

**SELECTED POEMS FROM
PREMIÈRES ET NOUVELLES
MÉDITATIONS; WITH
BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND
NOTES**

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Selected Poems from *Premières Et Nouvelles Méditations*; With Biographical Sketch and Notes
by Alphonse de Lamartine & George O. Curme

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ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE & GEORGE O. CURME

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LAMARTINE.

SELECTED POEMS
FROM
PREMIÈRES ET NOUVELLES
MÉDITATIONS.

EDITED,

WITH BIOGRAPHICAL SKETCH AND NOTES,

BY

GEORGE O. CURME, A.M.,

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MT. VERNON, IOWA.

"L'Idéal n'est que la vérité à distance."

"Les déceptions sont des vérités cueillies avant le temps."

— ALPHONSE DE LAMARTINE

BOSTON:

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1896.

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REMARK. — Each of these poems is complete, and unaltered in any way.	
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PREFACE.

I PRESENT to the student and the reader of French in this volume a carefully prepared edition of poems selected from Lamartine's *Premières et Nouvelles Méditations Poétiques*. Many teachers may miss several of their favorites. I have lovingly gone over every line and have tried in the notes to bring out clearly to the searching student the thought, the feeling, and the image of the poet where there seemed to be difficulties in the way.

My object in the biographical sketch has been twofold: to point out to the student what poems among the voluminous works of the poet he should read, and then to lead him to points in these poems where he can find views of the poet's life as it flows in his beautiful verses. It is to be hoped the reader will allow this current to mingle with his own.

Lamartine is to me the dearest of all French poets; therefore I warn my readers against accepting my views as critical oracles. There are two kinds of criticism, appreciative and destructive. The former seeks to enhance the reader's enjoyment of the author and at the same time gently warns where it is necessary. Its aim is to create love for the beautiful, and it is careful not to frustrate this leading purpose by allowing the shadows to fall thereupon so as to cover it. Destructive criticism is rarely of any value and is in most cases one of the most positive evils in literature. Men of tastes different from the writer criticised,

assume to pass sentence upon him. Nothing is more unjust. I have passed over a wide field of this kind of criticism upon Lamartine. It was a dry and arid field. Why did these men write at all? What have they accomplished? I call the attention of all my readers to the article of the well-known George Saintsbury in the *Encyclopedia Britannica* as a sample of this criticism which will be accessible to all. However, this is only one phase of Lamartine criticism. French critics now generally give him a high rank.

As a lake nestling at the foot of a great mountain and fed by its pure waters mirrors the lofty peak, so in my heart, fed by the spirit of this great man, his image floats, and it is thus that I desire to place him before my readers. I sincerely hope that this edition may contribute something toward establishing the study of Lamartine in our American schools. Lamartine is the Christian Virgil, only greater, and just as pure and refined. Both will ever remain the poets of the progressive young because they are representatives of those eternal ideals toward which mankind will ever march without reaching them. If this little volume should find favor, it will be followed by another under the suggestive title, *Harmonies et Recueils Poétiques*.

I gladly acknowledge here my indebtedness to a number of excellent articles and books in the general field of French literature, and I desire to express thanks especially to Madame Valentine de Lamartine, the poet's niece, and to Prof. Alfred Hennequin, of the University of Michigan, for real assistance and encouragement in my work.

CORNELL COLLEGE, MT. VERNON, IOWA,

August, 1887.

ADDITIONAL PREFACE.

AFTER the above and the text were in plates, and the notes in type, it was thought best to change the scope of the notes, reducing the grammatical and largely increasing the explanatory and literary notes. On account of the difficulty of removing the little figures in the text and placing them elsewhere, a few traces of the original plan will still be found, which it is hoped will nevertheless be serviceable even to the advanced student. In the revision of the notes I have been assisted by the fruitful criticisms and suggestions of Prof. P. R. De Pont of the University of Michigan, Prof. A. Lodeman of the Michigan State Normal School, Prof. Alcée Fortier of Tulane University, Prof. O. B. Super of Dickinson College, Prof. James A. Harrison of Washington and Lee University, Prof. H. Edgren of the University of Nebraska, and Prof. S. Garner of Annapolis, Md. Especial credit is due Prof. Edward S. Joynes, of the University of South Carolina, for much that there is of value in the notes. I have in a number of instances adopted his suggestions word for word. A short treatise on versification by Prof. A. Williams of Brown University, prepared especially for this edition, has been added. The dates found in the sketch and notes differ somewhat from those usually found in books and in the poet's own annotations. I have based them upon