenue d'Ouchy, Lausanne, created a hospital for poor patients at Aix-les-Bains, etc.

³ Interesting details on the foundation of the *Asile des Aveugles* by William Haldimand and Elizabeth Jane de Cerjat (a member, like Haldimand, of an Anglo-Swiss family), and on Henri Hirzel (not Hertz, as Dickens, or Forster quoting him, spelt his name) and the ingenious method he used to teach the young Edouard Meystre (1826-1899) how to speak will be found in B. van Muyden, *Henri Hirzel, premier directeur de l'Asile des Aveugles à Lausanne*, Lausanne, n. d. (1905), 15 pp. and in L. Bolli, *Chronique de l'Asile des Aveugles de Lausanne, 1843-1943*, Lausanne, 1944, 322 pp., pp. 13 ff. Only one man before H. Hirzel, Dr. Howe in Boston, had succeeded in teaching a person born blind, deaf and dumb how to speak.

⁴ Forster I, 412-413 (no date given).

a later letter reported. « *I have arranged to supply him with cigars during our stay here ; so he and I are in amazing sympathy. I don't know whether he thinks I grow them, or make them, or produce them by winking, or what. But it gives him a notion that the world in general belongs to me .* »¹ The other case, « a girl of ten years old », had come in, Forster tells us, « on the very day (8th of July) that Dickens [first] visited the place ».² From the first, Dickens took the greatest interest in the little girl, observing the self-protective embryo-like posture she assumed « the moment she [was] left alone »³, and reporting to Forster her very slow progress. On August 24 he could tell his friend that the child was « *decidedly improved (...)* *They have got her out of that strange, crouching position ; dressed her neatly ; and accustomed her to have a pleasure in society (...)* *I never saw a more tremendous thing in its way, in my life, than when they stood her, t'other day, in the centre of a group of blind children who sang a chorus to the piano ; and brought her hand, and kept it, in contact with the instrument. A shudder pervaded her whole being, her breath quickened, her colour deepened, — and I can compare it to nothing but returning animation in a person nearly dead. It was really awful to see how the sensation of the music fluttered and stirred the locked-up soul within her.* »⁴

Dickens's warm humanity and his well-known interest in the improvement of social institutions also appeared in the visits he paid to the Lausanne prison. He found it « wonderfully well arranged for a continental jail, and in perfect order » (the prison's physician, Dr. Verdeil, had introduced some much-needed reforms), but the length and severity of some the sentences served (« I saw one man sent there for murder under circumstances of mitigation — for 30 years. Upon the silent social system all the time ! ») struck him as « very terrible ». Dickens compared notes with Dr. Verdeil on the merits (demerits, rather) of Swiss and American prisons and noted that, though « well-fed and cared for », the inmates of the Lausanne prison, like the prisoners Dickens had seen enduring solitary confinement in American gaols, « generally [broke] down utterly after two or three years »⁵ and became the prey of painful delusions.

¹ *Forster I*, 415 (Dickens to Forster, August 24, 1846).

² *Ibid.*, 413.

³ *Ibid.*, 414 (Dickens to Forster, apparently July 8).

⁴ *Ibid.*, 415.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 412, no date given. — Dr. Verdeil had recently been able to abolish the solitary confinement system which Lausanne had borrowed from Philadelphia.

Dickens, naturally, did not spend all his spare time visiting institutions. He took part in many a gay party at *Le Denantou*, William Haldimand's mansion on the slope immediately above the Lake, or *Montchoisi*, the Cerjats' house below his own *Rosemont*. He good-humouredly observed the vagaries and foibles of eccentric baronets and spinsters, whom Lausanne seemed to attract like a magnet. He took many long walks round Lausanne, and engaged, in congenial company, in excursions to such places as Chillon (which, however grand a place, filled him with feelings of horror at man's inhumanity to man), the Great St. Bernard, the Col de Balme, Chamonix and the Mer de Glace, of all of which his letters give entertaining descriptions¹.

