

Cato Book Forum

*The Collected Works of Frédéric Bastiat, vol. 1:
The Man and the Statesman: The Correspondence and
Articles on Politics (Liberty Fund, 2011).*



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Introduction	3
Bastiat: From the “Unseen” to the “Seen” - from Obscure Provincial Magistrate to one of the Leading Political Economists in Paris	8
<i>The “Unseen” Provincial Magistrate 1801-1844.....</i>	<i>8</i>
<i>The “Seen” Leader of the Free Trade Movement in France, 1844-1850</i>	<i>9</i>
Bastiat the Correspondent	11
<i>Bastiat in Paris with the Économistes</i>	<i>12</i>
<i>Bastiat on Diverse Topics: Women, Fashion, Religion, & Wit</i>	<i>17</i>
Bastiat as an Elected Politician and Law-Abiding Revolutionary.....	23
<i>Bastiat in the Chamber of Deputies, 1848-1850.....</i>	<i>23</i>
<i>Bastiat the Law-Abiding Revolutionary of 1848.....</i>	<i>26</i>
Conclusion	32
<i>The Bastiat Monument in Mugron, 1878.....</i>	<i>32</i>
<i>The Evolution of “The State” during 1848.....</i>	<i>36</i>
<i>“Freedom” and “Laissez-faire” in Jacques Bonhomme (June 1848)</i>	<i>38</i>
Appendix: Revolutionary Broadside in Jacques Bonhomme by Frédéric Bastiat (June 1848)	41
<i>“Freedom” (Jacques Bonhomme, 11-15 June 1848).....</i>	<i>41</i>
<i>“Laissez-faire” (Jacques Bonhomme, 11-15 June, 1848)</i>	<i>42</i>
<i>“The State” (Jacques Bonhomme, 11-15 March 1848).....</i>	<i>43</i>

INTRODUCTION



Claude Frédéric Bastiat (1801-1850)¹

My dear Frédéric [FB writing to himself],

Like you I love all forms of freedom; and among these, the one that is the most universally useful to mankind, the one you enjoy at each moment of the day and in all of life's circumstances, is the freedom to work and to trade. I know that making things one's own is the fulcrum of society and even of human life. I know that trade is intrinsic to property and that to restrict the one is to shake the foundations of the other. I approve of your devoting yourself to the defense of this freedom whose triumph will inevitably usher in the reign of international justice and consequently the extinction of hatred, prejudices between one people and another, and the wars that come in their wake...

¹ For more information about Bastiat's life and work, as well as access to his works online, see <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/person/25>> and <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/index.html>>. A detailed chronology of his life (in French) can be found here "Chronologie de la vie et des oeuvres Frédéric Bastiat" by Jean-Claude Paul-Dejean at the Bastiat Circle website <<http://bastiat.net/fr/biographie/chronologie.html>>. A shorter one in English can be found here <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/Lecture/Chronology.html>>. An expanded one based upon Paul-Dejean's (in English) here <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/ExpandedChronology.html>>.

I love freedom of trade as much as you do. But is all human progress encapsulated in that freedom? In the past, your heart beat for the freeing of thought and speech which were still bound by their university shackles and the laws against free association. You enthusiastically supported parliamentary reform and the radical division of that sovereignty, which delegates and controls, from the executive power in all its branches. All forms of freedom go together. All ideas form a systematic and harmonious whole, and there is not a single one whose proof does not serve to demonstrate the truth of the others. But you act like a mechanic who makes a virtue of explaining an isolated part of a machine in the smallest detail, not forgetting anything. The temptation is strong to cry out to him, “Show me the other parts; make them work together; each of them explains the others. . . .”²

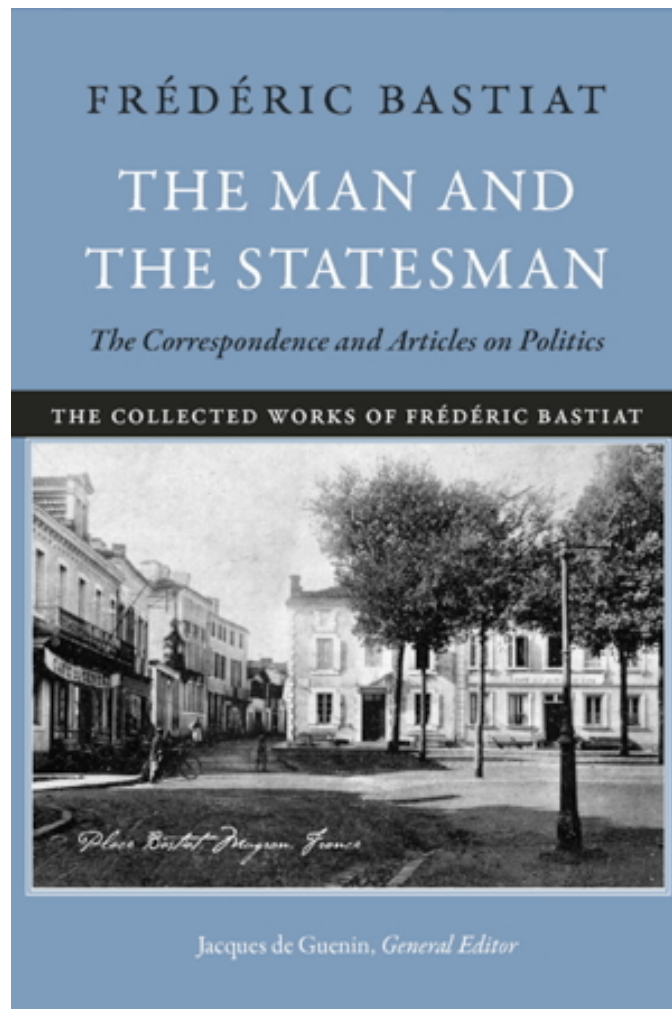
[Draft Preface for the *Harmonies* (1847)]

Liberty Fund published the first volume of an ambitious six-volume translation project in March 2011. It was volume 1 of the *Collected Works of Frédéric Bastiat* and had the subtitle of *The Man and the Statesman: The Correspondence and Articles on Politics*.³ It is the brain child of a French businessman and president of the Cercle Frédéric Bastiat, Jacques de Guenin (the General Editor of the project), who first proposed the translation into English of the complete works of Bastiat at a conference in the south west of France in 2001 to celebrate the bicentennial of the birth of the great French economist. This conference was well attended by a contingent of Americans who knew and highly respected the work of Bastiat and had made the journey almost as a pilgrimage in his honour. The group included members of the Board of Liberty Fund and as soon as they heard Guenin’s proposal they agreed to underwrite the project. It has taken a long ten years before

² Draft Preface for the *Harmonies* [addressed to himself and written at the end of 1847.], CW1, p. 318, 320. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226010>>.

³ *The Collected Works of Frédéric Bastiat. Vol. 1 The Man and the Statesman: The Correspondence and Articles on Politics*, ed. Jacques de Guenin et al. (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 2011). Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393>>.

the first volume appeared in print. It is this volume which I would like to talk to you about today.



Some might question the need for this project as there have been circulating in the post-war English speaking world several volumes of his work, beginning with *The Law* (1950)⁴ and then several volumes which were translated and published by the William Volcker Fund in 1964 and later in paperback by the Foundation for Economic Education in 1968, including the *Economic Harmonies*, *Economic Sophisms*,

⁴ Frédéric Bastiat, *The Law*, trans. Dean Russell (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1974). Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/78>>.

Selected Essays on Political Economy, and a biography of Bastiat by Dean Russell.⁵ But these were barely half of what Bastiat wrote in a frenzy of writing between 1844, when his first serious economic article appeared in the *Journal des économistes*, and Christmas Eve 1850 when he died from a serious throat condition (possibly cancer of the throat).

