

# Portrait of a Friend

G. K. CHESTERTON

IN THE days when Belloc was known to Bentley and Oldershaw, but not to me, when they were all together in the Radical group at Oxford, Belloc himself chiefly frequented a much smaller group which called itself the Republican Club. So far as I can make out, the Republican Club never consisted of more than four members, and generally of less; one or more of them having been solemnly expelled either for Toryism or for Socialism. This was the club which Belloc celebrated in the fine dedication of his first book; of which two lines have passed into some popular celebrity, "There's nothing worth the wear of winning but laughter and the love of friends"; but in the course of which he also described in more detail the ideals of this fastidious fellowship.

*We kept the Rabelaisian plan  
We dignified the dainty cloisters  
With Natural Law, the Rights of Man,  
Song, Stoicism, Wine, and Oysters.*

*We taught the art of writing things  
On men we still would like to throttle,  
And where to get the blood of kings  
At only half-a-crown a bottle.*

Of the three other corners of this very Foursquare

Gospel of Citizenship, that is of Belloc's three constant colleagues in the old Republican Club, one is still, I believe, a distinguished exile and official in Burma; or as his old friend loved to say with sour smiles of affectionate resignation, "a Satrap"; as if he had somehow Medized or condescended to the Oriental barbarism which we call Imperialism. I have no doubt that as a fact he was a happy and highly satisfactory Satrap; but he was the one member of the group whom I never met. The other two Republicans, who were Belloc's most intimate friends at Oxford, have both in different ways played a considerable part in my own life. One was John Swinnerton Phillimore, son of the old Admiral whose name made a sort of background for the Kensington of my boyhood, afterwards Latin Professor at Glasgow University and one of the first classical authorities of his time; now alas, only an ever-deepening memory. The other was Francis Yvon Eccles, the distinguished French scholar, whom I now meet all too seldom through his gravitation towards living in France.

Eccles, like Belloc, was the child of one French and one English parent; but there was a certain misleading comedy about the names, as if they had been interchanged like labels. For Eccles, who happened to have the English surname, looked much more like a Frenchman, and Belloc, with the French surname, much more like an Englishman; indeed, he ended by being the one solitary but symbolic Englishman really looking like the traditional John Bull. It is true that he reached this traditional type through the possession of a square chin like that of the great Emperor of the French, and the subsequent assumption of side-whis-

kers to satisfy the conventions of the Spaniards. But the combined effect of these foreign influences was that he looked exactly like what all English farmers ought to look like; and was, as it were, a better portrait of Cobbett than Cobbett was. Moreover, the symbol was true; for the roots that hold him to the Downs and the deep plowlands of South England were even deeper, so far as instinct is concerned, than the marble foundations of the abstract Republic of the Republican Club. I remember drinking a pot of beer with a publican not far from Horsham and mentioning my friend's name; and the publican, who obviously had never heard of books or such bosh, merely said, "Farms a bit, doesn't he?" and I thought how hugely flattered Belloc would be.

I knew Eccles in Fleet Street, from the first days of the old Pro-Boer *Speaker*, of which he was largely the literary adviser; yet it was always inevitable to think of him as sitting outside a café in Paris rather than London. His head, his hat, his arched eyebrows and wrinkled forehead of quite disinterested curiosity, his Mephistophelean tuft, his type of patient lucidity, were far more French than his friend with the French name. Whether or no these externals commonly correspond to characters, they certainly do not always correspond to careers. Thus, John Phillimore, the son of a sailor and coming largely of a family of sailors, himself looked very much more like a sailor than like a don. His dark compact figure and bright brown face might have been on any quarter-deck. On the other hand, by another such carnival comedy of exchange, I always thought that his cousin, who is, I believe, a distinguished Admiral, looked much more like a don

or a professor. But John Phillimore, as things fell out, had to be a rather unique sort of don; and at once a popular and a pugnacious professor. You could not conduct classes amid the racial and religious chaos of Glasgow, full of wild Highlanders and wild Irish, and young fanatical Communists and old fanatical Calvinists, without possessing some of the qualities of the quarter-deck. Most of the stories about Phillimore read like tales of mutiny on the high seas. It was shrewdly said of him that the effect of the word, "gentlemen", as said by him, was like the famous effect of the word, "Quirites!" as said by Caesar. On a similar occasion an insubordinate but intelligent Glasgow crowd seems to have instantly grasped the gratifying irony of his appeal, "Gentlemen, gentlemen! I have not yet ceased casting my pearls."

