

THE MYSTERIES OF PARIS

BY EUGENE SUE

1804 — 1857

A CLASSIC IN A PAGE

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"The Mysteries of Paris" was written by Sue after he had tried his hand at novels based on his career in the French navy. These early stories, practically forgotten now, had made him the idol of France, when he changed his method entirely and began to spread on immense canvases his epical and dramatic romances—"The Mysteries of Paris" and "The Wandering Jew," which latter novel appeared soon after the fame of the former had made Sue's name known through the world.

"The Wandering Jew" is by far the greater as concerns literary style, and sweeping imagination in conception and treatment. The present novel excels it, however, in variety and reality of "action."

The reader of to-day must remember that he is reading a novel written by a close student of sociology and society, who deals with a time when the great crimes of the criminals only to disgrace them again many times more wicked than when they went in.

This knowledge is necessary to prevent the assumption that "The Mysteries of Paris" is merely a purely melodrama. The world of crime there described, which is quite impossible to-day, was a legitimate fruitage of the galleys and the prisons.

In the beginning of the second quarter of the nineteenth century the most brilliant and admired among the sovereigns of Europe was the Grand Duke of Gerolstein, Gustavus Rudolph.

Clever, handsome, a man of singular strength both mental and physical, ruler of one of the richest States of the Germanic Federation, his lot seemed so happy that to name him was to envy.

Even his court looked upon him as a mortal happy beyond doubt. Only one man, old Sir Walter Murray, an English baronet who had trained him in boyhood and had been his adviser and friend ever since, knew the remorse that preyed on the Grand Duke continually.

To a man of lesser mind and soul the fault for which Rudolph of Gerolstein suffered might have seemed slight, especially in a sovereign, but the Grand Duke, reared during all his youth in the simple pursuits of wood and field and trained to the clearest sense of private honor, duty and royal duty by the honest simple Englishman, made his life one of expiation for a misdeed that had been forgotten by the world.

It had occurred when he was 18. Sir Walter Murray, who had come to England and Holland as a mercenary under the care of a celebrated man, Dr. Caesar Polidori, an Italian, an unscrupulous as he was learned.

With an attacking riches and power, Polidori had more readily gained a court rule than under a strict, grave court, organized with typically German propriety such as Gerolstein then was under Rudolph's father. He secured the work of corrupting the heir with such cunning that Rudolph insensibly fell under his spell.

Before Sir Walter returned Polidori had made such progress that he became the young Prince's future heir to the throne. As if to play into his hands, a beautiful Scotchwoman arrived at court. She was Lady Sarah, daughter of a woman who had been placed under a cloud as that of Polidori himself. She had come to Gerolstein with the determination to become the wife of the future sovereign.

With the keen scent of one accustomed for another, the Italian perceived her plan and resolved to aid her. With all his art of suggestion and intrigue he helped her to gain admittance. Within a few months Rudolph was floundering in the net, overwhelmed by an infatuation that the court young Prince imagined to be love.

Infatuated though he was, he was not blind enough to imagine that the Grand Duke would permit a marriage. He had a ready ear, therefore, to Polidori's suggestion, that there be a private wedding.

Sarah consented willingly. The Grand Duke was old and infirm and expected at the same time, he had long before she would be able to appear as the Grand Duchess and take her place among the sovereigns of Europe.

But the old ruler did not die as she had expected. He was more and more impatient. At last he fixed ambition to ascend a throne became overpowered and destroyed, even her cool judgment.

She betrayed her secret purposely to the court. The Grand Duke, furious at the revelation of what struck him as little short of disgrace, swore that he would place her in the pillory.

Rudolph, carried away by rage, drew his sword and attacked his father, being prevented from patricide only by the opportune arrival of Sir Walter, who disarmed him.

He was imprisoned secretly. Polidori, arrested at the same time, confessed and furnished proofs that the marriage had been a mock one, arranged by himself so that he should have double power. He gave up Sarah's letters in which she spoke with icy disdain of the Prince, disclosing her real character and making no concealment of the fact that she loved him into marriage merely to satisfy her ambition.

