



Stonehenge

A very exciting case in England has been the fight for Stonehenge. The landlord of Amesbury Abbey, who, as a biographical sketch states, "owns 8000 acres including Stonehenge, wanted to keep the tourist off the premises, and from the last account has succeeded in his desire. Thus the tripper and the archaeologist alike are debarred free access to the mysterious pillars on Salisbury Plain," and the indignant Britisher at a distance sympathises with them and conjures up as their oppressor a wealthy American canner who wants to forget Chicago in the sanctity of an English gentleman's domain. But the landlord is merely Sir Edmund Autrobus who did such excellent work in the Suakin Expedition of twenty years ago, and whose only desire in keeping the public away from Stonehenge is to preserve, and to some extent to restore it. For the mysterious pillars which have braved the elements of Salisbury Plain so long are now paying the general penalty, all being much shaken and a few leaning so much out of the perpendicular as to be really dangerous to visitors. The accompanying composite picture gives a portrait of the owner of the land on which "Stonehenge" stands, and the famous monument as it now appears and as it appeared in the days of its Druidic majesty. When we say "Druidic" we require to be careful, as some of the best authorities declare that the whole story of Stonehenge being the work of the Druids is an exploded myth. As a matter of fact circles, or circles of standing stones, are found in various parts of Great Britain, in North Europe, and, though they are of most recent origin, in some parts of India. It is considered certain that in almost all cases they were set up to mark the circular boundary of a place of burial, and regarding those in England the exhumation of numerous cinerary urns indicates that they belong to the bronze age. Stonehenge, the most important of the group, is situated on Salisbury Plain, Wiltshire, and consists of two concentric circles enclosing two eclipses, the diameter of the space being 100 feet and the height of the stones varying from 13 to 28 feet. A less important "Stonehenge" is that of Stennis in Orkney, while groups of stones which doubtless were devoted to a like purpose are found in other places in the British Isles. Stonehenge is erroneously considered the most important of England's earliest landmarks, and it is a pity that the Britisher from abroad, who is on a pilgrimage to the land of his fathers, is encouraged so freely to magnify its bearing on the history of the race. Far more instructive chapters may be read in the storied stones of some of the old cathedrals and palaces of subsequent times, for here is so much less of majesty and so much more of established fact. At the most Stonehenge is only a very interesting relic of something which is too hazy to be properly described, while there are scores of other monuments which, though many of them are not so extensively known, are really those marking the genesis of British civilisation and progress.

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