

THE ARISTOCRATIC 'ARRY

The Cheap Tripper, pursued by the curses of the aesthetes and the antiquaries, really is, I suppose, a symptom of the strange and almost unearthly ugliness of our diseased society. The costumes and customs of a hundred peasantries are there to prove that such ugliness does not necessarily follow from mere poverty, or mere democracy, or mere unlettered simplicity of mind.

But though the tripper, artistically considered, is a sign of our decadence, he is not one of its worst signs, but relatively one of its best; one of its most innocent and most sincere. Compared with many of the philosophers and artists who denounce him; he looks like a God fearing fisher or a noble mountaineer. His antics with donkeys and concertinas, crowded charabancs, and exchanged hats, though clumsy, are not so vicious or even so fundamentally vulgar as many of the amusements of the overeducated. People are not more crowded on a char-a-banc than they are at a political "At Home," or even an artistic soiree; and if the female trippers are overdressed, at least they are not overdressed and underdressed at the same time. It is better to ride a donkey than to be a donkey. It is better to deal with the Cockney festival which asks men and women to change hats, rather than with the modern Utopia that wants them to change heads.

But the truth is that such small, but real, element of vulgarity as there is indeed in the tripper, is part of a certain folly and falsity

which is characteristic of much modernity, and especially of the very people who persecute the poor tripper most. There is something in the whole society, and even especially in the cultured part of it, that does things in a clumsy and unbeautiful way.

A case occurs to me in the matter of Stonehenge, which I happened to visit yesterday. Now to a person really capable of feeling the poetry of Stonehenge it is almost a secondary matter whether he sees Stonehenge at all. The vast void roll of the empty land towards Salisbury, the gray tablelands like primeval altars, the trailing rain-clouds, the vapour of primeval sacrifices, would all tell him of a very ancient and very lonely Britain. It would not spoil his Druidic mood if he missed Stonehenge. But it does spoil his mood to find Stonehenge—surrounded by a brand-new fence of barbed wire, with a policeman and a little shop selling picture post-cards.

Now if you protest against this, educated people will instantly answer you, "Oh, it was done to prevent the vulgar trippers who chip stones and carve names and spoil the look of Stonehenge." It does not seem to occur to them that barbed wire and a policeman rather spoil the look of Stonehenge. The scratching of a name, particularly when performed with blunt penknife or pencil by a person of imperfect School Board education, can be trusted in a little while to be indistinguishable from the grayest hieroglyphic by the grandest Druid of old. But nobody could get a modern policeman into the same picture with a Druid. This really vital piece of vandalism was done by the educated, not the uneducated;

it was done by the influence of the artists or antiquaries who wanted to preserve the antique beauty of Stonehenge. It seems to me curious to preserve your lady's beauty from freckles by blacking her face all over; or to protect the pure whiteness of your wedding garment by dyeing it green.

And if you ask, "But what else could any one have done, what could the most artistic age have done to save the monument?" I reply, "There are hundreds of things that Greeks or Mediaevals might have done; and I have no notion what they would have chosen; but I say that by an instinct in their whole society they would have done something that was decent and serious and suitable to the place. Perhaps some family of knights or warriors would have the hereditary duty of guarding such a place. If so their armour would be appropriate; their tents would be appropriate; not deliberately—they would grow like that. Perhaps some religious order such as normally employ nocturnal watches and the relieving of guard would protect such a place. Perhaps it would be protected by all sorts of rituals, consecrations, or curses, which would seem to you mere raving superstition and silliness. But they do not seem to me one twentieth part so silly, from a purely rationalist point of view, as calmly making a spot hideous in order to keep it beautiful."

The thing that is really vulgar, the thing that is really vile, is to live in a good place Without living by its life. Any one who settles down in a place without becoming part of it is (barring peculiar personal cases, of course) a tripper or wandering cad. For instance,

the Jew is a genuine peculiar case. The Wandering Jew is not a wandering cad. He is a highly civilised man in a highly difficult position; the world being divided, and his own nation being divided, about whether he can do anything else except wander.

The best example of the cultured, but common, tripper is the educated Englishman on the Continent. We can no longer explain the quarrel by calling Englishmen rude and foreigners polite. Hundreds of Englishmen are extremely polite, and thousands of foreigners are extremely rude. The truth of the matter is that foreigners do not resent the rude Englishman. What they do resent, what they do most justly resent, is the polite Englishman. He visits Italy for Botticellis or Flanders for Rembrandts, and he treats the great nations that made these things courteously—as he would treat the custodians of any museum. It does not seem to strike him that the Italian is not the custodian of the pictures, but the creator of them. He can afford to look down on such nations—when he can paint such pictures.

That is, in matters of art and travel, the psychology of the cad. If, living in Italy, you admire Italian art while distrusting Italian character, you are a tourist, or cad. If, living in Italy, you admire Italian art while despising Italian religion, you are a tourist, or cad. It does not matter how many years you have lived there. Tourists will often live a long time in hotels without discovering the nationality of the waiters. Englishmen will often live a long time in Italy without discovering the nationality of the Italians. But the test is simple. If

you admire what Italians did without admiring Italians—you are a cheap tripper.

The same, of course, applies much nearer home. I have remarked elsewhere that country shopkeepers are justly offended by London people, who, coming among them, continue to order all their goods from London. It is caddish to wink and squint at the colour of a man's wine, like a wine taster; and then refuse to drink it. It is equally caddish to wink and squint at the colour of a man's orchard, like a landscape painter; and then refuse to buy the apples. It is always an insult to admire a thing and not use it. But the main point is that one has no right to see Stonehenge without Salisbury Plain and Salisbury: One has no right to respect the dead Italians without respecting the live ones. One has no right to visit a Christian society like a diver visiting the deep-sea fishes—fed along a lengthy tube by another atmosphere, and seeing the sights without breathing the air. It is very real bad manners.