The chief fact relevant to this chapter, however, is that Belloc's career began with the ideals of the Republican Club. To those who talk about ideals, but do not think about ideas, it may seem odd that both he and Eccles have ended as strong Monarchists. But there is a thin difference between good despotism and good democracy; both imply equality with authority, whether the authority be impersonal or personal: What both detest is oligarchy; even in its more human form of aristocracy, let alone its present repulsive form of plutocracy. Belloc's first faith was in the impersonal authority of the Republic, and he concentrated on its return in the eighteenth century, but rather specially touching its military aspect. His first two books were the very fine monographs on the two most famous of the French Revolutionists; and he was, in that sense, heartily revolutionary. But I mention the

matter here for a special reason, in connection with something in which he was and is rather unique in this country; native and rooted as is his real relation to this country. I have already remarked that to know him well is to know that, as a man, he is English and not French. But there is another aspect in his curious case. In so far as he is a traditionalist, he is an English traditionalist. But when he was specially a revolutionist, he was in the very exact sense a French Revolutionist. It might be roughly symbolized by saying he was an English poet but a French soldier.

Now I thought I knew all about Revolutionists long before I met the representative of the Republican Club. I had talked to them in dirty taverns or untidy studios, or more depressing vegetarian hostels. I knew there were differences in cut and color; and that some were more really revolutionary than others. I knew that some wore pale green neckties and gave lectures on decorative art; while some wore red neckties and made speeches on Trade Union platforms. I have sung "The Red Flag" in hearty chorus with the latter, and William Morris's "England, Awake" in more refined accents with the former. And though I knew nothing of the comparison with another method, I did more and more realize, with an ever sinking heart, that for some reason we had not got a decent revolutionary song to our name; and that in the matter of producing any respectable sort of Hymn of Hate, my countrymen were a washout.

One weakness of these popular war-songs was that they were not war-songs. They never had the faintest hint of how anybody could ever make war on anything. They were always waiting for the Dawn; with-

out the least anticipation that they might be shot at dawn, or the least intelligent preparation for shooting anybody else at dawn. "England, awake; the long long night is over; faint in the east behold the dawn appear." They were all like that; they were all Songs Before Sunrise; as if the sun that rose on the just and the unjust did not also rise on the conquered and the conqueror. But the English revolutionary poet wrote as if he owned the sun and was certain to be the conqueror. In other words, I found that the Socialist idea of war was exactly like the Imperialist idea of war; and I was strengthened and deepened in my detestation of both of them. I have heard many arguments against the idea of a Class War; but the argument which discredits it for me is the fact that the Socialists, like the Imperialists, always assumed that they would win the war. I am no Fascist; but the March on Rome gave them the surprise they needed. To say the least, it considerably halted the inevitable proletarian triumph; just as the Boers had halted the inevitable British triumph. And I do not like inevitable triumphs. Also I do not believe in them. I do not think that any social solution, even a more manly one like that of Morris, should be called "as sure as that tomorrow's sun will rise".

And then Belloc wrote a poem called "The Rebel"; and nobody noticed the interesting point about it. It is a very violent and bitter poem; it would be much too revolutionary for most of the revolutionists; even those with red ties would blush, and those with pale green ties would turn pale and green with sickness, at such threats against the rich as break out here: "And slit their pictures in their frames . . . and hack their

horses at the knees and hew to death their timber trees"; and the very fine ending, "and all these things I mean to do; for fear perhaps my little son should break his hands, as I have done".

