

Galileo

A Drama



*A treatment by P. - J. Proudhon,
with commentary by Edmond Lepelletier
and Benj. R. Tucker,
(1895)*

and

*"Proudhon as a Writer on Art,"
by Philip Gilbert Hamerton
(1866)*

*Proudhon as a Dramatic Author*¹

Benjamin R. Tucker & Edmond Lepelletier

In two recent issues of "La Nouvelle Revue" (February 1 and 15) appears a remarkable article under the above title from the pen of Edmond Lepelletier, embodying an outline sketch, left by Proudhon and now for the first time published, of a play which he had in contemplation, to be entitled "Galileo: A Philosophical Drama in Four Acts and Five Tableaux." As no one had dreamed of Proudhon as a dramatist, this is a surprising revelation. The article opens with a summary biographical sketch of Proudhon, which, in point of fact, contains nothing new, and, in point of opinion of Proudhon's work, goes nearly to the ordinary extent of misconception. Indeed, nothing better could be expected from a man like Lepelletier, who, although a journalist of considerable ability, a recognized literary critic, a moderately successful novelist and dramatist, and a leading Freethinker who eats priest three times a day and four times on Friday, has no better understanding of the revolution now in progress than to foam at the mouth whenever a bomb is thrown, to write articles urging the conviction of anarchists arrested for printing their opinions, and, after their acquittal, to write other articles inciting the bourgeois to violence against their fellow-bourgeois who sat on the jury. But the fact that Lepelletier is a man of this stamp renders all the more valuable the tribute that he is forced to pay to Proudhon's character and capacity. In the partial translated reprint which is given below I include, therefore, besides Proudhon's sketch of his contemplated drama, the tribute with which Lepelletier prefaces it and the comments with which he follows it, but I omit from it the biographical portion.

¹ Liberty. 10, 23 (March 23, 1895) 4-8.

PROUDHON, a tumultuous genius; a foaming ocean; a brain never at rest, but always in flux and reflux; believing what he said at the moment when he said it, and hence neither skeptical or impartial or indifferent; a sincere sophist; an enraptured rhetorician; an earnest demolisher of the fecundity of ruins; a surgeon of philosophy, of political economy, of Socialistic systems, of nationalities, of reputations, of consecrated works, who was persuaded that, in plunging his lancet haphazard into healthy and diseased parts alike, he preserved and cured,—Proudhon, I say, looms up in the recession of time, with his immense faults, his intolerable onslaughts, his intentional extravagances, and his spontaneous flights, as one of the most powerful, most colossal men of our century and of preceding ages. He is at once our Kant and our Hegel, with less than their calmness and more than their eloquence. Like all great and true thinkers, he was encyclopedic. Action escapes him. He lived immured in dream, in idea, and was preeminently a citizen of Utopia. Although mingled with the political events which led up to and followed the fall of Louis Philippe, he was rather a spectator than an actor in the tragi-comedy of 1848. Chosen a representative,—for in those days the voters sought thinkers, philosophers, historians, and even poets,—he participated only from above dominant and ironical, in the assembly debates usually conducted on a plane beneath his level. Moreover, he spent a part of his term in prison or in exile. At the moment when cannon were thundering in the faubourgs, which the rioters had barred with barricades surmounted by red flags, Proudhon was discovered on his way to Ménilmontant. They questioned him suspecting that a Socialist like him might be deserting the assembly and the government to join the insurgents behind their heaps of paving-stones, Proudhon shrugged his shoulders. “I was simply going,” he quietly answered, “to contemplate the sublime horror of the cannonade.” Paris in revolt in the gloomy days of June awakened in him an artist’s sensations.

A man prodigiously endowed, formidably complex, a veritable intellectual Proteus! for, although successively, and sometimes simultaneously, linguist, economist, philosopher, pamphleteer, historian, polemic, exegete, and legislator, he deserves also to be classed among the artists. In the first place, by his style. In the next place, by the aesthetic interest that marked especially the close of his laborious career, making him a citizen of the world of art.

He left behind him, the astonishing polygraph, an incomplete, imperfect work, of which his hand, already enfeebled by approaching death, wrote some unfinished pages, some uncorrected lines, but in every phrase of which the critical sense and the notion of the beautiful, the true, the just, are brilliantly apparent. “The Principle of Art and Its Social Destiny,”—such is the title of this fine book in which a new Proudhon arises, as strong, as novel, as superior, but more exact, more poised, and less paradoxical, than in his polemical and philosophical works. This is not all: he was not content to formulate his sensations and his theories regarding painting and sculpture; it was also his wish to deal with the special art of the theatre, so difficult, so synthetic, so profound. And we have a Proudhon who is a dramatic author. He did

not have the time to write his work; he could only drive the stakes in the scenic field which it was his design to cover.

He had in his head a "Galileo,"—a vast and serious subject which also tempted Ponsard. But how superior would have been Proudhon's drama, at once philosophical and human, to that of the author of "Honor and Money," who saw in the duel between faith and science, in which Galileo and the Inquisitors were the combatants, only the commonplace adventure of a good father of a family withdrawing an imprudent word in order to be able to marry his daughter advantageously.

Proudhon constructed his "Galileo" in outline only.

It is this outline, sufficiently complete and even minutely detailed, accompanied by reflections, critical comments, and interesting indications, that we now place before the public for the first time. It was found among Proudhon's unpublished papers, though it does not appear in the list of posthumous works announced by his executors. It is in the handwriting of Mlle. Catherine Proudhon, who was her father's secretary. It has been placed in my hands by M. Albert Lecroix, the former publisher of Proudhon's works, who acquired it by a contract made with Proudhon's widow covering all the works of her illustrious husband.

"Galileo" was conceived, thought out, and fixed in the very clear, theatrical, and lifelike form in which the render is now to rend it. The drama is made. The edifice is constructed. It remains only to fill in the dialogue. It is my intention at some future day to perform this complementary work. The text now presented, copied from the original manuscript without addition, subtraction, or correction, will suffice to prove that the multiple genius of Proudhon embraced a veritable dramatic author.

GALILEO.

A DRAMA.

Is it possible to dramatize the struggles of the mind and the agitations of thought in such a way that the spectator may take an interest in them, just as he takes an interest in the struggles of the passions and the revolutions of politics

To this question one would like to see a philosophical reply given by a writer applying the resources and rules of dramatic art to a philosophico-religious event, — such, for example, as the trial of Galileo.

Here is pretty nearly my conception of the plan and method of this drama.

Act 1.

SCENE I.—The scene opens in Galileo's house.

The philosopher, in presence of a company of friends and disciples, is finishing the demonstration of the double movement of the earth.

A religious man as well as a philosopher, a savant from motives of curiosity and recreation, Galileo warms his soul with song and music. The lesson finished, after a few enthusiastic words as to the religious and philosophical future of humanity, master and chorus sing in chorus a few verses, in a free translation, of the *Cœli Enarrant*.

Galileo's daughter, a young person remarkable for her talents and the knowledge which she has acquired in her father's society, accompanies them on some musical instrument. She is her father's usual musician.

Among those present are:

Torricelli, the celebrated disciple;

A young lord, the fiancé or lover of Galileo's daughter, and an intimate friend of Torricelli;

Two spies from the Holy Office, ruined noblemen living by their wits and as informers.

The song over, one of the spies asks Galileo an insidious question as to the difficulty of harmonizing the text of the Bible with the Copernican system.

Torricelli, a man of pure science, prudent and distrustful, who is inclined to condemn the mystical tendencies of Galileo, hastens to take the floor. He protests, after the fashion of the savants of the time, against any comparison between human

science, so uncertain, an eternal subject of dispute, and faith; maintains that the question propounded cannot be admitted, without temerity, among simple and modest philosophers; that it is not within the sphere of lay science; and that even to raise it is to be lacking in fidelity to the Church. And, after these words of edification, he asks that the question be set aside.

"It is very well known," he says, "that, of all the children of the Church, Galileo is the most submissive and faithful, and that all his disciples are fervently orthodox. The truths of religion are of a superior order, and their keeping is entrusted to the Church; beneath, far beneath, is the practice of philosophy, ever ready, like a humble servant, to sacrifice her data at the slightest symptoms of disagreement with revelation. Such questions are rash; they encroach upon the ecclesiastical mission and the episcopal prerogatives, and lead to temptation."

There can be nothing more edifying than Torricelli's words.

Galileo looks at his disciple with an ironical expression in his eye; repressing his thought and taking up the question propounded, he rushes full tilt into the speculations of which he is so fond.

He maintains that the truths of reason and those of faith do not form two orders separated by analysis, but that there is a close and positive bond between them; that together they form but one and the same chain,—the only difference being that the truths of faith, hidden from our intelligence, are revealed to us by the grace of heaven, while those of reason fall under our observation. The savant holds one end of the chain, the Church the other; the problem before each is that of following the chain until the two meet.

Meantime he points out that Scripture is erroneously interpreted.

Torricelli expresses his disapproval by signs of impatience, but always in equivocal terms, misleading to the auditors.

Galileo ends by prophesying, in the name of science, a sort of coming of the Holy Ghost, and a future of unequalled glory for the Church.

The two spies and all the company retire. Galileo shows his guests out. Torricelli and the lover are left alone.



SCENE II.—Torricelli reveals to the young man his suspicions concerning the two spies and recommends him to secrecy on this point, especially with Galileo, whose frankness and candor would compromise everything, and who must be saved in spite of himself. Then, changing the subject, he tells the young man that, whatever the merits of Galileo's daughter, he does not approve his suit.

"Can you be dazzled by her pretence to knowledge? Do you believe in scientific women, in the philosophy of a Hypatia? And, though she were her father's equal, is it fitting that a gallant knight, a man of the world, should be burdened with a Minerva?"

Reflections upon learned women.

“Do you intend, then, to form a sect with your wife and your father-in-law?”

Reply of the young man (twenty eight to thirty years of age).

“You are mistaken,” he says to Torricelli, “regarding the signora. She is other than she seems. Married, restored to her nature, she will tear off her veil of pedantry, which I desire no more than you, and her knowledge will add to her charm.”

SCENE III.—Galileo reenters.

Discussion between him and Torricelli.

The latter energetically blames Galileo's ultra-scientific tendencies. He accuses him of being deficient in philosophical dignity, and of pursuit of chimeras.

“All these crotchets,” says Torricelli, “are the corruption of science; they would be the corruption of religion, if in religion there were anything to corrupt.”

He warns his master to be on his guard, lest his religious notions and his free utterance may ruin him.

Galileo, after making sport of what he terms Torricelli's jugglery and dubbing him an impious man and an atheist, at which the young savant bursts into loud laughter, then maintains that science is but a means for man, an instrument for philosophy; that it would be little worthy of esteem if it were not to enlighten us in turn upon the things of which religion has a monopoly,—rights, duties; morality, destiny, etc. He complains of Torricelli's materialism, etc.

The two men do not refute each other, and they leave the scene unconvinced.



SCENE IV.—Love-scene between Galileo's daughter and her suitor, a typical young savante, but with tenderness and devotion predominant in her nature. One feels that she has been turned to study more by admiration for her father and by domestic influence than by her own genius.

