



INTRODUCTION

to the life of Paris

„On the right we have the Ci-ty Ha-all, erected at a cost of-“ etc. . Yes, and on the left we have the Seine- and a lot of other things. But that is not the purpose of this guide. With the advent of photography such a method of touring should have been definitely delegated to the list of useless pastimes.

Undoubtedly a large part of our acquaintance with the various objects that surround us is due exclusively to our visual faculty, but the visitor in Paris has lost much time and uselessly spent a great deal of money if the only result of his travels be to allow him to recognize picture post-cards and cinema projections with fair certainty.

Beautiful and lasting as the impression gained from the exterior of her many monuments, from her broad streets and picturesque pleasure spots, may be, Paris is a lovely feminine creature, and as such succeeds with a devilish ingenuity in preserving her deepest charm from the eye of the casual passer-by. It is not so much in the multitude of buildings that the beauty of this true capital of the civilized world is to be seen, as in the manifestations of her intimate intellectual, artistic and social life; but at the same time it is apparent that the traveller cannot hope to spring like Athena from the brow of Zeus, fully equipped with an acquaintance with these phases of her activities. Even the Parisian born and bred, can scarcely hope to know all, or even a considerable part of the charms that his city holds. The artist will know the gal-

leries and the studios, but will he know the haunts of the gourmet? It is doubtful: for alas! Paris in this respect is like all other cities and most artists have not that vein of commonsense which made Rimbaud desert his art at an early age and take to manufacturing munitions for an Abyssinian king. The gourmet will know his restaurants (though not all of them): the sportsman will know his clubs; and the student his libraries. But, all in all, it is very doubtful whether any two of them will ever get together on common ground.

How then, is the tourist who is in Paris only a short time — even months are a very short time when it is a question of knowing Paris — how is the tourist ever to get an insight into Parisian life.

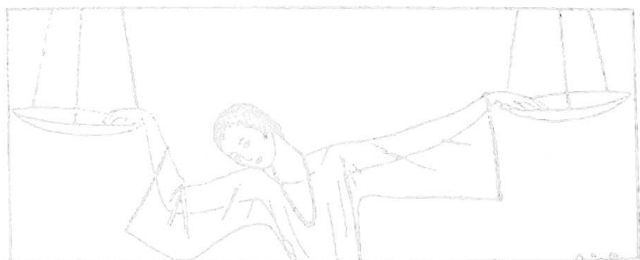
Of course, there are already several excellent guides to Paris: but either they confine themselves to the *picture post-card method* and treat only of the exterior of the city — the monuments, the addresses, and the means of communication, or they limit their sphere to the consideration of points of particular interest. There is no guide that is at a time a complete source of information and a personal *introduction to the life of Paris*.

It is because we believe that there is a very real need of such a guide that we have undertaken the publication of this series of which the first volume „*L'Introduction a la Vie de Paris*“ has already appeared. We are now preparing an English edition of this volume, to be entitled „*Prismatic Paris*“, conceived in the same spirit but carried out in the light of particular utility to Anglo-Saxon visitors and residents of Paris, and whose aims will be to discover to the reader the manifold aspects of the human *activities* of the capital, such as the studios, the literary circles, the antiques shops, the salons, etc. We could offer no more complete exposition of the aim of this work than to cite the preface written by Mr. Walter Berry, then President of the American Chamber of Commerce of Paris. Our endeavour has been to gather together in *Prismatic Paris* a number of articles on all subjects, written by persons whose experience has been such as to permit them to treat of their particular spheres with authority and accuracy.

In this smaller guide we have undertaken to furnish only practical indications as to restaurants and the resources of Paris and its environs in the matter of sports and entertainment.

M. V. VERNIER and R. GUTHRIE.





PARIS — PRO and CON

Every aspect and detail of life in France seems overlaid with a smooth patine of longcontinued war; — everything, except the spirit of the people, and that is as fresh and glorious as the sight of their own land in sunshine."

Rudyard Kipling.

When a visitor from New York, with its wealth of modern conveniences, or London with its paragons of cabbies, or Washington or Buenos Ayres or San Francisco: spick and span, all a-flower or rolling in wealth; when such a visitor strikes Paris, the first impression of its external life is far from favorable: the street, for instance, as one comes out of the Nord or Saint-Lazare stations, the streams of antiquated taxicabs, shabby cabbies, the underground, with its charnel-like atmosphere; and along the Boulevards, with their motley shops and cafe-terraces with their display of heterogeneous and unmannered humanity: Paris, the Paris street, produces on such a visitor a first impression of disagreeable surprise.

