



UNIVERSITÄTS-
BIBLIOTHEK
PADERBORN

The Works Of Horatio Walpole, Earl Of Orford

In Five Volumes

Walpole, Horace

London, 1798

Narrative of what passed relative to the Quarrel of Mr. David Hume and Jean Jacques Rousseau, as far as Mr. Horace Walpole was concerned in it

[urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-59887](https://nbn-resolving.org/urn:nbn:de:hbz:466:1-59887)

A
NARRATIVE

OF WHAT PASSED RELATIVE TO

THE QUARREL OF

MR. DAVID HUME AND JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU,

AS FAR AS MR. HORACE WALPOLE WAS CONCERNED IN IT.

A
NARRATIVE
NARRATIVE

OF THE VOYAGE

OF M. DAVID HUME AND JEAN JACQUES ROUSSEAU,

AS FAR AS THE HORACE WALPOLE WAS CONCERNED IN IT.

A

NARRATIVE, &c.

I WENT to Paris in September 1765. Mr. Hume was there, secretary to the English ambassador, the earl of Hertford. About that time the curate of Motiers in Switzerland had excited the mob against Rousseau, and it was no longer safe for him to stay in that country. He petitioned the magistrates of the place to imprison him, affirming that he was troubled with a rupture, and in so bad a state of health that it was impossible for him to travel. There was no law in Switzerland against ruptures, and the magistrates could not comply with his request. Mr. Hume was desired by some friends of Rousseau to procure him a retreat in England, and undertook it zealously. He spoke to me, and said, he had thoughts of obtaining permission for him to live in Richmond new park. I said, an old groom, that had been servant of my father, was one of the keepers there, had a comfortable little lodge in a retired part of that park, and I could answer for procuring a lodging there. We afterwards recollected that lord Bute was ranger of the park, and might not care to have a man who had given much offence by his writings to pious persons, appear to be particularly under his protection; on which we dropped that idea. Sir Gilbert Elliot was then at Paris, and going to England: to him Mr. Hume applied to look out for some solitary habitation for Rousseau, as the latter had desired.

The king of Prussia, hearing that Rousseau could not remain in Swisserland, had offered him a retreat in his dominions, which Rousseau declined. It happened that I was one evening at madame Geoffrin's in a mixed company, where the conversation turned on this refusal, and many instances were quoted of Rousseau's affected singularities, and of his projects to make himself celebrated by courting persecution. I dropped two or three things, that diverted the company, of whom monsieur Helvetius was one. When I went home, I reduced those thoughts into a little letter from the king of Prussia to Rousseau¹, and dining the next day with M. Helvetius, I showed it to him. He was much diverted with it, and pointed out one or two faults in the French, which I am far from pretending to write correctly. A day or two afterwards I showed it to two or three persons at madame de Rochfort's, who were all pleased with it, among whom the duc de Nivernois proposed the alteration of one verb. I showed the letter too to madame du Deffand, and she desired to communicate it to the president Henault, and he changed the construction of the last phrase, though the thought remained exactly the same. Madame de Jonfac, the president's niece, said, if I had a mind it should appear, she would disperse it without letting the author be known. I replied, No, it had never been intended for the public, was a private piece of pleasantry, and I had no mind it should be talked of. One night at madame du Deffand's, the latter desired me to read it to madame la marechale de Mirepoix, who liked it so much, that she insisted upon having a copy; and this, as far as I can remember, was the first occasion of the dispersion.

I have recounted circumstantially the trifling incidents of the corrections of

¹ The letter was as follows :

“ Le Roi de PRUSSE à Monf. ROUSSEAU.

“ MON CHERE JEAN JACQUES,

“ Vous avez renoncé à Geneve votre patrie; vous vous êtes fait chasser de la Suisse, pays tant vanté dans vos écrits; la France vous a decreté.

“ Venez donc chez moi: j'admire vos talents; je m'amuse de vos reveries, qui (soit dit en passant) vous occupent trop, et trop long tems. Il faut à la fin être sage et heureux. Vous avez fait assez parler de vous par des singularités peu convenables à un veritable grand homme. Demontrez à vos ennemis que vous pouvez avoir quelquefois le sens commun: cela les fchera,

fans vous faire tort. Mes états vous offrent une retraite paisible; je vous veux du bien, et je vous en ferai, si vous le trouvez bon. Mais si vous vous obliez à rejeter mon secours, attendez vous que je ne le dirai à personne. Si vous persistez à vous creuser l'esprit pour trouver de nouveaux malheurs, choisissez les tels que vous voudrez. Je suis roi, je puis vous en procurer au gré de vos souhaits: et ce qui surement ne vous arrivera pas vis à vis de vos ennemis, je cesserai de vous persecuter quand vous cesserez de mettre votre gloire à l'être.

