

Why Frivolous Gaby Left Her \$1,000,000 Gems to the Poor

The Strange Fear That Made Her Recklessly Extravagant, Penurious, Caused Her Untimely Death and Forced Her to Give Her Most Precious Possessions to the Destitute

PARIS, June 30.

THE sale of poor Gaby Deslys's jewels for the benefit of the poor of Marseilles is one of the strangest, most puzzling freaks of human behavior of our day.

That a woman who was universally noted for her frivolity, her extravagance, her worldliness in short, should perform the utterly unworldly act of selling all her jewels for the unknown poor seems inexplicable. These jewels were the greatest pride, the greatest joy of her life of insensate extravagance, and yet she willed away the magnificent collection to help a lot of wretched, squalid, hopeless paupers. The act is entirely contrary to what one would expect in a person of her spectacular career.

The explanation of Gaby's strange will has been furnished to your correspondent by one of her intimate friends. Her action can only be understood when one knows the peculiar state of mind, almost a pathological condition, which had dominated her for years.

"Gaby had an almost insane fear of poverty," said your correspondent's informant. "Poverty was to her like a personal devil, always watching her and waiting to grasp her in his cruel clutches. Her most extravagant acts were committed as a form of defiance to this demon—poverty. The final act of her life, willing her jewels to the poor, was intended to be her supreme blow at the demon."

This revelation of the famous dancer's state of mind also clears up some of the mystery surrounding the last dance of her life, her affair with the young Duke de Crussol, member of France's most ancient noble family. The Duke, who accompanied the dancer to New York about a year ago, was so profoundly devoted to her that his family came to the conclusion he was planning to marry her and was dreadfully worried at the prospect.

The truth was that the pretty dancer had confided to the young Duke her dream of leaving all her wealth to the poor, and that with the enthusiasm of youth he was completely carried away by her idealism. That is why he treated her with a reverence not usually paid by young dukes to frivolous dancers. That also explains his profound emotion at her death, why he broke into tears, wrung his hands in anguish, and could scarcely control himself.

"She had such a beautiful soul," said the Duke, evidently under the influence of knowledge that was not within the reach of ordinary persons. "She was good, she was noble, she lived for others. Nobody can understand yet how good she was."

The Duke, it should be recalled, distinguished himself as an aviator during the war, and threw away his chance of the Legion of Honor in order to visit Gaby Deslys when she was ill.

The value of the jewels left by Gaby to the poor is enormous, and is not fully indicated by the sale at auction already held. The market is a bad one at present, and the prices obtained were disappointing in view of the remarkable beauty and rarity of the pieces, and besides that there are many that have not yet been sold. Few stage favorites have ever accumulated so great an aggregation of wealth.

Her entire collection was conservatively estimated at 5,300,000 francs, which at a normal rate of exchange would be about \$1,060,000.

It would require a volume to catalogue all her jewels. Among those sold for the benefit of the poor of Marseilles may be signalled:

The necklace of forty-nine graduated pearls given to Gaby by ex-king Manuel of Portugal, \$105,000.

Gaby's famous necklace of fifty-seven pearls, with three great pearls pendant, a central pearl black, \$100,000.

A string of sixty-nine pearls, \$47,600.

A string of one hundred and fifty pearls, \$56,000.

Two platinum and diamond necklaces, \$51,000.

A splendid diamond pendant, \$11,300.

An emerald pendant, set in diamonds, \$19,440.

The gems were of many kinds, but pearls predominated. All the stones were of an extraordinary degree of beauty and purity—there was nothing second rate in the collection. A superb gold and platinum bracelet, an antique Chinese ivory brace-

let and a beautiful sapphire and diamond armlet were among the curiosities of the display.

To her dancing partner, Harry Pilcer, she left \$50,000, an income of \$3,600 a year and many other gifts, while she made other benefactions to the poor besides the one mentioned.

