

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher

Emile Souvestre

Table of Contents

<u>Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3</u>	1
<u>Emile Souvestre</u>	1
<u>BOOK 3</u>	1
<u>CHAPTER X. OUR COUNTRY</u>	1
<u>CHAPTER XI. MORAL USE OF INVENTORIES</u>	8
<u>CHAPTER XII. THE END OF THE YEAR</u>	15

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- BOOK 3.
 - CHAPTER X. OUR COUNTRY
 - CHAPTER XI. MORAL USE OF INVENTORIES
 - CHAPTER XII. THE END OF THE YEAR

BOOK 3.

CHAPTER X. OUR COUNTRY

October 12th, Seven O'clock A.M.

The nights are already become cold and long; the sun, shining through my curtains, no more wakens me long before the hour for work; and even when my eyes are open, the pleasant warmth of the bed keeps me fast under my counterpane. Every morning there begins a long argument between my activity and my indolence; and, snugly wrapped up to the eyes, I wait like the Gascon, until they have succeeded in coming to an agreement.

This morning, however, a light, which shone from my door upon my pillow, awoke me earlier than usual. In vain I turned on my side; the persevering light, like a victorious enemy, pursued me into every position. At last, quite out of patience, I sat up and hurled my nightcap to the foot of the bed!

(I will observe, by way of parenthesis, that the various evolutions of this pacific headgear seem to have been, from the remotest time, symbols of the vehement emotions of the mind; for our language has borrowed its most common images from them.)

But be this as it may, I got up in a very bad humor, grumbling at my new neighbor, who took it into his head to be wakeful when I wished to sleep. We are all made thus; we do not understand that others may live on their own account. Each one of us is like the earth, according to the old system of Ptolemy, and thinks he can have the whole universe revolve around himself. On this point, to make use of the metaphor alluded to: 'Tous les hommes ont la tete dans le meme bonnet'.

I had for the time being, as I have already said, thrown mine to the other end of my bed; and I slowly disengaged my legs from the warm bedclothes, while making a host of evil reflections upon the inconvenience of having neighbors.

For more than a month I had not had to complain of those whom chance had given me; most of them only came in to sleep, and went away again on rising. I was almost always alone on this top story alone with the clouds and the sparrows!

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

But at Paris nothing lasts; the current of life carries us along, like the seaweed torn from the rock; the houses are vessels which take mere passengers. How many different faces have I already seen pass along the landing-place belonging to our attics! How many companions of a few days have disappeared forever! Some are lost in that medley of the living which whirls continually under the scourge of necessity, and others in that resting-place of the dead, who sleep under the hand of God!

Peter the bookbinder is one of these last. Wrapped up in selfishness, he lived alone and friendless, and he died as he had lived. His loss was neither mourned by any one, nor disarranged anything in the world; there was merely a ditch filled up in the graveyard, and an attic emptied in our house.

It is the same which my new neighbor has inhabited for the last few days.

To say truly (now that I am quite awake, and my ill humor is gone with my nightcap) to say truly, this new neighbor, although rising earlier than suits my idleness, is not the less a very good man: he carries his misfortunes, as few know how to carry their good fortunes, with cheerfulness and moderation.

But fate has cruelly tried him. Father Chaufour is but the wreck of a man. In the place of one of his arms hangs an empty sleeve; his left leg is made by the turner, and he drags the right along with difficulty; but above these ruins rises a calm and happy face. While looking upon his countenance, radiant with a serene energy, while listening to his voice, the tone of which has, so to speak, the accent of goodness, we see that the soul has remained entire in the half-destroyed covering. The fortress is a little damaged, as Father Chaufour says, but the garrison is quite hearty.

Decidedly, the more I think of this excellent man, the more I reproach myself for the sort of malediction I bestowed on him when I awoke.

We are generally too indulgent in our secret wrongs toward our neighbor. All ill-will which does not pass the region of thought seems innocent to us, and, with our clumsy justice, we excuse without examination the sin which does not betray itself by action!

But are we then bound to others only by the enforcement of laws? Besides these external relations, is there not a real relation of feeling between men? Do we not owe to all those who live under the same heaven as ourselves the aid not only of our acts but of our purposes? Ought not every human life to be to us like a vessel that we accompany with our prayers for a happy voyage? It is not enough that men do not harm one another; they must also help and love one another! The papal benediction, 'Urbi et orbi'! should be the constant cry from all hearts. To condemn him who does not deserve it, even in the mind, even by a passing thought, is to break the great law, that which has established the union of souls here below, and to which Christ has given the sweet name of charity.

These thoughts came into my mind as I finished dressing, and I said to myself that Father Chaufour had a right to reparation from me. To make amends for the feeling of ill-will I had against him just now, I owed him some explicit proof of sympathy. I heard him humming a tune in his room; he was at work, and I determined that I would make the first neighborly call.

Eight o'clock P.M. I found Father Chaufour at a table lighted by a little smoky lamp, without a fire, although it is already cold, and making large pasteboard boxes; he was humming a popular song in a low tone. I had hardly entered the room when he uttered an exclamation of surprise and pleasure.

"Eh! is it you, neighbor? Come in, then! I did not think you got up so early, so I put a damper on my music; I was afraid of waking you."

Excellent man! while I was sending him to the devil he was putting himself out of his way for me!

This thought touched me, and I paid my compliments on his having become my neighbor with a warmth which opened his heart.

"Faith! you seem to me to have the look of a good Christian," said he in a voice of soldierlike cordiality, and shaking me by the hand. "I do not like those people who look on a landing-place as a frontier line, and treat their neighbors as if they were Cossacks. When men snuff the same air, and speak the same lingo, they are not meant to turn their backs to each other. Sit down there, neighbor; I don't mean to order you; only take care of the stool; it has but three legs, and we must put good-will in place of the fourth."

"It seems that that is a treasure which there is no want of here," I observed.

"Good-will!" repeated Chaufour; "that is all my mother left me, and I take it no son has received a better inheritance. Therefore they used to call me Monsieur Content in the batteries."

"You are a soldier, then?"

"I served in the Third Artillery under the Republic, and afterward in the Guard, through all the commotions. I was at Jemappes and at Waterloo; so I was at the christening and at the burial of our glory, as one may say!"

I looked at him with astonishment.

"And how old were you then, at Jemappes?" asked I.

"Somewhere about fifteen," said he.

"How came you to think of being a soldier so early?"

"I did not really think about it. I then worked at toy-making, and never dreamed that France would ask me for anything else than to make her draught-boards, shuttlecocks, and cups and balls. But I had an old uncle at Vincennes whom I went to see from time to time a Fontenoy veteran in the same rank of life as myself, but with ability enough to have risen to that of a marshal. Unluckily, in those days there was no way for common people to get on. My uncle, whose services would have got him made a prince under the other, had then retired with the mere rank of sub-lieutenant. But you should have seen him in his uniform, his cross of St. Louis, his wooden leg, his white moustaches, and his noble countenance. You would have said he was a portrait of one of those old heroes in powdered hair which are at Versailles!

"Every time I visited him, he said something which remained fixed in my memory. But one day I found him quite grave.

"'Jerome,' said he, 'do you know what is going on on the frontier?'

"'No, lieutenant,' replied I.

"'Well,' resumed he, 'our country is in danger!'

"I did not well understand him, and yet it seemed something to me.

