

## The Life of the Fly

heard about your little animals. I am sorry that I shall have to leave without seeing them. They must wait for another occasion. My train will be starting presently. Walk with me to the station, will you? We shall be alone and we can chat a bit more on the way.'

We strolled along, discussing entomology and madder. My shyness had disappeared. The self-sufficiency of a fool would have left me dumb; the fine frankness of a lofty mind put me at my ease. I told him of my experiments in natural history, of my plans for a professorship, of my fight with harsh fate, my hopes and fears. He encouraged me, spoke to me of a better future. We reached the station and walked up and down outside, talking away delightfully.

A poor old woman passed, all in rags, her back bent by age and years of work in the fields. She furtively put out her hand for alms. Duruy felt in his waistcoat, found a two-franc piece and placed it in the outstretched hand; I wanted to add a couple of sous as my contribution, but my pockets were empty, as usual. I went to the beggar-woman and whispered in her ear:

'Do you know who gave you that? It's the emperor's minister.'