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Lost Illusions

THE POLITICS OF PUBLISHING IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY FRANCE

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For Mark

My poor boy, like you I came here with my heart full of illusions, spurred on by the love of art, swept forwards by an invincible yearning for fame. I soon discovered the hard facts of the writer's trade, the difficulty of getting into print and the brutal reality of poverty. My enthusiasm, now deflated, and the effervescence of those early days made me blind to the mechanism which keeps the world moving: I had to see it in action, get caught up in the works, run foul of the shafts, get coated with grease and listen to the rattle of chains and fly-wheels. You will find out as I did that underneath your beautiful dream-world is the turmoil of men, passions and needs.

—ÉTIENNE LOUSTEAU TO LUCIEN CHARDON,
in Honoré de Balzac's *Lost Illusions* (1837–1843)

