

## Pastoral Simplicity & Patriarchal Government.

Selected writings by SILVAIN MARÉCHAL.

Sylvain Maréchal has earned a place in many of the histories of anarchism as a kind of *precursor* and he did, in fact, reject *most* forms of government. As a result, there are numerous passages in his work that are bound to delight anarchists, but virtually all of his works eventually draw the line that he will not cross. The family was, for him, the *natural* unit of society and government—and the need was less to reject hierarchy and authority, as the anarchist might suggest, but to limit it to its proper and natural scale. For example:

XI. The savage is *not yet* man. The city dweller is *no longer* man.

The father of the family, living with his children, in his house, in the midst of a domain no larger than he needs to feed himself and his own, that is man par excellence.

The *savage* is man *unformed*.

The *city-dweller* is man *deformed*.

The simple man, the rustic man, the one who occupies the happy medium between the *cannibal brute* and the polite Pharisee; that is *the man of nature*. — (*A Remedy for the Revolution*, 1793)

There is an *anti-civilization* element here, as well as an emphasis on simplicity—*douce médiocrité*—and a rejection of everything not ultimately close to *nature*—or Nature—conceived in fundamentally pastoral terms. References to a clearly Arcadian *Golden Age* are common in the works, and the conditions of that age are treated as at least close to attainable, provided we give each other the requisite space, find purpose in our families and allow our *patriarchs* to rule.

As a body of work, these writings on simplicity are perhaps not so simple. While the preoccupations remain roughly the same throughout, they are addressed in a variety of ways, through a variety of literary genres. There are tales, short plays, parables, poems, manifestos, fake “psalms” and philosophical essays. Individual collections often contain multiple works that address key concerns from different perspectives. Key episodes and proposals are repeated. It is a remarkable enough set of texts that I might be tempted to translate a good chunk of it, even if there was not an anarchist history lesson to be learned.

There is, however, a lesson to be learned. The close (*but no cigar*) resemblance of Maréchal’s work to anarchism makes it an interesting foil for works that really do seem to qualify for that designation. For example, much of what we find in the work quite closely resembles a certain *caricature* of Proudhon’s thought. (The extent to which *some* of resemblances are *not* the product of caricature is something that also needs to be explored.) But we might also note resemblances to some of the conservative elements in Lewis Masquerier’s writings.

I’m not prepared to try to do the comparisons before I’ve really digested the material—and provided enough in translation that others can compare as well—so my focus at the moment is to determine which of Maréchal’s many works seem relevant and to translate key pieces from those work, as I try to find my own way through this rather complex body of work. I’ve posted a tentative list of works in the sidebar and will link translations as I complete them.

To push forward a bit more here—and in the absence of a page (yet) dedicated to *Le livre de tous les*

ages—I am appending two chapters relating to that *douce médiocrité* that occupies such an important place in Maréchal's thought.

XXXI.  
Of Mediocrity.

Tranquil observer of scheming mortals,  
Happy, he who is free of all difficult choices,  
Without daring to take part in Society,  
Always free, only kept that way by Humanity.

*It is necessary to be something!* This is what is usually said, in justification, by those who, being nothing by themselves, want, at any price, to play a role in the world. So, what! Is a peaceful citizen, who passes pure days in a sweet mediocrity, nothing? Whether the links in a long chain be gold or bronze, are they not always an indispensable part of the whole? If a single one should be detached, isn't the series interrupted and the union destroyed?

A modern sage has said: *The glory of a woman is to be unknown.* If we generalize this proposition, it does not cease to be true.

The ambitious call inertia or weakness a kind of life that is secluded and obscure. Yet what is the aim of their wearying intrigues? Isn't it repose? Is it in the midst of a shipwreck or on a slippery rock that we must seek it? Isn't it more prudent to remain in port? Why run so far, through so many perils, to find a good that is within us: like those young botanists, still without experience, who tread under foot the plant that they seek and will long still seek in vain.

LXXV.  
Of Sweet Mediocrity.

Happy is he who in the port, sheltered from the storm,  
Only fears for others the dangers of shipwreck,  
And can say for himself: "Oh, fate! I fear nothing;"  
"I have done, or I have always wanted to do, good."

A Prince belongs to his Courtiers, the Courtier to the honors that he craves; the Miser belongs to his gold, the Pleasure-seeker to the caprices of his Mistresses: the Good man belongs only to himself.

But it is only in the heart of a sweet Mediocrity that the Good man can walk free in the midst of passions. We cannot recommend too much this sweet Mediocrity, this variety of private life which does not take us away from ourselves, which does not make us seek Happiness outside of ourselves, & which we never scorn with impunity. In the midst of a brilliant & tumultuous party, the man of the Court, the rich City-dweller recalls, with a sigh, the humble home of his ancestors. He misses the tranquil pleasures of his original state. He was not jealous or envious; he did not fear enemies, although he was happy, because his Pleasure came at no cost to his fellow-man.

# MOTHER NATURE

on the stand

BEFORE THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY.

1791.

Naturam expellis furca.—Horace.

Hush for a moment, children! I have a few things to tell you. Listen to your mother; let nature speak.

What are you doing here? Why have you been absent from your homes for so long? Let each of your return to your family! This place here is not your place. What do you intend to do?

Twenty-five million men, spoiled by contact, discontented with one another, & no longer able to tolerate one another, demand from you in loud cries a new code, & and you have had the courage to promise it to them. Why don't you instead have the good sense to send them back to me, saying to them: Brothers, don't you have the laws nature? & could you ever do better than that?

But, no! You have not been able to resist the glory attached to the title of legislators: & here you are, vying with nature, & pronouncing each day decrees, the wisdom of which are extolled everywhere.

Do not be vain for having shown a bit more reason than your predecessors. That was not difficult. And, children, beware of pretending to give your new laws a more solid basis! You have made poor work of it. The edifice at such great cost is impressive in the short view: but I warn you, you are building on sand. You travel in a vicious circle, with laudable intentions, no doubt, and perhaps with great talents. The task is beyond your means; new abuses will succeed the old, & that is all. A passing enthusiasm will be the recompense for your ephemeral labors, & the future will have no grounds to reproach the past.

The present at least hardly responds to the great revolution of which you are so proud. It is already a year in the past. What results has it fetched? You have abolished some odious & revolting distinctions. You have dared to proclaim all men equal & free. But this sublime effort, of which the child at the breast gives you each day a domestic example, what has it produced? Among the twenty-five millions men of whom you have been the courageous representatives, I still see changes only in their costume. Their customs have remained the same, with no amendment in their public conduct or private life. I still see, as before, two clearly distinct castes, the riches & the poor; despite the solemn declaration of the rights of man, everywhere, as before, my eyes are presented with masters & servants. An iron rampart still rises between those who have too much & those who do not have enough. When that insulting & harmful separation disappears at your command, I will believe in the sublimity of your decrees, in the efficacy of your labors.

You allow yourselves to speak of the *Golden Age* in the speeches that you make: but can those who speak to you of it, & you yourselves, recall well what was this age of gold? It was a time on earth when there were neither masters, nor slaves, nor priests, nor soldiers, nor kings, nor nations, nor poor, nor rich; men were quite naturally nothing but men. Is it really back there that you wish to bring your constituents? So far, you have not set them on that route.

Children! You amuse yourself on the road, but you do not go to the end. You play gravely on the banks of a torrent, which sometimes carries you off, and sometimes blocks your advance.

Time is mine. I have only assigned a rather small portion of it to you; but I have only imposed a small number of laws: you, on the contrary, each morning you go to swell the volume of your decrees; you apparently prefer quantity to quality, so that the life a man suffices only to study & understand them.

Among you there is genius & insight, spirit & eloquence; & you think that with all these gifts it is impossible for you to do shoddy work. None of that is required to do fine work; it is not required to make twenty-five million men happy & good; nothing is needed but instinct.....

Yes, instinct. Why murmur? That word embarrasses you. Children that you are! Eh! Don't you understand? It is for scorning instinct, that first faculty of man, that you find yourselves reduced to the extremities where I find you. Instinct is the limit beyond which I have forbidden you to go, on pain of misfortune. Return within the limits that the finger of nature has traced for you. In order to become free, submit to the yoke of instinct, the only one that you should bear.

And where would you be, if instinct, which you have sought to stymie with all your bizarre institutions, had not got the upper hand, despite you, & had not still prevented each day & unbeknownst to you, many falls & many blunders?...

Badly brought up children! You think that you know better than your mother. To correct you of this childish vanity, I have watched you for a while; I wanted to know if, in a crisis, you would finally turn to me. You have too much pride for that. Well, then! I have come to you.

When, after so many centuries of errors, I see twenty-five million men gather to undertake, de concert, the total destruction of the prejudices, whose weight they finally feel, I will breathe a bit, & say to myself:

Finally, here are some who have regained their primitive energy; they doubtless go to help themselves to all these social conventions of which they had been slaves. My reign will finally recommence.

Alas! I spoke too soon. It is still not time for that. How you struggle to get along! It seems that you do not all speak the same language, or that you are not all beings of the same species; & then, what are we to say of that bizarre distinction of executive, legislative and constitutive powers? Is that how I proceed? Haven't I given to each man all the powers together? So how can an assembly of men consent to be stripped of half their rights, in order to invest them in one man alone? What a pity it is to see you break that precious unity that should characterize, it seems to me, the labors of a great association of reasonable men, & imagine two authorities, two interests that are necessarily rivals to one another! What a pity to see here twelve hundred legislators, the elite among twenty-five million men, seriously occupied in consecrating such thoughtlessness!

You call yourselves free, & yet the decrees, as they emanate from your assembly, must, in order to have the force of law, be ratified by one individual whom the chance of birth has placed above rather than among you.

I have established kings in the fathers of families; & through that wholly natural arrangement, I have established a sweet harmony among men, sparing them the shame of obeying their fellows.

Today, when you have experienced all the evils resulting from that social royalty, imagined by your good ancestors in the days of darkness; today, when, freely assembled & discussing your interests among yourself, you finally perceive that royalty is not an evil as necessary as you have believed for so long, how is it that, with the good sense of which you have shown some evident on several other occasions, you still persist in keeping your fetish & awarding it a cult?

What an imposing spectacle is the sight of twelve hundred legislators assembled to take the axe to the prejudices of twelve centuries. A still more preferable spectacle would be that of twelve hundred fathers of families, in the vicinity of one another, at the same point on the globe, peacefully practicing the *ready-made*

laws of nature, & offering their conduct a simple example to 25 million beset for thousands of years by all the horrors of an artificial & unnatural society.

Twelve hundred actually happy families are well worth one theory that is ingenious, but impracticable among twenty-five million men united à fort d'art.

I believe in private virtues, in calm, in the felicity of a family maintained in the midst of a gentle mediocrity.

I do not believe at all in public mores, in the tranquility, in the happiness of a nation composed of several millions individuals friendly to luxury.

There was a great & beautiful revolution to be attempted; & it was to be hoped for from the wisdom of twelve hundred elected representatives among twenty-five million men: that would have been to truly recall the human species to the original rights of individual liberty, & to break the coils of civil society, instead of wishing to extend them anew; it would have been, in short, to preserve only what nature admits.

All that scaffolding, raised up with so much difficulty, maintained at such great cost—you have had time to realize how useless, expensive & cumbersome it had become, & and yet here you are constructing another, more elegant perhaps at first glance, more solid in appearance; but do you not perceive that it already contains within it the same vices of construction?

Say, children! Is it your ambition to perfect the human species? & because the gardener, through his cares, has been able to make from the eglantine a hundred-leaved rose, do you believe you will obtain as much from men? The perfectibility of which I have made you susceptible has its limits. Know that I no longer lend myself to your industry, when it degenerates into caprice.

The brutish man, hardly released from my hands, is one extreme. The civilized man is another extreme: man in his family, finds himself placed in this middle ground, where we encounter innocence & bliss.

But, by thinking in this way, & proceeding accordingly, you would not have satisfied that miserable vanity, an almost incurable malady contracted in the heart of civil society. You wish to astonish your constituents & deserve their homage. By saying to them, my friends! You know as much of it as we: in order to be happy & good, follow your instinct, that right sense that guides you so well in an infinite number of daily circumstances. The science of government is an *hors-d'œuvre*. The human race must not faire masse; let us separate amicably into small groups. Man must not obey man; his father alone has the right to command him. A king & some representatives, a civil code, a political constitution.... All that is fine, perhaps, but perfectly useless to the family man, who prefers domestic peace to the fleeting & perilous brilliance of civilization.

By speaking in this way to your constituents, you would have had their esteem & their gratitude. You require admiration & incense. Poor humans, where have you got to? I can hardly recognize you. How you have disfigured my work! How far it is from what you are, from what you claim to be one day, to what you should have always been!

