

— XIV —

THE STATUE OF DREAMS

**F**OUR months had passed. The spring had come. France mourned for Jean Laparde. Old Bidelot shook his grizzled head, and pushed away, with a curiously reproachful

motion of his hand, the mass of sketches and designs that lay upon the desk before him. If France grieved for the loss of one of her most brilliant sons, the great critic of France grieved besides for the loss of a personal friend that he had loved. Of these competitive designs that he had been appointed to judge for the statue with which France was to commemorate Jean Laparde — none would do! Not one! Not one, but was so far from the genius of Jean's own work that there seemed something mocking and incongruous in the thought that it should aspire to perpetuate and typify the work of the master-sculptor who was gone!

Not one would do — and meanwhile they besieged him, those who had submitted their designs, to cast Jean's mantle upon them! They came at all hours; they waited interminably on his door-step for him to return; they buttonholed him on the streets and in the cafés to urge their claims and to explain the allegory of their conceptions, lest some subtle beauty in their work might have escaped his eye! One would not think they would do that — eh? That it was not dignified? No? Well — there was the mantle of Jean Laparde!