Gaby's fear and hatred of poverty was a sentiment which had arisen in early youth in an extraordinary ambitious, vital and luxury loving temperament, and grew there until it had become a devouring passion, almost a mania. At one time, when she was at the height of her success, her concentration upon this idea became so great that her reason was endangered and she was forced to consult an eminent neurologist—Dr. Henri Mesurier, of the Salpêtrière Hospital.

He gave her a long course of treatment with the object of reducing the frantic torrent of her ideas to a normal channel. Fully recognizing that it would be useless and foolish to uproot the deepest sentiment of her nature, the doctor contented himself with directing it toward a goal that would not bring ruin or madness upon her. Thus it came to be agreed between them that she should find a life-long satisfaction of her passion by accumulating treasures and leaving her accumulated wealth after death to strike the hardest possible blow against poverty. In this way she was protected to some extent from the danger of ruining herself by her extravagances in her lifetime.

The existence of Gaby Deslys was one long triumph over the demon poverty, a fantastic deriding of his powers and terrors, a battle which she always won, but a battle so furious that her reason was often endangered.

Gaby was brought up by parents who suffered the lowest depth of poverty in the old city of Marseilles, on the Mediterranean. In the city of the civilized world perhaps is poverty so prevalent and so appalling as in Marseilles. Its slums have been accumulating misery since the days of the ancient Phoenicians, who founded the city and for more than two thousand years they have put their blight upon unnumbered victims.

At thirteen years of age Gaby understood to the full what poverty meant in its worst and most degrading sense. She determined to conquer it and never fall under its power again. This determination became the dominant passion of her life and the cause of her early death.

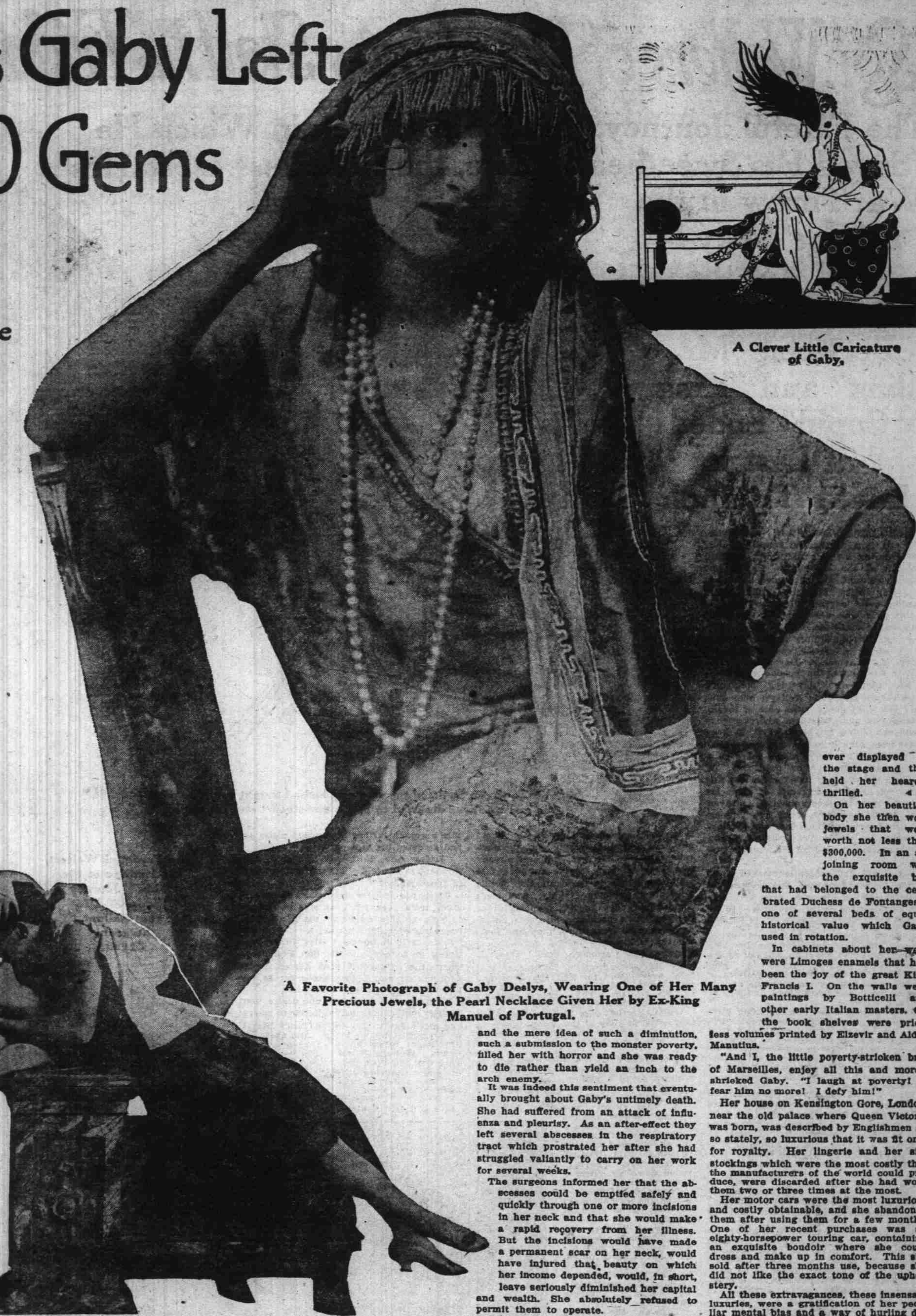
The rapidity of her success as a public artist was amazing. She chose to be a dancer and quickly became a star performer without any training but that which she gave herself while dancing to an organ in a Marseilles slum or doing a turn in a third class cafe.

