

## V - RHYMES FOR THE TIMES

### ANTICHRIST, OR THE REUNION OF CHRISTENDOM: AN ODE

"A BILL WHICH HAS SHOCKED THE CONSCIENCE OF EVERY  
CHRISTIAN COMMUNITY IN EUROPE."-- Mr. F.E. Smith, ON THE WELSH  
DISESTABLISHMENT BILL.

Are they clinging to their crosses, F.E. Smith, Where the Breton  
boat-fleet tosses, Are they, Smith? Do they, fasting, tramping,  
bleeding, Wait the news from this our city? Groaning "That's the Second  
Reading!" Hissing "There is still Committed" If the voice of Cecil falters,  
If McKenna's point has pith, Do they tremble for their altars? Do  
they, Smith?

Russian peasants round their pope Huddled, Smith, Hear  
about it all, I hope, Don't they, Smith? In the mountain hamlets  
clothing Peaks beyond Caucasian pales, Where Establishment means  
nothing And they never heard of Wales, Do they read it all in Hansard  
With a crib to read it with-- "Welsh Tithes: Dr. Clifford Answered,"  
Really, Smith?

In the lands where Christians were, F.E. Smith, In the little  
lands laid bare, Smith, O Smith! Where the Turkish bands are  
busy, And the Tory name is blessed Since they hailed the Cross of Dizzy  
On the banners from the West! Men don't think it half so hard if Islam  
burns their kin and kith, Since a curate lives in Cardiff Saved by  
Smith.

It would greatly, I must own, Soothe me, Smith, If you left this  
theme alone, Holy Smith! For your legal cause or civil You  
fight well and get your fee; For your God or dream or devil You will  
answer, not to me. Talk about the pews and steeples And the Cash that  
goes therewith! But the souls of Christian peoples.... --Chuck it,  
Smith!

## THE REVOLUTIONIST: OR LINES TO A STATESMAN

"I WAS NEVER STANDING BY WHILE A REVOLUTION WAS GOING ON."--  
Speech by the Rt. Hon. Walter Long.

When Death was on thy drums, Democracy, And with one rush of slaves  
the world was free, In that high dawn that Kings shall not forget, A void  
there was and Walter was not yet. Through sacked Versailles, at Valmy in the  
fray, They did without him in some kind of way; Red Christendom all  
Walterless they cross, And in their fury hardly feel their loss.... Fades the  
Republic; faint as Roland's horn, Her trumpets taunt us with a sacred  
scorn.... Then silence fell; and Mr. Long was born.

From his first hours in his expensive cot He never saw the tiniest viscount  
shot. In deference to his wealthy parents' whim The wildest massacres  
were kept from him. The wars that dyed Pall Mall and Brompton red  
Passed harmless o'er that one unconscious head: For all that little Long could  
understand The rich might still be rulers of the land. Vain are the pious  
arts of parenthood, Foiled Revolution bubbled in his blood; Until one day  
(the babe unborn shall rue it) The Constitution bored him and he slew it.

If I were wise and good and rich and strong-- Fond, impious thought, if I  
were Walter Long-- If I could water sell like molten gold, And make grown  
people do as they are told, If over private fields and wastes as wide As a  
Greek city for which heroes died, I owned the houses and the men inside--  
If all this hung on one thin thread of habit I would not revolutionize a rabbit.

I would sit tight with all my gifts and glories, And even preach to  
unconverted Tories, That the fixed system that our land inherits, Viewed  
from a certain standpoint, has its merits. I'd guard the laws like any Radical,  
And keep each precedent, however small, However subtle, misty, dusty,  
dreamy, Lest man by chance should look at me and see me; Lest men  
should ask what madman made me lord Of English ploughshares and the  
English sword; Lest men should mark how sleepy is the nod That drills the  
dreadful images of God!

Walter, be wise! avoid the wild and new, The Constitution is the game for  
you. Walter, beware! scorn not the gathering throng It suffers, yet it may  
not suffer wrong, It suffers, yet it cannot suffer Long. And if you goad it  
these grey rules to break, For a few pence, see that you do not wake Death  
and the splendour of the scarlet cap, Boston and Valmy, Yorktown and

Jemmappes, Freedom in arms, the riding and the routing, The thunder of  
the captains and the shouting, All that lost riot that you did not share--And  
when that riot comes--you will be there.

