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5 a.m. The Débris Of Yesterday, The Hope Of Today

ON the steep road to Montmartre lies the flotsam. Dawn does not discriminate, but relentlessly steals up on the lovers who hate it and the dead-beats who fear it. So the man on his hard bench stirs uneasily, dreaming fitfully

of what might have been. For another Paris, which has spent its week at the desk, the first light means a day of freedom. Two people have made plans, set their alarm clocks early. They speed past the Sacré Cœur and by six o'clock will be idling happily through country lanes

MAGIC OF PARIS-2

Morning Wakes Montmartre

At dawn two photographers watch the light grow stronger on a romantic slum set high above Paris. Visiting the same scene, a famous novelist thinks nostalgically of a light that has long since faded

by H. E. BATES

LAST week I came into Paris from the north: through the Englishman's traditional gate of nostalgia, the Gare du Nord. This week I came in, for the first time, from the south-west, through that supremely lovely provincial kingdom of ducal châteaux, where even the cottages have the grandeur of exquisite Renaissance nobility about them: the valley of the Loire. Villages here are of purest cream-white stone and on sunny mornings tender creepers of heavenly blue convolvulus cover them with true shining morning glory. Grapes gleam dark in vineyards of the river. Orchards are bowed down with burning bright peaches and there is a sense of luxury in the air.

Here, in a small village on the Loire, I ate with kingly splendour at a restaurant kept with extreme capability by two incredible and formidable mesdames, of whom much more in a moment. For seven and sixpence I ate the following prodigious meal, leaving on my plate nearly enough for another person before retiring to lie down like a potentate in the warmth of the afternoon: melon, hors d'œuvres, salmon in white butter, duck in butter with green peas (and what duck!—I thought it possible to eat only such duck in heaven), pâtisserie, fruit and cheese. When I came downstairs at four o'clock, still replete, the two mesdames were still eating the



6 a.m. The Streets Have Attractions For Early Risers

YOU must get there first to find what the light uncovers. At this hour the streets are used mainly by hurrying, half-awake Parisians who start work early, and an occasional artist seeking the unique tints of a pale sun. But for the desperate and the pleasure-seeking

there is a lure in the unwashed cobbles. You may find a crop of cigarette ends outside a café door. Or you may find a new fascination, like Marie Antoinette, who once alarmed the Court by rising to see daybreak "for the first time"

same sort of lunch with the cooks, the waiters, the waitresses, the chambermaid's children, the cats, the dogs and a few hangers-on.

It was a kind of presidential banquet, with the two mesdames presiding, each impressive and expansive, each bejewelled and enormous, each having something of the air of a cabaret girl turned duchess and greatly faded from former splendour.

All this, the reader may well say, is the oddest possible way of showing him the Paris of Montmartre. Not at all. One of the inexhaustible joys of France is not only that you may discover, in Paris, all sorts of proof that that city is a village, but that you may discover, in villages and the oddest back streets of provincial towns, stray and fascinating dregs of the life of the capital city. Such were the two mesdames.

These two delicious and formidable creatures, with their carrotty curly hair, their podgy opulence, their over-ripe bagginess, their over-powdered and kindly faces, had walked straight out of the pictures of the great apostle of the Parisian night life of the last century, Toulouse-Lautrec.

They were the pure, the true Montmartre. In their small and not over-clean hotel they provided not only the divinest cuisine but they provided that atmosphere of sad female disintegration

which Lautrec unearthed, with tender and terrible genius, from beneath the swishing lace, the top hats, the champagne, the velvet, the powder and the lights of the Montmartre of his day. They were spiritual ghosts from the world of the gay, lost nineties.

Montmartre is a province, northward of the great Paris boulevards, on a hill. You cannot get to it without driving up an infinite number of hairpin bends or without climbing an absolute Calvary of dark steps that are reminiscent of the darker byways of old Edinburgh. This hill is so high above the rest of Paris that you can see it quite clearly from the great terrace of chestnut trees at St. Germain, fifteen miles away. And it is really, itself, a sort of Calvary, because from just below it, from the Place St. Pierre, you stand and look up a sheer green hill of grass on the crown of which sits the incredible sugar-cake dome made so famous in paint by Montmartre's other apostle of decay, Utrillo.

