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Lost Illusions (Modern Library Classics)

Honoré de Balzac

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Honoré de Balzac

Lost Illusions (Modern Library Classics) Honoré de Balzac
"Balzac [was] the master unequalled in the art of painting humanity as it exists in modern society," wrote George Sand. "He searched and dared everything."

Written between 1837 and 1843, **Lost Illusions** reveals, perhaps better than any other of Balzac's ninety-two novels, the nature and scope of his genius. The story of Lucien Chardon, a young poet from Angoulême who tries desperately to make a name for himself in Paris, is a brilliantly realistic and boldly satirical portrait of provincial manners and aristocratic life. Handsome and ambitious but naïve, Lucien is patronized by the beau monde as represented by Madame de Bargeton and her cousin, the formidable Marquise d'Espard, only to be duped by them. Denied the social rank he thought would be his, Lucien discards his poetic aspirations and turns to hack journalism; his descent into Parisian low life ultimately leads to his own death.

"Balzac was both a greedy child and an indefatigable observer of a greedy age, at once a fantastic and a genius, yet possessing a simple core of common sense," noted V. S. Pritchett, one of his several biographers. Another, André Maurois, concluded: "Balzac was by turns a saint, a criminal, an honest judge, a corrupt judge, a minister, a fob, a harlot, a duchess, and always a genius."

This Modern Library edition presents the translation by Kathleen Raine.

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