

PARIS, THE FRENCH CAPITAL, ONE OF THE WORLD'S GAY CITIES; INTERESTING COMPARISONS

(By George Slocombe in New York Herald Tribune).

What is gayety in the life of a city? And why is one town gayer than another? Is New York gayer than London? Was London gay in those terrible 90s when the black cloud of a century of industrialism still hung like a pall over the marshes which a Roman legion had wrested from the painted Briton, and when whiskered men in long black coats and high top hats smoked with a comic gravity their clay churchwarden pipes in music halls? Was London gay when a middle-aged heir to the throne led a groaning phalanx of equally middle-aged peers and old men about town through heavy antics more becoming to their grandchildren? Was Hamburg gay with its ice palaces and dancing girls and beer gardens, dreamily sketched in sailor men's memories against the nostalgic misty background of adventure at sea of youth and reckless abandon and a robust Teutonic bacchanalia, of warm arms and sprawling Rubenesque figures and foaming flagons, the roar of brasses and the confusion of lights, all the desired perilous unreality of life ashore as dreamed of amid the sharp unromantic business of life at sea? Was Marseilles, that other pictured haven of wardening men afloat, ever gay in reality? And Naples? And Herculaneum before the epic catastrophe flamed from the heavens and rushed from the waters, before it was sealed up forever, a tomb of tombs, to remind us of the unchanging humanity of mankind?

About Paris

And Paris, the last of the mistresses of man? Paris the changing and the unchanged, the Babylon among cities, by whose waters many men have set down and wept? Was she

gayer then than now? Was she gayer to those gesticulating and much-caricatured Frenchmen, whose hair and cravats and garments curved widely in the mild air, who are no more real to us now than their fiacres and cabriolets, their duels and their dancers, no more real than the painted salons of the Cafe Anglaises and the painted ceiling of Tortoni's, no more real than the gilded phantasms of an old man's youth?

It is fashionable among aging Parisians to sigh after the lost pleasures of the city. It imparts to their conversation and to their books that ironic and wistful air which redeems in many Frenchmen a hard and brilliant common sense, a polished rapier of the intelligence, that is so uncommon among the romantic nations. It permits them to linger over the revived memories of early faculties, memories of a fragrance like old wine, and as treacherous. But the pleasures of another age are rarely our own. The elusive and evanescent beauties of another generation, uncapturable then, are not to be captured. The aspects of Paris, the social gayeties, the passions, the sharp and separate odors of the town, the odors of flowers and patchouli, of freshly roasted coffee, of the foyer of the ballet, of absinthe and Turkish tobacco, of red plush and burning alcohol and roasting meats, of horses and cab-drivers of chestnut-blossom and the scented wind on the river, which gave to life in the closing years of the last century its particular zest and piquancy, have gone or have changed.

If they had not, they would not excite us now. The great ladies of the demi-monde whom the just deceased Boldini painted have long since sought adventure in other and more

shadowy worlds. But their arched and billowy silhouettes, their bold and staring eyes which drove men to madness, their elaborate coquetties and artless seductions arouse in us now nothing more than a faint derision. Only the anti-quarry poring over faded prints, or the romantic investing the dead past with a vague and wistful beauty of its own, can evoke from her dimmed presentment on page or canvas the living personality of a Cleo de Merode.

The other great figures in Parisian life were even more incredible, their seductions more showy, evading all modern analysis, defying all the criteria of our jaded taste. La Belle Otero, whose portrait in bathing dress sent the waxed and pomaded elderly elegants of Paris doddering on their gold-headed canes to ogle the fabulous apparition behind its glass window in the Passage Jouffroy; La Belle Otero, whose name and wealth and physical perfections were almost magical in that gossiping and feverish Paris which was but a little provincial city at heart, has neither terrors nor torments for us now. Fortunate indeed were the ravishing beauties of the Renaissance that they had no early tinctures, no Daguerre, no studio photographer with his floating black tie, pale face and dark curled whiskers to interpret their charms for a legendless posterity.

Virtue of Novelty

But even the daguerreotypes had the virtue of novelty. And to those Parisians, avid of sensation, novelty was the only beauty. Polaire with her wasp waist, immense shock of frizzed black hair and haunted, half-animal eyes, Polaire whose pale extenuated features and wraith-like body seemed less than mortal, the very ghost of a ghost, Polaire also had her hour of triumph before she too fitted into the limbo reserved for those strange Parisian figures. In comparison with them, more vigorous, healthy and normal seem the idols of our own time! A cheerful vulgarity, a zest for laughter, a return to the spirit of the circus, have

succeeded the morbid and feverish excitement which was the secret appeal of the great stage figure, the figurant of the living comedy of stage and salon and street, of that disappearing Paris. Old men no longer linger in the narrow passages of Paris before the photograph of a Victorian beauty in pink tights. The smell of gasoline has replaced the smell of absinthe and roasted coffee on the boulevards. The great literary jests of the Tristan Bernards of the last generation have given way to the daily comedy of the political game. And as for gayety, in a world of politicians and policemen and taxi drivers and nailed passages for careless pedestrians and women shooting their husbands and financiers escaping from prison and murderers going free, Paris was never more gay than now.

1884 MODEL AUTO DECAYS IN CELLAR

Columbus, Ohio, April 22—The first automobile to chug its way down a Columbus street lies rusty, decayed and neglected in the basement of the Ohio Archeological Museum. It is a one-cylinder model that came out in 1884. Campbell Chittenden bought it in Cleveland, where it was manufactured and brought it to Columbus to surprise his friends—and it did.

Once during the '90 it took a gay party to a ball and smeared every one with grease. Thus it became a special outcast until years later when automobiles started to become popular. Then it saw quite a bit of service.

The wheelbase is about three-fourths that of a modern roadster. It has no hood. It cranks from the side. Outwardly it resembles a buggy. The one-cylinder engine is located beneath the seat. The top is adjustable. The tires, solid rubber, are all but falling from the rims. Antiquated lamps such as the post-Civil War Ohioans used on their better buggies furnished illumination.

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