Our proposed volumes of his collected works are the following:

- Volume 1. The Man and the Statesman: The Correspondence and Articles on Politics
- Volume 2. The Law, The State, and Other Political Writings, 1843-1850
- Volume 3. Economic Sophisms and "What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen"
- Volume 4. Miscellaneous Works on Economics: From Jacques Bonhomme to the Journal des Économistes
- Volume 5. Economic Harmonies
- Volume 6. The Struggle against Protectionism: The English and French Free Trade Movements

What will be new for the English reader in the Liberty Fund translation are the 300 pages of his correspondence, another 500 or so pages of articles on political topics, a third volume of *Economic Sophisms* which Bastiat never published in his lifetime, another 300 pages or so of economic articles, and a whole new volume of his writings on the Free Trade movements in Britain and France. There will be about 3,000 pages in total which is about double the Bastiat we had before. I believe there is enough new material here to confirm the important role Bastiat played in the tumultuous economic and political events of the 1840s in France, as

⁵ Frédéric Bastiat, *Economic Harmonies*, trans. W. Hayden Boyers, ed. George B. de Huszar (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1979), online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/79>>; *Economic Sophisms*, trans. Arthur Goddard (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1968), online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/276>>; *Selected Essays on Political Economy*, trans. Seymour Cain, ed. George B. de Huszar (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1975), online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/956>>; Dean Russell, *Frederic Bastiat: Ideas and Influence* (Irvington-on-Hudson, New York: The Foundation for Economic Education, 1969).

well as to open up new areas of research into Bastiat the politician and Bastiat the economic theorist. In order to assist this process the Liberty Fund edition will also provide an extensive critical apparatus such as a detailed chronology of his life and work, and glossaries of persons, places, institutions, and texts mentioned in his writings. The latter is turning into a sizeable project in its own right with the section of the glossary dealing with French and English political economy from volumes 1 and 2 containing over 110 sizeable entries.⁶

⁶ The glossary dealing with French and English political economy can be found online here <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/Glossary.html>>.

BASTIAT: FROM THE “UNSEEN” TO THE “SEEN” - FROM OBSCURE PROVINCIAL MAGISTRATE TO ONE OF THE LEADING POLITICAL ECONOMISTS IN PARIS⁷

The “Unseen” Provincial Magistrate 1801-1844⁸

The “General Introduction” to volume 1 charts in some detail the extraordinary course Bastiat followed in his all too short life of 49 and one half years (30 June 1801 - 24 December 1850).⁹ Having been born in provincial south west France and then losing both his parents at an early age, Bastiat settled into a reasonably comfortable life as a gentleman farmer (1825) and regional magistrate (1831) in the wine growing region of Gascony. There was no reason at that time to believe he would aspire to or achieve anything else with his life, except for two factors which are revealed in his early correspondence with school friends and neighbours.

The first was an unusually “liberal” education in a school which prided itself on teaching “modern subjects” such as modern languages, accounting, music, and history instead of Greek and Latin. From this experience Bastiat was able to pursue his life-long interests in commerce, music, and open and frank discussion without being burdened by what he called the values of slave owners and conquerors who wrote “the classics” which most French schoolboys were required to learn.

⁷ This title is of course a play on words on the title of one of Bastiat’s best known pamphlets “The Seen and the Unseen” (or “What is Seen and What is not Seen”) (1850) in which he makes one of his cleverest and most sophisticated arguments concerning the nature of economic analysis, namely, the broken window fallacy. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/956/35425>>.

⁸ We have created two timelines of the life and work of Bastiat: one for the “Unseen” part of his life <<http://files.libertyfund.org/img/Bastiat-Oct2010-Unseen.pdf>> and another for the “Seen” part of his life <<http://files.libertyfund.org/img/Bastiat-Oct2010-Seen.pdf>>.

⁹ “General Introduction” by Jacques de Guenin and Jean-Claude Paul-Dejean, pp. xxiii-xxvx. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225564>>.

The second was the very open-minded informal discussion group he had around him in the town of Mugron. Here and with his close friend Félix Coudroy he was able to read widely in the political, economic, and literary issues of the day. Bastiat was particularly interested in economics, which is not surprising since his family was involved in commerce and insurance in France and in Spain. Partly because of his unusual education and partly because of family business interests Bastiat learned to speak Spanish, Italian, and English, with a little bit of Basque thrown in as well.

Bastiat was comfortably well off (inheriting a farm from his grandfather and gaining a dowry from a well planned marriage), polyglot, sympathetic to trade and business, and most importantly, endowed with a restless and inquiring mind. These factors combined to incline him to a course of reading which was to eventually make him one of the leading political economists of his day. In the 20 odd years between inheriting his grandfather's estate in 1825 and his bursting on the Parisian scene in late 1844 Bastiat spent reading almost all the major works of political economy he could lay his hands on, in four different languages.

The “Seen” Leader of the Free Trade Movement in France, 1844-1850¹⁰

When he came across references to Richard Cobden and the Anti-Corn Law League in newspapers in 1844 his mind was captivated by the promise of free trade. Whilst many of his friends were hostile to the trade policies of “perfidious Albion” Bastiat could see how the benefits of free trade would also apply to France and he was determined to make the French people see this fact. The result was his first serious article on economics which he wrote for the leading journal of the

¹⁰ We have created two timelines of the life and work of Bastiat: one for the “Unseen” part of his life <<http://files.libertyfund.org/img/Bastiat-Oct2010-Unseen.pdf>> and another for the “Seen” part of his life <<http://files.libertyfund.org/img/Bastiat-Oct2010-Seen.pdf>>.

French political economy movement, the *Journal des Économistes* (which had been founded only in late 1842 in Paris). He entitled it “On the Influence of French and English Tariffs on the Future of the Two Peoples” and it was published in September 1844 causing a sensation among the closely knit circle of Parisian political economists.¹¹

This journal article started a new career for Bastiat. He was able to move out of the provincial obscurity he had inhabited for the first 44 years of his life (the “Unseen” part of his existence) and to enter an entirely new orbit centred on Paris and London (the “Seen” part of his life). In the six short years he had left to live Bastiat formed a Bordeaux and then a national Free Trade Association modeled on Cobden’s Anti-Corn Law League, became an outstanding and successful economic journalist refuting the errors (“sophisms”) of the protectionists and interventionists, was a successful author of books, was offered the editorship of the prestigious *Journal des économistes*, was elected a representative for the Constituent and then the National Assembly during the 1848 Revolution, was appointed the vice-president of the important financial committee of the Chamber, and became an economic theorist of note (if frustratingly unfulfilled because of a premature death). One or two of these achievements in such a short time might have been noteworthy, but Bastiat had half a dozen or more. He was truly a remarkable man and a remarkable classical liberal.

¹¹ Bastiat, “De l’influence des tarifs français et anglais sur l’avenir des deux peuples,” *Journal des économistes*, August-November 1844, vol. 9, pp. 244-71. Online at <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/JDE/BastiatTarifs-JDE-1844-T9-AugNov.pdf>>.

BASTIAT THE CORRESPONDENT

The Man and the Statesman is made up of two parts. The first part contains 208 letters Bastiat wrote between September 1819 until just a few days before his untimely death, on Christmas Eve 1850, from a serious illness (most likely tuberculosis or throat cancer, or possibly a combination of both).¹² The second part consists of political manifestos and other writings which Bastiat wrote in order to stand for election or as part of his duties as an elected member of the Chamber of Deputies.. The letters in this volume are taken primarily from volume 7 of the second edition of the Guillaumin edition of his complete works, edited by Prosper Paillottet which appeared in 1864.¹³ Additional letters were published in 1877 in a collection by Mme. Cheuvreux, a close personal friend,¹⁴ or have been discovered quite recently by the Bastiat scholar Jean-Claude Paul-Dejean.

For those who are familiar only with Bastiat the author of provocative and thoughtful essays on economics and politics, such as “The State,” “The Law,” the masterful “What Is Seen and What Is Unseen,” or the incomplete treatise *Economic Harmonies*, the letters will reveal another, unknown, more complex, and even conflicted Bastiat. The Bastiat in these letters is the shy, unsophisticated, and somewhat gauche provincial magistrate who tries to make an impression in the metropole of Paris; the budding economic theorist who is welcomed into the ranks of the Société d’économie politique, attending their monthly dinners and writing

¹² See the Introduction to the Correspondence by Dr. David M. Hart in CW1. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225576>>.

