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Kingcraft & Priestcraft

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In 1971 ;

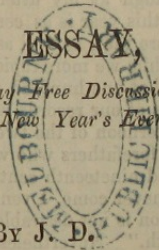
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OR, A REVIEW OF A CURIOUS OLD MS. WRITTEN BY MY GREAT-GRANDFATHER.

AN ESSAY,

Delivered before the Sunday Free Discussion Society, at the Masonic Hall, on New Year's Evening, 1871,

By J. D.



PUBLISHED BY REQUEST.

MELBOURNE:

ROBERT BELL, PRINTER, LITTLE COLLINS STREET EAST.

1871.

PRICE SIXPENCE.

KINGCRAFT AND PRIESTCRAFT.

DEAR READER,

You will please suppose yourself to be your great-grandchild living a hundred years hence, as the audience was requested to imagine themselves, when the following prospective trifle was read. A friendly debate, as is the custom every Sunday evening, followed. Most of the numerous hearers appeared to coincide with the views of the author; many of whom, after the meeting, expressing a desire that the essay should appear in its present form.

J. D.

THIS New Year, 1971, will not be the perfect year, the Millennial year, certainly not. You laugh at my uttering so absurd a statement, but that we shall progress this year is as certain as that we progressed last year, and the year before that, as well as in the previous centuries. Although these slowly, while we more rapidly, that is to say, comparatively, for it is just possible that one hundred years hence some public speaker will criticise those parts of our records where we dub ourselves the privileged citizens of the afternoon of the twentieth century, as we smile now at the boastings of our forefathers who were for ever talking of the afternoon of the enlightened nineteenth century. No, this is not the perfect year. Perfection will never come, I venture to assert. Nay, I also venture to hope. Perfection is not desirable—ever knowing and to know is the "heaven upon earth." Nevertheless, without ostentation, we may gratefully say that some of the glorious dreams of the last century, have become the precious realities of the present, as some of the joyful visions we are now revelling in, will probably be also realised by our children or children's children. This present year of great favour is nothing like the perfect year. Hymns of loving praise be chorused by the glad nations to the Infinite, ever revealing great mysterious First Cause, whereby his unerring prophet (Science) is daily teaching men and women how little they yet know—how much more they have to learn.

I only respectfully argue that we have made immense strides since the year 1871, and shall do so by a very simple process. Last week I was looking over a much worn old manuscript, written by my great-grandfather, John, who what he would call "flourished" at that time. This manuscript, and a photographic likeness of himself and wife, a few old books, in a funny looking old box of the period, was all he bequeathed to his son Jack, who carefully preserved it for his son, who has left the same to me, now an elderly man past 54 years; and this photograph astonishes me, for the portrait is so like, that if my great-grandfather was to rise again and stand alongside of me, you would't know one from the other.

I shall not tire you by quoting the tenth part of this old manuscript,

seems to be a lot of rough notes of certain essays the old gentleman had delivered at an Eclectic Association, and at a sort of Free Discussion Society, the latter holding its sittings on Sunday evenings in a little hall, which he dignified by the name of a hall, and proudly records as capable of holding some three hundred people. What would we think of the speculation of erecting a thing holding only three hundred? why his great-grandson is here talking to an assemblage of five thousand happy men and women, and yet this is the smallest hall in this mighty city, the rest being engaged, it being holiday time, for balls, concerts, and the drama. But I digress. This curious manuscript contains every now and then onslaughts on a number of abuses the old man calls "Crafts"—Kingcraft, Priestcraft, Lawcraft, Doctorcraft, etc. He seems to have a down, as he calls it, upon these crafts, more particularly Kingcraft, and still more particularly, Priestcraft; so you must take his statements for what they are worth, reminding you, however, that his seemingly spiteful remarks are, for the most part, verified by the historical records of the time, now to be seen in our new and large Public Library, containing half a million of choice books. I shall just refer to a few of those portions of the old gentleman's manuscript on the "Crafts" King and Priest, and show by comparison how much the moral policemen of these times have made them move on to the ancient tune of "Old opinions, rags and tatters, get ye gone! get ye gone!" And

