

FRÉDÉRIC BASTIAT



HARMONIES OF
POLITICAL
ECONOMY

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TRANSLATOR'S PREFACE.

The favour with which the English public has received the First Edition of this translation of Bastiat's *Harmonies Économiques*, published originally in separate parts, has induced me to have the whole reprinted in a cheaper and more accessible form, in the hope of giving the work a wider circulation, and rendering it more generally useful.

The first ten chapters were all that appeared in the lifetime of the gifted author, or that had the benefit of his finishing touch. It was Bastiat's intention, had he lived, to recast the work, and to give it a wider and more comprehensive scope; embracing in his design not only the principles of Political Economy, but their applications to Social Philosophy. Prior to his departure for Italy, on what he foresaw might be his last journey, he had communicated to his friends MM. de Fontenay and Paillottet a list of the new chapters in the order in which they will be found in the subjoined Notice of his Life.¹ To the same friends, in his last moments, he entrusted the manuscripts intended for the continuation of the work. The duty thus committed to them they discharged very judiciously, by arranging the new portions in the order pointed out, without altering the text, and, except in a very few instances, without additions of their own, contenting themselves with adding some explanatory notes, consisting chiefly of references to the author's other works.

Some of the chapters thus added are unfortunately mere fragments, but most of the others indicate very clearly Bastiat's opinions on the subjects to which they relate, and several of them display a breadth, a vigour, and an originality worthy of the best days of their lamented author.

Many of the questions purely economical which are discussed in the posthumous portions of the work,—such, for instance, as those of Wages, Population, and the relations of Labour and Capital, etc.,—are still deeply engaging public attention in England, as well as on the other side of the Channel; and on subjects of such vast practical importance it is surely desirable that the opinions of so profound and fearless a thinker as Bastiat should be as widely disseminated as possible.

In conclusion, I may perhaps be permitted to refer to the great interest taken in this translation by the late Mr Cobden, who was the correspondent and personal friend of Bastiat, and was, I need not say, so eminently qualified to form and pronounce an opinion on the merits of his last great work. A short time after the appearance of the first ten chapters (26th March 1860), writing from Paris, where he was then engaged in negotiating the Commercial Treaty, Mr Cobden says, “My enthusiasm for Bastiat, founded as much on a love of his personal qualities as on an admiration for his genius, dates back nearly twenty years. I need not, therefore, express any astonishment at the warmth with which you speak of his productions. They are doing their work silently but effectually. M. Guillaumin [the eminent publisher] tells me the sale of the last edition has been steady and continuous, and a new one is now in hand. The works of Bastiat, which are selling not only in France, but throughout Europe, are gradually teaching those who, by their commanding talents, are capable of becoming the teachers of others; for Bastiat speaks with the greatest force to the highest order of intellects. At the same time, he is almost the only political economist whose style is brilliant and fascinating, whilst his irresistible logic is relieved by sallies of wit and humour which make his *Sophismes* as amusing as a novel. No critic who has read Bastiat will dare to apply again to Political Economy the sarcastic epithet of the ‘dreary science.’ His fame is so well

established, that I think it would be presumptuous to do anything to increase it by any other means than the silent but certain dissemination of his works by the force of their own great merits.”

A word as to my mode of rendering Bastiat. I have not aimed at giving a literal translation. Indeed, the language often employed by Bastiat hardly admits of literal translation. But the more important object, I trust, has been attained of conveying fully, plainly, and intelligibly the author’s precise meaning.

The materials of the following notice of the life and writings of Bastiat have been borrowed partly from a short account of him in the *Dictionnaire de l’Économie Politique*, partly from the Memoir and Correspondence prefixed to the author’s *Œuvres Complètes*, and partly from an able article in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* from the pen of M. Louis Reybaud.

P. J. S.

NOTICE OF THE LIFE AND WRITINGS OF FRÉDÉRIC BASTIAT.

Frédéric Bastiat, whose last and greatest, though, alas! unfinished work—the *Harmonies Économiques*—I now venture to introduce to the English public, was born at Bayonne, on the 19th of June 1801. His father, an eminent merchant of Bayonne, died young, and his wife having died before him, Frédéric, their only child, was left an orphan at the early age of nine years.

The care of his education devolved on his paternal grandfather, who was proprietor of a land estate near Mugron, in the arrondissement of Saint-Sever. His aunt, Mademoiselle Justine Bastiat, acted towards him the part of a mother, and her affection was warmly reciprocated by Bastiat, who, to the day of his death, never ceased to regard her with filial love and reverence.

