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Triumphs of M. Jonquille

by MELVILLE DAVISSON POST

The opera had opened. The music began to fill the corridors. But M. Jonquille did not go in. He remained idling in the foyer, a cigarette in his fingers, his manner and air, a well-bred, bored indifference. The whole house was crowded. There was not a vacant seat.

It was the last performance in Paris of Mme. Zirtzenoff's Salome. A few belated persons passed M. Jonquille and entered the doors to the boxes. Some of these persons addressed him; all regarded him. He was a well-known figure in Paris. His friendship was worth something, and whether one knew him, or cared to know him, all were curious about the man.

The vast music assembled and extended itself.

The foyer became empty, and still M. Jonquille did not go in. Perhaps it was because Mme. Zirtzenoff had not gone on. She was a famous beauty; her Salome had the abandon which stimulated even the jaded nerves of France. It had been on at the Opera for fifty days, and Paris was still keen to see it.

The woman was a Russian exotic, one of those alluring creatures that always assemble a fabulous legend. There was a wild passion in her Salome, and her conquests were the gossip of Paris.

The opera had continued for perhaps thirty minutes. Mme. Zirtzenoff had come on; her voice, like a silver bell, reached M. Jonquille clearly where he sauntered in the foyer.

Presently the door to a box opened and one of the pages of the theatre appeared with an immense bouquet of orchids. The flowers were worth a thousand francs. They could have been grown in Paris only with extreme care and under every perfection of light and temperature. It was a mass of flowers that would have drawn the attention of anybody, exquisite orchids of the genus Oncidium Kramerii, called the Mottled Butterfly.

It seemed to have drawn the attention of M. Jonquille. He stopped the page as he passed him.

"Caroon," he said, handing him a piece of gold, "find me a box of cigars before you go on with those flowers. Quickly—run; I will hold them until you return."

The boy knew the great chief of the Service de la Surete.

He gave M. Jonquille the bouquet of orchids and disappeared down the stairway. He was gone hardly a moment; when he returned, M. Jonquille had not moved from his position by a pillar of the foyer. He handed back the orchids to the page and received the box of cigars.

He paused a moment, fingered the box but did not open it; instead, he walked a few steps down the foyer and entered the box from which the page had come out with the orchids.

One looking on would have wondered why the Prefect of Police required a pack of cigarettes, at the cost of a ten-franc gold-piece—especially as, having turned it in his hand, he had put it carefully into his pocket and entered a box.

It would appear that he waited for these cigarettes before entering the box. But to what end? One could not smoke in a box at the Opera, at its most expensive point in the ultra-fashionable audience of Paris. Although the great opera house was packed with people—not a vacant seat visible to the eye—there was but one person in the box which M. Jonquille had entered.

He was a person that anyone would pause almost anywhere to observe. He was young; he was exquisitely dressed—a dress in which there was some of the over-extravagance of detail, that suggestion of elegance, which the Parisian cannot avoid.

He was a young man and extremely handsome, a blond French type with a dainty mustache and regular Italian features, and thick, soft, yellow hair presenting the gloss of the seal's coat. In his physical aspect, for perfection of detail, the man had no equal on the Paris boulevards.



"Quickly—run; I will hold them until you return."

It had got him a rich American wife and lifted him, as by a fairy lamp, out of the sordid environments of an old family in decay. The thing seemed a piece of the design of a Providence with an aesthetic sense.

This exquisite person would have been incongruous except in an atmosphere of wealth. He had an apartment now beyond the Arc de Triomphe, one of those wonderful apartments that the American invasion after the Great War had set up in Paris.

The Marquis was the envy of the boulevardier.

But it was rumored that he had not the freedom of his wife's money-sacks. He got what she allowed him, but it ought to be written here, in justice to the Marquis, that it was not he who complained. Why should he? The allowance was evidently enough for any reasonable man. He had the best of everything; if he felt any sense of stint, there was no sign either by word or act.

In form, the Marquis was above reproach. There could be no surprise to the fashionable audience of Paris in the fact that the Marquis was alone in the box. His wife was on a visit to America, and it was better fitting that the Marquis should be alone than to be with another who might console him for his wife's absence. If the Marquis was not the best of men, he was at any rate not the least discreet.

He rose and bowed when the Prefect entered.

"Ah, monsieur," he said, "I am charmed to see you; Mme. Zirtzenoff will be even worth an hour of the priceless time of the Prefect of Paris. . . I shall be honored to have you as guest; pray sit down."

M. Jonquille sat down. He looked a moment over the vast audience, brilliant and distinguished; a moment at Mme. Zirtzenoff on the distant stage; and then he addressed his host.

"Monsieur," he said, "Mme. Zirtzenoff is, I imagine, beyond rubies. But I have not come here to observe her; I have come to ask you about the robbery in your apartment. That was an extraordinary robbery."

"It was most extraordinary, monsieur," replied the Marquis. "The whole of Paris regretted that you were out of France at the time. Where were you, monsieur?"

