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Conférence faite à Lugano, le 20 octobre 1956, à l'Association suisse des maîtres d'anglais.

Edward Gibbon, as you all know, spent five years in Lausanne between the ages of sixteen and twenty-one. During those years he read systematically, and without any compulsion whatever, all the Latin classics. From quite early in life, he had been a voracious reader, particularly interested in history. When he returned to England in 1758 his knowledge of Latin literature coupled with his passion for history had awakened in him the desire to see with his own eyes the cradle of Roman civilisation, Italy and above all Rome.

But he was already something of a classical scholar and knew enough to be aware of all that he ought yet to learn in order to derive full benefit from an Italian journey, and he wisely determined — young as he was, he was already a very wise person — not to ask his father — a country squire of affluent means — for the big sum such a journey would cost until he felt better prepared. So for the next two years, mostly living at his father's house in South Hampshire, he went on reading whatever could enrich his knowledge of the ancient world.

It was the time of the Seven Years' War. In 1759 England felt so threatened with a French invasion that the militia had to be raised for home defence. Squire Gibbon and his son accepted commissions in the South Hampshire battalion and, from May 1760, much of their time was taken up by their military duties. The invasion, however, never materialized and, after a time, young Gibbon could again devote a fair amount of time to his favourite studies. So that, when in the late autumn 1762 the war came to an end, he thought the moment had come to carry out his long cherished plan, his dream of seeing Italy and Rome.

Gibbon's father, simple country-squire as he was, was something of a snob, and therefore could not very well refuse his son the means

of going abroad, even for more than two years. For over two centuries it had been taken for granted that the education of an English gentleman entailed a journey on the continent, the Grand Tour as it had come to be called by the end of the seventeenth century. And the elder Gibbon meant his son to be an accomplished gentleman and pursue a political career. He was willing to pay for it.

No time was lost. In January 1763, Gibbon left England for Paris on his way to the South. But he was in no hurry. Paris could not be simply rushed through. He stayed there a little over three months, sight-seeing, developing an interest in numismatics, and getting into touch with literary and scholarly circles to which a first little book, on the study of ancient letters, published in 1761 — written in French and rather well-received in France — served him as introduction. From Paris, his way to Italy lay through Lausanne. His intention was to spend the summer there and cross the Alps in the autumn. But in Lausanne he found many old friends, pleasant accomodation at a pension where other young Englishmen were staying, and, in the libraries of our country, some books which he had not yet read and definitely wanted to read, so that he lingered almost a year, sharing with zest in the amusements of both aristocratic and bourgeois society, but also working hard. He read over again some of the classics, those in particular from whose works more or less information on Roman civilisation can be gathered; he patiently and stubbornly plodded through the huge folios of seventeenth century scholars who had collected and systematized all that was known of Antiquity; he made a special study of Roman coins and medals; he amassed notes towards a book on the geography of ancient Italy which he thought might be of use to scholars. So the winter passed, profitably as well as pleasantly. And it was not until April that he resumed his travels. The Italian journey was beginning at last.

Many years were to elapse yet before Gibbon became the self-dedicated historian of the decline and fall of the Roman Empire. For the present his interest in the ancient world, however deep, was anything but exclusive. His mind ranged widely over a variety of objects. Going to Italy was not only for him getting into immediate contact with the relics of the great empire, it was also breathing deep of the spirit of the Renaissance, that transformation of the human mind which had resulted in the enlightened Europe he was so happy to be a citizen of. And he meant to pay full attention to the contemporary conditions of all the countries he would be visiting. His journey thus had more than one aim, at least to begin with.

He entered Italy fully aware of what he would find. For he had prepared for his tour by reading the relations of their travels of various people, not all Englishmen. He was taking with him three books at least which contained much detailed and useful information on what he was going to see, namely the *Travels* of John George Keysler, originally written in German but published in an English translation, brought up to date, in 1758; Cochin's *Voyage d'Italie,* a recent French work in three slim volumes which he could easily slip into his pocket; and of course François Misson's *New Voyage to Italy,* published in French at the end of the previous century, a famous book which, after seventy years, was still, in an English translation frequently reedited with additional notes, the Baedeker of the English traveller in the eighteenth century.

