

sand *modistes*, *fleuristes*, *couturières*, *plumassières*, and so on, enrolled themselves for the contest, and of these some five hundred actually heel-and-toed from the gardens of the Tuileries to Nanterre. There was no order in the start; the road was choked with automobiles and carriages, and with the friends of the participants, who were permitted, by the way, to aid with pushes their candidates for the prizes. Nanterre was *en fête* to receive them. The band stand in the main square was adorned with a sign "Homage to the Midinettes," and in the afternoon there was dancing upon the gravel of the square, in the midst of a crowd of onlookers so dense that each midinette and her partner had barely room for spinning round. The restaurants of Nanterre and the *cafés chantants* in Paris were ringing with songs about them. Most of these are not for American readers; but here is one printable example of the kind of poetry inspired by the occasion:

#### BALLADE POUR LES MIDINETTES.

On les voit dans les Tuileries,  
Au Palais-Royal mêmement,  
Boulotter des charcuteries,  
Quand le temps est assez clément;  
Et c'est un spectacle charmant.  
De ces spartiates dinettes  
La joie est l'assaisonnement:  
Amour et los aux midinettes!

Elles vont dans des crémeries  
Quand pince le froid véhément,  
Et, là, fond des câlineries  
Aux chats de l'établissement.  
Etant chattes également,  
Elles aiment fort les minettes  
Qui les caressent lentement;  
Amour et los aux midinettes!

Vives, malignes, aguerries,  
Qu'un vieux marcheur, imprudemment,  
Leur conte des cochonneries,  
Elles ripostent, exprimant  
Leur dégoût pour un tel amant.  
Ces brunettes, ces blondinettes  
Se prennent par le sentiment:  
Amour et los aux midinettes!

#### ENVOI.

Princesses! ce poète ment,  
Qui vous adresse des sonnettes  
Et ne s'en va plutôt clamant:  
"Amour et los aux midinettes!"

Thirty or forty years ago, long before skyscrapers and rapid transit were thought of, and New York was just a great big growing town, they used to tell a story that was ghastly enough to curdle the blood of the most sceptical and to keep people of nervous temperament awake of nights. Of course, the thing probably never happened, but those who told it were careful to enhance its horror by assuring their hearers that it was an absolute, if inexplicable, occurrence. The tale went that of a summer night a husband and wife returning home from the theatre entered a Fifth Avenue stage far down town and for many blocks were the only occupants. A little above Fourteenth Street, however, the stage came to an abrupt stop, the door was opened, and three young men entered. One of the three had evidently been drinking heavily, for his companions were obliged to help him to his seat. The door was closed behind them and the stage continued its journey northward. About ten blocks farther on, one of the young men rose, and bidding his friends good night, stopped the stage, and alighted. A few minutes later the second of the three said, "Well, good night, Dick," pulled the strap, stepped to the sidewalk, and walked off through one of the side streets. There remained in the stage only the husband and wife and the young man, who was obviously under the influence of liquor, and who sat in a crouching attitude in a corner of the stage under the dim flickering lamp. After a time, the husband noticed that the young man's head seemed to be drooping as if in sleep, and fearing that he might be borne beyond his destination, he rose, tapped him on the shoulder, and called attention to the number of the street they had just passed. There was no response, and the husband repeated his words, leaning over as he did so. Then he suddenly straightened up, turned to his wife, and said quickly, "We will get out here." She began to protest, but he simply repeated his words, pulled the strap, and helped her to alight. As they stood under the corner lamp-post, she turned questioningly and asked him why he insisted on their getting out of the bus blocks below their destination.

"Because," he replied, "that young man's throat was cut from ear to ear."

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That was the story that went the rounds of New York thirty or forty years ago. Ten or twelve years ago they were telling in the Paris clubs a tale equally weird and gruesome. No one knew whence it originated—no one does know whence such stories come—they seem to be evolved out of the air. It had to do with a wealthy American who was passing a few days in Paris before joining his wife who was in London waiting for her husband and for the date of sailing of the ocean steamer that was to bear them to their home. One evening the American having nothing better to do decided that he would seek entertainment at the *Folies Bergères*. As he was sitting comfortably in that place of amusement, sipping a bock and smoking a cigar, his attention was attracted to a very handsome and strikingly attired woman at a nearby table. He studied her discreetly for some time, and noticed that she was throwing occasional glances in his direction and whispering about him to her companions. Suddenly, to his amazement, she rose, walked directly to him, took a card from her case, laid it on the table before him, and then, without a word, passed out of the theatre. The American examined the card on both sides, and found it to be absolutely blank. He was about to throw it away; but reconsidering, thrust it in his pocket, and a little while later, feeling rather tired, left the theatre and returned to his hotel. It was a small establishment, and before retiring, being in a communicative mood, the American had a little chat with the landlord. Among other things he spoke of his experience at the *Folies Bergères* with the mysterious woman and the card. The landlord laughed, and the American to emphasise his point, took the card from his pocket, and threw it on the table. But when the Frenchman saw it, a terrible change came over his countenance. His face was ashen with horror, and without a word he rose and abruptly left the room. The American's amazement at this was

heightened into indignation when, a minute later, a waiter appeared and told him that the management insisted that he leave the hotel at once. Puzzled and furious, the American called for a cab, had his trunks brought down from his room, and departed for the Continental. Reaching there, he told his story, which was received with sympathetic wonder and attention. The landlord of the other hotel must have gone crazy, they assured him. To this the American agreed, and to show the absurdity of it all produced the blank and innocent card. To his astonishment, the faces of those about him changed as if by magic. Instead of sympathetic attention, they looked upon him with expressions of the utmost horror and loathing. "Monsieur's pardon, but we find that we are entirely unable to accommodate Monsieur. Monsieur must go elsewhere." Utterly dazed by the turn of events, the American re-entered a cab and told the *cocher* to drive him to the Gare du Nord, took a midnight train, and ten o'clock the next day found himself in London. As he emerged from the Charing Cross Station, who should he encounter but his most intimate friend, and before going to his wife, the American felt that he must make him acquainted with the infamous and inexplicable treatment which he had received in Paris. After hearing the story, the friend whistled, rubbed his head, confessed that he could make nothing of it, and finally asked to see the card. "Here it is," said the American, drawing the bit of blank pasteboard from his pocket, and then to his amazement saw again the old expression of hatred and loathing and horror come over his friend's face, and a minute later he was standing giddy and alone in the street, the whole world reeling about him. He rushed away to find his wife. There, at least, he must find sympathy, consolation, and explanation. To her he breathlessly told the story, and before her threw down the terrible card. She looked upon it and in an instant the loving woman of the minute before was shrinking from him as from some loathsome reptile, her eyes stark and staring with hatred. "Don't touch me! Out of my sight! Never let me see you or hear of you again!"