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CLASSICS

# Alfred de Musset

## Complete Works



Series Fourteen

*The Complete Works of*  
**ALFRED DE MUSSET**

(1810-1857)



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*The Delphi Classics Catalogue*

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "alf de Musset". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent flourish under the word "Musset".

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Version 1

*The Complete Works of*  
**ALFRED DE MUSSET**



*By Delphi Classics, 2024*

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*Complete Works of Alfred de Musset*



First published in the United Kingdom in 2024 by Delphi Classics.

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ISBN: 978 1 80170 201 0

Delphi Classics

is an imprint of

Delphi Publishing Ltd

Hastings, East Sussex

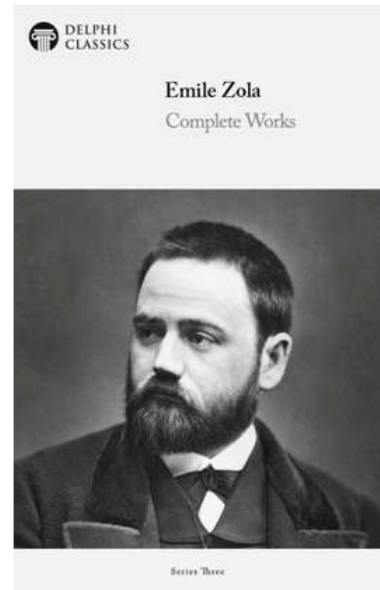
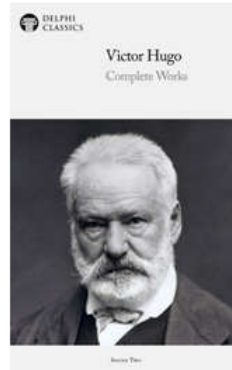
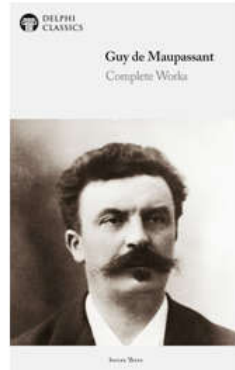
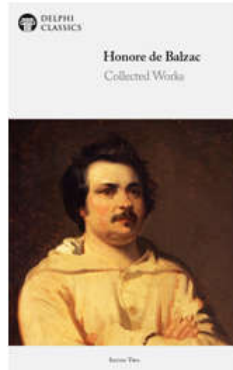
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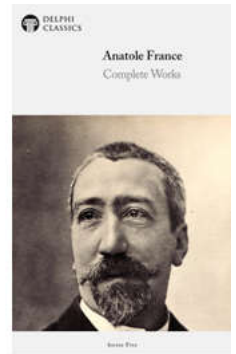
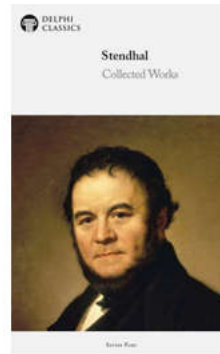
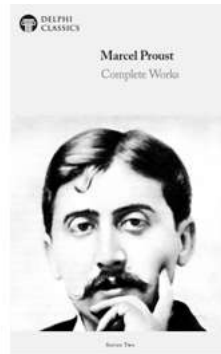
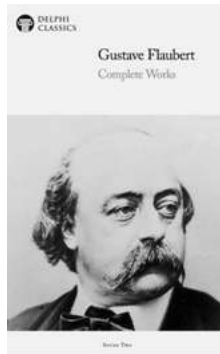
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# FRENCH MASTERS



