

【 名著双语读物·中文导读+英文原版 】



*The Selected Short Stories of Balzac—A Passion in the Desert*

# 巴尔扎克短篇小说精选 ——沙漠里的爱情

[法] 巴尔扎克 著  
高云书 等 编译

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## 内 容 简 介

本书精选了法国著名作家巴尔扎克的8篇短篇小说,其中包括《沙漠里的爱情》《家族世仇》《海滨惨剧》和《无神论者的弥撒》等公认的短篇小说经典名篇。它们被翻译成各种文字,影响了一代又一代世界各地的读者,并且被改编成戏剧、电影、电视剧和卡通片等。

无论作为语言学习的课本,还是作为通俗的文学读本,这些经典名篇对当代中国的读者都将产生积极的影响。为了使读者能够了解英文故事概况,进而提高阅读速度和阅读水平,在每篇的开始部分增加了中文导读。

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奥诺雷·德·巴尔扎克（Honoré de Balzac，1799—1850），19世纪享誉世界的法国著名作家。

1799年5月20日，巴尔扎克出生于法国都兰地区图尔市的一个中产阶级家庭。1813年中学毕业后，巴尔扎克按父亲的意愿进入巴黎大学法学院学习，但他对法律并不感兴趣，在此期间他旁听了很多文学学院的课程。同时，他还进修数学、物理、化学、生物等自然科学课程。接受这些文学课程和自然科学课程的教育对巴尔扎克创作风格的形成产生了非常重要的作用。大学毕业后，他拒绝父母为他选择的受人尊敬的法律职业，立志要做文学家。但是他的第一部作品——五幕诗体悲剧《克伦威尔》在发表后却没有收到预期的效果，它是一部不受欢迎的作品。尔后他与人合作从事滑稽小说和神怪小说的创作，曾一度弃文从商和经营企业，出版名著丛书等，但均以失败告终。商业和企业上的失败使他债台高筑，拖累终身，但也为他日后的创作打下了坚实的生活基础。

1829年，他发表了长篇小说《朱安党人》，这部取材于现实生活的作品为他带来了巨大声誉。1831年，他出版了《驴皮记》，该作品更使他声名大震，并从此确立了他在法国文坛的地位。巴尔扎克一生共创作 96 部长、中、短篇小说和随笔，总命名为《人间喜剧》，共写了两千四百多个人物，树立了人类文学史上罕见的文学丰碑，被称为法国社会的“百科全书”。1850年8月18日，巴尔扎克终因劳累过度与世长辞。在他的追思会上，文学大师雨果站在巴黎的濛濛细雨中，面对成千上万哀悼者慷慨激昂地评价道：“在最伟大的人物中间，巴尔扎克是名列前茅者；在最优秀的人物中间，巴尔扎克是佼佼者。”一个多世纪以来，他的作品传遍了全世界，



受到世界各地一代又一代读者的欢迎；他对世界文学的发展和人类进步产生了巨大的影响。马克思、恩格斯称赞他是“超群的小说家”、“现实主义大师”。

作为《人间喜剧》的重要组成部分，巴尔扎克的短篇小说在世界文坛也影响广泛，同样深受中国读者的喜爱。基于以上原因，我们决定精选、编译巴尔扎克短篇小说中的经典之作，并采用中文导读英文版的形式出版。在中文导读中，我们尽力使其贴近原作的精髓，也尽可能保留原作的故事主线。我们希望能够编出为当代中国读者所喜爱的经典读本。读者在阅读英文故事之前，可以先阅读中文导读，这样有利于了解故事背景，从而加快阅读速度。我们相信，该经典著作的引进对加强当代中国读者，特别是青少年读者的人文修养是非常有帮助的。

本书是中文导读英文名著系列丛书中的一种，编写本系列丛书的另一个主要目的就是为准备参加英语国家留学考试的学生提供学习素材。对于留学考试，无论是SSAT、SAT，还是TOEFL、GRE，要取得好的成绩，就必须了解西方的社会、历史、文化、生活等方面的背景知识，而阅读西方原版名著是了解这些知识最重要的手段之一。

作为专门从事英语考试培训、留学规划和留学申请指导的教育机构，啄木鸟教育支持编写的这套中文导读英文原版名著系列图书，可以使读者在欣赏世界原版名著的同时，了解西方的历史、文化、传统、价值观等，并提高英语阅读速度、阅读水平和写作能力，从而在TOEFL、雅思、SSAT、SAT、GRE、GMAT等考试中取得好的成绩，进而帮助读者成功申请到更好的国外学校。

