

A SHEAF OF EPIGRAMS

By J. AQUILINA

MADAME SOPHRONIA

MADAME Sophronia had ambitious plans
For Dick, her lazy, good-for nothing son;
But well she knew, poor boy, he had no chance;
If 'twas a race he simply could not run.

Madame Sophronia, a hard-headed woman,
Got over her anxiety and her fear;
Her son must be a great man all the same,
His one big chance — a political career.

Providence provides for the least of us:
For the-good-for-nothing and for those that fear
The hazards of the brain and competition
It provides a Political Career.

Dare politicians question Providence, alas!
If such a one there is he is an ass.

POSTSCRIPTUM

If though a politician you have brains,
Worked hard to earn your status and took pains,
You are just an exception to the rule,
So if you take offence you are a fool.

O TEMPORA!

THE poets of Arcady sang of kine and verdant trees,
Of gods and goddesses, jars of honey, buzzing bees;
The poets of today, limping with palsy of the knees,
Have changed the tune of the song, its measures and degrees.
O far-away Age of Pan piping melodies on the leas,
We who belong to a different Time-Club pay different fees.
Keep your swans for the poets of Arcady, we keep the geese:
We prefer their eggs and cackle, a Reality of bugs and fleas.

AN EPITAPH ON TWO LADIES

HERE sleeps a widow, woman without blame,
 So poor she had no money for a grave;
 Died in a Poor-house with unsullied name,
 A cheerful beggar always kind and brave.
 Here, just beside her lie the rotten bones
 Of Madame Pompadour, known for her malice;
 A titled lady who attracted drones
 And married one of them in her old palace.
 Titles and wealth distinguish us at birth —
 Two superfluities spurned by Mother Earth.

EUREKA

'WHAT is Truth?' asked Pontius Pilate,
 Nigh two thousand years ago.
 'Twas a question with one answer:
 'Pontius Pilate, we don't know!'
 'Can it be the twinge of Conscience?'
 And he washed his trembling hands.
 None replied till Freud made answer:
 'Truth and Conscience are but glands.'
 That's the Eureka of our time —
 There's no Truth and there's no Crime.

TODAY'S OBSESSIONS

MONEY and Trade Unions are the argument of the day:
 The two main obsessions, with little more to say;
 Money and Trade Unions all the time, politics and strikes
 Sum up an angry civilization of likes and dislikes.
 If Shelley, poor boy, had lived in our age of wrongs
 He might have planned for us the best Trade Union songs.

VERY DEAR

WHAT can as dear as a man's health be
 If not, perhaps, his doctor's fee?

EPITAPH ON A ZEALOT

HERE lie the bones of one whose fiery zeal
 Drove weaker clay, lone sinners, to despair;
 Who thought a holy cause turned black to white,
 And fought the Devil by means far from fair.

'How dare you mention fairness when you fight
 No less an enemy than the Lord of Hell?'
 Cried Holy Man who hounded sins and sinners.
 Where is *he* now? — That's what I cannot tell!

TIME

(*On board S. S. Bančinu*)

NEW faces but the same old sea
 On the Gozo ship:
 Scared sea-gulls flying outside time
 On life's short trip;
 Unageing sea, but ageing crew
 Is not the same:
 Time deals and shuffles cheating cards —
 New stakes, old game.

HOPE

HOPE never dies; uphill she climbs
 The steepest mountain,
 Haunted by dreams of distant chimes,
 And sparkling fountains.
 She feeds Man's heart by night and day,
 Spurning to glory
 Until a Devil bars the way
 And ends her story.

POLITICIANS

JEALOUS of God, the Devil, an aping Magician,
 Created his own likeness in a politician.

DE MORTUIS

WHEN he died (embarrassingly sudden) a formal oration,
 As usual, a colourful balloon of verbal inflation,
 Pathetically delivered, 'midst tears and sighs, honoured his name.
 But it didn't take the orator long to forget and put the blame
 On the dear departed, for a number of sins and abuses:
 Laugh it off, friend: Hypocrites' praises are worse than their bruises.

EPITAPH ON AZZECCAGARBUGLI

HE was a lawyer — one word-twister less,
 Could not help cheating, so he hated chess;
 Cheated not less his neighbour in distress,
 Conceal his faults — be generous like the Press.

EPITAPH

HERE lie the last remains of a sensitive man,
 Removed by cruel death, God's ally, out of sight,
 Who hated being shouted at, not shouting at others:
 He had his good reason: He was always right!

AN AFTER DINNER SPEECH

THE dinner was good, but the speech,
 Was the rarest rotten peach.
 'Never such dessert in all my life'
 Said cheery Charlie to his wife.

HOMO INSIPIENS

CREATIVE God made man out of Earth's slime,
 And stamped him with His image; so we read
 In Holy Writ, the truest scroll of time,
 Then man stamped with his image God and Creed.

INTERVIEWS

SILLY Miss Venus sat for an exam, with interview and passed:
 Good marks for good looks.
 Clever Miss Plaingal sat for the same exam, with interview and failed:
 She burned her books.

THE SCHOLAR

TWELVE letters of the alphabet strung after his name:
 'A fine scholar!' I thought, but when he spoke, what shame!

THE SPRING

I found the Spring dried up; I cried, went back like a chidden
 boy,
 But now the Spring flows with water again and I cry for joy.

MYSTERY

I looked into the water and saw a face I had never seen before,
 The face of Leah or Delilah — a Saint or a Whore.

FIN DE SIÈCLE

HOMO SAPIENS leaves the stage in a hurry handing over to
 Mother Night with her bats,
 Making his final bow to the new masters of the globe, the
 progeny of Rats.

FATHER RORE

FATHER RORE, proud of his voice,
 Turns his sermons into noise
 That fills the aisles with strange commotion
 And empties hearts of all devotions.