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OR,

THE WICKEDEST PLACE IN THE WORLD

ITS PLEASURES AND CRIMES MYSTERIES

BY AN OLD BOHEMIAN,

Author of "Paris by Gaslight," "The Actor Assassins," etc., etc.

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OR,

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A LURID PANORAMA OF THE NIGHT LIFE OF PARIS.

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INTRODUCTION.

In "Paris by Gaslight," I had the pleasure of conducting my reader upon a trip through the highways and byways of the gayest city on the face of the earth.

And in the course of that trip I gave a brief description of one of the peculiar features of life there.

Since I penned that chapter about the Jardin Mabille it has become a thing of the past, and its story belongs to that history, some of whose most grotesque pages it fills.

In culling the following leaves from the chronicles, I am inspired by the faith that the result they apply to is almost as well known on this side the Atlantic as it was in Paris itself. Certainly, as the Frenchmen have more than once truthfully declared, the best customers it enjoyed were Americans.

"Without the American colony," a Parisian journalist recently wrote, "There would be no Jardin Mabille. It requires the gold of the Transatlantic Crœsus to keep the ball rolling for the patrons of the descendants of Pere Mabille. If he made up his mind to settle in London or Bombay, Mabille would have to follow him."

But Mabille has departed before Crœsus, and in the following pages may be read the obituary of its glories.

There are other dives in Paris besides this famous one, but none of them have the claim to consideration this one possesses. Their names are unknown to foreign ears, and if they were their histories would be too gross and commonplace to be worth recording.

But the history of the Jardin Mabille is that of Paris itself. In it may be traced the variations of the great city's life for nearly half a century, and the character of its frequenters is an index to the condition of contemporaneous society at the French capital.

If such a story is not worth reading, I am willing to confess that my judgment is at fault, and that my pen has labored in vain.

In introducing the chapters which follow, I desire it to be understood that all the characters dealt with are real ones, who have contributed their share toward making Mabille famous. It is not necessary to draw upon the imagination in dealing with this characteristic phase of Parisian vice, for the truth itself, as the reader will admit by the time he reaches the end, at least rivals the wildest fiction.

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MABILLE UNMASKED.

I.

SOME FACTS ABOUT MABILLE.

In a lecture not long since, the Rev. Henry Ward Beecher made the astounding announcement to his hearers: "I have been in Hell."

And went on to describe a visit to the Jardin Mabille. It is just about forty years since the Mabille first became one of the recognized sights of Paris. Its beginnings were of the humblest sort. An old dancing-master known as "La Pere Mabille" set up on the Allee des Veuves and the Champs Elysees a sort of semi-suburban dance-house. It was a dingy structure where to the lascivious wheezings of a fiddle and a flute, and by the light of smoking oil-lamps, the lady's maids and gentlemen's gentlemen of the Faubourg Saint Honore were wont to caper about and chase the winged hours with flying feet, at the low rate of 10 sous a head. In the winter Pere Mabille gave at the hotel d'Aligre, in the Rue Saint Honore, a series of *soirees dansantes* which, as his biographer—for he has had a biographer—delicately says, "enjoyed a certain popularity with certain people."

His sons, more enterprising than their sire, thought they saw a fortune in such an extension and modification of the paternal business as should bring to "the temple of Parisian choregraphy," to quote their advertisement, with the real demi-monde the floating population of foreigners. They finally induced him to transform the ramshackle old edifice into something more substantial and showy; to substitute gas for the oil-lamps and to provide a band.

The success which attended their efforts was unexpectedly great.

Mabille in its subsequent rise, decline and fall has marked time to the course of Parisian popular morals. It was founded in the days of the true Bohemian life of Paris as Murger lived and painted that life. Beranger was in his glory and Lisette was still a "grisette, chez Boivin." Paris was still picturesque, still the blue-gray historic Paris of the old regime and the Revolution. The great yellow monotonous

Paris of Haussmann was not even dreamt of. The working people of Paris still lived in their cozy garrets amid the opulent quarters, and the sharp lines were not drawn which now divide the quarters of labor from the quarters of capital. A rather silly song with a taking piano accompaniment first popularized Mabille even in the most respectable drawing-room:

Allons chez Mabille,
Charmant et gracieux sejour,
Tout dans cet asile,
Fuit sur les alles de l'amour.

Or in plain English:

Come, then, in Mabille,
Let us pleasantly rove,
That nook where we wheel,
On the pinions of love.

Not long after this the Jardin sprang into fame not only throughout France, but throughout all Europe, thanks to the appearance there one evening in May, 1844, of a neatly and modestly dressed young woman, as brown as a berry, with splendid black hair, whose dancing of the polka, which had been brought to Paris from Eastern Europe only four years before, and was in the full flush of popularity, attracted universal attention by reason of the fire, grace and originality which she threw into her performance, though it was evident that she knew nothing whatever of the rules of the dance.

Elise Sergent, the girl in question, who had entered the Jardin Mabille an unknown adventuress, left it a Parisian lioness. She was no longer Elise Sergent, but La Reine Pomare, a name given her by reason of her complexion, the dusky queen of the Tahiti being then a political celebrity on account of the South Sea quarrel which had so nearly involved France and England in war.

The chroniclers and the song-makers took her up. A whole pink covered library—pink was then the free flag, as yellow now is—came to life under her auspices, and among the swingers of the censer at her shrine were not only men like Romien and Nadaud, but Auguste Vitu, Theodore de Banville and Theophile Gautier himself. Poets did not disdain to strike their lyres in her praise and to rank Pomare above those stage divinities of the dance, Taglioni and Elssler.

It was apropos of Mabille and its sovereign that Gustave Nadaud

IN THE MABILLE GARDEN.

launched the first of his successful songs, a song which at least for the writers and readers of "Tout Paris" is immortal:

Pomare, Maria,
Mogador et Clara,
A mes yeux enchantes
Apparaissez, chastes divinites!

That is,

Pomare, Maria,
Mogador and Clara,
To my enchanted eyes,
Appear, ye chaste divinities!

Not even his "Two Gendarmes" are so tenacious of life as these "Reines do Mabille." Alas! Queen Pomare's downfall was so sudden as her rise had been splendid. Not satisfied with inspiring poets and artists in gardens, she must needs seek fame on the stage. She made a *debut* at the Palais Royal and failed utterly, so utterly that she was hissed, and retired to the Rue d'Amsterdam to die, at the early age of twenty-two, of a broken heart and a galloping consumption.

In his dramatization of "Nana," produced a year ago, Busnach introduced a bloated old rag-picker who had called herself Pomare. This outrage upon a tragical tradition of Paris brought upon him a stinging letter from the Countess Lionel de Chabrillan, whose "Memoirs" of Celeste Mogador have been pillaged both by Busnach and his master, Zola. Mogador was the second sovereign of the "choregraphic temple."

The Clara of the quartette celebrated by Nadaud was a little brunette, Clara Fontaine of the pays Latin, and Maria was a silk mercer's saleswoman, who finally hanged herself with a silken bell-rope, "determined to die respectably in the business." The other early celebrities of Mabille, Frisette, Feuille do Rose, Marionette (described in Monselet's "M. de Cupidon"), Rigolette, Rose Pompon, the immortal Rigolboche, Alice la Provencale, and the rest, are their names not written in the chronicles of the boulevards and in a thousand novels and memoirs?

Barthelemy has enshrined them all in a clever mock-heroic poem, wherein the highest honors are reserved for a male dancer, one of the tribe by whose ways and works Mr. Beecher was so profoundly and unfavorably impressed. This was "Brididi the unapproachable," whose

rivals were Paul Piston, Pritchard (named for the English Consul, who figured in the Tahatian business) and Chicard, the last two in private life being respectable and steady-going tradesmen. Chicard, who most nearly approached that human windmill Brididi, was a leather merchant, by name Leveque.

The last queen of Mabille in whom anything like the early interest was taken by Parisians was Fille de l'Air, the tall, the pale, the slim, who, after figuring for a brief instant as the Sarah Bernhardt of the can-can, became, we are told, an "Ophelia of the beer-mug," and, instead of rivaling the saltatory and choregraphic feats of

Pomare, Maria,
Mogador et Clara,

went in for cigarettes and conversation, affected the blue-stocking and discussed Positivism and the Pessimistic philosophy like any lady of Boston.

To this complexion had Mabille come! The lowest deep was reached last year when, on the evening of Foxhall's victory in the race for Grand Prix, the last wearer of the crown of Mabille was hailed by an assemblage of "Naturalists" with the title, worthy of Zola, of "Sewer Gas!" Well might a chronicler, recalling the glory of the genuine grisettes and the true Bohemian of the past, the fame of Rose Pompon and Mimi Pinson, of De Musset and Murger, bewail the abyss into which Paris has fallen, and look back with tearful eyes over the long and dreary descent down which the traditions of the gay metropolis have travelled!

In its heyday Mabille was an object of interest not to Parisians only but to all the world, and even to the Puritans of New England. The eminent Brooklyn divine was not the first or the only one of his family who could boast that they had "been in Hell." Mrs. Harriet Beecher Stowe visited Mabille and gave a description of it very different from that of her brother. She wrote:

"We entered by an avenue of poplars and other trees and shrubs, so illuminated by jets of gas sprinkled among the foliage as to give it the effect of enchantment. We found flower-beds laid out in every conceivable form, with diminutive jets of gas so distributed as to imitate flowers of the softest tints and the most perfect shape. In the centre there is a circle of pillars, on the top of each of which is a pot of flowers with gas-jets, and between them an arch of gas-jets. In the midst of

this is another circle forming a pavilion for musicians also brilliantly illuminated and containing a large cotillion band of the most finished performers. Around this you find thousands of gentlemen and ladies strolling singly, or in pairs, or in groups. While the musicians repose they loiter, sauntering round, or recline on seats. But now a lively waltz strikes the ear. In an instant twenty or thirty couples are whirling along, floating like thistles in the wind, around the central pavilion. Their feet scarce touch the smooth-trodden earth. Round and round, in a vortex of life, beauty and brilliancy they go, a whirlwind of delight, eyes sparkling, cheeks flushing and gauzy draperies floating by, while the crowds outside gather in a ring and watch the giddy revel. There are countless forms of symmetry and grace, faces of wondrous beauty; there, too, are feats of agility and elasticity quite ærial. One lithe and active dancer grasped his fair partner by the waist; she was dressed in red, was small, elastic, agile, and went by like the wind, and in the course of every few seconds he would give her a whirl and a lift, sending her spinning through the air, around himself as an axis, full four feet from the ground. It is a scene perfectly unearthly, or rather perfectly Parisian, and just as earthly as possible; yet a scene where earthliness is worked up into a style of sublimation the most exquisite conceivable. Aside from the impropriety inherent ir the very nature of waltzing, there was not a word, look or gesture of immorality or impropriety. The dresses were all decent, and if there was vice, it was vice masked under the guise of polite propriety."

Such was Mabille and the can-can thirty years ago, as seen through the eyes or as recorded at least by the pen of a daughter of the Pilgrims.

Let us proceed to glance in detail at this lost Paradise, in which for nearly half a century the gilded vice of the most splendid city on the face of the earth whirled away a portion of those giddy hours whose end was darkness and despair. After having found out what Mabille was, let us see what it looked like.

II.

A TRIP TO MABILLE.

Mabille is departed; its glories have faded; its thousand and one sights are among the past; no longer will its illuminated gardens resound to the merry laugh of the champagne loving siren, to the *frou frou* of her petticoats or the tac tac of her high heels; no longer will the soft word of assignation be whispered in its orange treed kiosks; no longer shall the mad, merry, naughty can-can be danced, or the whirling waltz that caused the blood to leap into flame.

No longer will the fair, frail beauties of every nation under the sun disport themselves for the admiration of gilded, giddy youth and golden wanton old age. The glories of the Mabille have faded forever. It shares the mournful fate of Cremorne, and the auctioneer's hammer has already knocked it down to the highest bidder for building lots, where respectable store keepers, and eminently stupid officials, will erect pretentious villas, or sets of those flats only to be found within the elastic walls of glittering Paris.

Yes, Mabille is a thing of the past. For many a long year it has been declining. The fall of the Empire drove the first nail into its coffin. With Napoleon's sun, set that of Mabille. The gaudy blow-fly of vicious Paris perished with the corruption it fed on.

