

THE IMPERIAL THEATER

"What does Mademoiselle Fifi think on the subject?" asked the Emperor.

"She does not think about it at all yet, your Majesty. She was but ten years old when I took her. It was at Mantua. Your Majesty remembers how everything was topsyturvy in Italy eight years ago. One day I saw a child running about the market-place, calling gaily for her mother. The mother did not come. Then the child's cry changed to impatience, to terror and at last to despair. It was Fifi. The mother was dead, but the child did not know it then. She had no one in the world that I could discover; so, when I was started for France in a cart—for I could not walk at all then—I brought Fifi with me. She was so light, her weight made no difference, and ate so little that she could live off my rations and there would still be enough left for me. When we got to Paris, I hired a little garret for her, in yonder tall old house where I live, and Fifi lives there still. I made a shift to have her taught reading and writing and sewing, and never meant her to go on the stage. However, I caught her one day dressed up in a peasant costume, which she had borrowed, acting in the streets with some strollers—a desper-