"'Perhaps you have never thought what your country means,' continued he, placing his hand on my shoulder; 'it is all that surrounds you, all that has brought you up and fed you, all that you have loved! This ground that you see, these houses, these trees, those girls who go along there laughing this is your country! The laws which protect you, the bread which pays for your work, the words you interchange with others, the joy and grief which come to

you from the men and things among which you live this is your country! The little room where you used to see your mother, the remembrances she has left you, the earth where she rests this is your country! You see it, you breathe it, everywhere! Think to yourself, my son, of your rights and your duties, your affections and your wants, your past and your present blessings; write them all under a single name and that name will be your country!

"I was trembling with emotion, and great tears were in my eyes.

"Ah! I understand,' cried I; 'it is our home in large; it is that part of the world where God has placed our body and our soul.'

"You are right, Jerome,' continued the old soldier; 'so you comprehend also what we owe it.'

"Truly,' resumed I, 'we owe it all that we are; it is a question of love.'

"And of honesty, my son,' concluded he. 'The member of a family who does not contribute his share of work and of happiness fails in his duty, and is a bad kinsman; the member of a partnership who does not enrich it with all his might, with all his courage, and with all his heart, defrauds it of what belongs to it, and is a dishonest man. It is the same with him who enjoys the advantages of having a country, and does not accept the burdens of it; he forfeits his honor, and is a bad citizen!'

"And what must one do, lieutenant, to be a good citizen?' asked I.

"Do for your country what you would do for your father and mother,' said he.

"I did not answer at the moment; my heart was swelling, and the blood boiling in my veins; but on returning along the road, my uncle's words were, so to speak, written up before my eyes. I repeated, 'Do for your country what you would do for your father and mother.' And my country is in danger; an enemy attacks it, while I I turn cups and balls!

"This thought tormented me so much all night that the next day I returned to Vincennes to announce to the lieutenant that I had just enlisted, and was going off to the frontier. The brave man pressed upon me his cross of St. Louis, and I went away as proud as an ambassador.

"That is how, neighbor, I became a volunteer under the Republic before I had cut my wisdom teeth."

All this was told quietly, and in the cheerful spirit of him who looks upon an accomplished duty neither as a merit nor a grievance.

While he spoke, Father Chafour grew animated, not on account of himself, but of the general subject. Evidently that which occupied him in the drama of life was not his own part, but the drama itself.

This sort of disinterestedness touched me. I prolonged my visit, and showed myself as frank as possible, in order to win his confidence in return. In an hour's time he knew my position and my habits; I was on the footing of an old acquaintance.

I even confessed the ill-humor the light of his lamp put me into a short time before. He took what I said with the touching cheerfulness which comes from a heart in the right place, and which looks upon everything on the good side. He neither spoke to me of the necessity which obliged him to work while I could sleep, nor of the deprivations of the old soldier compared to the luxury of the young clerk; he only struck his forehead, accused himself of thoughtlessness, and promised to put list round his door!

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

O great and beautiful soul! with whom nothing turns to bitterness, and who art peremptory only in duty and benevolence!

October 15th. This morning I was looking at a little engraving I had framed myself, and hung over my writing-table; it is a design of Gavarni's; in which, in a grave mood, he has represented a veteran and a conscript.

By often contemplating these two figures, so different in expression, and so true to life, both have become living in my eyes; I have seen them move, I have heard them speak; the picture has become a real scene, at which I am present as spectator.

The veteran advances slowly, his hand leaning on the shoulder of the young soldier. His eyes, closed for ever, no longer perceive the sun shining through the flowering chestnut-trees. In the place of his right arm hangs an empty sleeve, and he walks with a wooden leg, the sound of which on the pavement makes those who pass turn to look.

At the sight of this ancient wreck from our patriotic wars, the greater number shake their heads in pity, and I seem to hear a sigh or an imprecation.

"See the worth of glory!" says a portly merchant, turning away his eyes in horror.

"What a deplorable use of human life!" rejoins a young man who carries a volume of philosophy under his arm.

"The trooper would better not have left his plow," adds a countryman, with a cunning air.

"Poor old man!" murmurs a woman, almost crying.

The veteran has heard, and he knits his brow; for it seems to him that his guide has grown thoughtful. The latter, attracted by what he hears around him, hardly answers the old man's questions, and his eyes, vaguely lost in space, seem to be seeking there for the solution of some problem.

I seem to see a twitching in the gray moustaches of the veteran; he stops abruptly, and, holding back his guide with his remaining arm:

"They all pity me," says he, "because they do not understand it; but if I were to answer them "

"What would you say to them, father?" asks the young man, with curiosity.

"I should say first to the woman who weeps when she looks at me, to keep her tears for other misfortunes; for each of my wounds calls to mind some struggle for my colors. There is room for doubting how some men have done their duty; with me it is visible. I carry the account of my services, written with the enemy's steel and lead, on myself; to pity me for having done my duty is to suppose I would better have been false to it."

"And what would you say to the countryman, father?"

"I should tell him that, to drive the plow in peace, we must first secure the country itself; and that, as long as there are foreigners ready to eat our harvest, there must be arms to defend it."

"But the young student, too, shook his head when he lamented such a use of life."

"Because he does not know what self-sacrifice and suffering can teach. The books that he studies we have put in practice, though we never read them: the principles he applauds we have defended with powder and bayonet."

"And at the price of your limbs and your blood. The merchant said, when he saw your maimed body, 'See the worth of glory!'"

"Do not believe him, my son: the true glory is the bread of the soul; it is this which nourishes self-sacrifice, patience, and courage. The Master of all has bestowed it as a tie the more between men. When we desire to be distinguished by our brethren, do we not thus prove our esteem and our sympathy for them? The longing for admiration is but one side of love. No, no; the true glory can never be too dearly paid for! That which we should deplore, child, is not the infirmities which prove a generous self-sacrifice, but those which our vices or our imprudence have called forth. Ah! if I could speak aloud to those who, when passing, cast looks of pity upon me, I should say to the young man whose excesses have dimmed his sight before he is old, 'What have you done with your eyes?' To the slothful man, who with difficulty drags along his enervated mass of flesh, 'What have you done with your feet?' To the old man, who is punished for his intemperance by the gout, 'What have you done with your hands?' To all, 'What have you done with the days God granted you, with the faculties you should have employed for the good of your brethren?' If you cannot answer, bestow no more of your pity upon the old soldier maimed in his country's cause; for he he at least can show his scars without shame."

October 16th. The little engraving has made me comprehend better the merits of Father Chaufour, and I therefore esteem him all the more.

He has just now left my attic. There no longer passes a single day without his coming to work by my fire, or my going to sit and talk by his board.

The old artilleryman has seen much, and likes to tell of it. For twenty years he was an armed traveller throughout Europe, and he fought without hatred, for he was possessed by a single thought the honor of the national flag! It might have been his superstition, if you will; but it was, at the same time, his safeguard.

The word FRANCE, which was then resounding so gloriously through the world, served as a talisman to him against all sorts of temptation. To have to support a great name may seem a burden to vulgar minds, but it is an encouragement to vigorous ones.

"I, too, have had many moments," said he to me the other day, "when I have been tempted to make friends with the devil. War is not precisely the school for rural virtues. By dint of burning, destroying, and killing, you grow a little tough as regards your feelings; 'and, when the bayonet has made you king, the notions of an autocrat come into your head a little strongly. But at these moments I called to mind that country which the lieutenant spoke of to me, and I whispered to myself the well-known phrase, 'Toujours Francais! It has been laughed at since. People who would make a joke of the death of their mother have turned it into ridicule, as if the name of our country was not also a noble and a binding thing. For my part, I shall never forget from how many follies the title of Frenchman has kept me. When, overcome with fatigue, I have found myself in the rear of the colors, and when the musketry was rattling in the front ranks, many a time I heard a voice, which whispered in my ear, 'Leave the others to fight, and for today take care of your own hide!' But then, that word Francais! murmured within me, and I pressed forward to help my comrades. At other times, when, irritated by hunger, cold, and wounds, I have arrived at the hovel of some Meinherr, I have been seized by an itching to break the master's back, and to burn his hut; but I whispered to myself, Francais! and this name would not rhyme with either incendiary or murderer. I have, in this way, passed through kingdoms from east to west, and from north to south, always determined not to bring disgrace upon my country's flag. The lieutenant, you see, had taught me a magic word My country! Not only must we defend it, but we must also make it great and loved."

