

# **ASPECTS OF BALZAC**

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Aspects of Balzac by W. H. Helm

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**W. H. HELM**

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OF BALZAC**



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BY

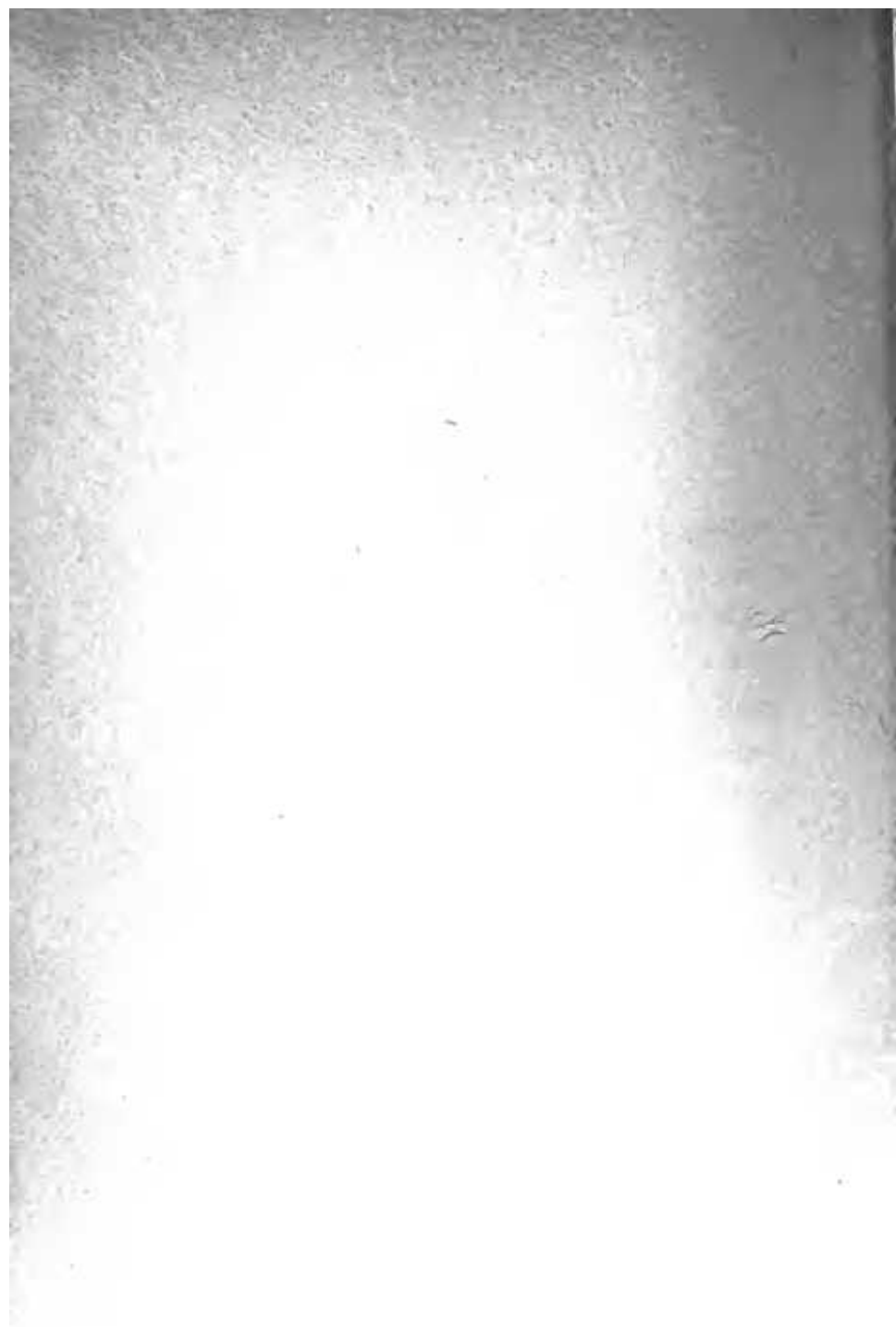
W. H. HELM

AUTHOR OF "STUDIES IN STYLE," ETC.



