

Wild Legends That Have Been Fulfilled

Strange Stories of Carp With Gold Collars and the Pale Boy of the Catacombs. Predicting Entrance of France Into War, Were Told Before Conflict Began.



The Pale Boy of the Paris Catacombs and his Wagonload of Dead Kings. Whatever May Be the Truth of This Strange Figure It Actually Existed as Here Photographed in the Catacombs.

BY STERLING HEILIG.

PARIS, April 25.—In my article of Sunday, February 15, 1914 (published in The Oregonian), I gave the fabulous legend of the Pale Boy of the Paris Catacombs. His reappearance categorically foretold the great war, as was stated.

In my article of Sunday, December 2, 1911, and, again, in the New York Sun of Sunday, June 2, 1912, I gave the presages of Trianon. Marie Antoinette was walking, aged gardeners of Versailles were talking and the Hotel du Reservoir was full of seekers. In particular, the venerable carp of Louis XVI, with gold collars round their necks, were out again, swimming five in a row. "War and trouble!" said old Jehan, "war and trouble!"

Do you believe in old wives' tales? Do you listen to the maudering of shaky fountain-tenders and loony mushroom-growers of the Paris underworld? You do not need to. Just admire the coincidences. Regularly, there is a flaw in the legend—it is remembered or heard of only after it came true.

These were published in America before-hand.

I even published the photograph of the Pale Boy, here repeated.

The Trianon presages began in June, 1911, and reached their climax in June, 1912.

Two English ladies, Misses Morrison and Lamont, vouched for by Andrew Lang, published in the Transactions of the Society for Psychical Research, an account of doings similar to those witnessed by that New York society girl whose astonishing impressions were published as fiction in a magazine whose name unfortunately escapes me, and, at the time in Paris, filled the Hotel du Reservoir with seekers.

Misses Morrison and Lamont, "ignorant of French history" and the topography of their surroundings, visited the Little Trianon by a plan in their guide book. Passing a large pond, they perceived an edifice which they supposed to be the Grand Trianon, and continued. From that moment their adventures began.

"Chatting of things and friends, we followed the path," runs the psychical relation, "but the presence of constructions which we had not seen made us turn to the right." Two astonishing looking men, "seemingly imposing functionaries, in long gray cloaks and little tricorne hats," frightened them, "and I should add that, already, everything round us had taken, in my eyes, a singular look."

"The trees seemed to be without relief or life. There was no effect of light and shade; not a breath of air in the leaves; and they looked flat, like a woods embroidered in tapestry." The manner of the cloaked men was worried, there seemed a tragic atmosphere. "I was glad to hear hurried steps behind us; but when I turned there was nobody."

"Another man came out of a stone wall, evidently a gentleman, his cloak slung over his shoulder." He cried: "Ladies, ladies, you must not go on!" waving his arms in distress and saying things which they remembered imperfectly, except that there was question of great troubles and changes, and it was wished "they should know it," and references to a "house" and "she." He scared silence they passed a little bridge near a pond, beyond which, before a house, "she" was seated, a book in her lap, as if waiting for them.

"Her face, no longer young, though beautiful, did not attract me," wrote Miss Morrison. "But the singularity of

her dress astonished me, though for a long time I had been under the impression of walking in a dream.

"She" was beginning to warn the English ladies of something vastly important, when the arrival of a lower middle-class Paris wedding party caused her to disappear, and the "painted scenery" along with her. They found themselves in boisterous company at the Hamlet—where Marie Antoinette played milkmaid—as it remains today. Andrew Lang and Theodore de Wyssave believed there had been a "psychical throw-back of 122 years," and what the ladies had seen was "not the Trianon of today, but as it was in the last years of Louis XVI, probably on October 5, 1789, when the Paris mob went to Versailles to bring back the baker, the baker's wife and the little oven booty."

At the Hotel du Reservoir, however—where the two ladies arrived trembling and voluble—there came out the legendary explanation, which got into the Paris papers and started the crowds of seekers. Half the old Versailles families have stories of how some member, wandering by the Trianon, in full, bright afternoon, saw the familiar landscape change and found themselves tangled up in a bad dream like adventure of men in cloaks warning them back, and "she," who tried to make some momentous communication, always interrupted. Always—in the English ladies—these adventures corresponded with momentous political changes in France and bloody European wars!