For all the time Dickens devoted to these pleasant occasions (in which, however relaxed and idle he seemed to be, his memory indefatigably stored impressions which his imagination would later elaborate²), and for all the interest he took in prison reform and the education of the blind, Dickens never let any of these avocations interfere with his real business in life, and the chief reason which had brought him to Lausanne, — the writing of another book. Nearly a fortnight was spent on the business of settling down at *Rosemont*, writing urgent letters, and working on a simplified version of the New Testament he wanted to read to his children³. On June 25, however, he was ready for action. «*I am contemplating terrific and tremendous industry*», he wrote Miss Burdett-Coutts, «— *am mightily resolved to begin the book in numbers without delay — and have already begun to look the little Christmas Volume in its small red face; though I hardly know it by sight yet*».⁴ Three days later Dickens triumphantly reported to Forster:

¹ Cf. *Forster I*, 423 ff. (Chamonix and the Col de Balme), 426 (Chillon), 433 ff. (sketches of English eccentrics), 436 ff. (Great St. Bernard), 446 ff. (more eccentrics). — Dickens's trip to the Great St. Bernard, which took place in early September 1846, combined with memories of «vintage time (...) along the banks of the Lake of Geneva», served Dickens in good stead when he wrote the first chapters of *Little Dorrit*, Book II (quotation from *do.*, p. 1).

² *Forster*, (*I*, 438-439), has some very perceptive remarks on Dickens's imagination and the way it profited by everything that fell under Dickens's observant eye.

³ The «children's New Testament» referred to in Dickens's letter of June 28 quoted by Forster on p. 416, was, Forster reports in a note on the same page, «an abstract, in plain language for the use of his children, of the narrative in the Four Gospels». It was completed in 1849 and published posthumously in 1937 (on this cf. E. Johnson, *l. c.*, II, 593 and n. 35).

⁴ *Letters... to Angela Burdett-Coutts*, *l. c.*, p. 84. — «The little Christmas Volume» is *The Battle of Life*.

« *BEGAN DOMBEY* !

I performed this feat yesterday — only wrote the first slip — but there it is, and it is a plunge straight over head and ears into the story.»¹ Successive letters reported the progress of the book. On July 5, e. g., he wrote Forster that he hoped to « have finished the first number in the course of a fortnight at farthest. I have done the first chapter, and begun another »². On the 18th, he expressed himself delighted with « the general idea of *Dombey*, [it] is interesting and new, and has great material in it »; he announced he would soon have the first number ready, but enjoined Forster to « impress on B. and E. the necessity of the closest secrecy. The very name getting out, would be ruinous ». In the same letter he asked Forster what he thought, « as a name for the Christmas book, of *THE BATTLE OF LIFE*. (...) If I can see my way, » he added, « *I think I will take it next, and clear it off. (...) It would be an immense relief to have it done, and nothing standing in the way of Dombey* »³.

The first number of *Dombey* (the first four chapters of the novel) was duly completed by the end of July⁴. The second one, begun on August 8, after Dickens's trip to Chamonix, was finished in the first week of September⁵. Dickens's excited brain, meanwhile, was teeming with ideas. « *I have been thinking this last day or two,* » he wrote Forster on the 25th of July, « *that good Christmas characters might be grown out of the idea of a man imprisoned for ten or fifteen years: his imprisonment being the gap between the people and circumstances of the first part and the altered people and circumstances of the second, and his own changed mind. Though I shall probably proceed with the Battle idea, I should like to know what you think of this one?* »⁶. Another letter, written « a few weeks later », though expressing Dickens's decision to proceed with *The Battle of Life*, submitted to Forster still another idea for a Christmas story, the idea, « very ghostly and wild », which was eventually to be worked out as *The Haunted Man*⁷. And yet, teeming with ideas as Dickens's brain was

¹ Forster I, 416.

² *Ibid.*, 420.

³ *Ibid.*, 421-422.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 440.

⁵ *Ibid.*, 440-441.

⁶ *Ibid.*, 440. — The reader has recognised the idea afterwards used, not in any Christmas story, but in the (1857 !) *Tale of Two Cities*.

⁷ Forster I, 440. — *The Haunted Man*, as Forster remarks, « was not written until the winter of 1848 ».

(« *Invention, thank God, seems the easiest thing in the world ; and I seem to have such a preposterous sense of the ridiculous (...) as to be constantly requiring to restrain myself from launching into extravagances in the height of my enjoyment* »)¹, his letters from Rosemont, after the successful completion of the second number of *Dombey*, reveal him to have been, for a few agonising weeks, incapable either of going on with the writing of *Dombey*, or of bringing *The Battle of Life* into satisfactory shape. The little Christmas story was indeed giving him a great deal of trouble. « *I cancelled the beginning of a first scene — which I have never done before — and, with a notion in my head, ran wildly about and about it, and could not get the idea into any natural socket* »². His next report on the Christmas book, written six days later, sounded a note of almost complete despair. « *I fear there may be NO CHRISTMAS BOOK !* », he wrote Forster on September 26, « (...) *I have written the first part ; I know the end and upshot of the second ; and the whole of the third (there are only three in all). I know the purport of each character, and the plain idea that each is to work out ; and I have the principal effects sketched on paper (...) But my soul sinks before the commencement of the second part — the longest — and the introduction of the under-idea.* »³