本书中文导读内容由高云书编写。参加本书故事素材搜集整理及编译工作的还有纪飞、赵雪、刘乃亚、蔡红昌、熊红华、熊建国、徐平国、龚桂平、付泽新、熊志勇、胡贝贝、李军、宋亭、张灵羚、张玉瑶、付建平等。限于我们的科学、人文素养和英语水平，书中难免会有不当之处，衷心希望读者朋友批评指正。

啄木鸟教育 (www.zmnedu.com)

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# 1. 戈布赛克

Gobseck



德维尔是巴黎名气最大的诉讼代理人，这一切都要得益于他为一位子爵夫人代理了几场收回财产的至关重要的案子，因此他也成为了高贵的子爵夫人的座上宾。此时他正坐在柔软的座椅中，讲述一段生命中值得珍藏的故事。那一年德维尔只有二十五岁，作为一个刚从事法律工作三年的二等书记，他只能租住在一个并不豪华的院子里，他的邻居是一位叫做戈布赛克的放高利贷的老头，故事就从这位老人身上展开。

戈布赛克的脸色苍白，他喜怒不形于色，远远望去好像是一尊石像，但是他那不大的眼睛却闪现出精明睿智的光芒。戈布赛克像时钟般保持着规律的生活作息，他的房间里的各种家具陪伴他穿越了时空的隧道，磨损的痕迹在上面处处可见，但是却干净整洁、一丝不苟。他经手过无数的款子，而这也使他做起事情来分外谨慎，不过当他将这份谨慎运用到情感方面上时就显得有些冷漠了。戈布赛克唯一的女继承人死于非命，他居然能以冷静的语调谈论这件事，谁让他是那么不想将自己一辈子的钱财转移给别人呢。他的每一条皱纹里都写着一段人生的历练。十岁时他就被母亲送到船上担任见习水手，二十年的漂泊生活使他品尽了生命的酸甜苦辣，阅尽人间百态的他有时候很像一个哲学家。不过戈布赛克一生最感兴趣的还是金钱，他精通每一项能获得利益的金融手段，他在放债领域做得游刃有余，在他看来人的生命中钱是天



戈布赛克脸色苍白



使也是魔鬼，金钱才是世间真正的力量，在每一个人的面具后面都隐藏着一双追逐金钱的眼睛。贫贱的穷人因为金钱而挣扎在生活的边缘，高贵的贵族为了维持自己奢华与享受也会找到戈布赛克，戈布赛克的新主顾就是巴黎社交圈最美丽的一位伯爵夫人。

戈布赛克环视着德·雷斯托伯爵夫人的卧房，鲜花的芳香混合着香水的气息使人沉醉，凌乱的舞裙与散布各处的缎子舞鞋似乎在诉说着深夜的狂欢，奢华而凌乱的场景令老戈布赛克有了青春的追忆。伯爵夫人恳求再宽限一些时日还清所借的一千法郎，但是老练的戈布赛克拒绝了她娇嗔的请求。为了避免伯爵先生知道自己的行为，伯爵夫人不得不拿出一颗钻石去抵账。在离开的时候戈布赛克看到了巴黎最风流的花花公子德·特拉伊的马车驶进了雷斯托伯爵夫人家，他禁不住摇了摇头，他仿佛看到了伯爵夫人将在欲望的陷阱里越陷越深。要知道德·特拉伊一方面精通各种奢华服饰的搭配，赢得了无数女人的青睐；另一方面却醉心于赌博和吃喝，花钱如流水般迅速。德维尔在拿到法学学士的头衔后成为了一位律师，尽管他与戈布赛克不再是邻居，但这个精明的老头总是向德维尔免费咨询一些法律问题。德维尔有时候觉得像戈布赛克这样的人才是世界幕后的掌控者，巴黎所有的秘密都被他们在茶桌上轻描淡写地交谈过，趾高气昂的贵族在他们面前总是那样和颜悦色，前途无量的政府官员在他们面前是那么的低声下气，而拴住他们的链条就是人人都渴望的金钱。德维尔想要盘下老板出售的律师事务所，而能够一下子拿出十五万法郎的人估计只有戈布赛克了，他向自己的老朋友诉说了自己的苦衷。这个老狐狸提出了一分五厘的利息——他才不会因为交情而放弃自己的收益呢，不过这对于德维尔来说可真是天大的好事，因为这利息已经算微不足道了，更何况他还给自己介绍了好多客户。戈布赛克这样做自然有他的理由，通过这一点利息既帮助了德维尔，同时也使自己的朋友不用背负感激的十字架。

