

Tucholsky Wagner Zola Scott
Turgenev Wallace Fonatne Sydon Freud Schlegel
Twain Walther von der Vogelweide Fouqué Friedrich II. von Preußen
Weber Freiligrath Frey
Fechner Fichte Weiße Rose von Fallersleben Kant Ernst Richthofen Frommel
Engels Fielding Hölderlin Eichendorff Tacitus Dumas
Fehrs Faber Flaubert Eliasberg Eliot Zweig Ebner Eschenbach
Feuerbach Maximilian I. von Habsburg Fock Ewald Vergil
Goethe Elisabeth von Österreich London
Mendelssohn Balzac Shakespeare Rathenau Dostojewski Ganghofer
Trackl Stevenson Lichtenberg Doyle Gjellerup
Mommsen Thoma Tolstoi Lenz Hambruch Droste-Hülshoff
Dach Thoma von Arnim Hägele Hanrieder Hauptmann Humboldt
Karrillon Reuter Verne Rousseau Hagen Hauff Baudelaire Gautier
Garschin Defoe Hebbel Hegel Kussmaul Herder
Damaschke Descartes Schopenhauer George
Wolfram von Eschenbach Darwin Dickens Grimm Jerome Rilke Bebel Proust
Bronner Campe Horváth Aristoteles Voltaire Federer Herodot
Bismarck Vigny Gengenbach Barlach Heine Grillparzer Georgy
Storm Casanova Lessing Langbein Gilm Gryphius
Chamberlain Tersteegen Gilm Grillparzer Georgy
Brentano Claudius Schiller Lafontaine Kralik Iffland Sokrates
Strachwitz Bellamy Schilling Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Katharina II. von Rußland Gerstäcker Raabe Gibbon Tschchow
Löns Hesse Hoffmann Gogol Wilde Gleim Vulpius
Luther Heym Hofmannsthal Klee Hölty Morgenstern Goedicke
Roth Heyse Klopstock Puschkin Homer Kleist Mörike Musil
Luxemburg La Roche Horaz Kraus
Machiavelli Kierkegaard Kraft Kraus
Navarra Aurel Musset Lamprecht Kind Kirchhoff Hugo Moltke
Nestroy Marie de France
Nietzsche Nansen Laotse Ipsen Liebknecht Ringelnatz
Marx Lassalle Gorki Klett Leibniz
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Honore de Balzac, His Life and Writings

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Imprint

This book is part of the TREDITION CLASSICS series.

Author: Mary F. (Mary Frances) Sandars
Cover design: toepferschumann, Berlin (Germany)

Publisher: tredition GmbH, Hamburg (Germany)
ISBN: 978-3-8491-7310-4

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PREFACE

Books about Balzac would fill a fair-sized library. Criticisms on his novels abound, and his contemporaries have provided us with several amusing volumes dealing in a humorous spirit with his eccentricities, and conveying the impression that the author of "La Cousine Bette" and "Le Pere Goriot" was nothing more than an amiable buffoon.

Nevertheless, by some strange anomaly, there exists no Life of him derived from original sources, incorporating the information available since the appearance of the volume called "Lettres a l'Etrangere." This book, which is the source of much of our present knowledge of Balzac, is a collection of letters written by him from 1833 to 1844 to Madame Hanska, the Polish lady who afterwards became his wife. The letters are exact copies of the originals, having been made by the Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, to whom the autographs belong.

It seems curious that no one should yet have made use of this mine of biographical detail. In English we have a Memoir by Miss Wormeley, written at a time when little was known about the great novelist, and a Life by Mr. Frederick Wedmore in the "Great Writers" Series; but this, like Miss Wormeley's Memoir, appeared before the "Lettres a l'Etrangere" were published. Moreover, it is a very small book, and the space in it devoted to Balzac as a man is further curtailed by several chapters devoted to criticism of his work. The introduction to the excellent translation of Balzac's novels undertaken by Mr. Saintsbury, contains a short account of his life, but this only fills a few pages and does not enter into much detail. Besides these, an admirable essay on Balzac has appeared in "Main Currents of Nineteenth-century Literature," by Mr. George Brandes; the scope of this, however, is mainly criticism of his merits as a writer, not description of his personality and doings.

