

Grand tour of Jean Jacques Barbille

the musician and the philosopher, Jean Jacques, to sustain his reputation and to increase it, had decided to visit that Normandy from which his people had come at the time of Frontenac. He set forth with much *éclat* and a little innocent posturing and ritual, in which a cornet and a violin figured, together with a farewell oration by the Curé.

In Paris Jean Jacques had found himself bewildered and engulfed. He had no idea that life could be so overbearing, and he was inclined to resent his own insignificance. However, in Normandy, when he read the names on the tombstones and saw the records in the baptismal register of other Jean Jacques Barbilles, who had come and gone generations before, his self-respect was somewhat restored. This pleasure was dashed, however, by the quizzical attitude of the natives of his ancestral parish, who walked round about inspecting him as though he were a zoological specimen, and who criticized his accent—he who had been at Laval for one whole term; who had had special instruction before that time from the Old Curé and a Jesuit brother; and who had been the friend of musicians and philosophers!

His cheerful, kindly self-assurance stood the test with difficulty, but it became a kind of ceremonial with him, whenever he was discomfited, to read some pages of a little dun-coloured book of philosophy, picked up on the quay at Quebec just before he sailed, and called, "Meditations in Philosophy." He had been warned by the bookseller that the Church had no love for philosophy; but while at Laval he had