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Gilbert Keith Chesterton

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P R E F A C E

Witness O sun that blinds our eyes,
Unthinkable and unthankable King,
That though all other wonder dies
I wonder at not wondering.

This treatise will outline the appraisalment of some eminent critics among the friends and admirers of the late Gilbert Keith Chesterton, with regard to his poetry, which they claim, is like himself, at once many-sided but, withal, curiously unified. It falls into four natural divisions that, like most divisions, seem to overlap: Songs of Satire, Religious Poetry, Love Poems, and War Poems, of which illustrations will be given in the pages that follow.

--S. G.--

He loved with me, said Browning, and men wept;
He laughed with me, said Dickens, and men smiled;
He drank with me, said Chaucer, and high feast kept;
He played with me, said Blake, a wistful child;
He rode with me, said Cobbett, on my quest;
With me, said Stephenson, he read man's heart;
And Johnson shouted, Me he still loved best,
And held sane judgment for the nobler part.
So much while Peter fumbled with the keys,
And Justice for a little strove with ruth
Clouding the difficult passage of Heaven's door;
Till other, wiser counsellors came than these:
Take him, said Thomas, for he served the truth;
Take him, said Francis, for he loved the poor.

--R. A. Knox--

TO THE QUEEN OF HEAVEN

(Guiding Star of G.K.C.)

THE DEDICATION OF THIS POEM

O Queen, whom English hearts revered
Before the dawn of evil day,
When "Merrie England" thine own "Dower,"
In error's gloom "had lost the way."

On bended knee with grief untold
Thy children raised their hands to pray
That God would send a champion bold
To those who wished to "find the way."

Thy Son looked down on Campden Hill
To see a little child at play;
With golden curls and laughing eyes
Grow great in wisdom day by day.

The child when grown to man's estate
Heard loud the call from realms above
"Go forth to combat error's hate
And preach a creed of truth and love."

With mighty word and mightier pen
Proclaimed the Faith with heart and will,
Wrought twice a score of years, and then,
His "lamp" went out "on Campden Hill."

His joyous spirit still lives on,
His words resounding o'er and o'er,
The echoes of his mirth shall ring
Round Campden Hill "forever more."

--S. G.--

CHAPTER I

L I F E

One with the golden eagle of the morning,
Flat and flung wide above the spinning plains,
It seemed my spirit sprang and wheeled and flew.

L I F E

Our fathers to creed and tradition were tied,
They opened a book to see what was inside,
And of various methods they deemed not the worst
Was to find the first chapter and look at it first.
And so from the first to the second they passed,
Till in servile routine they arrived at the last.
But a literate age, unbenighted by creed,
Can find on two boards all it wishes to read;
For the front of the cover shows somebody shot
And the back of the cover will tell you the plot.

How difficult it is to estimate properly a man of virtue who is daily before our eyes! He becomes mingled and confounded with other men. His great qualities lose their novelty and we become accustomed to the common materials which form the basis of even the most eminent character. Of such a type was Gilbert Keith Chesterton, affectionately known as G. K. C. who has recently passed from life. The stern Reaper has deprived us of one of the most lovable of men, but his spirit will continue to inform the minds, and inspire the hearts of his readers for generations to come. In his AUTOBIOGRAPHY, the first chapter of which is styled "Hearsay Evidence," he says:

"Bowing down in blind credulity, as is my custom, before authority and the tradition of the elders, superstitiously swallowing a story I could not test by scientific experiment or private judgment, I firmly believe that I was born on the 29th day of May, 1874,

on Campden Hill, Kensington; and baptized according to the formularies of the Church of England, in the little church of St. George's opposite the large Waterworks Tower that dominated that ridge. I do not allege any underground connection between the cisterns and the font; and I indignantly deny that the church was chosen because it needed the whole water-power of West London to turn me into a Christian."

Mr. Chesterton says that he was born of respectable but honest parent; that is, in a world where the word "respectability" was not yet exclusively a term of reproach, but retained some dim philological connection with the idea of being respected. Even in his youth he had remarked that the sense of the word was changing, and remembered a conversation between his parents in which it was used with both implications. His father, who was serene, humorous and full of hobbies, remarked casually that he had been asked to go on what was then called the Vestry. At this Mrs. Chesterton, who was more swift, restless, and generally Radical in her instincts, uttered something like a cry of pain. She said: "Oh, Edward, don't! You will be so respectable! We never have been respectable yet! don't let's begin now." To this his father mildly replied: "My dear, you present a rather alarming picture of our lives, if you say that we have never for one single instant been respectable." Readers of PRIDE AND PREJUDICE

And that is the Blue Devil that once was the Blue Bird;
For the Devil is a gentleman, and doesn't keep his word.

What G. K. C. means is that his people belonged to that rather old-fashioned English middle class, in which a business man was still permitted to mind his own business. They had been granted no glimpse of that later and loftier vision, of that more advanced and adventurous idea of commerce, in which a business man is supposed to rival, ruin, destroy, absorb and swallow up everybody else's business. His father was a Liberal of the school that existed before the coming of Socialism; he took it for granted that all sane people believed in private property; but he did not trouble to translate it into private enterprise. His people were of the sort that were always sufficiently successful; but hardly in the modern sense, enterprising. Mr. Edward Chesterton was the head of a hereditary business of house-agents and surveyors, which had already been established for some three generations in Kensington; and there was a sort of local patriotism about it and a little opposition in the older members, when the younger first proposed that it should have branches outside Kensington. This particular sort of unobtrusive pride was very characteristic of this older sort of business man.

Mr. Chesterton's paternal grandfather was a fine-looking old man with white hair and beard, and manners that had something of that rounded solemnity that went with old-fashioned customs of proposing toasts and sentiments. He kept up the old Christian custom of singing at the dinner-table, and it did not seem incongruous when he sang, "The Fine Old English Gentleman" as well as more pompous songs of the period of Waterloo and Trafalgar. Our subject remarks that having lived to see Mafeking Night and the later Jingo lyrics, he has retained a considerable respect for those old and pompous patriotic songs. He fancies that it was better for the traditions of the English tongue to hear such rhetorical lines as these, about Wellington at the deathbed of William the Fourth,

"For he came on the Angel of Victory's wing
But the Angel of Death was awaiting the King."

than to be contented with howling the following, heard in all music-halls some twenty years afterwards:

"And when we say we've always won,
And when they ask us how it's done,
We proudly point to everyone
Of England's Soldiers of the Queen."

He has a dim suspicion that dignity has something to do with style; but anyhow, the gestures, like the songs of his grandfather's time and type had a good deal to do with dignity.

Another point about this middle class to which Mr. Chesterton belonged was that it really was an educated class, that made it unduly suspicious of the influence of servants. It attached rather too much importance to spelling correctly.

And it did spell and speak correctly. There was a whole world in which nobody was any more likely to drop an "h" than to pick up a title. Gilbert Chesterton early learned with the malice of infancy, that what his seniors were really afraid of was any imitation of the intonation and diction of the servants. In this connection he states (to quote another hearsay anecdote) that about the age of three or four, he screamed for a hat hanging on a peg, and at last in convulsions of fury uttered the awful threat, "If you don't give it to me, I'll say 'at.'" He felt sure that it would lay all his relatives prostrate for miles around.

And this case about education and diction, though he could see much to criticise in it afterwards, did really have its good side. It meant that his father was thoroughly conversant with English literature and he (G.K.) knew a good deal of it by heart, long before he could really get

it into his head. He knew pages of Shakespeare's blank verse without a notion of the meaning of most of it; which is, perhaps, the best way to begin to appreciate verse. It is recorded of Mr. Chesterton that, about the age of six or seven, he fell on the street, in the act of excitedly declaiming the words,

"Good Hamlet, cast this nighted colour off,
And let thine eye look like a friend on Denmark,
Do not forever with thy veiled lids
Seek for thy noble father in the dust--"

at which appropriate moment he pitched forward on his nose.

What is perhaps even less appreciated is that the class to which Mr. Chesterton refers was not only cut off from what are called the lower classes, but also quite as sharply from what are known as the upper classes. Since then, one may say, with all graceful apologies, that this class has split up into the two great sections of the Snobs and the Prigs. The first are those who want to get into Society; the second, those who want to get out of Society and into Societies. He means here Vegetarian Societies, and Socialist Colonies and things of that sort. But the people he means were not cranks; and, what is more, they were not snobs. There were plenty of people in their time, of course, who were snobbish; but those to whom he refers were really a class apart. They never dreamed of knowing the aristocracy except in business.

They had, what has since become almost incredible in England, a pride of their own.

Mr. Chesterton's mother's family had a French surname, (Grosjean), though the family was entirely English in speech and social habit. On the other side his mother came of Scottish people, who were Keiths from Aberdeen; his maternal grandmother was a very charming personality, which fact with a certain vividness in any infusion of Scot blood or patriotism made this northern affiliation appeal strongly to his affections, and made a sort of romance in his childhood. Her husband had been one of the old Wesleyan lay-preachers and was thus involved in public controversy, a characteristic which had descended to his grandchild. He was one of the leaders of the early Teetotal movement, a characteristic which has not. But there was a great deal in him, as is seen by the only two remarks which his grandchild can recall his having made. Once, when his sons were decrying the restraint imposed upon liberal youth by mode and convention, he said abruptly, "Ah, they talk a lot about fashion; but fashion is civilization." And, on another occasion, the same rising generation were lightly discussing that pessimism which is only possible in the happy time of youth. They were criticising

the General Thanksgiving in the Prayer Book, and wondering why a good many people should be thankful for their creation. The old man, who was then so advanced in years that he hardly ever spoke at all, said suddenly out of his silence, "I should thank God for my creation if I knew I was a lost soul."

Other facts about his family he received only at secondhand, and styles his treatment of them as biography which deals with things that were just behind him, and merely threw their shadows on his earliest path; the things that he saw in reflection rather than reality. Of these there were more on his mother's side; especially that historical interest in the house of Keith, which was mixed up with his general historical interest in things like the house of Argyll. But on his father's side there were also legends; the nearest and most eminent figure being that Captain Chesterton who was famous in his day as a reformer of prisons. He was a friend of Dickens, and himself, probably, something of a Dicken's character. Gilbert Chesterton does not deny that a good many Dickens characters are humbugs. Although he has praised the old Victorian middle-class he has had to admit that it did uphold sometimes some pretty hollow and pompous impostors.

One real Victorian virtue that can be ascribed to

his own people was a strict adherence to a standard of commercial probity; the standard was stricter in all that more solid commercial class than in a later time, when the notion of success was mixed up not only with cynicism but with a queer sort of piratical romance. The change may be felt, as in the word "respectable," in the very atmosphere of certain words. The favourite modern ideal in morals and even in religion, especially the religion broadcast for millions of modern business men, is the word "adventure." The most menacing monster in morals, for the business men of the old middle class was branded with the title of "adventurer."

In one of his poems published in 1932, Mr. Chesterton contrasts the change from the traditions of the Middle Ages to the Materialism of to-day. The poem to which I refer is "THE MONSTER" from which I quote:

One with the golden eagle of the morning,
Flat and flung wide above the spinning plains,
It seemed my spirit sprang and wheeled and flew.
The world went under us like a river of light,
An ecstasy of order, where each life,
Rejoicing in its law, rushed to its end:
To break itself and breed; the embattled vines,
Grassland and grainland waved their thousand spears
In one wild rhythm as they swept along,
A map of marching armies, all one way;

A reference to the simple and contented lives of the peasants before the coming of the Machine Age is made in

the following lines:

"And ploughmen on their uplands ribbed with gold,
Went forward happy, with their backs to heaven,"

bent over their useful toil with uncomplaining spirit they
fulfilled their destiny.

In the poem the eagle typifies the supernatural which
guided the souls of men in Medieval times; the second
stanza continues the theme:

"Only the sacred eagle up the stream
Strove back to his beginnings; left behind
The white archaic dawns on herbless hills,
The first cold hues of chaos; like a stair
Mounted the soundless cataracts of the sun,
Seeking the sun of suns; till suddenly
The last heavens opened; for one flash I saw
Something too large and calm for sight or reason,
The Urns of Evil and Good, vast as two worlds,
And over them a larger face than Fate's
Of that first Will that is when all was not.
But that unblinded burning eagle soared
And perched upon His thunderous right hand.
I cowered, and heard a cry torn out of me
In an unknown tongue older than all my race,
"O Father of Gods and Men"; and saw no more.

The poet is overwhelmed by the presumption of creatures who
try to dethrone the Almighty and set up the worship of reason
and progress.

In the third stanza, the "MONSTER," represented by the
vulture, appears grovelling in the filth of worldliness:

"The vulture from his dark and hairy nest
Far down the low-browed cliffs of the abyss
Stood black against the sun; a shape of shame:
A plumed eclipse; and all the ways of men
Were paved with upturned faces; masks of hate:
For that hooked head was like a horrible tool,

An instrument of torture made alive
 With creaking pinions; for what end they knew:
 The vulture of the vengeance of the gods.
 For a red under-light on all that land,
 A hell that is the underside of heaven,
 Glowed from men's struggling fires: and as I followed
 That evil bird over lost battle-fields,
 Where panoplied and like fallen palaces
 The great and foolish kings who warred with doom
 Lay sunken with their star;"

Materialists who deny the existence of the soul of man, deny the dual nature of Christ and seek to find happiness outside of the Divinity, but are worsted in all their pride of intellect, by the might of the Omnipotent.

".....I saw far off,
 Misshapen, against the dark red dome of sky,
 A mountain on a mountain. As I gazed
 The shape seemed changed: the upper mountain moved.

The vulture passed, a shadow on the fire,
 And the dark hills were loud with dreadful cries.

I woke, the skies were empty of the eagle,
 And empty of the vulture all the abyss:
 And something in the yawning silence cried
 Giants and gods were dying in new dawns:
 Daylight itself had deepened; there opened in it
 New depths or new dimensions;"

Men have begun to realize that wealth and prosperity cannot bring happiness, and multitudes return to the Faith of Medieval Times.

"For a new light in a new silence shone
 From some new nameless quarter of the sky
 Behind us on the road; and all strange things
 Looked back to something stranger than themselves
 And, towering still and trampling, the Last Centaur

Cried in a roar that shook the shuddering trees,
"We rode our bodies without bridle at will,
We hurled our high breasts forward on flying hooves:
But these two bodies are a simple thing
Beside that Fear that comes upon the world." "

The poem represents as in a horrible dream the destruction wrought in the souls of men by the sophistries of free-thinkers and pseudo-philosophers who uphold the doctrine of atheism. Mr. Chesterton recalls his own agnosticism and doubt and rejoices in the gift of Faith that has come to him. With his last breath he defended the idea of a personal God and the dual nature of Christ. In the last lines of this poem he says with regard to matter and spirit:

".....But since I woke
This single world is double till I die."

In later times the world has defended some pretty indefensible adventures by implying the glamour of adventure. This is not merely Mr. Chesterton's opinion in an age of reaction. It was the opinion of the best, even of the old optimists and orthodox economists, who lived when the change was beginning, and believed they were living in an age of reform. His own father and uncles were entirely of the period that believed in progress, and generally in new things, all the more because they were finding it increasingly difficult to believe in old things; and in some cases

in anything at all. But though as Liberals they believed in progress, as honest men they often saw convincing proofs of deterioration.

Gilbert Chesterton's father was possessed of exceptional versatility, both as an experimentalist and a handy man. His den or study was piled high with stratified layers of about ten or twelve creative amusements: water-colour painting, modelling, photography, stained glass, fretwork, magic lanterns, and medieval illumination. Our subject has inherited or imitated his habit of drawing, but in every other way he admits emphatically that he is an unhandy man. There had been some talk of his father's studying art professionally in his youth, but the family business was obviously safer, and his life followed the lines of a certain contented and ungrasping prudence, which was typical in an extraordinary degree of him and of all his blood and generation. He never dreamed of turning any of these plastic talents to any mercenary account, or of using them for anything but his own private pleasure and that of his family. To his sons he appeared to be indeed the man with the golden key, a magician opening the gates of goblin castles or the tombs of dead heroes; and there was no error made in calling his lantern a magic-lantern. But all this time he was known

to the world, and even to the next-door neighbours, as a very reliable and capable, though rather unambitious business man. It was a very good first lesson in what is also the last lesson of life; that in everything that matters, the inside is much larger than the outside. On the whole, Mr. Chesterton was glad that his father was never an artist. It might have stood in his way in becoming an amateur. It might have wrecked his career--his private career. He could never have made a vulgar success of all the thousand things that he did so very well.

The subject of this treatise in making generalizations about his paternal kinsfolk claimed that they were, and are, extraordinarily English. They have a perceptible and prevailing colour of good nature, of good sense not untinged with dreaminess, and a certain tranquil loyalty in their personal relations, which was very notable even in one, like his brother Cecil Chesterton, who in his public relations was supremely pugnacious and provocative. This sort of sleepy sanity is rather an English thing, and in comparison, it may not be entirely fanciful to suppose there was something French, after all, in the make-up of Mrs. Chesterton's family. For, allowing for the usual admixture, they ran smaller in stature, often darker in colouring, tough, unusually tenacious

prejudiced in a humorous fashion, and full of fighting spirit. There was a savour of something racial about the stock. English in so many things, the Chestertons were supremely English in their natural turn for hobbies. It is an element in this sort of old English business men, which divides him most sharply from the American business man, and to some extent from the new English business man who is copying the American. When the American begins to assert that "salesmanship can be an art," he means that an artist ought to put all his art into his salesmanship. The old-fashioned Englishman, like Edward Chesterton, sold houses for a living, but filled his own house with his life.

A hobby is not a holiday. It is not merely a moment's relaxation necessary to the resuming of work, and in this respect it must be sharply distinguished from much that is called sport. A good game is a good thing, but it is not the same thing as a hobby, and many go golfing or shooting grouse because this is a concentrated form of relaxation. A hobby is not half-a-day, but half-a-lifetime. It would be truer to accuse the hobbyist of living a double life. And hobbies, especially such hobbies as the toy-theatre, have a character that runs parallel to practical professional effort, and is not merely a reaction from it. It is not

merely taking exercise it is doing work. It is not merely exercising the body instead of the mind, an excellent, but now largely a recognized thing. It is exercising the rest of the mind, now an almost neglected thing. When Browning, that typical Victorian, says that he likes to know that a butcher paints, and a baker writes poetry, he would not be satisfied with the statement that a butcher plays tennis, or a baker, golf. Mr. Chesterton says that his father and uncles, also typical Victorians of the sort that followed Browning, were all marked in varying degrees by this taste for having their own tastes. One of his uncles gave all his spare time to gardening, and has somewhere in the floricultural records a chrysanthemum named after him. In Gilbert Chesterton's own home, it was not a question of one hobby, but a hundred hobbies, piled on top of one another, and he says that it is a personal accident or perhaps a personal taste, that the one which has clung to his memory through life is the hobby of the toy-theatre. In any case, watching such work made one great difference to his life and views, to the end of his life.

From his nursery days Gilbert Chesterton loved to see things done, not the handle that causes them to be done but the hand that does them. He claims that had his father been some common financier, owning a thousand mills that made

cotton, or a million machines that made cocoa, how much smaller he would have seemed! And this experience made him profoundly sceptical of all the modern talk about the necessary dullness of domesticity, and the degrading drudgery that has only to make puddings and pies. Only to make things! There is no greater thing to be said of God Himself than that He makes things. The manufacturer cannot even make things, he can only pay to have them made. Mr. Chesterton says that he was often incurably afflicted with a faint smile, when he heard a crowd of frivolous people, who could not make anything to save their lives, talking about the inevitable narrowness and stiffness of the Victorian home. His folks managed to make a good many things in their Victorian home which people now buy at insane prices from Art and Craft Shops; the sort of shops that have quite as much craft as art. All the things that happened in the house, or were in any sense done on the premises, lingered in his imagination like a legend, and as much as any, those connected with the kitchen or the pantry. Toffee always tasted better to him than the most expensive chocolates which Quaker millionaires sell by the million; and principally because they made toffee themselves.

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that he did not write (all of them, he says, so much more brilliant and convincing than those he wrote) is the story of a successful city man who seemed to have a dark secret in his life, and who was finally discovered by the detectives still playing with dolls, or with tin soldiers, or some undignified antic of infancy. He says with all modesty that he is that man, in everything except his solidity of repute and his successful commercial career. It was perhaps even more true, in that sense, of his father before him. But he for one, never left off playing and he always wished that there had been more time to play.

From this brief sketch of his home life and training it can be seen that our subject was blessed in his genealogy as he was in the beneficial influences, and advantages surrounding his childhood and youth. In the discussion of his poetry reference will be made to the leading events of his adult life and to the closing years of his career.

In 1901 Mr. Chesterton married Miss Frances Blogg. At that time his weekly earnings were so small that they would seem ridiculous if stated today.

It has been said that he was fortunate in his friends but he was above all, blest in his wife with whom he lived in a modest though charming little home in a country village.

