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Library Edition

AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT
AND RABBIT

A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMENT

BY THE AUTHOR

Brigaut and Pierrette.

(*Pierrette*, page 182)

HONORE DE BALZAC

Author of *Le Cousin Bazouille*

(1837-1850)



THE THOMPSON PUBLISHING COMPANY

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Library Edition

AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT
AND RACKET

A BACHELOR'S ESTABLISHMENT
AND OTHER STORIES

BY

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

With Introductions by
GEORGE SAINTSBURY



THE THOMPSON PUBLISHING COMPANY
SAINT LOUIS AND PHILADELPHIA

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(Translator, CIARA BELL)

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AT THE SIGN OF THE CAT AND RACKET
THE CELIBATES, AND OTHER STORIES

INTRODUCTION

IN the very interesting preface, dated July 1842, which Balzac prefixed to the first collection of the *Comédie Humaine*, he endeavors, naturally enough, to represent the division into *Scènes de la Vie Parisienne*, etc., as a rational and reasoned one. Although not quite arbitrary, it was of course to a great extent determined by considerations which were not those of design; and we did not require the positive testimony which we find in the Letters to tell us that in the author's view, as well as in our own, not a few of the stories might have been shifted over from one division to another, and have filled their place just as well in the other as in the one.

La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote, however, which originally bore the much less happy title of "Gloire et Malheur," was a *Scène de la Vie Privée* from the first, and it bears out better than some of its companions its author's expressed intention of making these "scenes" represent youth, whether Parisian or Provincial. Few of Balzac's stories have united the general suffrage for touching grace more than this; and there are few better examples of his minute Dutch-painting than the opening passages, or of his unconquerable delight in the details of business than his sketch of Monsieur Guillaume's establishment and its ways. The French equivalent of the "Complete Tradesman" of Defoe lasted much longer than his English counterpart; but, except in the smaller provincial towns, he is said to be uncommon now. As for the plot, it

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