

**The Marmot with the Collar
Diary of a Philosopher**

by

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Translated from the French

by

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Part II

M.02.01.03.07 / M.058 – M.02.07.03.04b / M.163

Second Summer

M.02.01.03.07 / M.058

Moon of Avalanches, Last Day of the Full Moon. – Shall I relate this disappointment and this humiliation? Yes, I will tell all.

A hundred times my head sank, a hundred times I raised it with a start by force of will. It seems that at one time my head sank onto my breast, and that I collapsed on this far too cosy hay – curse it.

Awakening was slow, difficult, vague. I seemed to be departing from a dream, which would be starting again soon. All of a sudden, a more distinct idea crosses my mind and with a spring I am out of bed. A gleam of light penetrated to the back of my burrow. – It is the moon, I thought, this is the moment! – I rub my eyes to see more clearly, and I make my way toward the door of my burrow, taking up my interrupted phrase: “O Marmots...” I had no time to complete it. Shame! shame! thrice shame! it was full day, and on the floor of the valley all the marmots were running to pasture. The Long Night had passed, and I had slept like the common herd.

What am I saying? I had slept more than the common herd. Yes, I, a Philosopher, who had sworn not to yield, I was the last to awake.

M.02.01.04.01 / M.059

First Day of the Last Quarter. – It has consoled me to set down this confession without evasion.

How to say what I felt when I saw that I was not dreaming and that it was indeed the sun? I suffered less when I awoke among Men; I suffered less when I saw myself disowned and chased by my own Marmots. The loss of my wife and my children was less cruel for me. I huddled at the back of my hole, unworthy to look upon the light of day. I wished neither to drink nor to eat, even though I felt vaguely that I was very hungry and very thirsty. With two paws I began to tear the fur from my head and to beat my brow. I was shaking all over and grinding my teeth.

How long did this last? I do not know exactly. Three days and as many nights, perhaps.

One thought alone saved me. I told myself or rather I heard a voice that told me: “This is a lesson; learn from it”.

This is what I will do if the Gods grant me life.

M.02.01.04.02 / M.060

Second Day. – So, I have made the decision to live. To live one must eat, and that is why I go each day, like the others, far and wide to seek my food.

This is a difficult season for Marmots. They awake in a desert, amidst the snows of the Long Night; they are hungry and they must travel afar to find a blade of green grass. It is especially difficult this year, because of the quantity of snow; above all for me, who dwell so high and so remote.

Even so, I would find these journeys agreeable and a distraction, if I were not obliged to flee my kind and endlessly to search out the paths that are most hidden away, like an evildoer. I was spotted from afar, yesterday, and alarm calls signalled my presence. This is also why I have not dug a shelter down below, where the green grass begins, as is our custom each spring. I descend in the morning, and I climb back into my solitude when I have browsed.

M.02.01.04.06 / M.061

Sixth Day. – I have returned late and tired these last days; today I have several hours before me.

Observations on my awakening were almost none.

None on myself. I arose too abruptly, and once out of my burrow, in the presence of the sun, I had no thought for anything except my defeat. I barely felt the indisposition that ordinarily attends our awakening. I had neither vertigo, nor was my head heavy. We must make a painful effort, when we recover our senses, to purge ourselves of all this autumnal fat, which is transformed into water, and from which some claim that we live during the sleep of the Long Night. It is very likely that it happened this time like always; but I remember nothing of it. Nor do I recall getting over the suffering occasioned by the pricks and itches of the blood as it warms up. I suffered from hunger, but only on the second or third day. Otherwise, all is drowned in the shame of this awakening.

One must, I think, possess a very free spirit to observe oneself, in the morning, at the moment when one awakes; it is more difficult than in the evening, when one goes to sleep. In the evening, the normal state is wakefulness, on which sleep gains little by little. Between lapses into slumber, there are moments of lucidity; one feels sleep coming. In the morning, it is the opposite; the normal state then is sleep, and by the time one's mind is sufficiently lucid to be able to observe oneself, one is already awake. In the evening, it is possible to espy the onset of the phenomenon; in the morning, it is possible to follow only its conclusion. For science, the conclusion is not worth as much as the onset. It is the first glimmer that one must seize.

What I observed in Nature may be reduced to two points: sun and snow.

The sun did not rise where it set, but much higher. The first time that I saw it rise, that is to say three or four days after my awakening, it was already sufficiently high so as no longer to disappear behind the mountains. For it to rise that far, it would require more than a month, in ordinary time.

As far as the snow is concerned, there was more of it than I had ever seen. The little valley where flowers the Golden Clover was completely filled; it remains so. A certain boulder, at the foot of the rocks, measuring at least ten Marmot heights, is covered. To find green shoots

we must descend to a level just above the first dwellings of Man. The majority of Marmots had to open a gallery in the snow in order to leave their burrows. I had no need, because mine is dug almost on the edge of the precipice, where the wind prevents the snow from building up. But three pawsteps to the rear, all was white.

M.02.01.04.07 / M.062

Seventh Day. – The south wind is raging; the snow is melting and cracking everywhere. The streams will soon be torrents, the waterfalls cataracts. I have passed a large part of my day, sitting before my hole, watching the avalanches, on the other side of the valley. It was rapid fire. There is no greater spectacle when it is possible to observe it from a place of safety and from the elevation of a conscience that is at rest. Other Marmots make a game of it. So too did I, once upon a time. Nature used to amuse me; today I contemplate her.

M.02.02.01.06 / M.063

Moon of Love, Sixth Day of the New Moon. – A stream swollen by the melting snows has kept me captive down below, on the pasturage; I dug for myself a hole of two Marmot lengths and I passed five nights there.

The mountain has changed during these few days. It is free from snow on the side that faces the sun. The ground is bare over wide spaces; it has all flowed down, it has all hurled itself headlong, from the rocky heights to the valley's floor. Today some avalanches have fallen on the side in shade. Look out tomorrow, if this wind continues!

M.02.02.01.07 / M.064

Seventh Day. – Here I am, a prisoner anew, but at home. The avalanche is relentless, striking to right and left of my burrow. I am not at risk, because it is following the course of the ravines; and even so, I am making myself as small as possible at the entrance to my hole. I advance a whisker's length, just as far as is necessary to see, and when it arrives, I curl back up in my gallery. It hurls itself, furiously, from one wall to the other of its corridors; it destroys the ledges, carries off the boulders and tears up the trees from the rocks where they stand. The earth is quaking to the back of my burrow. It is when the avalanche tumbles over the precipice, below me, that it is beautiful to see. I always think I am falling and plunging with it into the void. It is a strange sensation, which gratifies your heart.

M.02.02.02.01 / M.065

First Day of the First Quarter. – This thunder is not stopping. Must they keep a store up there? The more it falls, the more there is.

Otherwise, my captivity is not very harsh. Some white buds are beginning to shew before my burrow, just the thing to see off the greatest hunger.

M.02.02.02.02 / M.066

Second Day. – I have taken advantage of my captivity to re-read my diary. I must confess, I failed in modesty. I thought myself too certain of success. It is not enough to say: I will not sleep! One must remain awake.

M.02.02.02.03 / M.067

Third Day. – I have seen my two Mountain Goats of last autumn passing by. A little one, aged at least eight days, was trotting behind them.

Strange race! They do not have a Moon of Love. If they meet each other, as Nature wills, this must be during the Long Night. Barely is this over, behold, they are a family. It happens sometimes even that they are already a family when we come out of our burrows.

M.02.02.02.04 / M.068

Fourth Day. – The largest is fallen. I could, if I chuse my moment, cross the corridors of the avalanches; but that is no longer necessary. The shoots are emerging from the earth everywhere. There is enough to live around my burrow.

M.02.02.02.05 / M.069

Fifth Day. – I yielded today to a gourmet's wish. I have been making a luncheon of Snowbells, the first of the year. Certain slopes were pink with them. It is the finest of the little flowers of the spring. When it catches the sun, one sees in the very body of the flower, between the veins, a multitude of crystals, infinitely small, which sparkle even so. Has the table of the Gods anything more exquisite than these crystalline corollas which melt into ambrosia?

To browse on the Snowbell, at dawn, when its little bell, turned toward the earth, is still wet with dew: this is a pleasure that heaven, fair at least this once, has reserved for the race of Marmots alone.

M.02.02.02.06 / M.070

Sixth Day. – The difference that one observes, immediately after the Long Night, between the two sides of the valley, is a remarkable thing. It is quite natural that the same quantity of snow should melt more quickly on the sunward side than on the side in shade. But how is it that on the day following the Long Night, before the sun could have got to work, it is always the sunward side that has less snow?

Certain things that appear completely simple, because we are used to them, are no less strange. I ask how it is that more snow falls on one side than the other. If it is the wind that carries it there, why always there and never here?

M.02.02.02.07 / M.071

Seventh Day. – An idea is beginning to take shape in my mind. I think that our calumniators are wrong and that the Long Night is not one long night.

M.02.02.03.01a / M.072

First Day of the Full Moon. – The more I reflect, the more I persuade myself that days and nights continue for part at least of the Long Night. It is perhaps humiliating to think that the sun rises and sets over our sleep; but if it is really so, the spirit must resign itself to the fact. Wisdom consists in seeing things as they are, and not in moulding them to our whims and fancies.