Mrs. Chesterton, with rare literary talents of her own, asked for nothing more than the opportunity of devoting herself to the care of her husband, who, because of his generosity, other-worldliness, and disinterestedness certainly needed all her care and skilful management to prevent him from wasting his substance magnificently. Never a cloud dimmed the cheerful atmosphere of their wedded life. In 1926 she followed her husband into the Church. She is now left lonely, and those who are indebted to Mr. Chesterton for so much inspiration, enlightenment, and pleasure in reading may pray for her consolation as well as for the repose of his great soul. Doubtless his spirit will hover amid scenes brightened by the untarnished lustre of his pure domestic life, worthy of the sacred cause to which he consecrated all the gifts of his genius.

The champion of traditionalism and orthodoxy, Mr. Chesterton by his literary achievements, conferred an incalculable benefaction on the Church Militant, and on the reading public in general. We are tempted to ask what English literature of the early twentieth century would have been without his contribution.

"Posterity is the court against which there is no appeal, and in whose name all final judgments of contemporary literature are set timidly aside. One cannot refrain, however, from making this daring attempt at present-day criticism by the unique position of Mr.

Chesterton in the world of letters. He belonged to no class; he adhered to no school. He was one of the few wits who enjoyed both a feast and a fight, one of the few who could have felt at home among a group of Elizabethans. In his joy of living he burst forth into a volume of literary creations that blazed like beacons in the after-glow of our times."

The vehicle of his technique is a chariot of his own invention which in the hands of other writers would be declared counterfeit or parody. His style was both good and bad, but it was his very own. He wrote in practically every form, from the extravagantly fanciful drama of "Magic" to a Short History of England, writing in a manner so arresting that he made a lasting impression not only on a countless throng of readers but also on a representative group of younger writers.

Today Chesterton is read throughout the English-speaking world and we find him praised as a genius, condemned as a madman, acclaimed as a true Christian, rejected as a destroyer, ridiculed as a creator of paradox. No writer of our time has aroused such conflicting opinions for and against himself. Verily, the man is great. Why, then is there so much controversy about the merits of his creations? Probably the more worldly-minded resent his reproaches by which their self-sufficiency and smugness are assailed. A brief outline of the works that owe their origin to the mighty intellect of G. K. Chesterton will show that the man was a prolific writer.

if anything. He wrote critical works, novels, biographies, books on history, religion, philosophy, and poetry; innumerable essays bear the initials "G.K.C." In that prodigious output there is quality as well as quantity. Philip Gibbs mentions his great range of knowledge, his immense wit and fancy, his genial, jolly and passionately sincere idealism. In all Mr. Chesterton's work, he strikes a lofty tone. His greatness prevents him from trifling with details; it also enables him to treat those great commonplace facts so familiar to all his readers in a manner that is amazing and unique. "There is grandeur as he pursues his theme, scorning digressions, and petty side-discussions and arguments." He sees the truth and tells it with arresting beauty and skill, declares it boldly and in clear-cut language free from all false accompaniments. He conceives new ideas so constantly that the amazing diversity of literary form required to express them, need not be a cause for astonishment.

In the "London Illustrated News" Mr. Chesterton wrote his first "NOTE-BOOK" in the September number of 1905, in which he says that he cannot imagine why that season of the year should be called by journalists the Silly Season. He declares it to be the only season in which men have time for wisdom. This can be seen even by glancing at the daily papers.

While Parliament is in session the most trivial and fugitive matters are made to seem important until the Silly Season, or the season of wisdom begins. Then, for the first time people have time to think. At such a time people begin to discuss "The Decay of Home Life" or "What is Wrong?" or the authority of the Scriptures, or "Do We Believe?" These really awful and eternal problems are never discussed except in the Silly Season.

With regard to the destruction of home life, Mr. Chesterton outlines one phase of the matter in the third of his "SONGS OF EDUCATION" entitled "THE CRECHE" which I quote in full:

"I remember my mother, the day that we met
A thing I shall never entirely forget:
And I try with the fancy that, young as I am,
I should know her again if we met in a tram,
But mother is happy in turning a crank
That increases the balance at somebody's bank,
And I feel satisfaction that mother is free
From the sinister task of attending to me.

They have brightened our room, that is spacious and cool,
With diagrams used in the Idiot School,
And Books for the Blind that will teach us to see,
But mother is happy, for mother is free,
For mother is dancing up forty-eight floors,
For love of the Leeds International Stores,
And the flame of that faith might perhaps have grown cold,
With the care of a baby of seven weeks old.

For mother is happy in greasing a wheel
For somebody else, who is cornering Steel;
"O, hush thee, my baby, the time will soon come
When thy sleep will be broken with hooting and hum;
There are handles want turning and turning all day,
And knobs to be pressed in the usual way;
O, hush thee, my baby, take rest while I croon,
For Progress comes early, and Freedom too soon."

The holiday season is the only time in which people can really manage to turn their minds to these grave and everlasting riddles that are behind every civilization. This solemn character in holidays, is, of course, implied in their very name; a holiday is a day that is made holy. It is usual that in the holidays man shows the more serious side of his make-up. During the rest of the year he has been occupied with the trifling details of his daily routine --the writing of articles or the canvassing of soap. On a holiday he rushes away to the things of greatest moment, sports in the country, hunting on the green hills.

In Mr. Chesterton's opinion the very idlest kind of holiday is the best. By being idle one mixes with the inner life of the place where he is; by doing nothing he is doing everything. If one is wise, he will refuse to see places of interest. In refusing to visit the Castle of Edinburgh he will see Edinburgh. There is a simple and sensible reason why nobody need visit places of interest in foreign countries. Has he not castles, cathedrals, and other institutions of like nature at home in England? Are they not to be found all over Europe? An item of interest in Paris would be an open-air cafe; in Germany, a beer-garden. It is the commonplace things that interest the

stranger in France or Germany, the extraordinary things he knows quite well. The only piece of architecture in England that might interest a Frenchman would be a hansom cab, an English poetic institution which has never been domesticated abroad.

Our subject claims that London is still full of romance of the delicate old-world type. Every other city is singing and humming with modern methods, especially those cities known as decadent. Rome is smart and Yankee compared with London. Florence is Chicago compared with London. Only London retains its fascinating, crooked, high streets. Only our London keeps its own dreamy and deliberate omnibus. Venerable dreamer, whispering from its turrets the last secrets of the Middle Ages! If you really desire to have your ears and soul filled with the poetry and imagery of the past, go into the Underground Railway at Victoria Station and ride, let us say, to the Mansion House. Close your eyes and listen with reverence for the names. St. James Park--pilgrims with staffs and scallops..... Westminster Bridge--the English Saints and Kings..... Charing Cross--King Edward the Confessor..... The Temple--the fall of that proud, mysterious band of Templars..... Blackfriars--a dark line of cowls! I beseech you do not destroy London. It is a hallowed ruin.

"If our vain haste has smothered home in houses
As our vain creeds have smothered man in men,
Though in that rock tomb sleeps the King less deeply
Than in this brick-tomb sleeps the Citizen,
What will not God achieve if man awake,
Since a rock-tomb was rended for our sake?"

The following precis shows the bent of Mr. Chesterton's mind seen again in his last essay contributed to the "London Illustrated News" shortly before his death in June 1936.

In the article just outlined, it is observed that it strikes the characteristic note which he constantly maintained--a humorous approach to a serious subject. His was a genius for paradox, and a logical method of exposing heresies (in his interpretation of the term).

In the opening sentences, Mr. Chesterton says:

"The true ease against topsy-turvyism, or a world in which everything stands on its head, is that a man cannot stand on his head in it. In the realm of anarchy, the anarchist vanishes more utterly than do the rulers or rational sages; and there is nothing even impudent, nothing even irreverent, in the mere inversion of inversion."

The result is that it is not always feasible to make anything out from a description of mere muddle. An extravaganza may be a form of fine art, but if the artisan lacks a sense of proportion and vision, it may become dull, or fall far short of the most formal model of classical beauty. It is easier for a romancer to make a lunatic stand out in a lunatic asylum than to let him remain in the lunatic

lunatic asylum; or to settle the difficulty by present-day methods, the romancer could be locked up in the lunatic asylum for life.

There are now some monstrosities that tower above the greatest monstrosities in a monstrous world. A recent work, not a romance but a very natural and trustworthy, and well written account of some of the most famous fanatics who aspired to divine honours in a greater or less degree at intervals during the last two or three centuries in "this England." An appropriate title would be "A Book for Madmen," but instead it is called "English Messiahs: Studies of Six English Religious Pretenders, 1656-1927," by Ronald Matthews and published by Methuen and Company. According to Mr. Chesterton the matter collected is very enlightening and instructive, and the outline and commentary, very unbiased. The general impression is that these strange manifestations of spiritual systematic selfishness in people like James Nayler and Johanna Southcott has each an element of both weakness and strength. The source of weakness in this individualistic, untaught and misguided type of religion was a continuous play of sexual emotion, nefarious in itself because it paraded under assumed names. The element of strength was that the religious

reform had some connection with social uneasiness, the motives of which were the more easily crushed because they identified themselves with foolish and transient theologies. Naylor, himself, would never have presumed to pose as an English Messiah had he not been bullied into it by a wild and uncouth woman who gained some profane notoriety for him by the pantomine travesty of Palm Sunday in which he stupidly agreed to take part. He was by nature, a sensitive idealist, but like many others who allow themselves to be duped, he was a fool.

A similar type of smothered romance seems to smoulder through the whole tale of Johanna Southcott who gave the tardy clue to her own troubled career by proclaiming, in the sixty-fifth year of her age, that she was destined to become the mother of a being who seemed to be identical with the Holy Ghost.

And still, it is just at this point of the narrative which seems to have grown too far-fetched for comparison that the reader just quakes with laughter, and feels that he can no longer react to any absurdity, or even distinguish between madness and sanity. Here is the jest:

"The Almighty Shiloh the third representative of the Divinity was to be also the infant monitor of the Prince Regent, with whom the bantling would spend the first six years, and from whom the Prince would receive the lessons of reform and temperance."

Mr. Chesterton declares:

"I have often wondered what the Brighton Pavilion was really for. I can only suppose it was some wild approximation to the scenery and background suitable to such a joke."

Can any one picture the poor old epicure, fop, and drunkard, staggering down his last dark path to his horrible and grotesque Pavilion, and there receiving his first lessons of virtue from a child not yet six years old.....really there seems to be no words adequate to describe such nonsense!

"In George the Fourth there disappeared a dead lover, a dead Liberal, a dead friend of Ireland, and what might have been a great King of England." If the matter of his first marriage had not been a brutal piece of bigotry he might indeed have led the youth of his time and furthered the return to many human and historic things. He might have taken part in really popular politics, and, perhaps have had a voice in affairs even of the popular religion. For there were forces at that time of greater moment than the mere tinkering of the politicians; this is in Mr. Matthew's illuminating book. The voice of Cobbett could sometimes be heard in the wild oration of Mr. John Tom, who styled himself the Peasant's "Saviour."

"God's ways are His own. We had hoped to keep Mr. Chesterton for years to come. He was a Cedar of Lebanon, of giant stature, not easily measured mentally."

In the Providence of God our departed champion followed

in the footsteps of the immortal Newman whom he idolized. At once he took his place in the vanguard of the Church of his forbears, and any man who crossed swords with G. K. C. knew that he had been in a real battle.

Never wounding an opponent, scorning all mean subterfuge, he nevertheless drove his lance to the very hilt into all sham philosophy and mock religion.

When shams and fads and pseudo-creeds
Warred with the right
Anon Don Chesterton
Smote with all his might.

The big heart, the outstanding mind, the paradox pen, the lecture ability (a remarkable combination), lashed the modern world, modern irresponsibility and self-glorification with unparalleled thoroughness, but always in a kindly spirit. "Billingsgate" was not a part of this valiant knight's armour. The same cannot be said of his opponents. They were better at giving rubs than at taking them. Uncalled-for, malicious attacks were made upon him. In reply he chid their puerile poutings with Christian charity and compassion.

Thousands who never saw that great genial, lumbering figure, that "cabful" of benevolent humanity merrily conveyed, find the world gloomier, lonelier now that he is gone. "There is silence in the world for there was no voice, nor is there

now, like Chesterton's." He has set the world thinking by his wholesome doctrines spiced with wit, seasoned with humour, and permeated with orthodoxy. The following lines from "PREMATURE EPITAPHS" by Cecil Palmer seem to be a fitting tribute to his memory:

"Place on his head the jewel; on his brow the diadem
Who in an age of miracles dared to believe in them,
Chesterton companion
His companions mourn,
Chesterton crusader
Leaves a cause forlorn,
Chesterton the critic
Pays no further heed,
Chesterton the poet
Lives while men shall read,
Chesterton the dreamer
Is by sleep beguiled,
And there enters heaven
Chesterton the child."

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CHAPTER II

THE MESSAGE OF POETRY

A Book of verses underneath the bough,
 Provided that the verses do not scan,
A loaf of bread, a jug of wine and Thou,
 Short-haired, all angles, looking like a man.

THE MESSAGE OF POETRY

Rise up and bid the trumpets blow
When it is gallant to be gay,
Tell the wide world it shall not know
Our face until we turn to bay.
Bless you, you shall be blameless yet,
For God forgives and men forget.

To most men and women, even to those who in childhood and youth have most enjoyed poetry, there comes a time of reaction. It generally comes in middle life, that period of cooling emotion and practical preoccupations, of stern reality, and disillusionment. In many of the creations of Mr. Chesterton he gives expression to the unrest felt by minds which science and reason left confronted with a passive universe.

With some people the necessity of earning a livelihood and establishing themselves robs life of that calmness and peace of mind so requisite for the full appreciation and enjoyment of poetry. In the minds of others the impression grows that poetry is rather out of place in this scientific and commercial age, that, in reality, art is of worth only as an aid to industry. Let poetry be left to professors and literary critics that is their affair. The ordinary man has no longer any need for it. And thus poetry drops utterly and permanently out of a man's life.

This being so it will not seem amiss--at least to those who still worship the Muses--to raise, from time to time a voice, be it ever so faint, to raise, I say a voice in defence of what they still claim to be one of the great humanizing forces of the world. They must answer over and over the challenging questions: Has poetry a message? Are poets anything but incompetent and brainsick visionaries, humdrum rhymers, "idle singers of an empty day"? Is poetry anything more than an empty pastime for the leisure hours of literary people?

In answer one salient fact can be stated. Though the greater number of middle-aged men and women cease to read poetry, come to despise it even, they continue to allow their children to be educated largely through that medium.

Poetry is still regarded as it was ever regarded in the past as meet food for the opening mind and heart. For the young at least it will seem to have a message.

At all events it is a fact that from civilization's earliest dawn poetry has been one of the principal mediums of instruction for youthful minds. It is hardly necessary to insist in this statement. The Hebrew child drew all his information from the sacred writings of his forbears

and chiefly from the poetry of prophecy and psalm. The Greek boy was brought up upon Hesiod and Homer, the Illiad above all. The Attic youth studied, declaimed and sang the poets; they were the inspiration of art, of oratory, of life in general. Once Rome had come in contact with the Aegean World she henceforth drew the best of her culture from Grecian well-springs. Side by side with his native epic poets, Ennius, Naevius, and others, the Roman boy studied Homer but the Odyssey rather than the Illiad, for, in the shrewd and politic Aeneas he seemed to find a more fitting inspiration for the practical genius of his race, than in Achilles and Agamemnon. But Rome was to produce a poet whose influence was to be felt when Rome herself, and her other great poets would have passed away. This poet was Virgil who was chosen as the poet of early Christendom, the tamer of the barbarians, an instrument of culture during the middle ages. For Dante, who was destined to surpass him, Virgil was the great poet of all time, and it was the shade of Virgil that guided his soul in its visionary journey through the regions beyond the grave. The Renaissance restored to Europe, Homer and Hesiod, the Attic dramatists, Pindar, Theocritus and all the glory that was Greece. But it was a scientific and critical age, like our own, rather than poetic, an age of scholarship and inquiry, and the poets were

held in honour for their form rather than for their message.

The seventh century brought a great revival of poetry, only to be followed by the great so-called age of reason, that is, the age of rationalism, scepticism, and pseudo-science, when real poetry was at a discount. Yet, whether honoured by the world of culture, or disdained, poetry never ceased to find a home in the school.

The truth is that between the spirit of poetry and the spirit of the child there is a remarkable kinship and affinity, on account of its nature. "Poetry is the art which expresses in metrical, and otherwise fitting language, self, life, nature, God, and all their interactions, seen in beauty and realized in a mood of emotional and imaginative exaltation." Poetry is idealistic, unselfish, and unworldly. Like the child with its fairy-tales and make-believe, it delights to dwell in the realms of the ideal. Poetry may be defined as beauty, truth, and goodness in their perfection, a perfection realized only in God. Poetry does not scorn the homely concerns of our every-day life. It sees them in the light of the ideal. Its concern is not with the practical pursuit of self-interested aims, nor with the practical solution of problems, political, economic, social, industrial, and scientific. It views life in its greater outlook and in its inner meaning. It points

out that the significant things in life are not gold and commerce, food and amusement, research and discovery, but rather duty, honour, friendship, love, hope, country, religion, happiness. And if poetry can in any measure teach that lesson to our growing sons and daughters, it has a mission at least for them.

"But this is not all. The business of poetry is with the ideal, even though its subject be merely a daisy, a field-mouse, a faded portrait, or a Grecian urn. Viewing life and the world in the light of the ideal, it is the exact opposite of the merely useful or rather the utilitarian. It sees in men and things not what self-interest sees in them, namely, means to its own ends. It is disinterested. With real pride it pleads guilty of being unpractical. Now it is the mission of the educator to set free and foster the higher aspirations of the child, to wean him from concentration on purely selfish desires and aims. Poetry with its lofty ideals, its universal sympathies, reaches this result more effectively than the moral and cautionary tales which a former generation thought so instructive for our little ancestors, just as through sacred art and liturgy, people may learn more and better than from the catechism, however indispensable the latter may be. The lesson is taken more readily to heart because it is learned unawares."

Another characteristic of poetry that makes it peculiarly fitting for the young, is that poets have always been the champions of the lowly and the oppressed, the singers of lost causes.

It is thus in the nature of things that patriotism should be another element of the poet's message to the young (Mr. Chesterton insists that Rudyard Kipling is wrong in his

glorification of militarism which in the latter's opinion spells discipline only. He also claims that Kipling lacks patriotism--that is to say, that he lacks the faculty of adhering to any cause or community. He is a globe-trotter of tendencies too cosmopolitan to be patriotic.) With a few other exceptions that are of little moment, all the poets from Tynaeus to our own time have sung the love of country. But poets are most themselves when they are mourning a people's lost glories, stirring the memory of past historic deeds, scourging the oppressor with their satire or goading the oppressed to fresh efforts for freedom. It is a fact with which the most practical of statesmen and politicians have always had to reckon. The national poets of Poland, kept alive her spirit in the darkest hours of her crucifixion.

"Augurs that watched archaic birds
Such plumed prodigies might read,
The eagles that were double-faced,
The eagle that was black indeed;
And when the battle-birds went down
And in their track the vultures come,
We know what pardon and what peace
Will keep our little masters dumb.

.....

But raised for ever for a sign
Since God made anger glorious,
Where eagles black and vultures grey
Flocked back about the heroic house,
Where war is holier than peace,

Where hate is holier than love,
Shone terrible as the Holy Ghost
An eagle whiter than a dove."

Ireland has ever been the predominant theme with her own poets both Gaelic and English. "Who fears to speak of '98," was written by a professor of Trinity College. It is said that the average boy or girl learns better and more unconsciously to love his native land from the poets than from the best manual of citizenship. The annals of the fatherland are excellent and even indispensable for that purpose, but they need to be supplemented by poetry.

For however excellent a manual may be it cannot reach the heart, it cannot impress the imagination of the young as poetry can. Another characteristic of poetry in general is wonder, which is peculiar to both poet and child. "Poetry is a perpetual, astonished discovery of beauty in nature, in man, in God. The poet's eye can penetrate through the veil of custom, and to the reality beyond."

So much for the message of poetry in general. A consideration of Mr. G. K. Chesterton's message in particular will now be discussed, in the light of criticisms made by those who are qualified to appreciate the manner in which G. K.'s poetry conveys its message. This champion of social justice has not only outlined the causes underlying the ills

of our present-day civilization, but even suggests a series of very potent remedies. He denounces the present with its materialistic outlook and its uncertainties and substitutes a search for truth, peace of soul, a stable order, and a return to the traditions of the past. An optimist, a lover of life, he denounced vehemently the modern errors that undermine the frank, merry health of the heart: gloomy puritanism, morbid pessimism, the unrest of minds that have lost, along with faith, their very balance, and especially the irrational mania of misguided intelligences. Our industrial civilization has reduced mankind to slavery; and the cure-all of pseudo-philosophers, state socialism, makes the condition of bondage the worse for everyone. Mr. Chesterton claims that economic harmony, just like Christian charity can be restored by an enlightened return to the ideal of the Middle Ages. The enthusiastic activity of the Medieval guilds gave normal and wholesome satisfaction both to selfishness and to the group spirit. In the fanciful story "The Napoleon of Notting Hill" the exact teaching of the apostles of the new "guilds" is found.

