

# **Wine Water and Song**

**By**

**Gilbert K. Chesterton**

***Free***editorial 

# WINE WATER AND SONG

## The Englishman

ST. GEORGE he was for England,  
And before he killed the dragon  
He drank a pint of English ale  
Out of an English flagon.  
For though he fast right readily  
In hair-shirt or in mail,  
It isn't safe to give him cakes  
Unless you give him ale.  
St. George he was for England,  
And right gallantly set free  
The lady left for dragon's meat  
And tied up to a tree;

But since he stood for England  
And knew what England means,  
Unless you give him bacon  
You mustn't give him beans.  
St. George he is for England,  
And shall wear the shield he wore  
When we go out in

With the battle-cross before.  
But though he is jolly company  
And very pleased to dine,  
It isn't safe to give him nuts  
Unless you give him wine.  
Wine and Water

OLD Noah he had an ostrich farm and fowls on the largest scale,  
He ate his egg with a ladle in an egg-cup big as a pail,  
And the soup he took was Elephant Soup and the fish he took was Whale,  
But they all were small to the cellar he took when he set out to sail,  
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."  
The cataract of the cliff of heaven fell blinding off the brink

As if it would wash the stars away as suds go down a sink,  
The seven heavens came roaring down for the throats of hell to drink,  
And Noah he cocked his eye and said, "It looks like rain, I think,  
The water has drowned the Matterhorn as deep as a Mendip mine,  
But I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine."  
But Noah he sinned, and we have sinned; on tipsy feet we trod,  
Till a great big black teetotaller was sent to us for a rod,  
And you can't get wine at a P.S.A., or chapel, or Eisteddfod,  
For the Curse of Water has come again because of the wrath of God,  
And water is on the Bishop's board and the Higher Thinker's shrine,  
But I don't care where the water goes if it doesn't get into the wine.

### **The Song Against Grocers**

GOD made the wicked Grocer  
For a mystery and a sign,  
That men might shun the awful shops  
And go to inns to dine;  
Where the bacon's on the rafter  
And the wine is in the wood,  
And God that made good laughter  
Has seen that they are good.  
The evil-hearted Grocer  
Would call his mother "Ma'am,"  
And bow at her and bob at her,  
Her aged soul to damn,  
And rub his horrid hands and ask

What article was next,  
Though mortis in articulo  
Should be her proper text.  
His props are not his children,  
But pert lads underpaid,  
Who call out "Cash!" and bang about  
To work his wicked trade;  
He keeps a lady in a cage  
Most cruelly all day,  
And makes her count and calls her "Miss"  
Until she fades away.  
The righteous minds of innkeepers

Induce them now and then  
To crack a bottle with a friend  
Or treat unmoneyed men,  
But who hath seen the Grocer  
Treat housemaids to his teas  
Or crack a bottle of fish-sauce  
Or stand a man a cheese?

He sells us sands of Araby  
As sugar for cash down;  
He sweeps his shop and sells the dust  
The purest salt in town,  
He crams with cans of poisoned meat  
Poor subjects of the King,  
And when they die by thousands  
Why, he laughs like anything.  
The wicked Grocer groces  
In spirits and in wine,  
Not frankly and in fellowship  
As men in inns do dine;

But packed with soap and sardines  
And carried off by grooms,  
For to be snatched by Duchesses  
And drunk in dressing-rooms.  
The hell-instructed Grocer  
Has a temple made of tin,  
And the ruin of good innkeepers  
Is loudly urged therein;  
But now the sands are running out  
From sugar of a sort,  
The Grocer trembles; for his time,  
Just like his weight, is short.  
The Rolling English Road

BEFORE the Roman came to Rye or out to Severn strode,  
The rolling English drunkard made the rolling English road.  
A reeling road, a rolling road, that rambles round the shire,  
And after him the parson ran, the sexton and the squire;  
A merry road, a mazy road, and such as we did tread

The night we went to Birmingham by way of Beachy Head.  
I knew no harm of Bonaparte and plenty of the Squire,  
And for to fight the Frenchman I did not much desire;  
But I did bash their baggonets because they came arrayed  
To straighten out the crooked road an English drunkard made,  
Where you and I went down the lane with ale-mugs in our hands,  
The night we went to Glastonbury by way of Goodwin Sands.  
His sins they were forgiven him; or why do flowers run  
Behind him; and the hedges all strengthening in the sun?

The wild thing went from left to right and knew not which was which,  
But the wild rose was above him when they found him in the ditch.  
God pardon us, nor harden us; we did not see so clear  
The night we went to Bannockburn by way of Brighton Pier.  
My friends, we will not go again or ape an ancient rage,  
Or stretch the folly of our youth to be the shame of age,  
But walk with clearer eyes and ears this path that wandereth,  
And see undrugged in evening light the decent inn of death;  
For there is good news yet to hear and fine things to be seen,  
Before we go to Paradise by way of Kensal Green.