Mabille was at its very best in 1867, the year of the Exposition. The most sumptuous costumes that Worth could boast, the costliest bonnets that Lucy Hocquet could build—*Valenciennes* lace, *poult de soie* cashmeres and diamonds—the grandest dandies from the Clubs, millionaires from Brazil, from Mexico, from California; English peers and members of Parliament, senators, deputies, diplomats, bankers, notaries, adventurers—all the Coras, the Theodoras, the Mimis, Fifines, the Messalines, all of the gay ones and great of the profligate city were to be nightly seen at the Mabille; for hundreds of yards outside the garden the roadway was choked by splendid private equipages. Grooms and porters ran hither and thither, police shouted in sturdiest

A STUDENTS' SPREE AT THE MABILLE.

tones as Monsieur le Marquis de Villemeche drove off in his tilbury to play baccarat at the Club, or as the sly little coupe of His Excellency the Mongolian minister drove up to carry His Excellency and Cora Pearl, or Leontine Valley, to supper in one of the private cabinets of the Maison Doree.

Inside the Garden Mabille how many cavaliers, how much smoking of cigarettes and flashing of gems, and changing of bright coins and crisp notes of the Bank of France. Clop! Swish goes a bottle of champagne over Leontine's dress! So much the better for Worth, so much the worse for the bank account of the blissful broker who is "protecting" her. Crac! The Valenciennes lace shawl of Bebe Saltasse is torn all to pieces by the clumsy foot of a Brazilian diamond farmer.

Where are all the frequenters now? Married and settled; emigrated; in the hospital; at the prison St. Lazare, or dead. It is only a base imitation of the real people that frequented the Mabille in late years. Many of the toilets were elegantly cut and tastefully adjusted, many of the women blazed in diamonds, and many, too many were exquisitely beautiful and fearfully attractive, but the great mass were poor, painted creatures, ranging between sixteen and sixty years of age, who paraded the circumference of the dancing platform with wondrously watchful eyes, despite their jaded and wretched mien.

Let us imagine the case of a young American visiting the Mabille for the first time—say in '79 or '80.

After having dined, and, perhaps, taken in a portion of the open air concert at the Cafe Alcazar or in the Champs Elysees, he would ride or walk up the Elysian Fields till the word *Jardin Mabille*, in glaring, glittering gas, would meet his eye. Paying five francs, he would be admitted into a gorgeously illuminated garden, the gas lamps bordering the grass in the shape of lillies, and lining half a dozen alleys, suspended in fanciful and elegant festoons from the trees. He would walk towards the dancing platform, accosted at every step by enterprising nymphs whose liberal education and ultra liberal morals had taught them to utterly disregard "no" for an answer. Arrived at the dance, and nearly blinded with the light, he would hear some mad, merry, inspiring music, and behold the can-can in all its naughty and suggestive motions, the male dancers being bilious, pimply youths, save when an amateur stepped in, some young fellow, full of fun and frolic, while the

ladies, exquisitely formed, and occasionally very pretty, might, were the American tall and provincial looking, amuse themselves and the spectators by tipping off his hat with a light touch of their daintily shod toes. Around the dancing platform he would behold a series of boxes, some of them occupied by a party consisting of a lady and a cavalier, engaged in flirtation and champagne; others by parties of four, composed of men or of women. As a matter of course, he would constantly be invited to stand treat. If he were a wise youth he would refuse point blank, since the refreshments were dispensed at rates which would be thought inordinate at Bignon or at the Cafe Anglais, and the waiter's ideas as to the *pour boires* which he should receive of the most grandiose order.

Assuming our American to be full of coin, and a trifle lonely, he would invite a fair nymph to share a bottle of champagne with him, under the impression that knowing everybody in the garden, she would enable him to pass an agreeable half an hour in a personal gossip. No such thing; the nymph, with an eye to number one, would immediately commence to sound him upon the subject of money, making a confidential communication to him in regard to a certain debt she would not let her husband know of for all the world, or that those diamonds which her protector, the viscomte, had given her, were in pawn. If the American were a gullible youth he would harken to the song of the siren, listen to a romantic and well made up story of betrayal under promise of marriage, and become an easy if not a willing victim. If made of sterner stuff he would turn a deaf ear to Madamoiselle, pay twelve francs for his bottle of wine, a franc to a smiling waiter who expected five, give the lady ten francs for another bottle of the sparkling, and repair to the dancing ring where the can-can would now be at its height, and the on-lookers for the most part considerably under the influence of wine. It would now be about eleven o'clock, and *blase*, *roue* looking men, faultlessly attired in evening dress would stroll in, either accompanied by fair frail members of the "half world," closely veiled and superbly dressed, or in male parties, having dined wisely and well at some of the swell restaurants on the Boulevards. Strangers would make their appearance, from the sallow and dark eyed Cuban, to the gawky youth who had just run over from England to take a week in Paris; from the Australian sheep farmer to the amorous and handsome Italian count. The throng of the members of

the demi-monde would momentarily increase—some in gaudy and flaunting colors, others modestly attired in black, some flashing with jewels and standing haughtily aloof, others clinging fondly to a female companion, and coquettishly refusing to be parted from her even in the dance. Each swell lady would have a score of admirers around her, both when she bandied playful words of double meaning, or took an occasional whirl at the waltz. The can-can would be at its height, the best dancers having been kept in reserve until the garden became crowded. The mad, bad, merry music would strike up and a set formed, the bilious looking men chalking the soles of their shoes and planting their high silk hats on the back of the head, the ladies coyly examining the condition of their skirts. The foreigners and country visitors and *gobemouches* would gather around, forming a wall six or seven deep, leaving a space of ten or fifteen feet for the dancers.

Bang! And the dancers would commence their wild gyrations, the men flinging their limbs about as if they did not belong to them, the women frisking their draperies in time to the music, and posturing while revealing a liberal display of lower limbs. Faster and fiercer the pace would grow, the women more madly energetic, their postures more hideously indecorus, until the final bars of the tune would be wound up in a series of acrobatic movements that would call down the *vivas* of the excited and amused spectators.

Our American would then take a stroll around the garden. Going with the tide, he would stop at a shooting gallery just as at Coney Island, and, perhaps, try his skill at a revolving stag. Of course, the young lady in attendance, would be minus change, and would, perhaps, offer him a kiss, or, perhaps, two, in lieu thereof. If he were a greenhorn he would gladly leave his coin in her hand in exchange for a substitute from a pair of cherry-painted lips, and feel exceedingly proud of having mashed this exceeding pretty and seductive young person. Fond of dancing, he might, after tasting a vermuth or a brandy and selzer, invite some partnerless nymph to the pleasures of the waltz, and a subsequent bottle of champagne. Were he gallant, he would offer to escort her home, at a cost of ten francs for a cab, and, perhaps, fifty for their little supper. The wise youth, instead of being thrown into toils, would enjoy the bright, strange, singularly strange, spectacle of the exodus from the garden at half-past twelve; watch the female spiders darting on the hapless male flies; watch gilded sin floating away

in toy broughams and open barouches; watch the hundreds of dissipated and splendidly dressed women leaping into cabs, while shrieking out *resquee* jokes to the men who would not treat them to supper; watch the mad buffoonry of some drunken member of the "half-world," as crazy with vermuth she sang snatches of ribald songs, or played horse jokes on the grinning *gobemouches* who surrounded her. Our wise American would light his cigar, and in the still summer night would stroll down the Champs Elysees to his hotel, having done the Mabille wisely and well.

The Mabille has had its glories, has had its day like any other dog. It has its histories, its strange stories of passion and crime, its tales of lovely women and of bold, bad men. The romance of the Mabille has got to be written, and it will prove of deadly fascination. During its existence how many thousands of votaries of pleasure tasted the fatal poison within its gorgeously illuminated gardens—who have had the brief moment of feverish pleasure only to perish like the moth of the bystanders who attended it.

The histories of some of the most noted daughters of Eve who made the Mabille the theatre of their exploits, shall be told in the following pages: histories full of ghastly contracts, full of those lurid lights and deadly shadows which make up the lives of those who live but for the delirious hour of passion.

III.

FIFINE POMANSAY.

Take up a Parisian paper and you will find the name of Fifine Pomansay underlined at that very fast and *chic* little theatre known as the Folies Bergere. Fifine, at whose feet to-day innumerable adorers fling bouquets and bracelets, offer up vows and bank notes for twenty thousand francs, two short years ago was one of the shining lights of the Mabille gardens. Would you like to know her history? I will tell it to you.

Three years ago Fifine did not belong to the theatre. She lived in a pretty cottage near Passy with a very charming young fellow, Maurice Beaumanoir. How fresh she was; how happy! Ah, that exquisite time of youth without care; of love without calculation!

A NAUGHTY NABOB.

I knew the young couple. I was their intimate friend, and to-day I care not to pass that little cottage, hidden away in the end of a garden under lilacs and rosebuds. She was neither elegant or a coquette at that time. She was simply loving and good, faithful and devoted, and I assure you that, with a flower in her hair and a ribbon around her waist, she was a thousand times more attractive than she is to-day with her laces, and bracelets and rings—aye, and happier, too.

I do not know what demon approached this Parisian Eve and whispered in her ear, but one day Fifine expressed to Maurice a vague sort of desire to appear on the stage. Poor girl; she surely did not know what she was saying. The theatre! She surely conceived it the very reverse of what it really is, and she naively imagined that she could inhale its vitiated atmosphere without taking any care of her lungs; she did not know that the red and white applied to the face are the poisons which penetrates into the very soul; she ignored, the silly creature, that nothing is more difficult than to remain a virtuous girl in this little wicked theatrical world, and that in the daily contact with actors, actresses and machinists, one necessarily loses, surely and rapidly, good faith, sincerity and disinterestedness.

Maurice Beaumanoir recognized the peril, but he was passionately in love. As for her, she began to tire of the fragrance of the lilacs, longing for the pungency of the "wings;" her cheeks were thirsty for pearl powder, and her ears, accustomed to songs of serious love, yearned for the mock heroic passionate declarations of the "boards."

One day, Maurice, sad and full of gloomy forebodings, went to the sub-manager of a theatre with whom he was acquainted, in order to bring Fifine under his notice. The little lady was charming, intelligent, smart as the waiting maid in a light comedy, clear as amber, as lively as a kitten. When the manager beheld those great eyes opening in astonishment at everything, the rich ripe mouth extended towards all seductions, he felt exceedingly desirous of taking this pretty girl who was so anxious to cross the Rubicon, under his wing. He presented her to the manager; he recommended her, he patronized her, and in one month from that date, half naked above and below, Fifine made her debut in a small part in which she acquitted herself creditably enough. Did Maurice assist at the debut? I should think so. Yes, he was there, his heart beating like a Nasmyth hammer—oppressed, restless and more nervous in his orchestra chair than was she on the

stage. She caught his eye as she came on, and flung her pert look and pert smile at him; this, too, with a courageous air, as though to say:

"Do not be afraid. I am not a bit nervous."

Then she played out her role with considerable intelligence, naturally with the inexperience of a first appearance, but with earnestness and liveliness. It was not a big success, nor was it a dismal failure, but the audience was satisfied.

Beaumanoir waited for Fifine at the stage door. She flung herself on his neck, intoxicated, palpitating, crying from happiness, and saying to him, with a thousand kisses:

"I played only for you. I only saw you. Are you satisfied with me?"

I was there, the friend of this interesting couple, and Fifine, already an actress, turning to me, stretched out her hand, and said:

"You will give me a little notice, won't you?"

I gave her the notice, which appeared in the journal I was then engaged upon, on the next morning. Fifine discovered it, and bought twelve copies, each at a different book-stand, for the purpose of reading *her* article. Foolish creature? How happy she was, and Beaumanoir, enchanted, squeezed my hand, calling me his best firiend.

Their life continued, but it was not the same. The daily intimacy was broken. Fifine had already become absorbed in new ideas. She rehearsed during the day, she played in the evening, and when Maurice spoke of love to her she replied by phrases from genteel comedy. These two souls no longer sang in the same key, and Fifine's ideas were a long way from the little cottage. The terrible poison of the theatre was in her veins, and was actively corroding. As for Beaumanoir, he became utterly sad; he felt the peril; he saw this woman, little by little, detaching herself from him; he felt himself becoming jealous, but he did not speak of it, and he redoubled his attentions to Fifine, whom he adored all the more because she gave him less. The human heart is thus strangely constructed. At the expiration of two months they had a quarrel about nothing. It was the first, and Fifine perceived that her toilet was not handsome enough. At the theatre all the ladies were better dressed than she, and she was ashamed of being so shabby. Beaumanoir bled at every pore in order to purchase a charming costume for her. Then came the hat and the gloves.