## **THE SHAKESPEARE MEMORIAL**

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

Lord Lilac did not long remain.      Lord Lilac did not come again.      He softly  
lit a cigarette      And sought some other social set      Where, in some other knots  
or rings,      People were doing cultured things,      --Miss Zwilt's Humane  
Vivarium      --The little men that paint on gum      --The exquisite Gorilla Girl....  
He sometimes, in this giddy whirl      (Not being really bad at heart),  
Remembered Shakespeare with a start--      But not with that grand constancy  
Of Clement Shorter, Herbert Tree,      Lord Rosebery and Comyns Carr      And all  
the other names there are;      Who stuck like limpets to the spot,      Lest they  
forgot, lest they forgot.

Lord Lilac was of slighter stuff;      Lord Lilac had had quite enough.

## THE HORRIBLE HISTORY OF JONES

Jones had a dog; it had a chain; Not often worn, not causing pain; But,  
as the I.K.L. had passed Their "Unleashed Cousins Act" at last, Inspectors  
took the chain away; Whereat the canine barked "hurray"! At which, of  
course, the S.P.U. (Whose Nervous Motorists' Bill was through), Were  
forced to give the dog in charge For being Audibly at Large. None, you will  
say, were now annoyed, Save haply Jones--the yard was void. But  
something being in the lease About "alarms to aid police," The U.S.U.  
annexed the yard For having no sufficient guards Now if there's one  
condition The C.C.P. are strong upon It is that every house one buys  
Must have a yard for exercise; So Jones, as tenant, was unfit. His state of  
health was proof of it. Two doctors of the T.T.U.'s Told him his legs from  
long disuse, Were atrophied; and saying "So From step to higher step we go  
Till everything is New and True," They cut his legs off and withdrew. You  
know the E.T.S.T.'s views Are stronger than the T.T.U.'s: And soon (as one  
may say) took wing The Arms, though not the Man, I sing. To see him  
sitting limbless there Was more than the K.K. could bear "In mercy silence  
with all speed That mouth there are no hands to feed; What cruel  
sentimentalist, O Jones, would doom thee to exist-- Clinging to selfish  
Selfhood yet? Weak one! Such reasoning might upset The Pump Act, and  
the accumulation Of all constructive legislation; Let us construct you up a  
bit--" The head fell off when it was hit: Then words did rise and honest  
doubt, And four Commissions sat about Whether the slash that left him  
dead Cut off his body or his head.

An author in the Isle of Wight Observed with unconcealed delight A  
land of old and just renown Where Freedom slowly broadened down From  
Precedent to Precedent.... And this, I think, was what he meant.

## THE NEW FREETHINKER

John Grubby, who was short and stout      And troubled with religious doubt,  
Refused about the age of three      To sit upon the curate's knee;      (For so the  
eternal strife must rage      Between the spirit of the age      And Dogma, which,  
as is well known.      Does simply hate to be outgrown).      Grubby, the young  
idea that shoots,      Outgrew the ages like old boots;      While still, to all  
appearance, small,      Would have no Miracles at all;      And just before the age  
of ten      Firmly refused Free Will to men.      The altars reeled, the hen-ens  
shook,      Just as he read of in the book;      Flung from his house went forth the  
youth      Alone with tempests and the Truth,      Up to the distant city and dim  
Where his papa had bought for him      A partnership in Chepe and Deer  
Worth, say, twelve hundred pounds a year.      But he was resolute. Lord Brute  
Had found him useful; and Lord Loot,      With whom few other men would act,  
Valued his promptitude and tact;      Never did even philanthropy      Enrich a  
man more rapidly:      Twas he that stopped the Strike in Coal,      For hungry  
children racked his soul;      To end their misery there and then      He filled the  
mines with Chinamen--      Sat in that House that broke the Kings,      And voted  
for all sores of things--      And rose from Under-Sec. to Sec.      Some grumbled.  
Growlers who gave less      Than generous worship to success,      The little  
printers in Dundee      Who got ten years for blasphemy,      (Although he let them  
off with seven)      Respect him rather less than heaven.      No matter. This can  
still be said:      Never to supernatural dread,      Never to unseen deity,      Did Sir  
John Grubby bend the knee;      Never did dream of hell or wrath      Turn  
Viscount Grubby from his path;      Nor was he bribed by fabled bliss      To kneel  
to any world but this.      The curate lives in Camden Town,      His lap still empty  
of renown,      And still across the waste of years      John Grubby, in the House  
of Peers,      Faces that curate, proud and free,      And never sits upon his knee.