### **The Song of Quoodle**

THEY haven't got no noses,  
The fallen sons of Eve;  
Even the smell of roses  
Is not what they supposes;  
But more than mind discloses  
And more than men believe.  
They haven't got no noses,  
They cannot even tell  
When door and darkness closes  
The park a Jew encloses,  
Where even the Law of Moses  
Will let you steal a smell.  
The brilliant smell of water,  
The brave smell of a stone,  
The smell of dew and thunder,  
The old bones buried under,  
Are things in which they blunder

And err, if left alone.  
The wind from winter forests,  
The scent of scentless flowers,  
The breath of brides' adorning,  
The smell of snare and warning,  
The smell of Sunday morning,  
God gave to us for ours.

. . . . .

And Quoodle here discloses  
All things that Quoodle can,  
They haven't got no noses,  
They haven't got no noses,  
And goodness only knowses  
The Noselessness of Man.  
Pioneers, O Pioneers

NEBUCHADNEZZAR the King of the Jews  
Suffered from new and original views,  
He crawled on his hands and knees, it's said,  
With grass in his mouth and a crown on his head.  
With a wowtyiddly, etc.  
Those in traditional paths that trod  
Thought the thing was a curse from God,  
But a Pioneer men always abuse  
Like Nebuchadnezzar the King of the Jews.  
Black Lord Foulon the Frenchman slew  
Thought it a Futurist thing to do.  
He offered them grass instead of bread.  
So they stuffed him with grass when they cut off his head.  
With a wowtyiddly, etc.  
For the pride of his soul he perished then—  
But of course it is always of Pride that men,  
A Man in Advance of his Age accuse,  
Like Nebuchadnezzar the King of the Jews.  
Simeon Scudder of Styx, in Maine,  
Thought of the thing and was at it again.  
He gave good grass and water in pails  
To a thousand Irishmen hammering rails.  
With a wowtyiddly, etc.  
Appetites differ; and tied to a stake

He was tarred and feathered for Conscience' Sake.  
But stoning the prophets is ancient news,  
Like Nebuchadnezzar the King of the Jews.

### **The Logical Vegetarian**

“Why shouldn't I have a purely vegetarian drink? Why shouldn't I take vegetables in their highest form, so to speak? The modest vegetarians ought obviously to stick to wine or beer, plain vegetarian drinks, instead of filling their goblets with the blood of bulls and elephants, as all conventional meat-eaters do, I suppose.”—Dalroy.

YOU will find me drinking rum,  
Like a sailor in a slum,  
You will find me drinking beer like a Bavarian.  
You will find me drinking gin  
In the lowest kind of inn,  
Because I am a rigid Vegetarian.  
So I cleared the inn of wine,  
And I tried to climb the sign,  
And I tried to hail the constable as “Marion.”  
But he said I couldn't speak,  
And he bowled me to the Beak  
Because I was a Happy Vegetarian.  
Oh, I knew a Doctor Gluck,  
And his nose it had a hook,  
And his attitudes were anything but Aryan;  
So I gave him all the pork  
That I had, upon a fork;  
Because I am myself a Vegetarian.  
I am silent in the Club,  
I am silent in the pub.,  
I am silent on a bally peak in Darien;  
For I stuff away for life  
Shoving peas in with a knife,  
Because I am at heart a Vegetarian.  
No more the milk of cows  
Shall pollute my private house  
Than the milk of the wild mares of the Barbarian;  
I will stick to port and sherry,

For they are so very, very,  
So very, very, very Vegetarian.  
“The Saracen's Head”

“THE Saracen's Head” looks down the lane,  
Where we shall never drink wine again,  
For the wicked old women who feel well-bred  
Have turned to a tea-shop “The Saracen's Head.”  
“The Saracen's Head” out of Araby came,  
King Richard riding in arms like flame,  
And where he established his folk to be fed  
He set up a spear—and the Saracen's Head.  
But “The Saracen's Head” outlived the Kings,  
It thought and it thought of most horrible things,  
Of Health and of Soap and of Standard Bread,  
And of Saracen drinks at “The Saracen's Head.”  
So “The Saracen's Head” fulfils its name,  
They drink no wine—a ridiculous game—  
And I shall wonder until I'm dead,  
How it ever came into the Saracen's Head.