In giving existence to men, my intention had certainly not been to make of them rich & poor, masters & servants, citizens & soldiers or priests, representatives and represented. You should have better studied my plan & your character. By consulting me, your glory would be associated with mine; & your establishments, supported by mine, would have lasted as long as they.

You have preferred to rake over the ideas of your predecessors. Following your example, it seems that your successors will dwell as much on your own. There are only the works of nature to which we add nothing, from which we subtract nothing. I leave to men the development of some of my works, which I did not finish with this intention, but woe to the men who wish to march down a road cleared by themselves.

After many concerns & vain labors, they are astonished to find themselves back at the point from which they began. They have reaped from that painful excursion only the impression of their weakness, & the knowledge of many evils of which they might have remained ignorant by remaining beneath my wings.

And do you not see that this revolution that stirs up twenty-five million men, resemble those changes of position that the incurably ill procure on their sickbed? Their imagination alone is relieved by it for a moment; they fall back soon after, more miserable than before.

Children! You still have the tender sight. There are objects that you can only catch by blinking. Your uncertain gaze can only take in one point at a time; but in your pride, this point becomes all of space for you.

If only you knew how small everything that issues from your narrow minds is before the vast conception of nature! If you knew how pitiful your decrees are, compared to the laws of nature! In the style alone, one senses all the pettiness of your views, the drought of ideas that goes into the composition of your code. By consulting me, you would familiarize yourself with these simple & imposing forms with which nature invests everything that comes from its hands.

It is not that you have surpassed your predecessors. They were only midgets beside you; but that has not prevented you from only being children.

You sow good grain in a field of tares: civil society is like an ungrateful land, where everything degenerates.

Do you hope to be able to regenerate twenty-five million men, by adopting nearly all the germs of the corruption that has made them gangrenous? You preserve royalty & all that follows, commerce & all the base passions that invigorate it, religion & all the errors that give it existence; it is the kings & their ministers, religion & its priests, luxury & and the bad habits of which it is the father; the commanders of the army & their despotism, the mass of laws & the subterfuges that they occasion, which have reduced a whole nation to the most deplorable extremities; & you pretend to save that same nation with the same instruments that have doomed it!

While seated in this sad enclosure, you are occupied with forging new chains for me, & complicating the elements of happiness that I had been pleased to simply, so that they might be within the reach of the greatest number, ungrateful children! My provident hand never tires of spreading over you & your constituents my daily benefits. While you exhaust yourselves in sterile words, I, mighty in deeds, ensure your preservation. Children! Imitate your mother, leave behind these reforms that only emanate from new excesses, these revolutions that, in the last analysis, are only changes, & too often surfeits of the evil. Abandon the social system, & hold fast to the natural order; your decrees will share the fate of everything that issues from the exalted brains of men. It is only that which is *sanctioned* by nature that can have lasting results. I smile when I see you place such importance on your little civil regulations, & treat with an inconceivable frivolity the most holy rights & the most sacred duties of man.

It seems that you want to raise altar against altar; but I warn you against it, & I cannot repeat it too often. The decrees of the national assembly will pass away, but the laws of nature will endure eternally. You may well dream, but all your political combinations will not make man in society better & more happy; you want more than nature can provide.

I observe gradations in all the physical revolutions. I do not make cold suddenly follow heat, or light darkness: you, on the other hand, extol the charms & the advantages of liberty to men tied up in civil bonds: you recommend equality to men forced to submit to the yoke of social subordination. You have been thoughtless!

Never have I heard men so often call each other *brothers*. How is it that men, all brothers, continue, some

to serve, the others to be served? Are brothers them masters & and servants of one another?

Men have never been so often called to order, and I have never seen so little of it among the children of men.

Everywhere I hear the cry: *the nation! the nation!* Nowhere do they invoke *nature*.

Children! I had many mysteries to reveal to you. For, even in the Age of Enlightenment, it is good for you to know it: you still walk in darkness; but so many serious things concern you! You have citizen militias to discipline, departments to organize: these things have a very different importance than the operations of nature.

It was only yesterday that you learned to extract from when good that is wholesome & substantial; but you have perfected the science of government. In your wisdom, you have combined monarchy, oligarchy, aristocracy and democracy. All of these political forms are much more worthy of your meditations than the phenomena of nature.

Statuary & painting take me for a model in their compositions, & are successful only insofar as they make exact copies of me. Grave legislators! Why have you alone freed yourself from this homage that the arts render each day to nature? More than the artists, it is important for you to observe me, to study me, even to copy me.... Do not blush at this word. The faithful copyists of nature are the sublime originals of society.

We can clearly see that you have not familiarized yourselves with nature. Always enclosed in tight spaces, you live as little as you can in my presence: yet the daily image of the beauties of nature would have imbued you with my principles of simplicity & order, justice & grandeur. Your legislation still does not bear these characteristics.

Children! You are still very young: everything that has occurred on the earth is still not known to you. Well! Learn, then, or recall that, before you, beings like you, limited in their faculties, also wished to have the last word with nature, &c do more & better than her; but also know that nature, witness of the powerless efforts of these pygmies, has seen them, victims of their senseless pretensions, ruin one another, & change this globe into a place of torment, when they might simply have lived in peace.

Children! The day will come for your new laws, as it did for your ancient libraries. How many dusty books will suffer the flames in order to make room for new errors, which in their turn will give way to others newer still, & so on, & so forth, if you do not seriously decide to return to me, & adopt as your only code that of nature!

Twenty million men groaned under the rod of their king, under the rule of their priests. They have said to you, in breaking the yoke of their double slavery: We want to be free; assemble yourselves, & make us laws I accordance with our wish. What will they say when, returning to your provinces, you present themselves with the code for which they yearn, & on which they read:

Royal sanction,  
Suspensive *veto*,  
Cost of a dominant religion....  
&c.?

Alas! (they will cry dolorously) what was the point of arming ourselves: we have gained nothing from our insurrection; & in some few years, we will have need of a new crisis....

And, indeed, what febleness, for example, what spinelessness have you shown with regard to what you call *the clergy*? Children! Are you still afraid of the rule? Never was an association of men more contrary to nature than that precarious & parasitical order, which can only exist in darkness, which, after having

infected the pure sources of primitive morals (1), subjected reason itself to the yoke, & ended by sanctifying the chains of despotism? Eh! What! You hem and haw with that horde! You spare the insolent members of that monstrous hierarchy! With a single hammer-blow, you could crush that three-headed hydra: with a single decree, you could reduce this insatiable body to starvation. It seems that you fear it will perish too soon of hunger. With a breath, you could have made this imposing chimera disappear. Why don't you consult nature? I would have said to you:

Children! Filial piety is the only religion suitable for men. An invisible divinity, composed of abstractions, leaves no grip on material beings. A dominant religion, with *ex professo* priests, leads straight to poverty. Religion is a macabre alloy with good morals: nature has never *ordained* priests; but it has etched on the hearts of children this indelible precept: You shall honor your father. So have no other temple but the paternal home.

Based on the serious drawbacks that result from the corporation that you have not had the courage to entirely erase from the book of your constitution, calculate the series of obstacles that you would have to overcome, by giving the basis of your new legislation the *cornerstone* of all the previous legislations.

Even if your constitution, modeled on my invariable principles, offered a system of political economy, linked in all its parts, what salutary effects could you reasonably await on the minds & hearts of twenty-five millions individuals, of which nearly all the social customs, which you dare not touch, oppose nearly all the natural laws?

From the time that men were only men, truly nothing was easier than to keep them happy & good; then a man was absolutely the *semblable* of another man. But since men have made themselves, some masters, the others servants, some rich, the others poor, some city-dwellers, the others villagers, some priests, the others soldiers, some representatives, the others represented; they have almost nothing in common among them, & the magistrate no more resembled the officer in character than in clothes.

Now, in that struggle of the various interests that meet in the midst of all these artificial professions, which can only blossom at the expense of one another, in the mass of the contradictory ambitions of all these different states that diverge, how are we to make heard the voice of reason & and justice? & if we manage to make them heard for a moment, how would we dare flatter ourselves with preserving their sustained ascendancy? The threats of the penal code are the only dikes capable of containing for a time these floods of individuals raised up in the opposite direction. But tell me, children, when it is necessary to resort to the rod of punishment, by which name to call the men in society? & how to feel the courage to be their legislator?

The wise man who has been able to escape the influence of such a regime, pities his fellows & withdraws, far from claiming to contribute to their enrichment, which he considers impossible or at least beyond his strength. There remains to him only one single recourse,—very weak, it is true, and very slow,—that of example. As much as the civil relations that he has had to contract can allow him, he lives according to nature, within his family, & tacitly invites his fellows to imitate him.

This is the decision that you should perhaps have made, grave legislators, after solemnly declaring the physical & moral impossibility of making happy & good twenty-five million men who persist in only making up a mass composed of elements rivaling one another.

For there is perhaps not one among you who does not know that the regeneration large group of people is only what we call *Penelope's web*. Consequently, there is perhaps not one in your midst who does not act against his conscience, by occupying himself with the *great work* of society.

To shield yourself from your inadequacy, see to what miserable means you were obliged to stoop. Oaths & masses, epaulettes & sashes, knots of tri-colored ribbon & flags, sometimes red and sometimes white,



depending on the circumstances; on the one hand, you knock down some citadels, while on the other you build long walls: there, a bell calls some grave legislators to order; here, a drum sends rushing to their post some citizens who call themselves free, & who no longer have the liberty to take their steps where they wish. Everywhere I see the silk livery of civil subordination, the golden chains of social dependence; nowhere do I glimpse man left to his natural gait.

To defend themselves against a handful of irritated individuals, twenty-five million men have suddenly taken up arms & abandon them no more; & the most pleasant, the most fertile region of Europe, which should only be covered with peaceful farmers & practical habitations, transformed suddenly into a camp, is overburdened with soldiers & cannons.

And that is what is called the most superb of revolutions.

I can conceive a still finer one, more worthy especially of reasonable beings.

Children! Listen:

Since, through an unheard of convergence of circumstances, twenty-five million men came to the point of finding themselves at the mercy of a group of little monsters with human faces; & since, finally, after several centuries of servitude, these twenty-five millions again recalled their primitive independence, & were determined to return to it; here is, it seems to me, how they ought to have gone about it.

First of all, it was necessary to abandon to their own forces all these useless beings who make up the castes of the nobility & clergy, & draw back the nourishing arm that made them so free to vegetate.

Then, putting back in common everything that has been subject to divisions of a monstrous inequality, you task the representatives of what we would in the past have had the impudence to call the third order, with proceeding, in the name of nature, with a distribution proportional to the number of individuals making up each family, beginning with that of the Bourbons. The honest man that you have the weakness to recognize at this moment as *supreme leader*, would have been the first to applaud this arrangement. He would have found himself more at his ease on a farm rich in good grain than in the Louvre, peopled with suspect lackeys & questionable women. Toinette, his better half, would have become a good *housewife*, who, at the end of autumn, while arranging her fruit in the warehouse, would have had the good sense to say to herself: it is with men as with the fruits of the earth; to keep both healthy, we must take the wise precaution of placing them at a certain distance from one another. They are spoiled by contact. The human race, embodied in the nation, is the worst of all species. The human species, distributed in families that do not rub shoulders, will be incorruptible, & deserve the first place in the scale of beings.

Attentive to that revolution, the other nations of Europe, far from wanting to cause trouble among these thousands of agricultural families, would have hastened, on the contrary, to choose you for models, after having helped themselves to the thrones & all these diplomatic rags with which we have sullied for so long the august brow of nature.

Last year, your king, Louis XVI, has done himself an infinite honor by coming into your midst to pronounce himself a fine speech, which made you all cry, because it was doubtless the first time that you had heard a monarch applaud liberty.

Louis XVI would have covered himself with an even greater glory, if, when you were occupied with what you call his *civil list*, he had addressed to you this short harangue, much less ambiguous than his pretty speech:

Friends! My predecessors have not all been good kings, far from it. From my own experience, I begin to suspect that the best intentioned king is not so necessary to men, his fellows, his equals, who can very well govern themselves, since they are no longer children. So then, without disturbing you, in order to place me

in a condition appropriate to my rank, without exposing you any more to worse kings than men, let each of you go home; let each father be the king of his children alone; I want to show you an example, & that role will suit me better in every regard. So take back what I have in excess, at present I am no more than a head of household; & distribute the surplus to the fathers of families who do not have enough.—

Since Louis XVI has not been capable of that heroism (& indeed, it is too much to demand of a king), who prevented the different civilized nations of this globe from passing the word around on the day of Saturnalia, to seize the persons of their kings, to convene at the same time a general rendezvous to assemble that handful of crowned individuals, & relegate them to a small island, uninhabited, but habitable, & whose fertile soil only awaited arms & minor cultivation? They would establish a cordon of little armed launches to watch over the island of the dethroned kings, & prevent the inhabitants from escaping. The predicament of the nearly disembarked would doubtless not be slight; in order to live, each of them would be obliged to pitch in. No more servants, no more courtiers, and no more soldiers. They would all have to fend for themselves. Those half-hundred characters would perhaps not live long in peace, & the human race, a calm spectator, would have the satisfaction of seeing itself delivered from its tyrants by their own hands. It is only from that moment that the nations of the earth could date the era of their independence.

