

1911 Encyclopædia Britannica, Volume 15 — Karr, Jean Baptiste Alphonse



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KARR, JEAN BAPTISTE ALPHONSE (1808–1890), French critic and novelist, was born in Paris, on the 24th of November 1808, and after being educated at the Collège Bourbon, became a teacher there. In 1832 he published a novel, *Sous les tilleuls*, characterized by an attractive originality and a delightful freshness of personal sentiment. A second novel, *Une heure trop tard*, followed next year, and was succeeded by many other popular works. His *Vendredi soir* (1835) and *Le Chemin le plus court* (1836) continued the vein of autobiographical romance with which he had made his first success. *Généviève* (1838) is one of his best stories, and his *Voyage autour de mon jardin* (1845) was deservedly popular. Others were *Feu Bressier* (1848), and *Fort en thème* (1853), which had some influence in stimulating educational reform. In 1839 Alphonse Karr, who was essentially a brilliant journalist, became editor of *Le Figaro*, to which he had been a constant contributor; and he also started a monthly journal, *Les Guêpes*, of a keenly satirical tone, a publication which brought him the reputation of a somewhat bitter wit. His epigrams were frequently quoted; e.g. “plus ça change, plus c’est la même chose,” and, on the proposal to abolish capital punishment, “je veux bien que messieurs les assassins commencent.” In 1848 he founded *Le Journal*. In 1855 he went to live at Nice, where he indulged his predilections for floriculture, and gave his name to more than one new variety. Indeed he practically founded the trade in cut flowers on the Riviera. He was also devoted to fishing, and in *Les Soirées de*

Sainte-Adresse (1853) and *Au bord de la mer* (1860) he made use of his experiences. His reminiscences, *Livre de bord*, were published in 1879–1880. He died at St Raphaël (Var), on the 29th of September 1890.

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