That is not a Song Before Sunrise. That is an attack before sunrise. But the peculiar point I wish to note here appears in the previous verse about the actual nature of the attack. It is the only revolutionary poem I ever read that suggested that there was any plan for making any attack. The first two lines of the verse run: "When we find them where they stand, a mile of men on either hand." The Comrades of the Dawn always seemed to be marching in column, and singing. They never seemed to have heard of deploying; into the long line that faces the foe for battle. The next two lines are: "I mean to charge from right away, and force the flanks of their array." Who ever heard of the Comrades of the Dawn having so complicated an idea as that of turning the enemy's flank? Then comes the encirclement:

*And press them inward from the plains,  
And drive them clamouring down the lanes,  
And gallop and harry and have them down,  
And carry the gates and hold the town.*

The Pursuit; and then the Holding of the Bridgehead.

Now that is the only Song of the Class War I ever read that has the haziest notion of what a war would be like. In this wild lyric, full of vindictive violence and destruction, there is also in quite swift lyrical form a perfectly clear tactical plan and military map; a definite description of how men may storm a fortress, if it has to be stormed. The violence of this dem-

ocratic, though doubtless dramatic, utterance goes far beyond anything that any Communist will reach in a hundred years. But it involves also the real character of battle; and a battle, like every human work, is at once designed in its beginning and doubtful in its end. Now the Comrades of the Dawn already annoyed me; because their revolution was wildly undesigned in its beginning, but had no doubt about its end. Just like Imperialism; and the South African War.

That is what I mean by saying that Belloc is an English poet but a French soldier. The man at rest, and therefore the man in reality, is the man of Sussex; but he has been enlarged, or some would say infected, by the foreign influence of those who have known real revolutions and invasions; and if he were called upon to conduct a revolution, he would conduct it as logically as a Parisian mob still conducts a riot. As he once remarked, such a democratic mob can deploy. But I have only taken this chance example to illustrate a general truth about a very remarkable man. I have taken the fact that the ordinary song of revolt is only militant, but his is also military. I mean that it is full of the notion, not only of fighting for the faith, but of getting to grips with the fact. If we are going to fight the rich, or fight the revolt against the rich, or fight resistance to a reasonable redistribution of riches, or fight anything else, this is how it is done. And when I remember all the other romantic revolutionary songs it does not at all surprise me, at least in this country, to realize that no fighting has been done.

Now that is exactly how his contemporaries have missed the whole whole point about Belloc at every point of his action; for instance, in his historic study

of the Servile State. Because the English, of whom I am one, are romantic, and because they delight in the romance that the French are romantic, and delight in the more delirious romance that Belloc is French, they have simply been stone-blind to him when he is entirely scientific. His study of the Servile State is as strictly scientific as a military map is military. There is nothing romantic about it; nothing rollicking about it; nothing even particularly amusing about it, except the two admirable words, "this fool", which occur in the calm procession of a million impartial words, in the chapter on the Practical Man. And even excepting that is like accusing Euclid of making a joke, when he proves a proposition with a *reductio ad absurdum*. Anyone who knows the place of reason in the modern scheme can imagine what happened. First, before reading what Belloc wrote, the critics started to criticize what Belloc would probably write. They said he threatened us with a horrible nightmare called the Servile State. As a fact, it was his whole point that it was not a nightmare, but something that we were already almost as habituated to accepting as to accepting the daylight. All the time, a thesis as pivotal as that of Adam Smith or Darwin is hardly realized, or even criticized, by anybody as what it is, though it has been criticized quite wildly, conjecturally and at random, as everything that it isn't. Bernard Shaw roundly asserted that it was a mere revival of Herbert Spencer's description of all dependence on the State as slavery. And when we pointed out that he could not have read a page of Belloc's book if he really thought it was like Herbert Spencer's book, he replied with characteristic gayety that it was Herbert Spen-

cer's that he had not read. Many supposed that it was a sort of satiric description of a Socialist State; something between Laputa and *Brave New World*. Others seem still to suppose that the Servile State is a general term for any tyranny or oppressive official State; and even use the term currently in that sense. For it is typical of our time and country that, while no one could say the book was popular, the title of the book was immediately and vastly popular. There was a time when errand-boys and porters said "Servile State"; they did not know what it meant; but they knew about as much as the reviewers and even the dons.

