



HAD returned to Paris in search of something new. A tour of the provinces had somewhat disheartened me, but still my last franc was not in sight, and I thought I would be able to add to it materially if I could but find the thing I wanted.

Paris did not seem the old Paris. I found some of the fine shade trees cut down where the barricades had been erected, and here and there on the walls of the little houses in the Rue Saintier, where I lodged were the marks of bullets—the scars of the rage of the terrible commune.

I wanted a new drama—something that would fill the house and my pockets as well. Just then this new drama seemed a dream, a vision not to be realized, for some of the finest things in that line had failed, and the dramatists were taking their wares across the channel and even to the United States.

I advertised for manuscripts in the proper channels and retired to the upper rooms to wait. I knew it would be a long time before I could find just what I needed, and when I thought of the stuff I would be expected to read—the useless dialogue and the poor humor—I fairly shuddered.

My one friend and confidant, Monsieur Jadet, a little man with the blackest eyes that ever sparkled, used to climb to my room and walk over to the table and run his hand through the dramas that were accumulating there.

"I told you so," he would say. "You get enough, but not what you want. It won't come. Paris is still shivering over the commune, and it won't come out of the shadow of the barricades and such until a year has passed. That one terror paralyzed the brain; it has palsied the hand, and—no drama, monsieur, no drama! Sarc! Why do we wait for that which cannot come?"

And then he would walk to the window and look out over the city with his face darkly sober. We waited for three weeks. Day after day I picked up a new manuscript, but soon laid it down. A dozen lines were enough.

One afternoon when I had come in from a walk through the denuded boulevards I found my room occupied. Pierre, my janitor, had let my visitor into the room, and she sat in my chair with her eyes resting half jealously upon the pile of rejected dramas on the table.

I was struck at once with the beauty of the girl, for girl she was, not past eighteen, with a fragile but bewitching figure and a face almost transparent in the sunlight. "You are Monsieur M—?" she asked, half timidly, showing me two rows of snow white teeth.

I replied in the affirmative and she seemed to smile again. "I am Mlle. Vivien," she answered, modestly taking from beneath her shawl a little roll of paper at sight of which I seemed to fall back.

Was it another drama? "You have advertised for a drama," she went on. "And see! I have brought you one."

I took the roll and was about to unroll it when she interposed a hand.

"When I am gone, if you please, monsieur," she said. "I will leave it with you. I will come—when shall I return for your verdict?"

Pitying the girl, I told her I had received so many manuscripts and that I feared hers would not be read for some time; but she said quickly:

"I will come to-morrow! You will read it to-night. It may be better than strolling through the streets," and before I could reply she had arisen and was gone.

I heard her footsteps on the stair and then lost the sound of them.

Half an hour later I was looking up from the manuscript with a startled face. It had come! I felt that I held in my hand the very thing I had sought, and with the drama clutched in my grip I went over to the window and breathed hard, yet joyfully.

The drama was called "The Countess Claire," and I saw at once that the young heroine would captivate the hearts of the fickle Parisians if anything could.

The girl who had brought the drama had left no address and I did not know where to look for her, so all I had to do was to wait. She said she would come the next day.

I dared not show the play to Monsieur Jadet, but resolved to wait till I had made arrangement for its purchase. I would keep the secret all to myself.

The next day Vivien came back. Modestly dressed and intellectual in appearance I had taken to her, and wondered if she were not the daughter of the playwright.

"I have examined your drama," said I.

"And you like it?" she started. "I thought you would, monsieur."

"It is very good."

She clasped her thin hands and looked at me.

"Your father, the playwright—"

"I have no father! I came to Paris, an orphan, from the district of Haute Lorraine. I walked all the way save when I was helped a little by the Prussian soldiers."

"But the drama? How did you bring it along without losing it?"

"I did not fetch it with me, monsieur. It was produced here, but let me have that for my secret, won't you?"

It is all the one I care to possess. "But if I should decide to purchase?" "I will negotiate," she answered. "I am Mlle. Vivien, and the drama belongs to me."

"To you, mademoiselle?" She touched her breast and bowed.

"To me—Vivien Nolles," she said.

That day Monsieur Jadet went into ecstasies over the purchase, but said dubiously:

"Where shall we find a 'Countess Claire'? It will become a famous character. What about the girl who brought the drama?"

I could not but start at the inspiration.

"I will see her," I exclaimed. "She won't give me her address, but she is to call again."

Vivien came once more, and I proposed that she take the title role.

Instantly her cheeks flushed, and I knew that I could have made no more desirable proposition.

"I have had a little training," said the girl. "I have played in the provinces as a child, but—"

She paused and looked away.

"The character seems to fit me, don't you think? The countess is young and, what is more, she came from the Haute Lorraine, for you remember what she says of the roses there?"