If the sun continues to rise and set during the Long Night, the unequal distribution of the snow when we leave our burrows is explained easily. It falls equally on the two sides; but it melts over there, in part, whereas here, in the shade, it builds up.

The mystery of the life of the Mountain Goat is also satisfactorily explained. A Mountain Goat has his own Moon of Love, just as we do, just as do all other animals; but we are asleep during that time.

If we allow this supposition, the irregularities of the sun are no more than appearance. The sun is not, cannot be irregular. All that our so-called sages have said on this subject is mere vanity. Just as the sun travels toward the north, during the succession of increasing days, to a certain determined point, which has never changed, according to Marmot memory; so too, during the succession of decreasing days, it must travel back, in an inverse sense, to a certain point that is equally fixed and invariable. If, for reasons that I do not understand, our sleep begins toward the end of the succession of decreasing days and extends long into that of increasing days, if, in addition, it varies more or less from one year to the next, the deviations of the sun are explained. It is the sun that is regular, and it is us who are not. Is it the sun's fault that we sleep or awake sooner or later? Is it the sun's fault if our sleep falls unequally between the two successions of days?

M.02.02.03.01b / M.073

First Day of the Full Moon. – How light one feels when one has shaken off a prejudice! I am seized by an impetuous desire to descend from my mountain and to go and instigate a debate with all the false sages down there. There must be light.

There is no Long Night; there is only a long sleep. How long does it last? I am still not in a position to give an exact reply to this question; but a number of indicators tend to demonstrate that it must be more than one moon, perhaps two.

It is, in effect, reasonable to suppose that, for a lady Mountain Goat, her time of carriage is no less considerable than a Marmot's. It should be more, in the rule. That makes forty days already, more or less.

One arrives at the same result if one considers the inequalities between the succession of decreasing days and that of increasing days. To re-establish the equilibrium, at least one

moon is required, without counting what is missing from those which are underway when we fall asleep and when we awake.

This, then, is a sleep of close to two moons, two moons during which the sun rises and sets without our opening our eyes.

Will I ever be able to keep the vigil for two moons?

M.02.02.03.02 / M.074

Second Day. – A young couple is establishing itself a few hundred pawsteps from me, on my terrace.

I saw them coming yesterday and prowling around the neighbourhood. Today they are returned and have chosen a dwelling under a great boulder. They have begun to scrape the earth. I ask myself if I must emigrate.

M.02.02.03.03 / M.075

Third Day. – My neighbours are working as hard as they can, taking it by turns. I know not what to resolve.

M.02.02.03.04 / M.076

Fourth Day. – When I say a young couple, I must be understood. One knows how it goes with Marmots, not only with them. Each year there are widows and widowers, ordinarily more widowers. Our ladies are so prudent! There is no longer always perfect equality in numbers among the young. It must happen, then, that sometimes a young Marmot marries an old or an old a young. My neighbour must be a Marmot of a ripe age. Only a matron possesses this air of command. I wager that her great-grandchildren are many, down there, in the tribe. Her husband is a happy-go-lucky young fellow, who seems always to be standing agape, awkward, shy, distracted. My neighbour will correct him of these distractions.

M.02.02.03.05 / M.077

Fifth Day. – I shewed myself boldly today. I hoped that my collar would work its effect. They did not seem to notice it.

It is just as I thought, an ill matched couple.

M.02.02.03.06 / M.078

Sixth Day. – I presented myself this morning before the newly weds, with the intention of determining, once and for all, our future relationship. I brought them proposals for peace and good neighbourliness, based on the principle that we should take no notice of each other. What do I want with these inadequate little Marmots who lay their heads in the traps that are set by feminine guile, and, in turn, with these matrons who, instead of shedding tears for

their last husband, think only of snapping up a new? What do they know of wisdom? They don't know even the name.

The husband, instead of defending his better half, took flight as soon as he saw that it was indeed them for whom I was making. He would be running still if his wife had not called him back. As far as she is concerned, I must do her this justice, she is the first Marmot who has not trembled before my collar.

She listened without displaying the least emotion, sitting, head inclined, two front paws hanging. When I had finished speaking, she pouted a little and replied with an air of indifference:

"It will be as you please, sir."

That said, she bowed deeply before me and rejoined her husband, who had crept up shyly.

This is what happened.

M.02.02.03.07 / M.079

Seventh Day. – In vain does my neighbour play the disdainful Marmot, curiosity devours her. She has made her way, by a winding path, so that she has ended up browsing a few pawsteps from my burrow. She would have liked to know what he was doing, this Philosopher. Her trouble was for nothing. The Philosopher had retired within his hole... The husband followed her, at a distance.

M.02.02.04.01 / M.080

First Day of the Last Quarter. – A change is in sight. Yesterday, a scorching wind was blowing; today, it is snowing. It is always so with this hot wind. As long as it blows, it is fine; as soon as it drops, then comes the snow.

M.02.02.04.03 / M.081

Third Day. – It is snowing all day and every day.

M.02.02.04.04 / M.082

Fourth Day. – I am feeling cold; it is as if I were about to become numb all over again. I had to excavate a gallery through the snow to leave my burrow.

M.02.02.04.05 / M.083

Fifth Day. – An idea has crossed my mind and made me thrill. If this continues, perhaps I will be able to recover the lost opportunity. They will sleep, my neighbours. What good fortune that they should have come to live at my door!

M.02.02.04.06 / M.084

Sixth Day. – I am taking advantage of every moment of clear weather to spy. The husband has not gone out since yesterday morning. If he is not asleep, he must be close to it. It will not be so easy to have success in the vigil. She lies in wait and is always watching out. What does she want of me? Is she also waiting that I should fall asleep?

M.02.02.04.07 / M.085

Seventh Day. – The north wind has gained the upper hand tonight. It blew with such violence and it was so cold that I shut up my gallery. When I left, there was no more snow on the edge of the precipice, before my burrow. The wind had carried it all away.

My neighbours have not enjoyed this good fortune. They are still snowed under. I am more and more hopeful of seeing them asleep.

M.02.03.01.01 / M.086

Withered Moon. *First Day of the New Moon.* – I thought to be certain of my success today. I was already underway. I had covered half the distance that separates us, when I saw three whiskers of a moustache appear above the snow. The old wife again!

M.02.03.01.02 / M.087

Second Day. – The snow is melting, no more hope!

M.02.03.01.03 / M.088

Third Day. – This new disappointment has revived the pain of the first. I don't have the heart for anything.

M.02.03.01.07 / M.089

Seventh Day. – Here at last is the real spring. The ground is once again clear. What does it matter?

M.02.03.02.03 / M.090

Third Day of the First Quarter. – The snows are melting quickly in the little valley of the Golden Clover. All the meadows are adorned. The pale yellow Windflowers, the pink Cowslips and the Gentians with their blue cups glisten in competition.

What is all this glory to me? There is no more spring for me. Why did I not hold fast during the Long Night! Why did I not keep vigil while the others slept! This would have been my spring.

M.02.03.02.04 / M.091

Fourth Day. – Never has a couple of young married Marmots begun to frolick with less concern for appearance than my neighbours. They call to each other, they flee and chase one another, they gaze into one another's eyes, they whisper sweet nothings into one another's ears, they take turns to groom one another's fur, they caress one another, they embrace.

Do they wish, perchance, to insult my Philosophy?

M.02.03.02.05 / M.092

Fifth Day. – Although I have tried to nourish myself from wisdom, the spring is the spring. I valiantly upheld my widowerhood last month. What is coming over me now?

M.02.03.02.06 / M.093

Sixth Day. – I am determined to undertake a little journey. I am in need of distraction.

Tomorrow, if the weather is fine, I will scale one of the peaks that command the valley floor, the Becca de l'Oura, for example. I wish to know what lies on the other side. To travel the world, one must take advantage of the time when Men are still far away.

M.02.03.03.01 / M.094

First Day of the Full Moon. – I enjoyed yesterday a morning of pure delight, perfectly beautiful. At dawn, I had breakfasted and was underway. My neighbours were already simpering and flirting. I cast them a glance of disdain. Apart from a certain Vulture whom I saw circling in the air, I had not the slightest reason for the slightest unrest. I was able to crouch under a rock.

Perhaps we are too fearful. With a little prudence, we could travel, like the White Hare. We travel well enough on leaving the Long Night, when hunger compels us. Even so, it is the most dangerous moment of the year. Where to take refuge when the snow covers the ground and how to hide oneself on this tapestry of white?

First, I descended as far as the torrent; then I clomb back along its course as far as the little valley where I had hoped, last year, to find my wife and my children. From there, I skirted the glacier by the moraines. When I arrived on the pass from which the Becca de l'Oura rises up, I took the ridge and followed it without turning aside, except to skirt a few rocky outcrops. It was three hours to the summit.

I don't remember ever having tramped with lighter paws. They are tired, even so. This is enough for today.

M.02.03.03.02 / M.095

Second Day. – The sun was already high over the horizon when I reached the summit of the Becca de l’Oura; but the sky was still clear, and there was not a cloud in the sky. Gods, how vast is the sky! And the world!

I wished to know what lies on the other side, I saw it. There is another valley, then mountains again, on the other side of which is scooped out yet another valley, and so on to infinity. I looked to the four points of the horizon, and I saw only mountains followed by mountains, always greyer, always paler. What is it, then, that we call the “flat land”? I tried to see the flat land from up above. I saw nothing that deserves this name.