One day she absolutely needed a pair of Ferry's celebrated shoes, "because the ladies of the theatre invariably dealt there." Maurice bought them at Ferry's, and Fifine was happy.

Beaumanoir became more depressed still—he felt how futile were his efforts; he knew perfectly well that he could not struggle against so many seductions and so many requirements; he felt, too, above all, that his mistress every day became more indifferent and more cold. And the agony of their love continued.

What was passing in the brain of Fifine? I do not know, and I do believe that she still loved Maurice; but pretty as she was, a coquette in every drop of her veins, worried on all sides, assailed by a thousand seductions, she weakened, and the love gradually disappeared before the offers of luxury, daily increasing in richness and splendor, offered on their knees by the most importunate adorers.

The first of January, 1880, arrived, and if you remember, it was the day that the first bank notes printed on blue paper were issued. On the evening before a servant waited upon Fifine with a letter from his master the banker, and Fifine had opened it, but she had showed it to Beaumanoir, who, in a fit of violent passion, burned it, while exacting her promise that she would not respond to it.

On New Year's day at three o'clock, the lover being away, the valet returned, arrayed in gorgeous livery, and Fifine received him. He brought her, on behalf of his master, a pocket book lined in blue, which she opened with a trembling hand. It contained twenty-five notes of a thousand francs each, all brand new.

The servant waited, the carriage was at the door, and Maurice was away. Fifine hesitated an instant, then, with a rapid gesture, she put on her hat, flung a last, but not a lingering look by any means, around her, the parting glance of an ungrateful and selfish girl, and said to the valet:

"Let us go!"

When Beaumanoir returned the house was empty, and in the evening a porter brought him a letter, the usual and eternal letter of faithless mistresses, which Hortense Schneider sang so deliciously in the *Pericole*.

Three days after I was at the opera. Patti sang in the *Barber of Seville*, and there, in a private box on the first tier, I percieved Fifine, alone, attired in a dress of carnation velvet, with a pearl collar around

her neck and diamonds worthy of the ex-Empress Eugenie in her ears. She let just one frigid glance drop on me, her former friend, but she cut me dead.

Beaumanoir nearly died of this abandonment, and for six months was inconsolable. But everything passes away, even the greatest griefs. He has been cured of this unhappy love, and has never seen Fifine since. He is one of the editors of a celebrated paper, but he never mentions her name. For him the beautiful and *chic* woman is dead.

Alas, Fifine! To-night I see you at the Mabille gardens, whither you repair so often with your banker lover. I shall think of the many delightful hours I spent in your society at the little cottage at Passy, where Maurice Beaumanoir was all the world to you, and you were what you cannot be again—a light-hearted and happy girl.

IV.

MABILLE! THE MABILLE BALL!!

Enervating word, at once fatal and charming, a word that sets youthful imaginations madly on fire! What an Eden it is painted by—those who have not been there! What a promised land, and how it flames in the brains of gilded youths, and of giddy, fascinating girls—this garden, this scene of enchantment, whose fame and seductions are known all over the world.

I remember how, many years ago, when residing in a distant province, this word alone would plunge me into interminable reveries, my eyes mechanically fixed upon some newspaper, I dwelt for hours arrested by the little advertisement that announced a Saturday night festival.

Sprightly and young I could perceive through the rose fogginess of my thoughts a something, I knew not what, of marvellous and supernatural, glorious in color, resplendent in light, full of delicious harmonies, and of a thousand mingled perfumes. This unknown garden assumed colossal proportions in my mind, I imagined it some luxurious Babylon, brilliant, dazzling with columns of porphyry, inhabited by women—they always creep up in youthful day dreamings—beautiful as angels, and of men rich as sultans. This pandemonium revolved

THE MABILLE BALL.

before my ravished eyes, an endless succession of bewildering delights, intoxicated with a pleasure and voluptuousness as indefinable as it was delightful. And this vision always increased in vividness and intensity, becoming so absorbing, so palpable, so real, that the illusion completely carried me away. I flung aside the newspaper, and my heart throbbing, my eyes full of tears, I almost cried aloud:

"Do take me, also, and let me enter this paradise of delight. Let me put my lips to this enchanted cup!"

When the crisis had passed I would awake to find myself what I was, an insignificant provincial, poor and unknown, and buried three hundred leagues away from the object of my cherished dreamings. How miserable I was, and how cloudless and sad my life appeared in comparison with the existence I had conjured up in day dreams. How I bewailed my position and the province that was so ignorant of all that was so temptingly delightful. I was a fool. Later on I became initiated. I had passed the gilded gates enclosing the famous Mabille. Ah, how far short of my expectations it fell; how much more splendid I had imagined it; how much larger, more luxurious and desirable. The adorable women were painted and vulgar; the handsome men were ugly and brutes; the "starry-eyed" lights, as I termed them in my poetic ravings, were but jets of gas. I quitted the garden that night angry and sad, and this impression was so lasting that it was more than a year ere I could be induced to enter the famous garden again. I ate of the apple as it was extended to me by the beautiful little white hand of a very charming girl.

The recollection of my first disillusion recalls an amusing adventure which happened at the Mabille ball in the year 1879.

Monsieur Fotier was very intimate with the manager of this establishment, Monsieur Victor Mabille, since dead. Their intimacy was so close that a card signed by Fotier passed the bearer into the garden. It was as the autograph of Rothschild—the name of Fortier at the ball was one of those notes which are instantly paid in gold. No matter who presented the card it was an "Open Sesame;" it was a veritable bank note.

Among the pensioners of the Saint Perene hospital was a charming old lady named Madame Francois. She was seventy years of age, small, round, slight, always gay, always laughing; in fact, Madame Francois was one of the most delightful dames it was possible to meet.

No infirmities, bright as a new *sou*, alert as a girl of fifteen and sharp as a pin, Madame Francois was for a long period in the service of Monsieur Fotier. She had nursed him as a child, she had almost reared him; when old age came she philosophically retired to the Saint Perene hospital, happy and tranquil, as is the feeling of good old people whose lives has been pure and untinged by remorse.

Naturally Madame Francois had not forgotten her former employer; to her Monsieur Fotier was always a baby whom she invariably caressed and occasionally lectured as she would a spoiled child.

I have stated that Madame Francois was happy; this is not true. Madame Francois had a speck in the blue of her sky, a cloud in her horizen; she had an eager desire, nourished during thirty years, and having arrived at the end of her career this unaccomplished desire had assumed the proportions of a fixed idea. Madame Francois had never been to a Mabille ball.

At length the good lady could restrain herself no longer. She arrived one morning at the house of Monsieur Fotier, very neatly attired, a handsome white cap on her head. She told Monsieur Fotier what it was that she required, who could not restrain himself from laughing.

"A Mabille ball, Mother Francois! At your age to think of such a thing!"

The old lady became quite sad.

"You see, my child," she said, "I have been wanting to go to one for forty years, and I would not like to die without having been there. They say it is so splendid. Give me a ticket, I beg and entreat of you."

She seemed so much in earnest, and the idea appeared to be laden with so much pleasure, that Monsieur Fotier took one of his visiting cards and wrote the irresistible "Open Sesame."

"There, Mother Francois," he said, "be happy; go to the Mabille. You will give this card to the man at the entrance and he will allow you to pass in."

"Could I bring another with me," timidly demanded Madame Francois, desirous of allowing some of her companions in Saint Perene to share her happiness.

"Certainly, Mother Francois."

"Then I shall bring Madame Putois. She will be delighted."

AFTER THE MABILLE BALL.

"Bring Madame Putois by all means, Mother Francois."

Next evening Madame Francois and Madame Putois, who wore a coquettish cap overflowing with ribbons, went to the ball. It was Saturday, a *fete* night. It is scarcely necessary to say that they amused themselves to the uttermost, for the two old ladies returned to the hospital, their eyes wide open from admiration and astonishment.

They told wonderful and enthusiastic stories of what they had seen; they spoke in glowing terms of the toilets, of the orchestra, of the lights and fireworks, that in two hours there was not a pensioner in Saint Perine but was crazy to go to the Mabille.

Assailed by prayers and requests Madame Francois, who was a good soul and could not say "no," promised every one of them.

"I will tell my son," this was Monsieur Fotier; "he will give me a pass and I will bring you."

In accordance with this promise, on the following Saturday Madame Francois presented herself to Monsieur Fotier. After the usual salutations the worthy dame came to the grand question:

"I came to tell you, my child, that this Mabille ball is so beautiful I want to go again."

"Ha! ha! Mother Francois," interrupted Monsieur Fotier, laughing, "I see that you still take stock in worldly pleasures."

"Well," said the dame, "everybody has their own ideas, and it would be very good of you to give me another pass—you know a little piece of white paper, as large as that. You see it will give me great pleasure, more than you think. Won't you give it to me?"

Monsieur Fotier could not possibly resist so pressing an entreaty and again wrote the "Open Sesame" on a visiting card, which he handed to the eager little lady, who took it and thanked him. She stopped on the threshold, and coming back, said:

"Tell me, can't I bring some one with me as before."

"Oh, yes, Mother Francois," unsuspectingly replied Monsieur Fotier, "bring some one with you."

These imprudent words were regretted later on by Monsieur Fotier.

Chance so arranged matters that he himself turned into the ball on that particular evening. He had scarcely, however, put his foot in the garden when shouts, and *vivas* and shrieks of laughter were heard from the dense crowd surrounding the circular dancing platform.

There was, as I say, an immense crowd, people mounted on chairs and tables, who yelled, and screamed, and roared "Bravo." It was an indescribable tumult, deafening, enough to cause the walls of the neighboring buildings to shake on their foundations. Monsieur Fotier approached, glided into the crowd, wriggled his way to the front.

What a sight met his eye!

In the dance enclosure, at the foot of the orchestra, and under the blinding lights of ten thousand jets of gas, thirty old men and women were grouped. They were a collection of curiosities, the women in costumes and caps of another and a bygone period; the men leaning upon crutched canes, all wearing hospital wooden shoes—in a word, in garments fearfully at variance with the glittering surroundings of the Mabille. Two men and two women belonging to this strange group formed a quadrille. Forgetting the "ice of age" they danced, these four old people, displaying quaint grace and octogenarian nimbleness. It was an irresistibly grotesque sight. Around the quadrille party the pensioners of Saint Perene formed a circle, clapping their hands and beating time with head and foot to encourage the dancers.

A single glance explained everything to Monsieur Fotier. One of the two old women who danced, she who was the most remarkable for her agility and the vigor of her caperings, was Madame Francois; opposite to her, Madame Putois. Monsieur Fotier stood stupified, not knowing whether to laugh or to be seriously angry, when he was touched on the shoulder. He turned, and found himself face to face with the proprietor, Monsieur Victor Mabille, who, white with rage, drew him swiftly apart.

"Tell me, Monsieur Fotier, what all this means? What collection of vile characters is this? They tell me that it is you who have admitted all this crowd. Do you want to ruin me, or are you mad? Do you take my ball to be a charity hop at the Saint Perene hospital? Do you wish to deprive me of my clients?"

What excuse could he offer? Monsieur Fotier was so overwhelmed by surprise that he allowed himself to be dragged by the proprietor like a helpless mouse to the box office. There they presented him with his visiting card, the word "Admit" standing out like the writing on the wall.

"Do you deny it," cried Mabille. "Is this not your handwriting?"

"I deny nothing," at length replied Monsieur Fotier. "This card is mine, and this "Admit" is my writing, but a thousand thunders, I never intended that it should pass in thirty people. I gave this card to an old dame of my acquaintance, but I never intended her to bring the entire hospital."

The superintendent then explained that at seven o'clock, even before the gas was lighted, a troop of old people of both sexes arrived, led by an old lady who had presented the "Admit" of Monsiur Fotier. The superintendent had hesitated before admitting so large a crowd on a single "admit," but the old woman had, on the other hand, so vigorously insisted, and knowing the esteem in which Monsieur Mabille held Monsieur Fotier, he did not presume to refuse the permission.