In his "Instructions to Travellers," to be found in the second part of his first volume, Misson advises any traveller "to set down all that he sees in his Journal and, to make his industry the more successful, to carry a table-book (that is a note-book) about with him, and every evening to examine and transcribe the observations of the day." Gibbon had started keeping a Journal pretty soon after his return to England. He would probably have continued to keep one during his continental journey even without Misson's advice. But we have some reason to think that the method he followed now was that prescribed by Misson. His manuscript journals are preserved in the British Museum, in six volumes. The second half of the fifth, and the sixth were written in Italy. They are still unpublished, not for long I hope. From their pages I have drawn the substance of my lecture.

Gibbon was not travelling by himself. Two of the young Englishmen he had made friends with at Lausanne went with him. One of them soon proved a nuisance and the others felt much relieved when he decided to leave them. But Gibbon and his friend Guise kept together as far as Rome. They went everywhere, saw everything in company. In his journal, Gibbon uses "I" when recounting his own impressions or speaking of his own work. Otherwise it is always "we." They travelled, as Gibbon says in a letter to his father, "in great harmony and good humour," Guise being "a very worthy, sensible man," and having "a very proper spirit of curiosity and enquiry."

From Geneva to Turin, they made use of the facilities provided by a sort of agency in Geneva which procured coaches, horses and drivers to the foot of Mount Cenis and again on the other side of

the Alps, as well as the necessary conveyances over the pass itself, mules, primitive sedan-chairs or sledges. Guise took a mule. Gibbon, averse to physical exertion of any kind, had himself carried over. Neither felt inclined to try toboganing down the steep snowy slopes. Their first care on arriving at their inn in Turin, capital then of the kingdom of Sardinia, was to hire a coach with the necessary driver. Gibbon had brought over with him from England a Swiss servant, a native of Bern, who spoke Italian, and proved very good and very useful. To him they left all material arrangements. You must henceforth imagine them getting about in their own carriage, not only when passing from one town to another, but also when visiting places of interest or calling on people within one and the same town. To walk about in Italy was below the dignity of gentlemen. Now they were gentlemen and wanted to be looked upon everywhere as such. The success of their travels largely depended upon it. That was the condition of their being received in the best society, even at court, royal or ducal, and also of their mixing freely with what other English travellers they would come across. For the English travelling on the continent for their pleasure or instruction all belonged to the upper classes and liked to keep together.

No sooner had our two young friends settled at their lodgings than some English, including the British minister himself, called upon them, and their visits were duly returned on the following day. Henceforth hardly any day passed but they had dinner or spent part of the evening with one or another member of the "nation," as Gibbon usually calls the English abroad. But he never gave them more of his time than was required by polite usage. He wanted to see as much as he could of the country and its institutions, of its curiosities, both ancient and modern, of its scholars and men of letters, if there were any, and not waste his time with people he could meet in England.

The fortnight spent at Turin was a busy one. Sight-seeing took up much of their time, but not of monuments only. To the royal manufactures, to the Arsenal, to the famous fortress they devoted a good many hours. Sardinia had of late become a military power of almost the first rank. Prussia alone was considered stronger. Gibbon, interested in modern political developments, proud of his own military training, was determined to find out for himself what the Piedmontese army was like. He got into touch with several officers, made them talk, watched parades, followed exercises and came away with a clear idea of its real value.