One of the insurmountable obstacles to that regeneration that you seem to have your heart set on, is your persistence in keeping a king. Know that, even when your Louis XVI joined in his person all the marvelous attributes that your imagination supposes in your divinities, you would still be foolish to salute him as your monarch. Remember that liberty has never been able to look a king in the eye. Remember that a nation subject to a king is not free, & cannot become free, whatever the political ties with which the prince has let himself be bound. A king is the scarecrow of liberty. The court is for nature & liberty what a house of prostitution is for a self-respecting virgin. No manners under the malign influence of the courts; no liberty without the reign of manners; & besides, why permit the duplication? What will you do with a king? Don't you have the president of your assembly? Why let him go and tell another to execute what he could just as well arrange himself? And, furthermore, don't you sense all the advantages that there would be for you to change your leader every fortnight? What savings would not result? No more civil list, no more domain! How much would the dignity of man be lifted, if each individual in a vast empire could claim in his turn the first place, without holding it by chance of birth!

I do not love kings, and I love the rich even less. The inequality of goods is still more odious to me than the inequality of ranks, & yet you have made of it the chain that links all the parts of civil society. Children! I say this to you in truth: as long as you tolerate rich & poor among you, you will never be done with your own regeneration. It is not that I advise the poor, in the present regime, to hurl themselves against the rich. I have permitted violence & lawless acts to the animals, who only have brute instinct. But couldn't men, whom I have endowed with an instinct capable of perfection, come to an amicable arrangement among themselves? Will the rich, once clearly persuaded that they are at the mercy of the poor, who are far more numerous than they are, & that they will never have peaceful enjoyments, be such enemies of their own rest & interests, not to consent to a new, more equal division? Without this division, without a distribution of the human species in isolated families, drawn together only by the link of humanity, & each living in their own domain, children! It is I who say it to you, do not hope for a regeneration; you will only make a lot of noise. Liberty is a chimera for men in society; they will only enjoy the reality under a more natural regime; for you must know that liberty & nature are two inseparable things; we can obtain nothing of the one without appealing to the other: they only want one single altar.

I say it to you again: the revolution has not been accomplished; it will not be finished as long as you

remain in the circle of the same ideas, of which only the nuances will have changed. You have created political liberty; but have you abolished domestic servitude? You decree the abolition of the nobility, but you preserve the respective states of the poor & rich, of masters & and their servants: you forbid a coat of arms to the first, you unburden the second of their liveries; but these distinctions are only simulacra; you do not alter the realities.

If the elimination of all these social monstrosities is beyond your means, then admit your inadequacy, & do not believe in a revolution.

After that, dare then to summon liberty within the walls of the towns. Do you hope that it will resolve to share your chains & your prisons? Do you flatter yourself that you will fix it in your midst? Liberty is not or is no longer nature. Its name shines in vain on your helmets, on your flags: the love of liberty is not in your hearts, as long as you are happy in the quarters of the slaves.

Incidentally, don't you know that liberty wants an exclusive worship; it wants to be loved for itself, & is outraged to be treated as a new fashion.

Children!... You must be a man in order to be free. So you will not do it, as long as, given over to childishness, you do not elevate yourselves to that character of nobility & simplicity, which befits independence. Liberty is a wholly natural thing, which should not inspire this mad enthusiasm by which you have been carried off. One would say, to see you, that you enjoy a treasure that does not belong to you; it seems that you taste the forbidden fruit.

Why all these solemn moves, these religious consecrations, these federative pacts in the honor of liberty? Does the child, in order to love his mother, need to swear? & isn't it as natural to be a free man as to be a good son?

You swear to live & die free, as if it was possible not to wish it. How petty is all this ceremony! How little suffused with your independence you seem to be! All this rattling of arms only announce the changeability of your character. All these artillery discharges prove only that the noise amuses you, & that is all.

Must there not be some quackery on your part? For you cannot conceal from yourselves that of the twenty-five million men that you represent, there are very few individuals prepared for the regeneration that you contemplate, & capable of the virtues that liberty presupposes.

The men who make up the *people* (2), only appear good for slavery. Liberty is not happy in the crowd; it disavows these debased beings who rub shoulders in the intersections of your towns; it sees there only vile mercenaries who compete for their existence with other animals. A bit of ease is required to appreciate the fruits of liberty, & to be enamored of its charms. The tatters of misery, like the liveries of luxury, are repulsive to liberty; it loves to find among its partisans the comforts of a sweet mediocrity: in a region where three quarters of the inhabitants only live on the cast-off scraps of the other fourth, where nine hundred thousand wretches bear the burdens of the day alone, paid by one hundred thousand of their fellows, themselves giving way under the burden of boredom, where the poor are at the beck & call of the rich: in such a country, what is that proud independence for which I have brought all men into the world, without distinction, but a vain word, a cruel & revolting mockery? Sad humans! In the midst of your charity workshops, deep within your cadaverous hospitals, in the muck of your public markets, under the walls of your flourishing & corrupt cities, sing hymns to liberty.

While awaiting the rising of your master, offer a canticle to liberty, you who have become the servant of your fellow, the coachman of your fellow, the cook of your fellow, the hairdresser of your fellow.

While awaiting the rising of the rich, sing, honest pauper, on his doorstep, a hymn to fraternal equality.

Repeat a canticle to liberty, honest but poor girl, who has become the companion of an imperious Messalina.

In these civil dens of base acts & crimes, of waste & poverty, wise representatives! raise then the voice of reason: in the public squares, in the temples, proclaim the rights of men; boast of the advantages & charms of liberty. Who will profit from your labors? Those, those alone, & in very small numbers, who did not need a free constitution to make themselves independent. Would the rest be able to hear you? And if the rabble of the citizenry, which is to say nearly the totality, could, could they profit from it & put it into practice?

The valet attentive to his meticulous service.

The worker diligently as his task.

The merchant calculating his profits & losses.

The carter who never rests.

The gardener penetrating deep into the earth, in order to obtain its first fruits.

The soldier chained to his orders & barracks.

The sailor tied to his mast.

The roofer hanging from the roof of your home.

The unfortunate man covered with the filth of a sewer entrusted to his care, &c.

In short, nine-tenths of the unfortunate humans who reproach themselves for the half hour that they give to their frugal meals. Where will they find the time, the unfortunate! to give themselves the prior instruction necessary to the understanding of your numerous decrees, which are not all masterpieces of clarity?

Ah! Is it not then for them that liberty has been recaptured, & proclaimed with so much pomp, with so much clamor, from the heart of the capital to the smallest of hamlets? And when they understand the whole extent of this great benefit, could they enjoy it? Does not the daily chain of renewed needs that squeezes them, proscribe for them every rapid advance and every moment of introspection?

I have conceived another order of things that would leave men the time & means to apply reason to their pleasures, to set their rights & their duty firmly in their minds.

The man in an isolated family, proprietor of a field, vast enough to feed a hundred individuals of the same blood, would divide his day between work & rest, occupied with himself & those close to him. A demanding & monotonous chore would not shrink his brain, would not diminish the intellectual faculties, & would not take from him all his time: there would remain time for him to reflect to himself, & to familiarize himself with my simple & sufficient laws.

But the immense flock of men that you represent, having multiplied its labors by multiplying the relations that necessarily result from a large & complicated association, corrupted by a close cohabitation, by a coalition subject to a thousand deplorable accidents, find neither the time nor the means to even slow the progress of the corruption in the heart of which it stagnates.

Children! You know all of that, & yet you have pursued your political labors with no less assurance. I do not understand you, but I foresee the result.

You will soon be obliged to agree with me. That marvelous revolution that has electrified you all is only one necessary, inevitable event, one point on the circle that any great mass of men must travel, a change of position, the only advantage that one could reasonably hope for from a state of things too distant from nature to be favorable & permanent.

With the memory of what has been, of what your fathers have done, could you reasonably flatter

yourselves with improving the lot of your contemporaries & of future generations?

How you are to be pitied, if you are in good faith! If you are not, how culpable you are!

I perceive that my harangue does not produce the effect on your minds that I should have had the right to expect. Some smile scornfully, others wrinkle their brows; these show impatience, those, few in numbers, acknowledge, deep down, the truth of my words; but they would not dare to proclaim my principles on the platform.

Ungrateful & ill-bred children! I would be more than avenged by abandoning you to your own forces. Farewell.

*Mother Nature addresses the Galleries.*

And you, my other children! who from the height of these galleries give a sustained attention to all that is said at the rostrum, that is enough time wasted. Go home as well, well convinced that you know by yourselves all that is necessary for you to live lives that are happy & good. Listen! In three words, here is the charter of the human race:

Child,  
Husband  
& Father:  
Filial piety,  
Conjugal tenderness,  
Paternal care.

All your duties, all your pleasures, all your rights are contained in these three words.

Morals, worship, legislation, everything that constitutes man at all times, in all places, are in these three words.

There is nothing short of that, nothing beyond: we have said everything when we have pronounced these three words; we have done everything when we have fulfilled their meaning; everything that has been imagined in addition, is not worth the trouble of guarding against.

We are only born to pass successively through three states: we have lived as happy, we die as satisfied as possible, when we have fulfilled these three roles well.

It is not at all necessary for men to assemble by the thousands, to elect a leader, to imagine a public code & creed, to build cities, &c.

Without leaving the paternal home, man finds everything he requires to be born, live & die.

We must have no other distinctions among men than those of sex,  
of age  
& of family.

The distinction of age necessitates the obedience of children to their father, & the sovereignty of the father over the children.

The distinction of the sexes motivates the protection of the stronger, or of the male, accorded to the weaker, or to the female, & the deference of the weaker to the stronger.

The distinction of family prevents men from living pell-mell, & forms them into small groups, each united by links of the same blood, & distributed equally over all the points of the globe.

Nothing is less complicated than this natural regime of the human species; it stays between the savage state & civil state, between man barely sketched, & man already degenerate.

Man is only destined to be husband,  
father,

son,  
brother,  
& friend.

What is there in common between the duties attached to these names and the artificial relations designated under the bizarre titles of

representative or represented,  
voter or candidate,  
prince — people,  
master — servant,  
rich — poor,  
magistrate — soldier,  
priest — layman,  
foreigner — citizen ?

Child, husband & father.

Man always begins with this, & he must return to it.

You have no other destination.

These are the *three aims* of man.

Man is only truly man from one of these three points of view. He has only received the intelligence & organization that is necessary for that. Woe to him, if he misunderstands his strengths enough to form other ambitions!

I have traced for him this sort of triangle, from which he does not step with impunity. Be, I have told him: a good son,

a good husband,

a good father,

& I will take care of the rest. As long as you will be just that, I will be with you; but I warn you: I will abandon you to your own forces, if you carry your views outside these three lines, well proportioned for your character. From the moment that you cross them, crime & misfortune await you beyond.

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Notes:

(1) We mix religion and morals, as we throw spices on the meat of a man with a jaded palate.

(2) *People* is here a synonym for a *great mass of men*.

## Sylvain Maréchal, “The Desert Island” (1788)

In the opening pages of Sylvain Maréchal’s play, *The Last Judgment of Kings*, we find the following notice:

*The idea for this play is taken from the following Apologue, part of the Lessons for the Eldest Son of a King, a philosophical work by the same author, published at the beginning of 1789, and put on the Index by the Police.*

In those days, returned from the court, very tired, a visionary gave himself up to sleep, & dreamed that all the peoples of the earth, on the day of the Saturnalia, gave each other the word to seize the persons of their kings, each on their side. They agreed at the same time on a general rendezvous, to gather this handful of crowned individuals, & to relegate them to a small, uninhabited, but habitable island, the fertile soil of which awaited only arms & a light cultivation. A cordon of small armed launches was established to watch over the island, and to prevent its new settlers from leaving it. The predicament of the new arrivals was not slight. They began by stripping themselves of all their royal ornaments, which embarrassed them; it was necessary that each one, to live, pitch in & do their part. No more valets, no more courtiers, no more soldiers. They had to do everything on their own. Those fifty characters did not live long in peace; & the human race, a quiet spectator, had the satisfaction of being delivered from its tyrants by their own hands.

