

SOME NEW BOOKS.

A Life of Balzac.

When M. Brunetiere, firmly planted upon his lofty perch of impersonal and abstract criticism, somewhat disdainfully refused to admit that acquaintance with a celebrated man's biography has necessarily any value he showed excellent judgment in selecting his illustrative example. "What do we know of the life of Shakespeare," he says, "or of Cervantes, or of Goethe, or of Dickens, or of any other writer who has been better known to us than to be believed and will be seriously asserted that our admiration for one or the other play would be augmented?" But he applied the test in a wholly arbitrary manner to a perfectly incongruous case, that of Balzac, and evaded himself for not undertaking to write a life of his distinguished fellow countryman, though he did write a study of him. As Mr. FREDERICK LAWTON remarks in his preface to his Balzac (Doubleday, Ltd., London): "We are told that the life of Balzac is a study of the writer's life had comparatively little to do with his work, and yet we should be glad to learn more of this life. The case of Balzac was so different that his novels are literally his life, and his life is quite as full as his books of all that makes the good novel at once profitable and agreeable to read. In the belief that a person who is acquainted with the strangely checked career of the author of the 'Comedie Humaine' is in a better position to understand and appreciate the different parts which constitute it, Mr. Lawton has put into sequence and shape the information gathered about him, inserting such extracts from his novels as their relative importance requires. Balzac, pronounced Balzac to be, with Shakespeare and St. Simon, the greatest storehouse of documents we possess concerning human nature. If it is true, as Mr. Lawton suggests, that the steady rise of Balzac's reputation during the last fifty years has been in some degree owing to the patient investigations which he here utilizes, he may justly claim to have rendered the memory of his hero a great service. But while conceding the value of the service he has done to the English reading public by this well-balanced biography, his keen comparison of dates and facts, its shrewd interpretation of character, its frankness and justness of criticism which seems almost hostile at times, until the picture is complete we prefer to attribute the great Frenchman's increasing fame to the intrinsic quality of his work, to the more cultivated taste of the public and to causes which our author sets forth in his summing up, which will be noted in their proper place.

Mr. Lawton begins his chronicle by giving us a vivid picture of those conditions which Balzac was destined to depict from many sides. He compares the condition of French society in the first half of the nineteenth century (covered by Balzac) as similar to that of a people endeavoring to recover themselves after an earthquake. Gradually portions of the ancient system of things were joined—cobbed on, one might call it—to the larger modern creation; but the two parts did not work very well together. The new social order, the new politics, the new and the old, the washer-woman, became a duchess, was all at ease in the imperial drawing room, while those who had amassed wealth rapidly in trade were equally uncomfortable amid the vulgar luxury with which they surrounded themselves. When the First Empire fell the ancient aristocracy was definitely disorganized; but one feature of the revolutionary era was revived in the aristocratic feminine salons, once renowned for their wit, good taste and conversation, which had dwindled to two or three under Napoleon. Material prosperity furnished a more leisurely pursuit for literature, and King Louis XVIII. himself was a professor of literature. When the second revolution placed upon the throne the bourgeois Louis Philippe, the bourgeois class came to the front, proudly conscious of its rising and an entire literature was destined to be devoted to them, an entire art to depict or satirize their manners. The eighteen years of the July Monarchy, which were those of Balzac's mature activity, contrasted sharply with these; it is immediately preceded them it was a more unbridled and violently popular conditions that he dealt with. Balzac's novels had a literary reputation that might be considered great. Up to the epoch of the Restoration the novel had been declared to be an inferior species of literature, and no author had dared to publish his claims to fame on this score. No novel since 1835 had ever been elected to the French Academy on account of its stories. Jules Sandeau was the first to break the tradition by his entrance among the immortals in 1859, to be followed in 1862 by Octave Feuillet.