He had a letter of introduction to one of the King's ministers who had at one time been ambassador in London. Through that man's kind offices, he and his friend were presented to the King himself, and allowed to call on the other members of the Royal family. Gibbon thought King Charles-Emmanuel a common-looking little old man, hardly a gentleman in his manners, and of very poor conversation. He felt out of sympathy with a sovereign who, to his mind, was a narrow-minded despot who did not appear to care for the welfare of his people: coming from Switzerland he had been horrified at the wretched poverty of the villages he had passed through in Savoy. For the King's son and heir, the Duke of Savoy, whom his father treated rather harshly, he felt very sorry; but the visit he paid him and the Duchess was not much of a success, the poor prince hardly daring to open his mouth. Quite successful, on the other hand, the visit to the King's daughters, three old maids, all lively, talkative and pleased to meet an Englishman who spoke French so well. Gibbon soon was so much at ease that, forgetting where he was, he drew out his snuff-box, offered it to the princesses to their great amusement, took a pinch himself, and, with a gesture which remained characteristic of him to the end of his life, underlined what point he was making by rapping on the lid, Guise in the meantime blushing at the liberties his friend was taking, though the princesses were not in the least resenting them.

Turin was very poor then in men of letters. Alfieri was a mere boy at school. And Gibbon was not impressed by the local celebrities he saw at the evening parties of a countess where the best people in the town used to meet. He found the nobility proud and haughty, and stupid. Of course his knowledge of Italian was far too elementary for him to judge. He had learnt some before leaving England, and was now taking lessons every day, but he was still a beginner. Far more than such social occasions he enjoyed his visits to the gallery, the rich collection of antiquities at the University which the King was constantly adding to. It was under the care of a highly competent curator, Bartoli by name, who received him with courtesy and soon discovered that the young Englishman was an enthusiastic student of the ancient world. They became friends almost at once, saw as much of each other as was possible, Gibbon inviting him to dinner at his inn, returning to the gallery again and again, discussing with him the archaeological interest of this or that item in the collection. Bartoli was then engaged in a controversy with other scholars concerning the ascription to Egypt, Greece or Rome of a certain bust.

He had just finished writing an elaborate memoir to be sent to the French Academy. He read it to Gibbon and asked him what he thought of it. Gibbon refused to commit himself before he had seen and pondered the arguments on either side, but he gladly sat up part of the night to read all that had been published on the question. When, on the following day, he went to see the curator, he could tell him he was convinced all his adversaries were in the wrong. The elderly man was highly gratified and, when Gibbon left Turin two days later he carried with him letters of introduction, which proved most useful, from Bartoli to his colleagues in other places. In nearly all the museums and collections which he henceforth visited he was received, not as an ordinary stranger, but as a scholar, and all facilities were given him to make as prolonged a study of their antiquities as he liked.

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On the 12th of May, Gibbon and Guise left Turin for Milan. The Austrian government in Lombardy had done much to improve agriculture and Gibbon, who as heir to a country estate was not an ignorant townsman, much admired the vast plain they were traversing. He described it in his journal as " the fairest in the world, fertile and well cultivated." Milan was a disappointment. The Cathedral struck him as over-ornate and he was shocked, even disgusted when reflecting that the vast sums lavished upon it must have been wrung from a poor superstitious people. At the Ambrosian the librarian was absent and they were given a guide who did not speak a word of French and could not be made to understand that they wanted to see most of the celebrated codices; then the man insisted on taking them to the Natural History Museum and Gibbon took little interest in natural curiosities. Fortunately the view from the upper platform of the Duomo was very fine, a famous Austrian regiment at drill was a gratifying spectacle, and a Rubens, four Breughels and Leonardo's drawings in the picture gallery were some compensation.

No foreigner then coming to Milan, even for two or three days, felt he had done his duty as a tourist unless he had been to the Borromean islands. And our friends were conscientious travellers. I have not found whether they were treated differently from other visitors, but, on arriving at Isola Bella after a long and tedious navigation under a pouring rain — there was no road then along the lake, and a boat had to be hired at Sesto —, they were most politely receiv-

ed by the servants of the absent owner who had placed the palace at their disposal. Dinner was served in the dining-hall and beds given them for the night. On the next day Gibbon spent a rainy morning writing letters in the library, waiting for the weather to clear. The afternoon was fine. They strolled about the terraces and gardens, delighted with their solitude and the scent of the citrus and lemon groves, enchanted by the view. Before turning back, they were rowed to Isola Madre; at Arona they landed to pay ironical respects to the colossal statue of San Carlo which Guise ascended by rickety ladders and iron hooks, while, unwilling to risk his bones, Gibbon waited for him down below, meditating, I suppose, on the Counter-reformation.