LONDON  
EVELEIGH NASH  
1905

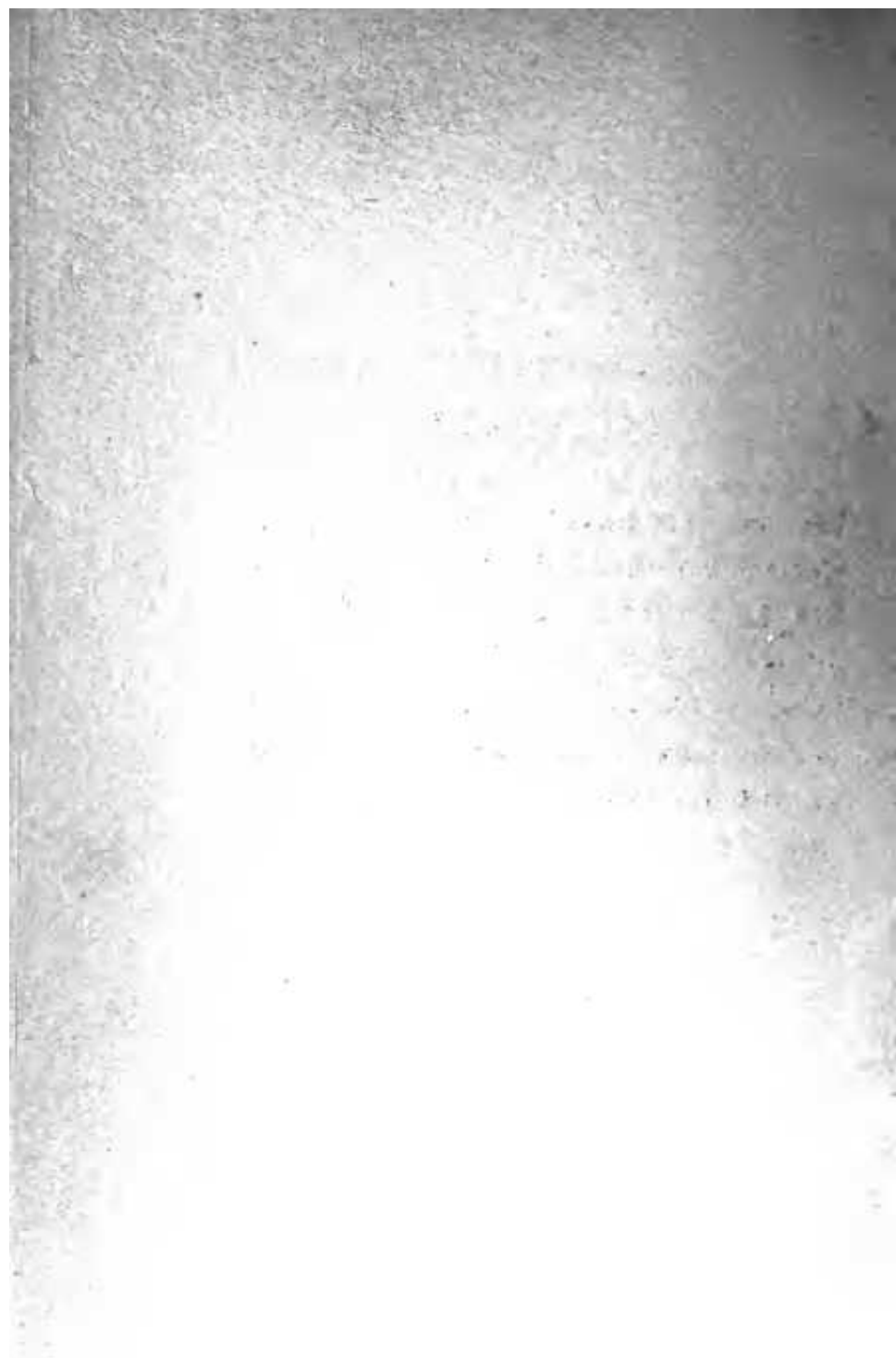
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## THE METHODS OF BALZAC

SOME of his critics would have said that to talk of "the Methods of Balzac" was to offer a contradiction in terms, since Balzac and method were incompatible. They might have found much to support their objection. The novelist himself held that a man should fling himself headlong into his work, as Curtius plunged into the gulf. Perhaps the most pregnant saying in the general preface of 1842, wherein the scheme of the "Comédie" is set out, one fully borne out by the novels themselves, is that "La passion est toute l'humanité. Sans elle, la religion, l'histoire, le roman, l'art, seraient inutiles." This phrase is the keynote to the vast harmony which Balzac composed. The love of man for woman and woman for man is, of course, "la

## ASPECTS OF BALZAC

passion" in particular, and it is more abundantly displayed in Balzac's novels than in those of any other writer, quite as abundantly as mere lust is shown in the work of Zola or Maupassant. Such loves as those of Montauran and Marie de Verneuil, of Montriveau and the Duchesse de Langeais, of Félix de Vandenesse and Henriette de Mortsau, are indeed of the influences that move the world. Yet passion takes other strong forms in the "Comédie Humaine." The passion of power as seen in Jacques Collin the criminal, and Eugène de Rastignac the conqueror of society, of the artist as in "Le Chef-d'Œuvre Inconnu," of the miser as shown by old Grandet, even the craving for gold for the mere love of that particular metal as by Facino Cane, and the rarer passion of the alchemist seen in "La Recherche de l'Absolu"—all are very fully analysed and exhibited. The callous and savage lust also of the enemy of the race, of the man or woman who preys upon other men and women as a crafty beast on its fellow-creatures, is pre-