

ANARCHISTS OF PARIS.

A Visit to Their Resorts and a Glimpse of Their Ways.

The Secret Police and Crime—The Dens Where Human Beasts Hide Together—Like Beasts—Why the Filthy Pines Are Kept Open.



But this morning, after a night with the police poking and prying about in the hidden places of this strange metropolis I feel inclined to write: "Paris is a melodrama, with just enough of comedy to prevent it from darkening into a tragedy."

We drove rapidly from the Hotel Terminus. Detective Houlier, a brigadier of the Service de Surete, or secret service, was my guard, having been assigned to the task by M. Crochefort, the commissaire. Superintendent Byrnes, of New York, had already told me about him. M. Houlier was sent to New York not long ago to take a famous murderer back to France, and is popular in New York. He speaks English fluently, which did not prevent him from talking emphatic French to our cabman.

The streets are lined with low cabarets or drinking places, small shops where thieves may sell their plunder, the dismal abodes of ugly women who are ready for anything from a flirtation based on finance to a bit of strangling, when it may be done safely. This one street in particular is said to be without an honest denizen. It is stated that it has been the scene of more murders than it has doorways, and that thefts are and have been for many years nightly incidents along it. The whole policy of the Parisian police, you know, is concentration. They believe that crime must exist and that criminals cannot be exterminated. They recognize that dishonesty and violence are inevitable. They believe that these things being true, it is much better to control them openly than it is to pretend to annihilate them while permitting them, in reality, to take their own devious courses. They have no idea that wickedness can be wiped out, but they set to work in an unassuming,



THE WARNING WHISTLE.

practical, nineteenth century way to do as much toward keeping it in check as possible.

Thus the criminal population of Paris is concentrated in certain localities. It is, theoretically, impossible for a thief to live elsewhere.

This, argues the Parisian, has two advantages. First, the honest man, understanding the system, knows what localities to avoid; second, having concentrated crime, the police find it much easier to watch it than would be the case were it scattered about all over the city. The district of which I write is one of those localities in which criminals are thus permitted to herd.

Just before we turned into the Rue de Venice, a young man wearing a dilapidated yachting cap, and jauntily, despite his lack of a coat, popped out of a doorway in front of us. He began to whistle a French song. Instantly M. Houlier whispered to me: "Ah, he knows us. Keep close behind him and see the doors close." We stepped quickly along so that he should not get too far in advance of us. Down through the Rue de Venice he marched with a nonchalance of air, an indifference of step, which were apparently as unstudied as possible, but he ever whistled that French song. And as far as the shrill notes reached the doors shut in advance of us.

parentage as the Frenchwoman's love for bright colors. It amuses the people and the police do not mind, for they have ways of seeing what they wish to see and going where they wish to go, independent of the watchman and his shrill French song.

Later in the evening M. Houlier resorted to one of these plans, and we entered most of the places whose doors had been so mysteriously closed before—entered them without permitting a single person to know that the police were near. And the watchman, in the meantime, had been quietly taken into custody.

The first was a dance hall of an extraordinary character. Its largest dimension was probably not more than thirty feet, and its width was not at any place more than one-half as much. At least fifty per cent. of this small room was occupied by plain board benches and primitive wooden tables. At one of these tables we sat without attention. M. Houlier ordered "cognac corse."

"One can take brandied cherries without fear," said he. "They are not likely to be worse here than elsewhere. But the wine or the beer"—and an expressive shoulder shrug followed.

Before us was that small portion of the room which was devoted to dancing, and in its narrow limits an incredible number of couples were waltzing with a fervor which varied with the amount of liquor which the dancers had drunk during the early evening. The music was furnished by a fiddler, a cornetist and a pianist, who were provided for in a tiny recess. The dancers ranged in age from sixteen to sixty. The women averaged perhaps twenty-five years. Costumes were careless. One young woman contented herself with a corset and a skirt as the only visible garments, and she attracted no especial attention. Criminality does not seem to rob the French woman of her prettiness, and there were those there that night whose very dirt and tatters were chic and jaunty. But the men! Frenchmen are rarely of fine appearance anyway, and the lowest of them, such as patronize this place, look like beasts. High cheek bones, small, widely set eyes, flat noses, short stature, big hands and feet and ungraceful arms and legs are characteristics. Such faces as I saw that night in Paris I have never seen in the worst quarters of New York or London; such utter and entirely brutalized depravity could not be written on any but a French face of the lowest type.