It is the family spirit, transformed under another influence. It is especially by the religious side of her father's ideas that she has been attracted; through it she feels poetry and love itself. She does not like Torricelli, and she fears his influence on the mind of her fiancé.

The young man is the type of a self-possessed lover, knowing what he does, what he wants, and where he is going,



SCENE V.—Reenter Galileo and Torricelli. They come from the laboratory.

Arrival of a summoner from the Holy Office, bearing a document commanding Galileo to appear. The same personage informs Torricelli and his friend that they are summoned also.

Galileo reads the document.

A few words indicate, as an aggravation of his offence, that he resists all the observations of his pious disciple and friend Torricelli, who continually opposes him. So that the religious man, Galileo, is transformed into an unbeliever by the cunning of the police and the imputations of justice, and Torricelli, the skeptic, the materialist, the atheist, into a paragon of orthodoxy.

The latter, whose foresight is justified, again recommends his master to be prudent.

The difficulty in this first act is to give enough movement to the dialogue to prevent the discussions from dragging.

Success in this is to be attained by giving a solemn character to the teachings of Galileo and a strong impression of novelty to his ideas, and by brilliantly emphasizing the opposition between faith and science and the gravity of the resultant danger to the Holy Office.

A little cry of conspiracy for the spread of such ideas would not be amiss.



Act 2.

The action takes place, as in the first act, in Galileo's house, at the moment when he, together with the other persons summoned, is appearing before the examining magistrate of the Holy Office. So that the action is double; it takes place at the same time in the Holy Office and in Galileo's house, the events occurring at the former being echoed at the latter.

The philosopher's friends have learned of the charge brought against him,

They arrive one after another, offer their services, and ask anxiously after news. The summoned witnesses also arrive by turns, and report the proceedings and the turn that the affair is taking.



SCENE I.—The young girl and her lover. Declaration by the signora that she has made up her mind, if misfortune comes to her father, to break off her engagement to her fiancé and follow her father's fortunes, The young savante has disappeared; only the woman is now to be seen. To the reply of her lover that their union would only add to the consolations of the philosopher, she answers that it is impossible; that now she owes herself entirely to her father, but that, married, she would owe herself entirely to her husband.

"Let us not put duty and love on the same side," she says.

SCENE II.—Arrival of Torricelli. He was the first witness to be examined: to his fine words he owes this honor. They almost tried to make him the denouncer of his master. He has had much difficulty in preserving his equanimity.

But he fears the house will be searched. They are beginning to suspect Galileo of carrying on propagandism and forming a sect. The philosopher's replies tell against him more and more; his obstinacy in maintaining that he is within the true doctrine of the Church aggravates his danger with every minute.

Torricelli has no longer any doubt as to the part played by the two individuals whom he at first regarded as spies. He advises prudence in their presence. As for himself, he goes to Galileo's library to take away his papers, his correspondence, and any books that might aggravate his situation.

Departure of the lover for the Holy Office.



SCENE III.—Entrance of sundry personages wearing various expressions on their face,—disconsolate, surprised, bigoted, etc.

SCENE IV.—Arrival of the two spies. They pretend to hope that all will go well, “If Galileo would only talk like Torricelli,” they say; “but he is obstinate.”



SCENE V.—A new personage arrives from the Holy Office. Galileo is injuring himself more and more. His explanations only confirm the suspicions that rest upon him.

The loftiness and frankness of his answers deliver him to the Inquisition.

One would almost think, to hear him, that his best friends are false witnesses trying to destroy him.

Animated recital of a speech made by Galileo to the magistrate.

Those present are frightened; their faces grow longer and longer. As the bad news arrives, the house empties, every one fearing lest he may be considered a friend of the heretic.



SCENE VI.—Return of the lover. His story is brief; he tells it in presence of the two spies. In an aside to Galileo's daughter, he declares that he is going to try to make them leave, either voluntarily or by force.



SCENE VII.—Arrival of a new personage. Galileo's exaltation increases. He cannot lie or maintain silence at the proper time. There is to be a search of the house.

General agitation ensues. The visitors disappear; everybody is terror stricken



SCENE VIII.—The spies are left alone with the young girl's suitor.



SCENE IX.—Arrival of Galileo. He announces the result of the examination. He is to be judged solemnly by the Holy Office. Can it be possible, he asks himself, that a

worshipper in spirit and in truth, like himself, is to be condemned as a blasphemer and an impious man

He is discontented with the precautions taken; is profuse, however, in his eulogies of his disciples, of his future son-in-law, whose devotion he approves at the same time that he blames their fears. He calls them men of little faith. Torricelli urgently beseeches him to make no further answers, and to say, if the commissioner questions him, that he knows nothing. He holds before him the prospect of torture and life imprisonment.



Scene X.—Reentrance of Galileo's future son-in-law. With a glance, with a word, he makes Torricelli understand that the two spies have tried to assassinate him, and that he has killed them.



Scene XI.—Arrival of the commissioner entrusted with the search, with two aids.

Act 3.

The action takes place in the Holy Office, at first in a vestibule or waiting-room, then in the audience chamber,



Scene I.—Since the first act the case has become strangely complicated. There has been a double murder committed, within a few hundred steps of Galileo's house, on the persons of two of his disciples, heard at the examination and at the moment when the house was about to be searched.

The connection of the circumstances naturally gives the idea to the police of the Holy Office that this murder, happening at such a time, bears some relation to Galileo's trial and was committed by some of his friends, though they know not whom to suspect. No one saw the combat, etc., etc.

The Holy Office is embarrassed. On the one hand, it dares not reveal the secret mission of the two spies; on the other hand, it is convinced that Galileo's family or friends are not strangers to the event, and therein it sees a new indication of guilt, especially as nothing was discovered in the house of the accused beyond some insignificant old books. Nevertheless it has not been deemed advisable to join the two cases.

All this is said in a scene between two members of the tribunal, who straightway withdraw. Tableau characteristic of the ways of the police and the judiciary.



SCENE II.—Arrival of Galileo, Torricelli, the daughter, and her lover.

The philosopher is full of anguish. He does not understand at all what is going on,—why the assassination of two of his friends is connected with his case, etc., etc.

Torricelli and his friend maintain silence; the young girl herself knows nothing.

In this scene Galileo begins to weaken. Recantation, subterfuge, are repugnant to him; but he is accused of error, of heresy in faith, of spreading false doctrines. He feels that he has not now to explain his ideas, but to justify them according to a doctrine not his own, which seems to him impossible. The result of this position is that he has not yet any fixed plan of defence, and that his counsel finds himself in the greatest embarrassment.

Galileo would like to assert himself loftily: he cannot, he is forbidden to do so. The certainty of his mind shows him, moreover, that it is not in his character to

interpret faith and reconcile it with science, and that his stubbornness degenerates into an attitude of pure revolt against the Church. Already he has said it only too clearly,—that his doctrine is not that of the Church; and the whole question is whether or no he will consent to retract.

What is to be done? Galileo decides to entrust his safety to the inspiration of the moment.



Scene III.—The tribunal at the Holy Office.

Galileo takes his place on the prisoners' bench.

Trial, verdict, and sentence.

There is no spectacle more interesting than that of a criminal suit; nothing is read with greater zest than pleadings, examinations of witnesses, closing arguments, etc.

The repetitions, the tedious passages, do not lessen the interest.

Why should not judicial proceedings, the most dramatic in society, be placed upon the stage?

Yet there are things in it that seem incompatible with rapid theatrical movement,—for instance, the endless repetition of testimony. That which is endured in real life is not tolerable in art. It is impossible to exactly reproduce upon the stage a scene from the criminal courts. Then what is to be done? This is the question that I ask myself. Has any one solved it? I do not know.

Reserving, then, the definitive solution, I confine myself to the presentation of some general indications regarding such a scene, with the given subject and characters.

The witnesses heard are present; their written testimony is on the clerk's desk; they will be questioned only in case an explanation shall become necessary.

No summing-up by counsel. The lawyers are present, but will not speak unless the progress of the scene and the dialogue requires it.

With the exceptions just indicated, everything will be between the accused, the ecclesiastical accuser or grand inquisitor, and the judge,

Thus, in my opinion, must the judicial drama be condensed for the theatre; of course, it is at the option of the author to give a greater or less extension, according to the subject, to the different parts of so great a scene, to the speech of such or such a character.

These principles laid down, this is how I conceive the progress of this grand scene.

The judge sums up the accusation in a few words, points out its gravity, and invites Galileo to explain, unless he prefers to retract purely and simply.

Galileo thanks the judge for his kindness, congratulates himself that he can at last justify himself, relies upon the lights of his judges, and then, gradually

becoming animated, explains how he has come to conceive of the union of these two great powers,—the philosophy of nature and faith.

An elevated, sublime speech, for which one may read certain very specious passages in Vacherot's "Metaphysics and Science." In this speech the fact of the motion of the earth comes up as an example; he shows that, in interpreting the passages of the Bible according to the Copernican theory, religion acquires an extraordinary degree of authority by the testimony of science, which, in his opinion, deprives scepticism of its last resources.

The reply of the ecclesiastical attorney is no less elevated. Galileo is not prosecuted because he cultivates philosophy and the sciences. He is not reproached for cultivating mathematics and astronomy and teaching them to his pupils.

The Church is not an enemy of science. Before Galileo, Pope Sylvester of holy memory, the Cardinal de Cusa, have cultivated science, without prejudice to the Christian faith. The latter even taught things similar to those which Copernicus and Galileo offer as new.

The accusation is that Galileo tends to introduce into the Church a foreign authority, into faith a new element, which would subvert it. This authority, this element, is philosophy.

The innovators of the sixteenth century, by the cry of reform and in the name of morality, brought dissension into the Church of God.

Something similar is going on today, in the name of science and by virtue of the pure reason of man.

There is a tendency—and Galileo is an example—through natural philosophy to an integral renovation of the essence and forms of religion.

Here the orator shows the consequences of such an innovation.

Today it is the interpretation of Scripture.

Tomorrow it will be the interpretation of dogma.

Next a discussion of the authority of the Church.

Evidently a movement in the direction of full Protestantism.

The testimony of Torricelli, who has so clearly distinguished between these two orders of ideas, is dwelt upon against Galileo. The ecclesiastical counsel compliments Torricelli.

Galileo is a second Luther, more dangerous than the Luther of Wittenberg.

Galileo, stung, attempts a retort.

He says that it is extremely dangerous for religion to thus hold itself aloof from science.

That man is so constituted that truths demonstrated by the senses, by calculation or geometry, outweigh all others in his mind; that such truths cannot be called in question; that they are as certain as the truths of faith; that with these they form a complete whole, and that by as much as it is evident that the earth moves, by so much it is evident that the religious doctrine is to be transfigured by science.

To deny it is to deny, he says, the movement of the earth, and I affirm the movement of the earth.

The necessary conclusion of the discussion is that Galileo has placed himself in this dilemma.

Either the Christian doctrine, as taught hitherto, is insufficient, erroneous in its propositions and in its terms, and then the authority of the Church is illegitimate, fallible, outranked by philosophy;

Or else this doctrine is true, there is no relation between it and revelation, and every philosophy that aspires to supplant it is pure heresy and the suggestion of the devil. There is not, there cannot be any connection between faith and science; they are not resolvable into each other; even though reason should fail to sustain it, tradition, the Church, discipline, the whole Christian system, are there to demonstrate it.

