

## SCHOOL-GIRL LIFE IN FRANCE

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RENCH girls are usually educated in one of two ways: either in convent schools, or by the *cours* system. The *cours*, or lectures of the College of France, like those of the University of Paris, are open to women as well as men, and are all free. The courses of study at the College of France are elective, and may be followed for any number of years as desired, and a great number of girls are educated entirely from about their thirteenth or fourteenth year by means of these free courses of study.

But the *cours* system entails much going back and forth between home and college, and as the young girl must have a *chaperon*, it is not always a convenient arrangement for her family. Therefore, the favorite mode of education is, and probably always will be, that of the convent school, especially as all the examinations of the university are open to its pupils. It is very much the fashion for ambitious graduates to undergo these examinations.

Some of the Paris convents are boarding-schools; others are *demi-pensionnats*. At the latter school begins at half past seven or eight (for day in the French school and business world is an hour earlier than with us), and the girls remain till half past four or five in the afternoon, having their midday meal and one or more hours of recreation in the school. A servant usually escorts them there in the morning, on her way to market or the shops, and their mother calls for them in the afternoon when returning from paying visits or driving. As the boys' private colleges and lycées are conducted on the same plan of *demi-pensionnat*, the father usually walks to school with the boys, and stops for them on his way home from business or the club, and the whole family meet and go off together till dark on those long tramps in the parks and suburbs that the French delight in. If one lives near one of these schools or colleges, it is a pretty sight to watch these joyous family reunions that take place every afternoon. Nothing strikes one more pleasantly in the French than the close and affectionate intercourse so universal between parent and child. This springs naturally from the *chaperon* system which, among the well-to-do classes, extends to young people of both sexes. The constant companionship between young and old which it brings about is an immeasurable advantage to both. It keeps the parents young in their feelings and sympathies, and in touch with all their children's interests and emotions, while it makes the young people ingenuous and childlike, at the same time giving them a certain maturity of thought and feeling, a seriousness in their views of life, a friendly, confidential grace of manner and a spirit of deference to their elders, which makes them very charming to deal with, and is unconsciously a great help to themselves in steering through a period of life when a boy is inclined to be lawless and a girl to be silly.

The entire elimination from a French school-girl's life of the amusements of maturer years so often permitted to American school-girls, such as dancing parties, theaters and the reading of novels, has a marked effect on her work in school. Having few outside excitements to wear on her nerves and distract her imagination, she throws all her native vivacity and enthusiasm into the more immediate interests of school life, and works with a steadiness, a well-disciplined attentiveness and power of application that are too often sadly wanting in the more frivolous Americans. The methods of study also demand great attention and concentration, and develop to the utmost her intelligence and originality. The instruction is all oral. From the time a girl can write at all she begins to take notes and write out abstracts. These are corrected by the teacher as to both accuracy and style, and are then re-written and learned by heart. The pupils may ask questions freely, and discussions are encouraged in class. Thus they learn to listen carefully, to think for themselves and to express their thoughts in good language. The studies are, perhaps, fewer in number than our girls take; but they are pursued with far more thoroughness, and on a far broader and more philosophical basis.

The discipline of these convent schools is very strict, especially in the boarding-schools, where the supervision is constant day and night. The rules are many and minute, and the girls have a keen sense of honor about keeping to them. They are active, healthy, restless creatures, and will often be insubordinate and mischievous while the teacher's eye is upon them, but the moment her back is turned the fun is over, and it is a point of honor to observe the smallest regulation. If a girl breaks a rule undetected she may pretty safely be relied upon to report it herself. I have known this done over and over again. The hardest rule for them to keep is that of silence. A French girl takes altogether too deep an interest in life to be expected to hold her tongue if there is any advice to be given, any question to be asked, or if there is any fun in the air.

The spirit of these schools is intensely democratic. There are no privileges of rank or wealth: and to level further all possible distinctions the girls always dress alike, in a uniform of plain, dark material, without ribbon or ornament. The simplicity of their lives would frighten effeminate Americans. In school or bed-room their eye never rests on carpet or drapery; the idea of sofa or easy chair never crosses their imagination. Will it be believed that in a fashionable school of one hundred and fifty girls, of the noblest and wealthiest families of France, there was not a single chair except those given as a mark of respect to the teachers? The girls sat on wooden benches without backs, or on

stools. It may sound strange, but I never remember hearing one of them complain of backache or headache.