During his school days and his youth Balzac naturally read the works of the novelists and dramatists, which were appearing and winning favor, though the translated French novel had also read the translated works of contemporaries on the other side of the Channel—Mrs. Anne Radcliffe, Monk Lewis, Maturin, the writings of Edwin Stowland's famous "Charlotte de Parme," he considered inferior to the works of Monk Lewis, and to Maturin he assigned a place beside Moliere and Goethe as one of the greatest geniuses of Europe. Fielding, Smollett, Goldsmith, Sterne, Walter Scott and Fenimore Cooper were his delight; but Richardson he read only after his own talent was formed, and he highly esteemed "Pamela Harlowe," though he pronounced "Pamela" and "Sir Charles Grandison" as "horrible." One critic is of opinion that Balzac's long-undiscovered passion, due to Richardson, who was used to read him by his defects no less than by his excellences. These models afforded him a clearer perception of the worth of the Romantic movement. Together with its extravagances and lyrical Romantic literature deliberately put into practice some important principles which had already unconsciously illustrated or dimly taught. It imposed Didot's doctrine that the writer should be a natural character, and its chief models, Victor Hugo, with the examples of Ariosto, Cervantes, Rabelais and Shakespeare to back him, proved that what was in nature was or should be also in art, yet without, for that, seeking to free art from law and the necessity for choice. This spectacle of a vast field to exploit, this possibility of artistically representing the common familiar things of the world in their most significant, seized on the youthful mind of a man who was to create the "Comedie Humaine." It formed the content of his first question: "What is the horizon of literature? It limited the horizon of literature."

in spite of his aristocratic name he was not of noble birth. He only added the noble name "de" in 1830. Indeed the father, whether at his own initiative or his son's, was the first to employ the "de," and the father is shown by the registers to have been the son of Bernard Thomas Balzac, "laboureur," or peasant farmer, in the province of Languedoc. The elder Balzac not only changed his name from Balzac but acquired education and position and became a lawyer. He was attached to the War Office when in 1797 he married the daughter of one of his hierarchic chiefs, the director of the Paris Hospitals, Laure Sallambier, thirty-two years his junior. He was a man out of the common and united in himself the Roman, the Gaul and the Goth, with their corresponding attributes, boldness, patience and health. He had notions on hygiene and wrote numerous pamphlets on philanthropic and scientific questions which are important because large traces of his influence are found in his son's books. The mother was a woman of remarkable vivacity of mind, great imagination (which she bequeathed to her son, declares the latter), and being exceedingly sensitive, with a bias to mysticism, she possessed a living sense of hearing of such doctrines which were read by her son and afterward utilized by him in his fiction.

From the age of 8 to that of 14 the young Honoré was interrupted at a school at Vendôme. "Louis Lambert" is a slice of autobiography, attempting also a portrait of the novelist psychologically as well as outwardly during these years; and all allowances being made for the author's large vanity, there remains a considerable substratum of truth in the record. At a very early age he tried his hand on verse, which proved doggerel, after having improvised plays in the nursery, and in his tender years he began a metaphysical composition entitled "Treatise of the Will," which was confiscated by one of the fathers and never restored. The shock threw him into a sort of coma which the good fathers, engrossed by training their charges' souls to the neglect of the bodies, failed to attribute to brain fatigue. Alarmed, they counselled the removal of the thin, sickly looking lad, who was suffering from intolerably bad physical conditions and lack of medical care as well as from a nervous, excitable nervous system. He was so convinced that he would become famous in the future and so naively frank in asserting it that he underwent much bantering in the family circle. "Hail to the great Balzac," the father called out, "and intended to stamp the name on the child's forehead, but when he uttered remarks beyond his years was, 'You certainly don't know what you are talking about.'"

When the lad was 15 his father removed to Paris, being placed at the head of the commissariat of the First Military Department. In the school where Honoré was then placed he proved an indifferent scholar, as in former schools; but he was growing interested in literature and making experiments in it. When he was 17 his father, seeing that there was no chance of his getting into the Ecole Polytechnique for which all along he had destined him, decided to put him into the legal profession, and induced a solicitor friend to take him into his office in the place of a clerk. He was there for a year, but the young dramatist, who had just quitted the law for literature. Here he passed eighteen months, attending lectures at the Sorbonne and being coached also by private tutors; and another like period in the office of a notary completed his law apprenticeship. It is probable that for a while at least during these years of legal training Balzac had serious thoughts of adopting the law as his career. Eventually he utilized the knowledge of chicanery which he gained in "Colonel Chabert" and his general information on the subject in several other books, notably in "Le Contrat" and "Le Mariage Civil." But when an opportunity presented itself for him to become a junior partner in a solicitor's practice he told his father that he had determined to become a man of letters, and trust to his pen for a living. The father's astonishment was unbounded, the opinion of friends was adverse, but after a good deal of lively discussion the parents agreed to let Honoré make a two years' experiment as a free lance in the ranks of the book writing tribe, firmly believing that he would be glad enough to play the part of the prodigal son at the end of that time, return home and embark in some safe trade.