Every time the music stopped—and dances were not more than three or four minutes long—the proprietor (by all means the most horrible faced of all the men) stepped forward and collected of each man ten centimes (two cents) before he would permit him to dance again. The space was so small that not more than one-half of the occupants of the room could dance at one time, so that the crowd at the tables and that on the dancing floor were constantly required to change places. A little high kicking created great dissatisfaction because it took too much room.

I was not surprised to learn that this place had been the scene of two murders within the year—one of the victims being a member of one branch of the police service, the republican guards. It is permitted to continue in existence because the Paris police philosophically figure that if these people did not meet here they would find some other and very likely less accessible place, and I have some slight reason for believing that the proprietor of this dive is not without a quiet connection with the palais de justice.

This place was a fair sample of the worst of the Paris dance halls. It is in such places as it that the thugs of Paris find their rough amusement. The stranger who goes there under police escort and sits quietly at one of the tables in the rear is certain not to be molested, but the stranger who went alone would be in danger of drugged drinks, despite the watchfulness of the republican guard. And if he attempted to make free with one of the girls, who would be his lot. The thug is jealous of his inamorata.

From this dance hall, after many strange calls and unsuspected peeps into queer places, we strolled around to Pere Lunette's. Pere Lunette's is the anarchist resort which is best known of all those in Paris. The police came within an ace of arresting one of the most sensational of the past two years' dynamiters there, and it is hinted that they avoided taking him while he was actually within the place because they did not want to have to close it up. Another instance of their method of giving bad men a chance to congregate so that they (the police) will have a chance to watch them. Pere Lunette's is a long, low room of most extraordinary contents. It is divided at about its middle by a partition which is painted with fairly good caricature portraits of some well-known Frenchmen. Writers, artists, politicians, journalists, even actors, are in this strange gallery, which includes about twenty men who have incurred the enmity of the habitues of Pere Lunette's. The portraits are not badly done. Their source is quickly discovered after one enters the rear half of the room. Three artists are among the regular patrons of Pere Lunette's. Instantly when a stranger goes among them they begin to sketch his portrait in charcoal on big sheets of white paper. In payment therefor, they expect a franc. Thus does the bold, bad anarchist manage to eke out a living. Our party was sketched separately and together. Among the men who gathered around us—Houlier was well known, and his presence commanded respect—was one who was bet-

ter known to the police than he wanted to be, and who tried to sneak away unseen. But his efforts were frustrated by the proprietor himself, who had no desire to achieve a worse reputation with the secret service than he had already gained. The rear room, like that in front, was vividly decorated with the red point of anarchy for the ground-work of its illustrations. These were rather allegorical than caricatures, although the faces of well-known men had been used by the artists who had made the pictures. Zola was there as a little dog picking up the bone of public approval, although he had to run through the mire of hypocrisy in order to obtain it. Tolstoy was represented as being led away from anarchy—the beautiful and true—by the will of the wisest of false philanthropy. The only men who were glorified on this wall were Edouard Drumont, who is the editor of Libre Parole and the most rabid agitator in France, and Henri Rochefort, who for a time shared Drumont's exile, and for the same offense—inciting the populace against the government. Some of the paintings in this extraordinary collection omitted personalities, and were devoted to ridiculing or abusing the customs of the present day—one of them which aimed to deride the pretended virtue of the women of the bourgeoisie being indescribable and unprintable.

