

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

by

Eugène Rambert

Translated from the French

by

Richard L. Hewitt

2020

Part I

M.01.04.04.01 / M.001 – M.01.07.03.04d / M.057

First Summer

M.01.04.04.01 / M.001

Clover Moon, *First Day of the Last Quarter*. – I make today the vow to devote myself entirely to Philosophy and to the study of the mystery of our existence. I pray that the Gods will grant me the strength to hold to this commitment, which I undertake before them and toward myself. I pray that they will grant me also the acuity of intellect and the necessary persistence to fathom such great problems.

M.01.04.04.02 / M.002

Second Day. – I do not think that I commit any wrong to society by passing in an honest celibacy the three or four years which are left for me to live, according to the ordinary course of things. Married for five years, my wife was the good fortune of my life until the fatal event that separated us; I have been five times father of a family, and my twenty-three children, my grand-children and my great-grand-children set me among the number of those who have fulfilled their dues toward society.

Besides, it is not my fault if I retreat. I am condemned to it. I am received like an evildoer. The collar which I wear has proved a curse on me. My former neighbours, my friends, my children have refused to recognise me. Society drives me away. I declare myself finished with it.

M.01.04.04.04 / M.003

Fourth Day. – I harbour no hope that the fruit of my observations and my reflections will ever prove useful to anyone. Learned Marmots are becoming fewer day by day. One lives nowadays only to play and to amuse oneself. Nevertheless, I have undertaken the resolve to write a diary of my thoughts, likewise my deeds and actions. What has no interest for present generations may perhaps have interest for Marmots of the future. Our fathers' fathers had learned from the elders of their time that Marmots once constituted a powerful people, the friend of knowledge and the pleasures of the intellect. Could what happened once not happen twice? If this hope is realised, our children's children will not be offended to know what one of their ancestors thought.

M.01.05.01.01 / M.004

Dry Moon, *First Day of the New Moon*. – I have been busy for several days settling in; the task is rather long.

I have chosen for my exclusive residence this terrace, situated between two cliff walls, of which I command the one and the other commands me. It is on the shady side of the slope; but it compensates for this inconvenience with certain advantages that decided me. First, I have never seen climb up here Man or Dog, and up to the present never has a Marmot dwelt here. I will find peace nowhere if I do not find it here. Then, the slope, at the foot of the cliff, is comprised in large part of leaves of slate, of a crystalline grain, which seem formed

expressly to serve me as writing tablets. They are almost as thin as Gentian leaves, yet hard, and the claw can scratch it without too much trouble.

It is too high for trees here, or shrubs; but flowers are abundant, especially in a little valley where runs a stream that falls from the rocks. Some great boulders, heaped up on the edge of the precipice, leave between them crevices that are always cool. It is there that is my Burrow. I have only to leave the hollow at whose bottom I have hidden the entrance to command the whole valley. Not a Marmot, not a Mouse can show its nose without my seeing it.

I have constructed for myself a great Burrow, in order to pass the Long Night. Fairly close to the entrance, at two Marmot lengths, the gallery divides into two. One very short branch, continuing in a straight line, ends in a spacious chamber, where the light penetrates. Here I will store my Tablets. The leaves of slate are beginning already to accumulate, one behind the other. The great gallery advances further into the mountain. It measures at least ten Marmot lengths and leads to a little chamber, intended for one Marmot alone. This is my bedroom.

M.01.05.01.03 / M.005

Third Day. – Now I am completely settled in. I have laid in provision of slates, and a fine bed of dried grass carpets the bedroom. From today, I am able to deliver myself without reserve to the discovery of Wisdom. In dreaming of this, my heart bounds for joy.

M.01.05.01.04 / M.006

Fourth Day. – It is necessary, in noting my reflections of each day, to commit here everything I recall of the circumstance of my captivity. This is by no means a small matter, and it will take more than a day to work with the claw; but, with the help of the Gods, I will succeed in it.

I recall very distinctly, and it is my last memory before the catastrophe, that we were snuggled up in the hay, as is our custom on the vigil of the Long Night. Some neighbours had come to invite us to spend it with them, but we had declined. My wife was not fond of these gatherings by tribe. So, we went to sleep as a family, curled up carefully, head in chest and rear paws to ears. My wife was on one side, myself on the other; between us, our four children, that year's family.

How long did we sleep? I know nothing of it and I will probably never know. One thing alone is certain, the knowledge that after having fallen asleep in my Burrow, with all my dear ones, I awoke alone, in a place far removed, surrounded by hideous Men.

M.01.05.01.05 / M.007

Fifth Day. – The mystery of this adventure is terrifying. It can happen that each one of us might fall into the hands of his enemies and undergo cruel treatment. The history of Marmots offers examples enough. But to fall asleep in one's own Burrow and to wake up in another country, among Men, and not to know how one made the journey: this is what confounds all imagination.

M.01.05.01.07 / M.008

Seventh Day. – We experience a slow awakening after the Long Night. It is by degrees that we open our eyes, that we prick our ears and that we recognise objects. These first glimmers are delicious for one who is surrounded by his wife and his children. But no one can have any idea what this awakening is like, when, at each new increase in consciousness one catches a glimpse of unknown objects, one discerns malevolent beings. In that case it is the cruellest of tortures not to be able to wake up all at once. The enormity of it is this, one wishes to flee and one cannot.