Her beauty, her vitality, her daring poses, her astonishing way of wearing astonishing clothes captivated the public, but her skill as a dancer was even by her own admission not equal to that of many other performers.

Always she wanted money, but it was not merely for the sake of money but for the purpose of celebrating her triumph over her childhood enemy—poverty. Her skill in business transactions was amazing, and she was able by her audacity and cleverness to obtain \$100,000 for a tour where a woman of greater artistic accomplishments would not, perhaps, have received \$5,000.

In the course of a few years Gaby was able to accumulate a great fortune in money and other possessions—the most valuable collection of jewels, bibelots and art treasures owned by any actress in Paris, a palace in London and an estate in America which has not yet been appraised.

Nobody, perhaps, will ever know the true story of her relations with ex-king Manuel of Portugal. People will always



A Clever Little Caricature
of Gaby.

A Favorite Photograph of Gaby Deslys, Wearing One of Her Many
Precious Jewels, the Pearl Necklace Given Her by Ex-King
Manuel of Portugal.

Gaby Deslys With Harry Pilcer—One of the Daring Poses Which
Brought Such Rich Returns to the Fair Dancer.

believe that Manuel's infatuation for her, the gifts which he showered upon her, brought about the revolution that cost him his throne. According to this view the gorgeous pearl necklace which Manuel gave the fair dancer, was the last act of recklessness that goaded his infuriated people to expel him.

Whatever the historical facts may be concerning Gaby's relations with the King, it is certain that following the revelation of this romance, she enjoyed an unusual increase of wealth and valuable jewels. And on this as on all other occasions she displayed the faculty of turning whatever happened to her into money. But she did not seek money for the miserly purpose of hoarding, but simply to jest at the monster poverty.

Gaby frankly set out to make all the money she possibly could, and she did not conceal this purpose from anyone—not even from romantic young kings and noblemen who paid their court to her. She made no pretence of following art for art's sake—she followed art for money's sake.

There was hardly anything she would not do for money. For several seasons she demanded \$500 from everyone who enjoyed the privilege of taking supper with her. She had noticed that many nouveaux riches and would-be sports were eager to be seen supping or dining with her or with any of the popular actresses of the moment.

She knew that such men had no real regard for her. They sought her society mainly for the glory or notoriety which it reflected on them. Why should they not pay for that which they so selfishly sought? Why should they enjoy it merely by paying for a meal? Therefore Gaby took all the money she could obtain from such persons in the most baldly commercial spirit. But with all who were poor, all who had been her true friends in any way she was generous to an extreme degree.

