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Library Edition

THE RISE AND FALL OF
CESAR BIROTTEAU
THE MYRAID CLASSES

'To what do I owe the honor of your visit, sir?'

(*Rise and Fall of Cesar Birotteau*, page 295)

TO

HONORABLE TO BALZAC

Author of *Le Procureur*

GEORGE HENRY



THE TROOPSON PUBLISHING COMPANY
NEW YORK AND CHICAGO

"The photograph is intended to be a record of the
the first of the kind in the history of the world."



Library Edition

THE RISE AND FALL OF
CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

THE MIDDLE CLASSES

BY

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

With Introductions by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY



THE THOMPSON PUBLISHING COMPANY
SAINT LOUIS AND PHILADELPHIA

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THE RISE AND FALL OF CÉSAR BIROTTEAU

AND

THE SECRETS OF A PRINCESS

INTRODUCTION

FEW books of Balzac's have been the subject of more diverse judgment than *César Birotteau*. From the opinion of the unnamed solicitor, who told Madame Serville that it was an invaluable work to consult on bankruptcy, to that of M. Paul Lacroix (beloved of many as the Bibliophile Jacob), that it might be forgiven for the sake of *Le Père Goriot* and the *Peau de Chagrin*, there is not perhaps quite so great a distance as may appear; but other expressions, opposed not merely in form, but in fact, might probably be collected.

As for the unfavorable division of these opinions there is no difficulty in discovering their causes; and there should be little, save in the case of blind partisans, in acknowledging their partial validity. Although the book opens with one of Balzac's most brilliant pieces of actual human observation—the description of the vague and half-delirious terror of waking from a bad dream,—and though the subsequent conversation between César and Constance has the merit of no vulgar curtain-lecture, it soon goes off into one of those endless retrospective narrations which are among the greatest blots on the *Comédie*, which utterly stop the action, and which, in the case of very many readers who are not gifted with the faculty of what may be called literary mountaineering, are very likely to cause the putting down of the book. To this initial difficulty has to be added the choking of the latter part with those bankruptcy details which did so charm the professional mind of Laure Balzac's learned friend, and

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