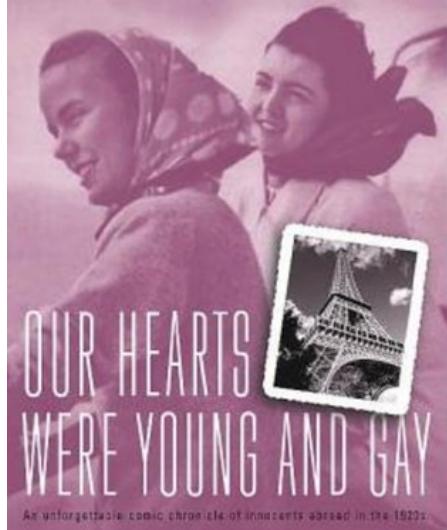


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*Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough*



# **Our Hearts Were Young and Gay: An Unforgettable Comic Chronicle of Innocents Abroad in the 1920s**

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## **Our Hearts Were Young and Gay: An Unforgettable Comic Chronicle of Innocents Abroad in the 1920s** Cornelia Otis Skinner , Emily Kimbrough

Actress Cornelia Otis Skinner and journalist Emily Kimbrough offer a lighthearted, hilarious memoir of their European tour in the 1920s, when they were fresh out of college from Bryn Mawr. Some of the more amusing anecdotes involve a pair of rabbit-skin capes that begin shedding at the most inopportune moments and an episode in which the girls are stranded atop Notre Dame cathedral at midnight. And, of course, there's romance, in the form of handsome young doctor Tom Newhall and college "Lothario" Avery Moore.

## **Our Hearts Were Young and Gay: An Unforgettable Comic Chronicle of Innocents Abroad in the 1920s Details**

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# **From Reader Review Our Hearts Were Young and Gay: An Unforgettable Comic Chronicle of Innocents Abroad in the 1920s for online ebook**

## **Barbara Rice says**

I was first introduced to this book by a college friend - the first edition with sprightly line illustrations and the special war edition (print going near the edges of the page). From the get-go I was in love, perhaps because I was about the age of Cornelia and Emily, and I wanted to go to Europe like they did.

Eventually I did go, even visiting a few of the same places (St. Valery en Caux, the Cluny Museum) and I was reminded of their adventures - very tame by today's standards but still funny.

Skinner's writing is a bit wordy and passe compared to how it might be written today, and I had to go to my French-English dictionary more than once. That's part of the charm of this memoir of the 1920's.

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## **Joy says**

Simply delightful.

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## **Janna Craig says**

This book never fails to make me laugh. And I love the vivid picture of Europe in the 1920s.

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## **Jeanette "Astute Crabbist" says**

"Our hearts were young and gay and we were leaving a part of them forever in Paris."

Sigh....sniff, sniff....I wish I could have seen England and France in the 1920s.

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## **Lori says**

Actress Cornelia Otis Skinner and her friend Emily of Muncie, Indiana embark on a European adventure in the early twentieth century. Before they get out of the St. Lawrence River, the boat suffers a wee shipwreck. The girls' humorous adventures make readers laugh. They cover up a case of measles with the assistance of a doctor so as to avoid quarantine. They encounter bed bugs in some accommodations. The tale shows the life of the upper class at that time and place. While travel changed in intervening years, and this type of humorous memoir lacks the popularity it enjoyed at the time it was written, it still amuses. I listened to the

audio book read by Celeste Lawson.

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### **Carol says**

Without a doubt this is my favorite book ever. I seldom reread books but I've read this one at least 4 or 5 times and I laugh until I cry each time. I buy copies at used book sales and give them to my friends.

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### **Karen says**

Delightful. Hadn't read this in years and years and it still makes me laugh. The reader was excellent.

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### **Ann Feeney says**

A lighthearted trip to Europe told by a true storyteller with a delightful sense of the absurd.

In addition, their lunch with H.G. Wells casts a whole new light on what I'd have thought a much more austere personage.

Perfect for light reading.

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### **Beth says**

I really enjoyed this. I like biographies. This wasn't one of my favourites, but I did like it.

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### **Eleanor says**

Funny and delightful. Many laugh out loud moments, especially in the early part of the adventure.