**IN MEMORIAM P.D.**

NICE, JANUARY 30, 1914.

If any in an island cradle curled      Of comfort, may make offerings to you,  
Who in the day of all denial blew      A bugle through the blackness of the world,

An English hand would touch your shroud, in trust      That truth again be  
told in English speech.      And we too yet may practise what we preach,  
Though it were practising the bayonet thrust.

Cutting that giant neck from sand to sand,      From sea to sea; it was a little  
thing      Beside your sudden shout and sabre-swing      That cut the throat of  
thieves in every land.

Heed not if half-wits mock your broken blade:      Mammon our master doeth  
all things ill.      You are the Fool that charged a windmill. Still,      The Miller is a  
Knave; and was afraid.

Lay down your sword. Ruin will know her own.      Let each small statesman  
sow his weak wild oat,      Or turn his coat to decorate his coat,      Or take the  
throne and perish by the throne.

Lay down your sword. And let the White Flag fade      To grey; and let the Red  
Flag fade to pink,      For these that climb and climb; and cannot sink      So deep  
as death and honour, Déroulède.

**SONNET WITH THE COMPLIMENTS OF THE SEASON**

TO A POPULAR LEADER MUCH TO BE CONGRATULATED ON THE  
AVOIDANCE OF A STRIKE AT CHRISTMAS.

I know you. You will hail the huge release,      Saying the sheathing of a  
thousand swords,      In silence and injustice, well accords      With Christmas  
bells. And you will gild with grease      The papers, the employers, the police,  
And vomit up the void your windy words      To your New Christ; who bears no  
whip of cords      For them that traffic in the doves of peace.

The feast of friends, the candle-fruited tree,      I have not failed to honour.  
And I say      It would be better for such men as we,      And we be nearer  
Bethlehem, it we lay      Shot dead on scarlet snows for liberty,      Dead in the  
daylight upon Christmas Day.



## A SONG OF SWORDS

"A DROVE OF CATTLE CAME INTO A VILLAGE CALLED SWORDS,  
AND WAS STOPPED BY THE RIOTERS."---Daily Paper.

In the place called Swords on the Irish road      It is told for a new renown  
How we field the horns of the cattle, and how      We will hold the horns of the  
devil now      Ere the lord of bell, with the horn on his brow,      Is crowned in  
Dublin town

Light in the East and light in the West,      And light on the cruel lords,      On  
the souls that suddenly all men knew,      And the green flag flew and the red flag  
flew,      And many a wheel of the world stopped, too,      When the cattle were  
stopped at Swords.

Be they sinners or less than saints      That smite in the street for rage,      We  
know where the shame shines bright; we know      You that they smite at, you  
their foe,      Lords of the lawless wage and low.      This is your lawful wage.

You pinched a child to a torture price      That you dared not name in words;  
So black a jest was the silver bit      That your own speech shook for the shame of  
And the coward was plain as a cow they hit      When the cattle have strayed at  
Swords.

The wheel of the torment of wives went round      To break men's brotherhood;  
You gave the good Irish blood to grease      The clubs of your country's enemies;  
You saw the brave man beat to the knees:      And you saw that it was good.

The rope of the rich is long and long--      The longest of hangmen's cords;  
But the kings and crowds are holding their bream,      In a giant shadow o'er all  
beneath      Where God stands holding the scales of Death      Between the  
cattle and Swords.

Haply the lords that hire and lend,      The lowest of all men's lords,      Who  
sell their kind like kine at a fair.      Will find no head of their cattle there;      But  
faces of men where cattle were:      Faces of men--and Swords.

And the name shining and terrible,      The sternest of all man's words,      Still  
mark that place to seek or shun,      In the streets where the struggling cattle  
run--      Grass and a silence of judgment done      In the place that is called  
Swords.

## A SONG OF DEFEAT

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

And I dream of the days when work was scrappy,      And rare in our pockets  
the mark of the mint,      When we were angry and poor and happy,      And  
proud of seeing our names in print.      For so they conquered and so we  
scattered,      When the Devil rode and his dogs smelt gold,      And the peace of  
a harmless folk was shattered;      When I was twenty and odd years old.  
When the mongrel men that the market classes      Had slimy hands upon  
England's rod,      And sword in hand upon Afric's passes      Her last Republic  
cried to God.      For the men no lords can buy or sell,      They sit not easy  
when all goes well.      They have said to each other what naught can smother,  
They have seen each other, our souls and hell.