Just fancy the anger of Monsieur Fotier. The tumult in the ball increased and assumed the proportions of a disturbance. Monsieur Mabille and Monsieur Fotier sought a pretext by which they could rapidly, and without giving them offense, get rid of the old people, whose presence was a veritable scandal, since all the princesses of the "half-world" were now pouring in.

In five minutes the Saint Perene detachment, wearied with pleasure, blinded by the light, and harassed by fatigue, departed in triumph. Madame Francois leaned upon the arm of the octogenarian with whom she had danced, and the old gentleman, his head high in air, his step resolute, and bearing all the trace of what had once been a very fine young fellow, passed his lady through the wicket with a bow that would have done honor to the Tuilleries.

Monsieur Fotier let the silly troop file past without endeavoring to stop them. As the cortege disappeared in the distance he registered a solemn vow never to write the word "Admit" under any circumstances or pretentions whatever.

Some days after he was met by Monsieur Mabille on the Boulevard des Italiens.

"I hope," said Mabille, with a laugh, "that you are not going to favor me this evening with the company of your friends of Saint Perene."

"Ah, fear nothing on that score," replied Monsieur Fotier; "I was this morning at the funeral of my poor nurse, Madame Francois. She will never again ask me for a pass to visit the Mabille. She died of apoplexy the day after the ball."

Madame Francois died happy. She had attended a ball at the Mabille.

V.

THE PEARL OF THE MABILLE.

The difference between the balls at the Tuilleries and the balls at the Mabille lay in the fact that the Mabille balls were the more respectable of the two. After the war with Italy all the schemers attached to the Prussian Court invaded the drawing-rooms of the Emperor and Empress, and they became so numerous after Sadowa that the Emperor was no longer master of his own palace. At the time of the Carnival, the fancy balls at the Tuilleries wore an Oriental appearance worthy of Madame Angot. The language of the guests was as uncloaked as were the shoulders and bosoms of the princesses of the Empire. There was no difference between the princesses at the Tuilleries and the queens at the Mabille. Plain speaking was the fashion at Court as in the garden.

This famous ball at the Tuilleries will be long remembered; where the Empress, naked to the knees, attended as Diana at the Chase; the Princess of Solmaux as a butterfly; Madame Forteroy as a Bacchante; Madame de Poulet as Venus; the young wife of Marshal Bazaine as Hebe. The quadrille, too, caused a sensation, for a general officer danced some steps of the can-can after such a fashion as to cause the chaste Diana to blush, especially when the gallant warrior was fondled by the butterfly and the bacchante. The Emperor, in spite of his taciturn air, was a very lascivious man. Nothing charmed him more than obscene burlesque. Never did he laugh so much as one night he beheld Bismarck behave in a manner suggestive of indecency in the middle of the quadrille at the Tuilleries. A stranger to the art of the celebrated Mabille male dancer, Brididi, the wise chanceller, the grave diplomat, found it a matter of tremendous difficulty to keep pace with the can-can frisking officer of the Empire and the gyrations of the half naked ladies.

The Italian Duchess, a spy of Prussia, never missed a Tuilleries ball, or any ball, either, whither she went with a lace veil impossible to penetrate. The Baron Dupine, who had more spirit but less heart

A MABILLE SUPPER PARTY.

than the Marquis de Boissy, was a great personage at these fancy balls, saying and doing exactly as it pleased him. On a night that the baron admired, after his own peculiar fashion, the brilliant and giddy crowd at the fancy ball, he perceived the spy Duchess, who was a most magnificent woman, vaguely surrounded by clouds of green gauze and nude to the equator of the corsage, which was trimmed with shells, pearls and coral.

"What a superb costume," cried the baron. "What character do you impersonate, Duchess?"

"I am the tide," she modestly answered.

"At low water," retorted the baron.

The reign of the bastard princes who created the Empire for the purpose of paying their debts, was also the reign of kept women.

The rage of that period was the young lady who, by the aid of beauty and effrontery, had raised herself from the gutter to the dignity of diamonds, laces, glittering equipages, powdered fortmen, boxes at the opera and at the race course, and who had at her beck a crowd of gilded youth and golden age. How many sons of noble families were crushed beneath the chariot wheels of these courtesans, to wind up their debauched existences in the police dock and the ignominy of the prison?

One of these famous queens of the demi-monde, a young lady whose diamonds were the envy of the half-world who frequented the Mabille, came to a tragic end. Everybody knew Madamoiselle Montgomery. She was known as the "Pearl of the Mabille." She was one of the most perfect blondes it is possible to conceive, with the complexion of a blush rose, her hair being absolutely molten gold, while her figure was rich ripe, being bewitchingly *svelte*. After having dragged in her train a crowd of adorers, the Pearl one night at the Mabille met with a handsome young Englishman, whose name was Walter Brackenbury, a cousin of Major-General Brackenbury, V. C., the bosom friend of the Prince of Wales. Young Brackenbury was about twenty years of age, and as handsome as a Greek god. He had entered the banking house of Dinden Feres, of the Place de la Bourse, and in order to satisfy the whims of his mistress, as extravagant as she was beautiful and passionate, in an evil moment forgot that the cash of Dinden Feres did not belong to him, and he made use of it. Jules Dinden, who was a very fast man, was also in the glamour of the Pearl

and this woman, in order to save Brackenbury, whom she loved with a love that knew no limit, accused herself of the theft, and absolutely went to prison for it.

On emerging from the prison, after having completed her term, the Pearl sought the man for whom she had sacrificed so much, but he had quitted Paris. Sir William Brackenbury had recalled him to England in order to marry the daughter of Mr. George Fenwick, an immense heiress. Brackenbury, to do him justice, was still devotedly attached to the woman who had so nobly interposed between him and shame, and his remorse was intensified when he learned that she had emerged from the prison in which, had he been a true man, he should be still engaged in putting in his sentence. He came to Paris some days before his marriage, found her out, and told her that although from interested motives he was about to marry Miss Fenwick, that he still adored her.

The Pearl of the Mabille went into a paroxysm of rage, then became calm and tranquil. One evening—the evening before that on which he was to leave for London in order to be married—Brackenbury, on entering the Pearl's apartment, found her dead. She had committed suicide.

Overwhelmed with grief, Brackenbury was still kneeling beside the lifeless body, which he covered with kisses, when a hand was laid upon his shoulder. On looking up, he found that the hand belonged to a gen'darme, who said:

"I arrest you, sir. You will be good enough to follow me to the Prefecture of Police."

The Pearl had dealt her faithless lover a death blow. In a letter to the Prefecture, which was all blotted with tears, and between the transports of passion that led to her suicide, the Pearl of the Mabille confessed her devouring passion, the agony of rage that assailed her in coming face to face with the hideous fact of Brackenbury's marriage, by denouncing her lover as a thief. She recounted the circumstances under which she had received the money stolen by her lover from Monsieur Dinden. She avowed that she had committed perjury in the police court, on account of her lover.

"Now," she wrote, "that I have been abandoned by the perfidious wretch I will set my mind right. I will tell her all. She is too good a woman to marry such a poltroon and thief." In conclusion she

assailed her lover by the most opprobious epithets of contempt and hatred, bidding him adieu in the two words, "Assassin! Robber!"

Walter Brackenbury was taken to the Prefecture. Pale, crushed, heartbroken, he was sentenced to eight months' imprisonment with hard labor. His marriage was broken off, and he had the imaginary ghost of his victim by his bedside, where, after two months' incarceration, he died of—the physicians could not tell what.

Theresa, the famous singer of very risky songs, was, we might say, born in the Mabille. By her Centaur voice and peculiar movement of the lips, she became the idol of the gommeaux, or "mashers," not only of the Mabille concerts, but also of the concerts in the Champs Elysees. This star of the Mabille possessed an audacity and effrontery impossible to describe. She would utter the most indecent phrases, her face wearing the innocent expression of a little school-girl reciting her first verse. The students, drummers and sub-lieutenants of the Army of Africa who frequented the Mabille would listen to no one else, and the consequence was that Theresa, who used gladly to sing a dozen songs of a night for a five franc piece, refused to open her mouth at the Mabille under thousands of francs.

The Mabille balls began modestly enough. The Mabille garden was used as a place of assignation by ladies who regarded the marriage vow as a mere "word of mouth" business, and by amorous young gentlemen, who repaired thither during the daytime to smoke cigarettes and sip absinthe in its cosy and secluded bowers. The first male dancer of note who figured at the Mabille was Chicard, who for a wager leaped from the balcony at the Grand Opera into the middle of the parquet. Chicard was somewhat advanced in life when he commenced those wild gyrations, those mad, merry antics which are peculiar to that naughty dance known as the can-can.

To him succeeded Bridid, who was for many years the king of the Mabille. It was Bridid who brought out those wonderfully active and supple young ladies, Pomare and Mogader, either of whom during the performance of the can-can could kick off the hat of a six foot four man; as witness the occasion when "Fred" Burnaby, of the Guards, accompanied by the Prince of Wales and Lord Newry, had his hat tipped off six times in succession by the toes of those acrobatic and boneless nymphs. Chicard had large shoulders, the moustache of a Baron of old, and was as grave as a mustard pot, dancing as though he

regarded it in the light of a severe duty. Bridid wriggled like an eel, and executed movements of so limp and extraordinary a nature as to cause the bystanders to cry out, half in alarm, half in admiration. Ordinarily, Chicard and Bridid, accompanied by a one-armed personage whom they called Manchot, would perform two dances during the evening, but on fete nights and gala occasions they danced all the time. The Prince of Wales has left London by 10 A. M. to reach Paris at 11 P. M., for the purpose of seeing these wonderful dancers perform the can-can, returning by the 2 A. M. express.

Le Manchot, who prepared the lady dancers for their first appearance at the Mabille, died a millionaire.

Three young fellows of high birth and ample fortunes, and whom the frequenters of the garden named the "Three Musketeers," caused a special sensation one season at the Mabille. They danced the can-can in so wild yet so graceful a manner as to win the plaudits of the oldest habitues of the place, and they never allowed a night to pass without dancing for exactly one-half hour. The elder is to-day one of the most prominent brokers on the Bourse, and the youngest a lawyer of considerable position. They will doubtless mourn the destruction of the garden in which they frisked and frolicked after so wondrous a fashion only twenty years ago. To the second of these acrobatic sons of the dance, the world owes The Lady of the Camelias. Yes, his bright particular partner in the can-can, the lady whose agility was only equalled by the perfection of form of those members which are usually concealed from vulgar gaze, was the woman whom Alexander Dumas, junior, has immortalized in his fascinating novel, and whom we have all seen on the stage in the drama of Camille.

Before coming into possession of the magnificent house in the Rue d'Autin Marguerite Gautier was selling roasted chestnuts at the Pont Neuf, her stand being particularly unpretentious, if not unsavory, and patronized by the lowest gamins who crowd the bridge. She made her first appearance at the Chaumiers Saturday night ball, where her beauty eclipsed that of Clara Fontaine. She disappeared from the Pont Neuf to shine in the half-world, which she never quitted save for the next. The romance and history of her life, of her illness, of her death, are too well known to dwell upon. But it is not generally known that she was at one time one of the most daring dancers of the can-can at the Mabille.

A CARNIVAL OF FUN.

(From "Paris By Gaslight.")

VI.

AUNT MALAGA.

One of the most remarkable characters connected with the Mabille was Aunt Malaga. She was a usurer who used to loan money at sixty-five per cent.—sometimes a hundred—to the ladies of the half-world who were in the habit of frequenting this terrible haunt of vice.

Aunt Malaga was wealthy. She had almost abdicated her sex in her triple avocations of the claque at the theatre in the Mabille, seller of tickets—a speculator, in fact—and money lender. From the moment that she became head of the claque, she commenced lending small sums to dramatic authors, in addition to loaning large sums on the diamonds and dresses of the painted moths who fluttered around the candle that was ultimately to destroy them. As to the female dancers and actresses at the Mabille, she loved them. She boasted of having set them up; of having given them counsel and money and of having introduced them to gentlemen who subsequently became their devoted friends and protectors.

In the Mabille Aunt Malaga was a power. She would never speak to a second-class member of the half-world, and would only be seen with the be-diamonded dames whose infamy was the talk of Paris. She knew every one of them by their true names, their history, their resources, their expectations; and Aunt Malaga has been known to lend five thousand francs to a debutante, in order to give her a good start in the hideous profession which was in the near future to drag her down to a dishonored and premature grave.