戈布赛克就如预言家一般的高明，德·雷斯托伯爵夫人再一次拜访了他，她的神色慌乱，她的双脚曾在堕落的边缘舞蹈，而如今她已经跌入困顿的泥淖中无法自拔。德·雷斯托伯爵夫人这次带来的抵押物是几颗钻石，戈布赛克拿起它们仔细地端详，即使是看尽世间珍宝的他也不禁啧啧赞叹。但是他很快克制住了自己的感情，他用那冰冷的声音说出了十万法郎的报价。德维尔并不愿意让这个

可怜又可恨的女人走入欠债的深渊，他决定拉她一把，于是他向伯爵夫人声明由于她并没有通过自己丈夫的同意，所以交易这批钻石是不合法的，如果真的要交易，那么价钱会压得很低。戈布赛克一下子反应过来了，他将钻石的价格压到八万，他的眼中闪现出欣喜的光芒，这光芒似乎要盖过钻石的璀璨了。伯爵夫人可能真的是十分需要这笔钱来弥补亏空，她咬咬牙同意了，德维尔只能无奈地摇摇头。当戈布赛克还没有从收购钻石的欣喜中回过味的时候，一位焦急的中年贵族敲响了他的家门，他就是德·雷斯托伯爵。他告诉高利贷商人他的妻子趁着自己不注意，将一批祖传的钻石卖了出去，他希望戈布赛克能够终止这项不合法的交易。让戈布赛克吐出已经到手的利益要比虎口拔牙还困难，几经交涉他终于同意伯爵以八万五千法郎赎回了珠宝。戈布赛克提醒伯爵这样的妻子如同一个吸血的魔鬼，钱财早晚有一天会被不知不觉地搬空，不如早作打算将财产转移，为自己的孩子留下后路。随着雷斯托伯爵的身体越来越差，他的担忧就越来越明显。他将自己的一部分财产委托遗赠给戈布赛克，由这位精明的高利贷商人代为打理，等到自己离开人世后交由自己的儿子埃内斯特继承。这就是戈布赛克的神奇所在，他一方面是一个锱铢必较的高利贷商人，但是如果不谈工作他又是巴黎最善良与睿智的老人。

德·雷斯托伯爵已经卧床不起了，伯爵夫人牢牢地掌控着家庭大权，但是令她感到苦恼的是似乎她的丈夫对她已经有所防备，而她的敌人将会是老辣的戈布赛克。当伯爵死去的时候，伯爵夫人并没有感到十分悲痛，她所做的只是抓紧一切时间将丈夫的合同文书翻个天翻地覆，试图找到丈夫隐匿财产的蛛丝马迹。但是她的如意算盘落空了，德·雷斯托伯爵的产业在戈布赛克的打理下正蒸蒸日上地产生利润，而伯爵太太则过着艰苦的生活，不过艰苦反而是上进的一剂良药，因为她的儿子在苦难的打磨下显得如此杰出优秀。这也源于戈布赛克的理念，这老头子并没有过早的将埃内斯特父亲留给他的遗产还给他，因为戈布赛克相信不幸是最好的导师，而过早地接触奢靡则是温柔的陷阱。戈布赛克也终于走到了生命的尽头，在临终前他呜咽着告诉德维尔自己的痛苦，他感觉自己的屋子里塞满了黄金，但是死神却不给他机会去好好享受这金钱带来的快乐了，即使是死后将自己的财产分割出去，戈布赛克依然会觉得心

如刀割。当德维尔打开老朋友的仓库时，他几乎被扑鼻而来的腐烂的气味熏晕了，一包包过期变质的食品、酒、咖啡、茶叶、棉花堆积在一起，戈布赛克并不愿意折价出售这些物品，有时他又为了几法郎的利润纠结不定，结果食物都变质不能卖出了，这种吝啬的心态反而让他在晚年受了不少损失。精明与幼稚、吝啬与智慧混合在戈布赛克的生活哲学里，这真是个怪老头子。

*I*t was one o'clock in the morning, during the winter of 1829-30, but in the Vicomtesse de Grandlieu's salon two persons stayed on who did not belong to her family circle. A young and good-looking man heard the clock strike, and took his leave. When the courtyard echoed with the sound of a departing carriage, the Vicomtesse looked up, saw that no one was present save her brother and a friend of the family finishing their game of piquet, and went across to her daughter. The girl, standing by the chimney-piece, apparently examining a transparent fire-screen, was listening to the sounds from the courtyard in a way that justified certain maternal fears.