From anywhere in Montmartre the church of Sacré Cœur intrudes, obtrudes, fascinates and dominates. But from the Place St. Pierre, where screaming Parisian infants dig in dirt-sand about their gossiping and knitting mamas, to the top steps, where screaming loudspeakers announce to bus loads of tourists of all nationalities that they have now arrived, it looks in its extraordinary

effulgent whiteness like some romantic architect's notion of the gates of heaven.

All day hungry, desperate, herded tourists arrive there. All nationalities, but especially Americans, English, Danes, Swedes and Swiss, make a pilgrimage that rewards them, first of all, with the most superb view of Paris that it is possible to have. It has been said that false snobbery should not keep the visitor away from Montmartre; and certainly it should not. For the view from the Sacré Cœur is incomparably lovely. That in itself is worth all the scrambling and half-lost Americans, fearful of being separated from the herd, fearful of missing a syllable of loudspeaker history; it is worth all the tourism, the touting and the nonsense that now surrounds this past Mecca of gaiety, art and nakedness, this slum set on a shining hill.

For let's face it: Montmartre is a Paris slum. Step off the Place du Tertre, where touting painters are busy sketching portraits for wealthy Americans and Swedes, and you are instantly in a world of hideous byways; a world of crumbling walls, peeling wallpapers, dark living holes, doorways where bags of skin and bone sleep in the afternoon sun. Forgotten, shopless streets wind darkly away and disappear into drain holes.

None of this, of course, need detain you. Another flight of steps will take you back into



PARIS does not believe in ham and eggs and kippers and cups of tea. Breakfast is a cup of coffee or a glass of wine and a crisp piece of bread. If time is short, and you must be off quickly to the market, you stop along the road. There you will meet

friends, who have much more than "Good morning" to say, and be greeted from behind the bar by someone who can still be bright and enthusiastic although he may have closed at midnight last night. Meanwhile, an odd-job man spruces up the gutter

7 a.m. Montmartre Begins To Think Of Business

EVERY third house seems to be a restaurant or bistro. If you aren't ready the Sunday morning customers will go to Jacques next door.

So the owners set out the wicker chairs on the pavement, and take in the staple items of their trade: milk, for the *café au lait*, ice for the drinks which must be served cold in France, and bread

to accompany every meal. Bread arrives in long baskets, especially designed for the *baguettes*, France's own form of white loaf. The vans speed off down narrow streets



MORNING WAKES MONTMARTRE—continued

Utrillo's famous streets, into the rampaging market of the Rue Lepic, the crowded fabric shops about the Place St. Pierre, the gay umbrellas of the Place du Tertre, the art shops, and always, of course, the industrious painters busy at any street corner—that great army of diminutive fiftieth-rate artists intensely engaged on seeing life through the eyes of others.

They, like the tourists, are searching for something that someone else saw first—and was derided, of course, for seeing it. They are looking for the world of the great nineteenth-century

French painters, the world of Renoir, Manet, Utrillo, Lautrec and others, the men who put Montmartre on the international map. The fact that they will not find it is not extraordinary. Renoirs are not born cheaper by the dozen, and Lautrecs, apostles of prostitutes, introverts and drunkards, are not born into cultured and aristocratic families every day. And it is not extraordinary for quite another reason. They will not find the world they are looking for because it is not there. It has not simply faded. It is dead. The Montmartre of popular conception has gone with the dodo.

