

viduality. It would be of course presumptuous to offer an opinion upon the correctness of the portrait; we are told, however, that "persons of political experience and social position in France have acknowledged the general accuracy of the author's descriptions, and noticed the suggestive sagacity and penetration of his occasional comments on the circumstances and sentiments he describes."

The early part of the story exhibits France in that state of feverish unrest which immediately preceded the outbreak of the German war. The accession of Ollivier to the Emperor's councils, the attempt at grafting constitutional government upon a military despotism, the *plébiscite*, celebrated by MM. Erkmann-Chatrian, formed the prelude to the catastrophe. Meanwhile the sham nobility of the Empire, at least on the female side, were as lavish in expenditure, and as sumptuous in entertainment, as the people of Pompeii on the night when Vesuvius belched forth its ashes and engulfed them all. The speculators at the Bourse were never busier in making and losing fortunes; but in dark *ruelles* there was conspiracy brewing; democracy began to raise its head, and matters looked threatening for the Napoleonic régime. Hence the war by which the Emperor endeavoured to cut the gordian knot and to consolidate his power.

We have no intention of sketching the plot of "The Parisians," because we prefer that our readers should unravel it for themselves. It seems to us treason both to an author and to his public to emasculate a work of fiction by removing its framework and presenting it as a skeleton to the reader. It will suffice if we glance at a few of the principal characters introduced to us in the novel. The *dramatis personæ* are so numerous, and each of them is drawn with such evident care for its distinct individuality, that we must of necessity omit many that may seem worthy of separate comment. The character which chiefly, perhaps alone, lays hold of the reader's affections, is the heroine, Isaura Cicogna. The author does not catalogue her beauties, but rather suggests them in a few sentences. "Certainly the girl is very lovely—what long dark eye-lashes, what soft, tender, dark blue eyes—now that she looks up and smiles, what a bewitching smile it is!—by what sudden play of rippling dimples the smile is enlivened and redoubled! \* \* Note next those hands—how beautifully shaped! small, but not doll-like hands—ready and nimble, firm and nervous hands, that could work for a helpmate." She had been trained for the lyric stage. Her voice was "mellow and rich, but so soft that its power was lost in its sweetness, and so exquisitely fresh in every note. But the singer's charm was less in voice than in feeling—she conveyed to the listener so much more than was said

by the words, or even implied by the music." She was proud of her art, but her pride went before a fall. She had met her "fate," and that fate was an Englishman who seems, with a certain *arrière pensée*, to have also fallen in love with her. It jarred upon his sense of propriety, however, to think of taking a public singer to wife; there was another obstacle—but of that presently. The poor girl, thinking that her profession was the only hindrance to their happiness, surrendered her brilliant prospects almost without a pang. She betook herself to story writing, supplied the *feuilleton* for *Le Sens Commun* and shunned the public gaze. Her sacrifice was bootless; for her admirer saw her surrounded by the Paris Bohemians, saw one of them devoting himself to her, and was as far removed from her as before. We need not follow Isaura's fortunes; she performed more than a woman's service during the siege, and it is consolatory to find, from what was indeed the author's "Chapter the Last," that all went well in the end.

We must now glance for a moment at Mr. Graham Vane—a young English gentleman, well-educated, polished, and with more than an average fund of generous impulses. He showed his good taste in admiring Isaura both for her beauty and her accomplishments, and the soundness of his heart finally asserted itself in affection for a girl who was pure and self-sacrificing. Yet there is something about the conduct of "Garm Varn," as his friend Lemerrier called him, which we do not like. It is quite true that there was the mystery of Louise Duval pressing like a night-mare upon him; but that ought to have effectually deterred him from engaging Isaura's affection and indicating pretty plainly, though not in so many words, that it was returned. Of the Duval mystery she knew nothing; on the other hand, it haunted Vane night and day, and he made it the subject of matrimonial calculation. He knew very well, that, under certain circumstances, he could not, or at least would not, marry Isaura, and yet he kept hovering about her, without declaring his passion or disclosing his difficulties. The heroic character of the story is Victor de Mauléon, who had formerly gone into voluntary exile because of a slanderous accusation. Whether he appears as M. Lebeau the conspirator, the gentlemanly hanger-on of the *scions*, or the brave soldier who perishes by the assassinating hand of one of his old Rouge colleagues, he stands out as the most firmly and vigorously drawn personage of the story. Gustave Rameau is the type of Paris Bohemianism, delicate and feverish and extravagant in speech and writing—one of the "Lost Tribe of Absinthe." Then there are the two brothers Enguerrand and Raoul, the one a gay butterfly of fashion, the other a benevolent