But readers of *Mother Nature on the Stand before the National Assembly* will also recognize the scenario from that work:

Since Louis XVI has not been capable of that heroism (& indeed, it is too much to demand of a king), who prevented the different civilized nations of this globe from passing the word around on the day of Saturnalia, to seize the persons of their kings, to convene at the same time a general rendezvous to assemble that handful of crowned individuals, & relegate them to a small island, uninhabited, but habitable, & whose fertile soil only awaited arms & minor cultivation? They would establish a cordon of little armed launches to watch over the island of the dethroned kings, & prevent the inhabitants from escaping. The predicament of the nearly disembarked would doubtless not be slight; in order to live, each of them would be obliged to pitch in. No more servants, no more courtiers, and no more soldiers. They would all have to fend for themselves. Those half-hundred characters would perhaps not live long in peace, & the human race, a calm spectator, would have the satisfaction of seeing itself delivered from its tyrants by their own hands. It is only from that moment that the nations of the earth could date the era of their independence.

THE LAST JUDGMENT OF KINGS,

PROPHECY IN ONE ACT, IN PROSE,

BY P. SYLVAIN MARÉCHAL,

Performed in the *Théâtre de la République*, in the month *Vendémiaire* and the days following.

*Tandem!...*

AT PARIS,

From the printing shop of C.-F. PATRIS, Printer of the Committee, Rue du Faubourg St.-Jacques,  
at the ci-devant Dames Ste.-Marie.

The second year of the French Republic, one and indivisible.

NOTICE

*to the directors of spectacles in the departments.*

The author, undersigned, reserves the rights that a decree of the national convention secures for him, over the presentations of his play, by the different theaters of the republic.

*Note.* The passages of the play marked with quotation marks are not recited in the Theater.



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THE AUTHOR OF  
THE LAST JUDGMENT OF KINGS,  
*To the audience of the first performance of this piece.*

Citizens, recall how, in the past, in all the theaters they debased, degraded and shamefully ridiculed the most respectable classes of the sovereign people, in order to make the kings and their court valets laugh. I thought that it was past time to return the favor, and to amuse ourselves in turn. So many times these *gentlemen* have had the laughter on their side; I thought it was the moment render them up to public ridicule, and thus to parody a happy verse from the comedy of the *Méchant*:

The kings are here below for our little pleasures.

Gresset.

That is the reason for the somewhat *charged* scenes of the *Last Judgment of Kings*.  
(Extract from Prud'homme's newspaper, *Révolutions de Paris, de Prud'homme*, XVII, page 109, in-8°.)

[...]

**THE LAST JUDGMENT OF KINGS,  
PROPHECY IN ONE ACT.**

*The theater represents the interior of an island, half volcanic. At the back, or upstage, a mountain shoots out small flames from time to time, throughout the action, until the end.*

*On one of the sides, downstage, some trees shade a shack, sheltered behind a large, white rock, on which can be read this inscription, drawn with charcoal:*

For a neighbor, it is better to have  
a volcano than a king.  
Liberty . . . . Equality.

*Below it are several figures. A stream cascades down, and flows around the side of the thatched hut.*

*On the other side, the view of the sea.*

*The sun rises from behind the white rock during monologue of the old man, who adds a number to those already drawn by him.*

**SCENE I.**

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THE OLD MAN. (*He counts.*)

1, 2, 3 . . . 19, 20. Today, then, it has been precisely twenty years since I was transported to this desert island. The despot who signed my banishment is perhaps dead now... Over there, in my poor homeland, they believe me burned up by the volcano, or torn by the teeth of some ferocious beast, or eaten by cannibals. Thus far, the volcano, the carnivorous animals and the savages seem to have respected the victim of a king...

My good friends are slow to come, but the sun is up!... What is this that I see?... These are not ordinary dinghies... A launch!... It approaches, driven by oars. Whites... Europeans!... If it was my compatriots, the

French... Perhaps they are coming to search for me... The tyrant will be dead; and his successor, in order to make himself popular, as is the practice at all ascensions to the throne, will have pardoned some innocent victims of the previous reign... I want no clemency from a despot: I would remain, I would die on this volcanic island, rather than return to the continent, at least as long as there are kings and priests.

Hidden behind this rock, I must learn what everyone intends here.

## SCENE II.

Twelve or fifteen SANS-CULOTTES, one from each nation of Europe. (*They disembark.*)

The FRENCH SANS-CULOTTE.

Let's see if this island is suited to our purpose. It is the third that we have visited: it appears to have been volcanic, and to be active still. So much the better! The globe will instead be rid of all the crowned brigands which whose deportation we have been entrusted.

The ENGLISH.

It seems to me that they will do very well here. The hand of nature will hasten to ratify, to sanction the judgment passed by the sans-culottes on the kings, these villains who have for so long been privileged and unpunished.

The SPANISH.

Let them experience here all the torments of hell, in which they do not believe and which they made the priests, their accomplices, preach to us, in order to nous *embêter* us.

The FRENCH.

Comrades! This island seems to be inhabited... Do you see these footprints?

The SARDINIAN.

At the entrance of this cavern, here are some freshly harvested fruits.

The FRENCH.

My friends! Hey, come! Come and read:

*For a neighbor, it is better to have a volcano than a king.*

Several SANS-CULOTTES *together*.

Bravo! Bravo!

The FRENCH *continues to read*.

*Liberty . . . Equality.*

There is some martyr here from the old regime. A fortunate encounter!

The ENGLISH.

Oh! how very well we have been sent! The one who groans in this place does not expect to find his liberators today.

The FRENCH.

The poor unfortunate knows nothing; he would be dead, without learning of the liberty of his country.

The GERMAN.

And of all of Europe. He must not be far off: let us seek him; let us be one step ahead.

The FRENCH.

I look forward to meeting him! He is doubtless one of ours; and, judging by the holy names that he has traced on that rock, he is worthy of the great Revolution, since he has been able to foresee it at this end of the world.

### SCENE III.

THE PREVIOUS ACTORS and the OLD MAN.

Several Sans-culottes *at once*.

Good old man!... venerable old man!... What are you doing here?

The OLD MAN.

Frenchmen!... Oh, happy day!... It has been so long since I have seen Frenchmen!... My friends! My children! What do you seek?... But above all, a shipwreck has perhaps cast you on this shore; are you in need of food? I have nothing to offer but this fruit, and the water from that spring. My hut is too small to contain you all at once. I did not expect such numerous and such good company.

The FRENCH.

Grandfather, we are in need of nothing. We only need to hear you, to know your story; afterwards, we will tell you ours.

The OLD MAN.

Here it is, briefly: I am French, born in Paris. I lived in a small estate beside the park of Versailles. One day, the hunt passed on my side; the stag was chased nearly into my garden. The king and all his entourage entered my house. My daughter, tall and beautiful, was noticed by all these *gentlemen* of the court. The next day, one of them took her from me... I raced to the castle to demand my daughter; I was mocked: I was rebuffed: I was chased out. I was not put off: tears in my eyes, I threw myself at the feet of the king as he passed. Someone said a word in his ear regarding me; he laughed in my face, and gave the order that I be removed. My poor wife obtained no more; she died of sorrow. I returned to the castle. I *compte* my sorrow to everyone. No one wanted to get involved. "I demand to speak to the queen;" I grasped her by the robe, as she came out of her apartment. "Ah!" she said, "it is that annoying character. When will you be forbidden from my presence?" I presented myself to the ministers; I raised my tone; I spoke as a man, as a father. One of them, a prelate, made no response; but he made a sign. I was arrested at the entrance to his audience; they plunged me into a dungeon, from which I was released only to be cast in the hold of a ship that, *en passant*, left me on this island, precisely twenty years ago. That, my friends, is my adventure.

The FRENCH SANS-CULOTTE.

Listen in your turn, and learn that you have been well avenged. To tell everything would take too long. Here is the essential point: Dear old man! You have before you a representative of each of the nations of Europe, now free and republican: for you must know that there are no more kings in Europe.

The OLD MAN.

Is it really true? Could it be possible?... You toy with a poor old man.

The FRENCH SANS-CULOTTE.

The true sans-culottes honor old age, and are not amused by it... as the dull courtiers of Versailles, Saint-James, Madrid and Vienna used to be.

The OLD MAN.

What! There are no more kings in Europe?...

A SANS-CULOTTE.

You will see them all disembark here; they follow us (in their turn, as you have been,) deep in the hold of a little armed frigate, which we precede in order to prepare their lodgings. You will see them all here, with one exception.

The OLD MAN.

And why that exception? One of them has never been better than the others.

The SANS-CULOTTE.

“You are right... *except for one*, because we have guillotined him.

The OLD MAN.

“*Guillotined!*... what do you mean?...

The SANS-CULOTTE.

“We will explain that and much more:” we have cut off his head, in accordance with the law.

The OLD MAN.

So the French have become men!

The SANS-CULOTTE.

Free men. In a word, France is a republic in the strongest sense of the term.... The French people have risen up. They have said: *We want no more kings*; and the throne has disappeared. More, they have said: *I want a republic*, and, *voilà* we are all republicans!

The OLD MAN.

I would never have dared dream of such a revolution: but I understand it. I have always thought, to myself, that the people, as powerful as the God that is preached to them, have only to want it... How happy I

am to have lived long enough to learn of such a great event! Ah! my friends! My brothers, my children! Am enraptured!...

But thus far you have only spoken of France; and, it seems to me, if I heard you well at first, that all Europe has been delivered from the contagion of kings...?

The GERMAN.

The example of France has born fruit: it has not been without exertion. All of Europe was in league against them, not the people, but the monsters who impudently call themselves their *sovereigns*. They have armed all their slaves; they have made use of all the means to dissolve that nucleus of liberty that Paris had formed. At first, they disgracefully slandered that generous nation that had first done justice to their king: they wanted to moderate it, to federalize it, to starve it, or even better to enslave it, to repel forever the men of the régime of independence. But through contemplating the sacred principles of the French Revolution, through reading the sublimes traits, the heroic virtues to which it has given rise, the other nations said to themselves: But, we are well duped to let ourselves be led to the butcher's shop like sheep, or to let ourselves be led on the leash like hunting dogs in bull-baiting. Let us fraternize instead with our elders in reason, in liberty. As a result, each section of Europe sent to Paris some brave sans-culottes, tasked with representing them. there, in that assembly of all the nations, they agreed that, on a certain day, all of Europe would rise up en masse,... and would emancipate itself.. In fact, a general and simultaneous insurrection broke out among all the nations of Europe; and each of them had their July 14 and October 5, 1789, their August 10 and September 21, 1792, they May 31 and June 2, 1793. We will teach you about these eras, the most astonishing in all of history.

The OLD MAN.

What marvels!... For the moment, satisfy my impatient curiosity on a single point. I hear you all repeat the name *Sans-Culotte*; what does this singular and biting expression mean?

The FRENCH SANS-CULOTTE.

That is for me to tell: A sans-culotte is a free man, a patriot *par excellence*. The masses of the true people, always good, always healthy and sane, is made up of sans-culottes. They are pure citizens, all close to need, who eat their bread by the sweat of their brow, who love work, who are good sons, good fathers, good husbands, good relations, good friends, good neighbors, but who are as jealous of their rights as of their duties. To date, for lack of understanding, they had only been blind and passive instruments in the hands of the vicious,—of the kings, the nobles, the priests, the egoists, the aristocrats, the men of state, the federalists, all people whose maxims and crimes we will explain to you, wise and unfortunate old man. Charged with all the maintenance of the hive, the sans-culottes no longer wish to suffer from now on, either above or among them, cowardly and destructive, arrogant and parasitic hornets.

The OLD MAN *with enthusiasm*.

My brother, my children, and I too am a sans-culotte!

The ENGLISH *takes up the tale*.

“So, on the same day, each nation declared itself a republic and established a free government. But at the same time they proposed to organize a *European Convention*, which was held at Paris, capital of Europe. The

first act proclaimed there was the Last Judgment of the Kings already detained in the prisons of their castles. They have been condemned to deportation to a desert island, where they will be kept in custody under the responsibility and control of a little flotilla that each republic will, in its turn, keep afloat until the death of the last of these monsters.”

The OLD MAN.

But tell me, please, why you have gone to the trouble of bring these kings here. It would have been more expedient to hang them all, at the same hour, beneath the porticos of their palaces.

The FRENCH SANS-CULOTTE.

No, no! their torment would be too mild and would be finished too soon: it would not have fulfilled the intended purpose. It has seemed more suitable to offer Europe the spectacle of its tyrants help in a menagerie and devouring one another, no longer being about to satisfy their rage on the brave sans-culottes that they had dared to call their *subjects*. It is good to leave them the leisure to reproach one another for their crimes, and to punish one another with their own hands. Such is the solemn and final judgment pronounced against them, unanimously, which we have come across these oceans to execute.

