

CORRESPONDENCE OF P.-J. PROUDHON



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ON AN ALBUM PAGE

Without friendship, what is the life of a man? Science parches and withers; power intoxicates and breeds arrogance; devotion without charity is only hypocrisy. The rich man is odious to me for his selfishness; the lover seems pitiable in his indolence; the voluptuary disgusts me with his softness. But let divine friendship come to warm our souls, and everything takes on a new aspect, a brilliant character. Pleasure, love, power, wealth, science, religion — friendship knows how to magnify them all, and through it, everything becomes even more lovable, more beautiful, more sublime.

Friendship makes one forgive fortune, and sometimes renders misfortune worthy of envy.

I dare boast of it: I have always had friends; never, at any stage of my life, was my heart devoid of a tender attachment. And when we met for the first time, my dear Maguet, I was not mistaken; something told me I had just gained yet another friend.

Am I happy, then?

No — and God forbid I should blame friendship for that.

But who could know happiness in an age such as ours? In the sanctuary of science, at the foot of the altars, in the arms of pleasure,³ in the very bosom of friendship, the sense of humanity's miseries pursues and troubles me. O noble young men, sacred battalion of friends, ours is a glorious calling: we have been predestined to root out vice and tyranny. Shall we fail in our mission?

As for me, I have raised my hand to heaven and sworn an oath to that effect.

I live now only for the fulfillment of this sacred work and for FRIENDSHIP.

P.-J. PROUDHON.

³ N.B. Whoever you may be — friendly male reader or wise female reader — you are asked to see nothing more than a synecdoche in these words from the undersigned.