It was settled. Vivien was to become our "Countess Claire," and forthwith we began.

Those were delightful rehearsals, and the rest of the cast, with one or two exceptions, took kindly to the fragile girl with the dark skin and deep, lustrous eyes, which Monsieur Jadet insisted talked as fluently as her tripping tongue.

One night after the rehearsal, in the midst of a pouring rain, Vivien threw her threadbare cloak over her head and stood waiting for a cab in the doorway.

"Shall I go with you to the Rue —?" She did not let me finish.

"To my home? No, no!" and she darted across the sidewalk, sprang into the vehicle, shut the door and was rushed away.

The drama progressed amazingly. Day after day I saw it nearing its readiness for the stage, and Monsieur Jadet who, with myself, had unlimited faith in its success, invested all his little wealth in the future.

"The girl is mad," suddenly cried the little Frenchman one afternoon as he rushed into my room and threw himself into my chair.

"Vivien?" I exclaimed.

"The Countess Claire," he answered, and then he proceeded to narrate a

street incident which he had just witnessed.

Jadet said that he was strolling along the Rue Concorde when he saw an officer of the army, a young man in full uniform, struggling with a young girl. Anxious to see more and always chivalrous to defend innocence and beauty, he hastened forward to see the girl disengage herself from the officer's grasp, and before breaking away, deal him several blows with a little whip which brought the blood, for the tiny lash cut like a razor.

"That for the 12th of July, and this!" she cried, as the blows fell upon the captain's cheek.

"But the girl?" cried I. "You seem to have me believe that she was the countess?"

"It was Vivien, monsieur! Her little arm seemed as strong as steel, but as flexible as whalebone. Sarc! how she struck the officer. He winced at each stroke, and when she ran off he looked and showed his teeth, but did not follow."

All this was strange, aye, unaccountable to me, I could not understand it at all. That Vivien, the fair girl from the Haute Lorraine, should have a difficulty with a man on the street was past my comprehension and almost beyond belief.

"She will explain when she comes," said I. "But the 12th of July, monsieur?"

Jadet shook his head.

"I don't know," said he. "Then is when they stood the commune up against walls and shot it to death."

But she walked to Paris and the Germans helped her, and he shook his head again and looked away. When Vivien came back she was silent as to the occurrence in the street. I forbore to question her, hoping that she would enlighten me of her own accord, but she did not.

Again we fell to work on the drama, and the night of the first performance drew nigh.

But I had made another and an alarming discovery. The girl was wildly ambitious. She was putting her whole soul into the role of the Countess Claire, and I could see that it was taxing her strength.

"You must not work so hard," I said to her one day at my table. "You are getting on all right, but you will overtax your powers, and we can't afford to lose our countess, you see."

It was a wan smile that made her

features lovelier than ever, and she drew back with the sunlight falling on her locks which looked more ethereal than ever.

"It is a life's ambition, monsieur," said Vivien. "I had coupled it with another ambition, but that one is satisfied—satisfied forever. You did not see me? No, I got away—eluded the police and—"

she broke into such a strange, wild laugh that I thought of what Jadet had told me about her mind.

This was the nearest she had come to referring to her altercation with the officer, and I did not press her to tell me more.

The thrill of the opening night of "The Countess Claire" remains with me still.

I recall the crowded house, the critics come to write the new drama down and the throbbing of my brain as Vivien appeared before the footlights.

But it was a success.

The moment she spoke I knew what would happen. Her grace, her bewitching face and figure, her beauty, fragile but passionately strong—all these united to assure me a triumph such as the little theater had not scored in years.

I found Vivien, brilliant eyed, in one of the wings after the fall of the curtain.

She seemed to be waiting for no one, and when I came forward to congratulate her she did not seem to see me at all.

I spoke, but she did not look up.

I touched her arm and spoke again, and then she seemed to recall that she owed me an answer.

"It was a success, Monsieur M—," she said. "You are satisfied with your 'countess'?"

How could I tell her how proud I was of her? How tell her that she had not only made her fortune, but my own, as well?

"You shall go home with me to-night," said the girl. "I believe the time has come, but you will let me precede you a little."

I told her that I would be delighted to see her at home, and below we called a cab.

"It will be going home with me if we go in separate cabs, monsieur," spoke Vivien at the door. "You can follow. I will direct the driver."

She called another cab and directed the driver to take her to the Rue Borsalaise, mentioning the number in the same breath. The man fell back and looked at her.

Vivien was in the vehicle and the door was shut, and in another minute we were rattling over the streets of Paris, but in different cabs.

Eager to see Vivien at home and to note the route taken by my cab, I leaned against the glass and took note of the streets. I was not far behind her, and I soon saw that we were entering the poorest quarter of Paris, the quarter where the petroleuses and commune had gaped and died before the bullets of the soldiery.