The thesis of the book is that the Socialist movement does not lead to Socialism. This is partly because of compromise and cowardice; but partly also because men have a dim indestructible respect for property, even in its disgusting disguise of modern monopoly. Therefore, instead of the intentional result, Socialism, we shall have the unintentional resultant: Slavery. The compromise will take the form of saying, "We must feed the poor; we won't rob the rich; so we will tell the rich to feed the poor, handing them over to be the permanent servants of a master-class, to be maintained whether they are working or no, and in return for that complete maintenance giving a complete obedience." All this, or the beginnings of it, can be seen in a hundred modern changes, from such things as Insurance Acts, which divide citizens by law into two classes of masters and servants, to all sorts of proposals for preventing strikes and lockouts by compulsory arbitration. Any law that sends a man back to his work, when he wants to leave it, is in plain fact a Fugitive Slave Law.

Now I take that one example of a scientific thesis, maintained in a purely scientific way, to show how very little the intellectual importance of Belloc's work has been understood. The reason of that misunderstanding lies in the other fact about him, which is really foreign and relatively French: the habit of separating in his own mind the scientific from the artistic; the ornamental from the useful. It is true that when a Frenchman designs a park as an ornamental park, the paths are very curly indeed because they are only ornamental. When he designs a road, he makes it as straight as a ramrod, like the roads down which French soldiers used to march with all their ramrods; because a road is meant to be useful and is most short when it is straight. Belloc's little Arcadian lyric, "When I was not much older than Cupid and bolder", is very like an ornamental French garden; and his book on the Servile State is very like a French military road. No man is more instinctively witty; and no man can be more intentionally dull.

These two voices of Belloc, so to speak, were so distinct that he could sometimes pass from one to the other and make it seem like two persons speaking; effecting a transition on a platform almost as dramatic as the dialogue of a ventriloquist with his doll. When he stood as a Liberal member for Salford, he often managed to bewilder his hecklers by spraying them with these sharply alternated showers of cold and hot water. Salford was a poor and popular constituency, in which there were many strata of simple and provincial people, retaining the prejudices of our great-grandfathers; one of them being the touching belief that anybody with a French name could be made to

cover and grovel by any allusion to the Battle of Waterloo. This was probably the only battle of which the heckler himself had ever heard; and his information about it was limited to the partly inaccurate statement that it was won by the English. He therefore used to call out at intervals, "Who won Waterloo?" And Belloc would affect to take this with grave exactitude, as a technical question put to him upon a tactical problem, and would reply with the laborious lucidity of a lecturer, "The issue of Waterloo was ultimately determined chiefly by Colborne's manoeuvre in the center, supported by the effects of Van der Smitzen's battery earlier in the engagement. The Prussian failure in synchrony was not sufficiently extensive, etc." And then, while the unfortunate patriot in the audience was still endeavoring to grapple with this unexpected growth of complexity in the problem he had propounded, Belloc would suddenly change his own note to the ringing directness of the demagogue, would openly boast of the blood of that Pyrenean soldier who had followed the revolutionary army of Napoleon, and risen in its ranks, through all the victories that established a code of justice all over a continent and restored citizenship to civilization. "It is good democratic blood; and I am not ashamed of it."

