

Topic Page: [Lamartine, Alphonse Marie-Louis Prat De \(1790 - 1869\)](https://search.credoreference.com/content/topic/lamartine_alphonse_1790_1869)

Summary Article: **Lamartine, Alphonse Marie Louis de**

From *The Hutchinson Unabridged Encyclopedia with Atlas and Weather Guide*

French poet. He wrote romantic poems, including *Méditations poétiques/Poetical Meditations* (1820), followed by *Nouvelles méditations/New Meditations* (1823), and *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses/Poetical and Religious Harmonies* (1830). His *Histoire des Girondins/History of the Girondins* (1847) helped to inspire the revolution of 1848. Lamartine was the first to sound a more personal note in his poetry and to establish a direct bond between himself and his public.

A distinguished orator, he entered the Chamber of Deputies 1833 and served as a deputy for several years. He was a leader in the revolution and became minister of foreign affairs in the provisional government in 1848. He was defeated in the presidential election by Louis-Napoleon (Napoleon III).

Diplomatic career Lamartine was born in Mâcon and followed family tradition by entering the bodyguard of Louis XVIII in 1814. He was later appointed attaché to the French embassy in Naples and during the supremacy of the Bourbons he held important diplomatic posts. While in Italy he wrote his *Nouvelles méditations poétiques*, *La Mort de Socrate* (1824), *Le Dernier Chant du Pèlerinage de Childe-Harold* (1825), and *Harmonies poétiques et religieuses*. A long-projected voyage to the East led to the prose work *Voyage en Orient/Recollections of a Pilgrimage to the Holy Land* (1835). His *Jocelyn*, the history of a country parson, was published in 1836, *La Chute d'un ange/The Fall of an Angel* (1838), and *Recueils poétiques* (1839); but during this period it was as an orator, not as a poet, that he enjoyed the greatest popularity.

Defeat in presidential election He was deputy for Mâcon 1837–48, and at the revolution in 1848 he was considered ‘the man of France’, as the defender of the *tricolore* against the *rouges*. His desire for moderation in the provisional government lost him popularity, and he secured very few votes in his candidature for the presidency of the republic; he then retired permanently from public life.

Work in retirement In his retirement Lamartine wrote a series of novels: *Raphaël* (1849), *Le Tailleur de pierres de Saint-Point/The Stonecutter of Saint-Point* (1851), and *Graziella* (1852), and the autobiographical *Confidences* (1849) and *Nouvelles Confidences* (1851). Under the empire he fell into great poverty and resorted to hackwork (*Cours familier de littérature* 1856–69) and inferior poetry (*Les Visions* 1854) to support himself. Although voted a generous pension by the government in 1868, his privations had worn him out and he did not long enjoy it.

quotations

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