

The Last Lesson



BY ALPHONSE DAUDET



Alphonse Daudet

(1840- 1897)

French Novelist and Story Writer

Background

❖ Set up in the days of Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871).


❖ France was Defeated by Prussia.

❖ Prussia was then led by Otto Von Bismark (1815-1898), Prussian statesman and first Chancellor of Germany.

❖ Prussia was then consisted of what now the nations of Germany, Poland and Parts of Austria.



❖ The story covers the times when French districts of Alsace and Lorraine were taken over by Prussia.



❖ The language German was imposed on French people.

❖ People were deeply shattered.

❖ They realized what they lost.

Linguistic Chauvinism



**-Taking Pride in one's
language**

Scene 1

- Little Franz is Late for School.
- He was Supposed to prepare with Participles.
- He was afraid of his strict teacher M. Hamel.
- M. Hamel would question him on Participles.
- Tempted to skip the school.

Prussian Soldiers were drilling.

Day was warm and bright

Open Field.

Sawmill.

- Resisted Temptations and hurried off to School.

Town Hall Scene



- **Large Bulletin Board.**
- **Crowd gathered around the bulletin board.**
- **Bulletin board supplied all bad news from the Last two years:-**
 - Lost Battles**
 - the Drafts**
 - the orders of Commanding Officer**
- **Franz thought What could be the Matter now????**

- Blacksmith- Watcher working with his Apprentice (Helper)- calls on--

“Don’t go so fast bub; you’ll get to your school in plenty of time!”



School Scene

Silence like Sunday Mornings

no usual commotion

no rapping of teacher's ruler on the table

no regular bustle

no opening and closing of desks...



M.Hamel's Changed Behaviour



- ❖ **Franz expected he would get inside the class amidst commotion.**
- ❖ **Children already at their places.**
- ❖ **M. Hamel roaming with his terrible ruler.**
- ❖ **Franz asked for permission**
- ❖ **Contradictory to his expectation he wasn't being Scold for getting late.**

M. Hamel said Kindly- “ GO to your place little Franz, we were beginning without you”

M. Hamel Dressed differently...

- ❖ **BEAUTIFUL GREEN COAT**
- ❖ **FRILLED SHIRT**
- ❖ **LITTLE BLACK SILK CAP**
- ALL EMBROIDERED**





Students in the class

- ❖ **Back benches which generally remained empty, were occupied by people**
- ❖ **There were village people sitting on the last benches.**
- ❖ **People were sitting quietly like students**
- ❖ **OLD HAUSER- in his three cornered Hat.**
- ❖ **THE FORMER MAYOR**
- ❖ **THE FORMER POST MASTER and many other**
- ❖ **They all looked Sad**
- ❖ **They had brought their old PRIMERS(Primary books)**



M. Hamel's Announcement

- In his grave and gentle tone he announced;
“My children, this is the last lesson I shall give you. The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the school's of Alsace and Lorrain. The new master comes tomorrow. This is your last French Class. I want you to be very attentive”
- His words were THUNDERCLAP to Franz

Franz Regretted for not Learning

“My books that had seemed such a nuisance a while ago, so heavy to carry, my Grammar and my History of the saints, were old Friends now that I couldn’t give up”

“M. Hamel too, the idea that he was going away, that should never see him again, made me forget all about his ruler and how cranky he was”

