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**PARLEZ-VOUS, FRANCAIS?**

The Question the Reporter Was Unable to Escape.

Spring, Summer and Fall, His Ears Were Accented by the Plaintive Sound of the Beggar's Voice.

A midwinter night and bitter, bitter cold, not so much snow, but a wind which had an arctic anger in it; it whirled the face like vitriol and froze the blood and almost made a fellow shiver, as if he were in pain.

Three of us, just common newspaper reporters, were scurrying through the street, half running, to get to a certain place. We had been at work all day, trying to find certain facts about a man who had been mysteriously murdered in the Tenderloin district—Johnny Spellman.

At the City Hall park was bleak and cold. The wind shrieked across it, and the hall, with its old white marble steps, stood over yonder, pallid and lifeless.

Not a human being in sight; the lights in the tall buildings in the city were on, and in the low entrance to the hall, ever blessed old cellar door, the house was happy, cheery beams.

It was late, well on toward midnight. That made us hurry all the more.

Uncle Sam's lagged out old coats and wagons which forever clogged the Mail street alley behind the grim stone coping, where big bags of mail matter for all parts of the world are bundled in and out, had disappeared out of the cold. There was no sound of the mail clerk's voice talking off the bags.

We reached the middle of the Mail street block. We were on the north side of the street. I ran in the rear of the shadows of the park and saw a man. In a voice which upon that night was the most piteous sound I ever heard he cried, stretching out one hand in a supplicant way: "Parlez-vous Francais, monsieur?"

"Do you speak French, sir?"

It was a strange, courteous question to come waiting amid the howling of the wind. I turned and stopped—and in honest amazement and pity said, "My God, yes!" I had learned French in boyhood, then had drunk for a Paris boulevardier and fulfilled the dubious linguistic requirements of a New Jersey college. I had a deep seated love for the people and a deal of fondness for the French tongue.

It was in that wretched night, when I saw the last thing which I saw. And he went away.

Summer makes Gramercy park pretty, and the lights of the Players' club shine out and men drink there and say cynical things in the small hours.

An August night I was passing through Gramercy square homeward. There was just the distant murmur of Fourth avenue, with the occasional footfall of a late fellow walking along Irving place. I could hear the fountain's drippings fall into its still basin. The air was sweet with the fragrance of blossoms, wafted out through the tall iron railings.

Out of the shadows of the park came a man. In a voice which I thought that night was the most piteous sound I ever heard he cried, stretching out one hand in a supplicant way: "Parlez-vous Francais, monsieur?"

It was a strange, courteous question to arrest a home going chap at such an hour. I turned, then stopped. Then I closed my right eye tightly, as Bob Turnbull had showed me how long ago. Then I answered, "My God, yes!"

I had learned some French in boyhood, then had drunk for a Paris boulevardier and fulfilled the dubious linguistic requirements of a New Jersey college. I had a deep seated love for the French people and a deal of fondness for the French tongue.

There in that sultry night, hearing that question, I saw the honest peasants—simple, sturdy folk—tolling a field in far Provence. I saw the Breton fisher, singing as he—Lord, and what was this genius of gall, who with his pale, beggar face and dismal, beggar voice kept stalking out upon me from dark places?

Was he going to be like Mr. Dick's head of Charles I? Could I know no refuge from this garlic-breathed Picard and his two children and his roll of money lost in the steerage of La Bretagne?

Proft, cried I, thing of evil. Proft still, it bird or devil.

I hit him very hard. Assuming that his face was France in profile, my fist landed in the Northern territory.

He moaned and muttered something in French. I paused while he lay and waited for me to go away.

It was enough. There was no light in him. It was an ecstasy of meanness I walked off, whistling loudly the "Marseilles." "Allons, allons, mes braves!"

The air was filled again with December snows. Gray looked the tall buildings through that sifting cloud

of white. The street lamps were dim and dull, like the eyes of poppy eaters.

Far down a shabby, narrow west side street in the purlieus of old Greenwich village the shop windows gleamed gay, with the frost upon them.

Men and women and children with bright faces leaned against the storm's great harsh breast, and laughed. Street cars, with their merry bells, bundled along.

A white door, with the snow heaped about it. Some tracks up the steps and the already nearly obliterated evidences that a wagon had been at the curbstone told that the undertaker and the coroner had been there. It was a coroner's case, suicide from despondency, they said.

There was no carpet in the dusty hall. A blowsy landlady showed me to the second floor. In the rear room a fire, not much of a one, burned in a tiled stove. The room was chill. An oil lamp shed light over a form upon the low bed in the corner, covered, face and all, with a sheet.

At a table sat a child, a girl of not more than a dozen years. She was reading when I entered. She laid the book down gravely. I noticed that it was a French prayer book.

Her eyes were big and very dark, and there were tears in them. She

**LADY IN WHITE OF BERLIN**

Strange Legend of the German House of Hohenzollern.

Joachim I Tore Down a Widow's Hut and Ever Since the House Has Rested Under His Curse.

Rumor in Berlin says that the "white lady" the mysterious ghost that foretells disaster to the house of Hohenzollern, has once again walked in the long halls of the imperial palace in Berlin. What does the appearance portend? ask the people.

There are nods, winks, mutterings, significant looks, eloquent silences, when the apparition is mentioned.

"She has walked, poor lady! Ah, I say nothing—nothing—you understand! Any yet—what hearest thou of the Empress Frederick today?"

The Empress Frederick! The dowager lady of the dead Kaiser Fritz? The English mother of the German emperor?

Is it she whom the "white lady" later and not thin only, but that of all thy successors to the remotest posterity!"

And the story goes that she has done it. The great Elector William saw the ghost. His son Frederick, first king of Prussia, saw the "white lady" in very truth, though in his case it was his young wife, his third, wandering about the palace in her night robes two days before her death.

There are many famous cases where the "white lady" is said to have portended misfortune. On the night before Saxe-Weimar Prince Louis of Prussia and his adjutant, Count Nostitz, were chatting in the Schloss Schwarzburg-Rudolstadt when a white robe figure glided before them.

The prince turned pale. He had been confidently talking of victory, but after that he despaired.

Neither he nor Nostitz was surprised when next day the "white lady" again appeared just as the Germans tell back defeated.

Nostitz's own son told this story to Kaiser Fritz, father of the present emperor. Curiously enough, Kaiser Fritz's death also was foretold by the specter.

When the French officers of Napoleon were quartered in the castle at Baireuth, the "white lady" appeared

to them, and General Espagne cried out that he was doomed. Shortly afterward he died.

Napoleon, who had all a Corsican's superstition, wouldn't sleep in the castle. Later, when he was to be buried in Paris a palace for the king of Rome, a poor man's house stood in the way. Napoleon did not demote it, like Count Joachim, or even apply to it the right of eminent domain, but bought it, though the owner raised his price several times and in the end got about ten times its value.

He then expected to fund through the Eagle, a dynasty, of long renown, and he didn't want his successors persecuted by ghosts—Eh.

Her Little Brother.

The ability of the small boy to rouse discomfort in his elder sister's breast has been the theme of more than one story. Ten-year-old Ned had peculiar talents in that direction, and in the month of two before his sister's engagement he made many embarrassing complications between her and the estimable young man who at last succeeded in winning her.

Ned was much interested in the engagement and very fond of his prospective brother-in-law. One day he was taken by the young man, who was a lawyer, to a courtroom where

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