The difficulty Dickens experienced in completing *The Battle of Life* was not entirely due to « the peculiar difficulties of the story for a Christmas book »⁴, nor did it lie entirely — though this too was « a fruitful source of the difficulty » — in his unwise decision (against Forster's advice) of « beginning two books together »⁵. It was largely caused, as he had begun to realise after some two and a half months' happy stay at Rosemont, by a deep, unsatisfied craving in his nature for the bustle and excitement of city life. « *Streets and numbers of figures,* » he wrote Forster on August 30, « *I can't express how much I want these. It seems as if they supplied something to my brain, which it cannot bear, when busy, to lose. For a week or a fortnight I can write prodigiously in a retired place (...) and a day in London sets me up again and starts me. But the toil and labour of writing,*

¹ Forster I, 440 (Dickens to Forster, August 30).

² Ibid., 443 (Dickens to Forster, September 20).

³ Ibid., 443-444.

⁴ Ibid., 445-446 (Dickens to Forster, Geneva, September 30). On these « peculiar difficulties », cf. Forster I, 442 ff. and 455 ff.

⁵ Ibid., 444 (Dickens to Forster, September 26).

day after day, without that magic lantern [London] is IMMENSE!! I don't say this, at all in low spirits (...), I only mention it as a curious fact, which I have never had an opportunity of finding out before. My figures seem disposed to stagnate without crowds about them.»¹

«The absence of any accessible streets [he means, of course, crowded streets] continues to worry me,» he wrote Forster some ten days later. «(...) It is quite a little mental phenomenon. I should not walk in them in the day time, if they were here, I dare say : but at night I want them beyond description. I don't seem able to get rid of my spectres unless I can lose them in crowds.»² On September 26, in the letter, already quoted from, expressing his fear that there might, after all, be «NO CHRISTMAS BOOK» that year, he gave, as a partial, but very important, cause of the trouble he was having with *The Battle of Life*, the all-too-perfect quiet of Lausanne : «I don't know how it is. I suppose it is the having been almost constantly at work in this quiet place ; and the dread for the *Dombey* ; and the not being able to get rid of it, in noise and bustle. The beginning two books together is also, no doubt, a fruitful source of the difficulty. (...) But this is certain. I am sick, giddy, and capriciously despondent. I have bad nights ; am full of disquietude and anxiety ; and am constantly haunted by the idea that I am wasting the marrow of the larger book (...). I now resolve to make one effort more. I will go to Geneva to-morrow, and try (...) whether I can get on at all bravely, in the changed scene. (...) You may suppose that the matter is very grave when I can so nearly abandon anything in which I am deeply interested, and fourteen or fifteen close MS. pages of which, that have made me laugh and cry, are lying in my desk.»³