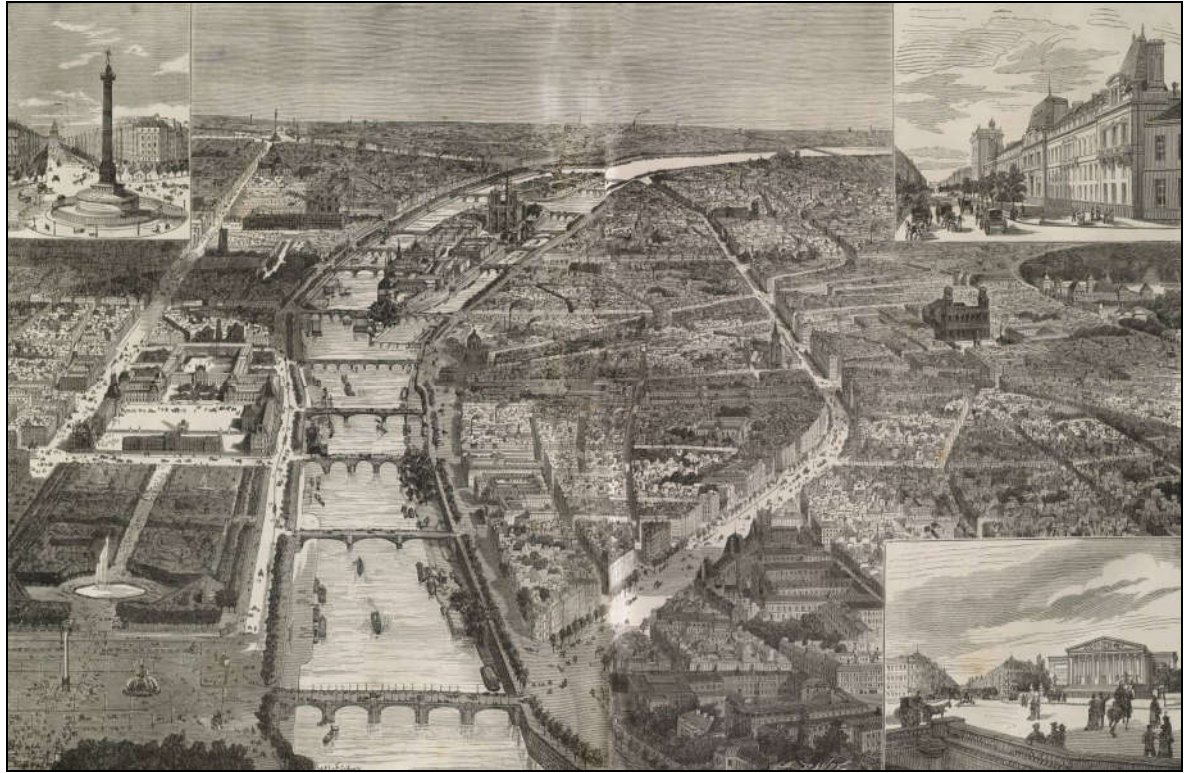
*Explore the French Masters at Delphi Classics...*



## The Novels



*Rue des Noyers, Paris, c. 1900 — Alfred de Musset's birthplace. The road was incorporated into the boulevard Saint-Germain in the mid-nineteenth century.*



*Bird's-eye view of Paris in 1878, with the new Boulevard Saint-Germain on the right*