This transition of tone had a tremendous effect, the whole hall rose at him roaring with applause and the investigator of the Belgian campaign was left isolated. But that is exactly the point; that he really was isolated. It is a point, not only in the subtlety of that blend of French and English blood; but also of the rather special subtlety of the English. The English are insular, not so much in the sense of being insolent but

simply of being ignorant; but they are not spiteful. Other things being equal, they would rather cheer a Frenchman who was proud of being a Frenchman, as they cheered Napoleon's Marshal at the Coronation of Queen Victoria, than remind him of Napoleon's misfortune at Waterloo. And the same interesting distinction cuts the other way also. We have been told in a tiresome way from childhood about something that was called French rhetoric. To our shame, we have forgotten that there was until very lately a noble thing called English rhetoric. And as distinct from his irony or his objective scientific militarism, the rhetoric of Belloc was thoroughly English rhetoric. There was nothing in it that could not have been said by Cobbett, or even by Fox, in the days the genuine English Radical could address the genuine English crowd. What has weakened that direct popular appeal has been the change that turned nearly all Englishmen into a sort of imitation Londoners; and the rhetoric of Westminster grew more and more pompous and hypocritical while the wit of Whitechapel grew more and more acrid and flippant. But it has been possible, even in my own time, to hear occasionally the voice historic, and virile English demagogues, talking in plain English about primary emotions. Nobody ever did it better, when he chose, than old John Burns, for whom I have spoken and voted so often in the days when I lived in Battersea. To mention one case, as a sort of model; it was natural enough that the old Dock Strike agitator, having become a Cabinet Minister and in many ways a rather Conservative force, should be assailed by more revolutionary groups as an extinct volcano if not a surrendered fortress. But Burns knew

how to deal with that sort of thing when speaking to democrats; by cutting deeper into human facts instead of sliding away upon legal fictions. He was taunted by some Socialists at a Battersea meeting with not having opposed the Royal Grant to Queen Mary or some princess at the celebrations on the appearance of an heir. I can imagine how the smoother sort of Lib.-Lab. social climber, passing through Parliamént into the governing class, would explain away his position in terms of the etiquette of the House. John Burns said, "I am the son of my mother and the husband of my wife. And if you ask me to put a public insult upon a woman who has just borne a child, I will not do it." That is English rhetoric; and it is as good as any in the world.

But while it is quite a mistake to suppose that there was anything particularly French about the direct democratic oratory that Belloc used in those days, there was another quality which he also used, which I think may really be called a rather French specialty. We generally have some very silly and inadequate notion in our minds when we talk about French wit; and the full richness of that fruit of culture is seldom covered even when we talk of French irony. For the best French irony is nothing so simple as merely saying one thing and meaning the opposite. It is at once exhibiting and withdrawing, in one flash, a series of aspects of a thing; like a man twirling a jewel with twenty facets. And the more brief it is, the more flippant it is, the more seemingly superficial it is, the more there is in that irony an element of mystery. There is always a touch of bewilderment, for the simple, in the tale of such tags as that of Voltaire: "To succeed in the

world it is not sufficient to be stupid, you must also be well-mannered." Curiously enough, there is exactly that quality in an ordinary military dispatch, sent out by a very silent and practical soldier; by Foch at the supreme crisis of the Marne. "My right is hard pressed; my left is retreating; situation excellent; I attack." For it might be all sorts of things besides the quite prosaic and practical thing that it is; it might be a paradox; or a boast; or a bitter jest of despair; and all the time it is in fact a quite correct description of the advantages of his own immediate tactical situation, as exact as a military map. I have never so vividly felt that there was really something French about Belloc than when he would from time to time suddenly say things like that on a public platform before an entirely puzzled audience. I remember once when he was lecturing on the same campaign in the Great War; a purely technical lecture full of plans and figures. And he paused to say parenthetically that perhaps nobody would ever understand why Von Kluck made his one big blunder before Paris. "Perhaps," said Belloc, like a man bemused, "perhaps he was inspired."