Aunt Malaga was now about fifty-five, tall, thin, with an eagle eye, a nose like a beak, a large mouth, sporting a moustache that many a dragoon cornet would give five years of his life for, and a square chin, denoting a will of steel. The well-known liking that Aunt Malaga entertained for the dancers and actresses of the Mabille, as well as her usury and wealth, rendered her a noted character. She was ever at her post, and on a gala night would reserve the best places in the theatre for persons whom she knew were bound to come, and to pay her anything she was pleased to ask for the seats: gay young fellows

from the Jockey and Mouton Clubs, accompanied by their fair enslavers, bankers, brokers, and that class of the Parisian world.

Latterly, Aunt Malaga took to male attire, and in the season of 1878 she presented to her clients a young woman, also attired as a cavalier, whom she called her niece. This niece, she explained, was to succeed her at the Mabille, and by means of interest at Court she obtained permission from the Bureau of Public Morals for the young lady to wear masculine garments while in the Mabille garden. But Aunt Malaga, on account of her relations with actresses of the Mabille, who were only actresses in name, came to be suspected by the police, aud after some careful inquiries it was found that this infamous woman was carrying on the trade of purchasing very young girls and selling them, body and soul, to white-headed old roues—scoundrels whose tottering limbs and labored breathings spoke, trumpet-tongued, of the near approach of the King of Terrors—Death. An agent of the Bureau of Public Morals beheld Aunt Malaga one day in the Palais Royale introduce an old gentleman of eighty to a hardened but pretty girl of thirteen or thereabouts, but as Aunt Malaga had disappeared, leaving the satyr to improve the acquaintanceship, the agent had no tangible evidence before him. Aunt Malaga possessed the tact of being always hidden behind the curtains. She seemed to possess a marvellous knack of avoiding the grip of the police, and it was cnly when she went to the Prefecture to denounce others who were occupied in this nefarious traffic, that it became observed that her philanthropy was only put in motion as a safeguard. This woman, by the aid of money, procured a most extraordinary influence over a certain vicious element in Paris, and if a man of prominence or a lady of position got into a scrape, a thousand francs to Aunt Malaga amply repaid the expenditure.

On two occasions, however, Aunt Malaga got tripped up by the police. One day a young author, richer in hope than in ability, solicited a loan from Aunt Malaga, offering as security a dramatic piece from his pen, about to be produced at the theatre in the Mabille.

"I have no doubt but that you possess talent," she said, "and I have no doubt of your honesty; but neither your talent or your honesty are sufficient security for the money you propose to borrow of me. If, however, you were to collaborate with some author in whom I have confidence, I would have no hesitation in advancing you the money."

The young author expressed himself very willing to collaborate

THE LONG AND SHORT OF IT.
[*From "The Fast Men of America."*]

with any *litterateur* whom Aunt Malaga would name, and was told to call next day.

The author was punctual.

"I have found a person whom I have every confidence in," said Aunt Malaga, "a lady."

"A lady!"

"Yes."

"But I—"

"Do you object to collaborate with a lady?"

"On the contrary, but is she clever? Can she write dramatically? Does she understand theatrical art?"

"She is quite a novice. If she were experienced and had achieved name and fame, do you imagine she would consent to write with you? She is not in the flush of her first youth, but she is very brilliant and a good fellow in the best acceptation of the term. Come to the Mabille to-night. You shall have admittance to her box, 3 box, and then, I have no doubt that you can arrange plots, situations, and all the rest of it."

The author, rather pleased than otherwise to work with an elderly lady, as he was devotedly attached to a little actress of the Vaudeville, repaired to the box at the Mabille, and was received by a veiled lady.

"Have I the honor of addressing Madame—" here he paused, for Aunt Malaga had omitted to give the lady's name.

"Madame Louise. You are Monsieur de Cletin. Aunt Malaga has spoken to me about you. You are a very brilliant writer. Is it not so?"

Young Cletin entered into conversation with the lady, and at once led up to the object of the interview. He found, however, that Madame Louise very much preferred talking over more tender subjects, and when after partaking of a glass of champagne provided by Aunt Malaga, that the fair one became rather more demonstrative in her conduct than was absolutely essential to the role of writing a comedy or even a drama.

Cletin, who, as has been told, was true as steel to little Gabrielle Skey, since married to the Viscount de Maureine, turned the deaf ear to the tendernesses of the lady, and seeing that simple remonstrance was of no avail, very bluntly informed her that Aunt Malaga had promised to lend him money on condition of his collaborating with

her nominee, and that as far as his heart and senses were concerned, he begged to state that they could only be controlled by another.

He had got thus far when a violent scuffling was heard at the entrance to the box, the door burst open, and two gentlemen leaped in, followed by a detective and Aunt Malaga.

"I charge this vile woman," cried the elder of the gentlemen, "with entering into a conspiracy to entrap my grandmother, the Countess of Piremont, into a marriage with this infamous scoundrel," pointing to Cletin; "and as for you, Madame," turning to the lady, "your dotage must prove the excuse for shutting you up where no such abominable go-betweens as this woman, or such blackguards as this creature can reach you."

The old Countess fainted. Her veil was drawn aside—she was wrinkled, old, haggard, and eighty years of age.

Cletin sprang to his feet, and in forcible and indignant language explained the trap into which he had so innocently stepped. His story was instantly credited, apologies tendered, and Aunt Malaga handed over to the tender mercies of the Bureau of Public Morals. On this occasion Aunt Malaga got off by paying a fine; on the second she did not escape so easily, since she brought herself within the grim shadow of the guillotine.

One morning, at Asnieres, the police discovered in the corner of an uninhabited house belonging to Aunt Malaga, the body of a woman who had been assassinated, and close beside it that of a man killed by a pistol bullet. The girl, who wore men's clothes at the Mabille—the girl who had acted as private secretary to the arch usurer, and passed as her niece—and this dead woman were one and the same. The lifeless man close to her was recognized as one of the leading dancers of the can-can at the Mabille. The apartment was stained with blood from the floor to ceiling. The girl's breast was covered with poniard stabs, their depth and number revealing the terrible passion of the murderer. Everything indicated that a fearful struggle had taken place between the woman and her lover. The man lay stretched at full length, his mouth open, struck by a ball right in the heart. It was supposed that, madly excited by jealousy, this man had assassinated the girl, then overwhelmed by the act of murder, had offered up his worthless life in expiation.

Aunt Malaga was called upon by the magistrates to explain the

double murder in her house. When she was brought into the apartment containing the bodies of the victims, she flung herself passionately upon that of her pretended niece in a paroxysm of grief. She embraced the corpse with frenzy. She stalked round the dead body like a wild beast, casting looks of furious defiance at those who offered to remove her. Then she walked straight up to the body of the man, spurned the corpse with her foot with a triumphant air, which seemed to say:

"If he has snatched her away from me whom I loved as much as he did, she who could only live for him, while I only wanted to live for her, I have at least dealt vengeance to the man who has robbed me of my happiness."

She declared to the magistrate that in her absence her niece, having outwitted her vigilance, had received the young man. This young man, enraged at being unable to obtain the aunt's consent to his marriage, had killed his sweetheart that she might not be given to another, and then, overcome with remorse, he had slain himself on the body of his victim.

It was impossible, despite the bad antecedents of Malaga, to discredit this very plausible story. It was proved, in the course of the inquest, that at the time of the double murder Malaga was at the Mabille. During her daily absences her niece did not quit the house at Asnieres.

So, Malaga, who had been arrested, was set free, and the story of love and jealousy, as told by her, was readily believed. Later on, however, the true history revealed itself.

Aunt Malaga had suspected the *liason* of her niece and watched her movements. Being a woman of the most deadly and vindictive passions, she resolved upon destruction of the girl whom, in the savagery of her nature, she loved with a frenzied, wild beast love. She caused, with the aid of one of the creatures of the Mabille, a tunnel to be excavated from her house to this uninhabited one, where the lovers were in the habit of meeting, and this completed, awaited her victims. The niece fell beneath the dagger, the lover by the pistol. The deed once accomplished, Aunt Malaga closed up the subterranean passage, trusting to the stupidity of justice to clear her of all complicity of the crime.

She succeeded to the very extent of her desire—not a soul suspected her. The secret was so well kept that it remained buried while

she lived. It was only when she herself was found dead, seated in a bower in the Mabille garden, and engaged in making up her usurious accounts, that her accomplice confessed to all.

VII.

POOR MADAME GENLIS.

I was standing, one lonely night in September, watching the mad, merry dancing at the Mabille, when my friend, Alphonse Jolibien, who knows everybody and everything in Paris, suddenly nudged me.

"Do you see that little lady, that delicious little brunette leaning on the arm of that fat, jovial-looking military man, like a young bride after a week's honeymoon?"

"Yes; who is she?"

"That's poor Madame Genlis."

"Poor! How do you mean?"

"It's a strange story. Take a good look at her and at him, and we will go over to yonder bower and polish off a bottle of champagne frappe."

I took a good look at the little lady. She was dressed in the highest fashion, in black and yellow, diamonds glittered in her ears, and a superb cross of the same gems hung from her shapely neck. Her eyes were large, almost too large, and as black as night, the lashes long and sweeping. The nose was short and *retroussee*, the mouth ripe, full and sensual. Her black hair was cut short. Her figure would have made Jupiter again false to Juno.

Jolibien having ordered the wine, we sat down, and lighting fresh cigars, he commenced:

"That is poor Madame Genlis. She is adorable," kissing the tips of his fingers in amorous rapture as he spoke. "She is as well known in the Mabille as Aunt Malaga, who lends money at sixty-five per cent. She never misses a night, and you shall see her dance. Her little feet go tip, tip, tip, scarcely touching the floor. Oh! she is adorable," and again Jolibien threw a kiss in the direction in which Madame Genlis still stood.

"Why is she called poor?"

"You shall hear. It is a strange, very strange, story. She is married to Jules Genlis, the editorial writer on the *Moniteur*. She is one of the most striking examples of unmerited misfortune it is possible to pick out. She is of noble family, and rich. She is an orphan, and at sixteen was left mistress of a certain considerable sum of money. Her guardian proposed ten different alliances, one, if possible, more advantageous than another, but the young girl was all love and romance and passion, and obstinately refused the idea of an interested marriage. Under such a condition of feeling she was bound to make a mistake. She made it by marrying Jules Genlis, a libertine, a 2 A. M. supper man, and a man whom the women of a certain turn of mind adored.

"You can easily imagine the story of such a marriage and its honeymoon, which lasted three weeks. At the end of the first month Genlis returned to his dissipated life, leaving his young wife at his home; he drank, he supped, he gambled, kept women, and went the pace as the fantasy of his depraved appetites dictated.

"She passed three years in this sort of misery, during which the poor little woman shed every tear in her body. She was too inexperienced to struggle against the evil will of the blackguard whose name she bore; she loved him too much to sit in judgment upon him; she only knew how to suffer, and she suffered all that a woman could suffer who is at once wounded in her love, in her pride, in her fortune, in her hopes, and in her interests.

"She did not complain, anyhow. She had nobody to complain to—her relatives were all dead—she had no friends. One day, having no more tears to shed, she dried up her heart with the heat of anger—her unworthy love was dead. She came to her husband and announced her intention of leaving him.

"Just as you please, my dear," said he; "I was going to suggest this. I have had enough of this sort of thing. I am not made for this kind of existence. Adieu!"

He had no word of regret, not a sigh, not a pity for this unfortunate girl whom he had morally killed, and that evening he commenced with a new love by a new debauch at the Maison Doree.

"As for Madame Genlis, she sought all her husband's creditors—their name was legion. She paid all, even his gaming debts, for she had pride in her name and she wished to do what was right by it. When she paid away every centime of her fortune—160,000 francs—3,000

francs remained, and it was a terrible night that which she passed alone in her deserted chamber, gazing at the three rolls of gold and thinking of her irredeemable past.

"Her life after that time has been a mystery. No one knew anything about it. She was seen from time to time, pale, sad, in faded clothes, but always neat and always beautiful. I sought to penetrate the mystery, as much for passion's sake as curiosity, but I failed utterly. She worked at the needle, I believe. In the winter we sometimes met her coming out of some cheap restaurant, always alone, alway sad. One evening I saw her enter a baker's shop and buy a small loaf, which she hid away under her shawl. Her misery must have been very great at that time. She emerged into the street and passed me without recognition. I did not dare speak to her. It was at this date that they commenced to speak of her as 'Poor Madame Genlis,' and always with respect. Of her husband—bah! we speak of him as a beast."

