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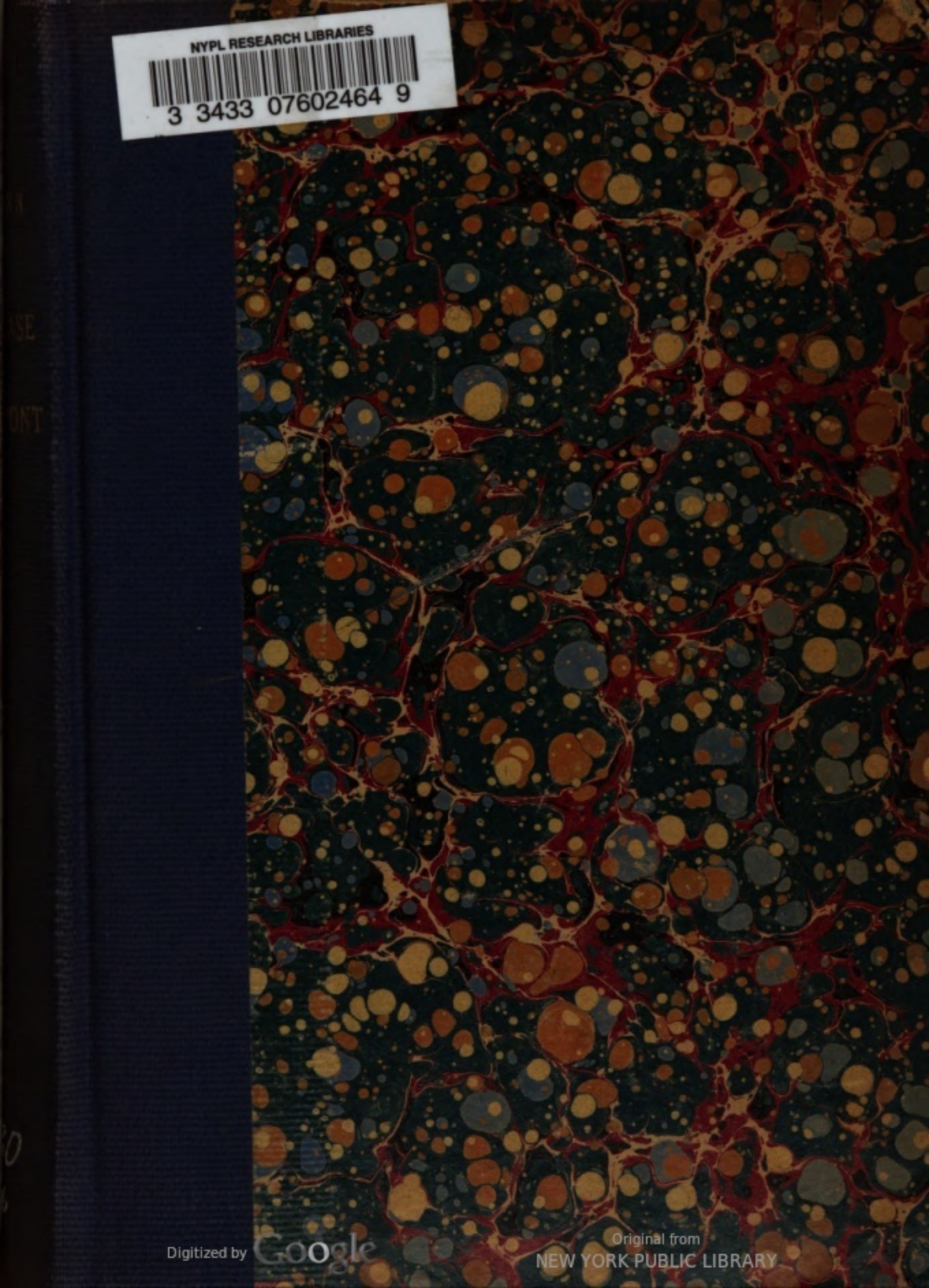

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"There's this the matter!" he said. "I've got to know where you and Gavock met before!"

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THE CURIOUS CASE OF MARIE DUPONT

BY

ADELE LUEHRMANN

ILLUSTRATED BY
FRANK SNAPP

NEW YORK
THE CENTURY CO.
1916

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is she? Who is she and what under heaven does she imagine she has to fear from me?"

"Fear!"