¹³ *Oeuvres complètes de Frédéric Bastiat, mises en ordre, revues et annotées d’après les manuscrits de l’auteur*. Ed. Prosper Paillottet and biographical essay by Roger de Fontenay. (Paris: Guillaumin, 1st ed. 1854-55, 6 vols; 2nd ed. 1862-64, 7 vols; 3rd ed. 1870-73; 4th ed. 1878-79; 5th ed. 1881-84; 6th ed. 1907). Online at <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/index.html#works>>.

¹⁴ Frédéric Bastiat, *Lettres d’un habitant des Landes* (Paris: A. Quantin, 1877). Online at <http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/Books/Bastiat_Lettres1877.pdf>.

articles for their main organ, the *Journal des économistes*; the ardent supporter of peace and free trade who valiantly endeavors to mimic the political success of his hero and friend Richard Cobden; the courageous deputy who is involved in fighting on the barricades to defend the new republic during the revolution of February 1848 in Paris; the loyal friend of those he left behind in the provincial town of Mugron to which he longs to return in order to escape the noise, turmoil, and frustrations of Paris; the companion of a number of more-successful and sophisticated bourgeois families, the women especially, who provided him with a family life and a personal intimacy which his own family could not or did not supply; the humorous and witty observer of the foibles of the “cold economists” (whom he also called his “co-religionists”) who took themselves very seriously;¹⁵ and the pitiful sufferer of a long, painful, and ultimately fatal disease which hampered his efforts to complete his magnum opus, *Economic Harmonies*.

Bastiat in Paris with the Économistes

Here is Bastiat’s almost breathless description to his friend Félix Coudroy about his first meeting with the Parisian Économistes in May 1845. [Guillaumin was the publisher of free market books and the *Journal des économistes* and his office served as a meeting place for the Parisian political economists; Charles Dunoyer was one of the Restoration classical liberals who most influenced Bastiat’s thinking]:

My dear Félix...

I was given a good welcome by M. Guillaumin, who is the first economist I have seen. He told me that he would give a dinner, followed

¹⁵ Bastiat describes himself as one of the “cold economists” in a letter to Mme. Cheuvreux in June 1850 (no. 174) <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225927>> and the Parisian Économistes as his “co-religionists” in another letter to Mme. Cheuvreux in March 1850 (no. 163) <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225905>>.

by a reception, to put me in contact with the men of our school; as a result I have not gone to see any of these people. This dinner was held yesterday. I was on the right of the host, clear proof that the dinner was in my honor, and Dunoyer was on his left. Next to Mme Guillaumin were MM Passy and Say. MM Dussard and Reybaud were also there. Béranger had been invited but he had other engagements. In the evening a crowd of other economists arrived: MM Renouard, Daire, Monjean, Garnier, etc., etc. Between you and me, my friend, I can tell you that I felt a keen satisfaction. There were none of these people who had not read, reread, and perfectly understood my three articles. I could write for a thousand years in *La Chalosse*, *La Sentinelle*, or *Le Mémorial* [provincial papers Bastiat wrote for] without finding a genuine reader, except for you. Here, one is read, studied, and understood.¹⁶

The letters also reveal much about the intellectual, political, and social life of France during the 1840s, a time when France was experiencing considerable economic and social change, the beginnings of industrialization, the rise of socialism, the collapse of the July Monarchy, the 1848 revolution and the creation of a new republic, and the rise of Louis-Napoléon, who would eventually install himself as emperor. When Bastiat is sent from his province to represent it in the Constituent Assembly he becomes a relatively minor player in the revolution, serving as the vice-president of the Chamber's finance committee because of his economic expertise. In the background of his correspondence we see the shadows of some of the major players like Cavaignac, Guizot, Lamartine, and even Louis-Napoléon, filtered through the eyes of someone very new to the capital and very critical of the ability of any political party, whether left or right, socialist or legitimist, to solve the underlying political and economic problems which France faced.

¹⁶ 37. Letter to Félix Coudroy, Paris, May 1845. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225653>>.

As a laissez-faire, classical liberal Bastiat was practically alone in the Assembly in arguing that the state should introduce free trade along the lines of the United Kingdom, deregulate the economy, and massively retrench the size of the military and public sector, thus allowing equally massive cuts in taxation in order to benefit the working class. Of course, Bastiat was surrounded on all sides by political groups and vested interests which opposed all these policies. It is surprising how long Bastiat was able to remain optimistic in the face of this opposition before he realized that he could better serve the cause of liberty by returning to journalism and scholarly writing. Unfortunately a premature death cut him down before he could achieve this goal.

For contemporary classical liberals Bastiat's letters provide a marvelous window into a long-forgotten world where opposition to war and colonialism went hand-in-hand with support for free trade and economic deregulation. Bastiat's numerous letters to Richard Cobden, a successful English businessman, a member of Parliament, and the leader of the British Anti-Corn-Law League, are full of insights into how Cobden was able to organize a mass movement which succeeded in abolishing the most important restrictions on the free importation of grain into Britain, and his repeated pleas for Cobden to pressure the British government to cut the size of its army and navy, which was a major reason preventing the French government from doing likewise. Intertwined with these matters were discussions about the various international peace congresses which were held in 1848, 1849, and 1850, which Cobden and Bastiat either attended or wanted to attend.

The strength of Bastiat's opposition to war and European imperialism can be gauged in this appeal "To the Electors of Saint-Sever" which was a failed attempt to get elected in 1846:

I must make myself clear on one vast subject, more especially as my views probably differ from those of many of you: I am referring to Algeria. I have no hesitation in saying that, unless it be in order to secure independent frontiers, you will never find me, in this case or in any other, on the conqueror's side.

To me it is a proven fact, and I venture to say a scientifically proven fact, that the colonial system is the most disastrous illusion ever to have led nations astray. I make no exception for the English, in spite of the specious nature of the well-known argument *post hoc, ergo propter hoc*.

Do you know how much Algeria is costing you?...

I have spoken of money; I should first have spoken about men. Every year, ten thousand of our young fellow citizens, the pick of our population, go to their deaths on those consuming shores, and to no useful purpose so far, other than to extend, at our expense, the field of the administrative services, who are naturally all in favor of it. In answer to that, there is the alleged advantage of ridding the country of its surplus. A horrible pretext, which goes against all human feeling and which hasn't even the merit of being materially true...¹⁷

When he was in better health, he attended some of the annual Peace Congresses which were being organized in major European cities in the late 1840s. In a letter to Richard Cobden he apologizes for not being able to attend the 1850 Congress in Frankfurt, where his and Cobden's fame as free trade anti-war advocates would have made them very welcome, and restates his opposition to "this monster of War":

My dear Cobden, as you know about my poor health, you will not have been surprised at my absence from the Congress in Frankfurt, especially since you will not have attributed it to a lack of zeal. Apart from the pleasure of being one of your colleagues in this noble enterprise, it would have been very pleasant for me to meet in Frankfurt

¹⁷ 2. To the Electors of the District of Saint-Sever, 1846 [363-5]. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226020>>.

friends that I rarely have the occasion to see and to meet a host of distinguished men from these two excellent races, the Anglo-Saxon and the Germanic...

Try to deal a mighty blow to this monster of war, an ogre that is almost as voracious when digesting as it is when eating, for I truly believe that arms cause almost as much harm to nations as war itself. What is more, they hinder good. For my part, I constantly return to what seems to me to be as clear as daylight: as long as disarmament prevents France from restructuring her finances, reforming her taxes, and satisfying the just hopes of the workers, she will continue to be a nation in convulsion . . . and God alone knows what the consequences will be.¹⁸

In addition, Bastiat's letters provide information about the activities of the radical liberal economists in Paris who were members of the Société d'économie politique.¹⁹ Bastiat had learned much of his economics from reading the works of Jean-Baptiste Say, Charles Dunoyer, and Charles Comte, who were the towering figures of early-nineteenth-century French classical liberal economic thought.²⁰ Although both had passed from the scene by the time Bastiat arrived in Paris (Say in 1832 and Comte in 1837), a second generation of economists was active in the 1840s: Charles Dunoyer (Comte's long-time colleague), Horace Say (Say's son), Adolphe Blanqui, Gilbert Guillaumin, Joseph Garnier, Gustave de Molinari, and many others.²¹ Bastiat wrote several important articles for the *Journal des économistes* which showed his considerable skill as a writer who could make complex ideas

¹⁸ 186. Letter to Richard Cobden, Paris, 17 August 1850. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225951>>.

