

Tibullus without Delia, Catullus without Lesbia, Propertius without Cynthia, Demetrius without Lammia, who is his glory at this day?"

"Blondet talking of Demetrius in the opera house seems to me rather too strong of the *Débats*," said Bixiou in his neighbor's ears.

"And where would the empire of the Cæsars have been but for these queens?" Blondet went on; "Laïs and Rhodope are Greece and Egypt. They all indeed are the poetry of the ages in which they lived. This poetry, which Napoleon lacked—for the Widow of his Great Army is a barrack jest, was not wanting to the Revolution; it had Madame Tallien! In these days there is certainly a throne to let in France which is for her who can fill it. We among us could make a queen. I should have given La Torpille an aunt, for her mother is too decidedly dead on the field of dishonor; du Tillet would have given her a mansion, Lonsteau a carriage, Rastignac her footmen, des Lupeaulx a cook, Finot her hats"—Finot could not suppress a shrug at standing the point-blank fire of this epigram—"Vernon would have composed her advertisements, and Bixiou her repartees! The aristocracy would have come to enjoy themselves with our Ninon, where we would have got artists together, under pain of death by newspaper articles. Ninon the second would have been magnificently impertinent, overwhelming in luxury. She would have set up opinions. Some prohibited dramatic masterpiece should have been read in her drawing-room; it should have been written on purpose if necessary. She would not have been liberal; a courtesan is essentially monarchical. Oh, what a loss! She ought to have embraced her whole century, and she makes love with a little young man! Lucien will make a sort of hunting-dog of her."

"None of the female powers of whom you speak ever trudged the streets," said Finot, "and that pretty little 'rat' has rolled in the mire."

"Like a lily-seed in the soil," replied Vernon, "and she has improved in it and flowered. Hence her superiority."