Bastiat's education was begun at Bayonne, continued at Saint-Sever, and finished at the College of Sorèze. Here his course of study was occasionally interrupted by indisposition; but, on his recovery, his quick parts and steady application soon enabled him to overtake and keep pace with his fellow-students. At Sorèze. Bastiat formed a boyish friendship with M. Calmètes, to whom his earliest letters are addressed. The attachment of the youths was so remarkable, that the masters permitted them to prepare their exercises together, and sign them with their joint names. In this way they gained a prize for poetry. The prize was a gold medal, which, of course, could not be divided. "Keep it," said Bastiat to his friend: "I am an orphan; you

have both father and mother, and the medal of right falls to them.”

In 1818, Bastiat left College, and, in compliance with the wishes of his family, entered his uncle’s counting-house at Bayonne. His tastes, however, were for study rather than for business, and while at Bayonne he devoted his leisure hours by turns to French, English, and Italian literature. “I aim at nothing less,” he said, “than to become acquainted with politics, history, geography, mathematics, mechanics, natural history, botany, and four or five languages.” He was fond of music, sang agreeably, and played well on the violoncello.

In 1824, he began to study the works of the leading Economists of France and England—Adam Smith, Jean Baptiste Say, and Destutt de Tracy; and even at this early period he took an interest in the English free-trade measures of Mr Huskisson. From this time he may be said to have devoted his life to his favourite science.

On the death of his grandfather, in 1825, he gave up commerce as a profession, and took up his residence on his paternal estate at Mugron, in the cultivation of which he was at first induced to engage, but without much success, and he soon relinquished agriculture, as he had before abandoned trade. Business, in truth, was not his vocation; he had no turn for details; he cared little for money; his wants were few and simple; and he had no intention, as he says in one of his letters, to undergo irksome labour for three-fourths of his life to ensure for the remainder a useless superfluity.

It was at this period, and at Mugron, that he formed his lifelong friendship with M. Felix Coudroy, to whom so much of his correspondence is addressed, and to whom, a short time before his death, he had thought of committing the task of finishing the second volume of the *Harmonies*. The two friends, whose tastes and pursuits were the same, were constantly together,—reading, walking, or conversing. If

Bastiat, whose ardent nature was impatient of plodding and systematic application, received a new book from Paris, he immediately carried it to Coudroy, who examined it, and noted the remarkable passages, which he read afterwards to his friend. Bastiat would often content himself with such fragments; and it was only when the book interested him deeply, that he would carry it off to read it carefully by himself. On these days, says his biographer, music was laid aside, and the violoncello was mute. It was thus, he continues, that the two friends passed their lives together, lodging a few paces from each other, seeing one another three times a-day, sometimes in their chambers, sometimes in long walks, sauntering together, book in hand. Works of philosophy, history, politics, religion, poetry, travels, biography, political economy, socialist works of the day,—all passed under the ordeal of this double intelligence. It was in these conversations that the ideas of Bastiat were developed, and his thoughts matured. When anything struck him particularly, he would set to work of a morning and put it into shape without effort. In this way he wrote his *Sophismes*, his article on the French and English tariffs, etc. It was this literary friendship, which lasted for more than twenty years, without being once clouded by the slightest disagreement, which prepared the mind of Bastiat for the gigantic efforts he was destined afterwards to make, and enabled him, during the last five years of his life, amid disease and distraction, to give to the world that mass of original and varied ideas which compose the six volumes of his collected works.²

In the events to which the expulsion of the elder branch of the Bourbons gave rise in 1830, Bastiat took an active interest. Bayonne had pronounced in favour of the new order of things. The citadel alone held out, and continued to display the white flag; and a concentration of Spanish troops on the frontier was spoken of. Bastiat did not

hesitate. Quitting Mugron, he hurried to Bayonne to take part in the movement. In conjunction with some of his friends, he prepared a proclamation, formed an association of six hundred determined young men, and did not despair of reducing the citadel by a *coup de main*. Happily their martial ardour was not put to the proof. Before the march of events all resistance gave way, and that same day the citadel opened its gates. In place of a battle, there was a feast;—punch, wine, and Béranger enlivened the evening;—and the officers, like horses just let loose from the stable, were the merriest of the party.³ Such was the beginning and the end of Bastiat's military career.

In 1831, he became *Juge de Paix* of the Canton of Mugron, and, in 1832, a Member of the Council-General of the Landes. The confidence and esteem of his neighbourhood would have invested him with a trust still more important, by sending him as a representative to the Chamber of Deputies; but in this, after three fruitless attempts, his friends were defeated, and Bastiat did not succeed in becoming a legislator until after the Revolution of February 1848.

He published, in 1834, *Réflexions sur les Pétitions de Bordeaux, le Havre et Lyon, concernant les douanes*,—a brochure of great vigour, and which contains the germ of the theory of Value developed fifteen years afterwards in the *Harmonies*.