From Milan, their original design had been to go to Venice and be there for the carnival. The duke of York, brother to King George, who was also touring Italy, was there at the time and his presence with a full retinue promised to make of the annual festivities scenes of exceptional brilliance. But to share in them would mean spending a lot of money and, on second thoughts, prudent Gibbon persuaded his more wordly companion to renounce the amusements and gallantries that made of Venice then the chief play-ground of Europe, and go straight on to Florence where their plan was to spend the summer and learn more Italian before proceeding to Rome in the autumn. The shortest way from Milan to Florence was by sea from Genoa to Lerici and so, leaving Milan on the Saturday, May 19, they drove south in the direction of the Po, stopping only once to have a look at the Pavia charterhouse, admire the richly decorated west front of the church, find its sumptuous interior not in the best of tastes, and reflect that it was the friars' austere living which made it possible for them to have such a luxurious place of worship. Reaching the banks of the river in the late afternoon, they found it so frightfully swollen by the recent rains, and the current so swift, that they thought it better not to trust their coach and horses, and their own lives, to the leaky ferry that was the only means of getting across. They went back to Pavia for a night or two, were there on the Sunday, going round the few sights. Gibbon mentions the covered bridge, the chapel filled with the bones of the French killed at the battle of 1525 and the University with its forty students, but none of the churches... and on the Monday, the river having subsided, they turned south again.

At Genoa, Gibbon had a friend, the daughter of the poet David Mallet at whose house Gibbon senior had deposited his son on withdrawing him from Magdalen College, while making arrangements for

sending him to Lausanne. Miss Mallet had married the Genoese envoy at the court of St-James's and was now living at Genoa. She received her countrymen with great kindness, had them to dinner the next day, when Gibbon made a most favourable impression on her husband, signor Celesia, who introduced him to his father and to his brother. His wife being confined to her apartments for a whole week by a bad cold, and the illness of a child, the three gentlemen did their best to make Gibbon and Guise's stay pleasant and profitable. From them, whom he was never weary of questioning, Gibbon learned a lot concerning the liberation of Genoa from the Austrians in 1746, the Balilla insurrection, the constitution of the republic, the Corsican difficulties, the character of Paoli, writing it all down in his journal. Thanks to them, he was received by the Doge at the Town Hall, "a corpulent old man who looks rather stupid" and "spends five times as much as he receives for the pleasure of living in an ugly house which he cannot leave without the permission of the Senate, of being clad in crimson from head to foot, and of having twelve sixty years old pages dressed in Spanish fashion." They also took him and his friend to several evening parties at the palaces of the noblest families where Gibbon felt much happier than in the Turin drawing-rooms, enjoying the talk, which was lively and even witty, an atmosphere which contrasted pleasantly with the severe, rather puritanical air one breathed at the court of Savoy. A charming hostess in particular, young and pretty, who was learning English and constantly laughing at her own mistakes, drew Gibbon into conversation and made him feel quite at home. Celesia himself or one of his relatives took our travellers to most of the villas in the country, with their renowned collection of great paintings, where Gibbon admired the Rubenses more than the Italian masters, and their situation more than their architecture. He gives an amusing little vignette of himself sprawling on a big sofa in one of those houses, entranced by the prospect of sea and shore through the windows opening east, south and west. By themselves, driving about in their coach, they went to see the churches, more palaces, the college of the Jesuits, the arsenal, the harbour where they went on board a galley of the Republic with its fifty-two oars, each rowed by five slaves, a monastery where the Abbott treated them to a cup of chocolate and showed them his private apartments.

