



# Cousin Bette

*Honore de Balzac*

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## **Cousin Bette** Honore de Balzac

La Cousine Bette is an 1846 novel by French author Honore de Balzac. Set in mid-19th century Paris, it tells the story of an unmarried middle-aged woman who plots the destruction of her extended family. Bette works with Valerie Marneffe, an unhappily married young lady, to seduce and torment a series of men. One of these is Baron Hector Hulot, husband to Bette's cousin Adeline. He sacrifices his family's fortune and good name to please Valerie, who leaves him for a tradesman named Crevel. The book is part of the Scenes de la vie parisienne section of Balzac's novel sequence La Comedie humaine ("The Human Comedy"). "One day, about the middle of July 1838, one of the carriages, then lately introduced to Paris cabstands, and known as Milords, was driving down the Rue de l'Universite, conveying a stout man of middle height in the uniform of a captain of the National Guard. Among the Paris crowd, who are supposed to be so clever, there are some men who fancy themselves infinitely more attractive in uniform than in their ordinary clothes, and who attribute to women so depraved a taste that they believe they will be favorably impressed by the aspect of a busby and of military accoutrements."

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