

LOOKING IN VAIN FOR FRENCH STUFF IN FRANCE

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Paris Has Everything, but the Best of Everything — Soap, Shoes, Cigarettes, Charley Chaplin—Is American.

"A H, VOILA! Monsieur desires some soap to soften the beard before shaving? Here is some from Monsieur's own country. Will Monsieur have the steeck, the powdaire, or the leetle tube with the crème? Mais oui! I have the three kinds. My boutique is, how you call heem, tout a fait modern,—up to the date! What, Monsieur desires some soap *Français*. Impossible! *Mais non*; *François* would not sell Monsieur French soap, which is *vulgaire*, compared to the soap *Americain*!"

And so Monsieur departs from the little *parfumerie*, tightly clutching the familiar tin tube, so familiar at home—and incidentally with a new idea of French commercial methods, imports and exports. Always Monsieur believed that the French led the world in soaps and toilet articles. Do not the advertisements in the subway and elevated at home proclaim as much? And here in Paris, of all places, the home of the exacting dilettante of fashion—or more often fiction—he is confronted by the home-grown product.

But let us follow the peregrinations of this *Monsieur Américain*. A smoke? To be sure one cannot stroll along the Boulevards without wishing to imitate all one's fellow beings, who are making human chimneys out of themselves. A *Tabac* sign arrests his eye. Monsieur must certainly get some of those wonderful cigarettes that he pays such high prices for at home, because of the exorbitant revenue tax. France is the smoker's heaven, so it always has been rumored.

"Will you be so kind as to let me have



"What Kind Would Monsieur Prefer?"

some cigarettes? says Monsieur in his best French to the pretty little girl with the apple blossom complexion who sits behind the spotless marble slab, with the delicate snuff scales and loose tobacco pits in front of her.

"Certainly. But what kind would Monsieur prefer? Some American cigarettes, no doubt? Here are some *Pêle Mêle* which have just arrived from New York."

"No, no, those are not American cigarettes," Monsieur expostulates. "They're English. Why, at home they're advertised as 'A Shilling in London, a Quarter here.' Moreover, these are not the genuine, despite the fact that they come in a red box with a white band. They haven't the British coat-of-arms. What is that screaming eagle with the arrows in its claws, and the scroll with 'E pluribus unum' doing here? It must be a rank imitation. However, I'll take a box, just to see. Mademoiselle, I desired some real French cigarettes. Let me have a box of *Xanthia*, *Figaro*, or some gold-tipped *Murattis*."

"But Monsieur must be mistaken. Those are not French cigarettes at all, but Egyptian and Turkish, and are very expensive, because they are imported. If Monsieur wishes French cigarettes I can give him some *Marylands*, or *Caporals*. Those are the true cigarettes of patriots, made by the Government. To be sure, all the tobacco is imported from Monsieur's United States, but then it is cured and stripped here, and I can assure Monsieur that they are absolutely pure."

Another ideal has been shattered, and Monsieur departs smoking one of the spurious "*Pêle Mêle*." It has a curi-



ously familiar flavor. He next tries one of the *Marylands*, which is entirely different but brings to mind the corn-silk escapades of his boyhood. Nevertheless all his friends seem to enjoy them, and as they only cost 65 centimes (13 cents) for twenty, Monsieur is a convert. He finds at length that all Mademoiselle claimed for them is true, and he can smoke one after another without any "heady" feeling.

But here is a café. Monsieur must sit at a table on the *terrasse*, or ordinary cement sidewalk, and sip an *apéritif* while watching the passing crowds. It is very gay this year, despite the war. Of course one sees many wounded soldiers; with arms in slings, or hobbling with the aid of crutches, or perhaps being guided by a friend. However, Paris has been saved, and even if the Germans are only sixty miles away as the crow flies the Frenchman and his wife must laugh—over the *apéritif*. It is not forced laughter, either, because the Frenchman at heart is a true patriot and fully realizes the seriousness of the situation, but also firmly believes that it is only a question of time before the invader will be driven from French soil and France will again come into her own. "Patience! All we need is to be patient a little longer and all will be well," is the watchword of Paris. But here comes the waiter.