After a fortnight it was time to go, but a contrary wind prevented their sailing. There was one thing they had vainly tried to see so far, Guido's Assumption of the Virgin in San Ambrogio. Whenever they had gone there, the church was crowded, a service was on, and

they had been unwilling to disturb the worshippers. They now made one more attempt. The church was packed as usual. But realizing that this might be their last chance of seeing the celebrated picture, they made no bones about forcing their way right up to a place whence, using their binoculars, they had a good view of it, to the great scandal of the preacher in the midst of a most pathetic sermon, and of its congregation. That done, there was nothing more they wanted to see at Genoa and they were eager to get away. But the wind refused to turn, and after several days of growing exasperation, they decided to go to Florence by road, a journey which they knew was long and likely to be uncomfortable, the only possible crossing of the Apennines being from Bologna to Pistoia. And it actually was even longer than they had expected owing to the very poor state of the roads and the difficulty of finding acceptable horses at most stages.

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Their way took them through Piacenza, Parma, Reggio, Modena and Bologna. In spite of their haste to get to Florence and of the heat which made travelling over the vast plain rather trying, they could not very well pass all those notable places without devoting some little time to each of them. Piacenza was seen in a few morning hours. That was enough for the sadly impoverished city. Gibbon ascribes its decadence to the fact that it had lost its annual fair, the merchants refusing to come any more to a town whose nobles claimed, and used, the right to help themselves at every booth without ever paying for what they took. Still there were the equestrian statues of the two Farnesi on the Piazza dei Cavalli and Guercino's frescoes in the cupola of the cathedral. Concerning the statues, Gibbon, sensible and matter-of-fact as always, remarks how ridiculous it is to honour a prince like Ranuccio Farnese who, to the arts of war, had preferred building theatres and founding libraries, by putting him on horseback in warlike attire, and how regrettable it is that in most equestrian statues the face of the man is hidden behind the head and neck of the horse.

The drive from Piacenza onward roused deep emotions in the future historian. He was on the Via Aemilia and imagined it trodden by the legions of ancient Rome. But he was not engrossed by the past to the extent of not noticing with pleasure the wonderfully fertile plain "like to a fine garden where every patch of ground is

turned to good profit." At Parma, which they came to in the evening — having covered the forty miles from Piacenza in some seven hours, jolting and bumping on a Via Aemilia which had long lost its pristine smoothness — at Parma, Gibbon was guilty of some more inept remarks, but also experienced for the first time a genuine aesthetic emotion. Correggio's frescoes in the cupola of the Duomo were then flaking off and no one thought of repairing them. Instead of feeling sorry for it, he noted it with some degree of satisfaction, hoping that that would put an end to the silly idea of commissioning great artists to the decoration of cupolas which could not be seen without twisting one's neck and where figures had no right to be unless represented as falling down. In the Duke's gallery, on the other hand, he suddenly came upon Corregio's Madonna with St-Magdalena kissing the Child's feet, and stood mute with admiration. "Never before, he wrote in his journal, had I known the power of the painter's art. The peace and inexpressible tenderness breathed by that picture enter the spectator's very soul and he cannot turn away from it, when at last he must, without the grievous feeling that he is losing what he loves." Far more characteristic of the ordinary Gibbon than such rapture was what he did in Palladio's big neighbouring theatre. The guide had boasted that it could accomodate 14 000 people. Gibbon thought it a shameless exaggeration and at once, with Guise's help, proceeded to make exact measurements and found that an audience of 7 000 was the very maximum the auditorium could hold. But still more characteristic of him his irrepressible desire to see the Duke's jealously guarded collection of antiquities. The public was never admitted to it. But it so happened that some of its treasures had been arranged in a special room for the benefit of the Duke of York whose visit was just then expected. And Gibbon, perhaps because he was the Duke's countryman, more likely because he would not be refused, obtained at last the permission to see them for half-an-hour. There he found a famous inscription of which he had heard — Muratori had already published it — and, disregarding the statues and vases, spent most of his half-hour absorbed in deciphering it.