"Is this the wonder-city whose very name sufficed to fire my imagination?" says the American or English, at grips with the arrogant guile of a chauffeur whose propensity to take advantage of his fare's perplexity far exceeds his inclination to render service.

But once one leaves the sidewalk and calls on friends, or goes into the salons or to the theatres, one gets to the heart of people and things — the first impression passes off. The *spirit of Paris* gradually takes possession of you and permeates you never to depart. From now on, wherever you go, it will re-awaken in you. You will be drawn back to it with irresistible force, like the moth, at even-time, to the flame.

This is what happens in the case of the petulant lady from New York who has been detained longer than usual on the chilly banks of the Hudson. At the very thought of Paris she warms, grows animated and becomes as restless as a thoroughbred at the barrier. Her husband knows no peace until he has promised to take her to the *Rue de la Paix* on her annual hunt for gowns and hats; forever gowns and hats, but never the same.

Such, too, is the case with the impressionable lady from Buenos Ayres, with her jet-black eyes and opulent charms. A too-long-drawn-out resistance to the call of Paris, and she becomes homesick, neurasthenic, pines and fades away, languishes and grows thin. There is no other cure for *Paris-itis* save a little three-weeks' trip across Oceans and tropics. And at the end of the voyage is found the long-sought-for oasis, the delicious and magic fountain where lost attractiveness is found again, and the most capricious whim is satisfied.

And during the war! Think of all the heroism that sprang from a longing for Paris! How many risks were run, if the truth were only known, in order to secure "leave to Paris". To a certain extent wasn't it the hope of getting back to Paris that made the "Poilu" win the war?

Even the provinces, so bound up in themselves, so home-loving, so jealous of their traditions, so tied to their little round of life in Carcassone or Bergerac, swear by Paris, and aspire, every year, to a several-weeks, visit.

Everyone would love to live in Paris.

When the fortifications are razed, Paris, including suburbs, will have a population of over six millions. The housing problem has become virtually unsolvable. And yet people prefer to put up with an alcove and a divan at a friend's house rather than forego Paris.

This is the disease known as *acute and general Paris-itis*.

What is the reason for this all-powerful attraction?

In the first place, from the central and unequal position which Paris occupies with respect to France and Europe on one hand and the New World on the other. Paris is situated at the confluence of three rivers flowing from as many directions in the shape of a fan; at the same time, she is the capital of a highly-centralized country and draws to herself the brightest talent in the remotest corner of the provinces. Henri Heine compared France to a great garden in which the most beautiful flowers are cultivated for the purpose of making a bouquet. And that bouquet, naturally, is — Paris.

But above all, Paris is the inevitable point of passage for Englishmen and Scandinavians on their way to Italy,

Spain, Switzerland, Austria, Egypt, India and the Orient; and to an even greater degree, the center of radiation for Americans on the Continent; their startingpoint; "the natural gateway of Europe". Paris is only 800 miles from Vienna and Rome, 300 from Berne and Amsterdam, a scant 250 from London and about 185 from Brussels.

The importance of this exceptional location increased to a still greater degree during the war. Did not the Allied effort operate around Paris, as on a pivot, for four years? How could the ebb and flow of all these events fail to leave their mark? The corollary is that this exceptional location gives Paris a cosmopolitan character that is admittedly unique in its variety and life. From the Americans who have made it the headquarters of their influence in Europe (there are over fifty American clubs and social organizations in Paris) to the remains of the Russian aristocracy, it may be said that Paris has been the cradle and refuge of every race aspiring to hold or win the status of a nation. Centres of infinite richness, to which dissimilar intellects have come to draw inspiration.

What great thinker, in fact, from Franklin to Goethe down to Nietzsche, Blanco Ibanez, G. Ferrero, D'Annunzio and others, has been able to resist this prestige. „All that is great in love or in hatred, in sentiment or in thought, in knowledge or in power, in happiness or in misfortune, tends to become concentrated in Paris in-somuch that when we consider the great assembly of distinguished or celebrated men who are found there, the city seems like a veritable Pantheon of living glory.“ (1)

And yet, amid all these influences, Paris, the genius of Paris, rises up like a beacon, retains its own character. Retains? did I say? It grows greater and broader through the absorption of all these various influences, assimilating and transforming them into a spiritual substance richer, newer and more living.

Paris is a crucible. The genius of Paris is a fusion of the spirit of the world in perpetual evolution.

