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Wild Night Music of Paris Makes Visitor Feel a Man of the World

Paris.—After the cork has popped on the third bottle and the jazz band has brayed the American suit- and cloak-buyer into such a state of exaltation that he begins to sway slightly with the glory of it all, he is liable to remark thickly and profoundly: “So this is Paris!”

There is some truth in the remark. It is Paris. It is a Paris bounded by the buyer’s hotel, the Folies Bergere and the Olympia, traversed by the Grands Boulevards, monumented with Maxim’s and the So-Different, and thickly blotched with the nightlife resorts of Montmartre. It is an artificial and feverish Paris operated at great profit for the entertainment of the buyer and his like who are willing to pay any prices for anything after a few drinks.

The buyer demands “that Paris be a super-Sodom and a grander Gomorrah” and once alcohol loosens his strong racial grasp on his pocket-book he is willing to pay for his ideal. He does pay for it too, for the prices charged at the various Parisian resorts that begin to liven up around midnight are such that only a war profiteer, a Brazilian millionaire, or an American on a spree can pay.

Champagne, that can be bought anywhere in the afternoon for 18 francs a bottle, automatically increases in price after ten o’clock to 85 to 150 francs. Other prices are in proportion. An evening at a fashionable dancing cafe will cut into a foreigner’s pocketbook to the extent of at least 800 francs. If the pleasure-seeker includes a supper in his program he will be lucky to get out without spending a thousand francs. And the people he is with will do it all so gracefully that he will, after the first bottle, consider it a privilege until the next morning when he contemplates the damaged bankroll.

From the taxi-driver who automatically cranks up five francs on his meter as soon as he picks up an American, either North or South, from in front of a fashionable hotel, to the last waiter in the last place he visits who has no change under five francs, the study of rooking the rich foreigner in search of pleasure has been reduced to a fine art. The trouble is that no matter how much he pays for it, the tourist is not seeing what he really wants.

He wants to see the nightlife of Paris and what he does see is a special performance by a number of bored but well-paid people of a drama that has run many thousands of nights and is entitled “Fooling the Tourist.” While he is buying champagne and listening to a jazz band, around the corner somewhere there is a little Bal Musette where the apaches, the people he thinks he is seeing, hang out with their girls, sit at long benches in the little smoky room, and dance to the music of a man with an accordion who keeps time with the stamping of his boots.

On gala nights, there is a drummer at the Bal Musette, but the accordion player wears a string of bells around his ankle and these, with the stamping of his boots as he sits swaying on a dais above the dancing floor, give the accent to the rhythm. The people that go to the Bal Musette do not need to have the artificial stimulant of the jazz band to force them to dance. They dance for the fun of it and they occasionally hold someone up for the fun of it, and because it is easy and exciting and pays well. Because they are young and tough and enjoy life, without respecting it, they sometimes hit too hard, or shoot too quick, and then life

becomes a very grim matter with an upright machine that casts a thin shadow and is called a guillotine at the end of it.

Occasionally the tourist does come in contact with the real nightlife. Walking down the quiet hill along some lonely street in a champagne haze about two o'clock in the morning, he sees a pair of hard-faced kids come out of an alley. They are nothing like the sleek people he has just left. The two kids look around down the street to see if there is a policeman in sight and then close in on the night-walking tourist. Their closing in and a sudden dreadful jar are all that he remembers.

It is a chop back of the ear with a piece of lead pipe wrapped in *Le Matin* that does the trick and the tourist has at last made contact with the real nightlife he has spent so much money in seeking.

"Two hundred francs? The pig!" Jean says in the darkness of the basement lit by the match which Georges struck to look at the contents of the wallet.

"The Red Mill holds him up worse than we did, not so, my old?" "But yes. And he would have a headache tomorrow morning anyway," says Jean. "Come on back to the Bal."