In 1840, Bastiat visited Spain and Portugal; and after a sojourn of some months at Madrid, and afterwards at Lisbon, with great benefit to his health, he sailed thence for England, and spent a few weeks in London. On his return to Mugron, he wrote his pamphlet, *Le Fisc et la Vigne*, in which he protests against certain new duties with which the wine-trade of his native province was threatened. In this brochure⁴ he gives a characteristic anecdote of Napoleon. At the outset, the duties imposed were so

moderate that the receipts would scarcely defray the cost of collection. The Minister of Finance remonstrated, and represented that these imposts were making the Government unpopular, without any benefit to the revenue. "You are a noodle, Monsieur Maret," said the Emperor; "since the nation grumbles at some light burdens, what would have been the consequence had I added heavy taxes? Accustom them, first of all, to the exercise; and then we can reform the tariff." The great captain, adds Bastiat, was also a skilful financier. Begin by inserting the thin end of the wedge—accustom them to the exercise—such is the history of all taxes.

In 1843, appeared another pamphlet, entitled *Mémoire sur la question vinicole*; and in 1844, *Mémoire sur la répartition de l'impôt foncier dans le Département des Landes*,—both productions of extraordinary ability, but having reference principally to questions of local interest and importance. The great subject of Free Trade, to which he was afterwards to devote his vast powers, had then assumed in his mind rather the form of a vague dream of what might perchance be realized under favourable circumstances at some far distant day, than of a thing in sober reality to be expected or hoped for. It was an accidental circumstance which first directed his attention to what was then passing in England under the auspices of the Anti-corn-law League.

Among the circle which Bastiat frequented at Mugron there prevailed a strong prejudice, or rather an inveterate hatred, against England; and Bastiat, who had cultivated English literature, and imbibed English ideas, had often to break a lance with his acquaintances on the subject of this unfounded dislike. One of these *Anglophobes*, accosting him one day, handed him a newspaper. "Read that," said he with bitterness, "and see how your friends are treating us!" It was a translation of a speech of Sir Robert Peel in the House of Commons, which concluded with the words—"If

we adopt this course, we shall fall, *like France*, to the lowest rank among nations." His country was insulted, and Bastiat had not a word to say. On reflection, however, it did appear strange to him that the Prime Minister of England should entertain such an opinion of France, and still more so, that, entertaining it, he should express it openly and offensively in his place in Parliament. To clear up the matter, Bastiat wrote instantly to Paris, and became a subscriber to an English newspaper, requesting that all the numbers for the preceding month might be sent to him. In a few days the *Globe and Traveller* made its appearance at Mugron, containing Sir Robert Peel's speech, when it was discovered that the words "like France," maliciously introduced into the French version of it, were *not* there, and, in fact, had never been uttered.

Bastiat continued to read the *Globe*, and soon made the more important discovery that a formidable agitation was at that time going on in England to which the French newspapers never once alluded. The Anti-corn-law League was shaking the basis of the old commercial legislation of England. For two years Bastiat was thus enabled to watch the progress of the movement, and at length began to entertain the idea of making known to his countrymen—and, perhaps, of inducing them to imitate—the important reform about to be accomplished on the other side of the channel.

It was this feeling which prompted him to send to the *Journal des Économistes* his first contribution, *Sur l'influence des tarifs Anglais et Français*. This article, bearing a signature till then unknown, and coming from the remote Department of the Landes, was at once accepted, and created a profound impression. Like Lord Byron, after the publication of *Childe Harold*, Bastiat "awoke one morning and found himself famous." Compliments and encouragements showered in upon him from every side. Further contributions were solicited, and were sent. The

ice was broken, and he was fairly afloat as an author. Whilst contributing various articles to the *Journal*—among others, the first series of the *Sophismes Économiques*—Bastiat began to write the history of the English Anti-corn-law League; and, in order to obtain fuller information and more copious materials, he opened a correspondence with Mr Cobden, with whom he continued to exchange letters at frequent intervals during the remainder of his life.

It was in 1845 that Bastiat went to Paris to superintend the printing of this work, which he entitled *Cobden et la Ligue, où l'agitation Anglaise pour la liberté des Échanges*. A luminous and spirited introduction, giving an account of the economical and political state of England prior to the Anti-corn-law agitation, and describing the origin, objects, and progress of the league, is followed by extracts from the more prominent speeches of Cobden, Bright, Fox, Thompson, and the other leaders. All this was new in France,—to the popular mind of that country it might almost be called a revelation. “I have distributed a hundred copies in Paris,” writes Bastiat to Cobden, “and they have produced the best impression. Men who, by their position and pursuits, ought to know what is going on in England have been surprised on reading it. They could not believe their eyes. . . . If I had combated directly their prejudices, I should not have succeeded; but, by allowing the free-traders to speak and act for themselves—in a word, by simply *translating* you—I hope to have given these prejudices a blow which they cannot recover—if the book be read.” In a subsequent letter, he says,—“Since my last letter an unexpected movement has manifested itself in the French press. All the Parisian, and many of the provincial journals, in reviewing my book, have given an account of the Anti-corn-law agitation. They do not, it is true, perceive all its bearings, but public opinion is awakened, which is the essential point.”