M.01.05.02.02 / M.009

Second Day of the First Quarter. – I am determined to undertake a minute study of the remains of our former Burrow. I wished to climb down there yesterday; but the rain forced me to turn back. The weather is more and more overcast. Let us scratch.

I cannot describe in detail what I saw when I was completely awake. I saw nothing except in outline. The place where I found myself had to be the interior of a cabin similar to those which one sees from here, but larger. I lay there, stretched out to my whole length, on a flat stone, at the foot of the high wall. Next to me burned dried fir branches, still bearing their needles, which crackled. It was just as when the lightning sets them ablaze in the forest. Men have sometimes been observed making similar fire on the mountain. It is a secret that they possess. This fire cast a living light and an extraordinary heat. The smoke escaped by a sort of great pipe, completely black. Around the stone were arranged a certain number of Men. They were of two types, those which keep their two legs hidden under a great floating skin, and those which keep them covered separately in narrow sheaths. I caught a glimpse behind them, on the ground and against the walls, of objects of which we have no idea, but I was able only to glimpse them because my whole attention was absorbed by these barbarous Men. They looked at me and grew noisily agitated, especially the little ones. Oh! the eyes of Men! Happy are those who have seen them only from afar!

My first movement was to make my escape by climbing through the smoke pipe. I had seen blue sky. Then I discovered that I was held by the neck. I had this collar, and they had attached to it a thick thread, a coarse spider's thread, which a Man held at the other end. The Man allowed me to climb the whole length of the thread, after which it pulled me down with a sharp tug. The idea occurred to me to bite through the thread and to sever it. But each time I turned my head to reach it, the Man would lift me up. Tired of struggling I pressed myself into a corner and played dead. Then one of my hangmen tried to take me by the neck. At one leap I seized its finger and bit it with so much fury that I hung there an instant off the ground. It let out a terrible cry, and the blood spurted in abundance. I expected crueler punishments and I was resigned to everything. I desired death. In fact, a child threatened me and struck me with a branch in the face. It did me little harm. Afterwards they brought out a sort of wooden house, which seemed to have been manufactured for me. They opened it from above and forced me to enter, lifting me into the air. I was scarcely inside when they closed it, and I found myself in a deep darkness. Such was the beginning of my captivity.

M.01.05.02.03 / M.010

Third Day. – This Moon does not deserve its name. It continues to rain and I continue to scratch.

When they had put me in this house, they lifted it from the ground, and they carried it to another place, where I felt them set it down. A hand lifted the roof and threw me some grass, then the roof fell back, and I heard no longer any type of noise. I remained some time with ears stretched. Silence continued to reign, I hurled myself on the thread of my collar, and severed it with a bite of my teeth. It had a bad taste of filaments of dried grass, twisted and tough. Free in this respect I set myself to trying the walls of my prison. They were formed entirely of wood. These Men have a manner of cutting up trees: they turn the trunk into slender leaves, which they then arrange as they wish. When I thought I had found the most tender spot, I began to scratch and to bite as best I could. The wood was hard, but Marmots have good teeth. I did not wait until the hole was my size; I passed through, I don't know how, and found myself in a place enclosed by four walls, where there was hay piled up in abundance. Cows could be heard from the other side of the wall. Without losing time in thinking what to do I propelled myself toward a high opening, by which light penetrated. I don't know exactly what happened next. I think that I struck against an invisible obstacle, which broke with a loud crash, while I fell back whence I had sprung. I have only a vague memory of this fall. I was for a moment giddy from the blow. When I came around, I was in another prison, much larger than the first and well enough lit, in the company of three Cows, two Goats and a Sheep. I had a bloody nose, but I did not think of it. I thought only to sever a new thread, fixed by one end to my collar, like the earlier one, and by the other to a ring, on the wall. My effort was in vain. This thread was cold and hard, and twisted into a great number of little curls, held one inside the other. The Cows were attached in the same manner, with a coarser thread. I do not know how Man finds this thread. There exists nothing similar in Marmot country.

M.01.05.02.05 / M.011

Fifth Day. – I rose yesterday before dawn. Seeing that the sky was lightening in the west, I set out for our former Burrow. This journey caused me some disquiet; Men are close by, on the higher pastures. All turned out well. I was able to conceal my movement in the shade and I did not make any bad encounter. I heard a Fox bark, but far away.

Our former Burrow was situated lower than the others. Thus had my wife wished it. She had become sensitive to the cold with age. It opened at the top of a ravine, and measured about six Marmot lengths up to the chamber which served us as our bedroom. An escape gallery, emerging under a thicket of Alders, has remained intact. The other is open to the sky, like the bed of a stream. The earth has been cut and hacked up, with very strong instruments, whose marks are still visible; they have been tossed into the ravine, just like two large stones, which used to close the main gallery, at the entrance to the bedroom. All the hay in which we curled up is still there. It has taken on rain and has rotted; but I recognised it well: it was the hay of choice, my wife loved it soft.

My heart bled to contemplate this ruin.

M.01.05.02.06 / M.012

Sixth Day. – So, it is indeed Man that is the guilty party. We did not fall by chance into Man's hands. He came to capture us and he exposed our Burrow. He alone has the instruments whose marks I saw and confirmed. Man has instruments for everything. Some think that the Gods give these to him. Others that he fashions them himself. I think that Man fashions them, but that he has this knowledge from the Gods.

