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TRANSLATORS NOTE:

I wish to express my sincere thanks to Mrs. Violet Hammersley for her work in revising and correcting certain passages of this work.

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## Editors' Note

These notebooks were found among the papers of Antoine Roquentin. They are published without alteration.

The first sheet is undated, but there is good reason to believe it was written some weeks before the diary itself. Thus it would have been written around the beginning of January, 1932, at the latest.

At that time, Antoine Roquentin, after travelling through Central Europe, North Africa and the Far East, settled in Bouville for three years to conclude his historical research on the Marquis de Rollebon.

THE EDITORS

## UNDATED PAGES

The best thing would be to write down events from day to day. Keep a diary to see clearly—let none of the nuances or small happenings escape even though they might seem to mean nothing. And above all, classify them. I must tell how I see this table, this street, the people, my packet of tobacco, since *those* are the things which have changed. I must determine the exact extent and nature of this change.

For instance, here is a cardboard box holding my bottle of ink. I should try to tell how I saw it *before* and now how I<sup>1</sup> Well, it's a paralleloiped rectangle, it opens—that's stupid, there's nothing I can say about it. This is what I have to avoid, I must not put in strangeness where there is none. I think that is the big danger in keeping a diary: you exaggerate everything. You continually force the truth because you're always looking for something. On the other hand, it is certain that from one minute to the next—and precisely *à propos* of this box or any other object at

<sup>1</sup> Word left out.

all I can recapture this impression of day-before-yesterday. I must always be ready, otherwise it will slip through my fingers. I must never<sup>2</sup> but carefully note and detail all that happens.

Naturally, I can write nothing definite about this Saturday and the day-before-yesterday business. I am already too far from it; the only thing I can say is that in neither case was there anything which could ordinarily be called an event. Saturday the children were playing ducks and drakes and, like them, I wanted to throw a stone into the sea. Just at that moment I stopped, dropped the stone and left. Probably I looked somewhat foolish or absent-minded, because the children laughed behind my back.

So much for external things. What has happened inside of me has not left any clear traces. I saw something which disgusted me, but I no longer know whether it was the sea or the stone. The stone was flat and dry, especially on one side, damp and muddy on the other. I held it by the edges with my fingers wide apart so as not to get them dirty.

Day before yesterday was much more complicated. And there was also this series of coincidences, of *quid-pro-quo*s that I can't explain to myself. But I'm not going to spend my time putting all that down on paper. Anyhow, it was certain that I was afraid or had some other feeling of that sort. If I had only known what I was afraid of, I would have made a great step forward.

The strangest thing is that I am not at all inclined to call myself insane, I clearly see that I am not: all these changes concern objects. At least, that is what I'd like to be sure of.

10.30<sup>1</sup>

Perhaps it was a passing moment of madness after all. There is no trace of it any more. My odd feelings of the other week seem to me quite ridiculous today: I can no longer enter into them. I am quite at ease this evening, quite solidly *terre-à-terre* in the world. Here is my room facing north-east. Below the Rue des Mutilés and the construction-yard of the new station. From my window I see the red and white flame of the "Railwaymen's Rendezvous" at the corner of the Boulevard Victor-Noir. The Paris train has just come in. People are coming out of the old station

<sup>2</sup> Word crossed out (possibly "force" or "forge"), another word added above, is illegible.

<sup>1</sup> Evidently in the evening. The following paragraph is much later than the preceding ones. We are inclined to believe it was written the following day at the earliest.

The  
beginning  
of his  
issue

and spreading into the streets. I hear steps and voices. A lot of people are waiting for the last tramway. They must make a sad little group around the street light just under my window. Well, they have a few minutes more to wait: the tram won't pass before 10.45. I hope no commercial travellers will come to-night: I have such a desire to sleep and am so much behind in my sleep. A good night, one good night and all this nonsense will be swept away.

Ten forty-five: nothing more to fear, they would be here already. Unless it's the day for the man from Rouen. He comes every week. They reserve No. 2, on the second floor for him, the room with a bidet. He might still show up: he often drinks a beer at the "Railwaymen's Rendezvous" before going to bed. But he doesn't make too much noise. He is very small and clean with a waxed, black moustache and a wig. Here he is now.

Well, when I heard him come up the stairs, it gave me quite a thrill, it was so reassuring: what is there to fear in such a regular world? I think I am cured.

Here is tramway number seven, *Abattoirs-Grands Bassins*. It stops with a clank of iron rails. It's leaving again. Now loaded with suitcases and sleeping children, it's heading towards Grands Bassins, towards the factories in the black East. It's the next to the last tramway; the last one will go by in an hour.

I'm going to bed. I'm cured. I'll give up writing my daily impressions, like a little girl in her nice new notebook.

In one case only it might be interesting to keep a diary: it would be if . . .<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The text of the undated pages ends here.