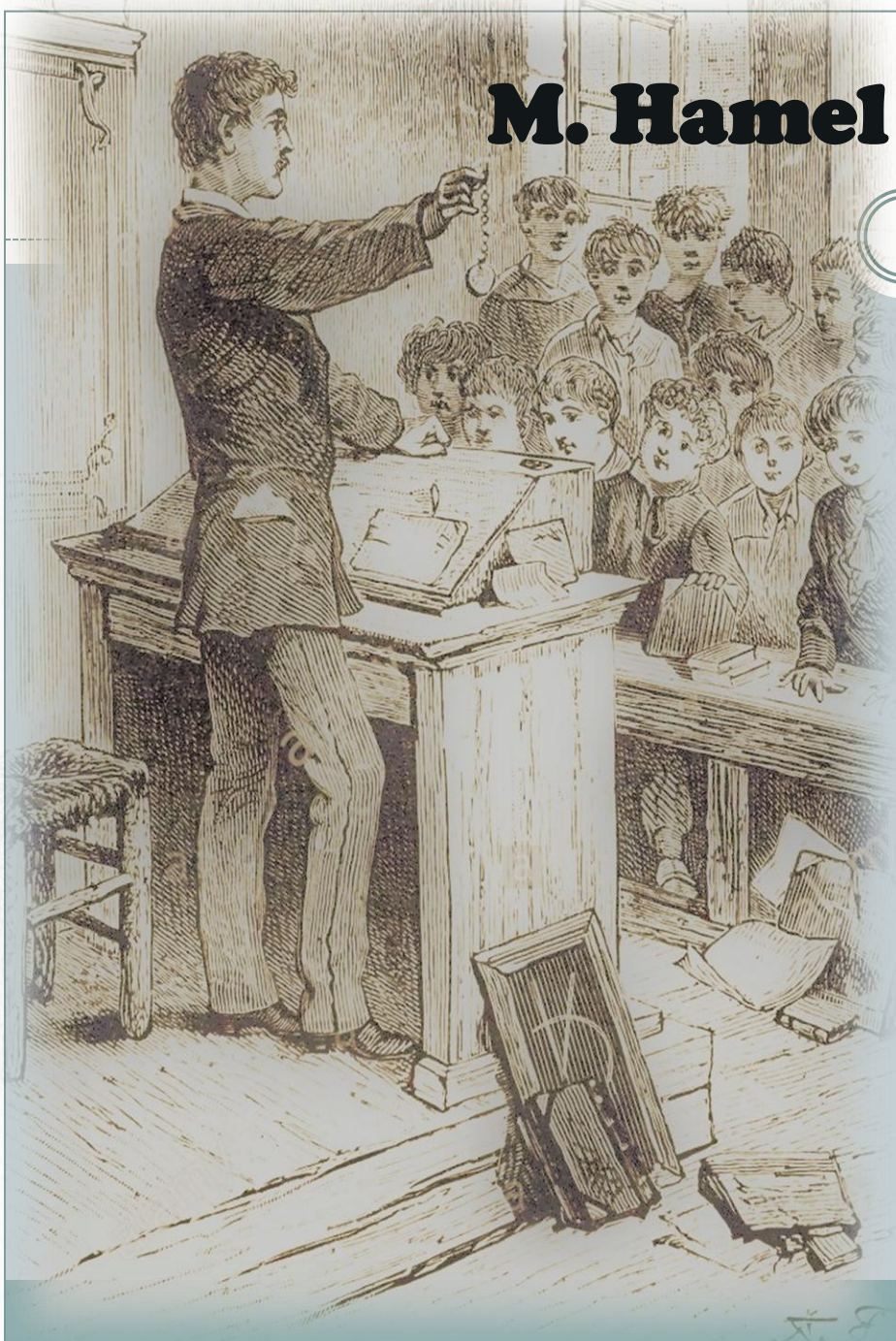
A map of France and surrounding regions. The area of Alsace-Lorraine is highlighted in red. Labels include 'U.K.', 'English Channel', 'GERMANY', 'BELG.', 'LUX.', 'Alsace-Lorraine', 'FRANCE', 'SWITZ.', 'ITALY', 'Mediterranean Sea', 'SPAIN', and 'Bay of Biscay'.

Love for their Lost Nation

“It was in the honour of his Last Lesson that he had put on his Sunday Clothes”

“The old people from village had gathered, as they were sorry that they had neglected school and to pay respect to the old master for his forty years of faithful service, showing respect to their country that was theirs no more”

M. Hamel Questions Franz on Participles...



- Franz thought that he would speak confidently
- Franz got mixed up on the very first word.
- He was sorry for not being able to speak and could not face M. Hamel.