This work required time and could not have been done without noise. Man always works noisily. He doesn't know how to excavate in secret, like us. And then, Man loves to hear himself. He cannot shout loudly enough when he walks in the mountains. But what does it mean that we should not have suspected anything? I have good ears. And my wife? She used to hear ants scurrying on the ground, above our chambers. How did they capture us, how did they carry us away without our realising it? There is the mystery. However deep our sleep of the Long Night may be, even so, it is not the sleep of stones. Can there be a sleep that resists the touch of the hand of Man?

M.01.05.02.07 / M.013

Seventh Day. – There are moments when I touch my whole body just to know I am really myself, if it is really I who went to sleep in my Burrow, I who awoke down below, I who live without a family, in this solitary hole, with a collar on my neck... I am seized by strange doubts... Yes, it is really myself; I touch myself and find only myself. Here are the long whiskers of my moustache; there are not two Marmots who wear them curled in this way. Here is my wounded left ear. Marmots have never had them too long – ears, that is. I am told that it is my mother who bit it off while dragging me along to hurry on our flight, in face of great danger. Here are the paws which dug our handsome Burrow – now destroyed; here is the spine which I grated by force of passing under the rocks that closed off our gallery.... Here I really am, there is no doubt... This is precisely what I don't understand.

M.01.05.03.01 / M.014

First Day of the Full Moon. – There is something strange and extraordinary in this sleep of the Long Night.

First of all, it is a sleep of a particular type, a benumbing, a torpor. It announces itself several days in advance; it comes over us despite ourselves, and we have trouble, on awakening, to shake it off.

In the second place, it is of a length that is difficult to determine. Some think that the Long Night is as long as a half-Moon, or indeed, as a whole Moon. Certain animals, who claim that they do not sleep during this time, say that it is still longer. But they do this out of idle chatter and to make fun of us.

In the third place, there pass during the Long Night things which do not happen at any other moment of the year and of which we can judge only very imperfectly, for want of seeing them.

The idea generally admitted among us is that the Long Night is only one night. But the animals who make fun of our sleep, allege that, during this supposed night, the Sun rises and sets just as it ordinarily does. Our sages have for a long time disproved this reckless opinion. The Long Night is the long night, that is clear. It is equally without doubt that it is a night that is very cold and during which there falls much Snow. It is why, when we feel it coming, we close all the entrances to our Burrows punctually. It is the badly inclined species, to whom the Gods have denied this instinct, who mock us.

All the same, I would like very much just once to count the hours of the Long Night.

M.01.05.03.02 / M.015

Second Day. – Now are days that are truly beautiful, days that are worthy of the Dry Moon and such as Marmots love.

The whole population of the valley is abroad.

A populous tribe has gathered at this moment on a dry knoll, strewn with flat stones and tufts of grass. The adults – I count a dozen – are sitting in a circle, occupied in judging the contests of the youth. Great is the excitement. Some groom each other's fur, others fight. On occasion the fights are organised, between pairs of champions; at other times the fray is general. Opponents evade and join with each other by turn. Just now they were running all in a circle, as fast as they could, one behind the other. Meanwhile the elders, serious onlookers of these joyful follies, shake their tails with pleasure. They return to life amidst this youthfulness, they recall the exploits of their flowering years, and I seem, even from here, to hear them *murmelling*, in token of perfect contentment.

They know not that our life contains a mystery, and they play. I, who know the mystery, play no longer.

M.01.05.03.03 / M.016

Third Day. – An idea has come to me. Perhaps my wife and children are still alive?

To have awoken down below, among Men, after having gone to sleep with my family, they must by all necessity have carried me. To have been able to carry me without my realising anything, I must have been in an extraordinarily ill state – have received a blow to the head, for example, just as I did in the Prison of the Hay, when I struck against the invisible obstacle. I have no memory of it; nevertheless, the thing is not absolutely impossible. It is perhaps the least unlikely explanation of so mysterious an incident. In reasoning from this supposition, I tell myself that it is hardly likely that my wife and my four children were overtaken by the same illness or struck in the same manner. To be sure, they would have heard the kidnappers, and they would have been able to make their escape, so long as the entrance to the escape gallery was not shut off, which cannot have happened, because it is intact, and I could not see on that side any trace of footsteps.

If my wife and my children are alive, they are not far away. I must make sure of this. Tomorrow I will begin expeditions of reconnaissance.

M.01.05.04.04 / M.017

Fourth Day of the Last Quarter. – The fairest weather in the world has favoured my researches. For eight days I have traversed the mountain. I approached nearly all the families to make a close reconnaissance – with my own eyes, the eyes of a father and a spouse – for those I was seeking. I found nothing.

I had allowed myself to recover hope. The disappointment is great; it is as if I had lost them twice over.

I continue to sow terror on my passage. Lone Marmots flee when they see me; they will give warning to their friends and parents; soon the whole tribe stirs and gives chase.

M.01.05.04.05 / M.018

Fifth Day. – The weather is breaking up. Let us resume the thread of our story.

The first days that I passed in the Prison of the Cows were terrible. They brought me food, but I would not touch it. When a Man entered, I would press myself against the wall and would not take my eyes from it. When I was alone with the three Cows, the two Goats and the Sheep, I would gnaw and bite the leash. I did nothing else for several days, and I broke all my teeth. Marmot teeth grow back – happily. Those who mock us cannot say as much.