First. As to Kingcraft, why nearly all the nations were then governed—or rather *misgoverned*—by a system of hereditary monarchy, and mostly by despotic kings, who did just as they pleased with their subjects; yes, subjects—that means, my good free sisters and brothers, that these people were subjected, to the laws, and often the mere whims of a fellow with a bauble (called a crown) on his thick head, and who said that he was anointed with holy oil from on high, and held his sacred appointment by divine right, as his father had before him, and as his eldest son would after him, according to God's law, from King David in Holy Writ; and even when the most vital question of all, war, was imminent, their subjects, who were to be mowed down like grass, had not the slightest voice in the matter, though their weeping wives were to be made widows and their sweet children orphans, while these bloody-minded wholesale murderers bellowed out, "glory!" It must be added, however, that many of the victims were fools enough to cry out "glory!" too—A shocking instance of this blood mania, was exemplified in a most un-holy war began in the year 1870, between two of the then reputed most enlightened nations—France and Prussia—to be sure France proclaimed a Republic, immediately their coward Emperor, appropriately dubbed "Napoleon the Little" by the patriots of the day, took refuge at the camp of his supposed enemy, the King of Prussia, but who really was his fellow-conspirator for maintaining the scandalous robbery of civil and religious liberty—Kingcraft—aided by the Catholic priests of France, and the Protestant ones of Germany. The Republicans of those times were hanged, and drawn, and quartered, if they were unsuccessful in their righteous efforts for freedom; and as a sample of what Priestcraft was in France in those war days, my great-grandfather quotes from the French correspondent of a newspaper published in the then called England, named the *Pall Mall Gazette*—and certainly not a Radical newspaper:

"I had not seen him (the priest and friend of the correspondent), for nearly a month, and he had *thinned* so much in that time that I scarcely recognised him, his chief alarm was about the interests of his church. 'Ah!' said he, heaving a deep sigh, and with a most desponding look, 'Republicanism in France, means Republicanism in Spain and Italy, and the total severance of our Church from the State, and six or seven years of trouble and tribulation for us priests. I do not know but it would be better for the invading army to besiege Paris, and by force restore the fallen dynasty, than that such a calamity should happen to us priests.'"

Now, there was a scoundrel! Sooner see his countrymen's blood flow like water, and wrong and desolation triumph even at the expense of patriotism and honour, than see one priestly privilege abrogated! There was one country named England then (but now changed to Albion, to distinguish it from the neighbouring Republican nations, Ireland, Scotland and Wales), which was then governed by a very respectable elderly lady, Queen Victoria, but she governed by her ministers and parliament chosen by household suffrage, or something of that sort, though what the house, mere bricks and mortar, had to do with brains, honour, and patriotism, and education, my great-grandfather don't explain, it is one of those riddles of 1871, which men of this period can only guess at. Well, this pretty good woman reigned constitutionally, as it was termed, that is, the power behind the throne was greater than the throne itself. She was a mere costly toy and died immensely rich, for her revenues were so scandalously enormous, and she didn't spend much or give much, though millions of her people were very poor, while every son and daughter of hers when born had large sums of money—annual pension money—awarded to them, and when they grew up, and married (almost always to foreigners, by the way) had extra pensions, though they did little but mischief, filched out of the pockets of the people, many of whom, as I said before were nearly destitute. Won't you believe my great-grandfather? Don't! Go to the records of that semi-barbarous age.

Ah! how different now; Albion, almost the only kingdom in the civilized world has upon the throne that excellent democrat, deist, and philanthropist, Albert the Third, who presides at most of the progressive meetings of his country, and gives so liberally out of his somewhat limited income, an income joyfully voted by the unanimous voice. The good man's son, who expects to be Albert the Fourth, must be more cautious, for when his father dies he may be mistaken—already there are breakers ahead, and the Albionites of this present don't believe even in their heirs apparent sowing their wild oats too long.

