FRANK RUSSELL’S DIVERSE WRITING AND SPEAKING CAREER: A BIBLIOGRAPHICAL GUIDE

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Frank Russell, 2nd Earl Russell (1865–1931), was a man of rational thought and social conscience who, released from his early imbroglios, embarked on a controversial career, throwing his name and political weight behind a range of desperate but often successful causes. This bibliographical guide acknowledges his labours, illustrates his diversity and demonstrates why Frank Russell deserves to be taken seriously.

In August 1891, Frank Russell, then aged twenty-six and bracing himself for his first battle in the divorce court, wrote to George Santayana that he was by nature “a lotus eater”.1 Thankfully, for those like myself who have revelled in his diverse career, Frank put aside this natural instinct to such an extent that one reviewer of his memoirs published some 32 years later observed that Frank, “Yachtsman, traveller, motor and aeroplane pioneer, barrister, City man, electrical engineer, and withal three times married”, had “no need to draw on his memory of others to fill 348 pages of reminiscences.”2

The bibliography which follows reflects his diversity. It goes beyond even the occupations listed above to include the work Frank did for the numerous causes he put his name to by dint of his inherited position. The list was compiled initially to inform my writing of his biography.3 Subsequently, it became clear that it had additional value as a means of exhibiting to others the unusual (if not unique) range of subjects Frank tackled. It is difficult to think of any other figure from

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1 Frank Russell to George Santayana, 10 Aug. 1891, Santayana Collection, Harry Ransom Centre, U. of Texas, Austin.
2 “Peer’s Many Sides”, Evening Telegraph, 2 Mar. 1923.
3 Bertrand’s Brother: the Marriages, Morals and Misdemeanours of Frank, 2nd Earl Russell (Stroud: Amberley Publishing, 2021). The biography’s references include a lengthy secondary bibliography (pp. 337–46). [See the review, this issue, pp. 86–94.—Ed.]
the time who could have written or spoken with authority on such diverse subjects as women’s suffrage, religious dogma, the domestic uses of electricity, divorce reform, automobilism, wireless equipment, prison reform, and birth control, all with equal conviction. Further, it is hoped that it will provide a tool to assist Bertrand Russell scholars; particularly in relation to moral and political matters where it is clear that many of the issues that concerned Bertrand also concerned his brother. In certain cases—conscription, for example—Frank’s interventions would have been of direct practical use to him.

The bibliography is organised into four sections. Section A details Frank’s books with some major reviews. B comprises articles, a couple of interviews, details of the weekly motoring column he wrote for The Graphic during 1908 and his numerous letters to the editor. C lists Frank’s speeches; and D, the major archives where Frank Russell material can be found.

There are a number of observations about the bibliography that I would like to make. The first is that for practical purposes section C does not contain everything Frank ever said in the House of Lords, but only his major speeches and those considered significant to scholars of either Frank or Bertrand. It will also be noted that there is very little from the period before Frank’s incarceration for “technical bigamy” in July 1901: only thirteen entries. This reflects the extent of his early output. In his young adult life, Frank’s focus was elsewhere. Though he had taken up his seat in the Lords in 1887 and had used his vote in favour of the Irish Home Rule Bill in 1893, he really only entered the political arena in earnest in 1894; first as a local councillor and then as a member of the London County Council. Most of his speeches from this time deal with political issues connected with this work. One stands out as a taste of things to come. In a speech at the Newington Reform Club on 5 June 1895 entitled “What Is Morality?”, Frank demonstrated his capacity for independent thought by stating that morality was nothing more than “the course of conduct which tends to the ultimate happiness of the individual and of the society”,

4 See in C, “Military Service Bill”, House of Lords debate, 17 Apr. 1918: Bertrand was then 45 years old, bringing him within the age bracket for conscription.

