



Association de Sauvegarde du
CHATEAU DE GAVRAY



Gavray and its surroundings: the writers

Charles Le Marquetel of Saint Denis de Saint-Evremond : born in Saint Denis le Gast on April 1 1613 - Died in London on September 29, 1703 - Buried in Westminster Abbey

After studying with the Jesuits at the Collège de Clermont (today Louis the Great in Paris) then at the University of Caen (law), he embarked on a career in arms. A literate soldier and man of the world, he had a brilliant military career in the staff of the Prince of Condé under the Duke of Enghien and Marshal d'Hocquincourt. His bravery distinguished him at Rocroy, Fribourg, Nordlingen and in the campaigns of Germany and Flanders.

A man of letters, a mocker and a satirist, an epicurean, he maintained relationships with distinguished men: Turenne, Créquy, d'Olonne, Clérembault.

In 1648, his taunts against Condé caused him to lose his lieutenantship, however the Fronde which broke out gave him the opportunity to show his courage and his spirit by taking the side of the Court. He became Field Marshal in 1652 and wrote a witty pamphlet "*The Retreat of Mr. de Longueville in Normandy*".

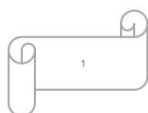
Sought after in society as a gallant and honest man, he charms salons with his lively chat and the alleys with its madrigals. He plays the leading role at *Ninon de Lenclos*.

In 1661, the discovery of his "letter to the Marquis de Créqui on the peace of the Pyrenees (1659)" criticizing Mazarin and, probably, his morals led to his disgrace.

Forced to go into exile in Holland then in England where King Charles II welcomed him kindly and paid him a pension. He led the life of an epicurean frequenting the elite of the aristocracy and men of letters and became chancellor to the Duchess of Mazarin when she moved to London.



Charles Le Marquetel by Parmentier





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The numerous steps to put an end to his exile only succeeded in 1689 when Louis XIV authorized him to do so. He was then 76 years old, his age, his affection for the Duchess of Mazarin, the favors of William III and his habits made him give it up. He died at the age of 90 and was buried in the Poets' Corner of Westminster Abbey.

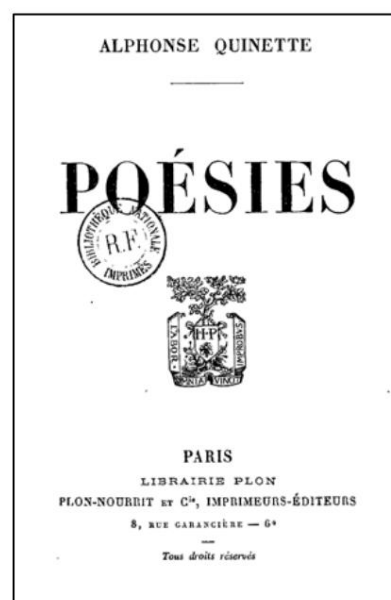
With the exception of his "*Comedy of the Academists*" mocking the suppressions by the Academy French, his works were, during his lifetime, distributed clandestinely.

Alphonse Quinette: born in Gavray on December 1 , 1833 -
Died April 22, 1906 - Buried in Gavray

After studying at La Baleine (Letousey boarding school), at Muneville college then at the Lycée de Coutances, he entered the administration at registration. Appointed estate attaché in Paris in 1873, then to the Ministry of Public Education.

Academic palms officer, appreciated for his uprightness, his cordiality, his simplicity and his dedication, he spent the last years of his life in Gavray where a street bears his name.

Poet, we owe him in particular: "*The bell of my old church* " and "*Poems* ".



Armand Lebailly: born in Gavray on April 22, 1838 – Died in Paris on September 6, 1864 at 26 years old – Buried in Gavray

Considered by his family as a minor prodigy, two parish priests taught him some notions of grammar and history, which he quickly assimilated, then sent him to the minor seminary of Muneville where he spent a year. Then, he left for college in Mortain, which he left in the fourth year, his father's finances no longer allowing him to pay the pension. During this period, he wrote his first verses between prayer, study and recreation.

Having gone to college in Saint Lô, he took free lessons from new teachers, he stayed in a room for poor schoolchildren, without air, with a hard wooden bunk and a little broth on bread once a day. He contracted tuberculosis, and by the end of the year he was coughing up blood. He then entered the diocesan seminary where he remained only a few weeks, his declining health making it a burden for his teachers and an embarrassment for his fellow students, he returned to Gavray. Gone was the family's dream of making him a priest.

Tempted by literature, he went to Paris in June 1858, after spending a year in Caen working for a newspaper whose columns he contributed almost alone. Of a restless and touchy character, he quickly exhausted his credit, his purse, his confidence and what remained of his health. He was reduced to a bed in the open wind, under a bridge, in the deserted plain of Saint Denis for almost a month. During the day, he



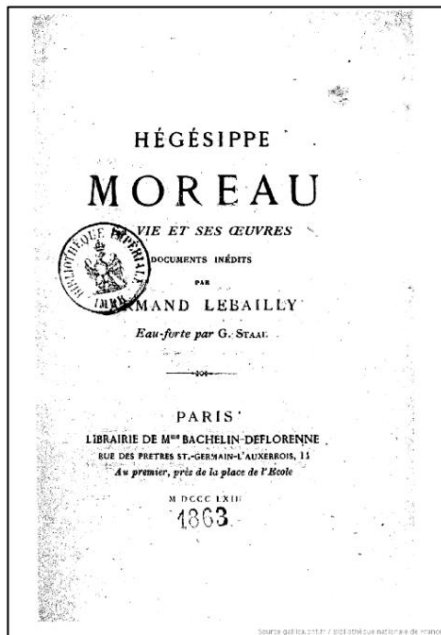
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runs through newspapers and the anterooms of men of letters, writes the short pages of his work while dragging himself from one hospital bed to another. Every summer, as soon as his health and means allow it, he takes the stagecoach to Gavray. On his return, he found himself in the hospital for several months.

