



The Skeptic's Skeptic

Chopstick In The Desert

By Yukon L. Beebe

As one who grew to manhood in saloons and who had by his twenty-first birthday his whistle wetted and his ashes hauled in every filthy maison de joie from St. Charles Street to Kuala Lumpur, this writer was understandably dismayed, yea, appalled when he set out, nary a few eves back, to relive the halycon days of past ash-hauling and, as it were, to slough off the snows of yesteryear.

In reference is a peregrination along the seedy back streets of that awdry metropolis of the hopeless in which we, forsooth, must connive to achieve our small aims.

May one now recite the horrendous circumstances of that midnight walk, undertaken despite the brutish hovering presence of the local constabulary and the ever-present danger of molestation by that element of the population which appears to ambulate entirely under the shadowy cloak of those hours when the decent populace is safely esconced in its own trundle beds.

Preceded, at gentlemanly intervals, by a few snorts in pubs along his route, the writer ventured into the fearsome region the natives term as "down-town," and therein lays the downfall of many an exemplary citizen.

The first watering hole the wanderer encounters when he reaches the nether regions of the area in question inevitably provides the dubious attractions of jazz, that hideous affliction on the civilized psyche; of darkness, that veil behind which lurk the unspoken deeds of which we shall not here speak; and of mu-jeres, the kind one used to see abroad on the streets of Port Said before an antiseptic regime decreed there be no more joy in said streets.

Same resting place, naturally, offers the water of life, albeit at exhorbitant fees. Quaffing at the enervating vintage and recalling, with more than a bare twinge of memoire, the gaudy delights of Pigalle in the '20s and the West End in the endies, the writer surveyed the crummy scene at hand.

The Weltanschaaung to be derived from such an establishment is almost worth the price of the cover. And if you understand that line, contact IBM. They need you.

But with sufficient quaff of the good stuff, anything begins to look good. The writer's eye fell on a luscious bit who was later to prove to have the dimensions of Lillian Russell in her latter years and the personality of Winnie Ruth Judd in one of her less temperate moments. A deplorable sort, but she filled the bill at the time.

Said exorbitant fees notwithstanding, the writer and his light o'love shared the dubious hospitality proffered by the doyen of the boite. In plain point of fact, they got crocked.

Came time to retire to a friendly neighborhood motel, though, the doxie had disappeared into the night — swallowed up, as it were.

The continued existence of such holes is a matter with which the public conscience must wrestle. As a writer who lost his punctuation along with his cherry, this citizen stands out almost alone, alas, it seems, in his steadfast opposition to such effronteries to the dignity of the body politic.

'Twas never thus in Soerabaya, where a man's a man for all that, and a woman is something other than a sometime thing.

And plain English is where you find it — and leave it.



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