5 In business, with his adventures in the world of electrical engineering; but arguably, much of his energy between 1890 and 1901 was taken up with his disastrous marriage to Mabel Edith Scott and his attempts to extricate himself from it, the influence of which is explored in depth in Bertrand’s Brother.
that Christianity was outdated, and that divorce by consent and nudity in art were both perfectly moral. Further, he showed “a healthy contempt” for the monastic life which he dismissed as “an attempt to escape moral damage by shirking the battle of life”. “All this,” commented the South London Press, “was very unorthodox.” It was also not what one might have expected from one’s representative on the LCC but, as the bibliography shows, it was certainly what we could come to expect from Frank.

The Frank that emerged from prison was “ready to support lost causes, to back the underdog, and to challenge the established order”: to throw his name and political weight behind a range of desperate causes. Injustice is found everywhere, and Frank’s prison experience appears to have sharpened his already acute sense of it to spur him into action. Though the subject matter of his subsequent writings and speeches was diverse, in essence the vast majority can be viewed as protests against inequality and restrictions to personal freedom. In a letter to The New Statesman in 1916, found in Section B2, entitled “A National Dishonour”, Frank stated: “The object of political action in a free State should be to restrain as little as possible the freedom of the individual to live his own life, think his own thoughts, and spend his own energies in the way that seems most desirable to him.” It was written just as the first conscription legislation was working its way through parliament. Like Bertrand, Frank opposed the Bill. His letter continued:

This principle is often lost sight of nowadays, and those who are in power frequently seem to welcome coercion for its own sake because it saves them the trouble of thought. Thought is slow, painful and laborious; coercion is easy, and appears to superficial observers to give the results desired. But the spirit which argues in this way is a spirit of brute force, of violence, and of unreason: it is not the spirit of a free people going rejoicingly and proudly on its way.

Across the spectrum of his causes Frank applied this precept, never taking the easy path over that which he deemed morally correct. By way of example, the right to freedom from ill health resulting from

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multiple unwanted pregnancies was an argument he used in favour of disseminating birth control literature to working-class mothers. In the 1927 article “Why Not Birth Control?”, published in *John Bull*, he effectively combined a mother’s right to contraception with rational argument against the church’s objection to it, writing, “I find it difficult to listen with patience to the suggestion that this result”—the ruining of a mother’s health so that she cannot adequately feed her child and the child’s lifelong suffering from the conditions of its birth—“is in accordance with the Christian religion. It is against humanity, it is against medical science and common-sense, it is against the happiness and well-being of the race; and if indeed it be Christian then Christianity itself is against these things.”

Even in the privileged world of automobilism he found what he considered unjust restrictions. His first protest was against vehicle registration: “There is no reason why a gentleman’s private carriage should be disfigured by a label suitable for an omnibus or a hackney carriage”, he wrote, “or why a private individual should be subjected to the annoyance of being ticketed and labelled wherever he goes. The reason alleged for this request is to enable offending cars to be identified with less trouble to the police…. It has not yet been proved that the police...

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are in fact unable to trace motor car offenders.”¹⁰ Today, we accept registration as a given. With so many cars on the road Frank’s further argument that all motorists were “well known by sight” is unimaginable, but Frank considered that numberplates branded all automobilists “potential lawbreakers”. His point was this: The erosion of freedom becomes normal: care must be taken in selecting which freedoms are impinged upon.¹¹

Frank was as persuasive in speech as in writing. In debate he held his own among the various specialists he interacted with. He introduced into the House of Lords four Bills to reform the divorce laws between 1902 and 1908. Collectively, they demonstrate his growing strength as an orator, whether or not the “bellicose little Lord Chancellor” did pronounce them an “outrage” on the House and an “insult” to their lordships personally.¹² In an impassioned plea, Frank challenged: “Is there no one in this House who feels that this state of things needs a remedy? Are your Lordships satisfied, because in your individual cases the law may not bear hardly upon you, to leave such a blot upon the social legislation of this country?”¹³ This method of appealing to their lordships’ better natures he would reemploy against the inhuman treatment of c.o’s in 1916, when he asked:

Is it desirable to treat a class of the community in this way, no matter how strongly you disagree with their opinions? I agree that all persons of strong opinions are a nuisance. It is very tiresome when people will not think the same as you do, and still more tiresome when they will not do what you tell them to do. But if they will not … do not treat them in a way in which any noble Lord individually would be ashamed to treat a fellow creature.¹⁴

There are many more examples that could be given to illustrate Frank’s position as a man of rational thought and social conscience, or as an engineer or proponent of science. He has not received due

¹⁰ Memoranda to Legislative Committee, etc., Automobile Club Journal, 14 May 1903, p. 518.
¹¹ Ironically, it was Frank’s subsequent very easily identified numberplate—A1—that saw him repeatedly brought up on charges of speeding and singled him out as a “hooligan driver”.
¹² Leeds Mercury, 2 May 1902.
credit for his labours. Of his own achievements, he tended to be somewhat modest, only crediting himself with “a certain capacity for speech and writing” as against the greater erudition of Lionel Johnson or the “rare quality” of Bertrand’s thought.\(^{15}\) Perhaps the time is right for a judicious selection of Frank’s writing and speeches that would give him the exposure he deserves. I hope this short guide and the bibliography it precedes stimulate sufficient interest to warrant it.

Digitized reprints are noted in the linked book titles.

### A. BOOKS


“Lionel Johnson”. *The Yorkshire Post*, 26 Nov. 1919, p. 4. (The review ignores the editing and suggests Lionel would have been a happier boy had he been more like the others.)


“Peer’s Many Sides. Earl Russell’s Story of

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\(^{15}\) Frank describes his Russell inheritance in *Life*, pp. 8–9, and his admiration of Lionel Johnson on p. 89 and in the introduction to *Some Winchester Letters of Lionel Johnson*. Numerous of Frank’s letters to Bertrand demonstrate his admiration for his brother’s talents; this particular reference can be found in *Auto.*, 2: 68–9.

\(^{16}\) The index omits many references to Bertrand. Altogether they are on pp. 5, 9, 11, 17, 18, 19–20, 25, 28, 30, 31, 34, 38, 43, 44, 46 (Granny’s poem), 48, 51, 82, 83, 85, 101, 129, 330, 338, 343.
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B. ARTICLES, COLUMNS, LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

**Br. Articles**


“Wireless Notes”. *The New Statesman* 31,


18 Ibid., p. 755.
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no. 803 (15 Sept. 1928): 708, 710.

B2. Letters to the Editor

“East London”. The Leaflet, n.s. no. 10 (Mar. 1885): 121.
Memoranda to Legislative Committee of the Automobile Club concerning registration of motorcars prepared by Earl Russell, H. H. Deasy and Mr. Robert Todd, Automobile Club Journal 5, no. 56 (14 May 1903): 517–18.
[On Bertrand Russell’s “Mr. Asquith’s Pronouncement”]. Women’s Franchise 1 (28 May 1908): 587 (Bertrand being on p. 579).


**B3. Interviews**


**C. SPEECHES**

**C1. Major Speeches and Other Contributions in the House of Lords**


“Trial of Earl Russell”. Brief summary and order that proceedings be printed. *Hansard* 97 (18 July 1901): col. 773. For the proceedings, see under D. Parliamentary Archives.


“Metropolitan Police Commission Bill”. Move to resolve “That in the opinion of this House the proposed inquiry is of too limited a character to serve any useful purpose”. *Hansard* 159 (19 June 1906): cols. 7–16.

“Education (England and Wales) Bill”. Response to right rev. Prelate that the proposed removal of clause 7 from this bill was intended to surreptitiously make religious instruction compulsory. *Hansard* 164 (8 Nov. 1906): cols. 655–719.

“Trade Disputes Bill”. Earl Russell proposed an amendment to clause 2. *Hansard* 167 (12 Dec. 1906): cols. 276–93. Earl Russell proposed an amendment to clause 2 to limit the number of strikers engaged in a picket to twenty.

