

**THE WICKER WORK  
WOMAN; A CHRONICLE  
OF OUR OWN TIMES**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649370092

The wicker work woman; a chronicle of our own times by Anatole France

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.  
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

[www.triestepublishing.com](http://www.triestepublishing.com)

**ANATOLE FRANCE**

**THE WICKER WORK  
WOMAN; A CHRONICLE  
OF OUR OWN TIMES**





# THE WICKER WORK WOMAN

A CHRONICLE OF OUR OWN TIMES  
BY ANATOLE FRANCE

A TRANSLATION BY  
M. P. WILLCOCKS



LONDON: JOHN LANE, THE BODLEY HEAD  
NEW YORK: JOHN LANE COMPANY: MCMX

THE WICKER-WORK WOMAN





## THE WICKER-WORK WOMAN

### I



IN his study M. Bergeret, professor of literature at the University, was preparing his lesson on the eighth book of the *Æneid* to the shrill mechanical accompaniment of the piano, on which, close by, his daughters were practising a difficult exercise. M. Bergeret's room possessed only one window, but this was a large one, and filled up one whole side. It admitted, however, more draught than light, for the sashes were ill-fitting and the panes darkened by a high contiguous wall. M. Bergeret's table, pushed close against this window, caught the dismal rays of niggard daylight that filtered through. As a matter of fact this study, where the professor polished and repolished his fine, scholarly phrases, was nothing more than a shapeless cranny, or rather a double recess, behind the framework of the main staircase which, spreading out most inconsiderately in a great curve towards

#### 4 THE WICKER-WORK WOMAN

the window, left only room on either side for two useless, churlish corners. Trammelled by this monstrous, green-papered paunch of masonry, M. Bergeret had with difficulty discovered in his cantankerous study—a geometrical abortion as well as an æsthetic abomination—a scanty flat surface where he could stack his books along the deal shelves, upon which yellow rows of Teubner classics were plunged in never-lifted gloom. M. Bergeret himself used to sit squeezed close up against the window, writing in a cold, chilly style that owed much to the bleakness of the atmosphere in which he worked. Whenever he found his papers neither torn nor topsy-turvy and his pens not gaping cross-nibbed, he considered himself a lucky man! For such was the usual result of a visit to the study from Madame Bergeret or her daughters, where they came to write up the laundry list or the household accounts. Here, too, stood the dressmaker's dummy, on which Madame Bergeret used to drape the skirts she cut out at home. There, bolt upright, over against the learned editions of Catullus and Petronius, stood, like a symbol of the wedded state, this wicker-work woman.

M. Bergeret was preparing his lesson on the eighth book of the *Æneid*, and he ought to have been devoting himself exclusively to the fascinating

details of metre and language. In this task he would have found, if not joy, at any rate mental peace and the priceless balm of spiritual tranquillity. Instead, he had turned his thoughts in another direction : he was musing on the soul, the genius, the outward features of that classic world whose books he spent his life in studying. He had given himself up to the longing to behold with his own eyes those golden shores, that azure sea, those rose-hued mountains, those lovely meadows through which the poet leads his heroes. He was bemoaning himself bitterly that it had never been his lot to visit the shores where once Troy stood, to gaze on the landscape of Virgil, to breathe the air of Italy, of Greece and holy Asia, as Gaston Boissier and Gaston Deschamps had done. The melancholy aspect of his study overwhelmed him and great waves of misery submerged his mind. His sadness was, of course, the fruit of his own folly, for all our real sorrows come from within and are self-caused. We mistakenly believe that they come from outside, but we create them within ourselves from our own personality.

So sat M. Bergeret beneath the huge plaster cylinder, manufacturing his own sadness and weariness as he reflected on his narrow, cramped, and dismal life : his wife was a vulgar creature, who had by now lost all her good looks ; his daughters,