

# SPACEMEN IN THE MIDDLE AGES

By W. R. DRAKE

WE tend to believe that until 1453, when the capture of Constantinople by the Turks expelled the Greek scholars westwards to usher in the glorious Renaissance, Europe lived in a vacuum, where nothing happened; we are astonished to learn that in fact this period was fermented by an intellectual unrest comparable with our own unsettled century. A single spiritual dynamism drove Peter the Hermit to set in motion two centuries of Crusades for the Holy Sepulchre, a quixotic enterprise, which inspired and taxed men more than our attempt to land on the moon. In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries feudal society was breaking down, monastic orders were founded, masons built cathedrals incorporating in the stonework arcane wisdom like those builders of the Pyramids, alchemists in their quest for the Philosopher's Stone transmuting metals to gold appear to have stumbled on some of the secrets of our own nuclear physics, famous universities were founded, the troubadours were distilling love into life and religion. The Church waged desperate conflict for survival against heresy, witchcraft and its own depravities.

Cosmology still followed Ptolemy's system of epicycles and concentric spheres, poetically exemplified in Dante's *Divine Comedy*, wherein the Poet describes the Moon peopled by Spirits of inconstancy, Mercury, ambition, Venus, earthly love, the Sun, prudence, Mars, fortitude, Jupiter, justice, Saturn, temperance, the stars, souls, and the celestial vault with Angels, beyond which transcending space and time exists the Heaven of

Light and Love, wherein the Spirit of God Himself abides.

This mediaeval conception of the universe amuses our scientific minds until suddenly we are struck by its affinity with the teachings alleged by our modern Spacemen, and we wonder. We are surprised to learn that at this time Siger of Brabant taught the periodically recurring cycle of events, everything happening over and over again, universe after universe, that ancient theory of Eternal Recurrence, propounded lately by Gurdjieff and Ouspensky. Astrology had persisted since the Roman Empire, the Arabs brought back to Europe the teachings of the Greeks; for centuries the Christian Church had accepted Plato's assertion that the visible world was only an imperfect copy of the transcendent universe. In the 13th century this became superseded by the Aristotelian doctrine that the universe around us is real and should be studied. Such a vital conception stimulated thinkers like Albertus Magnus, Robert Grossteste and Roger Bacon to defy the Church and to lay the foundations for an empirical natural science; fanciful astrology thus developed into practical astronomy, which swung to arid materialism and until our own last thrilling decade depopulated the universe to a sterile waste confining life to a tiny Earth.

## Zealous recorders

Troubadours from gay Provence sang *Chansons de Geste*, of courtly Knights and Ladies fair; Chaucer told of the Canterbury Pilgrims; later Sir Thomas Malory resurrected King Arthur, Merlin and the Round Table; all revealing a magical world, where reality mingled with phantasy in

glorious romance. Actual history was left to wandering scholars like Gervase of Tilbury, Matthew of Paris, William of Newbury, Giraldus Cambrensis, and Walter Map, who chronicled not only the turbulent strife between Emperor and Pope but also recorded phenomena in the heavens with a zeal worthy of classical Julius Obsequens and our inimitable Charles Fort; research into these mediaeval chronicles startlingly illumines the revelations of our own flying saucer students.

## A curious incident

Gervase of Tilbury, a scholarly adventurer, saw service under our Henry II, wandered through Europe and found employment under Emperor Otto IV, for whose delection about A.D. 1211 he wrote his *Otia Imperialia* or *Imperial Trifles*, an assembly of marvels, folklore and table-talk of the age. Today this book is extremely rare, no copy is believed to exist in England. There are only two or three in Europe. For the following translation, possibly the first in English, the present writer had to borrow the volume from the University Library at Hanover. In Book I, Chapter XIII, "De Mari," Gervase is writing about "The Sea"; time and place are not specifically mentioned but the subsequent anecdote alleging the teleportation of a knife across the Irish Sea, infers that the incident the chronicler now describes occurred at the beginning of the thirteenth century at Bristol, "an opulent city filled with most wealthy citizens." In his curious mediaeval Latin Gervase narrates as follows:

"There are some, who say that the land is in the centre, in the middle of the circumference, with

each part equally distant at the extremities, surrounded by sea and encompassed according to the commandments of the Third Day: "He gathered together the waters under the heavens unto one place and there appeared dry land."

