Labiche, the author of the piece in which she had been engaged to play and ended it with these words: "*Ayez pitié d'une pauvre petite toquée!*" ("Have pity on a poor little crack-brained girl.")

This was Sarah's first flight. When she returned to Paris she had some difficulty in getting an engagement in any serious theatre. She had not yet shown any particular talent, and she was known only for her freaks and escapades. The gossipy journals had related, with abundant details, how she had twice poisoned herself, and how, on each occasion, a savior had administered the necessary antidote. Doubtless there was little or no truth in all these *cancans*, but still they sufficed to bring discredit upon her name.

But, artiste as she naturally was, Sarah Bernhardt could not live off the stage. She bored herself to death, and finally she saved herself by an escapade more singular than all the others. She engaged herself at the Port Saint-Martin Theatre, in 1866, under a false name, to play the part of the *Princess Desiree*, in the "Biche au Bois." Nobody recognized her but some of the critics praised her for the correct and melodious manner in which she spoke a long piece on the beauties of nature. In this piece she sang a duet with Mme. Ugalde, and took part in the choruses like a regular third-rate artiste.

It was obvious that Sarah could not remain long where she was. She longed for *le grand art*. She went to the Odeon, then managed by Chilly and Duquesnel. To the latter she said: "I have been shown the door everywhere, but try me. I assure you there is something there;" and she pointed, not to her brow, but to her breast. She was protected by the Academician, M. Camille Doucett, who had at once divined her genius, and finally M. Duquesnel engaged her. She made her debut there on Moliere's birthday, Jan. 14, 1867, as *Armande* in "Les Femmes Savantes." But her first real success was in the little role of *Joas* in Ratbine's "Athalie." Her charming voice and perfect diction struck the audience with admiration. At the Odeon Sarah Bernhardt played a number of roles with varying success, but her first really great triumph was the role of *Zanetto*, in Coppee's "Passant," to which, as the author says, she lent "the prestige of her exquisite blonde beauty, and of her talent so full of elegance and of grace." (This was in January, 1869.) The success of *Zanetto* was immense, and Sarah was feted and lauded to the skies. No benefit performance, no soiree was complete unless *Zanetto* came and recited her lovely Italian romance.

The Franco Prussian war came. Sarah Bernhardt had suddenly become the idol of the public. In September of that terrible year of 1870 she conceived the idea of establishing an ambulance for the wounded in the public *foyer*, or crush-room, of the Odeon Theatre. With that nervous impetuosity which has always distinguished her, she at once set to work, and in forty-two hours she had twenty-two beds ready for the wounded, and a kitchen and a drug store in working order. All the expenses of this ambulance were borne by Sarah herself, and besides directing the infirmary she occupied herself with the administration of the ambulance, which, being a military one, was required to send in a report every morning to the central hospital of Val-de-Grace. Sarah used to watch anxiously over each of her wounded. One day a *mobile* named Fortin, who had been married only a few months, and who had a little property in the environs of Paris, underwent a painful operation. In order to perform it the surgeon administered chloroform. When the poor fellow awoke he turned to Sarah, who had remained at his bedside, and said, with his voice full of emotion: "Never mind, M'am'selle Sarah, the Prussians, who are now perhaps burning my house out yonder, will never eat all the fish in the Seine, and I promise you that my first *matelott* shall be for you!"

Sarah Bernhardt was charming as an *ambulancière*. She wore a blue dress, bordered with swan's down, and over it a large white apron, covering her breast and coming down to her feet.

After the war, when the theatres reopened, Victor Hugo's "Ruy Blas" was revived at the Odeon, and the role of the weary and melancholy Queen was given to Sarah Bernhardt. After the very first act Victor Hugo proclaimed her to be the very ideal *Dona Maria*. She had a delicate and sweet charm that even Rachel lacked. In his feuilleton on the event Sarcey says: "Mlle. Sarah Bernhardt has received from nature the gift of depressed and plaintive dignity. All her movements are at once noble and harmonious; whether she rises or sits down, whether she walks or makes a half turn round, the long folds of her dress with its silver threads fall around her with poetic grace. Her voice is languishing and tender, her diction of a rhythm so just, and of a clearness so perfect, that you never lose a syllable even when the words are only breathed over her lips like a caress. And how she follows the undulations of the period that rolls along and never breaks, ever keeping the flexible lines of its harmony! And with what fine and penetrating intonations she marks certain words!" The critic has here given us the secret of Sarah's universal fascination; it is her plastic grace. In "Hernani" her success reached its apogee; and yet the role of *Dona Sol*, which she