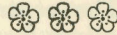


men whose hearts were weak are now walking around with artificial ones. Brains of dead men have been successfully placed in those mentally deficient. Such is the advance of science.

.....

This does not seem impossible, because daily we read of new discoveries, daily new apparatus appear on our market, and daily our knowledge is growing as men continue to experiment. Can we, then, believe; or shall we live happy and contented, satisfied with the present, putting no faith in the future?



Mortuus Est

A. P. C., '37

Chesterton died and great men gathered round with tributes and condolences. Though late, we pay our humble tribute—but we cannot be sad, for who could be sad for one who was so cheerful, who looked on this world with mystic, wondering eyes? For him this was a land of romance, the Romance of Christianity, in which “all things that can't be are.” The best part of life, for him, was the ending; it is just like a serial in a magazine, when we finish this part of it we have the assurance that it is “continued in our next.” He was cheerful because his God was a happy God, not the sad, sour god of the Pagan.

Though a mystic, Chesterton was not an ascetic; he took the simple pleasures of life with boyish gleefulness. He had no use for Puritanic restrictions; he believed in laughter and gaiety. He hated the contradiction called Prohibition because it kept beer from the poor man and gave wine to the rich. He shocked many a strong abstainer with those rollicking songs of the “Flying Inn:”

“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.’ ”

These were not the sad songs of a neurotic drunkard but the light-hearted laughter of one who knew how to use and not abuse God's gifts.

These songs bring out a side of Chesterton that made him loved by Englishmen—he loved England, old English inns, little old towns hidden away in the country; he loved the green English countryside, and even English snowstorms. The new shops and skyscrapers did not appeal to him; he thought that:

“God made the wicked grocer for a mystery and a sign,
That man might shun the wicked shops, and go to inns
to dine.”

He wrote those great rugged ballads of Alfred the Great and his fight against the Pagan Danes, for

“There was not English armour left,
Nor any English thing,
When Alfred came to Athelney
To be an English king.”

As bravely as Alfred, he fought the enemies who, in his time, were trying to separate England from Christ.

His love for England did not, however, extend to the blundering ignorance of many an Englishman. He opposed the Boer War because it was wrong, and upheld their defence of Belgium in the Great War because it was right. He had none of that foolish my-country—right-or-wrong sentiment. That, said G. K. was as bad as saying “My mother, drunk or sober.” You loved your country because it was your country, but you had a duty to see that it was rightly governed.

Whatever he thought was wrong he attacked fiercely; but all his satire and denunciation were accomplished by such sparkling good nature that even his enemies loved him. George Bernard Shaw was the target for many a sharp thrust from the pen of “G. K. C.” but that did not prevent them from playing at “cowboys” in an English meadow.

This same humour was the cause of many misconceptions of his nature and ambitions. Some regarded him as a clown who did nothing but laugh and make witty paradoxes. As a clown they loved him—but he was no clown. Every paradox was the natural product of a brilliant mind. He protested that never once did he make a paradox for the sake of being funny—though he did have common sense enough to know they were funny, and humility enough to admit he laughed at his own jokes.

It has been said by some that G. K. was so naturally happy and good humoured that it was easy for him to be good; that he had no great spiritual and moral battles. To say such a thing is to show ignorance not only of Chesterton's nature, but of all human nature. No one is free from such struggles. The only difference is that some do not talk of their own experiences, while others talk of nothing else. The fact that Chesterton was always cheerful means nothing toward proving that he had no moral difficulties. Happiness followed the vigorous winning of those battles—"If you think virtue is languor, just try it and see."

This gaiety really comes from a happy realization that he must not take himself too seriously; he was gay because he wanted to be. "It is easier to write a leading Times article than a good joke for Punch.—It is easy to be heavy, hard to be light. Satan fell by the force of gravity," he wrote in "Orthodoxy"—and even there could not resist making a pun.

Critics found fault with him for a lack of what they called "pathos" in his writing. They discovered he had no pity for man; they found no conception of man's suffering. But he did say things that showed a thorough knowledge of the world and suffering humanity; only his tragedies were spiritual ones. He said things that should have made them suffer if they had a conscience left to grieve, when "Christian killeth Christian in narrow dusty room." He gave them the greatest Christian poem of the century and what they failed to see was that the "Dim drums throbbing in the hills half heard" were calling to them.

They expected struggle—narrative, autobiographical, soul-revealing poems. And when none came they were disappointed. But Chesterton knew we had enough sad novelists and too many sad poets, tearing their soul apart and pasting it in the pages of a book. He wanted to give the world some much-needed cheer; even in serious things there should be cheerfulness. Father Brown is a perfectly "ripping" detective who can solve the most complex mystery in the simplest way. He is jolly, round faced, plump and dreamy, but knows more about crime than the most hardened criminal; he understands every one of them and is ready, when the crime is exposed, to "hear your confession." At times Father Brown is terrifying as he lays bare the soul of a criminal; at times he is terrified

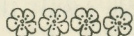
himself by the enormity of the sin. Father Brown has great and serious problems, yet he is not a bore about it; he can often smoke a cheerful cigar with a friend.

In Chesterton's autobiography we get a light throw on these stories. They were inspired by his friend Father O'Connor, a scholarly parish priest, who one day terrified G. K. by revealing a deep knowledge of sin and crime. He was surprised that a Catholic priest should know so much of the world without being "in the world." Religious problems still "troubled me a good deal, but I might have sunk more and more into some sort of compromise or surrender of mere weariness, but for this sudden glimpse of the pit that is ever at our feet."

He was amazed that the priest knew so much about sin and yet did not speak about it. Many modern writers, said G. K., would have filled their books with it, would have brought out all the sordid acts of the "hero's" life; they would print it for children and babies to read and call it the "coming of the Dawn." Chesterton hated modern realism; in his judgment, the Nazis should be praised for at least one thing: they burned "All Quiet on the Western Front."

He was hopelessly romantic. Like a boy he was always finding something new and wonderful. Gabriel Gale lies for hours watching a bird flying among the limbs of a tree, and weaves all kinds of queer fancies about it; or he suddenly and symbolically stands on his head on a lawn.

Perhaps he was too wildly fantastic—I don't know. I am not trying to point out his place in literature: I leave that to the learned critics. They will know how to do it. They may find that he lacks polish or pathos or something else—I don't care what. For me he will always be the "Last Knight of Europe," "who went singing southward when all the world was young."



And the great trees bowed in their gold and red
Till my heart caught flame;
And my soul, that I thought was crushed or dead,
Uttered a name.

—*Marya Zaturensky.*