Confronted with this dilemma, Galileo has no resource save disavowal,—retraction or punishment.

To properly conceive and render this scene it is necessary to note:

That at bottom Galileo is right both against the Church and against Torricelli;

That philosophy embraces everything and aspires to explain everything, even the things of religion;

That science is nothing if it does not rise to the knowledge of right, duties, society, and destiny;

That, if religion and the Church are not confirmed by its testimony; they must be rejected.

So that the crown of philosophy is virtue and the ideal.

Galileo, if he is logical and has the courage of his logic, must go as far as this.

But Galileo cannot be logical,—he does not know enough for that; he is not an unbeliever, and is prevented from being one by his mysticism; so he remains religious. He does not dream of denying the authority of the Church; consequently, he falls into inconsistency.

It is necessary to bring into relief the Church's error and Galileo's inconsistency, and to show the latter aggravated by presumption (for Galileo knows nothing of social matters) and by insubordination (for he disturbs society without knowing its doctrines).

Galileo is sentenced to retract his errors or else suffer torture and life imprisonment.

It is dishonor or death.

He is given three days to decide.

Act 4.

In Galileo's cell.

Scene I.—He is alone.

At first he has refused to retract.

Then, being put upon the wooden horse, he has retracted.

He has dishonored himself. Monologue.



Scene II.—Arrival of Torricelli, who comes to console him.

They converse in low tones. Torricelli again urges his master to sign the declarations that are asked of him, to forget his philosophy, to devote himself to science which alone will immortalize him, and to make no account of the theology of Rome and of the Church. Here the disciple's contempt for theology bursts forth vehemently; his hatred of the priests is shown without concealment. He points out how accurately the grand inquisitor foresaw the future when he said that science would kill religion.

Galileo's soul is full of melancholy; he has made his sacrifice; he will repress his sentiments, if necessary. But he, too, foresees the downfall of faith, the separation of philosophy and religion, and a formidable revolution.



Scene III.—Arrival of Galileo's daughter, and then of her suitor.

They inform Galileo that, by reason of his tardy recantation, his sentence is commuted to one year's imprisonment.

The drama ends with the young girl's self-sacrifice in renouncing marriage and consecrating herself to her father in his sad old age.

The lover does not withdraw his suit, but asks that he may still hope.

In this last scene Galileo reveals himself completely. His reformatory zeal does not go as far as martyrdom, and this fact he bewails. He would have preferred to die by torture rather than withdraw from it a diminished man. But his delicate nature refuses. While keeping his convictions, he feels that his mission is not that of an apostle.

He thanks his friends for what they have done to save him, but he regrets it. It would have been better, he says, to let things take their course; they have gained nothing by the attempt to dissemble, since he has said all. He lets them see that he

has clearly divined the secret of the death of the two spies, and he extends his hand to his future son-in-law.

Finally, he is informed that he is to be transferred to another prison, and that the palace of XXX will be given him for a retreat.

"Let us devote ourselves to pure science," say they all.

This last act is weak, and I know not how to make it more interesting.

But it is plain that such a drama is a possibility.

It is plain also that there is ample opportunity for action, for interest, and even for character delineation. Galileo, Torricelli, the grand inquisitor, Galileo's daughter; and her suitor, would be, as I conceive them, types new to the stage.

The danger lies in the temptation to philosophico-theological dissertation. To avoid this, the play as such must be studied carefully, the character and thesis of each personage must be grasped with force, and the idea must be brought into relief by broad strokes and profound expressions.

The young girl's love must be characteristic of the savante, of the artist, and of the neophyte; thereby it departs from the commonplace.

The characters move in theocratic surroundings, already traversed by gleams of atheism.

Style, manners, everything remains to be created.

Might one not, before dramatizing this subject, try it as a novel?

[Afterward by Lepelletier]

The outline sketch of "Galileo" [from this point it is Lepelletier that speaks] must fill us with regret that Proudhon did not have the time to realize his dramatic idea.

It is to be observed in the reflections scattered through it, in his own criticism upon it, wherein he anticipates objections and the possible refusal of a manager to undertake the piece, how deeply he is concerned as to the practicability of its production. He endeavored to give his work the customary foundations, proportions, arrangement, and distribution. He sought nothing strange, abnormal, or extraordinary. He accepted the ordinary rules, and submitted to them with good grace. This universal demolisher respected the barriers and the scaffolding of the stage. He intended to reveal himself as a regular, acceptable, playable dramatic author. He has insisted on the ordering of the scenes, and was not at all disposed to neglect the carpenter-work. Like a number of revolutionists, Proudhon, in theatrical art, preferred the classical opinion. Almost every line of this plan of "Galileo" shows care as to the action, the movement, the warmth which must animate every conception thrown into the dramatic mould. The difficulties of the subject have not escaped him. He has foreseen the suspicions and the incredulous smiles. How could he, Proudhon, constitute himself a dramatic author and presume to enter the lists with Ponsard? Incredible audacity, a rash project for which the author deserved punishment. Our age dotes on classifications and specialties. We pen minds up. Brains are forbidden to wander. Intelligence is destined to fixture. A writer who moves is distrusted, and credit is denied to the pen of a nomad. Arranged talents are the true talents. When a philosopher goes prowling behind the scenes, things are getting serious. Proudhon as economist, linguist, polemic,—that is enough. Let him not stray into this theatrical labyrinth where no guiding thread will be offered him. He would quickly lose his way, and he would cause others to lose theirs. A man should not desire to meddle with so many things. This pretension to universality is insolence on the part of those who have but one string to their bow or their lyre. Furthermore, it is insurrection. There is a Tchín, a caste in the empire of intellect. It is not allowable to rise above one's condition or to tread paths that are beneath it. It is even forbidden to step to the right or the left. Where fate has placed you, there you must remain. Genius may browse only within the length of its tether.

Foreseeing that the question whether he possessed the theatrical faculty would be a subject of dispute, he wished to answer in advance the criticisms expected, as well as the doubts arising from his personality, from his past, and from the popular estimate of him. To dissipate the prejudices—flattering, it is true—which his philosophical mind, his usual loftiness of vision, his concentrated thought, his critical spirit, his battlesome erudition, and his controversial temperament aroused as to his knowledge of theatrical requirements, he has seriously elaborated and fashioned his project, like good and studious dramatic pupil; at the same time he has

pointed out the weaknesses and obstacles involved in the chosen subject, and recognized the difficulty of imparting warmth and movement to a drama not turning solely upon love and offering no other catastrophe than the unjust judicial prosecution of an old man.

Was the "Galileo" of Proudhon, as shown in this skeleton, viable? If the play had been completed, would it have been playable?

It is very difficult to pass judgment in such a matter. Hypothesis has no credit in literary inquiries. In art, execution cannot be presumed.

It is unquestionable that dissertations, arguments, and controversies are precisely the opposite of dramatic art. Yet the subject adopted by Proudhon was not so ill-adapted to scenic development as one might think, and as he himself declared, it to be. Galileo Galilei is one of the loftiest of human-figures; and, as such, eminently fit to be the hero of a historical drama. Julius Caesar, Charlemagne, Mohammed, Luther, Jeanne d'Arc, Napoleon, Guttenberg, William Tell, Bernard Palissy, Richelieu, Mirabeau may inspire the poet, the novelist, the dramatist. These enormous personages carry with them the atmosphere of an entire century. They condense entire periods of human history. Their genius, their glory, their influence upon events and upon men furnish the author with half his drama; their existence, by turns adventurous, tragic, and sublime, gives the rest. What more powerful personality could come from the brain of a writer than the philosopher, the savant, the thinker of Pisa? Galileo dominates the beginning of the seventeenth century and radiates over all the centuries that have followed it. He was born on the day when Michael Angelo died. There are successions in the dynasty of geniuses. A star rose above the horizon of intellect at the setting of the sun which had illuminated the arts. The world escaped night. Science substituted its light for the splendors of painting and sculpture. The young student, observing in the cathedral at Pisa the oscillations of an astral lamp, discovered then the isochronism of the pendulum, prelude thus the most marvellous discoveries in mechanics, physics, astronomy, and mathematics. A professor at the age of twenty-four, teaching by turns at Pisa, Padua, Venice, Florence, and Rome, the young geometer combats Aristotle, publishes a treatise on fortifications, invents the thermometer, and then turns the acuteness of his genius toward the celestial gulfs. To fathom the starry depths declared solid by Aristotle, Ptolemy, and the Bible, he devises a surprising instrument,—the telescope. It is the key to space. To Galileo the heavens are opened. He surveys them. The astronomer, ruining the power and industry of the astrologists, traverses the spheres as a proprietor traverses his domain, and, when he descends to earth again, he relates what he has seen. Unfortunately, to see otherwise than with the eyes of faith made the observer an object of suspicion. The earth motionless in the centre of the universe, the sun and stars constructed, arranged, and illuminated for the benefit of man and manœuvring around our little globe to light it and serve as its satellites,—such was orthodox science. Aristotle, Ptolemy, Job, Joshua, and the Inquisition agreed in the view that the earth is stationary. With the authors, with the Scriptures, with the formidable casuists of the Holy Office, the popular voice, that Monsieur Everybody, persuaded that he has more wit than all the Voltaires past, present, and future, expressed sovereign contempt for Galileo, who dared to

maintain that our sphere went bouncing about in senseless rotation, a squirrel turning in a planetary cage.

[Aside by Tucker]

Lepelletier further depicts Galileo's character and discoveries, and sustains Proudhon's view that he was prosecuted as a philosopher rather than as an astronomer. He points out also that Proudhon has followed the truth of history in not exaggerating the degree of Galileo's torture.

[Lepelletier, continued.]

He has not sought to produce an impression by exhibiting instruments of torture or by overdrawing ecclesiastical cruelties. Galileo's torture was principally moral. What pain this great savant must have felt when he found himself constrained to give the lie to science, abjure the truth, and retract the scientific formula which he had discovered, of which he was so proud, and which imposed itself upon his conscience. There is the drama; the rest would be ordinary melodrama, and Proudhon has avoided it. This critic without respect for any prejudice had no desire to flatter anti-religious passions by transforming Galileo into a purely physical martyr. It is the spiritual suffering endured by the great man in having to apologize to ignorant and prejudiced monks that constitutes the pathos of his piece, and the dramatic strength is found, not in the torturer's wooden horse but in the duel between Dogma and Doubt, between Faith and Inquiry. Galileo, thus presented, appears as another Luther, and this revealer of the secrets of the universe becomes the destroyer of supernatural revelations. In his masterly sketch Proudhon comprehends him, and depicts him as he stands in history, erect in the light of the dazzling dawn of modern philosophy.

This drama of thought and mental action perhaps would have contributed to the renewal of our dramatic art. The contemporary theatre must progress or perish. Circus, pantomime, and scenic display will be the only possible spectacle, if our dramatic authors continue to practise their ancient contortions on the old boards. Wings! New flights! That is what is needed now. Long enough we have dragged and crawled; it is time to free ourselves from the slime into which every dramatic conception sinks.

