

Paris and the Parisites

By SAMUEL G. BLYTHE, in "Everybody's Magazine"

Paris, you know, is Gay Paree. It is where we go to be wicked, oh, wicked as the dickens; where we get experience of "life" that we go home and talk about ever afterward. Wickedness that has not the Parisian brand is merely pale, inoffensive sin, but the Paris kind, uh—!

Likewise, Paris is the best advertised municipality in the world. People have been writing about it ever since Mr. J. Caesar came along and added the three parts of Gaul to his imperial estates, writing about it, and throwing side-lights on the forbidden things one can do there and still maintain a respectable standing in society, because what is forbidden elsewhere is forgotten in Paris. They show you the island where Lutetia, the original Paris, was, and you are quite sure that in those days the unfortunate Frenchman who lived out in the woods used to wink knowingly and nod wisely when Lutetia was the subject of a talk and say: "It is dull here, but up at Lutetia is where one can have his fling." And they probably went into Lutetia in those days to have that fling, when they had accumulated the price, just as everybody nowadays goes to Paris to be devilish and debonaire, and as reckless as can be imagined; to be wicked, in fine, for Paris, as we have all read, is the wickedest place on earth, and the most fun.

There are a great many things to see in Paris that are worth seeing, pictures, buildings, statues, palaces, avenues, boulevards, churches, and all that, and most tourists see most of them, at least. But when night comes, and the lights are lit, the centuries of Press notices begin to have their effect. It is Paris, you know, and the only way to see Paris is to see the real Paris, after dark, with all its glories, its glitter, and its gleam. What would they think back home? Hush, you are not back home. You are in Paris, a Parisian for the time being, and, besides, what's the use of coming to Paris if you are only going to tramp through the Louvre until your brain gets numb wondering when the old masters had any time to eat and sleep—and they painted so many pictures—and other things like that? Must a visitor to Paris be confined to art-galleries and old churches and to sitting in the cafes and drinking coffee and watching other tourists sitting in the cafes and drinking coffee? Certainly not! You know what you want and you go out to get it. Everybody goes along; even mamma goes so some—only some—of the places, all tremble with excitement and shiver with apprehension. Oh, such sights! the regular tourist sights: Maxim's, and the Bal Tabarin, and the Moulin Rouge, the Abbaye, the Dead Rat, the cabarets, and all the rest of it—wicked, wicked, wicked.

Then, when you have looked it all over, and thought about it in the morning—or in the mornings, if you go more than once, as you will—you begin to have a dim suspicion that perhaps—it is just possible—it wasn't so tremendously wicked after all. It may even be that

wickedness is one of the staples of Paris, sold to the tourist at so much a thrill, large supply constantly in stock, warranted up-to-date, but as artificial as most of the diamond necklaces you saw.

Well, brethren of the Great Association of the Stung in Paris, that is exactly what it is. The Frenchman is a shrewd and grasping person. He will sleuth a franc for hours and hours. He is not unmindful that the vast literature about Gay Paree has had its effect upon the strange beings who come from other parts of the world padded with money, and he makes Paree gay and gets the upholstery. The wickedness the tourists rush so avidly to see is carefully planned and laid out for those tourists by the foot-rule and chromatic scale. It is statistical, rectangular, blue print, specified abundance, for so much per.

Draw a circle a mile or so in diameter around the centre of Paris and there you have it all, practically; or, at least, all the gaiety the average visitor ever sees, and more. Outside of this circle is a big, provincial city, filled with people who get up early in the morning, labour all day and until late at night, and get up next day and do it all over again. They are hard driven, poorly paid, and have as little fun as any set of working people on earth. If one wants to dispossess himself of the idea that all Parisians are gay, la-la-la people, it is only necessary to go to the Central Market any morning early and observe the toil and the fruits of toil one may see there, the thousands of slaving men and women who buy and sell all sorts of market supplies. They work every minute, at the hardest kind of labour, and it is so in the shops and the factories and elsewhere. They are very far from being a joyous and care-free people. For the most part, they seem to be possessed with the idea that unless they are constantly busy they will not have enough to buy bread and cheap wine with; and they probably will not.

