MY FIRST TRIP TO PARIS, by “SNAP”.
**(UNDATED, but probably 1918 because of the presence of US troops in Paris)**

I’ll never forget my first trip to Paris, with Jinks. I must admit that if I’d known at the time what Jinks was like when let loose I’d never have accompanied him – he’s too strenuous for a quiet chap like me.

We started off from a rest billet near Amiens one blithesome day in August and Jinks’s capacious pockets were well lined with the proceeds of the successful sale of a quantity of lead removed by night from the roof of a handy château. We travelled by goods train – Jinks bribed the guard with issue cigarettes – he had it all worked out that we’d have two extra days in Paris this way, all passenger trains having been diverted via Rouen owing to the direct line being under artillery fire somewhere or other. The train landed us at dead of night in a maze of sidings at the Clichy goods station. After escaping death from stray locomotives several times, we emerged into the streets of Paris and were driven in a taxi to the Hotel de Malte. Jinks suddenly remembered that this was one of the hotels recommended by the YMCA so we decided not to risk it and finally lighted in the Moderne in the Place de la République. We ordered the best room in the place, paid for it in advance for our full leave period, and were soon between sheets, dead to the world. After breakfasting in bed next morning we sauntered round the City and succeeded in discovering a high-class tailor without difficulty. He asked a fabulous price to rig us out in new, made-to-order duds but Jinks accepted with a lofty wave of the hand, threw down three 100 Franc notes as a deposit and ordered the astonished shopkeeper to work on the job day and night, regardless of expense.

Jinks then led the way to the Café de la Paix for dinner – he had been in Paris before and had a fair smattering of the lingo. After three days of champagne, taxicabs and music-halls Jinks calmly announced one morning that he was absolutely on the rocks! As my little roll had vanished on the first day and I’d been borrowing from Jinks from then on, I stared at him and simply gasped. “Now you know why I paid in advance for our room at the pub.” He added with a grin. “Don’t you think I’m a wonderfully foresighted old bird?” he asked, after a moment’s silence, during which I was thinking hard. – Evidently the thought that he might have saved a few francs for meals for the rest of our leave didn’t strike him.

“What about our tucker?” I asked. “My dear boy,” said Jinks, with a withering glance, “your distrust of Providence is positively sinful.”

However, for the next twenty-four hours Providence didn’t come up to scratch too well, seeing that we had only dry bread, though we did have a fairly liberal issue of intoxicating liquors of various kinds. We bought out bread with two francs I obtained by selling my wristlet watch to a Froggie near the Opera House. We got our liquid refreshment by means of one of Jinks’s remarkable brain waves. The procedure was like this: We would select a cafe where three or more customers were sitting with drinks on the table before them. I would walk in alone and, as soon as I had seated myself at a table, Jinks would suddenly have an imitation and noisy fit on the pavement just outside. The French are a most inquisitive race and immediately the performance outside would commence, the customers would leave their drinks and rush, proprietor, waiter and all, into the street to see what the excitement was. I would then polish off all the drinks on the table and rush out to Jinks, tell the crowd he was my “camarade” and dive off with him as fast as possible. At another cafe, some distance away, the little scene would be re-enacted, it being my turn to have the fit and Jinks’s to swallow the drinks. Six times that day we repeated the performance.