"What is Monsieur's pleasure? A cocktail perhaps, as a reminder of Monsieur's favorite café at home? *Certainement*, there is a *Bar Américain* within, and a book of excellent cocktail recipes which was given to Jules the sommelier by some of Monsieur's compatriots. A real French *apéritif*? *Mais non!* A thousand times, *non!* Monsieur would not enjoy it. One has to be a born Frenchman to enjoy an *apéritif*. It is very bitter, or else very sweet, or perhaps very sour, and always very disagreeable to one who has not been educated to appreciate its merits."

So, in desperation, Monsieur orders a cook book cocktail, with the usual result. Its ancestor many eons ago might have had some relations connected by marriage to the cocktail family, but the present generation is sadly lacking in all the necessary ingredients. Nevertheless it is a drink, and Monsieur gulps it down with the usual savagery of the Anglo-Saxon races, calls the waiter, to settle his *addition*, and prepares to depart.

"What! Monsieur is surely not going yet? Why, Monsieur has only this moment honored me with his presence at my table. If Monsieur will wait for only a few brief moments to let the drink digest he will in addition have the pleasure of seeing the sun set behind *Sacre Coeur* on Montmartre. It is truly a wonderful sight!"

Amazement appears on Monsieur's face as he realizes that he is not to be

hurried from his table, although there are many others waiting for an opportunity to be seated. Truly the French are a remarkable nation, he thinks, to be able to take time to appreciate the glories of a sunset.

All too soon they have faded into deep purple shadows, which gradually enshroud every distant object, and regretfully Monsieur prepares to depart, first thanking the waiter for his advice to remain. He takes his place in the throng of pedestrians groping their way along in the semi-darkness. For all the street lamps wear heavy shades, a precaution against Zeppelin raids.

The inner man recalls the fact that it is along past Monsieur's ordinary dinner hour, nearly eight o'clock. How late the sunsets are in Paris in summer! But what is this dainty shop, with the attractive lace curtains and soft lights within? Over the doorway



is a sign in English proclaiming that a "Regular Dinner, Southern style," may be had within. Monsieur enters, and to his surprise finds a buzz of conversation in his native tongue, interlarded with "English-English," going on all about him. Surely an American oasis, transplanted intact from Southern Virginia to the heart of the French capital. Were it not for the lisping foreign accent of the waitress who takes his

order (clam broth, fried chicken with hominy cakes on the side, corn bread muffins, raspberry tart, and coffee with cream), Monsieur would find it difficult to believe that he was not Down South.

What can that string of purple lights across the street portend? He crosses over to find that it is a cinema, or ordinary "movie," showing the latest escapades of one *Charlot*, known better as Charlie Chaplin. Indeed it seems impossible to get away from America. He enters, and finds an audience spellbound, watching a Wild West film. A woman screams as the hero, racing on a foaming charger to save the heroine from the "Peaux Rouges" (redskins), does a spectacular fall.

"What a savage country! What barbarous people! How can Americans exist, when such terrible things are going on around them? I do hope little Jacques in San Francisco will be care-

an occasional stifled sob, when the military pictures of the devastation in Northern France are shown. There is always one of *Père Joffre*, the idol of France, decorating some of the *Brave Gars*, who have won everlasting distinction and honor in some recent engagement. Cheer after cheer breaks forth as the regiment, with colors flying, marches past before the aged commander, who stands erectly at salute as the soul of France passes on.

Monsieur departs with an entirely new conception of the French nation. But Monsieur wishes a bite to eat before retiring, and so seeks one of the boulevard restaurants. It is closed. He tries another. But it, too, is closed. What can be the matter with Paris? Can every one have retired in this famous city so renowned for its night life? He tells his troubles to an *agent de sûreté*, or "cop," who looks like a mountain of security in his wide blue cape.