Here as elsewhere Mr. Chesterton hides his dogmatic theory behind the most flippant manner, and makes a "humorous approach to a serious subject." His style is refreshing.

startling and arresting in its originality. With all his wit and humour, what is most precious and least commonplace is his common sense. But he has not disciplined his spontaneity to follow the dictates of a sufficiently artistic conscience. His is a unique personality but some of his unequal improvisations may not bear the test of time.

In "The Judgment of England" is found a rhythmic record of some of the economic ills of our modern civilization:

"Ill fares the land, to hastening ills a prey
Where Wealth accumulates and Men decay."
So rang of old the noble voice in vain
O'er the Last Peasants wandering on the plain,
Doom has reversed the riddle and the rhyme,
While sinks the commerce reared upon that crime,
The thriftless towns litter with lives undone,
To whom our madness left no joy but one;
And irony that glares like Judgment Day
Sees Men accumulate and Wealth decay.

In these lines are pictured the despair and misery of the unemployed in our centres of population, victims of Industrialism or Plutocracy or both. Can one not see also the ghosts of country homes made desolate?

"In Mr. Gilbert Chesterton's poetry is found little more than that his poems have the good qualities of his prose and some of its defects: the gay colours and hard outlines of a Middle Age Mass book, alliteration, contrast, rhetoric and a trace of "rant". It is evident that he always prefers showy colours to delicate tints. No one else could have achieved what he has done. As has already been pointed out, his is a style unique in modern poetry, hence it is meet that it make itself felt. To his credit be it said that he has brought to life the ancient spirit of minstrelsy, but it is a one-man revival, a fact that makes

it difficult for critics to compare him with contemporary poets. Is Mr. Chesterton better than So-and-So? Neither better nor worse but different. The least that can be said is that it is more bombastic than is fashionable, and that beauty means to him rather brighter colours, lustier laughter, better cheer than those things in which it is our wont to look for inspiration. His muse inspires enthusiasm rather than ecstasy; his song is lusty, not lyrical; his emotions are ardent, but not intense; his verse is invigorating never exquisite. It is as if the rude, rugged but fine balladry had been refined, elaborated and transformed into a new thing by being filtered through the brain of a literary genius. But enough of generalities. Looking for special characteristics one finds the Medieval Knight riding out in defence of truth, justice, and high ideals. In his finest poems the call to arms rings most clear."

He is a Christian who finds his joy and his duty in bringing the religious test to all social activities: democracy is with him a religious as well as a political creed. He lives his Christianity. For him laughter is as holy as prayer, and prayer as spontaneous as laughter. To compare his poetry with what is best in literature would be as absurd as comparing "a good brew with a rare vintage. The one makes one glad, but the other makes one glow." There is poetry that has rather the wholesome ring of a challenge; it stirs the blood as do martial strains, even though the intellect remain cold. The latter is the poetry of G. K. Chesterton, "Beer it is, but no one can say that it is small beer."

"Both wisdom and innocence are found in the utterances of this great-hearted visionary. As one reads he is startled into believing that he is living at the very dawn of creation. In a word or line one sees in the cold grey light familiar shapes of men and things."

"Mr. Chesterton's method is not hard to analyze. He has told us wittily that paradox for its own sake 'is as easy as lying because it is lying'. He wrote paradoxically because humorous and dramatic contrast appealed to him, and because he wished to startle modern men into seeing the truth. He would burst the showy bubbles of present-day thought: for example the old fallacy that pagans are happy, or the new myth that science has superseded religion, or that woman has gained her freedom because she may work in an office instead of a home. To sum up, he aimed to show the wondering topsy-turvy, modern world where its own theories were leading and bring it back to sanity, to beauty, to humour, to honour and to God."

Gilbert Chesterton's work is free from any taint of dullness. This laughing philosopher makes people laugh with him and at themselves. He realized that "Satan fell by the force of gravity." His poetry is his own, as has already been stated, and the verse of his lighter vein is without doubt some of the best that we have.

The ring and drive in the following will serve as another illustration:

"The earth is a place on which England is found,
And you find it however you twirl the globe round;
For the spots are all red and the rest is all grey,
And that is the meaning of Empire Day.

Gibraltar's a rock that you see very plain,
And attached to its base is the district of Spain.
And the island of Malta is marked further on,
Where some natives were known as the Knights of St. John.

Then Cyprus, and east to the Suez Canal
That was conquered by Dizzy and Rothschild his pal
With the Sword of the Lord in the old English way;
And that is the meaning of Empire Day."

I will close this chapter with a further reference to those poems, "FOR FOUR GUILDS" because, according to a critic, "They are typical of Mr. Chesterton's genius. They show his passionate affection for the men who make beautiful things for the glory of God--and if they are not poetry then I have never read any."

Hear the Glass-Stainers' boast:

"To every Man his Mystery,
A trade and only one:
The masons make the hives of men,
The domes of grey or dun,
But we have wrought in rose and gold
The houses of the sun."

and conclude,

"Deep in dark church behold, above
Their lance-lengths by a rod,
Where we have blazed the tabard
Of the trumpeter of God."

The Bridge-Builders are better still,--

"In the world's whitest morning
As hoary with hope,
The Builder of Bridges
Was priest and was pope:
And the mitre of mystery
And the canopy his,
Who darkened the chasms
And domed the abyss.

.....

But he bade us, who fashion
The road that can fly,
That we build not too heavy
And build not too high:

Seeing alway that under
The dark arch's bend
Shine death and white daylight
Unchanged to the end.

Who walk on his mercy
Walk light, as he saith,
Seeing that our life
Is a bridge above death;
..... "

Or listen to the Stone-Masons justify their gargoyles,--

"Wilder than all that a tongue can utter,
Wiser than all that is told in words,
The wings of stone of the soaring gutter
Fly out and follow the flight of the birds;
The rush and rout of the angel wars
Stand out above the astounded street,
Where we flung our gutters against the stars
For a sign that the first and the last shall meet."

And for the fourth guild, let the Bell-Ringers sound an
Angelus for the soul of Gilbert Keith Chesterton,--

"The angels are singing like birds in a tree
In the organ of good St. Cecily:
.....

But all can hark at the dark of even
The bells that bay like the hounds of heaven,
Tolling and telling that over and under,
In the ways of the air like a wandering thunder,
The hunt is up over hills untrod:
For the wind is the way of the dogs of God:
From the tyrant's tower to the outlaw's den
Hunting the souls of the sons of men.
.....

And we poor men stand under the steeple
Drawing the cords that can draw the people,
And in our leash like the leaping dogs
Are God's most deafening demagogues:
..... "

These four poems alone would be enough to pass Mr. Chesterton for a poet.

Not only in his Ballads but in numerous other poems will you find the real Chesterton forever thanking God for man and for His gifts to man; saying in "ETERNITIES":--

"In heaven I shall stand on gold and glass,
Still brooding earth's arithmetic to spell;
Or see the fading of the fires of hell
Ere I have thanked my God for all the grass."

who believes so firmly in God's love for men and His infinite mercy towards the erring as to have written the "MIRROR OF MADMEN" and "EARTH'S SHAME", who knows that "every soul is great" and who can thus clothe with a wealth of irony the great truth of Christ and of His Church, that wisdom is inferior to love. ("FANTASIA").--

"Is there not pardon for the brave
And broad release above,
Who lost their heads for liberty
Or lost their hearts for love?
Or is the wise man wise indeed
Whom larger thoughts keep whole?
Who sees life equal like a chart,
Made strong to play the saner part,
And keep his head and keep his heart,
And only lose his soul."

As has already been said, though Mr. Chesterton can use the sword,--that sword of righteous indignation which as he says, "God flung, flaming over the walls of Paradise for man to use,"--yet he understands well and is never tired of exalting

those less fashionable Catholic virtues which are mostly left to the practice of our Saints, simplicity and humility and patience and long-suffering.

The poem "TO ST. MICHAEL IN TIME OF PEACE" appeared in the San Francisco Monitor shortly after Mr. Chesterton's death. This was claimed to be its first publication on this side of the Atlantic:

"He that giveth peace unto us not as the world giveth:
He that giveth law unto us; not as the scribes:
Shall He be softened for the softening of the cities
Patient in usury; delicate in bribes?
They that come to quiet us, saying the sword is broken,
Break men with famine, fetter them with gold,
Sell them as sheep; and He shall know the selling
For He was more than murdered. He was sold."

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CHAPTER III

POEMS, HUMOROUS AND SATIRICAL

For you never know what Dynamics do
With the lower truths of Statics;
And half of two is a touring car
In the Higher Mathematics.

POEMS, HUMOROUS AND SATIRICAL

Don Chesterton with genial grace
Restored the smile to England's face.

S.G.

A joke--especially another man's joke--is something to be handled with care, for once the bloom is off, the joke vanishes. Jokes are simply crystallized humour; they are closely connected with what is known as style and a collection of effects which create an atmosphere. "Chesterton's peculiar atmosphere 'rises like a sweet exhalation from the very ink he sheds.'" And as all genuine style it is indefinable. Humour has an unfortunate tendency to grow stale, but Chesterton's comic verse will live on. His opposition to Prohibition is seen in a series of skits and literary lampoons, for example, the poem of "NOAH":

"Old Noah he had an ostrich farm
and fowls on the largest scale,
He ate his eggs with a ladle
in an egg-cup big as a pail,
And the soup he took was Elephant Soup
and the fish he took was whale,
But they all were small to the cellar he took
when he set out to sail,
And Noah he often said to his wife
when he sat down to dine
'I don't care where the water goes
if it doesn't get into the wine'."

In "THE FLYING INN" he is concerned with a direct attack on the problem of Prohibition. A terrible calamity has befallen

England and this is but one result:

"The Saracen's Head" looks down the lane,
Where we shall never drink wine again,
For the wicked old women who feel well-bred
Have turned to a tea-shop "The Saracen's Head."

One of his best poems is that which gives a lesson in the etiquette to which a person should conform, were he privileged to have St. George to tea. It displays Chesterton at his best and might be called an ode to hospitality. It represents the very spirit of "THE FLYING INN." It declares that English hospitality is very tame if the only attributes are tea and coffee. At the marriage feast of Cana, did not God say, "Thou hast kept the good wine for the last?"

"St. George he was for England,
And before he killed the dragon
He drank a pint of English ale
Out of an English flagon.
For though he fast right readily
In hair shirt or in mail
It isn't safe to give him cakes
Unless you give him ale."

Chesterton is opposed to pessimism, which insinuates that a possible poison is of necessity a poison. He thunders forth, "Thou fool, dost thou not see that all the things of God are good? Who makes them bad? The drunkard is not a reproach to the inn-keeper but rather to the inmost soul of man. Dost thou not see that the prohibitionist is pointing out the coward's way? Does not the temperate drinker give

a good account of his stewardship?"

There is a lunatic song against grocers who are accused of non-conformity,

"God made the wicked Grocer
For a mystery and a sign
That men might shun the awful shops
And go to inns to dine.

.....

He crams with cans of poisoned meat
Poor subjects of the King
And when they die by thousands
Why, he laughs like everything. "

Another equally foolish song, in several instalments, on being a vegetarian may be cited:

"I am silent in the Club,
I am silent in the Pub
I am silent in a bally peak in Darlen;
For I stuff away for life
Shoving peas in with a knife,
Because I am at heart a vegetarian."

Mr. Chesterton was opposed to woman suffrage. His views are seen in "WHAT'S WRONG WITH THE WORLD." In this book he gives his reasons for considering that a woman's place is in the home. In "A LADY M.P." we read his satire on women in public life in the lines here quoted:

"She wants a new England more bright and more clean
Where foul tap-room revelries never are seen.
And after the quarter-staff flies the quart-pot,
For she wants a new England where these things are not,
And our love of old England is vain in her sight
As the noise of blind drunkards that strive in the night,

For your God or dream or devil
You will answer, not to me.
Talk about the pews and steeples
And the Cash that goes therewith!
But the souls of Christian peoples....
Chuck it, Smith!

That "Chuck it" is just the answer that London cab-drivers would make to any piece of brag or humbug. One must realize that Mr. Chesterton is proud to call himself a Cockney. In the lines about the Shakespeare Memorial he uses the same method:

"Lord Lilac thought it rather rotten
That Shakespeare should be quite forgotten
And therefore got on a Committee
With several chaps out of the City
And Shorter and Sir Herbert Tree,
Lord Rothschild and Lord Rosebery,
And F. C. G. and Comyns Carr
Two dukes and a dramatic star,
Also a clergyman now dead;
And while the vain world careless sped
Unheeding the heroic name--
The souls most fed with Shakespeare's flame
Still sat unconquered in a ring,
Remembering him like everything.

"IN THE BACKWARD BOLSHIE" is found G. K. Chesterton's opinion of a Bolshevik. He claims that he is after all, a Victorian. His is a nineteenth-century dream, although he tried to make it a twentieth-century reality. This dream has now become in aspect, a nightmare, the insane optimism about the advantages of machinery. What seemed to us as a Five Years Hence Plan should have been called a Fifty Years

Ago Plan. For in Russia they are trying to create an economic system such as the Victorians evolved in England, turning that country into the workshop of the world and filling it with filthy tools and gloomy mechanics. Marx was more of a Victorian than Morris. He may not have been in reality a subject of the Queen, though it is not unlikely that he was. By extraction he was a German like Queen Victoria's husband and more remotely Queen Victoria herself. In origin he was a Jew, as was Queen Victoria's favourite Prime Minister, and several others. Towards the close of the Victorian period the Jews were at the peak of their power and influence. From the time they forced the War in Egypt to the time when they forced the Boer War.

In his condemnation of this latter outrage, Mr. Chesterton gave vent to the white heat of his scorn that flamed in the "Elegy in a Country Churchyard," the last, the perfect denunciation of a notorious misgovernment. "To the student of Chesterton it is interesting, for the fact that it marks one of the few occasions on which the bitterness in him completely overwhelmed laughter, even the laughter of mockery."

"The men that worked for England
They have their graves at home:
And bees and birds of England
About the cross can roam.

But they that fought for England,
Following a falling star,
Alas, alas for England
They have their graves afar.

And they that rule in England,
In stately conclave met,
Alas, alas for England
They have no graves as yet."

G. K. C. made a name for himself as a defender of the Boer Republics against our Imperial aggression--aggression prompted as all the world knows now, by the cupidity of a group of international money-kings who coveted the Transvaal mines.

That aroused the interest of the Progressives. But then he set out to bewilder them, afterwards to harass them and finally to disgust them by taking the part of the ordinary man against the expert, for the right of the ordinary man against the State, and above all for his right to rule his own family and his own property. This theory was preposterous coming from the lips of a democrat, but he added fuel to the flames by preaching "Catholicism, war and beer."

In the skit entitled "THE COMMUNISTS," Mr. Chesterton shows communism to be the climax of capitalism. Lord Macaulay hoped that the roofs and chimneys of a new Manchester might be seen in the wilds of Connamara. The Moscow Marxians hope

that the roofs and chimneys of a new Manchester may rise in the wilds of Siberia. The original Manchester men aimed at competition, but the Marxians desired combination, or the Combine of All Combines . The competition ended in a Combine but the Combine has not really developed into a Communistic State. Grades of unequal wages are found in Bolshevik Russia, and the rulers claim that it is only a temporary arrangement at this political stage, and that true, pure, perfect Communism will come in the future. Might it not be the Labor Party?

"There are two normal nuisances
That stir us late or soon
One is the man who wants the earth
The other wants the moon,
Choosing between these last and Jix
We much prefer the lunatics."

He put all that he stood for into his articles, but verse is clearer and more convincing than prose, and as has been said, he was a master of versification. A good summary of his Daily News Articles is found in "THE SECRET PEOPLE":

"Smile at us, pay us, pass us; but do not quite forget;
For we are the people of England, that never have spoken
yet.
There is many a fat farmer that drinks less cheerfully,
There is many a free French peasant who is richer and
sadder than we.
There are no folk in the whole world so helpless or so
wise.
There is hunger in our bellies, there is laughter in
our eyes;

You laugh at us and love us, both mugs and eyes are
Only you do not know us. For we have not spoken yet." ^{wet:}

In the stanzas that follow, a reference is made of the different wars that England has waged through the centuries from Bosworth to the present time, to the so-called Reformation in England with the spoliation of the monasteries, to the struggle against the "Divine Right of Kings," industrialism, and plutocracy. There rings a threat that a day of reckoning will come to England as it came to France and Russia.

Mr. Chesterton says that it is grimly significant that the Organ of Empire has already begun to call its Imperial policy by the cheerful name of "The Empire Merger." This type of combine which all freedom-loving people have condemned as a conspiracy, is now so up to date that it is considered quite a compliment to apply this commercial term instead of a political designation. Courtiers in the future, instead of saying "Your Majesty" will say "Your Monopoly," especially when addressing Moritz IV of the Historic House of Mond, by that time Emperor of the World State. The poem continues:

"The fine French kings came over in a flutter of flags
and dames.
We liked their smiles and battles, but we never could
say their names.
The blood ran red to Bosworth and the high French lords
went down;
There was naught but a naked people under a naked crown.

And the eyes of the King's Servants turned terribly
every way,
And the gold of the King's Servants rose higher
every day.
They burnt the homes of the shaven men, that had been
gent and kind,
Till there was no bed in a monk's house, nor food that
man could find.
The inns of God where no man paid, that were the wall
of the weak,
The King's Servants ate them all. And still we did
not speak.

And the face of the King's Servants grew greater than
the King:
He tricked them, and they trapped him, and stood round
him in a ring.
The new grave lords closed round him, that had eaten
the abbey's fruits,
And the men of the new religion, with their bibles in
their boots,
We saw their shoulders moving, to menace or discuss,
And some were pure and some were vile; but none took
heed of us.
We saw the King as they killed him, and his face was
proud and pale;
And a few men talked of freedom, while England talked
of ale.

A war that we understood not came over the world and
woke
Americans, Frenchmen, Irish; but we knew not the things
they spoke.
They talked about rights and nature and peace and the
people's reign:
And the squires, our masters, bade us fight; and scorned
us never again.
Weak if we be for ever, could none condemn us then;
Men call us serfs and drudges; men knew that we were men.
In foam and flame at Trafalgar, on Albuera plains,
We did and died like lions, to keep ourselves in chains
We lay in living ruins; firing and fearing not
The strange fierce face of the Frenchmen who knew for
what they fought,
And the man who seemed to be more than man we strained
against and broke;

And we broke our own rights with him. And still we
never spoke."
.....

In the following stanza Nemesis seems to sound the warning
that the social, moral, and economic evils of our day will
have an ending--but in what?

"We hear men speaking for us of new laws strong and sweet,
Yet is there no man speaketh as we speak in the street,
It may be we shall rise the last as Frenchmen rose the
first,
Our wrath come after Russia's wrath and our wrath be
the worst.
It may be we are meant to mark with our riot and our
rest
God's scorn for all men governing. It may be beer is
best,
But we are the people of England; and we have not spoken
yet.
Smile at us, pay us, pass us. But do not quite forget."

It is said that the controversy begun by Mr. Chesterton
in The Daily News, and continued in many newspapers and re-
views until the time of his death, has had and is having a
more marked influence on modern thought and tendencies than
any other journalism of our day.

Here is a piece of satire on the freedom given to young
people of the present time. It is styled "THE NEW FICTION."
Mr. Galsworthy seems to think that his young people should
have their fling.

"Little Blue-Fits has lost his wits,

And doesn't know where to find them;
Leave them alone and they'll come home,
And leave their tales behind them.

The remarkable tales, with remarkable sales,
And Bonnets and Bees in disorder;
For the Bonnets we view are exceedingly Blue,
And decidedly over the Border.

The foregoing lines might apply to the contention put forward by a girl of eighteen from the platform of Girton College, Cambridge, recently. "Youth finds church a bore-- and stays away from it."

This statement made the elderly delegates at the Modern Churchman's Conference sit up rigidly in their seats. The young girl's most telling passage was, "I don't think public worship has any attraction whatsoever for the young. Religion is supposed to express God through truth and beauty, we are told, but in this age of specialization, people turn to science, art, philosophy to satisfy these needs." One wonders what her least telling passage was. Certainly the fun began when the first staggering thunderbolt descended: "Youth Finds Church a Bore!"

"Doctor Major leaped to his feet and howled; Dean Inge bounded like a ball to the ceiling, at the star-shattering blasphemy that youth finds church a bore!!"

With regard to irreligion, some ideas are seen in "THE NEW FREETHINKER."

"John Grubby, who was short and stout
 And troubled with religious doubt,
 Refused about the age of three
 To sit upon the curate's knee;
 (For so the eternal strife must rage
 Between the spirit of the age
 And Dogma, which, as is well known,
 Does simply hate to be outgrown).