M.02.03.03.03 / M.096

Third Day. – The mountains that one sees from the Becca de l’Oura are hardly alike. Some are higher, others lower. I did not see two which had the same profile. There are those which are green as far as the summit; others are crowned with sharp cliffs, of every hue, from white to black. I have seen yellow needles, even red. The flanks of some peaks are laden with great masses of snow. One loses oneself in this variety and this immensity.

In other respects, it is everywhere the same as where we live. Man dwells on the valley floors, where his houses shine like white points, sometimes gathered in groups, sometimes scattered at random. Higher up, the habitations of Men yield place to our burrows. I saw several families of Marmots on the other side of the mountain, but at a great distance below me. Highest of all, there arise the peaks, inhospitable country, where no trace of life is to be seen, except for the Mountain Goats who venture there and the Eagles who fly up to heaven.

Accordingly, the earth is divided into three zones, that of Men, that of Marmots, and the Upper Desert. The fairest is the second.

This has reminded me of what our fathers’ fathers used to say, that the Marmot nation was once infinitely more numerous and that it covered one half of the earth with its tribes. The world, evidently, was created for us. What are these holes where Men live, these tops where Eagles nest, in comparison with the vast flanks that are propitious for our burrows? Why then this decadence? Why do our tribes dwindle from generation unto generation? Are our ladies less fecund? No. But egotism separates us from one another. Each of us thinks only of his family, his loves, his burrow, so that our enemies defeat us as individuals. Matters would be quite otherwise if all Marmots lived for wisdom. They would have one common goal; they would form a single and great nation. But what can one expect of a race that persecutes its philosophers?

M.02.03.03.04 / M.097

Fourth Day. – There was no longer any grassy sward atop the summit of the Becca de l’Oura; but between the rocks there pushed up a few poor grasses and flowering mosses of a marvellous beauty, one of which, among others, was completely unknown to me and transported me with admiration. We have in this region some blue flowers, toothed very prettily, which my late wife used to call, I believe, “Forget-me-nots”. – My wife knew the names of all the flowers of the mountain. – The ones I admired up there closely resemble

them; but they are larger, of a richer shade of blue, and the plant that bears them is a species of moss, which tapestries the hollows of the rocks. Each mossy shoot has its own flower, and as the shoots of moss touch each other, one sees only carpets of blue. They exhale a discreet perfume, subtle, at once soft and fierce, light like the air they breathe, the air of heaven. I know nothing of their taste. It would have been a sin to browse on even a single one, they were so beautiful! Why, one would say they have eyes. One bends toward them, low down, to look at them closer up, and it is they who are looking at you.

Why has Nature deprived Marmot country of these delicate wonders? For whom does she make them bloom in these fierce and solitary places? Is it perhaps for the Vultures? No, it is for us, so that we go to seek them out. She reserves this surprise for the curiosity of those who love wisdom.

M.02.03.03.05 / M.098

Fifth Day. – Since I clambered up the Becca de l’Oura I am seized with an infinite desire to see and to know. I would like to pass beyond the mountains which border this country and get to know those of other skies and other peoples. The universe is larger than we think. I see here only one torrent; there are a thousand torrents in the world. I see here only a few peaks; it is by thousands upon thousands that the peaks of the earth are counted. If only I could see all the torrents whose waters course in the valleys, all the peaks that scale the heavens! Perhaps each peak has its own flower, blue or pink. I suspect that Nature is inexhaustible.

One must, even so, exercise judgement and not wish for everything at once. Let us start by concluding the great problem, after which we leap from peak to peak and from torrent to torrent.

M.02.03.03.06 / M.099

Sixth Day. – I have just passed twenty-four hours in serious meditations. An idea has smiled on me. I know only vaguely, by the rumour that circulates, what other animals think of our sleep and what they have to say about the Long Night. I must try to understand this in a more precise manner. Their witness is suspect; no matter, it is a witness. Whom to turn to? Marmots lead a life apart; they have nearly no contacts. How to chat with a Mountain Goat? He moves too quickly. A Badger is an uncouth creature. In his nocturnal prowlings he has never done a good turn to anyone. A Fox knows only how to lie and to burgle the burrows of others. Partridges, red and white, are always hopping about and fluttering. Nothing holds their attention. A deadly Viper, a prickly Hedgehog, a Mouse who slips between your fingers... Whom, then, to turn to?

There is still, of course, the White Hare, whose reputation for Philosophy, exaggerated perhaps, is bruited far and wide among the other animals. He passes one half of his life in his “form”, to meditate and to muse. What does he have so much to daydream about? I know not; but it is already something to daydream, it is a pathway to wisdom. We Marmots do not daydream at all. Unhappily, in no way does his Philosophy give him courage. He is the most timid of animals; he fears everything, he flees at any approach. I don’t recall having ever been able to exchange ten words with a White Hare. They always give one the slip. How will it be

when they see my collar? I wish to make the attempt even so. I saw one recently. His form cannot be very far. I will try to win him over.

M.02.03.03.07 / M.100

Seventh Day. – Men and their herds have taken possession of the highest pasturage. Two baying Dogs have coursed the mountain the whole day. I left my hole only to go and browse at ten pawsteps.

M.02.03.04.07 / M.101

Seventh Day of the Last Quarter. – An unhappy end to the Withered Moon! I have done nothing for eight days other than to follow from the elevation of my look-out the hunting of these cursed Dogs. Most of the Marmots of the valley have remained huddled in their burrows. I wager that several have not eaten ten Clover flowers during this time. It went ill with two young Marmots who ventured onto the meadow. Their retreat was cut off; they were seized and slaughtered in place. I was witness to this hideous spectacle. For two long days these bloodthirsty brigands scraped at a burrow. There was a whole tribe in this hole. It was able to escape the following night.

All this time was lost for Philosophy. These Marmots who have refused to recognise me are no less my brothers and sisters, my children, my own flesh and blood. Blood is thicker than water. When they are persecuted, it is as if it were I myself. Of what else could I think?

M.02.04.01.02 / M.102

Clover Moon. *Second Day of the New Moon.* – It rained today; the Dogs have not given voice. Perhaps they are tired; that is something.

I took advantage of a moment of clear weather to take a walk to the Hare's form. He fled at my approach, not so quickly, however, that I could not greet him graciously from afar. I will return tomorrow.

M.02.04.01.03 / M.103

Third Day. – A new visit to the White Hare. I had a great fright on my return. The Dogs were on campaign, and I thought they had occupied this side of the water. This is what one has to live with!

M.02.04.01.04 / M.104

Fourth Day. – My neighbours are now a family. Six little ones – no less! – have ventured out with them. The parents are delighted.

M.02.04.01.05 / M.105

Fifth Day. – Three hundred Marmots, perhaps more, have elected to dwell in this high valley, and it takes only two Dogs to set them all atremble... Marmots, you are no more than a crowd. When will you be a people?

M.02.04.02.03 / M.106

Third Day of the First Quarter. – The White Hare, who is russet for the moment, is beginning to display visible signs of curiosity. I was counting on it; it is by their curiosity that one captures these daydreamers.

M.02.04.02.04 / M.107

Fourth Day. – Yet another mystery of which I had not thought, so much does custom render natural for us the strangest things! Why is he called the White Hare? When we enter into the sleep of the Long Night, – it is by way of abbreviation that I still call it the Long Night, – he is russet, as at present. When we awake, he is bizarrely mottled with white and grey; sometimes even, if our awakening is not too late, he is white, except for two black spots on the tips of his ears, which one sees running over the snow. Still earlier, he would be, without doubt, completely white. If during the Long Night he moults from russet to white in the same manner and with the same speed as, when awake, we see him moulting from white to russet, it must be that we are asleep for nearly two moons. That is the critical figure. Everything points to it.

M.02.04.02.05 / M.108

Fifth Day. – You have to see the grand airs of a matron that my neighbour assumes – as she surveys her world, as she misuses her poor husband, as she teaches him the difficult task of being a father, as she grows anxious, makes a fuss, bustles around. She has raised an alarm call thrice in one half hour for nothing... And when one thinks that in all the education she gives her six children, there is not one thought, not one word for wisdom! To browse, to scrape the earth, and to multiply – is that, then, the whole of life?

M.02.04.02.07 / M.109

Seventh Day. – Today, on my ninth visit, I was able to exchange a pair of words with the White Hare and to assure him of my friendship. He was close to me, twenty Marmot lengths, at most. I saw his ears quivering; but curiosity held him back. At this word of friendship, he rubbed his nose with his two front paws, and told me in a voice that was full of unease, with a marked stutter, that he did not believe in f... f... f... friendship. I replied that I too hardly believed in it any longer, at least among Marmots, and that was the reason why I was seeking friends elsewhere. “We are brothers,” I added, “recluses both of us; let us join our two solitudes and let us be happy together.” He appeared most surprised by this discourse; he twitched his ears, which indicated clearly that he did not place any great faith in this.

“What do you have there, on your neck?” he asked me, continuing to stutter.

I was expecting the question. I adopted the humblest attitude; I put together my paws and said:

“I wear on my neck the token of one hundred and eighty days and one hundred and eighty nights of captivity. Noble Hare, the miserable wretch that you see before you is a living miracle. The odour of Man follows him...”