His collection of verses, the “*Songs of the Capitol*”, was noticed and attracted the congratulations and friendship of eminent men of letters who promised him a better future. He then published “*Italia mia*” after a stay in Italy thanks to the charity of his publisher. Then, it's the sun of Nice to restore his exhausted strength, unfortunately the illness is incurable. Back in Paris, he felt lost, he nevertheless wrote three volumes on “*Hégésippe Moreau*” which was very successful upon its release, on “*Alix de Lamartine*” mother of the writer and a love story “*Maria Grazia*”.

He spent the entire winter of 1863-1864 in hospitals where some friends came to see him from afar.



Lamartine having read the pages dedicated to his mother, feels the desire to know its author. He went to Necker hospital accompanied by his friend Ernest Legouvé. On his return, he said to him: “...long care is still useful to him, add this to what you will give him, and hands him a 500 franc note”.

Three days later, Lamartine was himself prosecuted for a sum of 1,000 francs which he could not pay. As for Ernest Legouvé, he must use subterfuge to make Armand accept 750 francs. He makes him believe that the Academy shared its annual poetry prize between a young writer and him. As the names of the winners were to be published in July, he offered to advance him 750 francs in the meantime. Armand runs to Gavray, then, impatient to witness his triumph, returns to the capital in small days. Exhausted, he learns of the deception through the newspapers, overcome with despair, he wants to be taken to a hospital immediately. He died a few weeks later in Necker.

Rémy de Gourmont: born at the La Motte manor in Bazoches-au-Houlme near Argentan on April 4, 1858 - Died in Paris on September 27, 1915 - Buried at Père-Lachaise in the tomb of Auguste Clésinger

Son of Count Auguste-Marie de Gourmont and Countess née Mathilde de Montfort, his family moved to the manor of Mesnil Villeman near Villedieu in 1866.

A boarder at the Coutances high school from 1868 to 1876, an excellent student with too much imagination, he began studying law in 1876 in Caen. After graduating in law in 1879, he moved to Paris. In November 1881, he obtained a job as an attaché at the National Library.

He published his first novel “*Merlette*” in 1886. The action takes place between Villedieu and Avranches, the work is received with indifference. He also met Berthe de Courrière,



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model and universal legatee of the sculptor Auguste Clésinger, on whom she commissioned a study before becoming his mistress. It inspired him to write passionate letters throughout 1887 which were published posthumously in 1921 under the title "Letters to Sistine". He moved into her home and lived there until his death.

Berthe de Courrière, who remained devoted to him throughout his life, inspired his novel "Sistine" published in 1890 and which he dedicated to Villiers de l'Isle-Adam, who had become his friend. He also became involved with Joris-Karl Huysmans who in 1892 was the dedicatee of "Mystical Latin" and was inspired by Berthe de Courrière in his novel "Là-bas".

In 1889, he was one of the founders of *Mercure de France* with Alfred Vallette, Louis Dumur, Ernest Raynaud, Jules Renard and Albert Samain. He collaborated there for twenty-five years and had a profound impact on the personality of the magazine. In April 1891, he published an article entitled "Le Joujou Patriotisme" where he maintained that the artistic and cultural affinities between France and Germany should lead to a rapprochement of the two countries, a rapprochement thwarted by nationalist passions. The thesis and the disdainful tone of the article caused him to be dismissed from the National Library and closed to him the columns of most of the major press. His defender, Octave Mirbeau still managed to get him into the "Journal".



Remy de Gourmont

Suffers from a form of lupus which disfigures him and gives him an unbearable appearance, he remains cloistered at home except to go to *Mercure* and once a year for a few weeks of vacation in Coutances. From then on, he devoted himself entirely to work and books, he published a vast and abundant work of novels, plays, collections of poetry and especially essays testifying to profound erudition.

His meeting, in 1910, with Natalie Clifford Barney inspired him with a strong passion which was expressed in the "Letters to the Amazon" published in 1914, it comes out again.

But the locomotor ataxia that has affected him for several years is getting worse, he is walking with more and more difficulty. The First World War plunged him into deep despondency, he died of cerebral congestion.

Writer and literary critic, he practices a form of discernment that he calls "dissociation of ideas". This cerebral exercise consists of separating things: *the correct idea is colonized by the amalgam which makes it, at the same time, a cliché and a false idea. The received idea is the result of the operation which brings together true elements to make a false idea, through the illusion that their union is normality.* The work of dissociation allows us to free the truth from its polluted part, to find *the pure idea*.



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Félix Hervy: 1871 – 1929

Storyteller, Poet, songwriter as indicated by the plaque affixed to his birthplace in Montaigu les Bois. His son brought together his work in “ *Les gaudrioles normandes d’aôt’fais*” and in “ *Songs and poems of yesteryear, humor of the ancestors* ”.

