



Voltaire's History of Charles XII, King of Sweden (Classic Reprint)

Voltaire Voltaire

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To Charles the Twelfth of Sweden I owe much of what has stood me in best stead all my life. It was nearly thirty years ago, when but a boy, that I bought his Life for a penny in the New Cut. I took it home and devoured it. It made a great impression on me. Not his wars, but the Spartan heroism of his character. He inspired me with the idea of triumphing over physical weakness, weariness and pain. To inure his body to bear all manner of hardships indifferently, to bathe in ice, or face the torrid rays of the sun, to discipline his physical powers by gymnastics, to despise the niceties of food and drink, to make his body an instrument as of tempered steel, and at the same time to have that body absolutely at the disposition of the mind, that seemed to me conduct worthy of a hero. And so, boylike, I tried to imitate him, and succeeded at least so far as to be happily indifferent to the circumstances of my personal environment. JOHN BURNS.

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