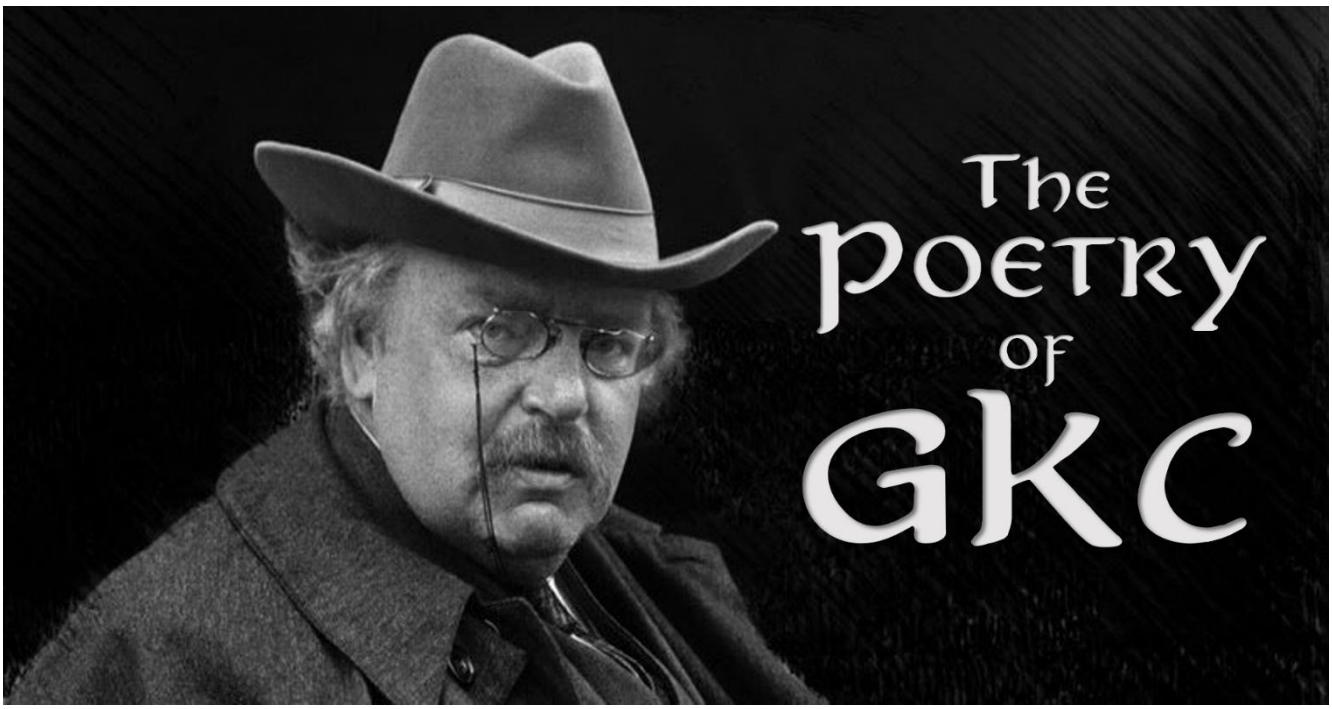
APRIL 2018

SOUTHEAST PA CHESTERTON SOCIETY

READING PACKET



"The greatest of poems is an inventory. Every kitchen tool becomes ideal because Crusoe might have dropped it in the sea. It is a good exercise, in empty or ugly hours of the day, to look at anything, the coal-scuttle or the book-case, and think how happy one could be to have brought it out of the sinking ship on to the solitary island."

- GKC, *Orthodoxy*

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INTRODUCTION

This packet contains a selection of Chesterton's poetry compiled mostly from the Collected Works Volume X (Parts I-III) [San Francisco: *Ignatius Press,* 1994-2010]. The introduction in the Appendix is by renowned Chesterton scholar Aidan Mackey, editor of Part I of this volume.

Annotations are duly credited to Mackey where they are borrowed from the original volume. All other annotations, particularly on some of the more difficult and more heavily allusive historical poems, are the work of the present author. Any errors in these notes, or indeed in this entire document, should also be considered the responsibility of the present author rather than of Mr. Mackey or Ignatius Press.

These selections are presented in no particular order. While the majority are from Chesterton's earliest phase, even before he began writing professionally, an attempt has been made to include a good variety showcasing Chesterton's facility with multifarious styles and forms as well as his great erudition and historical knowledge.

- **Joseph L. Grabowski**
Southeast PA Chesterton Society
March 26, 2018

THE BELL

Stars flame
Winds flood
Under the old tower's
Grey old hood
Blue dome
And stars strong
Mist's changes
Wind's song.
My song is good.

(ca. 1895-98)

A BLESSING

Sunlight in a child's hair.
It is like the kiss of Christ upon all children.
I blessed the child: and hoped the blessing
would go with him
And never leave him;
And turn first into a toy, and then into a game
And then in to a friend,
And as he grew up, into friends
And then into a woman.

(notebooks, ca. 1894-97)

THE CALVARY

In the dark of this cloud-laden even
Still upraised, son of man, still alone
Yea, 'mid empires still shifting and breaking
This place is thine own.

All thrones are left fallen and naked
All treasures corrupt and all gains
O Prince of four nails and a gibbet
Thy Kingdom remains.

On an age where the talkers are loudest
From thy silence, thy torment, thy power
O splendour of wrath and of pity
Look down for an hour.

Go hence: To your isles of the blesséd
Go hence, with the sons that you sing:
For this is the kingdom of pity
And Christ is the king.

(ca. 1892)

THE CARPENTER

The Meditations of Marcus Aurelius.
Yes: he was soliloquising, not making something.
Do not the words of Jesus ring
Like nails knocked into a board
In his father's workshop?

("The Notebook," 1894-97)

COMPARISONS

If I set the sun beside the moon,
And if I set the land beside the sea,
And if I set the town beside the country,
And if I set the man beside the woman,
I suppose some fool would talk about one being better.

(notebooks, 1894-98)

THE CRUCIFIED

On a naked slope of a poor province
A Roman soldier stood staring at a gibbet,
Then he said, "Surely this was a righteous man,"
And a new chapter of history opened,
Having that for its motto.

("The Notebook," ca. 1895)

DAISY-SONG

The sower's face is secret,
The sower's stride is long
Across the pathless places
The homeless voids among.
(Join we hands over sunset lands,
Sing we the daisy-song.)

Behind the great grey sower
To whom all voids belong
The sun-seeds float and eddy
The fire-grains drift and throng.
(Join we hands over sunset lands,
Sing we the daisy-song.)

(1890s)

DANTON

On the grim and crowded tumbrils high he reared his giant frame,
While the doubtful crowd seemed awe-struck at the murmuring of his name
"Sight most strange," he muttered, "strangest e'en these blood-stained streets have seen,
I, the fiercest of the Tribunes, passing to the guillotine.
Not in all those maddened millions, tossing wild with flame and steel,
Who with deadly blaze and thunder shook the towers of the Bastille—
Burnt a heart as hot as Danton's, clenched a hand as rich as mine!
Bear you the Tricolour yonder? Fling its colours over me,
Chief or captive, let me perish 'neath the flag of Liberty.
Liberty for whom I laboured, Liberty for whom I sinned,
Let me see her banner o'er me, flapping in the mighty wind:
As it flapped of old above us, where the serried pikes did glance,
When our thunder cry was swelling the awakened voice of France!
When we all were young and hopeful in the old time long ago,
When we scathed their haughty nobles under wild old Mirabeau!
Dost thou see us, old commander, somewhere in the still abyss?
Dost thou see the mighty union of thy children come to this?
Ay, throng thick thou yelling rabble, read with screams the shameless sky,
As ye thronged to see your tyrants, throng to see your champion die.
Well may dark St. Juste regard me with an ugly look, askance;
I am going, he is staying, well for me and ill for France.
Well may Monsieur David[1] yonder mark me with artistic eye,
Let him tell his pale Maximilien,[2] Danton died not fear to die.
Let him tell his cold Dictator that his time shall also come—
See his blood on yonder hatchet, hear his knell on yonder drum,
And my murdered blood shall choke him as he gasps the coward's lie
And there mobs cajoled recall me as they watch the tyrant die;
And we now have reached the scaffold, and we all are near the end;
Good Camille,[3] you will be faithful to your old Cordelier[4] friend.
Nay, I first, my friend, the greatest must receive the foremost lot,

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[1] Jacques-Louis David, a Neoclassical-style painter contemporary with Danton, but a disciple of Robespierre. David is most famous for his depiction of "The Death of Marat" (1793). [JLG]

[2] Robespierre. [Mackey]

[3] Camille Desmoulins (Lucie-Simplice-Camille-Benoist Desmoulins), a pamphleteer and journalist of the Revolution and a supporter of the "Dantonist" faction, who was guillotined alongside Danton on April 5, 1794. [JLG]

[4] The "Cordelier Club" was one of the chief forces of the Revolution, alongside the Jacobin Club. Danton was the *de facto* leader of the Cordeliers, whose numbers also included Desmoulins and Marat. The Cordelier Club motto, *Liberté, égalité, fraternité,* became one of the central mantras of the Revolution. In late 1792 and through 1793, however, the Cordeliers was increasinly overtaken by the most radical Revolutionists and proponents of "The Terror." This led ultimately to Danton's and Desmoulins' falling out with the club, and the latter's establishment of a journal (in December 1793), *Le Vieux Cordelier* (The Old Cordelier): note Chesterton's pun on the journal's name here. The journal sought to recover the values that preceded the Terror and particularly its antipathy toward the Church. This movement is what ultimately led to Danton and his confreres' executions. [JLG]

And my name will be remembered—it were better far forgot!
Friends, farewell, and be ye witness Danton dies without a fear.
Dear Camille, may God be with you—Monsieur Samson[5], I am here."
(*The Debater*, ca. 1892)

EASTER SUNDAY

The Christ is risen the preachers say
"Cry, for today is Easter Day."

Yea, if the dead might rise, then he
Might rise for one thing verily.

