

H. DE BALZAC

AT THE SIGN OF
THE CAT AND RACKET
(La Maison du Chat-qui-Pelote)

Translated by

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‘Oh!’ she cried, with an impulse of annoyance on seeing Monsieur de Bourbonne. ‘But our uncle is not in the way,’ she went on with a sudden smile. ‘I have come to kneel at my husband’s feet and humbly beseech him to accept my fortune. I have just received from the Austrian Embassy a document proving Firmiani’s death. The paper, drawn up by the kind offices of the Austrian envoy at Constantinople, is quite formal, and the will which Firmiani’s valet had in keeping for me is subjoined.—There, you are richer than I am, for you have there,’ and tapped her husband’s breast, ‘treasures which only God can add to.’ Then, unable to disguise her happiness, she hid her face in Octave’s bosom.

‘My sweet niece, we made love when I was young,’ said the uncle, ‘but now you love. You women are all that is good and lovely in humanity, for you are never guilty of your faults; they always originate with us.’

PARIS, *February* 1831.