To this work, and the service which it rendered to the cause of Free Trade, and of sound economic ideas, Bastiat some months afterwards owed his nomination as a Corresponding Member of the Institute. "I believe this nomination to be in itself of little importance," he writes to M. Calmètes, "and I fear many mediocrities have boasted of the title; but the peculiar circumstances which preceded my nomination do not permit me to reject your friendly felicitations. I have published only one book, and of that book the preface alone is my work. Having returned to seclusion, that preface has worked for me, and unknown to me; for the same letter which apprized me of my candidature announced my election. I had never in my life dreamt of this honour. The book is entitled *Cobden et la Ligue*. I now send it to you, which will save my saying more about it. In 1842 and 1843 I endeavoured to attract attention to the subject of which it treats. I addressed articles to the *Presse*, to the *Mémorial Bordelais*, and other journals. They were rejected. I saw that my cause was about to break down under this *conspiracy of silence*, and I had no resource but to write a book. You see, then, why I have become an author. And now, engaged in that career, I regret it extremely; for although always fond of Political Economy, I am reluctant to devote my attention exclusively to that science, and would rather wander freely over the whole field of human knowledge. Yet in this science a single question—freedom of international relations—fascinates and is about to absorb me,—for, perhaps, you may have seen that I have been assigned a place in the association which has just been formed at Bordeaux. Such is the age; you can take no part in public life without being garrotted in a speciality."

At Paris, Bastiat had been introduced to all the leading Economists, and he was delighted with his reception. "Not one of these gentlemen," he says to M. Coudroy, "but had read, re-read, and perfectly understood my three articles. I

might have written a thousand years in the *Chalosse*, the *Sentinelle*, and the *Mémorial*, without finding a single true reader but yourself. Here one is read, studied, and understood." By the whole circle Bastiat was welcomed and feasted. A desire was expressed that he should become conductor of the *Journal des Économistes*, and there was a proposal to find him a chair of Political Economy.

From Paris he passed over to England, where, in July 1845, he met with Mr Cobden, Mr Bright, and the other chiefs of the Anti-corn-law League. In a letter to his friend Coudroy, he thus describes his reception in London:—"Having installed myself at the hotel (at 10s. a-day), I sat down to write six letters, to Cobden, Bright, Fox, Thompson, Wilson, and the Secretary of the League. Then I wrote six inscriptions on as many copies of my book, and went to bed. This morning I carried my six volumes to the apartments of the League, desiring that they might be sent to the parties for whom they were intended. I was told that Mr Cobden was in town, and was to leave London to-day for Manchester, and that I should find him in the midst of preparations for his journey. (An Englishman's preparations consist in swallowing a beef-steak, and stuffing a couple of shirts into a carpet-bag.) I hastened to Cobden's residence, where I met him, and had two hours' talk. He knows French very well, speaks it a little, and, moreover, I understood his English. I explained to him the state of opinion in France, the effects I expected from my work, etc. He was sorry to leave London, and was on the point of giving up his intended journey. Then he remarked, 'The League is free-masonry, except that everything is public. We have a house here, which we have hired to accommodate our friends during the bazaar; it is empty at present, and we must instal you there.' I made some difficulty about this; and he rejoined, 'This arrangement may not be agreeable to you, but it will be of use to the cause, for Messrs Bright, Moore, and other members of the

League pass their evenings there, and we must have you always in the midst of them.’ However, as I am to join him at Manchester the day after to-morrow, I thought it hardly worth while to shift my quarters for a couple of days. He took me afterwards to the Reform Club, a magnificent establishment, and left me in the library while he took a bath. He afterwards wrote letters to Bright and Moore, and I accompanied him to the railway. In the evening I called on Mr Bright. . . . Obligated to speak slowly, in order to make myself understood, and upon subjects which were familiar to me, and with men who had all our ideas, I found myself placed in the most favourable circumstances. He took me afterwards to the Parliament,” etc.

On his return from England, Bastiat again took refuge in his retreat at Mugron, where he had his time entirely at his own disposal; but he was not long suffered to enjoy his literary leisure. In February 1846, he assisted in organizing a Free-Trade Association at Bordeaux, and afterwards went to Paris with a similar object. In this he was destined to experience innumerable difficulties, not the least of which arose from his supposed attachment to English opinions. He imagined the reform of the English tariff might be the means of furthering a similar reform in France, but in this he soon found that he was greatly mistaken.