He has not heard the mouths that moves
The faint and fallen that he loved

The wheels that rack, the lips that rave
Stern is God's guard about the grave.

Peace—for the priests in gold array—
Peace—for today is Easter day.

The bannered pomp; the pontiffs wise
(Great God—methinks he might arise)

Might break for once from death's eclipse
To smite these liars on the lips.

(1895)

GIRLS AND BOYS

Look at them blowing at these flowers!
This game is good enough for girls,
But you and I are trousered men,
And mean to end as belted earls.
And when we've shot with bows and bolts,
And shot our arrows, used your swords,
I have no doubt that we shall both
Be members of the House of Lords:
For these hereditary joys
Are given to the boldest boys.

(mid 1890s)

[5] A common contemporary misspelling of the surname of Charles-Henri Sanson (Chevalier Charles-Henri Sanson de Longval), the notorious executioner of the Revolution who, as it were, inherited the family business (he was a sixth-generation executioner). He even presided at the execution of the monarch, despite his own monarchist sympathies. He was famed for his hobby of dissecting his victims after their death, and for his instrumentality in the adoption of the guillotine. [JLG]

THE GOD OF THE LIVING

Not of the dead: of the face on face,
Crowned and damned in a twilight place,
Where the dumb lips gape and the weird lamp gleams,
And the glories dissolve into dust and dreams
Not of the dead, of the void of sighs
Where yesternight, with her children, lies,
Amid stars and mists: of the lone cry tosses
To the far low tread of an age long lost,
The sleepy realms of a sunken star,
God is the God of the things that are.

Though the fair myths moan and the faint creeds sigh,
Yet the hoarse crafts roar and the days rush by,
In a deafening circle, wheel in wheel,
In a fog of smoke and a shriek of steel,
God sits aloft in the noise air,
The master of workers everywhere,
The dreamer's lips have a golden word
But the voice of life is the voice of the Lord,
Steam or raincloud, spark or star,
God is the God of the things that are.

(school period, 1890-2)

A GRACE

You say grace before meals.
All right.
But I say grace before the play and the opera,
And grace before the concert and pantomime,
And grace before I open a book,
And grace before sketching, painting,
Swimming, fencing, boxing, walking, playing,
dancing;
And grace before I dip the pen in the ink.

(early notebook, mid 1890s)

GRASS AND CHILDREN

Grass and children
There seems no end to them.
But if there were but one blade of grass
Men would see that it is fairer than lilies,
And if we saw the first child
We should worship it as the God come on earth.
("The Notebook," 1890s)

HUMANITY

O'er the night-black city gazing, broken by the blaze and spark,
Where the light of human presence seemed more ghastly than the dark,
I beheld the far-off lamp-light mark the tavern and the den,
Till my soul grew sick and weary of the dreary life of men,
"Vain are canons and ideals, vain are creeds and duties all
To the last our blood is tinctured with the madness of the fall,
Onward moves the march of progress, but 'neath all its pride and fame
Flash the same the ruffian's weapons ,flash the harlot's eyes the same,
Sin consumes our brethren's spirits, death consumes our
brethren's clay,
Blood of our blood boils with passion, bone of our bone wastes away,
And we move among each other, breathing in our human breath
All our ghastly inner knowledge of the law of sin and death,
In our souls the stormy presence of the things without a name,
On our brows the dark confession of the common thought of shame.
On from fathers unto children pass the evils black and fell,
Through the veins of mortal millions course the burning springs of hell.
So I live, my ruin dating to some far ancestral dawn—
Live, and with my human being damn the helpless child unborn.
Oh, to break the cursed fetters, oh, to leave them and be free,
Risen, guiltless, flower-like, star-like, in a land of purity,
Where I then should feel no longer, moving in a silent place,
Throbbing in my human essence all the vileness of my race,
Loose the old brute-bond of nature, let my spirit, girt with wings,
Hover, nameless, formless, sinless, amid everlasting things."
Through the place, upon my speaking, came a rush of angels' wings,
Bore me through the starry spaces to a place of purer things,
Regions of a golden sunset, 'neath the evening star that lay,
Dark-eyed spirits softly walking in the evening courts of day,
Troops of strange, bright aureoled maidens thronged through mystic
glen and grot,
Souls on golden wings went by me, and I looked and knew them not.
In the bowers of purple woodlands spirit-children were at play,
And they scanned me as I passed them and in wonder turned away,
And my soul cried out within me with a bitterer distress,

That one face I loved might meet me in my heavenly loneliness.
Then across my sorrowing spirit came the thought of vanished earth,
Of the fields that knew my childhood, of the love that gave me birth.
"I would give all mystic lilies for a spray of woodland brier,
I would give all saintly glories for a gleam of cottage fire,
I would give all taintless spirits born beyond my earthly ken
For the hand grasp and the welcome of the meanest child of men.
Give me back the earthly contact, homely ill and homely good,
Link me with a race of sinners in the painted bond of blood,
Let me feel a common nature, whence I never can be free,
In whose realm one broad pulsation beats to all eternity.
Let me feel the hands of brothers in the darkness grasping mine,
As we stumble on together from the low to the divine.
Give me back my mortal nature, mortal death and mortal birth,
Keep your mystic, spotless spirits, take me back again to earth."
Through the place upon my speaking came a rush of angels' wings,
Bore me downward through the space to the place of mortal things,
And I saw once more the city, glimmering with its blaze and spark,
Every light a brother's watchfire, kindled in the silent dark,
And throughout the crowded homesteads, while the hours of sleep
endure,
Slept the happy and the starving, slept the sinful and the pure,
And o'er all the darkened city, over hall and hut, and den,
Lay a mute and mighty presence of the brotherhood of men.

(*The Debater*, March 1892)

HUMANITY

A poet, pallid and perverse,
With witless love and watery curse
Rose up to Heaven with hosts sublime
Of the insatiable time.
He rent the angels' cohorts through
And broke Heaven's blazonry of blue,
And even more he cried, "What ban
Can Jesus give, who was a man?"
The last red guard was fighting still,
Against the jeering Prince of Nil,
And as he rushed across the bay
The insulted lord of star and spray
Lifted his head, "Thou sayest true—
I was a man: but what are you?"

(ca. 1891-92)

IDOLATRY

Shall we turn from the mysterious dark with the pagan prayer and spell,
As wholly a hideous dream from the gloom of the gateway of Hell?
Shall we say of the wild-eyed savage who crouches with gibber
and moan,
Where the dead stone god sits glaring, that the worship is dead as the
stone?
Not so, for the worshipper lives, and with him the worship grew,
And the fear of his heart is deep and the prayer of his lips is true;
The worshipper lives and prays, and with him the worship began,
Though the fetish that towers be a fetish, the man that kneels is a man;
And a spark of the world-wide worship, dim kindled within him now,
Has guided the hands that fashioned and prompted the knees that bow.
Whence came that strange, mystical impulse, with the strength of true
sacrifice strong,
Before symbols of earth and heaven, before canons of right and of
wrong?
Out of the deep, mysterious—we know not whence it began—
Out of the deep, all-present, from the depths of the Nature of Man.
Yon dark barbarian, crouching with the wild and abject mien,
Is, more than the sage or the prophet, the priest of the things unseen;
That groveller's wail in the darkness that rings to the silent sky
Is more than lore or gospel the proof of a life on high.
Not alone to yon graven horror the man was kneeling then;
There is more than a fancy hidden in the soul of the children of men.
Not alone to yon ghastly idol the savage prays today.
He prays to the presence within him that has prompted his heart to pray.

(*The Debater,* Feb. 1892)

IF I COULD SING

If I could sing as you can sing
Then would I prize a burning marl,[6]
One simple and resplendent thing,
Too utterly to pule or parle,
If I could sing as you can sing
I would not snarl.

If I had sinned as you have sinned,
Ere saints could scoff at wings that singe
This much of manhood would I find,
To thank God for the shames that tinge
If I had sinned as you have sinned,
I would not cringe.

(Written on a fly-leaf torn from a book, ca. 1895)[7]

INTERLUDE

Here where the golden apples grow
Came Christ more strong than Hercules
Walking the sea with wounded feet
And found the lost Hesperides.

And here might all the times have met
The pagan dance, the monkish dream,
The Golden Age, the Second Coming,
The infinite Saturnian theme.

The hero passes to other labours
The nymphs are dead, and dry the trees;
All living creatures passed, and left
The Dragon the Hesperides.

(late 1890s)

[6] Basically, "brimstone" - as in, "fire and brimstone." The particular phrase of "burning marl" for this biblical idea seems to come from Milton, in *Paradise Lost*, Book I, Ln 296. [JLG]

[7] This poem is a great example of how allusive and deep Chesterton's imagination was, and of how rewarding deep study of these matters can be. Not only does his use of a Miltonian phrase demonstrate his learning, but an intriguing question arises in the reading of this particular poem: What was the book from which the fly-leaf was taken on which Chesterton jotted this down? And who is the "you" to whom Chesterton refers. If the date of 1895 is correct, an interesting possibility arises: in February of that year occurred the famous exposure of Oscar Wilde by the father of Wilde's lover, which led in turn to Wilde's suing for libel, which ultimately resulted in Wilde's arrest, conviction, and imprisonment for sodomy. Chestertonians know well GKC's antipathy toward Wilde: does this poem signal the origin of that? And, if this poem is related to Wilde, how does this influence our interpretation. [JLG]

INTERLUDE

There sunken in deep woods they sang their song
And while they sang, the Kings of many lands
Strove to add land to land and field to field,
And earth was all a dust of driving bands,
And the Dutch broom and the British pennant strove
And the mad Swede sprawled out to smite the Pole
And the Czars and Sultans watched their ages rites
And never guessed a song could save a soul.

(ca. 1896)

THE INVISIBLE

God knows I would not blame you, dear,
I do not know what thing am I
How hard a burden on your back,
How stale an eyesore to your eye.

I never knew myself at all,
I trod the tangled woods, but ne'er
Came to the mystic well or saw
What monster might be mirrored there.