But let that pass; we have little to do with it. The Republican United States of Australia, were actually in 1871 mere colonies of this old England, as many other now great nations also were, not that we went to war to gain our independence. Albion gladly gave it us, to save expenses, as you know. I say, how different now! Nearly the only monarch in the civilized world, and he one of the most scientific progressive men in our deistical ranks, long may he reign, good Albert the Third! We mere colonists in 1871, now are free citizens of the glorious capital of the Republican United States of Australia. Isn't that progress? As for war, I needn't tell you, that if any dispute should arise, which, by the by, has not arisen for fifty years, the grand con-

sideration of the world would arbitrate in the matter, and their judgment be final, for the first nation foolishly refusing to agree with the sentence of their chosen representatives would be swept from the map of the Globe, the art of war having reached to such a height, that war would be annihilation; and better a few obstinate fools die, than a world utterly perish.

Then, as to Priestcraft, although the priests of all religions were the same with my great-grandfather, he seems to confine himself to those ancient Israelite books, and the several beliefs in those days. The Roman Catholics denounced all Protestants as damnable heretics, and the Protestants agreed in declaring that the Catholics were the abomination of abominations, and His Holiness the Pope, as he was then called, was actually anti-Christ, and the Scarlet W., whatever that meant, some bad word I should imagine, commencing with that letter; possibly Witch, though it could hardly be that, as the Pope was a man. I give it up. Well, then, the Protestants, a very undefinable designation, were divided into a legion of sects, almost all damning one another, and only agreeing in declaring that strait was the gate and narrow was the way that leadeth unto life, and that strait gate and narrow way was, for the most part, confined to themselves, The Elect Precious!

Like people, like priests, the latter led the former by their noses, both Catholic and Protestant calling them their shepherds and their dupes the sheep, and sheepish enough they were, writes the author of the old manuscript, thus to be swindled both spiritually and temporally, for it appears that most nations had what they called their national religions, every dissenter being robbed accordingly. Nay, in these very United States, at that time, as I said before, subject colonies, the queer old folks paid a pretty large sum to all the parsons of every sect, probably on the agreed understanding that there was little difference between the tweedledums, and tweedledees; and then, how they did abuse the unbelievers in the idolatory of the ancient Israelite book, they were termed infidels, scoffers, blasphemers, Godless, worse than heathens, children of the Devil, and a whole host of other insulting names, nay, they were often classified in the same category with fornicators, adulterers, thieves, and drunkards, and the author of the old manuscript declares that neither in old England, his native country, or in his adopted Australia, dare any one of these infidels, however intelligent or honourable, ask a single question of any parson, after his rigmarole of an hour on a Sunday in what said parson dubbed a consecrated place; or, if he had, he would have been handed over to the police, and fined forty shillings. Yet, with all the preaching of these men, their Ebenezer buildings were surrounded by neighborhoods abounding with the filthiest vices and the most odious crimes, the prisons were full, and the good priests (and there were some) stood aglaze at the failure of the religious teaching of eighteen centuries, and the bad priests, and there were a good many of them, laughed in their sleeves at the credulity of those who paid them so well. I said in their sleeves, and this was literally so, for the curious manuscript is here and there daubed over with pictures of the customs of some of the priests of those stupid old days. I will describe one—a parson would walk as if he was in a consumption, up a lot of steps into a round box, dressed in what was called a surplice, sometimes black, a sort of large petticoat,

only it covered him all over, with immense sleeves, and a white bit of linen, split in two clapped round his throat: directly he got into this box, and miserably shutting his eyes and as miserably lifting up his hands, would clap them over his face, and stand in this semi-comic attitude for some five minutes, what for my great-grandfather does not explain, but I suppose to arrange his thoughts; for the people in their seats, called pews, would do much about the same as each entered—but that couldn't have been to arrange their thoughts, because they only came to listen. As in a former case (he word beginning with a W.), I give it up. Well, then, this half-mad gentleman, with the all-over petticoat on, would frown awful at the assembly, and give out a hymn, verses of which are pretty freely distributed in this curious manuscript. I merely quote one:

With holy fear and humble song
The dreadful God our souls adore;
Reverence and awe becomes the tongue
That speaks the terrors of his power.