At these words, the White Hare left like a bolt.

“Stop,” I called after him in a desperate voice. “Have pity on my misfortune.”

He stopped, measured the distance that separated us and seemed half reassured.

“The odour of Man follows me everywhere,” I continued, emphasizing each word, as if to accustom him to the horror of what I said, “it is like the curse of the universe. Everything that this execrable race touches is cursed forthwith. Even so, I assure you that this collar is the least offensive of collars. It has never done ill to anyone, except to myself alone. In your mercy, hear my request, Sir Hare; grant me that I should recount to you, from where I stand, my story. It is tragic, and I am certain that it will interest you; I am certain also that it will inspire you with compassion, because your soul is good, that can be read in your eyes. Then will you judge if you wish to reject or accept the offers of service that I lay before your feet.”

During this discourse the twitching ears of the Hare never ceased to move this way and that in great agitation. He had a certain flustered air, more even than startled. Seeing that he was not about to reply, I broke boldly into my story, in the hope of stirring him. What story could stir him if not mine? He seemed moved, indeed. I shed tears, and I thought that I saw him drying the corner of his eye with a furtive gesture. When I spoke of my resolution to devote myself to wisdom, I saw him keenly lower and raise his ears, in token of agreement; but when I came to explain the subject that torments me, when I spoke of the Long Night, of our sleep, of the mystery of our existence, he assumed a sort of foolish smile, as Hares do. It was less his ears than his whiskers that twitched in a convulsive movement, of which he seemed not to be the master. I could have struck him, but I restrained myself. He knows a lot, perhaps. My speech completed, I remained in the attitude of a suppliant, paws held together. Then he looked at me fixedly and addressed me in a confident voice, which proved that fear alone had made him stutter.

“Marmot,” he said, “I sympathise with your troubles. I believe that you are sincere. Return tomorrow. If tomorrow you find me at my form, we will try to be friends. If not, look for me no longer.”

I bowed deeply and retraced the route to my burrow... Until tomorrow!

M.02.04.03.01 / M.110

First Day of the Full Moon. – Be praised, o Gods, for the good fortune that you have just accorded me! All my sorrows are forgotten. I have a friend. Other Marmots have their ladies and their little ones; I have a friend.

With what sinking of heart and nervous expectation did I retrace the path to his form! He was there! To tell the truth, I thought I saw him beginning to tremble still at the moment when I approached; but he pulled himself together little by little, and he concluded by touching my collar with his paw. The spell, this time, must be broken. He asked me lots of questions besides about my story. I answered them all simply and without embarrassment. I gained his confidence.

“I will come to see you,” he said on my departure, “we will speak of wisdom.”

M.02.04.03.03 / M.111

Third Day. – He came and did not speak. I wished to do him the honours of my burrow; but he left precipitately, from the first chamber, as soon as he could turn around. Barely outside, he saw my neighbours. The matron was sitting on her rear legs and holding her paws to heaven, to mark her astonishment. A White Hare in a Marmot burrow! The husband and the six little ones were drawn up around her and were imitating her gestures.

“There is no safety here,” exclaimed the Hare. “If you wish to converse, climb back up to my form. I’m not budging from it.”

Saying this, he left as fast as he could, to the great joy of my neighbours. I considered that I owed it to my dignity not to follow. I will return tomorrow.

M.02.04.03.04 / M.112

Fourth Day. – I returned; but we still said nothing about the great problem. It took me a long time and all my power of persuasion to regain his confidence. He has a horror of burrows. To live in this darkness, not to breathe the free air, to be always crawling, to be always sullyng oneself on the walls of galleries that are far too low: all that seemed to him sad – a low condition and a natural ill.

“One can have only base thoughts in a burrow”, he told me gravely.

I replied that it was our custom to keep warm in times of cold. He made a gesture of disdain and shewed me his fur. I added that our burrows were places of refuge and that they served to protect us from the pursuits of our enemies.

“When one has enemies,” he exclaimed, “one must have eyes to see them, ears to hear them and legs to flee them.”

I could have told him that our industry was worth perhaps his lightness of foot; but I preferred to admit that he was right and to beg him to take pity on those whom Nature has not favoured so much as him. I believe that I succeeded, by dint of modesty and condescension, in effacing the memory of yesterday. I dare not be too sure of this, even so. His farewell was not as cordial as the other day. Is it, then, so difficult to have and to hold a friend?

M.02.04.03.05 / M.113

Fifth Day. – The Dogs again! Life is a school of patience.

M.02.04.03.06 / M.114

Sixth Day. – Has light dawned before my eyes? Am I plunged into the darkest of shadows?

Whether this Hare be fool or sage, whether he lie or tell the truth, his words have cast me into a violent agitation. I know not if I dream, I know not if I think. I try anew to assure myself that I am alive. All my ideas roll and tumble in my head. I cannot hold a single one down. I have vertigo.

M.02.04.03.07 / M.115

Seventh Day. – I must note down the most memorable points of this conversation, so far at least as my recollections will allow.

I feared a cold welcome; I asked myself even if he would not have left his form, to cut short importunate visits. Accordingly, I was greatly astonished to see him coming to greet me with the friendliest air.

“I beseech your forgiveness,” he said, “for the remarks that I made yesterday to you. They were unkind. I have reflected since then, and I have come to understand why you love burrows. It is an ill taste; you must get over it.”

“Sir Hare,” I replied, “I think it hardly more ill than you.”

“For the present, you are right; the illness from which the race of Marmots suffers is an intermittent illness. Can one not call a race ill that each year is dead for six moons out of twelve, sometimes seven?”

He saw that I did not understand.

“Yes,” he continued, “it is a matter of discussion among the White Hares to know whether Marmots sleep in winter or are, in fact, dead. My opinion is that there are many degrees between sleep and death, and that the sleep of Marmots in winter is so similar to death that it is impossible to distinguish between the two – with this difference, however, that Marmots return, as if by a miracle, whereas one does not return from death.”

When he had spoken these words, the White Hare fell quiet, and for my part, I stood mute before him. The strangest ideas began to cross before my eyes. He was the first to break the silence.

“I spoke inaccurately when I said that one does not return from death; I should have said that, up to now, no-one has been observed to have returned. Death is perhaps only a very long

sleep, which has yet to be measured. Since one returns from a sleep of six months, why should one not return from a sleep of several years, even several hundreds of years.”

This singular discourse unbound my tongue.

“Sir Hare,” I exclaimed, “please do not be offended by my frankness, but I see well that you are a dreamer rather than a Philosopher. Solitude and leisure disturb your imagination. Whoever could dream that it is possible to return from the sleep of death could dream also that we sleep for six moons.”

“If you do not believe me,” he continued, “address yourself to others. There is no shortage of folk in this country to tell you if I lie or if I speak according to the truth.”

Then I repeated for him the words that Master Badger had told me on another occasion. They lifted him into a fit of gaiety that was very amusing. He claims that the Badger sleeps just like us, for three moons at least.

“The world is thus,” he said; “yes, the world is indeed thus! He who sleeps for one moon makes fun of him who sleeps for two, he who sleeps for three makes fun of him who sleeps for six, and so forth. And neither the one nor the other suspects that he sleeps himself.”

“And are you sure,” I asked him, “are you so sure that you do not sleep?”

“I do not flatter myself on that account,” he replied. “I know only that there are six moons for which I do not sleep, whereas you, you sleep. If in some other season, I sleep while you are awake, you must be aware of it and I shall be grateful if you let me know.”

This discourse inspired me with confidence. I told him all my thoughts on the Long Night, and by what line of arguments I had persuaded myself that the Long Night is only an illusion of our sleep. He seemed greatly interested.

“You are right,” he said, when I had finished. “There is no Long Night. All nights are equal, or rather all nights are *not* equal, but only by a very little. They increase or they decrease imperceptibly. We call the succession of days and nights for which you sleep ‘winter’. It does not last two moons, as you supposed, but six moons and sometimes more.”

I let out anew an expression of surprise.

“Allow me,” he continued, “to remind you of the composure that becomes Philosophy. He is not worthy to seek the truth who is not prepared to listen to the whole. Each year, at the time when the sun disappears behind the mountains, Marmots retreat into their burrows and sleep a sleep that is not their ordinary sleep.”

“I know,” I said; “it is a deeper sleep, a sort of benumbing.”

“It is more than a sleep, it is a death. During this time it is possible to touch you, to shake you, to seize you, to carry you away, even to kill you – and you would not give any sign of life.”

“Sir Hare,” I exclaimed, “once more, do not abuse the advantage that our infirmity gives you.”

“Sir Philosopher,” he replied with a composure that was always imperturbable, “there will be no shortage of witnesses, if you suspect mine. This sleep which is a death lasts six moons, just as I have told you. With greater rigour in your arguments, you would have been able to convince yourself. There could be no equality between one of your own ladies and a Mountain Goat’s. She carries for five moons. You have counted only two moons for the transformation of our fur; but we are white for as long as we are russet, that is to say, four moons. During these four moons we are confounded with the snow, even in the eyes of the Eagle, except for these two black spots on the tips of our ears, which one still sees running. You were indeed right to think that they disappeared. They should disappear. It is evidently the design of Nature that we should be white like the snow. But it seems that she has too much to do to succeed in everything that she undertakes. She makes a start and not an end. Look closely, and in most of her works you will discover the black spot at the tips of the ears.”

