

through the dark Parisian streets and byways that he describes so powerfully—that he can make us experience something of the love he attributes to poets—that he has the power to transport us at will from a courtesan's "hanging of the crane" to the office in which M. Camusot de Marville deploys all his astuteness against the most formidable adversary that judge of instruction ever encountered. The scene just mentioned is one of the best in the "Comedy"—indeed, the whole third part not merely proves Balzac's knowledge of criminal procedure and his power to make interesting what another novelist would almost inevitably make dry, but also shows what a wonderful control over himself the great writer must have possessed in his last years. It was written in the midst of physical pain and mental distress—yet it is as powerful and as well articulated as though it had been a creation of his prime. Certainly whatever else we may say of "*Splendeurs et Misères*," it is a novel of astonishing vigor.

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