I saw all faces save my own—
How should I see it now, who rise,
Stand between Heaven and Earth and Hell
And only see the brave blue eyes.

(mid 1890s)

SEA AND STAR

The wave broke in, and the star came up
O'er the flower in the fields by the sea
And the purple vault of the evening sky
Doomed pale above the three.

The long wave rose, an elfin wall,
And bent, a flickering crown,
And from its fields the lonely flower
Cried out, the sands adown.

"I oped to many a golden morn
I close to many an eve
Yon, gleam, a pearly ridge, and break
A stain of froth to leave."

Then from the far star's burning tongue
Its loosened thunders came
"You bloom and break, a petal-ring
I dwell a deathless flame."

The wave upon the yellow floors
Cast down its dazzling crown
And gurgling all its grey old throats
The hungry sea drew down.

And days went by: the frost-fangs bit
The hoarse blasts came and went
And broken in the furrows bare
The fiery flower lay rent.

Aeons went by: and in the night
An old light's race was run
Blasted and bitter dark, the star
Sank in its blinding sun.

But when the soul out of the wave
At God's feet broke, in rest,
There rose a new star in his crown
A new flower on his breast.

(early 1890-92)

SIMON DE MONTFORT[8]

Moonrise gleams above the mountain, sunset glimmers through the wood,
Dreary float King Henry's[9] banners, silent o'er the field of blood;[10]
Pause the spears of fiery Edward, fierce before the heap of dead,
Where my foemen's shields are cloven, and my wearied sword is red.
At the dawn my sons were round me, and before yon armèd show,
Gave our souls to the eternal, and our bodies to the foe;
One by one they fell around me, with my banner over all,
Falling sword in hand like heroes, falling even as I shall fall.
I have ruled a mighty people, I have held a captive King,
I have tasted pride and glory, all that love and power can bring;
Now in my old age and sorrow I must take the field again,
And my cherished work is shattered, and my dearest lives are slain.
Forward, all ye thankless yeomen, onward, all ye Norman spears,
Give me in my breast the guerdon[11] of a score of toiling years!
Onward every crested tyrant, onward every armèd slave,
And I ask for nothing of you, nothing but a soldier's grave.
Yet amid the gloom of failure, the advancing shade of death
Flutters in my soul a whisper, like a meadow breeze's breath.
See the fruits of all thy labour far beyond this gloomy plain—
Never man that died for justice gave his life in blood and vain.
And a dark mist wraps the foemen, and in golden light on high
Dawn strange visions seldom given save to men about to die;
From the wild North, whence my love came, comes a people fierce and brave,
That shall drive yon haughty Edward wearied to a tyrant's grave.[12]

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[8] Simon V. de Montfort, 6th Earl of Leicester (c. 1208 – 4 August 1265), and English nobleman of French descent who led the Second Barons Revolt (1263-4) against King Henry III of England, whom he imprisoned and in whose stead he ruled England for a time. Henry III had been a king of long minority, having taken the throne when he was 9-years-old, and went down in history as one of the most ineffective rulers of England: Dante places him in Purgatory for this reason. Henry was a very devout man, but also very nepotistic and somewhat effete; had it not been for his son, Edward ("Longshanks"), he may never have regained the throne. De Montfort is historically hailed as inaugurating the modern English parliament. Before fully taking control of England, in 1258, Montfort forced a parliament at Oxford (the "Mad Parliament") re-affirmed and expanded *Magna Carta* and drastically reduced the power and the authority of the monarch in favor of the barons. The second parliament, during Montfort's reign, in 1265, is known as "Montfort's Parliament" and is most notable for calling representatives from the towns who were not noblemen or knights: in other words, it was the first example, and the foundation of, the House of Commons in Parliament; de Montfort is thus sometimes called "the founder of the Commons." [JLG]

[9] Henry III of England; see previous note. [JLG]

[10] The Battles of Evesham, 4 August 1265, in which Edward Longshanks led royalist forces to a complete rout of Montfort's and the other rebellious barons forces. One chronicler called it "the murder or Evesham, for battle it were none." Montfort and most of his allies were slain during the fight: indeed, Henry III, who was still a prisoner in Montfort's custody, and whom Montfort had dressed up in his own baronial colours and dragged into the fray, was nearly killed and only by chance recognized and saved. Montfort, along with his close ally Hugh Despenser, met their deaths at the hands of Roger Mortimer, whose troops violently mutilated Montfort's body; Mortimer took for himself Montfort's head and several appendages, which he sent home to his wife as gifts. [JLG]

[11] Reward, recompense. [JLG]

[12] Chesterton is clearly alluding to Longshank's attempt to conquer and colonize the Scots, and the fact that he died of dysentary on his way north to confront the forces arrayed under Robert the Bruce; the reference to Montfort's "love," however, is confusing: his wife was not from the north, but from Gloucester. [JLG]

Through the storms of feudal battle, through the gloom of despot's
reign,
'Spite of king, and priest, and baron, Freedom's fire breaks out again;[13]
Freedom's banner flames and flutters, Freedom's war cries rise and ring,
Angry mobs and stern battalions menacing a perjured King;
And a soldier ruling England, as I ruled it in my day,
Rough and stormy voice of Freedom spoke in faction and in fray;[14]
And a second tyrant striving to uphold a priestly power,
Flying baffled o'er the ocean in a dark and stormy hour;[15]
And a purer kinghood dawning for the country of the free,
Far beyond yon sceptred puppet, far beyond his bolder son,
Dawns the promise of fulfillment for the work that I have done;
Onward! every bandit weapon, onward! every hireling spear,
For my dream is fading yonder and my hours are numbered here.

(*The Debater*, Sept. 1891)

WILIAM OF ORANGE[16]

So the chattering knaves have vanished, by a mercy all are flown,
And in the slowly deepening twilight I am silent and alone,
Silent I am thought by nature, 'tis a legacy I bear,
From my grim old grandsire yonder[17], and a virtue great, but rare;
And for solitude, the desert, if its drear red plain I sought,
Could not be more lonely to me, than this bustling English court[18],
All my soul beyond the ocean to my ancient home[19] is flown,
And the palace of a stranger holds me weary and alone.
Ancient friends have died around me, and alone I hold the fight,
Severed by mean and fawning traitors, hateful to my thought and sight,

[13] The Pope was allied to Henry. [JLG]

[14] It is difficult to say whether Chesterton is shifting to a new allusion here. The mention of "perjured king" and a "soldier ruling England" might suggest Harold II (Harold Godwinson), the final Anglo-Saxon king of England who was killed at the Battle of Hastings in 1066 and succeeded on the throne by William the Conqueror. The Normans called Harold "the perjured king," because they claimed that Harold had reiterated to William personally the promise of Edward the Confessor that William should succeed to the throne; thus, in taking the throne himself, Harold had perjured himself of this oath. [JLG}

[15] Again, this allusion is unclear. But it may suggest James II, who was the last Roman Catholic King of England, who fled from the "glorious revolution" of William III (sometimes called William of Orange) and Mary, first to France and then by sea to Ireland, whence he launched one last (failed) attempt to recover the throne. Protestant history takes James II's flight as an abdication, and thus claims legitimate succession for the House of Hanover to the House of Stuart. It is clear that Chesterton here is far from the Catholic sympathies he would one day develop. [JLG]

[16] William III of England (William II of Scotland), who with his wife Mary usurped the throne to depose the last Catholic monarch, James II, in the so-called "Glorious Revolution" of 1688, which cemented Protestantism as the religion of England. [JLG]

[17] William III's great-grandfather, William I, Prince of Orange (24 April 1533 – 10 July 1584), was also known as "William the Silent" or "William the Taciturn." [JLG]

[18] William's Court was made notorious by the Jacobites who spread rumours of the king's homosexuality. Whether these were true or not, William did arouse great suspicion and resentment by granting English titles to two close Dutch friends: William Bentinck (see note below) and the young (and notably handsome) Arnold Joost van Keppel, whom William made an Earl despite his youth (twenty years William's junior). [JLG]

[19] Holland. [JLG]

Lies a shadow over Bentinck, and our minds we may not join.[20]
Schomberg sleeps with blood that mingles darkly with the rushing Boyne;[21]
And a newer race is round me, cold and strange to look upon,
In the calm of grasping Churchill[22], and the smile of proud St. John;[23]
Men who drink the State's donation in the toasts of exiled names,
Men who wear the stars of Wiliam, while they break the seals of James.[24]
Though I doubt not many a homestead, through this happy northern land,
Oft could show in Whig and Tory, noble heart and toiling hand.[25]
But this people cannot love me, base or faithful, low or high,
To the worst I am a master, to the best but an ally.
Once only, when danger threatened, and I faced it sword in hand,
With beneath the Irish river, and in front the Irish band—
And the English, never silent, to the praises of the brave,
Hailed me as a king and comrade, sent to govern, and to save.
It were better I had fallen on that stern, but glorious day,
Where the Rapparee[26], the red-coat, mingled in the roaring fray.
Better that the grazing bullet had been driven though my breast[27],
And beneath the Boyne's dark waters laid my weary limbs to rest;
But I lived to see their kindness in my old age dim and cease,
And that flash of glory fading in the drearier work of peace.
Toiling without thanks or honour, while the men I save stand by.[28]
In a work that must be finished ere I earn my right to die;
Still the old fight roars around us, trumpets blow, and chargers prance,
And a hundred tribes are writhing 'neath the tyrant heel of France.