For portions of economy the family resorted to Villers-Cotteret, six leagues from the capital. In Honoré's mind of insistence obtained permission to remain in Paris, where he would be more free to work and could more easily get into relations with publishers. In the introduction to "Eugenie Grandet," written fifteen years later, he describes some features of his life in the garret which was hired for him and whence he emerged to make his observations of human nature, even dogging people to their homes and registering their joys and sorrows of interests. His first effort to produce a masterpiece took the form of drama, to which he frequently resorted in later life. But he had not the talent of condensation requisite for the stage, and dramatizations of his genuinely dramatic novels made by other persons were far more successful than his own experiments. One of these primitive attempts was a tragedy, "Cromwell," written in verse, a form of literary composition foreign to his talent, and is worth mentioning because his comments on it to his sister show that he was early an adept in blowing his own trumpet, a character which he proved a very valuable point of attack for his critics throughout his career. He calls the plan "superb"; he mentions that a certain incident of the altered English history ruthlessly was "most happily invented" and that another was "finer than that of Augustus pardoning Cinna." But when he triumphantly invited a company of friends to listen to his completed tragedy at the house of his parents all hearers were appalled at its crudity, and his parents made it a condition of his continuing the profession of literature that he should live at home. This was advantageous in several ways, notably in that it kept him from being cut off from his self-imposed privacy during the fifteen months in his garret.

In later life he complained much to some of his friends, among others to Madame Hanska, of his parents' or rather of his mother's hardness to him during that garret period and asserted that if more liberality had then been displayed most of his subsequent misfortunes would have been averted. As our author justly remarks, this is by no means certain. His troubles and burdens would seem to have been caused far more by mistakes of judgment and imprudence than by any stress of circumstance. We may sum up at this point the evidence set forth through the volume and remark that one of the unlovely points in the novelist's character was his ingratitude to those who had shown him kindness

or rendered him services. Worst of all was his maligning of his mother, who, albeit of a taciturn and outwardly un-democratic nature, came to his assistance repeatedly with money, finally stripping herself and reducing herself to the necessity of accepting from her son a small pension, which was never regularly paid, though he never hesitated to acknowledge that she was in distress, though to purchase costly work of art and antiques or to fit up in the most fantastic and expensive manner the various abodes which his craving for change or a desire to escape his creditors induced him to acquire. In a letter to his sister of early date he alludes to his mother's worrying, susceptible disposition and adds: "We are oddities, forsooth, in our blessed family. What a pity I cannot put us into novels"; but he did precisely that later on. Before he came into his own, however, he published in partnership with others a lot of cheap, coarse work, a sort of second hand hash-up of material already published, imitations of Anne Radcliffe and others, by which he earned more or less, though his family were anxious to see him independent though they did not oblige him to depend upon his earnings.

His sole confidant at this period, Mme. de Berny, who understood him better than his own family, was a second mother to him, and more, and attracted by him in spite of his conceit, loudness and vulgarity, polished his manners, guided his pretentiousness, corrected his perceptions, came to his assistance financially and encouraged him with the strength and sincerity of her affection, was destined to endure from him the same disloyalty, ingratitude and misrepresentation as his parents. He exploited all the women who came in contact with him. When he was twenty-two years his senior, Mme. de Berny, through her maternal love and that of her mother who was brought into contact with the old court society and grandees which was his delight; and later on through their agency he was introduced to the fallen dynasty, the Duke de Fitz-James and the Duchesse de Castries. Through an acquaintance of Mme. de Berny also he hit upon the idea (1825) of abandoning authorship for the publishing business. As he had no business capacity this venture, like succeeding ones, promptly failed and left him involved in debts. Into these ventures our author enters in considerable detail, since a great deal of them financially harried life and all of them furnished him with material later on. We will confine ourselves in passing to the remark that the man who most substantially aided him during these years of struggle, publishing his writings and adoring him into the bargain, Werlet, was made to taste of his ingratitude like the rest but has left some valuable and magnanimous memoirs of him nevertheless.

III.

In 1829 Balzac published under his own name a historical novel "The Chouans," which, though not badly written, furnished with plenty of incident and very fair characterization, especially of the minor characters and local coloring imitated from Walter Scott, made no great impression. But he was now on the point of scoring a success. In the same year he published his "Physiology of Marriage," a book of satire and caricature having a keen sting of his mature manner. The book immediately became popular and resulted in his engagement to contribute light articles to various journals. Among the numerous pieces produced within the next two years his "Shagreen Skin" added most to his notoriety; and it was in a letter to the Duchesse de Castries, who flattered and flirted with him for years, connected with it that he first spoke of his desire to develop his fiction into a vast series of volumes destined to make known to posterity the life of his country. Probably a phrase contained in his amazing and amusing puff, written to advertise the 1822 edition of his "Physiologie des Femmes," would adequately represent his view of the century and of his entire "Comedie Humaine." "The 'Physiologie des Femmes,'" he says, "are the red hot interpretation of a civilization ruined by debauch and well being, which Monsieur de Balzac exposes in the pillory."

