

“The Law,” “The State,” and  
Other Political Writings,  
1843–1850

THE COLLECTED WORKS OF FRÉDÉRIC BASTIAT

Jacques de Guenin, General Editor

*The Man and the Statesman: The Correspondence and Articles on  
Politics*

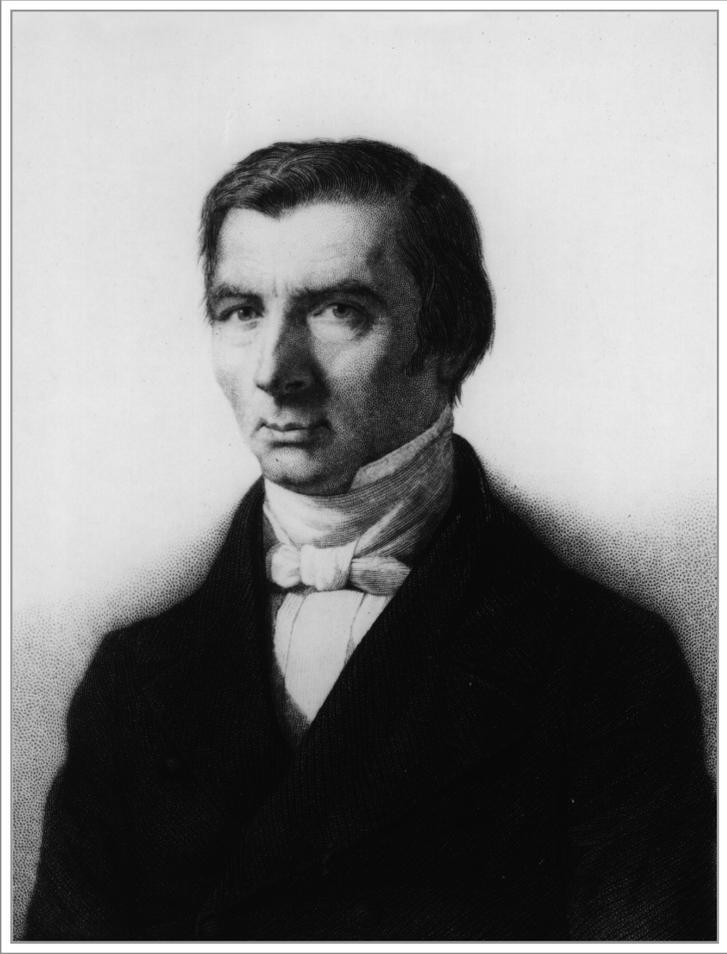
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*Economic Sophisms and “What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen”*

*Miscellaneous Works on Economics: From “Jacques-Bonhomme” to  
Le Journal des Économistes*

*Economic Harmonies*

*The Struggle Against Protectionism: The English and French Free-Trade  
Movements*



*Frédéric Bastiat*



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FRÉDÉRIC BASTIAT

Jacques de Guenin, *General Editor*

*Translated from the French by*

Jane Willems and Michel Willems

*with an introduction by*

Pascal Salin

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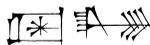
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The cuneiform inscription that serves as our logo and as the design motif for our endpapers is the earliest-known written appearance of the word “freedom” (*amagi*), or “liberty.” It is taken from a clay document written about 2300 B.C. in the Sumerian city-state of Lagash.

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## *General Editor's Note*

The six-volume Collected Works of Frédéric Bastiat will be the most complete compilation of Bastiat's works published to date, in any country or in any language. The main source for the translation is the *Ceuvres complètes de Frédéric Bastiat*, published by Guillaumin in the 1850s and 1860s.<sup>1</sup>

Although the Guillaumin edition was generally chronological, the volumes in this series have been arranged thematically:

*The Man and the Statesman: The Correspondence and Articles on Politics*

*"The Law," "The State," and Other Political Writings, 1843–1850*

*Economic Sophisms and "What Is Seen and What Is Not Seen"*

*Miscellaneous Works on Economics: From "Jacques-Bonhomme" to Le Journal des Économistes*

*Economic Harmonies*

*The Struggle Against Protectionism: The English and French*

*Free-Trade Movements*

There are four kinds of notes in this volume: footnotes by the editor of the Guillaumin edition (Prosper Paillottet), which are preceded by "(Paillottet's note)"; footnotes by Bastiat, which are preceded by "(Bastiat's note)"; new editorial footnotes, which stand alone (unless they are commenting on Paillottet's notes, in which case they are in square brackets following Paillottet's note); and source notes, which are given after the title of each article. The source note consists of (1) the volume number and the beginning page number as the work appears in the *Ceuvres complètes*; (2) the original French title; and (3) the date and place of original publication.

