

ART AND NORMAN LINDSAY.

By Professor Coleman Phillipson.

We have now had an opportunity of inspecting the exhibited works of Mr. Norman Lindsay; and, for my part, I fully agree with the decision of the committee who rejected a number of his drawings as being unfit for a public exhibition. One day we are told by an admirer of this work that Mr. Lindsay is greater than Titian and Velasquez. Another day we are informed by some one else that those people who do not love his work and do not discern in it great art are lacking in intelligence and understanding. But the imbecility of the one pronouncement and the arrogance of the other only produce laughter in those of us who have studied the development of great art, who have enquired into the function and province of the artist, who have contemplated true works of art, who have been cheered, uplifted, and illuminated by their revelation.

For aught I know, Norman Lindsay may be in himself an angel of light, purity, and goodness; and I do not presume to judge him and his character from that point of view. What I do emphasize is that many of the works shown, especially among the black-and-white drawings, are vile productions, betraying gross exaggeration, if not grotesque distortions, of human anatomy, a perverted idea of sex, an entirely false rendering of the relationship between men and women, a total misrepresentation of human life, activities, adventures, and ideals. If I am told that these pictures are not intended to depict normal human life, but only certain abnormal sections of it experienced by the artist, then I reply that I deplore the artist's environment, and hold that he has no right, on any grounds, social, ethical, or aesthetic, to prostitute his gifts by descending, for his subjects, to the garbage of the gutter, the gross debaucheries of the degenerate, and the repulsive aberrations of the perverted. All great artists have recognised restrictions in regard both to subject matter and treatment. They have realized the difference between freedom of expression and licentiousness. They have recognised that precision of line and aptness of colour do not, in themselves, suffice to constitute a work of art; what is important also is the totality of effect, the unity of impression, the intrinsic intention, purpose, significance, and spirit of the whole; not only is technical perspective essential, but also life's perspective.

The world and mankind offer countless subjects for representation. Art is a revelation of the beautiful. Beautiful to the beholder are sea and mountain, sunset and sunrise, hill and dale, tree and flower, stream and waterfall, bird and beast, and thousands of other things in Nature; and artistic treatment brings out still more their beauty and sublimity. Why, therefore, choose continually a dung-hill to wallow in? There are noble men and women, clean-minded and honourable, good and true, loyal and self-controlled, yearning for knowledge and light. Why, then, portray continually the ugly lust and sensuality, indeed the diseased sexuality, of a pandemonium of creatures who would not be described as men and women, even by the most debased pimp and procurer? The nude human body has for a thousand years been treated and can always be treated with exquisite tenderness and reverence; and great artists, through all time, are also in agreement as to the elimination of certain things from their pictures. Why, therefore, treat the nude now with satiric brutality, now with zardonic mockery; and why make it assume postures which even the most abandoned man or woman would be ashamed to assume in real life?

What is True Art?

I do not suggest that the artist should turn moralist; I do not ask that his work should be judged or envisaged from the point of view of didacticism or puritanism. But I do insist that the claim of art for art's sake leads inevitably to self-stultification and absurdity. Art is for life's sake; that is the only justification for its existence. The art of Michael Angelo and Titian, of Raphael and Correggio, of Botticelli and Velasquez, of Rembrandt and Durer, of Turner and Corot, and of a thousand other luminous souls, ministers to life. True art implies fervent praise, glorifying the work of God and the noble work of man. True art reveals the beautiful, it exalts, delights, refreshes, and reinvigorates the observer. It increases his sympathies, fosters his love, and imparts to him a yearning for the infinite. True art is, in a sense, the finest essence of life, the intense and profound realization of it, so profound that the act of apprehending it, which is a wonderful discovery in a spiritual adventure, is accompanied by a thrill of ecstasy and exultation. True art is an intimate and sacred communication between the artist and the observer; it is also a magic bridge between the real and the ideal. True art conducts us into that house beautiful, where we may gain a little peace, where we may rest our tired souls amid our daily toil and tumult, where we may throw off for a brief moment our importunate limitations. Indeed, where there is no beauty, where there is no sense and revelation of the beautiful, there the people will surely perish; and the beautiful is, after all, intimately related to the true and the good:—“Three sisters, friends to man that cannot be sundered”

Everything we see, everything we contemplate, everything we come in contact with inevitably affects us for better or for worse; it clouds our vision or it vitalizes it; it stimulates us to a freer and larger life, or it subjugates us to an ignoble existence. Let me, therefore, if it is not an impertinence on my part, appeal to Norman Lindsay, whose mastery of line and splendour of colour I marvel at, to turn his attention to nobler subjects and things of good report, subjects more worthy of his great skill and power, so that by creating truly beautiful works, he may give us a little gladness and delight during our brief hour in this troubled pilgrimage.

