

"As to farming matters, I was certainly not one of those who like to throw themselves into novelties and expenses without knowing what the result might be; but when I was convinced of the superiority of a tool I adopted it without delay."¹ Here the protagonist, Tiennon, of Guillaumin's novel sums up a somewhat conservative, but altogether practical peasant's attitude about change. Throughout his life, from 1823 to the turn of the century, during Tiennon's life, and on deep into the twentieth century into the 1970's, more changes occurred in the French countryside and in the lives of its dwellers in this 150 year span than had occurred since the neolithic farming revolution of hundreds, even thousands, of years earlier. The time at the peasantry's way of life decisively began to change from the neolithic pattern due to the industrial revolution's fruits, as of the early glimmer of dawn showing before the sun rises, was about 1860, give or take a decade.

For an example of change, the typical food peasants ate improved immensely. The bread Tiennon typically ate when young was "coarse-ground rye, with all the husk left in and mixed with the flour."² It was like biting into a loaf with sand thrown into it. But, by the time Tiennon was about 35 around 1860, he was able to have bread made without the gritty bran or the rye in it due to improvements in the flour mills in France's countryside.³ Improvement on the food front was somewhat uneven, for soup and bread was the main part of Tiennon's diet when he was a child,⁴ a young man,⁵ and when he was an old man of nearly 70,⁶ though the "as usual" milk soup when he was old was an implied improvement over the normal soup served when he was young. The use of the new threshing machine allowed delicacies to be served.⁷ Coffee and sugar were seen as luxuries,⁸ but coffee (at least) wasn't as hard to get as time went by⁹. The typical food of the village of Peyrane in the early 1950's was a decided improvement over what Tiennon had contended with.¹⁰ There was more solid food (i.e. less soup), more vegetables, and wine was virtually a staple item.¹¹

¹Emile Guillaumin, The Life of a Simple Man (Hanover, N.H.: University Press of New England, 1983), p. 112. ²Guillaumin, p. 6. ³Guillaumin, p. 113. ⁴Guillaumin, p. 7, 13. ⁵Guillaumin, p. 86. ⁶Guillaumin, p. 166-167, 170. ⁷Guillaumin, p. 85. ⁸Guillaumin, p. 28, 125. ⁹Guillaumin, p. 166. ¹⁰Laurence Wylie, Village in the Vaucluse, Third Edition (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1974), p. 166-167. It should be noted that by "peasantry," I shall mean those who dwell in rural France, whether or not they actually tend the land, since Guillaumin's book focuses on those who tend the land, while Wylie's focuses on village life more, in order to make cross comparisons easier between these two main sources. ¹¹Notice the contrast to Tiennon's attitude on wine's expense, Guillaumin, p. 80-81.

Jam was no longer a virtual once in a lifetime treat.¹² Clearly, the peasant's material life in one of its most basic aspects--food--improved drastically during this period.

The clothing situation faced by French peasants in the early 1800's would strike most living Americans as shocking. For instance, since Tiennon's family only had two sets of good clothes (excluding the very rarely worn wedding garments) for four men, they would take turns weekly going to mass, two this week, the other two next week.¹³ The wedding garments had to last a whole lifetime, and were used for one's own funeral service, so they were worn only a couple times a year.¹⁴ The typical "shoes" were wooden clogs, and the wearing of aged, worn, hand-me-downs was common.¹⁵ But in the course of Tiennon's life, clothing definitely improved. Fancier clothes (especially mentioned are dresses) became reasonably available to people of Tiennon's means. His daughter Clementine nagged her father for a hoop skirt that plainly wasn't going to be a wedding garment around 1869, which wasn't seen as a totally outrageous request. The high quality clothes his nephew and niece wore on their visit from Paris showed what was possible to relatively average people who lived in the city, even though Tiennon himself was in terrible clothes when he first saw them.¹⁷ Clothing continued to improve by the time of 1950's Peyrane.¹⁸ People at least had cheap canvas shoes instead of clogs, and even their everyday clothes weren't anywhere nearly as ratty as what Tiennon normally wore, best exemplified by what he had on when he first saw his nephew and niece above. Since clothing was one of the first areas of civilization affected by the industrial revolution, it only makes sense this area went through dramatic improvement from 1823 to 1975.