One morning I ate; the hunger was very strong.

A certain Man would enter our prison twice a day, at dawn and in the evening. It would give us grass and hay; it would remove the dung, would scatter fresh straw under the feet of the Cows, would clean them and would empty their udders into great vessels of wood. It would lead the whole troupe outside to drink. It wished to take me there too; but I would fasten myself to the ground, and it had to pull me with all its might to compel me to advance a pawstep. It was the same Man that I had bitten. It had for a long time a poorly hand.

This Man appeared to love its Cows. It would care for them, but it would treat them as a master, like its property. They would not try to resist. They would obey. On the part of Goats and Sheep this weakness is understandable. As for Cows, I never forgave it. A Cow is a heavy and flabby beast, happy to ruminate, happy to sleep on the straw, unworthy of freedom.

How easy it would have been for them to escape when they left to go to drink. But the air of the fields and the mountains never seemed to tempt them. When they had drunk, they would gaze in front of them and would return to servitude, nodding their heads and slobbering the whole length of the path. They would go straight to their place. The Man would pass the great thread around their necks, and everything was done.

To have seen Cows on the mountain, from afar, I thought them the friends of Man, and I was astonished at their taste. Now that I have seen them close up, I know they are Man's slaves and I despise them.

I am only a weak Marmot; but there isn't a Man who could boast that it has compelled me to take a pawstep voluntarily.

M.01.05.04.06 / M.019

Sixth Day. – One is not ill without knowing it; one does not receive a violent blow without some trace remaining. But I feel myself over in vain, I don't find any scar. I dig through my memory in vain; I don't recall any indisposition. I must look for another cause for this absolute lack of consciousness. It is inconceivable without an absolute sleep, and absolute sleep is death, from which one does not return.

M.01.05.04.07 / M.020

Seventh Day. – The more I reflect, the more I discover strange details in the sleep of the Long Night.

We count three Moons in the season of increasing days: the Moon of Avalanches, during which we wake up; the Moon of Love and the Withered Moon, this last so called because it begins at the moment of our most extreme leanness.

On the other hand, the Moons of decreasing days are four in number: the Clover Moon, which is the one when flowers the Golden Clover; the Dry Moon, which is the one when falls ordinarily the least rain, the one also when the grass begins to grow yellow on the flank of the mountains; the Moon of Fatness, which is the opposite of the Withered Moon, and finally the Unhappy Moon, which is cold and in which we begin to grow sleepy, so that we fall fast asleep soon after.

The Long Night occurs between the Unhappy Moon and the Moon of Avalanches.

What does the Sun do in this interval? Why, on the first morning of the Moon of Avalanches, does it not rise at the exact point where it set on the last evening of the Unhappy Moon?

Why is there not parity between the number of increasing days and that of decreasing days?

I discover no answer to these two questions, and I do not know that ever Marmot has resolved them in a satisfactory manner.

Here is one that is harder. I have preserved in my memory an exact register of the days of my captivity. They were to the number of one hundred and eighty, let us say six Moons. But, when I was restored to freedom, we were still not at the end of the Clover Moon. In consequence the days must have increased during five Moons. There is often some irregularity at the beginning and end of the Long Night, a half-Moon more or less; but a deviation of two Moons is without parallel.

Could the Long Night be simply an illusion of our sleep?

M.01.06.01.02 / M.021

Moon of Fatness, *Second Day of the New Moon.* – I am reminded of a wild dell that Marmots inhabited in former times, which they abandoned because the glacier encroached on the better meadows. One could count in those days three or four Burrows. It was little enough likely that my wife was there. I wished nevertheless to have a clear conscience in this matter. One gets strange ideas. I thought to myself that perhaps she wore also a collar, that perhaps she had been chased away like me, and I pictured her already philosophizing in one of these lonely Burrows. We would have philosophized together.

I set out yesterday at first light, and I assured myself that there had been no Marmot in the Burrows for many years. They are in ruins.

So, here I am, a widower, definitely a widower. My wife and my children are no more, since they are no where. May the Gods have pity on their souls and may Wisdom keep me in place of a family!

M.01.06.01.03 / M.022

Third Day. – Although my excursion of the day before yesterday did not meet with the success for which I had briefly hoped, it was not to no purpose.

I had first to descend to the Burrows which are beneath my cliff in order to climb back up the valley, following its stream. As I was making my way down there, between some thickets of Rhododendron, I met Master Badger, a neighbour from other times. What was he doing there? He was hunting, without doubt. Friendship between Badgers and Marmots is not great. These nocturnal prowlers are not our cup of tea. Even so, he recognised me and let out a grunt of surprise.

- You, here?
- So?
- Then they let you go?
- Who?
- Your captors, of course! In fact, it's your curse. Eating the whole Summer to sleep from the fat the whole Winter! Call that a life?
- What do you mean, the whole Winter?
- Exactly, you don't even know what Winter is.

During this exchange he began to snuff at something and to look at me askance, at my neck, in a peculiar manner. I was already drawing up, ready to defend myself valiantly, when he effected a sudden about-turn and took off with all the speed of his legs. It is this collar!

Badgers are a race which it is better not to rub against. My curiosity was nevertheless piqued, and I would have wished to talk an instant longer. Where to catch up with him now? He will flee at first sight of me.

