

LETTER--To Lucian of Samosata

In a letter to Lucian of Samosata, the author muses over Lucian's current abode in a paradisiacal setting, surrounded by beauty, laughter, and notable companions like Heine, Plato, and others who share Lucian's wit and clarity of vision. This imaginative paradise serves as a backdrop for expressing deep appreciation for Lucian's enduring satire and wisdom, painting him as the master of mirth and contentment. The author, in a tone blending admiration with wistfulness, wonders about the joy that Lucian's company — including Rabelais, Voltaire, and others — would find in their "Happy Islands," devoid of life's burdens and filled with perpetual youth and laughter.

Transitioning to a more contemporary setting, the author laments the absence of Lucian's incisive mockery in a world overrun by superstition, pseudo-science, and shallow philosophies. Through an imaginative summoning of Lucian's perspective, the author critiques modern societal flaws, like the auctioning of popular sages, revealing a yearning for Lucian's sharp insights in navigating the follies of present times. This reflection expands to a broader critique of society's gullibility, the trivial pursuits of pleasure, and the unchanging nature of human vices and follies, essentially arguing that despite centuries of progress, humanity remains as susceptible to the same old weaknesses and simplifications that Lucian once mocked.

Finally, the letter shifts focus to Rabelais and the awaited advent of the "Coqcigrues" — a metaphorical representation of absurdities plaguing society. This is vividly illustrated through an encounter with a horde of physicians advocating against pleasure and a cacophony of prescriptive voices from various "reformers" imposing their dogmas on Pantagruel and his companions. This chaotic scene symbolizes the absurdity of societal constraints and the loss of joy in living, themes both Rabelais and Lucian explored in their works. The author implicitly contrasts the timeless wisdom and liberating satire of Lucian and Rabelais with the modern era's restrictive norms and the

decline in intellectual freedom, humorously underscoring the timeless relevance of their critiques and the necessity of their insight to challenge contemporary absurdities.