### **The Good Rich Man**

MR. MANDRAGON, the Millionaire, he wouldn't have wine or wife,  
He couldn't endure complexity: he lived the Simple Life.  
He ordered his lunch by megaphone in manly, simple tones,  
And used all his motors for canvassing voters, and twenty telephones;  
Besides a dandy little machine,  
Cunning and neat as ever was seen,  
With a hundred pulleys and cranks between,  
Made of metal and kept quite clean,  
To hoist him out of his healthful bed on every day of his life,  
And wash him and dress him and shave him and brush him  
—to live the Simple Life.  
Mr. Mandragon was most refined and quietly, neatly dressed,  
Say all the American newspapers that know refinement best;  
Quiet and neat the hat and hair and the coat quiet and neat,  
A trouser worn upon either leg, while boots adorn the feet;  
And not, as any one would expect,  
A Tiger's Skin all striped and specked,



And a Peacock Hat with the tail erect,  
A scarlet tunic with sunflowers decked,  
Which might have had a more marked effect,  
And pleased the pride of a weaker man that yearned for wine or wife;  
But Fame and the Flagon, for Mr. Mandragon  
—obscured the Simple Life.

Mr. Mandragon, the Millionaire, I am happy to say, is dead;  
He enjoyed a quiet funeral in a Crematorium shed.  
And he lies there fluffy and soft and grey and certainly quite refined;  
When he might have rotted to flowers and fruit with Adam and all mankind,  
Or been eaten by wolves athirst for blood,  
Or burnt on a good tall pyre of wood,  
In a towering flame, as a heathen should,  
Or even sat with us here at food,  
Merrily taking twopenny ale and pork with a pocket-knife;  
But this was luxury not for one that went for the Simple Life.

### **The Song Against Songs**

THE song of the sorrow of Melisande is a weary song and a dreary song,  
The glory of Mariana's grange had got into great decay,  
The song of the Raven Never More has never been called a cheery song,  
And the brightest things in Baudelaire are anything else but gay.

But who will write us a riding song,  
Or a hunting song or a drinking song,  
Fit for them that arose and rode  
When day and the wine were red?  
But bring me a quart of claret out,  
And I will write you a clinking song,

A song of war and a song of wine  
And a song to wake the dead.

The song of the fury of Fragolette is a florid song and a torrid song,  
The song of the sorrow of Tara is sung to a harp unstrung,  
The song of the cheerful Shropshire Lad I consider a perfectly horrid song,  
And the song of the happy Futurist is a song that can't be sung.

But who will write us a riding song  
Or a fighting song or a drinking song,  
Fit for the fathers of you and me,  
That knew how to think and thrive?

But the song of Beauty and Art and Love  
Is simply an utterly stinking song,  
To double you up and drag you down  
And damn your soul alive.  
Me Heart

I COME from Castlepatrick, and me heart is on me sleeve,  
And any sword or pistol boy can hit it with me leave,  
It shines there for an epaulette, as golden as a flame,  
As naked as me ancestors, as noble as me name.  
For I come from Castlepatrick, and me heart is on me sleeve,  
But a lady stole it from me on St. Gallowglass's Eve.  
The folk that live in Liverpool, their heart is in their boots;  
They go to hell like lambs, they do, because the hooter hoots.  
Where men may not be dancin', though the wheels may dance all day;  
And men may not be smokin'; but only chimneys may.  
But I come from Castlepatrick, and me heart is on me sleeve,  
But a lady stole it from me on St. Poleander's Eve.  
The folk that live in black Belfast, their heart is in their mouth,  
They see us making murders in the meadows of the South;  
They think a plough's a rack, they do, and cattle-calls are creeds,  
And they think we're burnin' witches when we're only burnin' weeds;  
But I come from Castlepatrick, and me heart is on me sleeve;  
But a lady stole it from me on St. Barnabas's Eve.

### **The Song of the Oak**

THE Druids waved their golden knives  
And danced around the Oak  
When they had sacrificed a man;  
But though the learned search and scan,  
No single modern person can  
Entirely see the joke.  
But though they cut the throats of men  
They cut not down the tree,  
And from the blood the saplings sprang  
Of oak-woods yet to be.  
But Ivywood, Lord Ivywood,  
He rots the tree as ivy would,  
He clings and crawls as ivy would

About the sacred tree.  
King Charles he fled from Worcester fight  
And hid him in an Oak;  
In convent schools no man of tact  
Would trace and praise his every act,  
Or argue that he was in fact  
A strict and sainted bloke,  
But not by him the sacred woods  
Have lost their fancies free,  
And though he was extremely big  
He did not break the tree.  
But Ivywood, Lord Ivywood,  
He breaks the tree as ivy would,  
And eats the woods as ivy would

Between us and the sea.  
Great Collingwood walked down the glade  
And flung the acorns free,  
That oaks might still be in the grove  
As oaken as the beams above,  
When the great Lover sailors love  
Was kissed by Death at sea.  
But though for him the oak-trees fell  
To build the oaken ships,  
The woodman worshipped what he smote  
And honoured even the chips.

