

NOTE

HONORÉ DE BALZAC was born at Tours May 16, 1799. His father had been a barrister before the Revolution, but at the time of Honoré's birth held a post in the Commissariat. His mother was much younger than his father, and survived her son. The novelist was the eldest of a family of four, two sisters being born after him and then a younger brother.

At the age of seven he was sent to the Oratorian Grammar School at Vendôme, where he stayed for seven years, without making any reputation for himself in the ordinary school course.

Leaving Tours towards the end of 1814, the Balzacs removed to Paris, where Honoré was sent to private schools and tutors and he had 'finished his classes,' in 1816. Then he attended lectures at the Sorbonne, and, being destined by his father for the law, he went through the necessary lectures and examinations, attending the offices of an attorney and a notary for three years.

Then a notary, a friend of his father, offered to Honoré a place in his office, with a prospect of succeeding him in the business on very favourable terms. As against this, however, Balzac protested he would be a man of letters and nothing else. His protest was successful, but only in a qualified way, for although he was allowed to follow his own bent, it was in solitude and with meagre supplies that he did so. His family had left Paris at about this time, and he remained in a sparsely furnished garret with an old woman to look after him. For ten years this period of probation lasted, although he did not remain in the garret the whole of this time.

We know, in detail, very little of him during this period. There are a good many of his letters during the first three years (1819-22) to his elder sister, Laure, who was his first confidante, and later his only authoritative biographer. Between 1822 and 1829, when he first made his mark, there are very few of his letters. What concerns us most is that in these ten years he wrote very numerous novels, though only ten of them were ever reprinted in the *Comédie*

Humaine, and these all omitted by him in his later arrangements of that stupendous series. He gained little by his writings during these years except experience, though he speaks of receiving sums of sixty, eighty, and one hundred pounds for some of them. One other thing, however, he learnt, which lasted him his life, but never did him the least good; this was the love of speculation. Amongst other businesses by which he thought to make money was that of publishing, and afterwards printing and typefounding.

It was with *Les Chouans* that Balzac made his first distinct success, and in the three years following 1829, besides doing much journalistic and other literary work, he published the following: *La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote*, the *Peau de Chagrin*, most of the short *Contes Philosophiques*, and many other stories, chiefly included in the *Scènes de la Vie Privée*. It cannot be said that he ever mixed much in society; it was impossible that he should do so, considering the vast amount of work he did and the manner in which he did it. His practice was to dine lightly about five or six; next to go to bed, and sleep till eleven, twelve, or one; and then get up, and with the help only of enormous quantities of very strong coffee, to work for indefinite stretches of time into the morning or afternoon of the next day, often for sixteen hours at a time. The first draft of his work never presented it in anything like fulness, sometimes not amounting to more than a quarter of its final bulk, then, upon 'slip' proof with broad margins, he would almost rewrite it, making excisions, alterations, and, most of all, additions.

There is really very little biographical detail to be stated. On the 14th March 1850 he was married at Vierzschovnia, in the Ukraine, to Madame Hanska, born Countess Rzewuska, for whom he had waited nearly, if not quite fourteen years, and returned to Paris at the end of May, dying in his house, in the Rue Fortunée, on the 18th August the same year.

The present volume is a reprint of the translation made by Miss Ellen Marriage for the edition of the *Comédie Humaine*, in 40 uniform volumes, edited, with a general introduction, by Professor Saintsbury. This edition contains all that is most significant of Balzac's work, and the following is a list, as arranged by the author, of its component novels and stories:—

Scènes de la Vie Privée.

- AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT AND RACKET**, Etc. (La Maison du Chat-qui-pelote. Le Bal de Sceaux. La Bourse. La Vendetta. Mme. Firmiani).
LA GRANDE BRETÊCHE, Etc. (La Grande Bretèche. La Paix du Ménage. La Fausse Maîtresse. Étude de femme. Autre étude de femme. Albert Savarus). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.
A DAUGHTER OF EVE (Une Fille d'Ève. Mémoires de deux Jeunes Mariées). Translated by Mrs. R. S. Scott.
A WOMAN OF THIRTY, Etc. (La Femme de Trente Ans. La Femme abandonnée. La Grenadière. Le Message. Gobseck). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.
A MARRIAGE SETTLEMENT (Le Contrat de Mariage. Un Début dans la Vie. Une Double Famille).
MODESTE MIGNON (Modeste Mignon). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.
BLATRIX (Béatrix). Translated by James Waring.
THE ATHEIST'S MASS, Etc. (La Messe de l'Athée. Honorine. Le Colonel Chabert. L'Interdiction. Pierre Grassou). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.

Scènes de la Vie de Province.

- URSULE MIROUËT** (Ursule Mirouët). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.
EUGÉNIE GRANDET (Eugénie Grandet). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.
PIERRETTE AND THE ABBÉ BIROTTEAU (Les Célibataires—I. Pierrette. Le Curé de Tours). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.
A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMENT (Les Célibataires—II. Un Ménage de garçon). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.
PARISIANS IN THE COUNTRY (Les Parisiens en Province. L'illustre Gaudissart. La Muse du département).
THE JEALOUSIES OF A COUNTRY TOWN (Les Rivalités. La Vieille Fille. Le Cabinet des Antiques).
THE LILY OF THE VALLEY (Le Lys dans la Vallée). Translated by James Waring.
LOST ILLUSIONS (Illusions Perdues—I. Les Deux Poètes. Ève et David). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.
A DISTINGUISHED PROVINCIAL AT PARIS (Illusions Perdues—II. Un grand Homme de province à Paris. 1 and 2). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

Scènes de la Vie Parisienne.

- A HARLOT'S PROGRESS**. 2 vols. (Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes). Translated by James Waring.
THE UNCONSCIOUS MUMMERS, Etc. (Les Comédiens sans le savoir. Un Prince de la Bohême. Un Homme d'affaires. Gaudissart II. La Maison Nucingen. Factice). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.
THE THIRTEEN (Histoire des Treize. Ferragus. La Duchesse de Langrais).
OLD GORIOT (Le Père Goriot). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

THE RISE AND FALL OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU (Grandeur et Décadence de César Birotteau). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

A PRINCESS'S SECRETS (Les Secrets de la Princesse de Cadignan. Les Employés).

COUSIN BETTY (Les Parents Pauvres—I. La Cousine Bette). Translated by James Waring.

COUSIN PONS (Les Parents Pauvres—II. Le Cousin Pons). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

Scènes de la Vie Politique.

A GONDREVILLE MYSTERY (Une Ténébreuse Affaire. Un Episode sous la Terreur).

THE SEAMY SIDE OF HISTORY (L'Envers de l'Histoire Contemporaine. Z. Marcas). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.

THE MEMBER FOR ARCIS (Le Député d'Arcis).

Scènes de la Vie Militaire.

THE CHOUANS (Les Chouans). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

Scènes de la Vie de Campagne.

THE COUNTRY DOCTOR (Le Médecin de Campagne). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

THE COUNTRY PARSON (Le Curé de Village). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

THE PEASANTRY (Les Paysans). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

Études Philosophiques.

✓ **THE WILD ASS'S SKIN**. (La Peau de Chagrin). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

THE QUEST OF THE ABSOLUTE (La Recherche de l'Absolu). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

A FATHER'S CURSE (L'Enfant Maudit. Gambara. Massimilla Doni. Maître Cornélius).

THE UNKNOWN MASTERPIECE, Etc. (Le Chef-d'œuvre inconnu. Jésus-Christ en Flandre. Melmoth réconcilié. Les Marana. Adieu. Le Réquisitionnaire. El Verdugo. Un Drame au bord de la mer. L'Auberge rouge. L'Elixir de longue vie). Translated by Miss Ellen Marriage.

ABOUT CATHERINE DE' MÉDICIS (Sur Catherine de Médicis). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.

SERAPHITA (Seraphita. Louis Lambert. Les Proscrits). Translated by Mrs. Clara Bell.

THE MIDDLE CLASSES (Les Petits Bourgeois)