¹⁹ For information about the Société d'économie politique (founded 1842) see <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchPolEc/SEP/index.html>>.

²⁰ For information about Charles Comte (1782-1837) see <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Comte/Comte-BioBibliography.html>> and Charles Dunoyer (1786-1862) see <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Dunoyer/Dunoyer-BioBibliography.html>>.

²¹ For information about Gustave de Molinari (1819-1912) see <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Molinari/index.html>>.

come to life for all levels of readers.²² Whenever he could, he attended the monthly dinners held by the Société, and his letters are often filled with amusing anecdotes of what transpired at these functions.

Bastiat on Diverse Topics: Women, Fashion, Religion, & Wit

Although Bastiat's letters are numerous and their recipients diverse, it is worth noting that a number of recurring themes appear throughout the letters, as well as some contradictions in his thought.

There are many references to the idea of justice, which might seem surprising for an economist, as we have come to expect modern economists to be "scientific" and dispassionate. Nineteenth-century French political economists, however, were different because many of them still grounded their ideas in the natural law tradition of property rights. For example, Bastiat refers in his letters to issues of justice regarding ordinary working people, and there is a surprising recognition of the possibility that his own family fortune might have been based upon the unjust acquisition of church property during the Revolution. His strong sense of justice is also reflected in his acts of personal courage on the barricades in Paris during the 1848 revolution, suggesting a strong activist side to his political and economic philosophy. At times, he even comes to doubt the morality and efficacy of serving as a politician and expresses some ambivalence about his choice of career versus that of working outside of politics as a writer.

Bastiat's enigmatic and conflicting relationships with, and views of, women can be detected in many of his letters. His sentiments range from, on the one hand, the never-mentioned and absent "wife," Marie Clotilde Hiart (married Bastiat 7 February, 1831, died 10 February, 1850), to, on the other hand, the close personal

²² For a complete list of all 46 articles by Bastiat in the JDE see <http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/JDE/Bastiat_JDE.html>.

relationships he had with Mme. Cheuvreux and Mrs. Schwabe and his considerable fondness for their children, despite the fact that he had no children of his own. Further, in apparent contradiction to his distant and, in essence, nonexistent relationship with his wife, he did have strong views in favor of women's rights in general and in particular of their considerable contribution to modern literature. An example of Bastiat's "feminism" is the following letter to Mme Cheuvreux concerning her daughter Louise (March 1850):

Madam,

I am sending Mlle Louise a few verses on women, which I liked. They are, however, by a poet who is an economist since he has been nicknamed the free trade rhymers [Ebenezer Elliot]. If I had the strength I would do a free translation of this piece in thirty pages of prose; this would do well in Guillaumin's journal. Your sweet little tease (I do not forget that she possesses the art of teasing to a high degree, not only without wounding but almost caressing) does not greatly believe in poetry of production and she is perfectly right. It is what I ought to have called Social Poetry, which henceforth, I hope, will no longer take for the subject of its songs the destructive qualities of man, the exploits of war, carnage, the violation of divine laws, and the degradation of moral dignity, but the good and evil in real life, the conflicts of thought, all forms of intellectual, productive, political, and religious combinations and affinities, and all the feelings that raise, improve, and glorify the human race. In this new epic, women will occupy a place worthy of them and not the one given to them in the ancient Iliad genre. Was their role really to be included in the booty?

In the initial phases of humanity, when force was the dominant social principle, the action of woman was wiped out. She had been successively beast of burden, slave, servant, and mere instrument of pleasure. When the principle of force gave way to that of public opinion and customs, she recovered her right to equality, influence, and power, and this is what

the last line of the small item of verse I am sending Mlle Louise expresses very well.

You see how dangerous and indiscreet the letters of poor recluses are.²³

Bastiat was also conflicted in where he felt truly at home: the countryside of the Landes, his birthplace; or the metropolitan city of Paris. This ambivalence is evident in the great delight he took in sending and receiving letters of all kinds and from all people. The letters of course were very useful in maintaining personal relationships, but he always seems to be wishing he were somewhere else than where he was at any given moment. It was pointed out by some of his friends that when he first came to Paris as the acclaimed author of a major article on French and English free trade his Gascon country clothing and demeanour was rather looked down upon by the Parisian sophisticates. Here Mme. Cheuvreux recalls her initial meeting with Bastiat, giving a detailed description of his unfashionable attire:

There I saw Bastiat fresh from the Great Landes present himself at M. Say's home. His attire was so conspicuously different from those surrounding him that the eye, however distracted, could not help but stare at him for a moment. The cut of his garments, due to the scissors of a tailor from Mugron, was far away from ordinary designs. Bright colors, poorly assorted, were placed next to one another, without any attempt at harmony. Floss-silk gloves covering his hands, playing with long white cuffs; a sharp collar covering half his face; a little hat, long hair; all that would have looked ludicrous had not the mischievous appearance of the newcomer, his luminous glance, and the charm of his conversation made one quickly forget the rest. Sitting in front of this countryman, I discovered that Bastiat was not only one of the high priests of the temple, but also a passionate initiator. What fire, what verve, what conviction, what originality, what winning and witty common sense! Through this

²³ 163. Letter to Mme Cheuvreux, Paris, March 1850. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225905>>.

cascade of clear ideas, of these displays, new and to the point, the heart was shown, the true soul of man revealed itself.²⁴

Issues of mortality and religion that appear in many of the letters offer another dimension of the complexities of Bastiat's personality. Given the fact that he lost both parents at an early age to tuberculosis, it is not surprising that Bastiat was very aware of his own mortality. He was afraid of cholera and other diseases, he suffered a very painful and crippling illness, and he was quite aware of the fact that this illness would end his life far too early. The letters where this is apparent are very touching. Bastiat did not seem to take much solace from religion, however. In the letters there are scattered remarks about religion, some fairly critical, especially of its formalism and emptiness. As someone from a small town who "made it big" in the metropolis of Paris, it is not surprising that in the privacy of his letter Bastiat would occasionally reveal his insecurity concerning his provincialism, his clothes, and his accent.

Bastiat's hostility to the abuses of power by the established church are very apparent in his lengthy discussion of "ecclesiastic plunder" in the *Economic Sophisms* (these will appear in volume 3 of Liberty Fund's *Collected Works of Bastiat*).²⁵ Elsewhere, he expresses only lukewarm interest in the formalities of the Catholic religion and is somewhat cynical about the emptiness and hypocrisy of many practitioners:

Let us talk of Mesdames X. I have always noticed that customary devotion does nothing to change the way men act and I very much doubt that there is more probity, gentleness, or mutual respect and

²⁴ *Lettres d'un habitant des Landes*, Frédéric Bastiat, pp. 3-4. Online at <http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/Books/Bastiat_Lettres1877.pdf>.

²⁵ See his brief discussion of this in "The Physiology of Plunder" in *Economic Sophisms*, trans. Arthur Goddard (FEE, 1996). Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/276/23376>>.

consideration among our highly devout populations in the south than among the indifferent populations in the north. Young and amiable people will attend the bloody sacrifice of their Redeemer every day and will promise Him a great deal more than simple equity, and every evening they will deck altars to Our Lady with flowers. At every instant they will repeat: deliver us from evil, lead us not into temptation, thou shalt not take away or keep what belongs to another, etc., etc., and then when the opportunity occurs, they take as much as they can from their father's inheritance at the expense of their brothers, just as the sinners do. Why not? Are they not quits with an act of contrition and a firm purpose of amendment? They do good work; they give a half farthing to the poor and thus gain absolution. So what do they have to fear? What do they have to reproach themselves for, since they have succeeded in making accomplices of the ministry of God and God Himself?²⁶

Another important aspect of his character was his sense of humor and sharp wit. A few examples should suffice: in spite of the fact that he never finished his magnum opus, *Economic Harmonies*, which took as its theme the central role the idea of “harmony” played in his social theory, Bastiat was not beyond making puns on the word “harmony” at his own expense; although Bastiat was very keen to mix in the circles inhabited by the “Économistes” of Paris, he also could see the humor in their preference for wearing long black overcoats; and then there is the gentle teasing he gave the Cheuvreux chambermaid, who also happened to be an ardent supporter of free trade—perhaps one of the very few in France—and Bastiat could definitely see the humor, perhaps somewhat black, in this. The following quotation comes from a letter to Mme Cheuvreux written in October 1849 in which Bastiat makes fun of the sombre clothing of the serious-minded economists and the royalist proclivity of their wives:

²⁶ 196. Letter to Bernard Domenger, Pisa, 8 October 1850. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225971>>.

