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Illustrations

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GUILBERT

Last winter Yvette Guilbert announced one of her recitals in the "Komödie" theater. The little hall was as usual completely sold out. Before the "Divine Yvette" appeared, an expectant and highly select audience glanced with interest at the program, which presented a quite unusual appearance. Only a few of the old familiar chansons were to be heard on this occasion, while the greater part of the program was taken up by remarkable unknown poems by Aristide Bruant. Strange words in the jargon of Montmartre were to be read in these pages and only a few connoisseurs exchanged meaning smiles, whereas others—especially the younger generation—looked vaguely despairing as they realised that this so-called French bore only the remotest resemblance to the "French exercises" they had ploughed through a few years before in little red class-books. But before the general astonishment could be voiced in puzzled whispers, Yvette Guilbert had thrown back the curtain with her own inimitable gesture, strode forward with outstretched arms as if she would embrace the whole world, and proceeded to take the audience into her confidence. It was a special occasion for her, she said—thirty years ago to a day she had made her first appearance before a Berlin public. She had herself completely forgotten this exact date, but after her last Berlin recital a young lady had waited for her at the stage door and with a touching little speech had handed her the program of her first Berlin recital in 1900. One word led to another and suddenly the conclusion was reached that the only possible program for this jubilee day would be an exact reproduction of that of thirty years before. These few introductory words at once put Yvette Guilbert's audience into the right frame of mind. He who had the good for-