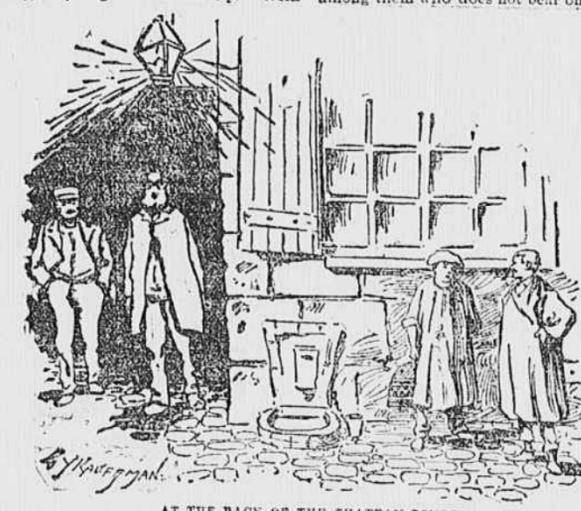
One woman only was among the crowd in this strange resort. She was a horrible creature with long, unkempt locks, red, inflamed eyes, a sallow dress, half off, and a way of waving her arms and swinging her legs which was not ungraceful, but was wholly unpleasant. By and by, under the influence of spiced wine, the crowd began to sing. Instantly this woman sprang into leadership. With



THE ENTRANCE TO PERE LUNETTE'S.

from the important part which was played in the history of Paris crime. It is not far from Pere Lunette's, and is closer yet to the great cathedral of Notre Dame. It was the palace built by Louis XIV. for his mistress, the notorious Gabrielle d'Este, and is as magnificent in its old architectural curves as it is squalid in its dirt and misery. Entrance is through a court at the back of which the lurid red of the Chateau Rouge's walls shows startlingly. Strangers are not looked upon with favor there. They are too likely to be searching for some one who does not want to be found. There are always many such at the Chateau Rouge, and they will continue to go there, although they know that the place is constantly under the surveillance of the police, because they can get there certain advantages of accommodation and companionship which they can find nowhere else in Paris.

The ground floor of the Chateau Rouge is given up to a room full of cheap tables. The floor is ineffably dirty and the high old ceiling is obscured by dirt and cobwebs. At midnight on that night there was not an empty seat at any of the forty tables, and the light from the flaring gas, fanned by many breezes from open windows, cast weird shadows and ungainly lights upon the miserable throng. This is ostensibly a drinking place. It is really a lodging house, where the price of one glass of horrible liquor entitles a person to a seat at a table and the privilege of sleeping in that seat until three in the morning, when all the miserable outcasts whose heads have been lying on their hands for six or seven hours, are hustled into the street. Men, women and children there are in that room, and there is not one among them who does not bear on face



AT THE BACK OF THE CHATEAU ROUGE.

a voice full of strength and by no means without its sweetness, she rolled out the words of four or five typical anarchist songs, accompanying her music with the weird gestures which made her seem a being not quite human. When, in the last verse of the last song, the rough poetry began its condemnation of existing society, she strengthened up her dress falling still further from her shoulders. With one hand she caught it at her bosom, leaving one hand free for the wild wavings that emphasized the words. The condemnation ended with a wild curse for the bourgeoisie. She raised her free hand above her head, lifted her eyes to the dingy ceiling (only half revealed by the sizzling oil lamps) and hurled the words into the air with late and defiance in her eyes and every motion. Her hair flew about her head in a whirl from the vigor of her gestures, and her red eyes were those of a mad woman, who thirsted for blood. She looked the Nemesis. A moment later the song changed to the story of the wrongs of the people, and wound up with an appeal to all humanity to help them—to help themselves. When she reached it there was as great a change in her expression and her gestures as there was in the words, and she sang plaintively and effectively. Altogether it was very dramatic and effective—thoroughly worth the extra bottle of spiced wine which she demanded as her pay after she had got over the excitement of the music.

