

Idle Thoughts
Who Bares, Loses

O VANITY, thy name is man —
And woman, too, it's safe to say
See them on the beach at Cannes,
Flaunting an all-over tan.
(It's the same at St Tropez).
Wherever there's a beach or pool
For baring all in sun-kissed lands,
The bronze and brown and golden rule
Involves a costume minuscule
(Try a triangle on strands).

September's end, and they'll be back
To startle, or at least impress
("Good heavens! But you're nearly *black!*")
Their pallid friends who clearly lack
A healthy glow (well, more or less).
But when you think, it's surely odd
That they have tried with all their might,
Every goddess and her god,
Everywhere, unclothed, unshod,
Browning everything in sight.

For, really, what's it all about?
Home consumption is the aim —
But crisp-browned flesh must do without
Admiring glances; and no doubt,
Back in Cannes, it's just the same.
Who is it that they would impress?
Nobody in St Tropez —
United in undue undress,
Wearing nothing, more or less,

And equally as brown as they.
They're going brown, therefore, for us,
The pale ones of the human race —

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In which case, tell me, why the fuss?
When we join them on the bus,
We'll see no flesh except the face.
Wrap-up autumn, Wigan way —
And, indeed, in Penge and Stoke —
Quite conceals the overlay
Nursed in Nice and St Tropez:
Total tan's a hidden joke.

What, then, does the Bronzed One do?
Does he or she, denied, decide
That the time is overdue
To allow the world to view
Hidden assets, tanned backside?
For nothing, they've pulled out the stops —
Unless I'm missing some great farce:
To the butcher, for some chops:
“That beef last week was really tops —
And would you like to see my arse?”

O Vanity, thy name is Man,
Migrating home like glowing geese.
Fortunately, there's a ban
On showing what you showed in Cannes.
(Penge would say it's not quite Nice).
Returning home, one must not go
Upsetting priest or maiden aunt,
Whose understanding might be slow,
By baring things one shouldn't show.
(In Cannes, you can; in Carne* you can't).

**Carne, on the Cornish coast, South-east of Truro.*