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[20] William Bentinck, 1st Earl of Portland, one of William's Dutch courtiers (see note above). Bentnick became jealous of the younger van Keppel when the latter became the new favorite of the King, and resigned his offices in the Royal household as a result, cooling the relationship between him and William. This story is one of the details that has been used to marshal credibility for the theory of William's homosexuality. [JLG]

[21] Frederick Schomberg had been second-in-command of William's entourage during the "Glorious Revolution," and in 1689 was sent into Ireland as Commander-in-Chief of the 20,000 strong force meant to stamp out the Jacobite/Irish rebellion. Schomberg's campaign did not go well, and much of his time was spent hunkering down in Ulster. Eventually William himself came in June 1690 with reinforcements (enough nearly to double the total force), including the elite Dutch Blue Guards, and took personal command of the army. Despite Schomberg's objections, William chose to attack James's forces across the River Boyne at a ford near Drogheda. Schomberg was killed in the fight, and William's army suffered many more casualties than James's; however, the Battle of the Boyne is commonly regarded as the beginning of the end for James's resistance. His forced retreat, though orderly and with few casualties, disheartened his supporters (especially the Irish).[JLG]

[22] John Churchill, 1st Duke of Marlborough (1650-1722), a member of William's Privy Council and a skilled military leader. Churchill had been an ardent loyalist whose leadership was instrumental in putting down a rebellion against King James in 1685; less than three years later, he'd suddenly shifted loyalties to support William. This did not go unremarked, and even though William prized Churchill's military skill, he had personal doubts about his loyalty and reliability as a councillor. [JLG]

[23] Henry St John, 1st Viscount Bolingbroke (1678-1751) was a member of the House of Commons and a good friend of the Speaker, Robert Harley, 1st Earl of Oxford, as well as of Jonathan Swift. At the time of the poem (which must be 1701-2) Bolingbroke was a reliable supporter of the monarch; however, his unique political doctrines have been credited with both "founding the modern Tory party" (Disraeli) and with causing "the death of the Tory party" (Geoffrey Holmes). It may be these sensibilities for reducing the monarchy's powers to which Chesterton refers here; or, Chesterton is giving the eponymous persona anachronistic distrust of Bolingbroke since he did later in life take up with the Jacobites in France. [JLG]

[24] James actually threw the Great Seal into the river while fleeing William and Mary in 1688. [JLG]

[25] William favored a balance of Whigs and Tories. [JLG]

[26] Irish militiaman. [JLG]

[27] William was wounded in the shoulder during the battle. [JLG]

[28] After Mary's death from smallpox in 1694, William's popularity declined precipitously during his reign as sole monarch. [JLG]

And we yet must teach the lesson Louis' spangled crowds among,
Though old William's heart is heavy, yet his brain and hand are strong;
Yet shall Luxembourg and Condé see our armies going forth,
And the blazoned throne of Louis shake beneath the banded north,
But the victor must be lonely, dark and silent as the tomb,
Save one memory in my spirit smiling gently on my gloom;
Yonder stands she, smiling ever, 'mid the Stuart's painted frowns,
Like a woodland garland lying 'mid a wealth of jewelled crowns,
Smile then on, and let me fancy 'tis once more thy presence fair,
Which I see and watch, forgetting 'tis thy painted semblance there;
Let them stay without, the schemers, plan or quarrel, or agree,
And for this one hour of evening, let me be alone with thee.[29]

(*The Debater*, May 1891)

ADVENIAT REGNUM TUUM

Not that the widespread wings of wrong brood o'er a moaning earth,
Not from the clinging curse of gold, the random lot of birth;
Not from the misery of the weak, the madness of the strong,
Goes upward from our lips the cry, "How long, oh Lord, how long?"
Not only from the huts of toil, the dens of sin and shame,
From lordly halls and peaceful homes the cry goes up the same;
Deep in the heart of every man, where'er his life be spent,
There is a noble weariness, a holy discontent.
Where'er to mortal eyes has come, in silence dark and lone,
Some glimmer of the far-off light the world has never known,
Some ghostly echoes from a dream of earth's triumphal song,
Then as the vision fades, we cry, "How long, oh Lord, how long?"
Long ages, from the dawn of time, men's toiling march has wound
Towards the world they ever sought, the world they never found;
Still far before their toiling path the glimmering promise lay,
Still hovered round the struggling race, a dream by night and day.
Mid darkening care and clinging sin they sought their unknown home,
Yet ne'er the perfect glory came—Lord, will it ever come?
The weeding of earth's garden broad from all its growths of wrong,
When all man's soul shall be a prayer, and all his life a song.
Aye, though through many a starless night we guard the flaming oil,
Though we have watched a weary watch, and toiled a weary toil,
Though in the midnight wilderness, we wander still forlorn,

[29] The end of William's reign was mostly occupied with fighting against the ascendancy of the French under Louis XIV. Chesterton presents William as brooding over these burdens of his reign and missing Mary who embodied his legitimacy on the throne (she was the daughter of King Charles I of England, who'd been executed in Cromwell's New Model Army takeover in the English Civil War. The death of King Charles II of Spain exacerbated conflicts amongst the royals of Europe and William's doubt of his place, since Charles, who'd left no natural heir, one his deathbed in 1700 willed all his territories to the French succession; in turn, the newly emboldened and aggrandized Louis XIV delegitimized William by recognizing James II's son (James Francis Edward Stuart, later known as "The Old Pretender") as the rightful heir to the throne of England. These tensions, and the renewal of Jacobitism that Louis XIV's unilateral decision had fueled, became major factors in the lead-up to the War of Spanish Succession and England's part therein. [JLG]

Yet bear we in our hearts the proof that God shall send the dawn.
Deep in the tablets of our hearts He writes that yearning still,
The longing that His hand hath wrought shall not His hand fulfil?
Though death shall close upon us all before that hour we see,
The goal of ages yet is there—the good time yet to be:
Therefore, tonight, from varied lips, in every house and home,
Goes up to God the common prayer, "Father, Thy Kingdom Come."

(*The Debater*, 1891)

THE ARENA

Causa Nostrae Laetitiae

(Dedicated to the University of Notre Dame, Indiana)

There uprose a golden giant
On the gilded house of Nero
Even his far-flung flaming shadow and his image swollen large
Looking down on the dry whirlpool
Of the round Arena spinning
As a chariot-wheel goes spinning; and the chariots at the charge.

And the molten monstrous visage
Saw the pageants, saw the torments,
Down the golden dust undazzled saw the gladiators go,
Heard the cry in the closed desert
Te salutant morituri,
As the slaves of doom went stumbling, shuddering, to the shades below.

"Lord of Life, of lyres and laughter,
Those about to die salute thee,
At thy godlike fancy feeding men with bread and
beasts with men,
But for us the Fates point deathward
In a thousand thumbs thrust downward,
And the Dog of Hell is roaring through
the lions in their den."

I have seen, where a strange country
Opened its secret plains about me,
One great golden dome stand lonely with its golden image, one
Seen afar, in strange fulfillment,
Through the sunlit Indian summer
That Apocalyptic portent that has clothed her with the Sun.
She too looks on the Arena,
Sees the gladiators grapple,
She whose names are Seven Sorrows and the Cause of All Our Joy,

Sees the pit that stank with slaughter
Scoured to make the courts of morning
For the cheers of jesting kindred and the scampering of a boy.

"Queen of Death and deadly weeping
Those about to live salute thee,
Youth untroubled; youth untutored; hateless war
and harmless mirth
And the New Lord's larger largesse
Holier bread and happier circus,
Since the Queen of Sevenfold Sorrow has brought joy upon the earth."
Burns above the broad arena
Where the whirling centuries circle,
Burns the Sun-clothed on the summit, golden-sheeted, golden shod,
Like a sun-burst on the mountains,
Like the flames upon the forest
Of the sunbeams of the sword-blades of the Gladiators of God.

And I saw them shock the whirlwind
Of the World of dust and dazzle:
And thrice they stamped, a thunderclap; and thrice
the sand-wheel swirled;
And thrice they cried like thunder
On Our Lady of the Victories,
Mother of the Master of the Masterers of the World.
"Queen of Death and Life undying
Those about to live salute thee;
Not the crawlers with the cattle; looking deathward with the swine,
But the shout upon the mountains
Of the men that live for ever
Who are free of all things living but a Child;
and He was thine."

(1930)

A Christmas Rhyme

When God was born in Bethlehem
He drank the milk of man.
And Mary asking "Is it fit?"
He bowed and clung and whispered it
"Mother, I say a dreadful thing
Save for my strange and swift coming
At last, even mortal mothers would
Have wearied of all motherhood,
When the babe was but a span."

When God was gone through Galilee,
The water turned to wine,
They questioned of the crimson freak,
He said, "Because all wine grows weak,
Yea, man grows colder than a cow,
They turn the wine to water now.
Alone I lift the feasting face,
For Bacchus, on the hills of Thrace,
Is weary of the vine."

When God was in Jerusalem,
The wine was turned to blood.
They wept. He said "Without this strife
Death had grown even as dull as life.
The sages stare and can but spy
Blue devils in the good blue sky,
But only God in agony
Can look on all good things that be,
And see that they are good."

Then do we bid a blessing down
On milk and blood and wine.
All huge and humble things we bless,
For man's great thought is grown a guess,
And woman's smile is grown a snare,
And power is in the creeds of fear,
And praise is on the thrones of theft,
And there are no things human left,
But those He made divine.

(*The Nation,* 1907 or 1908)

THE DONKEY

When fishes flew and forests walked
And figs grew upon thorn,
Some moment when the moon was blood
Then surely I was born.

With monstrous head and sickening cry
And ears like errant wings,
The devil's walking parody
On all four-footed things.

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 fierce hour and sweet:
There was a shout about my ears,
And palms before my feet.

(ca. 1895-8)

GLORIA IN PROFUNDIS[30]

There has fallen on earth for a token
A god too great for the sky.
He has burst out of all things and broken
The bounds of eternity:
Into time and the terminal land
He has strayed like a thief or a lover,
For the wine of the world brims over,
Its splendour is split on the sand.

Who is proud when the heavens are humble,
Who mounts if the mountains fall,
If the fixed stars topple and tumble
And a deluge of love drowns all-
Who rears up his head for a crown,
Who holds up his will for a warrant,
Who strives with the starry torrent,
When all that is good goes down?

For in dread of such falling and failing
The fallen angels fell
Inverted in insolence, scaling
The hanging mountain of hell:
But unmeasured of plummet and rod
Too deep for their sight to scan,
Outrushing the fall of man
Is the height of the fall of God.