"Is n't fear usually back of a lie? She 's afraid of me, that much is clear."

Amarinth leaned forward eagerly. "I say, is n't it possible that she is a married woman with a past — a past that you know about? Of course, she would n't want you to recognize her in that case."

"Yes, that 's the obvious explanation," said Gavock, but his tone was doubtful.

"Why is n't it the right one?" Guy demanded. "I 'll bet it is! Good Lord, it 's like a novel or a play! Why, you might meet her in her own house some day and suddenly remember where you 'd seen her before."

"No such luck, I fear. Life gives us few such piquant moments."

"What? You mean you 'd like it?"

"Of course. Who would n't?"

"Well, I should think it might be deuced unpleasant," Guy answered. "Why, suppose she were the wife of some one you knew?"

"What of it? I have, I hope, sufficient *savoir faire* not to betray myself even to her — to say nothing of her husband."

"But suppose you had to? Suppose the circumstances were such that you felt it your duty to tell her husband what you knew about her?"

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I saw her enter a house — her home — in the most fashionable part of town. I noticed that a policeman, passing as she alighted from her car, touched his hat respectfully, and when she had disappeared within the house I pumped him. *Voila!* The lady is still 'Miss.'"

"Miss what?"

"That 's my secret. And I shall certainly not share it with any one who holds such rigorous views as to the rights of husbands," Gavock laughed. "You see, she might marry a friend of yours."

"I 'm not sure she is n't already married."

"Neither am I. She is n't generally known to be, that 's all I 'm sure of. Where I have seen her before, I have n't an idea — not the remotest. But I have seen her! And I shall jump at the first chance which offers to see her again, in spite of the fact that she evidently does n't wish to see me again."

He looked at his watch. "By Jove, I had no idea it was so late! You have an engagement, you said. I hope our long talk has n't delayed you."

"Not at all. I 've plenty of time. It 's a dance, a charity benefit and starts late. Sorry you won't join me. There 's going to be some rather attractive exhibition dancing."

"Thanks. It 's good of you to ask me, but I feel a bit let down by the voyage and want to turn in early. If you 're leaving now we might start together. Where is the dance?"

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"A recent picture?"

"Yes, and a splendid likeness."

Gavock extended the frame to arm's length and regarded it approvingly. "A most charming face," he pronounced heartily. "And I dare say I once knew the young lady's parents well and that she is one of those clever children who have taken advantage of my absence to grow up?" The light speech ended on a note of inquiry.

"No, you 've missed fire there. Miss Dupont is not an American."

"Dupont? The name is French."

"She 's English."

"Indeed! In that case I may have been right, after all. I know an English family of Duponts — in Surrey. There were several girls, I remember. Let me see — Elspeth and Gladys and there was a third, I think —"

"Marie?"

"I think not," said Gavock, appearing to search his memory.

"I hardly think Miss Dupont belongs to that family except perhaps distantly," Guy said. "She's an orphan and lives here with an old school friend of her mother — Mrs. Alicia Thorley. Perhaps you know her, she 's a New Yorker."

"I have heard of her. She married an Englishman and they had a place near Paris — rather a nice place.

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grin. "You 're one sweet lamb, Marie, but I guess the only thing my dancing 'll ever create is a riot," she said.

A maid came into the room and spoke to Miss Dupont. "Mr. Amarinth wishes you to know that he 's come. He says he 'd like to go through the dance if you have time."

"Please tell him that I 'll be there in a minute."

The maid went out and after a last survey of herself in the mirror Marie Dupont followed.

"She 's the only honest-to-Gawd dancer in the bunch," Cornelia remarked, looking after her. "Do you girls remember the day she first did that flying pirouette and how surprised Madame Adrienne was?"

"Madame Adrienne did n't believe Miss Dupont was doing it for the first time," said Sybil Lowther, now at a mirror. "I don't believe it either. I think she 's studied dancing before — so does Madame Adrienne."

"What of Madame Adrienne?" a sharp nasal voice inquired in the doorway.

Every eye turned to the dancing mistress. There was a pause.

"I was just saying," answered Miss Lowther, "that Miss Dupont dances so well that she must have taken lessons before she came to you."

Madame shrugged her fat shoulders. "Miss Dupont says not and evidently Miss Dupont should know."

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She was frankly smiling, and he smiled back in sheer gratitude

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