Far in the deep, where darkness dwells,
The land of horror and despair,
Justice has built a dismal hell,
And laid his stores of vengeance there.

[Eternal plagues and heavy chains,
Tormenting racks, and fiery coals,
And darts, t' inflict immortal pains,
Dyed in the blood of damned souls.

There Satan, the first sinner, lies,
And roars, and bites his iron bands;
In vain the rebel strives to rise,
Crush'd with the weight of both thy hands.]

These guilty ghosts of Adam's race
Shriek out, and howl beneath thy rod!
Once they could scorn a Saviour's grace,
But they incens'd a dreadful God.

Tremble, my soul, and kiss the Son,
Sinner, obey thy Saviour's call;
Else your damnation hastens on,
And hell gapes wide to wait your fall.

And the people would sing these blasphemous verses standing up. What semi-savages must they have been in 1871! Then the man in the all-over petticoat would pray, and to give you a glimpse of the inconsistency of their prayers, he would commence by saying, "O Lord, we thank thee that these worms," yes, he called the people worms, "these worms are spared another week in the land of the living, while others have been called to thy judgment bar." And then he would end by saying "O Lord we praise thee, that shortly we shall leave this vale of tears and and bathe our weary souls in seas of heavenly rest." Very strange, wasn't it, praise for life yet pray for death. Then he would give out another hymn, commencing with "Lord what a wretched land is this, that yields us no supply," although most of those present, would seem to look pretty well, and the parson, especially as if he was very well supplied indeed. Then he would preach from the words "in hell he lifted up his eyes, being in torment;" not the parson, but a gentleman named Dives, who had so lifted up his eyes for above eighteen hundred

years. Then the congregation would disperse, after the benediction was given, or rather paid for; not a man, as the manuscript said before, daring to speak up against such horrid ugly lies. Indeed, the old gentleman writes, that little place holding only three hundred, was the only hall the advancing party of the period had, in order to utter anything like a free thought in, and even that place had only been rented a few weeks before. It is rather strange that a gentleman of the name of—, of whom my great-grandfather writes very affectionately, along with the names of others, that this gentleman, Mr.—, should forcibly and unmistakably prove, that all this about hell and Dives was a parable, indicating the end of the old Jew dispensation and the beginning of the new, and yet this gentleman, so logical and so clear, seems somehow to have been misapprehended, for the manuscript says that the Christians wouldn't have of him, and the infidels didn't want him. Hence these three hundred were of the advancing party, and I am happy to say that my great-grandfather was one of them, for his great-grandson named after him, J. D., wouldn't own him on this glorious New Year's Day, 1971. Another bad practice of these priests of 1871 was their interfering with the legislation of their countries. In old England, it appears, there was a House of Lords, among whom was a lot of old men with all-over white petticoats on, who blasphemously stiled themselves Right Reverend Fathers in God, and who were always trying to stop progress temporarily or spiritually, and even in this great capital when it was only a colony, though there were only two bishops, the others stiled themselves Reverends and Very Reverends, even against their own text book, and some of them, mostly of the sect of Presbyterians, tried to interfere with the legitimate business and amusements of the colonists, even to the stopping of the telegraph, and the railways, and the gardens, and the other harmless pleasures of the people, on the first day of the week. I wonder if the small remnant of these folk who originally came from Scotland, some of them hopping and jumping with naked legs and thighs, and indecently short clothes on, in public, at holiday time; I wonder if this same remnant would now try to stay the air conveyances floating along over the nations so gracefully, or hinder the weekly European Mail from coming in, or shut our magnificent Opera-house to-night? No, sirs, they know better than that in 1971. But the worst phase of all in this priestcraft was their having in their hands the teaching of the young children. Indeed that was the secret of their success. You should see the numerous quotations from some of their Catechisms, just one, from a national catechism:—

Question.—What is your name? Answer.—N. or M.

