

the ministerial salon, it is marked throughout by that wonderful power of word-painting of which M. Daudet alone possesses the secret.

ception that marked the work of Gautier; he has painted rural life with a delicacy worthy of Georges Sand; his portrayal of character is as pitiless as that of Flaubert; lastly, his fine quality of humor has more than once called forth favorable comparison with Dickens. In this outline we have, of course, intended to suggest, rather than to define or compare, the many-sidedness of M. Daudet's genius. It is easy to see how such a writer may be claimed by M. Zola as a follower under the banner of the naturalists, and at the same time win the applause of the opposing school. M. Daudet has met the *soi-disant* disciples of realism on their own ground, and shown them that pathological studies of human nature are not enough to constitute the permanent in literary art.

In *Numa Roumestan* M. Daudet takes us back to the South, which he knows so well — the terrible South, where, as he says, the wind and the sun distill alcohol in the blood, and people, from the cradle to the grave, live a life of natural intoxication. He tells us how the handsome young Provençal goes up to Paris at the age of twenty-four; frequents a café in the Latin Quarter, the favorite haunt of a crowd of boisterous countrymen, among whom, because of his strong lungs, originality, and love for music, he is at once installed as a favorite; goes two or three times a week to the opera or the play, and by successful lying, for which he has a positive genius, gets a reputation as an artist; is installed as fourth secretary of a celebrated advocate through a pretended enthusiasm for Mozart; by audacity wins a beautiful wife with a fortune; and, to complete the story, is at thirty in the Government as Minister of Fine Arts. This career M. Daudet depicts with almost cruel fidelity, and the public has not been slow to recognize the portrait. It is probable, however, that not one person, but many, have supplied the details of a picture whose outlines were unmistakably drawn from the life of the great Opportunist — Gambetta. There is an undercurrent of domestic sorrow running through the story, the tale of a beautiful and trustful wife, who finally learns of her husband's unfaithfulness, but is tied to him by the *convenances*. Few of M. Daudet's scenes are more pathetic than that in the closing chapter of *Numa Roumestan*, where the wronged woman witnesses from her window the popular rejoicings at the baptism of her child, while she murmurs sadly the old Provençal proverb, "Joy in the streets: sorrow at home." The social and political France of the Third Republic is, indeed, laid bare in this work. As a faithful representation of contemporary life it must be ranked among the author's masterpieces; and, whether dealing with the tumultuous receptions of the hero at his native town, or with the varying phases of Parisian society, from the students' café to

#### NUMA ROUMESTAN.\*

EVERY new production of M. Alphonse Daudet's pen is a delightful surprise. No page of contemporary French literature is more fascinating than that which records his triumphs. His progress as an artist has been even and strong; he has felt his way carefully; the dainty studies of country life with which he charmed the readers of less than twenty years ago have gradually given place to more elaborate works, until the author of *Le Petit Chose*, *Fromont, Rois en Exil*, and now of *Numa Roumestan*, takes his place perhaps at the head of all living writers of fiction. Not since Balzac's hand fell from the uncompleted *Comédie Humaine* has France seen M. Daudet's equal. His strength lies in the combination of what have long been regarded as conflicting or incompatible endowments. To a method that is realistic in the extreme he adds the most exquisite faculties of expression; the subtle analysis which forms the groundwork of his skill is allied with the poetry and pathos of a refined imagination. In the study of human passion his insight far surpasses that of M. Zola; he has the rich per-

\* *Numa Roumestan*. Mœurs Parisiennes. Par Alphonse Daudet. Paris: Charpentier. Boston: C. Schönhof. 3f. 50c.