The venerable Grand Duke without a word of reproach showed his son the letters. Rudolph fell on his knees and asked pardon. Like a sudden flame the disclosure awoke his soul and flared from him that he had thought was love. He consented at once to the annulment of the marriage and left Germany with Sir Walter on a long voyage.

Then began an expiation as original as it was ambitious. "Know to forgive himself for having embittered his father's last years, he vowed to give up his whole life to personal efforts to help the needy, succor the suffering, save the persecuted and punish the guilty.

sentenced to fifteen years in the galleys. In order to extract more money from his wife he arranged with a convict who was about to be liberated to snatch his infant son. Since then the unhappy woman, who had assumed the name of Madame George, had not been able to find a trace of him.

Rudolph, bent on knowing the pool and the criminal as they really were, took a personal part in the search. Clad as an artisan he went into the low quarters of Paris and mingled with the people in their wine shops and dives.

So it happened that one stormy night in the autumn of 1838 found him peering as a fan painter in the White Rabbit, one of the worst of the thieves' refuges that lined the narrow streets between the Palace of Justice and Notre Dame Cathedral.

He was not more than 16. Her face was a perfect oval and almost angelic in expression. Long eyelashes half veiled a pair of beautiful, melancholy blue eyes. Her small, touching mouth was like a rose. Splendidly shining auburn hair crowned her. Even in her shabby, ugly clothes she looked almost like a queen.

Yet she was only a poor wail of the dregs—a girl of unknown parentage, taught to beg in her childhood by an old hag and thief, seized and sold as a convict, and now, in the reformatories, doors and bars her into their low quarters. She had been there for some weeks when Rudolph met her by chance and inquired into her history.

"La Goualeuse," as they called her, because of her sweet voice, was still telling her story when she stopped suddenly, as if she had found a word which she had never before used. "You have a fine face," she said, "but I shall please your life for repentance. When you go from here, punished, you shall go with enough to support you for the rest of your existence in a retired spot. The more you repent and find forgiveness before God the more I shall love you."

"May God forgive me if I do wrong," said Rudolph. "You have abused your great strength," continued the reformatory, "but I shall help you to get it back. You have made the weak tremble. You shall tremble before them. You shall please your victims into night. I shall please you into night."

Two servants advanced silently to a sign. Rudolph addressed a doctor. He listened to some whispered words, stopped back as if in fear, then recovered himself and bowed, saying: "As Your Highness wishes."

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to use his strength, his craven nature assumed command. He answered Rudolph's questions slavishly, striving to gain mercy.

He confessed the murders and then confessed that his object in having the boy kidnapped had been to bring him up as a thief. By chance he had come into the hands of the banker at Nantes and had been brought up to honor and rectitude. After Duresnel had escaped from the galleys he found that his son held an influential position in the bank. He had gone to him, disclosed to him that he was his father and had tried to make him rob the bank.

The young man, horrified and heartbroken, had refused. He had been unable to force himself to denounce his own father to the authorities; therefore he had fled from Nantes, leaving a letter to warn the banker of the conspiracy.

If Rudolph had viewed the man with horror before, he looked on him now as a monster. When he set the trap, not knowing what it would catch, he had intended to let the criminal go free after getting what information he could. Now he realized that it would be a wicked thing to turn him loose on society again.

But the Grand Duke had an invincible loathing for society's remedy, the scaffold. He wanted to see organized civilization reach a grade of intelligence where the treatment of criminals would consist in making them impotent to do harm, while still leaving them opportunity for repentance and reform.

He came to a fearful resolution. At a signal a man entered whom Rudolph addressed as doctor. He listened to some whispered words, stopped back as if in fear, then recovered himself and bowed, saying: "As Your Highness wishes."

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Germain telling her that the notary had caused his arrest on the trumped-up charge of stealing 10,000 francs.

At this news Rudolph began to wonder if Jacques Ferrand did not have a more or less guilty hand in the affair of La Goualeuse, for whom he was feeling as wrong-growing interest, as Madame George's reports told him that she was winning the love of all about her, while the old abbe of the village swore that at heart she was as pure and innocent as a child, despite the ugly life into which she had been thrown by an evil fate.