M.01.06.01.04 / M.023

Fourth Day. – I cease not from turning over in my mind what Master Badger told me.

I would give what remains of my left ear to know if he were present when they seized us, or if he saw only the ruins of our Burrow.

And this Winter, of which he speaks like the Summer! It is probably the same as we call the Long Night, – these Badgers have a language of their own; – but what proportion can there be between the Summer and the Long Night?

When he says that we eat too much in Summer and that we then sleep from our fat, that is pure calumny, the calumny of an animal that is jealous and taciturn.

Is it our fault if we are fat in this season? All animals are the same, and the Badger a little more so than the rest. You had to see his fat bouncing while he was running in front of me. And supposing that Nature has given us more of an embonpoint than him, would she not have reason to do so, seeing that we dwell high up, and that this embonpoint keeps us in place of a double coat of fur when it is cold?

We eat, it is true, with a rich appetite; but at least we eat delicately. We do not feed, like him, on worms, grasshoppers and the most disgusting fruits of the earth. Nor is dry grass, from which so many other animals subsist, a dish for our use, with its musty taste. We live only from shoots swollen with sap, from tender grasses, from velvet fruits and Pine kernels. It is the luxury that I allow myself in my solitude, to eat still more delicately than in the past. Previously, I would share the meadow with a family; today, I have the whole of it for myself, alas! This allows me to live from flowers. Rare are the ears of grasses that I pick at. Grasses have absolutely no perfume. But the Golden Clover, with succulent leaves, the Lovage, whose umbel cracks and bursts under the tooth, the Cinquefoil, the Saxifrages, the Orchid with its voluptuous perfumes, the Daisy with its blue gleam, the slender Fleabanes, the Yarrow with its bitter and fortifying scent, and the Wormwood whose aroma intoxicates: this is the menu of a Marmot luncheon. One knows that one is approaching a Burrow in that all the flowers are cut down. There is none left around mine own within a circle of a hundred pawsteps. The little valley with the stream is happily rich, without counting the crevices between the boulders, always fresh and abundant in flowers. The drops of dew that one discovers in the morning in the leaves of the Lady's-mantle moisten my peaceful repasts. A Marmot is a dainty creature, and I make no attempt to conceal it. This weakness becomes a Philosopher. Never did a coarse eater think delicately.

M.01.06.01.05 / M.024

Fifth Day. – When I think of this Long Night, whose hours no one has counted, of these whims of the Sun, of these two Moons that have gone astray, of this fatness, from which the

mischievous allege that we sleep, of this strange torpor that overcomes us when the Unhappy Moon arrives, I am seized by ideas that give me vertigo.

It is absolutely necessary that I should see Master Badger once again.

M.01.06.02.07 / M.025

Seventh Day of the First Quarter. – He eludes me. During eight times twenty-four hours I have led the life of Badgers, turning night into day and day into night. I have traversed the whole mountain by the light of Moon or Star, and I caught up with him only to see him making off as if a pack of hounds were suddenly baying at his heels. He no longer bothers to look at me, he scents me. It must be that this collar has preserved the odour of Man. A Badger's fear of Man is greater even than ours; it is out of fear that he sets out only at night.

This life is contrary to Nature. I cannot sleep during the day. The sweet light of the Sun drenches my eyelids even at the back of my Burrow. And as far as these nocturnal travels are concerned, they are suited only for cravens and mischief-makers.

I will take great courage tomorrow, and I will go to see Master Badger at his home, in the full light of day.

M.01.06.03.02 / M.026

Second Day of the Full Moon. – To no avail! He will never let himself be approached. This collar savours of Man – evidently.

The Sun was already high over the horizon when I arrived at the Badger's sett. I approached softly, with a little speech all ready, to calm his fear. I did not wish to betray my presence until I was at the very entrance of his sett and I had him prisoner there. I ran the risk of being badly received, Badgers are arrogant and have a brutal temper; but there is absolutely no disgrace in suffering for Science. Accordingly, I approached without noise; then, revealing myself suddenly, I said to him, 'My friend'... I had not completed the word before I was tumbling three or four times head over heels, while the Badger fled as fast he could. He passed over my body.

M.01.06.03.03 / M.027

Third Day. – My resolution is fast. I will not sleep. I wish to count the hours of the Long Night.

Not to sleep – it suffices to will it thus. I can will it thus.

I will do more. As soon as other Marmots are asleep, I will arise and I will go to break in to one or more of their Burrows. I wish to know what this sleep really is.

M.01.06.03.04 / M.028

Fourth Day. – Since I made this decision, I feel calmer. What good does it serve to have recourse to a neighbour's advice? In the pursuit of Science, it is necessary to aid oneself. Deceit and illusion reign everywhere. It is not by hearsay but by experience that one discovers the truth.

However, so as to have nothing with which to reproach myself, I went this morning to make one last reconnaissance of the Badger's sett. He did not return, and most likely he will return no more. This is an accursed sett. He smelt there Man.

M.01.06.03.05 / M.029

Fifth Day. – The season advances. I must prepare. While I was trying to sleep, to recover from my nocturnal journeys, all the Marmots of the valley gathered in their great harvest of dried grass, as a bed. I am late in this.

M.01.06.04.01 / M.030

First Day of the Last Quarter. – I cut the grass which I need, yesterday and the day before yesterday, in the little valley with the stream. I laid it out in the Sun and turned it several times, to make it dry more quickly. But the days are not long enough and the dews are abundant. Patience!