 Never did dream of hell or wrath
 Turn Viscount Grubby from his path;
 Nor was he bribed by fabled bliss
 To kneel to any world but this."

One of the most seathing of Mr. Chesterton's denunciations is pronounced against the votaries of modern paganism. Throughout antiquity, he says, the love of women and the love of land were closely connected so long as humanity was human, even when it was pagan, even when paganism was decadent. "But even the stink of decaying heathenism has not been so bad as the stink of decaying Christianity. The corruption of the best....."

Throughout antiquity men wallowed in the mere sexuality of a mythology of sex. They organized the most revolting abominations for the service of their temples; they made sensuality a part of their poetry.

In one way all this ancient sin was immeasurably superior, incomparably superior to the modern paganism. It is known to have been the cult of Reproduction. It was at least in accordance with the natural law. It was on the side of

life. It has been left to Christians to invent a new kind of worship of sex which is not even a worship of Life. It has been left to moderns to worship Lust and to forbid Fertility. To steep their souls in "the blood of men that might have been." The priests of Priapus and Cotytto will be more welcome at the eternal Gates than these neo-pagans. Mr. Chesterton writes in "TO THE BABE UNBORN":

"I think that if they gave me leave
Within the world to stand
I would be good through all the day
I spent in fairyland.

They should not hear a word from me
Of selfishness or scorn,
If only I could find the door
If only I were born."

Now is it not unnatural that this abnormal separation between sex and fruitfulness which even the pagans would have thought a perversion had been accompanied with a similar separation and perversion about the nature of the love of land? In both departments there is precisely the same fallacy, which can be stated. The reason why our contemporary countrymen do not understand what we mean by Property, is that they think of it only in the sense of money, in the sense of salary, in the sense of something which is immediately consumed, enjoyed and expended; something which gives momentary pleasure and vanishes. They cannot grasp the idea that we mean

by Property something that includes that pleasure incidentally; but begins and ends with something grander, worthier and more creative.

Another evil of the time, is graft and dishonesty in government officials, an example of which is dealt with in a poem that voices the poet's impression of the Marconi scandal, entitled "HUMAN NATURE: OR MARCONI MEMORIES."

A paper known as The Eye Witness was at first under the direction of Cecil Chesterton, Hilaire Belloc, and Gilbert Keith Chesterton. Later it became The New Witness with Cecil Chesterton, Gilbert Chesterton's brother, as the sole editor. For his patriotic deed in exposing the Marconi scandals, Cecil stood trial at Old Bailey, and had to pay a ruinous fine. The charge against the Marconi ministers was that they received a tip by a Government contractor, whose contract was at that time being considered or accepted by the Government. The very extraordinary monopoly which the Government then granted to the Marconi Company was, in fact, granted to its managing director, Mr. Godfrey Isaacs, the brother of Sir Rufus Isaacs, then the Attorney General. Mr. Chesterton published in the "New Witness" some verses, beginning:--

"I am so swift to seize affronts
My spirit is so high

Who-ever has insulted me
Some foreigner must die.

I made a claim for damage
(For The Times had called me "thief")
Against a paper in Alsace
A paper called "Le Juif".

And when the Morning Post unearthed
Some murders I'd devised
A Polish organ of finance
At once apologized.

.....I know it sounds confusing
But, as Mr. Lammle said,
The anger of a gentleman
Is boiling in my head.

The Marconi Scandal is fully outlined by Mr. Chesterton
in his Autobiography..... Mr. Godfrey Isaacs lost
his life in the Great War. He died a Catholic as did Cecil
Chesterton.

The Great War broke out and Cecil enlisted. The result
was that G. K. C. found himself in charge of a newspaper with
Mrs. Cecil Chesterton as his first assistant. He regarded
himself as Cecil's deputy. The latter, however, died at the
Front shortly after the Armistice was signed and Gilbert felt
that The New Witness had been left to him as a trust. The
idea behind the paper was "Distributism," a name coined by
Hilaire Belloc, but the idea is contained in "Rerum Novarum."
Mr. Chesterton said that he was proud to have been associated
with men who helped to defend such an ideal, to help on so

urgent a social need. To quote his own words:

"I only apologize for the mere chapter of accidents which has scrawled across their much more valuable script my own somewhat absurd monogram.

For in truth I write (a difficult feat for me) as I take up my pen to write this prefatory note on the selection from G. K.'s Weekly: for the very title recalls to me the blackest hour of humiliation. I remember through what agonies of reluctance and disgust I passed, before I was persuaded by my friends and business advisers to surmount this unfortunate sheet with my own initials."

And so The New Witness was succeeded by G. K.'s Weekly of which Mr. Chesterton remained in control until the time of his death. And now for the "MARCONI MEMORIES":

"Human nature is a bird
Whose complaint is often heard,
And will make demands of any legislature;
And you need not claim to be
Giving seven pence for three
It exceeds the wildest hopes of Human Nature.

Human nature it prefers
To be told of what occurs
Without suppressing any vital feature;
And when statesmen hold their peace
Until searched by the police,
It rasps the finer edge of human nature.

Human Nature, it is said,
Thinks investment should be made
By someone who has cash enough to pay it;
And that one who pouched the pay,
And had nothing more to say,
Need not go to South America to say it."

These and remaining stanzas of the poem speak for themselves.

In "THE PEACE OF PETROL" a reference is made to an English

peace arranged by American intervention:

"O the motors he can make!
(Sell the bugle, pawn the sword)
We'll be humbled for his sake,
Break our faith and keep our Ford.
Ford, Ford, Ford--till death remove him
To a place on which it's needless to remark,
And the rich whose minds are muddy, who consider honour
bloody,
Go down to their damnation in the dark."

Of the Great World War nothing that he has written surpasses the better scorn of his "WIFE OF FLANDERS," bidding her Teutonic victor,

"Ride on and prosper. You have lost your spurs."

Mr. Chesterton's first published volume, back in 1900 was a book of verse called "THE WILD KNIGHT"--unless, for the question seems undecided, it was that outlandish piece of nonsense "GREYBEARDS AT PLAY" with rhymes and illustrations both by G. K. C., issued the same year:

"Now we are old and wise and grey.
And shaky at the knees;
Now is the true time to delight
In picture books like these.

The joke would have been lost at any other epoch. The men of the eighteen nineties gave us queer things, the products of an intense boredom. Men like Wilde, Beardsley and others rollicked in the warm sunshine of the late Victorian period, when suicide, drunkenness, and vice were the order

of the day. To many people these years were actually dull. From 1885 to 1898 people believed in nothing but good manners, and the essence of good manners is to conceal a yawn, which Mr. Chesterton defines "a silent yell." Although Oscar Wilde had a vast reputation on the continent, he was looked upon by the British as a "compromise between a joke and a smell"; Literature endeavoured to express the inexpressible, and the result was "outraged grammar and many dots."

Literature at the end of the last century needed something in the nature of a tonic given to a patient dying of old age. The results of the movement for literary reform were energetic but the energy was convulsive. It is impossible to explain the success of the Yellow Book and its compilers save on the assumption that people could not read between the lines."

The attack made by Gilbert Chesterton began with nonsense rhymes and pictures, and was a surprising success from the outset. There is a marked difference between the author of nonsense verses and their illustrator; the former may give full vent to his ideas, but the latter must use some restraint. In "GREYBEARDS AT PLAY," Chesterton "took the bit between his teeth and bolted faster than Edward Lear had ever done." (Edward Lear was an English artist and author who wrote the "Book of Nonsense," 1846.) How can one refrain from gasping when con-

fronted with the antitheses in such stanzas as these:

"For me, as Wordsworth says,
The duties shine like stars;
I formed my uncle's character
Decreasing his cigars."

Or

"The Shopmen, when their souls were still,
Declined to open shops--
And cooks recorded frames of mind,
In sad and subtle shops."

The drawings that accompanied these gems ? were such as the lines deserved, as one may well surmise. They display an arresting incongruity and inconsistency, which is the essence of parody, combined with accuracy which is the indispensable characteristic of satire.

About a month after G. K. had made this assertion of his extreme old age in these words:

"I am, I think I have remarked (he had not)
Terrifically old."

he published "THE WILD KNIGHT AND OTHER POEMS," in testimony of his youth. He had for some years written more or less topical stanzas which appeared in "The Outlook" and in the "Speaker". "GREYBEARDS AT PLAY" was after all, just a gargauntuan sneer at the boredom of a decade; the second look was a more decided assault upon some tenets of its beliefs and an expression of the principles which mattered most.

Some of his utterances drove the reader to "intellectual desperation."

"There is one sin to call a green leaf grey,
Whereat the sun in heaven shuddereth;
There is one blasphemy for death to pray
For God alone knoweth the praise of death."

Or again in "THE WORLD'S LOVER,"

"I stood and spoke a blasphemy
Behold the summer leaves are green."

This was a defence of reality, crying to heaven for vengeance upon the realists. Chesterton also came out with his defence of the common man. Has there ever been anything like his method "since Herod made friends with Pontius Pilate?"

"Where shift in strange democracy
The million masks of God."

the grass, and all the small_er things in life, "things" in general, for he alone among modern poets, was not afraid to use the word.

If at one time he could only ".....feel vaguely thankful to the vast stupidity of things," on another occasion he spoke: "The whole divine democracy of things," a line that is a rebuke to the atheist, a profession of a political belief which is the fruit of a religious faith.

Chesterton sallied forth as a Crusader against the political and literary Turks who had unjustly come into

possession of a part of the legacy of a Christian people. We must not forget that the mark of a Crusader is his power of invigorating which he uses equally with regard to virtues and vices. One does not always realize the difference between a Crusader and a Christian. The former tries to prove his charity towards his enemy by making him a Christian, the latter, by putting him off the scene completely. The two methods are likely to give strangely similar results.

His productions are so fresh that they seem to spring from his vitality rather than from his intellect. At times a boisterous movement rather than coherence is in evidence, the boisterousness is unsupported by the sense of the words.

"So you have gained the golden crowns and grasped
the golden weather,
The kingdoms and the hemispheres that all men buy
and sell,
But I will lash the leaping drum and swing the
flaring feather,
For the light of seven heavens that are lost to me
like hell.

Here the stanzas run on with such a swing that the reader will not notice how meaningless they are.

Sometimes our subject's poetry has a very cheery ring. In lamenting the songlessness of modern life he suggests the following in his "CHORUS OF BANK CLERKS":

"Up, my lads, and lift the ledgers, sleep and ease are
o'er,
Hear the Stars of Morning Shouting "Two and Two are Four"

Though the creeds and realms are reeling, though the
sophists roar,
Though we weep and pawn our watches, two and two are four."

The "POST OFFICE HYMN" begins as follows:

"O'er London our letters are shaken like snow,
Our wires o'er the world like the thunderbolts go;
The news that may marry a maiden in Sark
Or kill an old lady in Finsbury Park.

(Chorus with a swing of glee and vim)

Or kill an old lady in Finsbury Park."

The joke becomes huge, indeed, when one imagines the actual singing of the songs.

The following is entitled "IRRESPONSIBLE OUTBREAK."

One who having completed a book of enormous length on Chaucer feels himself freed from all bonds of intellectual self-respect and proposes to do no work for an indefinite period.

"They babble on of Babylon
They tire me out with Tyre
And Sidon putting side on
I do not much admire.
But the little town Bob-Up-And-Down
That lies beyond the Blee
Along the road our Fathers rode
O that's the town for me.

Now Huddersfield in Shuddersfield
And Hull is nearly Hell,
Where a Daisy would go crazy
Or a Canterbury Bell.
The little town Bob-Up-And-Down
Above is fair and free
For it can't be found above the ground
O that's the place for me."

It seems that G. K. would hide from himself the picture of modern civilization and go back to the simple life of Chaucer's time.

To return to "THE FLYING INN," the wandering revellers find safety from their pursuers in a lovely part of Lord Ivywood's estate, which they reached by an underground tunnel, and to their camp comes Quoodle, Lord Ivywood's dog to make one of the company and this beast is more vividly described than many of the minor human characters. It is for him that Pump writes what was the funniest of doggy songs:

"They haven't got no noses,
The fallen sons of Eve;
Even the smell of roses
Is not what they supposes;
But more than mind discloses
And more than men believe.

And Quoodle here discloses
All things that Quoodle can,
They haven't got no noses
They haven't got no noses
And goodness only knows
The Noselessness of man."

In "Man Alive" Innocent Smith really believes that Professor Eames wishes to die, but he only says quite cheerfully, "Let us eat, drink and be merry for today we die, only let us not come to that conclusion until tomorrow." This idea is expressed in "A BALLADE OF SUICIDE."

"The gallows in my garden, people say,
Is new and neat and adequately tall.
I tie the noose on in a knowing way
As one that knots his necktie for a ball;

But just as all the neighbours--on the wall--
Are drawing a long breath to shout "Hurray!"
The strangest whim has seized me....After all
I think I will not hang myself to-day.

To-morrow is the time I get my pay--
My uncle's sword is hanging in the hall--
I see a little cloud all pink and grey--
Perhaps the Rector's mother will not call--
I fancy that I heard from Mr. Gall
That mushrooms could be cooked another way--
I never read the works of Juvenal--
I think I will not hang myself to-day.

In the third stanza of first "SONG OF EDUCATION" the
poet chants:

"The people lived on the land, the land,
They potted about and prayed;
They built a cathedral here and there
Or went on a small crusade;
Till the bones of Becket were bundled out
For the fun of a fat White Czar,
And we all became, in spoil and flame,
The intelligent lot we are.

Chorus-- The intelligent lot, the intuitive lot,
The infallible lot we are.

O Warwick woods are green, are green,
But Warwick trees can fall:
And Birmingham grew so big, so big,
And Stratford stayed so small.
Till the hooter howled to the morning lark
That sang to the morning star;
And we all became, in freedom's name,
The fortunate chaps we are

Chorus-- The fortunate chaps, felicitous chaps,
The fairy-like chaps we are."

Mr. Chesterton has made a survey of the roads that
lead into the wilderness. For such a task he had a perfect
eye. It is surprising how under his mild gaze, and no

satirist ever had a milder eye, what seemed to be a firm straight road begins--as it were--to shift guiltily, and comes to an end in a ridiculous uncertainty, leading nowhere, guiding no one. To misuse his own phrase:

"And so the roads they twist and squirm
If I may be allowed the term:"

and a thing that has been observed through Mr. Chesterton's searching eye scarcely ever assumes the guise that men once thought it had.

"O Genius of Business! O marvellous brain,
Come in place of the priests and the warriors to reign!
O Will to Get On that makes everything go--
O Hustle! O Pep! O Publicity! O!
Shall I spend three and sixpence to purchase the book,
Which we all can pick up on the bookstall and look?
Well, it may appear strange, but I think I shall not,
For the back of the cover will tell you the plot.

-0-0-0-

CHAPTER IV

RELIGIOUS POETRY

For God regathers his ancient rights
And heaven itself has newer sights,
Happier in all its harbour-lights
When all our ships come home.

RELIGIOUS POETRY

For a new light in a new silence shone
From some new nameless quarter of the sky.

Some terms are difficult to define, and mystic is one of these. The dictionary tells us that a mystic is one who has the faculty of believing in spiritual apprehensions of the truth beyond human understanding, a definition that does not seem adequate; the fact is that it is something more and at the same time something less than this. Something more because the essentials of mysticism have their resting place in the divine, and something less because to the mystic there is no question of grasping the meaning of what he experiences--he accepts it as does the child his daily nourishment. In every human soul there is an innate love of beauty and a yearning after perfection which leads to a desire for ultimate Perfection--the Deity, a yearning that has led certain rare and privileged souls into that middle realm of golden peace whose light and glory are reflections from the face of the Divine. No strange country this to Catholics who, though they may look with wistful eyes towards the mountain of all delight, know that it is not for them--or at least for the vast majority of them--"to pierce beyond the mysterious boundary where limpid streams fall

silently and solitude fills the soul with an infinite delight." Nor are mystics strangers to those who have walked --though at a distance--with St. John of the Cross, stood spellbound in the presence of St. Teresa, or fled with Francis Thompson "down the nights and down the days." Indeed mystics are, like angels, our dear familiar friends and like them also, too little regarded.

Even in his youth Chesterton became aware of this mystic sense and began to cultivate it. He was a man of deep spiritual perceptions and for these, he strove to find expression through the medium of his love for nature, and his appreciation of all the good gifts of a bountiful Creator. He contended in his soul against the tyranny of the senses and the influence of strong emotions. He was a devoted husband, happy in his domestic life, but disturbing physical emotions were by his design to have no place in his life. By self-denial, and the subjugation of all sensual desires, could he win the goal on which his eyes were set.

The strain of mysticism which was the literary as well as the spiritual inheritance of Gilbert Chesterton, had a far birth. Long before the Christian era this mystic type of thought found place in Greece and Egypt. Much of mysticism is found in Plato, and in The Symposium, Socrates showed his belief in the doctrine that there is a natural progression

from beauty of form and of body to that of mind and spirit and thus to the beauty of the Author of all things beautiful.

Was it given to Chesterton to see, as did the sad and tear-stung eyes of Frances Thompson,

"Christ walking on the water
Not of Genesareth, but Thames"?

A close examination of G. K. Chesterton's poetry will not discover any marked example of the devotion that can be remarked in other English writers. He was not the poet of the Passion in the same sense as was Lionel Johnson. His verse carries no such tribute to the Cross as that of Blessed Robert Southwell S. J. or Crashaw. Nevertheless his improvisation represented a new departure in Catholic poetry.

The atmosphere he created is entirely different from that of Patmore or Frances Thompson, because his muse is more hilarious. The earlier poets, especially Patmore, were somewhat timid about "singing the songs of Sion in a strange land;" G. K. C. assumes a militant attitude. "Instead of withdrawing from an unsympathetic crowd he mingles cheerfully with it." The Catholic poets of the nineteenth century did not dare to show their colours in the midst of an heretical environment, and tended to become "precious." But G. K. made himself right at home (if I may use the expression) and launched into journalism. In

the rough democratic school of Fleet Street--the London newspaper quarter--he served his term of apprenticeship. Reading many of his lighter verses, one can hear the rumble of city traffic and the shouts of newsboys selling evening papers.

That is not the atmosphere in which one would expect to find religious poetry. But, surprising as it may seem, Mr. Chesterton's achievement was to bring Catholic doctrine from its hiding places into the open. Of a fourteenth century writer it was said that "he saw Christ walking in English fields in the garb of an English labourer". It can be said of Chesterton that he saw Christ amid the din and bustle of London streets. He manifests the jubilant and militant attitude of Catholicism in England today, an attitude resembling that of schoolboys let loose for a holiday in the country. It is the springtime for Catholics in England and the bleak winter days of their misery under penal servitude are forgotten, and with them, is forgotten the timid, inferiority-complex attitude towards the outside world which those conditions fostered.

This frame of mind is reflected in a little poem which he wrote in 1922 on the occasion of his reception into the Church;

"After one moment when I lowered my head
And the whole world turned over and came upright
And I came out where the old road shone white,

I walked the ways and heard what all men said
Forests of tongues like autumn leaves unshed,
Being not unlovable but strange and light,
Old riddles and new creeds not in despite,
But softly, as men smile about the dead."

He returned to his former haunts and found all the world changed.

It is the knowledge of a spiritual renaissance, and of the freshness and vitality of what is sometimes called the Old Religion and the glory of a new existence, that gives his poetry its peculiar tone. As a result, his mind dwells more on the Nativity and the Resurrection than on the Cross. But there is one exception which must be accounted for.

It must be borne in mind above all things, that Mr. Chesterton is a romanticist. That is one phase of the youthfulness that one remarks in him. He has all the child's delight in stories of knights and dragons, fairies and witches. This is part of his message to the dull, unimaginative and selfish creed of modern materialism.

In "A FAIRY TALE" he says:

"All things grew upwards foul and fair;
The great trees fought and beat the air
With monstrous wings that would have flown;
But the old earth clung to her own
Holding them back from heavenly wars
Though every flower sprang at the stars."

He can find the wonderful and beautiful everywhere.

Such a man naturally champions the age of romance. His is

"THE SONG OF DEFEAT" in which he flung his defiant challenge at the Plutoerats that were wielding the sceptre triumphantly in English Politics and journalism. We are not now concerned with the immediate cause of this outburst. All that we need know is that the lines are echoes of the Boer War, when the writer was, as he says, "twenty and odd years old".

Here is the opening stanza:

"The line breaks and the guns go under
The lords and the lackeys ride the plain;
I draw deep breaths of the dawn and thunder,
And the whole of my heart grows young again.
For our chiefs said 'Done,' and I did not deem it;
Our seers said 'Peace,' and it was not peace.
Earth will grow worse till men redeem it,
And wars more evil, ere all wars cease,
But the old flags reel and the old drums rattle
As once in my life they throbbed and reeled.
I have found my youth in the lost battle,
I have found my heart on the battle field,
For we that fight till the world is free,
We are not easy in victory;
We have known each other too long my brother
And fought each other the world and we."

