

NO COMPROMISE
Selected Writings
of
Karl Kraus

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Tourist Trips to Hell

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I have in my hands a document* that surpasses and seals the shame of this age, and would warrant assigning a place of honor in a cosmic boneyard to this money-hungry mess that calls itself mankind. If ever a newspaper clipping meant a clipping of creation—here we face the utter certainty that a generation to which such solicitations could be directed no longer has any better instincts to be violated.

After the enormous collapse of the pretense of culture, and after the nations have proved by their actions that their relationship to anything in the realm of the spirit is of the most shameless deception—perhaps good enough to further the tourist trade but never sufficient to raise the moral level of this mankind—nothing is left but the naked truth of mankind's condition, which has almost reached a point where it is no longer able to lie. In no portrait could it recognize itself as well as in this one.

* An advertisement in the Basel (Switzerland) newspaper *Basler Nachrichten*, the bulk of which is quoted on the following pages.

BATTLEFIELD EXCURSION TRIPS BY CAR!

Arranged by the
Basler Nachrichten

Tourist trips
from September 25
to October 25
at the reduced price
of 117 francs

Unforgettable impressions

No passport necessary

*To register
just fill out
the questionnaire.*

*Especially recommended
as a Fall trip!*

“. . . the trip through the battlefield of Verdun conveys to the visitor the quintessence of the horror of modern warfare. It is not only the French who consider this a battlefield par excellence, on which the gigantic struggle between France and Germany was ultimately decided. No other battlefield of the West will make as deep an impression on anyone who sees this part of the front, with Fort Vaux and Fort Douamont in the center. If the entire war cost France 1,400,000 dead, almost one third of them were killed in that sector of Verdun comprising a few square kilometers, and the German losses were more than double. In that small sector, where perhaps more than 1,500,000 bled to death, there is no square centimeter not rutted by shells. Afterward one drives through the area of the Argonne and Somme battles, walks through the ruins of Reims, and returns via St. Mihiel and through the Priester Woods; all this is only a mere run-through of details which, at Verdun, combine to create an unbelievably impressive picture of horror and frightfulness . . .”

Everyone who inquires receives a printed guide listing the detailed itinerary for the trip and all necessary information. Trips depart every day. Comfortable seating is guaranteed to every participant.

600 kilometers by rail, second class. An entire day through the battlefields in a comfortable car, overnight stay, first-class meals, wine, coffee, tips, passport formalities and visas from Basel round trip, all included in the price of 117 Swiss francs.

- You leave Basel in the evening in an express train, second class.
- You are picked up at the Metz railway station and taken by car to the hotel.
- You stay overnight at a first-class hotel, service and tips included.
- You receive an ample breakfast in the morning.
- You leave Metz in a comfortable car and ride through the battlefield area of 1870-71 (Gravelotte).
- You have a guided tour of the highly interesting blockhouse in Etain (quarters of the Crown Prince and site of a large German headquarters).
- You ride through the destroyed villages in the fortress area of Vaux with its gigantic cemeteries holding hundreds of thousands of dead.
- You inspect, with a guide, the subterranean casemates of Fort Vaux.
- You visit the Ossuaire (boneyards) of Thiamont where the remains of the unidentified dead are constantly deposited.
- You drive along the Ravin de la Mort past the Carrières d'Haudromont at the foot of the Côte du Poivre to Verdun.
- You have lunch in the best hotel in Verdun, with wine and coffee, tips included.
- You have time after lunch to visit destroyed Verdun and Ville Martyre, and passing through the battlefields of 1870-71 you return to Gravelotte and Metz.
- You have dinner in your hotel in Metz with wine and coffee, tips included.
- You are taken to the station by car after dinner.
- You return to Basel on a night express second class.

Everything included in the price of 117 francs,
with ample meals at first-rate restaurants

A large number of letters of praise and appreciation from people who have taken the trip is available at our office.

But what does it mean, this picture of horror and frightfulness revealed by one day at Verdun—what does it mean, this most gruesome spectacle of bloody delirium through which the nations let themselves be dragged to no purpose whatsoever, compared with the enormity of this ad! Is the mission of the press not revealed here—first to lead mankind to the battlefields, and then the survivors?

- You receive a newspaper in the morning.
- You will read how comfortable survival is made for you.
- You will learn that 1,500,000 bled to death exactly at the spot where wine and coffee—and everything else—are included.
- You have the decided advantage over the martyrs and the dead of first-class meals in Ville Martyre and at the Ravin de la Mort.
- You ride to the battlefield in a comfortable car, but they got there only in cattle cars.
- You learn about all that is offered as compensation to you for their sufferings and for an experience whose purpose, sense, and cause you have been unable to grasp to this day.
- You understand that all this came about so that some day, when nothing was left of the glory except moral bankruptcy, at least a battlefield par excellence would still be available.
- You learn that there is still something new at the

battlefront, and that one can live better there now than before on the home front.

- You realize that what the competition can offer—the Argonne and Somme battles, the boneyards of Rheims and St. Mihiel—is a mere trifle compared with the first-class offering of the *Basler Nachrichten*. They will doubtless succeed to fatten their list of subscribers using the casualties of Verdun.
- You understand that the goal is to make the tourist trip pay, and the tourist trip was worth the World War.
- You receive an ample breakfast, even if Russia starves to death, as soon as you make up your mind to take in the battlefields of 1870-71 as well—all in one package.
- You still have time after lunch to see the remains of the unidentified dead brought in, and after completion of this program event you still have an appetite for dinner.
- You learn that the nations whose victim you are in war and in peace will even spare you passport formalities—no minor matter—if the trip goes to the battlefield and if you get your ticket through the newspaper by the deadline.
- You realize that these nations have criminal laws to protect the life and even the honor of these press scoundrels who make a mockery of death and a profit out of catastrophe, and who particularly recommend this side trip to hell as an autumn special.
- You will have difficulty not violating these laws, but afterward you will be expected to send a letter of appreciation and thanks to the *Basler Nachrichten*.
- You will have unforgettable impressions of a world in which there is no single square centimeter not rutted by shells and advertisements.
- And if, even then, you have not recognized that your

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very birth has brought you into a murderers' pit and that a mankind which profanes even the blood it shed is shot through and through with evil, and that there is no escaping it and no help—then the devil take you to a battlefield par excellence!

LETTERS