

[*The New Witness*]

OLD KING COLE: A PARODY

BY G. K. CHESTERTON

Old King Cole was a merry old soul,
And a merry old soul was he;
He called for his pipe,
He called for his bowl,
And he called for his fiddlers three.

After LORD TENNYSON.

COLE, that unwearied prince of Colchester,
Growing more gay with age and with long days
Deeper in laughter and desire of life,
As that Virginian climber on our walls
Flames scarlet with the fading of the year,
Called for his wassail and that other weed
Virginian also, from the western woods
Where English Raleigh checked the boasts of Spain,
And lighting joy with joy, and piling up
Pleasure as crown for pleasure, bade men bring
Those three, the minstrels whose emblazoned coats
Shone with the oyster-shells of Colchester;
And these three played, and playing grew more fain
Of mirth and music; till the heathen came,
And the King slept beside the northern sea.

After W. B. YEATS.

Of an old King in a story
From the gray sea-folk I have heard,
Whose heart was no more broken
Than the wings of a bird.

As soon as the moon was silver
And the thin stars began,
He took his pipe and his tankard,
Like an old peasant man.

And three tall shadows were with him
And came at his command;
And played before him for ever
The fiddles of fairyland.

And he died in the young summer
Of the world's desire;
Before our hearts were broken
Like sticks in a fire.

After ROBERT BROWNING.

Who smoke-snorts toasts o' My Lady Nicotine
 Kicks stuffing out of Pussyfoot, bids his trio
 Stick up their Stradvarii (that's the plural
 Or near enough, my fatheads; *nimum*
Vicina Cremonæ; that's a bit too near).
 Is there some stockfish fails to understand?
 Catch hold o' the notion, bellow and blurt back 'Cole'?
 Must I bawl lessons from a horn-book, howl,
 Cat-call, the cat-gut 'fiddles'? Fiddlesticks!

After WALT. WHITMAN.

Me clairvoyant,
 Me conscious of you, old camerado,
 Needing no telescope, lorgnette, field-glass, opera-glass, myopic pince-nez,
 Me piercing two thousand years with eye naked and not ashamed;
 The crown cannot hide you from me;
 Musty old feudal-heraldic trappings cannot hide you from me,
 I perceive that you drink
 (I am drinking with you. I am as drunk as you are).
 I see you are inhaling tobacco, puffing, smoking, spitting
 (I do not object to your spitting),
 You prophetic of American largeness,
 You anticipating the broad masculine manners of These States;
 I see in you also there are movements, tremors, tears, desire for the melodious,
 I salute your three violinists, endlessly making vibrations,
 Rigid, relentless, capable of going on for ever;
 They play my accompaniment; but I shall take no notice of any accompaniment;
 I myself am a complete orchestra.
 So long.

After SWINBURNE.

In the time of old sin without sadness
 And golden with wastage of gold
 Like the gods that grow old in their gladness
 Was the king that was glad, growing old:
 And with sound of loud lyres from his palace
 The voice of his oracles spoke,
 And the lips that were red from his chalice
 Were splendid with smoke.

When the weed was as flame for a token
 And the vine was as blood for a sign;
 And upheld in his hands and unbroken
 The fountains of fire and of wine.
 And a song without speech, without singer,
 Stung the soul of a thousand in three
 As the flesh of the earth has to sting her
 The soul of the sea.

[*The Outlook*]
 QUOTATIONS

BY J. C. SQUIRE

Most dictionaries of quotations are large and fat volumes. Only game-keepers have pockets large enough to hold them, and they, therefore, have the drawback that they can only (unless their contents be memorized) be used in the home or the office. This apparently has struck Mr. Norman MacMunn, who has brought out a *Companion Dictionary of Quotations*,* which is of handy size. I have wasted — but that is an offensive word — a good deal of time over it since my copy reached me. It is full of so many good things. All you have to do is to think of a subject, turn to its entry (the work is alphabetically arranged), and find the totally surprising or the terribly inevitable things the greatest of the world's philosophers and poets have said about it. Who, looking up 'Madness,' would expect to find the only quotation these lines from Dryden's *The Spanish Friar*:

There is a pleasure
 In being mad which none but madmen know.

Many of the entries are like that, and where there is more than one they usually contradict each other. Take 'Failure.' You get Keats saying 'There is not a fiercer hell than the failure of a great object,' and George Eliot: 'The only failure a man ought to fear is failure in cleaving to the purpose he sees to be best.' The sages are just like the populace which produces proverbs. You can justify any course of action with a proverb, and buttress it with advice from the august. This dictionary is, as it were, a picture of the mental confusion of man faced with the many-sidedness of

truth. A weak-minded reader might be utterly demoralized by it. In a book like this, somehow, all voices seem to speak with equal authority and every proposition seems to have the same weight.

I like dictionaries of quotations. I have a taste for wisdom in a phrase, and any assembly of extracts from authors will hold me. I have been known to spend half a morning reading a calendar, one of those fat calendars from which it is such agony to tear off March 1 or March 2, because it means putting into the waste-paper basket or the fire that sentence of Bacon or Epictetus which struck one as being so true, so profound, so precisely what one has always thought oneself. I always read the 'Thoughts of the Day' in the *Westminster Gazette*, that elevating sentiment from Wordsworth or Mazzini, and nothing in the *Observer* pleases me more than that little cage of 'Sayings of the Week' in which the best things of our wits rub shoulders with the most alarming predictions of our geologists and eugenists. I have, in fact, a passion for scraps, and I can read a dictionary of quotations as easily as any work in the world. But I do not regard it as a dictionary, and I never gull myself into a belief that it is of the slightest practical utility to me. And I doubt if the greater part of any dictionary of quotations is useful to, or used by, anybody. There are remarkably few of us who ever think of quoting anything at all. Those who do almost invariably use hack quotations. And nobody would dare to quote, even in print, even in an anonymous leading article, most of the apt allusions given by the — I'm sorry — quotational lexicographers.

These dictionaries are used by journalists to verify quotations they know already, quotations the use of which

* De la More Press, 2s. 6d. net.