Housing also gradually improved. Tiennon's house as a child was essentially a one room house where the bedroom and the kitchen were one and the same, and privacy was virtually non-existent.¹⁹ But even during Tiennon's life he was able to move into a two room house as a relatively young man, which was about 1850.²⁰ In the

¹²Guillaumin, p. xii. ¹³Guillaumin, p. 39. ¹⁴Guillaumin, p. xii, 39.
¹⁵Guillaumin, p. 19. ¹⁶Guillaumin, p. 128; also notice how Paris fashion influences countryside regularly towards the end of Tiennon's life, p. 185. ¹⁷Guillaumin, p. 163. ¹⁸Wylie, p. 154, 169. ¹⁹Guillaumin, p. 54, is implied on p. 29; note also p. xi-xii. ²⁰Guillaumin, p. 92.

village of Peyrane, the houses were somewhat larger, normally had two stories, and at least a bathroom (normally) and a bedroom or two over and above the living room-kitchen (salle).²¹ But many modern conveniences, even in the early 1950s, are still missing. Many houses lack water closets, or even toilets, many lack cold and/or hot running water, centralized heat, and even electricity. Needless to say, Tiennon had none of these conveniences, but their introduction was rather spotty and piecemeal as time went by, and the French standard of living (in housing especially) was much lower than the American at this time, so many in Peyrane at this time still lacked these modern conveniences. However, conditions continued to improve, as shown by the installation of a sewage system in 1959.²² Clearly, shelter had improved over the years in question.

Another change was in education and knowledge of the outside world. Tiennon was sent first off to work at the age of seven (vs. the "now" of about 1900 when it wasn't until 12 or 13 when one began to work), and remained illiterate all his life. But Jean, his son, did have a realistic change of going to school (this was about 1860), but this was thwarted by a backward-thinking master and a lack of spaces for the children of the poor. The children of shopkeepers and better-off country people did go though, even if Tiennon's own children didn't benefit themselves from education.²³ His grandson, Francis, about 1890, did go to school.²⁴ And, in the Peyrane of 1950, all the children went to school from age 4 to 14, and all are expected to go.²⁵ As for their view of the outside world, Tiennon was so ignorant he was impressed by the Allier river under the bridge^{as} he crossed into Saint-Menoux for his court hearing, and considered the outside world totally mysterious and "peopled by savages."²⁷ But his grandson, with his knowledge of geography and history, wouldn't have thought this way, especially as he would get older.²⁸ Although 1950's Peyrane's inhabitants had a love/hate relationship with the outside world, with the emphasis on the word "hate,"²⁹ they weren't ignorant of it due to universal military service³⁰ and education.³¹ While suspicion of the outside world persisted, which is a modified form of

²¹Wylie, p. 139+, 143+. ²²Wylie, p. 340. ²³Guillaumin, p. 17, 176; 111-112.
²⁴Guillaumin, p. 176. ²⁵Wylie, p. 60, 69. ²⁶Guillaumin, p. 61. ²⁷Guillaumin, p. 29.
²⁸Guillaumin, p. 176. ²⁹Wylie, p. 206+, 221+. ³⁰Wylie, p. 123. ³¹Wylie, p. 73.
Also note p. 34 and 336.

Tiennon's attitude, there had been a fundamental change: At least the Peyrannis knew what they hated in the outside world! But even this attitude changed, insularity lessened, and resistance against the outside world decreased.³² So clearly the French countryside's inhabitants changed their views of the outside world and became much more educated in this 150 year period.