The OLD MAN.

I yield.

A SANS-CULOTTE.

Now that you are nearly up to date, tell us, fine old man, does this island, which you have inhabited for twenty years, seem proper to you for depositing our cargo of bad merchandise?

The OLD MAN.

My friends, this island is not inhabited. When I was cast ashore here, it was morning; I would not encounter another living being during the whole course of the day; in the evening, a pirogue anchored in this little harbor. From it came several families of savages, of whom I was afraid at first. I had not done them justice: they soon dispelled my fears with a hospitable welcome, and promised to bring me, each evening, some fruit and something from their hunting or fishing: for they came each day, at the fall of night, to this island, in order to render religious worship to the volcano that you can see. “Without challenging their belief, I invited them to at least divide their homage between the volcano and the sun. they did not fail to return at dawn, the third day following, in order to see the phenomenon that I had announced to them, and to which they had paid no attention in their smoke-filled huts. I placed them on this white rock; I made them contemplate the rising of the sun up out of the ocean in all its pomp: this spectacle held them in ecstasy. Since that moment, there has not been a week that they have not come to worship the rising sun.” Since that moment as well, they have regarded and treated me as their father, their physician, their advisor; and, thanks to them, I have lacked nothing in this uncultured solitude. Once they wanted quite seriously to recognize me as their king; I explained to them, as best I could, my adventures, and they swore to me that they would never have any kings, nor any priests.

I believe that this island will perfectly suit your intentions; all the more so, since for some weeks the crater of the volcano has been growing steadily, and seems to threaten an imminent eruption. It would be better for it to erupt on the crowned heads than on those of my good neighbors, the savages, or of my

brothers, the brave sans-culottes.

A SANS-CULOTTE.

Comrades, what do you say? I think that he his right. Let us signal the fleet to come join us here, and let it vomit up the poisons with which it is laden.

The OLD MAN.

I catch sight of my good neighbors; lower your pikes, in a sign of fraternity; you will see them lay their bows at your feet. I do not know their language and they do not know ours. But the heart knows no country: we communicate by gestures and we understand each other perfectly.

*Some savage families emerge from their canoes. The old man presents them to the sans-culottes of Europe. They fraternize; they embrace: the old man climbs the white rock and pays homage to the sun for the fruit that has been brought by the savages in skillfully crafted wicker baskets.*

*After the ceremony, the old man converses with them through gestures and briefs them.*

*The kings disembark: they enter the scene one by one, scepters in hand, royal cloaks on their shoulders, golden crowns on their head, and at their necks a long iron chain, the end of which is held by a sans-culotte.*

#### SCENE IV.

#### THE PREVIOUS ACTORS, SAVAGE FAMILIES.

The OLD MAN.

Braves sans-culottes, these savages are our elders in liberty, for they have never had kings. Born free, they live and die as they were born.

#### SCENE V.

#### THE PREVIOUS ACTORS, THE KINGS OF EUROPE.

A GERMAN SANS-CULOTTE, *leading the emperor, who enters first.*

Make way for his majesty, the emperor... He only lacked the time and genius to perpetrate all of the crimes committed by the house of Austria, and to bring to their height the evils that Joseph II and Antoinette wished for and committed against France. Scourge of his neighbors, he was also the scourge of his neighbors, whose population and finances he has exhausted. He let agriculture languish, hindered commerce, enchained thought. (*Shaking his chain.*) Not having been able to have the main share in the partition of Poland, he wanted to compensate for it by ravaging the borders of a nation whose enlightenment and energy he dreaded. False friend, perfidious ally, doing evil for its own sake. He is a monster.

FRANCIS II.

Pardon me; I am not as monstrous as you appear to believe. It is true that Lorraine tempted me. But hasn't France been too happy to buy peace and order at the price of a province? Hasn't it enough already? Besides, if someone is to blame, it is old Kaunitz, who abused my youth and my inexperience: it is Cobourg; it is Brunswick.

THE GERMAN. (*He releases him.*)

Speak your ugly soul, your wicked heart... End your life here, separated forever from the human species, which you and your fellows have for too long subjected to shame and torment.

AN ENGLISH SANS-CULOTTE *leading the king of England by a length of chain.*

Here is his majesty, the king of England, who, aided by the machiavellian genius of M. Pitt, squeezed the purse of the English people and further increased the burden of the public debt in order to organize in France civil war, anarchy, famine and, finally, federalism, which is worse than all those.

GEORGE.

I was not in my right mind, and you know it. Do you punish a madman? You put him in a hospital.

The ENGLISH, *releasing him.*

The volcano will render justice.

A PRUSSIAN SANS-CULOTTE.

Here is his majesty the king of Prussia: like the duke of Hanover, a destructive and shifty beast, the dupe of the charlatans, the executioner of good people and free men.

WILLIAM.

The manner in which you act towards me is a complete injustice. For in the end you should know me: I never had the military genius of my uncle; I concerned myself much more with the Illuminati as with the French. If my soldier have done a bit of evil, it has been well repaid. So things are even: as many killed as wounded, on one side of the other, and all is offset.

THE PRUSSIAN.

Those are indeed the sentiments and the language of a king. Monster! Atone here for all the blood that you have made flow on the plains of Champagne, before Lille and Mayence.

A SPANISH SANS-CULOTTE.

Here is his majesty, the king of Spain. He is indeed of the blood of the Bourbons: see how foolishness, false devotion and despotism are stamped on his royal features.

CHARLES.

I admit it. I am only a fool, whom the priests and my wife have always led around by the nose; so pardon me.

A SANS-CULOTTE OF NAPLES.

Here is the crowned hypocrite of Naples. A few more years, and he would have ravaged more of Europe than Mount Vesuvius, which stands at his door.

FERDINAND, king of Naples.

Volcano for volcano... Would you leave me here! I was the last to join forces. It was necessary, in the



end, that I rank myself in the party of my brothers the kings. Should I not have howled with the wolves?

A SARDINIAN SANS-CULOTTE.

Here, in this box, is his sleeping majesty: Vittorio Amadeo Maria of Savoy, king of the groundhogs. More stupid than them, when he wanted to play the bad man; but we have quickly put him back in his box. Amadeo, hurry back to sleep. I greatly fear that the volcano will not allow you to get your six months of slumber

THE KING OF SARDINIA *exiting his box, yawning and rubbing his eyes.*

I am hungry... Ah! ah! where is my chaplain to say my *Benedicite*.

THE SARDINIAN.

Say rather *your graces*... Go! (*pushing him*) that is what they are good for, all these kings; to drink, to eat, to sleep, what they cannot do evil.

A RUSSIAN SANS-CULOTTE.

(*Catherine steps on stage, walking briskly, with long strides.*)

Go on, then! You put on airs, I think... Here is her Imperial Majesty, the Tsarina of all the Russias; otherwise, the Lady of the Imperial Stride; or, if you prefer, *Catau*, the Semiramis of the North: a woman above her sex, for she never knew the virtues nor modesty. Without morals and without shame, "she was the murderer of her husband, in order not to have a companion on the throne, and to have no lack of them in her impure bed."

A POLISH SANS-CULOTTE.

You, Stanislaus Augustus, King of Poland, let's go and quick! Carry the train of your mistress *Catau*, whose jackslave you were so constantly.

A SANS-CULOTTE, *holding in his hands the ends of several chains, attached to the necks of several kings.*

Hold on! Here is the bottom of the barrel. It is the small-fry, who do not merit the honor of being named.

*The old man serves as intermediary for the savages, before whom the kings pass in review. He translates, for them, in sign language, what is said as the kings appear on stage. The savages give, in turn, signs of astonishment and indignation.*

A SANS-CULOTTE OF ROME, *leading the Pope.*

On your knees, crowned scoundrels! To receive the benediction of the holy father: for there is but one priest capable of pardoning your crimes, of which he was the accomplice and devious agent. Eh! In what odious plot have the priests and their chief not taken part? In what criminal intrigue have they not played a role? It is this triple-crowned monster, who, underhandedly, prompted a murderous crusade against the French, as in other times his predecessors had counseled one against the Saracens. After the kings, the priests are those who have done the most evil to the world and to the human species.

Blessings, immortal blessings to the French people, who first among the recalled the patriotism of Brutus and unmasked the *tartufferie* of the soothsayers. The French made the Romans blush at the incense

with that they debased themselves at the feet of a priest in the capitol, the same where the ambitious Caesar was stabbed by virtuous, republican hands.

THE POPE.

Ah! ah! you are too unkind... Cite a single one of my predecessors who has shown as much moderation as me. Following their example, I could well have proscribed the whole kingdom of France...

THE FRENCH SANS-CULOTTE *interrupts him.*

Say "the republic..."

THE POPE.

Well, the republic it is! The republic.

I could have called the vengeance of heaven down on the heads of all the French; I was content to raise against them all the powers of the earth. Could a priest do less? Listen; spare me, and for all the rest of my life I will pray to God for the sans-culottes.

THE ROMAN SANS-CULOTTE.

No, no, no! we want no more prayers from a priest: the God of the sans-culottes is liberty, it is equality, it is fraternity! You do not know and you have never known those gods. Go instead and exorcise the volcano which must soon punish you and avenge us.

A FRENCH SANS-CULOTTE, *after lining up all the kings in a semi-circle, and before leaving them:*

Crowned monsters! You should each have died a thousand deaths on the scaffold: but where could we have found the executions who would consent to soil their hands with your vile, corrupted blood? We abandon you to your remorse, or rather to your helpless rage.

Yet here are the authors of all our troubles! Future generations, could you believe it! Here are those who held, who so careless held the destinies of Europe in their hands. It is to serve this handful of cowardly brigands, for the good pleasure of these crowned crooks, that the blood of a million, of two million men, the worst of whom was worth more than them all, has been spilled on almost all points of the continent and across the seas. It is in the name or by the order of this score of ferocious animals that entire provinces have been devastated, crowded cities changed into heaps of corpses and ash, countless families violated, stripped naked and reduced to famine. This infamous group of political assassins has held great nations in check, and has turned against one another peoples made to be friends and born to be brothers. Here they are, these butchers in times of war, these corruptors of the human species in times of peace. It is from within the courts of these filthy beings that the contagion of all the vices has been exhaled into all the cities and over our countryside. Has there ever existed a nation having a king and morals at the same time?

THE POPE.

There were no morals in Rome!...

The cardinals have no morals!...

THE FRENCH SANS-CULOTTE.

And these ogres found eulogists and supporters! The priests gave to their God only the remains of the

incense that they burned at the feet of the prince; « and slaves laden with cloth of gold, strutted and thought themselves important when they said: *the king, my master...*» More that a hundred million men have obeyed these plats tyrants, and trembled pronouncing their names with a holy respect. It was to procure pleasures for these man-eaters that the people, from morning to night, and from the year's beginning until it end, worked, sweat and wore themselves out. Future races! Will you forgive your good ancestors this excess of debasement, stupidity and forgetfulness of self? Nature, hasten to finish the wok of the sans-culottes; breathe your fiery breath on these dregs of society and return the kings, forever, to the void from which they should never have emerged.

Consign there as well the first among us who from now on would pronounce the word *king* without accompanying it with the imprecations that the idea attached to that infamous word naturally suggests to every republican mind.

As for me, I pledge to strike straightaway from the book of free men anyone who would, in my presence, sully the air with an expression that would tend to speak favorably about a king, or about any other monstrosity of that sort. Comrades, let's all swear it, and re-embark.

THE SANS-CULOTTES *exiting*.

We swear it!... Long live liberty! Long live the republic!

SCENE VI.  
THE KINGS OF EUROPE.

FRANCIS II.

How they treat us, good God! With what indignity! And what will become of us?

WILLIAM.

O my dear Cagliostro, why aren't you here? You would get us out of this fix.

GEORGE.

I doubt it. What do you think, holy father? You held him prisoner for a long time in the Castel Sant'Angelo.

BRASCHI OR THE POPE.

He could do nothing about all this. We need something supernatural.

THE KING OF SPAIN.

Ah! Holy father, a little miracle.

THE POPE.

That time has passed... Where are the good old days when saints flew through the air astride a staff?

THE KING OF SPAIN.

Oh, my relation! Oh, Louis XVI! It is still you who has had the best fate. A bad half-hour is soon passed! At present, you have no need of anything. Here, we lack everything: we are between famine and hell. It is

you François and William, who attract all this to us. I have always thought that this French revolution, sooner or later, would play a dirty trick on us. We should not have got mixed up in it at all, not at all.

WILLIAM.

It suits you well, lord of Spain, to accuse us. Was it not your usual tardiness that has doomed us? If you had assisted us, that would have been it for France.

CATHERINE.