All of Balzac's thinking was done on a vast scale and if he dreamed of a century embracing novelistic encyclopaedia it was not because he deliberately preferred literature to all other callings but because all others had deceived his expectations in the matter of procuring him unlimited wealth. For first, last and all the time the most powerful magnets for his thoughts and ambitions were wealth and fame, the fame as a means to the wealth. In these early days of his popularity he had a will of iron, and he was not to be deterred until he had attained his goal, namely the idea that he would adorn a seat in the Chamber of Deputies, that the loftiest rewards of political and administrative life, the House of Peers, the Presidency of the Republic, were not only within his powers but his just due. This is not surprising when we reflect that all his life long he habitually exaggerated his earnings and understated his debts, while his estimate of his own genius and gifts of fascination literally knew no bounds. As to the latter we must concede that the list of his conquests is amazing in view of his personal appearance and habits, badly dressed, unshaven, bald, with his big mouthful of bad teeth and irregular features redeemed only by his remarkable brow and his wonderful eyes, soft yet full of fire. His stupendous egotism, to which he sacrificed his mother and every one else, seems not to have been a serious obstacle. Most women appear to have surrendered, with the exception of the Duchesse de Castries and Georges Sand. Mme. de Berny and later on (beginning with the appearance of "Louis Lambert") Mme. de Hanska administered severe lessons in the form of criticism of his work, but nothing could cure him of his author's vanity on the strength of his success. He sketched out a plan of establishing a grocery's shop with his name in gilt letters over it and creating such a scandal by serving at the counter that he would take in five hundred thousand francs in one month.

The old part of his ever varying, multitudinous plans for securing the wealth which constituted his heart's desire was that many of his suggestions were eminently practical and would have brought him several fortunes had he quietly exploited them himself on practical lines. As it was the people who heard him discuss them not infrequently took them up, acted on them and reaped a rich harvest. We may remark that in this respect he appears to have resembled Goethe, whose talents were not confined to literary vision. As an instance we may mention that he had a scheme for making paper by an improved process which he tried to realize in 1833, that anticipated the employment of esparto grass and wood. From one of his conceptions, however, at least, there is

such an important benefit to the entire literary profession: he revived Beaumarchais's proposal to establish a society of authors, whose aim should be to protect the rights of men of letters, should it with others tend to improve the material and style of printing books, after long loss of time on the part of editors, publishers and the indifference of many authors the Société des Auteurs de Lettres was founded in 1835.

IV.

The year 1833 was a fateful year for Balzac. He published "Eugenie Grandet" among other works, and although from friends and enemies alike flowed in for the book on the whole exhibits the novelist at his best. His own opinion of it was not in accord, and it even annoyed him at last to hear his name invariably mentioned in connection with this single novel. He accused those who called him "the father of Eugenie Grandet" with seeking to belittle him and deliberately forbearing to cite his "great" novels. Notwithstanding this, he seems by this time to have entered fully into the spirit of his vast scheme of novels, talked incessantly of his characters as living persons, outlining their future careers; and when Jules Sandeau, returning once from a journey, spoke to him of his sister's illness, Balzac listened to him eagerly for a while and then interrupted him: "All that is very well," he said to the astonished Jules, "but let us come back to reality; let us speak of Eugenie Grandet." But the book was connected with another vitally important phase of his life: during its composition he had fallen perhaps for the first time in his existence sincerely in love with the woman he ultimately married, so to speak, with "The Stranger."

Through his publisher he received a letter of admiration and just criticism from a woman who signed herself "The Stranger" and who he recognized as Mme. Hanska, more than a year later at the Countess Evelina Hanska, the wife of a Polish nobleman living at Wierchownia in the Ukraine. She felt it understood that she was young, handsome, immensely rich and not overhappily with her husband, who was twenty-five years her senior. That her description of herself was truthful Balzac discovered when, eager to meet the author who had so well depicted her sex, the lady contrived a journey to Switzerland with her husband and little daughter and notified him to meet them at Neuchâtel, a beautiful town on the lake of Geneva, and address her. It is evident, as Mr. Lawton says, that during this meeting, in which the husband never left the side of his young and lovely wife, some sort of understanding must have been reached based on the rather unkind anticipation of Count Hanska's death. At that time the gentleman's health was precarious, but he was so disinclined as to survive until 1841, all the while more or less cognizant of his wife's attachment and offering no opposition. He even deigned himself honored by Balzac's friendship, and the novelist repeatedly joined the family party for visits during his period of waiting.