In the text, Bastiat (as Paillottet does in the notes) makes many passing refer-

1. For a more detailed description of the publication history of the *Ceuvres complètes*, see "Note on the Editions of the *Ceuvres complètes*" and the bibliography.

ences to his works, for which we have provided an internal cross-reference if the work is found in this volume. For those works not in this volume, we have provided the location of the original French version in the *Ceuvres complètes* (indicated in a footnote by “OC,” followed by the Guillaumin volume number, beginning page number, and French title of the work).

In addition, we have made available two online sources for the reader to consult. The first source is a table of contents of the seven-volume *Ceuvres complètes* and links to PDF (Portable Document Format) facsimiles of each volume. The second source is our “Comparative Table of Contents of the Collected Works of Frédéric Bastiat,” which is a table of contents of the complete Liberty Fund series.<sup>2</sup> Here, the reader can find the location of the English translation of the work in its future Liberty Fund volume. These contents will be filled in and updated as the volumes are published and will eventually be the most complete comparative listing of Bastiat’s works.

In order to avoid multiple footnotes and cross-references, a glossary of persons, a glossary of places, and a glossary of subjects and terms have been provided to identify those persons, places, and terms mentioned in the text. The glossaries will also provide historical context and background for the reader as well as a greater understanding of Bastiat’s work. If a name as it appears in the text is ambiguous or is found in the glossary under a different name, a footnote has been added to identify the name as it is listed in the glossary.

Finally, original italics as they appear in the Guillaumin edition have been retained.

*Jacques de Guenin*  
*Saint-Loubouer, France*

2. These two sources can be found at <http://oll.libertyfund.org/person/25>.

## *Note on the Translation*

*In* this translation we have made a deliberate decision not to translate Frédéric Bastiat's French into modern, colloquial American English. Wherever possible we have tried to retain a flavor of the more florid, Latinate forms of expression that were common among the literate class in mid-nineteenth-century France. Bastiat liked long, flowing sentences, in which idea followed upon idea in an apparently endless succession of dependent clauses. For the sake of clarity, we have broken up many but not all of these thickets of expression. In those that remain, you, dear reader, will have to navigate.

As was the custom in the 1840s, Bastiat liked to pepper his paragraphs with exclamations like "What!" and aphoristic Latin phrases like *Quid leges sine moribus?* (What are laws without customs?). We have translated the latter and left most of the former as a reminder that Bastiat wrote in a bygone age when tastes were very different. We have also kept personal names, titles of nobility, and the like in their original French if the persons were French; thus, "M." instead of "Mr.," "Mme" instead of "Mrs.," "Mlle" instead of "Miss"; and "MM" instead of "Messrs."

In the glossaries and footnotes, we have translated the French titles of works referred to by Bastiat or cited by the editors only if the work is well known to English-speaking readers, such as Montesquieu's *Spirit of the Laws* or Rousseau's *The Social Contract*.

Because many of the pamphlets in this volume were originally given as speeches in the Chamber of Deputies (Bastiat was elected to the Constituent Assembly in April 1848 and to the Legislative Assembly in May 1849) and because Bastiat did not live to edit them into a final publishable form, the language can be at times rather colloquial and informal. One needs to remember that the speeches were given in the heat of the revolutionary moment, when France was undergoing considerable upheaval and the liberal forces Bastiat represented were under siege from both the conservatives and the protectionists on the right and the socialists on the left. Other essays

in the volume were prepared for publication in such journals as *Le Journal des débats*, *Le Journal des économistes*, or *Le Libre-échange* and were thus in a more polished form. A handful of writings in the volume were published privately by Bastiat as “pamphlets,” which he handed out to his friends, or were submissions to parliamentary committees on various topical matters. Thus, the language he used varied considerably from pamphlet to pamphlet depending on its *raison d’être*. It is therefore possible that both the original French editor (Paillottet) as well as the translation in this edition have given too final a form to what were in fact ephemeral *pamphlets du jour*.

