

**THE BALLET GIRL.**

In France and Italy the ballet is considered as legitimate a profession as that of an opera singer or an actress, and as much care is taken in training the novice for the one as for the other, in fact, the application required to attain prominence as a *premier danseuse* is far greater than that of an actress or singer, who is presumed to bring to the task a natural gift, while the dancer can only hope for success by long years of patient study and laborious practice.

In Europe there are four different grades in the profession. First, the *premier*, who receives seldom less than one thousand francs per month, and in some cases many times that sum. She receives presents, attentions and honors from titled nobles and crowned heads, is petted and caressed by the wealthy, and while her brief reign lasts, no wish remains ungratified. Once she is supplanted by a new favorite, nothing is left her but a new field in which to make new converts.

The *coryphee*, like the *premier*, has also studied her profession, but has broken down in training, or from want of funds is compelled to give up her place in the academy; but the time devoted to study and practice has enabled her to take a second place in the troupe. Very rarely she becomes a *premier*; more frequently the *premier* falls, and is compelled to content herself with the position of *coryphee*.

The *coryphee* has generally a protector—in some instances is married. Upon her falls the hard work of the ballet—she must go on early and come off late. Her pay of 200 to 250 francs per month allows her few luxuries. Her protectors are seldom of the wealthy kind, and, anxious to make a good appearance in the little world with which she is surrounded, her life is one constant trial, anxiety, and in many cases disappointment.

It must be remembered that the *coryphee* and *premier*, except in very exceptional cases, are educated for their profession. They enter the academy at an early age, and devote years to study and practice—practice from which a strong man would shrink, and under which many of the poor creatures break down. When once the school is entered and the training begins, there is no rest. The gymnast knows how necessary to success it is, that one day's hard work should be followed by one equally severe, and knows how dearly he pays for even one day of rest or relaxation. The training of the *danseuse* is no less severe than that of the gymnast, and far more painful. A slight experiment will satisfy any one that a large amount of "toe torture" must be endured before the mimic steps we admire so much upon the stage, can be successfully produced. From three to six years of this unending toil is required before the novice attains to any great degree of skill and endurance; then, if she has succeeded in graduating, she makes her *debut* as *premier* and the battle in reality commences. Engagements are not readily secured by these *debutantes*—and once secured, great exertion and constant care and practice are required to retain them, unless the public are favorably impressed, when all becomes comparatively plain sailing, and if the tuition was thorough and the training successful, the *debutante* may soon become the pet of the town—breaking the hearts and depleting the purses of titled nobles in Europe, and winning golden and green-backed favors from opulent and obese brokers in America, who, like Achilles, are vulnerable only in the heel—and toe.

The *premier* furnishes her own tights and generally her own shoes. She has a dressing room for her own exclusive use, and is frequently accompanied by her mother, who aids her in dressing, &c. Where she is without such a guide, her career is generally a more brilliant one, but much briefer. She misses the restraining presence and maternal care of the "old lady," who knows "the way of the world," and does not allow the daughter's head to be turned by trifles.

The *coryphee*s are allowed more room and have a dresser to assist them in their changes of toilet, which the *corps de ballet* has not. They fold and put away their own dresses and are seldom guilty of pilfering. Their tights they furnish themselves. All else is provided and kept in repair by the manager. They give much less trouble than the *corps de ballet*, who in this country are all English, while the *coryphee*s are Italian and German, more used, from their education, to restraints; and, as is the case in every profession, being better paid, behave better.

(To be continued.)

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**GODBE & MITCHELL**

G. S. L. City, Dec. 10, 1867.

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