“ Votre bon ami,

“ FREDERIC.”

the

the letter, because they were afterwards most unjustly the occasion of the letter being imputed to one who had not the smallest share in it, and who was aspersed from private pique. As soon as the letter made a noise, I was so afraid of affecting to write French better than I could, that I mentioned every where, and particularly to M. Diderot at baron Holbach's, that the letter had been corrected, though I did not tell by whom, for fear of involving others in a dispute; but I never, as M. D'Alembert has falsely asserted, avowed that I had had any assistance in the composition, which would have been an untruth. This attention of not committing others, has since most absurdly been complained of by D'Alembert. Has he set his name to every thing he has written? Do his principles lead him to betray every thing that has passed in confidence between him and others? But I shall unmask his motives, and detect his spleen. He had formerly been a great friend of madame du Deffand. She had brought to Paris a poor young gentlewoman, a mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, who lived with her as a companion. They had quarrelled (I neither know nor care about what) some time before I came to Paris, and had parted. Mademoiselle de L'Espinasse had talents, drew company and authors about her, and of the latter, D'Alembert was the most assiduous; and a total coolness ensued between him and madame du Deffand. The latter soon after my arrival had shown me great distinctions and kindness. Mr. Hume proposed to carry me to mademoiselle de L'Espinasse, where I might be sure of seeing D'Alembert. I said, I had not the honour of knowing mademoiselle de L'Espinasse; that madame du Deffand had been remarkably good to me, and as I understood they did not love one another, I did not care to disoblige madame du Deffand, nor to be involved in a quarrel with which I had nothing to do; and for monsieur D'Alembert, I was mighty indifferent about seeing him; that it was not my custom to seek authors, who are a conceited troublesome set of people, and that I was not come to Paris to pay homage to their vanity. This was by no means levelled particularly at D'Alembert, of whom I knew nothing, but so much my way of thinking, that in seven months and a half that I was at Paris, I would visit but two authors, whom I infinitely preferred to all the rest, which were the younger Crebillon and monsieur Buffon, the latter of whom is one of the most amiable, modest, humane men I ever knew. This neglect of D'Alembert and his friend, and my attachment to madame du Deffand, was not to be forgiven; and I am glad he did not forgive it, as it drew him to expose his peevish spite.

Mr. Hume remained some time longer at Paris; and though he lodged in the same hotel with me, I declare, and Mr. Crawford is my witness, that I never showed or mentioned the king of Prussia's letter to him.

In the mean time, a passport had been obtained for Rousseau; and notwithstanding he was incapable of travelling, he came to Paris in his Armenian habit, which he had worn some time, as he said, to conceal his rupture. He was lodged by the prince of Conti in the Temple; several persons obtained his permission to visit him, though he made it a great favour, and yet he was so good as to indulge the curiosity of the multitude, by often walking in the public walks, where the singularity of his dress prevented his escaping their eyes. He staid a fortnight, till the parliament who had passed a decree against him began to complain of his residence in their jurisdiction. On their murmurs, the ministers alleged that the passport had been granted merely to facilitate his journey to England, and was not understood to extend beyond two or three days. The duchess of Choiseul told me, that the duke her husband was very angry that his indulgence had been abused, and at Rousseau's public exhibition of himself. I said, I hoped the duke would excuse Rousseau's delay, as I knew he had staid in complaisance to Mr. Hume, who had not been ready to depart. She replied, "Then he paid more deference to friendship than to obedience." Mr. Hume and Rousseau set out for England. They had not been there many days before accounts were written from thence to Paris of Rousseau's vanity and extravagant folly; as of his complaining to Mr. Hume one afternoon that few persons had been to see him that day; and of his refusing to settle in a gentleman's family, because the latter would not admit Rousseau's house-keeper to dine with his wife. I pitied Mr. Hume, and thought, as I had done before, that he would be heartily sick of his charge; but Mr. Hume was beyond measure attached to him, and thought he could not do too much to please him and compensate for his past misfortunes.