"The beautiful Queen is out again!" said the hereditary palace gardeners. From father to son they know the stories. "War and trouble! Change of rulers!"

At the hotel the seekers crowded and complained.

The park was alive with earnest bunches, treading on each other's heels and mutually spoiling the conditions for each other as effectively as the Paris wedding party had done for the English ladies. Until, suddenly, their discontent vanished before an extraordinary sight.

They stood on the little bridge of the old carp pond.

They peered into the deep, clear waters.

When they waited, not impatient, not too numerous and noisy, the prodigious sight passed. Five vast, fat and sluggish ancient fish, beady-eyed, bearded, barnacled, swam nose to tail, in a procession, back and forth. And each great fish had a dull golden collar round his neck!

"The carp of the Dauphin!" whispered the seekers. "The prophetic fish!"

All France knew the story; but never had the presage showed itself to crowds, like this. "They seem to make a point of notifying the democracy!" grumbled antique Jehan Collet, venerable gardener of bar-sinister royal blood in his family, who knew them from the old, exclusive days and was jealous.

King Louis XVI, in his youth as Dauphin, loved to meditate on the long life attributed to elephants, turtles, eagles, whales, shark and carp. He began with turtles, cutting his initials and the date on their backs. Only heaven knows what became of them. History is silent. Then the unfortunate Prince—who was, later, to have his own neck cut off, turned to the carp pond.

He had Jehan Collet's grandfather catch him 10 family, sole, young carp in a hand net. Ten gold collars were prepared and ready. Ten names, to

baptize the fish, were engraved on them. Once colored, they were replaced in the pond. They became forgotten; but just before the old French Revolution they made themselves very prominent. On that last day, when the Paris mob took him and Marie Antoinette to Paris, eight big carp defiled before the King, in sympathy or warning. Leaning over the bridge, he apostrophized them: "I go," he said, "but you remain!"

They seem to have taken the job seriously. They have warned every French dynasty of trouble.

"I, Jehan, saw them as a boy of 17, in 1829," said Jehan Collet, to select seekers. "Charles X was King. He lived at St. Cloud; but when he heard that the carp had come out of the mud, he hurried here in his black carriage with six horses. He stood where Madame stands, and four carp swam past. One year later, France lost her last legitimate sovereign."

"When did they next show?"

"Louis Philippe, King of the French, lived much at the Grand Trianon," said the ancient servant. "I helped put in the first hot-air registers in France. When I saw the carp come out, in 1847, I told my wife the secret. Whom did she tell? Everybody. The King came, very grave. Together we stood on this little bridge. Five carp swam past, their collars shining red! Next year came revolution. Three years later, when I saw the carp come up, I said nothing. Louis Napoleon made his coup d'etat and promoted me third garter."

"And did the carp show in 1870?"

"In 1865, Madame, Napoleon III had heard of them, and laughed. They brought me luck," he said. Next year came the Mexican adventure—the beginning of the end. I knew it. So did Napoleon in 1870. He did not laugh then. The five swam past, in a lugubrious procession. They disappeared in the black waters under the rear a deafening tumult; and there thundered past him a black shape amid a pandemonium of nameless noises.

Guesclin, the boss, did not like the story; but in time the "noises" actually reached the cellars of the neighbors, and all kinds of tales of burglars and what-not were rife.

So a determined party went down to explore the subway—which is much too high above them. It grew louder and nearer; and, suddenly, young Gideon realized that it was inexplicable, un-paralleled, impossible!

Something was coming up the black ways, like a train, but jarring, bumping with shocks, and, echoing in the darkness, hollow clacking as of rude footsteps. Gideon's blood chilled. He had just time to make the stairs, when the rumbling became a roar, the rear a deafening tumult; and there thundered past him a black shape amid a pandemonium of nameless noises.

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Where the Dead Kings of France Slept Originally. The Crypt of St. Denis, Paris, Where the Kings Were Buried During the Revolution.

from their own cellars. Tenants of mean shops on the surface, they are lords of long, high corridors, like streets, away down beneath the streets of Paris.

Well, a boy named Gideon, who worked for one Guesclin, a mushroomer in the "Hollow Street," near the Tombe 'soad, was planting spores. He heard a far-off rumbling. It could not be the subway—which is much too high above them. It grew louder and nearer; and, suddenly, young Gideon realized that it was inexplicable, un-paralleled, impossible!