Acting on the suspicion gained as the artisan M. Rudolph, the Grand Duke surrounded the notary with skilful watchers and spies. They discovered that while Ferrand had won a reputation for great piety and virtue by his outward life, his career had been marked by the ruin of those who had trusted him, although in each case the notary had posed as the grief-stricken friend of his unfortunate clients and had shown them that their disasters were purely accidental and that he had lost it in speculation and was about to kill himself in despair.

The mass of proof convinced the Grand Duke that he had come by chance on the track of a man who had done immense wrongs and had brought his wretchedness in his path through many years. He determined to punish him by striking at that for which he had committed all his crimes—his wealth.

Ignorant of the powerful hand that was preparing to grip him, Jacques Ferrand was gloating just then over his realized ambitions. At last he had amassed a million francs and he was preparing to leave Paris and enjoy his fortune in the views and disportations that he longed for all the more fiercely for having been forced to enjoy them sparsely and in secret so many years.

At this juncture Lady Sarah arrived on the scene again. She had married a Scotch nobleman after the attainment of the mock marriage to the heir of Gerolstein. Her husband had died, and as soon as she was a widow the old eager dreams of becoming the wife of a reigning monarch came to her.

She resolved on a desperate expedient to induce Rudolph to marry her. As a first step in her plot she called on Jacques Ferrand. They had a long, secret conversation, from which she retired huffed, but after she had gone he was white and trembling.

Her next step was against La Goualeuse. Her spies had told her of the beautiful girl whom Rudolph had taken to his model farm. They had no trouble in finding out her past, and Sarah immediately assumed that the Grand Duke was in love with her. She resolved to remove her from him and thrust her back into the infamy from which she had been rescued.

By strange chance she picked on Screech-Owl to do the work. That charming woman went to the farm with an accomplice and the two lay in wait by a road which the girl used every evening on her way to the old abbe.

The Screech-Owl lured her to the place of concealment by loud cries of distress. They seized her with ease and bore her off.

They made her swear not to communicate with the people at the farm again or to tell any one of the kidnapping. The Screech-Owl threatened to burn her face with vitriol if she refused.

This hideous menace succeeded in doing what the threat of mere death would have failed in doing. La

Goualeuse swore that she would obey them when they told her that all they demanded in addition would be that she remain away from Rudolph and the farm.

They turned her loose in Paris; but they did it cunningly, in a district where under the police rules then in force she was promptly arrested as a vagabond and put into the prison of Saint Lazare.

Having watched until she was thus safely disposed of, Screech-Owl proceeded to Jacques Ferrand, to tell him that the girl whom Madame Seraphine had turned over to the vagabond long ago was now in Saint Lazare under the name of La Goualeuse. She declared that if she did not get 10,000 francs in three days she would tell La Goualeuse all she knew.

The notary, according to his wont, boldly denied everything and drove the hag from his house.

The Screech-Owl hurried to Lady Sarah to report the success of her mission. She knocked according to previous arrangement at a little door in the rear, which Sarah opened herself, permitting her to enter secretly.

"It is well," said Sarah when the old woman had recounted what had been done. "I now want another service for which I shall pay you well. You must find for me a handsome girl, not more than 17, whose parents died very early. She must have blue eyes, like the little girl in this picture."

Lady Sarah hastily opened a cabinet, tossed jewels out heedlessly, and brought forth a mezzotint portrait.

The Screech-Owl paid little attention to what Sarah said after she saw the jewels. She felt for her dagger and was devoting her mind to the task of getting behind the woman, not more than 17, whose parents died very early. She must have blue eyes, like the little girl in this picture.

"Why," she cried, before she could stop herself, "that is the little girl who was given to me to take care of. She is the one now known as La Goualeuse."

Sarah leaped to her feet, her face pale with surprise and excitement. "What do you mean?" she asked, almost breathlessly.

"I mean," said the Screech-Owl, "that I have found the girl you want. She is a former convict named Tournemine, a thousand francs, to get rid of her. She had grown very dear to him—an emotion that he could not analyze further—because she had lost a beloved child."