Even in the French language, there is no trustworthy or satisfactory Life of Balzac—a fact on which numerous critical writers make many comments, though they apparently hesitate to throw themselves into the breach and to undertake one. Madame Surville's charming Memoir only professes to treat of Balzac's early life, and

even within these limits she intentionally conceals as much as she reveals. M. Edmond Bire, in his interesting book, presents Balzac in different aspects, as Royalist, playwright, admirer of Napoleon, and so on; but M. Bire gives no connected account of his life, while MM. Hanotaux and Vicaire deal solely with Balzac's two years as printer and publisher. The Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul is the one man who could give a detailed and minutely correct Life of Balzac, as he has proved by the stores of biographical knowledge contained in his works the "Roman d'Amour," "Autour de Honore de Balzac," "La Genese d'un Roman de Balzac, 'Les Paysans,'" and above all, "L'Histoire des Oeuvres de Balzac," which has become a classic. The English or American reader would hardly be able to appreciate these fascinating books, however, unless he were first equipped with the knowledge of Balzac which would be provided by a concise Life.

In these circumstances, helped and encouraged by Dr. Emil Reich, whose extremely interesting lectures I had attended with much enjoyment, and who very kindly gave me lists of books, and assisted me with advice, I engaged in the task of writing this book. It is not intended to add to the mass of criticism of Balzac's novels, being merely an attempt to portray the man as he was, and to sketch correctly a career which has been said to be more thrilling than a large proportion of novels.

I must apologise for occasional blank spaces, for when Balzac is with Madame Hanska, and his letters to her cease, as a general rule all our information ceases also; and the intending biographer can only glean from scanty allusions in the letters written afterwards, what happened at Rome, Naples, Dresden, or any of the other towns, to which Balzac travelled in hot haste to meet his divinity.

The book has been compiled as far as possible from original sources; as the Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul—whose collection of documents relating to Balzac, Gautier, and George Sand is unique, while his comprehensive knowledge of Balzac is the result of many years of study—has most kindly allowed me to avail myself of his library at Brussels. There, arranged methodically, according to some wonderful system which enables the Vicomte to find at once any document his visitor may ask for, are hundreds of Balzac's

autograph writings, many of them unpublished and of great interest. There, too, are portraits and busts of the celebrated novelist, letters from his numerous admirers, and the proofs of nearly all his novels—those sheets covered with a network of writing, which were the despair of the printers. The collection is most remarkable, even when we remember the large sums of money, and the patience and ability, which have for many years been focussed on its formation. It will one day be deposited in the museum at Chantilly, near Paris, where it will be at the disposal of those who wish to study its contents.

The Vicomte has kindly devoted much time to answering my questions, and has shown me documents and autograph letters, the exact words of which have been the subject of discussion and dispute, so that I have been able myself to verify the fact that the copies made by M. de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul are taken exactly from the originals. He has warned me to be particularly careful about my authorities, as many of Balzac's letters—printed as though copied from autographs—are incorrectly dated, and have been much altered.

He has further added to his kindness by giving me several illustrations, and by having this book translated to him, in order to correct it carefully by the information to which he alone has access. I gladly take this opportunity of acknowledging how deeply I am indebted to him.

I cannot consider these words of introduction complete without again expressing my sense of what I owe to Dr. Reich, to whom the initial idea of this book is due, and without whose energetic impetus it would never have been written. He has found time, in the midst of a very busy life, to read through, and to make many valuable suggestions, and I am most grateful for all he has done to help me.

I must finish by thanking Mr. Curtis Brown most heartily for the trouble he has taken on my behalf, for the useful hints he has given me, and for the patience with which he has elucidated the difficulties of an inexperienced writer.

MARY F. SANDARS.

HONORE DE BALZAC

CHAPTER I

Balzac's claims to greatness—The difficulty in attempting a complete Life—His complex character—The intention of this book.