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KEEPING AUSTRALIA WHITE.

Australia's Legal Rights.

Effect of League of Nations.

By Edgar L. Stevens.

Australia believes in the policy of white Australia; believes that it is justifiable and necessary for the wellbeing of her country; believes that it is justifiable in the eyes of the world. But Australia also recognises that it is necessary for the protection of such policy to realize it by filling the continent with white people. The possibility that we may have to defend such policy even with the force of arms, is also foreseen. But have we realized that we may have to defend and justify the policy in the eyes of the world, in the minds of the nations, before, it may be, the International Court of Justice?

The former possibilities have from time in time been dwelt upon. To the latter little attention has been given. It has been touched on at times, particularly when the Peace Treaty was being negotiated. But to our position with regard to the legal standing of the policy in the international sense, public attention is seldom directed. Australia is a member of the League of Nations. It is provided by the Covenant that if any matter arise between members which is likely to lead to war, they agree to submit the dispute to the Council. There is, however, an exception to this paragraph, that it matters “which by international law are solely within the jurisdiction of one party member.” the Council has no power to adjudicate.

Effect of Covenant.

It may be easily imagined how a dispute might arise between Australia and some other member of the League with regard to the white Australia policy, and of a kind likely to lead to war. Suppose such nation referred the matter to the Council under the provision mentioned. Australia would probably claim that it, being a matter of immigration, came within the exception. It would then be for the Council to adjudicate on the question as to whether or not the policy was a matter which by international law was solely within domestic jurisdiction of Australia. In such circumstances, and by consent, the matter might be referred to the International Court of Justice for decision on this point, as was done in the recent dispute between Great Britain and France. In any case, Australia would have to prove, at least to the Council, that, by international law, the policy was one of domestic jurisdiction. If she failed to do that, the Council would have power to adjudicate on the policy itself, the power to determine whether we legally were entitled to debar, not only undesirable individuals, but the members of a nation as a class, from entry into Australia. If such a state of affairs arises, as it may conceivably arise at any time, Australia will be called before a world Court of Justice, whether it be the Council or the International Court, to justify her claims.

An Interesting Case.

In view of these facts reference to one of the most important cases dealt with by the International Court is interesting. France, in Tunis, claimed the right to conscript British subjects. Great Britain objected, and finally appealed to the Council to deal with the dispute. France objected that it was a matter solely within her domestic jurisdiction. By consent, the Court was asked to decide this question for the Council. The case proceeded before the Court, as any case on a point of law would proceed before our own Courts. Eminent counsel for both parties ably argued the point at issue. All the facts bearing on the case were brought forward by each party, and having read the facts, and heard the arguments, the Court gave its decision.

Imagine Australia in a similar position, as, we repeat, she may be at any time, and in all probability will be in the

far future, and the need is realized of our being able to prove that, by international law, the policy is a matter solely within domestic jurisdiction. If we fail in this, we will have to be prepared to go further, and justify the policy under whatever the circumstances which may arise.

Australia's Legal Rights.

It is comforting to note, in the argument addressed to the Court, a number of passages which would go to support what we would be bound to claim—that the policy is one of local concern, and within our rights as a nation. For instance, Sir Douglas Hogg, one of the counsel for Great Britain, says that the exception was intended to cover such matters as immigration and tariff. Again he cites as an illustration coming within the exception, the case of a State prohibiting the entrance of the subjects of another nation, because it would be injurious to the former. The French counsel agreed with this contention, and it is worthy of note that Mr. Hughes, then Prime Minister, fought hard at the making of the Treaty to protect Australia's national policy. But while immigration, in the general sense, is exempted, it may be that aspects of it will be held to be outside the terms of the Covenant. They probably will be so where they are intermingled with treaty rights and obligations. It is possible that a set of facts may arise, where it is exceedingly doubtful whether the matter is excepted, and while it might be, in such a case, that the policy would only be incidental to the main dispute, yet it would be drawn in for adjudication.

The possibilities, be they near or remote, should not be overlooked. The fact of the League, however, does not make them more dangerous; in fact, it makes them less so. We ought to rejoice that if they do come about, there is a judicial tribunal before which, in the calm of reasoned judgment, such questions may be settled rather than that they should be tried among the roar of guns and flow of blood.

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ANGLO-EGYPTIAN SUDAN.

Prefers British Rule.

Mr. C. T. Madigan, M.A., who recently contributed to The Register some interesting articles on Anglo-Egyptian Sudan, has sent us a copy of The Sudan Times of June 18, and drawn special attention to the following article, as showing the attitude of leading Sudanese to the British Government. “You will note,” he says, “that the son of the Mahdi leads this expression of loyalty to the present Government and the British rulers, a remarkable tribute to the British.”