Yesterday evening, in my haste and with characteristic tact, I arrived at M. Say's house right in the middle of dinner. To celebrate the reopening of the Monday gatherings [meetings of the Société d'économie politique], all our friends were there. The party was in full swing to judge from the bursts of laughter that reached me in the drawing room. The hall embellished with a number of black, white, and pink cloaks showed that there were not only economists present.

After dinner, I approached the sister-in-law of M. D—— and, knowing that she has just arrived from Belgium, I asked her if she had had a pleasant trip. This is what she answered: "Sir, I had the unspeakable pleasure of not seeing the face of a single Republican because I hate them." The conversation could not continue for long on this subject, so I spoke to the person next to her, who started to tell me about the pleasant impressions made on her by Belgian royalism. "When the king passes," she said, "everything is joyful: shouts of joy, heraldic figures, banners, ribbons, and lanterns." I see that in order not to displease the ladies too much, we must make haste to elect a king. The embarrassment is to know which one, since we have three in the wings and who will win (after a civil war)?

I was obliged to take refuge with groups of men, since to tell you the truth political passions are grimaces on women's faces. The men pooled their skepticism. They are splendid propagandists who do not believe a word of what they preach. Or rather, they do not doubt, they just pretend to doubt. Tell me which is worse, to pretend to doubt or to pretend to believe? Economists really must stop this playacting.²⁷

²⁷ 148. Letter to Mme Cheuvreux, Paris, 7 October 1849. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225875>>.

BASTIAT AS AN ELECTED POLITICIAN AND LAW-ABIDING REVOLUTIONARY

The second part of *The Man and the Statesman* also includes much material which will be new to English readers, such as his electoral manifestos for his unsuccessful attempts to enter politics before 1848, his manifestos and statements of principles as an actual elected representative for his region Les Landes in the Constituent Assembly and then the National Assembly in the revolution and Second Republic, and his writings for the two revolutionary magazines he started during the Revolution of 1848 (*La République française* (February-March 1848) and *Jacques Bonhomme* (June 1848)) which he and a couple of friends handed out on the streets of Paris.

Bastiat in the Chamber of Deputies, 1848-1850

Bastiat often found himself in a difficult position as an elected politician representing a rural, wine-producing region. He would have been expected to “bring home the bacon” (or the wine subsidies) for his constituents but he steadfastly refused to do this as the leading advocate of free trade and deregulation in France. In spite of this he was elected twice to represent Les Landes, the first time on 23 April 1848 soon after the Revolution broke out and overthrew the July Monarchy, and he was re-elected on 13 May 1849 to serve in the newly constituted National Assembly. Because of his economic expertise he was appointed to the Chamber’s Finance Committee and elected by its membership to be its vice president 8 times. On this committee he tried to bring some order to French government finances by cutting taxes and slashing subsidies and welfare benefits, often in the face of significant opposition from both the “left” and the “right” who viewed this laissez-faire classical liberal with considerable suspicion and wariness. Bastiat was certainly aware of the strange political situation he found himself in,

being neither fully of the “right” nor of the “left”. As he stated in 1849 in a “Letter to a Group of Supporters” in his constituency:

You say that I am being painted as a socialist. What can I answer? My writings are there. Have I not countered the Louis Blanc doctrine with *Property and Law*, the Considérant doctrine with *Property and Plunder*, the Leroux doctrine with *Justice and Fraternity*, the Proudhon doctrine with *Capital and Rent*, the Mimerel committee with *Protectionism and Communism*, paper money with *Damned Money*, and the Montagnard Manifesto with *The State*? I spend my life combating socialism. It would be very painful for me to have this acknowledged everywhere except in the département of the Landes.

My votes have been depicted as close to the extreme left. Why have the occasions on which I have voted with the right not equally been mentioned?

But, you will say, how have you been able to be alternatively in two such opposing camps? I will explain this.

For a century, the parties have taken a great many names and adopted a great many pretexts; basically, it has always been a matter of the same thing, the struggle of the poor against the rich.

Now, the poor demand more than what is just and the rich refuse even that which is just. If this continues, social war, of which our fathers witnessed the first act in '93, and of which we witnessed the second act in June, this frightful fratricidal war is not nearing its end. The only possible conciliation is on the field of justice, in everything and for all.

...What I am reproached for is precisely what I am proud of. Yes, I have voted with the right against the left when it was a matter of resisting the excesses of mistaken popular ideas. Yes, I have voted with the left against the right when the legitimate complaints of the poor, suffering classes were being ignored.

Because of this, I may have alienated both parties and will remain crushed in the center.²⁸

Partly because of the political difficulties he faced juggling his support between left and right factions in the Chamber, and partly because of his deteriorating health, Bastiat sometimes wondered if he were suited for a parliamentary career or whether he should spend what time he had left writing his articles and books. He was especially frustrated because his throat condition made doing either increasingly impossible. In a letter to his friend Mrs. Schwabe in October 1849 he poured out his exasperation:

Do not be afraid, madam, that your advice is untimely. Is it not based on friendship? Is it not the surest sign of this?

It is in vain that you predict late flowering happiness for me in the future. This cannot happen for me, even in the pursuit or the triumph of an idea that is useful to the human race since my health condemns me to hate the struggle. Dear lady, I have poured into your heart just a drop from the chalice of bitterness that fills mine. For example, just look at my difficult political position and you will see whether I can agree with the prospects you offer me.

I have always had a political idea that is simple, true, and can be grasped by all, and yet it is misunderstood. What was I lacking? A theater in which to expose it. The February revolution occurred. It gave me an audience of nine hundred people, the elite of the nation given a mandate by universal suffrage with the authority to put my views into practice. These nine hundred people were full of the best intentions. They were terrified of the future. They hesitated and cast about for some notion of salvation. They were silent, waiting for a voice to be heard and to which they could rally. I was there; I had the right and duty to speak. I was aware that my words would be welcomed by the Assembly and would echo around the masses. I felt the idea ferment in my head and my

²⁸ 5. Letter to a Group of Supporters, 1849 [CW1, pp. 387 ff.]. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226026>>.

heart . . . and I was forced to keep silent. Can you imagine a worse form of torture? I was obliged to keep silent because just at this time it pleased God to remove from me all my strength, and when huge revolutions are achieved such as to afford me a rostrum, I am unable to mount it. I was not only incapable of speaking but also even of writing. What a bitter disappointment! What cruel irony!

Here I am, since my return, confined to my room for simply having wanted to write a newspaper article.²⁹

Bastiat the Law-Abiding Revolutionary of 1848

However, twenty months before this letter was written when the Revolution first broke out in Paris in February 1848, Bastiat's health was sufficiently good for him to throw himself into it with considerable vigor. He was an ardent republican and supported the overthrow of the anti-liberal July Monarchy. Some idea of the "revolutionary Bastiat" can be got from the reminiscences of his younger colleague Gustave de Molinari. In a review of a collection of letters Bastiat wrote to the Cheuvreux family, the young economist Gustave de Molinari reminisced about his revolutionary activities with Bastiat in 1848.³⁰ Bastiat was then forty-seven and Molinari twenty-nine. Molinari notes that the February Revolution forced the young radical liberals to "replace our economic agitation [for free trade] with a politico-socialist agitation," which they did on 24 February (the day after the government resigned), when Molinari and a young friend decided to start a new magazine to be called *La République*.³¹ Molinari asked Bastiat if he would join him as coeditor; Bastiat agreed to do so with the understanding that they would abide

²⁹ 150. Letter to Mrs. Schwabe, Paris, 14 October 1849. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225879>>.