Her cab halted and mine soon came up, but Vivien was already out of sight.

I entered the tall house and ran up the steps, for the girl had told me that I would find her on the third floor back, in a little room, ten by twelve.

I heard the noise of a closing door as I started down the grimy corridor. I was there in a moment.

In another instant I had opened the door and stood on the threshold.

A light was burning on a table, and near it in a chair lay the form of an old woman.

Vivien was there, too, standing at the chair, with her face as white as death and her eyes riveted upon the wrinkled face in the chair.

I advanced, but the girl threw up her hand.

"She is dead, monsieur," she said. "She promised to live till I came back successful and she kept her word. This is my mother—the little woman who followed me from Haute Lorraine, and whose son, my brother, I avenged by cutting to pieces the face of the officer who had him shot those awful days. I have lived to achieve the only triumph I ever panted for. Oh, the long nights over the drama; oh, the patching it took and the oil we burned, and the bread we tried to save till it was ready for you."

I seemed thunderstruck.

"What, was it your work?—the drama?—The Countess Claire?"

Vivien smoothed the white hair that straggled over the cold temples of the dead and smiled.

"It was my work, but it took my blood. Mother always said 'find him first,' and I found him. Monsieur, you have lost your countess; you can find another, but she will not be Vivien; no, not the little butterfly of the Haute Lorraine."

I sprang forward to prevent her from falling to the floor in a faint, but she was down already, and I tenderly laid her upon the poorly draped bed in one corner of the room.

The little doctor whom I summoned looked once and then turned to me with a shake of his head.

"It is too late, monsieur; they will go side by side to Pere la Chaise, if they have money enough."

And they had money enough; for when the hour came the little cottage that wound in and out of old Paris carried mother and child, our "Countess Claire" and the widow of the Haute Lorraine, to the most beautiful city of the dead in the world.

And we lost her, lost our star on the evening of its rising, and when we rode back, Jadet and I in the same cab, scarcely speaking, we saw a man stagger from a cabaret, and the moment the light fell on his face we uttered exclamations of astonishment, for it was covered with hideous red scars, and Jadet, leaning toward me, said in a stage whisper:

"The disgraced captain, monsieur—the man who wears the autograph of our little countess."

SOME SHORT LAUGHS.

LIFE'S BRIGHT SIDE AS SEEN BY the Humorists.

A Little Merriment Is a Good Lubricant to Make the Wheels of Life Run Easily and Smoothly—Gleaned From Exchanges.

One of those hard-working newspaper men who put in about twenty-four hours a day in the effort to supply themselves and family with edulous matter was sitting at his desk the other afternoon looking as fresh and sweet as a daisy, when a friend dropped in on him.

"My!" exclaimed the visitor, "you look good enough to eat."

"I do eat," responded the worker in a tone of veneration for the antiquity of his harmless little joke.

The visitor laughed just because he was feeling good.

"Haven't you been away some place this summer?" he asked.

"Oh, yes, I went away in June and returned in July."

"Ah, where did you go?"

"I visited a foreign shore."

"Is that so? No wonder you are looking well. Did you have a good time? But of course you did; you look it."

"Had a fine time, but it was too soon over."

"Where did you go?"

"I left Detroit at 7:30 p. m., June 30, went over to Canada in a rowboat and came away at five minutes after midnight July 1."

"Rats!" ejaculated the visitor, and asked the traveler to go out and have a seltzer lemonade with him. Detroit Free Press.

"Green Old Age."

In No Need of Pie.

"Madam," said Meandering Mike, when, in response to his request for food, she offered him pie, "do ye remember a year ago when ye gave a sufferin' feller creature a pie?"

"I believe so."

"Madam, I'm that man."

"Was it good?"

"Good! It saved my life. There was an unfeelin' farmer that fired a box of tacks right fur my heart at short range. I hed yer pie buttoned up inside my vest, an' here it is—full o' tacks, ez ye kin see fur yerself. It ain't near wore out, an' I won't need another ter take its place fur a year yet."—Washington Star.

An Intelligent Animal.

"What is the matter with that mule?" asked a man who was standing on the bank of the canal. "He doesn't seem to be of any account whatever."

"He's all right," replied the boatman. "The faults with me. Ye see, mister, he understands every word ye say to him."

"He doesn't pay much attention to what you say."

"That's what shows his intelligence. I've just jined church, an' he thinks I'm a stranger."—Life.

Glass Blower.

In Fear.

Enoch Arden, after an absence of twenty odd years, approached his humble cottage from the rear. It was growing duskish, but the most casual observer could not fail to notice that Enoch's suspenders were fastened with shingle nails, and that there was a dearth of woman's care throughout his makeup.