Some few days before I left Paris, I went to madame Geoffrin; she was writing in her closet: in the cabinet I found two persons, one of whom was talking with much warmth, and in the style in fashion, on religion. By the turn of his conversation, and by what I had heard of his person, I concluded this was D'Alembert. It was. I walked about the room, till madame Geoffrin came to us. D'Alembert went away, and this was the only time I saw him.

The

QUARREL BETWEEN HUME AND ROUSSEAU. 253

The very day before I set out, I was showed in an English newspaper, Rousseau's ridiculous letter to the printer, in which he complains with so much bitterness of the letter of the king of Prussia. Before I went to bed, I wrote a letter to Rousseau, under the name of his own Emile, to laugh at his folly; but on reflection I suppressed this, as I had done a second letter in the name of the king of Prussia, in which I foretold the variety of events which would happen in England to interfere with the noise which Rousseau hoped to make there, which would occasion his being forgotten and neglected, and which consequently would soon make him disgusted with our country. These events were, politics, Mr. Pitt's return to power, horse-races, elections, &c. all easily foreseen, and which did happen of course, and which did contribute to make Rousseau weary of the solitude which he pretended to seek, which he had found, and which he could not bear.

After I came to England, Mr. Hume told me he had solicited Mr. Conway, one of the secretaries of state, to obtain for Rousseau from the king a pension of an hundred pounds a year. Mr. Conway asked, and the king consented to it; but in consideration of Rousseau's obnoxious writings, his majesty desired the pension should be a secret. Rousseau wished to have it public, and had not yielded then to receive it in a private manner. Afterwards followed Rousseau's extravagant quarrel with Mr. Hume, in the course of which Mr. Hume begged me to press Mr. Conway to obtain the pension in the way which would please Rousseau most. I willingly undertook it, urged Mr. Conway to pursue it, which he promised me to do; but I told Mr. Hume that he must by no means let Rousseau know that I had any share in it, as he probably would not care to owe it to me.

Then arrived Rousseau's long absurd letter to Mr. Hume, which most people in England, and I amongst the rest, thought was such an answer to itself, that Mr. Hume had no occasion to vindicate himself from the imputations contained in it. The gens de lettres at Paris, who aim at being an *order*, and who in default of parts raise a dust by their squabbles, were of a different opinion, and pressed Mr. Hume to publish on the occasion. Mr. Hume however declared he was convinced by the arguments of his friends in England, and would not engage in a controversy. Lord Mansfield told me, he was glad to hear I was of his opinion, and had dissuaded Mr. Hume from publishing. Indeed I was convinced he did not intend it: and when he came to

me one morning, and desired I would give him a letter under my hand to show to his friends, disculpating him from having been privy to the king of Prussia's letter, I willingly consented, and wrote one, which I gave him, and the beginning of which proved how strong my opinion was against his publishing.

I am sorry to say, that on this occasion Mr. Hume did not act quite fairly by me. In the beginning of my letter, I laughed at his *learned* friends, who wished him to publish, which, as I told him, was only to gratify their own spleen to Rousseau. I had no spleen to him, I had laughed at his affectation, but had tried to serve him; and above all things, I despised the childish quarrels of pedants and pretended philosophers. This commencement of my letter was therefore a dissuasive against printing. Could I imagine that Mr. Hume would make use of part of my letter, and suffer it to be printed—and even without asking my consent? I had told him he might do what he pleased with it: but when he had desired it only to show, and when it advised him not to publish, could my words imply a permission to print my letter? Much less could they imply permission to curtail my letter, and give it to the public as if I approved his printing. And I repeat it again, Was he at liberty to do this without asking and obtaining my consent? It is very true, I heartily despised Rousseau's ingratitude to Mr. Hume; but had I thought my letter would have been published, I should not have expressed my feeling in such harsh terms as *a thorough contempt*—at least I should have particularized the cause of that contempt, because the superiority and excellence of Rousseau's genius ought not to be confounded with his defects. Nor should I have treated him with the same indifference as I should treat the present gens de lettres at Paris, the mushrooms of the moment. But Mr. Hume was penetrated with respect for them, and not to wound their vain and sensitive ears, suppressed the commencement of my letter, and in that mangled form suffered them to publish it. When it was published, he made an apology to me: his letters and my answers I shall annex to this narrative.