A representative meeting was held on Tuesday, June 10, at the house of Said Abd El Rahman El Mahdi, son of the Mahdi, at Omdurman, to discuss the present situation and the steps which should be taken by the Sudanese in connection with the proposed Anglo-Egyptian negotiations. The guests included the Grand Mufti, the President of the Board of Ulama, official and non-official Sheikhs, notables and chief merchants of Omdurman, Khartoum, and Khartoum north. The meeting was opened by a few words of welcome by Said Abd El Rahman El Mahdi, who declared that all were free to discuss the question laid before them. The Grand Mufti then made a lengthy speech, acclaiming the present Government, and referring to the condition of the country before and during the present regime, hoping that no change whatever will take place in the Government of the country.

“Sheikh Ismail El Azhari, Inspector of the Mohammedan Law Courts, followed in the same trend of thought. He concluded his speech by saying that the new schemes, in addition to what had already been done, were but clear evidences of the guiding and benevolent spirit actuating the present Government in its wise administration. Nothing in the past could be compared with the present. Sheikh Ahmed Ibrahim, Omda of Tuti Island, Khalifa Ahmed El Imam, Khalifa of the Daib, approved what had been said, and Sheikh Abbas Rahmet Allah, member of the Municipal Council, a leading Jaali, said that the country was prepared to decide its own future not by mere words, but, if necessary, by more than words.

“A short discussion followed, after which it was decided that a declaration should be addressed to the Governor-General of the Sudan expressing their loyalty to the present Government and to their British rulers. This was drafted and signed by all present. Many of the leading merchants and notables who were not able to attend the meeting expressed their desire to sign the declaration.”

The Register.

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POETRY AND PHILOSOPHY.

The conflict between the poet and the philosopher is perennial. Materialist philosophy is for ever clutching at the soaring spirit of poetry, seeking to hold it down to earth, to extinguish its glowing vision with a cold douche of reason, and to challenge its transcendental interpretation of the universe. Now and again the poet retaliates, as when Keats asks,

Do not all things fly
At the mere touch of cold philosophy?
There was a splendid rainbow once in heaven:
You know her wool, her texture, she is given
In the dull catalogue of common things:
Philosophy would clip an angel's wing!

Prof. A. C. Pigou, in the June Contemporary, enters the lists in behalf of the philosophers. Tennyson, in his “In Memoriam,” expresses a fear lest “divine Philosophy” should

Push beyond her mark, and be
Procurer to the lords of hell.

Prof. Pigou is, perhaps, a little afraid that poetry may perform a similar office for the lords of heaven. A professor of political economy who has turned from “The Riddle of the Tariff” to study “Robert Browning as a Religious Teacher,” he essays to put poetry in its proper place. The trouble with poetry is that it refuses to stay put. It is always racing ahead of the plodding logician, when, like a modest troubadour, it should be bringing up the rear. It is incessantly and inconsiderately butting into the calculations of the philosopher with such outrageous, because unprov-

able, assertions as “God's in his heaven, all's right with the world.” But, then, Browning is notoriously an outrageous fellow. His serene confidence is enough to annoy any professor, just as his incurable wholesomeness, his determination to hitch his wagon to a star, are calculated to earn the contempt of some of the “moderns” of verse—poet-puddlers in the mire.

It must not be supposed that Prof. Pigou is hostile to Browning, or to any of the poets. Far from it. They are very admirable and useful persons within their own sphere, but they must keep to that sphere. They must not presume to trespass upon the provinces of philosophy, or to pronounce upon such questions as immortality and the materialistic or spiritualistic nature of the universe. Their emotional temperaments unfit them for such a task. They may be conceded the leadership in the pursuit of the beautiful and the good, but they must take second place to the philosopher in the definition of the true. The poet “must walk humbly behind men better trained than he to wield the uninspired but potent engines of logical analysis.” The vision, the direct perception, of the poet has its place with logical inference in the discovery of truth, but it is a minor place; “the spirit of poetry, her wings in passionate feeling, is not a fit manipulator of the logical machine.” In the quest of the real, “the contribution we may look for from poetic vision is very small indeed.” In the very definition of the real and unreal, however, the poets are at issue with the philosophers. They have

Obstinate questionings
Of sense and outward things,
Falling from us, vanishings;
Blank misgivings of a creature
Moving about in worlds not realized.

Intuitive “Intimations of Immortality” are of scant use to the philosopher. He denies the claim of the poet or the mystic to the possession of a special sense of divination—the claim so arrogantly made by that perverse Browning—