"There befell in our own times a demonstration from the seas above us, a new revelation appearing from aloft, quite wonderful. It was truly on the observance of a feast day in Greater Britain, after the people had heard solemn Mass in the church, the crowd were dispersing here and there, at that particular time it was misty because of many clouds and somewhat obscure. Then appeared the anchor of a ship, which after circling around seven times became fastened below a mound of stones with the rope stretched out hanging in the air. The people broke into clamour, and as some of them were talking of this, they saw the rope move as though someone was striving to free the anchor. However, despite much effort spent, it did not give way, then a voice was heard in the dense air like the shout of sailors to recall the anchor, which had been thrown and stretched out. With no delay, deceived by the promise of the task, they sent one of their own sailors, who climbed down in the way our seamen do by clinging to the anchor rope and descending changing hand over hand. And when he had already released the anchor, he was seized by the bystanders and pushed about from hand to hand as though he were shipwrecked at sea. Suffocated by the mist of our moist atmosphere he expired. But then the sailors above took counsel on their shipwrecked comrade, after the space of one hour, they cut off the anchor rope and leaving the anchor sailed away. In memory of this happening, after careful consideration, from the anchor was wrought that iron grille for the doors of the basilica, which stand open for the public to look at."

Gervase of Tilbury does not express astonishment at these sailors from the skies, he relates

the incident in terse journalistic style as though reporting an actual occurrence resisting the temptation to embellish his story with phantasy or to guess details obscured by the mist. He states that the sailor, rather the Space-man, was of human proportions, spoke an articulate language, behaved with skill but succumbed to our Earth's dense atmosphere; the rope and metal anchor were apparently similar to those in use on Earth. The implied competence of the Spacemen may not be very impressive, but this somewhat endears them to us and perhaps supports the stories told by those who allege contact with them today that the Spacepeople are basically much like ourselves.

#### More anecdotes

This remarkable incident recalls the account of Agobard, Archbishop of Lyons, who wrote in *De Grandine et Tonitrua* how in 840 A.D. he found the mob in Lyons lynching three men and a woman accused of landing from a cloudship from the aerial region of Magonia. The great German philologist, Jacob Grimm, about 1820 described a ship from the clouds, and Montanus, an eighteenth century writer on German folklore, told of wizards flying in the clouds, who were shot down. The belief in Beings from the skies who surveyed our Earth persisted in human consciousness throughout all the Middle Ages.

The Benedictine monk, Matthew of Paris, writing in the Monastery of St. Albans until his death in 1259 chronicled in his *Historica Anglorum* about sixty intriguing phenomena, emulated by William of Newburgh in Yorkshire, who wrote *Historia Anglicana* dying in 1208, and by *Nugis Curialium*, a miscellany of Walter Map, compiler of *De anecdotes* about the reign of Henry II.

Translations of their works, unobtainable in English, reveal much fascinating data, which would appear to suggest a survey by Extraterrestrials throughout the Middle Ages.

9th April, 1077 A.D. "Now in this year on Palm Sunday about six o'clock in a sky quite serene an immense star appeared near the sun." (Matthew of Paris.)

1110 A.D. "Now in this year a comet appeared in an unusual manner for rushing from the east it ascended to the heavens, it was seen to go not forward but backwards." (Matthew of Paris.)

1120 A.D. "Now in this year on the 13th of May a celestial light came over the Sepulchre of Our Lord." (Matthew of Paris.)

1189 A.D. "In the terrible silence a surpassing and greatly astonishing prodigy was seen about this time in England by many who up to the present time bear witness to those who did not see it. Above the public road which continued to London, a village by no means wretched called Dunstaple, by chance, so to speak, an hour after noon, those who looked up at the sky saw in the serene vault of heaven the striking shape of the Emblem of Our Lord with a dazzling milk-like whiteness and the conjoined form of a man crucified, which is painted in Church to the memory of the Passion of Our Lord and the devotion of the Faithful." (William of Newburgh.)

1200 A.D. "It was said a warning letter sent to Earth from God in Heaven, which men prophesied, hung in the lofty air for three days and nights, and everyone fell on the ground praying that this prodigy would forbode good to this world. And descending on Jerusalem it hung above the altar of St. Simon in Golgotha, where Jesus Christ was crucified." (Matthew of Paris.)

