

The Saturday "News" Special Foreign Service.

FRENCH BEGGARS MAY HAVE TO WORK

Bill Introduced in the Chamber of Deputies Providing for the Establishment of Labor Colonies to Which Vagabonds and Mendicants Will Be Sent.

Paris Swarms with Sham Blind, Sham Cripples, Sham Deaf and Dumb, and Other Humbugs Who Wheedle a Livelihood Out of the Charitable.

Special Correspondence.

PARIS, April 14.—As is pretty well known in America, France, and particularly Paris, is the happy hunting ground of the vagabond and the mendicant. The beggars of this country have reduced the problem of getting a living out of society without working for it to a fine art. They have their own organizations, and rules and regulations for the government of their members. Their number is continually increasing. The need of some comprehensive measure to deal with such human parasites has long been apparent. At last there has come forward a man who, recognizing the evil, is prepared to grapple with it. This is M. Georges Berry, deputy for the Ninth Arrondissement, who has introduced into the French chamber a bill for the suppression of vagabondage and mendacity. His remedy, in a nutshell, is work colonies.

REMARKABLE DATA.

M. Berry has devoted many years to careful and impartial study of a situation which is admittedly one of the curses of modern France, and in the course of his investigations he has gathered a remarkable mass of facts and figures. He declares, for instance, that out of every hundred thieves brought to justice, at least one comes from the ranks of the tramp and the beggar. He states further that in 19 years' conscientious seeking he never once succeeded in finding a "poor blind beggar" who was not a sham; that out of the 19, so-called "unemployed" to whom he offered well paid jobs, only 18 accepted his offer, while, as the result of another experiment, only 5 or 6 did not throw up their employment after they had earned a few francs. He has followed the professional beggar into the lowest lodging houses, the Chateau Rouge, Pere Lunette and Mere Gay, seen how he lives, fathomed his recesses, appraised his mentality, and now he comes forth and asserts that idleness is the root of the evil and that if we want to suppress professional mendacity we must make the beggars work.

SHAMS OF BEGGARDOM.

M. Berry's memory is stored with amazing stories of the ruses employed by beggars and vagabonds to excite compassion. There are the sham blind, sham cripples, sham deaf and dumb, sham epileptics and those supposedly afflicted with a variety of diseases. There are the sham unemployed, who have no work and have not even a few francs where-with to bury decently their latest delusion. "I myself," said M. Berry to the writer, "as deputy have been applied to over and over again for money to bury babies that never have been born."

He could tell a hundred stories of the sham blind," continued M. Berry, "but one will suffice. I used to notice on the steps leading to Pictet's station a tall and powerful man, whose eyes were hidden by blue spectacles, and who imperturbed with unwavering persistence

all who passed that way. One day he made use of an insulting expression because I would not give him alms, and in my indignation I told him that his blindness was mere sham. In a moment he rushed at me with his stick raised, forgetting that he could not see, and I had to beat a hasty retreat into the station.

"Not long afterward I came across the same fellow in another part of the town; he was in a petulant mood and was being wheeled about by a lad who implored the public not to forget his blind and helpless father."

"BLIND" BURGLAR.

"Fortunately I had a friend at the Prefecture and I reported the affair to him. The police were told to watch the man and it was not long before they discovered that this blind beggar was the chief of a gang of thieves who had committed an important burglary only a week or two before. The man was arrested with his accomplices, tried at the assizes and sentenced to five years' imprisonment. One had proved at the trial that he had committed no fewer than 33 burglaries."