After February, 1834, a regular correspondence existed between Balzac and his divinity. The project of marriage, more tentatively pursued by Balzac than by his Eve, was yet no hindrance to his fleeting fancies for other women. He utilized these interim amours in his novels, while taking a good deal of trouble to establish among circles outside his own immediate entourage the legend of his being a sort of Sir Galahad who cared only for his literary labors. To his sister he confessed the reverse, and Mme. de Berny was not among the envious ones and did not neglect the benefit of the wealthy Polish Countess, that the wealth played an important rôle in this romance of the heart the sequel indubitably proved—but rumors and at times precise information reached Mme. Hanska, and at one time, despite Balzac's fervent assertions and plausible explanations, a breach occurred between them in consequence which was nearly fatal. As Mr. Lawton pithily sums up the situation: "He drew largely on his capacities, material and moral, of the Marthas and Marias that crossed his orbit. Apparently, however, the final catalyst was Balzac's need in inspiring Mme. Hanska with a faith in him as implicit as that which he cherished in himself and expressed by an inscription on a little slip of paper which he attached to the sword sheath of a plaster statuette of Napoleon I kept in his study. 'What he could not achieve with the sword I will accomplish with the pen.'"

His faculty of imagination kept pace with his self-conceit. He had a habit of stating as accomplished facts things which existed only in his own intention. One day at Mme. de Berny's, he presented for half an hour on the qualities and points of a horse which he had presented to Jules Sandeau, and his audience believed him. A few evenings later Jules Sandeau met Balzac at the same house, and the subject was mentioned by their mutual friends. The novelist inquired whether Sandeau liked the horse; and the latter, not to be outdone, answered with an enumeration of the animal's qualities. But he never saw the horse for all that. Again, at a dinner given in his honor by Henry de Latouche the host sketched the plan of a novel he intended to write, and Balzac, flushed with champagne, warmly applauded the firmness he reproduced the narration introduced it with his peculiar powers of fire and description—as his own, firmly persuaded that it was his own. But Latouche heard of it and wrote him such a sharp letter of protest that for once the recipient was forced to distinguish between fact and fiction, between what was his own and what was another's in the output of ideas. While he fiercely inveighed against the habit of publishers to exploit the author's brains, meaning his own, his own idea of the ideal to be attained, had he possessed the artistic cultivation and the sense of the value of his own masterpiece any more than for "Eugenie Grandet." Another unknown female admirer, who signed herself "Louise" and wrote in English, sent him letters for a time. But she remained incognito and dropped the correspondence before Mme. Hanska, who was capable of jealousy, it appears, found out about it. "Like the Orientals," Mr. Lawton says, "he showed himself capable of nourishing sentiments of devotion toward as many beautiful and fortunate women as showed themselves amenable"; but he doubts whether the novelist ever really experienced any genuine emotion of love. Balzac's later letters to Mme. Hanska read with a bizarre mixture of flattered vanity, artistic appreciation of beauty and cold calculation; and his eternal whining about financial embarrassments ultimately wore out their recipient, who told him a number of plain truths, not for the first time in their acquaintance. Certainly he always found

to pass as his, though only the last act to come from his pen.

From the day Balzac left Neuchâtel until he arrived for a visit at Wierchownia in 1838 he furnished Mme. Hanska in a practically uninterrupted and frequent series of letters with a faithful chronicle of his existence—omitting the love episodes which constitutes an almost complete autobiography. When the end of this correspondence shall have been given to the public three volumes at least will have been taken up with the record. Certainly, as our author observes, some great force, whether of love alone, as Balzac protested, or love mixed with gratified pride, or both joined to the hope of enjoying the vast fortune that looked through the mist of the far off Ukraine, must have prompted these astonishing "Letters to a stranger," which overtook his time and strength and made him encroach unduly on his already too short hours of sleep. At the beginning of the correspondence the letters are filled with passion and an assumption of a betrothal to the lady which was not calculated to please the husband should they fall into his hands. This is precisely what did happen before very long, and the Count took umbrage. Even Mme. Hanska was offended, or pretended to be. A humble apology was sent to the Count, and happily for Balzac his interpretation of the letters was a joke was accepted. The Count, as Balzac expressed it, suffered from chronic blue devils, and realizing this he made a point of ingratiating himself in that quarter thereafter. He proceeded to write "Seraphita," inspired by Mme. Hanska and dedicated to her, and at the same time "Père Goriot" and other works. Also, with a view to a more rapid acquisition of name and fame, he entered into a literary partnership with Jules Sandeau and Emmanuel Arago for the manufacture of plays; but the plays were not successful.