“Of all the prejudices which reign among us,” says M. Louis Reybaud, in his admirable notice of Bastiat in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*,⁵ “there is none more deeply rooted than distrust of England. It is enough that England leans to one side to induce us to incline to the other. Everything which England proposes is suspected by us, and we not unwillingly detect an ambush in all her measures. In matters of trade this disposition is especially manifested. In vain we imagine that England in her reforms has only her own interest in view,—her true object is only to mislead and ruin us by her seductions! If we give way we shall be fools

or dupes. Such is the language of national opinion; and although enlightened men resist it, that opinion does not the less prevail and exhibit itself on all occasions. Better informed in regard to this bias of public opinion, Bastiat would have seen that the moment was not opportune, and that in the face of the English agitation he would have done better to delay, than to hasten, any agitation in France which might seem to be inspired by the spirit or example of England."

In fact, it was upon this rock mainly that Bastiat's Free-trade enterprise ultimately foundered, and he soon became convinced of the intensity of the prejudice against which he had to struggle. In a letter to Mr Cobden, written in December 1846, he says,—“This cry against England stifles us, and gives rise to formidable obstacles. If this hatred to *perfidious Albion* were only the fashion of the day, I should wait patiently until it passed away. But it has deep root in men's hearts. It is universal, and I believe I told you that my friends dare no longer talk of me in my own village, but *en famille*. This blind passion, moreover, is found so convenient by protected interests and political parties, that they avail themselves of it in the most shameless manner.”

Other circumstances contributed to discourage Bastiat: “I suffer from my poverty,” he tells Mr Cobden. “If, instead of running from one to another on foot, splashed and bespattered to the back, in order to meet only one or two people a-day, and obtain evasive and dilatory answers, I could assemble them at my table in a rich *salon*, how many difficulties would be removed! I want neither head nor heart, but I feel that this superb Babylon is not the place for me, and I must hasten back to my solitude.” His heart was constantly reverting to the happy and peaceful days he had passed at Mugron. “I suffer,” he says in a letter to Coudroy, “from leaving Mugron, and my old habits, my desultory labours, and our nice little chats. It is a frightful *déchirement*; but can I recede?” “Paris and I are not made

for each other." "Often I think of Mugron, its philosophic calm, and its fruitful leisure. Here life is wasted in doing nothing, or at least in producing nothing."

Bastiat's appearance in Paris at this epoch is thus described by one of his friends. "He had not had time to call in the assistance of a Parisian hatter and tailor," says M. de Molinari; "and with his long hair, his tiny hat, his ample frock-coat, and his family umbrella, you would have been apt to mistake him for an honest peasant, who had come to town for the first time to see the wonders of the metropolis. But the physiognomy of this apparent clown was arch and spiritual; his large black eye was luminous, and his square well-proportioned forehead bore the impress of thought."

"I remember, as if it were yesterday," says M. Louis Reybaud, "the impression which he produced. It was impossible to see a more characteristic specimen of a provincial scholar, simple in his manner, and plain in his attire. But, under that homely garb, and that air of *bonhomie*, there were flashes of intelligence, and a native dignity of deportment; and you were not long in discovering an honest heart and a generous soul. The eye, above all, was lighted up with singular brightness and fire. His emaciated features and livid complexion betrayed already the ravages of that disease which, in a few years, was destined to carry him off. His voice was hollow, and formed a contrast with the vivacity of his ideas and the briskness of his gestures. When the conversation was animated, his voice became feebler, and his lungs performed their office with difficulty. Better taken care of, his constitution, feeble as it was, might have lasted a long time. But Bastiat took counsel only of his energy. He never thought of how many days he had to live, but how he might employ them well."⁶

“I accept resolutely the hard life on which I am about to enter,” he says in one of his letters. “What gives me courage is not the *non omnis moriar* of Horace, but the thought that, perhaps, my life may not have been useless to mankind.”⁷

During the eighteen months that the Free-trade Association lasted, Bastiat’s life was one of feverish activity and incessant unremitting toil. Before the doors of the Association could be opened to the public, a Government *autorisation* had to be obtained; and it was obtained at length with much difficulty and after long delay. On Bastiat, as secretary, the care of all the arrangements devolved. He had to communicate with journalists, wait upon ministers, issue manifestoes, organize committees, obtain subscriptions, correspond with branch associations, undertake journeys to Lyons, to Marseilles, to Havre, attend meetings, make speeches, besides conducting a weekly newspaper, called the *Libre-Échange*—the organ of the Association—and contributing numerous articles to other newspapers, and to the *Journal des Économistes*. “If at daybreak he observed a Protectionist sophism appear in a newspaper of any reputation,” says M. de Molinari, “he would immediately seize his pen, demolish the sophism before breakfast, and our language counted one *chef-d’œuvre* the more.”

