

PROCESSION OF DANCING GILLES OF BINCHE, BELGIUM, SURROUNDED BY THE POPULACE.

**THE GILLES OF BINCHE.**

*Their Carnival the Quaintest of Belgian Medieval Customs.*

The persistent manner in which Belgians cling to their medieval festivals and traditions is a characteristic national trait well known to those familiar with the Flemish and Walloon provinces. The survival of such popular fêtes as that of the carnival procession of the dancing Gilles at Binche attests the innate love of Belgians for these picturesque vestiges of their forefathers' civilization.

The festival of the dancing Gilles of Binche is in many respects the quaintest of these popular customs. This festival takes place on Mardi-Gras at the Binche, a town of Hainaut. The carnival of Binche has always been held in high repute by Belgians, but without its Gilles it would not be substantially different from that of Rome, Nice and other towns.

These Gilles, or dancing men, who form the glory of the Binche carnival, are characterized by their headdresses and humps. The headdress is most elaborate and striking. In shape it resembles the oldtime top hat of our great-grandfathers. The hat is surmounted with magnificent ostrich feathers from three to four feet

in length, which give to the wearers the appearance of giants. From each hat, besides, flow several wide, variegated ribbons, while the Gilles' trousers are bedecked with trimmings of real lace and ribbons to match those of the hat. Every Gille wears a mask and a silk belt, from which hang small bells.

The entire Gille's outfit costs from \$40 to \$50, a large sum for the peasant youths, generally selected by the carnival committee to fill the part of actors in the Mardi-Gras festivities. The honor of being a Gille is so great, however, among the gay Lotharios of Binche, and carries such prestige with the local damsels, that the young men chosen by the committee are only too pleased to make the financial sacrifice demanded of them.

In the afternoon of Mardi-Gras the Gilles, in full uniform, two hundred strong, preceded by the local brass bands and musical clubs, appear in procession and march toward the Grande Place. The sight thus offered is unique in the annals of carnival rejoicings. The Gilles proceed by dancing to the tune of the band just mentioned. At every few steps they stop, bend and unbend, to heighten the effect of the ringing from the bells worn at their belts. Their streamers float to and fro, and envelop them in a rainbow of ribbon. At the same time the simultaneous ringing of bells and thumping of

wooden sabots on the cobblestones sound like the echo of a cavalry charge.

The Gilles have each a straw basket hanging to one side from the belt, and filled with oranges. With these they bombard the spectators as they dance along. As soon as emptied, the baskets are filled again by men from behind, appointed for this duty. A general battle of oranges then takes place between the Gilles and the carnival merry-makers. Finally, the procession reaches the Town Hall, in front of which, seated on a platform, is the Mayor, surrounded by the municipal officials. The Gilles then terminate the day's festivities by a general war dance, giving a prolonged exhibition of their capabilities. The public likewise joins in the fun, and soon some five thousand persons—men, women and children—may be seen gayly waltzing around the Grande Place. The sight of an entire population, dressed in carnival costume, and masked, dancing in the open air to the music of the Gilles brass band, is one not easily forgotten. The dancing continues until the late evening, when the sport is brought to an end by the Mayor, who formally awards a gold medal to the Gille who has proved himself the most expert dancer.

**HOW SHE WOULD GET TO PARIS.**

Charlemagne Tower, the American Ambassador to Germany, spoke of the Americans' love of Paris at a dinner that he gave in Philadelphia.

A young American girl lived in a bleak Western city. There were in those days no institutes for the treatment of rabies or threatened rabies, save in France. The young girl's life was monotonous, and one day she burst into a neighbor's house, almost beside herself with joyous excitement.

Her dark eyes flashed. Her cheeks had a delicate rose flush. Panting a little, she cried in a tremulous voice:

"Thank goodness, we are going to Paris at last! Dad has been bitten by a mad dog."