And Jolibien drank off his foaming glass with indignant emphasis.

"At the commencement of the winter of '69," he resumed, "poor Madame Genlis disappeared. She was no longer to be seen. She was enquired after for a short time. Then we forgot her.

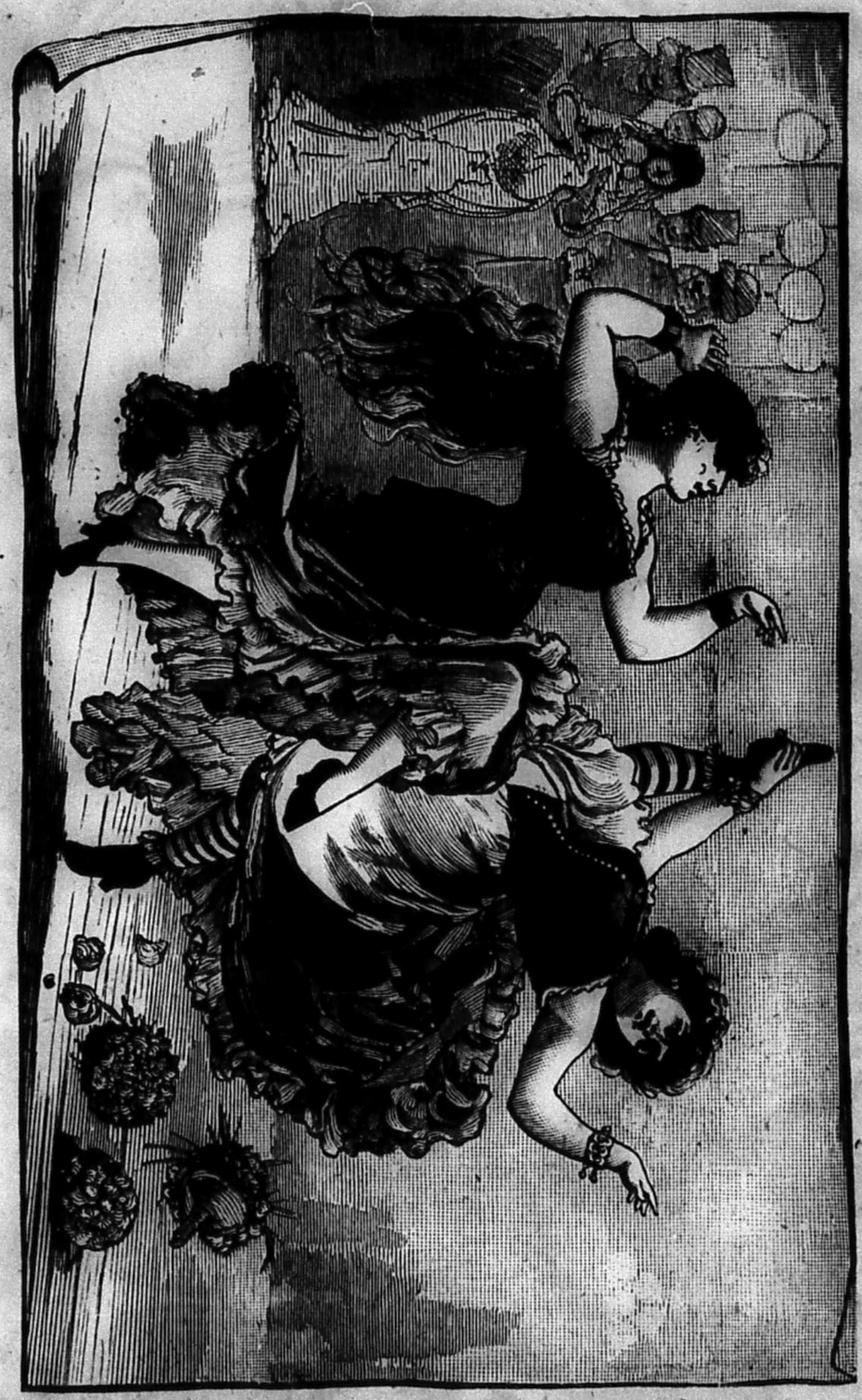
"In the month of September, 1870, poor Madame Genlis was at Tours. I do not know what circumstance brought her there, but there she was. We were in the middle of the war; Paris was invested, France invaded, and Chanzy was engaged in organizing the Army of the Loire.

"In the army was a battalion of Mobiles, and in the battalion a soldier who fought like a tiger. He was a little fellow, pretty as a woman, beardless, dapper, thin, fragile, but possessing astounding energy and bravery. They called him 'The Little Parisian.' He was a lion, this little Parisian. He had fought in three or four skirmishes, and had signalled himself in all. At night when the fight was over he was afflicted with a sort of nervous crisis, which displayed itself in the most copious weepings. They mocked him.

"'A soldier who cries!' exclaimed the gray-moustached veterans. 'Go and get thee a wet-nurse, my little man.'

"But he continued to weep, merely saying, 'Don't mind me. It is stronger than I. It comes from the nerves, the nerves, the nerves.'

"This little man had the nerves of a hysterical woman, but they never



STARS OF THE CAN-CAN.

hindered him from next day fighting better than any of the rest—always the first in a charge, always the last in a retreat, never complaining of cold or hunger. Indefatigable and intrepid, he was the credit and model of the battalion.

"At the battle of Chateaudeau the little Parisian had a leg pierced by a ball. He bandaged it with his handkerchief and continued the fighting, weeping a little. At the fight at Orleans a splinter from a shell wounded his left arm. He shrugged his shoulders and continued fighting, but weeping all the time. At the contest of Moret-Saint-Hilaire it was more serious for him; the little Parisian received a bullet in the shoulder, and this time he fell in a faint. They brought him to and bore him away in an ambulance. The poor little chap struggled like a madman, and would not let the ambulance corps touch him. He wept scalding tears, imploring of them to leave him, swearing that he was not hurt. This heroic fellow's crazy desire to get rid of them became almost laughable. They, however, removed his uniform by force, and the surgeon recoiled almost stupefied while he uttered a startled cry.

"The little Parisian was a woman.

"And you can guess who this woman was. It was Poor Madame Genlis. She had enlisted, and it was she who lay there in the ambulance in the midst of wounded soldiers, her comrades, her equals, her comrades in arms."

I could not help almost shouting "Bravo!" as Alphonse paused, and turned to where the charming little lady stood, while I drained off my glass to the dregs to her health.

"The story finishes here," added Jolibien. "The little Parisian did not die; her wound was but slight; she recovered rapidly, but they would not permit her to return to the battalion. General Chanzy heard of the story, and caused the female hero to be brought to him. He complimented her, mentioned her in dispatches, and his own hand decorated her with the Cross of the Legion of Honor. He furthermore gave her a license for keeping a tobacco canteen. She made money, and—fell in love—this time with the right man, a Captain in the line. Her affection was reciprocated, and now come and look at them both."

We returned to the glittering throng. The mad gayety of Mabille was at its height. Lights shone down on some very beautiful women, and on some very hideous ones. A *valse a troos temps* was being danced on

the great platform, and whirling in the arms of her devoted Captain was poor Madame Genlis, the decoration of the Cross of the Legion of Honor, so nobly won, glittering on her beautiful bosom.

"There is Genlis," hurriedly whispered Jolibien, as an ill-looking beetle-browed man passed, on his arm a painted and grinning harlot. "And to think that such a woman should have sacrificed herself for such a thing!"

VIII.

WHAT MONSIEUR DOULETTE TOLD AT MABILLE.

The charming and seductive Cora Pearl honored me with her company to a little dinner at the Maison Doree, which, as everybody knows, is situated on the Boulevard des Italiens, and whose cookery and delightful little dining rooms for two are so thoroughly appreciated by the gilded youths of glittering Paris. I had known Cora for some time, and, I assure you, there never was a girl more full of *bon camaraderie*. After the *pousse cafe* I proposed a theatre.

"Bah!" exclaimed my guest, "the theatre is too warm. Let us go to the Mabille."

A fiacre is ordered, and in the lovely summer night we rolled down the Rue Royale, crossed the Place de la Concorde, and entered the Champs Elysees, which was all dotted with carriage lamps, flitting about like so many fire flies. Arrived at the garden I was about to offer my arm to my fair companion when a tall, *blase*, handsome man of about thirty-five came up.

"Ah, Cora!" he cried; "I am really pleased to meet you, and with the kind permission of your cavalier would wish to crack a bottle of champagne in honor of my approaching marriage."

"Marriage, you big goose! What are you gabbling about?"

"I am going to be married on Thursday," he gravely replied.

"To whom? Any of—" nodding her head in the direction of a bevy of very handsome women, who were pouring in at the entrance to the Mabille.

"No, no. To a Normandy lady—a sort of distant cousin. The fact is—"

"Oh! No apology. You owe it to—womankind. But come,"

said Cora. "Monsieur Doulette, this is a very old friend," and she introduced us.

Having secured a private snuggery, the wine was duly opened, and the lady took up the conversation again.

"Tell me about it, Doulette. Are you marrying for love, ambition, cupidity, *ennui*, vanity, politeness, distraction, imitation, benevolence, folly, penitence, or despair?"

"For not one of those reasons, my dear Cora," he replied.

"In the name of Mephistopheles, then, tell us why."

"I shall do so. But fill to the health of the bride," filling our glasses. We drank the toast with our honors, and then Monsieur Doulette continued:

"I am about to marry in order to avoid being brought to the Mabille to see 'Around the World in Eighty Days.'"

"Oh, nonsense!" said Cora.

"A fact, I assure you. Just listen to what I've got to say, and you'll say there was no other course left open to me. You know that I am the fortunate favorite of three most beautiful and delightful ladies. One of them is an actress, the second is the wife of a silk merchant, and the third a lady of the upper world, very aristocratic and very exacting. If you asked me which of them I preferred, I would reply, 'the two others.' This will explain how evenly my affections are bestowed in this regard.

"About five weeks ago I received, one fine morning, the following letter from the actress, whom I shall call Number One:

"'MY FRIEND—I am free this evening. I have rehearsed all day, and the theatre is closed for to-night. Do you desire that I should give my evening to you? If you wish me to afford you that pleasure we shall dine together, a good dinner, mind you, at the usual place, and you will afterward bring me to see "Around the World in Eighty Days" at the Mabille theatre. I have not yet seen it, and I am crazy to do so. Are you with me, and does my project suit your views? I send you a thousand kisses.'

"I did not resist this charming request. We dined at Bignons'. I had already seen 'Around the Word in Eighty Days,' but I resolved to sit it out again. The evening was charming. So was the lady, and everything went merry as a marriage bell."

"This to your marriage bells," laughed our fair companion, as we clinked glasses.

"The following day," resumed Monsieur Doulette, "brought me another letter. This was from Number Two:

"'My Dear Victor—He is going away—he has gone. He goes to Havre on business, and will not return for two days. You see how delighted I am. Look out for me at six o'clock. I want to drive with my delightful conquerer and pass the evening with him. How I love you and how I long to be with you.

"'It will be awfully nice of you to take me to see 'Around the World in Eighty Days' at the Mabille. You must hire a small remote, dark and discreet private box from which I can see all the wonders of the piece while holding your darling hand in mine.'

This was a horrible condition of things, what was I to do? How was I to get out of it? If I were to say, 'I was there last night,' she will immediately ask 'with whom?' I should lie and lie, and it is only a cad who lies. There was nothing for it but to go. 'Here's at it,' I said to myself. 'It is a splendid spectacle, but I begin to know it all by heart. However, you are in for it, Victor, so go through like a man.'

"I went, my dear Cora, assuming the best possible grace. Number Two was delighted, so delighted, but she did not see how often I gaped behind my crushed hat. I never saw her better pleased, and at supper that night she swore I was the best, the nicest, the most agreeable fellow—but you know what all that means."

"Rather," was the prompt reply.

"On the next day," continued Monsieur Doulotte, came a letter from Number Three. This was an invitation to dinner, laconic, almost official, but terminating with four words written in an exquisite hand the very conciseness of which was full of promise:

"Come to me, early."