Concerning the problematical issue of how to translate the French word *la liberté*—whether to use the more archaic-sounding English word *liberty* or the more modern word *freedom*—we have let the context have the final say. Bastiat was much involved with establishing a free-trade movement in France and to that end founded the Free Trade Association (Association pour la liberté des échanges) and its journal *Le Libre-échange*. In this context the word choice is clear: we must use *freedom* because it is intimately linked to the idea of “free trade.” The English phrase “liberty of trade” would sound awkward. Another word is *pouvoir*, which we have variously translated as “power,” “government,” or “authority,” again depending on the context.

A third example consists of the words *économie politique* and *économiste*. Throughout the eighteenth century and most of the nineteenth, in both French and English the term *political economy* was used to describe what we now call “economics.” Toward the end of the nineteenth century as economics became more mathematical, the adjective “political” was dropped and not replaced. We have preferred to keep the term *political economy* both because it was still current when Bastiat was writing and because it better describes the state of the discipline, which proudly mixed an interest in moral philosophy, history, and political theory with the main dish, which was economic analysis; similarly, with the term *économiste*. Today one can be a free-market economist, a Marxist economist, a Keynesian economist, a mathematical economist, or an Austrian economist, to name a few. The qualifier before the noun is quite important. In Bastiat’s day it was assumed that any “economist” was a free-market economist, and so the noun needed no adjectival qualifier. Only during the 1840s, with the emergence of socialist ideas in France and Germany, did there arise a school of economic thinking that sharply diverged from the free market. But in Bastiat’s day this had not yet become large enough to cause confusion over naming. Even in 1849, when Gustave de Molinari published his charming set of dialogues, *Les Soi-*

*rées de la rue Saint-Lazare*, between three stock characters—the socialist, the conservative, and the economist—it was perfectly clear who was arguing for what, and that the economist was, of course, a laissez-faire, free-market economist.

A particularly difficult word to translate is *l'industrie*, as is its related term *industriel*. In some respects it is a “false friend,” as one is tempted to translate it as “industry” or “industrious” or “industrial,” but this would be wrong because these terms have the more narrow modern meaning of “heavy industry” or “manufacturing” or “the result of some industrial process.” The meaning in Bastiat’s time was both more general and more specific to a particular social and economic theory current in his day.

The word *industry* in the eighteenth century had the general meaning of “productive” or “the result of hard work,” and this sense continued to be current in the early nineteenth century. *Industry* also had a specific meaning, which was tied to a social and economic theory developed by Jean-Baptiste Say and his followers Charles Comte and Charles Dunoyer in the 1810s and 1820s, as well as by other theorists such as the historian Augustin Thierry. According to these theorists there were only two means of acquiring wealth: by productive activity and voluntary exchanges in the free market (that is, by “industrie”—which included agriculture, trade, factory production, and services) or by coercive means (conquest, theft, taxation, subsidies, protection, transfer payments, or slavery). Anybody who acquired wealth through voluntary exchange and productive activities belonged to a class of people collectively called *les industriels*, in contrast to those individuals or groups who acquired their wealth by force, coercion, conquest, slavery, or government privileges. The latter group were seen as a ruling class or as “parasites” who lived at the expense of *les industriels*.

Bastiat was very much influenced by the theories of Say, Comte, and Dunoyer and adopted their terminology regarding *industry*. So to translate *industrie* in this intellectual context as “production” (or some other modern, neutral term) would be to ignore the resonance the word has within the social and economic theory that was central to Bastiat’s worldview. Hence, at the risk of sounding a bit archaic and pedantic we have preferred to use *industry* in order to remain true to Bastiat’s intent.

Bastiat uses the French term *la spoliation* many times in his writings. It is even used in the title of two of his pamphlets (found in this volume), “Propriété et spoliation,” published in July 1848 in *Le Journal des débats*; and “Spoliation et loi,” published in May 1850 in *Le Journal des économistes*.

The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines *spoliation* as “the action of ruining or destroying something” and “the action of taking goods or property from somewhere by illegal or unethical means”—from the Latin verb *spoliare* (strip, deprive). In using this term, Bastiat is making the point that there is a distinction between the two ways in which wealth can be acquired, either through peaceful and voluntary exchange (i.e., the free market) or by theft, conquest, and coercion (i.e., using the power of the state to tax, repossess, or grant special privileges). Some earlier translations of Bastiat use the older word *spoliation*; the word *plunder* is also used on occasion. In our translation we have preferred to use *plunder*. Another possible translation for *spoliation* is “exploitation,” which carries much the same meaning but has an unfortunate association with Marxist theories of “capitalist exploitation.”

