Prepare To Be Startled—The Queen of Bohemia Is Here

But What New Sensation Can Mrs. Aimee Gouraud, the Woman of a Thousand Fads and Fancies, Possibly Have to Spring on a Public Which She Has Already Amazed in Such Countless Ways?

Mrs. Aimee Gouraud, who is here from Paris with a few of her pet snakes for a brief visit, and who is expected at any moment to wake up staid America with one of the daring bits of unconventionality for which she has so long been famous

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Edmund Russell, the Delsartian aesthete, who became the artistic major domo of Mrs. Gouraud's New York establishment and helped her plan some of her most astonishing revels.

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Yvonne Gouraud, the adopted daughter, who lived happily with Mrs. Gouraud until the latter's husband, Prince Mishnikoff began paying court to the girl. Now Yvonne, after a gay whirl on the stage and in the night life of Paris, has found a love mate of her very own in Khouri el Noulk, an Egyptian artist.

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Prince Mishnikoff, who lost his place as Mrs. Gouraud's husband when he became more than parentally attentive to her little adopted daughter.

BY FAIRFAX DOWNEY

CONSIDERABLE fuss has been made in recent days anent the arrival of various celebrities in the city of New York, and the reverberations of the welcome and homage caused by their coming echoed throughout the country. Almost royal honors have been rendered the famous visitors, and not undeservedly.

And yet the "Queen of Bohemia" set foot on our shores the other day and entered virtually unheralded, in spite of the fact that she has furnished sensation after sensation to the daring coteries of New York society in which she once moved and food for gossiping and romancing to the public in general.

Among her assortment of names, the "Queen of Bohemia" uses preferably Aimee Gouraud, a name which she has from one of her husbands; and she is most often designated thus, or as Mrs. Jackson Gouraud. An attempt to describe her, however, is more difficult. Call her a milionairess, an aethete, a genius at bizarre and extravagant entertainment, a citizeness of many lands, a dabbler in art and the occult, a seeker after weird adventure and you have not begun to say it all.

She reached New York unostentatiously, traveling from Paris, but those who know her doubt her ability to blend into a drab background and pass unnoticed for long. That has not been the way of Aimee Gouraud. It is most probable that her fads, fancies and unconventionalities will not down. New York must prepare to be startled!

Extensive marrying is one of the least of her accomplishments. She was born to her wealth as the daughter of E. B. Crocker, of San Francisco, one of the Pacific coast millionaires who helped to finance the Union Pacific Railroad. The girl eloped with R. Porter Ashe, California horseman, from whom she later was divorced. Next she became the wife of Harry Gillig, who was born in Nevada, but lived almost everywhere else in the world. Divorce parted them in two years, and in a few months Aimee married Jackson Gouraud, who had been a song writer, but now took to building forty-room houses, driving four-in-hands and escorting his first wife to first nights at the theatres. This union ended in death, the next gentleman espousing Aimee being Prince Mishnikoff of Russia. There again came a denouement and the clacking tongues of scandal.

It was in a matrimonial interval that the beautiful Aimee plunged into a series of wild adventures in foreign lands. The fascination of India, with its dark mysticism, beckoned the daughter of the rich "Forty-niner," and the story is told of her that, alone and unattended, except for a handsome youth of twenty-one, she braved the terrors of the jungle. Thus guided, she is said to have followed half-forgotten paths, camped in the open and lost herself in the depths of the jungle. It is related that during this journey, Aimee's Indian companion decorated her fair, white skin with quaint designs of tattooing.

But the "Queen of Bohemia" broke the ties of the jungle with determination and set out to satisfy her curiosity as to the interior of that carefully-guarded institution, the Indian harem. She won her way into the midst of the harem of an Indian prince of great wealth rank and spent some time behind the secret lattices in a sort of 1002d Arabian Night fantasy. Her charm and talent for the weaving of stories is said to have captivated the prince, who signalized his favor by giving her a pearl of great price, a jewel which became the base of Aimee Gouraud's remarkable collection, many gems which constantly adorn her and contribute to the attention she always has excited. In time the American girl became tired of the harem and left it, terming it a collection of dull women who seemed to live only to eat and sleep and lacked the ambition to grow jealous of one another.

Into other out-of-the-way corners of the globe she insinuated herself, indefatigable in her researches until the bizarre, the Oriental, the occult and uncanny held few secrets for her. She delved, too, into the darkest haunts of great cities. How extensive her explorations were no one knows, but evidences appeared in her unique entertainments, with their odd foreign features and atmospheres, such as only the initiate might conceive. These entertainments were the next phase in her extraordinary career, and it was as the wife of Jackson Gouraud that she thrilled and amused New York with them.

To aid her own ingenious mind, the "Queen of Bohemia" secured the services of an extraordinary master of ceremonies, one Edmund Russell, who has been termed the Essence of Aetheticism, Prophet of Fragrancy, Painter of Poems and Familiar of Swamis. Soirees Orientale and such were very much in Mr. Russell's line. All the barbaric splendor of India, Russia and other parts were conjured up by this artistic gentleman for Aimee Gouraud, but it was she who put the casts upon the stages which Russell set.

One of Mrs. Gouraud's earlier parties was her "Ball of Snakes," the serpents in question being real and no figments of the imagination, such as it was possible to summon in those days. The affair was in honor of Odette Valery, champion snake charmer. The hostess was garbed in a six-foot python, and all the guests who did not come provided with snakes received them as favors and those who had the nerve wore them as ornaments and even carried some of the smaller wrigglers home as souvenirs. Aimee danced a dance with a snake as a partner, a regular Garden of Eden glide. It was quite a party, especially when it is borne in mind that the snakes were real, not parlor.