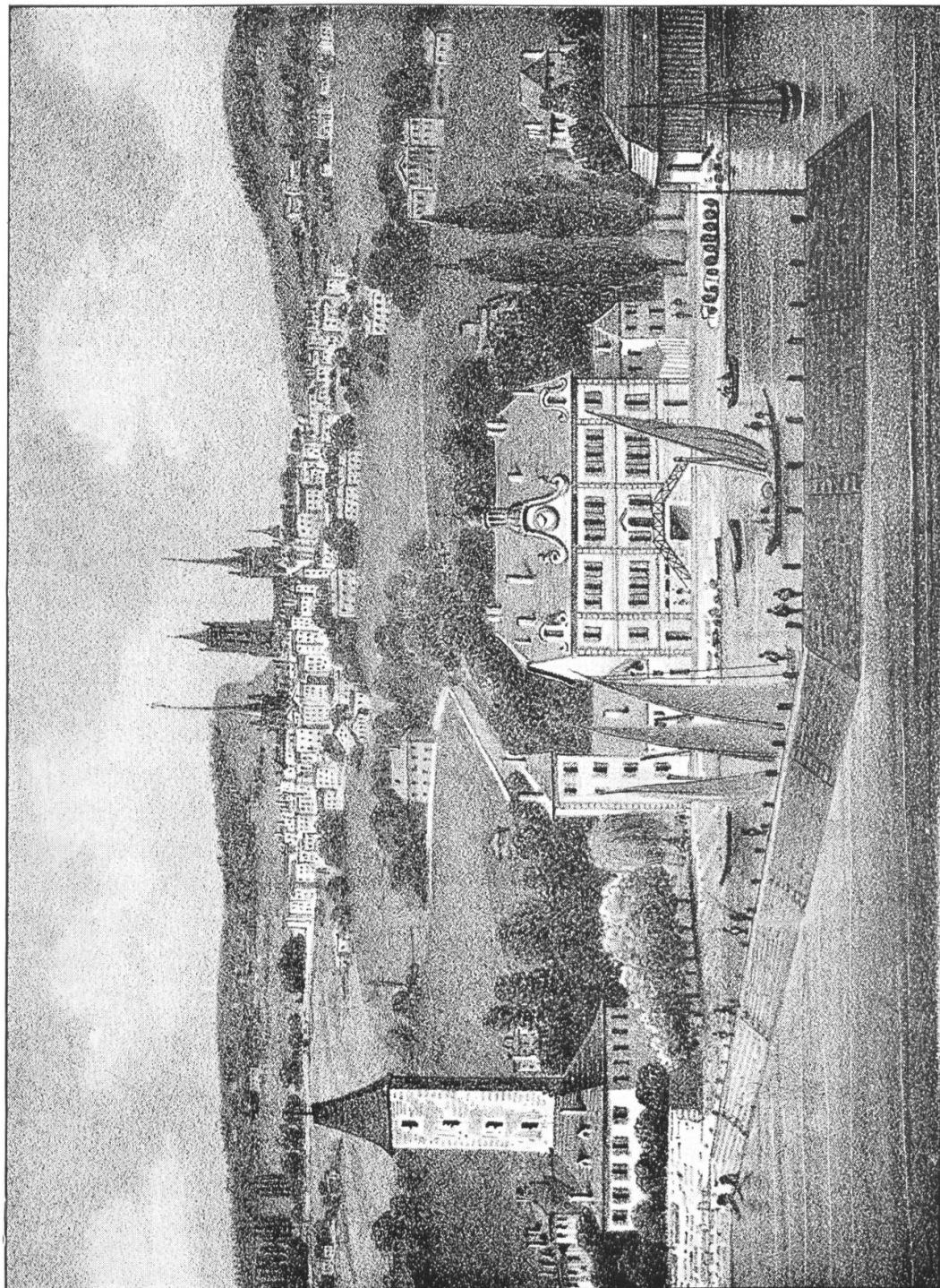
The change of residence, however brief — it lasted only a few days, as Dickens had to rush back to Rosemont to welcome some English visitors — proved beneficial, since, though he arrived at Geneva with «a blood-shot eye» and a bad headache, he could soon good-humouredly report that his head was «greatly better» and his eye «recovering its old hue of beautiful white, tinged with celestial blue»⁴. He managed to put in «three very good days' work at Geneva», and was finally able to send Forster «two-thirds of the manuscript of his Christmas book» on October 10, and the rest on

¹ Forster I, 441.

² *Ibid.*, *ibid.* (no date given).

³ *Ibid.*, 444.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 446 (Dickens to Forster, Geneva, October 1).



J. DuBois.

L'HOTEL D'ANGLETERRE A OUCHY VERS 1830

(Bibliothèque cantonale et universitaire, Lausanne)

October 18¹. Nothing now stood in the way of the greater work, the first number of which, issued on October 1, had met with very great success². The second number, finished as we have seen at *Rosemont* in the first week of September, was about to be published. It was therefore in a very happy frame of mind that, on October 26, after the long interruption caused by the completion of *The Battle of Life*, Dickens began the third number of *Dombey*, which was written with such ease that, on November 9 already, « one day before that proposed for its completion », it was all done.³

Lausanne had now done all it could for Dickens. The five months at *Rosemont* had enabled him to write *The Battle of Life* and three out of the four numbers of *Dombey* he had hoped to do at Lausanne⁴. Dickens could not, however, leave without a pang the little Swiss town where he had made so many friends, and whose beautiful setting had so often thrilled him. Lausanne, in early November, with the first snows of the approaching winter lying on the tops of the surrounding mountains, and the « autumn colours in the foliage (...) more brilliant and vivid (...) than any description could convey »⁵, was perhaps at its best, and it was in a sad frame of mind that Dickens, immediately after completing the third number of *Dombey*, made the round of his Lausanne friends, from the distinguished Haldimands and Cerjats to the humble deaf and dumb and blind Edouard Meystre, whose affection for Dickens took the form, at this last meeting, of « incessant repetition (...) for a full half-hour » of the naïve words, « Monsieur Dickens m'a donné les cigares ». ⁶ On Monday November 16, the last preparations were made and the last farewells said. « *I don't believe there are many dots on the map of the world,* » Dickens wrote Forster, « *where we shall have left such affectionate remembrances behind us, as in Lausanne. It was quite miserable this last night, when we left them at Haldimand's* ». ⁷

¹ Forster I, 448-450.

