



The Gentle Art of Tramping

By Graham Stephen

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I suppose one should draw a distinction between professional tramping and just tramping, especially as this whole book is to be called THE GENTLE ART OF TRAMPING. I am not writing of the American hobo, nor of the British casual, nor of rail-roaders and beachcombers or other enemies of society—"won't works" and parasites of the charitable. While among these there are many very strange and interesting exceptions, yet in general they are not highly estimable people, nor is their way of life beautiful or worth imitation. They learn little on their wanderings beyond how to cadge, how to steal, how to avoid dogs and the police. They are not pilgrims but outlaws, and many would be highway robbers had they the vitality and the pluck necessary to hold up wayfarers. Most of them are but poor walkers, so that the word tramp is often misapplied to them.

The tramp is a friend of society; he is a seeker, he pays his way if he can. One includes in the category "tramp" all true Bohemians, pilgrims, explorers afoot, walking tourists, and the like. Tramping is a way of approach, to Nature, to your fellow-man, to a nation, to a foreign nation, to beauty, to life itself. And it is an art, because you do not get into the spirit of it directly you leave your back door and make for the distant hill. There is much to learn, there are illusions to be overcome. There are prejudices and habits to be shaken off.

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