Such were the first lessons of the White Hare.

M.02.04.04.01 / M.116

First Day of the Last Quarter. – Yesterday I gave an account of the first lessons of the White Hare. They made on me such an impression that I did not know at first how to reply. He was there, before me, looking at me squarely and smiling always his tranquil smile. I began to find this smile unbearable. I excused myself to take the air. I was beginning to suffocate. I took a long stroll, I know not in which direction. I think that I heard the baying of Dogs. What did Dogs matter to me? At last, I felt myself drawn back by an insuperable force to the Hare’s form. I had collected my ideas, and I thought that I had found the means to confound all his arguments. He is a dreamer or errant, but in good faith. He is not a liar.

M.02.04.04.02 / M.117

Second Day. – The Hare claims that we are not the only ones to sleep during what he calls winter. He says that Vipers sleep, Dormice sleep, Bears sleep, and probably many others besides, without counting Badgers. However, it is us, he says, who of all the inhabitants of the mountain, us who sleep the longest and the most deeply.

He claims to have seen more than once now – seen with his own eyes – Men coming in winter, armed with singular instruments, with which they turn up the earth. He says that he has seen – seen with his own eyes – Men opening Marmot burrows and seizing, in their sleep, a whole family or a whole tribe, father, mother, children. They carry them away as if they were carrying stones. Accordingly, my adventure would have been nothing out of the ordinary, except, however, for one point. There is no other example, according to him, of a Marmot carried away in this manner who had been brought back.

M.02.04.04.03 / M.118

Third Day. – It is on this matter of winter that the White Hare is curious to hear. He speaks of it at length and reproaches himself for speaking of it, judging us incapable of sharing his enthusiasm.

Winter, he says, is a season that resembles none other, the coldest, but the most beautiful. – I do not understand, actually, how what is cold can be beautiful. – It never rains in winter, it snows. It snows so much that one can hardly see the cliffs along the whole valley. The most rugged summits grow white. All is white, all is snow. When it is not snowing, the sky is a darker and deeper blue than in summer; it is also a lot more peopled with stars. Sometimes one sees them in full day, so brilliant they are.

He says further that the difficulty is to feed oneself in winter, because of the snow which covers the grass; but one always finds a means to live. – I can well believe it. White Hares are not particular, they hardly live from flowers. – The wind sweeps the snows from some crag, which it uncovers. Immediately, all the animals of the neighbourhood gather there to browse. The grass is withered and tough, but one lives frugally in winter, and there is no thirst. Another resource, the most precious, lies in these piles of cut grass that Man heaps up carefully around a long pole. One can make for oneself a nice soft nest there, snuggle up and bury oneself, make for oneself galleries warmer than ours, but basically they are still forms and coverts. These are the only burrows that White Hares know. When the weather is bad, they pass the day there, dreaming and dining well. – He calls that dining well. – When the weather is fine, they run afar over the snow, whose every flake sparkles, and they return only in the evening. Supper is always ready.

It is the enchantment of winter that one might go anywhere without having always to throw off the hunter and his Dogs. Once the snow has settled in, Man appears no more on the mountain, and safety would be complete except for the Eagles and Vultures. As soon as one discerns a moving point in the sky, one scrapes the snow and enters a gallery.

Looking on this as best I could, I pressed him on this grass that was withered and tough, and on this beautiful season that is the coldest of all; it is the only occasion, during this long day when he spoke of so much, that he lost his habitual composure.

“I pity you,” he replied, “yes, I pity you for not knowing winter. You seek wisdom and you are right; but when you call yourself a Philosopher and, nevertheless, you sleep, you demonstrate all too clearly that Philosophy is not your vocation. Philosophy consists not in sleeping, but in remaining awake. The beautiful days of winter are those when most Philosophy is done. You are asleep at the time, you, the false thinkers; we, the true, are awake. We are alone on the solitary alp, alone under the vast heaven. We are the only ones to stir in the stillness of Nature, the only ones to breathe in the universal silence. There is no silence in summer, when Nature labours and Man exploits her, communicating the disturbance that surrounds him to the most distant solitudes. Men need to hear each other, and it is why they live massed together in towns and villages. In summer, everything is a town, everything is noise, even the mountain. In winter, when the air is calm, we have only to hold our breath for the silence to be complete. Nature sleeps, the spirit alone is awake. It is then that come great thoughts. Let us not speak of spring, season of weaknesses! The Hare is sufficient unto himself in winter. A philosophical recluse, he is, in winter, king of the mountain. Disturb him not, people of

burrows; weigh him not down with ill judged questions. You ask him what winter is. Must he tell you? Do you share a language in common? Can you see by thought what he has seen with his eyes? Live with him, breathe with him this silent air, and you will know what winter is. If not, sound not a word. It is better that whoever sleeps should remain silent.”

Thus spoke the White Hare and his discourses began to win me over. Wakefulness is the means and condition of all knowledge.

M.02.04.04.07 / M.119

Seventh Day. – The days are passing. In my head I turn over and over again the discourses of the White Hare. Where is truth? where is error?

I consider it now as proved that the Long Night is not one continuous night, but a succession of ordinary days and nights, increasing and decreasing by slow degrees. Until verification by experience, I consider this first point beyond question.

On the duration of our sleep, I cannot forbear to acknowledge that there is a great deal of likelihood in the arguments of the White Hare. What he said about the moults of his fur impressed me. I have no reason to suspect his witness. Moreover, I do not see why we could not sleep for three moons, four moons, five moons, even six moons, just as well as for two. It is strange, I confess it, and the imagination pictures it uneasily; but it is not impossible.

By contrast, I refuse absolutely to accept this sleep which is indistinguishable from death except by awakening. Is there, can there be a like sleep? Even if Sir Hare tries to say so, I will not take it on trust. We sleep, so be it; but our blood still flows, more slowly, it is true. We live, we breathe, there take place in our bodies transformations which are not corruption. So how can he allege that we are insensible and manipulable, as if we were dead flesh? What lives, lives, and is not insensible. Let others believe this sleep which is a death, and this death from which one revives!

Even so, it is certain that I fell asleep in my burrow and awoke far from my burrow. It is certain that Men violated my burrow during my sleep. I was there and I was not aware of anything. How to reconcile all this?

M.02.05.01.01 / M.120

Dry Moon, First Day of the New Moon. – There are moments when all relapses into uncertainty, even what I was beginning to believe secured and beyond doubt. They don't know what sort of thing a Marmot's eye is, these White Hares. Did he not say that it is dark in our burrows? Idle remarks of a dreamer, who passes the night in a form. They don't have eyes at all. If they put up in a burrow, they would never see the sun rise; they would not sleep for six moons, but twelve, if it is true that the year has twelve moons. For us, there is no glimmer that escapes us. I could still see it, last autumn, when I had closed my two doors. A furtive ray filled my burrow with light... No, he has no idea, this unhappy worshipper of winter,

what the sun is for a Marmot. The sun, it is our life. When it reappears, after the Long Night, we thrill even within the entrails of the earth... It cannot be that the sun rises over the mountain one or two hundred times, that its rays shine over our burrows, and that never has Marmot suspected it.

I do not know what to believe.

M.02.05.01.02 / M.121

Second Day. – He is no liar but a dreamer. I catch myself thinking that I am also a dreamer, that we are all dreamers, that each one dreams in his own fashion, in his form or in his burrow. A White Hare dreams that there is a winter, that the sun rises, that he sees it rise; a Marmot dreams that there is a Long Night, during which strange things happen. A White Hare dreams that he is awake, whereas I dream that I sleep.

M.02.05.01.03 / M.122

Third Day. – I will return tomorrow to the Hare's form and will propose to him an alliance. If he is my friend, and if it is true that we sleep a sleep that is a death, he will come to visit me in winter, he will come to awaken me when I sleep, and we will go together to see how Marmots sleep. I will not have it otherwise. I wish to see before I believe.

M.02.05.01.04 / M.123

Fourth Day. – I made my visit and I return but little consoled.

He was very civil; he came to meet me and at first sight greeted me affectionately, as would a friend, almost a father.

"You inspire me," he said, "with a compassion that is almost a brother's. I love you so much as a White Hare can love a dark inhabitant of burrows. Renounce those foul holes, come to share my form, and I will love you as myself."

I took advantage of these kindly intentions to submit my treaty of alliance. As he listened to me, he pulled a face that was hardly propitious, and his ears were seized by a singular movement. He pushes them aside, tilting them quickly back when he wishes to indicate that he does not like something or that he does not believe it.

"My son," he said, "I am ready to do for you all that is possible for a White Hare to do; but ask not what is possible only for the Gods, the sun and perhaps Men. I have power to kill you when you sleep your sleep of winter; I have no power to awaken you."

"You will shake me until you have awoken me."

"I would try in vain to shake you awake, if your sleep must last six moons, it will last six moons."

“You will sharpen your claws and will drive them into my flesh.”

He tossed his head.

“You will bite my paws, my ears, everywhere.”

He tossed his head.

“You will tear these whiskers, which are curled like no other Marmot whiskers.”

He tossed his head.

Then I felt my blood rise to my face in anger.