² « I hear that the *Dombey* (*sic*) has been launched with great success, and was out of print on the first night » (Dickens to Miss Burdett-Coutts, *Rosemont*, October 5, 1846, in *Letters... to Angela Burdett-Coutts*, l. c., p. 88).

³ Forster I, 462.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 409 (« I want to get Four Numbers of the monthly book done here, and the Christmas book »: Dickens to Forster, *Rosemont*, June 22).

⁵ *Ibid.*, 461-462 (Dickens to Forster, in his « last letter but one » from *Rosemont*; no definite date given).

⁶ *Ibid.*, 415.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 462 (undated by Forster).

On November 26 of the same year — a fitting conclusion to his five months' stay at Lausanne — Dickens directed Forster to put this dedication to *The Battle of Life* :

« *This Christmas Book is cordially inscribed
To my English Friends in Switzerland.* » ¹

*

To pass from Dickens to Ruskin is to pass from one world of feeling and imagination into another. It is to exchange a world in which a warm-hearted and expansive writer, busy as he might be giving life and shape to the creatures of his imagination and plotting the pattern of their destinies, was yet able to give his full attention, and much of his heart and time, to the human beings around him, — for a narrower and less genial world where a man, tragically self-centred and repressed, could only find momentary happiness and peace when he could forget himself in the contemplation and study of nature or of art. And so, whereas, to Dickens, Switzerland meant primarily, not, however delightful, nightingales singing in the bowers of *Rosemont* or « prodigious mountains rising up from the opposite shore » of Lake Lemman, but *people* — people to observe and to live with, to smile at or to laugh with, and always (or almost always) to love, Switzerland, to Ruskin, meant primarily picturesque scenery — beautiful to his eyes and soothing to his troubled soul when the light was just right and himself in the right mood, depressing and ugly when persistent rain or fog enshrouded the landscape into shapeless grey nothingness, or when some ill-timed remark or request of his travelling companions, some negligence of his valet or courier, or some dark thought of his own, upset the delicate balance of his sensitive nature and made enjoyment of even the most picturesque landscape impossible. ²

¹ *Forster I*, 459. — Dickens kept warm memories of his stay in Switzerland (cf. his letters of Nov. 22, 1846, Jan. 25, 1847 and July 27, 1848 in *C. Dickens, Letters and Speeches*, I, 168, 181, 208). He revisited it in October 1853, stopping over at Lausanne on his way to Italy. His Lausanne friends gave him a warm reception, and an equally hearty send-off (cf. *E. Johnson, l.c.*, II, 785, and *Letters and Speeches*, I, 327 and 331).

² The classic example of this is of course Ruskin's confession, not only in his diary for April 30, 1849 (*Ruskin's Diaries*, ed. J. Evans, Vol. II, 1958, p. 374), but in *Praeterita*, Vol. II, ch. XI, § 209 (*Complete Works of J. Ruskin*, Library Edition, XXXV, 488), that the view of the Alps, which he had been looking forward to « for three years », « thinking I should be almost fainting with joy,

All readers of Ruskin know what an important part Switzerland and its mountains played in Ruskin's life, from that first journey of 1833 when, a little boy of 14, from a terrace « high above the Rhine » at Schaffhausen, he first saw the Alps appear in the distance and felt in this sudden revelation of a beauty that was not of this world, his destiny henceforth « fixed in all of it that was to be sacred and useful »¹, to that last journey of 1888 when the tired and lonely man of 69, haunted by the ghosts of never-accepted frustrations and failures, was once more granted the grace to see, for a last brief interval of sanity and joy, Mont Blanc rising « in the rosy dawn (...) above long-laid calm morning mist »².

In the composite picture of Ruskin's Switzerland, where mountain peaks and picturesque old cities figure so prominently, and man, except for waiters and couriers and an occasional peasant met on the wayside, counts for so little, Lausanne plays a very insignificant part. In fact, the first explicit reference to it in his diary is a contemptuous dismissal. « *September 5th* [1835]. (...) Lausanne I never liked and never shall ; there is too much of lake, and the town is a town of Beau Sejours (*sic*) and Bon Repos-s (*sic*), and about it there is nothing but dead walls. »³

This sweeping condemnation of Lausanne should not be taken too seriously. Ruskin, as we have already seen, was a creature of moods and there was seldom room in his heart for more than one love at a time. When he wrote these scornful words he was just back from a tour of Central Switzerland and the Bernese Oberland which had filled his eyes and mind with so many enchanting pictures of grand mountain scenery that the tamer country around Lausanne appeared as « nothing after what we had seen »⁴. Also, as the next entries in his diary show, the weather by that time had taken a turn for the worse, one rainy day succeeded another, and this was enough to spoil any place for Ruskin.

