



Disagreeable Tales

Léon Bloy

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Thirty tales of theft, onanism, incest, murder and a host of other forms of perversion and cruelty from the "ungrateful beggar" and "pilgrim of the absolute," Léon Bloy. *Disagreeable Tales*, first published in French in 1894, collects Bloy's narrative sermons from the depths: a cauldron of frightful anecdotes and inspired misanthropy that represents a high point of the French Decadent movement and the most emblematic entry into the library of the "Cruel Tale" christened by Villiers de l'Isle-Adam. Whether depicting parents and offspring being sacrificed for selfish gains, or imbeciles sacrificing their own individuality on a literary whim, these tales all draw sustenance from an underlying belief: the root of religion is crime against man, nature and God, and that in this hell on earth, even the worst among us has a soul.

A close friend to Joris-Karl Huysmans, and later admired by the likes of Kafka and Borges, **Léon Bloy** (1846–1917) is among the best known but least translated of the French Decadent writers. Nourishing antireligious sentiments in his youth, his outlook changed radically when he moved to Paris and came under the influence of Barbey d'Aurevilly, the unconventionally religious novelist best known for *Les Diaboliques*. He earned the dual nicknames of "The Pilgrim of the Absolute" through his unorthodox devotion to the Catholic Church, and "The Ungrateful Beggar" through his endless reliance on the charity of friends to support him and his family.

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