"I was as punctual as an undertaker. 'Announce dinner,' cried Number Three. This was such quick work, that a little surprised I ventured to say:

"'You are early to-day—you don't usually dine till seven o'clock.'

"'I have a project on hand for this evening.'

"'Are there no other guests?'

"'No. Certainly not; I wish to dine with you alone.'

"'You overwhelm me—and this charming toilette. Has this been put on for my eternal subjection!'

"'Yes. Do you find fault with it, you ungrateful thing?

"We dined in haste. The service was very quick, but a smile or

a look from the adorable creature made me forget the perils of fast eating. At dessert, Number Three suddenly arose and said with the most caressing air:

"'I have put you in requisition, and I will keep you with myself all alone for the entire evening.'

"'This is too much good luck.'

"'Listen, I have a fantasy.'

"'Speak, and if it is anything in my power—'

"'Oh! I do not ask for the impossible. It is simply to ask you to take me to the theatre. I have hired a box at the Mabille, and I want you to help me to see "Around the World in Eighty Days."'

"What was I to do? The coupe was at the door, the horse was chafing to get away, and a servant announced that the carriage was waiting."

"'Let us go,' she said, with the smile of a goddess.

"I gave her my arm, and philosophically resigned myself. I saw 'Around the World in Eighty Days' for the fourth time. This hard lesson has borne fruit. This quadruple repetition caused serious reflections to rise in my mind. While Number Three was opening her great eyes at the spectacle, I was resolved upon taking a grave step. Immolated three times upon the same alter, I began to soon perceive that this triple *liason* was in the first place immoral, but above all, inconvenient and tyrannical. I trembled for the moment when I should again be put to this test, and I resolved upon avoiding the peril."

"Are you going to be married?" laughed Cora Pearl.

"I am."

"And you have no other reasons for quitting celibacy than that which you have related?"

"Not one."

"Honor?"

"Honor."

"Well, upon my word, Doulette, there are bigger fools in this world than I imagined!"

"A thousand thanks."

"And this is your last night at the Mabille?"

"My last night at the Mabille—for some time to come."

Well, it was a right royal night. Cora knew everybody worth knowing, and never was this bright, witty, heartless creature in better

trim than on the evening she met Monsieur Doulette, mourning his approaching nuptials, at the Mabille.

IX.

THE LADY IN BLACK.

It was in the season of 1880 that the *habitues* of Mabille were considerably exercised over a lady whose peculiar attire and eccentric habits were the cause of more gossip than over the desperate Nina Vermille, who undertook to break three bankers in as many weeks for a wager, and won it.

At eleven o'clock every night, an elegantly appointed brougham, the horses seventeen hands high with black satin coats, the coachman in black, the clothes fitting him like paper on the wall, a white camelia in his button hole, dashed up to the brilliant lighted entrance of the Mabille garden. So punctually did this vehicle arrive that after a little a group of men used to wait at the gate in order to time their watches by it, and the young Marquis de Gallifet lost fifty thousand francs by betting that on a particularly wet and stormy night in August, the carriage would fail to appear. Elrich Rothschild pocketed the money, for the carriage did appear at the very second. The sole occupant of this exquisitely appointed vehicle whose upholsterings were all as black as the horses and driver's coats, was a woman. She dressed in black satin, her gown being cut in the shape of a riding habit and clinging to a most *svelte* and lissome form. She wore no ornament save one—a diamond star which served to fasten her black point lace vail to her hair. The diamond, almost as large as a pigeon's egg, was of the purest water and shown like a star. The habit of the mysterious lady was to alight from the magnificent carriage, enter the gardens, take one turn around them, to sip one glass of vermuth, and then leave. Her footman, a reticent giant in black, walked behind her at a distance of two or three yards. No one saw her face. The vail came down over the eyes and nose leaving her rich red lips exposed and a deliriously moulded white chin rendered additionally white, on account of its dark surroundings. The pocket-handkerchief was black, her shoes and stockings were of the same raven hue, and her petticoats, at least such of them as revealed themselves as she alighted from the brougham, were of sombre dye.

JOHN BULL IN THE TOILS.

It is only necessary to say that she created a sensation and that all the "mashers" were enquirers as to who she was, and where she came from. Half a dozen looked knowing, pretending to be in the secret, but as they were not able to divulge anything, they only got laughed at for their pains. Night after night this strange apparition would glide through the gardens, never speaking to anyone, and always followed by the giant. She very soon became known as the "Lady in Black," and it was not very long until a cavalier was found bold enough to swear that he would not only address her, but would accompany her home. This young boaster was the Count Maltonnier, a very wealthy and fast scapegrace, whose father, the Marquis de Villette-Pieux-Cotine, allowed him to pull at pleasure at the very long family purse and he backed himself to perform this singularly audacious feat in large sums both at the Jockey club and at the Cercle.

Maltonnier dined at Vefour's, in the Palais Royal, and having primed himself with wine and accompanied by Elrich Rothschild, his *alter ego* and other self—they were always together—drove out to the Mabille, so as to reach the gardens by just a few minutes before eleven o'clock. The young men stood inside the entrance awaiting the last stroke of eleven when up dashed the brougham. The giant footman leaped from the box, threw open the door and flung down the steps and offering his arm to the lady assisted her to alight. Then the lady moved majestically in the garden followed as usual by the giant.

The Count, as soon as the lady passed in at once slipped up to her and bowing low and removing his hat, presented her with a bouquet composed entirely of black roses, saying never a word. The lady did not start—on the contrary, she accepted the bouquet, smiled, did not speak, and glided onwards.

"Move Number One," said the Count.

"By the beard of St. Denis," murmured Rothschild, "it promises well."

"How she smiled!"

"What lips!"

"What teeth!"

"What a chin!"

The two young men passed into the crowd and crossing the path of the "Lady in Black" five or six times, lifted their hats—the Count never staring at her or seemingly expecting a recognition. Now it so

happened that Nina Vermuth was at the Mabille on this particular night, and being exceedingly jealous of Count Maltonnier beheld with feelings the very reverse of amiability his decided avoidance of her and was not long in detecting that he only had his eyes for the lady in black.

Nina, although ordinarly a well conducted propriety-in-public loving young lady, on this occasion had been dining with a banker adorer at the Cafe Anglais, the aforesaid banker being old, bald, false-toothed, dyed, whitened and padded, but, oh! so rich, with an apartment in the Champs Elysees, a villa on Lake Como, a sporting box in the Bavarian Tyrol, and a cheque book capable of performing some of those wonders accredited to the wonderful lamp of Aladdin. Disgusted with her adorer but not with his cheques, she had partaken of just enough of champagne to raise all the deviltry in her nature, and seeing that the man whom she really admired was taken up by that phantom in black, she resolved upon causing this lady to remove her incognito, let the consequences be what they might.

The Count had also followed the Lady in Black at a respectful distance and determined to come to closer quarters as soon as the unknown should seat herself in the little kiosk to take her accustomed *petit verre* of vermuth. He went to the waiter who served her and ordered him to place another glass and another chair, adding a twenty franc piece by the way of a retainer. The waiter, in terror of the giant footman, at first refused point blank, but the twenty franc piece brought his courage back to the sticking point. He boldly placed a second glass and a second chair, and so boldly that the footman imagined the order had come from his mistress. The very instant that the waiter emerged from the kiosk, the bold Count stepped in, having told Rothschild to await him at the outer gate in order to see him enter the carriage with the incognito. Bowing low, he seated himself opposite the Lady in Black, the giant footman looking askance the while. She never moved; she never gave sign or token of his presence.

"Madame," he said, filling his glass, "I drink to your very good health."

She was silent.

"Madame," he continued in a low voice, "you will think me bold, audacious, but my audacity must be translated to admiration. I have long admired your elegant figure, your graceful walk, your beautiful

mouth and chin. Curiosity has overcome every other feeling—curiosity—"

"Will lead you to my footman to be kicked into the Champs Elysees," she interposed in a sweet, smiling voice.

"Even so," he retorted, "my curiosity to know what you are like will enable me to bear anything—everything."

She sipped her vermuth.

"Anything more?" she asked.

"Only let me see your face," he said. "I am sure it is lovely—divine."

"It might disappoint you."

"Impossible!"

"You are a very positive young man," said the lady, "and I will overlook your idiotic conduct on account of its folly."

"You forgive me then," he cried, stretching out his hand to clasp hers, but at that moment Nina Vermuth, who had watched them unperceived, sprang past the giant footman, and clutching the veil of the lady in black shouted:

"You infernal hussy from the slums of the fish market, I will soon see your ugly red face."

Maltonnier leaped at his mistress.

"No, Nina," he cried, "you shall not make known this lady's identity."

And by sheer force he compelled Nina's vengeful hand to relax its vigorous grip of the vail.

The giant footman entered and was about to pounce upon the Count when the lady in black interfered.

"Wait outside, Jules," she said.

Nina Vermuth was not tamely going to submit either to the coldness of the lady or the wrath of the Count.

"I will have that veil torn off your face before you leave this garden, my good fisherwoman," she cried, "as sure as my name is Nina Vermuth. There is no deception about me. I lead a gay life and I own it. What are you, a death's head, for all I know. Mathy," addressing the Count, "Come along with me or I'll have you mobbed, and I'll do it. There are a dozen girls in that dancing circle who are full of champagne and deviltry and who would not ask ask better fun. Are you for peace or war? Will you leave this black beetle or stay?"

"I will protect the lady from insult, no matter from what quarter it may come."

"Be it so—you have chosen," and with a wild laugh Nina rushed away in the direction of the dancers.

"She is intoxicated and capable of doing anything," cried the Count. "Come this way, Madame; take my arm. I know every turning in the Mabille, and there is a secret door at the back of that elm tree. Let your servant go to the carriage. Be quick!"

Already a din of excited sounds came from the dancers—there was not a second to be lost.

"Jules, go to the carriage—I will be there in a minute."

The lady in black took Maltonnier's proposed arm and he led her around at a run to the left of the kiosk, and behind a gigantic elm tree. There stood a small door. It is locked; with one kick from the heel of his boot Count Maltonnier burst it open, and hurrying his fair companion through a sort of lane full of broken bottles, lobster shells, and all sorts of abominations reached the entrance, which was a blaze of light. At the gate stood Elrich Rothschild, stupefied, bewildered, having followed the footman.

"Step in quickly," cried the Count to the lady in black.

Jumping into the carriage and banging the door after him, ere Rothschild could recover from his amazement, the vehicle was disappearing at the turn into the Champs Elysees.

"Well won," cried Elrich Rothschild to Colonel St. Maws of the Voltigeurs of the Guard who had also watched the proceedings as umpire.

"Well won, indeed, Elrich. That means a hundred thousand francs out of the Rothschild exchequer. Poor beggars—can they afford it?" and with a light laugh they sauntered towards the Rue Royale.

In the meantime the adventurous Count Maltonnier and the lady in black tore down the Champs Elysees.

"I hope you will forgive me," he pleaded, in a tender tone.

"I suppose I must," she replied.

"And won't you tell me your name?"

"Yes, I will tell it to you. I am Jeannette Crilly. You are not a bit the wiser now, are you?"

"Oh yes, I am, Jeannette Crilly. And why do you always dress in black, always drive in a black carriage, lined with black and drawn

by black horses; always have your servant in black; always come to the Mabille at a certain hour and to the second?"

"Just to have myself talked about."

"But why?"

"Because I am paid ten francs a day on account of my figure, which is perfect; my face is ugly."

"Ten francs a day for what?"

"Well, I don't mind telling you, as I commence to distribute hand bills to-morrow night. I am advertising the St. Etienne soap!"

"Good heavens! And this carriage, these horses, these servants—"

"Are all in the employment of the St. Etienne Soap Works Company on the Quai Sylvestre. I shall send you a few dozen cards to-morrow."

The Count Maltonnier won his wager, and what is more, he fell over head and ears in love with Jeannette Crilly, who was an honest girl enough, and she is now the Countess de Maltonnier.

She did not go to the Mabille after that remarkable night.

X.

VICTORINE LAYA'S FIRST CAN-CAN.