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Marie Antoinette, "The Beautiful Queen is Out Again," Said the Bourgeois of Versailles.



Carp Pond of Versailles, into Which Louis XVI, When Dauphin, Threw Back Ten Carp After He Had Fixed Golden Collars Round Their Necks. In the Background, the Hamlet Where Marie Antoinette Played Milkmaid.

they said, "that could have rolled."

Around about were rusty picks and trowels, old beds of mortar, blocks of stone—all signs of interrupted work, and fleeing masons, who had never come back. And when an old mason of the Underground Inspection Guild that a lodge had its meeting, it was notified informed them that there was a story that the "working-boy" and his "wagon-load of Kings" had disappeared.

They were nonplused. Me, too.

The legend dates from the old Revolution, when they sacked the royal burial vaults of St. Denis and scattered the bones of the Kings of France in contempt.

The Restoration claimed to have found and replaced some of the Kings' bones. "But not all," said the gray-haired mason, which is quite correct historically.

The riflers of the royal tombs were grim King-haters. They conceived it a grand joke to make off with the most illustrious Kings of old France as trophies. Where dispose them? Evidently, in the Catacombs, where the Trades Unions had long enjoyed safe retreat. Affiliated to the masons of the Royal Quarries' inspection, their meeting place was in this dome.

"They transported the Kings' bones in that packing-case," said the old man. "The greatest Kings of France are in it."

Someone set the packing-case on an old quarry-roller. Someone modeled the rude "working-boy of Paris," in the attitude of dragging royalty where he pleased. It was "symbolical" to quicken time passed. Democracy came back. And when one night when a lodge had its meeting, it was notified informed them that there was a story that the "working-boy" and his "wagon-load of Kings" had disappeared.

Far off they heard a rumble. It grew louder. Something was coming up the black ways with a noise of jarring, bumping, shocks like stone and wood. Mingling with it, echoing in the darkness, was a hollow clanking of rude footsteps.

Their blood chilled with unknown horror. And the jar became a roar, the roar a deafening uproar, as there thundered past them, in the "dome," a black shape.

"The wagon-load of Kings!" they cried, and fled in horror.

"The next day," told the old man, "Paris heard of the Republic's sad defeat in Belgium." (Not this war, but the old war of the Coalition.)

The noise was heard when Napoleon fell.

It was heard for Charles X, Louis Philippe, Napoleon III's coup d'etat, and the war of 1870.

"War and trouble," said the gray-haired mason. "War and trouble!"

And this was printed in America, on February 15, 1914.

COAST DEFENSE PROBLEM

IT WOULD appear that the time approaches for the advent of larger-caliber guns in order to secure the necessary longer ranges to compete with the modern naval armament, without a disproportionate amount of loss in the life of the gun, and it would seem that it would be, pursuant to the recommendation of the chief of the coast artillery, the best policy not to rush too quickly into the complete rearmament of all our defenses. In the light of the advancement in modern gun construction during the past 10 years, it is not without the range of possibility that such an armament constructed now would in an equal time prove to be inadequate to meet the defense required of it. Would it not be better to provide each modern fort with one battery of modern high-power guns (the present period points to 16-inch guns) and pursue this policy during the periods of advancement, discarding the old and making way for the new and modern equipment as time proves necessary?

If this condition of affairs should obtain, there would be at all times an adequate defense against all comers at a minimum of cost and danger. It is very probable, in the opinion of the best authority, that one two-gun battery of 16-inch guns on land, assisted by the smaller guns employed, could at any range hold its own against a very strong attack by the latest modern dreadnaughts. This is due to the fact that the range-finding system on land allows of great accuracy and the level gun-platforms on land allow of much better marksmanship than on shipboard. It would be hard to estimate the relative value of land guns in terms of naval guns of the same caliber, but a land gun should be more effective than numbers of its sister guns of the sea under ordinary conditions.

The question, therefore, is not how much money is needed at the present time to reconstruct our fortifications and replace our armament completely. The problem should not be reduced to "There you are. Don't mention guns in the future," but rather how much is needed, in each period in which an advancement is shown, to keep a portion of the armament on an up-to-date conservative basis.—North American Review.