October 17th. To-day I have paid my neighbor a long visit. A chance expression led the way to his telling me more of himself than he had yet done.

I asked him whether both his limbs had been lost in the same battle.

"No, no!" replied he; "the cannon only took my leg; it was the Clamart quarries that my arm went to feed."

And when I asked him for the particulars

"That's as easy as to say good-morning," continued he. "After the great break-up at Waterloo, I stayed three months in the camp hospital to give my wooden leg time to grow. As soon as I was able to hobble a little, I took leave of headquarters, and took the road to Paris, where I hoped to find some relative or friend; but no all were gone, or underground. I should have found myself less strange at Vienna, Madrid, or Berlin. And although I had a leg the less to provide for, I was none the better off; my appetite had come back, and my last sous were taking flight.

"I had indeed met my old colonel, who recollected that I had helped him out of the skirmish at Montereau by giving him my horse, and he had offered me bed and board at his house. I knew that the year before he had married a castle and no few farms, so that I might become permanent coat-brusher to a millionaire, which was not without its temptations. It remained to see if I had not anything better to do. One evening I set myself to reflect upon it.

"Let us see, *Chaufour*," said I to myself; 'the question is to act like a man. The colonel's place suits you, but cannot you do anything better? Your body is still in good condition, and your arms strong; do you not owe all your strength to your country, as your Vincennes uncle said? Why not leave some old soldier, more cut up than you are, to get his hospital at the colonel's? Come, trooper, you are still fit for another stout charge or two! You must not lay up before your time.'

"Whereupon I went to thank the colonel, and to offer my services to an old artilleryman, who had gone back to his home at Clamart, and who had taken up the quarryman's pick again.

"For the first few months I played the conscript's part that is to say, there was more stir than work; but with a good will one gets the better of stones, as of everything else. I did not become, so to speak, the leader of a column, but I brought up the rank among the good workmen, and I ate my bread with a good appetite, seeing I had earned it with a good will. For even underground, you see, I still kept my pride. The thought that I was working to do my part in changing rocks into houses pleased my heart. I said to myself, 'Courage, *Chaufour*, my old boy; you are helping to beautify your country.' And that kept up my spirit.

"Unfortunately, some of my companions were rather too sensible to the charms of the brandy-bottle; so much so, that one day one of them, who could hardly distinguish his right hand from his left, thought proper to strike a light close to a charged mine. The mine exploded suddenly, and sent a shower of stone grape among us, which killed three men, and carried away the arm of which I have now only the sleeve."

"So you were again without means of living?" said I to the old soldier.

"That is to say, I had to change them," replied he, quietly. "The difficulty was to find one which would do with five fingers instead of ten; I found it, however."

"How was that?"

"Among the Paris street-sweepers."

"What! you have been one "

"Of the pioneers of the health force for a while, neighbor, and that was not my worst time either. The corps of sweepers is not so low as it is dirty, I can tell you! There are old actresses in it who could never learn to save their

money, and ruined merchants from the exchange; we even had a professor of classics, who for a little drink would recite Latin to you, or Greek tragedies, as you chose. They could not have competed for the Monthyon prize; but we excused faults on account of poverty, and cheered our poverty by our good-humor and jokes. I was as ragged and as cheerful as the rest, while trying to be something better. Even in the mire of the gutter I preserved my faith that nothing is dishonorable which is useful to our country.

"'Chaufour,' said I to myself with a smile, 'after the sword, the hammer; after the hammer, the broom; you are going downstairs, my old boy, but you are still serving your country.'"

"'However, you ended by leaving your new profession?' said I."

"A reform was required, neighbor. The street-sweepers seldom have their feet dry, and the damp at last made the wounds in my good leg open again. I could no longer follow the regiment, and it was necessary to lay down my arms. It is now two months since I left off working in the sanitary department of Paris.

"At the first moment I was daunted. Of my four limbs, I had now only my right hand, and even that had lost its strength; so it was necessary to find some gentlemanly occupation for it. After trying a little of everything, I fell upon card-box making, and here I am at cases for the lace and buttons of the national guard; it is work of little profit, but it is within the capacity of all. By getting up at four and working till eight, I earn sixty-five centimes; my lodging and bowl of soup take fifty of them, and there are three sous over for luxuries. So I am richer than France herself, for I have no deficit in my budget; and I continue to serve her, as I save her lace and buttons."

At these words Father Chaufour looked at me with a smile, and with his great scissors began cutting the green paper again for his cardboard cases. My heart was touched, and I remained lost in thought.

Here is still another member of that sacred phalanx who, in the battle of life, always march in front for the example and the salvation of the world! Each of these brave soldiers has his war-cry; for this one it is "Country," for that "Home," for a third "Mankind;" but they all follow the same standard that of duty; for all the same divine law reigns that of self-sacrifice. To love something more than one's self that is the secret of all that is great; to know how to live for others that is the aim of all noble souls.

CHAPTER XI. MORAL USE OF INVENTORIES

November 13th, Nine O'clock P.M.

I had well stopped up the chinks of my window; my little carpet was nailed down in its place; my lamp, provided with its shade, cast a subdued light around, and my stove made a low, murmuring sound, as if some live creature was sharing my hearth with me.

All was silent around me. But, out of doors the snow and rain swept the roofs, and with a low, rushing sound ran along the gurgling gutters; sometimes a gust of wind forced itself beneath the tiles, which rattled together like castanets, and afterward it was lost in the empty corridor. Then a slight and pleasurable shiver thrilled through my veins: I drew the flaps of my old wadded dressing-gown around me, I pulled my threadbare velvet cap over my eyes, and, letting myself sink deeper into my easy-chair, while my feet basked in the heat and light which shone through the door of the stove, I gave myself up to a sensation of enjoyment, made more lively by the consciousness of the storm which raged without. My eyes, swimming in a sort of mist, wandered over all the details of my peaceful abode; they passed from my prints to my bookcase, resting upon the little chintz sofa, the white curtains of the iron bedstead, and the portfolio of loose papers those archives of the attics; and then, returning to the book I held in my hand, they attempted to seize once more the thread of the reading which had been thus interrupted.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

In fact, this book, the subject of which had at first interested me, had become painful to me. I had come to the conclusion that the pictures of the writer were too sombre. His description of the miseries of the world appeared exaggerated to me; I could not believe in such excess of poverty and of suffering; neither God nor man could show themselves so harsh toward the sons of Adam. The author had yielded to an artistic temptation: he was making a show of the sufferings of humanity, as Nero burned Rome for the sake of the picturesque.

Taken altogether, this poor human house, so often repaired, so much criticised, is still a pretty good abode; we may find enough in it to satisfy our wants, if we know how to set bounds to them; the happiness of the wise man costs but little, and asks but little space.

These consoling reflections became more and more confused. At last my book fell on the ground without my having the resolution to stoop and take it up again; and insensibly overcome by the luxury of the silence, the subdued light, and the warmth, I fell asleep.