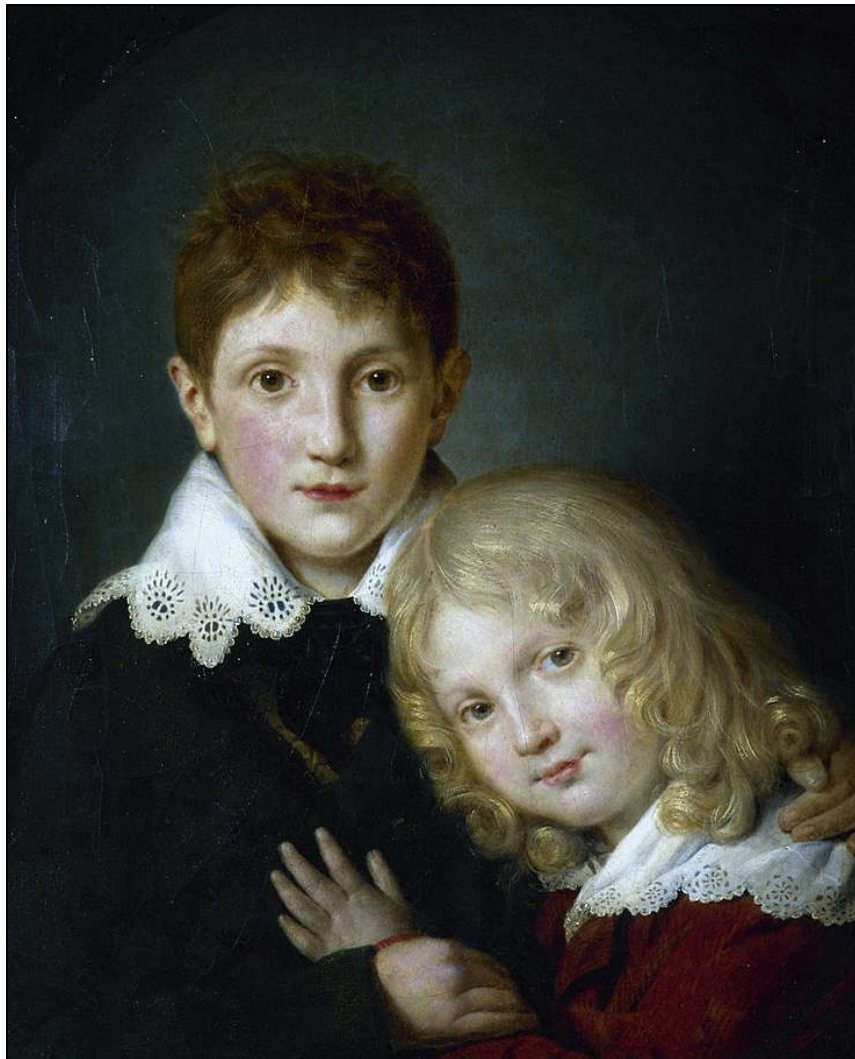


*Boulevard Saint-Germain, today*



*No. 57, Boulevard Saint-Germain. The Special School of Public Works was built on the site of a row of old houses, one of which was the birthplace of Alfred de Musset.*





*Alfred de Musset (right) with his elder brother Paul by Fortune Dufau, 1815*

## Gamiani (1833)



### OR, TWO NIGHTS OF EXCESS

*Anonymous translation, 1908*

*Original French Title: 'Gamiani ou deux nuits d'excès'*

Alfred de Musset was born in Paris in 1810 into an upper-class, but impoverished family. His father worked in various key government positions, but never gave his son any money. Musset's mother came from similar circumstances and her role as a society hostess – hosting drawing-room parties, luncheons and dinners – would leave a lasting impression on young Alfred. An early indication of his boyhood talents was his fondness for acting impromptu mini-plays based upon episodes from old romance stories that he had read. Years later, his elder brother Paul would preserve these and many other details in a biography of his famous sibling.

Musset entered the lycée Henri-IV at the age of nine, where in 1827 he won the Latin essay prize in the Concours général at the age of seventeen. With the help of Paul Foucher, Victor Hugo's brother-in-law, he attended the Cénacle, the literary salon of Charles Nodier at the Bibliothèque de l'Arsenal. After several attempts at careers in medicine, law, drawing, English and piano, he launched his career as a Romantic writer with the publication of his first collection of poems, *Contes d'Espagne et d'Italie* (Tales of Spain and Italy) in 1829. By the time he reached the age of twenty, he had already attained literary fame, as well as a reputation for his dandy character. He served as the librarian of the French Ministry of the Interior under the July Monarchy. His politics were of a liberal stamp and he was on good terms with the family of King Louis Philippe.

*Gamiani, or Two Nights of Excess* was first published in 1833 as a large, but slim edition consisting of twenty-six pages and twelve hand-coloured lithographs believed to be produced by Achille Devéria and Henri Grévedon. The author of the novel was not named upon release and Musset never publicly acknowledged that he wrote it. Nevertheless, from the early twentieth century scholarship strongly supported attributing the novel to Musset. The first extant English translation of the book was in 1864 by the author and collector of erotic literature, James Campbell Reddie. It was published by William Dugdale, who was a printer and bookseller renowned for releasing subversive political and pornographic material.

The book was one of the best-known erotic or pornographic French novels of the nineteenth century and was a bestseller of the genre. It was reissued multiple times over the course of the century with new illustrations being drawn by artists such as Félicien Rops and Édouard-Henri Avril. The novel depicts two nights of uninhibited, debauched and transgressive sexual experiences involving the Countess Gamiani, her fifteen-year-old lover, Fanny, and a young baron, Alcide. Musset's work is deliberately provocative as he includes tales of orgies in convents and bestiality. It has been suggested that *Gamiani* was inspired by Musset's turbulent relationship with the novelist George Sand, who was infamous at the time for her unconventional private life.



*Alfred de Musset by Charles Landelle, Musée d'Orsay, 1854*

Gamini

DEUX NUITS D'EXCÈS.



Bruxelles  
1833

*The first edition's title page*

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CONCERNING THE AUTHOR OF GAMIANI

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*A later frontispiece*



## PREFACE



SHORTLY AFTER THE French Revolution of 1830, a dozen young people, most of them destined to become celebrated in the world of Letters, in the Medical profession or the Law, had met one evening in one of the most brilliant restaurants of the old Palais-Royal. The remains of a gorgeous supper, and the quantity of empty bottles strewn on the table bore ample witness to their healthy stomachs and their jollity.

They had reached the dessert stage, and during the popping of numerous champagne corks, the conversation had turned first to politics, and then to the thousand and one topics of the day. Books then came in for their turn.

After having discussed one after another the different works which had excited the admiration of their readers from the earliest times down to the present day, the conversation turned on erotic literature.