While he was still overcome he received the news of the attack on Sarah. Although she was alive still, it was certain that she was doomed, and she begged Rudolph to fulfill a request that she might have in her interview.

He went at once, deeply as he hated her. Lady Sarah was determined to fulfill her ambition before she died. In the past months it had slowly become a mad dream, but now it was her one flaming desire—a madness that kept her alive and gave her strength to play her great card.

Even more beautiful than when she first lured the young Prince, she faced Rudolph with the light of triumph in her dark eyes.

"Rudolph!" she cried almost as soon as he entered. "Our child is not dead!"

The Grand Duke leaped to his feet and said with a trembling voice: "You are trying to deceive me!"

"There," she pointed, "is my child, my blood!" said Sarah, pointing to the fragmentary confession of the Screech-Owl.

Rudolph turned white. He staggered and the paper dropped from his hands. He looked at Sarah with a staring horror.

"I gave you that our child was dead," said Sarah, "because I wished to revenge myself on you. When she was 4 years old I gave her to Mme. Seraphine, the widow of an old soldier, to bring up. I placed 100,000 francs with her to rear a cross-brother, for her support. At the end of a year they wrote to me that she was dead. Recently, when my husband died and, almost at the same time, my dying wish was to see a cross-brother that she was our daughter, knowing that you would legitimize her by marrying me. In looking for a girl Providence led me to an old woman called Screech-Owl. I showed her this picture. She recognized it as that of a girl given to her by a convict, who had obtained her from Mme. Seraphine."

Rudolph stared at the picture. There could be no mistake. Twelve years, though they were twelve years of unthinkable suffering, had only emphasized the beauty of the child. He began to sob—terrible sobs that shook him as an epochal tempest shakes rocks.

"The Goualeuse—our child—and they have killed her!" gasped he at last.

boat, the other one approached only to pick him up and both women were left to whirl down the tide, being watched cold-bloodedly by the murderers until they sank.

Ferrand had taken effective precautions to prevent the assassins from knowing who he was. The death of Madame Seraphine removed his accomplice, who might have turned on him some day. Now there remained only one other being who had guilty knowledge of his crimes, and him he did not fear, since betrayal would mean his own destruction.

That accomplice was Dr. Polidori. Yet even while he was rubbing his hands with satisfaction, Dr. Polidori, tracked by Rudolph's spies who had seen him with Ferrand, was in their power. They had caught him in the very commission of a crime—the poisoning of a rich man at the orders of his young wife.

Once in the power of Rudolph, and realizing that the scaffold was certain if the Grand Duke chose to give him up to justice, he surrendered Ferrand without hesitation.

He confessed that the brother of the Countess Fermont had not committed suicide, but had been murdered by Ferrand and himself, that they might appropriate the fortune in the notary's hands. He furnished proof that Ferrand's charge against Germain had been made solely to hide another embezzlement of trust funds. With these confessions and documents that he surrendered, he gave the Grand Duke enough evidence to assure the conviction of the lawyer on capital charges.

But this was not Rudolph's design. Imbued as he was with the determination to punish criminals and crime in his own way.

Holding the fear of death over Polidori, he made him the instrument. Taking elaborate precautions against his escape, he sent the Italian into Ferrand's house to begin a novel and effective punishment.

Meantime he had learned of the kidnapping of La Goualeuse. His agents traced her to Saint Lazare. There they learned that Mme. Seraphine had taken her away, and almost simultaneously with their report came the news of her drowning.

The Grand Duke was stricken with grief. He realized with surprise that the beautiful and unhappy young girl had grown very dear to him—an emotion that he could not analyze further—because she had lost a beloved child.

While he was still overcome he received the news of the attack on Sarah. Although she was alive still, it was certain that she was doomed, and she begged Rudolph to fulfill a request that she might have in her interview.

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Sarah looked at him with lips apart and a stony face.

"Yes, accursed woman," said he, forcing himself to speak connectedly, although his brain was a-whirl, "they have killed her. Good and provident mother, do you know what this child was?"

other side was the scaffold. He consented.