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### **Ryandake says**

you know, i never understood what charm was until i read this book. charm clearly has an innocence lacking in our times.

marvelous read. incredibly funny. great sharp wit and gentle, self-deprecating humor ("We were poisonously young"). for all the books that i've read from this time, i've never run across the feeling this one imparts--it makes me nostalgic for a time i never experienced.

highly recommended.

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### **Jane Hoppe says**

In the 1920s, Bryn Mawr classmates Cornelia Otis Skinner and Emily Kimbrough ventured abroad to England and France. In 1942, they regaled the world with stories from this prolonged visit by collaborating to write memoir/travelogue *Our Hearts Were Young and Gay*.

I very much enjoyed the authors' colorful descriptions and humorous observations. They poked fun at their own mistakes, innocence, and language, culture, and fashion gaffes. Some incidents, like Emily's throwing a deck chair to a drowning man, are laugh-out-loud funny. Three of my favorite descriptions are:

"I was tall and moved like a McCormick reaper."

"We looked like a pair of igloos out for a stroll."

"I had tried camouflaging my face with slathers of foundation cream and half the contents of a box of face powder. The effect was that of someone who had been ducking for apples in a paper-hanger's bucket."

Between goofy incidents, funny metaphors and similes, and clever, vivid language, I found myself laughing a lot while reading this book. Whether these women found humor, or humor found them, I am not sure. Either way, the book is light-hearted.

The book holds some historical interest as well. What was it like crossing the ocean on a steamship? How did ships avoid icebergs in dense fog? What was it like depending upon a porter to move mountains of trunks and luggage and garment bags? Once in Europe, the girls traveled mostly by train, but I got to learn of various 1920s conveyances such as "open Daimler" and "tally-ho" and "torpédo." The girls also had a broad classical education in those days, as their conversations were peppered with mythical, literary, and artistic references. Not too many 19-year-olds today would liken a sight to a "Stygian tunnel" or Macbeth seeing Banquo's ghost, or Millet's "The Angelus."

References that didn't fascinate me so much were to stage actors of the day. Skinner's father was a famous actor, so she traveled in that milieu. I don't recall recognizing any entertainer's name she mentions in the book. The girls had a number of personal experiences with Cornelia's family's connections. Also, Cornelia and Emily describe in some detail fashions and their wardrobes for different events. Except where their clothing added to the humor of a story, I wasn't so interested in those descriptions, but that's just me.

I was charmed by the authors' innocence and emotional honesty. As impressively educated as they were, as resourceful as they were to study French while in France, and as proud of their first independent adventure as they were—they were still girls. For example, when the ship stopped briefly in Cherbourg, "Emily put her head down on the rail and cried again because the French were turning out just as she thought they would." Another example was when measles-ridden Cornelia admitted she just wanted her mother. And in their fear of abandonment in the Rouen cathedral bell tower, they concocted such an elaborately frightful worst-case scenario—including imagining tossing bits of clothing from the deserted tower so that passers-by finding sweaters floating down would look up and see the girls stranded in the tower, but instead the clothing would catch on gargoyles and never reach the ground—that they scared themselves into rushing down and out of the cathedral so fast, their exit created enough wind to blow out the votive candles.

Parts of this European adventure took me back to my own European "firsts," reminding me of pensions with shared bathrooms down the hall, the wonder of standing where Charlemagne stood, and the leisure of wandering. I loved that the day before Cornelia and Emily left Paris, they visited their favorite places; and

what they chose was sweet. The book ends with the statement that both authors have been back to Europe since, but this was the trip when "Our hearts were young and gay and we were leaving a part of them forever in Paris."

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### **Ellen Keyes says**

Made me long for the days when movies were considered risque if someone said the word "pregnant" or showed too much shoulder. So good!!

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### **Christopher Parsons says**

I read this years ago as a teenager at my mother's recommendation. It's such a hoot and such a good picture of a bygone era, and Cornelia Otis Skinner has such a flair for the idiosyncratic, as evidenced in her many colorful monologues. Great fun.

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### **Anna says**

I first read OUR HEARTS WERE YOUNG AND GAY when i was in a convent in Vermont. I was 14 or 15. The pleasure which I find in it then has not diminished. it's like visiting with old friends. There are scenes which are hilarious and have withstood the test of time. A tuly enjoyable read for all ages.

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### **Virginia Welch says**

Hilarious. A best-selling book during the 1940s. Two young women graduate from college and decide to tour Europe.