« Lausanne I never liked and never shall. » I do not know whether Ruskin ever outgrew this impression. It is evident from his diaries and correspondence that he seldom stopped there, preferring when,

and want to lie down on the earth and take it in my arms » was this time « irrecoverably » spoilt for him « because George had not got me butter to my bread at Les Rousses ». (*N. B.* - Ruskin in 1849 was 30 years old.)

¹ Ruskin, *Praeterita*, Vol. I, ch. VI, §§ 133 and 135 (Library Edition, XXXV, 114-116.

² J. Evans, *John Ruskin*, 1954, p. 405.

³ *Ruskin's Diaries*, Vol. I, pp. 59-60.

⁴ *Ibid.*, *ibid.*

e. g., on his way from Italy to his « dear Geneva », to stop at his father's favourite hotel (*Les Trois Couronnes*) at Vevey, and then either drive straight through Lausanne or else by-pass it altogether by taking the lake steamer from Vevey to Geneva ¹.

When Lausanne next appears in his diary, however, a very different note is struck. Of the town, he says nothing at all. But to the lake, this time, he does ample justice.

« June 9th. [1841]. LAUSANNE. — The sun is setting on Lake Lemman, and I am sitting at my room window watching the opposite outline. The snow on the high point, fresh, is dazzlingly bright, but only there ; it shades softly down on the red crags. I dim my eye — it glows like a moonrise in the grey sky. I cannot write for looking at it. Brighter yet ! Now it is running to the left, glowing on the pastures and pines. Oh, beautiful ! The hills are all becoming misty fire, and all is grey beneath them and above. Yet redder — the middle bit is all snow ; it is bursting into conflagration, over purple shades. Now the light has left the bases, but it is far along to the left on the broad field of snow, less and less but redder and redder. Oh, glorious ! It is going fast ; only the middle peak has it still — fading fast — fading — gone. All is cold but the sky, whose spray clouds are red above, and a soft clear twilight still far down the lake with the Voiron and Salève against it. When shall I — Nay, now there is a faint red glow again on the snow fields to the left. It must have been a cloud which took it off before — When shall I see the sun set again on the lake Lemman and who will be with me, or who not ? All is cold now. » ²

Typically this noble descriptive passage is immediately followed by one of a very different nature, in which Ruskin denounces as unbearable, because unpicturesque, the neatness of the Swiss, which, as we have seen, was so to delight Dickens a few years later ³.

« The neatness of these Swiss is quite intolerable after Italy. It is cheerful certainly, and gives ideas of a happy people, and is all as it should be ; but it is horribly unpicturesque. If I were to be here for a month, I could draw nothing, without a pack of lies. » ⁴

¹ Ruskin stopped at Lausanne in 1835 (Sept. 5-7) (*Diaries, I*, 59-60) ; 1841 (June 8-9) (*Ibid.*, 200-201) ; 1842 (July 18) (*Ibid.*, 231) ; 1845 (Oct. 27 ?) (*Ibid.*, 321-322) ; 1859 (Aug. 29-30 & Sept. 10-11) (*Diaries, II*, 548-549) ; 1860 (Aug. 6) (*Complete Works, Library Edition, XXXVI*, 339-340).

² *Diaries, I*, 200-201.

³ Cf. above p. 105.

⁴ *Diaries, I*, 201.

Thus Ruskin on Lausanne, and the exasperating neatness of my compatriots, in 1841. Five years later, in a diary entry, dated January 4, 1846, referring to a « series of circumstances » that had taken place in the preceding autumn, we catch another glimpse of him at Lausanne and see another, even more striking series of moods succeed each other in this incredibly unstable and over-susceptible young genius.