Among the thousand and one fair frail beauties who have rendered the Mabille Garden so infamously notorious, Victorine Laya, not only by her varied seductions, but by her marvellous dancing, takes a good place in the front rank. Her history up to the date of her first appearance at the Mabille is a curious one. Born at Passy, close to Paris, she was but twelve years of age, when a hoary old sinner, the Baron de Stote, cast his criminal eyes upon her as she frisked with some other little girls one day in the Bois de Boulogue, and ascertaining her name and residence, waited upon her mother, a washerwoman, who worked upon one of those floating wash-houses with which the river Seine is extensively dotted within easy distance of Paris.

"Madam," said the Baron, "I am a man of business and of pleasure. I have seen your daughter Victorine. I have taken a very great fancy to her. If you are willing to part with her, to regard her as a

mercantile commodity, I am willing to deal with you. My programme is this: I will send her to a boarding-school to be named by some respectable and religious lady of your clients; she will remain there until she is sixteen, I paying charges of every kind. She is to be thoroughly educated and refined. You can visit her twice a year only, except by special permission from me. At the expiration of four years, she takes charge of an establishment of mine as its and my mistress and your control over her ceases. I do not ask you for a reply for one week. If at the end of that time you are favorable to my proposition, well and good, if on the contrary you decline it, you shall have your way—*Au Revoir.*'

Madam Laya was a mercenary woman and not over scrupulous. In her earlier youth—she was only thirty now, she had had several love affairs and although Victorine was born in lawful wedlock, Monsieur de Laya, a carpenter by trade, would have been a very unwise man to have sworn to her paternity. At the expiration of the week, the Baron called again and his terms were accepted. Victorine with many tears and many wailings—she was just twelve years of age, was entered at a private seminary in the Place d'Eylau, kept by Madamoiselle Cruise, recommended by a wealthy lady whose washing fell to the lot of Madame Laya, and a cheque for two thousand francs was handed to the washerwoman upon the day she signed the Baron's agreement, the sum to be paid annually for four years, over and above all school expenses whatever. Strange to say, the Baron never gave himself any trouble about his future—housekeeper. He paid all the demands upon him with the most scrupulous regularity, and on the expiration of the term took a very handsome set of apartments in the Champs Elysees for his new protege.

Now it so happened that Victorine Laya was as giddy and bold a girl as can be well imagined. She was a source of terror and discomfort, and Madamoiselle Cruise would not have kept her an hour save for the tempting fee, and even this condition on more occasions than one would have been flung aside, except for the scandal Victorine's expulsion would have caused against her very fashionable school. It is scarcely necessary to say that the Baron kept his own counsel as to the future of the young lady, as did her unworthy mother, whose half yearly visit was paid to her child in the capacity of a nurse, not parent, and Victorine was in thorough ignorance of the life of gilded shame that awaited her upon the emancipation from the thraldom of school.

AN OLD MAN'S DARLING.
[From "Gotham by Gaslight."]

She had not been idle however, and having made eyes at a Lieutenant Dubos, of the 41st regiment of the line as the gallant warrior twisted his waxed moustache in the Bois de Boulogne, and the lieutenant being of an amorous complexion, their looks soon passed into little *billets deux*, and these in turn led to clandestine meetings. When the four years had expired, and the Baron de Stote came to claim his muchly coveted prize, the bird had flown to the arms of Lieutenant Dubos, and on the morning that Victorine was to have become the mistress of the Baron, she became the lawfully wedded wife of the Lieutenant Dubos, who it may be readily imagined, was in a very frenzy of anger. He had expended no less a sum than twenty-five thousand francs on the young lady merely as it proved for the purpose of educating her and making her a bit of perfection for a blundering lieutenant in a marching regiment. It was unendurable. The Baron was a man of resource, of thought, of calculation and resolution, and he argued that these runaway love matches are too ardent for the love to burn very long; that a lieutenant's pay is not calculated to afford many of those luxuries which a young lady on her entrance into life is certain to imagine and equally desirous of realizing; that the girl who runs away is always a little of the wild duck and that he would have but to wait a little, plan a little, and act a little to bring the lieutenant's bride within the gilded cage in the Champs Elysees.

He sent for the washerwoman, her mother. This lady was desolated at the perversity of her daughter and discarded her, swearing never to see her again.

"Be quiet, my good woman," said the Baron, "just you find out all about this lieutenant—go and see your daughter when he is present, claim her, be violent, boisterous, vulgar as the devil. Make a scene, a dozen scenes. Announce your intention of going to live with them. Insist upon it. Do this as I bid you and I will pay you a thousand francs; here are a hundred in earnest."

The washerwoman was astounded—what did this mean? The injured Baron was jovial, gay, willing to spend more money!

"Come back and report to me, my good lady," said the Baron, playfully pinching the laundress's ear, "as soon as you have anything to report."

The laundress went on her way rejoicing, and hurrying to the barracks at St. Cloud, where Lieutenant Dubos was quartered with his

regiment and his wife, burst into the room to find the loving couple seated at a dinner consisting of a thin soup and an emaciated cutlet. Acting upon her instructions, Madam Laya claimed Madam Dubos, hugged her to her heart, and swore that nothing would ever separate her from her darling child. Dubos, petrified, asked for an explanation which despite the prayers and subsequent hysterics of his wife was giving him *in extenso* by her mother. A violent scene occurred, in which the lieutenant imprecated his wife for having informed him that she was the orphan child of noble parents, and bounced out of the apartment, declaring that he had no desire to see either herself or her mother again. It is needless to say that he soon repented this decision, came back and was forgiven, but causing his wife to promise never to let her vulgar and odious parent within earshot again. The vulgar parent however, had her own game to play and she handled the cards, under counsel of the Baron, with such admirable dexterity, that in less than three weeks Madam Dubos proved a worthless, infamous wife. The lieutenant was at first completely mystified, Victorine had laid aside her simple muslin gown for a rich brocade and her jet ornaments for brilliants of the purest waters. She explained this sudden metamaphosis by stating that her mother had come into a property from a distant cousin who had emigrated to New Orleans, and as the ex-laundress now appeared in the full bloom of silks and satins, lace and jewelry, there was no reason to doubt the accuracy of the story. Greatly rejoicing at his good luck, Lieutenant Dubos proposed to retire from the army, and to live at ease, but as this manœuvre did not suit the plans of the wife, he was artfully induced to exchange into a cavalry regiment, the First Dragoons, then under orders for Algeria.

"I will come and join you when you have found a charming little tent or house for me to live in, darling," said Madame Dubos. "But I could not think of roughing it in an abominable troop ship. You wouldn't let me, would you, my pet?"

Lieutenant Dubos sailed with his regiment. Victorine went to Havre to see him off, and returned to number 1,243 Champs Elysees, the apartments prepared for her by the Baron de Stote.

Victorine, like all ladies of her class, was as capricious as a fairy. She had only to wish for a thing and the wish was gratified. De Stote was no niggard, and having purchased his new toy at a very high

price set considerable store by it. Madame Dubos was a very pretty woman, not by any means handsome or beautiful, but pretty, while her figure was simply perfection, tall, slender, graceful, her feet and hands the envy of half the cocottes of the Mabille. She grew weary of spending money on laces, in splendid clothes, in jewelry. She longed for excitement instead of the now dull routine of a sumptuous breakfast at twelve o'clock, a drive in the Bois de Boulogne, a little dinner at the Cascade, or at Bignons', a box at the theatre, and a supper at the Maison Doree.

"I want to go to the Mabille," she said.

"It is rather a shady sort of place," replied the Baron; "besides," he added, "you might be seen there, as it is cheap, by some of his brother officers."

"Oh! they are good fellows all. They won't peach on me."

That evening Victorine paid her first visit to the Mabille, and was perfectly enchanted. She went the next day, in fact the garden commenced to possess a perfect fascination for her. In vain the Baron objected. Bah! the more he objected the more resolute did she become, and she capped the climax of folly by declaring that she wanted to dance the can-can "just for once."

At this, Baron de Stote was absolutely furious and he declined to permit her to go to Mabille again, under any circumstances whatever. His language was both unguarded and coarse, if not brutal, and Victorine resented it by shying a Venetian glass at his head, and by going to the Mabille in a hired coupe.

She had scarcely quitted the house when a haggard and travel-stained man dashed up the steps, and demanded to see Madame Dubos. The liveried menial was taken aback, so livid was the countenance of this man; so blood-shot and murderous his eyes.

"Madame has gone to the Mabille Garden," he stammered.

The man turned away, leaped into a cab and shouted:

"To the Mabille."

It was a very crowded night and the Prince of Wales was expected; Theresa was to sing "A Sapper is free of everything," and Mademoiselle St. Valerie was to lead off the can-can with Lesoult. It was a gala night, in short. Victorine Dubos entered the garden and walked straight to the dancing circle. She stood for perhaps a quarter of an hour watching the wondrous and naughty dancing of St. Valerie and others equally

immodest. Then she proceeded to the buffet, where she ordered a pint of champagne, and filling glass after glass, drank off the foaming wine.

"I would like to try the can-can, Monsieur," she observed to Le Martre, the master of the ceremonies.

"You cannot, Madame. No strangers are permitted to dance the can-can. You can dance any other dance on the programme."

"But I shall, I will," and ere the other could prevent her she had stepped into the circle.

A wild, haggard man burst through the bystanders, pushing them right and left, and stood right in front of Victorine, who had just commenced the dance.

It was Dubos.

"Infamous wretch," he cried, and at the same instant drew a revolver, and pointing it at her head pulled the trigger. With a piercing scream Victorine Dubos fell stone dead.

Dubos is now a prisoner for life in Toulon where he is engaged on the public works. It was Victorine Laya's first can-can. She had sworn to the Baron that she would dance it, and it was her last as well. Mabille remembered her tragic fate to the last, but it is not on record that it prevented any other victims of their depravity and folly from following in her steps.

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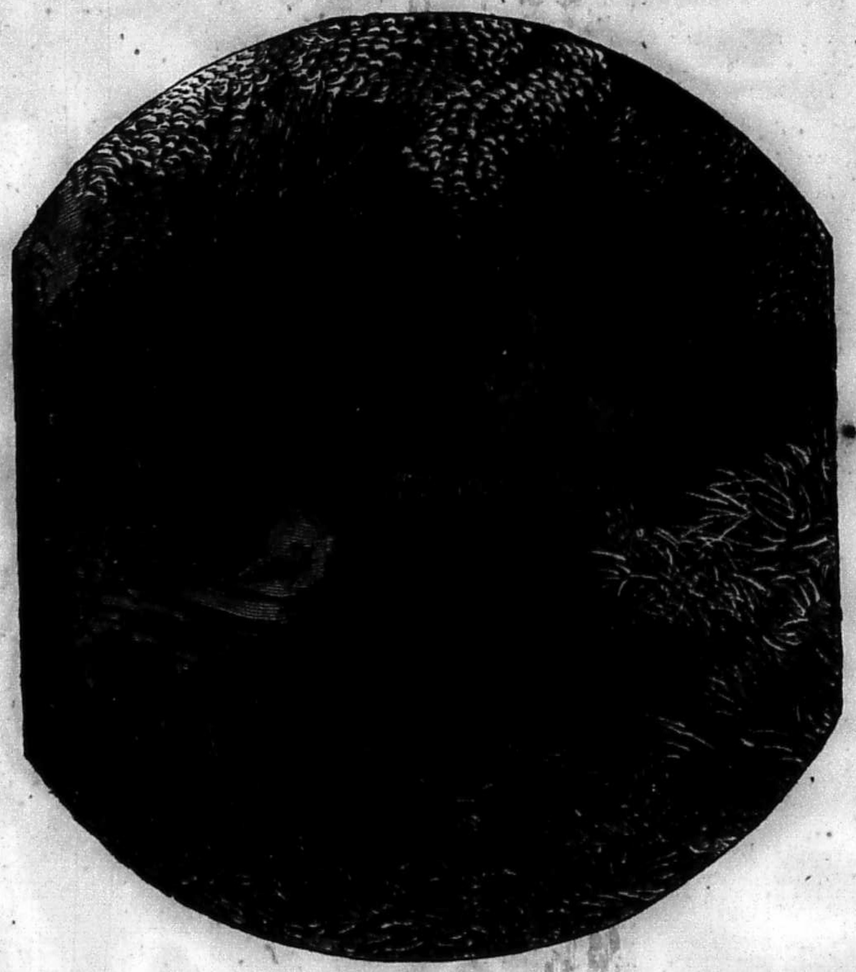

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