



Alphonse Daudet's Short Stories

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Alphonse Daudet (born May 13, 1840, Nîmes, France—died Dec. 16, 1897, Paris, France) was a French short-story writer and novelist, now remembered chiefly as the author of sentimental tales of provincial life in the south of France.

This collection of short stories comes in two parts: Letters From My Mill and Monday Tales.

Letters From My Mill (or Letters From my Windmill) Letters from My Windmill (French: *Lettres de mon moulin*) is a collection of short stories by Daudet that were first published in their entirety in 1869. Some of the stories had been published earlier in newspapers or journals such as *Le Figaro* and *L'Événement* as early as 1865.

The stories are all told by the author in the first person, typically addressing a Parisian reader. The author, having relocated his home from Paris, recounts short bucolic tales about his new life in Provence as well as his trips to Corsica and French Algeria. Considered to be light-hearted, and often a bit tongue-in-cheek, the stories vary from day-to-day events in southern France to Provençal folk-tales, and often feature professions and faunal references characteristic of Provence.

Letters From My Windmill is sometimes considered to be Daudet's most important work. It is cherished by many French, particularly in the South, for the picture it paints of the local culture.

The section includes *The Beaucaire Diligence*, *Master Cornille's Secret*, *The Goat of Monsieur Seguin*, *The Pope's Mule*, *The Lighthouse of the Sanguinaires*, *The Cure of Cucugnan*, *Old Folks*, *The Death of the Dauphin*, *The Legend of the Man with the Golden Brain*, *The Three Low Masses*, *The Two Inns*, and *The Elixir of the Reverend Father Gaucher*.

The second section called *Monday Tales* includes *The Last Class*, *The Game of Billiards*, *The Child Spy*, *Mothers*, *The Siege of Berlin*, *The Little Pies*, and *The Pope is Dead*.

In 1866, Daudet's *Lettres de mon moulin* (Letters from My Windmill), written in Clamart, near Paris, and alluding to a windmill in Fontvieille, Provence, won the attention of many readers. The first of his longer books, *Le petit chose* (1868), did not, however, produce popular sensation. It is, in the main, the story of his own earlier years told with much grace and pathos. The year 1872 brought the famous *Aventures prodigieuses de Tartarin de Tarascon*, and the three-act play *L'Arlésienne*. But *Fromont jeune et Risler aîné* (1874) at once took the world by storm. It struck a note, not new certainly in English literature, but comparatively new in French. His creativeness resulted in characters that were real and also typical. *Jack*, a novel about an illegitimate child, a martyr to his mother's selfishness, which followed in 1876, served only to deepen the same impression. Henceforward his career was that of a successful man of letters, mainly spent writing novels: *Le Nabab* (1877), *Les Rois en exil* (1879), *Numa Roumestan* (1881), *Sapho* (1884), *L'Immortel* (1888), and writing for the stage: *reminiscing in Trente ans de Paris* (1887) and *Souvenirs d'un homme de lettres* (1888). *L'Immortel* is a bitter attack on the Académie française, to which august body Daudet never belonged. Daudet also wrote for children, including *La Belle Nivernaise*, the story of an old boat and her crew.

In 1867 Daudet married Julia Allard, author of *Impressions de nature et d'art* (1879), *L'Enfance d'une Parisienne* (1883), and some literary studies written under the pseudonym "Karl Steen." Daudet was far from faithful, and was one of a generation of French literary syphilitics. Having lost his virginity at the age of twelve, he then slept with his friends' mistresses throughout his marriage. Daudet would undergo several painful treatments and operations for his subsequently paralyzing disease. His journal entries relating to the pain he experienced from *tabes dorsalis* are collected in the volume *In the Land of Pain*, translated by Julian Barnes.

Daudet died in Paris on 16 December 1897, and was interred at that city's Père Lachaise Cemetery.

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