³⁰ Molinari, review of "Frédéric Bastiat. Lettres", in *JDE* July 1878, 4th Series, vol. 3, pp. 60-70.

³¹ The prime minister at the time, François Guizot, was forced to resign on 23 February, and a provisional government was formed on 26 February, thus, Molinari and his friend tried to start their new journal the day after the revolution broke out.

by the censorship laws, which at the time called for approval by the government before publication took place. Molinari wryly noted that Bastiat told them that "we may be making a revolution but revolutions do not violate the laws!"

The three of them proceeded to the Hôtel-de-Ville in order to have their hastily written screed approved by the government, but the building was in complete turmoil with armed revolutionaries milling about. The three wisely decided that the provisional government was "otherwise occupied," and Bastiat consented to publish the journal without prior approval. In Montmartre, on their way to the printer, they came across another would-be revolutionary hawking in the street a journal that had already taken the name *La République*, such was the competition at the time for catchy titles. The three decided on the spot to rename their journal *La République française* and had 5,000 copies printed and distributed. Like most periodicals at the time *La République française* lasted a very short while, but it did include a number of "striking" articles penned by Bastiat directed at the working class, who were pushing the revolution in an increasingly socialist direction. As Molinari notes, their journal "was decidedly not at the peak of the events" that were swirling about them, and it soon folded.

In his letters Bastiat also gives us a few clues about his involvement in the street battles which broke out on the streets of Paris. On 27 February he wrote to Mme. Marsan that:

My dear lady,

You must be anxious. I would like to reassure you... the revolution has left me safe and sound.

As you will see in the newspapers, on the 23rd everything seemed to be over. Paris had a festive air; everything was illuminated. A huge gathering moved along the boulevards singing. Flags were adorned with flowers and ribbons. When they reached the Hôtel des Capucines, the soldiers

blocked their path and fired a round of musket fire at point-blank range into the crowd. I leave you to imagine the sight offered by a crowd of thirty thousand men, women, and children fleeing from the bullets, the shots, and those who fell.

An instinctive feeling prevented me from fleeing as well, and when it was all over I was on the site of a massacre with five or six workmen, facing about sixty dead and dying people. The soldiers appeared stupefied. I begged the officer to have the corpses and wounded moved in order to have the latter cared for and to avoid having the former used as flags by the people when they returned, but he had lost his head.

The workers and I then began to move the unfortunate victims onto the pavement, as doors refused to open. At last, seeing the fruitlessness of our efforts, I withdrew. But the people returned and carried the corpses to the outlying districts, and a hue and cry was heard all through the night. The following morning, as though by magic, two thousand barricades made the insurrection fearsome. Fortunately, as the troop did not wish to fire on the National Guard, the day was not as bloody as might have been expected.

All is now over. The Republic has been proclaimed. You know that this is good news for me. The people will govern themselves. I am convinced that for a long time they will govern themselves badly, but they will learn from experience. Right now, ideas I do not share have the upper hand. It is fashionable to expand the functions of the state considerably, and I think they should be restricted. For this reason, I am outside the movement, although several of my friends are very powerful in it. Two friends and I produced a leaflet to inject some of our ideas into the intellectual to and fro.

Do not worry about the sequel. My age and health have extinguished in me any taste for street campaigning.³²

³² 93. Letter to Marie-Julienne Badbedat (Mme Marsan), 27 February 1848. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225765>>.

In another letter written to his childhood friend Félix Coudroy a couple of days later Bastiat talks about the difficulties he had finding printers willing to print his little magazine:

The February revolution has certainly been more heroic than that of July. There is nothing so admirable as the courage, order, calm, and moderation of the people of Paris. But what will the results be? For the last ten years, false doctrines that were much in fashion nurtured the illusions of the working classes. They are now convinced that the state is obliged to provide bread, work, and education to all. The provisional government has made a solemn promise to do so; it will therefore be obliged to increase taxes to endeavor to keep this promise, and in spite of this it will not keep it. I have no need to tell you what kind of future lies ahead of us.

There is one possible recourse, which is to combat the error itself, but this task is so unpopular that it cannot be carried out safely; I am, nevertheless, determined to devote myself to this if the country sends me to the National Assembly...

I have tried to get these ideas out into the street through a short-lived journal which was produced in response to the situation; would you believe that the printing workers themselves discuss and disapprove of the enterprise? They call it counterrevolutionary.³³

After his magazine folded he concentrated his efforts in getting elected to the Constituent Assembly, which he was able to do in 23 April 1848, and then working within the Chamber's Finance Committee to cut taxes and government expenditures. One of the worst new policies of the Provisional Government was to introduce the National Workshops, which were a government program to provide state-subsidized employment to unemployed workers. Bastiat opposed this from the start and did everything he could to prevent it or to at least limit the damage it was

³³ 94. Letter to Félix Coudroy, Paris, 29 February 1848. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225767>>.

doing to French finances. When the government itself came to realize that the program was close to bankrupting the government it decided to shut down the program prompting rioting in the streets of Paris in June (the so-called June Days) when hundreds of protesters were killed by the army which had been called out to suppress the riots. It was only days prior to this violent crackdown that Bastiat and Molinari launched a new revolutionary magazine.

Undaunted by the first failure in March, Molinari and Bastiat decided to launch another journal, this time directed squarely at working people, to be called *Jacques Bonhomme*, which comes from the nickname given to the average working Frenchman. Molinari and Bastiat joined with Charles Coquelin, Alcide Fonteyraud, and Joseph Garnier to launch the new journal in June 1848, just before the June Days uprising (23-26 June).³⁴ On 21 June the government decided to close the National Workshops because of out of control expenses. This action was promptly followed by a mass uprising in Paris to protest the decision, and troops were called in to suppress the protesters causing considerable loss of life. During this time, Bastiat sent Molinari and the editorial committee an article he had written provatively entitled "Dissolve the National Workshops!" which appeared on the front page of the very last issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*. *Jacques Bonhomme* seems to have lasted for only four issues (June–July 1848), its lifespan abruptly truncated when Bastiat and his colleagues wisely decided to shut it down as the troops were shooting people in the streets of Paris. As Bastiat briefly noted in a letter to Mme Affre on 29 June 1848:

My dear Julie,

Cables and newspapers will have told you all about the triumph of the republican order after four days of bitter struggle.

³⁴ For information about Coquelin, Fonteyraud, Garnier and other French économistes see the glossary online at <<http://davidmhart.com/FrenchClassicalLiberals/Bastiat/Glossary.html>>.

I shall not give you any detail, even about me, because a single letter would not suffice.

I shall just tell you that I have done my duty without ostentation or temerity. My only role was to enter the Faubourg Saint-Antoine after the fall of the first barricade, in order to disarm the fighters. As we went on, we managed to save several insurgents whom the militia wanted to kill. One of my colleagues displayed a truly admirable energy in this situation, which he did not boast about from the rostrum.³⁵

It was actions like these that confused Bastiat's opponents in the Chamber and back in his constituency but which give us a full measure of the man as a committed classical liberal (or even libertarian as we might well call him today). On the one hand, he sided with the "right" in his activities in the Chamber and in the Finance Committee opposing the socialist welfare program of the National Workshops because of its financial profligacy, yet on the other hand, he sided with the "left" in opposing the slaughter of protesters in the streets by the army and even endangered his own life in trying to persuade the soldiers to cease firing into the crowds and in helping move the dead and injured to safety.

35 104. Letter to Julie Marsan (Mme Affre), Paris, 29 June 1848. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225787>>.

CONCLUSION

I would like to conclude this survey of the first volume of Liberty Fund's translation of the *Collected Works of Frédéric Bastiat* with a discussion of how Bastiat was remembered by his friends and colleagues, a foretaste of what is to come in future volumes, and two quotations which sum up the life and thought of the man.