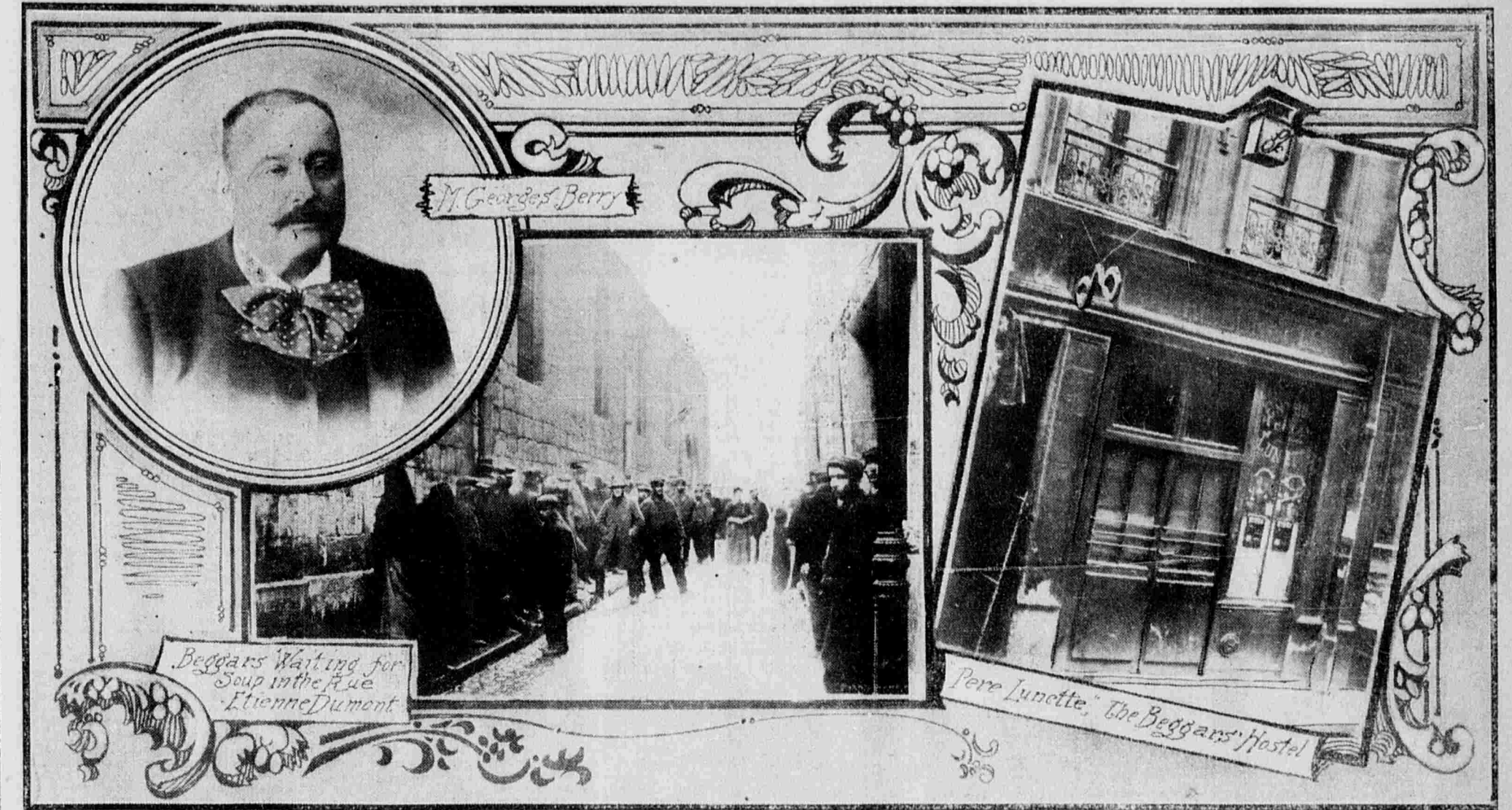
TRICKS OF THE TRADE.

But not every sham beggar is so dangerous as the Pictet's men with the blue spectacles. Take, for instance, the two brothers who used to walk—possibly still do—on the Rue Monge and Boulevard St. Germain. One had acquired a trick of doubling his leg up under him as he hobbled along. The other dragged his leg after him. They both were "wounded in battle" and their earnings were 20 to 22 francs a day. They were so thrifty that they even turned to account the slices of bread which charitable folk would give them. Other beggars throw the bread away in disdain. These, however, sold it to an "agent," or, in other words, a receiver of stolen goods, at Clignancourt, who in his turn had customers for it among bourgeois who kept dogs.

Still more curious is the case of an ex-solicitor's clerk who lost his situation after borrowing 500 francs from his employer's desk. This man, having turned professional beggar, parades an amputated leg through the streets of Paris for nine months in the year. As soon as July comes he starts for the sea in a variety of trunks, of which he is a star dancer on stilts. The ex-solicitor's clerk has not a character for respectability to maintain like a confederate who works regularly the great Parisian boulevards who kept dogs, and lives in dignified ease at Asnieres, where he is supposed to be "something at the ministry of justice."

MANUFACTURED CRIPPLES.