At a time when the so-called Realistic School is in the ascendant among novelists, it seems strange that little authentic information should have been published in the English language about the great French writer, Honore de Balzac. Almost alone among his contemporaries, he dared to claim the interest of the world for ordinary men and women solely on the ground of a common humanity. Thus he was the first to embody in literature the principle of Burns that "a man's a man for a' that"; and though this fact has now become a truism, it was a discovery, and an important discovery, when Balzac wrote. He showed that, because we are ourselves ordinary men and women, it is really human interest, and not sensational circumstance which appeals to us, and that material for enthralling drama can be found in the life of the most commonplace person—of a middle-aged shopkeeper threatened with bankruptcy, or of an elderly musician with a weakness for good dinners. At one blow he destroyed the unreal ideal of the Romantic School, who degraded man by setting up in his place a fantastic and impossible hero as the only theme worthy of their pen; and thus he laid the foundation of the modern novel.

His own life is full of interest. He was not a recluse or a book-worm; his work was to study men, and he lived among men, he fought strenuously, he enjoyed lustily, he suffered keenly, and he died prematurely, worn out by the force of his own emotions, and by the prodigies of labour to which he was impelled by the restless

promptings of his active brain, and by his ever-pressing need for money. Some of his letters to Madame Hanska have been published during the last few years; and where can we read a more pathetic love story than the record of his seventeen years' waiting for her, and of the tragic ending to his long-deferred happiness? Or where in modern times can more exciting and often comical tales of adventure be found than the accounts of his wild and always unsuccessful attempts to become a millionaire? His friends comprised most of the celebrated French writers of the day; and though not a lover of society, he was acquainted with many varieties of people, while his own personality was powerful, vivid, and eccentric.

Thus he appears at first sight to be a fascinating subject for biography; but if we examine a little more closely, we shall realise the web of difficulties in which the writer of a complete and exhaustive Life of Balzac would involve himself, and shall understand why the task has never been attempted. The great author's money affairs alone are so complicated that it is doubtful whether he ever mastered them himself, and it is certainly impossible for any one else to understand them; while he managed to shroud his private life, especially his relations to women, in almost complete mystery. For some years after his death the monkish habit in which he attired himself was considered symbolic of his mental attitude; and even now, though the veil is partially lifted, and we realise the great part women played in his life, there remain many points which are not yet cleared up.

Consequently any one who attempts even in the most unambitious way to give a complete account of the great writer's life, is confronted with many blank spaces. It is true that the absolutely mysterious disappearances of which his contemporaries speak curiously are now partially accounted for, as we know that they were usually connected with Madame Hanska, and that Balzac's sense of honour would not allow him to breathe her name, except to his most intimate friends, and under the pledge of the strictest secrecy. His letters to her have allowed a flood of light to pour upon his hitherto veiled personality; but they are almost our only reliable source of information. Therefore, when they cease, because Balzac is with his ladylove, and we are suddenly excluded from his confidence, we can only guess what is happening.

In this way, we possess but the scantiest information about the journeys which occupied a great part of his time during the last few years of his life. We know that he travelled, regardless of expense and exhaustion, as quickly as possible, and by the very shortest route, to meet Madame Hanska; but this once accomplished, we can gather little more, and we long for a diary or a confidential correspondent. In the first rapture of his meeting at Neufchatel, he did indeed open his heart to his sister, Madame Surville; but his habitual discretion, and his care for the reputation of the woman he loved, soon imposed silence upon him, and he ceased to comment on the great drama of his life.

The great versatility of his mind, and the power he possessed of throwing himself with the utmost keenness into many absolutely dissimilar and incongruous enterprises at the same time, add further to the difficulty of understanding him. An extraordinary number of subjects had their place in his capacious brain, and the ease with which he dismissed one and took up another with equal zest the moment after, causes his doings to seem unnatural to us of ordinary mind. Leon Gozlan gives a curious instance of this on the occasion of the first reading of the "Ressources de Quinola."

