

**DEGENERATION IN THE GREAT FRENCH  
MASTERS. ROUSSEAU -  
CHATEAUBRIAND - BALZAC - STENDHAL  
- SAND-MUSSET - BAUDELAIRE -  
FLAUBERT - VERLAINE - ZOLA**

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Degeneration in the great French masters. Rousseau - Chateaubriand - Balzac - Stendhal - Sand-  
Mussset - Baudelaire - Flaubert - Verlaine - Zola by Jean Carrère & Joseph McCabe

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**JEAN CARRÈRE & JOSEPH MCCABE**

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# DEGENERATION IN THE GREAT FRENCH MASTERS

*ROUSSEAU — CHATEAUBRIAND — BALZAC  
— STENDHAL — SAND — MUSSET — BAUDE-  
LAIRE — FLAUBERT — VERLAINE — ZOLA*

By JEAN CARRÈRE  
TRANSLATED BY JOSEPH McCABE

T. FISHER UNWIN, LIMITED  
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## PREFATORY NOTE

FEW readers will go far in these brilliant and stimulating pages without asking: "Who is Jean Carrère?" He is a master of French prose in its purest limpidity, a poet of fine inspiration and rich imagery, a profound student of human nature and of all literature, a prophet of lofty ideals, yet the most patient and indulgent of critics. In other words, he represents a rare combination of the qualities of the literary critic, the journalist, the poet, the moralist, and the humanist; and there could be no more excellent equipment for the work, which he accomplishes in this forceful and elegant little volume, of disentangling unhealthy sentiment from exquisite art and charm of personality in the great writers of modern France.

M. Carrère was well known in England twenty-two years ago, when he was quite a young man. He was a French war correspondent with the British Army in South Africa. He criticised us—Heaven knows there was much to criticise!—but he made France understand us. "At last there is somebody in France who understands us," said the *Daily Graphic* at the time. His vivid, picturesque, intensely humane articles were quoted everywhere. And the outcome of it all gave him a task. He interpreted England and France to each other; and from the rancorous and acrid mutual misconceptions of 1900 we passed quickly to the Entente.

Carrère went on to render the same service to France and Italy. He is profoundly, devotedly Latin; for he



### *Prefatory Note*

is above all things classical, an admirer and pupil of the serene type of greatness in Homer and Vergil. So again the poet and man of letters anonymously helped to shape and guide the world-process. M. Carrère is a modest man, and it is necessary to give these details in explanation of the vague references he makes in these pages to his work and his travels.

Behind it all, from the start, was a larger ideal. He had ventured upon the sea of letters, from the Latin Quarter at Paris, in the early nineties. He says, in this book, that he began with all the artistic irresponsibility of the prevailing school. But do not take him too literally. By 1897 he was writing such verse as

Let us flee idle dreams and that sadness impure,  
and

For the poem is a cry in the battles of men.

He was for manliness, health, struggle, joyous labour, strong sunlight, serenity, law. He very early took up the work of Mistral. He had been called the *roi des Écoles*, the king of 4,000 students, in 1893. His influence grew, and from the end of the nineteenth century he used it on behalf of what he calls always the *solar* ideal of life. The youth of France was obsessed by poetry which commended life in the light of the moon: soft, dim, evasive, querulous, dreamy. And France seemed to be decaying.

That is the keynote of these essays. That is why they begin with Rousseau, and include the Catholic Chateaubriand. M. Carrère is one of the least sectarian of men, and one of the most human. His point of view is original precisely because it is so broadly human. He pleads only for manliness (*vir-tus*). But his pleading and his censuring are supported by so impartial and discriminating a sentiment—so much of the “serenity”

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he urges—so acute a knowledge of human nature, and so high an artistic quality, that he is as captivating as he is original.

It remains only to extenuate a little boldness on the part of the translator. These essays necessarily quote some of the finest verse of modern France. Where the poems have already been translated, the work of these more leisurely and more qualified translators of poetry has been used. But much remained; and this version is essentially for the man who does not read French. I decided, therefore, to render the lines into an English which should show both the structure of the verse and the exact sentiments of the poets—which the familiar translations rarely do—and the lapse from æsthetic grace must be pardoned.

The French title, *Les Mauvais Maitres* (*The Bad Masters*), would mislead an English public, unaccustomed to French subtlety. I have changed it. But it must be borne in mind throughout the reading of the work.

J. M.