The charm of Paris consists, too, and to a very great extent, in her history, or, to be more exact, in the happy mingling of her history and her modern life; or even more precisely still, in the workable stone and artistic genius which enable that history to find expression, to assume shape and to endure. Where can one find more striking and diversified evidence of the life of twenty centuries, and at the same time a more harmonious combination of the past and of modern life? The Middle Ages; the Renaissance; the century of Henri II, of Henri IV,

(1) *Child.*

of Louis XIII, the Great Century of Louis XIV, that of Louis XV; the July Monarchy; then the Revolution, the Empire, the Restoration, and finally the modern period which gave Paris the Bois, the Boulevard Haussmann and the Grand and Petit Palais Truly, what a tremendous privilege, what a source of never-ending sensations, to be able, by merely crossing the bridges, and without depriving oneself of modern conveniences, to relive the twenty most active, most human centuries that ever existed! Does it not mean lengthening one's existence tenfold? Nowhere, with the possible exception of Rome, is such a possibility rendered so easy and agreeable as in „this universal city where (as Goethe wrote Eckermann as long ago as 1827) every step one takes recalls a lengthy past, where every streetcorner was the scene of an historical episode.“

There are other reasons besides for the charm of Paris

It is due to the clearness of its sky, unsmudged by smoke, quite unlike New York or London.

To the cheerfulness and good humour of its people. Gay Paris! Yes indeed, but gay not because there is less care or less hard work than elsewhere, but because daily cares and difficulties are hidden away, like ugly things, in the depths of the heart.

Her contrasts — the out-of-date cabs, drawn by scrawny nags at a jog-trot across the Place de la Concorde, strike one as ridiculous and out of place; so do the wine-shops, rubbing elbows with aristocratic mansions — what contrasts!

Happy contrasts: the shadows necessary for bringing out the picture.

But, more than all, what gives Paris its stamp of originality is the width of its avenues and their “divine proportions”, as Leonardo da Vinci said of them. — No building can exceed sixty feet in height, and their style harmonizes with the *ensemble*. There is plenty of air, light and open space around them, making them stand out in relief.

Compare the Brandenburg Gate in Berlin with the Arch of Triumph. The Brandenburg-Thor shute in a flat vista, lacking distance, whereas the Arch of Triumph stands out on an elevation with a dozen perspectives radiating from it. When gilded by the rays of the setting sun, what a splendid sight from every point of the horizon!

The same holds true of the Madeleine, Notre Dame, the Louvre, the Place des Vosges: vistas, air, space and light everywhere. Nowhere do the eye and spirit breathe more freely and stretch further than in Paris.

“And then A woman passes by one scarcely knows who she is; one will never see her again; one knows that she is thoroughly virtuous and deserving of the deepest respect. But she has a mocking glance, a delightful countenance, an inexpressible grace in the simplicity of her gown, in the shadow of her hat, in the movement of her fur. And if one had met her this summer on a railway-platform, one would have immediately thought: “There goes somebody from my home town.” For she has a melodious voice, true in pitch and modulation, one of those voices that are heard nowhere else but here. She grasps every idea, and quickly. She never gives half-expression, or quarter-expression, to her thought. She knows everything, has seen the whole world, is conversant with everything. She is carried away with everything, and yet takes nothing seriously. You feel that she is marvellously well-posted on the subject of silk stockings, and that she is not familiar with the location of the Avenue Ledru-Rollin. She belongs to Paris, as do you and I and all who adore the exquisite grace of French life Thanks, Paris for having preserved what ought to constitute the charm of the Royal Court, making one forget evil smells and rumbling of wheels and garish lights by the smiling and perfumed passing-by of one of those marvellous creatures that it has taken — look at the calendar — nearly two thousand years to perfect.”

Paris! Paris! It is all such indescribable things as these that go to make up your charm. And that is why we forgive you the unconstraint of your boulevards and the arrogance of your cabmen.

M-V. VERNIER
translated by Fitz Gerald.



„How to enjoy Paris“ is but the practical extract of a more important work concerning the intellectual, artistic and social life of Paris, now in preparation. The title of which will be „**Prismatic Paris**“.

„**Prismatic Paris**“ will be published as soon as there will be a sufficient number of subscriptions. It will present the Academy, the Litterary circles, the studios, the antiquity shops, the Faubourg St. Germain, the old mansions of Paris, the salons. and each subject will be treated by leading writers such as Maurice Donnay, A. de Fouquières, J. de Castellane, Comte de Saussine, Marcus Selden Goldman, Ramon Guthrie. The illustrations will be by A. Marty, B. Boutet de Monvel etc.

Ask your bookseller to suscribe for you to „**Prismatic Paris**“.