Balzac had recited his play in the green-room of the Odeon to the assembled actors and actresses, and before a most critical audience had gone through the terrible strain of trying to improvise the fifth act, which was not yet written. He and Gozlan went straight from the hot atmosphere of the theatre to refresh themselves in the cool air of the Luxembourg Gardens. Here we should expect one of two things to happen. Either Balzac would be depressed with the ill-success of his fifth act, at which, according to Gozlan, he had acquitted himself so badly that Madame Dorval, the principal actress, refused to take a role in the play; or, on the other hand, his sanguine temperament would cause him to overlook the drawbacks, and to think only of the enthusiasm with which the first four acts had been received. Neither of these two things took place. Balzac "n'y pensait déjà plus." He talked with the greatest eagerness of the embellishments he had proposed to M. Decazes for his palace, and especially of a grand spiral staircase, which was to lead from the centre of the Luxembourg Gardens to the Catacombs, so that these might be

shown to visitors, and become a source of profit to Paris. But of his play he said nothing.

The reader of "Lettres a l'Etrangere," which are written to the woman with whom Balzac was passionately in love, and whom he afterwards married, may, perhaps, at first sight congratulate himself on at last understanding in some degree the great author's character and mode of life. If he dives beneath the surface, however, he will find that these beautiful and touching letters give but an incomplete picture; and that, while writing them, Balzac was throwing much energy into schemes, which he either does not mention to his correspondent, or touches on in the most cursory fashion. Therefore the perspective of his life is difficult to arrange, and ordinary rules for gauging character are at fault. We find it impossible to follow the principle, that because Balzac possessed one characteristic, he could not also show a diametrically opposite quality—that, for instance, because tenderness, delicacy of feeling, and a high sense of reverence and of honour were undoubtedly integral parts of his personality, the stories told by his contemporaries of his occasional coarseness must necessarily be false.

His own words, written to the Duchesse d'Abrantes in 1828, have no doubt a great element of truth in them: "I have the most singular character I know. I study myself as I might study another person, and I possess, shut up in my five foot eight inches, all the incoherences, all the contrasts possible; and those who think me vain, extravagant, obstinate, high-minded, without connection in my ideas,—a fop, negligent, idle, without application, without reflection, without any constancy; a chatterbox, without tact, badly brought up, impolite, whimsical, unequal in temper,—are quite as right as those who perhaps say that I am economical, modest, courageous, stingy, energetic, a worker, constant, silent, full of delicacy, polite, always gay. Those who consider that I am a coward will not be more wrong than those who say that I am extremely brave; in short, learned or ignorant, full of talent or absurd, nothing astonishes me more than myself. I end by believing that I am only an instrument played on by circumstances. Does this kaleidoscope exist, because, in the soul of those who claim to paint all the affections of the human heart, chance throws all these affections themselves, so that they may be able, by the force of their imagination, to feel what they

paint? And is observation a sort of memory suited to aid this lively imagination? I begin to think so."[*]

[*] "Correspondance," vol. i. p. 77.

Certainly Balzac's character proves to the hilt the truth of the rule that, with few exceptions in the world's history, the higher the development, the more complex the organisation and the more violent the clashing of the divers elements of the man's nature; so that his soul resembles a field of battle, and he wears out quickly. Nevertheless, because everything in Balzac seems contradictory, when he is likened by one of his friends to the sea, which is one and indivisible, we perceive that the comparison is not inapt. Round the edge are the ever-restless waves; on the surface the foam blown by fitful gusts of wind, the translucent play of sunbeams, and the clamour of storms lashing up the billows; but down in the sombre depths broods the resistless, immovable force which tinges with its reflection the dancing and play above, and is the genius and fascination, the mystery and tragedy of the sea.

