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Edited by Harold N. P. Sloman  
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**The Cambridge Modern French Series  
Senior Group**

**GENERAL EDITOR : A. WILSON-GREEN, M.A.**

**SIX CONTES**

**PAR**

**GUY DE MAUPASSANT**

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HAROLD N. P. SLOMAN, M.A.

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## GENERAL INTRODUCTION

THE aim of the Cambridge Modern French Series is to offer to teachers French texts, valuable for their subject-matter and attractive in style, and to offer them equipped with exercises such as teachers who follow the Direct Method have usually been obliged to compile for themselves. The texts are arranged in three groups,—Junior, Middle and Senior,—designed, respectively, for pupils of 13 to 15, of 15 to 17 and of 17 to 19 years of age. It is hoped to bring into schools some of the most notable modern books,—novels and stories, memoirs, books of travel, history and works of criticism; and further to give the pupil not only an opportunity of becoming acquainted with great books, but, at the same time, of reading them in such a way that he may gain in knowledge of French, in ability to write and speak the language, in sympathy with and interest in '*France, mère des arts, des armes, et des lois.*'

It is with this end in view that the exercises are written. They follow, in the main, the lines of my Exercises on Erckmann-Chatrion's *Waterloo*, published by the Cambridge University Press in 1909. Some of the most distinguished teachers of French have expressed to me their approval of

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these exercises ; others have paid them the sincerest compliment in imitating them. Each exercise is based on a definite number of pages of the text and consists of: questions in French on (*a*) the subject-matter, (*b*) the words and idioms, (*c*) the grammar. In addition, in all the volumes of the Middle Group and in some of those of the other two Groups, English passages, based on the pages under review, are provided for translation into French. Where there is no translation, the number of questions is increased, and, in the Senior Group, opportunity is given for free composition. The intention is to catch in this fourfold net every important word and idiom ; often, to catch them even more than once. The questions on the subject-matter are not of the kind that may be answered by selecting some particular scrap of the text. They involve some effort of intelligence, some manipulation of the text. The general questions on words and idioms aim at showing how the words of the text may be used in quite other connections, in bringing them home to 'the business and bosoms' of the pupils, in building up the vocabulary by association, comparison, and word-formation. Often something will be learnt from the form of the questions, and every question should be answered with a complete sentence so that the repetition may help memory. The questions on grammar will serve to test oral work done in class. Each volume contains a systematic series of questions on verbs and pronouns, with examples drawn, where possible, from the text, and besides, each exercise contains a question, or questions, on the grammar of the pages on which it is based. Lastly, vocabularies are provided for the convenience of those

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teachers who wish for translation into English, in addition to, or instead of, reading all in French. The editors of the different volumes have practical experience of the teaching of French. Our hope is that this new Series may make French teaching more intelligent and more real, and therefore more interesting and more effective; that it may help to give the pupil an interest in French ideas and ideals which he will not lose, and provide him in the classroom with an atmosphere not altogether alien to that of France itself, the other Fatherland, for

Chacun a deux pays,  
Le sien et puis la France.

A. WILSON-GREEN.

EAST COTTAGE,  
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**The necessary arrangements for the reprinting  
of the following stories have been made  
through the courtesy of the representatives  
of the late GUY DE MAUPASSANT.**



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## LES CONTES DE GUY DE MAUPASSANT

**L**ES quelques contes présentés dans ce petit volume peuvent donner, il me semble, une idée assez juste et assez nette de la maîtrise surprenante dont Guy de Maupassant fait preuve en tous les genres. Je ne me propose pas de donner ici même une esquisse de la vie si tragique de notre auteur, quoique nul écrivain ne se reflète plus clairement dans ses œuvres : comme Frank Harris serait ravi d'en déduire sa biographie ! Mais tout le monde peut trouver des notes biographiques d'un intérêt et d'un pathétique incomparables dans les mémoires qu'a publiés dernièrement son valet, François, et qu'on vient de traduire en anglais. Guy de Maupassant a écrit des romans émouvants, des vers élégants et sincères, des pièces de théâtre et des récits de voyage, mais c'est comme auteur de contes et de nouvelles que je me plais surtout à le rappeler. Il prend rang parmi les grands conteurs russes et parmi nos écrivains on ne peut rapprocher de lui qu'Edgar Allan Poë et Thomas Hardy. Il sait dès le commencement créer de quelques traits simples et sûrs l'atmosphère voulue ; et c'est peut-être dans le genre macabre et bizarre que son succès est le plus éclatant. A ce genre se rattachent dans nos contes, *Le Horla* et *Qui sait ?* Ce sont ici ses propres expériences qu'il reproduit— ce qui les rend même plus émouvantes et terrifiantes ; car

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vers la fin de sa vie il est devenu victime d'hallucinations terribles, qu'il a lui-même fidèlement étudiées. Il produit ses effets si simplement—une phrase entrecoupée, une expression inattendue, qui ne disent pas beaucoup mais suggèrent tant, et voilà que le lecteur a la chair de poule, le sens confus d'une terreur menaçante : c'est ici qu'on peut le comparer à Poë.

Mais quand il rit, il rit de tout cœur, sans arrière-pensée ; par exemple, dans *Le Trou*, et, quoiqu'on puisse trouver un soupçon de malice quand il se moque de la bravoure des Allemands, dans *Les Prisonniers* et *Walter Schnaffs*. Et *Menuet*?—que dire de ce camée incomparable, si finement ciselé, ce récit d'un pathétique à faire pleurer et d'une si parfaite simplicité ? On ne peut décrire le charme de ce conte exquis, il faut l'éprouver.

Dans notre littérature anglaise rien de semblable. A vrai dire, le conte est un genre qui a peu réussi parmi nous : nous n'avons que des conteurs de deuxième classe. Notre langue est trop grave sans doute et ne peut atteindre la légèreté et la finesse de l'esprit français, insaisissable comme le parfum d'une rose. A la rigueur on pourrait rapprocher de ce genre d'ouvrages les contes de Conrad, mais l'auteur est...Polonais.

H. N. P. S.

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