« January 4th. (...) *From about the close of September at Venice, to the 26th of October, or thereabouts, at Vevay, I had been kept almost without letters (...). I received in passing through Lausanne (and that by chance, having doubted whether I should send George to post a letter half way down the town, and only let him go because I was busy drawing some figures at a fountain and couldn't interrupt myself) a short letter from my Father, full of most unkind expressions of impatience at my stay in Venice. I had been much vexed by his apparent want of sympathy throughout the journey, and on receiving this letter my first impulse was to write a complaining and perhaps a bitter one in return. But as I drove down the hill from Lausanne there was something in the sweet sunshine between the tree trunks that made me think better of it. I considered that I should give my father dreadful pain if I did so, and that all this impatience was not unkindly meant, but only the ungoverned expression of extreme though selfish affection. At last I resolved, though with a little effort, to throw the letter into the fire (...). I had no sooner made this resolution than I felt a degree of happiness and elation totally different from all my ordinary states of mind, and this continued so vivid and steady all the way towards Nyon that (...) I began to wonder how God should give me so much reward for so little self-denial, and to make all sorts of resolves relating to future conduct.* »¹

Interesting and characteristic as these two passages from Ruskin's diaries are, his most important reference to Lausanne will be found, not in his diaries, but in *Modern Painters*, Vol. V.

Modern Painters V was mostly written (as E. T. Cook tells us, and Dr. J. Evans confirms) in the winter of 1859-60, when Ruskin had just come back from a tour of Switzerland in the course of which he had twice spent two days (August 29-30 and September 10-11) at Lausanne.² Although the diary contains nothing else under these dates than the word LAUSANNE (a typical fact for that part of

¹ *Diaries*, I, 321-322.

² E. T. Cook in *Ruskin's Complete Works*, VII, lvii ; J. Evans in *John Ruskin*, 1954, p. 246 ; *Ruskin's Diaries*, II, 548-549.

the journey), there is little doubt that the four days must have been occupied by Ruskin in comparing, as he did so many times in the course of this Swiss journey, a drawing by Turner (in this case his *Lausanne, from the road to Fribourg*, no. 439 in the National Gallery collection) with the piece of scenery that had inspired it. The result of Ruskin's study *in situ* is the following passage, §§ 9-15 of chapter IV of Part VIII ¹.

An introductory paragraph (§ 8) explains that Turner never drew accurately on the spot, but always « instantly » modified what he saw as he drew it, and that this sketch is an « entirely characteristic » example of his method ². Ruskin then goes on as follows :

§ 9. « *This sketch has been made in the afternoon. He had been impressed, as he walked up the hill, by the vanishing of the lake in the golden horizon, without end of waters, and by the opposition of the pinnacled castle and cathedral to its level breadth. That must be drawn ! and from this spot, where all the buildings are set well together. But it lucklessly happens that, though the buildings come just where he wants them in situation, they don't in height. For the castle (the square mass on the right) is in reality higher than the cathedral, and would block out the end of the lake. Down it goes instantly a hundred feet, that we may see the lake over it ; without the smallest regard for the military position of Lausanne.*

§ 10. « *Next : The last low spire on the left [St. François] is in truth concealed behind the nearer bank, the town running far down the hill (and climbing another hill) in that direction. But the group of spires, without it, would not be rich enough to give a proper impression of Lausanne, as a spiry place. Turner quietly sends to fetch the church from round the corner, places it where he likes, and indicates its distance only by aerial perspective (much greater in the pencil drawing than in the woodcut).*

§ 11. « *But again : Not only the spire of the lower church, but the peak of the Rochers d'Enfer (that highest in the distance) would in reality be out of sight ; it is much farther round to the left. This*

¹ *Complete Works*, VII, 242-244. — The reader is invited as he reads Ruskin's text to compare what he says with (1) the facsimile reproduction of Turner's sketch, *Lausanne, from the road to Fribourg*, which he will find in Ruskin's *Complete Works*, VII, opposite p. 242 and here, opp. p. 94, noting however that, as Ruskin points out in a note to § 8 and repeats in the parenthesis at the end of § 10, Turner's original sketch was a delicate pencil sketch to which the reproduction (a woodcut in the Library Edition) could not do full justice ; (2) the *unmodified* view of Lausanne, which he will find here, opp. p. 90.

would never do either ; for without it, we should have no idea that Lausanne was opposite the mountains, nor should we have a nice sloping line to lead us into the distance.

With the same unblushing tranquillity of mind in which he had ordered up the church, Turner sends also to fetch the Rochers d'Enfer ; and puts them also where he chooses, to crown the slope of distant hill, which, as every traveller knows, in its decline to the west, is one of the most notable features of the view from Lausanne.

§ 12. « These modifications, easily traceable in the large features of the design, are carried out with equal audacity and precision in every part of it. Every one of those confused lines on the right indicates something that is really there, only everything is shifted and sorted into the exact places that Turner chose. The group of dark objects near us at the foot of the bank is a cluster of mills, which, when the picture was completed, were to be the blackest things in it, and to throw back the castle, and the golden horizon ; while the rounded touches at the bottom, under the castle, indicate a row of trees, which follow a brook coming out of the ravine behind us ; and were going to be made very round indeed in the picture (to oppose the piky and angular masses of castle), and very consecutive, in order to form another conducting line into the distance.