As for me, I am going to sleep in this cave. Instead of quarrelling, who would like to follow me?... Stanislaus, won't you come and keep me company?

THE KING OF POLAND.

Old Catau, look at yourself in that fountain.

CATHERINE.

You have not always been so proud.

THE EMPEROR .

Cursed Frenchman!

THE KING OF SPAIN.

These sans-culottes, whom we despised so much at first, have however accomplished their intention. Why didn't I make a fine *auto-da-fé*, to serve as an example to others?

THE POPE.

Why did I not excommunicate them in 1789? We have held back too much, spared too many.

THE KING OF NAPLES.

All these reflection are fine, but they come a bit too late. We are in the galley and we must row: above all, we must eat; let us occupy ourselves, first of all, with fishing, hunting or tilling.

THE EMPEROR .

It would be a find thing to see the Emperor of the House of Austria scratch the earth in order to live.

THE KING OF SPAIN.

Would you rather draw lots to see which of us will serve as feed for the other?

THE POPE.

We do not even have enough to make the miracle of the multiplication of loaves! That does not surprise me. We have schismatics here.

CATHERINE.

It is doubtless to me that this speech is addressed: I want satisfaction... *En garde*, holy father.

*The empress and the pope fight, the one with her scepter and the other with his cross: a scepter-blow shatters the cross; the pope throws his tiara at the head of Catherine knocks off her crown. They beat each other with their chains. The king of Poland wants to put a stop to it, taking the scepter from Catherine's hands.*

THE KING OF POLAND.

Neighbor, that is enough. Hey! Quit it!

THE EMPRESS.

It is just like you to take away my scepter, coward! Is it to compensate for your own, which you have allowed to be cut into three or four pieces?

THE POPE

Catherine, I ask your pardon, *escolta mi*: if you leave me alone, I will give you absolution for all your sins.

THE EMPRESS.

Absolution! Knavish priest! Before I leave you alone, you must confess and repeat after me that a priest, that a pope is a charlatan, a shell-game swindler... Go on, repeat it:

THE POPE.

A priest... a pope... is a charlatan... a shell-game swindler.

THE KING OF SPAIN, *apart, in a corner of the theater.*

What a find! I still have a leftover bit from the ration of bread given me in the hold. What a treasure! There are no rupees, no piastres worth a scrap of black bread, when one is dying of hunger.

THE KING OF POLAND.

Cousin, what are you doing, off by yourself? You are eating, I believe. I'll take some of that.

THE EMPRESS *and the other kings hurl themselves on the King of Spain to snatch away his crust of bread.*  
And I as well, and I as well, and I as well...

THE KING OF NAPLES.

What would the Sans-Culottes say, if they saw all the kings of Europe fight over a bit of black bread?  
*The kings battle: the ground is littered with fragments of chains, scepters and crowns; the cloaks are in tatters.*

## SCENE VII.

### THE PREVIOUS ACTORS AND THE SANS-CULOTTES.

*The sans-culottes, who have wanted to enjoy from afar the predicament of the kings reduced to famine, return to the island to roll a barrel of biscuit in the midst of the famished kings.*

ONE OF THE SANS-CULOTTES, *smashing open the barrel, and spilling out the biscuit.*

Hold on, knaves, there is your feed. Eat up. The proverb that says: *Everyone must live*, was not made for you, for there is no necessity that kings lose. But the sans-culottes are as open to pity as to justice. So feast on this hardtack, until you are acclimated to this country.

#### SCENE VIII.

THE KINGS *pounce on the hardtack.*

THE EMPRESS.

One moment! I, as empress and proprietor of the largest domain, must have the largest portion.

THE KING OF POLAND.

Catherine was never a picky eater: but we are no longer in Petersburg; each to their own.

THE KING OF NAPLES.

Yes! Yes! Each to their own. That barrel of biscuit must not resemble the *soi-disant* republic of Poland.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA *gives a blow of the scepter on the fingers of the empress.*

THE EMPRESS.

Silence, ravisher of Silesia.

THE POPE.

Gentlemen! Gentlemen! Render unto Caesar that which is Caesar's.

THE EMPRESS.

If you gave to Caesar what belonged to Caesar, little bishop of Rome...!

THE EMPEROR .

Peace, peace: there is some of it for everyone.

THE KING OF PRUSSIA.

Yes, but that will not be for a long time.

THE KING of NAPLES.

But here is the volcano, which seems to want to put us all in agreement: a burning lava descends from the crater and advances towards us. Gods!

THE KING of SPAIN.

Our good Lady! Save me... If I escape, I will become a Sans-Culotte.

THE POPE.

And I will take a wife.

CATHERINE.

And I will join the Jacobins or the Cordeliers.

*The volcano begins its eruption: it throws rocks, burning coals, etc. on the theater.*

*There is an explosion: fire besieges the kings from all sides, they fall, consumed in the bowels of the half-opened earth.*

END.

## Manifesto of the Equals

Actual equality, the final aim of the social art.—Condorcet, *Picture of the Human Mind*, page 329.

People of France!

For fifteen centuries you have lived as slaves, and consequently unhappy. For six years you have hardly breathed, awaiting independence, happiness and equality.

Equality! First wish of nature, first need of man, and principal bond of all legitimate association! People of France! You have not been more favored than the other nations that stagnate on this unfortunate globe!... Always and everywhere, the poor human species, given over to more or less skilled cannibals, serves as a plaything for all the ambitions, fodder for all the tyrannies. Always and everywhere, the men of fine words beguile: never and nowhere have they obtained the thing with the word. From time immemorial we have repeated, hypocritically, that *men are equal*, and from time immemorial the most degrading and most monstrous inequality weighs insolently on the human race. As long as there have been civilized societies, the finest prerogative of man has been acknowledged without objection, but has still not been realized a single time: Equality was nothing but a beautiful, but sterile fiction of the law. Today, when it is demanded in a louder voice, they respond to us: Silence, wretches! Actual equality is only a chimera; content yourselves with conditional equality; you are all equal before the law. Canaille, what more do you need? What more do we need? Legislators, governors, rich proprietors, listen in your turn.

We are all equal, aren't we? This principle remains uncontested, because unless one is afflicted with madness, you would not seriously claim that it is night when it is day.

Well! We intend from now on to live and die equal as we are born; we want real equality or death; that is what we need.

And we will have that real equality, no matter the price. Woe to those who would resist so strong a wish!

The French Revolution is only the forerunner of a much greater, much more solemn revolution, which will be the last.

The people have marched over the bodies of the kings and the priests combined against them: they will do the same to the new tyrants, to the new political Tartuffes seated in the place of the old ones.

What more do we need than equality of rights?

We not only need that equality transcribed in the Declaration of the Rights of the Man and Citizen, we want it in our midst, under the roofs of our houses. We consent to everything for it, *to make a clean slate in order to hold on to it alone*. Let all the arts perish, if necessary, as long as real equality remains to us!

Legislators and rulers who have no more genius than good faith, rich proprietors without guts, you try in vain to neutralize our holy enterprise by saying: They only seek to reproduce that agrarian law already demanded once before them.

Slanderers, be silent in your turn, and, in the silence of confusion, hear our ambitions dictated by nature and based on justice.

The agrarian law or division of the countryside was the momentary wish of some unprincipled soldiers, of some small tribes moved by their instinct rather than by instinct. We offer something more sublime and more equitable, the common good or the community of goods! No more individual property in land, *the land belongs to no one*. We demand, we desire the communal enjoyment of the fruits of the earth: *the fruits belong*



*to everyone.*

We declare that we cannot tolerate any more than the great majority of men would and sweat in the service and for the good pleasure of the great majority.

For long enough, and more, less than a million individuals have disposed of that which belongs to more than twenty millions of their fellows, of their equals.

Let it finally cease, this great scandal that our descendants will hardly believe! Disappear, finally, revolting distinctions of rich and small, of great and small, of masters and servants, of *rulers and ruled*.

Let there no longer be any difference among men but those of age and sex. Since all have the same need and the same faculties, let there no longer be anything but a single education, a single nourishment. They content themselves with a single sun and a single air for all: why is the same portion and the same quality of foodstuffs not sufficient for each of them?

But already the enemies of an order of things more natural than one can imagine, rail against us.

Disorganizers and rebels, they say to us, you only want massacres and plunder.

People of France!

We do not waste our time in responding to them, but we say to you: the holy enterprise that we prepare has no other aim but to put an end to the civil dissensions and to the public misery.

Never has a more immense design been conceived or put into execution. As it approaches some men of genius, some sages, have spoken of it in low and trembling voices. None of them have had the courage to speak the entire truth.

The moment for grand measures has arrived. Evil has reached its height; it covers the face of the earth. Chaos, under the name of politics, has reigned there for too many centuries. Let everything revert to order and retake its place. At the voice of equality, let the elements of justice and happiness be organized. The moment has come to found the Republic of Equals, that grand refuge open to all men. The days of general restitution have arrived. Wailing families, come seat yourselves at the common table set by nature for all her children.

People of France!

The purest of all glories was thus reserved for you! Yes, it is you who must first offer this touching spectacle to the world.

Some old habits, some ancient prejudices would make new obstacles to the establishment of the *Republic of Equals*. The organization of real equality, the only organization that responds to all needs, without making victims, without costing sacrifices, will perhaps not please everyone at first.

The selfish, the ambitious will shudder with rage. Those who possess unjustly will cry injustice. The exclusive enjoyments, the solitary pleasures, the personal comforts will cause keen regrets in some individuals jaded in the face of others' struggles. The lovers of absolute power, the vile accomplices or arbitrary authority will cede their splendid leaders with difficulty under the level of real equality. Their short sight will penetrate with difficulty into the coming future of common happiness; but what can a few thousand malcontents do against a mass of men, all happy and astonished to have sought for so long a felicity that had been close at hand?

On the morrow of that revolution, they will say to themselves in astonishment: What! The common happiness depended on so little? We had only to want it. Ah! why have we not wished it sooner. Yes, without doubt, a single man on the earth who is richer, more powerful than his fellows, than his equals, and the balance is broken; crime and misfortune are on the land.

People of France!

So, from now on, by what sign should you recognize the excellence of a constitution?... That which rests entirely on actual equality is the only one that can suit you and satisfy all your wishes.

The aristocratic charters of 1791 and 1795 fastened your irons instead of breaking them. That of 1793 was a great step indeed toward real equality; we have still not approached it so closely. It still did not touch the goal and did not achieve common happiness. It did, however, solemnly consecrate its great principle.

People of France!

Open your eyes and hearts to the fullness of bliss: recognize and proclaim with us the Republic of Equals.

Sylvain Maréchal

*The Golden Age: A Collection of Pastoral Tales*, by the Shepherd Sylvain (1782)

[excerpts]

They say there was a Time called the Golden Age,  
When sacrifices were made to the naked Truth,  
When artless Innocence walked with a sure step:  
For Virtuous hearts this Time still exists.



Oh you who wish to taste pure felicity!  
Far from the big cities, take your exercise in the fields,  
We find in the fields (nearer to Nature)  
The precious remains of the peaceful Golden Age.



What do we see in the cities? Pompous and often tasteless palaces. We tread on ground hardened by wearying, muddy cobblestones; fetid streams of mire seem to be the natural element of those who cross them. We must flee before fast steeds, harnessed to noisy carts. We attend spectacles where it is made a law to disfigure Nature; everywhere we see temples served by self-interest; courts where throats are cut legally; aligned gardens that make you yawn, if you stroll through them alone, & that on the banner days are revolting in their shameless luxury. At each step we encounter untrustworthy traders, a coarse rabble of soldiers and a stupified populace. The women have all the vices of the men, & the men all those of the women.

Clear skies, pure streams, lawns that relax the traveler & and rest the eyes; the varied songs of a thousand birds; the labors of the docile ox; the milk of the charitable cow; the fleeces of herds as gentle as they are; the coolness of the forest; the scent & radiance of flours; the flavor of fruit; the sublime spectacle of the rising of the sun; the moving calm of evening; the health, joy, contentment and peace communicated by the three kingdoms of Nature: they all invite man to come to the fields, & they should all keep him there.

*Excerpt from* Livre de tous les âges, ou du Pibrac moderne, *by P. Sylvain Maréchal. Paris, 1775, in-12°, p.*



**THE JUST MAN.**

On a beautiful autumn evening, the old Lysander, seated before his hut, facing the darkening west, enjoying one more time the last rays of the setting sun, which was becoming, like him, weaker & less fiery.

From time to time he raised his eyes toward the heavens & asked them for an end to his life as peaceful as the decline of his age. Some moments later, the spectacle of Nature made him forget the great number of his years: for the ninetieth time he saw it submit to the changing of the seasons. Lysander had always seen & admired it; Lysander saw & admired it still; Nature is so beautiful!