A funny story: I'm sitting in the dentist chair with my mouth filled with goo, waiting for the flouride treatment to do its magic. In my hand is Our Hearts Were Young and Gay. I had found this old title on my late mother's bookshelf, where it had sat dusty and neglected for years. I had always wondered why my mother had this book in her library. So my mouth is filled with glop and my teeth are immobile in these pasty, stiff trays shaped like horseshoes and I'm reading OHWYG. And I start to laugh. And then I start to guffaw. But I can't get a breath because of the pasty horseshoe glop, so I start to shake and quiver a bit while gasping because I'm laughing so hard at the antics of the two heroines in the book. The dentist and his assistant hear my gagging from the next room and come running back to the room where they have left me. Tears are running down my face and I'm shaking and trying to get a breath. The looks on their faces were priceless: terror! I'm certain they thought I was going to die right there in the examination chair. Poor Dr. Meroney. I'm so sorry to have nearly given you a heart attack.

I loved this book. Be warned though, there are many references in it to personalities of the 1920s, mainly Hollywood types, that you may not recognize. But even with the occasional (now meaningless) name dropping, it's a hilarious romp.

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### **Ali says**

Cornelia Otis Skinner, an American actress, writer and screenwriter co-wrote *Our Hearts were Young and Gay* with her good friend Emily Kimbrough, a memoir about their travels in Europe in the 1920's. It is difficult to see where Kimbrough's collaboration is exactly as the book is written in Skinner's first person narrative. None of that seems important however as the book is full of charm and humour, and both women come across quite hilariously full of adorably lovable quirks and eccentricities.

Having finished college Cornelia and Emily embark on a European tour which they have planned for some time.

Full review: <https://heavenali.wordpress.com/2015/...>

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### **Virginia says**

Cornelia Otis Skinner is a damn funny woman.

This book had me rolling on the floor laughing. She's as good as Thurber...

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### **Els says**

To be young, and free, and to see the world- to touch for the first time stones on which martyrs have walked, to stand in the rooms of kings.

This book is filled with that wonder, and perhaps the reason I enjoy it so much is because I resonate so strongly with those feelings. I am a privileged girl, and have seen many of the places in this book. And while it may be easy to laugh at Cornelia & Emily's mishaps, wardrobe choices, and grand imaginations, that is how I felt, and continue to feel every time I set foot in a new land.

*"What is more melancholy and profound than to see a thousand objects for the first and last time? To travel is to be born and to die at every instant."*

~Victor Hugo

But before I begin to wax too poetic and scare off some of my more light-hearted friends, allow me to point out that this book is hilarious, and loveable, and huggable, and if you do not have a bellyache from suppressed laughter by the time you've finished- I pity thee.

On the other hand, it does poke fun at a few of my favorite books and authors.

*"I felt like a French aristocrat who had escaped the talons of the revolution, although the only one I remotely resembled was the Scarlet Pimpernel."*

Um, excuse me? I do not recall Sir Percy looking hideous, EVER. Quite to the contrary.

*"...and my some miracle we got through without losing a wheel or running over any small children, which ever since I read "A Tale of Two Cities" I thought coaches always did."*

\*is offended\*

*"Nothing, Emily said, was a greater aid to beauty than a long slumber; the eyes were mad clear and sparkling and the skin like tinted porcelain. (She must have gotten that out of Gene Stratton Porter.)"*

Cornelia, I hereby challenge thee to a duel. Thou hast insulted the author of Freckles.

And there was a leetle bit of unseemly content. God's name is used in vain once or twice, as well as one 'damned', and not in the biblical context. In addition, the 19-ish-year-olds learn about the birds and the bees from a painting. The book doesn't dwell on this. Aaannnd even in the good old early 20s, they run into a couple who, in their innocence, they describe as "good friends" and who their mother attempts to explain to them by comparing them to Oscar Wilde. None of this is emphasized, though, and the first time I read it, in my innocence, I had no idea what they were talking about. Alcohol consumption and smoking are mentioned numerous times, and the girls, erm, do a lot of flirting.

And yet, I would still classify this book as 'innocent and clean,' so....

After finishing this book, it is likely you will wish you could time-travel and tour the continent in the 1920s, if we're still talking about downsides. :)

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## Qt says

A wonderful, absolutely charming book! The writing is witty, light, and funny, and the adventures make for delightful reading. It creates such a wonderful picture of 1920s European travel, but is also a deliciously high-spirited and cheery tale--wonderful!

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