

THE BALLET GIRL.

(Concluded.)

The *premiers* and, with one or two exceptions, the *coryphees* now at Niblo's, are from La Scala. The *corps de ballet* is entirely English.

These girls have brought to America many of their European habits, and those in New York live very much as they did in their own country. The *premiers* live in comfortable rooms—in some instances furnished by themselves or their admirers; generally in some quiet locality not far from the theatre. They are the recipients of much attention from their friends, and are always jealous of each other. A liberal abuse of the rival is not at all unpleasant to them. They have mothers for whom they appear to have great respect and love, whose counsels are seldom disregarded. The *coryphees* in some instances live with their mothers, and these by their life of continence, show the good effect of motherly care. When the *coryphee* is without a mother, she almost invariably has a sister or some other near relative with her, and the life of these unprotected ones is not as blameless as it might be, and undoubtedly would be, were it not for the persistent annoyance and persecutions of brainless fops, whose plethoric purses furnish the means, and inordinate pride the incentive, for unceasing attentions, from which the unprotected and silly girl has no chance for escape.

A cheap stage bouquet tossed over the footlight, and graciously received by the *dansuse*, is the beginning, followed by more costly bouquets, containing notes, jewelry, &c. Invitations to supper, to dinner, and to ride, succeed an introduction easily obtained. The rest of the story is left to the imagination. It will not repay the trouble required to write it, or to read it.

Those who are unfortunate enough to have their board paid, live comfortably, if not very respectably. The other class live in a very unpretentious manner, striving to save money, and hoping for their return to their native country.

No one would recognize in the beautiful, fascinating *dansuse*, as we see her behind the footlights, the poor, wan, tired girl who, with her sister or mother, inhabits one or two small, ill-furnished rooms, doing her own scanty cookery and other domestic offices, fighting constantly against the insults of those heartless, senseless fops who can see no good in a ballet girl, and whose attentions are the greatest annoyance of the girl's life. Her duty compels her to be at the theatre nearly one hour before the performance commences, in order to dress and "make up;" the performance lasts nearly three hours, which time is spent by the *dansuse* in violent exercise before the glaring heat of the foot-lights, changing her dresses in the crowded ill-ventilated dressing room, and shivering in her thin, comfortless dress while waiting at the wing her turn to go on. If she is late for the performance; if, tired and exhausted, she is tardy in changing her dress, or repairing the wear to her "make up;" if, excited and careless, she is remiss or demonstrative on the stage, she is fined by the manager, which fines are religiously stopped from her not very liberal pay.

Late at night, reeking with perspiration, tired out and exhausted, they must wend their way to their cheerless homes—rain and snow, winter and summer, it is all the same unvarying routine of body, soul and spirit-wearing toil. A scanty supper off the remains of a poor dinner, washed down with liberal draughts of beer, and the night's labor at one or two o'clock in the morning is done.

The *coryphee* is seldom fined; she goes on later, is on less, and gets away earlier than the *corps de ballet*, and her pay of about fifty dollars per week she generally receives intact, while the twenty-five dollars of the *corps de ballet* is frequently much reduced.

The customs and regulations of stage management in this country admit of no *figurante*; their place upon the stage is filled by the extra ballet, who, as a general rule, are uneducated and ordinary women, who have no recognized position in society, and who resort to this means of gaining a livelihood in preference to the more arduous duties of shop girl, for which position, however, few of them have the ability. Their pay is from six to ten dollars per week.

Upon the *maître de ballet* falls the responsible task of arranging the dances, marches, and tableaux; sometimes doing double duty as costumer, designing the dresses. Years of study and practice, and much patience and persever-

ance, are required to fit a man for this position.

Enough has been written to show that the life of the ballet girl is by no means all *colours de rose*, and that in this profession, as in all others, there are bad women, actuated by the vilest of instincts, and others who are striving honestly and honorably to earn a livelihood by their own unaided exertions, and as such are entitled to our respect and sympathy.—*Billard Table*.

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GODDE & MITCHELL.

G. B. L. City, Dec. 10, 1887.

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