"A SONG OF DEFEAT" points out something that is the basis of Christian philosophy, and of the philosophy of the man under consideration. Besides, it gives us, as does nothing else in his writings, the essence of his idea of the Cross. It is the "Song" that shows us his conception of Calvary. Because this is worth some further consideration, a little more will be said and quoted on the subject. It has been said that the philosophy of the poem is the foundation of

the philosophy of Christendom, and perhaps to the paganism which finally adopted Christianity. From Mr. Chesterton's viewpoint the two great epics of ancient times, Homer's *Illyad* and Virgil's *Aenead*, are based on this idea. In "THE EVERLASTING MAN" he tells us that the *Illyad* is so conceived as to show that Homer's own sympathies and certainly those of the reader are on the side of the conquered rather than on that of the conqueror. And this is a sentiment which runs through all poetry and increases even as the poetical origin itself disappears.....The tale of the end of Troy will never end; for it will echo and re-echo through the ages "immortal as our hopelessness and our hope." Troy, standing, was but a speck on the horizon that might have stood nameless for all time. But Troy, falling, has been caught up in the flames and hung "in an immortal instant of annihilation;" and, because it was destroyed, the memory thereof will endure.

He traces the same idea in that epic of Virgil's in which the Latin poet tells the tale of the fugitive from Troy who laid the foundations of Rome. "The whole of the great patriotic epic is in a very peculiar sense founded upon the fall of Troy; that is, upon an avowed pride in Troy although it had fallen." In attributing to the Trojans

the origin of his beloved race and republic, he initiated what we call the Trojan tradition which runs through the history of the Middle Ages. The first hint of it is seen in the impressive lines of Homer about Hector. But Virgil from it evolved not merely a classic but a legend. And it was a legend of the almost divine dignity that belongs to the vanquished. This was one of the traditions that did truly prepare the world for the coming of Christianity and particularly of Christian chivalry. This was one of the props of the social structure through the endless defeats of the Dark Ages and the struggles against the barbarians, out of which our conception of knighthood had its beginning. "It is the moral attitude of the man with his back to the wall."

The truth is that Western, that is, Roman civilization was founded according to this legend by a defeated man, and that by this fact it is closely related to the religion of the Cross. As Imperial Rome was established by a man who had been vanquished, so Catholic Rome could trace its beginning to the Word made Flesh Who was crucified on Mount Calvary. And as Chesterton found the ideal of chivalry at the basis of European history so he discovered it at the roots of English history.

At the conclusion of the "EVERLASTING MAN" there is a chapter entitled "The Five Deaths of the Faith" of which a part may be summarized as follows: "This is the final fact, and it is the most extraordinary of all. The faith has not only often died but it has often died of old age. It has not only often been killed but it has often died a natural death; in the sense of coming to a natural and necessary end." History shows that it has outlived the tragedy of the most atrocious and the most widespread persecutions, from the shock of the Diocletian violence to the horror of the French Revolution. But it has a more remarkable and even a more eerie longevity; it has held its own not only in war but in peace. "It has not only died often but degenerated often and decayed often; it has survived its own weakness and even its own surrender." It is not necessary to repeat what is so evident about the beauty of the end of Christ in its union of youth and death.....

The gist of the whole matter is this that the tradition of the Cross is at the root of Imperial Rome and of the Christian religion, of triumph through suffering, of victory through failure, of heroism shown by surrender, of weakness overcoming strength. At the outset one might think that our poet was too jubilant with the thought of

combat, too conscious of the resurrection of the Church at the present time, to give due emphasis to the doctrine of the Cross. But on closer examination one can see that he battles as one of those crusaders who bore the Cross upon their breasts, and that the marvel of this resurrection lies for him precisely in the fact that it follows what seemed to be the final closing of the tomb.

If anyone doubt whether Mr. Chesterton stress sufficiently the Tragedy of Calvary and see the true significance of the Cross, let him consider those words in the chapter of the "EVER-LASTING MAN" just quoted, where he shows us that the central idea in the Holy Gospels is the last scene of Golgotha.

When we think of G. K. C. we seem to hear his gusty laughter and to see one whose ample proportions and whose connection with the good-fellowship of Fleet Street would seem to dissociate him from any ideas of mysticism. But another picture can be conjured up by the passages just summarized, and it is that of a most humble and faithful son of the Church inclining reverently before the Cross.

In the first chapter of "The Innocence of G. K. Chesterton" by Gerald Bullett, one reads that Chesterton's mirth is like a gale out of Heaven, a cleansing wind, a hurricane of humorous commonsense. He, like everyone else, has his moments of frivolity, and these moments have their place in his writings. But

his usual frame of mind is one not of frivolity but of cheerfulness. It is at once the genial happiness of the reveller and the awful gaiety of one who rides gladly to battle.

There were few things that appealed to his imaginative mind in so striking a manner as the beauty of the English country-side. One cannot repeat too often that the England of History is an England almost entirely rural. The industrial England of the last hundred years is a parasitic and and baneful excrescence threatening the very life of the tree. Industrialism may boast its Puritan descent, and welcome for Puritanism, as Mr. Chesterton has so often reminded us, is also foreign to the true English tradition. Ever since the so-called Reformation, the tradition has been lame and halting, because spiritually starved. Its malady stands out in the pages of Dickens.

Our poet once remarked to his wife that he would like to see pictures of the Christ Child leaping about the meadows of Bethlehem, plashing through the streams and laughing with joy at His Own creation. I think that He would have been glad to join in the pranks of the boy Chesterton in English meadows, and that the Virgin Mother would have had a smile for them both. It would seem that G. K. had spent his life romping with the Divine Child.

A friend of Mr. Chesterton's declares that the first

time he saw him was in a room of the Pharos Club, Henrietta Street, Strand about 1900. He was drawing pictures with coloured chalk for a small boy. For the greater part of the time they were bending over the work with marked concentration, but once in a while they gave vent to roars of hilarious laughter.

The fun and glory of the world ravished our subject with delight. To see the trees and the grass growing, the water flowing; to see the sun, moon and stars that God at creation had flung into the spacious firmament; to feel the driving sleet and rain in his face, and then to have all that grandeur "merely as a background, a frame for crowds and crowds of wonderful living people," always seemed to him a stupendous miracle. For a time when he was passing from boyhood to manhood, he felt that it was the only miracle. He had always held beliefs deep down in his heart to match this more than belief, this realization of the wonders of God in the secular universe.

A saint is one who is always aware of the presence of God. Was it given to G. K. C. to have attained this continuous awareness of God? Let us hope that it will some day be acknowledged. It is certain that all his life he saw the marvelous power of God revealed in common things.

In the little poem "THE FISH" this thought is revealed:

"Dark the sea was: but I saw him,
One great head with goggle eyes,
Like a diabolic cherub
Flying in those fallen skies.

.....

For I saw that finny goblin
Hidden in the abyss untrod;
And I knew there can be laughter
On the secret face of God."

In a volume entitled "THE NEW JERUSALEM," Mr. Chesterton described his visit to the Holy Land at Christmas time and portrays with an arresting realism, the scenes that were most significant to him.

He says that almost any traveller could choose from among innumerable things that he has looked at, the few things that he has really seen. He means the things that come to one with a strange clearness; so that he actually realizes what they are. He can believe in them although he has seen them, we might almost say. There is no rule about this realization; it seems to come at random; and a person to whom it comes can speak only for himself without trying to make a critical comparison with others. In this sense he says that the Church of the Nativity at Bethlehem contains something indescribable, yet forcing one to attempt a description. The church is entered through a door so small that it might truly be called

a hole, in which many have seen a symbol of the idea of humility. It is also said that the wall was pierced in this way to prevent a camel from coming in to disturb divine service, but even that explanation would only recall the same idea through the parable of the needle's eye. It is more likely that it was to keep out more dangerous "animals" than camels, as, for instance, Turks. It is clear that the whole church has been turned into a stronghold, windows are bricked up and walls thickened in some or all of its thousand years of religious strife. In the blank spaces above the little doorway hung in olden times that strange mosaic of the Magi which once saved the holy place from destruction, in the strange interval between the fall of Rome and the rise of Islam. For when the Persians who had devastated Jerusalem rode out in triumph to the village of Bethlehem, they saw above the door a picture in coloured stone, an image of themselves. They were following a strange star and worshipping an unknown Child. A Christian artist, following some ancient Eastern tradition that contained an eternal truth, had drawn the Three Wise Men with the long robes and high head-dresses of Persia. On entering one sees that the church is somewhat dark, but can distinguish two rows of towering pillars, and beyond them, at the other end

of the church beside the altar is the dark stairway that descends under the canopies of rock to the stable where Christ was born. How different was the poor shelter in which the Saviour was presented to the wondering eyes of the humble shepherds.

In the poems on the Nativity, as in all true religious poetry the human note is not suppressed but illuminated. There is the consciousness that the "Desired of Nations" has come to dwell with us.

"A word came forth from Galilee, a word like to a star,
It climbed and rang and blessed and burnt wherever
 brave hearts are;
A word of sudden, secret hope, of trial and increase,
Of wrath and pity fused in one, of passion kissing
 peace.

In yet another poem he used the phrase "passionate peace," which perhaps more than any other is the keynote of his own religious poetry. "And no writer of our time has written anything more impressive, more genuine, more soul-stirring in this most difficult field." With unfeigned sincerity he wrote with the courage of his convictions what he believed most passionately, in the face of a mostly unbelieving world. He had found the pearl of great price--the Catholic faith--the one factor that could dispel the darkness of the modern world.

"Stop softly, under snow or rain

To find the place where men can pray;
The way is all so very plain
That we may lose the way.
Oh, we have learnt to peer and pore
On tortured puzzles from our youth
We know all labyrinthine lore,
We are the three wise men of yore,
And we know all things but the truth."

The same thought is seen in Joyce Kilmer's "Folly." It is fortunate for the cause of literature that the poetry of G. K. Chesterton has the superior qualities which only an artist in words can realize. In one of Paul Claudel's letters to Jacques Riviere, he says that our sturdy champion stands with Patmore, in fulfilling the task of restoring a "Catholic imagination and sensibility; which have been withered and parched for four centuries." This rejuvenated sensibility must feel the joy and pain, exaltation and lowliness which constitute the supernatural paradox of Catholicism. Mr. Chesterton gives expression to these everlasting paradoxes in his "HYMN FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT," as well as in those arresting early lines to "THE DONKEY."

The first and the last stanzas of "A HYMN FOR THE CHURCH MILITANT" are quoted here:

"Great God, that bowest sky and star,
Bow down our towering thoughts to Thee,
And grant us in a faltering war
The firm feet of humility.

.....

Cleanse us from ire of creed or class,
The anger of the idle kings;
Sow in our souls, like living grass,
The laughter of all lowly things."

One is tempted to ask why any poet should think of writing a poem on such a lowly beast, but listen to these lines on "THE DONKEY":

"The tattered outlaw of the earth,
Of ancient crooked will;
Starve, scourge, deride me: I am dumb,
I keep my secret still.

Fools! For I also had my hour;
One far fiercer hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet."

But it is the glorious anniversary of the Nativity that he commemorates over and over in his "CHRISTMAS SONG FOR THE THREE GUILDS" in the tenderness of that scene where addressing the Holy Babe he says in "THE NATIVITY":

"And thou, that art still in thy cradle,
The sun being crown for thy brow,
Make answer, our flesh, make an answer,
Say, whence art thou come--who art thou?
Art thou come back on earth for our teaching
To train or to warn--?
Hush--how may we know?--knowing only
A child is born."

The realism of the vision presented in "A CHRISTMAS CAROL" is inspiring:

"The Christ-child stood at Mary's knee,
His hair was like a crown,
And all the flowers looked up to Him
And all the stars looked down."

Through days of almost universal depression and pessimism G. K. was an optimist whom we can imagine repeating:

"Sing joyfully to God, all the earth: serve the Lord with gladness. Alleluia." (Ps. 99)

But his optimism was neither easy nor inexpensive, there were thorns among the roses:

"The world grows terrible and white
And blinding white the breaking day:
We walk bewildered in the light,
For something is too large for sight,
And something much too plain to say."

In a spirit of confidence and faith in God's providence, he wrote one of his greatest poems, "THE HOUSE OF CHRISTMAS"

"Here we have battle and blazing eyes,
And chance and honour and high surprise,
But our homes are under miraculous skies
Where the yule tale was begun."

The arresting characteristic of Mr. Chesterton's optimism was his evident belief that in the end good would prevail over evil, and his dogged determination to do his part in making it prevail at all hazards. The fighting, crusading attitude is obvious through all his work. With his spirit of militancy is seen the irrepressible cheerfulness of his disposition. He was not only one of the greatest wits of his time; he was also the "laughing philosopher" vowed from childhood to the "blood-red banner of joy." He gives expression to this happy frame of mind in the last stanza of "THE WISE MEN."

"Hark! Laughter like a lion wakes

To roar to the resounding plain,
And the whole heaven shouts and shakes,
For God Himself is born again,
And we are little children walking
Through the snow and rain."

He anathemized puritanical self-glorification, conceit
in one's virtuous acts, and a lack of toleration and mercy
towards those who have "missed the way." His condemnation
is voiced in the "BALLADE d'UNE GRANDE DAME" which reads as
follows:

"Heaven shall forgive you Bridge at dawn,
The clothes you wear--or do not wear--
And Ladies' Leap-frog on the lawn
And dyes and drugs and petits verres.
Your vicious things shall melt in air....
.....But for the Virtuous Things you do,
The Righteous Work, the Public Care,
It shall not be forgiven you.

.....

Though your sins cried to--Father Vaughan,
These desperate you could not spare
Who steal, with nothing left to pawn;
You caged a man up like a bear
For ever in a jailer's care
Because his sins were more than two....
.....I know a house in Hoxton where
It shall not be forgiven you.

Envoi

Princess, you trapped a guileless Mayor
To meet some people that you knew....
When the last trumpet rends the air
It shall not be forgiven you."

With regard to the return to religion, Mr. Chesterton
tells us that in the days when Huxley and Herbert Spencer and

the Victorian agnostics were trumpeting as a final truth the Darwinian theory, it seemed to thousands of simple people almost impossible the religion should survive. It is all the more ironic that it has not only survived them all, but it seems the only real example of the Survival of the Fittest.

It so happens that it does really and truly fit in with the theory offered by Darwin which was something totally different from most of the theories held by Darwinians. This real original theory of Darwin has since very largely broken down in the field of biology and botany; but it does actually apply to this particular argument in the field of religious history. The recent re-emergence of our religion is a survival of the fittest as Darwin meant it, and not as popular Darwinism meant it, so far as it meant anything.

Religion has returned, because all the various forms of scepticism that tried to take its place, and do its work, have by this time tied themselves into such knots that they cannot do anything.....There is not one of the popular forms of scientific scepticism, or determinism that does not end in total paralysis, with regard to the practical conduct of human life.....The work of the sceptic for the past hundred years has indeed been very like the vain fury of some primeval monster: eyeless, mindless, merely destroying and

devouring, a giant worm eating into the vitals of a world that he could not even see; a benighted and beastly life, unaware of its own cause and of its own destiny. But man has taken to himself again his own weapons; will and worship and the view of the scheme of creation; and we are once more in the morning of the world.

That materialism is nothing but a hideous nightmare people have begun to realize, and hope for better things. In the last stanza of the poem "NIGHTMARE," our author says:

"He that returns, He that remains the same,
Turned the round real world, His iron vice;
Down the grey garden paths a bird called twice,
And through three doors mysterious daylight came"

showing the religious tenor of the poet's outlook.

That the spirit of the Middle Ages may return is the hope of this Great Champion of Medievalism which he expresses in "THE HUMAN TREE":

"Thou art still, our Father, we
Fain would have thee nod.
Make the skies as blood below thee,
Though thou slay us, we shall know thee.
Answer us, O God!

'Show thine ancient fame and thunder,
Split the stillness, lest we wonder
Art thou there at all?'
But I saw him there alone,
Standing stiller than a stone
Lest a moth should fall."

An abiding proof of the great spirituality and universal

charity of our illustrious Christian minstrel is given in
"A HYMN" which is quoted here:

"O God of earth and altar,
Bow down and hear our cry,
Our earthly rulers falter,
Our people drift and die;
The walls of Gold entomb us,
The swords of scorn divide,
Take not thy thunder from us,
But take away our pride."

Finally from Mr. Chesterton's religious poetry it is
said that we can best judge the reality of his poetic impulse,
for here, knowing that affectation would be almost indecent,
he has expressed what he had to express with a care denied to
most of his other works. In one of his essays, G. K. C.
exults in that matchless phrase of Vaughan "high humility."
He has both adapted and adopted this quality, and the results
are wonderful. In "THE WISE MEN" occurs this stanza:

"The Child that was ere worlds began
(....We need but walk a little way,
We need but see a latch undone....)
The Child that played with moon and sun
Is playing with a little hay."

The superb antithesis leaves one struggling against that
involuntary little gasp which is a reader's first tribute to
a fine thought. Our author would be a great hymn writer, if
he would. One of his poems, in fact, has found its way into
The English Hymnal, where it competes (if one may use the word
of a sacred song) with the "Recessional" for the favour of con-

gregations. If we take a glance at a few of the hymns, we shall find that they share certain obvious qualities: bold imagery, the vocabulary of conflict, an attitude of humility that is very nearly also one of great pride, and certain tricks of style. And when we look through Chesterton's poems generally, we shall find that these are exactly the qualities they possess.

When the Great War broke out, at the beginning of August 1914, everything seemed changed. No one living can say what its permanent effects on literature will be, but one thing is certain: nothing will remain the same. We have already learned to view each other with different eyes. For better or for worse, old animosities and party cleavages have given way to unforeseen combinations. To assert that we have grown better would be untrue. But it might reasonably be argued that the innate generousness of the British people has been vitiated by its childlike trust in its journalists and the men who own them....."Those of us who had not the fortune to escape the Press by service abroad, especially those of us who derived our living from it, came to loath its misrepresentation of the English people. There seemed no end to the nauseous vomits of undigested facts and dishonourable prejudices that came pouring out in daily streams. Then we came

to realize, as never before, the value of such men as Chesterton.".....But, unfortunately for us all, G. K. C. fell seriously ill in the early period of the war and was in a critical state for many months. But not before he had published a magnificent resantation--for it is no less--of all those bitternesses which, in their sum, had very nearly caused him to hate the British. It is a poem, "BLESSED ARE THE PEACE-MAKERS."

"Of old with a divided heart
I saw my people's pride expand,
Since a man's soul is torn apart
By mother earth and fatherland."

When we read this poem, with its proclamation of a faith restored, Chesterton's temporary absence from the field of letters appears even more lamentable. For even before his breakdown he had given other signs of a resurrection..... He has been throughout his career essentially a crusader. He fought for the Holy Sepulchre and gained it.....One thing is true of all crusaders, they are not necessarily Christians. And there is that about Chesterton which sometimes makes one wonder whether, after all, he is not "a child of the French Revolution" in a sense he himself does not suspect. He has cursed the barren fig-tree of modern religious movements. But there comes a suspicion that he denies too much; that from between these supple sentences and those too plausible arguments

one may catch a glimpse of the features of a mocking spirit. Chesterton has given us the keenest enjoyment, and he has provoked thought, even in the silly atheist. We all owe him gratitude, but no two readers of his works are likely to agree as to the causes of their gratitude. That, in itself, is a tribute. Wherefore let it be understood that in writing this study I have been speaking entirely for myself, and if any man think one misguided, inappreciative, hypercritical, frivolous, or anything else, why he is welcome.

"Behold, the crowning mercies melt,
The first surprises stay;
And in my dross is dropped a gift
For which I dare not pray:
That a man grow used to grief and joy
But not to night and day."

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CHAPTER V

LOVE POEMS

If you befriend, or I befriend,
The strength is in us twain,
And good things end and bad things end,
And you and I remain.

LOVE POEMS

"Marriage is a duel unto death which no man of honour should decline."

In his autobiography Mr. Chesterton tells of his ideal home life and happy childhood. What he found wonderful about childhood was that everything in it was a wonder. It was not merely a world full of miracles; it was a miraculous world. What gave him this shock was almost anything that he really recalled and not the things that he thought most worth recalling. "Herein it differs from the other great thrill of the past, all this is connected with first love and the romantic passion, for that, though poignant in the same degree, always comes to a point; it is narrow like a rapier piercing the heart, but the other is like a hundred windows opening in all directions. A man does not generally forget his wedding-day; especially such a highly humorous wedding-day as was Mr. Chesterton's." His family remembers against him a few familiar legends, about the missing of trains, the losing of baggage, and even more eccentric occurrences. It is said that he stopped on the way to buy a glass of milk in one shop and a revolver with cartridges in another. Some considered these as queer presents for the bridegroom to give himself; if the bride had known less of him, she might have considered him as a suicide or a murderer.

or worst of all, a teetotaler. They seemed to him, the most natural things in the world. He writes: "I did not buy the pistol to murder myself or my wife: I never was really modern; I bought it because it was the great adventure of my youth, with a general notion of protecting her from the pirates doubtless infesting the Norfolk Broads, to which we were bound, where, after all, there is still a suspiciously large number of families with Danish names." People may call it childish, but the ritual partaking of a glass of milk was a reminiscence of childhood. He stopped at that particular dairy because he had always drunk a glass of milk there when walking with his mother in his infancy. And it seemed to him a fitting ceremonial to unite the two great relations of a man's life.