We are passing through a period of dramatic exhaustion. The bourgeoisie comedy, the sensational drama, the inept vaudeville, and the musical medley are evidence of a decline analogous to that of the mythological or heroic tragedy, of the comedy of imbrolios, and of the travesty that was common at the end of the eighteenth century. Adulteries, the paltry heroes of the Iliads of vulgar alcoves, the commonplace passions of young simpletons for intolerable coxcombs whom in the last act the paternal hand is sure to lead before the mayor and the priest, have really become repulsive themes. These comedians, these traitors, these lovers, these modern intended husbands, are as worn-out as the tragedy kings flanked by their

confidants. We are tired of the eternal story of people who desire to couple and succeed in doing so after encountering difficulties more or less unforeseen. The adventures of disunited couples, the chasing after another's wife, the conjugal disasters developed in black or in yellow according to the author's intention to provoke tears or laughter, all these old fairy tales have nearly lost their power to drive away the spleen; it takes other inventions than these to relieve human ennui. The grown-up children that we are want other stories at night in order to forget life and enable the eternal hour-glass to suffer time to pass insensibly away.

Love, the sauce with which the theatrical cooks serve all their dishes, is getting tiresome. We are clamoring for a change in the bill of fare. Does love really occupy in the minds of most men a place as important as the play-makers attribute to it? It shows a misunderstanding of the time to give such a preponderance to this passion, universal undoubtedly, felt at some time or other by every living being, worthy of all the attention of philosophers, but in social life as well as in the purely physical realm beyond the competence of novelists, vaudevillists, and comedy writers, and requiring the examination and study of thinkers, legists, and sociologists. The phases of amorous life are neither the most numerous or the most decisive in the order of a destiny. The necessities of the condition in which fortune has placed you; labor; study; diseases; accidents; avaricious, ambitious, and æsthetic desires; gaming; sports; moral duties; age; lassitude; anxiety for the morrow,—all of these are factors diminishing the coefficient of amorous force at man's disposal. In obedience to what conventional tradition, what mental habit, do all theatrical writers make it their first thought to give love the leading rôles? No play that has not its lovers; sometimes three pairs of them. If we may believe our authors, there is scarcely any motive capable of exciting the spectator except love, the monotonous godfather of all the tragic or burlesque farces which the footlights illuminate.

Proudhon himself, in his sketch, has bowed to this rule, more reputed than, and as useless and superannuated as, that of the three unities. But with great insight into that art of the future which he foresaw he reduced his lover to a mere utility man, and of Galileo's daughter he tried to make a sweetheart removed from the commonplace. This affectionate maiden is provided with a heart and brain that counterbalance the weight of the senses. She loves her father and admires him; she even goes beyond the ordinary sentiments of education and affection; she rises to a height where she understands her father. She is more the disciple of Galileo than the fiancée of an amiable knight. Proudhon's play does not end with the ordinary joining of hands. As she believes renounce worldly joys to dwell with their God in the solitude of the cloister, so Galileo's daughter sacrifices her youth and her charms to the austere company of the proscribed old man. She will be the Antigone of his exile and will become the chaste priestess of that science of which her father is the pontiff and the martyr. But, it being necessary to make some concession to spectators surprised at seeing a curtain fall on two loves not united, the hope endures that some day, when the aged savant has descended into his grave, his daughter will be able to reward the fidelity of the enamored young knight, who does not withdraw his pledge. If there were no other evidence of Proudhon's ingenuity and originality as a dramatic author, the figure of this young girl would alone

establish it. He broke with the consecrated types of those stage loves who have become as insipid, conventional, and stale as the Leanders and the Isabellas of the répertoire.

The Scandinavian drama, the power and originality of which should not be exaggerated, has just accustomed literary spectators to an abstract theatre. The characters stand for general concepts, such as the fatalism of heredity, the impossible union of dissimilar souls, the antagonism of wives and husbands, of children and parents, of masters and servants, the insurgence of feminine independence, the hypocrisy of the virtuous people, the pillars of society. The actors of Ibsen, Björnson, and Strindberg appear like philosophical systems provided with gestures, like physiological laws clothed with the power of speech. At present this school is very much in fashion. It certainly exercises an influence upon our theatre, which has always been rejuvenated by the transfusion of younger, tarter, and somewhat barbarous blood. This health-restoring serum has been supplied successively by Spain, Italy, and England. Now it comes from Scandinavia. The origin is a matter of indifference; the essential thing is the avoidance of an overdose. Proudhon, in his "Galileo," anticipated this revelation of the theatre of ideas. It was his desire to show upon the boards, costumed after the fashion of their time and condition, characters which were only acting formulas and talking syntheses. His "Galileo" was the renovation, if not of the entire drama, at least of the historical drama.

Men of genius, as well as secondary authors, who have borrowed their heroes from history, have been accustomed to treat only the anecdotic and concrete side of their subject. They have sustained the interest only by following the loves, misfortunes, misdeeds, or disputes of the characters. Victor Hugo has not escaped this tendency, and Francois Coppée submits to it. One of the best known authors among modern dramatists has endeavored, as Proudhon proposed, to dramatize the struggles of the mind and the agitations of thought. Consequently their finest and most popular plays have the fault of resembling those histories in which all the importance is placed upon battles, sieges, treaties, and births and marriages of princes, while the superior motives of humanity, the theatrical strokes of thought, the catastrophes of conscience, and the denouements of effects that follow causes, which are the real drama of history, are left in the shadow, in the background.

This sketch of "Galileo," transformed into a finished play, placed upon the stage, and enacted, would certainly have given us, in its picturesque frame of the beginning of the seventeenth century in Italy, an original and powerful work. The critical genius of P. J. Proudhon, his polemical nature, and his theological erudition would have found in the trial of Galileo, that is, of knowledge, of experiment, of observation, of doubt, of scientific evidence, by the Church in the name of dogma, tradition, and consecrated error, developments, demonstrations, and refutations of vast reach and attractive depth. Conversing with Galileo, like Goethe with his doctor, he would have examined the system of the worlds, scrutinized the infinite depths of universal harmony, analyzed the problems of life, and traced ideas and sentiments to their origins, while Torricelli, as a sort of Mephistopheles, would have furnished the mocking retort to the assertive stupidity and simple ignorance of the

doctors of the Holy Office. Consequently it is much to be deplored that the work was left unfinished. Though Proudhon, as dramatic author, had failed in his unexpected attempt; though he had scarcely surpassed the heavy Ponsard; though he, the brainy colossus, had given birth to a product as paltry and ridiculous as the "Galileo" that we saw on the stage of our foremost theatre in 1809; though his drama had been rejected by the manages as not playable,—yet, in spite of all, we should have had a strong and beautiful book: France would have had a second "Faust."

PROUDHON AS A WRITER ON ART.²

Philip Gilbert Hamerton

AMONGST all the discouraging facts about the public reception of the fine arts, there is not one so discouraging as the, difficulty of finding out what people really think. The sameness of shallow profession that murmurs in our ears is a weariness to the soul. The orthodox in art, like the orthodox in some other matters, seem to find satisfaction in all acquiescence or verbal submission to their authority; they are pleased and contented when ignorance repeats, without either feeling or understanding, the consecrated formulae; they are happy when any one says what *they* think, and irritated if he says what he thinks himself. It appears that many minds like echoes better than all the other sounds on earth, and willingly pass their lives in listening to nothing else. Nay, so wedded are they to this strange taste of theirs, that they *will* listen to nothing else.

To all such—and alas! they are many—this book of Proudhon's is not to be recommended. The sounds that come out of it are not repetitions but new voices, often flatly contradictory of our own, and of all others hitherto familiar in our ears. Proudhon was a very hard-headed, merciless disputant, far too sincere to be always pleasant, saying what he thought "in words like cannon-balls." One of his phrases, "*La propriété c'est le vol*," was more than a cannon-ball, it was a bomb-shell. It was not exactly true, but there was just enough truth in it to make it very terrible. The pages of his book on art are charged with smaller bombs that explode in our faces as we turn the leaves.

Proudhon was "let loose on this planet" for the purpose of awakening discussion on those fundamental postulates which society likes to take for granted. Nobody would ever discuss these, if some bold thinker did not from time to time attack them. In the realms of social philosophy, and we may now add of art also, Proudhon served the purpose of "Her Majesty's Opposition;" he was useful as resistance is to force. No force can be exercised without resistance, and, in intellectual matters, *real* resistance, such as Proudhon's, is very difficult to get. Ships that sail on water can go against the wind, because they have hold with their keels upon a resisting medium; but balloons, those ships of the upper air, are driven helplessly to leeward because no strong element withstands their flying cars. In common practical matters the resistance is supplied by material difficulties, and

² "Du Principe de l'Art et de la Destination Sociale," par P. J. Proudhon. Paris.

men may sail; in the intellectual region there is too often no such resistance, and they drift.

Before criticising these posthumous notes on art which Proudhon has left us, it is quite necessary, in order that we may understand them rightly, to comprehend the strange nature of the man.

If a great power evidently exists upon the earth, appearing in times and places far apart, and asserting itself victoriously as an influence strong enough to modify the existence of humanity, certain thinkers are satisfied that by the very fact of its wide and forcible action on mankind the power has a Divine authority, or is at least a natural product, and therefore to be examined respectfully. I am of this way of thinking, but Proudhon was not. Take, for example, the power of capital, and its exaction of tribute in the shape of interest. This power has not been created by the will of individuals, or the decision of governments; it grows everywhere naturally. Its strength may seem to us occasionally a temptation to certain forms of tyranny, which legislation has a right to guard us against, but we humbly recognize the power of capital as an institution of the Supreme wisdom, and therefore cannot disapprove of it any more than we can disapprove of the natural collecting of water in lakes and seas. But Proudhon's mind was so constituted that he was capable of feeling the strongest moral disapproval concerning the central institutions of Nature. To hoard capital, in his view, was really a crime; and the exaction of interest, robbery. Nor did he maintain these views because he was poor, and envied the rich. He had opportunities of becoming richer, and refused to profit by them, from motives of conscience. Indeed, those English writers must have a very slight acquaintance with the private history of French republicans who believe them to have been actuated by a motive so easily explained as mere envy. They were enthusiasts who had a faith, and for that faith they gladly suffered poverty, exile, and imprisonment, when the abandonment of it would have given them ease, and often led them to much worldly prosperity.

This peculiarity of Proudhon's mind must be remembered when we read his criticism of art. Whatever offends his moral sense he vehemently opposes. Nothing is sacred for him but his own sense of what is right. There is a violence, a virulence, in his onslaughts which becomes most offensive if we lose sight for a moment of his peculiar point of view. But if we are irritated against him, it is evidence of a want of philosophy in ourselves. Proudhon wrote unreservedly what he thought; he might have abstained from writing, or he might have written what other people thought. It may be doubted whether he acted wisely in leaving for publication his ideas on art, a subject of which he had no special knowledge; but there cannot be a doubt that if we concede this, and leave him the choice between expressing his own opinions or other people's, it was his duty to us, his readers, to express his own.