The very next day he sent for a noble old priest and announced that he had decided to give his whole great wealth to charity.

Actually writhing, feeling as if the words would truly choke him, as if they were ropes fastened around his throat and being drawn taut, he declared first that he would settle two thousand francs a year on Morel, who had come from the asylum cured, this income to be revertible to the daughter as the father's death.

With his hand on Ferrand's listened to the innocent priest's praise of his generosity.

Having signed this paper, he signed another in which he declared that there had come to him through an anonymous source 100,000 crowns, which the giver wished to offer to the Countess Fermont as restitution.

Then came the most important gift of all. Polidori, posing as the sympathetic friend, had used all his force to sustain the wretched lawyer while he read the deed and signed it.

It gave all the remainder of his fortune, with the strict condition that the donor's name be left unknown, to the establishment of a bank for workmen, where they might borrow money without interest when out of employment. It named as perpetual manager, with a salary of four thousand francs, Francois Germain (who had long since been liberated from prison by Ferrand's withdrawal of the charge against him, and restored to his mother).

The good priest, unable to control himself, broke forth in tearful praise and blessings. Every word uttered by him was as a dagger stroke into Ferrand's black heart.

"Rudolph!" he murmured, "I did not know you were so good. I was tormented by being forced to succor those whom he hated. Covetous—he was anguished by being forced to part with all he loved. Hypocrite—he was racked by doing good deeds and gaining no credit for them."

Even while Rudolph was on his way to kill him his penance had been fulfilled. The priest had gone with the deeds and securing Ferrand's penniless, had thrown himself to the floor, quivering as if in convulsions.

Suddenly he arose with the fire of madness in his eyes. He tried to leave the room, Polidori, who was responsible for him as a prisoner till the Grand Duke should declare himself satisfied, seized him. The lawyer, temporarily insane, struggled fiercely. He tried to call to the floor a poisoned dagger slipped from Ferrand's coat. Suddenly he screamed appallingly. Reason returned to him. He had felt himself pierced in the hand. In that moment he knew that he must die.

Even at that instant Polidori, struggling to his knees, pressed his leg on the weapon. A burning pain shot through him.

A few minutes afterward doors crashed as Rudolph burst into the house. "Faster!" he cried, entering the room.

He said no more. On the floor lay the two, close together, their limbs twisted, dead.

The avenger's wrath fled, Rudolph became the Grand Duke again, looking solemnly upon the decree that heaven still pronounced and cancel his earthly attempt at justice.

Quiet, humbled and immersed now in a pure and noble sorrow for his child, he returned to his mansion to order an immediate departure for Gerolstein.

There he was met with another wonderful act of Providence. It had taught him the weakness of earthly designs of punishment, this second one was to teach him humble gratitude.

La Goualeuse had been found alive in a basket near the Seine. The current had swept her near shore where rescuers seized her as she floated by.

At first he was stunned and could not believe; but they brought the beautiful young girl to him, and tenderly, gently, and lovingly, he held her, and she was his.

Within an hour afterward he was at the bedside of the dying Sarah. Before she closed her eyes forever she had been made Duchess of Gerolstein—her rap dream, for which she had committed so much crime, made true at last, but only to come as a punishment, for her breaking eyes my the extent of her wickedness and the mockery of the prize.

As Princess Amelia, the wife of the Duke of Parma, entered the Grand Duchy of Gerolstein, Beller, with shouts of joy, surrounded with pomp, blessed with the passionate love of her father, life did its best to undo the wrongs it had done her, and fortune offered cure and forgetfulness.



QUICK! QUICK! DICTATE WHILE I WRITE, SAID LADY SARAH.

Next Sunday's one-page classic will be "The Virginians," by William Makepeace Peck.

Still Divinely Receptive. Lumberton Robesonian.

Since you who know the charming young ladies of this town know that divine chances come to them whether they are in an attitude of receptivity or not, you may be like the man who looked steadily at the first giraffe he ever saw and turned away with the contemptuous remark, "H—L, there ain't no such animal