Sandeau, who was not elected to the Academy (for which Balzac longed in vain) until nearly the end of the decade in which Balzac died, looked upon him as his protégé and owed him because of his precarious position and the despair which caused him to attempt suicide because of Georges Sand's desertion. "The Search for the Absolute," also written at this time, is one of the author's best works, ranking with "Eugenie Grandet." His publisher-biographer, Werlet, tells us how Balzac was in the habit of revising and modifying his proofs a dozen times. The original manuscript as sent to the printers was a mere sketch, and the sketch was a sort of Chinese puzzle done with a crow quill, largely composed of scratched out and interpolated sentences, with passages and chapters shifted about most intricately. After the typesetters had arranged all this as best they might and Balzac had a set of proofs in hand, a sketch of composition began. A sketch was made in comparison with the result with which the printers had to contend, and in the process where his books were set up the employees would never work more than one hour at his manuscript. Naturally his indemities were very large and trouble ensued. His methods of work corresponded in eccentricity. He would toil for weeks together eighteen or twenty hours a day, seeing no one, reading no letters, stimulating himself with coffee until the inspiration failed, but eating sparingly. He made up for his abstinence on emerging by such repasts as the following consumed one Sunday in 1834 at Vèry's, the most aristocratic and expensive restaurant in Paris: a hundred oysters, twelve chops, a young duck, a pair of roast turkeys, a sole, hors d'oeuvres, fruit more than a dozen pears, choice wines, coffee, liquors.

From start to finish of his career he was always deeply in debt but could never resist the temptation to surround himself with gorgeousness and luxury, even when most hotly pursued by creditors. Thus at one time in 1834 he had two apartments, in one of which he passed under the name of Mme. Brunet to evade his creditors; and the remarkable furnishings of this retreat he has described in "The Girl With the Golden Eyes." As for his general philosophy of life, "Seraphita" was his "pocket Catholicism," says our author. Weird and mystical as it is, yet he anticipated not a little the science of the present day, but with the true and the false mixed up through the exuberance of his fancy. A visit he paid to Vienna to see Mme. Hanska brought him into acquaintance with aristocratic society through her, and he returned home convinced that his proper place was the Secretaryship of Foreign Affairs. He became more extravagant than ever, employed two secretaries, the Count de Bolly and the Count de Grammont, Sandeau being no longer grand enough for the post. As matter of fact Sandeau was tired of playing second fiddle forever and writing tragedies or comedies for which Balzac received all the credit. Occasionally, despite all precautions, his creditors caught him; occasionally he was hauled into court by lawsuits over his writings, as to the disposition of which he was not scrupulous to follow his contracts. One of these suits, over the "Lily in the Valley," afforded his opponent such opportunity for scathing criticism of his literary style to the delight of the audience and the press that he overhauled the parts of the book which had been so severely handled. At last after a definitive crash in his affairs he syndicated his output, and the excessive amounts contracted for, exercised a deleterious influence on its quality. The real derogation, however, in his becoming a feuilletonist consisted in his slipping into the manner and adopting the artifices which he had so unsparingly condemned in Eugène Sue and Alexandre Dumas.

About this time, tempted by an offer of 20,000 francs if he would deliver the book by a certain date, he wrote "César Bروتeau" in three weeks. He had long carried the subject in his mind, however; but because of the scathing criticism probably he did not seem to have cared much for the masterpiece any more than for "Eugenie Grandet." Another unknown female admirer, who signed herself "Louise" and wrote in English, sent him letters for a time. But she remained incognito and dropped the correspondence before Mme. Hanska, who was capable of jealousy, it appears, found out about it. "Like the Orientals," Mr. Lawton says, "he showed himself capable of nourishing sentiments of devotion toward as many beautiful and fortunate women as showed themselves amenable"; but he doubts whether the novelist ever really experienced any genuine emotion of love. Balzac's later letters to Mme. Hanska read with a bizarre mixture of flattered vanity, artistic appreciation of beauty and cold calculation; and his eternal whining about financial embarrassments ultimately wore out their recipient, who told him a number of plain truths, not for the first time in their acquaintance. Certainly he always found

V.

