

LAMB LARK OR LAMPREY

This Letter was originally sent to The Times, but, due to an Editor's Small-Mindedness, the Public were never permitted to learn its Content. It is published here, in Professor Leary's remarkable Treatise, for the first Time. (Dr. C. R. A. Peeps)

Dear Sir,

It has come to my Attention that this World of ours, which had seemed to be on the Verge of utter Catastrophe, offers some Cause to hope that not all might be going to Wrack and Ruin. Naturally, I am aware that your Organ prefers to dwell on the Pungent and the Putrid, but I would beg your Leave to point to recent Developments that bode well for our perilously-perched Civilisation. A Topic that I have neither seen nor heard mentioned anywhere, least of all in your Purveyor of Crap and Commonness.

How could it have escaped your Notice that the Wheel of History might at long last be reversing? We may well be seeing the Dawn of a new Golden Age, the Like of which we have not experienced since the 14th Century. I refer, Sir, to the Return of the late, lamented Middle Ages.

The Parallels are simply too obvious to overlook. Indeed, this Writer hardly knows where to begin his Enunciation. But begin I shall, for I feel the Incumbence very keenly to enlighten your Readers.

Let us make a Beginning therefore with the vexious Subject of Revenue. The noble Art of Ruling, as is well known, requires the Support of Income. Specie is the Handmaid of Government, and without Gold no Sovereign or Seigneur can hope to indulge those rightful Whims that befit his Station. If he has not the Wherewithal how can he be expected to provide Demonstration of spectacular Consumption, of profligate Largesse, or megalomaniacal Erection? And how, pray tell, can the penuried Ruler conduct that most sacred of his Obligations, the Waging of unremitting War?

The Question of Money has proved troublesome throughout History, and the 14th Century was not excepted from this Vexation. That marvellous Age, however, did have an important Advantage over our own. At that Time it was understood that the different Classes each had distinct and particular Functions to perform. Without too much Reiteration we may summarise this Understanding as follows: the Rulers were responsible for Combat and Consumption, the Ruled for Toil and Taxes. Furthermore, since the Commoners had no Voice with which to trouble the judicious Deliberations of their Betters, Revenue could be raised according to the Lords' Necessity. The occasional Disturbance or Tumult from those Elements of the lower Orders not willing to provide their ordained Due was never more than a passing Nuisance. After

all, who gave, or for that Matter, gives, a Harlot's Fart what Peasants think?

What has changed since is that the Sons of the Soil have wormed their Way up from the Muck and have achieved a most untoward and unhappy Measure of Influence on the Affairs of State. In the Course of this Worming a Villain with oversized Testicles introduced the absurdly-named Notion of progressive Taxation. Progressive, Sir, in the Manner a Fungus progressively blights the Flesh between the Toes, that a Boil progresses to Bursting.

Happily, recent Years have seen a Reversal of this dreadful Progression. This Turn can probably be attributed to the long Premiership of the Lady who was said to be not for Turning. Through one of those delicious Ironies that History offers up from Time to Time this Female was herself a perfect Commoner. It matters not, she set the Ship of State on Course, full steam ahead to the Middle Ages. A careful Analysis of the Effects of recent Policy reveals a clear and most welcome Shifting; the Masses are taking on ever more of the fiscal Load. Regrettably, we have not yet seen the Burden returned in its Entirety to the lumpen Shoulders of the Proletariat. Nevertheless, the Trajectory so far is an excellent Augury for better Times to come.

In the 14th Century the Lords and their Ladies well understood the Importance of the aforementioned Consumption, Largesse and Erektion, those indispensable Signatures of Gentility. They gorged on veritable Menageries; furred, feathered and finned, Lamb, Lark or Lamprey, there was nothing the medieval Kitchen would not baste, boil or bake. They commissioned the Works of the most skilled Artisans to adorn their Halls (to the great Benefit of Posterity; could the Rabble now gawp gormlessly at these Marvels were it not for the Nobles' strenuous Pursuit of Beauty in all its Forms?). The Great of the Land supported large Retinues of loyal Sycophants, all ready, at the drop of a foppish Cap, to accompany their Lieges to the Hunt or Tournament or Orgy. And the Lieges spared no expense to outdo one another in building Palaces, Fortifications and Follies. Much of this, like the artistic Legacy mentioned above, remains extant, to the Wonder and Edification of our own ignorant Age.

Ah, how very missed are the Middle Ages. But, pause, and reflect. There has in recent Years been a steady Increase in Income Inequality, and with it a heartening Impulse on the Part of contemporary Gentry to aspire to the Greatness of olden Times. True, the Fashion for Palaces and Fortifications seems to have been replaced with a simple Superfluity of Square Footage (not Palaces so much as Barns writ large), but the Passion for Folly and Follies has made a splendid Revival. One excellent Example would be the Millenium Blob. I wrote you a Letter a few Years ago excoriating this Excrescence (“...resembling a strange and overscaled Muffin.”), but at the Time even I failed to notice the Silver-Lining evidenced in this Cumulus, nor did I appreciate its Significance as a Harbinger. The Mayor of London now conducts his Business in a large glass Egg; Oh, marvellous Folly! Even the Welsh have (for Reason unknown) been given what appears to be a Flying Carpet to shelter their druidical Rites from unrelenting Cardiff Rain. Oh,

Ynfydrwydd rhyfeddol! All these amusing Fantasies and Flippancies have been built on the Back of the taxpaying Classes, as is right and proper. We see here a clear Demonstration of 14th Century Principle.