We have read countless pages about love brightening the sun and making the flowers more beautiful. It is true in one sense; it changes the world; but the baby lives in an unchanging world; the man feels that it is he that has changed. "He has changed long before he comes near the great and glorious trouble of the love of woman; and that has in it something novel and crucial; crucial in the true sense of being as near as Cana to Calvary. In the latter case, what is loved becomes instantly what may be lost."

"Man through Love's gate, as through Death's gate
Goeth alone and cometh not back again....."

The lady of his delight seemed to him strange music which her minstrel might take a lifetime to master. He looked upon marriage as "a duel unto death which no man of honour should decline." This chivalrous knight could sing to his beloved;

"O long light hands and curled brown hair
And eyes where sits a naked soul:
Dare I even then draw near and burn
My fingers in the aureole."

And when she had grown older his wondering heart could cry:

"That I who saw your youth's bright page
A rainbow change from robe to robe,
Might see you on this early globe,
Crowned with the silver crown of age."

In "A MARRIAGE BELL" he expresses his unchanging devotion as follows:

"Why should we reek of gun and groan,
While we two ride together?
The triple thunders of the throne
Would be but stormy weather.

For us the last great fight shall roar,
Upon the ultimate plains,
And we shall turn and tell once more,
Our love in English lanes."

Of the institution called the private house or home, the shell and organ of the family, Mr. Chesterton says that only by the hypocritical ignoring of a huge fact can anyone contrive to talk of "free love," as if love were a trivial act like lighting a cigarette, or whistling a tune. Suppose whenever a man lit a cigarette, a towering spectre arose from the rings

of smoke and followed him everywhere as a hugh slave. Suppose whenever a man whistled a tune he "drew an angel down" and had to walk about forever with a seraph on a leash. These cataclysmic visions are but faint parallels to the momentous consequences that Nature has attached to sex; and it is perfectly plain at the beginning that man cannot be a free lover; he is either a traitor or a slave. The second element that creates the family is that its consequence, though gargantuan, are gradual; the cigarette produces only an infantile monster, the song only a child-like seraph. Thence arises the necessity for some prolonged system of co-operation; and thence arises the family in its full educational significance.

Reminiscing, our author speaks of his first meeting with his future wife as follows:

"The secretary of the debating-club always proved her efficiency by entirely refusing to debate.....She had a cousin who was interested in the Celtic fairy tales that were loose in the neighbourhood; and one day she came back glowing with the news that Willie Yeats had cast her horoscope.....and told her that she was especially under the influence of the moon. I happened to mention this to a sister of the secretary, who had just returned to the family circle, and she told me in the most normal and unpretentious tone that she hated the moon."

He says that he conversed with the same lady several times afterwards and found that this was a really honest statement of the fact. On the other hand she admired productive things like fields and gardens. She was interested in gardening; in that quaint cockney atmosphere she would have been as

willing to choose farming as an avocation, in the same wayward frame of mind; she actually practised a religion. It was inexplicable to Mr. Chesterton, and to the "fussy" circle in which the lady lived, that anyone could consider religion a practical pursuit like gardening. It seems that, by accident, the future Mrs. Chesterton was educated in the school of an Anglo-Catholic convent; and to all that agnostic or mystic world, practising a religion was much more puzzling than professing it.

She did not resemble Robespierre except in a marked attention to neatness in dress; and Mr. Chesterton claimed that it was only in Mr. Belloc's description of Robespierre that he found words to portray the peculiar characteristic that cut her off from the spirit of the time and saved her from it.

"God had given him in his mind a stone tabernacle in which certain great truths were preserved imperishable."

He says it was fortunate that their most important meeting was not under the sign of the moon but of the sun. She had often declared during their later acquaintance that had the sun not been shining to her complete satisfaction on that day, the issue might have been quite different. It happened in St. James Park where they keep ducks, and the little bridge, which has been mentioned in a no less authoritative work than Mr. Belloc's "Essay on Bridges" in which he mentions the longest

bridge, the shortest, the one that frightens one most, that frightens one least, the latter being the bridge in St. James Park. Mr. Chesterton assures his friend that this particular bridge can frighten one a good deal.

It is probably this episode that he commemorates in the poem "A CERTAIN EVENING" of which these are the last three stanzas:

"The pine grew apples for a whim,
The cart-horse built a nest;
The oxen flew, the flowers sang,
The sun rose in the west.

And 'neath the load of many worlds,
The lowest life God made
Lifted his huge and heavy limbs
And into heaven strayed.

To where the highest life God made
Before His presence stands;
But God Himself cried, "Holiday!"
And she gave me both her hands."

We shall leave our subject to his domestic felicity and turn to a discussion of his poems on Friendship, wherein will be described another source of his habitual cheerfulness.

Of his first friendships he speaks in the chapter "HOW TO BE A DUNCE." Boys, he says, wander in threes. Three is certainly the symbolic number for comradeship, even if it is not always the same as friendship. He had the good fortune to enjoy both. The first of his friends, Edward Clerehew Bentley, with whom he fought in the field, has since written

the best detective story of modern times, and still writes for the "Daily Telegraph." He had well-developed brains and could work wonders with them, even writing an ordinary leading article for a London daily. He could also write clear and undiluted nonsense with the same serious simplicity. A sample of his "free verse" was conceived during a somewhat dry chemistry lesson, when, being rather bored, he wrote on a piece of blank paper the lines:

"Sir Humphrey Davey
Detested gravy,
He incurred the odium
Of discovering sodium."

Our subject afterwards dedicated to this friend E.C.B. a fantastic story of which he says,

"I was oppressed with the metaphysical nightmare of negations about mind and matter, with a morbid imagery of evil, with the burden of my own mysterious brain and body; but by this time I was in revolt against them, and trying to construct a healthier conception of cosmic life even if it were one that should err on the side of health."

He even called himself an optimist, because he was so horribly near being a pessimist. It was the only excuse he could offer. All this part of the process was later cast into the formless piece of fiction called "THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY." The title attracted some interest at the time. Some referring to his supposed festive opinions, pretended that it was mistaken for "The Man Who Was Thirsty." Others imagined that Man Thursday was the coloured brother of Man Friday. Others again with

were saved because they really understood "The Man Who Was Thursday." He was glad to think that at that period of his "lunacy" he was a little benefit to other lunatics. He at first thought that no one would understand the story but his friend, Bentley, of whom he writes in the stanzas to E. C. B.

"Before the grass grew over me
I knew one good man through and through
And knew a soul and body joined
Are stronger than the heavens are blue.

O wisdom worthy of thy joy,
O great heart, read I as I ran;
Now, though men smite me on the face,
I cannot curse the face of man."

It was the third member of G. K.'s original friends who brought into their secrets the breath of ambition and the air out of the great world. He was a dark, thin young man, named Lucian Oldershaw. It was through him that Mr. Chesterton made the acquaintance of his future wife. He was also instrumental in bringing about his first meeting with Hilaire Belloc. After a reunion of some of these friends in London, G. K. C. went to meet Lucian Oldershaw at a little restaurant in Soho. Mr. Oldershaw entered the place followed by a husky individual with the stiff straw hat of the time tilted over his eyes, which accentuated the peculiar length and strength of his chin. He resembled somewhat a picture of Napoleon, especially of Napoleon on horseback. His eyes had a somewhat anxious look, a curious keenness

seen in the eyes of sailors; there was something in his walk that reminded one of a sailor's roll. The following lines long afterwards expressed the combination of the blend of nations in his blood.

"Almighty God will surely say,
St. Michael, who is this that stands
With Ireland in his doubtful eyes
And Perigord between his hands,
And in his arm the stirrup-thongs
And in his gait the narrow seas
And on his mouth Burgundian songs
And in his heart the Pyrenees?"

He sat down heavily on one of the benches and began to talk at once. He went on talking, as he has done ever since to Mr. Chesterton's great pleasure and stimulation. This was Hilaire Belloc, already famous as an orator at Oxford where he was always pitted against another brilliant speaker, F. E. Smith, later Lord Birkenhead. Belloc was supposed to represent Radicalism; and Smith, Toryism; the contrast between them was great enough to withstand the reversing of the labels. The two characters and careers might be taken as types for studying the problem in the meaning of failure and success.

As Belloc continued his discourse, he gave vent to some provocative statements on the subject of religion, which amused Mr. Chesterton immensely, but he felt conscious of a certain undercurrent of sympathy with him, that many of those who were equally amused did not feel. And when, in that night and many

nights afterwards, they began discussing the War, G. K. found that the bond of sympathy that came into being was of real significance. They were both Pro-Boers who hated Pro-Boers which was the first link in the alliance. He dedicated his story of an impossible skirmish in Notting Hill to Mr. Belloc. It was from that dingy, little Soho safe, as from a witch cavern, there emerged that quadruped that twi-formed monster G. B. Shaw has nicknamed the "Chesterbelloc." The Dedication of "THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL" gives expression to the ideals of those kindred spirits as follows:

"For every tiny town or place
 God made the stars especially;
 Babies look up with owlish face
 And see them tangled in a tree;

.....

The legend of an epic hour
 A child I dreamed, and dream it still,
 Under the great grey water tower
 That strikes the stars on Campden Hill."

The things that Mr. Chesterton recalls as most worth doing and worth remembering, are all sorts of absurd interludes with his associates, full of their talk and coloured with their characters. Belloc still awaits a Boswell. His lively and influential personality has shown all the continuity of Dr. Johnson's; and though clouds of sorrow have passed over his life and a little solitude in his later years, he had

every right to say, as had the man in his own song:

"For you that look the all in all
The things you left were three,
A loud voice for singing and clear eyes to see
And a spouting fount of life within that never yet has
dried."

Of some of his other friends G. K. C. says that Bentley, or Conrad Noel were characters who could have been put into any comedy; and the pranks of Maurice Baring were worthy of some fantastic eighteenth century exploits. Once at a dinner party given by Mr. Herbert, later Lord Lucas, Baring broke an ordinary tumbler and began to tramp like an elephant among the fragments, which prank gave rise to a ballade of which the refrain is "I like the noise of breaking glass," and the beginning as follows:

"Prince when I took your goblet tall
And smashed it with inebriate care,
I knew not how from Rome and Gaul
You gained it; I was unaware
It stood by Charlemagne's great chair
And served St. Peter at High Mass.

.....I'm sorry if the thing was rare
I like the noise of breaking glass."

It is only just to their happy company to say that they did not confine themselves to saying or singing their own lyrics; though Belloc was usually ready to oblige; and the loud and roaring, but none the less pathetic song with the chorus:

"And the Gates of Heaven are opening wide
To let poor Hilary in"

was first heard probably at one of those quiet evenings on

which they met for mutual edification and culture. They must have sung many of the best songs in the English language by poets both ancient and modern: a legend persists, that when A. P. Herbert had an apartment not far from Buckingham Palace they sang "Drake's Drum" with such patriotic violence that King Edward the Seventh sent them word to stop their noise.

Another friend of our subject was his fellow convert Rev. Ronald Knox who delivered the oration at the funeral service for Mr. Chesterton, and of whom says in "NAMESAKE":

"Mary of Holyrood may smile indeed,
Knowing what grim historic shade it shocks
To see wit, laughter, and the Popish creed,
Cluster and sparkle in the name of Knox."

Once in speaking of a certain piece of nonsense attributed to his friend Bentley, he compared it with the fantasy of Father Ronald Knox in which he makes a detailed map of the Barsetshire of Trollope, or works out a preposterous cryptogram to show that Queen Victoria was the author of "IN MEMORIAM."

On one occasion Mr. Chesterton with five or six of his friends addressed the astonished town of Nottingham, on what they considered to be its Christian duty towards the modern problem of industrial poverty. He remembered the faces of the citizens of that great city while he spoke and recorded his impressions in some verses, supposed to represent the sentiments of a Nottingham tradesman; they became a joke in their little circle:

"The Christian Social Union here
Was very much annoyed;
It seems there is some duty
Which we never should avoid,
And so they sang a lot of hymns
To help the Unemployed.

.....

He said the human souls should be
Ashamed of every sham,
He said a man should constantly
Ejaculate "I am"
.....when he had done, I went outside
And got into a tram."

Among the most intimate and treasured friends of Mr.
Chesterton was the Rev. John O'Connor of Bradford, the original
of the "Father Brown" stories. It was he who received our
champion into the Church in 1922. The last of the above men-
tioned stories was dedicated as follows: "To Father John
O'Connor, of St. Cuthbert's, whose Truth is stranger than
Fiction with a gratitude greater than the world."

"I left two loves on a distant strand,
One young, and fond, and fair, and bland;
One fair, and old, and sadly grand--
My wedded wife and my native land."

--Thomas D'Arcy McGee--

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CHAPTER VI

WAR POEMS

Likelier across these flats afar,
These sulky levels smooth and free,
The drums shall crash a waltz of war
And Death shall dance with Liberty.

WAR POEMS

The dead child lay in its shroud,
And the widow watched beside
And the mother slept, and the channel swept
The gale in the teeth of the tide.

--Rudyard Kipling--

The militant attitude seen in all Mr. Chesterton's work reaches a climax in his war poems of which the following is a type:

"THE BALLAD OF THE BATTLE OF GIBEON" is based on the Scripture text. One can easily picture the camp on the edge of the desert, from which a glimpse of the coloured fields of Palestine can be obtained. In the distance are the camps of the enemy:

"Five kings ruled o'er the Amorite,
Mighty as fear and old as night;
Swathed with unguent and gold and jewel,
Waxed they merry and fat and cruel.
Zedek of Salem, a terror and glory,
Whose face was hid while his robes were gory;
And Hoham of Hebron, whose loathly face is
Heavy and dark o'er the ruin of races;
And Piram of Jarmuth, drunk with strange wine,
Who dreamed he had fashioned all stars that shine;
And Debir of Eglon wild, without pity,
Who raged like a plague in the midst of his city;
And Japhia of Lachish, a fire that flameth,
Who did in the daylight what no man nameth."

Then to our people spake the Deliverer:

"Gird you, O Israel, quiver and javelin,
Shield and sword for the road we travel in."

The result of the bloody onset is described by the poet as follows:

"Started the weak of them, shouted the strong of them,
Crashed we a thunderbolt into the throng of them,
Blindly with heads bent, and shields forced before us,
We heard the dense roar of the strife closing o'er us.
And drunk with the crash of the song that it sung them,
We drove the great spear-blade in God's name among them."

Wildly the conflict raged until

"Sheer through the turban
Clean to the skull the Deliverer clove him;"

With triumphant shouts of victory the people of God proclaim
their deliverer:

"Loudly we shouted, and living and dying,
Bore them all backward with strength and strong crying;"

And high above the din of battle, the turn of the tide, and the
deafening noises of the rout, was heard the voice of Gibeon
calling:

"Stand thou still, thou sun upon Gibeon
Stand thou, moon in the valley of Ajalon!
Shout thou, people, a cry like thunder,
For the kings of the earth are broken asunder."

May each Christian knight and glorious champion of the present
day as Gibeon:

"After the battle was broken and spent
Up the hill the Deliverer went,
Flung up his arms to the storm clouds flying
And cried unto Israel, mightily crying,
"Come up, O warriors! come up, O brothers!
Tribesmen and herdsmen, maidens and mothers
The bondsman's son and the bondsman's daughter
The hewer of wood and the drawer of water,
....."

In this poem the gruesome details are pictured with a realism
and vividness that display the poet's powers of description.

He depicts the brilliant show of power on the part of these Oriental despots, the five Kings, and contrasts their magnificence with the meagre equipment and seeming impotence of the Hebrew band.

Another war poem, (published in 1922) was "THE BALLAD OF ST. BARBARA" which connects an heroic legend of the martyrdom of a beautiful Christian maiden with some scenes from the World War.

St. Barbara is the patron saint of artillerymen, miners, and all those in danger of sudden death from lightning or other causes. Her devout clients are said to have the assurance that they will not die without the consolation of receiving holy Viaticum.

In the poem her story is told amid the din and fury of war, by a Breton soldier to a Norman during the Battle of the Marne. The poem is said to be excellent in its kind, not exceptionally fine poetry, but most assuredly "good Chesterton."

"When the long grey lines came flooding upon Paris in the
We stood and drank of the last free air we never could ^{plain}
taste again.

.....

And a Norman to a Breton spoke, his chin upon his hands:
'There was an end of Illium; and an end came to Rome
And a man plays on a painted stage in the land that he
calls home.'

.....

And the Breton to the Norman spoke

'There are more windows in one house than there are eyes
to see'."

The reference here is to the third window that Barbara had built in the bath-house which her father had ordered to be built for her use near the tower in which he had her immured from all contact with the world. The plan arranged for two windows, but she inserted a third in honour of the Holy Trinity. The poem continues:

"Ruin is a builder of windows; her legend witnesseth
Barbara, the saint of gunners, and a stay in sudden death."

.....

"While trickled the idle tale"

in the heart of the whirlwind:

"Barbara the beautiful
Had praise of lute and pen:
Her hair was like a summer night
Dark and desired of men.

Her sire was master of many slaves
A hard man of his hands;
They built a tower about her
In the desolate golden lands,

Sealed as the tyrants sealed their tombs,
Planned with an ancient plan,
And set two windows in the tower,
Like the two eyes of a man."

The dreadful carnage goes on as:

"Our guns were set toward the foe; we had no word, for
firing.

.....

Dark with the fate of a falling star, retiring and retiring,
The Breton line went backward and the Breton tale went on.

'Her father had sailed across the sea

From the harbour of Africa
When all the slaves took up their tools
For the bidding of Barbara."

By means of persuasion, words of command and
....."wealth of wine and meat"

she bade them

"Throw open the third window
In the third name of God."

In the midst of their endeavours to comply with Barbara's request, a sight met the eyes of the workmen:

.....
"And far towards the foam
Men saw a shadow on the sands
And her father coming home."

The soldiers' conversation continues in a low tone:

"Before the touch, before the time, we may not loose a
breath:
Their guns must mash us to the mire and there be no
replying,
Till the hand is raised to fling us for the final dice to
death."

Then are heard the reproaches of the irate father:

"There were two windows in your tower,
Barbara, Barbara,
.....
.....

Hath a man three eyes, Barbara,
A bird three wings,
That you have riven roof and wall
To look upon vain things?"

Barbara here gives her reason for the third window:

"But out of the third lattice
Under low eaves like wings

Is a new corner of the sky
And the other side of things."

The crash of shell and the boom of artillery continue and in
the intervals the narrator continues the legend:

"Then he drew the sword and drove her"

for abandoning the worship of the gods. The carnage continues:

"They are firing, we are falling, and the red skies rend
and shiver us,
Barbara, Barbara
Be at the bursting doors of doom, and in the dark deliver
us,
Who loosen the last window on the sun of sudden death.

'Barbara the beautiful
Stood up as queen set free,
Whose mouth is set to a terrible cup
And the trumpet of liberty.'"

As the innocent maiden proclaimed her belief in the true God,
her father's vengeance is wreaked with savage fury:

"The sword upon his shoulder
Shifted and shone and fell,
And Barbara lay very small
And crumpled like a shell."

.....
.....

Blood of his blood upon the sword
Stood red but never dry.
He wiped it slowly, till the blade
Was blue as the blue sky.

But the blue sky split with a thunder-crack,
Spat down a blinding brand,
And all of him lay back and flat
As his shadow on the sand."

As if all the forces of evil were let loose to sweep like a
whirlwind, carrying all before it, the battle rages on:

"Tiptoe on all her thousand years and trumpeting to the
sun:
As day returns, as death returns, swung backwards and
swung home,
Back on the barbarous reign returns the battering-ram of
Rome;
While that that the east held hard and hot like pincers
in a forge,
Came like the west wind roaring up the cannon of St.
George,
Where the hunt is up and racing over stream and swamp
and tarn
And their batteries, black with battle, hold the bridge-
heads of the Marne."

Again and again the story is interrupted by the battle which swells as a raging sea threatening to surround and engulf it. A vivid contrast of colour is observed: "the red carnage, the black belching guns," and, at intervals, as distant strains of sweet archaic music, the ancient tale fresh as the dews of morning, and green with the life-blood of young leaves. Furthermore, the contrasts in colour are reflected in the contrasts in measure: the short flexible ballad metre, with its great potential, variety of syllable and its basis of stress, and the long rolling lines, like the long lines of French cavalry that streamed out of Paris to inundate the plain with their victory:

"They burst asunder in the midst that eat of their
own flatteries."