"Camille," said the Vicomtesse, "if you continue to behave to young Comte de Restaud as you have done this evening, you will oblige me to see no more of him here. Listen, child, and if you have any confidence in my love, let me guide you in life. At seventeen one cannot judge of past or future, nor of certain social considerations. I have only one thing to say to you. M. de Restaud has a mother, a mother who would waste millions of francs; a woman of no birth, a Mlle. Goriot; people talked a good deal about her at one time. She behaved so badly to her own father, that she certainly does not deserve to have so good a son. The young Count adores her, and maintains her in her position with dutifulness worthy of all praise, and he is extremely good to his brother and sister.—But however admirable his behavior may be," the Vicomtesse added with a shrewd expression, "so long as his mother lives, any family would take alarm at the idea of intrusting a daughter's fortune and future to young Restaud."

"I overheard a word now and again in your talk with Mlle. de Grandlieu," cried the friend of the family, "and it made me anxious to put

in a word of my own.—I have won, M. le Comte," he added, turning to his opponent. "I shall throw you over and go to your niece's assistance."

"See what it is to have an attorney's ears!" exclaimed the Vicomtesse. "My dear Derville, how could you know what I was saying to Camille in a whisper?"

"I knew it from your looks," answered Derville, seating himself in a low chair by the fire.

Camille's uncle went to her side, and Mme. de Grandlieu took up her position on a hearth stool between her daughter and Derville.

"The time has come for telling a story, which should modify your judgment as to Ernest de Restaud's prospects."

"A story?" cried Camille. "Do begin at once, monsieur."

The glance that Derville gave the Vicomtesse told her that this tale was meant for her. The Vicomtesse de Grandlieu, be it said, was one of the greatest ladies in the Faubourg Saint-Germain, by reason of her fortune and her ancient name; and though it may seem improbable that a Paris attorney should speak so familiarly to her, or be so much at home in her house, the fact is nevertheless easily explained.

When Mme. de Grandlieu returned to France with the Royal family, she came to Paris, and at first lived entirely on the pension allowed her out of the Civil List by Louis XVIII.—an intolerable position. The Hotel de Grandlieu had been sold by the Republic. It came to Derville's knowledge that there were flaws in the title, and he thought that it ought to return to the Vicomtesse. He instituted proceedings for nullity of contract, and gained the day. Encouraged by this success, he used legal quibbles to such purpose that he compelled some institution or other to disgorge the Forest of Liceney. Then he won certain lawsuits against the Canal d'Orleans, and recovered a tolerably large amount of property, with which the Emperor had endowed various public institutions. So it fell out that, thanks to the young attorney's skilful management, Mme. de Grandlieu's income reached the sum of some sixty thousand francs, to say nothing of the vast sums returned to her by the law of indemnity. And Derville, a man of high character, well informed, modest, and pleasant in company, became the house-friend of the family.

By his conduct of Mme. de Grandlieu's affairs he had fairly earned the esteem of the Faubourg Saint-Germain, and numbered the best families among his clients; but he did not take advantage of his popularity, as an ambitious man might have done. The Vicomtesse would have had him sell his practice and enter the magistracy, in which career advancement would have been swift and certain with such influence at his disposal; but he persistently refused all offers. He only went into society to keep up his connections, but he occasionally spent an evening at the Hotel de Grandlieu. It was a very lucky thing for him that his talents had been brought into the light by his devotion to Mme. de Grandlieu, for his practice otherwise might have gone to pieces. Derville had not an attorney's soul. Since Ernest de Restaud had appeared at the Hotel de Grandlieu, and he had noticed that Camille felt attracted to the young man, Derville had been as assiduous in his visits as any dandy of the Chaussee-d'Antin newly admitted to the noble Faubourg. At a ball only a few days before, when he happened to stand near Camille, and said, indicating the Count:

"It is a pity that yonder youngster has not two or three million francs, is it not?"