There are, of course, swarms of sham cripples in Paris, but there are also real ones, victims of the most fiendish brutality, as the following absolutely true story will show. Some time ago a friendly official of the prefecture of police gave M. Berry warning of the arrival from Spain of about 100 "cousins-jattes," as the French call cripples who having lost both legs or one of use them, drag themselves along on a kind of large bowl. They had come up for the famous "cousins-jattes" day were to be found located in and about the Place du Trone. M. Berry hurried thither and found that the band already had received notice from the police to quit French territory. One of the party



could speak French and this is what he told M. Berry:

"My father plays a barrel organ and my mother is a fortune teller, and I am the youngest of 11 children. All boys. With the exception of my eldest brother who was all handed over when quite young to a specialist doctor, to be made cripples. None of us died, but I have known many of the children in my village to be killed by the torture they had to undergo. We used to earn a lot of money, but cripples have increased so rapidly in Spain of late years that we older ones decided to emigrate to France. We have only been here three days and our takings have been very good, but now the police have decided to expel us."

As a matter of fact, the very next day the whole party of cripples, men and women alike, were taken by the police back to the Spanish frontier. M. Berry adds that these cripples go in couples, as man and wife, and doubtless their wretched offspring are subjected to the same torture as they themselves were.

SHAM FITS.

Another well known type of Parisian beggar is the man who shams an epileptic fit or St. Vitus' dance. M. Berry tells his experience with a young man who appeared to be afflicted with the latter malady in its most distressing form. It was last October in the Champs-Elysees. The poor fellow was painfully making his way along, jumping now on one leg, now on the other, his body being so shaken by each movement that he made that the perspiration was pouring from his face. Finally he sank upon a seat, quite exhausted.

"In spite of my compassion," says the French deputy, "I could not help feeling that this fellow was not really epileptic. When he had made signs to a flower-seller and to a man on crutches who kept at a certain distance away. My suspicions were aroused. When he had taken a seat, I went up to him and began to talk to him kindly. Scarcely an easy dupe and a fat alms, the young fellow, who staggered most lamentably, told me his wretched history. His father had been attacked by a mad dog and so severely bitten that he had died of his wound. I was with my father, sir, at the time, and my right was such that I have since been afflicted as you see me now."

CRIPPLE BOLTED.

"I listened to the young man's tale with deep interest, and when he had done I told

him that I was a specialist in his malady and that I had determined to receive him into my ward at Bicetre and cure him. A cab was passing at that moment, and I rose and hailed it. What I had foreseen came to pass. The cabman had not even had time to pull up before my young man, forgetting all about his infirmity, had taken to his heels and was lost to sight among the trees."

STAND AUCTIONEER OFF.

M. Berry once was taken by a former policeman to witness a curious sight—the sale by auction of the steps of a Paris church. The sale took place in a little wine shop well known to the mendicant fraternity. Beggar men and women crowded round a long table at the head of which stood the "auctioneer," an old man with a flowing white beard. He was selling, on behalf of the Beggars' syndicate, the sole right to occupy the steps of the church in question before and at the close of divine service, the late "proprietor" having died without leaving any recognized heir. Bidding was very animated, and it was evident that the place was a lucrative one. Finally was knocked down to a little old man for 280 francs, cash down, of course. Nearly all such beggars die capitalists.

BEGGARS' DIRECTORY.

There is an inquiry office for beggars in a back street off the Boulevard St. Germain, near the School of Medicine. It is run by a woman and is known only to the initiated. M. Berry says he was told the address by a garrulous old beggar. He went there disguised as a workman. "Do you want to be a beggar?" he asked. "No, thank you," said the stout lady, and she added, "Le grand jeu costs 15 francs and contains 500 addresses, all good. The people who live there never refuse to give alms. With the big pack you can live easily for a year without ever applying twice to the same purse. With the petit jeu," she continued, "you have 200 addresses, and it costs 5 francs. But the houses are overdone, for every beggar has the small list."

MENDICANTS' HOTELS.

There are in Paris at least 500 lodgings known to the police where beggars congregate at night to eat and sleep. Some of these unwholesome places have become quite famous, such as the Chateau Rouge, dubbed "the Guillotine" from the hideous painting which some popular artist

had daubed on the wall of the room where the beggars caroused at night. The Chateau Rouge was historical, as it was the residence of what was once the residence of the beautiful duchesse d'Estrees, one of the numerous favorites of Henry IV, at the end of the sixteenth century. It was on the floor of Gabrielle's bedroom that those legions who could afford to pay 20 centimes (four cents) were allowed the luxury of six hours' sleep—from 8 p. m. to 2 a. m.—without being disturbed at every moment, like these less fortunate fellows below, by fresh comers stepping over their bodies.

CHEERFUL PICTURES.