The title of the novelist's great series, "The Comedie Humaine," was suggested, it is thought, by one of his secretaries, Count de Bolly. What he has been rendered in it is the struggle for life on the social ladder, and that which forms its most legitimate claim to be deemed in general reference to this in all the so-called sections. Before the Revolution the action of the law was narrower, being chiefly limited to members of one class. After it the sphere of competition was thrown open to the entire nation, and there was an interpenetration of combatants from all classes all over the field of battle, or rather the several smaller fields of battle became one large arena. Balzac's fiction "reproduces the later phase in the most minute detail and mostly with treatment suited to the subject. As a stylist he is very uneven, though his opinion of himself in this respect was high; and of the French language he said that he had enriched it by the use of a few words, but that he was not clear that he added anything to the original stock of words; these he exuberantly coined not having found favor. But, as Sainte-Beuve said of him,

the means to make expensive and prolonged trips at brief intervals to Italy and Sardinia among the rest. Assuredly the gratification to her vanity of having a prominent author on her list must have counted for very much in Mme. Hanska's continued friendship, for her good, strong common sense repeatedly protested against every phase of his character and procedure.

Thus his career ran on; fine work was marred with diffuseness and obscurity, too much frankly bad work prevailed. As to the obscurity we recall an explanation vouchsafed by Balzac himself. An artist who was reading one of his works for the purpose of illustrating it appealed to the author for an explanation of a blind passage. Balzac read it, reflected, admitted that he could not define the meaning and added that a writer was compelled to toss the subject of a thing to his reader at brief intervals; other writers would think they knew as much as he did and lose their respect for him. But the critics were outspoken, and Balzac by 1842 became possessed of an idea that he was the object of deliberate persecution. He meditated removing to St. Petersburg and becoming naturalized there, oddly enough imagining that this would be construed as a proof of devotion by Mme. Hanska, who was a thorough Pole and anti-Russian. Meanwhile Count Hanska died and the only insuperable object to the coveted marriage appeared to be removed. But Mme. Hanska, to Balzac's dismay, insisted that her daughter, still in her early teens, would require all her attention for several years to come and that the affairs of her inheritance would demand at least so much time. In vain did Balzac appeal to her, frantically and otherwise, describing how he rolled unceasingly, creating, always creating, with strength exhausted. God only created during six days, he said, while he—she was allowed to enter the rest. But he wrote her elaborate calculations of the sums which their establishment and housekeeping would necessarily cost for the proper scale in Paris. He even went to St. Petersburg in the spring of 1843 to persuade his Eve (who was staying there) to fix the date for the marriage, and after this visit, futile though it was in that particular respect, the familiar "you" crept into her formal "you" in his letters to her.

His mother and sister were not favorably to this aristocratic alliance, being gifted with clearer vision apparently. But Balzac hunted up a house, ordered alterations, bought art objects and antique furniture and in general tried to hasten the appointment of a date. In 1847 Mme. Hanska made her second incognito trip to Paris, this time to inspect the house and give orders, and it was intended that he should escort her back to Wierchownia; but something of importance happened, just what is not known. Balzac burned all letters from his Eve for a certain period, and large gaps exist in the published correspondence for 1847. One authority on the novelist asserts that a violent quarrel ensued on Mme. Hanska's discovering one out of many of her lover's liaisons and mentions that this harassment was largely responsible for the rapid progress of the heart disease that finally killed him. Incidentally it may be noted that his efforts to enter the Academy had failed. The quarrel was made up in some way, and in 1848, finding that the political disturbances had been prejudicial both to his invested capital and to his income accruing from work, he set off in September for Wierchownia, determined to return, like a Spartan, either on his shield or under it. It came near being the latter. He was ill with low bronchitis, and Mme. Hanska expressed her regret at having put so much money into the Paris house which they were not likely to inhabit; things went wrong with her estate, the Emperor would not consent to the marriage unless she transferred her landed property to her daughter's husband, and a scolding letter from Balzac's mother accusing him of remissness toward his family, which was accidentally read by his Eve, came near putting the finishing touch to affairs.

