

"Bixiou," said Blondet, "an *Amphitryon* is sacred for twenty-four hours before the feast and twelve hours after. Our illustrious friend is giving us a supper."

"What then?" cried Bixiou; "what is more imperative than the duty of saving a great name from oblivion, of endowing the indigent aristocracy with a man of talent? Lucien, you enjoy the esteem of the press of which you were a distinguished ornament, and we will give you our support. —Finot, a paragraph in the 'latest items'! —Blondet, a little butter on the fourth page of your paper! —We must advertise the appearance of the finest book of the age, *l'Archer de Charles IX.*! We will appeal to Dauriat to bring out as soon as possible *les Marguerites*, those divine sonnets by the French Petrarch! We must carry our friend through on the shield of stamped paper by which reputations are made and unmade."

"If you want a supper," said Lucien to Blondet, hoping to rid himself of this mob, which threatened to increase, "it seems to me that you need not work up hyperbole and parable to attack an old friend as if he were a booby. To-morrow night at Lointier's——" he cried, seeing a woman come by, whom he rushed to meet.

"Oh! oh! oh!" said Bixiou on three notes, with a mocking glance, and seeming to recognize the mask to whom Lucien addressed himself. "This needs confirmation."

He followed the handsome pair, got past them, examined them keenly, and came back, to the great satisfaction of all the envious crowd, who were eager to learn the source of Lucien's change of fortune.

"Friends," said Bixiou, "you have long known the goddess of the Sire de Rubempré's fortune: She is des Lupeaulx's former 'rat.'"

A form of dissipation, now forgotten, but still customary at the beginning of this century, was the keeping of "rats." The "rat"—a slang word that has become old-fashioned—was a girl of ten or twelve in the chorus of some theatre, more particularly at the opera, who was trained by young *roués* to