“Your evasions do not deceive me at all,” I cried; “I have untangled your lies and seen through your pride. What do you have that allows you to despise the ancient and noble race of Marmots? Our industry is worth more than your light foot, and it is us who are the clear-sighted ones. You require the full sunlight, poor blind wretch; as for us, we can see even in the bosom of the earth. We sleep, that is true; but we are not insensible; our heart still beats, and I who address you, I have counted its pulse.”

Scarcely had I uttered these words when I repented of having spoken too warmly; but he did not seem offended.

“I know not what passes in your heart,” he continued, “my observations have not reached that far; but what I know well is that in winter you are like frozen bodies, which the sun melts in spring. If you wish that I should let you hold a sleeping Marmot, come to share my form, and try not to sleep yourself.”

I will absolutely not go to share his form. This White Hare is an egotist and a fantasist. Why does he not come to share my burrow? I for one have a horror of forms.

M.02.05.01.05 / M.124

Fifth Day. – He is very amusing when he speaks of these foul holes. A Marmot, Sir Hare, is the most respectable animal on the mountain, whereas you... Enough said.

M.02.05.01.07 / M.125

Seventh Day. – I think better of it. Tomorrow I will go to ask hospitality of him for at least a few days. This body which is frozen and this sun which melts it remain fast in my memory.

M.02.05.02.01 / M.126

First Day of the First Quarter. – Catastrophe! murder! horror!

He was my friend. I will maintain deep mourning for eight days, like a husband for his wife, a child for his father.

M.02.05.03.02 / M.127

Second Day of the Full Moon. – The days prescribed for the period of mourning have passed. During this time I have abstained from labour with the paws.

Divine Providence, thus is it ever that you have exercised justice! Innocents are born only to make sinners fat.

I had taken the path to his form, and I was making the ascent, toddling along as best I could. Not only was I resolved on the idea of spending a few nights in his form, but I was beginning to find its novelty attractive and stimulating. I was impatient to hold and to fasten at close quarters on these bodies which freeze and melt. And then, I had to ask of him pardon for the intemperate remarks which had escaped me in my anger. So, I was ambling along at a cheerful pace, not forgetting, however, the precautionary measures that are the custom of an old Marmot, five times father of a family. I was looking for covered places and aiming always at some sort of shelter. When I had to expose myself to being seen from the sky, I raised my eyes first, to assure myself that nothing suspect was hovering there. All went well until a last boulder, whence I could see the form of the Philosopher, my friend. I sheltered there for a few instants. He saw me and hurried without thinking to meet me. I let out a strident alarm call; I had just discerned a moving point amidst the clouds. He was too late. I was knocked almost senseless by a great flapping of wings, and I saw a black bird swooping on his prey, swifter than lightning. The Hare was struck with terror and flattened himself on the ground; it did not save him from being snatched up in the Vulture's talons. I followed him with my eyes. Not a movement did he make. Head low, ears at rest, he seemed at peace and resigned to all.

M.02.05.03.03 / M.128

Third Day. – I will preserve the memory of the White Hare religiously. He held too lofty an idea of races which keep a form and scorned too much those which dig burrows. He placed also too much confidence in his swiftness of foot, and that proved his undoing. But he was good, he valued Philosophy, he had a mind that was swift and enthusiastic, he could pardon offences and he really loved me. It is through an impulse of friendship, running toward me, that he met his death. I will see him always, motionless in the Vulture's talons.

It requires time for mutual understanding and to get used to each other, when one has acquired habits and when characters are so different. Even so, I think that we would have ended up living as brothers. The search for wisdom is the strongest of all bonds. May your soul rest in peace, my friend, you who are the only being in the world who, since my misfortune, shewed me any goodwill, who could have been the confidant of my most secret thoughts, the companion of all my labours, my guide, perhaps, in the paths of knowledge! The Gods have been cruel; they have parted us at the moment when a closer friendship was about to join us. They allowed us only to be seen by each other. May they at least have pitied

you in your death, may they have shortened your suffering, may they allow, of all the voices of the earth, the voice of my regrets and of my inalienable friendship to reach your soul!

M.02.05.03.04 / M.129

Fourth Day. – I feel incapable of taking up the thread of my thoughts. My spirit is empty and the world seems a desert to me.

M.02.05.04.02 / M.130

Second Day of the Last Quarter. – Days succeed to days, and my courage is not coming back. I have never experienced a like feeling of loneliness.

M.02.05.03.04 / M.131

Fourth Day of the Last Quarter. – Today I undertook an excursion to distract myself and to chase away unhappy thoughts. I intended to scale the Dent-Noire, the highest peak in the valley. A storm made me retrace my steps.

M.02.06.01.01 / M.132

Moon of Fatness. *First Day of the New Moon.* – Storms on top of storms! On several occasions lightning has struck the summit of the Dent-Noire. Why was I not there?

M.02.06.01.03 / M.133

Third Day. – Dogs are raging. Man also. He mingles his thunder with the sky's. Several Marmots have been killed. The country is emptying.

M.02.06.01.04 / M.134

Fourth Day. – Nature, who has multiplied over the earth races that do evil, has made three to be more formidable than the others: Vulture, Dog and Man.

The Vulture is the most terrible of all, because of the power of his wing and his lightning speed. The only animals to escape him are those whose weight does not allow him to carry them away, and still they must fear for their young. He does not fly, he plummets and carries you away; one could call him Fate. He has tawny eyes, surrounded by living flesh, a hooked beak, talons that are always sharpened, a neck that is always turned toward his prey. One shudders at the very thought of his nest, which is a charnel house, of the flight through the air which is made by those whom he dismembers for his young. This death is horrible to imagine, the more horrible as it is slower. The victim breathes and throbs under the hideous beak that tears shreds from his flesh and under the sharp talons that probe his entrails.

Even so, the Vulture is less cruel than bloody. It is not he who is cruel, but Nature, who has made him to be born voracious and has told him: "You will live from reeking flesh". He is hungry, and he hunts after animals, just as we do after flowers. He requires Marmots or Hares, just as we do Clover or Snowbells. He drinks the blood of his victims, just as we drink the dew in the cups of the Gentian or in the goblets of the Lady's-mantle. It is Nature who has decreed that there should be at least one eyrie of Vultures in each valley, often two, often more. It is she who has hung this eternal threat over every form and every burrow, over all who browse and all who nest. Why has she established these tyrants of the air? Why has she divided with them the habitable world? Who knows? She has mysterious designs, she has inexorable laws, which we cannot fathom, but to which we must submit. Happy are the barren, happy the wives who never gave suck, because it is for the Vulture that forms and burrows are filled! With the Vulture, the spirit of murder reigns in the heavens and hovers over the earth.

It is less frightful to fall under the tooth of a Dog than under the talon of a Vulture. A Dog does not carry you away, he does not rend you slowly, he does not dismember you limb from limb; he slaughters you, and it is over.

Nevertheless, the Dog is uglier and crueller than the Vulture. He is not hungry, like the Vulture; he hunts for the sake of the hunt, he slaughters for the sake of the slaughter. Certain races are hateful to him; he has a need to destroy them. It is a requirement of his Nature, an instinct that he cannot resist. We poor Marmots are among this number; Hares are also among this number. What have we done to him? What injury must he bathe in our blood? What do we have in common? He hates us for the ill that we have not done him. It is our innocence that is hateful to him.

Born fierce, the Dog has cultivated the instincts of a monster in his enslavement. For the Dog is Man's slave. Most animals grow fat in their servitude; they become heavy, idle in the chase, slow in running. In contrast, the Dog has become more insatiable, more ardent, more industrious, more agile. Men have taught and trained him. They have completed the work that was outlined by Nature. To the instinctive hate that excites the Dog against us is added a new stimulus, the desire to please his master. When he has snatched a Hare or a Marmot, he will set his victim down at the feet of Man, who strokes and caresses him. The Dog is greedy for caresses. He paws for pleasure and swoons under the hand that strokes him. None desires his liberty with the same ardour that the Dog desires the reward of obedience. He has the taste for self-abasement. It is said that Man throws him for food the remains of the hunt, the entrails of his victims, and that he takes joy and glory in this shameful feast.

The Dog does not have a fine ear, he has even less a sharp eye; but he has an extraordinary sense of smell. No other animal is so skilful to discover and trace a spoor, it is this which makes him dangerous. He walks with lowered head, scenting right, scenting left. The least whiff of Hare or Marmot makes him start suddenly and fills him with a fierce rapture. Then he lurches forward and pursues the spoor with all the speed of his long and slender legs, baying savagely. He has a particular cry when he hunts, a sort of music, compounded of frenzy and pleasure. He knows not fatigue. In the remotest deserts, under the most blazing sun, on snow or on bare rock, no matter, he runs for hours, for days, panting, his tongue lolling horribly, weary, his paws bloody, but running away. When his powers fail him, desire sustains him still.

Certain Dogs, long and low, enter within our burrows. Happily, their galleries are narrow and they must work to widen them. During this time, we flee by another escape, or we dig further ahead. I saw once, in the long corridor of my burrow, the two eyes of a dog aflame. He had reached a constriction formed from the root of a Pine and could not penetrate further. We began to observe each other, he furious, myself calm. This lasted hours. I see them still – those two eyes; if I were to live ten Marmot lives, I would still see them. They expressed one thing alone, the thirst for blood.