From Pere Lunette's we went to the Chateau Rouge—Red House. The Chateau Rouge will soon be a thing of the past. It has already played an important part in the history of France, said

which was an unnecessarily brutal crime. Then comes the arrest of the murderer in the Chateau Rouge; then his confrontation with the corpse of his victim in the morgue; then his fall, with him sitting smilingly on the bed in it; then his march to the guillotine, and finally the instant in which his head dropped into the basket. Other characters are there of a like cheerful character. Murder or the punishment for murder plays a part in every one of them. Skeletons and isolated skulls, the guillotine and the gallows, coffins and specters are strewn indiscriminately over the four walls and the ceiling. This is a part of the same French love for the horrible that made four thousand people visit the morgue one day last week to view the remains of two children who had been drowned.

Here again came a song. It was not the song of the anarchist, or of any cult except pure viciousness. It called for the righting of no wrongs, it was inferior to the horrible ditties which we had just listened to at Pere Lunette's, because it dealt simply with filth and wickedness for their own sakes only. The whole party of six or seven roared its outrageous chorus out without expression other than relish for its inconceivable nastiness and general approval of all those things which are against the law of the land, from murder down. Its verses were sung by one man alone, whose voice was cracked by drink, and whose wicked leers and generally repulsive face would have been enough to turn a weak person sick.

He formed my escort when, a few moments later, I went to the upper rooms of the old palace. Only one of them is given over to the crowd which swarms in from the dark places of the city every night. The others are reserved by the proprietor for his own uses and those of his family. This one room was once the salon of the beautiful but wicked woman for whom the house was built, and its ceiling is without question the original. Even the awful dirt of the Chateau Rouge has not accumulated thickly enough to hide the centerpiece, which bears the arms and royal crest of Louis XIV., just as do the ceilings of the royal palace at Versailles. But what a sight this royal crest looks down upon!

Packed so closely on the floor that one cannot by any possibility get across the room without stepping upon them, were men asleep. They had no beds. They lay on the bare boards. Some of them had taken off their clothes—all of them—and made them up into bundles, which they used for pillows, but that was all. The room was reeking with the odor of this hundred of the awful poverty brigade which was bivouacked upon its floor, and when the gas was suddenly turned up, the glare was greeted by a chorus of horrible curses from the men whom it disturbed—the faces it revealed were by all odds the most horrible that could still bear the human imprint. I have seen the mob of desperates and destitutes which slept on the floor of the Stephen Merritt mission on Eighth avenue, New York, during the distress of the hard times of two years ago, and I have many times been through the worst of the lodging houses in London, but I never saw such faces in any of them as I saw that night at the Chateau Rouge, and I never want to see such faces again. All were bearded and all were dirty. Not one but was marked by the ineffaceable stamp left there by misery and crime. I felt no hesitation in believing that there were among the crowd, prostrate and cursing at the intrusion upon the floor, men who had done the worst that human being can. Two were pointed out to me as returned from the convict colony at New Caledonia, and I found that this was true later when they told me many stories about the life there. A bundle of rags over in one corner moved, and finally began to curse with a vigor and originality which was greater than any that had been developed even by this crowd of experts. The voice was not that of a man, and I questioned my guide.

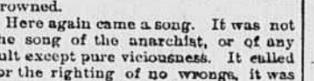
"That is the only woman who ever sleeps up here," he said. "She is famous throughout the slums of Paris as a woman who served her time in the French army and lived for years in the goldfields as a man doing a man's work and having no associates but men. She is old now and can no longer stand the hardships of the rough life she used to love so well; all that she can do is to come to this miserable place and herd with these. She has no criminal record so far as the police know, although she seems to care for no companions (except those that she finds in such places as these—places which the respectable poor would shun as they would shun plague spots."

She was still calling out horrible French curses on our heads when we went downstairs, out of the salon of Gabrielle d'Este—a room built as the monument of a king's wickedness, and remaining as the resort of the lowest human beings in all Paris.

The night was well along into the realm of the morning. We had seen much; we had seen nothing that was not terrible and revolting. We had seen enough.

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