Question.—Who gave you this name? Answer.—My Godfathers and Godmothers in my Baptism; wherein I was made a member of Christ, the child of God, and an inheritor of the kingdom of heaven.

Question.—What did your Godfathers and Godmothers then for you? Answer.—They did promise and vow three things in my name. First, that I should renounce the devil and all his works, the pomps and vanity of this wicked world, and all the sinful lusts of the flesh. Secondly, that I should believe all the Articles of the Christian Faith. And, thirdly, that I should keep God's holy will and commandments, and walk in the same all the days of my life. . . . My duty towards

my neighbour is to honour and obey the Queen, and all that are put in authority under her. To submit myself to all my governors, teachers, spiritual pastors and masters. To order myself lowly and reverently to all my betters.

We could hardly expect that the poor little things could burst any of their fetters under such teaching as this. How different our Sunday,

our teachings, and our priests as a whole are I needn't tell you—but just a minute. Now, the teachers of religion are dressed like other people, and no one can set himself up as a professional teacher without obtaining an educational certificate, and is compelled by act of parliament to discuss on equal terms with any gentleman who chooses to challenge him, provided he also has an educational certificate. Of course there are very few theological debates, as we are principally divided into Catholics and Deists, both parties having made up their minds that there can be no half-way house between. Neither do the Catholics call the Deists and Deists, and indeed their government is far different from what it was in 1871, for, although they now have a Pope who decides for them in matters of faith, it is only a spiritual authority; and even this Pope is not elected by a few cardinals as of yore, but chosen by the votes of seventieths of the members of his Church, a vast improvement. God bless us both. And then, of course, no teacher, Catholic or Protestant, can have anything to do with the educational training of our young ones; most of our schoolmasters are ourselves,—parents, as we conceive being the best schoolmasters; and as for payment, the parsons and their congregations settle that matter entirely among themselves. There is no interference with our laws. Our first day of the week as well as the last day Saturday (the wage people being paid on Wednesdays) are kept as the law allows, some reading in the Public Library, some wandering in the gardens or parks or museums, some enjoying themselves in the air conveyances, some in the vastly improved boats on the sea, or attending at the Opera House, or the Theatre, or some like us, talking with each other; while others who can afford it, taking trips at this holiday-time in the weekly steamers to Europe, and coming back, after staying a week in the different countries of their forefathers, in about three weeks time; no parson interfering, scarcely one of them try. Why, it was only the other Sunday, you know, that (Mr. C. great-grandson of a Reverend C., in 1871), preached a good moral sermon in the morning, and in the evening danced with our dear President's wife at the ball given in aid of the building fund of our new Scientific Institute, while one of the Catholic teachers on the same evening went with the Vice-President of our States, who is a deist, to the Opera-house. What a fuss the 1871 folks would have made. Then, you know, to-night, another Catholic bishop, with his wife, starts for Albion, for Catholic priests may marry now, and most of them very wisely avail themselves of the privilege, and yet the cry is still love, and light, and life, more love, more light, more life, and science is revealing more almost daily. But I have done. Hark to the grand sounds of music just passing this Hall, with the 20,000 happy people returning from the great city of Ballarat, how full of enjoyment they look, with no fear of hell on their countenances because they have been breathing God's fresh air on a Sunday! Oh! listen to the gladsome strains, they are marching to our patriotic song—"The fetters are broken, the chains are all gone." See, there is not one man under the influence of strong drink in all that 20,000. God bless us all? He is blessing us all, by the revelations of his scientific Apostles, ever revealing more love, more life, more light. Oh! ghosts of 1871, and especially the small advancing party of three hundred, see a sight like this, and hear the voices of the millions of the world shouting, "More love! more life! more light! Love, and life, and light!"