Yet, in spite of all this austerity, or shall I say because of it? the girls thrive and are exceptionally contented and happy. If they are taught to work well, they are also encouraged to play well. In all things they are gay, gayly grave, gayly polite, gay in their piety, gay in the midst of adversity; they are hot-tempered, but generous; they flare up quickly, forgive readily and forget utterly; they would cut off their right hand for their worst enemy if they saw her in distress, and do it so cheerfully that she would not suspect the sacrifice; they are full of sympathies and heroic possibilities that are never appealed to in vain.

## A WOMAN'S WARDROBE IN PARIS

BY IDA HECTOR  
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MISS HECTOR

IT may be safely asserted, notwithstanding the absence of a court, and of an ostensible leader of society, that on most points connected with the toilet Parisiennes still hold their old supremacy. French women are often accused of extravagance in dress, and this is in a great measure true. Not that they have a large

number of gowns of one sort at a time—the contrary, they have perhaps fewer than would be considered necessary elsewhere—but they make up for quantity by quality, and each is perfect of its kind in material, make and finish. Good dressmakers are very expensive; a handsome visiting costume from Worth, for instance, would always cost from \$150 to \$200; but then even the most elegant of women only go to such houses for some of their toilettes, contenting themselves with smaller fry for their more simple frocks, in which cases the grander ones are often useful as models, or as suggestive of ideas. And although Parisiennes are more ready to wear their dresses straight on until they are done with, rather than allow those which are half worn to accumulate, of course a woman with any pretensions as a leader of fashion must have gowns suitable to all occasions. First of all there are the indoor toilettes, for morning and afternoon wear, which are quite distinct from those worn for morning shopping, or afternoon walks and drives, while visits, receptions and weddings have each their proper attire. Then there are the intermediate gowns for small dinners or concerts—something between a smart morning dress and the regular evening dress, too elaborate for the former, but high to the throat, with long sleeves—a style of dress unnecessary in England, where *decolleté* dresses are much more frequently seen than in France, where they are almost exclusively reserved for balls or very big dinners. There must be a separate equipment, too, for the Riviera in the winter, and for Trouville in the summer.

Another fruitful source of expenditure is the attention paid to the delicacy and elegance of the underwear, the perfection of undershirts as to cut and fit, this latter detail being most necessary to the setting of the dress, while bonnet, mantle, gloves, shoes and hosiery must all be in accord with the costume. This care as to accessories may seem excessive, but without it no woman is called well dressed.

Naturally, these remarks apply only to the richer classes, though in nearly all grades the outlay is proportionately large. Even in the middle classes, a girl with a marriage portion of \$20,000 will spend a quarter of it on her trousseau, in which, however, house linen plays a considerable part, and the supply of personal linen is enormous. And it is only married women who dress so elaborately, girls affecting extreme simplicity.

Humbler folks, who, either from choice or necessity, are content with ready-made garments, find a plentiful supply, superior in many ways to that found, at all events, in London, and with the exercise of a little taste and judgment may manage to present a very fair appearance at a comparatively small cost.

One exception may perhaps be taken to the dressing of French women, and that is their somewhat sheepish adoption of any prevailing fashion. Individuality in dress is a thing almost unknown, all women being, broadly speaking, attired on the same pattern, allowing, of course, for variations in costliness and elegance. This want of independence in the choice of raiment, while it prevents the eccentricities and vagaries often to be found in an assemblage of English people, also precludes the development of any originality in the matter of dress, which should always be to a certain degree the outcome of the wearer's personality. There is no doubt that many women gain immensely by adapting fashions to their own requirements, instead of accepting them unconditionally.

In the matter of millinery French women have a strong sense of the picturesque, and show a certain daring in their airy arrangements of flowers, butterflies, lace, or other trimming, as well as in the coquettish curves into which they so cleverly bend their hats. As a rule, too, they have a quick eye for color, and while less precise and exacting in the question of perfect matching of shades, they generally succeed in producing an harmonious *ensemble*, being especially happy in the combination of different colors. Subdued tints and half-tones are more favored than the more decided and brilliant shades, though occasionally one is almost startled by some wonderfully vivid costume, or dash of color