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long period pondering over the difficulties of his subject. He modelled figure after figure and still was not satisfied.

The members of the Balzac committee, hostile in any case, became restive, and objected to what they considered an unwarranted delay. Rodin defended himself. "I ask you to admit that the progress of a work of art which is to be produced under the best conditions and to the satisfaction of those who have commissioned its execution must not be interfered with and subjected to fixed time limits. All those who have struggled to produce such work know that calm and untroubled reflection is absolutely necessary. . . . You can and must admit this, for these are the anxieties of all creators."

There was a rumour of a conspiracy to take the commission from Rodin and give it to someone else—a "cut price hack," as one of his supporters suggested, "who would make his delivery in 48 hours."

Rodin Remained Calm

When the Balzac was at last shown, it raised another storm. Rodin had modelled a huge figure, brooding and tragic, wrapped in a heavy Dominican cloak to resemble the cloak the novelist always worked in. The likeness was striking, but Rodin had striven more to interpret the spirit of Balzac, and had purposely made the figure rough hewn, with a sublime air of vagueness.

Another verdict was (and it is reminiscent of the Dobell comments): "A formless mass, a nameless thing, a gigantic foetus."

It had become the Balzac Affair. To the storm of abuse Rodin answered calmly. "My life is one long course of study. . . . If truth must die, my Balzac will be broken in pieces by future generations. . . . But if truth is eternal, I predict that my statue will make its way alone."

The Société des Gens de Lettres refused the Balzac, and a protest was at once published bearing the signatures of Zola, Manet, Cézanne, Carrière, Forain, Toulouse Lautrec, Signac, D'Indy, Debussy, Maillol, Bourdelle, Meunier, Mendes, Fort, France, and many other famous names.

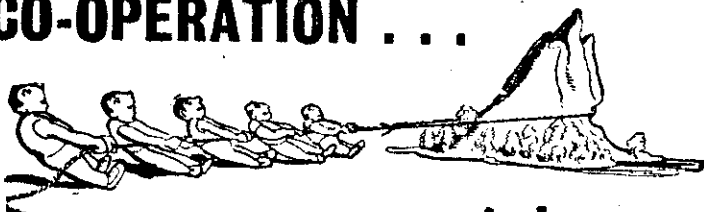
The protest was effective. A subscription was started and funds poured in, also enthusiastic letters. The public wished to buy the Balzac. Then Rodin, worn out and disgusted, decided he would keep the figure himself. To the intense relief of the committee, a letter was received informing it of Rodin's renunciation without demanding the indemnity to which he was entitled. The committee gladly washed its hands of Rodin, and gave the commission to the sculptor Falguière.

Then everybody will remember, not the storm, but the succession of storms, aroused by the sculptures of Epstein. Most of these have been described by Epstein himself in his autobiography—in all the circumstances with surprising good temper—but although they read rather like farces than like art controversies, they were no joke to the artist. It will be interesting to see whether Dobell is made or crippled by all this fuss.

Battles are going on every day between the artist and his public. Any art that is alive and moving is sure to hurt somebody. But my own forecast is that Dobell will turn the tables on his antagonists.

NEW ZEALAND LISTENER, NOVEMBER 17

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