M.01.06.04.03 / M.031

Third Day. – Today I was able to transfer the whole harvest into my bedroom. Now I am well installed.

One matter still exercises me. How will I close my Burrow?

M.01.06.04.04 / M.032

Fourth Day. – I must not wall up my Burrow, as do other Marmots. I must be able to enter and leave. Even so, I could not leave myself exposed in a Burrow that is open to the rigors of the Long Night. This is what I have determined to do. I have been to look on the mountainside for two leaves of slate, which I will shape with claws and teeth so that they close my gallery exactly, at two points not far from each other, one Marmot length at most. I will be able to remove them and put them back at my pleasure.

M.01.06.04.05 / M.033

Fifth Day. – My doors are made. They close very well.

M.01.06.04.06 / M.034

Sixth Day. – I experienced a thrill of pleasure on seeing this morning that it had snowed around my dwelling.

This Snow has reminded me that I have greatly neglected the account of my adventures in captivity. I must take advantage of these last days to finish it.

I was an object of curiosity in the Prison of the Cows. When someone came at hours other than those of service, which happened nearly every day, it was ordinarily to look at me. I often saw around me a circle of visitors.

All these Men were ugly, each one more so than the next.

Even so, I allow two exceptions.

The first is in favour of the one who would come to look after the Cows each day, morning and evening. I finally grew accustomed to it. It threatened me sometimes, but without doing me any harm. It had the appearance of not remembering that I had bitten it. I appreciate also that it loved its Cows. One of its pleasures was to stroke them along the spine and under the chin.

I allow a second exception in favour of a Man of the other type, of the type which covers its two legs in a great floating skin. That one would come to see me often, at all hours of the day, alone or with children, and would bring me each time some fruits. I never touched them before its eyes; but I was weak enough to touch them when it was outside. They were, for the most part, fruits unknown on the mountain. Some I would have thought tasty in freedom.

This Man had long hair, very fair, which fell over its back, strangely twisted and knotted. It had white skin, and great eyes, of a false greyish blue, which tried sometimes to smile. But the eyes of Men are incapable of smiling. It is only Marmot eyes, clear and truly blue, which can smile.

More than once it wished to touch me. I did not allow it, although it seemed to reproach me for having so little trust; but I never tried to bite it. I confined myself to drawing back, growling, and it would withdraw its hand.

One day, it brought me a Pinecone, which still had a few kernels. It wished to make me eat from its hand. I was nearly persuaded. It seemed happy to offer me this fruit of the mountain. I held back even so. The following day, not finding any more kernels, it looked at me askance, lifting its finger in a manner that was half friendly, half threatening. It was its gesture when it made a reproach. This Man had done me only good. It appeared to feel sorry for me in my captivity. Nevertheless, I never trusted it. Its eyes could even have wished to smile, they were still Man's eyes. The eyes of Men speak always two things at once.

M.01.06.04.07 / M.035

Seventh Day. – I don't know if they intended to restore my freedom or if I owe this to an oversight of my warders. If anyone wished to restore it to me, it is the Man with the long fair hair and the false blue eyes.

The fact is that one fine day the Man of the Cows found a way to cover my head, doubtless so that I would not be able to bite it; after which it took me by the collar, released me from the thread that held me prisoner and threw me into a black hole. The Man of the false blue eyes was present while they were treating me in this way. I heard it laughing.

A little time later I sensed that they were carrying me, but I was still in this black hole and my head was still covered. I began to suffocate. It was the Man of the false blue eyes who was carrying me. I recognised it by its voice. But it was not alone. Some children were with it, laughing and chattering a lot. I think that it was carrying me hung from its arm. This lasted an infinite time, several hours. In the hands of anyone else I would have been dead a hundred times over from anger and distress; but a remnant of hope sustained me, because it was the Man of the false blue eyes.

All of a sudden I sense that I am being placed on the ground and they are opening the black hole. A breath of air reaches me. In the same instant I see that I am delivered, by enchantment, from every type of impediment; I make a leap and fall amidst a circle of Men, who watch me, laugh, clap their hands and let out cries. The one of the false blue eyes was bent over me. I think truly that this time its eyes were smiling. But I did not take time to look at them; I hurled myself out of the circle by the first opening, and began to run as fast as I could, straight for the heights. I was accompanied by their laughter and by their loud cries. Some had the appearance of following me; but this time I would have outstripped one of their Dogs. I kept up my speed until my four paws failed me all at once. I was at the end of my strength, but I was free.

M.01.07.01.01 / M.036

Unhappy Moon, *First Day of the New Moon.* – If it please the Gods, this Unhappy Moon will prove the happiest of my life.

So, I was free, but I still had no idea where I was, because, in my headlong flight, I had looked only straight in front of me. Great was my joy in finding myself in a country that I knew. I had fallen into a hollow, between two tufts of grass, a few pawsteps from some great cliffs. Before my paws opened a deep valley, and opposite me, on the other side, arose snowy peaks. At first sight I recognised my fatherland and I shed abundant tears.

I shed them still just in thinking about it.

M.01.07.01.02 / M.037

Second Day. – It seems that I detect already the approach of the Long Night. This scratching is almost a job.