The paintings on the walls of the drinking room on the ground floor were of the most blood-curdling type. As you entered your eyes fell on a gull-lotter on which perched a swarm of ravens and which was built upon hundreds of death's heads. On the wall opposite you saw two gendarmes arresting a Bill Sikes wailing in blood. On another wall an assassin was kneeling in front of his victim, a woman; and further away was a lake of human blood in which vultures were bathing. These horrors were to be seen until a few months back in the Rue Galande, a narrow street between the river and the Boulevard St. Germain, and the Palace St. Michel, and in the heart of the Latin quarter. The Rue Galande was a modern Cour des Miracles and worthy of the pen of a Victor Hugo. A few doors away from the Chateau Rouge stood the Maison Parent, where for the sum of fifteen centimes, or three cents, a beggar was given a glass of liquor, blowed to sleep till 2 a. m. Upstairs there were two dormitories, one for men and one for women, where the charge was only two cents. Here the men and women lay on the bare floor, while the children slept on the tables. Beds, of course, there were none. Here also would congregate young women of 18 to 20, waiting for some rich lover who were out on "business."

HIGH CLASS HEADQUARTERS.

A third well known house was the Maison Gay, the headquarters of the committee of the Beggars' Syndicate. Only the aristocracy gathered here, and "La Mere Gay" kept good wine and was famous for her repeated tales of woe. The walls were decorated with paintings rivaling in horror those of the Chateau Rouge: two women scratching each other's eyes out for the love of an Apache who stood looking on approvingly; two Apaches assailing a man while two policemen smoked and chat-

ted quietly a few yards away, and so on.

Mother Gay tells, indeed, how she once saved a man's life in front of her door. The poor wretch, who had been decoyed into the Rue Galande by a young woman, had been half strangled and robbed by two Apaches, her accomplices, who were about to finish him with their knives when Mme. Gay rushed out and dragged him into her bar. Mere Gay has known the most notorious criminals. Many of them, she declares, have paid off the paying her by small instalments sent from the penal settlement, where most of them will spend the remainder of their lives.

But the future visitor will seek in vain for these haunts of the beggar. New streets have been opened up. The Rue Galande has been cut in half, and the last stones of the Chateau Rouge, the Maison Parent, the Maison Gay and similar hotbeds of crime have just been cleared away.

BUT ONE REMAINS.

One only is left. That is the Pere Lunette, in the Rue des Anglais, adjacent to Rue Galande. The name of this street alone would testify to its age. It was so called as being the residence of the English students who in the middle ages flocked to the famous University of Paris and sat on freshly cut rushes at the feet of the learned professors of the Sorbonne.

If you pass on into this street, or what is left of it, you will at once notice a six-story house, which is painted red up to the first floor. At the door are two huge pairs of spectacles with the inscribed legend, "Entrons chez Lunette" (Let us go into Lunette's). It is here that the street musicians, house-to-house singers, dancers, fire-eaters, etc., congregate. Pere Lunette is the last survivor among the night refuges of the beggars which have attained to literary celebrity. The police are by no means averse to a stout, broad-shouldered man, dressed in a white garment, generally if not in the pay of at least anxious to keep on good terms with the prefecture of police, and it is in such places that the criminal will most surely be found when wanted.

TURNED OUT EARLY.

At 2 o'clock all the baggards of the Galande quarter are turned out and make their way toward the Central Market. In the neighborhood of which there are other low cabarets, where for another three or four cents they can find drink or a plate of soup or bread and cheese, and finish the remainder of the night sleeping on the floor or huddled to-

gether around the tables. One of these places, nicknamed, the Hotel Fin-de-Siecle, is crammed nightly from the cellar to the attic with 1,200 beggars of all ages and sexes.

WORK IS THE SOLUTION.

A volume could be filled with stories of Paris beggars, their ways and their haunts, for the theme is well-nigh inexhaustible. One must pass on to consider how M. Georges Berry proposes to disperse his formidable army of crime and misery. That idleness alone begets the beggar the French deputy is convinced. But whether the vice is innate or accidental, the only means to combat and suppress it is to devise a means of making the man work who at present finds it simpler and less irksome to hold out his hand for charity. The present system of punishing the beggar and vagabond by keeping him a few months in prison, where he is well fed and housed, is worse than useless, M. Berry maintains. The fact of his having been imprisoned once, of his having a police record, forces him into the ranks of the professional beggar, for the workshop henceforth is closed to him. However earnest may be the "accidental" beggar's resolve to raise himself, he is doomed to failure in the present condition of the law.

TO CREATE WORK COLONIES.