It is to the marvellous exertions of this period that we owe the *Sophismes Économiques*,—a work which arose out of the circumstances in which Bastiat found himself placed; and which, although written from day to day, amid the distractions we have described, exhibits his genius in its most brilliant light. “As examples of dialectical skill in reducing an opponent to absurdity,” says Professor Cairnes, “of simple and felicitous illustration, of delicate and polished raillery, attaining occasionally the pitch of a refined irony, the *Sophismes Économiques* may almost

claim a place beside the *Provincial Letters*." Sprightly, lucid, and conclusive, full of fire and irony, playfulness and wit, these two little volumes afford the most unanswerable reply ever given to the fallacies of the Protectionist school; and, had Bastiat written nothing else, they would have conferred on him a just title to be regarded as the most distinguished economist of his day. The *Sophismes* have been translated into four languages, and are the best known, if not the most original, of all the works of their lamented author.

The success of the work was instant and complete. Bastiat at first complained that "three or four pleasantries had made the fortune of the book, while the serious parts were neglected;" but he afterwards confessed that "parables and pleasantries had more success, and effected more good, than the best treatises." Of these pleasantries, *The Candlemakers' Petition*, in the first series of the *Sophismes*, is perhaps the happiest, and I cannot forbear presenting the reader with a translation of this choice morsel:—

Petition of the Manufacturers of Candles, Wax-Lights, Lamps, Candlesticks, Street Lamps, Snuffers, Extinguishers, and of the Producers of Oil, Tallow, Rosin, Alcohol, and, generally, of everything connected with Lighting,

To Messieurs the Members of the Chamber of Deputies.

Gentlemen,—You are on the right road. You reject abstract theories, and have little consideration for cheapness and plenty. Your chief care is the interest of the producer. You desire to emancipate him from external competition, and reserve the *national market* for *national industry*.

We are about to offer you an admirable opportunity of applying your—what shall we call it? your theory? No; nothing is more deceptive than theory; your doctrine? your system? your principle?—but you dislike doctrines, you

abhor systems, and as for principles, you deny that there are any in Social Economy: we shall say, then, your practice, your practice without theory and without principle.

We are suffering from the intolerable competition of a foreign rival, placed, it would seem, in a condition so far superior to ours for the production of light, that he absolutely *inundates* our *national market* with it at a price fabulously reduced. The moment he shows himself, our trade leaves us—all consumers apply to him; and a branch of native industry, having countless ramifications, is all at once rendered completely stagnant. This rival, who is no other than the Sun, wages war to the knife against us, and we suspect he has been raised up by *perfidious Albion* (good policy as times go); inasmuch as he displays towards that haughty island a circumspection with which he dispenses in our case.

What we pray for is, that it may please you to pass a law ordering the shutting up of all Windows, Sky-lights, Dormer-windows, Outside and Inside Shutters, Curtains, Blinds, Bull's-eyes; in a word, of all Openings, Holes, Chinks, Clefts, and Fissures, by or through which the light of the Sun has been allowed to enter houses, to the prejudice of the meritorious manufactures with which we flatter ourselves we have accommodated our country,—a country which, in gratitude, ought not to abandon us now to a strife so unequal.

We trust, Gentlemen, that you will not regard this our request as a satire, or refuse it without at least previously hearing the reasons which we have to urge in its support.

And, first, if you shut up as much as possible all access to natural light, and create a demand for artificial light, which of our French manufactures will not be encouraged by it?

If more tallow is consumed, then there must be more oxen and sheep; and, consequently, we shall behold the increase of artificial meadows, meat, wool, hides, and,

above all, manure, which is the basis and foundation of all agricultural wealth.

If more oil is consumed, then we shall have an extended cultivation of the poppy, of the olive, and of rape. These rich and exhausting plants will come at the right time to enable us to avail ourselves of the increased fertility which the rearing of additional cattle will impart to our lands.

Our heaths will be covered with resinous trees. Numerous swarms of bees will, on the mountains, gather perfumed treasures, now wasting their fragrance on the desert air, like the flowers from which they are derived. No branch of agriculture but will then exhibit a cheering development.

The same remark applies to navigation. Thousands of vessels will proceed to the whale fishery; and, in a short time, we shall possess a navy capable of maintaining the honour of France, and gratifying the patriotic aspirations of your petitioners, the undersigned Candlemakers and others.

But what shall we say of the manufacture of *articles de Paris*? Henceforth you will behold gildings, bronzes, crystals, in candlesticks, in lamps, in lustres, in candelabra, shining forth, in spacious warerooms, compared with which those of the present day can be regarded but as mere shops.

No poor *Resinier* from his heights on the sea-coast, no Coal-miner from the depth of his sable gallery, but will rejoice in higher wages and increased prosperity.

Only have the goodness to reflect, Gentlemen, and you will be convinced that there is, perhaps, no Frenchman, from the wealthy coal-master to the humblest vender of lucifer matches, whose lot will not be ameliorated by the success of this our Petition.