A Dog is stronger than a Marmot. Nevertheless, if Marmots were to will it, if they could only unite, they would easily have satisfaction of these prowling Dogs who hunt alone on the mountain. But each Marmot family lives for itself. The children flee, the mother flees, the father flees. None thinks to resist. It is true to say that, when one hears the Dog, there is every reason to suppose that Man is not afar, the tyrant and bugbear of creation.

M.02.06.01.05 / M.135

Fifth Day. – Let us speak a little of Man, let us speak of him at our leisure.

There could be as many varieties of Men as there are individuals, if we had to judge by their spare skins, of different types and colours, which they put on and take off as they wish. But it is believed generally enough that they are not natural to him and that he manufactures them. All that I could see in the time of my captivity has confirmed me in this opinion. It is the characteristic of Man that he makes a multitude of things that none other has ever made before, nor will ever make again.

Man is the most defective of animals. He has a mane which, for some, frames the whole face, whereas for others, it protects only the back of the head. It falls out with age, that is to say at the moment when he would have most need of it to guard him against the cold. Otherwise, not too much is known about what purpose it serves. Those who are the best supplied still wear a covering on their heads. As far as can be judged, the rest of the body is naked, apart from the skins in which they dress up. Other animals have each a colour: The Cow is black or red, often patched with white; the Hare is white in winter, russet in summer; the Bear is brown; the Marmot has a graceful coat, shaded from grey to black; the skin of Man alone lacks its own colour; it is half transparent and allows one to see the flesh and blood. That is without example in Nature. Man is himself sensible of this monstrosity, and it is probably the reason for which he covers himself with false skins, which do not belong to him and which he is careful to wear according to their colour. But he keeps his face uncovered, his hands too, which makes one long to bite them. If I were a fierce beast, I would eat lots of Men.

Man sits like us and holds himself upright on his rear legs; on the other hand, he cannot walk on four paws. The true method is to employ both methods, as the case requires, just as Marmots do. Man is not stable on his two feet; he always seems about to stumble. He often equips himself with the branch of a tree to steady his gait, which is slow and clumsy. He runs heavily. How could he run lightly, built as he is. There is no proportion between his rear legs, great and shapeless pillars, and his fore legs – shorter and slenderer, which he knows only to use as arms, just as we also do sometimes, but only when it suits us.

Man would be the least offensive of animals, because he is the most awkward, if he did not make up by force of industry what Nature has denied him. He has absolutely no sense of smell, absolutely no sense of hearing, his sense of sight is of the most ordinary; but he has an inventive mind. He puts to his eye a long instrument, by means of which he discovers his prey at any distance; he usually carries on his shoulder another instrument, longer still, which he aims against his victims, and from which he projects fire, smoke and little stones, which are round and heavy, which strike from afar those whom he wishes to hit. It can be only a God who has taught him the art of lightning in this way. Why him rather than others, rather than us, for example? What has Man done to deserve this favour? Does the spilling of innocent blood confer a claim in the eyes of heaven?

Man is possessed of a charm. Certain species of animal bow before him, acknowledging him openly as their master and serving him with passion. Others fear and hate him. He is not bloody like the Vulture; he has never been seen to murder his victims in the flesh, nor drink their blood. He is not born for murder. He has neither blazing talons, nor a hooked beak, nor sharp teeth. He does not seem to bear against us any instinctive hatred. He is not cruel, only ambitious and jealous. Man desires that everyone should pay him a tribute of submission. His passion is to rule or to persuade himself that he rules. It is his pleasure to surround himself with slaves. Every free being is an injury to him. His dream would be universal mastery. He will not achieve it unless he purges the earth of the free children of the mountain. It is for this that he labours. He kills us, because he cannot enslave us. It is his way of avenging his own impotence. Let him kill as much as he likes, we will not grant him the pleasure of joining his retinue. Races born for liberty bear eternal hatred toward Man and his underlings.

Man's empire is expanding. To the extent that he advances, he makes a desert around him and peoples it with his creatures. By which caprice of Nature has she destined for royalty the most evil being to have left her hands? I have no answer; but one thing is certain, Man increases, Marmots dwindle. Of our ancient multitudes, there remain only a few clans on the floors of the valleys, a refuge that is uncertain and increasingly violated. Our fathers did not recall ever having seen in this country the silhouette of a Man outlined against the sky, on the mountain crags. Now this is seen almost every day, at least in summer. They hoist themselves up, in caravans, from cliff to cliff. They push and pull each other along, and do so until they arrive. Then one has to hear them, when they have reached the summit, celebrating with great cries of joy the victory that they have just won over their clumsiness. Not only does Man wish to rule over the animals, he wishes to rule over the earth herself. He has sworn not to leave a single place unsoiled by his presence. Such pride will weary the patience of heaven. Unless the world has been created for the triumph of his iniquity, Man and his glory will pass.

I made in my captivity an astonishing discovery: Man could be good, he is even good, sometimes. In vain did I refuse to believe it, but I have seen shining in his eyes the sweet gleam of pity. It takes some acquaintance not to deceive oneself. Those shifting eyes, in the middle of his face, instil fear at the first onset. No animal has a gaze more fixed, no animal has a gaze more fleeting. There is no certainty before those eyes. Even so, one learns to read them eventually. One reads there oftenest thoughts of pride or deceit; but I have read there sometimes, read clearly, a thought of goodness. The day when the Man with the long and fine mane, who used to give me Pine kernels, carried me back to the mountain, I saw in his false blue eyes a real smile. I am persuaded now that it wished to deliver me. It is believed

that these Men with the finer manes, who all wear a sort of floating skin, are the females. I believe it too, and that explains why there is greater softness in their movements and their physiognomy. But they are not the only ones capable of kindness. The Man who used to come morning and evening to milk his Cows – did he have a rough mane and wild features! Yet I saw even his eyes shining while he was passing his hand under the neck of a little brown Cow, whom he never failed to caress. He wished me absolutely no ill, not ever. He would willingly have given me a share of his caresses. I rejected them, because of my prison, and today I would reject them still, in liberty. Because finally, what must one think of this being who is capable of kindness and finds not his pleasure there? That is unprecedented in creation. I understand the Vulture, who knows nothing of mercy; I understand the Dog, who is all fawning and ferocity. But Man! How can he reduce to slavery those whom he loves and shed the blood of those on whom he has pity? What is this art that consists in being merciful today and pitiless tomorrow? I call heaven as witness, he is an animal who could be good and who prefers to be bad. This monster is called Man. Fortune fills him with her favours and he strides arrogantly toward empire over the world.

Man is the greatest mystery of Nature – after the Marmot.

M.02.06.01.07 / M.136

Seventh Day. – It has done me good to say here all I think of our persecutors. It has taken the place of the Dent-Noire. I feel consoled.

M.02.06.02.01 / M.137

First Day of the First Quarter. – Today is the first anniversary of the death of the White Hare. I have shed tears for him for a whole moon, I will shed tears for several moons still.

All Marmots are taught, in their tenderest youth, that there exists a Providence, that the Gods exercise justice on earth and in the heavens, that they favour the designs of the just and are sure to punish the guilty. I ask myself if this religion does not date from the time when the race of Marmots was the most flourishing of all those that inhabit the mountain. It is a religion for a happy people. Men must have one that is very like it today. We poor Marmots believe in what we can! I am sure that Men are wholly convinced of it.

M.02.06.02.02 / M.138

Second Day. – The moment has come to take courage. The season is advancing. One must either renounce Philosophy or make preparation for the vigil of the Long Night.

Today, once they had signalled the end to their stay with a great carnage of Marmots, the Men retired to the lower pastures. Their herds went ahead. The ringing of their bells made a great deal of noise.

M.02.06.02.03 / M.139

Third Day. – The more I reflect, the more I am persuaded that there are profound meaning and great truth in the last words of the White Hare. The sleep of the Long Night would have as its sole cause the cold, which penetrates from without to within; this would be a phenomenon of the same order as those of freezing and melting. If the Long Night were long enough so that the cooling was complete, we would die; but the cooling is not complete; a warm hearth remains in our hearts, whose action takes over when the temperature becomes milder.

This theory has a great deal to say for it.

It is somewhat akin to what happens to plants, at least to all those that do not perish at the approach of the Long Night. Beeches, for example, in the base of the valley, or Larches, are frozen without, at the moment when we awake from our sleep. They have leaves no longer, their wood is cold, and their sap flows no more. But a hearth of life remains at their centre, which communicates its warmth gradually, to the whole trunk and to all the branches, when the season is more favourable.

The same theory would explain, besides, the instinct which carries us to stuff our burrows with hay, to close their galleries precisely and to press ourselves as closely as possible against each other to sleep that sleep. One would understand also, at a pinch, the insensibility of which we are accused during the time when we sleep. Our skin, cooled completely and all over, is as if dead. One would have to prick to a certain depth to meet with any feeling.

If other animals are not subject to this sleep, they must have warmer blood or a better coat of fur, perhaps both.

The more this explanation beguiles me, the more impatient I am to hold within my arms a frozen Marmot. When will that be?

M.02.06.02.04 / M.140

Fourth Day. – I feel reborn and my joy renewed. I am clearly on the right track. This point won, the rest will follow of itself.