In consequence however of my contempt of controversy, with a proper scorn of D'Alembert's womanish motives, and in tenderness to Mr. Hume, I forbore to expose D'Alembert as he deserved. The little insects produced by this quarrel kept it up for some time in print, and Freron, who exists on such four nutriments, attacked me in one of his journals, which to this hour I never saw; nor

QUARREL BETWEEN HUME AND ROUSSEAU. 255

so much as heard of, till I was informed from Paris, that the duchess of Choiseul obliged him to make a public retraction, and, as well as the duke, was much incensed against D'Alembert, madame du Deffand being the duchess's particular friend. I immediately wrote to Paris to beg the duchess would suffer Freron and D'Alembert, or any of the tribe, to write what they pleased, and get what money they could by abusing me.

Rousseau remained for some months longer in Derbyshire, in a cottage near Mr. Davenport—but in the spring, Rousseau and his housekeeper suddenly departed. The post-master where he hired horses told him, Mr. Davenport would be much concerned at being quitted so abruptly. Rousseau replied, he took that method not to shock Mr. Davenport by his complaints.—However, he left a letter behind him for this last benefactor, not much inferior in reproaches to the one he had addressed to Mr. Hume. The chief cause of his discontent had been a long quarrel between his housekeeper and Mr. Davenport's cook-maid, who, as Rousseau affirmed, had always dressed their dinner very ill, and at last had sprinkled ashes on their victuals.

Rousseau, quitting his Armenian masquerade, crossed the country with his *gouvernante*, and arrived at Boston in Lincolnshire. There a gentleman who admired his writings waited on him, offered him assistance in money, and called him *the great Rousseau*. He replied with warmth, "No, sir, no, I am not *the great Rousseau*, I am the poor neglected Rousseau, of whom nobody takes any notice." Thus broke forth the true source of all his unhappiness. The brightest parts, the most established fame, could not satisfy him, unless he was the perpetual object of admiration and discourse; and to keep up this attention, he descended to all the little tricks of a mountebank.

From Boston he wrote to the lord chancellor Camden, to desire his lordship would send him a guard to conduct him to Dover. A guard! and in England! where he or any body may travel in the most perfect security! and where there was no sentence of law or decree of parliament against him!—And for what? To conduct him to France, where he was proscribed and liable to be apprehended by the first guard that should meet him. The chancellor smiled at his folly, and desired Mr. Fitzherbert to acquaint him, that he had no occasion for a guard, and might go with the utmost safety to Dover—and so he did.

From

From Dover he wrote to Mr. Conway the most extravagant of all his letters, and which indeed amounted to madness. In it he entreated Mr. Conway in the most earnest and pathetic terms to suffer him to quit England (from whence he would be failed long before Mr. Conway could receive his letter); he intimated a violent apprehension that he was to be assassinated at sea; he promised, if he was permitted to depart, that he never would write a syllable against England, or the English; offered to deposit all his unprinted writings there, and, to prove his sincerity, demanded his pension (an odd request for a man going to perish), the acceptance of which, he said, would constitute him the greatest of villains, if he should ever afterwards abuse England: and he concluded his solicitation of leave to depart, with a promise of acquainting Mr. Conway how to direct to him, as soon as he should be landed at Calais.

Mr. Conway showed me this letter. I begged him, as soon as he should receive the direction, to acquaint Rousseau, that he was at full liberty to write what he pleased; that nobody wished to prevent his writing any thing he had a mind to say; and I begged Mr. Conway to obtain the pension, which he did, and which was granted.

Still wishing to compensate for any uneasiness I had given Rousseau by the king of Prussia's letter, and now really thinking him distracted enough to thrust himself on actual calamities, I wrote to the duchess of Choiseul to represent his case, to beg her protection for him, and to entreat that she would save him, if the parliament of Paris or the government should be disposed to exercise their resentment on him.

He arrived safely at Paris, was received by his old friend the prince of Conti, was for some time lodged near Meudon; and when I returned to Paris in August 1767, he lived very privately at a little distance from that capital on an estate belonging to the same prince, where I shall leave him, and conclude this idle history.

HORACE WALPOLE.

Paris,
Sept. 13, 1767.

L E T.