1227 A.D. "About this time when Master Oliver was preaching (for the Crusades) in Germany there appeared to all the people a Crucifix manifesting in the air about which sealed letters were sent under seal by several prelates to the University of Paris and read aloud to the public" (Matthew of Paris.)

(These crucifixes in the air in 1189 A.D. and 1227 A.D. recall the famous cross in the sky near

Rome in 312 A.D., which inspired Constantine to support the Christians and to establish Christianity as the Roman State religion. Had it not been for that phenomenon, possibly a spaceship, Christianity might not have triumphed!)

1228 A.D. "At that time the news was dispersed far and wide about Joseph Cartaphilus, whom Ananias baptised and who saw Christ crucified." (Matthew of Paris.)

1236 A.D. "About this time in the month of May along the borders of England and Wales there appeared portents in the sky of armed soldiers, superbly although hostilely congregated. This is seen to be incredible to all who hear this, unless the same thing is read in the beginning of Maccabees. The identical prodigy was seen in the heavens assembled in Ireland, of which apparition we are taught by a certain close relative of the Duke of Gloucester." (Matthew of Paris.)

We are infinitely obliged to this old Latin history of Matthew of Paris for drawing our attention to the Apocrypha to the Old Testament, the Second Book of Maccabees, Chapter V, verses 1 to 3 dealing with 170 B.C.

"About the same time Antiochus prepared his second voyage into Egypt.

"And then it happened, through all the city for the space of almost forty days, there were seen horsemen running in the air, in cloth of gold, and armed with lances running like a band of soldiers.

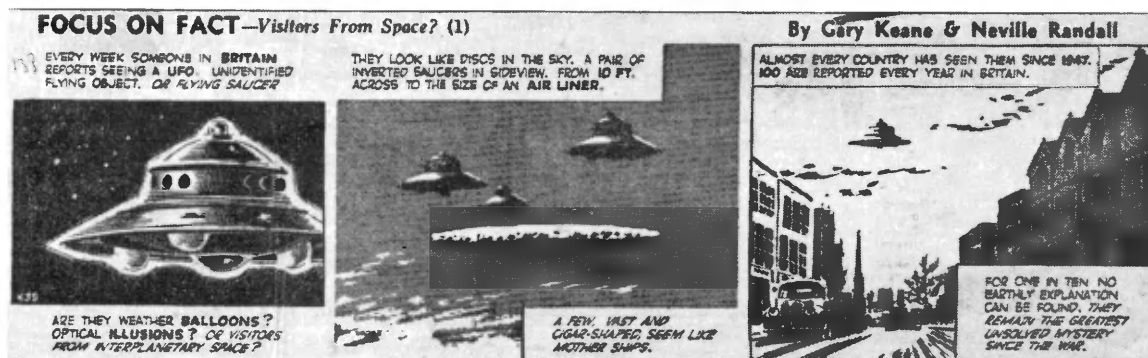
"And troops of horsemen in array encountering and running one against another, with shaking of shields, and multitude of pikes, and drawing of swords, and casting of darts, and glittering of golden ornaments and harness of all sorts.

"Whereof every man prayed that apparition might turn to good."

(When we recall, that the Red Indians thought of a railway-engine as an iron horse, we can understand the primitive Jews remembering the manoeuvres of spaceships as a cavalry battle.)

Similar portents in the skies are reported by Josephus to have preceded the destruction of Jerusalem about 70 A.D. by the Romans, and similar signs may be looked for before the Coming of Christ, according to St. Matthew XXIV, v.29, St. Luke XXI, v.25 and Revelations VI, v.12.

The student of mediaeval literature is amazed by the parallel between the wonders of the Middle Ages and the flying saucer phenomena abounding today. Surely a vast and marvellous insight into extra-terrestrial influence on Earth is evoked by those magic chronicles of the Middle Ages?



This was the first instalment of the strip cartoon which appeared on February 10 in the London "Daily Sketch" and is reproduced by kind permission of the Editor. It serves as another indication that the subject is at last being taken seriously. The cartoons attracted a number of letters admitting to sightings which had previously been withheld through fear of ridicule. One or two readers went further and stated that when they had seen a flying saucer they thought they must be going mad! Such is the power of propaganda.