The Bastiat Monument in Mugron, 1878

After Bastiat's death on Christmas Eve 1850 his friend Prosper Paillottet went through Bastiat's papers in order to get them organized for a printing of his collected works. Six volumes of the first edition appeared in 1854-55. A second edition with an additional 7th volume appeared in 1862-64 and it was this edition which was reprinted several times during the 19th century. Many of Bastiat's other single volume works were kept in print by the Guillaumin publishing firm during this time as well, especially the *Economic Harmonies*. His friends and colleagues wanted to do more for his memory than to just keep his books in print. It was decided to raise money (privately of course) to design and erect a statue of him which would be erected in his home town of Mugron. The illustration on the cover of volume 1 of Liberty Fund's edition of his *Collected Works* shows a postcard of the Place Bastiat in the town of Mugron where the statue was displayed.



[Gabriel-Vital Dubray, "Frédéric Bastiat" (1878)]

The well-known sculptor Gabriel-Vital Dubray (1813-1892) was commissioned to design and create the monument. Dubray was a very successful sculptor who had created many important works during the Third Empire (1852-1870) for which he was made a knight of the Legion of Honor. Many of his works were displayed in churches and even in the Louvre Palace. Thus it was quite a coup to get an artist of his stature and importance to do the Bastiat monument.

The monument to Bastiat was unveiled in Mugron on 23 April 1878 and the event was reported, along with an engraving, in the magazine *Le Monde illustré*. The engraving above comes from the magazine and shows how Dubray designed and built an elaborate monument with the classical figure of "Fame" leaning against the pedestal and writing with her pen the titles of the three books for which Bastiat was best remembered and for which he deserved to be famous: the work in which he first introduced the French to the ideas on free trade of Richard Cobden and the Anti-Corn Law League - *Cobden and the League* (1845), his best selling collection of witty and clever articles debunking the economic myths of the protectionists *Economic Sophisms* (1845, 1848), and his incomplete magnum opus on economic theory *Economic Harmonies* (1850).

It seems that nature did not smile upon Bastiat's monument on that occasion as it rained for most of the day. This did not stop numerous speakers including Léon Say, the Minister of Finance and the grandson of Jean-Baptiste Say, from reminding the crowd of well wishers of Bastiat's importance to the classical liberal movement in France and his contributions to the deregulation of the French economy. At 7.00 pm a crowd of 150 gathered in the local school for a banquet which lasted until 11.00 pm when they dispersed. But they did not retire to bed apparently. The correspondent for the *Journal des économistes* remarked wryly that "the streets of Mugron were full of singing and noise for the rest of the night" thus bringing to an end a veritable "festival of peace."



[The Bastiat monument in the Place Bastiat in Mugron as it appears today]

Unfortunately this festival of peace did not survive the orgies of statism and nationalism which were the First and Second World Wars. M. Jacques de Guenin, the director of the Cercle Frédéric Bastiat in France states that in 1942 during the occupation of France by the Nazis any statues containing bronze were seized and broken up for their metal content (presumably to make weapons). This was the unfortunate fate of the Bastiat monument - the bust of Bastiat and the figure of

Fame were taken for scrap for war matériel. The bust could be reconstituted after the war because the original mold had survived, but the figure of Fame was lost forever. It is both sad and ironic that this would be the fate of Bastiat's monument as Bastiat had dedicated himself to the cause of peace and opposition to war as his writings and his participation in the Peace Congresses of the late 1840s attest.

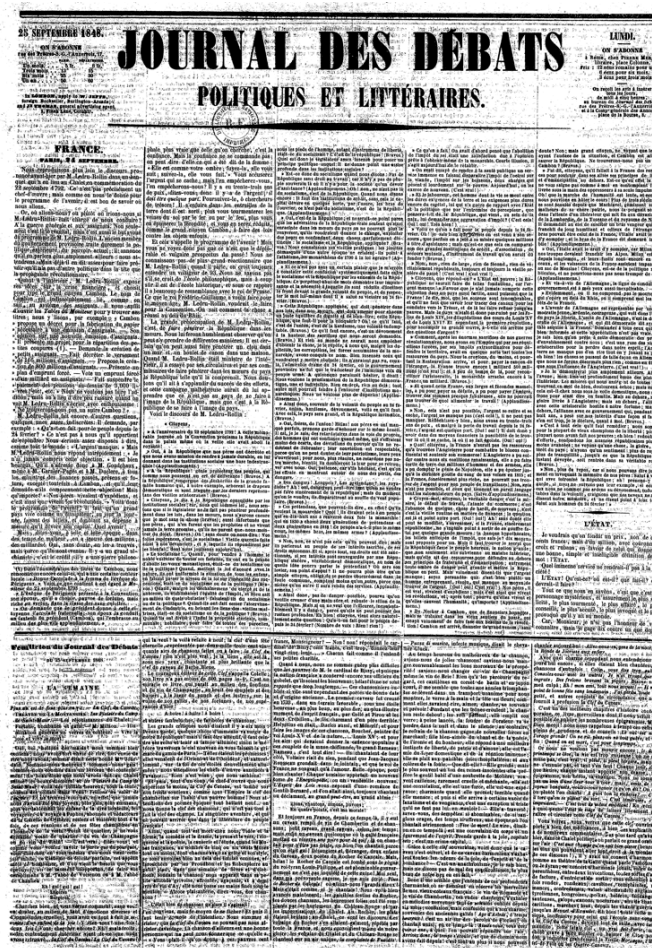
However, one might say that "Fame" did eventually return to Bastiat's monument in spite of what the Nazis and 50 years of the European welfare state had done to it. Bicentennial celebrations of Bastiat's birth were organised in 2001, including a major conference on his political and economic ideas and a formal visit to his monument in Mugron to unveil an addition to the list of his most famous works. The title of the pamphlet "La Loi" (The Law) was added in respect to the many American visitors who hold this work of Bastiat's in high regard. "Fame" had at last been recalled to complete the work which she had begun in 1878.

The Evolution of “The State” during 1848

The foretaste of what is to come in future volumes comes from one of Bastiat's best known and influential pamphlets, “The State”, which will appear in volume 2 (*The Law, The State, and Other Political Writings, 1843-1850*), which was very much a product of the June Days of 1848 which we have been discussing above. Bastiat wrote a draft of “L'État” (The State) for the 11-15 June 1848 issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, about a week before the shootings of the rioters began in Paris.³⁶ The essay was written to appeal to people on the streets of Paris in an attempt to woo them away from the spread of socialist ideas. Three months later Bastiat rewrote the piece, and it appeared in the 25 September 1848 issue of *Le Journal des*

³⁶ A copy of this appears in the Appendix to this paper.

débats, where it was featured on the front page of the journal's four very densely printed pages.³⁷



[The front page of *Le Journal des débats*, 25 September 1848 with Bastiat's essay "The State" prominent on the bottom of the front page.]

A couple of months later it was reprinted as a stand alone pamphlet by the Guillaumin publishing firm. Its evolution during those tumultuous months of 1848 has a lot to say about Bastiat's thinking about the state and its power, as well as the forces against which he was struggling on both the left and the right. It has since

³⁷ Bastiat, "L'État," *Le Journal des débats*, 25 September 1848, pp. 1-2.

become one of Bastiat's best known works and his the definition of the State which he gave in it has become well-known if not famous:

THE STATE is the great fiction by which EVERYONE endeavors to live at the expense of EVERYONE ELSE.

By this Bastiat meant that the traditional state, in which a minority plundered and ruled the majority, had become in the new democratic republic of France a new kind of state where the majority tried to live like the old minority ruling elite had done. But it faced the impossible situation of attempting to “exploit itself,” where the majority tried to exploit the majority, which was an impossible situation. Bastiat gave this warning in June and September 1848 but it seems we are only now coming to realise its significance as the modern welfare state reaches its inevitable funding crisis in the fall of 2011.

