

The Life of the Grasshopper

Indus, the ancient story, perhaps as old as the first piece of economical advice vouchsafed by Paterfamilias and handed down more or less faithfully from memory to memory, must have undergone an alteration in its details, as do all legends which the course of the ages adapts to circumstances of time and place.

The Greek, not possessing in his fields the insect of which the Hindu spoke, dragged in, as the nearest thing to it, the Cicada, even as in Paris, the modern Athens, the Cicada is replaced by the Grasshopper. The mischief was done. Henceforth ineradicable, since it has been confided to the memory of childhood, the mistake will prevail against an obvious truth.

Let us try to rehabilitate the singer slandered by the fable. He is, I hasten to admit, an importunate neighbour. Every summer he comes and settles in his hundreds outside my door, attracted by the greenery of two tall plane-trees; and here, from sunrise to sunset, the rasping of his harsh symphony goes through my head. Amid this deafening concert, thought is impossible; one's ideas reel and whirl, are incapable of concentrating. When I have not profited by