The impression produced by the first week of the war was that the British had come just in time for the day of doom. No sensitive and civilized man could refrain from thinking that demonocracy had superseded theocracy.

The blackness of our despair was long unfamiliar to our blood. Those six dark days are as full of legends as are the six centuries of the Middle Ages.....Things were either seen or said among the British which united them in matters deeper than any alliance, with the French who spoke of Joan of Arc in heaven above the fated city; or the Russians who dreamed of the Mother of God with her hand pointing to the west. They were visions or inventions of a medieval army: one saw ghostly archers crying, "Array, Array;" another told of one on a great white horse that seemed a faint figure of St. George.

.....

During those momentous six days the enemy had chased the British and French before him as autumn leaves before a whirlwind. "Not unlike autumn leaves, red-stained, dust-hued, and tattered, they lay there as if swept into a corner. But even as their conquerors wheeled eastwards, their bugles blew the charge; the English went forward through the wood that is called Crecy, and stamped it with their seal for the second time, in the highest moment of all the secular history of man."

At Crecy of old the English and French knights had met in a more picturesque age, in a battle that was rather a tournament. It was now a league of knights for the remains of all

knighthood, of all brotherhood in arms or in arts, against that which is and has been most unknighly and unbrotherly from the beginning."All men knew that the third attack of the Huns had come to naught, and Christendom was delivered once more. The empire of blood and iron rolled slowly back towards the darkness of the northern forests; the great nations of the West went forward where side by side as after a long lover's quarrel, went the ensigns of St. Denys and St. George."

"And across the carnage of the Guard, by Paris in
the plain
The Normans to the Bretons cried and the Bretons
cheered again."

In his volume of poems published in 1915, Mr. Chesterton gives us a varied collection of works produced from time to time during an interval of twelve or so years. In "LEPANTO" the tramp of armed men is heard as though the victor in many conflicts were still loath to lay down his arms; through the staccato syllables of which one can hear drums beating and men cheering. This poem, as do numerous others, reveals the fact that Gilbert Chesterton is a poet and a considerable poet, not because of his strict adherence to the rules of versification, which to him are not the first requisites of poetry, but because of his innate desire for self-expression as a means of communicating the message that he believes it

to be his duty to impart. That message as has already been said, is the call to arms that resounds through all his work. Critics have declared that he has more impulse than finish, but he has natural gifts of rhythm and of the effective use of words which are said to make amends for his reluctance or inability to take pains.

Our champion transports us to the scene of the battle described in the poem, "LEPANTO":

"White founts falling in the courts of the sun,
And the Soldan of Byzantium is smiling as they run;
There is laughter like the fountains in that face of all
men feared,
It stirs the forest darkness, the darkness of his beard,
It curls the blood-red crescent, the crescent of his
lips,
For the inmost sea of all the earth is shaken with
his ships.
They have dared the white republics up the capes of
Italy,
They have dashed the Adriatic round the Lion of the
Sea."

The name "Lepanto" is the Italian for Naupactus (dock-yard). The site must have been selected because of its strategical position on the hill, surrounded by fertile plains interspersed with many winding streams.

Occupied by the Turks in 1498, Lepanto is celebrated chiefly for the victory which the combined Papal, Spanish, Venetian and Genoese fleets under Don John of Austria, gained over the Turkish fleet on October 7, 1571. Though this victory did not accomplish all that was expected, since the Turks appeared the very next year, and in vain offered battle to the Christians,

it was of great importance as being the first outstanding triumph of the Christians over the infidels on the sea.

That there was a great lack of enthusiasm and co-operation on the part of many Christian rulers is learned in the lines following:

"And the Pope has cast his arms abroad for agony and loss,
And called the kings of Christendom for swords about the
Cross,
The cold queen of England is looking in the glass;
The shadow of the Valois is yawning at the Mass;
From evening isles fantastical rings faint the Spanish gun,
And the Lord upon the Golden Horn is laughing in the sun."

At first the only champion to answer the call was Don John of Austria, a son of Charles V by a morganatic union:

"Dim drums throbbing, in the hills half heard,
Where only on a nameless throne a crownless prince has
stirred,
Where, risen from a doubtful seat and half-attained stall,
The last knight of Europe takes weapons from the wall,
The last and lingering troubadour"

whom the king would have preferred to see a monk, had been refused permission in 1565 to serve in the fleet ordered to sail for the relief of Malta; and an express royal command had been needed to bring him back when he was about to make the voyage on his own account. His obedience was rewarded when in 1568 he was appointed to the supreme command of the fleet. He it was,

"That once went singing southward when all the world was
young,
In that enormous silence, tiny and unafraid,
Comes up along a winding road the noise of the Crusade."

In the following lines the alliterative effects, striking

imagery, verbal music and realistic touches are truly engaging:

"Strong gongs greaning as the guns boom afar,
Don John of Austria is going to the war,
Stiff flags straining in the night-blasts cold
In the gloom black-purple, in the glint old-gold,
Torchlight crimson on the copper kettle-drums,
Then the tuckets, then the trumpets, then the cannon,
and he comes.

Don John laughing in the brave beard curled,
Spurning of his stirrups like the thrones of all the world,
Holding his head up for a flag of all the free.
Love-light of Spain--hurrah!
Death-light of Africa!
Don John of Austria
Is riding to the sea."

Towards the western star Mahound struts about, or rests
at ease gloating over his worldly greatness.

"And he strides among the tree-tops and is taller than the
trees,
And his voice through all the garden is a thunder sent to
bring
Black Azrael and Ariel and Ammon on the wing.
.....

They rush in red and purple from the red clouds of the
morn,"

from temples they advance in green robes "splashed with pearl,"

"They gather and they wonder and give worship to Mahound."

Then ring out the commands of the Moslem chief:

....."Break up the mountains where the
hermit-folk may hide,
And sift the red and silver sands lest bone of saint
abide."

He, the prince of Giaours, aims to chase the followers of Christ
night and day, and give them no rest, saying:

"For that which was our trouble comes again out of the west."

He knows the noise that shook the Moslem strongholds four
hundred years previous and realizes that

"It is he that saith not 'Kismet'; it is he that knows
not Fate;

It is Richard, it is Raymond, it is Godfrey in the gate!"

Our author recalls tales of the crusades and represents Mahound
gathering strength to crush the Christian band, saying:

....."that our peace be on the earth.
For he heard drums groaning and he heard guns jar,
(Don John of Austria is going to the war.)"

The legions of Spain assemble with all haste to follow their
new admiral:

"Sudden and still--hurrah!
Bolt from Iberia
Don John of Austria
Is gone by Alcalar."

Trusting that St. Michael, the Marshaller of hosts, will
be their stay in time of need, the champions of Mother Church
answer the call:

"St. Michael's on his Mountain in the sea-roads of the
north
(Don John of Austria is girt and going forth.)
Where the grey seas glitter and the sharp tides shift
And the sea folk labour and the red sails lift.
He shakes his lance of iron and he clasps his wings of
stone;
The noise is gone through Normandy; the noise is gone
alone;"

The hope of victory is anything but sanguine because of
strifes and contentions among the Christian nations of Europe:

"And Christian killeth Christian in a narrow dusty room,
And Christian dreadeth Christ that hath a newer face of
doom,

And Christian hateth Mary that God kissed in Galilee,
But Don John of Austria is riding to the sea."

With blast of clarion and with trumpet call:

"Domino gloria!
Don John of Austria
Is shouting to the ships."

And, in spite of the Pontiff's call for help, King Philip enjoys the sweets of idleness amid the splendour of his luxurious court, leading a passionless existence unmoved by the disasters that threaten, a striking contrast with the Christian champion;

"(Don John of Austria is armed upon the deck.)
The walls are hung with velvet that is black and soft as
 sin,
And little dwarfs creep out of it and little dwarfs creep
 in.
He holds a crystal phial that has colours like the moon,
He touches, and it tingles, and he trembles very soon."

Though he was during nearly the whole of his reign engaged in hostilities with the Turks, Philip II had hitherto displayed no great energy in resisting their still unceasing inroads upon the domain of Christendom. His fleet had for a time saved Malta; but Cyprus was wrested by the infidel from the Venetians without his having offered timely co-operation for its defence (1571); and the barbarous proceedings of the victors filled Europe with horror and shame. The poet gives a revolting picture of this vain inglorious recreant, remaining inactive and inert, with the result that

....."his face is as a fungus of a leprous white and grey

Like plants in the high houses that are shuttered from
the day,
And death is in the phial, and the end of noble work,
But Don John of Austria has fired upon the Turk."

Although unable to obtain from his brother Philip II even so much as the title of infante of Spain, the ardent spirit of Don John had continued to indulge in wild dreams of a kingdom to be carved out by his own resources in those regions which he had successfully disputed with the infidel. His exploits in the Netherlands are familiar to all readers of history. He was thwarted by the parsimony, jealousy, and suspicion of his brother Philip. It is doubtful whether the disunion among the adversaries of the latter weakened them more than his persecution vexed the soul and crippled the energies of his brother. Such was the situation when Don John was removed by death, on October 1, 1578. A suspicion accused King Philip of having by poison brought about the death of a half-brother whose zeal and energy for the Catholic cause put him to shame.

"Gun upon gun, ha! ha!
Gun upon gun, hurrah!
Don John of Austria
Has loosed the cannonade.

The Pope was in his chapel before day or battle broke,
(Don John of Austria is hidden in the smoke.)"

One of the immediate results of the victory at Lepanto was the manumission of fifteen thousand Christian captives who toiled in chains in the merchantmen and war galleys of Mahound.

"And above the ships are palaces of brown, black-bearded
chiefs,
And below the ships are prisons, where with multitudinous
griefs,
Christian captives, sick and sunless, all the labouring
race repines
Like a race in sunken cities, like a nation in the
mines."

Filled with dire despair these children of the True God are
countless, voiceless, hopeless:

....."and in the skies of morning hung
The stairways of the tallest gods when tyranny was young.
.....
.....
And many a one grows witless in his quiet room in hell
Where a yellow face looks inward through the lattice of
his cell,
And he finds his God forgotten, and he seeks no more
a sign--
(But Don John of Austria has burst the battle-line!)
Don John pounding from the slaughter-painted poop,
Purpling all the ocean like a bloody pirate's sloop,
Scarlet running over on the silvers and the golds,
Breaking of the hatches up and bursting of the holds,
Thronging of the thousands up that labour under sea
White for bliss and blind for sun and stunned for liberty."

The settlement of the Netherlands, in whatever manner Don
John might have brought it about, was a harder task than any he
had ever accomplished.

"Vivat Hispania!
Domino Gloria!
Don John of Austria
Has set his people free!"

In his span of life of little more than thirty-three years,
Don John's career was the reverse of an empty or an ignoble one,
and though it was full of defects and disappointments, yet his

enthusiasm shines forth even under the cold shade cast over it by the fraternal jealousy of a Philip II. With Mr. Chesterton let us chant his paean in these closing lines:

"Cervantes on his galley sets the sword back in the sheath
(Don John of Austria rides homeward with a wreath.)
And he sees across a weary land a straggling road in
Spain,
Up which a lean and foolish knight forever rides in
vain,
And he smiles, but not as Sultans smile, and settles
back the blade.....
(But Don John of Austria rides home from the Crusade.)"

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CHAPTER VII

THE BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

Back to the black gates of the woods,
Back up the single way
Back by the place of the parting ways
Christ's knights were whirled away.

THE BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE

No more shall the brown men of the south
Move like the ants in lines,
To quiet men with olives
Or madden men with vines.

This poem, "THE BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE," proclaims the fact that Mr. Chesterton's imaginative powers compare favourably with those of the great writers of English poetry. It was written in 1911 and is considered by many to be the greatest epic of the twentieth century. The lines run on with a jingling metre that for almost any other poet would spell disaster. The narrative is told in the simplest English. The directness of the whole story strikes one, as our subject tells the tale of Alfred and the Danes. Typical of the straightforward nature of the poem are the lines:

"I am that defeated King
Whose failure fills the land,
Who fled before the Danes of old,
Who chaffered with the Danes for gold,
Who now upon the Wessex wold
Hardly has feet to stand."

The simplicity, together with massive powers of description and the rhythmic beauty of the passages is worthy of consideration. The thought is clearly expressed in so few words and in a manner not many modern writers could imitate. Who but Gilbert Chesterton could have retained the expressive vigour

and beauty of the lines while describing indirectly and vaguely, Alfred's past glories and England's disappointment in him, his past struggles with the heathens, his present unpromising situation? G. K. wastes not a word, loses not a thought, sacrifices not a particle of the attractiveness of the versification.

A distinguishing feature of this work is its symbolism. In giving the "BALLAD OF THE WHITE HORSE" this characteristic, Chesterton revives a lost art. Critics in pronouncing their appreciation of this achievement have all called attention to its great spirituality.

The facilities afforded for vivid description in this poem were fully utilized by the author. Only G. K. C. of all the poets of our time could have achieved what he has done in conceiving this masterpiece, the realism of which is revealed in the picture of the dismal Gaels, the gloom of Alfred's followers, the death of Mark, the Man from Italy, the camp of Guthrum in the White Horse Vale.

In his prefatory note Mr. Chesterton tells us that this ballad needs no historical notes, for the simple reason that it does not profess to be historical. All of it that is not frankly fictitious, as is any prose romance of the past, is meant to emphasize tradition rather than history.

"Before the gods that made the gods
Had seen their sunrise pass,
The White Horse of the White Horse Vale
Was cut out of the grass."

(The White Horse is a rude figure of a horse made by cutting away the turf on an escarpment of the Chalk Downs near Wantage, Berkshire, England, traditionally ascribed to Alfred the Great.)

King Alfred is not a legend in the sense that King Arthur may be a legend but King Alfred is a legend in this broader and more human sense, that the legends are the most important things about him:

"A sea-folk blinder than the sea
Broke all about his land,
But Alfred up against them bare
And gripped the ground and grasped the air,
Staggered, and strove to stand,

.....

He broke them with a broken sword
A little towards the sea,
And for one hour of panting peace,
Ringed with a roar that would not cease,
With golden crown and girded fleece
Made laws under a tree."

The cult of Alfred was a popular cult, from the darkness of the ninth century to the deepening twilight of the twentieth. It is wholly as a popular legend that he is dealt with here. Mr. Chesterton writes as one ignorant of everything, except that he has found the legend of a King of Wessex still alive in the land. He gives three curt cases of what he means. A tradition connects the final victory of Alfred with the valley in Berkshire called the Vale of the White Horse. He has met with doubts of the tradition, which may be valid doubts. He tells us that he does not know when or where the story started;

it is enough that it started somewhere and ended with him;
he writes only upon a hearsay, as the old balladists did.

"The Northmen came about our land
A Christless chivalry:
Who knew not of the arch or pen,
Great, beautiful half-witted men
From the sunrise and the sea."

The following stanza may be compared with one in the
"Ancient Mariner."

"Misshapen ships stood on the deep
Full of strange gold and fire,
And hairy men, as huge as sin
With horned heads, came wading in
Through the long, low sea-mire."

In the "Ancient Mariner" Coleridge says:

"The western wave was all aflame,
The day was well-nigh done;
Almost upon the western wave
Rested the broad bright sun.
When that strange shape drove suddenly
Betwixt us and the sun."

Both stanzas depict vividly the grim and ferocious aspect of the
foes which spread terror and dismay along their path. The lines
teem with alliteration, word pictures and verbal music.

For a second case, there is a popular tale that Alfred play-
ed the harp and sang in the Danish camp; this has been inserted
because it is a popular tale, at whatever time it arose:

"And Alfred, King of Wessex,
Looked on his conqueror--
And his hands hardened; but he played,
And leaving all later hates unsaid
He sang of some old British raid
On the wild west march of yore."

He sang of war in the warm wet shires,
Where rain nor fruitage fails,
Where England of the motley states
Deepens like a garden to the gates
In the purple walls of Wales."

In the first canto entitled "The Vision of the King"
Alfred has been repulsed by the Danes, and in his despair and
anguish he recalls his childhood days.

"And he saw in a little picture
Tiny and far away,
His mother sitting in Egbert's hall,
And a book she showed him, very small,
Where a sapphire Mary sat in a stall
With a golden Christ at play.

It was wrought in the monk's slow manner,
From silver and sanguine shell,
Where the scenes are little and terrible,
Keyholes of heaven and hell."

Alfred stood spellbound, entranced, in the presence of
his heavenly visitor, and showed his gratitude by casting at
Our Lady's feet the "one dim ancestral jewel" that hung on his
ruined armour.

"Mother of God," the wanderer said,
'I am but a common king,
Nor will I ask what saints may ask
To see a secret thing'."

And that was whether in this little land

....."our hearts shall break with bliss,
Seeing the stranger go?"

The words that he heard in reply were not very reassuring:

"I tell you naught for your comfort,
Yea, naught for your desire.

Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher."

The gathering of the chiefs is pictured in the second canto. Our poet has summarized this crusade, the fight for Christian civilization against heathen nihilism in a triple symbol, and given a fictitious Roman, Celt and Saxon, a part in the glory of Ethandune:

"The King went gathering Christian men,
As wheat out of the husk;
Eldred, the Franklin by the sea,
And Mark, the man from Italy,
And Colan of the Sacred Tree,
From the old tribe on Usk."

He gathered his men to die in battle if God so decreed, but they all knew why. The mystic word of God's Mother still gave Alfred little hope, but he does not despair:

"And this is the word of Mary,
The word of the world's desire:
'No more of comfort shall ye get,
Save that the sky grows darker yet
And the sea rises higher.'"

Through untold labours and dire calamities they were to be strengthened for the combat in so just a cause.

Alfred has come down to us in the best way (that is by national legends) solely for the same reason as Arthur and Roland and other giants of that darkness, because he took part in a struggle that had been carried on by generation after generation, by the Romans before they withdrew and by the Britons while they remained.

It would seem that Alfred's Wessex was of very mixed blood : but in any case, it is the chief value of legend to mix up the centuries while preserving the sentiment; to see all ages in a sort of splendid foreshortening. That is the use of tradition: it telescopes history.

In another canto "THE WOMAN IN THE FOREST" Mr. Chesterton refers to the legend of Alfred and the woman who left him to mind the cakes. It was selected because it is a popular legend and a vulgar one. It has been disputed by grave historians, who were, perhaps a little too grave to be good judges of it. The two chief charges against the story are, that it was first written long after Alfred's death, and that (as Mr. Oman claims) Alfred never really wandered all alone without any thanes or soldiers. Both of these objections might possibly be met. Mr. Chesterton says that it has taken him nearly as long to learn the whole truth about Byron, and perhaps longer to learn the real facts about Pepys, than elapsed between Alfred and the first writing of such tales. As for the other objection, do the historians really think that Alfred after Wilton, or Napoleon after Leipsic, never walked about in a wood alone for an hour or two? Ten minutes would possibly suffice for the essence of the story. But our subject is not concerned about proving the truth of these legends or popular traditions. He considers it enough for him to

maintain two things: that they are favourite traditions, and that without them he would not have bothered about Alfred any more than we bother about Eadwig.

Let the ballad run on. Note the impressive word music and alliterative symphony, the sounds seeming to re-echo Alfred's emotions:

"Thick thunder of the snorting swine,
Enormous in the gloom,
.....

For he must meet by the river-hut
Them he had hidden to arm,
Mark from the towers of Italy,
And Colan of the Sacred Tree,
And Eldred who beside the sea
Held heavily his farm.
.....

King Alfred was but a meagre man,
Bright eyed, but lean and pale;
And swordless, with his harp and rags,
He seemed a beggar, such as lags
Looking for crusts and ale.

And the woman, with a woman's eyes
Of pity at once and ire,
Said, when that she had glared a span,
"There is a cake for any man
If he will watch the fire."

While ruminating over past calamities and his present misery, Alfred recalls the blessings that he has received from a merciful Providence and tries to revive his spirits soliloquizing as follows:

"Did not a great grey servant
Of all my sires and me,

Build this pavilion of the pines,
And herd the fowls and fill the vines,
And labour and pass and leave no signs
Save mercy and mystery?"

In his reflections on the vicissitudes of life, Alfred
thinks of the poor woman:

"And as he wept for the woman
He let her business be,
And like his royal oath and rash
The good food fell upon the ash
And blackened instantly.

Screaming, the woman caught a cake
Yet burning from the bar,
And struck him suddenly on the face,
Leaving a scarlet scar.

.....

Then Alfred laughed out suddenly,
Like thunder in the spring,

.....

Pride flings frail palaces at the sky,
As a man flings up sand,
But the firm feet of humility
Take hold of heavy land."

How G. K. revels in that Homeric slaughter! The words
blood and bloody punctuate the longest poem of this author to
the virtual obliteration almost of fine imagery, the occasional
tenderness, and the blustering aggressiveness of some of the
metaphors and similes. Who but Gilbert Chesterton would have
the nerve, not to say the skill, to write:

"And in the last eclipse the sea
Shall stand up like a tower,
Above all moons made dark and riven,

Hold up its foaming head to heaven,
And laugh, knowing its hour."

