

**TWO LITTLE  
PARISIANS  
(CAILLOU AND TILI)**

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Two little Parisians (Caillou and Tili) by Pierre Mille & Berengère Drillien

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**PIERRE MILLE & BERENGÈRE DRILLIEN**

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:: PARISIANS ::  
(CAILLOU AND TILI)

AUTHORISED TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH OF  
PIERRE MILLE  
By BÉRENGÈRE DRILLIEN

UNIV OF  
CALIFORNIA

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# TWO LITTLE :: PARISIANS ::

## CHAPTER I

### THE FIRST MEETING

**S**HE was present. For several days I had felt her near me. Invisible and kind, she was hovering above ; she touched me gently, and enveloped me. As a matter of fact, I knew she was sure to come. Every year, early or late, she comes, but I know not how. She always takes you by surprise, and is so powerful, in spite of her gentle air, that she overwhelms you. People do all they can to think of other things—there are strikes ; there are revolutions ; there are armies on the march, and ironclads stirring. You try to think that these are the things that matter, but you cannot. You feel through and through that these things are only fiction. The truth, the only truth you



are capable of realising is, that she has returned once more. I am speaking of the Spring.

In some mysterious way, inanimate things are the first to be aware of her arrival. Once I had a little friend, a very little friend—she was only thirteen ; but do not imagine evil ; I was the same age myself. She went to the communal school in one of the faubourgs of Paris, and one day she had to write a composition on Spring. She gave it me to read, and to this very day I can see her English writing, so awkward and childish. This is the way she had started : “ It is Spring, so all the tables begin coming out of the doors of the cafés.”

I was a little boy who, even at that early age, had read far too much. The only ideas I possessed as yet, on the subject of Spring, were those I had gleaned from books. My imagination was warped, and this mode of expression seemed a dreadful one to me. But to-day I think, on the contrary, that it is full of the profoundest meaning. When Spring is coming, the café tables know it, and they go out, of themselves, to breathe

the fresh air. It is still cold ; the sky is grey ; everybody is shivering, and everybody is bored ; but they have been informed by a sure instinct. Out they go, and beckon to the Guayaquil panamas, that have jumped from their boxes, to rush and place themselves in the hatters' windows.

And after the inanimate things, the tiny creatures are the first to respond to her call. The gnats that dance in the sun, and the winged dust that seems to be born of the still tender and unripe grasses. For many years I had asked myself whence came this prophetic instinct, and, until I began to grow older, I did not understand. As you get old, however, certain of your senses grow more acute ; that is Nature's way of squaring things. You do not hear quite so well ; your sight is not so good ; but your sense of smell is developing : it is learning to discover in the air, and in all around, subtle perfumes which it did not know before. So that is the reason why I know to-day that Spring heralds her coming by a new perfume in the wind, and some days later, by the scent of the earth.

The wind warns you first, for he is a great traveller. He flies very quickly, and stores up treasures in his flight. Each time he passes over a green blade, or a little flower, he steals away some of its breath, and thus, gathering as he goes, reaches you at last, richly laden ; then, at the first sun-ray, all that he is carrying exults and reveals itself. It is just at this very moment you say to yourself, "What is it? What has changed?" As yet, the intellect perceives nothing, but some unconscious thing in the depth of your being quivers with emotion, which makes the nostrils dilate, and the heart throb.

The earth is still more sensitive than yourself ; she grows warm in her turn. Far away, beyond the white, black and red blotches, which are the towns, the plough has stirred and reinvigorated her, and the lumps of drying soil send up to the skies the expression of renewed desire. The smell is very elusive, yet at the same time it is definite, fresh, healthy, . . . joyous, as the perfume of the ploughed fields after the heavy rains of July and August. It pene-