Sensing that he was enjoying it for the last time, he remained for a long time in a pious ecstasy. Quietly & without being seen, Philander, the eldest of his children, had come up behind him. He respected at first the eloquent silence of the venerable old man; but the respect soon gave way to love. The son rushed into the arms of his father, who cried: "If I finished my life in this moment, my last day would be a happy one." The embraced again, & he added: "My son, I long

ago promised you a hymn, the *Canticle of the Just*. The hour that I had set aside for it has, I think, arrived; listen to me, Philander, for perhaps the last time... my voice is weak; but it will always have enough strength for such a beautiful subject."

And he sang:

How sweet it is to be virtuous!

The life of the just man goes by as peacefully as the tranquil waters of the pure brook that flows slowly across the pasture. Like them, the just man leaves behind him abundance & happiness! Like them, we desire it, we cherish it and we lament it when it is gone.

How sweet it is to be virtuous!

Nature watches over the just man at all times. She presides at his birth & gives him parents as wise as there are tender, who take care of his youth & train him in virtue. In a little while he becomes as hardy as them. The first use of his strength is to aid his already feeble relations; he would return to them all that he has received. But soon nature speaks to his heart: he feels the need of the companion. A worthy lover offers herself to his innocent desires. The most tender love soon captivates him in the sweetest of bonds. An amiable & numerous posterity is the fruit of such holy nuptials: they derive their happiness from that of their children, in order to earn a fair return in the results. The years multiply. These virtuous spouses bend bit by bit under their weight; finally, they succumb: lamented by their relations, content with them, they die as they have lived.

How sweet it is to be virtuous!

The unfortunate bless the just man; his countrymen love him; strangers hold him in esteem. The sweetest pleasures all gather together under his humble roof. Merry words & innocent games enchant his leisure time, crown his meals & incline him to undertake new labors: & to complete his happiness, Friendship, loving Friendship, seats itself at his table.

How sweet it is to be virtuous!

For the just man the dawn is always beautiful, the day always serene, nature always in its springtime. The awakening of the just man is the signal for joy; his moments are all full: the unfortunate counts almost all of them for him. Night does not overtake the just man before he has profited from the day: sweet sleep comes then to close his eyelids; he sleeps & does not fear to be awakened by the rumblings of remorse. Peace is the companion of innocence: the calm of the night is no deeper than that in his heart..

How sweet it is to be virtuous!

The wicked, it is true, shares the light of day with the just man; the night extends its peaceful veils over one as over the other. Nature spreads her benefits over both: but how well she distinguishes between virtue and vice! These same presents of fair nature, which bring pleasure to the just man who enjoys them, are a source of evil for the wicked man who abuses them; the ruby liqueur of Bacchus gives the sober man the strength that it takes from the intemperate.

How sweet it is to be virtuous!

Sometimes, too, somber clouds darken the fair days of the just man: his pleasures are sometimes mixed with pain. But it is an ingenious precaution of Nature, to make him feel more clearly the cost of happiness. Whatever setbacks he experiences, he always maintains a good heart, a clear mind, a beautiful soul. A consoling voice does not cease crying to him: Fear nothing; you are just.

How sweet it is to be virtuous!

Nature loves the just man: she grants him a happy childhood, a fine youth, a friendly old age. She gives him wise parents, a chaste spouse, loving children, true friends; perfect health, fertile land, a fortunate life, a comforting death. The just man is a good son, good husband, good friend.

How sweet it is to be virtuous!

“But tears fill your eyes, my son!” said the old man, embracing him. “I love to see you sympathetic to this reflection! So always be just, & you will always be happy. Seek to do good, & you will find happiness.

These were the last words of Lysander. He did not know that Death, who had been behind him for some time, had not dared to interrupt such a touching scene with his presence. Hardly had the old man finished, than she showed herself to him. Lysander saw her without dread; he awaited her without fear. He embraced Philander once more. Death seized that moment, struck him..... & the soul of the father passed into that of his son.

# MODERN APOLOGUES, FOR THE USE OF THE DAUPHIN.

## First Lessons for the Elder Son of a King.

—  
FIRST LESSON.  
PROMETHEUS.

Thus far, the mythologists have misreported the allegorical history of Prometheus. Here are the facts: that ingenious artist of antiquity, having kneaded clay in water, made from it several figures of men, which he animated with the elemental fire. He took great pleasure in his work, like a father in his children. All went well enough at first. But one day, returning to his workshop, what a spectacle was offered to the eyes of Prometheus. These men, to whom he had given the same existence & that he had formed from the same earth, started to quarrel among themselves during his absence: so much that they had battered & mutilated one another. They had done worse still. Some of them who had profited from the general disorder, either by fraud, or by force or other means, had subjected their fellows to the point these, prostrating themselves at their feet, hardly dared to raise their eyes, & obeyed them at the first threatening gesture. "What is this I see!" said Prometheus, in fury. I thought I was making man, & not slaves & masters. Cursed brood! I created you all as equals. With the breath of life, I animated you with the spirit of liberty! You have let the torch go out. So, go! I disown you as my children. I abandon you to your evil destiny & repent of my work.

Prometheus did indeed leave them, & retired to the mountains of the Caucasus. But his heart carried with him the trait that had torn into him. The remorse for having given birth to slaves, by creating men, slowly consumed him & made him suffer a pain & grief like that suffered by a wretch whose entrails would be restored, though lacerated by the teeth of a vulture.

LESSON II.  
THE TOCSIN.

In those days, a stranger, entering the capital city of a great Empire, heard the tocsin sound for a long time. He questioned the people of the city, wishing to know what misfortune had occurred. Had there been a fire somewhere?

No, someone replied, but we celebrate the birth of a prince, who may perhaps one day, he added in a low voice, be a firestarter. The same bell should serve to announce two events so nearly similar. There is, however, this difference between the: we have established a fire brigade to extinguish fires; but we have still not promulgated a body of laws to stop the firestarters.

LESSON III.  
THE ORDEAL.

In those times there was an arrogant king, who believed himself molded from a different clay than those who were prepared to obey him. The senate, placed between him & the people, in order to serve as a mediator, assembled, & agreed to reprimand to him on this subject. The queen was pregnant & ready to give birth. An old magistrate rose in the midst of the assembly & proposed the following expedient to correct the prince. At the moment of the birth of the royal child, they presented the father with three infants born in the same hour, & left it to him to choose which was his own. At the same time, they said to him that, since the kings & their successors are born for the throne, molded from another clay than the rest of their subjects, he would have no trouble distinguishing the royal child that belonged to him. The king, furious, but seriously embarrassed, hesitated for a long time & finally chose as his own the son of the castle's

caretaker. Then the head of the senate said to him: If the eye of the father swings, & is even mistaken in the choice of his own child, admit, prince, that the son of the shepherd is the equal of the son of the king; that a man cannot call himself a born king; that he does not come from his mother's womb with a crown already on his head; that it is the people who entrust it to whomever seems good; in short, that a sovereign is only *primus inter pares* [first among equals].

LESSON IV.  
THE PIG-KEEPER KING.

In those days, a young king was inclined to dissipation, even to villainy; it was a hereditary vice. The états-généraux, natural guardians of the sovereign, who had never been emancipated from them, assembled & agreed on a means of correcting the young prince. One day, when he had abandoned himself completely to his foul penchants, and was plunged into a deep sleep, they seized his royal person; from his palace, they transported him on a litter, still sleeping, to a stable. When he awoke, the young prince could hardly believe his eyes. He didn't know if he was still dreaming. He could no longer find his throne, his crown, his scepter, nor his mistresses to caress him, nor his valets to serve him, nor his flatterers to arouse him to new excesses. He wished to command; some shepherds, forewarned, came running at his call, & dealt with him on a footing of the most perfect equality. In vain, the prince threatened & claimed his authority. They accused him of being out of his head, & led him, despite his protestations, to watch over the most vile of the flocks. Finally, after some days of this ordeal, they seized a moment of slumber to replace him on his throne. The Prince was not altogether taken in by all this; but he did not have the good sense to profit from the tacit lesson. He soon lapsed back into his hereditary vice. Then the états-généraux to strip him entirely of his titles and honors, for which it appeared he was not born & condemned him, for good measure, to spend the rest of his days amongst the vile herd whose manners he shared.

LESSON V.  
THE DWARF KING.

In those days, a sovereign prince made it a point of pride to only compose his large domestic staff with servants of the greatest height. He had only one son, who had a stature that was just exactly as erect as necessary for him to not absolutely be a dwarf. At the death of his father, the son reigning in his turn, announced the first days of his reign by substituting a population of dwarves for all those great servants who had for so long wounded his view & his self-esteem. Seeing around him only little men, he soon forget that there were any larger than him, who was indeed taller than all who served him. Despite all the precautions taken to assure that there only appeared before his eyes men still smaller than him, a large man came in the end to enter his palace, & even his presence. He was treated as a *monster*, & put, as such, in the prince's menagerie.

LESSON VI.  
A LESSON IN ARCHITECTURE.

What is the name of those human figures that serve as columns to support the architrave of this palace? asked a young prince of his tutor one day.

We call them Caryatids.

What does that word mean?

It is the name of the inhabitants of Karyai.

Why have we given that form & that name to these pilasters?

To perpetuate the punishment of that traitorous people, who having joined forces with the Persians against their brothers, the other Greeks, were put to the sword; the women were reduced to slavery.

The modern architects, who did not have the same motive as the ancients for preserving that order, made use of it, however, with another intention. As these figures were ordinarily only employed in the palaces of the kings, the kings cannot cast an eye on their palaces without reflecting that their subjects resemble the Caryatids who support the balcony where they promenaded. If the load is too heavy, the people bend & shatter; but in their fall, they carry off those who weigh on them.

LESSON VII.

A LESSON IN ARITHMETIC.

In those days, a very young king was still learning the elements of arithmetic. One day, his mathematics teacher, who was no sycophant, gave him this lesson.

A king, for example, is, in his kingdom, like the unity: if he found himself tempted to regard each of his subjects only as a zero, one could observe to him that it is the zeros that give a value to the unity. The more we multiply them, the more the unity counts. The unity, reduced to itself, would be nothing. It owes all its worth to them. There is, however, this important difference between the zeros in politics & the zeros in arithmetic: the latter cannot be counted without the unity, which gives them an existence, & with which they cannot dispense. The former, on the contrary, do everything for the unity, which does almost nothing for them.

LESSON VIII.

THE LESSON ABOUT ARMS.

In those days, a king was learning what we call arms, & he was not the most skilled; almost every time that he wounded himself or wounded those against whom he drew his blade. One day, someone present at his exercises dared to say to him:

Prince, believe me, get rid of your scepter, as well as your sword; for it is even more difficult to bear the one than it is to handle the other, & the clumsy blows are of much greater consequence.

LESSON IX.

A COURSE IN ANATOMY.

In those days, a young king, inclined to despotism, seemed to desire to take lessons in anatomy. The senate ordered that the demonstrations should be made using the skeleton of a former tyrant who had been legally decapitated. The young prince was informed of it from the first lessons; & this course was as good for him as a moral treatise.

LESSON X.

THE STUDENT OF SURGERY.

In those days, a young King, who breathed nothing but war, was taken prisoner. The only obligation imposed by the generous victor was that the young captive prince attend, as a student, the dressing of wounds in an army hospital: then he was returned to his subjects, who quietly applauded the lesson.

LESSON XI.

THE OVERTURNED STATUE.

In those days, an irritable prince, promenading on the public square of his capital, found his statue overturned.

What reckless fool has insulted me in this way? Let him die!

Prince, someone responded, it was the thunder.



LESSON XII.  
THE COURT IN MOURNING.

In those days, I entered one day into the capital of a great empire. The inhabitants were in mourning. Men & women, all were dressed in wool. The silk, the gold & the precious stones had disappeared. All had donned the livery of mourning. Troubled by this spectacle, I sought news!

What calamity afflicts or threatens the city? Has it lost its king, its queen, some one of the princes of the imperial race? And are these princes worthy of the costs & inconvenience of the mourning?

No, responded a citizen. A sovereign from the far north just died, & and we mourn him.

Then he has done great services to the nation?

On the contrary, he took from it an entire province, & granted peaces only for lack of combatants.

And it is for such a prince that a nation foreign to the dead man, decks itself out as in mourning! In that case, what will they do when they lose their own king, or some great men?

The greatest philosopher died in the same period; but, far from according him the honor of a public mourning, they refused his manes the honor of burial.

LESSON XIII.  
THE TAX ON SLEEP.