“Freedom” and “Laissez-faire” in *Jacques Bonhomme* (June 1848)

The two quotations I would like to finish with I think admirably sum up the thinking and style of Bastiat. One comes from a fictional letter he wrote to himself sometime in late 1847 as a “draft” introduction to his magnum opus on economic theory, *Economic Harmonies*, which was never completed in his lifetime. Writing fictional letters and petitions to figures in authority in order to mock and ridicule false economic ideas about protection and subsidies to industry had become an important part of Bastiat's style in writing his “economic sophisms” between 1845 and 1848, so it not surprising that he would turn this effective stylistic method on himself. He writes the preface to a book he had not even begun to write, let alone finished, and addresses it to himself as if he were a close friend. He part congratulates the author for his love of liberty and his audacity in undertaking the task of writing such a needed book, and part chastises him(self) for his failings and inadequacies. It nicely captures the somewhat split personality of Bastiat at this

time - the still shy and uncertain immigrant from the provinces, and the confident, well-read and articulate theorist of economic principles who perhaps thought he had what it takes to become the next Quesnay or Say as some of his admirers expected him to become.³⁸

My dear Frédéric [FB writing to himself],

Like you I love all forms of freedom; and among these, the one that is the most universally useful to mankind, the one you enjoy at each moment of the day and in all of life's circumstances, is the freedom to work and to trade. I know that making things one's own is the fulcrum of society and even of human life. I know that trade is intrinsic to property and that to restrict the one is to shake the foundations of the other. I approve of your devoting yourself to the defense of this freedom whose triumph will inevitably usher in the reign of international justice and consequently the extinction of hatred, prejudices between one people and another, and the wars that come in their wake...

I love freedom of trade as much as you do. But is all human progress encapsulated in that freedom? In the past, your heart beat for the freeing of thought and speech which were still bound by their university shackles and the laws against free association. You enthusiastically supported parliamentary reform and the radical division of that sovereignty, which delegates and controls, from the executive power in all its branches. All forms of freedom go together. All ideas form a systematic and harmonious whole, and there is not a single one whose proof does not serve to demonstrate the truth of the others. But you act like a mechanic who makes a virtue of explaining an isolated part of a machine in the smallest detail, not forgetting anything. The temptation is strong to cry

³⁸ In a letter to Coudroy (no. 133, 235 April 1849) Bastiat notes that some English admirers think that there have been three schools of French political economy which have developed around the ideas of three leading theorists: Quesnay, Say, and now Bastiat. He agrees that he has had the original ideas to form a new school but has not had the time to fully form them. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/225845>>.

out to him, “Show me the other parts; make them work together; each of them explains the others. . . .”³⁹

The Appendix which follows this paper contains three of the articles which Bastiat wrote for his revolutionary magazine *Jacques Bonhomme* in the week before the June Days shootings in Paris. As with all the articles he and his collaborators wrote in February and June they were designed to appeal to ordinary workers and to warn them of the dangers of socialism. They were short in length and could be read quickly on the street, where they were handed out to passers-by. Some were apparently designed to be printed separately and pasted on the walls of the street as so the curious could read them at any time of the day or night. Two I have selected are interesting because of their hard-hitting content, the third because it is an early draft of Bastiat’s famous essay on “The State.” One is called “Laissez-faire” and is an appeal to the socialists to accord to economic matters the same freedom they want for voters and elected deputies in a democratic society. The other article is simply called “Freedom” and it lists all the smaller “freedoms” which together make up the classical liberal notion of “liberty”, namely freedom of discussion and conscience, freedom of teaching, freedom of the press, freedom to work, freedom of association, and finally (perhaps Bastiat’s favourite freedom) the freedom to trade. The closing line I think sums up Bastiat’s entire life:

I am throwing myself into public debate; I am trying to get through to the crowd to preach all the freedoms, the total of which make up liberty.

³⁹ Draft Preface for the *Harmonies* [addressed to himself and written at the end of 1847.], CW1, p. 318, 320. <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226010>>.

APPENDIX: REVOLUTIONARY BROADSIDES IN *JACQUES BONHOMME*
BY FRÉDÉRIC BASTIAT (JUNE 1848)

“Freedom” (*Jacques Bonhomme*, 11-15 June 1848)⁴⁰

I have lived a long time, seen a great deal, observed much, compared and examined many things, and I have reached the following conclusion:

Our fathers were right to wish to be free, and we should also wish this.

It is not that freedom has no disadvantages, since everything has these. To use these disadvantages in argument against it is to say to a man trapped in the mire: Do not get out, as you cannot do this without some effort.

Thus, it is to be wished that there be just one faith in the world, provided that it is the true one. However, where is the infallible authority which will impose it on us? While waiting for it to manifest itself, let us maintain the freedom of discussion and conscience.

It would be fortunate if the best method of teaching were to be universally adopted. But who has it and on what authority? Let us therefore demand freedom of teaching.

We may be distressed to see writers delight in stirring up all forms of evil passion. However, to hobble the press is also to hobble truth as well as lies. Let us, therefore, take care never to allow the freedom of the press to die.

It is distressing that man should be reduced to earning his bread by the sweat of his brow. It would be better for the state to feed everyone, but this is impossible. Let us at least have the freedom to work.

By associating with one another, men can gain greater advantage from their strength. However, the forms of association are infinite; which is best? Let us not run the risk that the state imposes the worst of these on us; let us seek the right one by trial and error, and demand the freedom of association.

⁴⁰ Originally published in the first issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, dated 11-15 June 1848 [CW1, pp. 433-44]. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226072>>.

A people has two ways of procuring something. The first is to make it; the second is to make something else and trade it. It is certainly better to have the option than not to have it. Let us therefore demand the freedom to trade.

I am throwing myself into public debate; I am trying to get through to the crowd to preach all the freedoms, the total of which make up liberty.

“Laissez-faire” (*Jacques Bonhomme*, 11-15 June, 1848)⁴¹

Laissez-faire! I will begin by saying, in order to avoid any ambiguity, that laissez-faire is used here for honest things, with the state instituted precisely to prevent dishonest things.

This having been said, and with regard to things that are innocent in themselves, such as work, trade, teaching, association, banking, etc., a choice must be made. It is necessary for the state to let things be done or prevent them from being done.

If it lets things be done, we will be free and optimally administered most economically, since nothing costs less than laissez-faire.

If it prevents things from being done, woe to our freedom and our purse. Woe to our freedom, since to prevent things is to tie our hands; woe to our purse, since to prevent things requires agents and to employ agents takes money.

In reply to this, socialists say: “Laissez-faire! What a disaster!” Why, if you please? “Because, when you leave men to act, they do wrong and act against their interests. It is right for the state to direct them.”

This is simply absurd. Do you seriously have such faith in human wisdom that you want universal suffrage and government of all by all and then you proclaim these very men whom you consider fit to govern others unfit to govern themselves?

⁴¹ Originally published in the first issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, dated 11-15 June 1848 [CW1, pp. 434-45]. Online at <<http://oll.libertyfund.org/title/2393/226074>>.

“The State” (*Jacques Bonhomme*, 11-15 March 1848)⁴²

There are those who say “A financial man, such as Thiers, Fould, Goudchaux or Girardin, will get us out of this.” I think they are mistaken.

"Who, then, will get us out of this?"

"When?"

"When it has learnt this lesson: since the State has nothing it has not taken from the people, it cannot distribute largesse to the people."

"The people know this, since they never cease to demand reductions in taxes."

"That is true, but at the same time, they never cease to demand handouts of every kind from the State.

They want the State to found crèches, infant schools and free schools for our youth, national workshops for those that are older and retirement pensions for the elderly.

They want the State to go to war in Italy and Poland.

They want the State to found farming colonies.

They want the State to build railways.

They want the State to bring Algeria into cultivation.

They want the State to lend ten billion to land owners.

They want the State to supply capital to workers.

They want the State to replant the forests on mountains.

They want the State to build embankments along the rivers.

They want the State to make payments without receiving any.

They want the State to lay down the law in Europe.

They want the State to support agriculture.

⁴² Originally published in the first issue of *Jacques Bonhomme*, dated 11-15 June 1848. It will appear in vol.2 of Bastiat's *Collected Works*.

They want the State to give subsidies to industry.

They want the State to protect trade.

They want the State to have a redoubtable army.

They want the State to have an impressive navy.

They want the State to ..."

"Have you finished?"

"I could go on for another hour at least."

"But what is the point you are trying to make?"

"This. As long as the people want all of this, they will have to pay for it. There is no financial man alive who can do something with nothing."

Jacques Bonhomme is sponsoring a prize of fifty thousand francs to be given to anyone who provides a good definition of the word STATE, for he will be the savior of finance, industry, trade and work.