A final note on terminology: in Bastiat’s time, the word *liberal* had the same meaning in France and in America. In the United States, however, the meaning of the word has shifted progressively toward the left of the political spectrum. A precise translation of the French word would be either “classical liberal” or “libertarian,” depending on the context, and indeed Bastiat is considered a classical liberal by present-day conservatives and a libertarian by present-day libertarians. To avoid the resulting awkwardness, we have decided by convention to keep the word *liberal*, with its nineteenth-century meaning, in the translations as well as in the notes and the glossaries.

*David M. Hart*

## *Note on the Editions of the Œuvres complètes*

The first edition of the *Œuvres complètes* appeared in 1854–55, consisting of six volumes.<sup>1</sup> The second edition, which appeared in 1862–64, was an almost identical reprint of the first edition (with only minor typesetting differences) but was notable for the addition of a new, seventh volume, which contained additional essays, sketches, and correspondence.<sup>2</sup> The second edition also contained a preface by Prosper Paillottet and a biographical essay on Bastiat by Roger de Fontenay (“Notice sur la vie et les écrits de Frédéric Bastiat”), both of which were absent in the first edition.

Another difference between the first and second editions was in the sixth volume, which contained Bastiat’s magnum opus, *Economic Harmonies*. The first edition of the *Œuvres complètes* described volume 6 as the “third revised and augmented edition” of *Economic Harmonies*. This is somewhat confusing but does have some logic to it. The “first” edition of *Economic Harmonies* appeared in 1850 during the last year of Bastiat’s life but in an incomplete form. The “second” edition appeared in 1851, after his death, edited by “La Société des amis de Bastiat” (most probably by Prosper Paillottet and Roger de Fontenay) and included the second half of the manuscript, which Bastiat had been working on when he died. Thus the edition that appeared in the first edition of the *Œuvres complètes* was called the “third” edition on its title page. This practice continued throughout the nineteenth century, with editions of *Economic Harmonies* staying in print as a separate volume as

1. *Œuvres complètes de Frédéric Bastiat, mises en ordre, revues et annotées d’après les manuscrits de l’auteur* (Paris: Guillaumin, 1854–55). 6 vols.: vol. 1, *Correspondance et mélanges* (1855); vol. 2, *Le Libre-échange* (1855); vol. 3, *Cobden et la Ligue ou L’Agitation anglaise pour la liberté des échanges* (1854); vol. 4, *Sophismes économiques. Petits pamphlets I* (1854); vol. 5, *Sophismes économiques. Petits pamphlets II* (1854); vol. 6, *Harmonies économiques* (1855). [Edited by Prosper Paillottet with the assistance of Roger de Fontenay, but Paillottet and Fontenay are not credited on the title page.]

2. Vol. 7: *Essais, ébauches, correspondance* (1864).

well as being included as volume 6 in later editions of the *Œuvres complètes*. By 1870–73, therefore, when the third edition of the *Œuvres complètes* appeared, the version of *Economic Harmonies* in volume 6 was titled the “sixth” edition of the work.

Other “editions” of the *Œuvres complètes* include a fourth edition, 1878–79, and a fifth edition, 1881–84. If there was a sixth edition, the date is unknown. A seventh edition appeared in 1893, and a final edition may have appeared in 1907. (For a complete listing of the editions of the *Œuvres complètes* that were used in making this translation, see the bibliography.)

*David M. Hart*  
*Academic Editor*

## *Acknowledgments*

*This* translation is the result of the efforts of a team comprising Jane Willems and Michel Willems; Dr. Dennis O’Keeffe, Professor of Social Science at the University of Buckingham and Senior Research Fellow at the Institute of Economic Affairs in London, who carefully read the translation and made very helpful suggestions at every stage; Dr. David M. Hart, Director of the Online Library of Liberty Project at Liberty Fund, who supplied much of the scholarly apparatus and provided the translation with the insights of a historian of nineteenth-century European political economy; Dr. Aurelian Craiutu, Professor of Political Science at Indiana University, Bloomington, who read the final translation and contributed his considerable knowledge of nineteenth-century French politics to this undertaking; Dr. Robert Leroux of the University of Ottawa for additional assistance with the translation; and Dr. Laura Goetz, senior editor at Liberty Fund, who organized and coordinated the various aspects of the project from its inception through to final manuscript.