Below the merriment and herculean jollity, so little represented in his books, there was deep, gloomy force in the soul of the man who, gifted with an almost unparalleled imagination, would yet grip the realities of the pathetic and terrible situations he evolved with brutal strength and insistence. The mind of the writer of "Le Pere Goriot," "La Cousine Bette," and "Le Cousin Pons," those terrible tragedies where the Greek god Fate marches on his victims relentlessly, and there is no staying of the hand for pity, could not have been merely a wide, sunny expanse with no dark places. Nevertheless, we are again puzzled, when we attempt to realise the personality of a man whose imagination could soar to the mystical and philosophical conception of "Seraphita," which is full of religious poetry, and who yet had the power in "Cesar Birotteau" to invest prosaic and even sordid details with absolute verisimilitude, or in the "Contes Drolatiques" would write, in Old French, stories of Rabelaisian breadth and humour. The only solution of these contradictions is that, partly perhaps by reason of great physical strength, certainly because of an abnormally powerful brain and imagination, Balzac's thoughts, feelings, and passions were unusually strong, and were endowed with peculiar impetus and independence of each other;

and from this resulted a versatility which caused most unexpected developments, and which fills us of smaller mould with astonishment.

Nevertheless, steadfastness was decidedly the groundwork of the character of the man who was not dismayed by the colossal task of the *Comedie Humaine*; but pursued his work through discouragement, ill health, and anxieties. Except near the end of his life, when, owing to the unreasonable strain to which it had been subjected, his powerful organism had begun to fail, Balzac refused to neglect his vocation even for his love affairs—a self-control which must have been a severe test to one of his temperament.

This absorption in his work cannot have been very flattering to the ladies he admired; and one plausible explanation of Madame de Castries' coldness to his suit is that she did not believe in the devotion of a lover who, while paying her the most assiduous court at Aix, would yet write from five in the morning till half-past five in the evening, and only bestow his company on her from six till an early bedtime. Even the adored Madame Hanska had to take second place where work was concerned. When they were both at Vienna in 1835, he writes with some irritation, apparently in answer to a remonstrance on her part, that he cannot work when he knows he has to go out; and that, owing to the time he spent the evening before in her society, he must now shut himself up for fourteen hours and toil at "*Le Lys dans la Vallee*." He adds, with his customary force of language, that if he does not finish the book at Vienna, he will throw himself into the Danube!

The great psychologist knew his own character well when, in another letter to Madame Hanska, who has complained of his frivolity, he cries, indignantly: "Frivolity of character! Why, you speak as a good *bourgeois* would have done, who, seeing Napoleon turn to the right, to the left, and on all sides to examine his field of battle, would have said, 'This man cannot remain in one place; he has no fixed idea!'"[*]

[*] "*Lettres a l'Etrangere*."

This change of posture, though consonant, as Balzac says, with real stability, is a source of bewilderment to the reader of his sayings and doings, till it dawns upon him that, through pride, policy,

and the usual shrinking of the sensitive from casting their pearls before swine, Balzac was a confirmed *poseur*, so that what he tells us is often more misleading than his silence. Leon Gozlan's books are a striking instance of the fact that, with all Balzac's jollity, his camaraderie, and his flow of words, he did not readily reveal himself, except to those whom he could thoroughly trust to understand him. Gozlan went about with Balzac very often, and was specially chosen by him time after time as a companion; but he really knew very little of the great man. If we compare his account of Balzac's feeling or want of feeling at a certain crisis, and then read what is written on the same subject to Madame Hanska, Balzac's enormous power of reserve, and his habit of deliberately misleading those who were not admitted to his confidence, may be gauged.

George Sand tells us an anecdote which shows how easily, from his anxiety not to wear his heart upon his sleeve, Balzac might be misunderstood. He dined with her on January 29th, 1844, after a visit to Russia, and related at table, with peals of laughter and apparently enormous satisfaction, an instance which had come under his notice of the ferocious exercise of absolute power. Any stranger listening, would have thought him utterly heartless and brutal, but George Sand knew better. She whispered to him: "That makes you inclined to cry, doesn't it?[*]" He answered nothing; left off laughing, as if a spring in him had broken; was very serious for the rest of the evening, and did not say a word more about Russia.

[*] "Autour de la Table," by George Sand.

