

BERLIN'S THE BUMMEL TOWN

by
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London has its club life, its hotel restaurants, a few smart expensive night clubs where drinking stops at 12.30, some twenty small foreign restaurants in Soho, the Café Royal, and practically nothing else. How could one „bummel“ there? It would cost a fortune, even if it could be done — and it simply can't.

Paris, oh yes, we all know the gaiety of the nightly round of Montmartre, the bluff of the Latin quarter, and the countless restaurants where one can eat to enjoy; but there lingers a feeling that it is all a show for us, the foreigners. Where are the French?

But Berlin, what can it provide? There are a thousand „Konditoreien“ — they are all more sumptuous, much more modern than those of Paris or Vienna, but they aren't „gemütlich“, they are always on the go, but they have one saving point, „Hier findet man Anschluß“.

To see the Berliners' real night life one must avoid the eternal round of the bars and dancing places in the west, these are too international — besides being very expensive — they might be in any city. One must explore, get away to the East, South and North; in fact, one must go on a „bummel“. Some of the following brief descriptions will no doubt be recognised by many.

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An old cellar, the walls are black with the smoke of a hundred years, the ceiling too low for anyone but a dwarf. Bare wooden tables. Students sitting with their girls, empty bottles of wine gradually line up in close formation on the tables. Students, still sitting, embracing their girls; students singing lustily, singing of their girls. All in good humour — no one disgraces himself in spite of the fixture provided for „Seekranken“ — these are historical rooms.

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A café in a setting of Japan, strangely full of very ordinary up-from-the-country people drinking a cup of coffee quite innocently in Berlin. Something looks rather queer with that lady over there, her hands seem rather big. Suddenly she speaks in a loud bass voice. It gradually dawns on one that they aren't women after all. There are two tables of them, but nobody takes any notice of them. One is told that this café is at the end of their beat.

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Everybody knows the engraving of this, perhaps the oldest, certainly the quaintest, cottage of old Berlin. Famous men have lived here, now it is a small „Bierstube“. They say that the caricaturist Zille started his career sketching here, and certainly copies of his works adorn the walls; it can at least provide types for an apache ball. And they are interesting too, one would soon become interesting here, beer costs ten pfennigs and corn brandy twenty pfennigs a glass. There are four out-of-works who play cards all day long — at least three of them do — only one of them works at a time and he keeps the rest of them in beer.