We foresee your objections, Gentlemen, but we know that you can oppose to us none but such as you have picked up from the effete works of the partisans of Free Trade. We

defy you to utter a single word against us which will not instantly rebound against yourselves and your entire policy.

You will tell us that, if we gain by the protection which we seek, the country will lose by it, because the consumer must bear the loss.

We answer:

You have ceased to have any right to invoke the interest of the consumer; for, whenever his interest is found opposed to that of the producer, you sacrifice the former. You have done so for the purpose of *encouraging labour* and *increasing employment*. For the same reason, you should do so again.

You have yourselves obviated this objection. When you are told that the consumer is interested in the free importation of iron, coal, corn, textile fabrics,—yes, you reply, but the producer is interested in their exclusion. Well, be it so;—if consumers are interested in the free admission of natural light, the producers of artificial light are equally interested in its prohibition.

But, again, you may say that the producer and consumer are identical. If the manufacturer gain by protection, he will make the agriculturist also a gainer; and, if agriculture prospers, it will open a vent to manufactures. Very well; if you confer upon us the monopoly of furnishing light during the day,—first of all, we shall purchase quantities of tallow, coals, oils, resinous substances, wax, alcohol,—besides silver, iron, bronze, crystal—to carry on our manufactures; and then we and those who furnish us with such commodities, having become rich, will consume a great deal, and impart prosperity to all the other branches of our national industry.

If you urge that the light of the Sun is a gratuitous gift of nature, and that to reject such gifts is to reject wealth itself under pretence of encouraging the means of acquiring it, we would caution you against giving a death-blow to your own policy. Remember that hitherto you have always

repelled foreign products, *because* they approximate more nearly than home products to the character of gratuitous gifts. To comply with the exactions of other monopolists, you have only *half a motive*; and to repulse us simply because we stand on a stronger vantage ground than others, would be to adopt the equation, $+ \times + = -$; in other words, it would be to heap *absurdity* upon *absurdity*.

Nature and human labour co-operate in various proportions (depending on countries and climates) in the production of commodities. The part which nature executes is always gratuitous; it is the part executed by human labour which constitutes value, and is paid for.

If a Lisbon orange sells for half the price of a Paris orange, it is because natural, and consequently gratuitous heat, does for the one, what artificial, and therefore expensive heat, must do for the other.

When an orange comes to us from Portugal, we may conclude that it is furnished in part gratuitously, in part for an onerous consideration; in other words, it comes to us at *half-price* as compared with those of Paris.

Now, it is precisely the *gratuitous half* (pardon the word) which we contend should be excluded. You say, how can national labour sustain competition with foreign labour, when the former has all the work to do, and the latter only does one-half,—the Sun supplying the remainder? But if this *half*, being *gratuitous*, determines you to exclude competition, how should the *whole*, being *gratuitous*, induce you to admit competition? If you were consistent, you would, while excluding as hurtful to native industry what is half gratuitous, exclude, *a fortiori* and with double zeal, that which is altogether gratuitous.

Once more, when products, such as coal, iron, corn, or textile fabrics, are sent us from abroad, and we can acquire them with less labour than if we made them ourselves, the difference is a free gift conferred upon us. The gift is more or less considerable in proportion as the difference is more

or less great. It amounts to a quarter, a half, or three-quarters of the value of the product, when the foreigner only asks us for three-fourths, a half, or a quarter of the price we should otherwise pay. It is as perfect and complete as it can be, when the donor (like the Sun in furnishing us with light) asks us for nothing. The question, and we ask it formally, is this, Do you desire for our country the benefit of gratuitous consumption, or the pretended advantages of onerous production? Make your choice, but be logical; for as long as you exclude as you do, coal, iron, corn, foreign fabrics, *in proportion* as their price approximates to *zero*, what inconsistency would it be to admit the light of the Sun, the price of which is already at *zero* during the entire day!

In addition to his other engrossing avocations in Paris, Bastiat, in the end of 1847 and beginning of 1848, delivered a course of lectures to young men on the principles of Political Economy and the Harmony of the Social Laws. He had no opportunity of committing these lectures to writing, as he wished, but we have doubtless the substance of them in his published works, especially in the *Harmonies Économiques*. "Something tells me," he says in one of his letters to M. Coudroy, "that this course addressed to the young, who have logic in their heads, and warmth and fervour in their hearts, will not be useless." "My auditors," he says elsewhere, "are not very numerous; but they attend assiduously, and take notes. The seed falls into good ground."