Art has not gone begging. Ours is an Age of Great Collectors. To the Aristocrats of our Time Money is no Object. Unheard of Millions are currently being spent in the Procurement of Works new and old. One must admit that much of the New is of dubious Taste and Value. It is perhaps too much to expect that a Return to 14th Century Patterns of Consumption could be accompanied by a commensurate Measure of Discernment. The contemporary Equivalent of the *Très Riches Heures du Duc de Berry* appears to be the Antics of a Performer who displays the Cadavers of slaughtered Beasts, a Performance my Butcher can better any Day of the Week.

Regarding Banquets and Orgies I offer the Arrival of the Олигархы in Support of my Thesis. A rather uncouth Tribe certainly (not unlike the Germans of the 14th Century who were also notoriously deficient in Etiquette), but they are, nonetheless, always well-disposed to put their Roubles where their Mouths and Protuberances are fain to be.

Please, however, do not take my Observations regarding the State of contemporary Culture too much to Heart. I am of a liberal Disposition, and my Inclination is to turn a blind Eye to such Drollery. The important Crux, I believe, is the Revivification of the Instinct for Acquisition and Excess, a Cornerstone of Nobility.

Warfare has never ceased to be of Interest to our Species but only recently has the Concept of the pre-emptive Strike based on fallacious and specious Grounds been triumphantly restored. For this we must give Thanks to our wayward Cousins across the Water (those rough Colonists who repudiated Mother Britannia, at whose generous Tit they were suckled). Their ongoing Adventures in the Lands of the Heathens are the Stuff of Legend. (It is with some Pride that I note the Participation of my own Nation in these Endeavours.) And, like the Wars of the 14th Century, they show no Sign of reaching a precipitate Conclusion. This is Combat for Combat's Sake; Strife in the Name of Shock and Awe, Glory and Renown. Our Age has no Equivalent of the Joust or the Tournament, no Arena where the Brave and the truly Reckless may test their Mettle in a Fight to the Death. In the Pursuit of leathery Balls there are sometimes Cuts and occasional broken Bones, but where is the Cut and Thrust? Where are the Mutilations and Fountains of Warrior Blood?

But, hark, what is that Sound? That, Sir, is the martial Clang of Hammer on Steel, for Vulcan is beating Ploughshares into Swords. The Armourers' Trade is booming (my little *jeu de mots* is quite intended), and between the Booms we hear the distant Whine of Namby-Pambies in womanish Consternation. The Whinging and Weeping avails them not, because today we have Governments with Gunpowder in the Blood, Rulers who truly appreciate the Utility of Iron. Today, young Men, eager to demonstrate their Prowess, are joining great Hosts in the Struggle

against the Barbarians. On distant Fields of Battle, these well-armed and well-armoured modern Knights, their Standards and Gonfalons fluttering in the infidel Breeze, experience the Enthralment of spurious Slaughter.

The perspicacious Reader (I assume, Sir, that your Periodical has one or two of these rare Creatures) will by now be asking, But was not the 14th Century the Age of Plagues, a Period of flea-driven Extinctions?

Verily, and the glad Tiding is that we can see Indications that a new Reaper will soon appear to do some desperately needed Reaping. For it cannot be gainsaid that not only have the lower Classes grown exceedingly impudent, they have grown exceedingly.

Nil desperandum. We are promised Pandemics of Ebola and Avian Influenza that should cull large Numbers of the Peasants currently crowding our Planet. (There was, some Years back, the Appearance of a wasting Disease, but its Reliance on Sodomy as a Vector limited its Ability to be a truly efficacious Means of Population Control.) Of course, said Infections may well carry off one or two unfortunate Members of the Elites, but, as in the Middle Ages, superior Intelligence and Circumstance, allied with illustrious Physicians and Quarantine from the Masses, should considerably mitigate any Risk pertaining to those Elements of Society that are worth preserving. Minor Losses will be a small Sacrifice for the Wise and Better-Bred to pay for the Elimination of Swathes of useless, and, frankly, malodorous Plebians.

Thus, Sir, you will see that my Thesis is solidly founded on four Pillars, viz.: the Decrease in onerous Duties on the *Crème de la Crème*; the Rise of frivolous Consumption and Collecting by the Same; the Revival of Glory and Awesomeness in pointless Fighting; and the imminent Arrival of an Antidote to Overpopulation. I feel confident, therefore, in asserting that the present Century, like the effulgent 14th, will be marked in the Annals as a Time never to be forgotten.

To you, Sir, who like to dabble in Dolefulness and Dysphoria, I say, rejoice! For gilded Times are at hand and the Proud *shall* inherit the Earth.

Yours, most sincerely,

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