Balzac looked on the world as an arena; and as the occasion and the audience arose, he suited himself with the utmost aplomb to the part he intended to play, so that under the costume and the paint the real Balzac is often difficult to discover. Sometimes he would pretend to be rich and prosperous, when he thought an editor would thereby be induced to offer him good terms; and sometimes, when it suited his purpose, he would make the most of his poverty and of his pecuniary embarrassments. Madame Hanska, from whom he required sympathy, heard much of his desperate situation after the failure of Werdet, whom he likens to the vulture that tormented Prometheus; but as it would not answer for Emile de Girardin, the editor of *La Presse*, to know much about Balzac's pecuni-

ary difficulties, Madame de Girardin is assured that the report of Werdet's supposed disaster is false, and Balzac virtuously remarks that in the present century honesty is never believed in.[*] Sometimes his want of candour appears to have its origin in his hatred to allow that he is beaten, and there is something childlike and naive in his vanity. We are amused when he informs Madame Hanska that he is giving up the *Chronique de Paris* — which, after a brilliant flourish of trumpets at the start, was a complete failure — because the speeches in the Chambre des Deputes are so silly that he abandons the idea of taking up politics, as he had intended to do by means of journalism. In a later letter, however, he is obliged to own that, though the *Chronique* has been, of course, a brilliant success, money is lacking, owing to the wickedness of several abandoned characters, and that therefore he has been forced to bring the publication to an end.

[*] "La Genese d'un Roman de Balzac," p. 152, by Le Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul.

Of one vanity he was completely free. He did not pose to posterity. Of his books he thought much — each one was a masterpiece, more glorious than the last; but he never imagined that people would be in the least interested in his doings, and he did not care about their opinion of him. Nevertheless there was occasionally a gleam of joy, when some one unexpectedly showed a spontaneous admiration for his work. For instance, in a Viennese concert-room, where the whole audience had risen to do honour to the great author, a young man seized his hand and put it to his lips, saying, "I kiss the hand that wrote 'Seraphita,'" and Balzac said afterwards to his sister, "They may deny my talent, if they choose, but the memory of that student will always comfort me."

His genius would, he hoped, be acknowledged one day by all the world; but there was a singular and lovable absence of self-consciousness in his character, and a peculiar humility and childlikeness under his braggadocio and apparent arrogance. Perhaps this was the source of the power of fascination he undoubtedly exercised over his contemporaries. Nothing is more noticeable to any one reading about Balzac than the difference between the tone

of amused indulgence with which those who knew him personally, speak of his peculiarities, and the contemptuous or horrified comments of people who only heard from others of his extraordinary doings.

He had bitter enemies as well as devoted friends; and his fighting proclivities, his objection to allow that he is ever in the wrong, and his habit of blaming others for his misfortunes, have had a great effect in obscuring our knowledge of Balzac's life, as the people he abused were naturally exasperated, and took up their pens, not to give a fair account of what really happened, but to justify themselves against Balzac's aspersions. Werdet's book is an instance of this. Beneath the extravagant admiration he expresses for the "great writer," with his "heart of gold," a glint can be seen from time to time of the animus which inspired him when he wrote, and we feel that his statements must be received with caution, and do not add much to our real knowledge of Balzac.

Nevertheless, though there are still blank spaces to be filled, as well as difficulties to overcome and puzzles to unravel, much fresh information has lately been discovered about the great writer, notably the "Lettres a l'Etrangere," published in 1899, a collection of some of the letters written by Balzac, from 1833 to 1848, to Madame Hanska, the Polish lady who afterwards became his wife. These letters, which are the property of the Vicomte de Spoelberch de Lovenjoul, give many interesting details, and alter the earlier view of several points in Balzac's career and character; but the volume is large, and takes some time to read. It is therefore thought, that as those who would seem competent, by their knowledge and skill, to overcome the difficulties of writing a complete and exhaustive life are silent, a short sketch, which can claim nothing more than correctness of detail, may not be unwelcome. It contains no attempt to give what could only be a very inadequate criticism of the books of the great novelist; for that, the reader must be referred to the many works by learned Frenchmen who have made a lifelong study of the subject. It is written, however, in the hope that the admirers of "Eugenie Grandet" and "Le Pere Goriot" may like to read something of the author of these masterpieces, and that even those who only know the great French novelist by reputation may be interested to hear a little about the restless life of a man who was a slave to his

genius—was driven by its insistent voice to engage in work which was enormously difficult to him, to lead an abnormal and unhealthy life, and to wear out his exuberant physical strength prematurely. He died with his powers at their highest and his great task unfinished; and a sense of thankfulness for his own mediocrity fills the reader, when he reaches the end of the life of Balzac.