"Ah," he sighed as he faltered on the back door-step.

He raised his hand as if to knock, hesitated covered his face and shrank away.

"I dare not," he exclaimed.

He had suddenly reflected that he had forgotten to buy saleratus, as he directed upon the occasion of his departure long ago.

After he had gone, the gibbous moon rose grandly above the tree tops, just as if nothing had happened.

Safe.

"Cut off his head," commanded the despot.

The scimitars of the executioners glittered aloft.

"Can you, oh, can you?" shrieked the miserable culprit.

The monarch knit his brow and whispered to the grand vizier.

"No," answered the latter, "he is not in the classified service."

His majesty turned brusquely to the condemned.

"Certainly we can," he said. "Why not?"

With a wave of his hand he bade the affair proceed.

"On Account."

The Acme.

With a wild cry of joy the prodigal rushed into his father's arms.

"My child," exclaimed the old man, "tell me all."

"Across the sea," rejoined the son, "I wed the daughter of a railroad king."

The parent grew suddenly cold and distant.

"Huh," he sneered, "I thought you must have married into a police captain's family, by the lugs you put on."

He finally concluded, however, to make the best of it.

The Soul That Marched On.

"Bridget," said the chief of the island of Zigi to his dusky wife, "I've had the most awful pain under my belt since dinner. Who was that missionary that we had for dessert?"

"I don't know, sir," replied his faithful helpmeet, "but I guess he was a prohibitionist. We found some temperance tracts in his pockets."

"Great guns! Is that so?" exclaimed the chief. "I wish you'd be more careful about using that brandy sauce."—Boston Herald.

Deterred.

"Behold you are you strike."

The assassin paused with his glittering poniard raised in the air.

"Contemplate," the victim argued further, "the risk you run of being proved insane if you kill me."

The dagger fell upon the pavement.

With a snarl of mingled rage and fear the desperado troubled the crouching figure at his feet for a cigarette and strode away.

Null and Void.

"Why can't we enforce a law prohibiting prize fighting?"

"The constitution guarantees the right of free speech."

Literary Note.

"Good!" It saved my life. There was an unfeelin' farmer that fired a box of tacks right fur my heart at short range. I hed yer pie buttoned up inside my vest, an' here it is—full o' tacks, ez ye kin see fur yerself. It ain't near wore out, an' I won't need another ter take its place fur a year yet."—Washington Star.

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SAN DIEGO'S GIRL PILOT.

Just Out of Her Teens and Able to Sail the Biggest Vessels.

If her present plans do not miscarry Miss Elizabeth Polhemus, a 20-year old girl of San Diego, Cal., will be a certified pilot in about six months. Her father is an old soldier who fought under Farragut. He now holds a responsible position at San Diego. His daughter therefore comes naturally by her love for the sea. Some time ago she cast about for means to earn her own living. Having on numerous occasions acted as pilot on incoming vessels, of course under the supervision of certified navigators, she determined to study for examination. Aided by her father she has made rapid progress.



Elizabeth Polhemus.

So thorough is the young woman's knowledge of handling a ship and of the reefs, shoals currents and air currents of San Diego harbor that the old pilots who have instructed her in this difficult work seldom have a word to say in criticism of her management, and for six months it has not been necessary to change one of her orders when bringing a ship into port. She will be examined by the state board of pilot commissioners in a few months and confidently expects to pass. The fees for bringing a vessel into San Diego are \$5 per foot on the draught of the vessel and 4 cents per ton. A 3,000-ton vessel drawing twenty feet of water would net \$220.

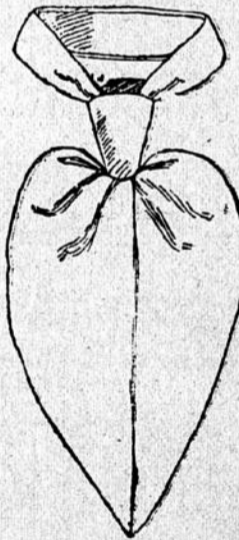
NECKWEAR FOR MEN.

The Trowel Puff Is the Latest Novelty in This Line of Goods.

There is more novelty in neckwear than in any article of men's wear this season. The Ascot is coming back into



Worn With a Scarf Ring. use, and so is the moderate-sized puff. Extremes of all kinds have been outlawed. The principal innovation is a stock scarf which can be tied into a flat bow, an Ascot, a flat or a De Joinville. It is the delight of the Johnnies. The trowel puff is another new fad, which, it is expected, will win the gen



The Trowel Puff.

eral approval of the swells. The flat bows and club scarfs, in new form, are also favored as accompaniments for the colored plique shirt fronts which hold over from last season.—New York World.



A School of Fish



"Giving Him Points."