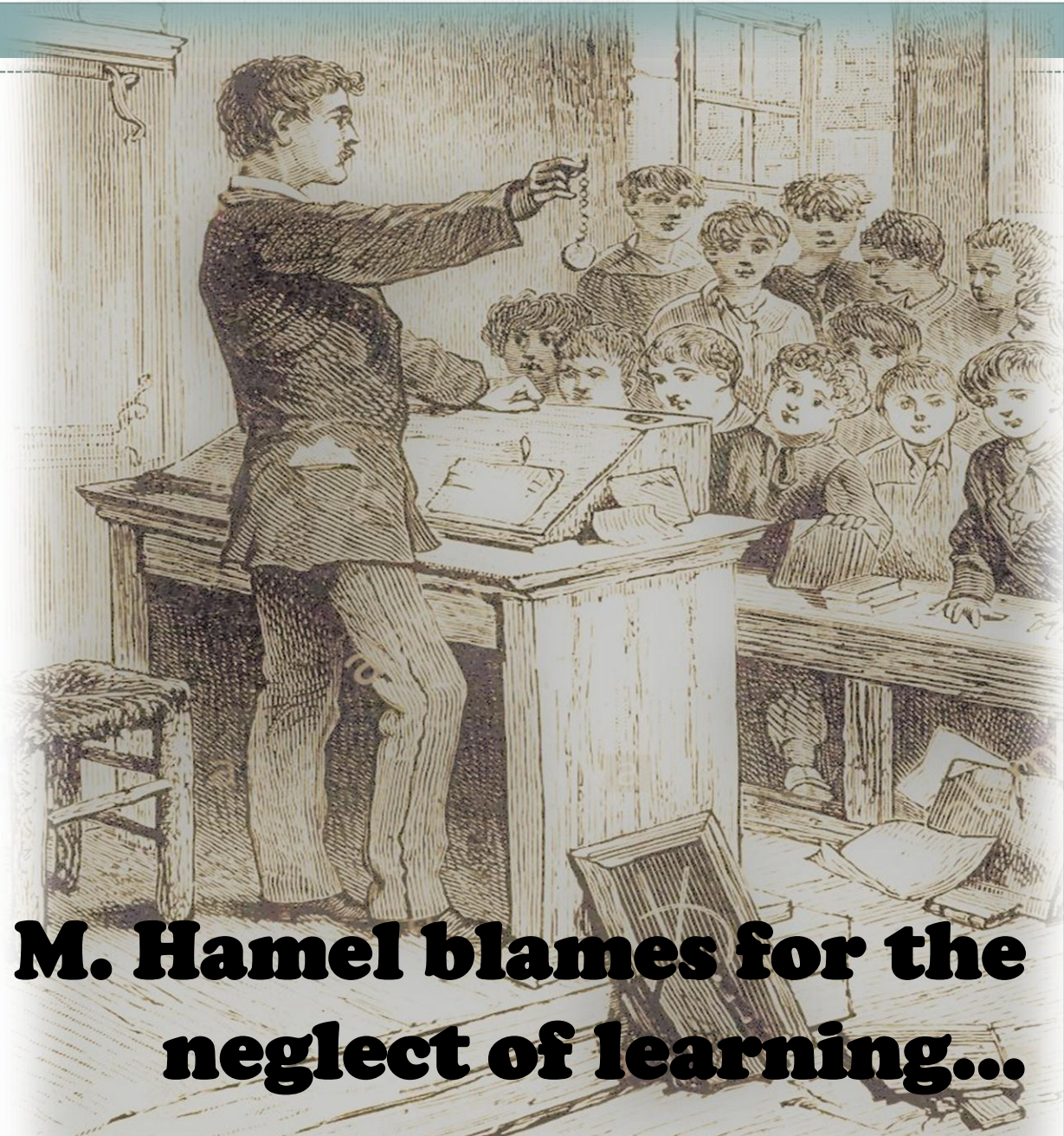


People of Alsace
who kept learning
for tomorrow.

Parents preferred
to put their
children on fields.

Blames Himself for
not taking his
classes seriously.

Sending students
to water his plants
and giving holidays
when he wished to
go for fishing.



**M. Hamel blames for the
neglect of learning...**

M. Hamel Praises French Language



- ❖ **French is the most beautiful language in the world.**
- ❖ **The clearest and the most logical language.**
- ❖ **We must guard it among us and never forget it.**

“When a people are enslaved, as long as he hold fast his language, it is as if they had key to their prison”

Franz filled with admiration for M. Hamel



**M. Hamel taught with
Patience**

**“I had never listened
so carefully, and
that he had never
explained
everything with so
much patience.”**

**M. Hamel wanted to teach
everything in one class**

**“ it seemed almost as
if the poor man
wanted to give us all
he knew before
going away, and to
put it all into our
heads at one
stroke”**

M. Hamel brought new copies for all



- To give it all a new start.
- On copies one had to practice handwriting.
- It was written in beautiful round hand—

France, Alsace, France, Alsace....

- ‘It looked like little Flags floating every where in the school room, hung from the rod at the top of our desks’
- Everyone set to work, every thing was quiet, only sound heard was the scratching of pen over the paper.

Will they make them sing in German even the pigeons



❖ Satirical remark upon Germans-

**Franz mocks germans can they force
animals and birds too to speak in
German???**

❖ Self Pity

**Franz was pitying the state and the
condition of French people, where they
being humans were forced to change their
language and birds were still free to
converse in their language**

Human Predicament



**Man has turned inhuman, where he
wants to control, rule and take over
other.**

**Birds and animals are better who still
let each other live free in their
peripheries.**

M. Hamel feels Sorry for the loss of his country



- Felt sorry for the lost freedom and his country
- Felt sorry for he had to leave
- Wanted to fix everything in a gaze.
- He had served the school for past 40 years.
- he had Planted trees and plants in the garden

M. Hamel ready to leave



- M. Hamel's Sister moving in the room above the classroom, packing trunks for they must leave the country the next day.
- M. Hamel stood up very Pale

“I never saw him look so tall”

M. Hamel could not face the people and his students , something choked him from speaking, so he turns to the board and writes as large as could...



VIVA LA FRANCE
LONG LIVE FRANCE

Things to Ponder Upon



Mother Tongue, Language and Linguistic Chauvinism?

Why First Person Narrative technique is used ?

Why Franz, a little boy as Narrator and Why not M. Hamel?

Linguistic Chauvinism the Major theme or Patriotism

Who is the main Protagonist?