There was once a king (it is in this way that, in those days, that good manners compelled one to name a tyrant). He was a king who proposed, in open council, a prize to the one who could imagine some new tax. So many had already been created that the most fecund brain in the most intrepid minister of finance was exhausted. One of the members of the council proposed raising a tax on the shade the trees give to poor people in the countryside. The king, amazed by such creativity, was already prepared to crown the inventor, & even to give him the management of this new right, when another council member rose, & said: but when there is no more sun, & especially in winter, it would also really be too unjust to be made to pay for the very shadow of which one is deprived; there must be equity in all things. I would instead advise the imposition of a tax on sleep; [1] a tax that much more important, as one sleeps every day, & besides, in an urgent case, his majesty could order his subjects to use narcotics.

His majesty raised his hands to the heavens, the whole extent, & all the resources of human genius, & made the councilor who had expressed himself so agreeably his favorite.

[1] The emperor Vespasian levied a tax on urine.

LESSON XIV.  
THE THREE GAMBOLS.

In those days a wise man, delegated by his province to go before the sovereign in order to obtain the end of a tax, was admitted to the audience in his turn. The sovereign, who was still very young, responded to the request in these terms:

I would grant everything that you ask of me, if you consent to break, for a moment, with the gravity of your role, and resolve to gambol three times in the presence of my whole court.

That worthy replied:

Prince! I am no more familiar with the antics of an ape, than with the bowing and scraping of a courtier. Since the tax matters very little, I leave it to the members of your entourage, who will more than make up for my inability. But choose whether you command men or monkeys. The same king cannot be the ruler of both at once.

LESSON XV.

**THE LAMP AND THE OIL.**

In those days, a young sovereign, fond of ostentation, multiplied the taxes each day. The senate finally addressed some reproaches to him; he simply responded:

In order to shine, the lamp has need of oil.—No doubt, the chief magistrate courageously responded; but there is no need for the oil to overflow the lamp: it is enough that the wick be saturated with it; it would be extinguished, if it was inundated.

[...]

LESSON XVII.

**THE CONSULTATION.**

In those days, a young sovereign still consulted a philosopher in these terms: who would prevent me from claiming divine honors? A man like me perhaps deserves it as much as the animals & plants of Egypt & elsewhere. So then, an edict proclaimed today will earn me altars & incense tomorrow.

“Prince!” responded a friend of wisdom, “Believe me, the plants & animals enjoyed divine honors in Egypt, perhaps because they did not demand them of men. For it might be good if men were as stingy with incense demanded or deserved, as they are generous with incense that is voluntary & free.”

[...]

LESSON XXVIII.

**VISION.**

**THE DESERT ISLAND.**

In those days, returned from the court, very tired, a visionary gave himself up to sleep, & dreamed that all the peoples of the earth, on the day of the Saturnalia, gave each other the word to seize the persons of their kings, each on their side. They agreed at the same time on a general rendezvous, to gather this handful of crowned individuals, & to relegate them to a small, uninhabited, but habitable island, the fertile soil of which awaited only arms & a light cultivation. A cordon of small armed launches was established to watch over the island, and to prevent its new settlers from leaving it. The predicament of the new arrivals was not slight. They began by stripping themselves of all their royal ornaments, which embarrassed them; it was necessary that each one, to live, pitch in & do their part. No more valets, no more courtiers, no more soldiers. They had to do everything on their own. Those fifty characters did not live long in peace; & the human race, a quiet spectator, had the satisfaction of being delivered from its tyrants by their own hands.

[...]

LESSON XXX.

**A FAIRY TALE.**

In those days there was once a king who assembled his people one day, in order to say to them:

My friends, my predecessors have not always been good kings; my successors will probably not all be good kings. From my own experience, I can see that the best-intentioned of kings is not necessary for men, his fellows and equals, who can conduct their own affairs very well, since they are no longer children. So, without troubling you to provide me a state suitable to my rank, without exposing you any more to sovereigns worse than me, let us each just return home. Let each father be the king of his children alone. I wish to set an example for you. Take back what I have in excess, at present I am only head of the household; & distribute the surplus to the fathers who do not have enough.....

[...]

LESSON XXXIII.

THE TYRANT TRIUMPHANT.

In those days, a large, civilized, educated, but peaceful nation had a tyrant for a king. That king, emboldened by his first successes, & regarding all of his subjects as so many beasts of burden, said to himself one day: They have borne this, that, & still other taxes; they could bear many others. As a result, the despot announced a new form of taxation, more exorbitant than those that came before. This time, the nation could not stop itself from murmuring, & even offered some resistance. The tyrant, who did not expect an event that seemed to him the height of audacity & insubordination, & was not, moreover, in a mood to yield, flew into a rage that is hard to describe. A skillful politician, he had assembled a great number of soldiers around his palaces, & and at the crossroads of the principal cities in his kingdom, in order to insure indirectly, & under the pretext of a more precise military discipline, the obedience of his subjects, if necessary. His troops were devoted to him, because he took the finest care of them; he showered them with privileges, dressed them superbly and fed them well; & the people paid for all that: like children who are forced to pay the costs of their own punishment.

The despot, in his blind rage, gave the signal to his bodies of troops to gather & swoop down upon the disarmed nation. (The soldiers no longer have relatives, the moment that they are the king's men.) The dismayed people could see nothing to do but to flee. They took refuge among the mountains, which were abundant in the country, scattering there, secluding themselves in family groups, & left all the cities, all the larger towns, without any inhabitants. The soldiers, tempted by the occasion, (they could not have hoped for a better one), scorned the fugitives, in order to plunder at their ease the treasures that they had abandoned to their mercy; so that the palace of the marvelously well served tyrant was no longer large enough to contain the spoils left by his subjects. His heart quivered with joy at that sight; & in recognition, he gave a portion of the booty to those who had so faithfully brought it to him. The first euphoria having passed, he wanted to enjoy the honors of triumph in the finest cities of his States. But he could not find anyone to be the witness to it; everyone had disappeared. Go, he told his soldiers, go and tell them that I pardon them; they can return to inhabit their houses; I am satisfied with them. They have abandoned their goods to me; let them come and acquire new ones through new labors. I will protect them with the shadow of my paternal scepter. The unarmed soldiers hurried to track down their countrymen, & urged them to leave their mountains, & set out for the city & their hearths.—We will only leave here in pieces, they responded; divided by families, with no other master than nature, with no other kings than our patriarchs, we renounce forever life in the cities that we have built at great cost, & whose every stone is washed with our tears & dyed with our blood. The soldiers, who were moved, & who, moreover, no longer had any picking to hope for, were converted to peace, to liberty, resolved to remain with their brothers, & sent back their uniforms to the tyrant who awaited them. As for that tyrant, abandoned by all, starving amidst his treasures, in his impotent rage he tore at his own flesh with his teeth, & died, wracked by the agonies of need.

[...]

LESSON XLII.

THE WISE FOOL.

In those days, a wise man had attempted several times, but always in vain, to introduce truth into the court. The king's fool fell hopelessly ill. The wise man dared to mimic him; & mimicked him so well that he succeeded him in his occupation. But the truth did not gain much by this disguise. In the mouth of the wise, it offended the monarch; in the mouth of folly, it only amused him, & did not improve him at all. Then the wise man left the service, & left the palace, saying: I see well that the kings are incorrigible.

LESSON XLIII.

THE GOLDEN AGE.

In those days, a king, who was called other names in the reaches of his provinces, asked one day at his table:

But, what is that golden age, that century of gold, of which I have sometimes heard?

One of his *écuyers-tranchants* [squires who cut meat] responded:

Prince, it is a fairy tale, invented, no doubt, to amuse some poet dissatisfied with the court.

But still...

Since His Majesty insists.... It is said that there was a time on earth when there were neither masters, nor servants, nor sovereigns, nor subjects; each served themselves.

What! There were no kings!... How could men do without them?

The fairy tale says that they were only the happier for it, & lived longer.

That is not possible. So how was it done?

Each family lived together under the pastoral staff of a patriarch.

That is indeed a real fairy tale.... However, added the king, let us forbid the modern poets to write new poems about it, & the nurses to beguile their children with it.

[...]

LESSON XLVIII.

### THE COMMUNE.

A king was accustomed to give his audiences in his privy. One should take such kings at their word & not make more of the oracles that they render on the throne, than of the noise that they let escape on their commode.

[...]

LESSON LIX.

### THE SARMATIANS AND THE KINGS.

The Sarmatians, a ferocious & bellicose people, drew blood from their horse, & drank it: the sovereigns differ from the Scythians only by not waiting for the necessity & a time of war, to feed on the substance of the people subject to their control.

LESSON LX.

### THE SLAVE MARKET.

Society is like a vast market of slaves or men, who buy & and sell each other in turn. The small are sold to the great, the poor to the rich; the great & the rich to the greater & richer. The courtiers sell themselves to the kinds; the credulous sell themselves to the priests, & they in turn sell themselves to the tyrants. The women especially are sold to the men, & sometimes the other way round. The wise man alone belongs to himself & will under no circumstances take part in this shameful traffic. So he is frowned upon by all those he has pitied.

[...]

LESSON LXIII.

### THE SUTLERS ON THE THRONE.

One could compare society to an encamped army. The cities are the camps. The people are the soldiers. The kings are their sutlers (vivandiers), in every sense that we attach to that word.

LESSON LXIV.

### THE FISHERS OF MEN.

In order to catch certain fish, it is necessary to trouble the water in which they swim: in order to captivate the people, it is necessary to surround them with an atmosphere of shadows. The kings are fishermen very well informed in the trade.

[...]

LESSON LXVI.  
THE STATUE OF LEAD.

In those days, a young monarch visited the workshop of an artist. He was very surprised to see a statue of lead on a pedestal of gold, & remarked upon it to the sculptor, who responded: Prince! It is the simulacrum of the new minister. The young monarch made no reply; but he left, & the same evening, as he went to bed, he withdrew the unworthy choice that he had been convinced to make in the morning at his rising.

LESSON LXVII.  
THE PALACE OF THE KINGS.

In those days, a king prided himself on the magnificence of his palace. Someone, who was not a courtier, said to him:

Prince, I know a crawling animal that owes its lodging to an architect still more skillful than your own.... The snail, & I might add the tortoise.

LESSON LXVIII.  
THE PHILOSOPHER-ARCHITECT.

A king was going to build a palace, & his architect showed him the plans. The prince was frightened by the immense scale that had been given to it.—“It would be grand enough to lodge all my subjects.” “Your palace,” replied the architect, “will never be large enough to contain all of your flatterers.”

[...]

LESSON LXXIII.  
THE NEW KING.

In those days, after his election, a sovereign was assailed by the mob of his friends, who came to ask favors & solicit his generosity.

My friends, responded the prince, showing them out, seating himself on the throne, I have become poorer than you. I do not even belong to myself any more. Let each of you individually demand by a single drop of my blood, I will refuse you. I am everything to everyone, & nothing to anyone. I am entirely dispossessed; & even of the virtues that I cherish the most, I have retained only justice: it is the only one that I am permitted to exercise.

[...]

LESSON LXXVIII.  
THE BEAR, THE MONKEY AND THE FOOL.

The place for a bear is in the woods of a misanthrope;  
The place for a monkey is in the mail coach of a courtier;  
The place for a fool is in the court of a despot who fears a thinking people.

[...]

LESSON LXXXII.  
THE WISE MAN’S LODGING.

In those days a wise man chose to reside directly opposite the superb palace of a rich man. “Why this preference?” he was asked. “You must be very sure of yourself, to have no fear of temptation, having constantly in sight the seductive spectacle of opulence.” “On the contrary,” replied the sage; “the unfaithful servants, the mercenary mistresses, the false friends that I see haunt this palace each day, make me more and more disgusted with the condition of the master who inhabits it.”

LESSON LXXXIII.  
THE WISE MAN'S DISH.

In those days, a sage familiar with the spectacle of poverty & the unfortunate, was admitted to the table of the rich. After the meal, someone asked: well! What do you think of all the dishes that have been spread out for you?—One has been forgotten that would have tickled the palate more agreeably.—And which is that?—The gland..... The gland, which reminds me those happy times when all men ate from the same plate, & each according to his needs. This, is is said, we only ate acorns; but at least everyone ate them; some did not go to be without supper, while their fellows could not sleep, for having supped too much.

[...]  
LESSON C.  
THE ORIGIN OF THE WELL OF TRUTH.  
A PARABLE.

In those days, the truth was stopped at the gates of the capital city of the Sybarites. Beautiful child, asked the clerk, what is contained in that packet hidden under your coat?—Foreign books.—Those goods will be confiscated; & you are condemned to pay the fine.—But I have nothing.—Well! We will seize your person.—And they went to constraint her bodily; but near the counter for admission, the truth saw an open well. To avoid a scene & the loss of her liberty, she preferred to cast herself to the bottom of the well, where she still remains; no one thus far having dared to draw her back out.