Now you can make all sorts of things out of that; in all sorts of opposite directions. You could make it a Voltairean sneer at divine inspiration, and the disasters it brings; or a dark mysterious judgement like that suggested when "the Lord hardened Pharaoh's heart", or all kinds of other fine shades between the two. But you could never be quite certain that you had got to the bottom of it. So that shining ornamental pond which looks so shallow, and is called French wit, is indeed the deepest of all wells, and truth lies at the bottom of it. Finally, it may be re-

marked, that this very diversity in one man's methods, and his own habit of keeping these diverse things distinct, is the explanation of the accident by which many people have been disappointed or bewildered or even bored by Belloc in different aspects; because they were looking for the revelation of one of the legends about him, when he happened to be concentrating with cold ferocity on something much more prosaic or precise. In debating with Bernard Shaw about the Law of Rent, he observed austere that if they were discussing economics, he would discuss economics, but if Mr. Shaw was making jokes he would be happy to reply in comic verse. To which Mr. Shaw, ever ready to rise to a sporting event, pursued the subject in some delightful doggerel; which Belloc acknowledged with the song about "the strip to the south of the Strand"; then including the Adelphi. But it is typical that his song simply was a song, and could have been sung in any pub as a drinking-song.

One of the most amusing events of my life occurred when I took the chair for a private celebration of Belloc's sixtieth birthday. There were about forty people assembled, nearly all of them were what is called important in the public sense, and the rest were even more important in the private sense; as being his nearest intimates and connections. To me it was that curious experience, something between the Day of Judgement and a dream, in which men of many groups known to me at many times all appeared together as a sort of resurrection. Anybody will understand that feeling who has had, as most people have had, the experience of some total stranger stopping him in the street and saying, "And how are the old

set?" On such occasions I become acutely conscious of having belonged to a large number of old sets. Most of the people I knew well enough; but some of the younger I had known quite lately and others long ago; and they included, as do all such gatherings, those whom I had intended to enquire about, and never carried out my intention. Anyhow, they were of all sorts except the stupid sort; and the renewed comradeship stirred in me the memory of a hundred controversies. There was my old friend Bentley, who dated from my first days at school; and Eccles, who reminded me of the earliest political rows of the Pro-Boers; and Jack Squire (now Sir John), who first floated into my circle in the days of *The Eye-Witness* and my brother's campaign against corruption; and Duff Cooper, a rising young politician I had met but a month or so before, and A. P. Herbert of somewhat similar age; and the brilliant journalist I had long known as *Beachcomber*, and only recently known as Morton. It was to be, and was, a very jolly evening there were to be no speeches. It was specially impressed upon me that there were to be no speeches. Only I, as presiding, was to be permitted to say a few words in presenting Belloc with a golden goblet modelled on certain phrases in his heroic poem in praise of wine, which ends by asking that such a golden cup should be the stirrup-cup of his farewell to friends:

*And sacramental raise me the divine  
Strong brother in God and last companion, wine.*

I merely said a few words to the effect that such a ceremony might have been as fitting thousands of years ago, at the festival of a great Greek poet; and

that I was confident that Belloc's sonnets and strong verse would remain like the cups and the carved epics of the Greeks. He acknowledged it briefly, with a sad good humor, saying he found that, by the age of sixty, he did not care very much whether his verse remained or not. "But I am told," he added with suddenly reviving emphasis, "I am told that you begin to care again frightfully when you are seventy. In which case, I hope I shall die at sixty-nine." And then we settled down to the feast of old friends, which was to be so happy because there were no speeches.

Towards the end of the dinner, somebody whispered to me that it would perhaps be better if a word were said in acknowledgment of the efforts of somebody else whose name I forget, who was supposed to have arranged the affair. I therefore briefly thanked him; and he still more briefly thanked me, but added that it was quite a mistake, because the real author of the scheme was Johnnie Morton, otherwise *Beachcomber*, who sat immediately on his right. Morton rose solemnly to acknowledge the abruptly transferred applause; glanced to his own right, and warmly thanked whoever happened to be sitting there (I think it was Squire) for having inspired him with this grand conception of a banquet for Belloc. Squire arose, and with many courteous gestures, explained that the gentleman on his own right, Mr. A. P. Herbert, had been the true and deep and ultimate inspiration of this great idea; and that it was only fitting that the secret of his initiative should be now revealed. By this time, the logic of the jest was in full gallop and could not be restrained; even if I had wished to restrain it. A. P. Herbert rose to the occasion with