But Ivywood, Lord Ivywood,  
He hates the tree as ivy would,  
As the dragon of the ivy would  
That has us in his grips.  
The Road to Roundabout

SOME say that Guy of Warwick,  
The man that killed the Cow  
And brake the mighty Boar alive  
Beyond the Bridge at Slough;  
Went up against a Loathly Worm  
That wasted all the Downs,  
And so the roads they twist and squirm

(If I may be allowed the term)  
From the writhing of the stricken Worm  
That died in seven towns.  
I see no scientific proof  
That this idea is sound,  
And I should say they wound about  
To find the town of Roundabout,  
The merry town of Roundabout,  
That makes the world go round.

Some say that Robin Goodfellow,  
Whose lantern lights the meads  
(To steal a phrase Sir Walter Scott  
In heaven no longer needs),  
Such dance around the trysting-place  
The moonstruck lover leads;  
Which superstition I should scout  
There is more faith in honest doubt  
(As Tennyson has pointed out)

Than in those nasty creeds.  
But peace and righteousness (St. John)  
In Roundabout can kiss,  
And since that's all that's found about  
The pleasant town of Roundabout,  
The roads they simply bound about  
To find out where it is.

Some say that when Sir Lancelot  
Went forth to find the Grail,  
Grey Merlin wrinkled up the roads  
For hope that he should fail;  
All roads led back to Lyonesse  
And Camelot in the Vale,  
I cannot yield assent to this

Extravagant hypothesis,  
The plain, shrewd Briton will dismiss  
Such rumours (Daily Mail).  
But in the streets of Roundabout  
Are no such factions found,

Or theories to expound about,  
Or roll upon the ground about,  
In the happy town of Roundabout,  
That makes the world go round.  
The Song of the Strange Ascetic

IF I had been a Heathen,  
I'd have praised the purple vine,  
My slaves should dig the vineyards,  
And I would drink the wine;  
But Higgins is a Heathen,  
And his slaves grow lean and grey,  
That he may drink some tepid milk  
Exactly twice a day.

If I had been a Heathen,  
I'd have crowned Neœra's curls,  
And filled my life with love affairs,  
My house with dancing girls;  
But Higgins is a Heathen,  
And to lecture rooms is forced,

Where his aunts, who are not married,  
Demand to be divorced.

If I had been a Heathen,  
I'd have sent my armies forth,  
And dragged behind my chariots  
The Chieftains of the North.

But Higgins is a Heathen,  
And he drives the dreary quill,  
To lend the poor that funny cash  
That makes them poorer still.

If I had been a Heathen,  
I'd have piled my pyre on high,  
And in a great red whirlwind  
Gone roaring to the sky;  
But Higgins is a Heathen,  
And a richer man than I;  
And they put him in an oven,  
Just as if he were a pie.

Now who that runs can read it,  
The riddle that I write,  
Of why this poor old sinner,  
Should sin without delight—?  
But I, I cannot read it  
(Although I run and run),  
Of them that do not have the faith,  
And will not have the fun.  
The Song of Right and Wrong

FEAST on wine or fast on water,  
And your honour shall stand sure,  
God Almighty's son and daughter  
He the valiant, she the pure;  
If an angel out of heaven  
Brings you other things to drink,  
Thank him for his kind attentions,  
Go and pour them down the sink.  
Tea is like the East he grows in,

A great yellow Mandarin  
With urbanity of manner  
And unconsciousness of sin;  
All the women, like a harem,  
At his pig-tail troop along;  
And, like all the East he grows in,  
He is Poison when he's strong.  
Tea, although an Oriental,  
Is a gentleman at least;  
Cocoa is a cad and coward,  
Cocoa is a vulgar beast,  
Cocoa is a dull, disloyal,

Lying, crawling cad and clown,  
And may very well be grateful  
To the fool that takes him down.  
As for all the windy waters,  
They were rained like tempests down  
When good drink had been dishonoured  
By the tipplers of the town;

When red wine had brought red ruin  
And the death-dance of our times,  
Heaven sent us Soda Water  
As a torment for our crimes.  
Who Goes Home?

IN the city set upon slime and loam  
They cry in their parliament "Who goes home?"  
And there comes no answer in arch or dome,  
For none in the city of graves goes home.  
Yet these shall perish and understand,  
For God has pity on this great land.  
Men that are men again; who goes home?  
Tocsin and trumpeter! Who goes home?  
For there's blood on the field and blood on the foam  
And blood on the body when Man goes home.  
And a voice valedictory.... Who is for Victory?  
Who is for Liberty? Who goes home?