M. Berry proposes to leave the police court and police records to criminals and offenders and to create work colonies for all those who seek public charity. He would keep the number of the police court altogether. He would treat him more as a patient and thinks his case should be dealt with by a Jure de paix, or magistrate, who would normally make out the number of months of work necessary to cure him.

M. Berry's proposals are by no means new. They are based on the system which has been for some years in force in Belgium and which has given excellent results. His scheme may be briefly summarized as follows: Vagabondage and mendacity are henceforth to be considered legal offenses and the magistrate is to have the power to sentence the offender to a labor colony for a period varying from one week to five years. Colonies of repression are to be created by the state and vagabonds and beggars arrested on the public highway are to be sent thither to work. Municipal and departmental councils are to be empowered to vote funds for the organization of such colonies and departmental workshops, where unemployed citizens, demitted or born in the commune or department, will find work.

R. FRANKLIN.

Italian Princess Who Leads The Cult Of The Spooks In Rome.

Special Correspondence.

ROME, April 15.—Although the University of Rome recently rejected the proposition to establish a chair of psychical research for the scientific investigation of ghosts, astral doubles and occult phenomena generally, it must not be inferred that the cult of the spook attracts little attention here. The Eternal city has more haunted houses and probably a larger percentage of believers in spiritualism than any other city in the world. They are found in all grades of society and at the present time aristocratic circles are much given to entertaining mediums and visitors from the other world.

The recognized leader among them is the Princess d'Antoni del Drago. She bears not the slightest resemblance to the popular conception of a female seer, but she is a widow, young, pretty and accomplished. She is not only a believer in spirits, but claims to be a medium also. It was she who drew from Marconi the acknowledgment that there was "something in it," which science—at least as much of it as he knew—could not explain. Further than that he would not go but as it was the result of one sitting only with the princess, there is no telling where he would have ended had he continued his investigations.

Princess d'Antoni belongs to the aristocratic House of Potentillani, and owns the handsome del Drago palace, and has thus been landlady to the last two American ambassadors. She says that

as a child she was conscious of voices and visions which troubled her little soul, but which her parents attributed to imagination. She married very young and it was after this that she became conscious that she was not quite as other people that she had powers which were denied to them, and which now make her a remarkable medium.

WIFE NO. 1 APPEARS.

A few months after her marriage, she relates, she was lying in bed one evening, reading, when the bedclothes suddenly dropped to the floor, as though snatched away by impatient hands. She turned surprised, and became conscious of a cloud, as it were, between her and the light. As she gazed, the shadow took form and substance and assumed the aspect of a woman, dressed in black. When the princess made an involuntary movement to rise, the apparition said in a solemn voice, "Do not be frightened, I come in love. I am your husband's first wife and come to warn you that you will have a son, but he will not live. Give this to Ferdinand as a proof of my love." At the same time holding out a lock of hair.

The princess' entranced senses then burst their bonds, and she shrieked with fear. Hearing her cries, Prince d'Antoni, who was in the next room, rushed to her and found her half-fainting. He also saw as she entered the room, so he said, the shadowy form of a woman, for the ghost had begun to dissolve into thin air. Neither would have believed the reality of what they

had seen had it not been for the lock of hair which lay on the floor and which, being compared with that of the late princess was found to be identical.

PREDICTION FULFILLED.

In due course a son and heir was born to the happy couple who forgot the warning, but their joy was short-lived, as the first Princess d'Antoni appeared again to her successor, in almost the same circumstances as before. "I am come to warn you," she said, "the other time you forgot my words, but now do not let a moment pass without having the boy baptized. My poor child, he will only live a day or two. Take heed of my words and do not delay the baptism." The poor mother hugged her apparently healthy baby in her arms, but sent for the priest, had the ceremony performed, and the next day she was childless. The doctor declared himself baffled. "I never knew a perfectly healthy baby to die in that way before," he exclaimed.

HUSBAND'S DRAMATIC DEATH.

From this time on Princess d'Antoni has had many manifestations and warnings of a supernatural character. One day, she states, she had been at a Kirmesse at the Pincio where she presided over a stall in the bridal dress of a General's daughter and made lots of sales. She entered her carriage with a friend in the highest of good spirits to return home, when suddenly she felt as though a pall had settled over her, and when asked by her companion what was the matter replied that she

was sure that when they met again something dreadful would have happened. The next day she was standing before her mirror, when she saw her husband's reflection in it. "What! you, Ferdinand!" she exclaimed, and turned round but could see no one. Her maid, Maria, said that the prince must have been in the room, as she had heard his footsteps, but on going to look for him found that he was not in the house. Meanwhile Prince d'Antoni, who was at the capital, had been seized with a fainting sensation and slumped at a table and on going to look before her glass. That night he was taken ill and died 10 days later. For three months after his death, the princess asserted communication with him and was greatly soothed thereby.