The happiness that I experienced in recognising the mountains that had sheltered my childhood was soon disturbed. As soon as I was sufficiently master of myself to inspect objects in detail, I looked for my Burrow and I discovered only a ruin. I had thought much of my wife

and my children, without being able to cast any light on the question as to whether they had shared my fate. On seeing my exposed Burrow, I realised the terrible truth. So long as I thought they had been able to escape, they must not be very far. No doubt but that they had sought asylum and protection from a family of our friends or from a populous enough tribe, settled higher up, whose chief was the first-born of my twenty-three children. I awaited the close of day to make a reconnaissance. Night had set in when I arrived at the door of my son's Burrow. I called him by name, and in my impatience to press him to my heart, I hastened into the gallery. No one recognised the father's voice. The whole tribe threw itself upon me as if I were a thief who comes by night, and for sure I would have perished under their blows if I had not taken flight, after having vainly tried to make myself known. They would have run me down; but I was leaner than them all, having yet to taste the Mountain Clover, and I surpassed them in speed.

I reached then the Burrow of our friends, our true friends, – at least I thought so, – our neighbours for a long time. This time I employed prudence. Having arrived at the entrance of the Burrow, I introduced myself and I called the master of the dwelling softly by name. He came out, looked at me askance, appeared to inspect my collar, which shone in the Moonlight; then he let out a sharp whistle. At the same instant wife and children ran up, and the whole family threw itself upon me with fury greater even than my son's tribe. I had all the trouble in the world to extricate myself from their paws.

After these two misadventures, I took refuge in some hole, resolved to await the dawn. This night seemed longer than all those of my captivity. At the first glimmering of dawn, I saw the inhabitants of the neighbouring Burrows come out. They had a restless air. They took no time for breakfast; they came and went, in an extraordinary state of unease, gesturing and exchanging the news of the night. Soon, on every mountain flank shrilled the whistle of alarm. I understood that it was meant for me and that they were organising a general battue to purge the country of the prowler who had disturbed the repose of two Burrows. I was lost if they found me. Accordingly, I took flight in all haste, and I did not stop until I arrived at this high terrace, where there has never been a Burrow and where it was little likely that they would come looking for me. I spent two days here in the agony of my spirit, without taking food, without making for myself a shelter. I could almost have regretted my prison down below and the Man of the false blue eyes. At last, making a violent effort to overcome myself, I undertook the resolution to live alone and to devote myself to Wisdom.

O Marmots, Marmots, it is to you and not to Men that I owe the darkest hours of my life! Even so, it is for you that I labour. When I have pierced the mystery of the Long Night, I will brave anew your Burrows and I will teach you despite yourselves. I wish to reward you with good for the evil that you have forced me to suffer.

M.01.07.01.03 / M.038

Third Day. – Summer has returned. A dense mist hides the deep valleys, but it is very fine on the mountain.

I have passed today some delicious moments. – I had stretched out on a white stone, just outside my Burrow, and I was beginning to grow sleepy. I dreamed that I had finally

discovered the solution to the great problem. I recall it no longer. My ideas began to float without certainty. I know only that I was holding it in my paws, that I was clutching it with all my strength and that there escaped from it a virtue, because I began to feel in all my limbs a new sense of well-being, as if a divine power were in-Burrowing into my blood. When I opened my eyes, I saw the Sun. It was only the Sun. But, a curious thing, I felt absolutely no disappointment. I remained on my stone, half asleep, half awake, rejoicing in a perfect pleasure, and *murmelling* as I had never *murmelled* more since the vigil of my captivity.

M.01.07.01.04 / M.039

Fourth Day. – I sleep a lot these days, not for rest, but out of precaution. I am making preparation for the vigil of the Long Night.

M.01.07.01.05 / M.040

Fifth Day. – How I pity you, common Marmots, you for whom nothing relieves either your pleasures or your cares! You eat to live and you live to eat. You work to have shelter, and you rest only to resume work. Your life turns on an eternal wheel. As for me, I have a goal. A higher thought ennobles all my thoughts, all my actions and even my sleep. I rest to renew my strength; I renew my strength for the study of Wisdom.

Sacred and glorious study! Can one still be alive if one does not live for study?

M.01.07.01.06 / M.041

Sixth Day. – I thank the Gods for all the new pleasures whose delights I am savouring today. Happy misfortune! Without you, I would be where my brothers and sisters are. Without you, I would not know the delights that Wisdom reserves for those who love her. Blessed be my ungrateful children! Blessed my captivity! Blessed the hands of Men who violated the sanctuary of my Burrow!

If only my wife were alive! How happy she would be to keep with me the vigil of the Long Night!

M.01.07.01.07 / M.042

Seventh Day. – The Sun is dull, the north wind biting. Let us make ready.

M.01.07.02.01 / M.043

First Day of the First Quarter. – Several Marmots put out their noses as far as the entrance of their Burrows. They found the air too cold and returned almost as soon. Only one Marmot pretended to browse.

M.01.07.02.02 / M.044

Second Day. – The valley is from day to day more peaceful. The hours of silence would be propitious for great meditations, if I did not sense, myself also, the symptoms that are harbingers of torpor. More than once I have been indignant against Nature. She should at least respect philosophers, rather than treating them like the common herd, and worse, if possible. Even so, on reflection, I have discovered here an advantage. It is nothing to observe sleep in others; one must observe it in oneself, triumphing over it.