"Ah! Monsieur is evidently a foreigner, or else he would know that every café and restaurant must close sharply at half past ten. It is the military order. No, there is nothing to do. I regret that Monsieur is hungry, but I fear he will have to wait until five o'clock to-morrow morning before he can get a *petit déjeuner*. I wish Monsieur *bon soir*, and may he sleep well."

Monsieur finds to his astonishment that an order is an order, and that even all the side entrances are locked and barred, and so, much surprised that such an order can be enforced in a metropolis, he betakes himself to bed, as the only alternative. He cannot sleep, however, as an aching tooth begins to act up in a most unkind manner, and he resolves to see a dentist the first thing in the morning.

After a breakfast of the eternal coffee and rolls, he asks his hotel clerk to be recommended to a good dentist. "The only good dentists are American dentists," the clerk replies. "In France all those who can afford it patronize them, as the art of dentistry is only in its earlier stages of development here."

The dentist's office is situated in one of the most exclusive quarters and is fitted up with the splendor of a king's palace. He is received by a butler and a footman, in livery, who in turn pass him on to a French secretary, seated behind a mahogany desk, who prepares to make an appointment. But Monsieur wishes to have his tooth fixed immediately.

Living must be exceedingly cheap here, he thinks, if an ordinary "mouth mason" can have quarters like these. A few minutes later a young French assistant wearing rubber gloves and a starched, spotless sanitary operating apron announces that his *maitre* will accord him an interview. He proceeds to the operating room, and awaits the arrival of the great personage.

The master enters. But instead of a

Truly, as the Author Is Forced to Conclude, a Product Is Not Without Honor, Save in Its Own Country.

man gray with years he turns out to be a youth who looks as if he had only graduated from his dental college three or four years ago.

"How is it possible for a man as young as you appear to be to attain such great success? Why, it would have taken years at home. What is the secret?"

"Paris is the dentist's heaven," is the laconic reply. And as Monsieur receives a bill for 200 francs (\$40) from the secretary on his way out Monsieur sees the force of the remark.

But you see Monsieur is learning all the time, and he is forced to believe that the American invasion is no longer a dream but a grim reality. Two other experiences only are necessary to convince him that it is an accomplished fact.

Monsieur desires to write several business letters, and wishes a stenographer to transcribe them on the typewriter. The major domo, one of whose species may be found in every Paris hotel, a venerable gentleman with a long gray beard, willingly directs Monsieur to one of the American typewriting establishments situated at frequent intervals throughout the city.

Here Monsieur must wait his turn before he is able to obtain an English stenographer. The bulk of clients are French, who have been converted by degrees to Yankee time saving devices, although many of the banks and old conservative business houses continue to use the laborious hand methods.

While waiting Monsieur spies one of the latest importations—a phonogra-



phic machine that he is accustomed to use for dictation in his office at home. Despite the friendly warnings of the other waiting clients, Monsieur slips in a record, and while the crowd gathers around to await dire developments he finishes his dictation, gives the records to an attendant to be transcribed at leisure, and departs. Broadway and the Rue de la Paix are not so far removed after all, he thinks.

Before his departure on the day following Monsieur remembers a final command of his lawful spouse.

"Bring me back some shoes from Paris." Madame had called as the steamer was leaving the dock.

"*Vallik-ovaire*" some one had said was the best shop. He repairs forthwith to find the "Walk-Over" shoe store crowded with French ladies, eagerly in pursuit of feminine footwear.

"Yes, Monsieur, all our boots and shoes are imported direct from America. The French ladies of fashion recognize that American ladies have the prettiest feet in the world, and so wish to emulate them as far as possible," the dapper French clerk informs him.

The last cherished ideal goes crashing to earth. It is impossible to escape this Americanism, this continual spirit of progress. The French are adopting American methods and ideals as rapidly as they can conveniently assimilate them. It's only necessary to get away to find how greatly American manufacturers are appreciated.

Truly, a product is not without honor, save in its own country.