But Roman history at no time caused Gibbon to despise the pleasures of society. At Reggio, which they reached on the 15th of June, late in the afternoon, they found the town in a state of feverish excitement owing to the presence of the reigning duke who was holding his court and entertaining his noblest subjects. They at once decided to join them. As everyone would be wearing a mask, according to usage, they procured masks, changed into their best clothes and went to the

assembly. There was music, dancing, a sumptuous buffet, plenty of young people, and more sedate ones playing cards at very high stakes. No one appears to have resented, perhaps noticed, the presence of the two strangers. Very likely they neither addressed anyone in their lame Italian, nor offered to dance, and were content to partake of the refreshments. Next day there was some sight-seeing and at night they went to the opera. On leaving it they resumed their journey. The heat was becoming more than they could stand and they had determined to cover during the night the last two stages before going over the mountains. They would sleep in their coach as best they could. They were at Modena on the 17th, at Bologna on the 19th.

To Modena they gave two full days, pleased with the general aspect of the town. Its stuccoed houses gave it a clean and cheerful appearance. They saw some of the churches, without satisfaction. Their architecture was not to their taste. And they hurried from one to the other. Far more time was spent in the rich library, the librarian himself taking them round, proud to show the young protestant scholar fine editions of Calvin and Luther and other fathers of the reformed church which, for all he was a Jesuit himself, he had carefully collected. And in the gallery Gibbon was detained for hours, not so much by the pictures as by the collection of coins and medals, already one of the most precious in all Italy. Before leaving Modena he filled no less than ten pages of his journal with detailed observations on the coins that had interested him most. He had been allowed to handle and inspect them closely, and his remarks are clear evidence of the competence he had attained as a numismatist.

In the art gallery he had paid most attention to the work of the three Caracci and Guido Reni, the masters of the Bologna school of painting. One would have expected him to stay some time at least where they can best be studied. But he and Guise merely passed through Bologna. The reason he gives is that a fortnight was necessary to see all "the miracles of the school of the Caracci" and he now wanted to reach Florence without further delay. There would be time, and in fact there was time, to see Bologna properly on the return journey.

Crossing the Apennines was a trial. It took them eighteen hours at an average of hardly more than four miles an hour, a walking pace. The road was very rough, often a mere track, and the carriage would not have stood a greater speed. Besides, what horses they could get were poor old animals. Crawling along might have had its compensations had the country pleased them. But it looked bleak and deso-

late, the few villages dirty and miserable. Gibbon noted with regret the absence of the herds of cattle which, in other mountains, added some cheerfulness to a forbidding prospect. It was late at night when they entered Florence at last and found lodgings at an excellent *hotel garni* kept by an Englishman.

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At Florence they stayed from the 20th of June to the 22nd of September, three full months. So far as Gibbon was concerned he turned his time to very good account. Whether the same can be said of his friend, we do not know. They seem to have done much together. But for long hours Gibbon read either Italian literature or works of historical and archaeological interest, wrote his journal — over a hundred large size pages for the first two months —, went on with the work begun at Lausanne on the geography of ancient Italy... and in all that side of his friend's life, Guise did not share. Nor can he have felt the same curiosity for the collection of antiquities, inscriptions and coins which Gibbon studied systematically, or the private libraries to which Gibbon obtained admittance. As regards their social life it was a different matter. Guise was the son of a baronet and a relation of the British Minister at the Tuscan court, Sir Horace Mann. And this proved most useful. Sir Horace, on whom they called on their second day at Florence, at once took them under his wings, told them to consider his house as their own, constantly invited them to dinner or supper with other members of the nation, took them with him to all kinds of social functions, introduced them to a number of Italian families, and generally was to them a devoted and considerate parent. He was a kind man by nature, very popular at Florence where he had been ever since 1737, on a friendly footing with all that counted in the city, from the Austrian governor to the keepers of the libraries and museums. To any one he protected all doors were open. A life-long friend of Horace Walpole, we know him well thanks to the correspondence of England's most famous letter-writer. His own letters to Walpole have not been published in full. They do not deserve it, their style is without distinction. But two thick volumes describing Florentine life in the eighteenth century have been based upon them and help to visualize the background against which Gibbon and Guise moved in that summer of 1764.

