

A CHILD OF SNOWS  
AND  
OTHER POEMS

G. K. CHESTERTON

***Free***editorial 

### **A Child of the Snows**

There is heard a hymn when the panes are dim,  
And never before or again,  
When the nights are strong with a darkness long,  
And the dark is alive with rain.

Never we know but in sleet and in snow,  
The place where the great fires are,  
That the midst of the earth is a raging mirth  
And the heart of the earth a star.

And at night we win to the ancient inn  
Where the child in the frost is furled,  
We follow the feet where all souls meet  
At the inn at the end of the world.

The gods lie dead where the leaves lie red,  
For the flame of the sun is flown,  
The gods lie cold where the leaves lie gold,  
And a Child comes forth alone.

### **A Christmas Carol**

The Christ-child lay on Mary's lap,  
His hair was like a light.  
(O weary, weary were the world,  
But here is all aright.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's breast  
His hair was like a star.  
(O stern and cunning are the kings,  
But here the true hearts are.)

The Christ-child lay on Mary's heart,  
His hair was like a fire.  
(O weary, weary is the world,  
But here the world's desire.)

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

'A Christmas Carol' poem

I

The shepherds went their hasty way,  
And found the lowly stable-shed  
Where the Virgin-Mother lay:  
And now they checked their eager tread,  
For to the Babe, that at her bosom clung,  
A Mother's song the Virgin-Mother sung.

II

They told her how a glorious light,  
Streaming from a heavenly throng.  
Around them shone, suspending night!  
While sweeter than a mother's song,  
Blest Angels heralded the Savior's birth,  
Glory to God on high! and Peace on Earth.

III

She listened to the tale divine,  
And closer still the Babe she pressed:  
And while she cried, the Babe is mine!  
The milk rushed faster to her breast:  
Joy rose within her, like a summer's morn;  
Peace, Peace on Earth! the Prince of Peace is born.

#### IV

Thou Mother of the Prince of Peace,  
Poor, simple, and of low estate!  
That strife should vanish, battle cease,  
O why should this thy soul elate?  
Sweet Music's loudest note, the Poet's story,  
Didst thou ne'er love to hear of fame and glory?

#### V

And is not War a youthful king,  
A stately Hero clad in mail?  
Beneath his footsteps laurels spring;  
Him Earth's majestic monarchs hail  
Their friends, their playmate! and his bold bright eye  
Compels the maiden's love-confessing sigh.

#### VI

Tell this in some more courtly scene,  
To maids and youths in robes of state!  
I am a woman poor and mean,  
And wherefore is my soul elate.  
War is a ruffian, all with guilt defiled,  
That from the aged father's tears his child!

#### VII

A murderous fiend, by fiends adored,  
He kills the sire and starves the son;  
The husband kills, and from her board  
Steals all his widow's toil had won;  
Plunders God's world of beauty; rends away  
All safety from the night, all comfort from the day.

#### VIII

Then wisely is my soul elate,

That strife should vanish, battle cease:  
I'm poor and of low estate,  
The Mother of the Prince of Peace.  
Joy rises in me, like a summer's morn:  
Peace, Peace on Earth! The Prince of Peace is born!

### **A Cider Song**

To J.S.M.

The wine they drink in Paradise  
They make in Haute Lorraine;  
God brought it burning from the sod  
To be a sign and signal rod  
That they that drink the blood of God  
Shall never thirst again.

The wine they praise in Paradise  
They make in Ponterey,  
The purple wine of Paradise,  
But we have better at the price;  
It's wine they praise in Paradise,  
It's cider that they pray.

The wine they want in Paradise  
They find in Plodder's End,  
The apple wine of Herford,  
Of Hafod Hill and Herford,  
Where woods went down to Herford,  
And there I had a friend.

The soft feet of the blessed go  
In the soft western vales,  
The road of the silent saints accord,  
The road from heaven to Herford,  
Where the apple wood of Herford  
Goes all the way to Wales.

### **A Hymn**

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

From all that terror teaches,  
From lies of tongue and pen,  
From all the easy speeches  
That comfort cruel men,  
From sale and profanation  
Of honour and the sword,  
From sleep and from damnation,  
Deliver us, good Lord.

Tie in a living tether  
The prince and priest and thrall,  
Bind all our lives together,  
Smite us and save us all;  
In ire and exultation  
Aflame with faith, and free,  
Lift up a living nation,  
A single sword to thee.

### **A Little Litany**

When God turned back eternity and was young,  
Ancient of Days, grown little for your mirth

(As under the low arch the land is bright)  
Peered through you, gate of heaven--and saw the earth.

Or shutting out his shining skies awhile  
Built you about him for a house of gold  
To see in pictured walls his storied world  
Return upon him as a tale is told.

Or found his mirror there; the only glass  
That would not break with that unbearable light  
Till in a corner of the high dark house  
God looked on God, as ghosts meet in the night.

Star of his morning; that unfallen star  
In that strange starry overturn of space  
When earth and sky changed places for an hour  
And heaven looked upwards in a human face.

Or young on your strong knees and lifted up  
Wisdom cried out, whose voice is in the street,  
And more than twilight of twiformed cherubim  
Made of his throne indeed a mercy-seat.

Or risen from play at your pale raiment's hem  
God, grown adventurous from all time's repose,  
Or your tall body climbed the ivory tower  
And kissed upon your mouth the mystic rose.

### **A Broad Minded Bishop Rebukes The Verminous St. Francis**

If Brother Francis pardoned Brother Flea,  
There still seems need of such strange charity,  
Seeing he is, for all his gay goodwill,  
Bitten by funny little creatures still.

## **A Prayer in Darkness**

This much, O heaven—if I should brood or rave,  
Pity me not; but let the world be fed,  
Yea, in my madness if I strike me dead,  
Heed you the grass that grows upon my grave.

If I dare snarl between this sun and sod,  
Whimper and clamour, give me grace to own,  
In sun and rain and fruit in season shown,  
The shining silence of the scorn of God.

Thank God the stars are set beyond my power,  
If I must travail in a night of wrath,  
Thank God my tears will never vex a moth,  
Nor any curse of mine cut down a flower.

Men say the sun was darkened: yet I had  
Thought it beat brightly, even on—Calvary:  
And He that hung upon the Torturing Tree  
Heard all the crickets singing, and was glad.

## **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 my 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 road 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.

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