Renoir painted his beautiful and famous

picture called *Le Moulin de la Galette* in 1879. The crowded dancers under the gay lights, the café tables, all the pulsing life of the cabaret whose big wooden windmill sails still dominate the street corners just below the *Sacré Coeur*—all of it is deliciously, richly, superbly recorded for posterity. Renoir was thirty-five and the apostles of bourgeois taste of respectability and photography in painting promptly called him all the names under the sun. The picture is now in the Louvre and I do not suppose you could get it, if you could buy it at all, for much less than £100,000. Odd to think that these once-derided artists, the four great apostles of the



ON every street corner is a painter. But every one attracts a knot of critics, just as two men digging a hole will draw a crowd in more mundane surroundings. Maybe the watchers of Montmartre feel that their interest encourages inspiration. The artists

are not so certain. But this one has few worries. She did the main work two hours ago when she was almost alone in the street. And thirty minutes later she sold her canvas to a souvenir-seeking tourist. The subject? Almost inevitably, a view of the Sacré Coeur

8 a.m. Another Day Has Burst Into Full Flood

NOW Montmartre becomes cosmopolitan and crowded again. The pretty girl takes her dog for an airing amid the shoppers and traffic. The concierge, omnipotent

guardian in the ground-floor of French houses, reluctantly takes up his duties. The gendarme has chased a suspect and lost him. He looks worried, but the idlers just look cynical and amused.

Their attitude to such moments is essentially sporting, and the incident will provide enough speculation to while away the morning



Parisian dancing and café life of the seventies, eighties and nineties—Renoir, Lautrec, Degas and Manet—should now be among the most expensive in the world.

Not that this, of course, is all the tourist stashes for in Montmartre. Having seen the Sacré Coeur, having wandered about the crazy hillside streets, he descends inevitably to the Boulevard de Clichy, with its big restaurants, its roaring traffic, its cinemas and, of course, its temples of the Nude. For myself I am always glad to get out of the Boulevard de Clichy. It crashes and bangs on its too-great length, reminding one rather in its belligerent and garish

impact of Sixth Avenue in New York. All along it restaurants and cafés boldly placard the tourist: ham and eggs, Coca-Cola, quick snacks, iced coffee and a curious meal advertised itself in one restaurant as Break His Fast.

To walk along the Boulevard de Clichy is rather like being buffeted by a highly coloured hurricane. I am always glad to step out of it, uphill, and shelter in the comparative quiet of one of those prodigious street markets that are among the greater joys of Paris.

Not so others. The Boulevard de Clichy, with its surrounding harems of nudism, is what they come for. The guide books do not list, as far as

I know, the number of nude shows going on in Montmartre at one time, but it is my firm belief that when you have seen one you have seen them all. It is also my firm belief that they are by no means as nude as they were.

Before the war I saw nude shows where the girls, in an infinite variety of shapes, were as near mother-naked as could be. My present impression is that most of them are now quite heavily clad. Indeed they seem to wear rather more, in specialized parts of their anatomy, than ordinary French girls wear on southern beaches, where the last lines of respectability are now defended by three buttercup petals and a piece

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of string. All Montmartre does is to show more variations of the female form, set it to music and charge an entrance fee. As far as I am concerned it constitutes one of the supreme ways of being bored.

As They Like It

Obviously this view is not shared by others. Obviously the delights of the bare bosom are everywhere highly popular. The demand is in fifteen languages, including American, and most advertisements outside theatres announce their attractions in four or five. What you see for your money is exactly what you see, and perhaps even better, in London. Fifty years ago our fathers would no doubt have quivered with ungovernable tension at the sight of these forbidden mounds of flesh. For us the advent of the Bikini has taken away any surprises that remain.

These shows go on all night, until five or six in the morning. There are also music halls, like the Bal Tabarin, also made famous by Renoir, where you pay for your entertainment by buying expensive bottles of champagne. All this sort of thing, international, cosmopolitan, big-business, is no more Montmartre than Camden Town, where our own painter Sickert fifty years ago also painted the music hall scene and where the delights of the bust are, I see, about to be introduced again. Like the Eiffel Tower, the Arc de Triomphe and the Tour d'Argent, they are things to be done once and possibly, in the tourist sense, never done again.

You will not find Montmartre here; but you can still look for it, and stand a good chance of finding it, in the lesser music halls like the Petit Casino, or in those smaller, more intimate and much more French theatres known as *chansonnières*. Their birthplace was Montmartre and most of them are still there, providing an exceedingly intimate, witty and acid sort of entertainment, half singing, half sketches, that can be most satirically entertaining if your French is good enough.