The " nation " was well represented at Florence, young men most of them, living in lodgings, all members of the upper classes,

happy to meet one another. They never ate their dinners alone. When they dined in their own rooms Gibbon and Guise had the company of at least one, or, more usually, of several of them. They met again round the hospitable table of Sir Horace or of Mr. Dick, the English consul at Leghorn who, for the sake of congenial society, preferred to live at Florence. (The English at Leghorn, a fairly numerous colony, were all merchants, tradespeople, and between them and the noble travellers on the Grand Tour there was no possible contact). Had it not been for Sir Horace's paternal supervision some of those young men might have fared ill, gone to the dogs perhaps among the women of the town, the sharpers of all kinds all ready to pounce upon the unwary foreigner. But the minister cared for the reputation of his countrymen, which was the reputation of England herself, and kept them in order as far as he could. So instead of frequenting the low gaming-houses and the houses of ill-fame beyond the Arno, they went to the assemblies or conversazioni of the aristocracy and there found honest card-playing and pretty women looking for lovers. Gibbon did not play and was decidedly averse to forming too close a connection with even the most charming lady. He confesses to feeling attracted to one or two, and may even — but we shall never know — have had an affair in September. On the 2nd, he writes in his journal: "I have begun to form an inclination," and proudly adds that the lady, born a Medici, belongs to the very highest society... but there his journal stops abrupty on what reads like an unfinished sentence; the following pages are left unfilled and the journal was only resumed three weeks later on leaving Florence. Was this interruption due to his spending much time with the lady — Italian ladies could be very exacting with their lovers — or to his reading more and more in preparation for Rome ? Did he mean to fill the blank pages with an account of the affair or merely, as is more likely, with some considerations on the extinction of the Medici dynasty and the circumstances of the duchy passing into Austrian hands ? Impossible to say, the blank pages remained blank. On the whole, despite female charm, he found the conversazioni rather tiresome, the Florentines less pleasant to meet than the Genoese. And he went on frequenting them chiefly because he could be sure to meet his English friends there. But he was not unwilling to be present at such events as the horse-races in the streets, the boat-races on the river, the processions on religious festivals, the ceremony at which the nobles of Tuscany and Siena swore allegiance to their sovereign or his representative, and he has left in his diary interesting descrip-

tions of such occasions. He also went to the opera, not on account of the music — he had no ear for music, though a fine voice could give him pleasure — but because the theatre was a meeting place for the best people : the gentlemen would pass from box to box, calling on all their acquaintances, sitting down with them to the suppers brought to the boxes, and laughing at the crowd in the pit who made themselves ridiculous by clamouring for a little silence.

But to such social pleasures, Gibbon gave but a comparatively small share of his time. Work filled most of it. For must be reckoned as work his many visits to the Uffici or the Pitti palace, so conscientious, so painstaking, so systematic was his study of both modern works of art and antiquities. Every day began with an Italian lesson, from seven to nine, supplemented by much personal reading. For more than two months nearly every night saw him sitting up late writing in his journal in a neat hand, but with great speed (witness the many missing words), often turning the notes jotted down in front of a painting or a statue, when examining a medal or a coin, into carefully composed paragraphs. The better to profit by his visits to the museums, he perused the magnificent, but ponderous folios of Gori's *Museum Florentinum,* and other learned memoirs and treatises. His days were really quite strenuous, and the relaxation he afforded himself no more than necessary. When he had exhausted the interest of the museums, he turned to the churches and the palaces, doing them thoroughly. So that when, at the end of September, he said good-bye to Florence, he had the right to tell himself that he had seen practically everything worth seeing, acquired a vast amount of new knowledge, widened his horizon, and above all made himself ready for Rome at last.