M.01.07.02.03 / M.045

Third Day. – I have eaten only a little these last few days. I wish to prove wrong the mockers and the calumniators. I wish them not to be able to accuse me of sleeping from fat.

Moreover I have little taste for good living. One beautiful clump of autumnal Saxifrage failed to tempt me at all. I passed by with indifference white Bogstars, on the bank of the stream. The perfume of a little late-flowering plant, a Saw-wort, I think, made me nauseous.

I wish that the vigil of the Long Night could be kept without eating. The idea of living from dried grass is difficult to endure.

M.01.07.02.04a / M.046

Fourth Day. – I will keep, during the whole time of the Long Night, an exact account of the heavens and the earth.

I will begin today.

The Sun passes behind the mountains which form our rampart at noon. If it appears, it will be only for an instant, in the great breach in the cliff wall. Even yesterday, from the entrance of my Burrow, I no longer saw anything but its rim.

The sky is clear, except for some white clouds, hanging on the summits. A north wind is blowing, cold and quick. Perhaps it will freeze tonight?

The grass is dry and yellow, but not flattened. All the stalks of the grasses, all the stems of the Gentians, still stand up proudly.

The first Snow of Autumn has disappeared on the side of the valley that the Sun reaches. On the other, it still whitens the gorges above my Burrow.

Most of the streams have ceased to flow; the waterfalls rush no more over the ledges. A feeble murmur rises up from the torrent in the valley.

A single spring continues to flow in the neighbourhood of my Burrow, the spring called 'Black Mosses'.

I have seen few animals these last days. An Eagle yesterday, a White Hare some days ago, – he did not yet have grey fur, – and this morning two Mountain Goats, one of whom, the he-

goat, has a broken horn. Flights of Choughs sweep around the high crags, crying hunger. Without them the mountain echoes would be idle for whole days.

M.01.07.02.04b / M.047

On the Same Day. – The Sun has just passed behind the breach in the cliff wall. I was at the entrance of my Burrow, I was watching for it. It was barely able to send me one ray, the last before the vigil of the Long Night... By the time it re-appears above the horizon, one Marmot will have penetrated the great mystery.

M.01.07.02.05 / M.048

Fifth Day. – This morning, the ground was covered with white frost. The north wind remains cold.

I am experiencing a peculiar weariness. There passes an appreciable time between the moment when I wish to stir a limb and the moment when I actually stir it. The delay is in my joints. It seems they no longer join. It is only by access of the will that I can take these notes. Sometimes, thought stops, and the claw runs on automatically. I am sorry for those who will read this...

M.01.07.02.06 / M.049

Sixth Day. – Same weather as yesterday, same weaknesses... My intellectual processes are fine, but with intermissions. I am following a line of reasoning and then it stops all of a sudden. It is very difficult to describe. I am thinking and I am no longer thinking. I grasp my idea and it vanishes. I find it again an instant afterward. It seems to me sometimes that my brain is turning into water. I feel it swimming. I have shivers of a strange type, all along my spinal cord. There are moments when the mountain dances around me.

M.01.07.02.07 / M.050

Seventh Day. – Still no appetite. Otherwise I am better, a lot more awake, even though it is colder than the last few days. Perhaps the onset is the most difficult to get past.

Fine weather.

M.01.07.03.01 / M.051

First Day of the Full Moon. – Fine weather, very fine weather, not a cloud in the sky! North wind.

I still feel properly awake; but my breathing is slow, also the beating of my heart. I suspect that the slowness of the circulation of the blood is the real cause of the torpor from which I am suffering. But what is the cause of this indolence of the blood?

M.01.07.03.02 / M.052

Second Day. – My heart is beating ever more slowly.

I wished to fight back and to stir up the blood. I rubbed my spine in the places where the gallery is narrow. It did no good.

M.01.07.03.03 / M.053

Third Day. – The sleep of ordinary nights makes itself felt first of all in the head. Our limbs cease to function because our thought ceases to command them.

The sleep of the Long Night announces itself differently. It starts with a torpor in the limbs that are furthest from the brain. Despite the intermissions from which I have suffered, the spirit is cheerful. I can think, I have will. But my rear paws refuse nearly all service.

I am suffering from a peculiar sense of cold. I am cold under the skin; I am cold in my blood.

Despite the fine weather, only a single Marmot has made pretence of venturing abroad.

M.01.07.03.04a / M.054

Fourth Day. – The moment has come. It is noon and there is no other Marmot in sight. The Burrows are walled up or will be soon. This evening, by the light of the Moon, I will make my first reconnaissance.

White frost, north wind, clear sky.

M.01.07.03.04b / M.055

On the Same Day. – From time to time something like a cloud passes before my eyes. I have also a buzzing in my ears. Otherwise I see and hear well.

The rear quarters continue to refuse service. They will be forced to work.

M.01.07.03.04c / M.056

On the Same Day. – The shadows are lengthening. O Gods, come to my aid. No more does this blood of mine wish to circulate. I did not think that it would cost so much to be a Philosopher... But I shall not yield... no, I will not yield.

M.01.07.03.04d / M.057

On the Same Day. – The torpor is beginning to overcome my front paws... I can barely scratch this out... The night is here... Yet one moment... I must hold myself together with great ideas... O Marmots...

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 01 (English)

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

2020 – 2022

**<http://eugene-rambert.snakeshead.org>
<http://philosophical-marmot.snakeshead.org>**