Canto the sixth describes the slaying of the chiefs, the Christian champions.

"And when they came to the parting ways
Doom's heaviest hammer fell
For the King was beaten, blind, at bay."

In spite of almost superhuman feats and gallant efforts

"Far sundered were the friends in arms."

and "to the Haut King came at morn
Dead Roland on a doubtful horn
Seemed unto Alfred lightly borne
The last cry of the Gael."

Now comes the last charge outlined in canto the seventh:

"ETHANDUNE, THE LAST CHARGE". A gloomy picture is Alfred as:

"He saw wheels break and work run back
And all things as they were;
And his heart was orbed like victory
And simple like despair."

In reading this poem one perceives the author's command of the technique of ballad structure: certain irregularities, brilliant scenic pictures, verbal music, and in this case a racy, jingling movement.

"The Ballad of the White Horse" is a true epic because it has all the essentials thereof. One of these requisites is that the actors should be decent men if they cannot be heroes. "The Illiad" would have been impossible if it had occurred to Homer to introduce the Government contractors to

the belligerent powers in the conflict. All the point would have vanished from Orlando Furioso if it had been the case that the madness of Orlando was the delirium tremens of the habitual drunkard. Chesterton recognizing this truth makes the Pagans of the "White Horse" conduct themselves as gentlemen. There is a beautiful song put into the mouth of one of them which is in its way a perfect expression of the impotence of false gods:

"There is always a thing forgotten
When all the world goes well;
A thing forgotten, as long ago,
When the gods forgot the mistletoe,
And soundless as an arrow of snow
The arrow of anguish fell."

The sorrow behind these lines is more moving because more sincere than the lines of that over-quoted stanza of Swinburne's:

"From too much love of living,
From hope and fear set free,
We thank with brief thanksgiving
Whatever gods there be--
That no life lives forever,
That dead men rise up never,
That even the weariest river
Winds somewhere safe to sea."

This is not sincere, because a pagan (as Swinburne was) could have put an end to his troubles by self-destruction, had he really felt these things. Swinburne, like most pagans of the present day, really hated priestcraft when he thought he was hating God. Chesterton's note is truer. He realizes that the pagan has all the good things of this world except one, and

that only an unusually keen pagan knows that he is deficient in that.

And so one might go on mining the White Horse and marvel-ling at the finds of pathos, imagery, passion, lyrical eloquence, verbal music and treasures of Christian inspiration.

Note the gleam of the preternatural in the idea that Elf had thrice been drowned and when men found him

"The spear was in his hand."

"Seven spears went about Elared
Like stays about a mast;
But there was sorrow by the sea
For the driving of the last."

Again Alfred undaunted by his misfortunes and reverses calls to his followers who remain:

"'Brothers at arms,' said Alfred,
On this side lies the foe;
Are slavery and starvation flowers,
That you should pluck them so?

For whether is it better
To be prodded with Danish poles,
Having hewn a chamber in a ditch,
And hounded like a howling witch,
Or smoked to death in holes?"

The indomitable spirit of the Wessex King flames out,

"Though dead are all the paladins
Whom glory had in ken,
Though all your thunder-sworded thanes
With proud hearts died among the Danes,
While a man remains, great war remains:
Now is a war of men."

He then recalls the glories of the past when Egbert "rode

out commonly" to the battle line and gave them the signal:

"And now two blasts, the hunting sign,
Because we turn to bay;
But I will not blow the three blasts,
Till we be lost or they."

The Christian men then charged with such fury that the
Danes marvelled how and why,

"The people of the peace of God
Went roaring down to die.

.....

The King looked up, and what he saw
Was a great light like death,
For Our Lady stood on the standards rent,
As lonely and as innocent
As when between white walls she went
And the lilies of Nazareth."

Inspired with new hope, and trusting implicitly in the
help of God's Mother:

"Came Christendom like death,

.....

Barriers go backwards, banners rend,
Great shields groan like a gong--
Horses like horns of nightmare
Neigh horribly and long."

As the climax approaches, the theme takes on epic grandeur
and romantic intensity, mingled with sheer imaginative invention
and religious significance:

"The Mother of God goes over them,
Walking on wind and flame,
.....

The Mother of God goes over them,
On dreadful cherubs borne;
And the psalm is roaring above the rune,
And the Cross goes over the sun and moon,
Endeth the battle of Ethandune
With the blowing of a horn."

The Norsemen are vanquished, a stretch of English land
is assigned to them and their king, Guthrum accepts Christianity.

"Where the high saddles jostle
And the horse-tails toss,
There rose to the birds flying
A roar of dead and dying;
In deafness and strong crying
We signed him with the cross."

Alfred seems content to rule well his kingdom as it is and
seeks for no more fame in war. His is

"A land having a light on it
In the river dark and fast,
An isle with utter clearness lit,
Because a saint had stood in it;
Where flowers are flowers indeed and fit,
And trees are trees at last."

As the years glide on, Alfred sits and dreams of the past,

"Of his old companions slain like kings,
And the rich irrevocable things
Of a heart that hath not openings,
But is shut fast, being full.

.....
And a young lord turned among the lords
And said: 'The King is old.'"

Just as he was speaking a herald came post haste announcing
another attack of the fierce Norsemen:

"Danes drive the white East Angles
In six fights on the plains,

Danes waste the world about the Thanes,
Danes to the eastward--Danes!"

Note the symbolism and vivid word pictures in the following:

"One time I followed a dancing star
That seemed to sing and nod,
And ring upon earth all evil's knell;
But now I wot if ye scour not well
Red rust shall grow on God's great bell
And grass in the streets of God."

Throughout the poem are seen beautiful alliterative effects as in the preceding stanza. The following stanza shows with a realism, pathos and intensity, Alfred's grief over the seeming lack of supernatural aid:

"Thou I give this land to Our Lady,
That helped me in Athelney.
.....

I know that weeds shall grow in it
Faster than men can burn;
.....
I have a vision, and I know
The heathen shall return."

Alfred has a vision of the sixteenth century breach between England and Rome:

"They shall come mild as monkish clerks,
With many a scroll and pen;
And backward shall ye turn and gaze,
Desiring one of Alfred's days,
When pagans still were men."

In the following stanzas the changes wrought by the passing years are portrayed by beautiful figures of speech and realistic touches:

"And clover and silent thistle throve,
And buds burst silently,
With little care for the Thames Valley
Or what things there might be--

That away on the widening river,
In the eastern plains for crown
Stood up in the pale purple sky
One turret of smoke like ivory;
And the smoke changed and the wind went by,
And the King took London Town."

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CHAPTER VIII

CHESTERTON AND THE MADONNA

But they did chide Our Lady
And tax her for this thing.
That she had lost Him for a time
And sought Him sorrowing.

CHESTERTON AND THE MADONNA

Approach! behold! nay, worship there the image of
his love,
The heavenly queen who reigneth all the sacred hosts
above
Nor wonder that around his bier there lingers such a
light,
For the spotless one that sleepeth, was the Blessed
Virgin's Knight!

--T. D. McGee--

One great Catholic devotion peculiarly cherished by
Gilbert Chesterton was the cult of God's Mother whom he cele-
brated both in prose and verse. Among his contributions to the
magazine which he and his friends published at St. Paul's School
appears the following:

"Hail Mary! thou blest among women generations shall
rise up to greet,
After ages of wrangle and dogma, I come with a prayer
to thy feet.
Where Gabriel's red plumes are a wind in the lanes of
thy lilies at eve,
We pray, who have done with the churches, we worship
who may not believe."

Although it is written in the style of Swinburne; this is
typical of Chesterton, especially the closing paradox. Later he
sounded Our Lady's praise in many a lyric and in one great poem.

In "THE QUEEN OF THE SEVEN SWORDS" Mr. Chesterton has paint-
ed a series of beautiful pictures from the vision of a heart
steeped in devotion to our blessed Mother. He has erected about
her a tower of golden words: he has woven his imagery and his

ardour into silver mantle of poetry. His filial devotion is shown in "THE TWO WOMEN":

"But thou art more than these things, O my queen,
For thou art clad in ancient wars and tears.
And looking forth, framed in the crown of thorns,
I saw the youngest face in all the spheres.

The seven swords of the Queen are the seven wounds of her Son; seven ghastly wounds in His body, seven deep thrusts in her heart. In the poem from which the collection is named, the poet says:

"The Seven Swords held out their hilts like a challenge."

There are seven knights who were tortured or worsted in battle, who gave their lives for the Queen and her Son. They are holy champions from Spain and France, from the sunny clime of Italy and from the four divisions of Great Britain. They call her by beautiful names, these seven knights: St. Anthony of Italy calls her, "Lily of lilies in heaven;" St. Andrew of Scotland implores her intercession in an incomparable strain:

"Mother of mirth and pardon, of laughter, and tears
and truce
Queen of the kind and careless knights that rode with
the heart of Bruce."

Upon the following lines from "Old Ballad of Robin Hood"

"Robin loved Our Dear Lady
And for doubt of deadly sin
Would never hurt a company
That any woman was in--"

G. K. C. builds a few lines in which Lady Mary talks with Maid

Marian, allaying the latter's fears concerning the nature of Robin's death. Where we might imagine the maiden at Our Lady's feet, pouring out her heart to the Mother of Sorrows, this poet gives us a typically Chestertonian vision of the meeting of two maidens. Mary says to the girl:

"He is not dead in the ditch-nettles
Or on the gallows-tree
But a great king has taken him
To ride with his chivalry.'

And I have travelled many a mile
From a city beyond the sea
To give you news of your true-love
Because he honoured me.'"

Gilbert Chesterton's words are as an unfading garland of beautiful blooms meet to be worn with pride by the most Queenly of Women.

It is usual among Catholics to hear England spoken of as Our Lady's Dower, but some may wonder why it should be so called or whether it has at last forfeited all claim to so glorious a title.

If, wrote Newman in his essay on "Development," "we take a survey of Europe at least, we shall find that those religious communions which were characterized by the observance of St. Mary are not the Churches which have ceased to adore her Eternal Son, but such as have renounced that observance." There can be little need to labour this point further, all who are in any way familiar with English medieval history, art or literature

will know how tender a love was shown to the "Flower of all Virginity," as an old song calls her.

But the petitions offered during the Ages of Faith in England to our Mediatrix were acceptable, as is evidenced by the number of illustrious English converts who have devoted all the gifts of their genius to restoring Catholic ideals, by leading their compatriots "to Jesus through Mary." May Newman, Chesterton, Ronald Knox and all their fellow converts say with King Alfred:

"When our last bow is broken, Queen
And our last javelin cast
Under some sad green evening sky,
Holding a ruined cross on high,
Under warm westland grass to lie,
Shall we come home at last?"

In his essay on "MARY AND THE CONVERT" Mr. Gilbert Chesterton says:

"I was brought up in a part of the Protestant world which can best be described by saying that it referred to the Blessed Virgin as the Madonna. Sometimes it referred to her as a Madonna; from a general memory of Italian pictures. It was not a bigoted or uneducated world; it did not regard all Madonnas as idols or all Italians as Dagoes. But it had selected this expression, by the English instinct for compromise, so as to avoid both reverence and irreverence. It was, when we came to think of it, a very curious expression. It amounted to saying that a Protestant must not call Mary 'Our Lady' but he may call her 'My Lady.' This would seem, in the abstract, to indicate an even more intimate and mystical familiarity than the Catholic devotion. But I need not say that it was not so. It was not untouched by that queer Victorian evasion; of translating dangerous or improper words into foreign languages. But it was also

not untouched by a certain sincere, though vague respect for the part that Madonnas had played in the actual cultural and artistic history of civilization. Certainly the ordinary reasonably reverent English man would never have intended to be disrespectful to that tradition in that respect; even when he was much less liberal, travelled and well-read than were my parents. Certainly, on the other hand, he was entirely unaware that he was saying 'My Lady'; and if you had pointed out to him that, in fact, he was generally saying 'a My Lady,' or 'the My Lady,' he would have agreed that it was rather odd."

Mr. Chesterton says that he cannot forget, and that it would be a very ungrateful thing in him to forget, that he was lucky in this relative reasonableness and moderation of his own family and friends; and that there is a whole Protestant world that would consider such moderation a very poor-spirited sort of Protestantism. "That strange mania against Mariolatry; that mad vigilance that watches for the first faint signs of the cult of Mary as for the spots of a plague; that apparently presumes her to be perpetually and secretly encroaching upon the prerogatives of Christ; that logically infers from a mere glimpse of the blue robe the presence of the Scarlet Woman"--all that, he assures us, he never felt or knew or understood; nor did those who had the care of his childhood. They knew very little about the Catholic Church; they certainly did not know that anybody connected with them was ever to belong to it.

The subject of his own conversion is at once intimate

and daring for our champion; "it is a theme which ought by its own majesty to make it impossible to be egotistical; but which does also make it impossible to be anything but personal. 'Mary and the Convert' is the most personal of topics, because conversion is something more personal and less corporate than communion; and involves isolated feelings as a prelude to collective feelings."

"The gates of heaven are lightly locked,
We do not guard our gain,
The heaviest hind may easily
Come silently and suddenly
Upon me in a lane.

And any little maid that walks
In good thoughts apart,
May break the guard of the Three Kings
And see the dear and dreadful things
I hid within my heart."

Dealing with his personal feelings even in what he called a rude and curt outline was far from easy for our poet, and he hoped that he would not be misunderstood if the example he gave was merely personal since it is this particular part of religion that cannot really be impersonal. It may be an accident, or a highly unmerited favour of heaven, but it is a fact that he always had a curious longing for the remains of this particular tradition, even in a world where it was regarded as a legend. He was not only haunted by the idea while still stuck in the ordinary stage of schoolboy scepticism, but he was affected by

it before that, before he had shed the ordinary nursery religion in which the Mother of God had no fit or adequate place. May he not have pleaded with Francis Thompson:

"Therefore, O tender Lady, Queen Mary,
Thou gentleness that dost enmoss and drape
The Cross's rigorous austerity,
Wipe thou the blood from wounds that needs must gape."

He found on one occasion, scrawled in very bad handwriting, screeds of an exceedingly bad imitation of Swinburne, which was nevertheless, apparently addressed to what he would have called a picture of the Madonna. And he states that he could distinctly remember reciting the lines of the "Hymn to Prosperine," out of pleasure in their roll and resonance; but deliberately directing them away from Swinburne's intention, and supposing them addressed to the new Christian Queen of life, rather than to the fallen Pagan queen of death:

"But I turn to her still, having seen that she shall
surely abide in the end;
Goddess and maiden and queen, be near me now and
befriend."

It may still be noted that the unconverted world, Puritan or Pagan, but perhaps especially when it is Puritan, has a very strange notion of the collective unity of Catholic things and thoughts. Its exponents, even when not in any rabid sense, enemies, give the most curious lists of things which they think make up the Catholic life; an odd assortment of objects, such

as candles, rosaries, incense (they are always deeply impressed with the enormous importance of incense), vestments, pointed windows, and then all sorts of essentials or unessentials inserted in any sort of order: fasts, relics, penances or the pope.

In the realization of the spiritual benefit derived from Catholic devotions and practices, this champion of Medievalism sings in "THE CONFESSIONAL":

"Now that I kneel at the throne, O Queen,
Pity and pardon me.
Much have I striven to sing the same,
Brother of beast and tree;
Yet when the stars catch me alone
Never a linnet sings--
And the blood of a man is a bitter voice
And cries for foolish things."

Our subject informs his readers that he can scarcely remember a time when the image of Our Lady did not stand up in his mind quite definitely, at the mention or the thought of all these things, the sacramentals, already referred to. He was quite removed from them and quite doubtful about them; and, at one time disputing with the world for them, and with himself against them; for that is the frame of mind before conversion. But whether the figure was distant, or was dark and mysterious, or was a scandal to his contemporaries, or was a challenge to himself--he never doubted that this figure was the figure of the Faith, that she embodied, as a complete human being still

only human, "all that this Thing had to say to humanity." In the poem "CROOKED" our author expresses his great spirituality and his belief in the continual awareness of God's Mother with regard to the doings of this "crooked" world:

"The little picture of the Mother of God
Hangs crooked upon the wall,
Blue and bright gold like a butterfly pinned askew,
Only it does not fall,
As, stooping over and falling never, an eagle
Hangs winged over all."

The poet seeing as in a vision, the forces of evil darken the minds of men with their gloomy shadows, and, contemplating the inevitable consequences of living estranged from the saving influence of religion, he continues:

"And knowing the whole world stiff with the crack of doom,
I pick up my pen and correct and make notes, and write
small:
And go on with the task of the day, seeing unseeing
What hangs over all:
The awful eyes of Our Lady, who hangs so straight
Upon the crooked wall."

Our author adds that the instant he remembered the Catholic Church, he remembered the Virgin Mother; when he tried to forget the Catholic Church, he tried to forget her; when he finally saw what was nobler than his fate, the freest and the hardest of all his acts of freedom, it was in front of a gilded and very gaudy little image, a Madonna in the port of Brindisi, that he promised the thing that he would do, if he returned to his own

land. In the happy moment of his reception into the true Church, might he not have sung?

"A secret happiness that soaks the heart
As hills are soaked by slow unsealing snow,
Or secret as that wind without a chart
Whereseon did the wild leaves of Sibyl go.

O light uplifted from all mortal knowing,
Send back a little of that glimpse of thee,
That of its glory I may kindle glowing
One tiny spark for all men yet to be."

If Catholic England was styled "Mary's dowry," what might be said of Ireland? Her religion has always been poetic, popular, and, above all, domestic. Devotion to Mary was closely connected with the worship of her Divine Son. She was too poor and too oppressed to shelter the Divine Humanity under the roofs of mighty cathedrals or even to paint His coloured shadow upon frescoes on palace walls, but it was enshrined in the hearts of her people. Her religion was so vividly positive and personal that there is little doubt that the return of liberty and prosperity to Ireland will mean the development of that Christian craftsmanship, in which she once taught the world in the decorative designs of the Dark Ages. "Any impression so atmospheric must seem arbitrary, and it would be idle to mention the multitude of small experiences that have seemed to point to such a destiny." One example out of a thousand may be cited. Once in the rocky wastes of Donegal someone had met a beautiful

peasant woman carrying a child, who, on being asked for her name answered simply: "I am the Mother of God, and this is Himself, and He is the boy you will all be wanting at the last."

Mr. Chesterton's final tribute to Our Lady is expressed in "THE TRINKETS":

"A wandering world of rivers,
A wavering world of trees,
If the world grow dim and dizzy
With all changes and degrees,
It is but Our Lady's mirror
Hung dreaming in its place,
Shining with only shadows
Till she wakes it with her face."

"Was there ever a name that lived like this?
Will there ever be such another?
The angels of heaven have reared a shrine
To the holy name of "Mother."

--Selected--

"Our Lord, that was Our Lady's Son,
Go bless you, People, one by one;
My Rhyme is written, my work is done.

--Hilaire Belloc--

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EPILOGUE

The writer of this treatise thinks that it may not be out of place to recall the invitation that was sent out by the Editors of "The Queen's Work" for some talented young author to fill the niche left by Mr. Chesterton. Did he not win love, appreciation fame; and, looking at the question from a worldly point of view, material success? It is not a question of developing the gigantic physical proportions of the "dead genius" nor of losing oneself in the folds of his "incredible cape," but of grasping his sword-pen and continuing the work of lampooning the "Dragons" that infect the "path to Rome."

DON CHESTERTON

The purple sails are filling,
Fair winds are driving home
The champion, Don Chesterton
Who "cleared the seas for Rome,"

He "chased the Giaours flying,"
Oh joy! Didst see them run?
Prostrate they're gruesome lying,
Don Chesterton has won!

His comrades in Britannia
Chant loud their paeon and song:
"To Chesterton sit gloria!"
And lusty cheers prolong.

The "Happy Isles" are festooned gay,
And ring with "serenades"
Welcoming Don Chesterton
"Home from the crusades."

--S. G.--

CONTEMPORARY COMMENTS

It might interest the reader to know how contemporary friends and critics of our poet appraise the man and his work. The following will serve as examples:

"It was a benediction to have known him."

--Hilaire Belloc--

"He will be missed sadly in days like these when men of the mould of St. Thomas More are rare."

--Archbishop Hinsley--

"The death of G. K. Chesterton is a grave loss to English Literature, to the literature of the world, and to Catholic literature."

--The Osservatore Romano--

"England has sustained one of the greatest losses during the last three hundred years in the death of Mr. Chesterton."

--Vincent McNabb, O.P.--

"His genial and penetrating humour was a delight."

--Ramsay MacDonald--

"He was a great friend. I attach high importance to his work."

--H. G. Wells--

"We mean to emphasize the fact that Chesterton was not a great poet; he was entirely too great a propagandist."

--Saturday Review of Literature--
(U.S.A.)

"How he laughed! There has been no such laughter since Shakespeare and Dickens."

--Daily Telegraph--

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