



# Harmonies of Political Economy: Translated from the Third French Edition, with a Notice of the Life and Writings of the Author

*Frédéric Bastiat*

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Harmonies of Political Economy - Translated from the Third French Edition, with a Notice of the Life and Writings of the Author by Frédéric Bastiat

Frédéric Bastiat, whose last and greatest, though, alas! unfinished work—the *Harmonies Économiques*—I now venture to introduce to the English public, was born at Bayonne, on the 19th of June 1801. His father, an eminent merchant of Bayonne, died young, and his wife having died before him, Frédéric, their only child, was left an orphan at the early age of nine years.

The care of his education devolved on his paternal grandfather, who was proprietor of a land estate near Mugron, in the arrondissement of Saint-Sever. His aunt, Mademoiselle Justine Bastiat, acted towards him the part of a mother, and her affection was warmly reciprocated by Bastiat, who, to the day of his death, never ceased to regard her with filial love and reverence.

Bastiat's education was begun at Bayonne, continued at Saint-Sever, and finished at the College of Sorèze. Here his course of study was occasionally interrupted by indisposition; but, on his recovery, his quick parts and steady application soon enabled him to overtake and keep pace with his fellow-students. At Sorèze. Bastiat formed a boyish friendship with M. Calmètes, to whom his earliest letters are addressed. The attachment of the youths was so remarkable, that the masters permitted them to prepare their exercises together, and sign them with their joint names. In this way they gained a prize for poetry. The prize was a gold medal, which, of course, could not be divided. "Keep it," said Bastiat to his friend: "I am an orphan; you have both father and mother, and the medal of right falls to them."

In 1818, Bastiat left College, and, in compliance with the wishes of his family, entered his uncle's counting-house at Bayonne. His [p010] tastes, however, were for study rather than for business, and while at Bayonne he devoted his leisure hours by turns to French, English, and Italian literature. "I aim at nothing less," he said, "than to become acquainted with politics, history, geography, mathematics, mechanics, natural history, botany, and four or five languages." He was fond of music, sang agreeably, and played well on the violoncello.

In 1824, he began to study the works of the leading Economists of France and England—Adam Smith, Jean Baptiste Say, and Destutt de Tracy; and even at this early period he took an interest in the English free-trade measures of Mr Huskisson. From this time he may be said to have devoted his life to his favourite science.

On the death of his grandfather, in 1825, he gave up commerce as a profession, and took up his residence on his paternal estate at Mugron, in the cultivation of which he was at first induced to engage, but without much success, and he soon relinquished agriculture, as he had before abandoned trade. Business, in truth, was not his vocation; he had no turn for details; he cared little for money; his wants were few and simple; and he had no intention, as he says in one of his letters, to undergo irksome labour for three-fourths of his life to ensure for the remainder a useless superfluity.

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