

"Hallo! Lucien, my boy, why here we are patched up again—new stuffing and a new cover. Where have we come from? Have we mounted the high horse once more with little offerings from Florine's boudoir? Bravo, old chap!" and Blondet released Finot to put his arm affectionately round Lucien and press him to his heart.

Andoche Finot was the proprietor of a review on which Lucien had worked for almost nothing, and to which Blondet gave the benefit of his collaboration, of the wisdom of his suggestions and the depth of his views. Finot and Blondet embodied Bertrand and Raton, with this difference—that la Fontaine's cat at last showed that he knew himself to be duped, while Blondet, though he knew that he was being fleeced, still did all he could for Finot. This brilliant *condottiere* of the pen was, in fact, long to remain a slave. Finot hid a brutal strength of will under a heavy exterior, under the drowsiness of impertinent stupidity, with a superficial polish of wit, as a laborer rubs his bread with garlic. He knew how to garner what he gleaned, ideas and crown-pieces alike, in the fields of the dissolute life led by men engaged in letters or in politics.

Blondet, for his sins, had placed his powers at the service of Finot's vices and idleness. Always at war with necessity, he was one of the race of poverty-stricken and superior men who can do everything for the fortune of others and nothing for their own. Aladdins who let other men borrow their lamp. These excellent advisers have a clear and penetrating judgment so long as it is not distracted by personal interest. In them it is the head and not the arm that acts. Hence the looseness of their morality, and hence the reproach heaped upon them by inferior minds. Blondet would share his purse with a comrade he had affronted the day before; he would dine, drink, and sleep with one whom he would demolish on the morrow. His amusing paradoxes excused everything. Accepting the whole world as a jest, he did not want to be taken seriously; young, beloved, almost famous and contented, he did not devote himself, like Finot, to acquiring the fortune an old man needs.