While lying in bed next morning Jinks announced that he had had another brainwave during the night: we were to go as guides to the A.I.F. in Paris. We dressed hurriedly, Jinks whistling all the while as though he had not a care in the world. On the steps of the hotel we met a fellow I knew from our battalion, and introduced him to jinks who promptly borrowed five francs from him. We breakfasted off two 25 centime loaves form the nearest bakers and directed our steps to the shop from which we had obtained our new uniforms, and, after considerable haggling, Jinks succeeded for two francs in getting two black arm bands made with “Guide” sewn on in red letters. When these bands were pinned on under our three stripes (we had raised our rank to sergeant immediately on arrival in Paris) our appearance looked quite imposing. With overcoats slung over arms in such a way as to hide our badges (so many beastly officers are always hanging about Paris) we strolled down to the Y.M.C.A. Jinks explained on the way that the stunt was to take parties of Diggers round Paris for a small consideration. We hung around the Y.M. entrance and Jinks accosted the first two fellows he saw coming out. “Say Digs., you don’t happen to want a guide, eh!” As they eyed us with some astonishment, Jinks explained that we belonged to a new branch of the A.I.F., the Australian Guides Corps, formed by H.Q. to try and prevent so many men from being taken down, robbed, etc. while on leave in Paris. An important duty of the Corps was to show semi-broke diggers the best method of eking out their scanty supply of francs. He knew Paris from A to Z, having lived there for years before the war, etc., etc. and that for the modest sum of five francs would show parties of six where the cheapest and best restaurants and theatres were.

It took us a full hour to get six mugs together and it was then just dinner time so Jinks led the way to what he described as the best value-for-money eatinghouse in Paris., and it turned out to be the “Rocher” in Passage Jouffroy. The place certainly was an eye-opener to me. We got four courses with a glass of wine thrown in, for two francs a piece and the party appeared, so far, to be highly satisfied.

After a round of drinks at less than half boulevard prices in a little side street cafe, we arrived at the Théatre Rochechouart in Montmartre, just in time for a matinee performance, where Jinks surprised us all again by obtaining front stall seats for one franc seventy-five. “What do you think of your uncle now, eh?” he chuckled. The orchestra struck up with a blare a few minutes later and I was just comfortably settling down in my seat as the light went out when Jinks tapped me on the shoulder. “They put on a rotten show here,” he whispered, so be ready to get for your life as soon as it starts--- before they take a tumble. Five minutes later we got.

When we were outside in the street again Jinks told me he had thought of a much bigger and better wheeze. “The cows were making too much damned profit out of us on that stunt,” he added, we’ve got enough dough to carry on with until tomorrow night, if we go easy, and then we’ll try our hands at showing Yanks the warm side of Paris at 10 francs a time.” While wandering through the Luxembourg Gardens, where Jinks said we might come across some red-headed Parisiennes, two Canadian privates swooped down on us and begged us to buy them a drink. “Canst thou hope to get blood from stones?” asked Jinks. “Well guys,” said one, “Can you point us out a place where we can sell these two suits of togs we lifted from an officer’s kit this morning?” “Give us a look” said Jinks. “Huh --- old stuff. I’ll give you 10 francs for it.” “Make it twelve and they’re yours old son.” “Right!”

“Why waste your money on that rubbish?” I asked as we walked away. “My boy,” replied Jinks, mysteriously, we can disguise ourselves in these.” Back to the hotel we went and emerged half an hour later as full-blown one pip artists from the Canadian Corps. Outside the Yankee pay office we announced, *sotto voce,* that we would take parties for 10 francs to see all the most degrading sights in Paris, including the Egyptian tin-can dance, the Orgy of the Sylphs, and a number of other exciting displays invented in Jinks’s fertile brain. To say that the Yanks rushed us is to put it mildly. We soon had parties of six each booked to meet us at 8 o’clock at the Statue of Liberty. We took them to the Chat Noir Cabaret, collected 60 francs each, and left them to their fate as soon as the lights went out. “All they’ll see there’s harmless,” grinned Jinks, as we walked briskly to another quarter of the city.

Daily, we booked parties of Yanks at different parts of Paris, and nightly left them in the lurch at different silly little Montmartre cabarets. And everything went without a hitch until the day before our leave expired. The catastrophe occurred outside the Yankee Y.M.C.A.. We had just booked our quotas for the evening when up rushed a big burly Kankee sergeant with two buck M.Ps. “They’re the blighters. Grab the cows,” he cried. ----------- Jinks and I are only little blokes so we went quietly.......................................We drew no pay whatever for quite a long time after the court martial, and I sometimes wonder whether the game was really worth the candle after all.

(Pencilled footnote: The above story is, of course, not true)