It is all as of old; the empty clangour.      The Nothing scrawled on a five-foot  
page,      The huckster who, mocking holy anger,      Painfully paints his face  
with rage.      And the faith of the poor is faint and partial,      And the pride of  
the rich is all for sale,      And the chosen heralds of England's Marshal      Are  
the sandwich-men of the "Daily Mail."      And the niggards that dare not give are  
glutted,      And the feeble that dare not fail are strong,      So while the City of  
Toil is gutted,      I sit in the saddle and sing my song.      For we that fight till  
the world is free,      We have no comfort in victory;      We have read each  
other as Cain his brother,      We know each other, these slaves and we.

**SONNET**

ON HEARING A LANDLORD ACCUSED (FALSELY, FOR ALL THE  
BARD CAN SAY) OF NEGLECTING ONE OF THE NUMEROUS WHITE  
HORSES THAT WERE OR WERE NOT CONNECTED WITH ALFRED THE  
GREAT

If you have picked your lawn of leaves and snails, If you have told your  
valet, even with oaths, Once a week or so, to brush your clothes. If you  
have dared to clean your teeth, or nails, While the Horse upon the holy  
mountain fails-- Then God that Alfred to his earth betrothes Send on you  
screaming all that honour loathes, Horsewhipping, Houndsditch, debts, and  
Daily Mails.

Can you not even conserve? For if indeed The White Horse fades; then  
closer creeps the fight When we shall scour the face of England white,  
Plucking such men as you up like a weed, And fling them far beyond a shaft  
shot right When Wessex went to battle for the creed.

## **AFRICA**

A sleepy people, without priests or kings,      Dreamed here, men say, to drive  
us to the sea:      O let us drive ourselves! For it is free      And smells of honour  
and of English things.      How came we brawling by these bitter springs,      We  
of the North?--two kindly nations--we?      Though the dice rattles and the clear  
coin rings,      Here is no place for living men to be.      Leave them the gold that  
worked and whined for it,      Let them that have no nation anywhere      Be  
native here, and fat and full of bread;      But we, whose sins were human, we will  
quit      The land of blood, and leave these vultures there,      Noiselessly  
happy, feeding on the dead.

## THE DEAD HERO

We never saw you, like our sires,      For whom your face was Freedom's  
face,      Nor know what office-tapes and wires      With such strong cords may  
interlace;      We know not if the statesmen then      Were fashioned as the sort  
we see,      We know that not under your ken      Did England laugh at Liberty.

Yea, this one thing is known of you,      We know that not till you were dumb,  
Not till your course was thundered through,      Did Mammon see his kingdom  
come.      The songs of theft, the swords of hire,      The clerks that raved, the  
troops that ran      The empire of the world's desire,      The dance of all the dirt  
began.

The happy jewelled alien men      Worked then but as a little leaven;      From  
some more modest palace then      The Soul of Dives stank to Heaven.      But  
when they planned with lisp and leer      Their careful war upon the weak,  
They smote your body on its bier,      For surety that you could not speak.

A hero in the desert died;      Men cried that saints should bury him.      And  
round the grave should guard and ride,      A chivalry of Cherubim.      God said:  
"There is a better place,      A nobler trophy and more tall;      The beasts that  
fled before his face      Shall come to make his funeral.

"The mighty vermin of the void      That hid them from his bended bow,  
Shall crawl from caverns overjoyed,      Jackal and snake and carrion crow.  
And perched above the vulture's eggs,      Reversed upon its hideous head,      A  
blue-faced ape shall wave its legs      To tell the world that he is dead."

## **AN ELECTION ECHO 1906**

This is their trumpet ripe and rounded,      They have burnt the wheat and  
gathered the chaff,      And we that have fought them, we that have watched  
them,      Have we at least not cause to laugh?

Never so low at least we stumbled--      Dead we have been but not so dead  
As these that live on the life they squandered,      As these that drink of the blood  
they shed.

We never boasted the thing we blundered,      We never Haunted the thing that  
fails,      We never quailed from the living laughter,      To howl to the dead who  
tell no tales,

'Twas another finger at least that pointed      Our wasted men or our emptied  
bags,      It was not we that sounded the trumpet      In front of the triumph of  
wrecks and rags.

Fear not these, they have made their bargain,      They have counted the cost  
of the last of raids,      They have staked their lives on the things that live not,  
They have burnt their house for a fire that fades.

Five years ago and we might have feared them,      Been drubbed by the  
coward and taught by the dunce;      Truth may endure and be told and re-  
echoed,      But a lie can never be young but once.

