

## *The Betty Letters*

*My Dear Grandchild,*

*I have read that a team of British engineers wants to drive a steam-driven, motor car more than 127 miles per hour in order to surpass the land-speed record, set in 1906 by Fred Marriot in Florida when he drove his Stanley Steamer at that speed. The attempt will prove nothing even if it is successful other than to establish a new, world land record for a steam-driven motor car. The technology for this new motor car is not even new although there are some parts of the technology, being used, that inculcate modern heating methods. A steam-driven motor car has little practical application in today's world; and, the success of the mission – if it is a success – will prove very little. It is, one could state, an exercise in mental calisthenics. That is all. Meanwhile, in some parts of the world, people are starving for lack of food. In the Middle East, people continue killing each other. I cannot understand the reason that certain people would spend tons of money and expend many hours of their time in trying to break a world, land-speed record for a steam-driven, motor vehicle, an exercise of utter futility, while there is so much that needs to be done in order to help mankind. In Afghanistan and in many parts of the Middle East, in the name of Allah, people are willing to commit suicide by wearing a bomb, strapped to their body, in order to kill themselves as well as others in their immediate vicinity for the sake of proving something that is so nebulous that it makes no sense at all when carefully analysed. Monotheism is more than 3,500 years old and, as a mental crutch, it has never succeeded, comprehensively. It is the successor to pantheism, which was not better, actually. Religion has been the legal reason for centuries for man to kill his neighbour. As I have said in the past in previous letters, man is the only animal on this earth that kills because he enjoys killing. Other animals kill for food, basically. They do not possess the propensity to hate their own kind to the extent of trying to exterminate their fellows. Surely, trying to find a solution to this problem is much more important than breaking a land-speed record, using an antiquated, steam-driven motor vehicle.*

*It is a fact that one of the last episodes in a civilisation's rise is when architecture becomes the most-important art form. History proves this out. Take, for instance, the Coliseum (also spelt Colosseum) of Rome. In the words of Lord Byron:*

*'While stands the Coliseum, Rome shall stand;  
When falls the Coliseum, Rome shall fall;  
And when Rome falls — the World.'*

*The Coliseum is an amphitheatre and it is considered one of the greatest buildings from antiquity. Construction started in about 72 AD by the Roman Emperor, Vespasian. It was considered a great feat of architecture and engineering for various reasons, including its scale, the fact that it was free-standing, the grandeur of its decoration, and the way in which its layout facilitated both the production of extravagant spectacles and the necessary crowd control of the large numbers of people, attending the events. The monument was constructed with the skilful use of a combination of materials, including concrete, brick, tufa, travertine, and marble. Modern-day experts believe that the Coliseum was designed to hold 50,000 spectators. They came to watch religious plays as well as the legendary scenes of hand-to-hand combat*

*between gladiators, men fighting wild animals, chariot races, and mock naval battles.*

*There was, also, another reason for the construction of the Coliseum – To pacify the citizens of Rome by appealing to their basal needs: Killings for the sake of blood lust. Tens of thousands of people were slaughtered in this monument to the technology of the day. Gladiators would fight each other to the death. Criminals were executed in the Coliseum in a variety of ways: Mauled to death by animals; forced to fight professional gladiators to the death, knowing only too well that they had little chance of winning the contest; used as target practice by archers, and so on. The Rome of 72 AD was pagan, unrestrained by behavior. In today's world, such behavior would never be condoned. The Coliseum was an amazing building, nevertheless, and it is by today's standards, also. But it had a horrible reason for its existence, too. It is one of the symbols of Rome, today, but that may be because most people do not appreciate how it came into being and the tremendous cost of its construction. Many of the spectators came to watch executions by way of crucifixion, executions by hanging felons on crosses, involving the binding or nailing the felon to an upright cross until death deprived him or her of life. Bets were taken on how long a felon could live after being nailed to an upright cross. The gory sight delighted many of the good citizens of Rome of that period. Today, of course, good Christians wear a cross around their necks in order to advertise that they are Christians, not realising, one must suppose, that the cross was a method of executing people in days of yore. How many people, centuries later, will wear the symbol of an electric chair, around their necks, as a sign of something? What about wearing a hangman's noose around one's neck as a sign of something?*

*Man is a strange life-form, to be sure, because while, on one hand, he makes the claim of being the most intelligent of all animals, on land or at sea, he acts in a manner that is completely inconsistent with this claim. He kills because he enjoys killing in the same way that the citizens of Rome of 72 AD and before that year enjoyed the spectacle of viewing killing for the sake of watching such an atrocity. Man tries to build a motor car, driven by steam, for no other reason than to go faster than his predecessor in a steam-driven motor vehicle. He builds monuments to his great achievements and, then, negates his good works by evil deeds. He creates weapons that are able to kill more people, more expediently than ever before so that, it is claimed, it will deter his enemies from attacking him. What happened on December 7, 1941, when Japan attacked Pearl Harbour? The military might of the United States did not deter Japan from attacking the peaceful American territory of Hawaii.*

*Yes, man, the self-acclaimed, most-intelligent of all life-forms on this planet, has yet to learn how to live with his fellows in peace; and to live in humility, knowing that his accomplishments, to date, are as great as his ability to cure some of the most-common of afflictions, such as the annual winter cold. But his vast intelligence prompts him to spend millions of dollars on trivial pursuits of absolute fancy.*

*Do I talk too much?*

*Yes? Then I stop.*

*Talk to you, next week.*

*Chief Lady*

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