He had no diffidence, nor deference. But these are feelings rather useful to warn us off literary ground than to guide us when we are on it, pen in hand. Men of strong convictions are always liable to the accusation of want of modesty. They say what they believe, as if they not only believed but knew it. Thorough belief has within itself an assurance equivalent to that of perfect knowledge. If a man has this, his writings will convey the impression that he is conceited when he is only

convinced. There is immense assurance in Proudhon's manner, but it is only the language of genuine earnestness. Writers who are never in earnest about any thing, have a great advantage over him in this respect; they can cultivate at leisure the amiable art of modesty.

The first proposition of Proudhon, which I should feel inclined to dispute, is the one on which he founds his position as an art critic, namely, the judicial competence of the uninformed spectator. The following paragraphs, translated and much condensed, contain the essentials of his argument:—³

“I know nothing by study or apprenticeship about painting, or sculpture, or music. I have always liked their productions as children like engravings. I am of that innumerable multitude which knows nothing of art, as to its execution, or of its secrets, which, far from swearing by a school, is incapable of appreciating manual skill, the difficulties overcome, the science of means and processes, but whose suffrage is the only one that artists aspire to, and for whom art creates. This multitude has the right to declare what it rejects or prefers, to signify its tastes, to impose its will upon artists. It may make mistakes, its tastes require to be awakened and exercised; but it is the supreme judge. It can say—and none may reply—‘I command; it is your business, artists, to obey. For if your art repels my inspiration; if it has the pretension to impose itself on my fancy instead of following it; if it dares to refuse my decisions; if, in a word, it is not made for me I despise it; with all its marvels I repudiate it.’

“Nature has made us, as to ideas and sentiments, about equally artists. As the progress of knowledge is slow, and requires studies and efforts, so aesthetic education is rapid. Authority in art is inadmissible. It is enough for any man to consult himself to be in a position to put forth a judgment on no matter what work of art. This is how I have constituted myself an art critic, and I recommend all my readers to do the same.

“I judge works of art by the taste for beautiful things which is natural to us, and especially by what I have learned in literature. I have no aesthetic intuition, and it is only by reflection and analysis that I arrive at the appreciation of the beautiful. But it seems to me that the faculties of taste and understanding are not so far distinct that one cannot supply the place of the other.

“My quality of judge established, I do not hesitate to produce my decisions.”

The theory that ignorant persons may judge of art is so popular that Proudhon will carry the suffrages of most readers with him, and it is of little use to oppose him by argument, because his theory flatters the self-esteem of the public, whilst the contrary one wounds it. I by no means accuse Proudhon of uttering this doctrine *with a view* to flatter his readers, for he never condescended to any arts of that kind, but the doctrine is very agreeable to them. If you tell people that they are good judges of art they like you for it, and willingly listen; if you tell them that they

³ In all extracts from Proudhon, in the course of this paper, I have condensed whenever possible.

are incompetent, and leave them to infer that you consider yourself competent, they become animated by less kindly sentiments towards you, and attribute your unacceptable doctrine to personal arrogance and conceit.

To judge of any picture, statue, drawing, or engraving, three distinct kinds of knowledge are needed. First, an accurate acquaintance with the natural facts which ought, in that particular subject, to have been represented; secondly, some considerable practical acquaintance with the means employed to represent the facts; thirdly, a philosophical comprehension of the intellectual or imaginative element in the work.

Take, for example, a simple pastoral subject, the picture of "Ploughing in the Nivernais," by Rosa Bonheur, in the Luxembourg. The facts to be known by any writer who would criticise that picture include the construction and movements of oxen, then (in a less degree in this instance because they are clothed) the construction and movements of men, after that the construction of trees and earth, with the peculiar forms which the earth takes when it comes off the mould-iron, as Woolner says, "wave lapping wave without a sound." The sky, too, must have been studied, I and it would be no disadvantage if the writer knew something about ploughs, and had seen ploughing in the country represented (the Nivernais), and were able himself to harness a yoke of oxen after the manner of the peasants in those parts, that he might know whether Rosa Bonheur had made no mistake in that matter. Then, as to color, though the critic cannot be a colorist, he must have made colored studies of oxen and ploughed land, or else he will have no notion of what the real color of them is. Lastly, as to the philosophy of art, he must know enough of that to be able to assign its due place to the work in the history of art, and to determine how far it is imaginative and poetical, or if only prosaic and observant, what sort of prose it is, and what separates it from other prose, such, for instance, as that of Courbet. Criticism is nothing else than the application of a set of tests, which tests are numerous and delicate in proportion to the information and feeling of the critic. These tests are not little rules easily learned, as some imagine, but results of elaborate knowledge of very various kinds. Now it *never* happens that a critic is in full possession of all the knowledge needed for just criticism; he has the means of applying one or two tests it may be, but these are not enough for the complete estimation of the work. What is called the public estimation of a work depends ultimately on the success with which it may have passed the successive ordeals of different tests applied by critics of various competence. The weakness of most art criticism lies in its ignorance of those scientific and technical facts which supply the only accurate tests. Common criticism is a mere expression of personal liking or aversion, and deserves very slight attention indeed. Proudhon would elevate this criticism by Ignorance to the rank of something serious that artists are bound to obey; that is he would have Ignorance dictate to Knowledge. It has done so to some extent, but to a much less extent than Proudhon imagined; and every year the authority of ignorance diminishes. The public now knows the difference, in England at least, between a critic who has grounds for what he advances and a writer who expresses merely his personal fancy or caprice, and it desires nothing so much as to find and follow competent guidance. The multitude is *not* the supreme

judge. Its suffrage is *not* the only one that artists aspire to and for which art creates. True artists aspire "to the judgment of those who are severally competent in the various specialities of criticism. When these have severally judged the work from their various points of view, a general conclusion as to its merit is drawn from the mass of their testimony, and this general conclusion, more or less modified by time, passes current always in the end. It is encouraging to remember the establishment of Turner's fame in spite of the popular verdict He did *not* "obey" the multitude, he *had* "the pretension to impose himself on its fancy instead of following it;" he *did* "dare to refuse its decisions." The multitude "despised his art with all its marvels" and "repudiated it." And with what result? All the popular outcry and clamor were in vain, the few artists and connoisseurs who understood Turner silenced the thousands who could not comprehend him, and now, no thanks to any popular favor, his immortal name is engraven where they cannot efface it, high in the House of Fame. There is nothing in life more wonderful, more sublime, more cheering to our faith and hope, than the certain ultimate victory of *the few who know*.

Holding these views, believing that to produce art criticism of any value needs laborious preparation, it follows that I cannot allow to Proudhon, who was entirely ignorant of art, the title of art critic in any serious sense at all. And yet it seems well that he should have left us his impressions on the subject, because he wrote so very sincerely, and sincere writing about art, by thoughtful persons, is lamentably rare. Proudhon at least tells us what an ignorant thinker worked out in his own head, and in the course of his thinking by the sharp penetrating faculty of his mind, he got down to one or two obscure truths which are likely ere long to become widely known, at least to the more thoughtful class of readers. He was the first to announce in print the relation between some modern art and the new Positive Philosophy. He fished up *that* murex, and deserves great credit for it.⁴ His faculty as an art philosopher was naturally large, but there is no evidence that he appreciated artistic performance. I mean that as a thinker he could grasp the historical relation of school to school, but as an observer I doubt whether he had that delicate insight which can justly compare picture with picture.

Proudhon's assertion that authority in art is inadmissible is not absolutely true, but an important truth lies hidden in the loose and too general phrase. Any pretension to universal authority in art is inadmissible, because no human being in the course of one life can acquire the knowledge necessary to a universal art critic. But, on the other hand, authority on special matters naturally asserts itself, and is always recognized so soon as the grounds of it are ascertained. In a cultivated age authority on particular subjects is allowed to all who can give evidence of superior knowledge on these especial subjects. What Proudhon rebelled against in his heart was the authority of superiority; but such rebellion is always vain, because nature herself instituted and ever sustains that just authority.

⁴ It may be permitted me to observe that I had an article on the Positive Philosophy of the Fine Arts in preparation, before the publication of Proudhon's book.

The place due to the Fine Arts amongst the occupations of men would naturally occupy a thinker who busied himself so incessantly with social questions. The following passages show how severely Proudhon regarded art and artists from his point of view as a social moralist.

“Whether painters represent drunken priests as Courbet does, or priests saying mass like Flandrin, or peasants, soldiers, horses, or trees, or effigies of antique personages of whom we know next to nothing, or heroes of novels, or fairies, angels, gods, products of fancy or superstition,—in what can all that seriously interest us? What good does it do to our government, our manners, our comfort, our progress? Does it become serious minds to concern themselves with these costly trifles? Have we time and money to spare? Certainly, we practical and sensible people, not initiated in the mysteries of art, have a right to ask this of artists, not to contradict them, but in order to be edified about what they think of themselves, and what they expect from us. Nobody, however, seems to have given a clear answer on these points.

“Every two years,—formerly it was every year, - the government regales the public with a great exhibition of painting, statuary, &c. Industry never had such frequent exhibitions, and she has not had them nearly so long. In fact, it is an artists’ fair - putting their products on sale, and waiting anxiously for buyers. For these exceptional solemnities the government appoints a jury to verify the works sent, and name the best. On the recommendation of this jury the government gives medals of gold and silver, decorations, honorable mentions, money rewards, pensions. There are, for distinguished artists, according to their recognized talents and their age, places at Rome, in the Academy, in the Senate. All these expenses are paid by us, the profane, like those of the army and the country roads. Nevertheless, it is probable that no one, either on the Jury, or in the Academy, or in the Senate, or at Rome, would be in a condition to justify this part of the budget by an intelligible definition of art and its function, either private or public. Why can’t we leave artists to their own business, and not trouble ourselves about them more than we do about rope-dancers? Perhaps it would be the best way to find out exactly what they are worth.

“The more one reflects on this question of art and artists, the more one meets matter for astonishment. M. Ingres, a master painter, like M. Courbet, has become, by the sale of his works, rich and celebrated. It is evident that he, at any rate, has not merely worked for fancy’s sake. Quite lately he has been admitted to the Senate as one of the great notables of the land. His fellow-townsmen at Montauban have voted him a golden crown. Here is painting, then, put on the same level as war, religion, science, and industry. But why has M. Ingres been considered the first amongst his peers? If you consult artists and writers about his value, most of them will tell you that he is the chief, much questioned, of a school fallen into discredit for the last thirty years, the classical school; that to this school has succeeded another, which in its turn, became the fashion, the romantic school, headed by Delacroix, who is just dead; that this one has given away, and is now partly replaced by the realist school, of which Courbet is the principal representative. So that upon the glory of Ingres, the venerable representative of classicism, are superposed two younger schools, two new generations of artiste, as two or three new strata of earth are superposed on the animals contemporary with the last deluge. Why has the government chosen M. Ingres, an antediluvian, rather

than Delacroix or Courbet? Is art an affair of archaeology, or is it like politics which has always been horrified by new ideas and I walked with its eyes turned backwards in history? If so, then the last comers in painting would be the worst. Then what is the good of encouragement and recompenses? Let things go their own way, unless we would follow the advice of Plato and Rousseau, and ostracise this 'world of art,' sod of parasites and corruption."