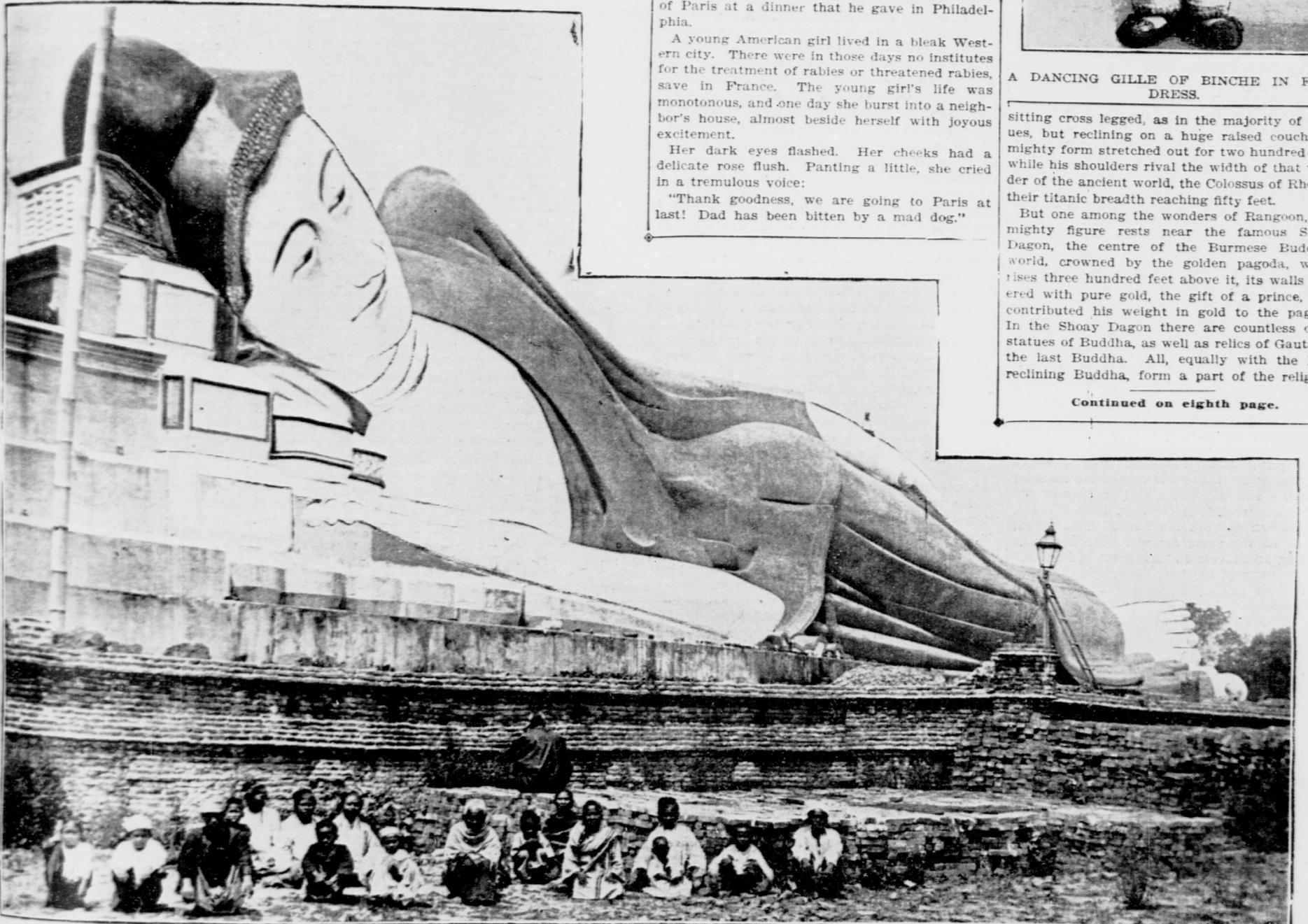
**HUGE STATUE OF BUDDHA**

*Mighty Reclining Figure at Rangoon, Burmah.*

To the Eastern traveller the statue of Buddha is a familiar sight. From Colombo, in Ceylon, to Kobe, in Japan, he is everywhere greeted by the same calm, impassive and mysterious face of the Eastern preceptor of perfection. But in no city in the Orient do the form and face of Buddha constitute so frequent or so essential a part of the city's decoration as in Rangoon, Burmah, starting place of Mr. Kipling's famous "Road to Mandalay," the stronghold of Buddhists. Notable even among the countless statues of Rangoon is the mammoth Buddha, representing the strange teacher, not standing or



A DANCING GILLE OF BINCHE IN FULL DRESS.



COLOSSAL RECLINING FIGURE OF BUDDHA AT RANGOON, BURMAH. IT IS 200 FEET LONG AND 50 FEET WIDE ACROSS THE SHOULDERS.

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sitting cross legged, as in the majority of statues, but reclining on a huge raised couch, his mighty form stretched out for two hundred feet, while his shoulders rival the width of that wonder of the ancient world, the Colossus of Rhodes, their titanic breadth reaching fifty feet.

But one among the wonders of Rangoon, this mighty figure rests near the famous Shoay Dagon, the centre of the Burmese Buddhist world, crowned by the golden pagoda, which rises three hundred feet above it, its walls covered with pure gold, the gift of a prince, who contributed his weight in gold to the pagoda. In the Shoay Dagon there are countless other statues of Buddha, as well as relics of Gautama, the last Buddha. All, equally with the huge reclining Buddha, form a part of the religious

Continued on eighth page.