

until we have examined two or three unfavorable criticisms that have been made against the book. One is that it ought to have ended with the death of Lucien and the failure of Vautrin's schemes, the transformation of the king of the convicts into a police agent being described at such length as to deprive the climax of its full effect. This criticism is just, but it can be met, as a similar charge was in the case of "Béatrix," by the statement that all we need do in order to preserve the artistic unity of the novel, is to treat "La Dernière Incarnation de Vautrin" as a sequel to "Splendeurs et Misères" rather than as an integral part of it. Balzac's groupings of his stories can hardly, as we have seen repeatedly, be considered highly important, and when we can save a masterpiece from blemish by disregarding his order of arrangement we are justified in so doing. The novelist himself seems to have felt that excuses for the existence of the fourth part were needed, and it is quite clear that a novel written in such a fragmentary way can be somewhat rearranged without much resulting damage.

A still more serious charge relates to the part played by Vautrin, who is declared to be a grossly exaggerated personage—a character with whom a great realist should have had nothing to do. That there is truth in this charge also can scarcely be denied. Vautrin is a striking type of that "superior man" who in one form or another haunts romantic fiction and poetry.\* Even Goethe and Byron, in "Faust" and "Manfred," were seduced into attempting the portrayal of this fascinating being, and Balzac was in good company when he endeavored to vary the type. It is only of late, with the development of the leveling tendencies of democracy and the success of the realistic and naturalistic schools of fiction founded by Balzac, that the average man and the decadent have been able to oust the "superior man" from his place in

\* See an important article on this subject by Dr. Joakim Reinhard in the *Sewanee Review* January, 1900.