All this seems severe, but is very easily answered. Happily for the human race, it is guided in the right direction by its instincts before it has learned to account for its own doings by philosophical reasoning. Those who possess the instinct which either creates or appreciates works of art do not need to quiet their own consciences by any argument about the wisdom or utility of paying attention to the fine arts. The art faculty, like every other great faculty of our nature, carries within itself the assurance of its own lawfulness. If any argument is needed to satisfy those unfortunates who can only think and never feel, here is one, such as it is. Nature is always artistic, the very commonest things have artistic invention. A rose is beautiful and a toad is ugly, both are artistic. Now, so long as man's work is unartistic, it is a discord in the universe, hence artists serve the purpose of bringing man and his belongings into visible harmony with nature. If you answer, "What is the good of being brought into harmony with nature? we don't care about artistic qualities even in nature itself," we can only say that art does not work exclusively for you, but that very many other persons find in it a sensible benefit and an addition to happiness. It is easily shown also that art adds to human knowledge, by giving it visibility and precision, but to do this the art itself must be conscientiously accurate, which until very lately it has seldom been. Indeed, the mission of art to humanity is only just begun, and it is less easy as yet to point to definite services rendered than it probably will be a few centuries hence. Even now, however, we owe to many deceased artists much interesting and often really valuable information. Such an institution as the English National Portrait Gallery is a proof of the utility of art as a record.

These questionings of Proudhon as to the utility of art are, however, rather introductory to his own answer than the real questionings of an inquirer who could give no answer, and believed that none could be given. Proudhon defines art as "*an idealist representation of nature and ourselves with a view to the physical and moral advancement (perfectionnement) of our species.*" This is one of the best definitions hitherto constructed. It includes natural truth, idealism, landscape art, figure design, and the influence of art as drawing attention to, and leading towards, the improvement of our physical and moral life. It misses, however, the affections and sentiments which cause the production of all art that touches us closely. Art is the expression of the artist's delight in what he sees or imagines, and an attempt to communicate the same delight to others, with a view to their sympathy and applause. Then Proudhon considers the aesthetic faculty one of secondary rank, merely an auxiliary in the development of humanity, rather a feminine than a virile faculty, and predestined to obedience. Here also he is undoubtedly right from the political or social point of view, which estimates faculties according to their direct

governmental power. The aesthetic power influences only those who by their natural constitution are created the subjects of such influence; its weakness lies in the fact that it only governs those who are willing to be governed. Political power, on the other hand, governs also the unwilling. The difference between the two may be accurately estimated by the difference in national importance between the Royal Academy and the House of Commons. But, on the other hand, considered apart from the question of power over others, I am not sure that the aesthetic faculty, especially when in its highest form of artistic invention, can be considered a secondary or an unmasculine faculty. Be assured that to paint a great picture or write a great poem is manly work in the strongest sense. Shakspeare and Michael Angelo were certainly manly; and however firm our manhood, it is never too mighty for the great claims which the exigencies of noble art make upon it.

The wisdom of such governmental encouragement of art as Proudhon questions may indeed be doubted, but the course pursued by the Emperor in selecting Ingres for honors rather than Courbet, or even Delacroix, is marked by Louis Napoleon's usual tact and prudence. Ingres may be an "antediluvian," but his merits, such as they are, have the advantage of universal recognition, whilst the merits of Delacroix and Courbet are strongly disputed. The great evil of all governmental recognition of contemporary art is that persons in authority can only honor "safe" men, and these are seldom the greatest, never the most original. Calcott was a safe man and got knighted; Turner was not a safe man, and thirty years ago, any official recognition of him would have excited much clamor, which would have caused the common people to doubt the judgment of their rulers. Besides, it does not follow that antediluvians should be necessarily worse than their successors; their only fault is to have aimed at qualities now no longer in fashion amongst artists; but these qualities may nevertheless be desirable, and to have aimed at them may have been to render permanent service to the arts, even though they are for the present temporarily lost sight of in the pursuit of more novel aims. As to the fitness of the *kind* of honor bestowed on Ingres there is still, however, room for doubt. The fine arts do not teach men how to govern a country; and the severe study of form, which is Ingres' *sole* claim to consideration, is not enough to make him vote wisely on such questions as will come before him in his senatorial capacity.

Proudhon's conception of art was large. He perceived the immense extension of the aesthetic faculty in man. He saw that not merely painting or sculpture, but every thing that aims at the adornment of life, springs from that faculty. The truth is, that whenever we decorate a building or a piece of joiners' work with the simplest moulding, whenever we enrich our dress with the least bit of braid or ribbon, or even put a wild flower in a button-hole, we are attempting to give satisfaction to the artistic instinct. A manufacturer at Oldham put a cornice round the top of his factory at a cost of £1,500. That was poor art, but it was an attempt at art, and sprang from the instinct which erected the frieze of the Parthenon. The duty of artists and writers on art is to guide this blind instinct to a rational activity. Thus we might suggest to a savage, that instead of carving and staining his own face, he would do better to carve and stain wooden furniture; and it is the duty of every writer on art in the present age to tell the people who invent the prevalent

fashions in female dress, that although the desire for becoming costume is a right instinct, the existing *mode* is a disease of it.

Proudhon's chapter on the Ideal is somewhat unsatisfactory. So far as I understand the Ideal, it is the typical or perfect form to which nature tends. But there may be various ideals; indeed, they are infinitely numerous. Nature never quite reaches them in any individual creature; but very clearly indicates them. Proudhon believed that there is Idealism in every thing, even in a photograph of raw butcher's meat, chopped in pieces. I confess I see no Ideal whatever in nature or in photography, but only hints' giving us a clue to the Ideal. It is scarcely worth while, however, to discuss this point, on which there exists little difference of opinion amongst artists. The difference which *does* exist, and which distinguishes modern art from the antique, is that we recognize a greater quantity or variety of ideals than the ancients did. This is of importance, because it makes our aims more various and our judgments more liberal than theirs.

"For philosophers and *savants*," says Proudhon, "the mode of expression ought to be rigorously exact. Artistic expression, on the other hand, is augmentative or diminutive, laudatory or depreciatory. So that the slavery to the pure idea, which characterizes philosophy, science and industry, is just what destroys the aesthetic sentiment, the ideal, whilst artistic license gives birth to it. "The object of art is *not* merely to make us admire beautiful things. The attainment of beauty is only the *début* of the artist. Our moral life consists of quite other things than this superficial and sterile contemplation. There are the variety of human actions and passions, prejudices, beliefs, conditions, castes, family, religion, domestic comedy, public tragedy, national epic, revolutions. All that is as much matter for art as for philosophy.

"Art is essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative."

All that is very true and good, one or two phrases are even deep and show unusual insight. The way in which Proudhon defines the change which the Fine Arts love to make in all their materials is very accurate. "Artistic expression," he says, "is augmentative or diminutive, laudatory or depreciatory. His other assertion, that "the attainment of beauty is only the *début* of the artist," is more likely to be disputed. Beauty and pleasure are considered by many to be the end of art; truth the end of science; morality the end of philosophy; whereas Proudhon, being a seeker after truth, and a moralist, will have it that art also should seek after these things. I reserve the discussion of this point till we come to Proudhon's more elaborate development of his doctrine. The last sentence, "art is essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative," expresses a truth too often lost sight of by such critics as Proudhon himself, who forget that the particular truths and concrete forms of art can only be met by particular and, so to speak, concrete criticism. Vague abstractions, or even abstractions which, considered philosophically, are not vague, aid us little in our attempts to estimate productions which always come before us with definite forms. Philosophy, or at least the broad philosophical spirit, is a necessary element in good art criticism, but the knowledge

of special facts is also indispensable to any one who would speak of an art which is “essentially concrete, particularist, and determinative.”

Proudhon is less happy in a curious attempt he makes to distinguish the Ideal from the Idea.

“The Ideal is distinguished from the Idea, because the Idea is an abstract type, whilst the Ideal is the clothing given to the Idea by the imagination or sentiment. For example:—

“IDEA: It is safer to live in a humble condition than in a high one. *Ideal*: Fable of the oak and the reed, combat of the rats and the weasels, when the princes of the rat army, with their plumes, not being able to get into the holes, were all massacred.

“IDEA: Maternal tenderness. *Ideal*: a hen and her chickens; the pelican; opossums; a woman giving suck to her child; the lion at Florence.”

This is very wide of the mark. Proudhon first gives an abstract moral notion, and calls that the Idea; then an artistic illustration of it in visible shape, and calls that the Ideal. Turning to Liddell and Scott for reference to a Greek author who employed the word ἰδέα in something like its modern artistic sense, I find that “in the Platonic Philosophy the ἰδέαι were not only εἰδῶν, but something more, viz., the *perfect archetypes, models, or patterns* (Lat. *formæ*), of which, respectively, all created things were the imperfect antitypes or *representations*.” The word ἰδέα, in art at least, does not mean a thought or a moral proposition, but a *form* seen in the mind. So far as a work of art realizes this inner vision it is ideal. Realism is the surrender to outward vision; idealism is the surrender to the inward vision. Proudhon’s examples of ideals are not necessarily ideals at all; they might have been examples of servile realism. He confounds thought and ideality, just as our vulgar language continually confounds them. People say that they have ideas when they have only thoughts. By an extension of meaning which is metaphorical we talk also of musical ideas, because our language is not critically accurate enough to have a special word for that which the musician *hears* in his imagination. Proudhon’s “ideas” are only thoughts, or moral notions; and his “ideals” only instances, or illustrations. But when Phidias imagined Jupiter, he saw in his mind a true artistic *idea*; and when he wrought the great image in ivory and gold, he made a work which, as an attempt to realize that idea, was, so far as he approached it, ideal.

Since Proudhon was before all things a moralist, seeking a definite moral utility in every thing, and approving every thing only just so far as it seemed to him helpful to moral progress, and since he by no means loved or understood art for itself, but only as a force or influence which might ameliorate men, it is evident that the principle of *art for art* must have been, in the highest degree, repugnant to him.

“*Art for Art*, as it has been called, not having its lawfulness in itself, and resting on nothing *is* nothing. It is a debauch of the heart and dissolution of the mind. Separated from right and duty cultivated and sought after as the highest thought of the soul and the supreme manifestation of humanity, art, or the ideal, shorn of the best part of itself, reduced to nothing more than an excitement of

fancy and the senses, *is the principle of sin, the origin of all slavery, the poisoned source whence flow, according to the Bible, all the fornications and abominations of the earth.* From this point of view the pursuit of letters and of the arts has been so often marked by historians and moralists as the cause of the corruption of manners and the decadence of states; it is for the same reason that certain religions—Magism, Judaism, Protestantism—have excluded it from their temples. Art for art, I say, the verse for the verse, the style for the style, the form for the form, fancy for fancy; *all these vanities, which eat up an age like a disease, are vice in all its refinement, evil in its quintessence.* Carried into religion and morality, that is called mysticism, idealism, quietism, and romanticism: a contemplative disposition where the most subtle pride unites itself with the most profound impurity, and which all the true practical moralists have opposed with all their energy—Voltaire just as much as Bossuet.”