Glory to God in the Lowest
The spout of the stars in spate-
Where thunderbolt thinks to be slowest
And the lightning fears to be late:
As men dive for sunken gem
Pursuing, we hunt and hound it,
The fallen star has found it
In the cavern of Bethlehem.

(ca. 1920)

[30] Chorus from an unfinished play. [Mackey]

THE RETURN OF EVE

When Man rose up out of the red mountains
Of which Man was made
A giant ribbed out of the red mountains
Reared and displayed.
Of him was not posterity nor parent
Future or past
But the sun beheld him for a beauteous monster
The first and last.

When God arose upon the red mountains
Man had fallen prone
Flat and flung wide like a continent, capes
and headlands,
The vast limbs thrown.
And the Lord lamented over Man, saying
"Never
Shall there be but one
For no man born shall be mighty as he was
mighty
To amaze the sun.

"Not till I put upon me the red armour
That was man's clay
And walk the world with the mask of man for
a vizor
Not till that day.

For on God alone shall the image of God be
graven
Which Adam wore
Seeing I alone can lift up this load of ruin
To walk once more."

But the Lord looked down on the beauty of
Woman shattered,
A fallen sky,
Crying "O crown and wonder and world's
desire".
Shall this too die?
Lo, it repenteth me that this too is taken;
I will repay,
I will repair and repeat of the ancient pattern
Even in this clay.

"And this alone out of all things fallen and
formless
I will form anew,
And this red lily of all the uprooted garden
Plant where it grew,
That the dear dead thing that was all and only
a woman
Without stain or scar
Rise, fallen no more with Lucifer Son of
Morning,
The Morning Star."

The cloud came down upon the red mountains
Long since untrod,
Red quarries of incredible creation
Red mines of God.
And a dwarfed and dwindled race in the dark
red deserts
Stumbled and strayed,
While one in the mortal shape that was once
for immortals
Made, was remade.

Till a face looked forth from a window in one
white daybreak
Small streets above
As the face of the first love of our first father,
The world's first love.
And men looked up at the woman made for
the morning
When the stars were young,
For whom, more rude than a beggar's rhyme
in the gutter,
These songs are sung.

(early 1920s)

ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI

In the ancient Christian ages, while a dreamy faith and wonder
Lingered, like the mystic glamour of the star of Bethlehem,
Dwelt a monk that loved the sea-birds as they wheeled about his chapel,
Loved the dog-rose and the heath-flower as they brushed his garment hem;

Did not claim a ruthless knowledge of the bounds of grace eternal,
Did not say, "Thus far, not further, God has set the hopes of life."
Only knew that heaven had sent him weaker lives in earth's communion,
Bade him dwell and work amongst them, not in anger nor in strife.

Aye, though far and faint the story, his the tale of mercy's triumph,
Through the dimmest convent casements men have seen the stars above;
Dark the age and stern the dogma, yet the kind hearts are not cruel,
Still the true souls rise resistless to a larger world of love.

Is there not a question rises from his word of "brother, sister,"
Cometh from that lonely dreamer what today we shrink to find?
Shall the lives that moved our brethren leave us at the gates of darkness,
What were heaven if ought we cherished shall be wholly left behind?

Is it God's bright house we dwell in, or a vault of dark confusion,
Yonder sunlit April meadows, with the singing brooks at play,
With God's daisies clustering wide-eyed o'er the breezy fields of morning,
And God's skylarks whirring westward to the cloudless deeps of day?
Laugh aloud, O death and darkness, grin the skulls of crypt and charnel,
All God's glorious flowers of being flame and fade upon a tomb;
Mystic woods and aureoled blossoms, spirit-birds and goblin lizards,
All that faerie-world goes downward, sloping darkly into doom.

Is it so, one half of nature choked beneath the breath of ruin,
Does death tread at last a victor on the lives we loved so well?
Take us, too, devouring chaos, hide us from the vast injustice,
Dust to dust be ours for ever, with the world wherein we dwell.

While the flush of kindred feeling at the cursed wrong and violence,
Done amid our human brothers, on the helpless and infirm,

Throbs, though fainter, to our being, down the cycles of creation,
For the shrivelling of the night-moth and the writhing of the worm.

While from things of field and forest, eyes of tenderness and trusting
Look to ours and link them to us, as we journey side by side
Shall we lift a blind denial to the brotherhood of nature,
Shall we break the bonds of kinship in the madness of our pride?

Shall not rather hope be with us: noble, broadened, undefined,
Since all life is as a riddle, since all faith is but a guess:
Hope that every life that liveth has a nobler way before it,
Has a deathless purpose founded on the everlasting yes.

He that in his mighty gardens shakes the meanest seed of nature,
Soweth with the seed a promise whence no power can make him free,
He that on his lonely summits feeds the narrowest stream of being,
Dooms its way through fields and forests on its eternal sea.

(The Debater, Nov. 1892)

ST. FRANCIS XAVIER[31]

The Apostle of the Indies

He left his dust, by all the myriad tread
Of yon dense millions trampled to the strand,
Or 'neath some cross forgotten lays his head
Where dark seas whiten on a lonely land:
He left his work, what all his life had planned,
A waning flame to flicker and to fall,
Mid the huge myths his toil could scarce withstand,
And the light died in temple and in hall,
And the old twilight sank and settled over all.

He left his name, a murmur in the East,
That dies to silence amid older creeds,
With which he strove in vain: the fiery priest
Of faiths less fitted to their ruder needs:
As some lone pilgrim, with his staff and beads,
Mid forest-brutes whom ignorance makes tame,
He dwelt, and sowed an Eastern Church's seeds
He reigned, a teacher and a priest of fame:
He died and dying left a murmur and a name.
He died: and she, the Church that bade him go,
Yon dim Enchantress with her mystic claim,

[31] Prize poem written at St. Paul's School. [Mackey]

Has ringed his forehead with her aureole-glow,
And monkish myths, and all the whispered fame
Of miracle, has clung about his name:
So Rome has said: but we, what answer we
Who in grim Indian gods and rites of shame
O'er all the East the teacher's failure see,
His Eastern Church a dream, his toil a vanity.

This then we say: as Time's dark face at last
Moveth its lips of thunder to decree
The doom that grew through all the murmuring past
To be the canon of the times to be:
No child of truth or priest of progress he,
Yet not the less a hero of his wars
Striving to quench the light he could not see,
And God, who knoweth all that makes and mars,
Judges his soul unseen which throbs among the stars.

God only knows, man failing in his choice,
How far apparent failure may succeed,
God only knows what echo of His voice
Lives in the cant of many a fallen creed,
God only gives the labourer his meed
For all the lingering influence widely spread,
Broad branching into many a word and deed
When dim oblivion veils the fountain-head;
So lives and lingers on the spirit of the dead.

This then we say: let all things further rest
And this brave life, with many thousands more,
Be gathered up in the eternal's breast
In that dim past his Love is bending o'er:
Healing all shattered hopes and failure sore:
Since he had bravely looked on death and pain
For what he chose to worship and adore,
Cast boldly down his life for loss or gain
In the eternal lottery: not to be in vain.

(1892)

SECRECY

Laughter is sacred, secret unalloyed.
The dark irrational gaiety of things
The boyish valour of the world that swings
The stars exultant in a sickening void.

They say he never laughed, whose anguish deep
Redeemed us on the mountain of the Skull
Who over Salem, neither being dull
Nor cowardly, was man enough to weep.

Grief grows like grass: nor need he, though he can
With sudden pity make a pompous strife
Death is so plain upon the face of life
Tears may be plain upon the face of man.

But mirth is sacred: when from all his own
He sundered, going up a mount to pray
Under the terrible stars in stern array
Upon the lonely peak he laughed alone.[32]

"TO THE JESUITS"
(Spain, 1936)[33]

Flower-wreathed with all unfading calumnies
Scarlet and splendid with eternal slander
How should you hope, where'er the world may wander,
To lose the long laudation of its lies?

The yellow gods of sunrise saw arise
Your tilted towers that housed the moons and suns,
The red sons of the sunset, not with guns
But with guitars, you ambushed for surprise.

You bade the Red Man rise like the Red Clay
Of God's great Adam in his human right,
Till trailed the snake of trade, our own time's blight,
And Man lost Paradise in Paraguay.

You, when wild sects tortured and mocked each other
Saw truth in the wild tribes that tortured you

[32] The year isn't noted. Aidan Mackey observes of this poem: "The fancy that His laughter was the one thing hidden by God from mankind occurs more than once in Chesterton's writing. See, especially, the closing pages of *Orthodoxy*."

[33] Mackey: "This was the last poem written by Chesterton. The manuscript was given to Father Corbishley, S.J. and hangs in Campion Hall, Oxford."

Slurred for not slurring all who slurred or slew,
Blamed that your murderer was too much your brother

You hailed before its dawn Democracy
Which in its death bays you with demagogues
You dared strong kings that hunted you with dogs
To hide some hunted king in trench or tree.

When Calvin's Christ made Antichrist had caught
Even the elect and all men's hearts were hardened,
You were called profligates because you pardoned,
And tools of ignorance because you taught.

All that warped world your charity could heal
All the world's charity was not for you;
How should you hope deliverance in things new
In this the last chance twist of the world's wheel?

One while that wheel as a vast top is twirled
With every age, realm, riot, pomp or pact,
Thrown down in thunder like a cataract,
Said, " Fear not; I have overthrown the world."

(*G.K.'s Weekly,* 26 March 1936)

THE TOWERS OF TIME

Under what withering leprous light
The very grass as hair is grey,
Grass in the cracks of the paved courts
Of gods we graved but yesterday.
Senate, republic, empire, all
We leaned our backs on like a wall
And blessed as strong as strong and blamed as stolid--
Can it be these that waver and fall?
And what is this like a ghost returning,
A dream grown strong in the strong daylight?
The all-forsaken, the unforgotten,
The ever-behind and out of sight.
We turned our backs and our blind flesh felt it
Growing and growing, a tower in height.