“Divorce in Ireland”. Earl Russell rose to call attention to Private Bills for divorce in Ireland: and to move that a Return be made to this House of all Private Bills presented during the last five years for effecting divorces. *Hansard* 178 (16 July 1907): cols. 490–4.


“The House of Lords Reconstitution Bill”. Earl Russell questioned whether this was not an attempt to distract attention from the Parliament Bill. Hansard 8 (17 May 1911): cols. 489–574.

“Shooting Escaping Convicts”. Move to resolve “That in the opinion of this House the infliction of the penalty of death or wounding upon convicts who are seeking to escape should no longer be authorised by law.” Hansard 12 (25 June 1912): cols. 190–4.

“Income Tax on Married Women’s Property”. Earl Russell rose to call attention to the imprisonment of Mr. Mark Wilks at the instance of the Treasury for non-payment of his wife’s Income Tax, and to move to resolve “That in the opinion of this House the present state of the law which renders a man liable to indefinite terms of imprisonment for matters over which he is by Statute deprived of any control is undesirable, and should be amended.” Hansard 12 (14 Oct. 1912): cols. 823–34.


“Immunity of Trade Unions”. HL debate on whether the concessions of the 1906 Act were going to continue to be supported by the House. Hansard 13 (22 Jan. 1913): cols. 410–12.

“Poor Law Amendment Bill”. A Bill to amend the Administration of the Poor Law as to married women was presented by the Earl Russell; read 1º, and to be printed (No. 108). Hansard 14 (9 July 1913): col. 802.

“Voluntary Mental Treatment Bill”. Earl Russell rose to call attention to difficulties in early treatment of mental cases, and to present a Bill. Bill read 1º, and to be printed (No. 187). Hansard 17 (22 July 1914): cols. 89–92.

“Streatley and Goring Bridge Bill”. Move to resolve “That in the opinion of this House new means of communication should be in the hands of local authorities and available for the free use of the public, and that it is undesirable to proceed with a Bill giving fresh powers for the levying of tolls by a private corporation.” Hansard 18 (4 May 1915): cols. 887–92.

“Military Prosecutions of Journalists”. Earl Russell rose to ask His Majesty’s Government in what circumstances a reporter was prosecuted for sending a report to a newspaper editor, by whom the report was published, what damage was done to the interests of this country thereby, and what steps it is suggested that a reporter ought to take before communicating with his newspaper. Hansard 18 (4 May 1915): cols. 906–10.


“Conscientious Objectors”. Russell had the question on the paper as to whether
military conscientious objectors sentenced prior to Army Order X of 25 May 1916 will go into civil custody; and what had been the result of the second court-martial on C. H. Norman. *Hansard* 22 (18 July 1916): cols. 763–5.

“Internment of British Subjects”. Earl Russell rose to call attention to the Defence of the Realm Regulations under which British subjects are imprisoned without accusation or trial. *Hansard* 26 (24 July 1917): cols. 23–32.


“The Taxi-Cab Dispute”. Earl Russell rose to ask whether His Majesty’s Government would make a statement on the questions at issue in the present taxi-cab dispute, and indicate their policy with regard to the admission of women to the ranks of licensed cab drivers. *Hansard* 26 (23 Oct. 1917): cols. 739–42.

“Conscientious Objectors.” Earl Russell continued to assert that absolutists should be treated in a manner that does not make them martyrs. *Hansard* 26 (11 Nov. 1917): cols. 965–1,014.


“Military Service Bill”. Earl Russell questioned the need to extend military service to those under the age of 51, calling it “a piece of panic legislation”. *Hansard* 29 (17 Apr. 1918): cols. 705–62.


“New Capital Issues”. Earl Russell rose to call attention to the new Regulation on Capital Issues, and to ask His Majesty’s Government—1. Whether the present Regulation has been withdrawn. 2. Whether, in the promised modification of this Regulation, care will be taken to limit it to the purpose for which it is really required, and to avoid unnecessary and harassing interference with business. *Hansard* 33 (13 Mar. 1919): cols. 692–702.