This passage is so powerful, so full of conviction, so strongly colored with the little crystal of truth, which is dissolved and disseminated in so much hot water of fanaticism, that very many good people on reading it would succumb at once, and never dare to oppose to such stem and lofty morality the resistance of reason and common sense. Let us examine for one moment what the principle of Art for Art really is. It simply maintains that works of art, as such, are to be estimated purely by their artistic qualities, not by qualities lying outside of art.⁵ For instance, the comparative poetical rank of Byron and Bowles is not to be settled by a comparison of their religion and morality, but of their art. Leslie used to say that he remembered a versifier who considered himself a better poet than Byron, because Byron's works often offended against morality, whereas his own were perfectly unexceptionable on that score. But amongst true critics, however desirable purity may appear to them, poetry is judged as poetry, painting as painting, music as music, art as art. So we say that naughty Alfred de Musset was a poet, because he wrought exquisite poetical work; and we say of good Mr. Tupper that he is no poet, because he has not those qualities of ear and intellect and imagination which are necessary to make one. If Mr. Tupper were very naughty, and poor Alfred de Musset a canonized saint in heaven, that would not in the least affect our estimate of them

⁵ It is probable that if Proudhon were alive to answer me he would say that his objection refers less to the spirit in which works of art are estimated than to the spirit in which they are produced, that an artist who works for artistic ends alone is a lost being, whereas an artist who works for moral ends is always safe. Unfortunately for this view it happens that when art makes itself secondary to any moral or intellectual purpose, it almost always, as if of necessity, loses quality as art, and very frequently sinks so low (artistically speaking) as to get beneath the level of all that deserves the very name of art. The reader may remember Cruikshank's large painting against drunkenness; that was a painting with a praiseworthy moral purpose, but it was not a picture at all. (I have called it a "painting," because any piece of canvas covered with paint is entitled to that designation.) On the other hand I remember many pictures of drunken and immoral satyrs, by the at masters which were not produced with that honorable wish to combat moral evil and help moral good which animated Cruikshank, and yet were truly pictures, and as such are rightly considered treasures, whilst Cruikshank's work is worth as much as the last teetotal lecture, and no more.

as artists. It is in vain to write Jeremiads against this. A painter who paints supremely well, however few or feeble the moral lessons he inculcates, is sure of applause and immortality. What moral lesson did Rubens teach? What sermonizing is there in Titian? Even their sacred subjects are merely treated as artistic *motives*, and how utterly worldly they both were, how fond of pomp and vanity, how full of the lust of the flesh, the desire of the eyes, and the pride of life! Yet they are the princes of art; and the preachings, and the teachings, the inculcated lessons, the elaborate allegories, the everlasting impertinences of inopportune counsel that fill our modern exhibitions will all be swept into deserved oblivion, whilst these great men remain.

When Proudhon says that "art for art has not its lawfulness in itself, and rests on nothing," he forgets that art rests upon nature, and that truth is essential to it. The two great artists whom I have just instanced as famous for purely artistic qualities were pre-eminent for their marvellous powers of observation, and memory, and vividly truthful imagination. They are great because they saw so much, and remembered so much, and because, when they imagined, they imagined with such astonishing veracity, and could so splendidly set forth outwardly on canvas what they had first seen inwardly. Art *has* its own lawfulness, which is dual, namely, the law of natural appearances and the law of artistic exigencies, and both these laws are so vast and so complex that it takes half a lifetime to learn them. No wonder that writers like Proudhon, who practise and advocate the art criticism of pure ignorance should not even be conscious that these great laws exist.

And even in such technical matters as the laying of a touch, or the judgment with which glazing and impasto are employed, or the prudence of using light or dark grounds, or whether it is better to get light transparently through the colors or opaquely upon them, whether in water-color it is better to use the sponge or forego it, whether in etching it is wiser to obtain darks by depth of biting or by multiplicity of lines, all such questions as these depend for their solution on the one law that *the best method is always that which best renders the highest order of truth consistently with the permanence of the work*. So that even in the way we estimate the most purely technical qualities of handling there is an understood reference to nature. What we call quality in work is a very great thing, and implies very great knowledge and observation of nature. Quality does not rest on nothing. If a man can spread half a dozen square inches of canvas with oil paint in such a manner as to put what we call quality into it, that man has studied nature for years and years.

And again, when writers like Proudhon consider the art of painting as of itself mere dissoluteness of the mind, they wholly forget the severe discipline that is necessary to success in it. This mistake is especially frequent in men who, having only gone through the usual discipline of school education, consider the fine arts idleness. Latin and Greek are discipline, they *know*, but art is only "mental debauchery." If such men would try to learn to draw in good earnest, they would find out whether art is a discipline or not. Are these gentlemen aware that ignorance lower than theirs looks upon their own pursuits as they, in their ignorance, look upon the pursuits of artists? Peasants and field-laborers almost always consider mental labor pure idleness. You and I may find a difficult author

very hard work, but the ploughman over the hedge thinks we have a pleasant, idle time of it in our easy chairs.

Proudhon makes a good and valuable distinction between personal and impersonal work. The official articles in the *Moniteur* he gives as instances of impersonal work, Michelet's "History of the Revolution" as personal. Men of genius, who always have a strong personality, hate doing impersonal work; and instinctively select those occupations where their personality may exercise itself with effect. On the other hand, it is a decided advantage to men without special genius to follow what may be called more impersonal occupations; they shelter themselves behind the strong shield of custom or officialism. Fine Art never ought to do this; it should always be frankly personal; so ought most literature. Proudhon is right when he says that by his own personality the artist acts directly upon ours, that he has a power over us like that of the magnetizer over the magnetized, and that this power is stronger and stronger as the artist is more and more energetically idealist. To reduce this true doctrine to a concentrated expression, we may put it that the influence of an artist is in proportion to the energy of his ideality.

In a few short chapters, Proudhon rapidly outlines the history of art. Egyptian art, according to him, is altogether typical, aiming only at the fixing of types; Grecian art is the worship of form; Middle Age art is asceticism; the Renaissance was a rehabilitation of beauty, an ambiguous idealism; then the Reformation brought about the humanizing of art, by reducing it to seek its material in common life. Rembrandt, according to Proudhon, was the Luther of painting. Then came the French Revolution, with the great war of the classics and romantics; after that a long period of utter confusion and irrationality, out of which anarchy sprang at last the new school of *Realism*, which Proudhon regards as the final salvation and renovation of art, the principle which is ultimately to place it on a primitive basis in perfect harmony with the rational spirit of modern intelligence.

It is especially interesting to find in this historical summary what Proudhon thought of that great and fruitful movement in art, the Renaissance. He considered it to have been a reaction against the asceticism of the middle ages, and then a development of Catholicism triumphant. The art of the Renaissance was the outward splendor and blossoming of the full-grown sovereign Papacy. Borrowing its means from Grecian art, it worked for the glorification of Papal Christianity. In this Proudhon sees nothing unnatural, Paganism had filtered into Christianity. All religions have a common basis, and on the whole there is but one religion. What is made matter of reproach to Italian Christianity has happened more or less everywhere; every people has retained, in embracing the new religion, as much as possible of its old superstition. Northern asceticism never got down to Italy, which always remained more Pagan than the rest of Europe." Proudhon does not see much resemblance between the Venuses of ancient art and the Madonnas of the Renaissance; he is "in love" with the (female) saints of Raphael, but not with the antique goddesses. He has warmer sympathy with Gothic art, however, though ascetic," and considers that it

“Asserted itself with as much power as its predecessors and more sublimity. The Renaissance remains inferior to it on the grounds of geniality, originality, and artistic idea, because in the immense majority of its productions it had for its object to ally together two most incompatible things—the spirituality of the Christian sentiment, and the ideality of Grecian figures. This mixture of Paganism and Christianity, besides being an inevitable reaction against Catholic asceticism, had its utility, if only to remind us of antiquity, reconnect the chain of the ages, form the artistic communion of the human race, and prepare us for the Revolution; But it was not the less an entirely secondary task.

“What characterizes the art and time of the Renaissance is the want of principles, or, if you prefer it, a tolerance incompatible with the ardor of a conviction. The Church Triumphant has entered into her repose and her glory; it seems as if the purifying times of suffering would never more return to her. Whether from quietism or indifference, she protects equally works frankly Pagan and mystical conceptions. A mixture Paganism and spirituality, the art of the Renaissance, like that of the Greeks, arrived at the idolatrous worship of form.”

At the conclusion of the chapter Proudhon strongly objects to the figures of Christ executed at the period of the Renaissance; he does not like them at all, likes M. Renan's Christ still less, and wants a revolutionary one of the temper of Danton and Mirabeau.

On the whole this is a rational and philosophical way to speak about the Renaissance. During our recent heat of reaction against that movement very many of us have lost sight of its true character. Modern Liberals ought to look back to the revival of classical literature, and the practical imitation of classic art which followed it, with feelings of especial and peculiar gratitude. It is to that movement that we all owe our modern intellectual emancipation. This is proved by the ardent hostility with which the enemies of modernism assail the Renaissance, and by their untiring endeavors to bring it into general discredit. It is true that the Renaissance led to a period of license in manners; its palaces were not houses of purity, nor its great luxury without sin; but it seems unhappily inevitable that every successive effort towards intellectual emancipation should be followed by temporary licentiousness of life. If this is really inevitable, it is to be regretted; but the mind of humanity must and will advance in spite of these occasional disturbances of moral equilibrium. There are signs even now of something of this kind preparing itself for us, a new intellectual movement which is likely to be accompanied by some relaxation in conduct. What is certain is that without the Renaissance and the secular studies which it fostered, modern science and modern art would have been still unknown to us, and Europe would have stiffened into a Gothic China or Japan.

But the Renaissance, in turning towards the literature and art of the ancients, fell into empty idealism, an idealism of externals. The art of the great time of the Renaissance had little apparent connection with the actual life of the age it flourished in. Proudhon quotes a saying, attributed to Raphael, that the business of art is not to represent things as nature makes them, but as she ought to make them; and Proudhon attributes the curious mixture of Catholicism and Pagan mythology which distinguishes the art of the Renaissance to this spirit of idealism, which was

also the cause, in his opinion, of the moral corruption which immediately followed that movement.

The effect of the Reformation upon art was to make it condescend to illustrate the actual life of its own time. It resisted the new Paganism into which art had thrown itself, and drove artists to paint what they saw by closing the fields of idolatry and idealism. The title of Proudhon's chapter on this subject explains his view in one word, "La Réforme; *l'art s'humanise*." The art of the Renaissance may have been Divine, but it would not condescend to be human; aiming at what its professors thought God ought to have done, it failed to perceive the qualities of what he *had* done. Hence Proudhon gives a far higher place to Rembrandt than to Raphael, puts Rembrandt and Luther together, and Shakspeare along with them in a trinity of reformers. What he likes in Shakspeare is not so much his idealism as his true sympathy with common life and clear understanding of it. Proudhon regrets very much that France did not join this movement, and by no means approves that tiresome pedantry which even down to our own day has led Frenchmen to ape the ancients.