I remained for some time lost in the sort of insensibility belonging to a first sleep; at last some vague and broken sensations came over me. It seemed to me that the day grew darker, that the air became colder. I half perceived bushes covered with the scarlet berries which foretell the coming of winter. I walked on a dreary road, bordered here and there with juniper-trees white with frost. Then the scene suddenly changed. I was in the diligence; the cold wind shook the doors and windows; the trees, loaded with snow, passed by like ghosts; in vain I thrust my benumbed feet into the crushed straw. At last the carriage stopped, and, by one of those stage effects so common in sleep, I found myself alone in a barn, without a fireplace, and open to the winds on all sides. I saw again my mother's gentle face, known only to me in my early childhood, the noble and stern countenance of my father, the little fair head of my sister, who was taken from us at ten years old; all my dead family lived again around me; they were there, exposed to the bitings of the cold and to the pangs of hunger. My mother prayed by the resigned old man, and my sister, rolled up on some rags of which they had made her a bed, wept in silence, and held her naked feet in her little blue hands.

It was a page from the book I had just read transferred into my own existence.

My heart was oppressed with inexpressible anguish. Crouched in a corner, with my eyes fixed upon this dismal picture, I felt the cold slowly creeping upon me, and I said to myself with bitterness:

"Let us die, since poverty is a dungeon guarded by suspicion, apathy, and contempt, and from which it is vain to try to escape; let us die, since there is no place for us at the banquet of the living!"

And I tried to rise to join my mother again, and to wait at her feet for the hour of release.

This effort dispelled my dream, and I awoke with a start.

I looked around me; my lamp was expiring, the fire in my stove extinguished, and my half-opened door was letting in an icy wind. I got up, with a shiver, to shut and double-lock it; then I made for the alcove, and went to bed in haste.

But the cold kept me awake a long time, and my thoughts continued the interrupted dream.

The pictures I had lately accused of exaggeration now seemed but a too faithful representation of reality; and I went to sleep without being able to recover my optimism or my warmth.

Thus did a cold stove and a badly closed door alter my point of view. All went well when my blood circulated properly; all looked gloomy when the cold laid hold on me.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

This reminds me of the story of the duchess who was obliged to pay a visit to the neighboring convent on a winter's day. The convent was poor, there was no wood, and the monks had nothing but their discipline and the ardor of their prayers to keep out the cold. The duchess, who was shivering with cold, returned home, greatly pitying the poor monks. While the servants were taking off her cloak and adding two more logs to her fire, she called her steward, whom she ordered to send some wood to the convent immediately. She then had her couch moved close to the fireside, the warmth of which soon revived her. The recollection of what she had just suffered was speedily lost in her present comfort, when the steward came in again to ask how many loads of wood he was to send.

"Oh! you may wait," said the great lady carelessly; "the weather is very much milder."

Thus, man's judgments are formed less from reason than from sensation; and as sensation comes to him from the outward world, so he finds himself more or less under its influence; by little and little he imbibes a portion of his habits and feelings from it.

It is not, then, without cause that, when we wish to judge of a stranger beforehand, we look for indications of his character in the circumstances which surround him. The things among which we live are necessarily made to take our image, and we unconsciously leave in them a thousand impressions of our minds. As we can judge by an empty bed of the height and attitude of him who has slept in it, so the abode of every man discovers to a close observer the extent of his intelligence and the feelings of his heart. Bernardin de St.-Pierre has related the story of a young girl who refused a suitor because he would never have flowers or domestic animals in his house. Perhaps the sentence was severe, but not without reason. We may presume that a man insensible to beauty and to humble affection must be ill prepared to feel the enjoyments of a happy marriage.

14th, seven o'clock P.M. This morning, as I was opening my journal to write, I had a visit from our old cashier.

His sight is not so good as it was, his hand begins to shake, and the work he was able to do formerly is now becoming somewhat laborious to him. I had undertaken to write out some of his papers, and he came for those I had finished.

We conversed a long time by the stove, while he was drinking a cup of coffee which I made him take.

M. Rateau is a sensible man, who has observed much and speaks little; so that he has always something to say.

While looking over the accounts I had prepared for him, his look fell upon my journal, and I was obliged to acknowledge that in this way I wrote a diary of my actions and thoughts every evening for private use. From one thing to another, I began speaking to him of my dream the day before, and my reflections about the influence of outward objects upon our ordinary sentiments. He smiled.

"Ah! you, too, have my superstitions," he said, quietly. "I have always believed, like you, that you may know the game by the lair: it is only necessary to have tact and experience; but without them we commit ourselves to many rash judgments. For my part. I have been guilty of this more than once, but sometimes I have also drawn a right conclusion. I recollect especially an adventure which goes as far back as the first years of my youth "

He stopped. I looked at him as if I waited for his story, and he told it me at once.

At this time he was still but third clerk to an attorney at Orleans. His master had sent him to Montargis on different affairs, and he intended to return in the diligence the same evening, after having received the amount of a bill at a neighboring town; but they kept him at the debtor's house, and when he was able to set out the day had already closed.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

Fearing not to be able to reach Montargis in good time, he took a crossroad they pointed out to him. Unfortunately the fog increased, no star was visible in the heavens, and the darkness became so great that he lost his road. He tried to retrace his steps, passed twenty footpaths, and at last was completely astray.

After the vexation of losing his place in the diligence, came the feeling of uneasiness as to his situation. He was alone, on foot, lost in a forest, without any means of finding his right road again, and with a considerable sum of money about him, for which he was responsible. His anxiety was increased by his inexperience. The idea of a forest was connected in his mind with so many adventures of robbery and murder, that he expected some fatal encounter every instant.

To say the truth, his situation was not encouraging. The place was not considered safe, and for some time past there had been rumors of the sudden disappearance of several horse-dealers, though there was no trace of any crime having been committed.

Our young traveller, with his eyes staring forward, and his ears listening, followed a footpath which he supposed might take him to some house or road; but woods always succeeded to woods. At last he perceived a light at a distance, and in a quarter of an hour he reached the highroad.

A single house, the light from which had attracted him, appeared at a little distance. He was going toward the entrance gate of the courtyard, when the trot of a horse made him turn his head. A man on horseback had just appeared at the turning of the road, and in an instant was close to him.

The first words he addressed to the young man showed him to be the farmer himself. He related how he had lost himself, and learned from the countryman that he was on the road to Pithiviers. Montargis was three leagues behind him.

The fog had insensibly changed into a drizzling rain, which was beginning to wet the young clerk through; he seemed afraid of the distance he had still to go, and the horseman, who saw his hesitation, invited him to come into the farmhouse.

It had something of the look of a fortress. Surrounded by a pretty high wall, it could not be seen except through the bars of the great gate, which was carefully closed. The farmer, who had got off his horse, did not go near it, but, turning to the right, reached another entrance closed in the same way, but of which he had the key.

Hardly had he passed the threshold when a terrible barking resounded from each end of the yard. The farmer told his guest to fear nothing, and showed him the dogs chained up to their kennels; both were of an extraordinary size, and so savage that the sight of their master himself could not quiet them.

A boy, attracted by their barking, came out of the house and took the farmer's horse. The latter began questioning him about some orders he had given before he left the house, and went toward the stable to see that they had been executed.

Thus left alone, our clerk looked about him.

A lantern which the boy had placed on the ground cast a dim light over the courtyard. All around seemed empty and deserted. Not a trace was visible of the disorder often seen in a country farmyard, and which shows a temporary cessation of the work which is soon to be resumed again. Neither a cart forgotten where the horses had been unharnessed, nor sheaves of corn heaped up ready for threshing, nor a plow overturned in a corner and half hidden under the freshly-cut clover. The yard was swept, the barns shut up and padlocked. Not a single vine creeping up the walls; everywhere stone, wood, and iron!