Agricultural methods also began to change. Tiennon and his metayer neighbors engaged in a campaign to get their master and his steward to buy lime for their field at which they were successful, which occurred about 1860.³³ Tiennon at this same approximate time had bought two new plows which were a decided improvement over the older ones.³⁴ Around 1850 the change over from the flail³⁵ to the threshing machine occurred, which did improve productivity.³⁶ Even the normally ignored advice of master Boutry in improving farming methods (this was about 1842) showed change was in the air.³⁷ By the time of 1950 Peyrane, certain changes had continued,³⁸ though the small farm/draught animal power situation had persisted to a remarkable degree,³⁹ though a tractor cooperative existed, and food was shipped to far away places.⁴⁰ No longer was subsistence farming the core of French peasant life, as it had been during most of Tiennon's life. In 1961, however, the blacksmiths had retired and tractors were much more common than in 1950.⁴¹ Thus, French agricultural technology was revolutionized in this 150 year period.

In certain other areas of life, material changes occurred. When very young, around 1828, Tiennon's family went to market using an oxcart,⁴² but in 1872, Tiennon had managed to get a small carriage and donkey for himself.⁴³ In 1950, Peyrane was populated with ancient cars,⁴⁴ though the blacksmiths were ^{still busy.}⁴⁵ The smallpox epidemic that swept through Tiennon's area⁴⁶ in 1870 was a thing of the past for 1950's Peyrane.⁴⁷ The coming of the railway helped to save Tiennon's farm during a bad year in 1893, despite initial skepticism about its usefulness.⁴⁸ (Notice the difference in attitude here from American farmers ^{in the Great Plains} who knew from the start the railroad was their lifeline to markets and manufactured goods "back East" at this very same time because they weren't primarily subsistence farmers). Even the 25-watt bulb Wylie found in

³²Wylie, p. 371. ³³Guillaumin, p. 112-113. ³⁴Guillaumin, p. 112. ³⁵Guillaumin, p. 35. ³⁶Guillaumin, p. 85, 149. ³⁷Guillaumin, p. 46-47. ³⁸Wylie, p. 31. ³⁹Wylie, pictures opposite p. 143, p. 21-23. ⁴⁰Wylie, p. 31, 297-298, 336. ⁴¹Wylie, p. 342, 360, 365-368. ⁴²Guillaumin, p. 43. ⁴³Wylie, p. 342, 360, 365-368. ⁴⁴Guillaumin, p. 43. ⁴⁵Wylie, p. 342, 360, 365-368. ⁴⁶Guillaumin, p. 43. ⁴⁷Wylie, p. 342, 360, 365-368. ⁴⁸Guillaumin, p. 43.

his salle⁴⁹ was an improvement over Tiennon's fireplace as a source of light, though not heat.⁵⁰ These are some of the other improvements that had occurred in French living standards during this time.

As a glance back can tell, the period which the fruits of the industrial revolution first began to transform the countryside was about 1860, plus or minus a decade. For Tiennon, the introduction of the use of lime, the change in the type of bread, the beginnings of mass education were about 1860 (although Tiennon's children lost out on the latter, others didn't), the chance to have a two room house with both rooms used by people was 1850, the introduction of the threshing machine was about 1850, the chance to have a donkey and carriage was 1872, and Clementine somewhat realistically (it wasn't like asking for a yacht) nagged her father for a fancy hoop skirt that wasn't going to be a wedding dress in 1869. This time frame of (roughly) 1850 to 1870 makes sense, since France's biggest industrial surge (proportionately) was in the 1840's and 1850's, and it would take a while for this change to show up in the countryside. And these changes, as well as some others that occurred during this time, encouraged Tiennon late in life to say to his friend Daumier, "How do you know it won't happen? Think of all the changes we have seen in the course of our lives, of all the greater comfort that we have now."⁵¹ So now, it's the historian's job to properly note and explain these changes to the common man: "It was their (the intellectuals') job to see and to explain--to a society of men stumbling dazedly out of a primeval dungeon--the cause and the meaning of the events (caused by the industrial revolution) that were sweeping them faster and farther than the motion of all the centuries behind (t)hem. The intellectuals did not choose to see."⁵² Hopefully, we will see this and do this now, and do it right.

⁴⁹Wyllie, p. 171, 145-146. ⁵⁰Guillaumin, p. 26. ⁵¹Guillaumin, p. 188. ⁵²Ayn Rand, For the New Intellectual (New York: New American Library, 1961), p. 39.