**Paper Flowers**

**Cajun Custom**

By HILDA GALLASEREO

Possibly, if you are of Cajun descent, you may discover that when your grandmother wed, she carried paper flowers. Please do not be ashamed of this fact. Do not put it down to her lack of education or culture. Remember there were no florists where your grandmother lived. Besides, the paper bouquets were lovingly and exquisitely created — most often by the bride's nanaine (godmother). And the bouquet could be kept as a souvenir.

Besides, in the old days, if a bride had the audacity to walk down the aisle carrying real flowers, folks would look at one another and murmur “grosse tete.” It would mean that her family was only trying to “put on the dog.” Grose tete, you understand.

And, while the bride carried her paper flowers, the groom wore his black leather gloves. For that, I have found no reason whatsoever. I have never been able to discover why. It was just the thing to do, I suppose.

"Jump the Broom!"

Even the natives laugh together about another old custom that was once common in the backlands. It was called the "Broomstick Wedding," or "Sauter le Bala" — literally translated: "jump the broom."

The ceremony had nothing in common with today's shotgun wedding. The enraged father did not run after the fleeing crucifix and a religious statue. And everywhere were the little white grave boxes. Inside each box was a religious statuette, a crucifix and a religious statue. But on occasion you could also find something else. Perhaps a coffee cup. And you would naturally assume that particular old Cajun family had a much store by his demitasse du cafe.

When In Cajun Country

If you plan to be in southwest Louisiana for any length of time, it's best that you make up your mind right off to submit to the ways of the Cajun. He will change you one way or another.

You will grimace with your first taste of coffee. But if you stick around a week or so and give it any chance at all, you'll be drinking coffee hot and strong and black and Cajun as all get-out.

And you will begin to get angry at the tourists who come in and eat up all the good crawfish and cause the prices to climb; and you will learn some choice words in French and you will learn to understand WHAT the Cajun is talking about even if you don't actually learn to translate it word for word; and you will become enraged — eternally. And you will learn to make a roux; and when you are able to look out over a field of rice and tell how much gravy will take to cover it — then you are almost as Cajun as a Cajun.

NEXT: A Case of the Nostalgias.