The main interest, for the student of Gibbon, of the journal he kept at Florence lies in the insight it gives into his mind and tastes. If there is one thing that can be said to characterize Gibbon as a diarist, it is his perfect candour. Writing to his father about that time, he says : " I have always had the honesty never to pretend to any taste I was in reality devoid of." That was very true, and is particularly true of his journal which he wrote for himself alone. In it he never strikes an attitude, is always content to be himself. An independent mind from an early age, he follows his own way, quite indifferent to received opinions, consecrated admirations. Aware of his limitations — he knows he is not much of an artist — he is not ashamed of them, and prefers to form his own opinion of the most celebrated paintings or sculptures rather than repeat what others have

said. He likes what is true to nature, to reality, and what is expressive. He dislikes whatever appears to him strained, exaggerated, unnatural. Michelangelo's statues on the Medici tombs are ridiculous in his eyes simply because no one could possibly maintain for a minute the positions the sculptor has given them. This, which of course is true, completely blinded him to their overpowering mysterious beauty. And for similar reasons, many of his pronouncements are as silly as they are ingenuous. But when nothing in a work of art hurts his need for truth being respected, he can be highly and intelligently appreciative, discriminative and sensible, and even, though rarely, enthusiastic. Did time permit, his pages on the Medici Venus should be read here, for the celebrated statue did awake in him the authentic emotion he had once before experienced. He saw it again and again, each time with deeper satisfaction.

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From Florence, through Lucca, Pisa, Leghorn and Siena, Gibbon (and Guise) took ten days to reach the Eternal City, the true goal of his dreams and ambitions as a traveller. In his months at Florence his absorption in the Roman past of Italy had grown more and more intense. His journal bears witness to it, with its many pages of description and discussion of the antiquities he saw. And now, although he did not omit to pay proper attention to the monuments and modern conditions of the places he was going through or staying at for the night, drawing for instance a curious parallel between Geneva and the republic of Lucca, his mind was irresistibly concentrating on the times of Tully, Caesar and Augustus and their successors. Driving from Florence to Pistoia and then passing the Montecatini defiles, he pondered Catilina's attempt at overthrowing the Republic, the skilful dispositions the man had taken to resist the legions of Metellus, and found that he now understood it all much better by being able to relate it to the actual scene of the conjuration and its defeat. At Pisa he chiefly noticed in the cathedral the many columns which originally belonged to pagan temples and had been stolen by the Pisans from all round the Mediterranean at the time of their maritime supremacy; in the Camposanto the sarcophagi and ancient inscriptions, while for Gozzoli's frescoes he has but a contemptuous "They are bad."

On the 2nd of October, at the end of the day, he entered Rome at last, "in a dream of antiquity," as he put it. In one of his auto-

biographical sketches, written twenty-five years later, he wrote : " I can neither forget nor express the strong emotions which agitated my mind as I first approached and entered the eternal city. After a sleepless night, I trod, with a lofty step, the ruins of the Forum ; each memorable spot where Romulus stood, or Tully spoke, or Caesar fell, was at once present to my eye ; and several days of intoxication were lost or enjoyed before I could descend to a cool and minute investigation."

This intoxication it was, I suppose, that brought the journal to an end. Gibbon must have found it impossible to write anything, as impossible as to descend to a cool and minute investigation. And when he again could use his powers of analysis and criticism, he had placed himself in the hands of a competent guide, " an antiquary of experience and taste," who, being a Scotch, was indefatigable and left him no time to do anything but study monument after monument. To that " daily labour," as Gibbon calls it, he acquiesced with delight for eighteen weeks, but it left him too tired to resume his journal in good earnest. In December, he covered a few pages with brief notes in English, and that was all. Of his four months in Rome, of the latter stages of his Italian journey we know very little indeed. The *Autobiography* gives, in one short page, a mere outline and his letters home are very few and mostly relate to financial affairs. From Rome he went to Naples for six weeks, and returned to England through Rome, Loreto, Bologna, Venice, Milan and Turin, without any hurry, but too busy or too lazy to keep a diary. Or he may have felt that that daily task was no longer necessary or useful. Towards the end of his second week in Rome, on the 14th of October, as he sat musing amidst the ruins of the Capitol, listening to the singing in the neighbouring church of the Franciscan friars, the idea of writing the decline and fall of Rome first started to his mind. His life henceforth had a purpose and diarists are not as a rule purposeful creatures.

Georges BONNARD.