

THE FORTUNES OF FIFI

CHAPTER I

THE IMPERIAL THEATER

Although it was not yet six o'clock, the November night had descended upon Paris—especially in those meaner quarters on the left bank of the Seine, where, in 1804, lights were still scarce. However, three yellow flickering lamps hung upon a rope stretched across the narrow Rue du Chat Noir. In this street of the Black Cat the tall old rickety houses loomed darkly in the brown mist that wrapped the town and shut out the light of the stars.

Short as well as narrow, the Rue du Chat Noir was yet a thoroughfare connecting two poor, but populous quarters. The ground floor of the chief building in the street was ornamented with a row of gaudy red lamps, not yet lighted, and above