This proved a rich subject for discussion. So every known erotic book was talked about, from the Pastorales of Longus and the lustful cruelties of the Marquis de Sade, Martial's Epigrams and Juvenal's Satires down to Aretin's Sonnets, each in turn came in for attention.

After having compared the freedom of expression employed by Martial, Propertius, Juvenal, Terence and Horace, in short by all the Latin writers, with the restraint shown by the various French authors of erotic works, one of the party declared that he deemed it impossible to write a book of this character without calling a spade a spade. He agreed that La Fontaine's tales were an exception, and that besides, French poetry allowed of this kind of reticence, and that with the delicacy and cunning turn given to its phrases, had succeeded in giving itself an added charm; but that it would be impossible to produce anything really attractive and passionate in prose.

Thereupon, a young gentleman, who had apparently been listening to the conversation with a dreamy air, seemed to rouse a little on hearing the last words, and said;

"Gentlemen, if you will kindly agree to meet together here again in three days' time, I hope to be able to convince you that it is not difficult to produce a work of the highest taste without employing any of the vulgar expressions which we are accustomed to term "naïvetés" in our good old ancestors, such as Rabelais, the Chevalier de Brantôme, Béroalde de Verville, Bonaventure des Periers, and so many others, for I am sure their wit would shine just as brightly if it had been cleared of the crude old words which besmirch our ancient language."

This proposal was loudly applauded, and three days later our young writer brought the manuscript of the book that we now present to our book-loving friends.

Each member of the dinner-party wanted to have a copy of it, and one of them allowed a foreign publisher to print a limited edition in 1833, in quarto size, the text lithographed in script in two columns to the page, with ten large illustrations very nicely done, attributed to Grévedon or Devéria.

This edition, now of extreme rarity, and of which many librarians have denied the existence, was followed by a second, — this time set up in type — dated: Venice, 1835.

The title is identical: *Gamiani, ou Deux Nuits d'excès, par Alcide, Baron de M...* It is a small volume of 105 pages with some bad woodcuts copied from the lithographs of the original edition.

From that time forth, the story was known and the curiosity of the public awakened. Reprints appeared rapidly one after the other, in fact more than a dozen of them came out before 1870. J. Gay, a dealer in rare books, mentions in his *Bibliographie des ouvrages relatifs à l'amour*, that the most correct and best printed of these, was the Brussels edition of 1871. Seven engravings and frontispiece by Felicien Rops are generally found adorning this edition.

We possess on our library table these two most notable editions: the original autographed manuscript (lithographed) which is certainly the first that ever appeared, and the beautiful edition in-18 on hand-made paper, with its fine engravings in red and black, which undoubtedly issued from Poulet-Malassis' offices. As regards the text, there are trifling differences to be observed, probably due to slight errors in copying, but which do not affect the sense in the least.

Of these two versions, both quite authentic, we have chosen the earlier text (Brussels 1833), and in the present volume we offer our readers a word for word translation of that edition. Of course, we have corrected the typographical errors and suppressed a certain number of "embellishments" which had distorted the real intentions of the author; and we have thought it wise to complete our labours by inserting, as a foreword, an extract from the *Mémoires de Céleste Mogador* concerning the author of this book, as it appeared in the 1864 edition.

We shall not surprise our readers when we inform them that the authorship of *Gamiani* has always been attributed to the celebrated poet Alfred de Musset. His contemporaries were unanimous on this point, and we would observe, to any of the author's friends who might wish to discredit this assertion, that the private life of their favorite writer, especially in his twenty-fourth year, was anything but edifying, and it is quite sufficient to scan a faithful biography of the poet in his early years to understand and excuse such a youthful peccadillo. Besides it was simply the subject of a wager, an inconsequential trial of the wits, never intended to see the light of publicity.

The immortal author of the *Les Nuits*, in creating the character of *Gamiani*, could not have imagined that his work, born in the clouds of absinthe, would have been thus handed down to posterity; and this explains why so little care was bestowed on the composition of this sketch of literary prostitution, besides the loose style of the dialogue, and the lack of cohesion and of sequence in the scenes, especially in the last pages of the book.

But, in spite of the criticisms that have been made of its imperfect style, this erototragic phantasy deserved to be preserved and to survive the period of romantic extravaganza which had given it birth.

We have done our best to present it to collectors in a scrupulously fine print, worthy of taking the place which its illustrious origin deserves, among the literary, artistic and gallant curiosities of their libraries.

The Publisher.

EXTRACT FROM THE MEMOIRS OF THE COUNTESS OF

C\* \* \*

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*End of Sample*