It was in the midst of these harassing occupations and herculean exertions that the Revolution of February came to surprise Bastiat,—to put an end to the Free-trade Association,—and to bring a far more formidable set of agitators—namely, the Socialists and Communists—to the surface of society. Bastiat doubted if his country was ripe for a Republic; but when it came, he gave in his adhesion to it, and was returned by his native Department of the

Landes as a Deputy to the Constituent, and afterwards to the Legislative Assembly. He took his seat on the left, says his accomplished friend and biographer M. de Fontenay, in an attitude of moderation and firmness; and, whilst remaining somewhat isolated, he was surrounded with the respect of all parties. A Member of the Committee of Finance, of which he was named Vice-President eight times in succession, he exercised a very marked influence on that department, although quietly and within doors. The increasing feebleness of his lungs prevented his often ascending the tribune or addressing the Assembly, although it was often a hard trial for him to be thus, as it were, nailed to his seat.⁸ It is to this he alludes in the second chapter of the *Harmonies*:—"If, when the much-loved vessel of the State is beaten by the tempest, I sometimes appear to absent myself from my post in order to collect my scattered thoughts, it is because I feel my feeble hands unfitted for the work. Is it, besides, to betray my mission to reflect upon the causes of the tempest itself, and endeavour to act upon these causes? And then, what I find I cannot do to-day, who knows but it may be given me to accomplish to-morrow?"

In a letter to M. Coudroy, in June 1848, Bastiat thus describes his daily occupations:—"I rise at six o'clock, dress, shave, breakfast, and read the newspapers; this occupies me till seven, or half-past seven. About nine, I am obliged to go out, for at ten commences the sitting of the Committee of Finance, of which I am a member. It continues till one, and then the public sitting begins, and continues till seven. I return to dinner, and it very rarely happens that there are not after-dinner meetings of Sub-Committees charged with special questions. The only hour at my disposal is from eight to nine in the morning, and it is at that hour that I receive visitors. . . . I am profoundly disgusted with this kind of life."

But the grand work of Bastiat in 1848 and 1849—a work to which he devoted the best energies of his mind and genius—was the open and incessant war which he waged with the Socialist and Communist writers and agitators whom the Revolution had let loose on French society, and who were then shaking the social and political fabric to its centre. Bastiat, like the porcupine, had a quill pointed against every assailant. To each error he opposed a pamphlet. With Louis Blanc and the national workshops, he did battle in the brochure entitled *Propriété et Loi*, in which he exposes the illusions with which the public mind had been stuffed by the Socialists. The doctrine of Condorcet he attacked in another little volume, bearing the title, *Propriété et Spoliation*. In another, *Justice et Fraternité*, he demolished the absurdities of Pierre Leroux's democratic and social constitution. Proudhon's doctrine he disposed of in *Capital et Rente*, where he refutes the foolish notions in vogue in 1848 on the subject of gratuitous loans—a subject which he again discussed in 1850, in the larger volume entitled *Gratuité du Credit*. In *Protectionisme et Communisme*, Bastiat demonstrated that what is called *protection* is nothing else than practical communism or spoliation. *Paix et Liberté, ou le Budget Républicain*, another brochure from his prolific pen, is a brilliant and vigorous onslaught on the excessive taxation of that day, and the overgrown military and naval armaments which gave rise to it. Many passages of this admirable production, full of force and practical good sense, might be read with benefit at the present day, as applicable not only to France as it was, but to France as it is, and not to France alone, but to the other nations of Europe.

In the tract entitled *L'État*, Bastiat maintains his favourite doctrine that all which a Government owes to its subjects is security; that, as it acts necessarily through the intervention of force, it can equitably enforce nothing save

Justice; and that its duty consists in holding the balance equal among various interests, by guarding the liberty of all, by protecting person and property, by enforcing covenants, and thereby upholding credit, but leaving Demand and Supply in all cases to perform their appropriate functions without restraint and without encouragement. He exposes the absurdity of men expecting everything from Government, and trusting to public employments rather than to individual exertion. He shows that, since the State is only an aggregate of individuals, it can give nothing to the people but what it has previously taken from them. *Tout le monde, as he says elsewhere, veut vivre aux dépens de l'état, et on oublie que l'état vit aux dépens de tout le monde.*

To this tract another is appended, to which he gives the quaint title of *Maudit Argent!* in which he exposes the popular errors which arise from confounding capital with money, and money with inconvertible paper. In this little work, Bastiat of course could not treat the subject systematically and in detail, as M. Michel Chevalier has since done in his philosophical treatise *Sur la Monnaie*;⁹ but Bastiat's tract contains many excellent passages. The effect of an enlargement of the volume of currency on the value of money, for instance, is thus happily illustrated:—

Ten men sat down to play a game, in which they agreed to stake 1000 francs. Each man was provided with ten counters—each counter representing ten francs. When the game was finished, each received as many times ten francs as he happened to have counters. One of the party, who was more of an arithmetician than a logician, remarked that he always found at the end of the game that he was richer in proportion as he had a greater number of counters, and asked the others if they had observed the same thing. What holds in my case, said he, must hold in yours, for what is true of each must be true of all. He