

Snobs

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SNOBS

Snobs are a product of civilized society. The more developed that society, the greater the variety of its snobs. In the nineteenth century snobs formed such an important part of society that writers felt impelled to write about them. Some of these writers attacked or satirized snobs directly, like Thackeray; others did so by depicting the effect of snobbery on less fortunate people, like Dickens.

The word "snob" has its origin in the telescoping of two Latin words, *sine nobilitate* (without nobility) that used to be applied at public schools and universities to those who had not the good fortune to be of noble birth. The word was used exclusively in this sense, the sense of birth or family, until the eighteenth century; after which snobs began to develop and multiply in all walks of life and work.

Snobs exist everywhere, just as the word itself is used in its original form in almost all languages. Even in the so-called classless societies of modern times they exist; not, perhaps, the "blue-blood" snobs, but the job snobs — people who look down upon those with a less important or less lucrative job than themselves. In some countries this form of snobbery is legalized by the State, and there are special privileges, and even special shops, for those in the upper reaches of this so-called classless but in fact highly snobbish society.

Then there is the fashion snob. This variety of snob consists mostly of women, who voluntarily dress like a Picasso picture or a South Sea islander merely because a beardless youth sitting at a neo-baroque desk somewhere in Paris decrees that they shall. But men cannot be exempted from this category either; and there are men all over the world who still walk about with the bottom button of their waistcoats undone because King Edward the Seventh of England, who was somewhat portly, did so for his comfort. The young men who went limping around London in the last century because Lord Byron was lame were just as snobbish as the twentieth-century *dama* who makes herself look like something from Mars.

Another and particularly aggravating type of snob is the inverted snob. This is the man who boasts of being unable to add two and two together and make four; the woman who proudly recounts how many times recently she burned the potatoes or put soda instead of salt in the peas ("I can't even boil an egg, ha-ha-ha!"); the man who pretends to be ashamed of having gone to a good school, and the woman who affects to hate romance.

In this modern age of fast and easy travel it is the travel snobs who have it all their own way. Their conversation is liberally interlarded with foreign words and phrases like: "I stayed at a charming little *auberge* this year", or "What fascinating places those great *Bahnhofs* are". They are impressed by everything but their own native product, and they continually tell you so in the language of one who has really "been places".

Lastly there is the intellectual snob. He is an ally of the travel snob, and parades and peddles his superior knowledge on all possible and impossible occasions. If you do not know who or what was Sordello, or are unfamiliar with the habitat of the praying mantis, he looks at you pityingly. He tells you not to forget the *thermoi* when you go on a picnic, and he never gargles with permanganate, only with $K_2Mn_2O_8$.

The trouble is that the intellectual snob is nearly always right, and he is therefore the deadly enemy of the inverted snob. When these two get together, all weapons are fair and no holds are barred. The result is mutual discredit; and then it is the ordinary, everyday snob, the man who is so

snobbishly ordinary and everyday that all other snobs pale into insignificance beside him, who emerges finally and irrevocably victorious.

Geoffrey Tier, Dr. phil.

(By courtesy of "SMS Student", Magazine of the College of the Swiss Mercantile Society Ltd., London).

SWISS MILK PIPELINE SYSTEM TO BE EXTENDED

The Gruyère district of Switzerland, where there is a growing shortage of stockmen for accompanying the cattle to the summer Alpine pastures, is expected to follow the example of Canton Vaud and adopt the milk pipeline, or lactoduct, system.

This year some herds did not move up from the valleys at all because of the labour shortage, while in some places mechanization replaced the missing hands. In the Gruyère Alps 12 mountain dairies have ceased production and have been transferred to the valleys. The main problem is the carriage of the milk to the dairy, because the making of first quality Gruyère cheese demands that the milk should be in the vat within an hour and a half of leaving the cow.

Canton Valais now has more than a dozen milk pipelines, of an aggregate length of 27 miles. The newest, coming down from the Rawyl pass pastures (7,924ft.), is 8¼ miles long and in some sections is immersed in an irrigation channel which takes water to the villages and fields lower down.

Other lactoducts are working at Grimontz, St. Martin and elsewhere. From the St. Martin pastures, at 6,600ft. in Val d'Hérens, milk poured into a big basin flows down to the village dairy, at 4,200ft., at the rate of about two gallons a minute.

The plastic pipe, of just under half an inch diameter, is generally laid underground at a depth of about 1½ft., but in many places it has to cross torrents and ravines and it is then hung from a steel wire. A telephone line follows it.

The system has many advantages: its construction is inexpensive, its upkeep is simple and cheap, it enables the milk to reach the vats quickly, and does away with human or animal transport (bumping down the mountain paths does the milk no good).

The system has now been tried out for six years. As regards the financial aspect, it is estimated that if the milk is dealt with on the mountain pasture and the products carried down by men or mules the transport cost (without taking into account the price of the milk) would be 3d. a gallon; transport by vehicle costs 5d. a gallon; the cost by lactoduct is 1½d. a gallon.

Speaking of the shortage of labour, a veteran of the Gruyère district told your Correspondent: "Youngsters now prefer living in the towns, where they find higher pay and more enjoyment. They refuse to spend six to seven weeks on the alp in a lonely chalet. They have given up yodelling and playing the Alpenhorn.

"They are only interested in transistors and juke-boxes and they would like to have television in the Alpine barns and dairies." (By courtesy, "The Times", 18th July 1963.)

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