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**Poems**

**By**

**G.K. Chesterton**

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I

**THREE DEDICATIONS**

**TO EDMUND CLERIHEW BENTLEY - THE DEDICATION OF THE MAN WHO WAS THURSDAY**

A cloud was on the mind of men, and wailing went the weather, Yea, a sick cloud upon the soul when we were boys together. Science announced nonentity and art admired decay; The world was old and ended: but you and I were gay. Round us in antic order their crippled vices came-- Lust that had lost its laughter, fear that had lost its shame. Like the white lock of Whistler, that lit our aimless gloom, Men showed their own white feather as proudly as a plume. Life was a fly that faded, and death a drone that stung; The world was very old indeed when you and I were young. They twisted even decent sin to shapes not to be named: Men were ashamed of honour; but we were not ashamed. Weak if we were and foolish, not thus we failed, not thus; When that black Baal blocked the heavens he had no hymns from us. Children we were--our forts of sand were even as weak as we, High as they went we piled them up to break that bitter sea. Fools as we were in motley, all jangling and absurd, When all church bells were silent our cap and bells were heard.

Not all unhelped we held the fort, our tiny flags unfurled; Some giants laboured in that cloud to lift it from the world. I find again the book we found, I feel the hour that flings Far out of fish-shaped Paumanok some cry of cleaner things; And the Green Carnation withered, as in forest fires that pass, Roared in the wind of all the world ten million leaves of grass; Or sane and sweet and sudden as a bird sings in the rain Truth out of Tusitala spoke and pleasure out of pain. Yea, cool and clear and sudden as a bird sings in the grey, Dunedin to Samoa spoke, and darkness unto day, But we were young; we lived to see God break their bitter charms, God and the good Republic come riding back in arms: We have seen the city of Mansoul, even as it rocked, relieved--Blessed are they who did not see, but being blind, believed.

This is a tale of those old fears, even of those emptied hells, And none but you shall understand the true thing that it tells-- Of what colossal gods of shame could cow men and yet crash, Of what huge devils hid the stars, yet fell at a pistol flash. The doubts that were so plain to chase, so dreadful to

withstand-- Oh, who shall understand but you; yea, who shall understand?  
The doubts that drove us through the night as we two talked amain, And day  
had broken on the streets e'er it broke upon the brain. Between us, by the  
peace of God, such truth can now be told; Yea, there is strength in striking  
root, and good in growing old. We have found common things at last, and  
marriage and a creed. And I may safely write it now, and you may safely read.

**TO HILAIRE BELLOC - THE DEDICATION OF THE NAPOLEON OF NOTTING HILL**

For every tiny town or place      God made the stars especially;      Babies  
look up with owlish face      And see them tangled in a tree:      You saw a moon  
from Sussex Downs,      A Sussex moon, untravelled still,      I saw a moon that  
was the town's,      The largest lamp on Campden Hill.

Yea, Heaven is everywhere at home.      The big blue cap that always fits,  
And so it is (be calm; they come      To goal at last, my wandering wits),      So it  
is with the heroic thing;      This shall not end for the world's end,      And  
though the sullen engines swing,      Be you not much afraid, my friend.

This did not end by Nelson's urn      Where an immortal England sits--  
Nor where your tall young men in turn      Drank death like wine at Austerlitz.  
And when the pedants bade us mark      What cold mechanic happenings  
Must come; our souls said in the dark,      "Belike; but there are likelier things."

Likelier across these flats afar,      These sulky levels smooth and free,  
The drums shall crash a waltz of war      And Death shall dance with Liberty;  
Likelier the barricades shall blare      Slaughter below and smoke above,      And  
death and hate and hell declare      That men have found a thing to love.

Far from your sunny uplands set      I saw the dream; the streets I trod,  
The lit straight streets shot out and met      The starry streets that point to God;  
The legend of an epic hour      A child I dreamed, and dream it still,      Under  
the great grey water-tower      That strikes the stars on Campden Hill

**TO M. E. W.**

Words, for alas my trade is words, a barren burst of rhyme,      Rubbed by a  
hundred rhymesters, battered a thousand times,      Take them, you, that smile  
on strings, those nobler sounds than mine,      The words that never lie, or brag,  
or flatter, or malign.

I give a hand to my lady, another to my friend,      To whom you too have  
given a hand; and so before the end      We four may pray, for all the years,  
whatever suns beset,      The sole two prayers worth praying--to live and not  
forget.

The pale leaf falls in pallor, but the green leaf turns to gold;      We that have  
found it good to be young shall find it good to be old;      Life that bringeth the  
marriage bell, the cradle and the grave,      Life that is mean to the mean of  
heart, and only brave to the brave.

In the calm of the last white winter, when all the past is ours,      Old tears  
are frozen as jewels, old storms frosted as flowers.      Dear Lady, may we meet  
again, stand up again, we four,      Beneath the burden of the years, and praise  
the earth once more.