

have put on a gaudy show; 'Rastus was on parade' in those days, no doubt about it. But all that sort of thing is another matter, and quite foreign to the wretched stuff that I am deprecating.

Suppose the Haitians do keep up an exotic religious cult and an exotic ritual — I do not know that they do, but it is what they would naturally do and have every right to do. Suppose they are superstitious and have faith in *Hexerei* — well, how about the witchcraft-sodden regions of Eastern Pennsylvania? Suppose their dances carry a strong sexual implication and lead to sexual excesses — well, surely a person who came down here from the United States to look at anything like that would be taking a busman's holiday. My point is that in any serious view of a people such matters are quite trivial, and an exaggerated or exclusive concern with them is unfriendly and indecent; yet it is with these above all else that our popular literature about Haiti concerns itself.

The consequence is that visitors come here with their minds stuffed full of absurdities and their imaginations cocked and primed for any untoward adventure. Last Shrovetide, a year ago, a woman who had just been disgorged from a tourist-ship saw the usual fancy-dress parade moving through the streets of Port-au-Prince, and asked a native what it was. The native, who spoke no English, finally got the gist of what she wanted through his head, and said, *carnivals*. The woman legged it back to the ship in full cry, and reported that she had seen a huge procession of cannibals. Only last week another woman, who was told she could find some article she wanted in a certain small native shop, refused to go there for fear she would be smitten with leprosy; she had read somewhere that native shops and native goods were full of it, and catching it was practically a sure-fire chance.

I am told that one who stays here a fortnight never quite rids himself of the fascinations which the island and its society exercise, and is always hoping to come back. I can easily believe that. I met a man on shipboard who had been here four years as an officer in the invasion, and he said he had never seen either place or people that he loved as much.

He was another of the fine type I mentioned in my last letter, the kind that gives one a just pride in one's nationality. When I asked him what the new president of Haiti was like, he said he seemed to be a pretty good sort. 'The one before him lay down and let us do anything we liked,' he said, 'but this fellow made a lot of trouble for us. We respected him for it, though, for of course we had no business there, and we all knew it.'

What a queer country ours is! One runs into so many people like this man, people who are everything a human being should be, in integrity, intelligence, sensitiveness, instinct for the right thing, sometimes everything even in culture, and yet who are socially ineffectual; they have no more influence in determining the course of our collective public life than gnats on a locomotive. Probably, though, we are not exceptional; probably in other countries as well, in Italy, Germany, France, England, 'the revolt of the masses' is as effectively suffocating such people in the same quicksand of ignorance, vulgarity and brutality. If so — and I believe really it is so — it makes an extremely blue outlook for civilization at large.

This is a dismal tone on which to end a friendly letter. Yet it is the best I can do by way of a happy ending, for as things stand at the moment, I swear by the dog of Egypt — *νή των κύνα*, the Socratic oath — I can see no happy ending possible for anything, even a letter.