

It is sometimes encouraging on beginning a novel to be reassured by the opening pages that neither individuality of style nor character-painting is the coveted attainment of its writer. Certain well-known landmarks enable us to assume with confidence that the book will be of the genus "plot," and the historic framework in which it is set further prophesies "romantic." To enumerate a few of these symptoms; the heroines, even the sub-heroines of barmaid rank, have hands "whose whiteness no rough work ever seemed to mar." Again, the characters—the villains more especially—show a remarkable and most convenient aptitude for soliloquizing aloud. This oils the wheels of the whole machinery, enables the plot to run undisturbed on its course, and saves both the author and reader much needless trouble. This much law must be granted to *The Friend of the People*; but, that being done, it does not fail to fulfil the other part of the compact, for the plot is a good one and well worked out. The scene is laid in France at the eve of the Revolution, and the story is based on the twin-like resemblance between two men—sons of the same father—the one Maurice, Marquis de Ravignac, the other Gervais Bouchard, bastard-born of a peasant woman who on her deathbed confesses to a priest, as she thinks, but really to her son in disguise, the secret of his parentage. By the help of this information, of his likeness to his half-brother, and by a succession of very skilful villainies, Bouchard manages to step into his brother's shoes. Ravignac is conveyed away and imprisoned for four years, while his brother claims his property and his wife, who was separated from her husband on their bridal day, but manages to make good her escape from this impostor. Having attained to these heights, he wisely determines to swim with the times, drops his