

(Philip, a young Englishman, is staying at Heidelberg, in Germany, to complete his education. He is taking private lessons with different teachers).

The oddest of Philip's masters was his teacher of French. Monsieur Ducroz was a citizen of Geneva. He was a tall old man, with a sallow skin and hollow cheeks; his grey hair was thin and long. He wore shabby black clothes, with holes at the elbows of his coat and frayed trousers. His linen was very dirty. Philip had never seen him in a clean collar. He was a man of few words, who gave his lesson conscientiously but without enthusiasm, arriving as the clock struck and leaving on the minute. His charges were very small. He was taciturn, and what Philip learnt about him he learnt from others: it appeared that he had fought with Garibaldi against the Pope, but had left Italy in disgust when it was clear that all his efforts for freedom, by which he meant the establishment of a republic, tended to no more than an exchange of yokes; he had been expelled from Geneva for it was not known what political offences. Philip looked upon him with puzzled surprise; for he was very unlike his idea of the revolutionary: he spoke in a low voice and was extraordinarily polite; he never sat down till he was asked to; and when on rare occasions he met Philip in the street took off his hat with an elaborate gesture; he never laughed, he never even smiled.

Somerset Maugham