Late In The Day

Also to this sort of thing belongs the Lapin Agile, painted over and over again by Utrillo, where you can sing, dance, drink and listen to this same kind of programme, probably surrounded at the same time by the very same Americans, English, Swiss, Swedes and Danes as you saw having their faces sketched up on the Place du Tertre in the afternoon. They will still be earnestly engaged in catching up in their act of discovering, seventy or eighty years too late, the gaiety and colour of a life they believe to exist because somewhere, in paint or print, someone told them so.

Let me therefore record a depressing fact: that there is now nothing new to discover in Montmartre except that which, if you have the right eye, you can discover for yourself. Tourism has seized this slum-crowded hill by the neck and is vigorously engaged in cashing in. It is now on every sight-seeing bus tour, on every Continental itinerary, from Stockholm to San Francisco.

Let me entreat you, therefore, if

you must go to Montmartre, not to go that way. Go by yourself, and go, if possible, on foot. Find yourself a restaurant in a back street and eat there, as I did this week, among the strong odours of Provençal cooking, in the damp, fierce and rather formidable atmosphere of fresh lobsters, mussels, prawns and langoustes dripping from watery barrels under shady awnings. Get yourself waited on, as I did, by one of these dangerous-eyed, black and temperamental creatures who flash the breadknife about because madame has quarrelled with monsieur or because a customer does not like his table or because a Parisian and his girl are making love over hot mussels or because she herself is only a working girl and can't.

Tang On Your Tongue

Feel the electricity in the air. Come out smelling of garlic and wondering if you dare take one more backward look at the black-haired mademoiselle who is now being infinitely sweet to the very customer she was about to disembowel with the breadknife only half an hour ago. Come out with the tang of Paris on your tongue and the rather brassy echo of it in your ear—and then go up to Montmartre and find what you want to find and not what someone else found for you.

In that way you can find much. For it is a great essay, this crazy hillside village-city, in human decay. The decay was there when Renoir painted it; Lautrec dug deeper and brought up an infinite residue of brilliant and sad depravity. Utrillo found crumbling flesh on the walls. Today you can feel decay in a hundred purposeless back streets, in the weary black lamp-posted flights of steps up which aged women crawl only to fall asleep in the sun at the top.

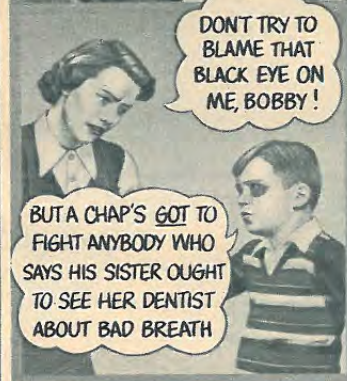
You can feel the decaying charm of it in the little squares of acacia trees and chestnuts and limes, full of old women and playing children, in the shining and sudden vistas of the Sacré Coeur. The writing of its disintegration is on a thousand walls, with their conflict of slogans—*Vive Stalin, Vive le Roi*—and in the picture galleries, overflowing with the bad, spiritless imitations of the great.

Exit The Artists

Art indeed has long deserted it. There is not now the vestige of a vogue, in the artistic sense, even in decay. It has long since gone southward, over the river. Wars are not kind to decaying artistic coteries, and two of them, in that sense, finished Montmartre. Nor will you find the same swirling skirt, the same baggy-eyed ladies, the same depraved sad duchesses whom Lautrec immortalized. They, too, have gone.

Where? It is my guess that they keep little hotels on the Loire, presiding with iron discipline and powdered charm over their little ménages, cooking with the divinity of angels, keeping a tight hand on the cash and preserving, with a most endearing charm, the tiny scraps, the relics, of a world that tourists are still looking for, and will never find, in the streets about the Sacré Coeur.

Sis, I'm Tired of Fighting for You!



Clean
Your Breath While
You Clean Your Teeth—
AND HELP STOP
TOOTH DECAY!



1/4 also Giant Size 2 1/4

NEXT WEEK

H. E. Bates crosses to the Left Bank of the Seine where the flashing lights of the Montparnasse cafés and show-places vie with each other to capture the francs of wide-eyed visitors