She frankly recognized that her beautiful body was her capital. It was through that alone that she was able to earn her great fortune. Anything that injured her body diminished her capital and her wealth.

and the mere idea of such a diminution, such a submission to the monster poverty, filled her with horror and she was ready to die rather than yield an inch to the arch enemy.

It was indeed this sentiment that eventually brought about Gaby's untimely death. She had suffered from an attack of influenza and pleurisy. As an after-effect they left several abscesses in the respiratory tract which prostrated her after she had struggled valiantly to carry on her work for several weeks.

The surgeons informed her that the abscesses could be emptied safely and quickly through one or more incisions in her neck and that she would make a rapid recovery from her illness. But the incisions would have made a permanent scar on her neck, would have injured that beauty on which her income depended, would, in short, leave seriously diminished her capital and wealth. She absolutely refused to permit them to operate.

The surgeons brought their tools and endeavored to overcome her opposition. Even in her weakened condition her will proved absolutely insurmountable. The method of treating the abscesses through the mouth proved ineffective to relieve the system of the poison and she died from the septic poisoning at the height of her fame and beauty.

"I will die laughing at poverty," she gasped in her last moments as she lay in her luxurious apartment surrounded by every comfort that wealth could procure to lessen her sufferings.

This singular, passionate fear of poverty gives the answer to the great enigma of her life—her mingled sordidness, generosity, cold-bloodedness, charity, avarice and recklessness.

A few months ago, as she sat robed in glorious pearls and costly fabrics, surrounded by the art treasures of the ages, she exclaimed to a group of intimate friends:

"Ah! j'ai tellement peur de la misère!"

"Ah! I have such fear of poverty!"

She then described her conception of the monster, her early struggles with him, her triumph over him with a dramatic force that far exceeded anything she had

ever displayed on the stage and that held her hearers thrilled.

On her beautiful body she then wore jewels that were worth not less than \$300,000. In an adjoining room was the exquisite bed

that had belonged to the celebrated Duchess de Fontanges—one of several beds of equal historical value which Gaby used in rotation.

In cabinets about her were Limoges enamels that had been the joy of the great King Francis I. On the walls were paintings by Botticelli and other early Italian masters. On the book shelves were priceless volumes printed by Elsevir and Aldus Manutius.

"And I, the little poverty-stricken brat of Marseilles, enjoy all this and more," shrieked Gaby. "I laugh at poverty! I fear him no more! I defy him!"

Her house on Kensington Gore, London, near the old palace where Queen Victoria was born, was described by Englishmen as so stately, so luxurious that it was fit only for royalty. Her lingerie and her silk stockings which were the most costly that the manufacturers of the world could produce, were discarded after she had worn them two or three times at the most.

Her motor cars were the most luxurious and costly obtainable, and she abandoned them after using them for a few months. One of her recent purchases was an eighty-horsepower touring car, containing an exquisite boudoir where she could dress and make up in comfort. This she sold after three months use, because she did not like the exact tone of the upholstery.

All these extravagances, these insensate luxuries, were a gratification of her peculiar mental bias and a way of hurrying defiance at old poverty.

She wanted to feel that she could command every luxury that misery denied to its slaves. She wanted to feel that she had such command of these luxuries that she could throw them away if she pleased—could flaunt them or flout them as she saw fit.

But such was her passion for luxuries that she instinctively sought those that were rarest and so, unconsciously perhaps, she accumulated things that had great intrinsic value. Very often they increased in value and so she grew richer and richer. When she bought absolutely flawless pearls, the largest and finest in the market, she picked the only kind that would sell again for as much or more than their purchase price.

All the time that she was hilariously and triumphantly defying poverty she was hugging to herself and a very few intimates the secret of the supreme blow she meant to aim at the monster. She thought with deep joy of her great plan of leaving her choicest treasures to fight poverty in that squalid old city where he held his most hopeless victims. This was the course in which she had been encouraged by the great neurologist in order to maintain her mental balance and keep her from ruining herself by her extravagances.