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

He took up the lantern and went up to the corner of the house. Behind was a second yard, where he heard the barking of a third dog, and a covered wall was built in the middle of it.

Our traveller looked in vain for the little farm garden, where pumpkins of different sorts creep along the ground, or where the bees from the hives hum under the hedges of honeysuckle and elder. Verdure and flowers were nowhere to be seen. He did not even perceive the sight of a poultry-yard or pigeon-house. The habitation of his host was everywhere wanting in that which makes the grace and the life of the country.

The young man thought that his host must be of a very careless or a very calculating disposition, to concede so little to domestic enjoyments and the pleasures of the eye; and judging, in spite of himself, by what he saw, he could not help feeling a distrust of his character.

In the mean time the farmer returned from the stables, and made him enter the house.

The inside of the farmhouse corresponded to its outside. The whitewashed walls had no other ornament than a row of guns of all sizes; the massive furniture hardly redeemed its clumsy appearance by its great solidity. The cleanliness was doubtful, and the absence of all minor conveniences proved that a woman's care was wanting in the household concerns. The young clerk learned that the farmer, in fact, lived here with no one but his two sons.

Of this, indeed, the signs were plain enough. A table with the cloth laid, that no one had taken the trouble to clear away, was left near the window. The plates and dishes were scattered upon it without any order, and loaded with potato-parings and half-picked bones. Several empty bottles emitted an odor of brandy, mixed with the pungent smell of tobacco-smoke.

After seating his guest, the farmer lighted his pipe, and his two sons resumed their work by the fireside. Now and then the silence was just broken by a short remark, answered by a word or an exclamation; and then all became as mute as before.

"From my childhood," said the old cashier, "I had been very sensible to the impression of outward objects; later in life, reflection had taught me to study the causes of these impressions rather than to drive them away. I set myself, then, to examine everything around me with great attention.

"Below the guns, I had remarked on entering, some wolfraps were suspended, and to one of them still hung the mangled remains of a wolf's paw, which they had not yet taken off from the iron teeth. The blackened chimney-piece was ornamented by an owl and a raven nailed on the wall, their wings extended, and their throats with a huge nail through each; a fox's skin, freshly flayed, was spread before the window; and a larder hook, fixed into the principal beam, held a headless goose, whose body swayed about over our heads.

"My eyes were offended by all these details, and I turned them again upon my hosts. The father, who sat opposite to me, only interrupted his smoking to pour out his drink, or address some reprimand to his sons. The eldest of these was scraping a deep bucket, and the bloody scrapings, which he threw into the fire every instant, filled the room with a disagreeable fetid smell; the second son was sharpening some butcher's knives. I learned from a word dropped from the father that they were preparing to kill a pig the next day.

"These occupations and the whole aspect of things inside the house told of such habitual coarseness in their way of living as seemed to explain, while it formed the fitting counterpart of, the forbidding gloominess of the outside. My astonishment by degrees changed into disgust, and my disgust into uneasiness. I cannot detail the whole chain of ideas which succeeded one another in my imagination; but, yielding to an impulse I could not overcome, I got up, declaring I would go on my road again.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

"The farmer made some effort to keep me; he spoke of the rain, of the darkness, and of the length of the way. I replied to all by the absolute necessity there was for my being at Montargis that very night; and thanking him for his brief hospitality, I set off again in a haste which might well have confirmed the truth of my words to him.

"However, the freshness of the night and the exercise of walking did not fail to change the directions of my thoughts. When away from the objects which had awakened such lively disgust in me, I felt it gradually diminishing. I began to smile at the susceptibility of my feelings, and then, in proportion as the rain became heavier and colder, these strictures on myself assumed a tone of ill-temper. I silently accused myself of the absurdity of mistaking sensation for admonitions of my reason. After all, were not the farmer and his sons free to live alone, to hunt, to keep dogs, and to kill a pig? Where was the crime of it? With less nervous susceptibility, I should have accepted the shelter they offered me, and I should now be sleeping snugly on a truss of straw, instead of walking with difficulty through the cold and drizzling rain. I thus continued to reproach myself, until, toward morning, I arrived at Montargis, jaded and benumbed with cold.

"When, however, I got up refreshed, toward the middle of the next day, I instinctively returned to my first opinion. The appearance of the farmhouse presented itself to me under the same repulsive colors which the evening before had determined me to make my escape from it. Reason itself remained silent when reviewing all those coarse details, and was forced to recognize in them the indications of a low nature, or else the presence of some baleful influence.

"I went away the next day without being able to learn anything concerning the farmer or his sons; but the recollection of my adventure remained deeply fixed in my memory.

"Ten years afterward I was travelling in the diligence through the department of the Loiret; I was leaning from the window, and looking at some coppice ground now for the first time brought under cultivation, and the mode of clearing which one of my travelling companions was explaining to me, when my eyes fell upon a walled inclosure, with an iron-barred gate. Inside it I perceived a house with all the blinds closed, and which I immediately recollected; it was the farmhouse where I had been sheltered. I eagerly pointed it out to my companion, and asked who lived in it.

"'Nobody just now,' replied he.

"'But was it not kept, some years ago, by a farmer and his two sons?'

"'The Turreaus;' said my travelling companion, looking at me; 'did you know them?'

"'I saw them once.'

"He shook his head.

"'Yes, yes!' resumed he; 'for many years they lived there like wolves in their den; they merely knew how to till land, kill game, and drink. The father managed the house, but men living alone, without women to love them, without children to soften them, and without God to make them think of heaven, always turn into wild beasts, you see; so one morning the eldest son, who had been drinking too much brandy, would not harness the plow-horses; his father struck him with his whip, and the son, who was mad drunk, shot him dead with his gun.'"

16th, P.M. I have been thinking of the story of the old cashier these two days; it came so opportunely upon the reflections my dream had suggested to me.

Have I not an important lesson to learn from all this?

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

If our sensations have an incontestable influence upon our judgments, how comes it that we are so little careful of those things which awaken or modify these sensations? The external world is always reflected in us as in a mirror, and fills our minds with pictures which, unconsciously to ourselves, become the germs of our opinions and of our rules of conduct. All the objects which surround us are then, in reality, so many talismans whence good and evil influences are emitted, and it is for us to choose them wisely, so as to create a healthy atmosphere for our minds.

Feeling convinced of this truth, I set about making a survey of my attic.

The first object on which my eyes rest is an old map of the history of the principal monastery in my native province. I had unrolled it with much satisfaction, and placed it on the most conspicuous part of the wall. Why had I given it this place? Ought this sheet of old worm-eaten parchment to be of so much value to me, who am neither an antiquary nor a scholar? Is not its real importance in my sight that one of the abbots who founded it bore my name, and that I shall, perchance, be able to make myself a genealogical tree of it for the edification of my visitors? While writing this, I feel my own blushes. Come, down with the map! let us banish it into my deepest drawer.

As I passed my glass, I perceived several visiting cards complacently displayed in the frame. By what chance is it that there are only names that make a show among them? Here is a Polish count a retired colonel the deputy of my department. Quick, quick, into the fire with these proofs of vanity! and let us put this card in the handwriting of our office-boy, this direction for cheap dinners, and the receipt of the broker where I bought my last armchair, in their place. These indications of my poverty will serve, as Montaigne says, 'mater ma superbe', and will always make me recollect the modesty in which the dignity of the lowly consists.

I have stopped before the prints hanging upon the wall. This large and smiling Pomona, seated on sheaves of corn, and whose basket is overflowing with fruit, only produces thoughts of joy and plenty; I was looking at her the other day, when I fell asleep denying such a thing as misery. Let us give her as companion this picture of Winter, in which everything tells of sorrow and suffering: one picture will modify the other.

