

with delight, since it was filling Paris with enthusiasm and had cost him great labor. He denied that his heroine was his Fornarina—he had his Fornarina, but he would never paint her. Later we find him groaning over having to finish “cette bêtise de *la Fille aux Yeux d’Or*,” the central fact of which he exposes to Mme. Hanska in very plain French. He also lets her know that he himself inhabits an apartment furnished like the now famous boudoir of Paquita Valdéz.

It will be observed that Balzac’s critical instinct made him perceive that “*La Duchesse de Langeais*” was by far the most important of his three connected stories. On this point most readers are in agreement. Yet each story has distinct merits, and together they make a volume that appeals greatly to persons who care for sensational romance. It is the fashion to sneer at the interest attaching to this kind of fiction, but it is well for a novelist to have a “*Histoire des Treize*” among his works, on which jaded readers can fall back, and from which new readers can receive an impetus to attack other and more serious books. Besides, it must be remembered that Balzac, after his youthful period of extravagant writing was over, never failed to introduce an element of realism into his sensational books that lifted them far above the *genre* of fiction to which they primarily belonged.

Even in “*Ferragus*” the sensationalism is not unmixed. The remarkable power wielded by the ex-convict and his associates, the mysterious vengeance visited upon the inquisitive Maulincour, the strange misfortunes of M. and Mme. Jules, the death of the latter and the fate that befell her corpse, are all sufficiently sensational, and hold so little by actual life that an analytically-minded reader can easily find the faults such a reader loves to discover. More fortunate are those who can enjoy the thrilling pages without asking whether this or that would really be likely to happen; but it would surely require the blindness of partisanship to maintain that the power of