"Is it a pity? I do not think so," the girl answered. "M. de Restaud has plenty of ability; he is well educated, and the Minister, his chief, thinks well of him. He will be a remarkable man, I have no doubt. 'Yonder youngster' will have as much money as he wishes when he comes into power."

"Yes, but suppose that he were rich already?"

"Rich already?" repeated Camille, flushing red. "Why all the girls in the room would be quarreling for him," she said, glancing at the quadrilles.

"And then," retorted the attorney, "Mlle. de Grandlieu might not be the one towards whom his eyes are always turned? That is what that red color means! You like him, do you not? Come, speak out."

Camille suddenly rose to go.

"She loves him," Derville thought.

Since that evening, Camille had been unwontedly attentive to the attorney, who approved of her liking for Ernest de Restaud. Hitherto, although she knew well that her family lay under great obligations to



Derville, she had felt respect rather than real friendship for him, their relation was more a matter of politeness than of warmth of feeling; and by her manner, and by the tones of her voice, she had always made him sensible of the distance which socially lay between them. Gratitude is a charge upon the inheritance which the second generation is apt to repudiate.

"This adventure," Derville began after a pause, "brings the one romantic event in my life to my mind. You are laughing already," he went on; "it seems so ridiculous, doesn't it, that an attorney should speak of a romance in his life? But once I was five-and-twenty, like everybody else, and even then I had seen some queer things. I ought to begin at the beginning by telling you about some one whom it is impossible that you should have known. The man in question was a usurer.

"Can you grasp a clear notion of that sallow, wan face of his? I wish the Academie would give me leave to dub such faces the lunar type. It was like silver-gilt, with the gilt rubbed off. His hair was iron-gray, sleek, and carefully combed; his features might have been cast in bronze; Talleyrand himself was not more impassive than this money-lender. A pair of little eyes, yellow as a ferret's, and with scarce an eyelash to them, peered out from under the sheltering peak of a shabby old cap, as if they feared the light. He had the thin lips that you see in Rembrandt's or Metsu's portraits of alchemists and shrunken old men, and a nose so sharp at the tip that it put you in mind of a gimlet. His voice was so low; he always spoke suavely; he never flew into a passion. His age was a problem; it was hard to say whether he had grown old before his time, or whether by economy of youth he had saved enough to last him his life.

"His room, and everything in it, from the green baize of the bureau to the strip of carpet by the bed, was as clean and threadbare as the chilly sanctuary of some elderly spinster who spends her days in rubbing her furniture. In winter time, the live brands of the fire smouldered all day in a bank of ashes; there was never any flame in his grate. He went through his day, from his uprising to his evening coughing-fit, with the regularity of a pendulum, and in some sort was a clockwork man, wound up by a night's slumber. Touch a wood-louse on an excursion across your sheet of



paper, and the creature shams death; and in something the same way my acquaintance would stop short in the middle of a sentence, while a cart went by, to save the strain to his voice. Following the example of Fontenelle, he was thrifty of pulse-strokes, and concentrated all human sensibility in the innermost sanctuary of Self.

"His life flowed soundless as the sands of an hour-glass. His victims sometimes flew into a rage and made a great deal of noise, followed by a great silence; so is it in a kitchen after a fowl's neck has been wrung.

"Toward evening this bill of exchange incarnate would assume ordinary human shape, and his metals were metamorphosed into a human heart. When he was satisfied with his day's business, he would rub his hands; his inward glee would escape like smoke through every rift and wrinkle of his face;—in no other way is it possible to give an idea of the mute play of muscle which expressed sensations similar to the soundless laughter of Leather Stocking. Indeed, even in transports of joy, his conversation was confined to monosyllables; he wore the same non-committal countenance.

"This was the neighbor Chance found for me in the house in the Rue de Gres, where I used to live when as yet I was only a second clerk finishing my third year's studies. The house is damp and dark, and boasts no courtyard. All the windows look on the street; the whole dwelling, in claustral fashion, is divided into rooms or cells of equal size, all opening upon a long corridor dimly lit with borrowed lights. The place must have been part of an old convent once. So gloomy was it, that the gaiety of eldest sons forsook them on the stairs before they reached my neighbor's door. He and his house were much alike; even so does the oyster resemble his native rock.