And this Happy Family of Greuze's! What joy in the children's eyes! What sweet repose in the young woman's face! What religious feeling in the grandfather's countenance! May God preserve their happiness to them! but let us hang by its side the picture of this mother, who weeps over an empty cradle. Human life has two faces, both of which we must dare to contemplate in their turn.

Let me hide, too, these ridiculous monsters which ornament my chimneypiece. Plato has said that "the beautiful is nothing else than the visible form of the good." If it is so, the ugly should be the visible form of the evil, and, by constantly beholding it, the mind insensibly deteriorates.

But above all, in order to cherish the feelings of kindness and pity, let me hang at the foot of my bed this affecting picture of the Last Sleep! Never have I been able to look at it without feeling my heart touched.

An old woman, clothed in rags, is lying by a roadside; her stick is at her feet, and her head rests upon a stone; she has fallen asleep; her hands are clasped; murmuring a prayer of her childhood, she sleeps her last sleep, she dreams her last dream!

She sees herself, again a strong and happy child, keeping the sheep on the common, gathering the berries from the hedges, singing, curtsying to passers-by, and making the sign of the cross when the first star appears in the heavens! Happy time, filled with fragrance and sunshine! She wants nothing yet, for she is ignorant of what there is to wish for.

But see her grown up; the time is come for working bravely: she must cut the corn, thresh the wheat, carry the bundles of flowering clover or branches of withered leaves to the farm. If her toil is hard, hope shines like a sun

over everything and it wipes the drops of sweat away. The growing girl already sees that life is a task, but she still sings as she fulfills it.

By—and—bye the burden becomes heavier; she is a wife, she is a mother! She must economize the bread of to—day, have her eye upon the morrow, take care of the sick, and sustain the feeble; she must act, in short, that part of an earthly Providence, so easy when God gives us his aid, so hard when he forsakes us. She is still strong, but she is anxious; she sings no longer!

Yet a few years, and all is overcast. The husband's health is broken; his wife sees him pine away by the now fireless hearth; cold and hunger finish what sickness had begun; he dies, and his widow sits on the ground by the coffin provided by the charity of others, pressing her two half—naked little ones in her arms. She dreads the future, she weeps, and she droops her head.

At last the future has come; the children are grown up, but they are no longer with her. Her son is fighting under his country's flag, and his sister is gone. Both have been lost to her for a long time perhaps forever; and the strong girl, the brave wife, the courageous mother, is henceforth only a poor old beggar—woman, without a family, and without a home! She weeps no more, sorrow has subdued her; she surrenders, and waits for death.

Death, that faithful friend of the wretched, is come: not hideous and with mockery, as superstition represents, but beautiful, smiling, and crowned with stars! The gentle phantom stoops to the beggar; its pale lips murmur a few airy words, which announce to her the end of her labors; a peaceful joy comes over the aged beggarwoman, and, leaning on the shoulder of the great Deliverer, she has passed unconsciously from her last earthly sleep to her eternal rest.

Lie there, thou poor way—wearied woman! The leaves will serve thee for a winding—sheet. Night will shed her tears of dew over thee, and the birds will sing sweetly by thy remains. Thy visit here below will not have left more trace than their flight through the air; thy name is already forgotten, and the only legacy thou hast to leave is the hawthorn stick lying forgotten at thy feet!

Well! some one will take it up some soldier of that great human host which is scattered abroad by misery or by vice; for thou art not an exception, thou art an instance; and under the same sun which shines so pleasantly upon all, in the midst of these flowering vineyards, this ripe corn, and these wealthy cities, entire generations suffer, succeed each other, and still bequeath to each the beggar's stick!

The sight of this sad picture shall make me more grateful for what God has given me, and more compassionate for those whom he has treated with less indulgence; it shall be a lesson and a subject for reflection for me.

Ah! if we would watch for everything that might improve and instruct us; if the arrangements of our daily life were so disposed as to be a constant school for our minds! but oftenest we take no heed of them. Man is an eternal mystery to himself; his own person is a house into which he never enters, and of which he studies the outside alone. Each of us need have continually before him the famous inscription which once instructed Socrates, and which was engraved on the walls of Delphi by an unknown hand:

KNOW THYSELF.

CHAPTER XII. THE END OF THE YEAR

December 30th, P.M.

I was in bed, and hardly recovered from the delirious fever which had kept me for so long between life and death. My weakened brain was making efforts to recover its activity; my thoughts, like rays of light struggling through

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

the clouds, were still confused and imperfect; at times I felt a return of the dizziness which made a chaos of all my ideas, and I floated, so to speak, between alternate fits of mental wandering and consciousness.

Sometimes everything seemed plain to me, like the prospect which, from the top of some high mountain, opens before us in clear weather. We distinguish water, woods, villages, cattle, even the cottage perched on the edge of the ravine; then suddenly there comes a gust of wind laden with mist, and all is confused and indistinct.

Thus, yielding to the oscillations of a half-recovered reason, I allowed my mind to follow its various impulses without troubling myself to separate the real from the imaginary; I glided softly from one to the other, and my dreams and waking thoughts succeeded closely upon one another.

Now, while my mind is wandering in this unsettled state, see, underneath the clock which measures the hours with its loud ticking, a female figure appears before me!

At first sight I saw enough to satisfy me that she was not a daughter of Eve. In her eye was the last flash of an expiring star, and her face had the pallor of an heroic death-struggle. She was dressed in a drapery of a thousand changing colors of the brightest and the most sombre hues, and held a withered garland in her hand.

After having contemplated her for some moments, I asked her name, and what brought her into my attic. Her eyes, which were following the movements of the clock, turned toward me, and she replied:

"You see in me the year which is just drawing to its end; I come to receive your thanks and your farewell."

I raised myself on my elbow in surprise, which soon gave place to bitter resentment.

"Ah! you want thanks," cried I; "but first let me know what for?"

"When I welcomed your coming, I was still young and vigorous: you have taken from me each day some little of my strength, and you have ended by inflicting an illness upon me; already, thanks to you, my blood is less warm, my muscles less firm, and my feet less agile than before! You have planted the germs of infirmity in my bosom; there, where the summer flowers of life were growing, you have wickedly sown the nettles of old age!

"And, as if it were not enough to weaken my body, you have also diminished the powers of my soul; you have extinguished her enthusiasm; she is become more sluggish and more timid. Formerly her eyes took in the whole of mankind in their generous survey; but you have made her nearsighted, and now she hardly sees beyond herself! "That is what you have done for my spiritual being: then as to my outward existence, see to what grief, neglect, and misery you have reduced it! "For the many days that the fever has kept me chained to this bed, who has taken care of this home in which I placed all my joy? Shall I not find my closets empty, my bookcase, stripped, all my poor treasures lost through negligence or dishonesty? Where are the plants I cultivated, the birds I fed? All are gone! my attic is despoiled, silent and solitary! "As it is only for the last few moments that I have returned to a consciousness of what surrounds me, I am even ignorant who has nursed me during my long illness! Doubtless some hireling, who will leave when all my means of recompense are exhausted ! "And what will my masters, for whom I am bound to work, have said to my absence? At this time of the year, when business is most pressing, can they have done without me, will they even have tried to do so? Perhaps I am already superseded in the humble situation by which I earned my daily bread! And it is thou—thou alone, wicked daughter of Time who hast brought all these misfortunes upon me: strength, health, comfort, work thou hast taken all from me. I have only received outrage and loss from thee, and yet thou darest to claim my gratitude!