Inside the circle, there is a perfect organisation for the acquirement of tourist money. Knowing that the tourists want to be wicked when they get to Paris, the Parisians have provided ample opportunity, purely as business enterprises. This core of Paris is no more the real Paris than the Tenderloin is the real New York, but it passes for that with most people who go there, and the provident French, having methodical minds, notwithstanding their artistic tendencies, put on their shows, collect their tolls, and consider it all in the day's work. It is as mathematical as the multiplication table. Ardent, impulsive, artistic, volatile, mercurial Parisians! Yes, all of that, but they lust for that foreign gold with a rapacious lust, and for the sake of it will show you anything you want to be shown. A Frenchman is greedier for money than even an Englishman. An Englishman will cheat you out of an extra shilling in the pound and congratulate himself; he might even deign to beat you out of a sixpence; but if a Frenchman cannot

take away from you illegally a franc or two, he will certainly cheat you out of so small a sum as ten sous and consider he has done a good stroke of business.

He's thrifty, too. He can get money from loose-fingered Americans in the most adroit manner, but when he gets it, it has vanished, mostly from circulation. It makes a Frenchman yell with pain to spend a franc. He is not prodigal, to throw away his substance. He buys his pleasures cheaply. He is the only person on earth who can sit in the same seat in a cafe from four o'clock

do not print their prices even now, but most of them do; so when a dinner is ordered there is a chance that the diner will know within fifteen or twenty francs of what the total will be. Of course, it will be impossible for him, a traveller, to know exactly before the waiter presents the bill, for he cannot figure in the service charges and how much the butter and bread cost. Nor will he ever know, until he finds it on the bill, just what some of the distinguished food purveyors charge for "satisfaction." That may be four francs or eight francs, or whatever the host thinks you should



THEY GOT TOGETHER AT VARIOUS PLACES IN THE QUARTER, AND WERE PAINSTAKINGLY DEVIL-MAY-CARE.

in the afternoon until-midnight, and have a fine time writing letters on paper the cafe furnishes to him for nothing, consuming the whole four cents' worth of gooseberry syrup and water. He looks with astonishment at the strange folks from other countries who think nothing of scattering a louis or two about in a night. He cannot comprehend them. All he can do is to try to get some of the change.

Presumably there are hotels in Paris where travellers from other parts of France—Frenchmen—stop. Apparently, only tourists stay at the hotels in the core. These are conducted for tourists, and priced for tourists, and they milk the tourists until the screams of rage drown the rattle of the cabs. Also, there are plenty of places where people can stay for small sums—if they want to; but the hotels in the centre of the city are not operated for that class of trade. The Paris hotelkeeper in the centre has but one definite object in view, which is to get all the money he can, as quickly as he can—to take it all at once, for he knows nobody will stop with him a second time.

One opportunity for extortion that the American influx has done away with, in a great measure, is the menu card with no prices on it. Some of the cafes

pay him for the privilege of spending your money in his place.

The Latin Quarter is not what it once was. There is authority for that statement. Any person who has been two consecutive weeks in Paris will tell you so with sobs. The lamentations of those who have been there six months are heart-rending when they relate the same sorrowful story. It seems to be a personal grief, some bereavement that has saddened them for life. I don't know why, for the Latin Quarter seemed to be doing business when I was there. At any rate, there were droves of students, or persons I took to be students, with funny whiskers and long hair and flowing ties, and they got together at various places in the Quarter and drank beer or wine and sang songs and were quite studiously and painstakingly devil-may-care. And I went to one of their balls. It was most preconcertedly riotous. Everybody seemed to have a particular bit of wickedness—to do, and everyone did his or her part at the right time and with all the outward symptoms of gusto. So far as I can learn, the students do what they please. If they ever did more than that, then the Quarter has deteriorated. The trouble is, probably, that the persons who think it is not so gay and care-free as it



THEY ARE THE GREATEST ARTISTS AT THE DIFFERENTIAL PHRASE AND THE OBSEQUIOUS BOW.

NATURAL

ENO'S

HEALTH-GIVING

FRUIT

REFRESHING

SALT

INVIGORATING