



Sweating Blood

Léon Bloy

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First published in French in 1893, *Sweating Blood* describes the atrocities of war in 30 tales of horror and inhumanity from the pen of the "Pilgrim of the Absolute," Léon Bloy. Writing with blood, sweat, tears and moral outrage, Bloy drew from anecdotes, news reports and his own experiences as a guerilla fighter to compose a fragmented depiction of the 1870 Franco-Prussian War, told with equal measures of hatred and pathos, and alternating between cutting detail and muted anguish. From heaps of corpses, monstrous butchers, cowardly bourgeois, bloody massacres, seas of mud, drunken desperation, frightful disfigurement, grotesque hallucinations and ghoulish means of personal revenge, a generalized portrait of suffering is revealed that ultimately requires a religious lens: for through Bloy's maniacal nationalism and frenetic Catholicism, it is a hell that emerges here, a 19th-century apocalypse that tore a country apart and set the stage for a century of atrocities that were yet to come. **Léon Bloy** (1846–1917) was born to a freethinking yet stern father and a pious Spanish–Catholic mother in southwestern France. Nourishing anti-religious sentiments in his youth, his outlook changed radically when he moved to Paris and came under the influence of Jules-Amédée Barbey d'Aurevilly. In his subsequent years of writing pamphlets, novels, essays, poetry and a multi volume diary, Bloy earned his 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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Alma Rasmussen:

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