"Ah! die then, since thy day is come; but die despised and cursed; and may I write on thy tomb the epitaph the Arabian poet inscribed upon that of a king:

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

"Rejoice, thou passer-by: he whom we have buried here cannot live again."

.....

I was wakened by a hand taking mine; and opening my eyes, I recognized the doctor.

After having felt my pulse, he nodded his head, sat down at the foot of the bed, and looked at me, rubbing his nose with his snuffbox. I have since learned that this was a sign of satisfaction with the doctor.

"Well! so we wanted old snub-nose to carry us off?" said M. Lambert, in his half-joking, half-scolding way. "What the deuce of a hurry we were in! It was necessary to hold you back with both arms at least!"

"Then you had given me up, doctor?" asked I, rather alarmed.

"Not at all," replied the old physician. "We can't give up what we have not got; and I make it a rule never to have any hope. We are but instruments in the hands of Providence, and each of us should say, with Ambroise Pare: 'I tend him, God cures him!'"

"May He be blessed then, as well as you," cried I; "and may my health come back with the new year!"

M. Lambert shrugged his shoulders.

"Begin by asking yourself for it," resumed he, bluntly. "God has given it you, and it is your own sense, and not chance, that must keep it for you. One would think, to hear people talk, that sickness comes upon us like the rain or the sunshine, without one having a word to say in the matter. Before we complain of being ill we should prove that we deserve to be well."

I was about to smile, but the doctor looked angry.

"Ah! you think that I am joking," resumed he, raising his voice; "but tell me, then, which of us gives his health the same attention that he gives to his business? Do you economize your strength as you economize your money? Do you avoid excess and imprudence in the one case with the same care as extravagance or foolish speculations in the other? Do you keep as regular accounts of your mode of living as you do of your income? Do you consider every evening what has been wholesome or unwholesome for you, with the same care that you bring to the examination of your expenditure? You may smile; but have you not brought this illness on yourself by a thousand indiscretions?"

I began to protest against this, and asked him to point out these indiscretions. The old doctor spread out his fingers, and began to reckon upon them one by one.

"Primo," cried he, "want of exercise. You live here like a mouse in a cheese, without air, motion, or change. Consequently, the blood circulates badly, the fluids thicken, the muscles, being inactive, do not claim their share of nutrition, the stomach flags, and the brain grows weary.

"Secundo. Irregular food. Caprice is your cook; your stomach a slave who must accept what you give it, but who presently takes a sullen revenge, like all slaves.

"Tertio. Sitting up late. Instead of using the night for sleep, you spend it in reading; your bedstead is a bookcase, your pillows a desk! At the time when the wearied brain asks for rest, you lead it through these nocturnal orgies, and you are surprised to find it the worse for them the next day.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

"Quarto. Luxurious habits. Shut up in your attic, you insensibly surround yourself with a thousand effeminate indulgences. You must have list for your door, a blind for your window, a carpet for your feet, an easy-chair stuffed with wool for your back, your fire lit at the first sign of cold, and a shade to your lamp; and thanks to all these precautions, the least draught makes you catch cold, common chairs give you no rest, and you must wear spectacles to support the light of day. You have thought you were acquiring comforts, and you have only contracted infirmities.

"Quinto"

"Ah! enough, enough, doctor!" cried I. "Pray, do not carry your examination farther; do not attach a sense of remorse to each of my pleasures."

The old doctor rubbed his nose with his snuffbox.

"You see," said he, more gently, and rising at the same time, "you would escape from the truth. You shrink from inquiry a proof that you are guilty. 'Habemus confitentem reum'! But at least, my friend, do not go on laying the blame on Time, like an old woman."

Thereupon he again felt my pulse, and took his leave, declaring that his function was at an end, and that the rest depended upon myself.

When the doctor was gone, I set about reflecting upon what he had said.

Although his words were too sweeping, they were not the less true in the main. How often we accuse chance of an illness, the origin of which we should seek in ourselves! Perhaps it would have been wiser to let him finish the examination he had begun.

But is there not another of more importance that which concerns the health of the soul? Am I so sure of having neglected no means of preserving that during the year which is now ending? Have I, as one of God's soldiers upon earth, kept my courage and my arms efficient? Shall I be ready for the great review of souls which must pass before Him WHO IS in the dark valley of Jehoshaphat?

Darest thou examine thyself, O my soul! and see how often thou hast erred?

First, thou hast erred through pride! for I have not duly valued the lowly. I have drunk too deeply of the intoxicating wines of genius, and have found no relish in pure water. I have disdained those words which had no other beauty than their sincerity; I have ceased to love men solely because they are men I have loved them for their endowments; I have contracted the world within the narrow compass of a pantheon, and my sympathy has been awakened by admiration only. The vulgar crowd, which I ought to have followed with a friendly eye because it is composed of my brothers in hope or grief, I have let pass by with as much indifference as if it were a flock of sheep. I am indignant with him who rolls in riches and despises the man poor in worldly wealth; and yet, vain of my trifling knowledge, I despise him who is poor in mind I scorn the poverty of intellect as others do that of dress; I take credit for a gift which I did not bestow on myself, and turn the favor of fortune into a weapon with which to attack others.

Ah! if, in the worst days of revolutions, ignorance has revolted and raised a cry of hatred against genius, the fault is not alone in the envious malice of ignorance, but comes in part, too, from the contemptuous pride of knowledge.

Alas! I have too completely forgotten the fable of the two sons of the magician of Bagdad.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

One of them, struck by an irrevocable decree of destiny, was born blind, while the other enjoyed all the delights of sight. The latter, proud of his own advantages, laughed at his brother's blindness, and disdained him as a companion. One morning the blind boy wished to go out with him.

"To what purpose," said he, "since the gods have put nothing in common between us? For me creation is a stage, where a thousand charming scenes and wonderful actors appear in succession; for you it is only an obscure abyss, at the bottom of which you hear the confused murmur of an invisible world. Continue then alone in your darkness, and leave the pleasures of light to those upon whom the day—star shines."

With these words he went away, and his brother, left alone, began to cry bitterly. His father, who heard him, immediately ran to him, and tried to console him by promising to give him whatever he desired.

"Can you give me sight?" asked the child.

"Fate does not permit it," said the magician.

"Then," cried the blind boy, eagerly, "I ask you to put out the sun!"

Who knows whether my pride has not provoked the same wish on the part of some one of my brothers who does not see?

But how much oftener have I erred through levity and want of thought! How many resolutions have I taken at random! how many judgments have I pronounced for the sake of a witticism! how many mischiefs have I not done without any sense of my responsibility! The greater part of men harm one another for the sake of doing something. We laugh at the honor of one, and compromise the reputation of another, like an idle man who saunters along a hedgerow, breaking the young branches and destroying the most beautiful flowers.

And, nevertheless, it is by this very thoughtlessness that the fame of some men is created. It rises gradually, like one of those mysterious mounds in barbarous countries, to which a stone is added by every passerby; each one brings something at random, and adds it as he passes, without being able himself to see whether he is raising a pedestal or a gibbet. Who will dare look behind him, to see his rash judgments held up there to view?

Some time ago I was walking along the edge of the green mound on which the Montmartre telegraph stands. Below me, along one of the zigzag paths which wind up the hill, a man and a girl were coming up, and arrested my attention. The man wore a shaggy coat, which gave him some resemblance to a wild beast; and he held a thick stick in his hand, with which he described various strange figures in the air. He spoke very loud, and in a voice which seemed to me convulsed with passion. He raised his eyes every now and then with an expression of savage harshness, and it appeared to me that he was reproaching and threatening the girl, and that she was listening to him with a submissiveness which touched my heart. Two or three times she ventured a few words, doubtless in the attempt to justify herself; but the man in the greatcoat began again immediately with his loud and angry voice, his savage looks, and his threatening evolutions in the air. I followed him with my eyes, vainly endeavoring to catch a word as he passed, until he disappeared behind the hill.