The party, the feature of which was the "Dance of All Nations," also is famous, the hit of the evening having been the contortions of Dogmena, cannibal girl of the Philippines, who appeared in cocoanut oil and a red sash. Ancient Judea, of course, was represented by Salome. Aimee herself did a tango for the sake of the Argentine and performed, as she did in all her dances, with consummate skill, for most of them she had indulged in on their home grounds. Among them were the Cobra dance, La Madrilena, La Harem glide, and La Houla-Houla. Other guests came through with renditions of the "Vienner Viggle," the Hawaiian Kui, the Siberian Whirl and La Dance Igorrotes. It was a soiree at which more than a few wicked feet were shaken.

True to her penchant for things on a grand scale, the "Queen of Bohemia" put on a Hippodrome party. In the main tableau she posed as a dairymaid in attendance upon a herd of Hippodrome elephants.

She collaborated with Valeska Suratt in a Paris Apache dance at a party; those who have seen Valeska in such action realize that it must have taken some collaboration, but undoubtedly Aimee was equal to it. The haunts of the Apaches in Paris were reproduced with the bare tables, dirty walls, bottles, 'n everything, and in that setting the dancers stepped several lively little rounds together, after the accepted Apache manner. Tiring of other partners, Aimee sent out for a real donkey and did a few steps with that animal, probably remarking that she was tired of imitations.

At the "Queen of Bohemia's" fancy dress ball in Paris, she made her entrance in Indian harem costume, carried on the shoulders of four slaves, whose bronzed bodies were painted with golden flowers. The late Gaby Deslys, who was among those present, declared the affair was a regular party, and her opinion was accepted as most expert.

Then there was the Louis Quinze party, at which Mrs. Gouraud appeared as Mme. La Pompadour, being rivaled by the Countess Lancay as Mme. Du Barry. The latter scored a point, when she brought her eldest son dolled up as Louis XV, but Aimee won hands down, when she ended up the evening by taking a bath in Du Barry's historic silver bathtub and snoozing in that favorite's historic bunk.

National festivals and history in general were exhausted by the "Queen" as ideas for parties, and finally she was reduced to offering $5000 for a new idea. But that was some time ago, and now that she is back in New York again, possibly she has a whole flock of new ideas with her. Mayhap the city may see more of her unconventional revels.

A strange quirk in the character of the frivolous "Queen of Bohemia" is her disposition toward adopting religions and children. She has indulged in several of the former, Buddhism among them. Of the several children taken into her family, the most widely known is Yvonne Gouraud, for it is said to have been that handsome young woman who figured in the breaking of the fourth matrimonial tie of Mrs. Gouraud—that with Prince Mishnikoff. In the first place, the "Queen" testified that the prince was a flivver as a card of introduction to the court of the Czar, since he did not seem to be on the imperial invitation list. Added to that disappointment, Aimee was put out at what she termed the prince's "violent affection, attachment and infatuation for a girl fifteen years old." There was a great fuss, with accusations by Aimee, denied by both the prince and the adopted daughter, the prince insisting he was no more than parentally attentive. After much confusion Aimee was granted a divorce from the prince, and Yvonne returned to her.

As for Yvonne, she tried a stage career and then entered on the gay life of Paris, where her foster mother had become a resident. Yvonne, who once declared she never would marry other than an American or an Englishman, appears to have changed her mind, for her engagement has been announced to Khouri el Nouik, an Egyptian artist.

If she had married an American or an Englishman there would have been cause for surprise, for neither Yvonne nor her foster mother has ever done anything which was commonplace or expected of them. It might have been expected that Yvonne would have married her adoring divorced stepfather, Prince Mishnikoff, but evidently his affections were not returned and her heart has found a warm response in another and entirely unlooked-for personage, of whom little is known. It is rumored that he plans an American honeymoon.

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A Medical Mystery

In the Medical Museum in Wigmore street, London, are a number of doll-like human heads, about the size of ordinary oranges.

For long it was supposed that these were cleverly-executed models; but expert scientific investigation has shown that they are real heads of once living persons.

They come from Ecuador, where a certain tribe of Indians has observed the curious custom—a custom somewhat akin to embalming.

Beyond the fact that the bones of the skull are removed, and the head then shrunk to its present proportions, nobody outside the community knows how it is done.

A certain learned professor once tried to probe the mystery on the spot. But the natives, as soon as they divined his intention, promptly killed him; and shortly afterwards his own shrunken head was placed on exhibition, presumably as a warning to other strangers.

Australia Has Many Snakes

Australia is supplied with a hundred species of snakes, three-fourths of them venomous. The big pythons and rock snakes are harmless, but, as one travels from the tropics southward, the dangerous varieties increase in number, and in Tasmania all are venomous, though only five are really deadly. Fortunately these are rarely seen. The continent is also abundantly supplied with lizards. Three hundred and ninety species are recorded, and they may be seen not only in woods and prairies and deserts, in the water, among rocks and in trees, but also in the less frequented city streets.

Teak Most Lasting Timber

It takes between 100 and 200 years for a teak tree to reach a height of 150 feet. But teakwood makes perhaps the most lasting lumber known. The teak tree is "the most important tree in the commerce of Siam."