

Printemps à La Paris

by Madge Macbeth

PARISIAN springtime, at last! Old King Sol has conquered the hostile hosts of rain-clouds, and gilds the city with his smile. Colors that tried to be gay during the weeks of wintergloom are intensified to the pitch of dazzling the eye. Parks blaze with flowers and blossoming shrubs, and form an ideal setting for throngs of smartly-dressed children and their smartly-dressed *bonnes*.

Thank heaven, the quaint Normandy costumes worn by nearly all nurses in a by-gone generation have not completely disappeared. They seem to be such a gentle, capable, spiritual part of childhood. The women wear a flowing dress and widespread, wing-like bonnets, similar to those of the Sisters of Charity, and they are comfortably middle-aged. Their faces are smooth and placid, their bosoms deep. Not for an instant, do they sit idle. Their fingers are busy with lace work, or wool. They carry their own stools to the parks—otherwise it would be necessary to rent seats—and they gather in groups, sewing, knitting, chatting, watching. I have never seen a naughty child in one of these groups, nor have I heard a cross word spoken. French children have courtly manners and are not afraid to use them. The other day, I rescued a little boy's ball from the fountain. Without the least hesitation or self-consciousness, he received it in his eager arms, performed a princely bow and kissed my rather wet hand! Nobody laughed; nobody applauded him. He had merely done the proper thing.

In this same garden—the Tuileries—a *carousel* has blossomed with the early flowers. Nearby, stands a *guignol*. These simple amusements, like the *boulevard cafes* never lack patrons, particu-

larly on Sunday afternoons. The children of the aristocracy blend their delighted shrieks with those of the proletariat, and in all the crowds of grown-ups, it would be difficult to find an expression of disinterest or boredom.

The *carousel* (merry-go-round, you know) is an archaic affair, furnished with about a dozen beasts of truly Ark-aic mien. Two heavily hirsute ancients promote a faltering and rotary motion by turning hand-cranks! A woman of Junoesque proportions stands guard over the jousting for brass rings, while a limited selection of thin tunes quivers in the air.

But how kind everybody is to the children! How joyously the whole world plays! I have seen a little boy, frightened by the stately march of his piebald palfrey, accompanied throughout the entire circular journey by one of the operators, who, leaving his partner to do the work, walked round and round supporting the child and trying to inspire him with courage.

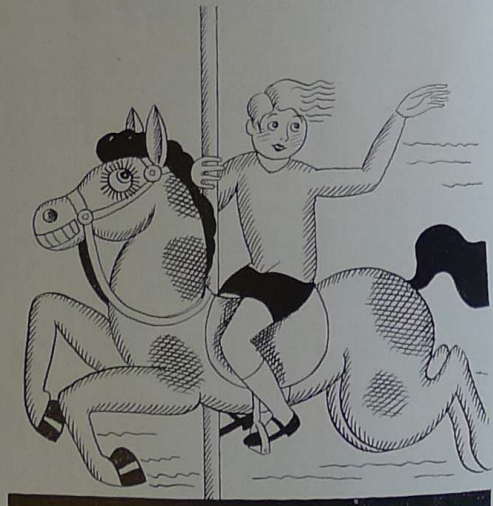
The *guignol* is performed in a too-small tent, innocent of chairs and crowded with the prams of parents who possibly feel that the education of their infants furnishes a reason for their presence. The Punch-and-Judy theme is universal, but its development in a foreign tongue admits of many variations. Spellbound, the audience stands, sympathetic with Punch to a man. "Have a care," some child will cry, "here he comes, behind you!" Or, "Now is your chance, monsieur. Soak him!" At the end, when with apparent, willing stupidity, the arch-villain persuades the hangman to illustrate the method of wearing a noose, and promptly swings virtue to its untimely end, the place rings with cheers and satisfaction, proving how warmly the world takes an entertaining rascal to its bosom.

To answer the question, "What are they wearing in Paris?" requires a more authoritative pen than mine. One window displays a delectable confection of mauve; the next one, green; that following, canary yellow. A great deal of red is shown, and, of course, white. The silhouette is still fairly straight, with a tendency to circular ripples across the front. My own experience in the large establishments has been a little disappointing. One can do much better in similar places in Canada. It seems that Parisians are not educated (or is it barbarized?) to the extent of buying from cases or racks that contain a wide choice of garments. They still regard with contempt, the ready-made. I have seen many an English-speaking woman discouraged by her failure to find the chic, inexpensive costume with unmistakable French touches, for which we are eternally searching!

Of ordinary sport and house frocks in such places as the *Gallerie Lafayette*, the *Louvre*, *Printemps*, there are hundreds, ranging in price from five hundred to a couple of thousand francs. They do not strike me, however, as being as "French" as those we see in our better class shops. The majority are made with jumper and skirt, in silk, crepe de chine and jersey. Also, the majority have short—or no sleeves. Sleeveless Russian jackets in velvet or cloth which were so widely shown a few weeks ago, are now too common for the smart costume. Capes cover many of the sleeveless dresses—capes of the same material. These two-piece costumes are recommended as serving for both street and evening wear, and are probably well-suited to the needs of women who find it inconvenient to go to their homes between afternoon and evening engagements.



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