

**THE KEYNOTE
(MONSIEUR
DES LOURDINES)**

Published @ 2017 Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd

ISBN 9780649376384

The Keynote (Monsieur des Lourdines) by Alphonse de Châteaubriant

Except for use in any review, the reproduction or utilisation of this work in whole or in part in any form by any electronic, mechanical or other means, now known or hereafter invented, including xerography, photocopying and recording, or in any information storage or retrieval system, is forbidden without the permission of the publisher, Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd, PO Box 1576 Collingwood, Victoria 3066 Australia.

All rights reserved.

Edited by Trieste Publishing Pty Ltd.
Cover @ 2017

This book is sold subject to the condition that it shall not, by way of trade or otherwise, be lent, re-sold, hired out, or otherwise circulated without the publisher's prior consent in any form or binding or cover other than that in which it is published and without a similar condition including this condition being imposed on the subsequent purchaser.

www.triestepublishing.com

ALPHONSE DE CHÂTEAUBRIANT

**THE KEYNOTE
(MONSIEUR
DES LOURDINES)**

THE KEYNOTE

(MONSIEUR DES LOURDINES)

BY
ALPHONSE DE CHATEAUBRIANT

TRANSLATED BY
LADY THEODORA DAVIDSON



HODDER & STOUGHTON
NEW YORK
GEORGE H. DORAN COMPANY

Copyright, 1912,
By George H. Doran Company

PREFACE

IT has been a privilege to translate a work so daintily, so poetically written, as the volume which started on its French career as "Monsieur des Lourdines" and is now presented to English readers as "The Key-note."

That it won the grand prize of the Académie Goncourt is a tribute not only to its own inherent qualities but also to the perception of those who exercise the right of selection. Its merit lies, not in liveliness of plot, wealth of incident, or pandering to the elemental passions, but in the extraordinary delicacy of its appeal to the best and purest side of human nature. It touches that sense of poetry and mystery which, often jealously concealed if secretly acknowledged, lurks in the background of the majority of cultivated minds.

The title chosen for the English version may seem at first sight to have little connection with the story, but it is hoped that it will quickly vindicate itself. It is indicated in

these lines by Romain Rolland: "*Tout se que touche l'amour, est sauvé de la mort.*"

Love is the *Keystone* of the Book.

The author has demonstrated the complete victory, by simple force of love, of an insignificant-looking, unfashionable father, over the smart, selfish, superficial character of his son. Love of nature, love paternal, love patriarchal for property and dependants, love of music, a spirit without guile or rancour, transform a shy, ill-dressed, half-educated country squire, into a Bayard "*sans peur et sans reproche.*" With barely a word spoken on either side, the conflict between two almost irreconcilable natures wages; deft touches allow the reader to delve beneath the surface, and watch the progress of affairs. The scene where the final subjugation of the son's hard egoism is accomplished, quite unconsciously, by the modest hero of the book, is one of sheer poetry. The contrast between the beauty of his mind and the homeliness of his exterior, is a masterpiece of imagination.

As is well known on both sides of the Channel, the late Edmond de Goncourt bequeathed a considerable sum of money, to found an Academy for the encouragement of young

writers. Its members are paid, and in them is vested the power to award each year a prize of two hundred pounds, to the best work of fiction.

The name of Alphonse de Chateaubriant is comparatively new in the modern world of Letters. With one stride, this youthful author has stepped into the front rank. Thanks to the Académie Goncourt, he has been accorded instant recognition; and those who, but a short while ago, knew nothing of his talent, now acclaim him as the most gifted of contemporary prose-writers.

"The Keynote" is offered with full confidence in its intrinsic excellence, but with an appeal for the indulgence of cultured readers, in view of the many difficulties that beset the path of the translator of a work, the merit of which lies so largely in grace of diction and distinction of style.

THEODORA DAVIDSON.

PART I