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He took the box out of his desk . . . saying  
"There is your remedy."

(*Cousin Betty*, page 331)





Library Edition

POOR RELATIONS:

COUSIN BETTY

COUSIN PONS

BY

HONORÉ DE BALZAC

With Introductions by

GEORGE SAINTSBURY



THE THOMPSON PUBLISHING COMPANY  
SAINT LOUIS AND PHILADELPHIA

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(*La Cousine Bette*; Translator, JAMES WARING)

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(*Le Cousin Pons*; Translator, ELLEN MARRIAGE)



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COUSIN BETTY





## INTRODUCTION

*La Cousine Bette* was perhaps the last really great thing that Balzac did—for *Le Cousin Pons*, which now follows it, was actually written before—and it is beyond all question one of the very greatest of his works. It was written at the highest possible pressure, and (contrary to the author's more usual system) in parts, without even seeing a proof, for the *Constitutionnel* in the autumn, winter, and early spring of 1846-47, before his departure from Vierzschovnia, the object being to secure a certain sum of ready money to clear off indebtedness. And it has been sometimes asserted that this labor, coming on the top of many years of scarcely less hard work, was almost the last straw which broke down Balzac's gigantic strength. Of these things it is never possible to be certain; as to the greatness of *La Cousine Bette*, there is no uncertainty.

In the first place, it is a very long book for Balzac; it is, I think, putting aside books like *Les Illusions Perdues*, and *Les Célibataires*, and *Splendeurs et Misères des Courtisanes*, which are really groups of work written at different times, the longest of all his novels, if we except the still later and rather doubtful *Petits Bourgeois*. In the second place, this length is not obtained—as length with him is too often obtained—by digressions, by long retrospective narrations, or even by the insertion of such “padding” as the collection business in *Le Cousin Pons*. The whole stuff and substance of *La Cousine Bette* is honestly woven novel-

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