superb presence of mind, and gave the series quite a new and original turn. He is an excellent speaker; and, as we all know, an admirable author; but I never knew before that he is an admirable actor. For some reason best known to himself, he chose to pretend to be the oratorical official of some sort of Workmen's Benevolent Society, like the Oddfellows or the Foresters. He did not need to tell us that he was taking this part; in the tone of his voice, he told it in the first few words. I shall never forget the exactitude of the accent with which he said, "I'm sure, friends, we're all very pleased to see Ex-Druid Chesterton among us this evening." But he also gave his speech a definite logical direction. He said it was not to 'im, but to our old and faithful friend Duff Cooper that this pleasant evening was really due. Duff Cooper, sitting next to him, then rose and in resolute and ringing tones delivered an imitation of a Liberal platform speech, full of invocations of his great leader Lloyd George. He explained, however, that Mr. E. C. Bentley on his right, and not himself, had arranged this tribute to that pillar of political Liberalism, Mr. Belloc. Bentley gave one glance to his own right, and rose with exactly that supercilious gravity that I had seen forty years ago in the debating-clubs of our boyhood; the memory of his balanced eyeglasses and bland solemnity came back to me across my life with such intensity as stirs the tears that are born of time. He said, with his precise enunciation, that he had himself followed through life one simple and sufficient rule. In all problems that arose, he had been content to consult exclusively the opinion of Professor Eccles. In every detail of daily life, in his choice of a wife, of a profession, of

a house, of a dinner, he had done no more than carry out whatever Professor Eccles might direct. On the present occasion, any appearance he might have had of arranging the Belloc banquet was in fact a mask for Professor Eccles's influence. Professor Eccles responded in a similar but even more restrained fashion, merely saying that he had been mistaken for the man next to him, the real founder of the feast; and so by fatal and unfaltering steps, the whole process went round the whole table; till every single human being had made a speech. It is the only dinner I have ever attended at which it was literally true that every diner made an after-dinner speech. And that was the very happy ending of that very happy dinner, at which there were to be no speeches.

I did not myself make another speech; though I was far from thinking that there had been too much speechifying. Only certain fragmentary words, a memory of a late Victorian poet whom I knew, Sir William Watson, floated on the surface of my mind; and it was those words that I should have said, if I had said anything. For that the poet said to his friend is all that I could have added, in a merely personal spirit to the many things that were said that night about Hilaire Belloc; and I should not have been ashamed if the words had sounded like a vaunt:

*Nor without honour my days ran,  
Nor yet without a boast shall end;  
For I was Shakespeare's countryman  
And were not you my friend?*

[A chapter from the *Autobiography of G. K. Chesterton*, to be published in November by Sheed & Ward.]

## “To Follow in His Train”

EARL DANIELS

IT WAS a midsummer Sunday morning. The sun came through the stained-glass windows with a subdued, cool light, to make patterns on the floor; beyond open doors, green branches stirred in the wind, and there were glimpses of living blue sky, flecked with clouds. The brass on the altar gleamed; the flowers were fresh; and the office-lights picked out spots of color on the dull wood of the reredos. The congregation was well-dressed and well-mannered; the priest immaculately vested, his voice modulated to soothing correctness as he made an ordered way through the prayer-book service. Here, it would seem, was worship to which no one could take exception. It was worship of propriety and taste, set down in the midst of peace and satisfaction. It was worship, too, which bade fair to leave the worshippers much as they had been, ready with smile and greeting for a friendly priest at the door of the church, for renewal of the commonplaces of conversation, and for the Sunday dinner's plenitude.

Then, for the recessional, they sang “The Son of God Goes Forth to War”. Rather, they idled through it, placidly, evenly; so far as one could tell from appearances, unstirred by the heroic words. The organ sank to softness, and there followed the low, benedictional “Amen”. But it wasn't benediction. Instead, it jarred; for something had happened which made benediction ironically inappropriate, and the words of the