§ 13. « These motives, or motives like them, might perhaps be guessed on looking at the sketch. But no one without going to the spot would understand the meaning of the vertical lines in the left-hand lowest corner.

They are a ' memorandum ' of the artificial verticalness of a low sandstone cliff, which has been cut down there to give space for a bit of garden belonging to a public-house beneath, from which garden a path leads along the ravine to the Lausanne rifle-ground¹. The value of these vertical lines in repeating those of the cathedral, is very great ; it would be greater still in the completed picture, increasing the sense of looking down from a height, and giving grasp of, and power over, the whole scene.

§ 14. « Throughout the sketch, as in all that Turner made, the observing and combining intellect acts in the same manner. Not a line is lost, nor a moment of time ; and though the pencil flies, and the whole thing is literally done as fast as a piece of shorthand writing, it is to the full as purposeful and compressed, so that while there are

¹ Turner's view was taken from a spot on the present avenue de la Sallaz, above the vallée du Flon. The Lausanne rifle-ground has since been removed from the vallée du Flon (where Dickens had seen it in 1846 : see above p. 106).

indeed dashes of the pencil which are unintentional, they are only unintentional as the form of a letter is, in fast writing, not from want of intention, but from the accident of haste.

§ 15. « *I know not if the reader can understand, — I myself cannot, though I see it to be demonstrable, — the simultaneous occurrence of idea which produces such a drawing as this : the grasp of the whole, from the laying of the first line, which induces continual modifications of all that is done, out of respect to parts not done yet. No line is ever changed or effaced : no experiment made ; but every touch is placed with reference to all that are to succeed, as to all that have gone before ; every addition takes its part, as the stones in an arch of a bridge ; the last touch locks the arch. Remove that key-stone, or remove any other of the stones of the vault, and the whole will fall.* »

This is Ruskin at his best. His mind free from any distracting longings or remorses, happily engaged in comparing the Lausanne skyline with Turner's rendering of it ; his pen happily transcribing, with seemingly effortless ease, the successive vivid impressions of his mind, and his imagination busily reconstructing, again with no apparent effort, the very processes of Turner's creative mind as *he* sat on the same spot at the rim of the steep *vallée du Flon*, sketching the skyline of the *Cité* and altering it, and the mountains and lake in the background, to suit his artistic purpose.

With this picture of Ruskin, no longer, as in the diary entry of 1835, indulging in childish condemnation of Lausanne and the surrounding landscape because his sensibility was not, on that particular day, attuned to it ; no longer, as in 1841, engaged in passive contemplation of a sunset in which, because of this very passivity, he could not quite forget his obsession with himself and his frustrated love¹ ; no longer, as in 1845, the helpless prey of moods that could be modified by the mere influence of mild autumn sunshine filtering through the trees of an avenue as he drove down from Lausanne to the Lake — but Ruskin at his most creative, most active, most perceptive, and most happy, we shall conclude this survey of what Lausanne had to offer to five, very different English writers : a combination, unusual and perhaps unique, in a magnificent setting of lake and hills and mountains, of civilised social life and quiet rusticity ; of French refinement and Vaudois bonhomie ; of intel-

¹ See in the passage quoted above on p. 116 how twice the flow of Ruskin's description of the sunset over Lake Lemán is interrupted by the upsurging of his frustrated love for Adèle Domecq.

lectual interests and convivial pleasures and picturesque charm. Of the tiny Lausanne of two hundred and one hundred years ago — a quiet little rustic city of less than 10,000 inhabitants in Gibbon's day and of little over that figure in Ruskin's and Dickens's, its extreme limit on the south that *place St. François* which is now the very hub of the town traffic — little, it seems, remains in the noisy Lausanne of 1959, glittering with neon lights, and sprawling all over the hills on whose vine-covered slopes Gibbon's *La Grotte* and Dickens's *Rosemont* were once isolated, bucolic retreats and *Monrepos* fully deserved its name. But still, around Lausanne, the Lake and the mountains remain, and whoever cares to walk its streets on market-days, or wander along any of its less frequented by-lanes and avenues, will find in it, in spite of all modern 'improvements', the same quiet, unassuming and almost rustic charm that made even the « cold and unimpassioned » Gibbon launch into glowing praise of his dear Fanny Lausanne.

René RAPIN.