Ah, not alone the evil splendour
And not the insolent arms alone
Break with the ramrod, stiff and brittle,
The sceptre of the Nordic throne;
But things of manlier renown
Reel in the wreck of throne and crown,
With tyrannous tyranny, tyrannous loyalty
Tyrannous liberty, all gone down.

(There is never a crack in the ivory tower
Or a hinge to groan in the house of gold
Or a leaf of the rose in the wind to wither
And she grows young as the world grows old.
A Woman clothed with the sun returning
to clothe the sun when the sun is cold.)

Ah, who had guessed that in a moment
Great Liberty that loosed the tribes,
the Republic of the young men's battles
Grew stale and stank of old men's bribes;
And where we watched her smile in power
A statue like a starry tower
the stone face sneers as in a nightmare
Down on a world that worms devour.
(Archaic incredible dead dawns breaking
Deep in the deserts and waste and wealds,
Where the dead cry aloud on Our Lady of Victories,
Queen of the Eagles, aloft on the shields,
And the sun is gone up on the Thundering Legion
On the roads of Rome to the Battlefields.)

Ah, who had known who had not seen
How soft and sudden on the fame
Of my most noble English ships
The sunset light of Carthage came
And the thing I never had dreamed could be
In the house of my fathers came to me
Through the sea-wall cloven, the cloud and dark,
A voice divided, a doubtful sea.
(The light is bright on the Tower of David,
The evening glows with the morning star
In the skies turned back and the days returning
She walks so near who had wandered far
And in the heart of the swords, the seven times wounded,
Was never wearied as our hearts are.)

How swift as with a fall of snow
New things grow hoary with the light.
We watch the wrinkles crawl like snakes
On the new image in our sight.
The lines that sprang up taut and bold
Sag like primordial monsters old,
Sink in the bas-reliefs of fossil
And the slow earth swallows them, fold on fold,
But light are the feet on the hills of the morning
Of the lambs that leap up to the Bride of the Sun,
And swift are the birds as the butterflies flashing
And sudden as laughter the rivulets run
And sudden for ever as summer lightning
the light is bright on the world begun.

Thou wilt not break as we have broken
The towers we reared to rival Thee.
More true to England than the English
More just to freedom than the free.
O trumpet of the intolerant truth
Thou art more full of grace and truth
For the hopes of the world than the world that made them,
The world that murdered the loves of our youth.
Thou art more kind to our dreams, Our Mother,
Than the wise that wove us the dreams for shade.
God if more good to the gods that mocked Him
Than men are good to the gods they made.
Tenderer with toys than a boy grown brutal,
Breaking the puppets with which he played.

What are the flowers the garden guards not
And how but here should dreams return?
And how on hearths made cold with ruin
the wide wind-scattered ashes burn--
What is the home of the heart set free,
And where is the nesting of liberty,
And where from the world shall the world take shelter
And man be matter, and not with Thee?
Wisdom is set in her throne of thunder,
The Mirror of Justice blinds the day--
Where are the towers that are not of the City,
Trophies and trumpetings, where are they?
Where over the maze of the world returning
The bye-ways bend to the King's highway.

(1925)

A Curse in Free Verse

(This is the only rhyme admitted: otherwise the enchanting lyric is all that the most fastidious fashionable taste could require):

I CURSE PARADOX—
I curse the contradictory inconsistencies of the Modern Mind
I curse and curse and curse . . .

Those who dogmatise about the folly of dogma:
Those who moralise about the non-existence of morals:
Those who say people are too stupid to educate their children
But not too stupid to educate each other's:
Those who say we can be certain of nothing
Because we are so certain of all the exploded evolutionary hypotheses
That show we can be certain of nothing . . .
But what are all these inconsistencies—
Compared with the conduct of Those Who
Deliberately call Their House Christmas Cottage,
And then go away from it at Christmas?

I hate those who wage and win twenty unjust wars
And then say "The World now requires Peace,"
Who then make a League for Peace and use it to make another War:
I hate those who intemperately denounce Beer and call in Temperance;
Those who deny what science says about Cancer
And what Christianity says about Calvary
And Call the Contradiction Christian Science.
I hate those who want to Rise out of Barbarism
By running around naked and grubbing up roots and herbs;
But what are all these aversions . . . ?
Compared with the blighting blistering horror and hatred
With which I regard
THOSE WHO CALL THEIR HOUSE CHRISTMAS COTTAGE
AND THEN GO AWAY FROM IT AT CHRISTMAS?

(The Poet is removed, cursing . . .)

(early 1930s?)

COMFORT FOR COMMUNISTS

"In January of last year Bezboznik[34] complained that anti-religious societies had been disbanded in seventy districts, while it had been thought that in the region of Kovrov there was a whole system of atheist cells, the President of that region wrote, … that neither in the town nor in the region were there any cells left--in fact, 'in the entire district there is not only one organized atheist—myself.'"

—From an article by Father C. C. Martindale, S. J. in the Catholic Herald, May 11, 1935

"I'm all alone; I can't organize anyone,
There's nobody left to organize me,
And still I'm the only organized atheist
In all the province of Skunktz (E. C.).

Sometimes disgusting disorganized atheists
Orphan the stars without permit from me,
Unmake their Maker without their ticket
Or their copy of Form X. 793.

The Blasphemy Drill's getting slacker and slacker
Free Thought it becoming alarmingly free,
And I'll be the only organized atheist
Between the Bug[35] and the big Black Sea."

Ours, ours is the key O desolate crier,
The golden key to what ills distress you
Left without ever a God to judge you,
Lost without even a Man to oppress you.

Look west, look west, to the Land of Profits,
To the old gold marts, and confess it then
How greatly your great propaganda prospers
When left to the methods of Business Men.

Ah, Mammon is mightier than Marx in making
A goose-step order for godless geese,
And snobs know better than mobs to measure
Where God shall flourish and God shall cease.

Lift up your heart in the wastes Slavonian,
Let no Red Sun on your wrath go down;
There are millions of very much organised atheists
In the Outer Circle of London Town.

(1935)

[34] An atheistic journal from Novi Sad (then Jugoslavia, present-day Serbia); the title literally means, "The Ungodly." [JLG]

[35] The Bug river forms parts of the borders between Poland and Ukraine and Poland and Belarus. [JLG]

THE JAZZ

A Study of Modern Dancing, in the manner of Modern Poetry

TLANNGERSHSHSH!
Thrills of vibrant discord,
Like the shivering of glass;
Some people dislike it; but I do not dislike it.
I think it is fun,
Approximating to the fun
Of merely smashing a window;
But I am told that it proceeds
From a musical instrument,
Or at any rate
From an instrument.

Black flashes . . .
. . . Flashes of intermittent darkness;
Somebody seems to be playing with the electric light;
Some may possibly believe that modern dancing
Looks best in the dark.

I do not agree with them.
I have heard that modern dancing is barbaric,
Pagan, shameless, shocking, abominable.
No such luck—I mean no such thing.
The dancers are singularly respectable

If I were writing an essay
—And you can put chunks of any number of essays
Into this sort of poem—
I should say there was a slight disproportion
Between the music and the dancing;
For only the musician dances
With excitement,
While the dancers remain cold
And relatively motionless
(Orpheus of the Lyre of Life
Leading the forests in fantastic capers;
Here is your Art eclipsed and reversed,
For I see men as trees walking.)

If Mr. King stood on his head,
Or Mr. Simon butted Mr. Gray
In the waistcoat,
Or the two Burnett-Browns
Strangled each other in their coat-tails,
There would then be a serene harmony,

A calm unity and oneness
In the two arts.
But Mr. King remains on his feet,
And the coat-tails of Mr. Burnett-Brown
Continue in their customary position.

And something else was running in my head—
—Songs I had heard earlier in the evening;
Songs of true lovers and tavern friends,
Decent drunkenness with a chorus,

And the laughter of men who could riot.
And something stirred in me;
A tradition
Strayed from an older time,
And from the freedom of my fathers:
That when there is banging, yelling and smashing to be done,
I like to do it myself,
And not delegate it to a slave,
However accomplished.
And that I should sympathise,
As with a revolt of human dignity,
If the musician had suddenly stopped playing,
And had merely quoted the last line
Of a song sung by Mrs. Harcourt Williams[36]:
"If you want any more, you must sing it yourselves."[37]

(ca. 1922)

[36] *Nee* Jean Sterling Mackinlay, a singer and actress of the London stage. [JLG]

[37] It's difficult to know what song Chesterton has in mind; this line appears quite a lot in English folk balladry; however, one contender is a song Chesterton elsewhere refers to in which this lyric appears, entitled "Oliver Cromwell Lay Buried and Dead." [JLG]

NURSERY RHYMES NO. 1: PROPERTY[38]

Little Bo-Peep has lost her Sheep
But hopes that mutton will soon be cheap
When so many cooks are nothing loth
For the task of spoiling the mutton-broth.
And the lords of the Meat Trust, she has been told,
Have cornered mutton and "got it cold"
Through experts, each guaranteed as fit
For the duty of making a hash of it,
In mutton cutlets and mutton pies
She endeavours in vain to recognise
The face of a single personal pet . . .
. . . But Woolen Goods Will Be Cheaper Yet
In shirts and shapes of every size
For pulling the wool over mortal eyes;
And Bradford mills are a lovely sight
Rows and rows of them, brisk and bright . . .
. . . But somehow or other they never recall
The days she walked on the mountain wall
Where the Shepherd Kings of an elder sky
Hoary as hills on the hills trailed by
And something went with her march along
Of David's valour and Virgil's song
When her voice was a clarion calling a clan
And her crook was a sceptre, the sceptre of man,
To gather her flock where the eagles fly
Or lay down her life when the wolf went by.

Little Bo-Peep is paid in full
Stuffed with mutton and choked in wool
But little Bo-Peep has lost her Sheep
And cannot do anything else but weep.

