

A statement by Ferdinand Cheval from a article by Lawrence Durrell in Holiday Magazine, "In Praise of Fanatics" - Aug 1962

• (Durrell) It was written in simple schoolboy French which gave it an oracular ring, both touching and authoritative. It was a sort of artistic credo, but it smelled strangely of the direct vision of somebody like Blake. I read it slowly and with growing admiration. It began:

• "The son of peasant folk and therefore a peasant myself, I would like to live and die in such a manner as to prove that even in my own order of life men of genius and energy can be born, can exist. I've been a village postman for twenty-nine years now. Work has been my only glory, honor my only well being. Up to today, then, here is my strange history. Once, in a dream, I conceived and built a palace, a castle in which there were grottoes.....I don't know how to explain it.....but so ravishing, so picturesque, that for ten years the whole thing stayed engraved in my memory. I could not get rid of it. Of course I took myself for a fool, a maniac.

I was no mason, to start with, I had never touched a trowel. As for sculpture, I'd never touched a chisel. As for architecture—leave it right out of the picture, I knew nothing of it. I did dare not breathe a word about my dream to a soul for fear of being laughed at in the village. To be truthful, I laughed at myself a bit.

Fifteen years later, when I had almost forgotten this remote dream, a chance slip of the foot jogged my memory. I tripped and fell over an object. It was a stone of a form so bizarre that I slipped it into my pocket in order to study it at leisure. The next day I went back to the same spot and found others, even more beautiful. The stone was of a softish kind, deeply worked by river water and finally hardened by time into something as tough as a pebble; but the shapes—they represent a sort of sculpture so bizarre that I doubted if any man could imitate it. It was full of different species of animal and human caricatures. I said to myself then, 'Well, if nature can sculpt so easily, I am sure I can master masonry and architecture.' Here, then, was my dream at last, 'To work,' I said to myself!"

Ferdinand Cheval - Le Facteur Cheval, (b.1836 - d.1924) creator of
le Palais Ideal, Hauterives, Drome, France
the Palais was built from

1879 - 1912
10,000 Days
93,000 hours
33 years of hardship
if there is anyone more
obstinate than I, let him fall to work.