



by Sue Burgess

## Spring Clean

Spring Cleaning (*le grand nettoyage de printemps / le grand ménage de printemps*) was/is a thorough cleaning of the house that was/is carried out at the end of winter or the beginning of the spring.

«*Le ménage ou nettoyage de printemps*» is an expression which exists in many different languages and cultures and is something that has been done since the dawn of time.

«*Faire le ménage de printemps*» is a very old tradition which has its origins in the agricultural world where it was necessary to empty and clear out cellars and attics (*caves et greniers*) to make room for the harvests to come.

There is possibly a religious origin too. The Jews (*les juifs*) thoroughly clean their house before Passover (*la Pâque juive*) taking care to remove any traces of yeast (*levain*) and bread crumbs (*miettes de pain*). «*Le nettoyage de Pessah*» Passover Cleanout corresponds to a Spring clean to which is added the destruction of «*hamets*». This word regroups different kinds of cereal crops (*blé, orge, avoine, épeautre, seigle*) (wheat, barley, oats, einkorn and rye) «*Le 'hamets*», represent our selfishness which must be got rid of.

The famous Spring Clean «*grand ménage de printemps*» comes from the days when we knew how to take the time to do things (*prendre le temps*)! Spring Cleaning is the essential of the «*Larousse de la bonne ménagère*» (Good Housekeepers' Dictionary) and other such books which used to be given as wedding presents to newly weds.

Nowadays in a lot of families this «*grand nettoyage*» is done as soon as the heating is switched off. «*Le ménage de printemps*» needs to be done when the weather is good enough for us to be able to open all the windows and air the house (*aérer en grand la maison*).

Some vocabulary you will need if you are going to «*faire le grand nettoyage de printemps*» : throw away (*jeter*), sort (*trier*), tidy up (*ranger*), wash (*laver*), clean (*nettoyer*).

You might need to buy: bin liners (*poches/sacs poubelles*), sponges (*éponges*), a squeegee (*raclette à vitres*), steam cleaner (*nettoyeur à vapeur*), vacuum cleaner (*aspirateur*) and mop (*serpillère*).

Erratum from January issue  
A leap in the dark should read «saut dans l'inconnu» in French

### VOCABULARY / VOCABULAIRE:

to clean.....	nettoyer
to sweep.....	balayer
to dust.....	épousseter
to vacuum.....	passer l'aspirateur
to wash.....	laver
to rinse.....	rincer
to throw away / out.....	jeter
to tidy (up).....	ranger
to put away one's things...	ranger ses affaires



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to make one's bed	faire son lit
to iron	repasser
to mend (clothes)	raccorder
to set the table	mettre le couvert
to clear the table	débarrasser la table
to look after	s'occuper de
housewife	Une ménagère / une femme au foyer
cleaner	Une femme de ménage
home help	Une aide ménagère
a maid	Une bonne