(*G.K.'s Weekly,* 19 November 1927)

NURSERY RHYMES NO. 2: EDUCATION

Tom, Tom, the piper's son
Learned that pipers' days are done
Since oaten pipe and pastoral song
To rude and rural scenes belong
And all the tune that he could play
Was *Over the hills and far away.*

The schools received him; and he reads
The round of all our real needs

[38] The first of a series of three rhymes about social questions from *G.K.'s Weekly.* [JLG]

The daylight hope of liberal days
One life to live, one world to praise,
The life that ends wherei t began
Here in the market-place of man,
They big him trace in wheel and star
The God of all things as they are
They called the laurelled lords of fame
To put his pretty pipe to shame
And rock-hewn Homer's hornèd lyrle
And Maro's harp of heart's desire
Moaned with the tears of mortal things
And Shakespeare clashed his thousand strings
Crying and replying like a crowd
And Dante's iron lute was loud
With high unhuman love and hate—
—At the calm signal of the State
And just enactment of the School
They drowned the piping of the fool.

But all the tune that they could play
Was *Over the hills and far away.*

(*G.K.'s Weekly,* 26 November 1927)

NURSERY RHYMES NO. 3

Little Jack Horner
Sat in a corner
Eating a Christmas pie;
He put in his thumb
And pulled out a plum,
And said: "My Lords—ha! and ah—gentlemen—hum!
The conclusion to which the Committee has come
On the sociological residuum
Of the weak, the unfit, and the blind and the dumb—
The (in short) economic excresence which some
In less technical terms have described as the Slum
Discovers a Nervous Prostration made numb
By the use of beer, brandy, gin, whisky, and rum,
Affecting the sensistive sensorium
With a blasting effect as of bullets (dum-dum);
And making our workers so gloomy and glum
That they can't take delight in the landscape of Brum,
And will seldom leap up like a chivalrous chum
To make somebody else's big enterprise hum,
And receive in return, by a sound rule of thumb,
The more or less crumby proportion of crumb
Which falls from the table of Baron de Tum

Of Consolidate Glue and Incorporate Gum,
And the British Adventure in Bam-Buzalum.
The tabel all laden with Clicquot and Mumm
To which they might, too, have aspired, and become
Successful as we are: survived in the scrum
Of the fittest who fight for Honorarium,
And make in Imperio Imperium,
To the manifest gain of Lord Cockalorum;
And at last, to arrive at the Summum Bonum,
The Evolving Eden and Elysium,
The Pattern of Fate with its thread and its thrum,
The End of Existence when—er—that is, um
I appear; and the world has discarded its scrum
Of ignorance, dirt, and of mere tedium.
And the beer and the bloodshed in which it has swum,
And the dissolute cask and the bellicose drum,
And the world that revolved like a mad teetotum
Round Me"—(or, to state his oration in sum)
He said: "What a good boy am I."

(*G.K.'s Weekly,* 19 May 1927)

ON PROFESSOR FREUD

The ignorant pronounce it Frood,
To cavil or applaud.
The well-informed pronounce it Froyd,
But I pronounce it Fraud.

(1925)

ON READING "GOD"

(Mr. Middletown Murry explains that his book with this title records his farewell to God)

Murry, on finding *le Bon Dieu*
Chose difficile à croire[39]
Illogically said "Adieu"
But God said "Au revoir."[40]

(1932)

[39] "The Good God/A thing difficult to believe." [JLG]

[40] The salutation, "Adieu," is literally a blessing, meaning something like, "I commend you to God." God's response here renders more like, "I'll see you again" or even "I'll see you soon"[!]. [JLG]

INTRODUCTION

By Aidan Mackey

In his verse, as in most of his endeavors, G. K. Chesterton is difficult to assess because his individuality is so marked that he cannot usefully be compared to any of his peers. He belonged to no school; he never attempted to lead any movement in poetry; and although in his early years, his rhythms are imitative of Swinburne's, he quickly developed a style unmistakably his own.

He cannot be pigeon-holed, because he worked with equal facility in so many fields, and, even among his admirers—perhaps especially among his admirers—there is no consensus of opinion as to the one in which he was most successful. If I were constrained to pin a single label on him, then it would have to be that of propagandist. And this will, I believe, make him the more readily understandable.

His written work as a whole is, I believe, most readily understood if he is seen as a propagandist. Almost from the beginning he had a coherent philosophy of life and people from which he never deviated, and he dedicated his life and work to propagating it. All forms of communication—the novel, the debating platform, literary criticism, social and political comment, plays, letters to the press, detective stories, religious writing and controversy, art studies, essays and verse—were vehicles by which he reached out, over the heads of specialists and critics, to the ordinary people he so unaffectedly loved.

His whole life was one consistent and fierce, though almost unfailingly good-tempered, attack on the planners, sociologists and bureaucrats who sought (and still seek) to supervise and regulate the lives and pleasures of people—most especially of poor people. He was very much more in tune with the joys and sorrows and grievances of ordinary people than were most of the intellectuals of his day, who tended, then as now, to think in terms of abstract social problems rather than of common folk and their lives. He was the poet of the ordinary, denying that anything was or could be uninteresting; his verse celebrates lamp-posts

and daisies and railway stations. Above all he gave unceasing thanks for "The Great Minimum", that gift of mere existence, to which any added joy is almost superfluous, and certainly to be regarded as an unlooked-for and undeserved bonus.

Chesterton saw himself as a journalist, and in this he was accurate in the sense that he wrote for his day; he had no desire at all for permanent fame, and none of his writing was done for posterity; all was penned for immediacy of impact upon the people and problems of his day. Even his finest and most profound books, such as *The Everlasting Man*, are scattered throughout with names of people who mean nothing to us today, for it would never have occurred to him that many of the people with whom he argued would pass into oblivion whilst his own work and thought endured.

Inevitably, this means that some of his verse, written for a topic or event of the day, has little meaning for us today without explanatory notes which would in some cases smother the barb he had fired. It would, for instance, require a brief essay to render "A Song of Swords" (p. 414) easily accessible to us now. More importantly, it means that he wrote most of his verse in haste and did not polish and revise nearly as much as would a more single-minded writer. The truly dedicated poet does not ride, but is ridden by, his muse; but for Chesterton poetry was there to serve and not to be served. There were too many other things in life of far higher importance to him than poetry—especially his own poetry.

Chesterton, then, is not to be numbered among the great poets of our inheritance, and most certainly he himself would have derided any such suggestion. The following pages, however, will show how very often he wrote great and near-great poetry, and most literate people have, whether or not they are aware of the fact, a good many lines and stanzas of his verse securely installed as part of the furniture of their minds.

Even his lightest poems, such as those in his novel, *The Flying Inn*, carried his rollicking yet devastating shafts launched at the cant and humbug of the planners, politicians and self-appointed reformers of his day. The thrust and accuracy of his barbs is remarkable, and English satiric attack has few better examples than "AntiChrist, or The Reunion of Christendom: An Ode".

It was, however, virtually always at the idea and not at the person that he aimed his weapon. Even in the two exceptions to that rule which come to mind, "Sonnet with the Compliments of the Season" and "Elegy in a Country Churchyard", the target is allowed anonymity.

Chesterton took very seriously the ideas and causes for which he fought throughout his life, but it never occurred to him that his own writing, whether in prose or verse, was of lasting importance. It was several times pointed out to him that in his splended epic, "The Ballad of the White Horse", he had the left wings of the opposing armies at the battle of Ethandune facing each other but, as his wife Frances wrote to one correspondent, G. K. C. did not believe that anyone would care or think it of any importance.

When we consider the breath-taking quantity of his literary output (an article for *Illustrated London News* every week from 1905 until his death in 1936, with hardly a week missed except during his illness in 1914; a weekly article in *The Daily News* for eleven years; essays, poems, reviews, letters, etc., in almost a hundred different journals; his writing for the papers, *The Eye-Witness* and *The New Witness*, edited by his brother Cecil, followed by his own editorship of *G. K.'s Weekly*; the travelling and lecture tours; all these in addition to the torrent of books), some unevenness in his work cannot be wondered at.

The faults are there to be seen but, beyond any reasonable doubt, so are the glories. Even the speed at which he wrote had the advantage of giving his verse a freshness and vigour that heightens its appeal to us. An originality of approach to the age-old theme of love would seem to be an impossibility, yet Chesterton achieves it, and achieves it triumphantly, time after time.

These considerations cannot but make life difficult for the critic whose integrity and judgement will not allow him to be dismissive, as are so many lesser commentators. The *doyen* of literary critics, Desmond McCarthy wrote in *The Sunday Times* (September 17, 1933):

> This is the second time I have read the collected poems of Chesterton through, and whatever doubts I have about this poetry I am in no doubt about this: Mr Chesterton is not a minor poet. Nor is he a great one—that is equally certain. A

> minor poet (it is an exceedingly vague term) may, as is well known, produce one or two imperishable poems; but his vision does not embrace so much. . . . Both Chesterton and Kipling stand in that sense apart as faulty, fervid poets whose approach to poetry is nevertheless the grand one through which greatness is achieved. . . . In my boyhood there was a critical flag flying in all the reviews, inscribed "The Renaissance of Wonder". Wonder seems to Chesterton the permanently appropriate attitude towards life; wonder, with faith behind it. . . . Humility and the courage which springs from humility, not that which springs from pride, are his favourite virtues. These make him sing as a poet—or, when he doesn't sing—shout. He has the great poet's capacity to feel most what he values most. But unlike the great poet, his art is second to his purpose. . . . I never tire of a chivalrous radiance that shines in his best work, shines with a glitter of tears that are tears of joy; or of the solemnity of that climax his rhetoric sometimes reaches, when it has fought its way through paradoxes, jokes and conceits to a final simplicity of expression.

But it was that fine, though now neglected, critic John Collinge Squire who most clearly saw Chesterton's true position, describing him as the poet of "of the market-place", and commenting:

> We have here, in the intermittent work of an unflagging publicist and man-of-letters, a body of good, and diversely good, work which would suffice to make reputations for a dozen small dedicated poets, and a body of less good verse which remains interesting because only one man and one craftsman could have written it.