WROTE IN ARABIC.

She has had several seances with the celebrated medium, Palladino. On one of these occasions the latter sat down at a table and began to write. She covered two or three pages of paper with what both she and her friends supposed to be rubbish; the letters were there, but they made no sense. The paper, however, was examined and proved to be the purest Arabic, which language certainly neither Princess d'Antoni nor the Palladino have any knowledge of whatever. The Palladino herself is really a wonderful woman. She is totally uneducated, but when in a trance speaks in several modern languages and even writes them correctly and grammatically.

Not long ago experiments were tried

with this Neapolitan woman at the University of Naples with results which surprised those present as they were all unbelievers. Prof. Bottazzi, one of the scientists present, happened to touch Palladino's hand when she was unconscious, an electric light near her was at once lighted and this happened every time he repeated the experiment. The professor also vouches for the statement that what was apparently a human hand was laid upon his neck and arm. He touched it and Apollo who stood looking on approvingly, it did not disappear suddenly, but faded, that is, dissolved into thin air, as he held it.

LATEST CONVERT.

The latest great convert in Italy to a belief in the unseen is Prof. Cesare Lombroso, the celebrated criminologist, who, however, has dabbled in "spiritualism" for many years, but it was through Palladino that he at last confessed that many of the wonderful manifestations are absolutely authentic and not to be explained by science. The seance which is said to have convinced the eminent scientist was held in a diningroom by gaslight, and the only apparatus provided was a small iron bedstead and mattress for the medium which was placed in a window above, with a curtain of dark woolen stuff between it and the spectators, who sat about four feet distant. The clothing of the medium was thoroughly examined. Signora Palladino allowed herself to be bound to the iron bed by her wrists, her feet and her waist, and after about a quarter of an

hour various knockings came from the table placed just outside the curtain. The curtain then opened and the head and part of the body of a young woman appeared, clothed in a white garment. One of those present having remarked that the white wrapping allowed only a part of the face to be seen, the points of the fingers of hands appeared and drew aside the folds. Before disappearing the head bowed towards the spectators and the sound of a kiss was audible. After a few minutes the figure of a stout, broad-shouldered man emerged from behind the curtain. Finally the figure of another woman appeared, this time with a child in her arms.

Of a different character were the experiences of the Count d'Annunzio, the great Italian poet and dramatist. Merely for fun he had attended seances at the house of a friend, Marquis Clemente Origo. The communications received were obtained through a table in the way familiar to spiritualists. On one occasion the poet expressed his contempt, both for the communication and the communicator. That greatly annoyed the seer, who was working the table telegraph system, and it began butting at d'Annunzio with the table. Not liking this d'Annunzio left his seat. But the table tilted on two legs, followed him rapidly. Taken by surprise he moved a few steps backwards, but his movements were not quick enough, for the table suddenly hurried itself at him with such force that he was dashed against the wall. The marquis succeeded in calming the spirit and the seance was resumed, but

only on the condition stipulated by the invisible guest, that d'Annunzio should not sit at the table. The spirit was then asked its name which it refused to give. It was then asked its opinion of the poet's work and rapped out this response: "Smoke, all smoke, and like smoke will vanish, leaving no trace behind." d'Annunzio, who was sitting at the effect that his spirit critic did not know what good poetry was. Then the table went for him again and literally chased him out of the room. Since then d'Annunzio has been a confirmed seer. He is convinced that if there are such things as spirits they are of an inferior order of intelligence.

There are several Americans in Rome who thoroughly believe in ghosts. Among the most convinced is the celebrated sculptor, Ezekiel, who comes from Virginia. He has had many experiences, but the one he most cherishes is the vision he had of his mother the night she died. He was in his bedroom, here in Rome, stretched on his bed and she was, he supposed, in America. Suddenly, he says, a light flickered, and looking up he saw a female figure at the further side of his long room. Surprised, he rose on his elbow and watched. The apparition slowly approached the bed and then, turning its head, gazed at him sorrowfully. Then recognizing his mother he sprang up exclaiming, "Mother! You here!" But she gave no answer and he was left staring after her. The next morning brought him a cablegram informing him of his mother's death in America.

CONSTANCE HARRIMAN.