He remained at Wierchownia nevertheless for more than a year, suffering a second illness described as intermittent brain fever among other experiences. It became evident that he must leave the harsh climate, and at last, in March, 1850, Mme. Hanska married him. The pair reached Paris at the end of May, arrived at their house only to find themselves locked out and the feast dinner and the furniture wrecked by a valet who had suddenly gone mad, so that they were forced to break in. This inauspicious beginning was followed by a total breach between the pair. It seems strange that they could have known each other for years and could so recently have lived for eighteen months under the same roof without discovering that their peculiarities of character and temperament clashed tolerably. Moreover, there were disagreeable revelations on both sides; the husband learned that his wife's available income was very much inferior to what he had supposed or been led to believe, and the wife learned that her husband's debts, far from being paid, as he asserted, subsisted and were more numerous and larger than he had ever admitted. So instead of coming to Paris to be the queen of a literary circle the "Stranger" saw herself involved in liabilities that threatened to swallow up her fortune if she lent her succor. Reproaches and disputes ensued. At the end of a month his heart disease began to undermine him rapidly, and he died on the 18th of August. His wife seems not to have been greatly interested or concerned in his illness or death, but she did assume his liabilities (which she was not bound to do) and eventually discharged them all, even allowing his mother a pension of 3,000 francs until the old lady died.

It should be a curious problem for modern Mohammedan authorities to decide upon to which period they would refer to the Arabs made a distinction in treating of the non-Islamic world between those peoples who had a scripture and those who had not. Among the former he included the Jews, the Christians, and strangely enough, the Sabseans, whose holy writings have since disappeared.

The American Hebrew.

Mohammed in his capacity as legislator for the Arabs made a distinction in treating of the non-Islamic world between those peoples who had a scripture and those who had not. Among the former he included the Jews, the Christians, and strangely enough, the Sabseans, whose holy writings have since disappeared.

A Woman City Treasurer.

The question of permanently filling the vacancy created in the office of City Treasurer by the death of the late Mayor of Santa Monica correspondence Los Angeles Times.

The question of permanently filling the vacancy created in the office of City Treasurer by the death of the late Mayor of Santa Monica correspondence Los Angeles Times.

Nell Gwynne's Secret Door.

Nell Gwynne's Secret Door. The London Daily Mail.

his effluence gave to everything the sentiment of life and made the page thrill. One disadvantage of introducing the same characters in various volumes was that the writer forgot their personal details and allowed them at times to be introduced as if they were new characters; at times also one met an old friend character as a child who had been introduced in a previous volume or had evaded death and been buried.

But force of conception is dominant throughout his fiction, and parallel to the vigorous creation of characters is the flow with which he builds up their environment. Here his realism is intense. His descriptions of places are so realistic also that they are almost photographic, and still serve to guide the curious traveler. In the construction of plot he was unequal and often inferior, thanks to his Romanticist origins, and his melodrama does not even merit the blame of being a defect, it is his incessant digressions, dissertations on the whole sphere of science or human activity which dam the course of his stream most irritatingly. He could no more compress his sprawling given bounds than he could his drama. His power of harrowing the reader's feelings was great, but at bottom he has too little sympathy with his fellow mortals to be truly pathetic. But with all its shortcomings the "Comedie Humaine" is a more universal and representative history of social life than had been previously written, although love is noticeably absent as the chief motive (since he never really felt the emotion) and although his descriptions of women, especially of the fine ladies, are always touched with satire.

His influence in his own lifetime was far greater outside of France than in it and created a fashion in Hungary, Poland and Russia. At home his influence was most evident, said contemporary critics, on Georges Sand and Victor Hugo; and in the latter case it is patent. His greatest influence on literature, however, began as soon as he was dead, and the men he reached soonest were the dramatists, though not through his own plays. They were impressed by the presence, the intuition which his comedy exhibited of things which were destined to reveal themselves in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The reflection of all the struggle for life in political, social, financial and industrial spheres in the "Comedie Humaine" was calculated to impress when his hour was over, and the hour did arrive. The modern French dramatists, Flaubert, De Maupassant, the De Goncourts, Bourget and others, all bear distinct marks of Balzac's determining influence. His genius for divination was supremely great. Another offshoot from the "Comedie" is the naturalistic school, typified by Zola. While it is certain that an entrance of realism into French literature would have occurred in the second half of the nineteenth century had there been no Balzac it is equally certain that had Balzac put his hand to another treatment of fiction he would nevertheless have created a school. His tremendous force would have channelled into the future, whatever the nature of his current.

The volume has thirty-two illustrations, portraits of Balzac, Mme. Hanska, caricatures of the period and other pictures germane to the subject. Mr. Lawton writes forcefully and convincingly, but indulges in a penchant for peculiar words, which makes it impossible to decide on many occasions whether typographical errors or his deliberate will are responsible for somewhat singular results.

The Sevenables.

The Sevenables. From the American Hebrew.

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Mme. Bernhardt's Calves at Stage Supper.

Mme. Bernhardt's Calves at Stage Supper. From the Boston Record.