“Deportations to Ireland”. Earl Russell moved to resolve “That in the opinion of this House there is no justification for the retention by the Executive of any powers of arrest without trial.” *Hansard* 54 (16 May 1923): cols. 199–227.

“Procedure of the House”. Earl Russell
moved that interruptions were contrary to the Rules of Order of the House and a precedent of closure was being set in a heated response to accusations of obstruction by Labour peers during the debate on the Coal Mines Bill on 8 July 1926. *Hansard* 64 (14 July 1926): cols. 1,090–141.


“House of Lords Reform”. Earl Russell expressed Labour’s concerns that the proposed reform would put them in a permanent minority and that the Government trod a dangerous path that will lead to revolution. *Hansard* 67 (23 June 1927): cols. 954–1,010.


“Select Vestries: Address in Reply to His Majesty’s Most Gracious Speech”. Earl Russell was chosen against convention to reply to the King’s Speech. *Hansard* 75 (2 July 1929): cols. 931–94.


“Mental Treatment Bill”. Earl Russell led the second reading of the Bill, which was committed to a committee of the whole House. *Hansard* 75 (28 Nov. 1929): cols. 724–67.


C2. Reports of Speeches other than in the House of Lords and London County Council Meetings


Debate: "That the grant of the suffrage to women has been indefinitely postponed by the violent methods of some of its supporters" (opposer), Hardwicke Society, 20 Mar. 1908. *Women's Franchise* 1 (19 Mar. 1908): 437. Follow-up report, 26 Mar. 1908, p. 452.


Address to Men's League for Women's Suffrage, St. Peter's Hall, Bournemouth, Sussex, 14 Feb. 1913. *Common Cause* 4
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(7 Mar. 1913): 826.

D. UNPUBLISHED LETTERS, DIARIES, ARTICLES, ETC.

Dr. Libraries
The British Library. Stopes Papers,Contained correspondence between Marie Stopes and Frank Russell, Add MS 58556
includes correspondence with Bertrand).


Huntington Library, California. Elizabeth Mary Russell, Countess Russell Papers: Journal [typescript] ER98–103 (1912–18); Correspondence: 8 letters from Frank to Elizabeth Russell, ER1735–1742.

McMaster University, Ontario. Bertrand Russell Archives, extensive correspondence prefix RA1–3; Frank Russell diaries, RA1 731.080042–4.

D2. The National Archives


Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Files: Russell v. Russell: J77/461/4047 [1891]; J77/534/16305 [1895].

Home Office files: Criminal: Maria Selina Elizabeth Scott convicted at Central Criminal Court for Libel, 16 Nov. 1896, HO 144/270/A58558.


D3. Parliamentary Archives


House of Lords Journals [1895], HL/PO/JO2/127.

Record of the Trial of Earl Russell, HL/PO/DC/CP/33/6.

Correspondence and Departmental orders regarding the Trial of Earl Russell, HL/PO/1/183; HC/SA/SJ/11/31; HL/PO/1/79/13.

Ticket to the Trial of Earl Russell, HL/PO/RO/1/95.


Address to the Sovereign on the Trial of Earl Russell, HL/PO/CP/2/1/69.

D4. University and College Archives


University of Texas, Harry Ransom Center. George Santayana Collection: Correspondence: Frank Russell to George Santayana, MS–3699, Box 3.8.

Winchester College Archives. George and Sarah Richardson Collection, E17/3–12. Includes letters from Frank Russell to Sarah Richardson, 1885–86; Evidence of Mrs. Sarah Richardson in R. v. Scott & others, 27 Nov. 1896.

19 For Bertrand’s letters to Frank in 1918, see K. Blackwell, A. G. Bone, N. Griffin, S. Turcon, eds., The Brixton Letters.