He saw that Chesterton's reputation had suffered because of this diversity as well as his massive output:

> People like clear definitions and a label. If a writer produces a little good verse, and nothing else, he is evidently a poet, and will be sympathetically considered as such. . . . Chesterton's poetry, as it were, has been hidden by the dust he has raised. . . . A great deal of Mr Chesterton's verse has serious, though usually not ruinous, faults. He is a very exuberant man. The coupling of complete, and full-blooded, expression with fastidious care is unusual. Carefulness normally leads to cramping and timidity, and gusto to carelessness. Mr Chesterton has always scorned to conceal even his most 'vulgar' tastes, and he has let his genius take him where it would. . . . The mixture does no harm: it is all to the credit of his honesty in a frightened, neighbour-watching age; it is a great thing that on one page there is to be found a poem beginning, "A word came forth in Galilee, a word like to a star", and on the next, with one which opens, "Jones had a dog; it had a chain". . . . His defects are the defects of his qualities; his ear for splendid

> sound, his intellectual agility, his natural un-self-conscious copiousness. Lesser men often have fewer obvious faults.

My own feeling is that we gain more than we lose from the fact that G. K. C. seldom took time to hone and polish his verse. If to be a great poet one must have produced a body of near-flawless work, then he has certainly disqualified himself. For the great, dedicated poets there is very frequently a point at which inspiration must take second place to the sheer grind of wrestling with technique, and the task of making some uncooperative line scan, and this may hold up composition for a long time. Chesterton seldom exercised that patience.

It is often said that he never revised his work. This is not true, but it was far from being his normal practice. He was a poet of overflowing vitality, of high purpose and, it must be said, sometimes of high carelessness. An idea would sometimes recur to his mind and reemerge in an altered form or length, but this is not the same as the meticulous polishing of a particular piece. One example of his reworking of a theme (quite possibly having forgotten that he had earlier committed it to paper) can be seen in "The Troubadour of God", which I have seen in several versions. The one that seems the earliest is a fragment, of which the only complete stanza does not appear in that form in other versions. The fullest version did not see publication until after his death when it appeared in *G. K.'s Weekly*, February 3, 1938. What variants I can find will be included in the second volume of this edition.

If, as I contend, there is greatness in having produced very many poems of real depth and quality and, perhaps even more important, to have minted countless lines and stanzas that have lodged themselves firmly in the hearts of many thousands of people who may hardly know the name of the poet, then Chesterton cannot be denied a significant place in our hall of poetic fame. As Oliver Edwards, writing in the *London Times*, on May 15, 1958, put it:

> He was, it seems to me, more consistently a poet than any other kind of writer. . . . There is in his poems less persiflage and more passion than in any of his other work. He plumbed more sombre depths, he rose to greater heights.

Perhaps it would be possible to satisfy the demands of both justice

and accuracy only if we acknowledge G. K. C. to be (a concept which would greatly amuse him) not one, but half-a-dozen poets: the ballad-monger, the satirist, the troubadour, the comic, the psalmist and the warrior-poet.

Chesterton, I believe, must be seen as a whole or we lose much of his integrity and importance. He cannot be compartmentalized or cut down; there are those who say, "I love his essays (or his fiction, or his verse or his literary criticism) but I don't want to bother about his religious beliefs (or his social philosophy, or his controversies)", but such readers must miss a great deal, for he was a thinker made in one piece and all his thought and writing offers a unified and coherent view of life.

As I have noted, some of his poems exist in more than one version, but in many cases the variation is slight and without significance, so I have not thought it worthwhile to distract the attention of the reader with it. With others, I have noted that a variant version does exist, quoting changes, and in one or two cases, such as "The Song of the Cradle", the versions differ so greatly that I have treated them as being separate poems and have given both versions.

One of the criticisms that may be made of this collection is that it includes inferior poems that some readers would prefer to remain forgotten; some the point of which has been blunted by the passage of time, and many others that Chesterton himself did not include in his *Collected Poems*.

If, however, I had decided to select and winnow, some major difficulties would have arisen. Firstly, that there are few poems in which there is nothing of value or interest that we would regret losing; secondly, that he himself was, like John Keats and others of our greatest poets, prepared to preserve work that he came to regard as faulty and immature. In a brief note in *The Wild Knight and Other Poems*, 1900, he commented that the poems "have been selected and arranged rather with a view to unity of spirit than to unity of time or value; many of them being juvenile." Then in 1933 when Methuen issued a new edition of the *Collected Poems*, he wrote a Prefatory Note to the section *Poems* (1915):

> This collection was made a long time ago and includes items written a very long time before that: things that are indeed merely juvenile. But I have decided that it is very difficult to disentangle the threads in a patchwork which may already be thought threadbare; and I have let these schoolboy verses remain side by side with some that I wrote at least in maturer years and on more momentous occasions.

As a further answer to those who would say that poems that were not collected by the poet himself should not be included in this permanent record, it should be sufficient to list a few of those which, for one reason or another, he failed to collect. In a few cases, such as the three poems (including the splendid "Gloria in Profundis" that appeared in the Faber & Gwyer series of 'Ariel Poems', and those in the little book of religious verse *The Queen of Seven Swords*, the reason for the omission may possibly lie in the realm of copyright. A few others, such as "To Saint Michael in Time of Peace" and "To the Jesuits in Spain", were written after the compilation of the *Collected Poems*. But very many others, I am certain, were merely overlooked, for it was only in the last ten years of his life that Dorothy Collins was at hand to bring some degree of order and system to filing and storage. It would be quite ludicrous to imagine Gilbert himself diligently sifting through files of dozens of periodicals and newspapers in search of his own verse.

It would, in fact, be very difficult to determine just what he intended (if, indeed, he gave any thought at all to the matter) and which alterations and omissions were deliberate and which were fortuitous. For instance, for the enlarged edition of the *Collected Poems* which Methuen published in 1933 he moved his sonnet "The Convert", which had appeared on page 84 of the original (1927) edition, to make it the final poem in the volume.

This, clearly, was deliberate. Equally clearly, it was done not because he held that poem in special esteem, but because of the importance to him of its subject. On the other hand, the early poem "A Word", which had been first collected in *Poems* (1915), was also included in the first edition of *Collected Poems*. It was then dropped from the 1933 and subsequent British printings, yet retained in all American printings.

We can, I believe, draw no conclusion from all this except that the

confusing situation, and other oddities and omissions, arose simply through lack of systematic editing and the fact that no one had the overall task of keeping track of all of his verse. This, of course, applies also to much of his other writings; very many of the essays and articles as yet uncollected are quite as good and relevant as are those that were gathered into books. This I have long known because of the wealth of unpublished material I have had the opportunity to study, and it is now amply demonstrated in the collections of his essays from the *Illustrated London News*, which form so considerable and valuable a part of these Collected Works.

My own view is that sufficient time has now elapsed since the poet's death for it to be legitimate to say that in so far as it is possible, the whole of his verse should be made available.

Our further need now is for a new, much smaller, volume of selected poems that would allow readers and critics to extend to him the courtesy due to every writer and particularly to every poet—to be judged by his finest work.

Other poems again, and this represents a large body, were written for the entertainment of friends and family, with no intention whatsoever of publication. As well as a number of important serious poems, these include some of his very best comic verse, which will delight the growing number of his readers, not only for their quality but also because they are so personal, again and again revealing the huge warmth and geniality of his character.

Of these, very few readers would wish to be deprived. For me, the years of tracking down (a task that will never be completely achieved) these fugitive pieces have been one of the most exacting, but most exciting and rewarding aspects of compiling this offering. As an example, I saw, about a year ago, a reference to a biography of A. G. Gardiner. Knowing that Gardiner had been editor of the *Daily News* at the time when G. K. C. was writing his Saturday articles for it, I ordered the book to find what Gardiner might have said about him. I found in it the delightful verses "Some Revelations of Journalism", which Chesterton had written for Gardiner's little daughter, Stella.[1]

[1] Stephen E. Koss, *Fleet Street Rebel: A. G. Gardiner and the 'Daily News'* (Archon Books, 1973).

Very recently, well after the contents of this first volume had gone to the publisher, I was sent two minor but completely fresh poems, inscribed by G. K. C. in books given to friends, and I have no doubt at all that the publication of this edition will flush out more from their hiding-places. It will, therefore, be a very long time before we dare to assert that we have a complete and definitive edition.

There are other problems in editing Chesterton. He almost never dated his work, and much of it, even very early compositions, now exists only in typescript. Some poems may be given an approximate date by their appearance in periodicals, but this can never be conclusive; those that are in holograph form furnish a rough guide because of the development of his hand-writing, and a few are linked to specific, identifiable events.

The great majority, however, thwart any attempt to arrange them chronologically so, after a good deal of heart-searching, I have adopted a thematic approach and have arranged the poems under nine subject-headings. I accept that this method, too, has its shortcomings, and the reader will see that many poems are susceptible of being placed in one of two or even more groups, so that there is a strong but unavoidable element of the subjective in the decision. I can only plead that the Prefatory Note I quoted earlier shows that this method does conform to Chesterton's own approach.

Another problem I encountered is that he sometimes wrote verses using very soft pencils or chalks, and age has rendered some of these unreadable. Then there are pages that have been lost, pages torn out to make a spill with which to light one of his small cigars, passages indecipherable because of stains from tea, wine or ink. I also found a few cases in which his hand-writing was so hurried or tired that little can be made out, and his habit of using journalisitic abbreviations adds greatly to the difficulty. In some instances I have inserted, within brackets, a word or phrase that seems likely to have been what Chesterton had in mind, but in cases where the authentic text is insufficient to the offering of a coherent and significant passage, it must be reckoned as being a poem lost.

The enormous amount of material that was, for over half a century, stored at Top Meadow Cottage (the home of Dorothy Collins on

the grounds of Top Meadow) and is now in the British Library gives the clearest possible picture of the exuberant and care-free attitude Chesterton held toward his material when once it had served its immediate purpose. The wonder is not that some part of it has been lost, but rather that so much of it has survived—preserved, of course, by others.