Then the Marquis added with a laugh:

"You cannot be expected to tell that; you protect us, monsieur, by your mystery. If the Loren could see 'To-morrow M. Jonquille will be in Brussels,' we should not have a jewel or a five-franc piece remaining to us."

"Alas, monsieur," replied the Prefect, "you do me too much honor; there are a number of very good men with the Service de la Surete, quite as capable as I to protect Paris."

The Marquis laughed.

"You have an affection for your associates, M. Jonquille, that I fear clouds your intelligence. Nothing could have been managed more stupidly than the investigation of my apartment. In your absence, monsieur, you cannot imagine into what hopeless commonplace the investigation of a criminal affair in Paris can descend."

"Alas, monsieur, there is a gulf fixed between Alexander and the lieutenants of Alexander! But for my own feeble efforts, nothing would have resulted from the police investigation in my apartment. The necklace of diamonds which the Marquis purchased for five hundred thousand francs—asmsembled from the crown jewels of Russia—would have disappeared without a clue to the thief. As it happened, he was brought to justice; he confessed and was sentenced for an incredible period by the court. But for me,"—and again the Marquis laughed—"there would have been no thief sentenced. . . Your inspectors, monsieur, were ridiculous."

There was a hum of the Prefect's reply.

"And the Marquis Chantelle was magnificent! His fame in the affair has reached me; he is the admiration of the Surete. I have come, monsieur, to verify the details, and from yourself. I do not know what rumor may have added or omitted."

He bowed slightly, like one would add a gesture of compliment to his words.

"Willingly, monsieur," replied the Marquis. "I shall be charmed to verify details; but you will pardon me if I am moved to ask you for your opinion on a certain phase of this mystery. You must have an opinion, monsieur, if you do not have an explanation, in fact."

He turned a little in his seat. "Monsieur," he said, "how did it happen that when we had fixed this

robbery upon Jean Lequeux, a member of the Surete, he admitted it before the court and asked for an immediate sentence? But he would admit nothing else; he would not say what he had done with the necklace or where it was."

"That was a strange position for a man to take, monsieur. He could have nothing from the judge. Why confess? If did not lighten his sentence; and after all, our evidence against him was circumstantial. Why did he not say what he had done with the necklace? The judge would have reduced the sentence. Why conceal it, monsieur, and go for this long period of servitude? Did he hope to escape?"

M. Jonquille spoke with decision. "He did not."

"Then, monsieur," continued the Marquis, "why did he refuse to say where the necklace was? Of what service would be the necklace to him after twenty years?"

Again M. Jonquille replied directly and with decision.

"Of no use, monsieur; the man did not expect it to be of any use to him."

"Then, monsieur," continued the Marquis, "why in the name of heaven did he not say where this necklace was, and thereby reduce his sentence?"

M. Jonquille seemed to reflect. "You have asked for my opinion," he said. "I think I can do better than give an opinion. I think I can tell you precisely the reason why Jean Lequeux, when he confessed this crime before the court, refused to say what had become of the necklace."

(To be continued.)

Going fishing—take Winard's Liniment.

The King and Queen of Siam on a state tour of their domain with a train of eighty-four elephants were at least plentifully supplied with trunks.

Wedding trousseaux for well-to-do brides, which formerly included dozens of garments of wool and cotton, can now be packed into a fair-sized suitcase. As crepe-de-Chine has replaced the cotton and wool, however, the cost is much the same as it was. Don't enjoy not enjoying what the average man has enjoyed.—Dr. W. H. Moberly.

In British Honours.

The Residence, or Government House, lay right on the beach, surrounded by green lawns, with ducks and fowls propping up as they pleased among the flower beds. At the gate stood a British Tommy in khaki, as stiff as any sentinel outside the Bradenburger Tor. . .

There is always a sense of comfort and ease in entering an English home, whether it be in Yorkshire or on the other side of the globe; for the English know how to bring comfort and convenience with them wherever they happen to be. . . A Briton is always a Briton. Take a Swede from Smaland and plant him in some English-speaking country, and in a very short time he will have adapted himself, in all externals, to the customs of the place, and speak English fluently if with an accent. But you would never find an Englishman so adapting himself as, for instance, to adopt the dress of the natives, or endeavor to speak the Smaland dialect with a cockney accent. It is this disinclination towards everything alien which leads them to envelop themselves, wherever they may be, in an atmosphere of their own, forming a barrier which is not easily broken through. . .

Sooner or later Europe must become one nation, and anyone who travels in it will always be in a common fatherland. After the fall of my system it seems to me that the only way in which an equilibrium can be achieved in Europe is through a league of nations.—Napoleon Bonaparte.

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Cruelty to animals is one characteristic of the savage. Sooner or later Europe must become one nation, and anyone who travels in it will always be in a common fatherland. After the fall of my system it seems to me that the only way in which an equilibrium can be achieved in Europe is through a league of nations.—Napoleon Bonaparte.

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