The war of the classics and romantics is not unfairly described by Proudhon. The following passages contain, I believe, all that is most valuable in the argument of each party:—

"The romantics reproached the established tradition with two things: the first with setting aside fifteen centuries of history, whence the narrowness of its thought, and the want of life and originality and truth in its works; the second with not even understanding its models, and being thereby thrown into endless contradictions. Is the history of Christendom nothing? said they. Is it not as much matter for poetry as the Pagan mythology and wars? And if it is artistic material, why are we to confine ourselves to the limits of your classics? And then with your worship of classic form, which is your ideal, you sacrifice *expression* which is not less important, and so fall into conventionalism and monotony. The ancients carved their calm gods because they believed in them; we, who seek action and life, common labors and civic duties, cannot accept them as models.

"The classics argued that art is absolute, universal, and eternal; that its rules, which are the laws of the beautiful, are, like the rules of logic and geometry, immutable; that the ancients practised them because they understood them, and hence left us incomparable works; that there is only one and the same art in which nations more or less succeed; that the revolutions of history do not necessitate revolutions in literature and art, as the Renaissance artists proved; that to abandon a tradition, consecrated by so many masterpieces, would be to retrograde, and substitute the worship of the common-place for the worship of form; finally, that if the new school thought it could excel the old, it had better try, and would then be judged by its performance."

This last challenge, as Proudhon remarks, it was dangerous to accept old systems which have produced their full quantity of fruit always contemptuously invite young systems to show theirs; and when there is little or none to show, they would have it believed that the immature system is permanently unproductive. The *Renaissance* had produced its fruit; romanticism was only just beginning to produce,

so that any comparison on such ground was unfair. In these days we all see that romanticism was less a system than an emancipation, and that its greatest service is to have opened the way to the universality of modern naturalism. Classicism was a theory of limitation and restraint; romanticism a deliverance from this; naturalism is a boundless study of human life and the external world. Traces of the two first linger yet in art, and some elderly men on the rare occasions when those once mighty watchwords are pronounced in these days, may even still feel a lingering ardor of partisanship, such as that great controversy kindled in their youth; but for the coming generation that war will be as much matter of history as the Wars of the Roses.

The part of Proudhon's book which will be read with most interest is that extending from the tenth chapter to the conclusion. The first nine chapters are full of principles and doctrines, of which I have just given an abridged statement; but in the tenth Proudhon enters on the direct discussion of the merits of modern painters. His first care is to define the two chief elements of every work of art, reason and taste, and to affirm that criticism ought to possess these two qualities to be able to meet and measure them duly. In the word "reason," Proudhon understands both sciences and morality; what he calls "taste" includes every thing that is to be measured by the aesthetic faculty. I doubt whether he realized the full importance of the sciences which treat of natural *aspects*; he was certainly under the impression that a man might write art criticism without them. And I doubt, farther, whether Proudhon rightly saw the limits of taste; probably he included under that head much that belongs to the higher faculty of invention, and to the more common gift of simple observation. However, taking the two words in his sense, we are to understand that in his criticism he insists always on the moral and rational side of art, and presents more reservedly his aesthetic judgments, which, he feels, may be simply personal. This is the way he himself puts it; a barer statement would be that he does not judge art as an art critic at all, but as a reasoner and moralist.

Proudhon is very angry with Eugene Delacroix because that painter had the misfortune to aim at the rendering of his own personal impressions, and to say so. This is resented as the height of artistic presumption. An artist, according to Proudhon, is not to render his own impressions, but those of the public—those of P. J. Proudhon in particular, as one of the public. The artist is to embody, not his own ideas, but the collective ideas of his time.

This is one of those pleasing theories which the vulgar are always so ready to accept. They like to flatter themselves that men of genius, after all, are not their teachers, but their servants and interpreters. "It is we," they delight to believe, "who have great ideas; the business of artists is to embody our conceptions, as the business of writers is to register our opinions." It is true that much writing and painting attempts only this, and succeeds; but it is also certain that great men aim at something more than this. Delacroix certainly did, and so far gave evidence of greatness. Not that his art seems to me really grand and noble; it is too agitated, too feverish, too full of morbid and false energy. Even his color, which it is the fashion to admire, is generally violent and crude, and his composition often singularly

awkward. With better health, and less irritability of nerve, he might have been a great artist, but he had not the calm of a mighty painter. Proudhon objects that he painted a great variety of subjects which he, Proudhon, does not care about, and then asks, "Comprend-il mon idée, sent-il mon idéal, saisit-il mon impression, à moi profane, qu'il s'agit surtout d'intéresser, d'émouvoir, et dont on sollicite le suffrage?" The objection to this style of criticism is that it attributes far too much importance to the personal predilections of the critic. What do we care about Proudhon's "idéal" when we are studying Delacroix? For any critic to say that a painter is irrational merely because he does not realize his, the critic's, own impressions is a monstrous impertinence.

Proudhon is severe on Ingres for his "stupid" work. The truth is that Ingres is wholly unintellectual. Long labor, and a narrow obstinacy, have given him unusual skill in drawing the muscles (which, nevertheless, as in the picture of St. Symphorien in the Cathedral of Autun, he often violently exaggerates), but no painter of great fame is so mindless. I have not seen his "Vierge a la Communion," but am fully disposed to believe all that Proudhon says against it as a pretty young girl *posing* charmingly, whereas it is evident that when Mary took her first sacrament, it being after the death of Jesus, she must have been at least fifty years old, and, having borne great sorrow, could scarcely have retained that early charm which grief and time so certainly wear away. I have not seen this picture, but I remember the Virgin in the same painter's "Jesus disputing with the Doctors," a face without character and without emotion, like the visage of a Baker Street wax-work; and I remember the central figure, the boy Jesus, a conception so commonplace that any religious printseller will offer you a hundred such. The high-water mark of Ingres's art was reached in the *Source*, where all his fine knowledge of form was called for, and not one ray of intelligence.

There is an elaborate criticism of Léopold Robert. His pictures of Italian peasants have long been very popular in France, where they are rendered familiar by engravings. They have a great charm, an infinite grace of composition and delicate sense of beauty. No artist ever more admirably rendered the harmony of moving forms. His groups were arranged with such consummate art, that no limb, however joyously active, violates the profound accord. Hence we yield to these works as we yield to beautiful music; they are the music of forms in motion. We are filled with a deep satisfaction, and are glad that an order so exquisite should thus be arrested for ever. For in the actual world of men, beautiful groupings like these are scarcely seen ere they shatter, but in the works of a painter like Léopold Robert the elastic limbs hold themselves unweariedly, and the fair forms bind themselves together in a permanent edifice of grace.

Whether Italian peasants ever *do* arrange themselves so felicitously, whether their limbs are so delicately moulded and their faces so ideally beautiful, I cannot undertake to affirm. Proudhon utterly disbelieves these pictures. There is not corn enough on the cart, he says, for a real harvest, nor any genuine rustic life in these peasants of a painter's dreamland. Very possibly Proudhon is right. Leopold Robert may have pursued an ideal, which, so far as actual rustic life is concerned, must be pronounced false in its superlative refinement. Yet though his gift may have been

injudiciously employed, it was a great gift and a rare one, and art can achieve no perfect work without it.

Proudhon considers Horace Vernet as irrational as Ingres and Delacroix. "Sottise et impuissance, je n'ai pas d'autres termes pour caractériser de pareils ouvrages." Such is the verdict on Vernet's works in general. Descending to particulars, we have a lively expression of dislike. Speaking of that prodigious canvas *La Smala*, our critic uses the following highly energetic language: "Otez-moi cette peinture: pour le vulgaire qui l'admire, elle est d'un détestable exemple; pour les honnêtes gens qui savent à quel sentiment elle répond, elle est un sujet de remords. L'auteur a été payé, je suppose; je demande que cette toile soit enlevée, ratisée, dégraissée, puis vendue comme filasse au chiffonnier."

I agree with Proudhon so far as this, that Vernet's work has no intellectual or moral value, and that it is not even in any high sense artistic. Nevertheless, he was a great representative man, and, in his own peculiar way, one of the most marvellously endowed men who ever lived. He painted French soldiers so exactly as French soldiers understand themselves that his works are, as it were, collective works; it is as if the whole French army had taken up paint-brushes, and, suddenly gifted with pictorial skill, wrought together unanimously. His pictures ought to be preserved as a thoroughly faithful record of the common French military mind of this age. The French soldier has a peculiar professional character, and, when it is not natural to him as a man, he rapidly acquires it by contact. Vernet loved that character; and as he painted what he loved, he did it with a fidelity which, whatever critics may say, was by no means superficial. Gay, brave, thoughtless, poor, cheerful under privation, happy with a little luxury or honor,—merry and kind habitually, yet stern and savage on occasion,—of almost childish simplicity, yet with a tiger-like spring and fury in attack,—these little madder-breeched heroes were beloved by Vernet sympathetically. He took the utmost interest in them all, knew every thing about their existence, could remember every item of their uniforms as a mother remembers the little frocks of her own children. Proudhon has a profound contempt for this interest in externals, but what is a soldier without his uniform and his arms? And Vernet could remember faces too, and I paint every soldier from memory whom he had once looked at attentively. Proudhon is angry at Vernet's honest taste for military life in its less elevating aspects; but what is more wearisome than perpetual heroics?

Proudhon finds it convenient to admit the degradation of modern art in order to herald the great reform which in his opinion is to renew and reinvigorate it. This reform is the substitution of justice and truth for aesthetic quality as the aim of the artist. We are familiar with this principle already in England in another form. Mr. Ruskin has often told us that art ought to place truth first, and beauty second. Proudhon goes a step farther, and says that in the human mind there is but a duality, or rather polarity, Conscience and Science, or in other words, Justice and Truth; the faculty which perceives beauty he excludes, or wholly subordinates. Certainly there is much great art which is devoid of beauty, as for instance Durer's; and there is much small art which has beauty, or at least that lower form of it which we call prettiness: yet the best art is both true and beautiful. Proudhon so

strongly detests the principle of art for art, that what he most undervalues in works of art is precisely their artistic quality. Like many men of narrow culture who have got hold of a great truth, he has been dragged out of his depth by it. It seems to me that the right theory on this subject has never been precisely stated even by Ruskin, and still less by Proudhon. The relation of truth to aesthetic quality in painting is one of inferior rank, but prior necessity. This complex sort of relation occurs in many other things. In building, for instance, the work of the mason is of inferior rank to the work of the architect, yet of prior necessity. In literature, grammatical accuracy of language is of inferior rank to the poetical gift, yet of prior necessity. In music, truth of intonation is of inferior rank to musical feeling, yet of prior necessity. So that, in my view, truth is to be put *before* beauty as the first thing to be asked for, yet not above beauty as if it were the higher thing.⁶

All these theories and reasonings of Proudhon, of which I have endeavored to give an accurate account, are introductory to the main object of his work, which is the elevation of Courbet to the rank of a great rational artist, the reformer and regenerator of art. I prefer to reserve this part of the subject, and treat Courbet in some future work, when I shall have had fuller opportunities for studying him.

⁶ Proudhon never attempts to estimate the value of thought and imagination in art, and they can scarcely be brought under his duality. I should say that, in art, natural truth is lower than artistic invention, and yet more necessary; whilst artistic invention is lower than thought, and yet for pictorial purposes, more necessary. In art, as in life, necessity and rank are often in inverse proportion, and what is most necessary is first asked for. The food of the body is the first want, the food of the mind the second. The material qualities of art are its first necessity; the spiritual come after.

CE-6104f
December 2010

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