M.02.06.02.05 / M.141

Fifth Day. – Today, I saw a White Hare passing, at some distance from my burrow. I know just about where to find his form, and it would not be difficult, perhaps, to befriend him, like the other. But the one whom I loved is dead, and I will not allow any successor, at least for the time being.

I observed that his fur was already turning white. I infer that the Long Night will begin early this year.

M.02.06.02.06 / M.142

Sixth Day. – If my theory is equitable, it is easy to understand what made my previous experiment fail. I was cold. Also, what an idea to dig my burrow higher than all the other Marmots, and on the side of the valley that doesn't see the sun! I divine immediately why I was the last to awake. In colder country one melts later of necessity. If I didn't fall asleep even earlier, it is only by a miraculous effort of will. What I suffered is no longer a mystery.

This time I will take more equitable measures. I will begin by making a burrow that is properly warm, on the other side, in the sunniest spot and as low down as possible. From tomorrow I will be on reconnaissance, to find the propitious place. Must I also sleep, it will only be later, and I will have the time to make at least one journey to come and feel in their burrows the first sleeping Marmots.

M.02.06.03.04 / M.143

Fourth Day of the Full Moon. – I have passed three days in travelling. I descended very low, much lower than the pastures where the Men and their herds are presently.

At last, I found a place to my liking, on the other bank of the torrent. It is a difficult place, cut off by great walls of white cliffs and covered with forests that are almost impenetrable. It is very warm under these cliffs, which lose no ray of sun, and it is not impossible to dig a burrow there, amidst the debris that has accumulated.

Despite the proximity of Man, I hope to be safe there. Nowhere did I see his spoor. This forest alone seems to have been respected by this great destroyer of forests. Its approach is doubtless too difficult. The trees are falling through age, and the debris heaped up on the ground has been rotting there for centuries.

Nevertheless, I will await my remove until the Men are further off.

M.02.06.03.05 / M.144

Fifth Day. – No surprise that I succumbed. I am already feeling cold here. And there has yet to fall a single snowflake.

M.02.06.03.06 / M.145

Sixth Day. – These Men are not budging. I can hold off no longer.

M.02.06.03.07 / M.146

Seventh Day. – The Men are there still. No matter. I leave today. I call on these Gods who are called just. My protection is in their hands.

I really cannot wait any longer. I have much to arrange down below, if I am to be ready. My Tablets are in order, in their chamber. I will wall up my burrow, as is our custom, so that others will think it occupied. After that, fare well!

M.02.07.01.01 / M.147

[Unhappy] Moon, *First Day of the New Moon*. – All went well. Nothing untoward disrupted my journey. I had scarcely arrived when I set to work. It took me eight days to reach the end of this burrow. There is none larger, none more comfortable, none deeper, none more secure, in the whole valley. Its entrance is immediately under the cliff, hidden by a thicket of Yew. Rainwater cannot enter, because the cliff overhangs it. I have taken advantage of this to give the gallery at the onset a swift incline. It descends to a depth of six Marmots. There it winds between two boulders, which narrow it sufficiently to make the passage impossible for a Dog even of the smallest race; then it continues horizontally for five Marmot lengths, ending in a very spacious chamber, which I had no need to dig; it is a natural cavity. I confined myself to compacting enough earth to smooth out the irregularity of the ground. A second gallery, for escape, opens a path amidst a labyrinth of roots and boulders; I had great trouble digging it; at every turn there was a new obstacle. Its line is broken by several sharp corners. Finally, it comes out at the foot of the cliff, like the first, but on the other side of a great boulder; it is scarcely possible to pass from one opening to the other except underground. I have walled up the escape gallery, because of the flow of air; but at the least danger I can open it in a few instants.

It is more like a fortress than a burrow.

I found several slates while I was excavating it.

M.02.07.01.02 / M.148

Second Day. – I began today my harvest of hay. I cut grasses and moss, which I laid out in the sun, under the rock.

The water that oozes out along this cliff, a few pawsteps from my burrow, is not the equal of the spring of Black Mosses. Great also is the difference between the grasses of this country and the flowers of the Golden Clover.

M.02.07.01.03 / M.149

Third Day. – The chamber which I am stuffing with hay could contain ten Marmots. If I had excavated it myself, would I have made it smaller?... It is not certain that I will pass the Long Night alone. If I can take between my two paws a frozen Marmot, why could I not bring him back here? Why not two?

M.02.07.01.05 / M.150

Fifth Day. – I am approaching the end, and that is happy, because the roof of my mouth is bloody. – It is a disagreeable manner of carrying that we Marmots pass down, from generation unto generation. Filling oneself, stuffing the mouth with hay, only to disgorge it in one's burrow!... Still, I accept the hay up there. This is too coarse.

M.02.07.01.06 / M.151

Sixth Day. – The Men have left. I hear only the noise of the torrent.

I have carpeted with hay not only the bedroom, but the galleries as well. I wish to be warm, very warm. I have manufactured doors from slate. I believe I am ready.

M.02.07.01.07 / M.152

Seventh Day. – An idea has come to me, a bright idea that is also heroic. I will sow the hay of my bedroom with Holly leaves. They will prick me into sensibility.

M.02.07.02.02 / M.153

Second Day of the First Quarter. – It took me two days of searching to find a Holly tree. I am bringing back two branches, laden with leaves.

M.02.07.02.03 / M.154

Third Day. – I have passed my day in laying down my Holly. I can hold myself upright in my bedroom, without injuring my rear paws; but I cannot lie down without the whole weight of my body resting on these leaves that are armed with sharp teeth. When I feel threatened by the sleep of torpor, I will go to await it in my bedroom. A very small chamber, which I excavated today, a mere bulge in the gallery, will suffice me until then.

This time, I am ready.

M.02.07.02.04 / M.155

Fourth Day. – I cannot get this poor White Hare out of my memory. And still, it is good that he is dead. I would not have known how to decline to share his form, and it would have been cold with him. My present measures are well taken. Any other system would be false. Besides, is it not something – not to have to share the glory of the discovery and of reaching the success of one's undertaking on one's own? Couldn't he return to life on the day following the Long Night! With what pleasure would I describe to him this burrow, and my hay sown with Holly, and the journey that I will undertake and what I will have found up above, in the country where one sleeps! With what pleasure would I speak to him in my own turn of winter, as a Philosopher who slept not!

M.02.07.02.05 / M.156

Fifth Day. – Last year, at the same time, I saw the sun no more. From here I can see it still for several hours a day.

M.02.07.02.06 / M.157

Sixth Day. – The weather is fine, the Long Night is overdue.

There was noise at the head of the valley. Dogs gave voice and the hunters' thunder rumbled.

Bad news. Now is not the moment to empty the mountain!

M.02.07.02.07 / M.158

Seventh Day. – The temperature has fallen suddenly. I made a reconnaissance to discover what was happening. Marmots are in hiding. I suppose that several have walled up their burrows even today.

M.02.07.03.01 / M.159

First Day of the Full Moon. – Change in sight. Abundant snow. Yesterday evening, the peaks were free from snow. This morning, the snow is twice my height just a few pawsteps from my burrow. I am not sleepy, even so.

M.02.07.03.02 / M.160

Second Day. – It snows ever more.

M.02.07.03.03 / M.161

Third Day. – Still snow! Impatience starts to gain on me. Happily, I am not sleepy.

M.02.07.03.04a / M.162

Fourth Day. – I have been held prisoner for three days and three nights by the snow and by the wind that chased it in whirlwinds capable of burying Marmot legions. Today, the sky is visible through great blue gashes among the grey clouds, remnants of yesterday's storm. Unless ill chance pursues me, this night will determine everything. These clouds will disperse with the setting of the sun. The surface of the snow will harden, and I will begin my journey as soon as the moon has risen.

It is clear that everything on the mountain sleeps; but I myself sleep not. I have had some buzzing in my ears and some shivers along my spine. The rear quarters begin also to be heavy; but I do not have to fight against sleep; all is lucid in my mind, and I am scratching gaily with my right paw.

I had not counted on this snow. No matter. There are two burrows at least whose position I know precisely enough to find them without groping. The first is under a certain pyramid of granite, which snow has never buried. I am there in an hour, if the snow settles. Once above these places, one is free to excavate a gallery.

Nothing will be merrier, on my return, than to send a frozen Marmot sliding down the slope. He will reach the bottom by himself; I will have only to prevent him from reaching it too

quickly. Who knows? With the help of the snow, it would be possible to carry away a whole family. I can see them tumbling over each other.

M.02.07.03.04b / M.163

On the Same Day. – Today, the Fourth Day of the Full Moon, I will set out to visit the frozen Marmots, buried under the snows of the high mountain.

I am awaiting only the first beam of the moon to set out. It will not be long, because for a long time now the moon has been outlining the mountain tops.

The sky is magnificent, absolutely cloudless; the air is calm, the snow settles; but it is not especially cold. I feel in good cheer, full of ardour and of hope. It is difficult to understand how one can sleep on a night like this.

This is the appointed hour. May the Gods assist me!

E. Rambert: La marmotte au collier (1889)

trans. R. L. Hewitt: The Marmot with the Collar (2020)

**The Marmot with the Collar
A Trilingual Edition**

Part 02 (English)

**Richard L. Hewitt
Kamuzu Academy, Malawi**

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