"I was the one creature with whom he had any communication, socially speaking; he would come in to ask for a light, to borrow a book or a newspaper, and of an evening he would allow me to go into his cell, and when he was in the humor we would chat together. These marks of confidence were the results of four years of neighborhood and my own sober conduct. From sheer lack of pence, I was bound to live pretty much as he did. Had he any relations or friends? Was he rich or poor? Nobody could



give an answer to these questions. I myself never saw money in his room. Doubtless his capital was safely stowed in the strong rooms of the Bank. He used to collect his bills himself as they fell due, running all over Paris on a pair of shanks as skinny as a stag's. On occasion he would be a martyr to prudence. One day, when he happened to have gold in his pockets, a double napoleon worked its way, somehow or other, out of his fob and fell, and another lodger following him up the stairs picked up the coin and returned it to its owner.

"That isn't mine!" said he, with a start of surprise. 'Mine indeed! If I were rich, should I live as I do!'

"He made his cup of coffee himself every morning on the cast-iron chafing dish which stood all day in the black angle of the grate; his dinner came in from a cookshop; and our old porter's wife went up at the prescribed hour to set his room in order. Finally, a whimsical chance, in which Sterne would have seen predestination, had named the man Gobseck. When I did business for him later, I came to know that he was about seventy-six years old at the time when we became acquainted. He was born about 1740, in some outlying suburb of Antwerp, of a Dutch father and a Jewish mother, and his name was Jean-Esther Van Gobseck. You remember how all Paris took an interest in that murder case, a woman named La belle Hollandaise? I happened to mention it to my old neighbor, and he answered without the slightest symptom of interest or surprise, 'She is my grandniece.'

"That was the only remark drawn from him by the death of his sole surviving next of kin, his sister's granddaughter. From reports of the case I found that La belle Hollandaise was in fact named Sara Van Gobseck. When I asked by what curious chance his grandniece came to bear his surname, he smiled:

"The women never marry in our family.'

"Singular creature, he had never cared to find out a single relative among four generations counted on the female side. The thought of his heirs was abhorrent to him; and the idea that his wealth could pass into other hands after his death simply inconceivable.

"He was a child, ten years old, when his mother shipped him off



as a cabin boy on a voyage to the Dutch Straits Settlements, and there he knocked about for twenty years. The inscrutable lines on that fallow forehead kept the secret of horrible adventures, sudden panic, un hoped-for luck, romantic cross events, joys that knew no limit, hunger endured and love trampled under foot, fortunes risked, lost, and recovered, life endangered time and time again, and saved, it may be, by one of the rapid, ruthless decisions absolved by necessity. He had known Admiral Simeuse, M. de Lally, M. de Kergarouet, M. d'Estaing, le Bailli de Suffren, M. de Portenduere, Lord Cornwallis, Lord Hastings, Tippoo Sahib's father, Tippoo Sahib himself. The bully who served Mahadaji Sindhia, King of Delhi, and did so much to found the power of the Mahrattas, had had dealings with Gobseck. Long residence at St. Thomas brought him in contact with Victor Hughes and other notorious pirates. In his quest of fortune he had left no stone unturned; witness an attempt to discover the treasure of that tribe of savages so famous in Buenos Ayres and its neighborhood. He had a personal knowledge of the events of the American War of Independence. But if he spoke of the Indies or of America, as he did very rarely with me, and never with anyone else, he seemed to regard it as an indiscretion and to repent of it afterwards. If humanity and sociability are in some sort a religion, Gobseck might be ranked as an infidel; but though I set myself to study him, I must confess, to my shame, that his real nature was impenetrable up to the very last. I even felt doubts at times as to his sex. If all usurers are like this one, I maintain that they belong to the neuter gender.

"Did he adhere to his mother's religion? Did he look on Gentiles as his legitimate prey? Had he turned Roman Catholic, Lutheran, Mahometan, Brahmin, or what not? I never knew anything whatsoever about his religious opinions, and so far as I could see, he was indifferent rather than incredulous.

"One evening I went in to see this man who had turned himself to gold; the usurer, whom his victims (his clients, as he styled them) were wont to call Daddy Gobseck, perhaps ironically, perhaps by way of antiphrasis. He was sitting in his armchair, motionless as a statue, staring fixedly at the mantel-shelf, where he seemed to read the figures of his statements. A lamp,