Five years ago and we might have feared them;      Now, when they lift the  
laurelled brow,      There shall naught go up from our hosts assembled      But a  
laugh like thunder. We know them now.

## THE SONG OF THE WHEELS

WRITTEN DURING A FRIDAY AND SATURDAY IN AUGUST 1911.

King Dives he was waiting in his garden all alone,      Where his flowers are  
made of iron and his trees are made of stone,      And his hives are full of thunder  
and the lightning leaps and kills,      For the mills of God grind slowly; and he  
works with other mills.      Dives found a mighty silence; and he missed the throb  
and leap,      The noise of all the sleepless creatures singing him to sleep.      And  
he said: "A screw has fallen--or a bolt has slipped aside--      Some little thing has  
shifted": and the little things replied:

"Call upon the wheels, master, call upon the wheels;      We are taking rest,  
master, finding how it feels,      Strict the law of thine and mine: theft we ever  
shun--      All the wheels are thine, master--tell the wheels to run!      Yea, the  
Wheels are mighty gods--set them going then!      We are only men, master, have  
you heard of men?

"O, they live on earth like fishes, and a gasp is all their breath.      God for  
empty honours only gave them death and scorn of death,      And you walk the  
worms for carpet and you tread a stone that squeals--      Only, God that made  
them worms did not make them wheels.      Man shall shut his heart against you  
and you shall not find the spring.      Man who wills the thing he wants not, the  
intolerable thing--      Once he likes his empty belly better than your empty head  
Earth and heaven are dumb before him: he is stronger than the dead.

"Call upon the wheels, master, call upon the wheels,      Steel is beneath your  
hand, stone beneath your heels,      Steel will never laugh aloud, hearing what we  
heard,      Stone will never break its heart, mad with hope deferred--      Men of  
tact that arbitrate, slow reform that heals--      Save the stinking grease, master,  
save it for the wheels.

"King Dives in the garden, we have naught to give or hold--      (Even while the  
baby came alive the rotten sticks were sold.)      The savage knows a cavern and  
the peasants keep a plot,      Of all the things that men have had--lo! we have  
them not.      Not a scrap of earth where ants could lay their eggs--      Only this  
poor lump of earth that walks about on legs--      Only this poor wandering  
mansion, only these two walking trees.      Only hands and hearts and stomachs--  
what have you to do with these?      You have engines big and burnished, tall  
beyond our fathers' ken,      Why should you make peace and traffic with such  
feeble folk as men?

"Call upon the wheels, master, call upon the wheels, They are deaf to demagogues, deaf to crude appeals; Are our hands our own, master?--how the doctors doubt! Are our legs our own, master? wheels can run without-- Prove the points are delicate--they will understand. All the wheels are loyal; see how still they stand!"

King Dives he was walking in his garden in the sun, He shook his hand at heaven, and he called the wheels to run, And the eyes of him were hateful eyes, the lips of him were curled, And he called upon his father that is lord below the world, Sitting in the Gate of Treason, in the gate of broken seals, "Bend and bind them, bend and bind them, bend and bind them into wheels, Then once more in all my garden there may swing and sound and sweep-- The noise of all the sleepless things that sing the soul to sleep."

Call upon the wheels, master, call upon the wheels. Weary grow the holidays when you miss the meals, Through the Gate of Treason, through the gate within, Cometh fear and greed of fame, cometh deadly sin; If a man grow faint, master, take him ere he kneels. Take him, break him, rend him, end him, roll him, crush him with the wheels.



## THE SECRET PEOPLE

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

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

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

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

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

Our patch of glory ended; we never heard guns again. But the squire  
seemed struck in the saddle; he was foolish, as if in pain He leaned on a  
staggering lawyer, he clutched a cringing Jew, He was stricken; it may be,  
after all, he was stricken at Waterloo. Or perhaps the shades of the shaven  
men, whose spoil is in his house, Come back in shining shapes at last to spoil  
his last carouse: We only know the last sad squires ride slowly towards the  
sea. And a new people takes the land: and still it is not we.

They have given us into the hand of the new unhappy lords, Lords without  
anger and honour, who dare not carry their swords. They fight by shuffling  
papers; they have bright dead alien eyes; They look at our labour and laughter  
as a tired man looks at flies. And the load of their loveless pity is worse than  
the ancient wrongs, Their doors are shut in the evening; and they know no  
songs.

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