

11/4/20

L-1 The Last Lesson

Book - Flamingo

Author :- Alphonse Daudet

Alphonse Daudet was a French novelist. He was born in May 1840 - and died in 1897. He was a great novelist, short story writer, playwright and a poet.

Difficult words :-

1. Pretend - show
2. to reproach - blame
3. Dreadful - frightening
4. Cranky - strange, short-tempered
5. Sunday clothes - the best dress that a person has.
6. Nuisance - problem, burden
7. Couldn't give up - cannot leave
8. Saar - A river which passes through France

9. Thunderclap - Startling or unexpected
10. Wretches - here, it refers to an unfortunate happening
11. Grave - serious
12. Primer - basic reader of any language
13. Thumbed - torn and damaged
14. Solemn - serious
15. Blushed - face turned red in colour due to shame
16. Counted on - depended upon
17. Commotion - noise and confusion

characters :-

1. **M. Hamel :-** He is a teacher who has been teaching French to the people of Alsace and Lorraine for 40 years.
2. **Franz :-** He is a student at M. Hamel's school. He is negligent about his studies.

3. Wachter - He is a blacksmith

4. Hauser - Like Wachter, he is also a minor character who attends the last class.

Summary :-

Franz started for school very late that morning. He was afraid of being scolded because M. Hamel was to question them on participles, and he did not know the first word about them. He thought of running away and spending the day out of doors. The warm bright day, the chirping birds, and the Prussian soldiers drilling in the open field back of the sawmill were tempting. But he resisted the temptation and hurried off to school.

There was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board near the town-hall. Wachter, the blacksmith, asked Franz not to go so fast. He assured the boy that he would get to his school in plenty of time. Usually there was a great bustle when the school began but that day everything was as quiet as

Sunday morning.

Through the window Franz saw his classmates, already in their places and M. Hamel walking up and down with his terrible iron ruler under his arm. Franz opened the door and went in. He blushed and was frightened. M. Hamel very kindly asked him to go to his place.

Franz noticed that their teacher had put on his beautiful green coat, his frilled shirt, and the little black silk cap, all embroidered. He wore these only on inspection and prize days. The village people were sitting quietly on the usually empty back benches. Everybody looked sad; and Hauser had brought an old primer.

M. Hamel said that it was the last lesson he would give them. Henceforth, only German was to be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new master would come the next day. This was their last lesson of French. He wanted them to be very attentive.

Franz felt sorry that he had not learnt his lessons properly. The idea that M. Hamel was going away made the narrator forget all about his rules and how cranky he was. Now Franz understood why M. Hamel had put on his fine Sunday clothes and why the old men of the village were sitting there. They had come to thank the master for his forty years' faithful service and to show their respect for the country that was theirs no more.

M. Hamel asked Franz to recite but he stood there silent. The teacher did not scold him. He confessed that his parents and he were at fault. Then he talked of the French language - the most beautiful language in the world - the clearest, the most logical. He asked them to guard it among them and never forget it. Their language was the key to their prison.

Then they had lesson in grammar and writing. The pigeons cooed very low on the roof. Franz

thought if they would make even the pigeons sing in German. All the while M. Hamel was sitting motionless in his chair and gazing at one thing or the other. His sister was packing their trunks in the room above as they had to leave the country next day.

After writing, they had a lesson in history, and then the babies chanted their alphabets. Even old Hauser was crying. All at once the church-clock struck twelve and then the midday prayers. At the same moment the trumpets of the Prussians, returning from drill, sounded under the windows. M. Hamel stood up. He wanted to speak but something choked him.

Then he took a piece of chalk and wrote on the blackboard as large as he could "Vive La France". After this he stopped and leaned his head against the wall. Without a word, he made a gesture with his hand to indicate that the school was dismissed and they might go.

Q 1 Why was Franz reluctant to go to school on the last day?

Ans. Franz was reluctant to go to school on the last day because his teacher Mr. Hamel was going to question the students on 'participles' and he did not know a single word about them.

Q 2 What did Franz notice that was unusual about the school that day?

Ans. There was no commotion that day and everything was as quiet as on a Sunday morning. M. Hamel was wearing his best dress and moreover on the back benches the village people were sitting quietly.

Q 3 What had been put up on the bulletin board?

Ans. The crowd in front of the bulletin board indicated the display of some important news item on it. Later, when Franz reached school, he realized that the news was about an order sent from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine.

Q-4 Why were Mr. M. Hamel's words like a thunderclap to Franz?

Ans. Franz was shocked when Mr. Hamel announced that it would be the last French lesson. He realized that he hardly knew how to write and would not get a chance to learn anymore of French. He felt sorry that he did not learn his lessons and wasted his time in useless activities.

Q-5 How did Franz's feelings about M. Hamel and school change?

Ans. He felt sorry that he had not learnt his lessons and wasted his time in seeking birds' eggs and going sliding on the Saar. He felt that his books, which were a nuisance a while ago and heavy to carry, were now like old friends that he did not want to give up at all. Moreover, he forgot all about M. Hamel's rules and how cranky he was.

Q-6 Why were the old men of the village present in the classroom?

Ans. The old men of the village were sitting in the classroom as they were sorry that they had not

gone to school Franz felt that they too, like him, were sorry for not having gone to school often. It was their way of thanking the teacher.

Q 7 What changes did the order from Berlin cause in school that day?

Ans: M. Hamel had put on his best dress - his beautiful green coat, his frilled shirt and the little black silk cap, all embroidered. The whole school seemed so strange and solemn. On the back benches that were always empty, the elderly village people were sitting quietly like the kids.