I had evidently just seen one of those domestic tyrants whose sullen tempers are excited by the patience of their victims, and who, though they have the power to become the beneficent gods of a family, choose rather to be their tormentors.

I cursed the unknown savage in my heart, and I felt indignant that these crimes against the sacred peace of home could not be punished as they deserve, when I heard his voice approaching nearer. He had turned the path, and soon appeared before me at the top of the slope.

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

The first glance, and his first words, explained everything to me: in place of what I had taken for the furious tones and terrible looks of an angry man, and the attitude of a frightened victim, I had before me only an honest citizen, who squinted and stuttered, but who was explaining the management of silkworms to his attentive daughter.

I turned homeward, smiling at my mistake; but before I reached my faubourg I saw a crowd running, I heard calls for help, and every finger pointed in the same direction to a distant column of flame. A manufactory had taken fire, and everybody was rushing forward to assist in extinguishing it.

I hesitated. Night was coming on; I felt tired; a favorite book was awaiting me; I thought there would be no want of help, and I went on my way.

Just before I had erred from want of consideration; now it was from selfishness and cowardice.

But what! have I not on a thousand other occasions forgotten the duties which bind us to our fellowmen? Is this the first time I have avoided paying society what I owe it? Have I not always behaved to my companions with injustice, and like the lion? Have I not claimed successively every share? If any one is so ill-advised as to ask me to return some little portion, I get provoked, I am angry, I try to escape from it by every means. How many times, when I have perceived a beggar sitting huddled up at the end of the street, have I not gone out of my way, for fear that compassion would impoverish me by forcing me to be charitable! How often have I doubted the misfortunes of others, that I might with justice harden my heart against them.

With what satisfaction have I sometimes verified the vices of the poor man, in order to show that his misery is the punishment he deserves!

Oh! let us not go farther let us not go farther! I interrupted the doctor's examination, but how much sadder is this one! We pity the diseases of the body; we shudder at those of the soul.

I was happily disturbed in my reverie by my neighbor, the old soldier.

Now I think of it, I seem always to have seen, during my fever, the figure of this good old man, sometimes leaning against my bed, and sometimes sitting at his table, surrounded by his sheets of pasteboard.

He has just come in with his glue-pot, his quire of green paper, and his great scissors. I called him by his name; he uttered a joyful exclamation, and came near me.

"Well! so the bullet is found again!" cried he, taking my two hands into the maimed one which was left him; "it has not been without trouble, I can tell you; the campaign has been long enough to win two clasps in. I have seen no few fellows with the fever batter windmills during my hospital days: at Leipsic, I had a neighbor who fancied a chimney was on fire in his stomach, and who was always calling for the fire-engines; but the third day it all went out of itself. But with you it has lasted twenty-eight days as long as one of the Little Corporal's campaigns."

"I am not mistaken then; you were near me?"

"Well! I had only to cross the passage. This left hand has not made you a bad nurse for want of the right; but, bah! you did not know what hand gave you drink, and it did not prevent that beggar of a fever from being drowned for all the world like Poniatowski in the Elster."

The old soldier began to laugh, and I, feeling too much affected to speak, pressed his hand against my breast. He saw my emotion, and hastened to put an end to it.

"By—the—bye, you know that from to—day you have a right to draw your rations again," resumed he gayly; "four meals, like the German meinherrs nothing more! The doctor is your house steward."

"We must find the cook, too," replied I, with a smile.

"She is found," said the veteran.

"Who is she?"

"Genevieve."

"The fruit—woman?"

"While I am talking she is cooking for you, neighbor; and do not fear her sparing either butter or trouble. As long as life and death were fighting for you, the honest woman passed her time in going up and down stairs to learn which way the battle went. And, stay, I am sure this is she."

In fact we heard steps in the passage, and he went to open the door.

"Oh, well!" continued he, "it is Mother Millot, our portress, another of your good friends, neighbor, and whose poultices I recommend to you. Come in, Mother Millot come in; we are quite bonny boys this morning, and ready to step a minuet if we had our dancing—shoes."

The portress came in, quite delighted. She brought my linen, washed and mended by herself, with a little bottle of Spanish wine, the gift of her sailor son, and kept for great occasions. I would have thanked her, but the good woman imposed silence upon me, under the pretext that the doctor had forbidden me to speak. I saw her arrange everything in my drawers, the neat appearance of which struck me; an attentive hand had evidently been there, and day by day put straight the unavoidable disorder consequent on sickness.

As she finished, Genevieve arrived with my dinner; she was followed by Mother Denis, the milk—woman over the way, who had learned, at the same time, the danger I had been in, and that I was now beginning to be convalescent. The good Savoyard brought me a new—laid egg, which she herself wished to see me eat.

It was necessary to relate minutely all my illness to her. At every detail she uttered loud exclamations; then, when the portress warned her to be less noisy, she excused herself in a whisper. They made a circle around me to see me eat my dinner; each mouthful I took was accompanied by their expressions of satisfaction and thankfulness. Never had the King of France, when he dined in public, excited such admiration among the spectators.

As they were taking the dinner away, my colleague, the old cashier, entered in his turn.

I could not prevent my heart beating as I recognized him. How would the heads of the firm look upon my absence, and what did he come to tell me?

I waited with inexpressible anxiety for him to speak; but he sat down by me, took my hand, and began rejoicing over my recovery, without saying a word about our masters. I could not endure this uncertainty any longer.

"And the Messieurs Durmer," asked I, hesitatingly, "how have they taken the interruption to my work?"

"There has been no interruption," replied the old clerk, quietly.

"What do you mean?"

Immortals Crowned by the French Academy: An Attic Philosopher, v3

"Each one in the office took a share of your duty; all has gone on as usual, and the Messieurs Durmer have perceived no difference."

This was too much. After so many instances of affection, this filled up the measure. I could not restrain my tears.

Thus the few services I had been able to do for others had been acknowledged by them a hundredfold! I had sown a little seed, and every grain had fallen on good ground, and brought forth a whole sheaf. Ah! this completes the lesson the doctor gave me. If it is true that the diseases, whether of the mind or body, are the fruit of our follies and our vices, sympathy and affection are also the rewards of our having done our duty. Every one of us, with God's help, and within the narrow limits of human capability, himself makes his own disposition, character, and permanent condition.

Everybody is gone; the old soldier has brought me back my flowers and my birds, and they are my only companions. The setting sun reddens my half-closed curtains with its last rays. My brain is clear, and my heart lighter. A thin mist floats before my eyes, and I feel myself in that happy state which precedes a refreshing sleep.

Yonder, opposite the bed, the pale goddess in her drapery of a thousand changing colors, and with her withered garland, again appears before me; but this time I hold out my hand to her with a grateful smile.

"Adieu, beloved year! whom I but now unjustly accused. That which I have suffered must not be laid to thee; for thou wast but a tract through which God had marked out my road a ground where I had reaped the harvest I had sown. I will love thee, thou wayside shelter, for those hours of happiness thou hast seen me enjoy; I will love thee even for the suffering thou hast seen me endure. Neither happiness nor suffering came from thee; but thou hast been the scene for them. Descend again then, in peace, into eternity, and be blest, thou who hast left me experience in the place of youth, sweet memories instead of past time, and gratitude as payment for good offices."