I would also like to acknowledge the contribution of Mr. Manuel Ayau (1925–2010), a Liberty Fund board member whose support and enthusiasm for the translation project was crucial in getting it off the ground.

This volume thus has all the strengths and all the weaknesses of a voluntary, collaborative effort. My colleagues and I hope that Bastiat would approve, especially as no government official was involved at any stage.

*Jacques de Guenin*

*General editor*

*Founder of the Cercle Frédéric Bastiat*



## *Introduction*

*The* pamphlets and articles in this volume clearly show Frédéric Bastiat to be a keen observer and analyst of the political and economic problems of his time. Many of the pamphlets were written while he was an active politician, a position he held unfortunately for only a short period of time. Bastiat was elected to the Constituent Assembly in April 1848 and then to the Legislative Assembly in May 1849 but died on Christmas Eve in 1850, at the age of forty-nine.<sup>1</sup>

Despite his brief life, Bastiat was a privileged witness to a particularly unsettled period of French history: after the Revolution of 1789 came a period of political chaos, followed by the Napoleonic Empire, the return of the monarchy in 1815, a revolution in 1830, and another one in 1848, at which date the Second Republic was founded and universal suffrage adopted for the first time in French history. It was also during this period that the “bourgeoisie” became an increasingly influential social class that made possible, after the death of Bastiat, the takeoff of economic growth under Emperor Napoléon III and the beginnings of industrialization in Britain and France. These were the events that provided the background for Bastiat’s numerous writings on economics and politics.

### THE POLITICAL PAMPHLETS AS MODELS OF APPLIED ECONOMICS

Bastiat was both a thinker and an actor in public affairs. He was a politician who was inspired by both economic and ethical principles, which is a

1. It is not clear exactly what killed Bastiat. We know from his correspondence that he had a painful throat condition of some kind, which was probably tuberculosis but could also have been throat cancer. Whatever it was that finally killed him, Bastiat died at the peak of his powers as a writer and a politician.

rare occurrence, whether then or now. Next to Bastiat “the economist,” who wrote such monumental theoretical works as *Economic Harmonies* (1850), we have Bastiat the “political pamphleteer,” who wrote in response to the political and economic battles of the moment.<sup>2</sup> To those economists who dream of attempting to implement their ideas, political life might seem attractive; however, only a very few, like Bastiat, are lucky enough to get that opportunity. While France was wracked by wave after wave of revolutionary change between 1848 and 1850, Bastiat had the chance to present his ideas in speeches to the Assembly, in broadsides handed out in the street, as essays in popular journals, and as articles in academic journals.

Throughout the pamphlets, Bastiat demonstrates how the combination of careful logic, consistency of principle, and clarity of exposition is the instrument for solving most economic and social problems. He does not hesitate to present facts and even statistics to his readers, but he does so in a manner that is understandable and coherent because the material is analyzed through the filter of rigorous economic theory.<sup>3</sup>

In this volume the reader will find discussions covering a wide variety of topics, such as the theory of value and rent (in which Bastiat made path-breaking contributions), public choice and collective action, regulations, taxation, education, trade unions, price controls, capital and growth, and the balance of trade, many of which topics are still at the center of political debate in our own time. Far from being dry and technical discussions of abstruse matters, all Bastiat’s pamphlets are written with such outstanding limpidity that reading them is a joy.

#### EYEWITNESS TO POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC UPHEAVALS (1848–50)

After a period as a successful provincial magistrate, Bastiat was elected in the immediate aftermath of the February revolution of 1848 to the Constituent Assembly in Paris. He represented his home *département* (the Landes,

2. A future volume will contain Bastiat’s “economic” pamphlets, better known as *Economic Sophisms*, but it must be understood that in Bastiat’s writing there is no hard and fast barrier between politics, ethics, and economic theory. He moves from one to the other with great ease.

3. See, for example, the interesting way in which Bastiat is able to explain the poverty of vine growers in his province by referring to the effects of taxation and protectionism in “Discourse on the Tax on Wines and Spirits,” p. 328.