CHAPTER II

Balzac's appearance, dress, and personality—His imaginary world and schemes for making money—His family, childhood, and school-days.

According to Theophile Gautier, herculean jollity was the most striking characteristic of the great writer, whose genius excels in sombre and often sordid tragedy. George Sand, too, speaks of Balzac's "serene soul with a smile in it"; and this was the more remarkable, because he lived at a time when discontent and despair were considered the sign-manual of talent.

Physically Balzac was far from satisfying a romantic ideal of fragile and enervated genius. Short and stout, square of shoulder, with an abundant mane of thick black hair—a sign of bodily vigour—his whole person breathed intense vitality. Deep red lips, thick, but finely curved, and always ready to laugh, attested, like the ruddiness in his full cheeks, to the purity and richness of his blood. His forehead, high, broad, and unwrinkled, save for a line between the eyes, and his neck, thick, round, and columnar, contrasted in their whiteness with the colour in the rest of the face. His hands were large and dimpled—"beautiful hands," his sister calls them. He was proud of them, and had a slight prejudice against any one with ugly extremities. His nose, about which he gave special directions to David when his bust was taken, was well cut, rather long, and square at the end, with the lobes of the open nostrils standing out prominently. As to his eyes, according to Gautier, there were none like them.[*] They had inconceivable life, light, and magnetism. They were eyes to make an eagle lower his lids, to read through walls and hearts, to terrify a wild beast—eyes of a sovereign, a seer, a conqueror. Lamartine likens them to "darts dipped in kindness." Balzac's sister speaks of them as brown; but, according to other contemporaries, they were like brilliant black diamonds, with rich reflections of gold, the white of the eyeballs being tinged with blue. They seemed to be lit with the fire of the genius within, to read souls, to answer questions before they were asked, and at the same time to pour out warm rays of kindness from a joyous heart.

[*] "Portraits Contemporains—Honore de Balzac," by Theophile Gautier.

At all points Balzac's personality differed from that of his contemporaries of the Romantic School—those transcendental geniuses of despairing temper, who were utterly hopeless about the prosaic world in which, by some strange mistake, they found themselves; and from which they felt that no possible inspiration for their art could be drawn. So little attuned were these unfortunates to their commonplace surroundings that, after picturing in their writings either fiendish horrors, or a beautiful, impossible atmosphere, peopled by beings out of whom all likeness to humanity had been eliminated, they not infrequently lost their mental balance altogether, or hurried by their own act out of a dull world which could never satisfy their lively imaginations. Balzac, on the other hand, loved the world. How, with the acute powers of observation, and the intuition, amounting almost to second sight, with which he was gifted, could he help doing so? The man who could at will quit his own personality, and invest himself with that of another; who would follow a workman and his wife on their way home at night from a music-hall, and listen to their discussions on domestic matters till he imbibed their life, felt their ragged clothing on his back, and their desires and wants in his soul,—how could he find life dull, or the most commonplace individual uninteresting?

In dress Balzac was habitually careless. He would rush to the printer's office, after twelve hours of hard work, with his hat drawn over his eyes, his hands thrust into shabby gloves, and his feet in shoes with high sides, worn over loose trousers, which were pleated at the waist and held down with straps. Even in society he took no trouble about his appearance, and Lamartine describes him as looking, in the salon of Madame de Girardin, like a schoolboy who has outgrown his clothes. Only for a short time, which he describes with glee in his letters to Madame Hanska, did he pose as a man of fashion. Then he wore a magnificent white waistcoat, and a blue coat with gold buttons; carried the famous cane, with a knob studded with turquoises, celebrated in Madame de Girardin's story, "La Canne de Monsieur de Balzac"; and drove in a tilbury, behind a high-stepping horse, with a tiny tiger, whom he christened Anchise, perched on the back seat. This phase was quickly over, the horses